



THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Mike Glover



INTRODUCTION

The five books of Moses were collectively called the Pentateuch, a word of Greek origin meaning ‘the five-fold book.’ It’s probable that the division of the Torah into five books proceeded from the Greek translators of the Old Testament.

The names by which these several books are generally known are Greek. Genesis through to Deuteronomy is known as the Torah, which means Law. In Greek, the word Pentateuch is ‘Pente,’ which means five and ‘uch’, which means Law.

SUMMARY OF THE BOOK

In the Book of Deuteronomy, we read about God’s plan of redemption not only for His people but also for all of mankind. It points to the ultimate Redeemer of the world, Jesus, the Messiah. We read about principles concerning how the nation of Israel should live and the ultimate fulfilment of those principles being set forth by Jesus Himself.

The name ‘Deuteronomy’ means ‘second law’, but it wasn’t a new law for Israel, but a repetition of the laws that were given at Mount Sinai, **Exodus 19-24**. However, in the repetition of the law, Moses explains and amplifies various portions of the laws that were given about forty years before.

We know this is an important book because it is quoted eighty-five times within the New Testament. Only six books within the New Testament don’t have any quotes from Deuteronomy.

Many scholars believe that the key verse within the book is ‘Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength,’ **Deuteronomy 6:5**.

DATE

Moses writes, “Thirty-eight years passed from the time we left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the Zered Valley. By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. The LORD’s hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp,” **Deuteronomy 2:14-15**. The crossing of the brook Zered brought Israel to the borders of Ammon. It also marked the separation of the unfaithful Israelites who faltered at the first visit to Kadesh.

Note that Moses marks a thirty-eight-year time frame in which Israel left Kadesh-Barnea, following the coming over the brook Zered that the rebellious generation was done away with.

In **Deuteronomy 1:3**, Moses marks the eleventh month of the fortieth year as the time from leaving Egypt to their current place in Moab. They had spent three months getting to Sinai from Egypt, **Exodus 12:2 to Exodus 19:1**.

Israel spent approximately twelve months at Sinai receiving the law, **Numbers 10:11-13**. Thirty-eight years later, Israel finds itself in the plains of Moab, **Numbers 33:38 / Deuteronomy 2:14**, yet to have entered Canaan.

Deuteronomy opens in the fortieth year and eleventh month. Smith and Fields date the book of Deuteronomy to the year 1407 B.C. ‘Old Testament History’. The message of Moses to the people lasted about thirty days, **Deuteronomy 1:3 / Deuteronomy 34:8 / Joshua 2:22 / Joshua 4:19**.

AUTHOR

We know that Moses wrote the book as his farewell speech to Israel, Deuteronomy 1:1 / Deuteronomy 1:5 / Deuteronomy 4:44-45 / Deuteronomy 31:24-26. Jesus Himself, on many occasions, quotes from the book and accredits the writing to Moses, Matthew 4:4 / Matthew 4:7 / Matthew 4:10 / Matthew 5:21 / Matthew 5:27 / Matthew 5:31 / Matthew 5:38 / Matthew 15:4 / Matthew 18:16 / Matthew 19:7 / Matthew 22:24 / Matthew 22:37 / Mark 7:10 / Mark 10:4 / Mark 12:19 / Mark 12:29-30 / Luke 4:4 / Luke 4:8 / Luke 4:12 / Luke 10:27 / Luke 18:20 / Luke 20:28.

THE BOOK CONTAINS THREE SERMONS

First sermon, Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43
Second sermon, Deuteronomy 4:44-11:32
Third sermon, Deuteronomy 12:1-33:29

OUTLINE

A summary of Israel's journey from Egypt, Deuteronomy 1-3
A summary of Israel's relationship with God, Deuteronomy 4-10
How to love God and keep His commandments, Deuteronomy 11-26
Blessings, curses, and restoration, Deuteronomy 27-30
The death of Moses, Deuteronomy 31-34

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘These are the words Moses spoke to all Israel in the wilderness east of the Jordan—that is, in the Arabah—opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth and Dizahab. (It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road.) In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses proclaimed to the Israelites all that the LORD had commanded him concerning them. This was after he had defeated Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and at Edrei had defeated Og, king of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth. East of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, Moses began to expound this law, saying.’ Deuteronomy 1:1-5

FIRST SERMON, DEUTERONOMY 1:1-4:43

THE COMMAND TO LEAVE HOREB

The book begins by telling us that Moses spoke these words to Israel ‘in the wilderness east of the Jordan’, [Deuteronomy 1:1](#). Although we can’t be sure, the wilderness may possibly be referring to any area from Mount Sinai to the valley just east of the Jordan before Israel crossed over into Canaan. Moses does refer to the wilderness of Arabah as ‘the valley near Beth Peor’, [Deuteronomy 4:46](#).

No one really knows the exact location of ‘Suph, [Deuteronomy 1:1](#) / [Numbers 21:4](#), Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, [Deuteronomy 1:1](#) / [Numbers 12:1-15](#), and Dizahab, [Deuteronomy 1:1](#), but we do know that Moses was in the land of Moab.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Tophel is identified with Tufileh, the Tafyle of Burckhardt, still a considerable place, some little distance southeast of the Dead Sea. Paran is probably ‘Mount Paran’, [Deuteronomy 33:2](#), or a city of the same name near the mountain, [Genesis 14:6](#). Laban is generally identified with Libnah, [Numbers 33:20](#), and Hazeroth with Ain Hadherah, [Numbers 11:34](#), but the position of Dizahab is uncertain.’

Notice if Israel had walked from Horeb, [Exodus 3:1](#), that is Mount Sinai, to Kadesh, [Numbers 13:26](#), it would have taken just eleven days, [Deuteronomy 1:2](#) / [Numbers 21:4](#).

However, because they initially refused to take the land as God commanded, they ended up wandering around for thirty-eight years in the wilderness, [Hebrews 11:1-11](#). Thirty-eight years later, Israel finds itself in the plains of Moab, [Numbers 33:38](#) / [Deuteronomy 2:14](#), yet to have entered Canaan.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Israelites were eleven days in going from Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea, where they were near the verge of the promised land; after which they were thirty-eight years wandering up and down in the vicinity of this place, not being permitted, because of their rebellions, to enter into the promised rest, though they were the whole of that time within a few miles of the land of Canaan!’

The fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, [Deuteronomy 1:3](#), represented the time from leaving Egypt to their current place in Moab. They had spent three months getting to Sinai from Egypt, [Exodus 12:2-19:1](#). This means that Israel spent approximately twelve months at Sinai receiving the law, [Numbers 10:11-13](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was a melancholy year to the Hebrews in different respects; in the first month of this year Miriam died, [Numbers 20:1](#), on the first day of the fifth month Aaron died, [Numbers 33:38](#), and about the conclusion of it, Moses himself died.’

He tells us that great victories had been won by Israel over the Amorites and Bashan, [Deuteronomy 1:4](#). When Israel had an opportunity to take the Promised Land, they were afraid of the power of the Canaanites, but this new generation of Israelites, trust God and so, God gave them the victory over these two pagan kings, Sihon and Og, [Deuteronomy 1:4](#).

Before Moses dies and the children of Israel enter Canaan, he has some final words for the people. Moses begins the first of three sermons east of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, [Deuteronomy 1:5](#).

It’s at this point that Moses now expounds the law, that is, ‘Torah’. The word is used here to refer to the total law of God which came through Moses, and or it can refer to some specific teachings, [Proverbs 1:8](#).

Over a period of several years, the name ‘Torah’ became the name that was given by the Jews to the first five books of the Bible, known as the Pentateuch, [Ezra 7:6](#).

‘The LORD our God said to us at Horeb, “You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighbouring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—and to their descendants after them.” Deuteronomy 1:6-8

The background to these verses is found in Exodus 18:18-26. God told Israel they had stayed long enough, at Sinai, Deuteronomy 1:6. The ‘long enough’ Deuteronomy 1:6, time at Sinai was a twelve-month period of time in which Israel received the law of God, Exodus 19:1-2. Moses reminds the people of the day that they were told to leave Sinai for the Promised Land of Canaan.

The Amorites were a great nation of people who came into the area of Canaan from the north and settled primarily on the eastern side of the Jordan. Because they were seen as a great nation, when Israel conquered them, it gave them even more confidence to conquer any of the tribes of the Canaanites, Deuteronomy 1:7.

Canaan was the land promised to Abraham as God’s gift that Israel might grow into a mighty nation, Genesis 12:1-9. The Canaanites were living in the land at the time of the arrival of Israel and had been there since the days of Abraham.

It was God who gave them the land as a gift, and all Israel had to do was take it by faith, Hebrews 11:1. The land already had inhabitants, that is, the Canaanites, but God’s gift of the land was conditioned upon the people going in and ‘possessing’ it, Deuteronomy 1:8.

The ‘possessing’ of Canaan is where Israel found their trouble. It would have been nice to simply walk into Canaan without any resistance, but Israel, however, needed to learn to trust in God and His protection.

THE APPOINTMENT OF LEADERS

‘At that time I said to you, “You are too heavy a burden for me to carry alone. The LORD your God has increased your numbers so that today you are as numerous as the stars in the sky. May the LORD, the God of your ancestors, increase you a thousand times and bless you as he has promised! But how can I bear your problems and your burdens and your disputes all by myself? Choose some wise, understanding, and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you.” You answered me, “What you propose to do is good.” So I took the leading men of your tribes, wise and respected men, and appointed them to have authority over you—as commanders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens and as tribal officials. And I charged your judges at that time, “Hear the disputes between your people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among you. Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of anyone, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it.” And at that time I told you everything you were to do.’ Deuteronomy 1:9-18

Some believe the background to these verses is found in Exodus 18:13-26, where we find Moses sitting from morning till evening judging the people, and so, his father-in-law Jethro tells him that the task is too much for one person; he needs to appoint judges, which he did, Acts 6:1-6.

Others believe the background to these verses is found in Numbers 11:16-17, where God instructs Moses to appoint elders to share the burden of responsibility.

Moses tells Israel that they are too heavy a burden for him to carry alone, Deuteronomy 1:9. Israel had grown numerically by the time they stood east of the Jordan, but eventually, they would grow numerically as the stars in the heavens, Deuteronomy 1:10-11. This was the fulfilment of God’s promise to Abraham that He would make of his seed a great nation, Genesis 15:5-6.

Moses asks, how can he bear their problems and their burdens and their disputes all by himself, Deuteronomy 1:12. And so, he tells them to choose some wise, understanding, and respected men from each of your tribes, and he will set them over them, Deuteronomy 1:13.

They told Moses that what he proposed to do is good, Deuteronomy 1:14. Moses took the leading men of their tribes, wise and respected men, and appointed them to have authority over them as commanders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens and as tribal officials, Deuteronomy 1:15 / Exodus 18:21.

He had charged their judges at that time, and said, hear the disputes between their people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among them, Deuteronomy 1:16.

Moses gives sound advice to the wise men who would serve as judges, first of all, they should respect persons in judgment, Deuteronomy 1:16. In other words, to judge in favour of a rich man or friend was to pervert judgment, Exodus 18:21. These judges were to examine the facts of each case and make a judgment based on the facts given.

Secondly, the judges were to give careful attention to the rich, poor, high-ranking officials, and lowly citizens, Deuteronomy 1:16. No man is to be preferred above others. Let the facts be what the judge is interested in. They are to bring to Moses any case too hard for them, and he will hear it, Deuteronomy 1:17. There would be times when the judge was threatened to give a favourable judgment to the perverted.

These threats may come in the form of verbal threats or hard looks. Moses commands the judges not to be afraid but to make the right judgments in the courts, for this is God's will, Deuteronomy 1:17. At that time, Moses told them everything they were to do, Deuteronomy 1:18.

The main qualification of a leader is to be fair in all judgments. Bribes distort justice and so disqualify one from being a leader. For this reason, those who are greedy for money can never be leaders for God, for their judgments are tainted with the love of money.

SPIES SENT OUT

‘Then, as the LORD our God commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites through all that vast and dreadful wilderness that you have seen, and so we reached Kadesh Barnea. Then I said to you, “You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. See, the LORD your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Then all of you came to me and said, “Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to.” The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe. They left and went up into the hill country and came to the Valley of Eshkol and explored it. Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, “It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us.” Deuteronomy 1:19-25

The background to these verses is found in Numbers 13-14. Notice that the journey was made ‘as the Lord our God commanded us’, Deuteronomy 1:19. In other words, the journey wasn't only commanded by God, but the taking possession of the land was also commanded by God, Numbers 32:23.

Moses reminds the people of the hard journey through the wilderness to reach Canaan from Kadesh, Deuteronomy 1:19 / Deuteronomy 8:15, where God fed them with manna from heaven and gave them water to drink, Exodus 15:22-16:36.

Because God had led them through the vast and terrible wilderness, that is, the land of the Amorites, Deuteronomy 1:20, Moses was now prepared to lead Israel into Canaan.

As Moses stood at Kadesh-Barnea, the people had at long last come to the moment of their deepest desire, a land of their own given to them by God, Deuteronomy 1:20. He encouraged them not to be afraid, and not to be discouraged, Deuteronomy 1:21.

The land was there, and all they had to do was take it by faith. God had commanded them to take the journey from Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea, possess the land that God had given them, and not be afraid or discouraged, Deuteronomy 1:21.

Israel did the first command, yet when they saw that difficulties were involved in completing the second, they became fearful and were dismayed. Israel thereby failed to complete the second and third commands of God regarding taking Canaan.

Notice it was the Israelites who came up with the plan to send men to spy out the land, Deuteronomy 1:22 / Numbers 13:1-3; this wasn't part of God's plan. It appears that Moses expected that they would go up against the Canaanites without any report from spies, Deuteronomy 1:23, but the plan seemed good to him, and so he went along with it, Deuteronomy 1:24.

When the spies came back with some of the fruit of the land, they said, 'it is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us', Deuteronomy 1:25. It appears that Moses only considers Joshua and Caleb's words, Deuteronomy 1:25 / Numbers 13:27, even though the other ten spies brought back an 'evil report', Numbers 13:28-29, which caused all the congregation to murmur, Numbers 13:30-14:1.

REBELLION AGAINST THE LORD

'But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You grumbled in your tents and said, "The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go? Our brothers have made our hearts melt in fear. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.'" Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place." Despite this, you did not trust in the LORD your God, who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go.' Deuteronomy 1:26-33

The background to these verses is found in Numbers 13:1-14:45. They rebelled against God's command when they didn't enter the land because of their lack of faith in God, Deuteronomy 1:26-27. Their lack of faith to trust in God, that He would be with them in their confrontation with the Canaanites, was considered rebellion.

With the events at Egypt, Sinai, and the provisional care of God through the wilderness fresh upon their minds the people, had at that time disobeyed God's commands regarding not fearing the enemy, Deuteronomy 1:26 / Deuteronomy 1:21.

They said the people were stronger and taller than they were, this report of the spies was correct, Deuteronomy 1:28 / Numbers 13:28. However, the fact that the Canaanites were stronger and taller would have been the opportunity for God to prove that He was with His people when they conquered them, which they eventually did thirty-eight years later.

Moses tells the people to not fear for 'He will fight for you', Deuteronomy 1:30. They were to believe based upon God 'as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place', Deuteronomy 1:31 / Exodus 19:4.

Israel's faith was to be founded on the evidence of God's care that had taken place in their lives. They still didn't trust in God, and they were to remember God's guidance by fire in the night and a cloud during the day, Deuteronomy 1:33 / Numbers 14:14.

All Israel had to do was believe based on what they had experienced in Egypt. Despite encouraging Israel to think back on the things God had done for them in the past, they still didn't believe the LORD; they still didn't trust Him.

This is the very reason why the Israelites were disciplined for thirty-eight years in the wilderness. However, regardless of their lack of faith, God treated the people as a father who would carry his son, Deuteronomy 1:31. He carried them across the wilderness, choosing where they would camp throughout their thirty-eight years of wilderness living.

‘When the LORD heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: “No one from this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your ancestors, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the LORD wholeheartedly.” Because of you, the LORD became angry with me also and said, “You shall not enter it, either. But your assistant, Joshua, son of Nun, will enter it. Encourage him because he will lead Israel to inherit it. And the little ones that you said would be taken captive, your children who do not yet know good from bad—they will enter the land. I will give it to them, and they will take possession of it. But as for you, turn around and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea.” Then you replied, “We have sinned against the LORD. We will go up and fight, as the LORD our God commanded us.” So every one of you put on his weapons, thinking it easy to go up into the hill country. But the LORD said to me, “Tell them, ‘Do not go up and fight, because I will not be with you. You will be defeated by your enemies.’” So I told you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the LORD's command, and in your arrogance, you marched up into the hill country. The Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you; they chased you like a swarm of bees and beat you down from Seir all the way to Hormah. You came back and wept before the LORD, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you. And so you stayed in Kadesh many days—all the time you spent there.’ Deuteronomy 1:34-46

When Israel rejected, through a spirit of rebellion, these commands, God didn't allow that evil generation to have His gift of Canaan, Deuteronomy 1:34-35 / Psalm 95:11.

God says, Caleb, son of Jephunneh, will be given some land and his descendants because he followed the LORD wholeheartedly, Deuteronomy 1:36 / Numbers 14:24.

Even Moses himself wouldn't enter the Promised Land, Deuteronomy 1:37 / Numbers 20:10-12 / Psalm 106:32-33. However, Joshua, who was his assistant, would, Deuteronomy 1:37.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The sentence on Moses was not passed when the people rebelled during their first encampment at Kadesh, but some 37 years later, when they had re-assembled in the same neighbourhood at Meribah, Numbers 20:13. He alludes to it here as having happened not many months previously, bearing on the facts which were for his purpose in pricking the conscience of the people.’

Joshua was to be encouraged because he would lead Israel to inherit it, Deuteronomy 1:38. The only exceptions were Caleb and Joshua, who were the only faithful spies, out of the twelve, who came back with a good report concerning the Promised Land, Numbers 14:6-10.

Numbers 14:6-19 records only Joshua and Caleb pleading for the people's faithful obedience, yet here we find that Moses too did so. Caleb eventually received the portion that he had surveyed as one of the spies, Joshua 14:9-12, and Joshua was given the privilege of leading the Israelites into Canaan in the place of Moses.

The other exceptions were the younger ones, Deuteronomy 1:39, the next generation of Israelites, who would be permitted to enter the land. The generation that came out of Egypt disinherited themselves because they didn't obey the command to go up and take the land, Deuteronomy 1:39. They had experienced the great wonders of God, the plagues of Egypt, and the crossing of the Red Sea, yet they still didn't trust God, 1 Corinthians 10:11.

Israel were told to turn around and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea, Deuteronomy 1:40. They then said, they have sinned against the LORD and so, they will go up and fight, as the LORD our God commanded them and so, every one of them put on their weapons, thinking it easy to go up into the hill country, Deuteronomy 1:41.

Morris, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The people’s sin in failing to enter the land was not just underestimating God’s power. They could have blamed themselves for their weak faith. Instead, they blamed God and imputed to Him the worst of motives toward them. God loved them, but they claimed He hated them, Deuteronomy 1:27. In covenant terminology, to love means to choose, and to hate means to reject, Genesis 25:23 / Malachi 1:2-3 / Romans 9:10-13.’

When the Israelites realised that they were prohibited from entering the land, they again rebelled against God, Deuteronomy 1:42 / Hebrews 3:8-4:8. They decided to enter the land on their own strength, for God said He wouldn’t be with them, Deuteronomy 1:42-43.

They paid the price for their disobedience by the loss of many lives, for the Amorites chased them as if they were bees chasing after them, Deuteronomy 1:44 / Numbers 14:40. The names ‘Amorites’ and ‘Canaanites’ are sometimes used interchangeably, Numbers 14:45.

When Israel cried out to God in a state of rebellious disbelief, ‘the Lord turned a deaf ear to them,’ Deuteronomy 1:45 / Psalms 34:15-16 / Psalms 66:18 / Psalms 109:7 / Proverbs 15:29 / Proverbs 28:9 / Isaiah 1:11-15 / John 9:31 / John 16:23-27 / 1 John. 3:21-22.

Their weeping, Deuteronomy 1:45, was more about remorse over their loss than true repentance, 2 Corinthians 7:10. They wept over their own failures, not over the fact that the Lord was not with them. They stayed in Kadesh many days; all the time they spent there, Deuteronomy 1:46 / Numbers 13:27 / Numbers 20:1 / Numbers 20:14 / Numbers 20:21.

God said that the reason Israel didn’t believe was that they were unwilling to follow His commands. The people were too lazy, afraid and hard-hearted to follow through with God’s commandments, Exodus 9:34 / Exodus 10:3.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘Then we turned back and set out toward the wilderness along the route to the Red Sea, as the LORD had directed me. For a long time, we made our way around the hill country of Seir. Then the LORD said to me, “You have made your way around this hill country long enough; now turn north. Give the people these orders: ‘You are about to pass through the territory of your relatives, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own. You are to pay them in silver for the food you eat and the water you drink.’” The LORD your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything. So we went on past our relatives, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We turned from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion Geber, and travelled along the desert road of Moab. Then the LORD said to me, “Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land.

I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession.” (The Emmites used to live there—a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. Like the Anakites, they too were considered Rephaites, but the Moabites called them Emmites. Horites used to live in Seir, but the descendants of Esau drove them out. They destroyed the Horites from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did in the land the LORD gave them as their possession.)

And the LORD said, “Now get up and cross the Zered Valley.” So we crossed the valley. Thirty-eight years passed from the time we left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the Zered Valley. By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. The LORD’s hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp.’ Deuteronomy 2:1-15

WANDERINGS IN THE WILDERNESS

This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter. Israel turned back and set out toward the wilderness along the route to the Red Sea, as the LORD had directed Moses and for a long time Israel made their way around the hill country of Seir, Deuteronomy 2:1.

God told Moses that they have made their way around this hill country long enough and so, now turn north, Deuteronomy 2:2. Israel were commanded to hold back from any engagement of war with Edom because Edom was a relative to Israel, Deuteronomy 2:3-5 / Numbers 20:14-21.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Though the descendants of Esau were conquered by David, 2 Samuel 8:14, yet they were not dispossessed of their land, and in the reign of Jehoshaphat they regained their independence, 2 Kings 8:20-22.’

Note that Numbers 20:21 tells us that Israel went around Edom, but Deuteronomy 2:4 says they passed through it. Is this a contradiction?

Defending Inerrancy says the following.

‘God would not allow Israel to do battle with the Edomites because He had given the land of Edom to Esau as an everlasting possession. Numbers 20:21 states that ‘Israel turned away from him.’ However, when Moses reviews these events in Deuteronomy 2:4, he states that the Lord said, ‘You are about to pass through the territory of your brethren, the descendants of Esau.’ Likewise, Deuteronomy 2:8 says Israel ‘passed beyond our brethren the descendants of Esau.’ Did they pass through Edom, or did they go around it?’

‘In one sense, it can be said that Israel passed through Edom when they entered it in order to make the request to continue their journey along the King’s highway that ran through their land. However, the text never actually says that they did or that they would pass through the land. Actually, the same Hebrew word ‘abar’ is used in each case. It can be used to mean pass through or pass by. The historical record clearly describes their journey as passing along the eastern border of Edom, Deuteronomy 2:8. God had warned Israel that as they would pass along the eastern border, they should not provoke the Edomites to war, Deuteronomy 2:5.’

Moses tells us that Israel purchased both food and water from the Edomites, Deuteronomy 2:6 / Deuteronomy 2:28-29. God had blessed Israel in all the work of their hands, and He has watched over their journey through this vast wilderness, and for forty years God has been with them, and they have not lacked anything, Deuteronomy 2:7.

Because of Israel’s fear and unwillingness to fulfil God’s commandments regarding taking possession of the land, they were sent into the wilderness to wander for forty years, Numbers 14:29-45.

Moses doesn’t go over the events that transpired in the wilderness wanderings, such as Korah’s rebellion, Numbers 16:1-35, Aaron’s rod budding, Numbers 17:5-8, and Moses’ sin at the waters of Meribah, Numbers 20:2-13.

Israel went on past their relatives the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir and they turned from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion Geber, and travelled along the desert road of Moab, Deuteronomy 2:8.

After Israel travels around Edom, Numbers 20:14-21, they head northward toward Moab and the Lord commands Moses not to wage war with Moab due to the fact that He had given it as a possession to Ar the children of Lot, the Moabites were descendants of Lot, Deuteronomy 2:9 / Genesis 19:30-38.

God had given the land of the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, as a possession, Acts 17:26. For this reason, Israel was not to invade any of the territories that belonged to the Edomites, for it was a God-given possession.

The Rephaites, Emmites, and the Anakites, Deuteronomy 2:10-11, were a people of great stature, Numbers 13:33; they were strong and tall, Genesis 11:27-28 / Genesis 19:30:38, and they inhabited portions of Palestine at the time Israel was in the wilderness.

Seeing these people who inhabited the land of Canaan certainly brought fear to the Israelites, who were a people of short stature. The Horites, Deuteronomy 2:12, were possibly a great civilised people who populated part of Palestine, Genesis 14:5-6.

God commands Israel to travel to the brook Zered, Deuteronomy 2:13, which was a dry riverbed that was the border between Edom and Moab, Numbers 21:12. From the time Israel left Kadesh Barnea to the time they passed over the brook Zered into the Moabite territory, a period of thirty-eight years had passed, Deuteronomy 2:14.

By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as God had sworn to them, Deuteronomy 2:14. God's hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp, Deuteronomy 2:15.

In Deuteronomy 1:3, Moses marks the eleventh month of the fortieth year as the time from leaving Egypt to their current place in Moab. They had spent three months getting to Sinai from Egypt, Exodus 12:2-Exodus 19:1.

Israel spent approximately twelve months at Sinai receiving the law, Numbers 10:11-13. Thirty-eight years later, Israel finds itself in the plains of Moab, Numbers 33:38 / Deuteronomy 2:14, but yet to enter Canaan.

From the fifteenth day of the first month in which their fathers came out of Egypt, Numbers 14:33, to the tenth day of the same month in which they went over Jordan into Canaan, Numbers 33:3 / Joshua 4:19, was but five days short of a complete forty years.

'Now, when the last of these fighting men among the people had died, the LORD said to me, "Today you are to pass by the region of Moab at Ar. When you come to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them to war, for I will not give you possession of any land belonging to the Ammonites. I have given it as a possession to the descendants of Lot." (That too was considered a land of the Rephaites, who used to live there; but the Ammonites called them Zamzummmites. They were a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. The LORD destroyed them from before the Ammonites, who drove them out and settled in their place. The LORD had done the same for the descendants of Esau, who lived in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites from before them. They drove them out and have lived in their place to this day. And as for the Avvites who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorites coming out from Caphtor destroyed them and settled in their place.)' Deuteronomy 2:16-23

Israel is now commanded to pass over Moab because God had given the land to the descendants of Lot, and they are commanded not to wage war with Edom because God had destroyed the Horites before them, and he blessed Esau with Edom, Deuteronomy 2:16-19.

As with Edom and Moab, Israel was to treat the Ammonites as relatives. The Ammonites were also called Zamzummims, Deuteronomy 2:20 / Genesis 14:5, a word which means 'a distant and confused noise', and they too were a people who were strong, Deuteronomy 2:21.

Nevertheless, they were expelled from the land by the strength of the Lord working in an Israelite army of soldiers who were small in stature, Deuteronomy 2:21.

The fact that the smaller people of Israel were able to expel the Anakims and Ammonites from the land is evidence that Israel did not work alone in this effort.

The nations around surely concluded that the God of Israel was working with Israel to take the land because of the conquering power of a small and inexperienced army of Israelites.

When we remember that all the people who descended from Abraham knew that the land had been promised to the sons of Jacob, Genesis 12:1-3, the Ammonites fought to retain the land, but they knew that they were fighting against

the will of the God of Abraham, who gave the land to Israel. As with the Edomites and the Moabites, the land of the Ammonites was also not for the people of Israel.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Deuteronomy 2:22-23](#).

‘Seir once belonged to the Horites, the cave-dwellers, but the wickedness of the Horites caused God to give Mount Seir to Esau. Moab once belonged to the Emmites, the terrible ones, but their terrorism caused God to give the area to the Moabites, descendants of Lot. The area of the Ammonites also once belonged to the Rephaim, but God gave it to the Ammonite descendants of Lot. Both the Emmites and the Rephaim were evil. In the case of the Philistines, we have three successful examples of God replacing people because of their wickedness.

1. The Avvites once lived along the Palestine coast. They became wicked.
2. They were driven out by the Caphtorim, who were the Philistines of later times, and who also became wicked.
3. The Philistines were also driven out by Israel in the time of David, king of Israel.

Also, Sihon and Og were driven out to make room for Reuben, Gad and Manasseh!’

DEFEAT OF SIHON, KING OF HESHBON

‘Set out now and cross the Arnon Gorge. See, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his country. Begin to take possession of it and engage him in battle. This very day, I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you.’ From the Desert of Kedemoth, I sent messengers to Sihon, king of Heshbon, offering peace and saying, “Let us pass through your country. We will stay on the main road; we will not turn aside to the right or to the left. Sell us food to eat and water to drink for their price in silver. Only let us pass through on foot—as the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, did for us—until we cross the Jordan into the land the LORD our God is giving us.” But Sihon, king of Heshbon, refused to let us pass through. For the LORD, your God, had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done. The LORD said to me, “See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. Now begin to conquer and possess his land.” When Sihon and all his army came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz, the LORD our God delivered him over to us, and we struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army. At that time, we took all his towns and completely destroyed them—men, women, and children. We left no survivors. But the livestock and the plunder from the towns we had captured, we carried off for ourselves. From Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the town in the gorge, even as far as Gilead, not one town was too strong for us. The LORD our God gave us all of them. But in accordance with the command of the LORD our God, you did not encroach on any of the land of the Ammonites, neither the land along the course of the Jabbok nor that around the towns in the hills.’ Deuteronomy 2:24-37

These verses point us back to the time when God had commanded Israel to take the journey to Canaan from Mount Sinai, [Deuteronomy 1:19](#), and to go up and possess the land of Canaan without fear, [Deuteronomy 1:21](#). This first attempt at taking possession of the land failed, however, now we find a generation of men who believe in the omnipotence of God.

Israel set out to cross the Arnon Gorge, and God says, He has given into their hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his country, they are to begin to take possession of it and engage him in battle, [Deuteronomy 2:24](#).

God says He will begin to put the terror and fear of Israel on all the nations under heaven and they will hear reports of Israel and will tremble and be in anguish because of them, [Deuteronomy 2:25](#).

From the Desert of Kedemoth, God sent messengers to Sihon, king of Heshbon, offering peace. They will tell him, let Israel pass through his country, and Israel will stay on the main road, and we will not turn aside to the right or to the left, [Deuteronomy 2:26-27](#).

The messengers tell him to sell Israel food to eat and water to drink for their price in silver, only let them pass through on foot as the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, did for us, until they cross the Jordan into the land the LORD our God is giving them, Deuteronomy 2:28-29.

When Israel sent out messengers to request permission to pass through the land God hardened the heart of the king of Heshbon in that he would not allow Israel to pass by their land Numbers 20:21, nor would he sell them water and food, Deuteronomy 2:30.

As with the Pharaoh of Egypt, Exodus 4:21 / Exodus 9:15, Moses' request became the opportunity for Sihon to harden his heart against the will of God. God says, He has begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to Israel, and so, begin to conquer and possess his land, Deuteronomy 2:31.

When Sihon and all his army came out to meet Israel in battle at Jahaz, God delivered him over to Israel, and they struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army, Deuteronomy 2:32-33.

Israel took all his towns and completely destroyed them, men, women and children and they left no survivors, Deuteronomy 2:34. Israel took the livestock and any plunder they found in the towns they had captured, Deuteronomy 2:35.

From Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the town in the gorge, even as far as Gilead, not one town was too strong for us because God gave Israel all of them, Deuteronomy 2:36 / Numbers 21:13.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There were three degrees of this war ban, as it came to be called.

1. This was the most severe. Every man, woman, and child was destroyed, and all of their property of every kind was destroyed, and none of it was permitted to become spoil or booty for the victors.
2. This second degree of the ban stopped with the destruction of all the people and permitted their property to become the spoil of the conquerors.
3. This third degree issued in the destruction of all the men, the women, and children, along with the property becoming the property and slaves of the victors. The Deuteronomic law describing this is in Deuteronomy 20:10-15. It was the second of these bans that was executed against Sihon.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Aroer stood on the north bank of the river, and was assigned, Joshua 13:9 / Joshua 13:16, to the tribe of Reuben, of which it formed the most southerly city. The valley of the Arnon is here deep, and the descent to it is abrupt. In Roman times, it was spanned by a viaduct, the ruins of which still remain, and which was probably built on the lines of the original structure of Mesha, 2 Kings 3:5.’

The victory over Sihon and Og, the Amorites, was the beginning of the conquest of Canaan, Numbers 21:21-25. The conquest of this great nation was a signal to Israel that God was working in their army to conquer a great people. Not only did the victory of the great nation of the Amorites bring fear into the hearts of the inhabitants of Canaan, but it also increased the morale of the army of Israel.

Because of the stubborn heart of the king of Heshbon, Deuteronomy 2:30, and the faith of Israel, the Lord routed the enemy before the people. Israel's faith remained strong because the Lord was with them.

The high walls of the Canaanite cities had intimidated Israel thirty-eight years before, Deuteronomy 1:28, but walking in faith, they were now nothing before the LORD.

There were apparently areas in Ammon that God prohibited Israel from taking, Deuteronomy 2:37. All other lands from the river Arnon as far north as the River Jabbok belonged to Israel. God gave the land of Ammon to the descendants of Lot just beyond the River Arnon. Northward would belong to Israel.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘Next, we turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og, king of Bashan, with his whole army, marched out to meet us in battle at Edrei. The LORD said to me, “Do not be afraid of him, for I have delivered him into your hands, along with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon.” So the LORD our God also gave into our hands Og king of Bashan and all his army. We struck them down, leaving no survivors. At that time, we took all his cities. There was not one of the sixty cities that we did not take from them—the whole region of Argob, Og’s kingdom in Bashan. All these cities were fortified with high walls and with gates and bars, and there were also a great many unwallled villages. We completely destroyed them, as we had done with Sihon, king of Heshbon, destroying every city, men, women, and children. But all the livestock and the plunder from their cities we carried off for ourselves. So at that time we took from these two kings of the Amorites the territory east of the Jordan, from the Arnon Gorge as far as Mount Hermon. (Hermon is called Sirion by the Sidonians; the Amorites call it Senir.) We took all the towns on the plateau, and all Gilead, and all Bashan as far as Salekah and Edrei, towns of Og’s kingdom in Bashan. (Og, king of Bashan, was the last of the Rephaites. His bed was decorated with iron and was more than nine cubits long and four cubits wide. It is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites.)’ Deuteronomy 3:1-11

DEFEAT OF OG, THE KING OF BASHAN

Moses reminds us that Israel now turns and goes up along the road toward Bashan, and Og, the king of Bashan, with his whole army marched out to meet them in battle at Edrei, Deuteronomy 3:1. Og were a ‘remnant of the Rephaim’, Deuteronomy 3:11, and the Rephaim were a race of giant people, Genesis 14:5.

God told Israel not to be afraid of him, for He has delivered him into their hands, along with his whole army and his land, but they weren’t to do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, Deuteronomy 3:2.

God also gave into Israel’s hands Og, the king of Bashan and all his army, and Israel struck them down, leaving no survivors, Deuteronomy 3:3. Israel totally defeated Og, the king of Bashan, Numbers 21:33-35 / Psalms 135:5 / Psalms 135:10-11 / Psalms 136:17-21, and as a result of that victory, Israel celebrated and became greatly encouraged. Og were the last hurdle to entering Canaan, Nehemiah 9:22 / Psalms 135:11 / Psalms 136:19-20.

The victory was so great that they took sixty cities, Deuteronomy 3:4, but because they were heavily fortified cities, this would make the battle long and hard, as they must have taken one city at a time.

The sixty cities, Deuteronomy 3:4, didn’t include the surrounding towns and villages. They utterly destroyed cities with fortified walls, gates, and bars in addition to the giants of the land, Deuteronomy 3:5.

Israel completely destroyed them, as they had done with Sihon, king of Heshbon, destroying every city, men, women, and children, but all the livestock and the plunder from their cities they carried off for themselves, Deuteronomy 3:6-7. Israel took from these two kings of the Amorites the territory east of the Jordan, from the Arnon Gorge as far as Mount Hermon, Deuteronomy 3:8.

We are told that Hermon is called Sirion by the Sidonians; the Amorites call it Senir, Deuteronomy 3:9. Israel finally ‘took the land’, Deuteronomy 3:10, which is exactly what God commanded them to do the first time, Deuteronomy 1:21.

Notice the size of Og's 'bed', [Deuteronomy 3:11](#), it was around thirteen and a half feet long, and six feet wide. This tells us just how big the people of Bashan were, which in turn tells us how much more glorious their defeat was. The size of the bed implies that the people of Bashan were physically larger and stronger than the Israelites, [Deuteronomy 2:10-11](#), but through faith in God, the Israelites were victorious, [Numbers 21:33-35](#). Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Og's bed made of iron.

'The 'iron' was probably the black basalt of the country, which not only contains a large proportion, about 20 per cent, of iron, but was actually called 'iron,' and is still so regarded by the Arabs. Iron was indeed both known and used, principally for tools, [Deuteronomy 19:5](#) and compare [Genesis 4:22](#), at the date in question by the Semitic people of Palestine and the adjoining countries, but bronze was the ordinary metal of which weapons, articles of furniture, etc., were made.'

As long as Israel feared their enemy, they demonstrated a lack of faith in God, and God wasn't with them, [Deuteronomy 1:19-21](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:26](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:29-32](#).

However, when they trusted God and God was with them, their fears left, and God gave them the victory. The Scriptures teach that our fear can be seen as a lack of faith in God, [Matthew 8:25-27](#), and a demonstration of doubting His promises, [Matthew 14:24-31](#). As Christians, we have nothing to fear from men, [Matthew 10:24-31](#) / [2 Timothy 1:7](#).

DIVISION OF THE LAND

'Of the land that we took over at that time, I gave the Reubenites and the Gadites the territory north of Arnon by the Arnon Gorge, including half the hill country of Gilead, together with its towns. The rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh. (The whole region of Argob in Bashan used to be known as a land of the Rephaites. Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, took the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maakathites; it was named after him, so that to this day Bashan is called Havvoth Jair.) And I gave Gilead to Makir. But to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the territory extending from Gilead down to the Arnon Gorge (the middle of the gorge being the border) and out to the Jabbok River, which is the border of the Ammonites. Its western border was the Jordan in the Arabah, from Kinnereth to the Sea of the Arabah (that is, the Dead Sea), below the slopes of Pisgah. I commanded you at that time: "The LORD your God has given you this land to take possession of it. But all your able-bodied men, armed for battle, must cross over ahead of the other Israelites.

However, your wives, your children, and your livestock (I know you have much livestock) may stay in the towns I have given you, until the LORD gives rest to your fellow Israelites as he has to you, and they too have taken over the land that the LORD your God is giving them across the Jordan. After that, each of you may go back to the possession I have given you." [Deuteronomy 3:12-20](#)

The land north of the valley of Arnon up northward through Gilead now belonged to Israel, [Deuteronomy 3:12](#). The rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, God gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh, [Deuteronomy 3:13](#). The whole region of Argob in Bashan used to be known as a land of the Rephaites, [Deuteronomy 3:13](#).

Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, took the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maakathites; it was named after him, so that to this day Bashan is called Havvoth Jair, [Deuteronomy 3:14](#) / [Numbers 32:41](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'These Geshurites held territory adjoining, if not included within, Bashan. They are not to be confounded with those mentioned in [Joshua 13:2](#), who were neighbours of the Philistines [1 Samuel 17:8](#). The exact position of Maachah, like that of Geshur, cannot be ascertained; but it was no doubt among the fastnesses which lay between Bashan and the kingdom of Damascus, and on the skirts of Mount Hermon.'

God gave Gilead to Makir, but to the Reubenites and the Gadites, God gave the territory extending from Gilead down to the Arnon Gorge, the middle of the gorge being the border and out to the Jabbok River, which is the border of the Ammonites, [Deuteronomy 3:15-16](#).

Its western border was the Jordan in the Arabah, from Kinnereth to the Sea of the Arabah, that is, the Dead Sea, below the slopes of Pisgah, [Deuteronomy 3:17](#) / [Numbers 34:11](#).

Israel was to remember that God did fight for them, [Deuteronomy 3:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:29](#). God had commanded Israel at that time to take possession of the land, but all Israel's able-bodied men, armed for battle, must cross over ahead of the other Israelites, [Deuteronomy 3:18](#).

The fighting men were obligated to continue with their brethren in the suppression of the nations from the land of Canaan west of the Jordan. At this time, however, only the wives, children and livestock of these tribes remained in the land, [Deuteronomy 3:19](#).

Israel's wives, children and livestock were to stay in the towns until God gives rest to their fellow Israelites as He has to them, and they too have taken over the land that God is giving them across the Jordan.

After that, each of them may go back to the possession He has given them, [Deuteronomy 3:19-20](#). Gad, Reuben, and half the tribe of Manasseh were given this land with the promise of their fighting men crossing the Jordan to wage war with their brethren, [Numbers 32:1-42](#).

MOSES FORBIDDEN TO CROSS THE JORDAN

‘At that time I commanded Joshua: “You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. The LORD will do the same to all the kingdoms over there where you are going. Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you.” At that time, I pleaded with the LORD: “Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan—that fine hill country and Lebanon.” But because of you, the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. “That is enough,” the LORD said. “Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah and look west and north and south, and east. Look at the land with your own eyes since you are not going to cross this Jordan. But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see.” So we stayed in the valley near Beth Peor.’ [Deuteronomy 3:21-29](#)

Moses recognised the all-powerful state of the Lord God, as many before and later would, [Genesis 18:14](#) / [Jeremiah 32:17](#) / [Jeremiah 32:27](#). Joshua had a massive responsibility in bringing the whole nation into the land and fighting for it, hence why the Lord told him not to be afraid because God himself would fight for them, [Deuteronomy 3:21-22](#) / [Numbers 27:12-23](#).

Moses pleaded with God and said, Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that fine hill country and Lebanon, [Deuteronomy 3:23-25](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The whole of this prayer of Moses is very characteristic. The longing to witness further manifestations of God's goodness and glory, and the reluctance to leave unfinished an undertaking which he had been permitted to commence, are striking traits in his character, [Exodus 32:32-34](#) / [Exodus 33:12](#) / [Exodus 33:18-22](#) / [Numbers 14:12-45](#).’

Moses himself desired earnestly to see the land of Canaan, but because of his sins and Aaron's sin at the waters of Meribah, they were unable to enter in, Numbers 20:1-13. Moses pleads with God, the Lord, but God didn't want to speak to him anymore about it, Deuteronomy 3:26 / Jeremiah 15:1.

It was at this time that the Lord got angry with Moses, Numbers 27:14 / Deuteronomy 32:51, and because he had been given the privilege of leading Israel from Egypt to this point, and so carried the great responsibility of leadership, James 3:1.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Here, as in Deuteronomy 1:37 / Deuteronomy 4:21, the sin of the people is stated to be the ground on which Moses' prayer is denied. In Deuteronomy 32:51, and in Numbers 27:14, the transgression of Moses and Aaron themselves is assigned as the cause of their punishment.'

With such responsibility comes great judgment, which judgment was brought upon him for striking a rock for water at Meribah. Moses and the water from the rock point us to Jesus, who was that rock, 1 Corinthians 10:4.

God only allowed Moses to see the land from Pisgah, but not to go over and experience the land, Deuteronomy 3:27. Because of Moses' sin, the responsibility of leading God's people into the Promised Land was given to Joshua, Deuteronomy 3:28 / Numbers 27:12-23.

Beth-Peor is located in the vicinity of Mount Peor, Deuteronomy 3:29 / Numbers 23:28. The name means 'house of Peor,' which comes from a temple of the Moabite god, Peor. Baal-Peor was the area where the initial entry into Canaan occurred, Numbers 25-26.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It is very likely that what God speaks here, both concerning Moses and Joshua, was designed to be typical of the procedure of his justice and grace in the salvation of man.

1. The land of Canaan was a type of the kingdom of heaven.
2. The law, which shows the holiness of God and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, could not bring the people to the possession of that kingdom.
3. Moses may probably be considered here as the emblem of that law by which is the knowledge of sin, but not redemption from it.
4. Joshua, the same as Jesus, the name signifying a Saviour, is appointed to bring the people into the rest which God had provided for them; thus it is by Jesus Christ alone that the soul is saved, fitted for and brought into the possession of the heavenly inheritance, John 1:17 / Galatians 2:16 / Galatians 3:12-13 / Galatians 3:24, for he is the end of the law, the great scope and design of the law, for righteousness, for justification, to them that believe, Romans 10:4. Such a use as this every pious reader may make of the circumstances recorded here, without the danger of pushing analogy or metaphor beyond their reasonable limits.'

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

‘Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you. You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did at Baal Peor. The LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, but all of you who held fast to the LORD your God are still alive today. See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.” What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?’ Deuteronomy 4:1-8

OBEDIENCE COMMANDED

The first commandment from God was that Israel must listen to God and carry out His will if they want to live and take possession of the land that God of their ancestors, is giving them, **Deuteronomy 4:1**. They need to do more than just listen; they must do as God says, **James 1:22**.

The decrees, **Deuteronomy 4:1**, that is, statutes, were the initial revelations of God that were written and established as principles by which everyone must live.

The laws, **Deuteronomy 4:1**, that is, judgments, were the revealed decisions of God concerning specific matters as to how Israel carried out the written statutes of God in their lives.

The commandments, **Deuteronomy 4:1**, were all direct instructions of God concerning the conduct of people’s lives, that is, things they should and shouldn’t do.

Notice God tells His people that they shouldn’t forget that He commanded them not to change any of His laws, abide in His commandments alone, **Deuteronomy 4:2**.

Moses repeats this principle later in **Deuteronomy 13:1**, and it was so important that even the prophets repeated this command, **Proverbs 30:6** / **Jeremiah 26:2**, and the Scriptures themselves end with these same words, **Revelation 22:18-19**. No one has the right to add or remove anything from God’s Word.

When Moses spoke, he spoke divine commandments from God, **Numbers 12:7-8**. The commandments of God save the soul. Israel had tried their hand at reinterpreting God’s Word, **Numbers 16:3**, and rebelled against God’s commandments, **Deuteronomy 1:26**, none of which helped them, **Proverbs 14:34**.

We can only be saved from sin through following and obeying God’s commands, **Daniel 5:27** / **Hosea 5:10-11** / **Amos 7:7-8** / **Matthew 7:21-24** / **Ephesians 2:20** / **Ephesians 4:1-6**.

It’s God’s word which exposes our real identity, **1 Corinthians 14:24-25** / **Hebrews 4:12-13**. God’s Word never changes, **Malachi 3:6** / **Matthew 24:35** / **Hebrews 13:8**, even though we may change, **Jonah 1:1-2** / **Jonah 3:1-10** / **Malachi 1:6-8** / **Malachi 3:7-10**. It’s God’s word which will judge us in the end, **John 12:46-50** / **Colossians 2:23**. Israel looked and saw God’s wrath poured out upon the disobedient at Baal-Peor, **Deuteronomy 4:3**. Israel had committed fornication with the daughters of Moab and the Midianites and even worshipped their gods, **Numbers 25:1-18**.

The Lord’s anger was aroused, and twenty four thousand Israelites were killed before the zeal of Phinehas stopped the plague with the act of conviction. Those not involved in the sin at Baal-Peor could look to their current state of life and realise that it was due to God’s will for the obedient, **Deuteronomy 4:4**.

Remember that before the Hebrews entered the Promised Land, the Lord God warned them against worshipping the Canaanite gods in **Deuteronomy 6:14-15**, but Israel turned to idolatry anyway.

Baal was the name of the supreme god worshipped in ancient Canaan and Phoenicia. The practise of Baal worship infiltrated Jewish religious life during the time of the Judges, **Judges 3:7**. It wasn't long before it became widespread in Israel during the reign of Ahab, according to **1 Kings 16:31-33**, and also affected Judah, **2 Chronicles 28:1-2**. The word Baal means 'lord', the plural is Baalam, and in general, Baal was a fertility god who was believed to enable the earth to produce crops and people to produce children.

Different regions worshipped Baal in different ways, and Baal proved to be a highly adaptable god. Various areas emphasised one or another of his attributes and developed special doctrines of Baalism. For example, **Numbers 25:3** refers to Baal of Peor, and later it is known as Baal-Berith in **Judges 8:33**; in other words, it became a localised deity.

According to Canaanite mythology, Baal was the son of El, the chief god, and Asherah, the goddess of the sea. Baal was considered the most powerful of all gods, eclipsing El, who was seen as rather weak and ineffective. In various battles, Baal defeated Yamm, the god of the sea, and Mot, the god of death and the underworld.

Baal's sisters were Ashtoreth, a fertility goddess associated with the stars, and Anath, a goddess of love and war. And as we know, the Canaanites worshipped Baal as the sun god and as the storm god. He's usually depicted holding a lightning bolt, which defeated enemies and produced crops.

They also worshipped him as a fertility god who provided children. Baal worship was rooted in sensuality and involved ritualistic prostitution in the temples. At times, appeasing Baal required human sacrifice, usually the firstborn of the one making the sacrifice, as we see in **Jeremiah 19:5**.

One of the most famous incidents in the Bible involving Baal was during the reign of Ahab and Jezebel. At the height of Baal worship in Israel, God directly confronted paganism through His prophet Elijah.

First, God showed that He, not Baal, controlled the rain by sending a drought lasting three and a half years, according to **1 Kings 17:1**. Then Elijah called for a showdown on Mount Carmel to prove once and for all who the true God was.

And if you remember all day long, four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal called on their god to send fire from heaven, which was surely an easy task for a god associated with lightning bolts.

But as **1 Kings 18:29** tells us, 'there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.' And after Baal's prophets gave up, Elijah prayed a simple prayer, and God answered immediately with fire from heaven.

The evidence was overwhelming, and the Bible says in **1 Kings 18:39**. 'the people fell prostrate and cried, 'The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God! In other words, Baal was a god who didn't exist except in the minds of those who wanted him to be real.

Judges 9:4 tells us that the Israelites were involved in worshipping Baal-Berith, which literally means 'the Baal of the covenant'. The Israelites were supposed to be in a covenant relationship with God, but they were now in a covenant relationship with Baal.

Moses encourages Israel to remain faithful to God's commandments and that such actions are defined as being wise and full of wisdom, **Deuteronomy 4:5-6**. The nations about them will perceive that Israel is wise as they obey the Lord's commands too. The nations will see that God answers Israel's prayers and is with them as they obey, **Deuteronomy 4:7-18 / Acts 17:22-31**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Almost all the nations in the earth showed that they had formed this opinion of the Jews by borrowing from them the principal part of their civil code. Take away what Asia and Europe, whether ancient or modern, have borrowed from the Mosaic laws, and you leave little behind that can be called excellent.'

‘Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, “Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.” You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets. And the LORD directed me at that time to teach you the decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.’ Deuteronomy 4:9-14

One of the dangers among people of all times is forgetting where our blessings in life come from, Deuteronomy 4:9. Israel was to teach their children and their children’s children about what God had done in the past, Deuteronomy 4:9-10 / Ephesians 6:1-3.

Israel’s personal experiences of God’s direct leading in the past were to be passed on to their children, Deuteronomy 6:7 / Deuteronomy 6:20 / Deuteronomy 11:19 / Deuteronomy 31:13 / Deuteronomy 32:46.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If a man knows the worth of his own soul, he will feel the importance of the salvation of the souls of his family. Those who neglect family religion, neglect personal religion; if more attention were paid to the former, even among those called religious people, we should soon have a better state of civil society. On family religion God lays much stress; and no head of a family can neglect it without endangering the final salvation of his own soul, Genesis 18:32 / Genesis 19:38 / Deuteronomy 6:7.’

God’s work among them in the past forty years was to be a witness that He worked in their lives to bring them into the land of Canaan. Israel was to have burned within their memory the twenty four thousand who died due to their sinful conduct, Numbers 25:9.

Israel was to always remember that there are consequences to disobedience. Israel didn’t hear the words from God; only Moses heard, but they did hear the great sound from God on the mountain, Deuteronomy 4:11-12 / Exodus 19-20.

God appeared to the people at Sinai, and they saw the smoke from the fire, Exodus 19:18, the thick darkness about them, Exodus 20:21, and the cloud, Exodus 24:16, and the people were terrified at the sight, Exodus 20:18.

The Lord then spoke to Israel out of the fire and thick darkness and Moses reminds the people that they ‘saw no form of any kind’ but that they only ‘heard the voice of words’, Deuteronomy 4:12. Moses told them that they must never forget what they heard, and so, pass the awesome and terrifying experience on to the generations to come.

The generations of Israel must understand that the ‘voice’ was proof that Moses didn’t invent the law of God from his own imagination. He was only the mediator through whom God spoke His laws for Israel.

God declared to Moses His covenant, the Ten Commandments, which He commanded His people to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets, Deuteronomy 4:13.

God had directed Moses at that time to teach Israel the decrees and laws they were to follow in the land that they were crossing the Jordan to possess, Deuteronomy 4:14.

Phillips, in his commentary, says the following concerning the two tablets.

‘The Commandments are not to be thought of as written partly on one tablet and partly on the other. Each tablet would have contained all the Commandments. This again reflects the normal practice of the suzerainty treaties under which one copy was retained by the suzerain and the other given to the vassal to deposit in the temple of his god. In Israel’s case, both copies were placed in the Ark, Deuteronomy 10:1-5 / Deuteronomy 31:9 / Deuteronomy 31:26.’

IDOLATRY FORBIDDEN

‘You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore, watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below. And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon, and the stars—all the heavenly array—do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshipping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven. But as for you, the LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are. The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he solemnly swore that I would not cross the Jordan and enter the good land the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance. I will die in this land; I will not cross the Jordan; but you are about to cross over and take possession of that good land. Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. For the LORD, your God, is a consuming fire, a jealous God.’ Deuteronomy 4:15-24

Moses reminds Israel of their fearful experience at Horeb, that is, Sinai, when they heard the voice of God and received His commandments, Exodus 24:1-8. Moses calls upon Israel to think back at what they heard and saw and tells them that they ‘saw no form of any kind’, Deuteronomy 4:15.

Israel had to watch themselves very carefully, so that they don’t become corrupt and make for themselves an idol, Deuteronomy 4:15-16. To carve an image out of stone or wood and call it God is idolatry. No representation of any imagined gods was to be carved in either stone or wood.

No representation of the sexual organs of man or woman was to be made that would incite heathen worship and immorality, Deuteronomy 4:16-18 / Genesis 31:19 / Genesis 35:2 / Exodus 20:4.

The Egyptians worshipped all kinds of things, and they had idols set up everywhere to represent many different gods, but Israel wasn’t to make any representation of any animal as an object of worship.

To look at the sun, moon, and stars and worship them is also idolatry, Deuteronomy 4:19. The Egyptians also worshipped the heavenly bodies, and so, they worshipped the created instead of the Creator. There is one Creator and one worthy of worship, that is, the Lord God, Romans 1:13-32 / Acts 14:16-17 / Acts 17:30.

Notice Moses refers to Israel’s time in Egypt as an iron-smelting furnace, Deuteronomy 4:20. This is obviously metaphoric language for great affliction and suffering, 1 Kings 8:51 / Isaiah 48:10 / Jeremiah 11:4. Moses reminds Israel how God’s anger was directed at him for not following through with His commandment, Deuteronomy 4:21 / Numbers 20:10-13.

God tells Moses that he will not be able to enter Canaan with Israel due to this act of rebellion on his part, Deuteronomy 4:21-22 / Numbers 27:12-14. Though Moses pleaded with God about the matter, the Lord would not change His mind, Deuteronomy 3:23-29. This teaches us that no one is above God’s laws.

Once again Israel were reminded to be careful not to forget the covenant of the God that He made with them and they are reminded again not to make for themselves an idol in the form of anything God has forbidden, Deuteronomy 4:23. The proof that they forgot the covenant they made with God is seen in them making any graven image, which meant that they had created other lords in their lives than the One who gave them laws by which to direct their lives.

Moses reminds Israel that the LORD your God is a consuming fire, Deuteronomy 4:24. In other words, they must take Him seriously, Hebrews 12:29. We are also told that God is a jealous God, Deuteronomy 4:24 / Exodus 20:3. In what sense is God a ‘jealous’ God?

1. With regards to the passage in Deuteronomy 4:24 / Exodus 20:3, we have to admit that it’s easy to see how some readers and some who, at school, had to learn to recite the Ten Commandments, as I did, might gain the impression from that verse that God isn’t only a jealous God but is also a vindictive God, who punishes the children for the sins of their fathers. And that is an entirely erroneous impression.

If you look up the word ‘jealous’ in a concordance you will also come across the word ‘jealousy’, and you will be led to that striking verse which states, ‘Yahweh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God’, **Exodus 34:14**.

The problem arises because these two words today don’t mean what they meant in Old Testament times; and a meaning which is different, even from the 1611, when the Authorized Version was produced.

I am sure that we have all discovered, in reading the older version, that problems arise because, over the years, many words have acquired very different meanings. If we had the space to spare, this fact could very easily be demonstrated.

Today we list ‘jealousy’ among such sins as ‘envy’, ‘malice’ and ‘pride’. In fact, the Oxford Dictionary defines the word ‘jealous’ as, resentful towards another on account of known or suspected rivalry; envious. Because of this, jealousy is the motivation behind a great many of the sins that people commit.

THE BIBLICAL MEANING OF ‘JEALOUS’

The Old Testament word at which we are looking is ‘qanno’, and its basic meaning is, quite simply, ‘zeal’ and ‘to be jealous’. In the Old Testament sense, with one or two rare exceptions, it means to be ‘zealous or enthusiastic or passionate’.

It is in this sense that the prophet Elijah uses the word when he declares his enthusiasm for God, in **1 Kings 19:10**. Similarly, when God declares that He is jealous, He tells us what it is that He is jealous of. Several times, He states, ‘I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion’.

There is no resentfulness in His jealousy for Jerusalem, but the expression of a deep and powerful love and concern for the city in which He ‘caused His name to dwell’.

This means that when, in **Exodus 20:5** and **Deuteronomy 4:24**, He says, ‘I am a jealous God’, He is declaring His zealousness for the protection of His own honour as the ‘one True God’. In **Isaiah 42:8**, He states, ‘I am Yahweh; that is My Name; My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to graven image.’

VISITING THE SINS OF THE FATHERS

1. As for the supposed vindictiveness of God, which some think they see in that verse, it should be noted that the verse doesn’t teach that children bear the guilt of the iniquities of their parents. The word ‘aven’, meaning iniquity, means perverseness in error or waywardness.

If God had wanted His people to understand that children bear the ‘guilt’ of the sins of their parents, He could have caused that very word to be used. ‘Asham’ is the word for guilt, and there is a world of difference between the guilt of sin and the consequences of sin.

The Bible doesn’t teach the errors of inherited guilt or total inherited depravity. The truth is much simpler than that, and something which faces us every day of our lives.

The truth is that children suffer because of the sins of their parents. It’s a sad fact that all too often the innocent has to suffer the consequences of the sins of the guilty.

Within the last few days, as of writing this, the world has been saddened by the news of the death of a small, courageous African boy, who died of Aids, the scourge of our modern world, it's a disease with which he was born because of the sin of others.

THE STAIN OF SIN SPREADS

The reality is that sin always brings appalling consequences, and its effects are borne not only by those who are responsible for committing it, but also by their children and their children's children.

And remember also that since children learn from the behaviour of their parents, whether it be good or bad, the sins of the fathers are very often reproduced and copied by their offspring.

There are families in which criminality, lawlessness, immorality, violence, and addiction have become a way of life and are accepted as normal. And, sooner or later, they bear the consequences of such a lifestyle. But as for the matter of guilt, the prophet Ezekiel has the definitive word in **Ezekiel 18:20**.

‘After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time—if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and arousing his anger, I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long, but will certainly be destroyed. The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you. There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell. But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. For the LORD, your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your ancestors, which he confirmed to them by oath.’ **Deuteronomy 4:25-31**

Here we read of the consequences for Israel if they do forget what they had learned from Moses or God's prophets and if they didn't teach their children and their children's children about God's mighty power, **Deuteronomy 4:25**. Moses calls heaven and earth in as witnesses that if such occurs God's anger will be provoked and Israel will be consumed from off the earth, **Deuteronomy 4:26**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God and man being called upon to bear testimony to the truth of what was spoken, that if there was any flaw or insincerity, it might be detected, and if any crime, it might not go unpunished. Such appeals to God, for such purposes, show at once both the origin and use of oaths, **Deuteronomy 6:13**.’

God will scatter them among the peoples, and only a few of them will survive among the nations to which God will drive them, **Deuteronomy 4:27 / Leviticus 26:33-40 / Deuteronomy 28:64**.

Moses looks into the future at a day when the people of God would turn their backs on God and worship the works of their hands in the form of birds, snakes, fishes, and various forms of wood and stone, **Deuteronomy 4:28 / Isaiah 45:20 / Psalms 115:4-7 / 1 Corinthians 12:2**. We can imagine that these words would have haunted those Israelites who were carried away years later into the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities.

The condition for remaining in the land was their obedience to the law of the covenant, **Deuteronomy 4:29**. Once they rebelled against the law of God, then they had no right to the land. The consequence of their sin would be hardship and destruction because of their disobedience.

Though they suffer, the Lord stands ready and willing to forgive them of their iniquity if only they would seek His forgiveness, **Deuteronomy 4:30-31**. This promise reached far into the future when Israel would be in the bondage of Assyria and Babylon.

After their captivity, they had repented of their ways, and so, God would bring a remnant of all twelve tribes back to the Promised Land in order to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah.

THE LORD IS GOD

‘Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other. From heaven, he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth, he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire. Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today. Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other. Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.’ **Deuteronomy 4:32-40**

Someone once said, ‘nowhere in man’s history has there been a time when God revealed himself so much to man’. God spoke with them at Mount Sinai in the hearing of all, and He performed mighty works in Egypt to get Israel out of Egypt.

Moses tells us two things that Israel couldn’t deny, first of all, the Lord spoke to them from the mountain, and they saw no form, **Deuteronomy 4:32-33**, and second, the Lord humbled the mightiest nation of their day and brought His people out by divine miracles, **Deuteronomy 4:34 / Exodus 7:9 / Exodus 11:9-10 / Exodus 14:24-25**.

God did all these things to let Israel and the other nations know that the Lord alone is indeed God, **Deuteronomy 4:35**. We would think that because of everything which God had done, the Israelites would be a people who had great faith in God. However, all these things God had done for them weren’t enough to convince them, and so they turned to idolatry again.

From heaven God made them hear His voice to discipline them and on earth God showed them His great fire, and they heard his words from out of the fire, **Deuteronomy 4:36**.

However, because God loved their ancestors and chose their descendants after them, He brought them out of Egypt by his Presence, **Exodus 33:14**, and His great strength, to drive out before them nations greater and stronger than they were and to bring them into their land to give it to them for their inheritance, as it is today, **Deuteronomy 4:37-38**.

The undeniable fact that the Lord is the one true God was to be ‘taken to heart’, because ‘there is no other’ **Deuteronomy 4:39 / Deuteronomy 4:28 / Isaiah 46:8-11**.

God gave birth to them through Abraham, brought them out of the bondage of one of the most powerful nations of the world, Egypt, and then brought them into a land that He had promised them centuries before.

Israel ate to keep God’s decrees and commands, which He is giving them, so that it may go well with them and their children after them and that they may live long in the land the God gives them for all time **Deuteronomy 4:40**.

Seeing that the Lord God is the only true God and that He has delivered commandments to be followed the people ought to understand the importance of doing so. This section brings to an end Moses’ first sermon.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This whole address by Moses, Deuteronomy 1:6 to Deuteronomy 4:40, and especially the exhortation to observe the Law faithfully, Deuteronomy 4:1-40, is one of the greatest revelations of God’s character in the Old Testament. The address builds to a climax, as every great sermon does. The total impression God and Moses intended must have been awe and humble gratitude in the hearts of the Israelites.’

CITIES OF REFUGE

‘Then Moses set aside three cities east of the Jordan, to which anyone who had killed a person could flee if they had unintentionally killed a neighbour without malice aforethought. They could flee into one of these cities and save their life. The cities were these: Bezer in the wilderness plateau, for the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead, for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, for the Manassites.’ Deuteronomy 4:41-43

Cities of refuge were established in reference to the civil laws of the nation, and six of the cities were given to the Levites to which a person who has killed someone may flee, Deuteronomy 4:41-42 / Numbers 35:6 / Deuteronomy 4:41-43 / Deuteronomy 19:1-14 / Joshua 20:1-9.

Moses sets up three cities of refuge on the east of the Jordan River for one to flee out of Gad, Reuben, or half the tribe of Manasseh, Numbers 35:6-34 / Deuteronomy 19:1-14 / Joshua 20:1-9.

These cities would be accessible to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh who lived on the east side of the Jordan. In addition, give them forty-two other towns, Numbers 35:6.

In all the Levites were to be given forty-eight towns, together with their pasturelands, Numbers 35:7. The towns the Levites are to be given are from the land the Israelites possess and are to be given in proportion to the inheritance of each tribe, Numbers 35:8. Moses is to take many towns from a tribe that has many, but few from one that has few, Numbers 35:8.

God told Moses to speak to the Israelites and tell them that when they cross the Jordan into Canaan, they are to select some towns to be their place of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee, Numbers 35:9-11.

They will be places of refuge from the avenger, Genesis 9:6, so that anyone accused of murder may not die before they stand trial before the assembly, Numbers 35:12 / Joshua 20:4 / Joshua 20:6.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If he was found worthy of death, they delivered him to the avenger that he might be slain, Deuteronomy 19:12, if not, they sent him back to the city of refuge, where he remained till the death of the high priest, Numbers 35:25. Before the cities of refuge were appointed, the altar appears to have been a sanctuary for those who had killed a person unwittingly, Exodus 21:13 / Exodus 21:14.’

These six towns will be their cities of refuge, Numbers 35:13. There were three cities of refuge on the west side of the Jordan and three were on the east side, Numbers 35:14. On the west side of the Jordan, Hebron, Kiriath-Arba, was given from the tribe of Judah, Joshua 20:7.

Shechem was given from the tribe of Ephraim, Joshua 21:21 and Kedesh in Galilee was given from the tribe of Naphtali, Joshua 21:32. From the east side of the Jordan, Golan in Bashan was given from the tribe of Manasseh, Joshua 21:27. Bezer was given from the tribe of Reuben, Joshua 21:36 and Ramoth-Gilead was given from of the tribe of Gad, Joshua 21:38.

Back then, cities of refuge had meaning to their names. Shechem means shoulder or back or strength, Hebron means fellowship, Kedesh means holy, sanctuary, Golan means joy, exultation, Ramoth means high, exalted, and Bezer means fortification, stronghold.

These six cities will be a place of refuge for Israelites and for foreigners residing among them, so that anyone who has killed another accidentally can flee there, **Numbers 35:15**. The cities are mentioned in **Exodus 21 / Numbers 35 / Deuteronomy 19 / Joshua 20**.

Roads leading to these cities were kept in excellent condition, with signposts reading, 'Refuge! Refuge!' The cities were no more than half a day's journey from any other city, **Joshua 20:7-8**.

The cities were in central locations where they could easily be reached from any part of the country. The cities of refuge were open to all, and the doors into the cities were never locked. The cities were stocked with food, and there was no protection if a man did not flee to a city of refuge.

The principle behind these cities is based on the law of the avenger who could avenge the death of a relative who was killed. The next of kin had the right to avenge the death of a relative.

Unless the avenging relative acted out of the heat of the moment when a relative was accidentally killed, the attacker could escape to a city of refuge until a judgment could be made, **Genesis 9:6**.

If someone was killed by using a weapon, a weapon made of iron, **Numbers 35:16**, stone, **Numbers 35:17**, or wood, **Numbers 35:18**, then this would be classed as murder and was to be put to death, **Numbers 25:16-18**. If a murder took place, the avenger could kill the murderer on the spot, **Numbers 35:19**.

This same law applied to those who, out of hatred, killed another, **Numbers 35:20-21**. The murderer was someone who intentionally killed someone else, whereas the manslaughterer was someone who had no such intent, but unintentionally killed someone. Anyone who killed someone accidentally was dealt with differently.

If, without enmity someone suddenly pushes another or throws something at them unintentionally or, without seeing them, drops on them a stone heavy enough to kill them, and they die, then since that other person was not an enemy and no harm was intended, the assembly must judge between the accused and the avenger of blood according to these regulations, **Numbers 35:22-24**.

Only those who accidentally killed someone were able to flee to the cities of refuge, **Numbers 35:25**. They could flee to the city of refuge in order to escape the vengeance of a near relative, **Numbers 35:25**. However, if anyone exercised the privilege of escaping to a refuge city, they had to stay in the city until the high priest died, **Numbers 35:25**.

If that same person who killed someone accidentally decided to go outside of the city of refuge before the high priest died, then the near relative of the one who was killed could kill them without any guilt, **Numbers 35:26-27**.

If the high priest died, the one who accidentally killed someone could return to his property, and the near relative had no right to avenge the death of his relative, **Numbers 35:28**. This is to have the force of law for Israel throughout the generations to come, wherever they live, **Numbers 35:29**.

Notice that capital punishment could only be carried out when more than one witness could testify to the fact that murder was committed, **Numbers 35:30 / Deuteronomy 17:6-7**.

No amount of money could be paid to free the one who was guilty of murder, **Numbers 35:31 / Exodus 21:30**, and neither could any amount of money be paid in order that anyone who accidentally killed someone could leave a city of refuge before the death of the high priest, **Numbers 35:32**.

Israel must not pollute the land where they are because bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it, **Numbers 35:33**. Israel must not defile the land where they live because God's dwells there among them, **Numbers 35:34**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No wonder God is so particularly strict in his laws against murderers.

1. Because he is the author of life, and none has any right to dispose of it but himself.
2. Because life is the time to prepare for the eternal world, and on it the salvation of the soul accordingly depends, therefore it is of infinite consequence to the man that his life be lengthened out to the utmost limits assigned by Divine Providence. As he who takes a man’s life away before his time may be the murderer of his soul as well as of his body, the severest laws should be enacted against this, both to punish and prevent the crime.’

The death penalty was given in order to keep society pure from the sickness of murderers. Once someone murders someone else, then the land is defiled by those who have no value for life. The death penalty, therefore, was God’s way of keeping society clean from moral decay in reference to anyone who had no value for life, **Genesis 9:6**.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CITIES

The Bible Hub says the following.

1. Refuge and Safety.

Just as the Cities of Refuge provided a safe haven for the manslayer, Christ offers refuge to sinners seeking salvation. **Hebrews 6:18** speaks of believers who ‘have fled to take hold of the hope set before us,’ drawing a parallel to the act of fleeing to a place of safety. In Christ, believers find protection from the ultimate avenger, the justice of God, which demands retribution for sin.

2. Accessibility.

The cities were strategically located and easily accessible, ensuring that anyone in need could reach them without undue delay. This reflects the availability of Christ to all who seek Him. **Romans 10:13** declares, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ The open access to these cities symbolises the open invitation of the Gospel.

3. Impartiality.

The Cities of Refuge were available to all, regardless of social status or nationality, as stated in **Numbers 35:15**. ‘These six cities will serve as a refuge for the Israelites, as well as for the foreigner or temporary resident among them.’ This inclusivity prefigures the universal offer of salvation through Christ, who breaks down barriers and extends grace to all humanity, **Galatians 3:28**.

4. High Priest’s Death.

The manslayer was required to remain in the city until the death of the high priest, at which point they could return home without fear, **Numbers 35:25-28**. This aspect foreshadows the death of Christ, our High Priest, whose sacrificial death liberates believers from the penalty of sin. **Hebrews 9:15** states, ‘For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.’

5. Judgment and Mercy.

The cities balanced justice and mercy, ensuring that the innocent were protected while the guilty were held accountable. This balance is perfectly embodied in Christ, who fulfils the law’s demands while offering mercy through His atoning sacrifice. **John 1:17** affirms, ‘For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.’

CONCLUSION

The Cities of Refuge serve as a multifaceted type of Christ, illustrating His role as a sanctuary for sinners, His accessibility and impartiality, and the profound implications of His sacrificial death. Through this typology, believers gain a deeper understanding of the comprehensive nature of Christ's redemptive work and the assurance of safety found in Him.

SECOND SERMON, DEUTERONOMY 4:44-11:32

INTRODUCTION TO THE LAW

‘This is the law Moses set before the Israelites. These are the stipulations, decrees and laws Moses gave them when they came out of Egypt and were in the valley near Beth Peor east of the Jordan, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon and was defeated by Moses and the Israelites as they came out of Egypt. They took possession of his land and the land of Og, king of Bashan, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan. This land extended from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge to Mount Sirion (that is, Hermon), and included all the Arabah east of the Jordan, as far as the Dead Sea, below the slopes of Pisgah.’ Deuteronomy 4:44-49

This is the law Moses set before the Israelites, he gave them when they came out of Egypt, Deuteronomy 4:45. The decrees, Deuteronomy 4:45, that is, statutes, were the initial revelations of God that were written and established as principles by which everyone must live.

The laws, Deuteronomy 4:45, that is, judgments, were the revealed decisions of God concerning specific matters as to how Israel carried out the written statutes of God in their lives. The commandments were all direct instructions of God concerning the conduct of people's lives, that is, things they should and shouldn't do, Deuteronomy 4:1-8.

The valley near Beth Peor was on the east side of the Jordan, Deuteronomy 4:46 / Deuteronomy 1:1 / Deuteronomy 1:5 / Deuteronomy 3:29. The land was originally controlled by the Moabites, Numbers 21:26, and here it's identified as the land of Sihon, the king of the Amorites whom Israel had just defeated, Deuteronomy 4:46.

Israel took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan, Deuteronomy 4:47. This land extended from Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge to Mount Sirion, that is, Hermon, and included all the Arabah east of the Jordan, as far as the Dead Sea, below the slopes of Pisgah, Deuteronomy 4:48-49 / Psalms 48:2.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

‘Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our ancestors that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. The LORD spoke to you face to

face out of the fire on the mountain. (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.)’ Deuteronomy 5:1-5

Moses once again reminds Israel that if they are to keep God’s commands, they must hear, learn, and have faith in them, [Deuteronomy 5:1](#). He reminds them of the ‘covenant’, [Deuteronomy 5:2](#), which God had made with them when at Mount Horeb, that is, Sinai, [Exodus 24:1-8](#).

A covenant is basically a binding agreement made by two or more persons or parties. However, the Scriptures also tell us that God’s covenants are equivalent to binding laws, [Deuteronomy 29:9](#) / [Psalm 111:9](#) / [Hebrews 8:6](#).

It was during this time that the Lord appeared before Israel and delivered His commandments to them. At that time, the people were terrified, and so, they asked Moses to speak to them, instead of God, [Exodus 20:19](#). It was not with their ancestors that God made this covenant, but with them, with all of them who are alive here, [Deuteronomy 5:3](#). God spoke with Israel face to face; they heard God’s voice but were terrified, and so, Moses stood between the people and God to act as a representative of the Lord’s people, [Deuteronomy 5:4-5](#).

This covenant delivered by God face to face with Israel is recognised in the Scriptures as the ‘first covenant’, [Hebrews 8:7](#) / [Hebrews 9:1](#), or ‘the law’, [Hebrews 10:1](#).

This first covenant demanded perfection, [Deuteronomy 4:2](#) / [Galatians 3:10](#); however, it had no eternal cures for one who would violate the law, [Hebrews 10:1-4](#).

The author of Hebrews thereby refers to this law as ‘weak and useless’, [Hebrews 7:18-19](#). This is because the law only pointed out our sin, [Romans 7:7](#), and the law, in and of itself, couldn’t save. The law, like a tutor, helped us see our need for forgiveness through the blood of Christ, [Galatians 3:17-28](#).

‘And he said. ‘I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.’ Deuteronomy 5:6

It was God who brought them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, [Deuteronomy 5:6](#) / [Exodus 20:2](#). Remember, God has just delivered them from Egypt, [Deuteronomy 5:6](#) / [Deuteronomy 13:4-5](#) / [Exodus 20:3](#) / [Leviticus 26:13](#) / [Numbers 15:41](#), and they’ve been exposed to the Egyptian culture and religion.

The Egyptians worshipped absolutely everything and anything which moved; they believed in many gods and worshipped each one regularly. When we keep this in mind, we can begin to understand why God gave them these commands.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

When it comes to the Ten Commandments, we must remember that they were given by God to the Israelites and the Israelites only, [Exodus 19:5-6](#). The laws were given for the social security and health of the nation of Israel, which would help them live together as a society in this new land called Canaan.

These ten commands are the basis for the Hebrew law; the first four are focused on their relationship with God, and the next six are focused on their relationship with each other and other people. God is going to give these laws because He wants them to love Him because of what He’s done for them up to this point in time.

Please note that there are some slight differences between the statements of the Ten Commandments found in [Exodus 20:1-17](#) and the statements found in [Deuteronomy 5:6-12](#).

The reason for this is obvious, in Deuteronomy the commandments are given to those Israelites who are preparing to live in the Promised Land, but in Exodus the commandments were given to those Israelites to those who would eventually die in the wilderness. In other words, the words written in Deuteronomy were given to a new generation of people, who were preparing to enter the Promised Land.

ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

OTHER GODS

‘You shall have no other gods before me.’ Deuteronomy 5:7

In this first command, we learn about the uniqueness of God, Deuteronomy 6:4. God was to be their only God; they were to be monotheists, Deuteronomy 5:7 / Exodus 20:3. They weren't to be atheistic, believing that there was no God, nor were they to be polytheistic, believing in many gods.

They weren't to be pantheistic, believing in nature worship; they weren't to be deistic, the belief that God created everything but just left them to it, and they weren't to be agnostic, believing that they couldn't know God. God was to be their only God.

Sloven, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Because God had initiated love toward Israel by redeeming the nation, Deuteronomy 5:6, the people were to respond appropriately by loving Him in return. This is the essence of God's grace. He initiates love, and the only reasonable response is to love Him for what He has done, Romans 12:1-2. God does not just love us when we love Him. More fundamentally, He loves us first, Romans 5:10 / Ephesians 1:4-5 / 1 John 4:19. In the game of love, God always makes the first move.’

Although the word ‘you’ is plural, as referring to the Israelites as a whole, it also implies that each person was responsible for their own actions. Each individual was to have no other gods before them, but we need to ask the question: Is God implying that there are other gods?

The answer is no, it's not that other gods are excited, rather He's referring to the gods of their imaginations, gods which people create after their own image.

God is warning them against following after their own religious imaginations in order to establish their own religious laws. It's true that Israel wouldn't give up their knowledge of the One True God, but over time, it would eventually give in to worshipping the gods of the nations around them. God is laying the foundation that He won't tolerate His people worshipping these other ‘gods’ which they have made up in their minds.

Durham, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Yahweh had opened himself to a special relationship with Israel, but that relationship could develop only if Israel committed themselves to Yahweh alone. Yahweh had rescued them and freed them, delivered them and guided them, then came to them. The next step, if there was to be a next step, belonged to them. If they were to remain in his Presence, they were not to have other gods.’

IMAGES

‘You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.’ Deuteronomy 5:8-10

The first command shows us the uniqueness of God, and the second command shows us God's nature, He is spirit, Deuteronomy 5:8-10 / Exodus 20:4-6. God is a loving God who wants nothing more than people to love Him back in worship. This is all about having a proper relationship with Him.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following concerning making images.

1. Any material representation of the Lord slanders Him. He is greater than anything humans can conceive in our minds, let alone make with our hands.
2. By making and using images of Yahweh, the worshipper would gain a sense of control over Him. God is the Creator, and we are His creatures. He is also sovereign over all. Rather than accepting his place as a subject creature under the sovereign Creator, the person who makes an image of God puts himself in the position of creator. In effect, he puts God in the place of a created thing. He usurps God's sovereignty. Since God made man in His image, it is inappropriate for us to try to make God in our image, much less in the image of an animal.
3. It is easy for anyone to confuse an object that represents a deity with that deity. Instead of worshipping the god the object represents, people have always transferred their worship to the object. This is our natural tendency as material beings who give preference to what we can see over what we cannot see.'

It doesn't take much to move from creating a god in your mind to making some physical representation of that god as a reminder; this is called idolatry. God is telling them that they must not make an image of any kind, of any representation of any god they make up in their minds. They mustn't bow down to any image as if it were real, as it had some power to direct their lives and their behaviour.

When you think about it, God is spirit, John 4:24, and so because He's spirit, they wouldn't need any kind of physical representation of Him. I think it's important to point out that it's not wrong to make things that have some kind of religious significance.

After all, at God's command, the Israelites would do this later with the items they created for the tabernacle, Exodus 25:31-34, and later for the temple, 1 Kings 6:18 / 1 Kings 6:29.

Idolatry comes in when the people who make these items believe that the items have some kind of emotional or spiritual power over their lives, Isaiah 44:9-20. We know that stones or trees don't have any power; it's all in people's minds. They believe that these objects possess some kind of supernatural power.

Idolatry was a big problem for the Israelites when they entered the Promised Land. The good news is that after their Babylonian captivity, they learned the lesson and never committed idolatry again.

The sad news is that many people commit idolatry today, even without thinking about it. They worship people, objects and images; they pray to statues, believe that rosary beads help them with their prayers, etc., 1 Corinthians 10:14 / Colossians 3:5 / 1 Peter 4:3.

God tells Israel that they mustn't make any images, otherwise, they'll end up bowing down and worshipping those images. As I mentioned, God is spirit, and He's not to be worshipped by using an idol; we can't squeeze Him into an object.

The word 'jealous', Deuteronomy 5:9 / Exodus 20:5, can be very misleading; the word here simply means He is zealous. In other words, He's zealous for the protection of His own honour as the 'one True God', Isaiah 42:80.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Yahweh's jealousy is a part of his holiness, Exodus 34:14, and is demanded by what he is. It is justified by the fact that it comes only upon those who, having promised to have no God but him, have gone back on that promise. Those who do so show that they 'hate' him, that they hold him in contempt: upon them in result must come a deserved judgment, across four generations.'

God is a loving God who wants nothing more than people to love Him back in worship, [Exodus 20:5-6](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:9-10](#). This is all about having a proper relationship with Him.

MISUSING GOD'S NAME

‘You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.’ Deuteronomy 5:11

Misusing God's Name or using His Name in vain, [Deuteronomy 5:11](#) / [Exodus 3:13-14](#) / [Exodus 20:7](#) / [Matthew 6:9](#), carries with it the idea of calling upon the Name of the Lord for superstitious reasons in order to determine the destiny of things in this world. This would include the making of oaths and promises in the Name of God, [Deuteronomy 6:13](#) / [Leviticus 24:14-16](#) / [Matthew 5:33-34](#).

What is God's name? Well, God has many names. Yahweh, the self-existent One. He has always existed and will always exist. You can always rely on Him because He is your eternal source of strength, [Genesis 2:4](#) / [Isaiah 40:3](#) / [Exodus 3:14](#).

Adonai, God is the Lord overall. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He reigns forever. Therefore, you find safety in Him and Him alone, [Genesis 15:2](#) / [Judges 6:15](#) / [Deuteronomy 10:17](#).

The point is that God wants the Israelites to understand that He is a holy God, [1 Peter 1:16](#), and because He is a holy God, His Name is holy and is to be revered, and so we must use it respectfully.

Sadly, in today's society, many people use the Lord's Name to emphasise they're telling the truth, but to take His name in vain means to make Him less significant.

THE SABBATH DAY

‘Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns, so that your male and female servants may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.’ Deuteronomy 5:12-15

The Exodus passage tells them to ‘remember the Sabbath day’, [Exodus 20:8-11](#), and the Deuteronomy passage tells them to ‘observe the Sabbath day’, [Deuteronomy 5:12-15](#).

God understands that life can get very busy, and He knows that the Israelites, just like many people do today, don't take any time out from work and consume themselves with work.

The idea is that the more we work, the more money we'll earn, therefore, the more we can spend on ourselves. It's such a shame that many people don't work for a living, but they live to work.

God is telling the Israelites that six days are more than enough time to do all the things which are necessary for living. In other words, the Sabbath is made for man to rest, [Mark 2:23-28](#).

The meaning of the word ‘Sabbath’ teaches us the purpose for keeping the day; the word doesn't mean ‘seventh’, it means ‘rest’. The Israelites were to rest from work on this day.

The reason for this rest day is illustrated in God's creation, He rested from His work in creation. God could easily have created the heavens and earth in a shorter or longer time, but to establish an example for man in reference to his work, God set the pattern by the six 24-hour days of creation.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Before God gave the Mosaic Law, He told the Israelites to refrain from gathering manna on the seventh day of the week, Exodus 16:22-30. Later, God made abstinence from work on the Sabbath Day a law for the Israelites, Exodus 20:8-11. The reasons were to memorialise God's creation of the universe, Exodus 20:11, and to memorialise His creation of the nation Israel, Deuteronomy 5:15.’

For the Israelites, keeping the Sabbath was also a sign of their covenant with God. The Sabbath and circumcision were the two signs of the covenant, and so when Israel as a nation rested on this day.

The other nations around them would see this and know Israel was in a covenant relationship with God. Remember also, it wasn't simply a sign to the nations around them, but mainly a sign to God that Israel was keeping the covenant.

Why did He tell them to keep the Sabbath day holy? Deuteronomy 5:12 / Exodus 20:8. It was to remind them of what God had done for them in Egypt, and please note that the Sabbath wasn't given as a ‘religious day’, but as a day where there would be common respect between the citizens of society.

Those who employed people to work for them couldn't force their employees to work on the Sabbath; this is respect, even the animals were not allowed to be put to work. The Sabbath was made for man in order to give him rest, a rest from all the earthly things, so that he had time to think about spiritual things.

Fruchtenbaum, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the only one of the Ten Commandments not reiterated for the church in the New Testament. Traditionally, the church has celebrated the first day of the week as a memorial to Jesus Christ's resurrection, which event is the ground of our rest, Romans 4:25.’

Many people believe that the Sabbath Day command is still binding upon Christians today, but note that this is the only command that's not reinstated in the New Testament. Why? Simply because this commandment was given to the Israelites to remind them that God brought them out of Egypt, Deuteronomy 5:15.

A few people turn to Genesis 2:1-3 to argue that the Sabbath Day's rest is still in force today. This is basically a summary of Genesis 1, and notice it's not stated here that God rested from all activity, but that He rested from creation, ‘the work which he had been doing,’ which is an expression repeated twice.

Please note that this has no reference whatever to the Jewish sabbath. This doesn't refer to the days of the week, but the days of the creation. This day of God's rest is still going on, Hebrews 4:4-6 / Hebrews 4:11, and will obviously continue until Christ returns.

There is no command here for man to rest, no revelation whatever to Adam or his posterity suggesting or commanding the observance of any such thing as the Jewish sabbath.

Notice also, the specific thing from which it's stated that God rested is the work of creation, a fact which is obvious enough in the fact that the creation isn't still going on.

There is also no mention here of ‘evening and morning,’ which tells us that the close of the seventh day is still in progress. We must remember that the sabbath that God blessed was the first day of Adam's life, not the seventh, and there's no indication whatever that Adam ever heard of a sabbath.

The sabbath was made known, not to Adam, but Moses, Nehemiah 9:13-14, and the reason for the Jewish observance of the sabbath given to them wasn't because God rested on the creation sabbath, but 'the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt,' Deuteronomy 5:15.

The sabbath was never a sign between God and all men, but 'it is a sign between me (God) and the children of Israel.' Exodus 31:17. God created everything in six days, Genesis 1 / Exodus 20:11. At the end of the sixth day, God looked at everything He had made and said it was 'very good', Genesis 1:31.

The next day, day seven, God rested from His work of creating because it was all finished, Genesis 2:2. God then blessed this day because it was the day that He chose to rest from His work, Genesis 2:3.

Why did God rest? Was he tired from all the work of creating? Not at all! The Bible tells us that God doesn't get tired or sleep, Psalms 121:3-4. He rested to establish a pattern for us to follow.

ISRAEL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS

HONOUR YOUR PARENTS

'Honour your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.' Deuteronomy 5:16

Honouring or respecting parents is the building block upon which society is built; the whole of society is dependent on this, Deuteronomy 5:16 / Exodus 20:12. Children have their first relationship with their parents, and it's from them we learn how to behave in society.

The first lesson of disobedience and obedience is taught in the family, Leviticus 20:9 / Ephesians 6:1-3 / 1 Timothy 5:4. Obedience to parents is a duty to God, Leviticus 19:3 / John 19:26-27.

But disobedient parents are a hallmark of the Gentile community. God is telling the Israelite children the terms and conditions for long life in a healthy society, in the Promised Land, Ephesians 6:1-3.

Sadly, Israel as a nation failed to maintain the sacredness of the family, and so, even as we see in our society today, whenever the family of any society breaks down, then the society breaks down as a whole. God tells the children of Israel that if they honour their parents, they will live long in the land.

Out of all the ten commandments, this is the only one that has the promise 'that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth,' Exodus 20:12 / Deuteronomy 5:16.

This doesn't mean if children honour their parents that they'll live to 100 and get a letter from the king of England. There have been some godly people who've lived long, and there have been some who've died young, despite honouring their parents. Jesus was obedient to His parents, but He still died at thirty three years of age.

So, what does it mean? The answer is simple, just like God, parents want things to go well for their children; they want them to have a long life. Too many kids' lives have come to an end prematurely simply because they haven't listened to their parents' advice, Proverbs 15:5.

They got involved in gangs, they ended up with addictions, they caught a sexually transmitted disease, and they had children of their own and can't handle being a parent. Honouring our parents and listening to their advice may help us live longer.

MURDER

‘You shall not murder.’ Deuteronomy 5:17

Here God teaches Israel about the sacredness of human life, [Deuteronomy 5:17](#) / [Exodus 20:13](#). If there’s no regard for human life, then society will end up in social chaos.

Although there are different types of murder, [Exodus 21:12-13](#) / [Numbers 35:22-23](#) / [Exodus 22:2-3](#) / [Leviticus 24](#), it’s all about the sacredness of human life, [Deuteronomy 22:8](#) / [Leviticus 19:14](#) / [Leviticus 19:18](#) / [Leviticus 19:19](#). These laws were given to give them stability; this is our duty to our fellow man, we must respect human life, [Matthew 19:18](#).

ADULTERY

‘You shall not commit adultery.’ Deuteronomy 5:18

Adultery has been rising throughout the world at an alarming rate, and the effect has been devastating in our society. How many families have been ripped apart because the husband or the wife has an affair with someone else?

The reason God tells the Israelites not to commit adultery is obvious, [Deuteronomy 5:18](#) / [Exodus 20:14](#); marriage is sacred, and when adultery is committed, it’s a sure sign that the marriage relationship is breaking down, [Matthew 5:27-28](#).

We know how serious this crime was because the punishment for adultery was stoning to death, [Leviticus 20:10](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:23-29](#) / [Matthew 5:27-28](#) / [1 Corinthians 6:9-20](#).

Jantz, in his commentary, says the following.

‘How can we guard against committing adultery? First, Scripture stresses the importance of guarding our own hearts, the seat of our affections, [Matthew 15:19](#) / [Proverbs 4:23](#) / [Proverbs 7:25](#). Second, we should realise that God has a claim on our bodies as well as our souls, [1 Corinthians 6:13-20](#). Third, we should cultivate our relationship with our spouses, [1 Corinthians 7:1-5](#). The husband-wife relationship is more fundamental than the parent-child relationship. Husbands need to take the initiative in cultivating this relationship, [Ephesians 5:25-31](#).’

STEALING

‘You shall not steal.’ Deuteronomy 5:19

This is all about respecting other people’s property, [Deuteronomy 5:19](#) / [Exodus 20:15](#) / [Ephesians 4:28](#) / [Exodus 22:1-3](#) / [Proverbs 6:30-31](#). If an Israelite stole, they were to return what they had stolen if possible, to make restitution, and to add twenty per cent of the value as a penalty for their theft. [Leviticus 5:16](#) / [Leviticus 6:5](#) / [Numbers 5:7](#) / [Luke 19:8](#).

There are many lazy people in the world who don’t work but want everything. They see other people with their material possessions, but instead of buying them for themselves, they decide they want them, and so they go out of their way to get them, even if that means breaking into someone’s home to steal them.

Stealing in any shape or form is sinful; any act where someone takes something which belongs to someone else is theft. If anyone steals anything, it's an act of selfishness because they're not concerned about the person they're stealing from; they have no respect for anyone.

God is teaching them to be content with what they have, [Philippians 4:12](#). He wants them to enjoy the material blessings God has given them, rather than stealing other people's material blessings.

FALSE TESTIMONY

‘You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour.’ Deuteronomy 5:20

If anyone wants to destroy someone's character, then making up a lot of false stories, along with false accusations, is the way to do it, [Deuteronomy 5:20](#) / [Exodus 20:16](#).

God wants to protect the individuals of Israel from such horrendous circumstances, [Deuteronomy 19:16-20](#) / [Ephesians 4:25](#). This would include slander, gossip, unproven accusations, false witnessing, and half-truths concerning an individual, [Psalms 101:5](#) / [Proverbs 6:16-19](#) / [Acts 5:3](#).

COVETING

‘You shall not covet your neighbour's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbour's house or land, his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.’ Deuteronomy 5:21

God commands Israel not to covet because He wants their hearts, [Deuteronomy 5:21](#) / [Exodus 20:17](#) / [Colossians 3:5-6](#). Anyone who covets is selfish, only thinking about themselves and not the consequences of their actions. It all begins in the heart, which then leads to action. Coveting a neighbour's wife is a clear signal that a man's relationship with his wife is failing.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The seriousness of this sin is obvious from the fact that God forbade it many times in Scripture, [Psalms 10:3](#) / [Proverbs 28:16](#) / [Mark 7:21-23](#) / [Luke 12:15](#) / [Romans 1:28-29](#) / [Ephesians 5:3](#) / [Ephesians 5:5](#) / [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#) / [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#).’

SUMMARY OF THE COMMANDMENTS

The first four commandments were focused on Israel's relationship with God; the first is about loyalty, the second is about worship, the third is about reverence, and the fourth is about sanctification and relationships. The next six commandments were focused on Israel's relationship with each other and with other people.

The fifth commandment is about respect for parental authority, the sixth is about respect for human life, the seventh is about purity in relationships, the eighth is about honesty, the ninth is about truthfulness, and finally, the tenth is about contentment.

It's through these commandments that God reveals His true nature. He is just and righteous, because He is a holy God; His laws are holy. People need to see, know, and understand their own sinfulness. God knew that no one could keep His laws, but He wanted to help us see just how far from His holiness we actually are.

The law itself provided the building blocks for a great society, for a just society. God made them into a holy nation, [Exodus 19:5-6](#), and now He's laying the foundations of how this new nation should behave and interact with God and each other.

As I mentioned earlier, many people believe that the Sabbath Day command is still binding upon Christians today, but note again in the table below that this is the only command that's not reinstated in the New Testament.

The Ten Commandments	
Exodus 20:1-17 / Deuteronomy 5:6-22	New Testament
No other gods before me	1 Corinthians 8:6 / Acts 14:15
Do not make for yourself an image	Acts 17:29
Do not misuse the name of the LORD	Matthew 5:9
Keep the Sabbath Day holy	777777
Honor your father and mother	Ephesians 6:2
Do not murder	Romans 12:9 / Revelation 21:8
Do not commit adultery	Romans 13:9 / Hebrews 13:4
Do not steal	Romans 13:9 / Ephesians 4:28
Do not give false testimony	Romans 13:9 / Ephesians 4:25
Do not covet	Romans 13:9 / Colossians 3:5

It's such a blessing to know that we can't be saved by keeping the ten commandments today, [Galatians 3:24](#). The old law pointed out our sin and condemned us, [Galatians 3:10](#).

As Christians, there are many commands to obey, nine of which are found within the Ten Commandments, but forgiveness of our sins is found through Christ for anyone who repents and is baptised, [Acts 2:38](#), and for the Christian who tries to live right and confesses their sins to God, [1 John 1:7-9](#). For those who are trying to obey the law, please read James' inspired words, [James 2:10](#).

'These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud, and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me. When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leaders of your tribes and your elders came to me. And you said, "The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today, we have seen that a person can live even if God speaks with them. But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer. For what mortal has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey." The LORD heard you when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, "I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever! "Go, tell them to return to their tents. But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees, and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess." So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. Walk in obedience to all that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.'

Deuteronomy 5:22-33

We're told that God spoke to Israel through Moses, concerning the first covenant. God spoke the ten commandments to Israel face to face, yet the other parts of the first covenant were delivered to Israel by God through Moses.

These are the commandments God proclaimed in a loud voice to the whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness, and he added nothing more, [Deuteronomy 5:22](#). Then God wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to Moses, [Deuteronomy 5:22](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He spoke no more with the great voice directly to the people but addressed all other communications to them through Moses. This unique and sublime phenomenon, followed up by the inscription of the Ten Words on the two tables by the finger of God, marks not only the holiness of God’s Law in general, but the special eminence and permanent obligation of the Ten Words themselves as compared with the rest of the Mosaic enactments. The giving of the two tables did not take place until Moses had been on the Mount 40 days and 40 nights, as appears from the fuller account of [Deuteronomy 9:9-12](#).’

When Israel heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leaders of their tribes and their elders came to Moses, [Deuteronomy 5:23](#).

Israel said, God has shown them His glory and His majesty, and they have heard His voice from the fire, [Deuteronomy 5:24](#). Today they have seen that a person can live even if God speaks with them, [Deuteronomy 5:24](#).

Israel comes to the conclusion that their sinfulness has put them in danger of losing their lives if they stand before God again to hear Him speak, [Deuteronomy 5:25-26](#).

And so, Moses reminds them about the decision they made, to have Moses stand in for them, where God could speak through Moses rather than speaking to them directly, [Deuteronomy 5:27](#) / [Exodus 20:18-21](#). Israel vowed to Moses that they would hear the commandments of God and do them, [James 1:22](#).

The Lord concludes, ‘everything they said was good’, [Deuteronomy 5:28](#), and so, from that point onwards, God speaks to the people through Moses, [Numbers 12:7](#).

Notice, however, what the Lord replied, ‘oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!’ [Deuteronomy 5:29](#). It appears that the Lord already knew that Israel wouldn’t obey Him.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He made the human will free, and in spite of all the influence of sin and Satan, he preserves its liberty. Had man no free will, he could neither be punished nor rewarded, because a mere machine, and consequently no more accountable for his actions than the fire for its consuming quality, or the stone for its gravity; the one having burned the house of the righteous, the other having crushed the innocent to death, [Deuteronomy 29:4](#).’

While Israel returns to their tents, Moses is to stay with God so that He may give him all the commands, decrees and laws Moses is to teach them to follow in the land God is giving them to possess, [Deuteronomy 5:30-31](#).

Moses reminds the people not to forget to perfectly obey the commands of God, [Deuteronomy 5:32-33](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:2](#), in order that they may live, prosper and enjoy a loving life in the Promised Land.

When God speaks directly to people, the result can be overwhelming, [Daniel 10:5-19](#) / [Matthew 28:2-4](#) / [Acts 9:3-9](#) / [Revelation 1:17](#). However, we must remember that God doesn’t speak directly to people today like He did in the Old Testament, today, He speaks to us through His Son, Jesus, He speaks to us through His written word, the Bible, [John 12:48](#) / [Hebrews 1:1-2](#) / [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#).

God still wants us to fully obey Him today. He wants us to live without sin, [1 Corinthians 15:34](#) / [Ephesians 4:26](#), but sadly, all too often we fail, [Romans 3:23](#). The good news is that God has provided a way for us to ask for forgiveness and a Man, who can intervene for us, [1 John 1:8-2:1](#).

The message of Mount Sinai wasn’t ‘come unto Me,’ but ‘stay away, for I am holy, and you are not.’ However, when we turn to the New Testament, we’re encouraged to approach God with boldness, [Hebrews 12:18-24](#).

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

‘These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.’ ‘Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you.’ Deuteronomy 6:1-3

These are the commands, decrees and laws God directed Moses to teach Israel to observe in the land that they are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that they, their children, and their children after them may fear God as long as they live by keeping all his decrees and commands that He gives them, and so that they may enjoy long life, Deuteronomy 6:1-2.

Sailhamer, in his commentary, says the following about fear.

‘It is a fear that produces not obeisance but obedience, not worry but worship, Deuteronomy 6:13.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Whoever fears God will endeavour to bring up his children in the way of righteousness, that they also may fear God, and that pure and undefiled religion may be preserved in his family through all its generations, not only in word, but in practice also.’

Moses begins by warning Israel to hear and obey God’s commandments, and he encourages them to remember how they felt when they first heard God’s commands, that is, they were fearful of God, Deuteronomy 6:3. Our fear of God is seen in our obedience to Him, Titus 3:8 / Matthew 10:28 / 1 Peter 1:17.

LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” Deuteronomy 6:4-5

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The only individual in the Old Testament of whom it was said that he turned to the Lord with all his heart, soul, and might was King Josiah, 2 Kings 23:25.’

HEAR

The ‘Shema’ is a passage of Scripture which every faithful Jew would recite twice a day. And in every Jewish household, attached to the right side of the doorpost, there would be what they call a ‘medusah’. This was a small container that contained a certain Bible text.

Even today, if you go into a Jewish house, you will often see them touching the ‘medusah’ or kissing it. At the same time, they would recite the words from Psalms 121:8 in Hebrew, ‘Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and forevermore.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These words form the beginning of what is termed the ‘Shema’ (Hear) in the Jewish Services and belong to the daily morning and evening office. They may be called ‘the creed of the Jews.’

The name Deuteronomy is the Hebrew word ‘Devarim’, which means ‘these are the words.’ In Greek, the name is made up of two separate words, Deutero, which means ‘second’ and Nomos, which means ‘law’. In other words, the Book of Deuteronomy is the second giving of the law.

It wasn’t a new law for Israel, but a repetition of the laws that were given at Mount Sinai in the Book of Exodus. However, in the repetition of the law, Moses explains and amplifies various portions of the laws that were given about forty years before.

Moses begins with a call to the Israelites, saying, ‘Hear, O Israel!’ Deuteronomy 6:4. The word translated ‘hear’ is the word ‘Shema’ in Hebrew. It describes both the mental activity of hearing as well as its effects.

In other words, hearing is always followed by obeying what was said. And what did the Lord require? The Lord requires an undivided love and loyalty from the Israelites because He alone is their God.

The name ‘LORD’, Deuteronomy 6:4, is from the Hebrew word Yahweh, meaning ‘He is’ or ‘the becoming One’ and for the Jews, it was a sacred word for God. The word was considered so sacred that they wouldn’t pronounce it with their lips, and so, they used the word ‘Adonai’, which is ‘my Lord’.

Where did they get this idea from? Exodus 20:7. The Jews were so concerned not to misuse the name of God that this tradition arose. The Jews wanted to be absolutely certain that they didn’t misuse the name of the Lord, and so they read Adonai in place of YHWH.

In fact, they go as far as not even spelling the name of God in their writings; they simply write the letters G_D. Yes, the motives for this tradition were good, but it was never commanded by God Himself.

We may be forgiven for asking, What’s the big deal? It’s just a name, but a name, even your name, represents your reputation, your character and authority. God says, ‘when you misuse My name, it’s a big deal because you’re defaming My reputation, My character and My authority, and you are using it flippantly.’

And please know there are many ways people misuse God’s Name, Deuteronomy 5:11.

1. People use God’s Name to insult other people.

This is when we use profanity or swearing to express irritation. Why do people swear? They lack emotional control, but the main reason is that they do it to impress others. It takes maturity to discipline our speech, especially when we’re angry, and it takes discipline to refrain from swearing, James 3:9-12.

2. People use God’s Name to intimidate other people.

How many sermons have you heard where the preacher says, ‘I had a vision from God, and He told me that you guys are to give me money to buy a car or a jet’?

These people are using God’s Name to intimidate money out of their followers. Parents do this all the time. When their kids misbehave, they get angry with them, and some people go to the extreme by telling their children that God is going to get them if they don’t start behaving.

3. People use God’s Name impulsively.

This is where people use God’s Name as a convenient expression of fear or anger or joy or amazement or surprise. But God says, ‘When you use My name, you take it seriously. Don’t use it flippantly.’

THE TRINITY

The concept of the Trinity has baffled many people for centuries, mainly because people misunderstand or don't want to accept the concept of the Trinity as it is illogical.

We must begin by acknowledging that the word 'Trinity' is nowhere found in the Scriptures, but what we do find is the word 'Godhead', [Acts 17:29](#) / [Romans 1:20](#) / [Colossians 2:9](#). The Greek word for Godhead is 'theios', and it means the nature of God, especially as existing in three persons.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica gives the following definition.

'Trinity, in Christian doctrine, the unity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three persons in one Godhead.'

When Christians speak of the Trinity, they are not saying there are three separate Gods; they are saying that God is one Being who exists in three Persons. God is one in essence and three in person. The three Persons of the Trinity are coequal and coeternal, one in essence, nature, power, action, and will, and each of them is uncreated.

THE TRINITY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

When we turn our attention to the Old Testament, we find in the first sentence of the Bible, [Genesis 1:1](#), the word 'God'. The word 'El' is the singular word for 'god,' and the word in [Genesis 1:1](#) is 'Elohim,' which is plural. When the noun 'God' is capitalised, it means the one, true God, the God we worship.

When the noun 'god' is not capitalized, it refers to a false god, [Psalm 96:5](#). For example, the term 'elohim', god, is used to figuratively speak of pagan deities, [Psalm 96:5](#), to designate human rulers, or judges, as they represent God and stand in His place, [Psalm 82:1](#) / [Psalm 82:6](#), and angels as His messengers, [Psalm 8:5](#) / [Hebrews 2:7](#).

Notice the Spirit of God is involved in creation, [Genesis 1:2](#) / [Psalm 33:6-7](#) / [Job 26:13](#), and we also find God referring to Himself by the plural pronouns 'we' and 'us', [Genesis 1:26-27](#) / [Genesis 3:5](#) / [Genesis 3:22](#) / [Genesis 11:7](#). Isaiah does the same in [Isaiah 6:8](#) / [Isaiah 41:21-24](#).

In [Isaiah 6:3](#), there is a threefold ascription of praise to God, there is one 'holy' for each Person of the Godhead. A careful reading of [Genesis 19:24](#) tells us that Yahweh brings down sulphur and fire from Yahweh, who is in heaven above.

THE TRINITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we turn our attention to the New Testament, we find the Bible speaks of the Father as God, [Philippians 1:2](#), Jesus as God, [John 1:1](#) / [Titus 2:13](#); and the Holy Spirit as God, [Acts 5:3-4](#). The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons, [Matthew 28:19-20](#) / [2 Corinthians 13:14](#).

The church is described as the household of the Father, [1 Timothy 3:15](#), the bride of the Son, [2 Corinthians 11:2](#) / [Ephesians 5:27](#) / [Revelation 19:7](#), and the temple of the Holy Spirit, [1 Corinthians 6:19](#).

We should also note that the Father is not the Son, [John 3:16-17](#) / [John 4:34](#) / [John 5:30](#). The Son is not the Father, [John 5:31-32](#) / [John 16:10](#) / [John 17:20-23](#). The Father is not the Holy Spirit, [John 14:26](#) / [John 16:13-15](#).

The Holy Spirit is not the Father, [John 14:26](#) / [Romans 8:27](#). The Son is not the Holy Spirit, [John 15:26](#) / [John 16:7](#). The Holy Spirit is not the Son, [Matthew 1:20](#) / [John 16:8](#).

We can see the distinction between the three of them when we read that the Father sent the Son into the world, [John 3:16](#). He cannot be the same person as the Son. The Son returned to the Father, [John 16:10](#), and the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit into the world, [John 14:26](#) / [Acts 2:33](#).

Therefore, the Holy Spirit is clearly distinct from the Father and the Son. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three distinct Persons. Each person of the Trinity is fully God, yet they relate to one another in distinct ways, [Matthew 3:16-17](#) / [Matthew 28:19](#) / [2 Corinthians 13:14](#).

THE ONENESS OF GOD

I've heard many people say if the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God, then logically this means there are three Gods, which goes against the Bible's claim that there is only one God, [Deuteronomy 6:4](#) / [Isaiah 44:6-8](#) / [Isaiah 43:10-11](#) / [Isaiah 45:5-6](#) / [Isaiah 46:9-11](#) / [John 5:44](#) / [John 17:3](#) / [Romans 3:30](#) / [1 John 5:20-21](#).

Just as the word 'you' can be used in plural in the Scriptures, [Deuteronomy 31:27](#) / [Amos 6:1](#) / [1 Corinthians 3:16](#) / [1 Peter 2:5](#), it may come as a surprise to many that the word 'one' can also be used in the plural sense. In terms of the Trinity, it can be used to describe unity in a multi-Personal Being.

Take, for example, [Deuteronomy 6:4](#), where it says, 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.' In Hebrew, this is 'Yahweh Eloheinu Yahweh echad'. A literal translation of this verse would read as follows, 'Hear, O Israel; Yahweh (is) our Gods, Yahweh is a Unity.'

The Hebrew word 'Eloheinu', which translates as 'our Gods,' is the first-person plural variation of Elohim. The word 'one' used in [Deuteronomy 6:4](#) is the Hebrew word 'echad', which functions much like the English word in that it can refer to a solitary oneness or to a complex unity.

A good example of this use of the word is found in [Genesis 2:24](#), where Moses records, 'for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The words 'one flesh' are 'echad basar' in Hebrew.

So here we have a man and his wife, two different persons, two separate and distinct human beings, become one. They do not become a singular being, but instead, they are in unity with each other.

Jesus uses the Greek equivalent words to express the same idea when He quotes [Genesis 2:24](#) in [Matthew 19:4-6](#). 'The two shall become one flesh', 'sarka mian', 'they are no longer two but one flesh', 'sarx mia'.

So, the word 'one' can refer not only to a solitary oneness but also to a complex unity, [1 Corinthians 3:8](#). In relation to the Trinity, we see that this refers to multi-Personal Being. Jesus Himself says He and the Father are one, [John 10:30](#).

In [Genesis 34:16-22](#), we read of two different groups of people, the Israelites and the Shechemites, and notice they come together to form one 'echad' people. In [Genesis 41:25-26](#), we find Joseph telling Pharaoh that his dreams are one 'echad', in the same. In other words, two different dreams, but they mean the same; they are one, they go together, they are united.

One doesn't necessarily mean solitary oneness, but it can mean a complex unity. If we take a closer look at the Old Testament, we find that the Hebrew word for 'face', 'presence', and 'person' is actually plural, [Exodus 33:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:37](#) / [Job 13:8](#).

When we read [Deuteronomy 10:17](#), the Hebrew says that 'Yahweh is the Gods and Lords of all the other gods and lords'. The word 'Creator' used in [Ecclesiastes 12:1](#) is also plural in Hebrew, as are the words 'Maker' and 'Husband' in Hebrew, [Job 35:10](#) / [Psalm 149:2](#) / [Isaiah 54:5](#). In [2 Samuel 7:23](#), the words 'God went' are plural and the text literally says, 'Gods, they went to redeem.'

CONCLUSION

As I mentioned at the beginning, many people don't understand or won't accept the doctrine of the Trinity because they think it is illogical. I wonder if these same people accept the virgin birth as logical, [Genesis 3:15](#) / [Isaiah 7:14](#) / [Matthew 1:23](#).

The Scriptures clearly teach the principle of the Trinity, where God is one Being who exists in three Persons. God is one in essence and three in person. The three are one, [Ephesians 4:6](#), in nature, character, and purpose, and they are the same in properties, attributes and equal in power and glory, [1 John 5:7](#).

All three persons of the Godhead are self-existent, [Exodus 3:14-15](#) / [John 8:58](#) / [Genesis 1:2](#). Omniscience, meaning all-knowing, [Romans 11:33-34](#) / [Matthew 9:4](#) / [1 Corinthians 2:11](#). Omnipresence, meaning present everywhere, [Psalms 139:1-10](#) / [Matthew 28:20](#) / [Psalms 139:7](#).

Omnipotence, meaning all-powerful, [Psalms 62:11](#) / [1 Corinthians 15:25](#) / [Romans 15:19](#). Holy, [Revelation 15:4](#) / [Acts 3:14](#) / [Ephesians 4:30](#), and good, [Romans 2:4](#) / [Ephesians 5:25](#) / [Nehemiah 9:20](#).

People use different object lessons to try to explain the Trinity to others; some are good, others not so good. Maybe the easiest object lessons are the ones people see and speak about every day.

For example, when people speak about a rugby team or a football team, everyone knows that there is more than one person involved in the word team. They are one in terms of being a team despite having many players, with different roles and positions. The church itself is one body but made up of different parts, each having its different roles, [1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#).

GOD IS ONE

Why emphasise the oneness of God? [Deuteronomy 6:4](#). Remember the world in which the Israelites lived; it was full of idols. Their ancestors lived in Egypt, and in Egypt, idols were everywhere.

In the Promised Land, idol worship was everywhere. Though other nations served and worshipped other gods, the Israelites were to recognise the LORD alone as their God, [Deuteronomy 4:35](#). God is one, and there is only one God, [1 Timothy 2:5](#).

Notice the relation between Israel and God. The same God who had a relationship with Israel is also our God today. He is not only our God, but also your God. He's our personal God. Thomas understood this after seeing Jesus, he says to Jesus that He was, 'My Lord and my God!' [John 20:28](#).

Israel was to love Him with all their heart, soul, and strength, which implies they were to love Him with everything they've got. Such a love for God includes an expression of obedience.

This love was to be the appropriate response to the LORD because He alone is God, [Deuteronomy 10:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 30:16](#). This love was to be completely directed to God alone and is further indicated by the repetition of the word 'all' along with the terms 'heart,' 'soul,' and 'might' in the same verse, [Deuteronomy 6:4-5](#). Sadly, when Israel forgot the Lord, things went from bad to worse, [Jeremiah 2:32](#) / [Jeremiah 23:27](#). God needs to be the total focus of our attention every single day of our lives. Is God the focus of our attention? [John 12:42-43](#).

1. Begin the day with God, [1 Thessalonians 5:17](#).

I know it sounds simple enough, but if you or I are going to stay focused on God, we have got to include the things of God in our daily lives! I know your mornings are rushed, but if you create the discipline to spend the first minutes of

your day reading the Word of God and talking to Him about the day ahead, you will have a greater focus on Him throughout the day.

Do you want to create and develop the habit of a prayerful life? This is a habit worth developing and isn't as difficult as you might think. When you see or hear a news report that bothers you, pray for the people and the situation.

When you come across someone who annoys you or tries your patience, silently pray for them. When you hear of someone facing some problem, large or small, pray for them. God doesn't need your eloquent, long-winded, pious-sounding discourses; He wants your heart, and often in prayer that sounds as simple as 'God, help!'

2. Limit the distractions.

In [Joshua 3:1-4](#), the people of Israel are commanded to keep a distance of two thousand cubits between them and the ark of the covenant. That's about half a mile, and the purpose was so the people of Israel would always be able to see the ark in all types of terrain that they were travelling through.

In our spiritual lives, when we fill the spaces with all kinds of conveniences and distractions, it becomes very difficult and even impossible sometimes to see where the Lord is leading us.

3. Serve God.

We know [Matthew 6:24](#), and you've probably also heard the term 'mammon' in place of money at the end of it. Though 'mammon' was a word that primarily represented money and possessions, it was also used to refer to lusts of all types. If you're serving God with your resources of time, energy, talents, and money, then staying focused on God will naturally follow.

4. Remove sin from your life, [Hebrews 12:1-2](#).

If there is something, someone, some place or anything in your life that leads you away from God in any way. Something that keeps you out of prayer, away from fellowship with other believers or distracts you from reading your Bible, you have one option: remove that thing from your life.

Staying focused on God and growing in your spiritual, prayer, or Christian life in any way with any habitual sin in your life is next to impossible. Ask any runner what the worst thing they can do in a race, and they will tell you, turning around to have a look.

We must focus and fix our eyes on Jesus if we want to finish the race. We must kill the sin, or it will kill you spiritually, physically, or both. It's not enough to simply listen to what God has to say; we must also obey what He says, [John 14:15](#). He is our God, He is our LORD, and if we claim to love Him, we must obey what He says.

LOVING GOD WITH ALL OF OUR HEART

We all know how much God loves us because the Bible clearly tells us, [John 3:16](#) / [1 John 3:16](#). And so, there is no questioning God's love for us, but how do we love God? [Deuteronomy 6:5](#).

C. S. Lewis once said the following.

'On the whole, God's love for us is a much safer subject to think about than our love for Him.'

God never commands us to do something without first telling us how to do it. And so, after telling Israel that the LORD God is one, Moses goes on to explain to us how we are to love God.

The Hebrew word for love is the word ‘ahab’, and it carries with it the idea of having the ultimate love that we can express or feel. In other words, when we say we love the Lord, we’re saying we have loved, and we do love and will continue to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and strength.

Do you love God with all of your heart? If we’re honest with ourselves, we will admit that we all love God to a certain extent, but the truth is, sometimes He’s not always the one we love most.

Sometimes we love our spouses more or our families more. Sometimes we love our jobs or hobbies more. We have many other things in this world that are pulling for our affection.

So how can we obey the Lord’s command to love Him with all our hearts? We have to acknowledge that we can’t really love Him or anyone else without His help. In other words, He doesn’t ask us to do anything which didn’t first originate from Him, 1 John 4:19.

God is the actual source of our love for Him. He loved us first, and He infused us with His love. To infuse means to fill, to soak; we’re being soaked with the love of God. The love of God in us is the love with which we can love Him in return.

When most people think about love, they think of the warm, fluffy feeling they get when they meet someone. But love isn’t merely a feeling; it’s an attribute, hence why God is love, 1 John 4:8 / 1 John 4:16. We can’t claim to love anyone if we don’t know God because God is love.

The reason we know and rely on the love of God is simply because God is love. So what is the heart? You would be forgiven for thinking it is an organ in your body which keeps you alive. That’s just a pump that keeps the blood flowing through your body.

We have to remember that in the Old Testament, the word ‘heart’ didn’t carry the same deep meaning in Hebrew as it does in the Greek New Testament. This is one reason why the New Testament gives a deeper meaning to the word ‘mind’. In other words, the Hebrew concept of ‘heart’ included both feelings and thoughts, Genesis 6:5.

Thinking is an activity of the mind, but Jesus asked the scribes why they were thinking those thoughts in their hearts, Matthew 9:4. This shows that our mind is part of our heart.

In Acts 11:23, we read that when we exercise our will, our will is part of our heart. Rejoicing is related to our emotions, but in John 16:22, we see that our hearts rejoice. This shows us that our emotions are also part of our heart. Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, Hebrews 10:22, indicates that our conscience is also part of our heart. Our hearts do much more than we might have thought.

In addition to sensing the wide range of human emotions, our hearts think, decide, and perceive right from wrong. If we didn’t have a heart, we couldn’t sense love or love in return, Mark 12:30. God created us with a heart so we could have a loving relationship with Him.

So in a very real sense, our heart is at the centre of our relationship with God. We were created by God in such a marvellous way. We have a spirit to contact, receive, and contain Him as life, and a heart to love Him.

He wants to be our life, and He wants us to love Him with our whole heart. And if we’re truthful with ourselves, it’s easy to love God when things are going well, when we enjoy one blessing after another.

But what about those difficult times? What about when challenges come our way? Israel had to learn the lesson which we still have to learn today. Loving God with ALL of our heart means loving God at ALL times, even when God seems quiet. Even when He says wait, even when He says no.

And, yes, even when bad things happen and challenges come our way. Loving God at all times is a day-to-day learning process. We learn more and more how to do it and keep on doing it a little each day. And we do that until we can say what the Apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:11-13.

Notice that the word ‘courage’, in Philippians 4:11-13, the root word for courage is ‘cor’, which is Latin for ‘heart’. Living with courage in our hearts is a good way to remind ourselves to love God. Living with courage in our hearts is a good way to remind ourselves not to trust in our own feelings or understanding, Proverbs 3:5.

Martin Luther once said the following in a poem.

‘For feelings come and feelings go, And feelings are deceiving. My warrant is the Word of God: Nought else is worth believing. Though all my heart should feel condemned For want of some sweet token, There is One greater than my heart Whose Word cannot be broken. I’ll trust in God’s unchanging Word Till soul and body sever: For, though all things shall pass away, His Word shall stand forever.’

When we depend on our own feelings and understanding, we end up confused. God doesn’t love me anymore! God has abandoned me in my time of need! Loving God with our mind means renewing our mind daily so that we think more of His thoughts instead of our own, Romans 12:2.

God’s will and thoughts are good, pleasing, and perfect, and we need as much of them as possible to fill and renew our minds. Renewing our minds in God’s Word is an important way of loving God.

God is a loving God, and He created us with a heart so that we would love Him wholly and absolutely. But as I mentioned earlier, we know our hearts love many other things besides God.

So what do we do to make sure we continue to love God with all of our hearts? Simply trying not to love those things doesn’t work. When our heart is turned away from the Lord and set on things such as sins, selfish preoccupations, and worldly pleasures, it has a veil on it, 2 Corinthians 3:15-16.

In other words, they stop us from seeing the Lord. But when we turn our hearts to Him, the veil is removed, and we can see the Lord again. We see His beauty, His virtues, and how wonderful He is.

Then He infuses more of what He is, including love, into us, and it’s in this way that our love for Him grows. We can turn our hearts to the Lord Jesus at any time by praying to Him, calling on His name, confessing our sins to Him, and spending time in His Word. These simple practices can remove the veil from our hearts, restore our fellowship with the Lord, and rekindle our love for Him.

When Sir Walter Raleigh was led to the block, his executioner asked him if his head lay right. Raleigh answered, ‘It matters little, my friend, how the head lies, provided the heart is right.’

Let me ask you, what does your heart speak? How does your heart lie? Are you loving God with all your heart?

LOVING GOD WITH ALL OUR SOUL

Before we look at what it means to love God with all of our soul, Deuteronomy 6:5, I think we first need to ask the question, what is the soul? All human beings are triune beings. The Godhead is made up of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. And Paul says human beings are also triune beings because we have a body, soul, and spirit, 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

OUR BODY IS EARTH CONSCIOUS

The body is of the earth and for the earth. We might describe the body as ‘Earth-conscious’, since it is the physical tool or instrument, by means of which a person’s ‘soul’ or ‘self’, by its very nature, which is invisible, is able to function in a physical world.

Although the Son existed ‘in the beginning with God’, John 1:1-2, it was necessary that ‘the Word’ should ‘become flesh’ and ‘dwell’ or ‘tabernacle’ among us, John 1:14.

The Lord needed a physical body. Paul says in Philippians 2:6-8, without the human form that Jesus took on Himself, it would have been impossible for Him to fulfil the unique purpose for which He came. And so, the Word must become flesh.

This was the divine plan, that’s why we find the writer of the letter to the Hebrews, placing the words of the Psalmist from Psalms 40:6-8, into the Lord’s mouth.

Notice that the ‘body’ was prepared for ‘me,’ Hebrews 10:5. In other words, man is more than just a bunch of chemicals. Man is housed in a physical body, and since his body is designed for earthly life, at death, the body returns to the earth, Genesis 3:19.

OUR SPIRIT IS GOD CONSCIOUS

If we consider the body to be ‘Earth-conscious’, we may think of the spirit as being ‘God-conscious’, Job 32:8. In other words, it’s that part of man’s nature which enables him to reach out to and communicate with God. It’s the spiritual dimension in man’s character, and here again, we see the difference between man and other creatures. It’s only man who can say, ‘My soul thirsts for God, for the living God’. Psalms 42:2. It’s only man who is encouraged to ‘Seek after Him, in the hope that they might feel after Him and find Him.’ Acts 17:27. It’s only man who is given the assurance that ‘He is not far from each one of us, for in Him we live and move and have our being.’ Acts 17:28. And as Solomon reminds us at death, ‘The spirit returns to God Who gave it.’ Ecclesiastes 12:7.

OUR SOUL IS SELF-CONSCIOUS

The ‘soul’ is man’s unique self. It is the part of his being which, because it is rational and moral, determines the actions performed by his body, and which, therefore, renders him personally accountable for what he does.

And so, it is man’s ‘soul’ which will ultimately be either saved or lost, depending on a person’s response to the offer of salvation which was made first possible by the coming of the Christ into the world.

The Greeks thought of the soul as the thing that integrates the whole inside. In other words, if something is messed up in our soul, our whole life is messed up. If we have bitterness or unforgiveness in our souls, it saturates everything in our lives. To the Greeks, the soul is the thing that ties heart, mind, and strength together. Loving God with all our souls means to love Him with our entire inner being.

To love God with all my soul means loving God with all I am, Psalms 62:5 / Psalms 103:1. My will, my attitudes, my intentions, my emotions, my thoughts and feelings, and my body. To love God with all your soul is to love God with your entire inner life.

Have you ever asked yourself why you are here? Why does my life feel empty at times? We all have a God-shaped space within us which can only be satisfied by Him.

People turn to all kinds of things to fill in that space: drugs, alcohol, affairs, work, etc. But that space can only be filled by God because He is the One who fits perfectly into it.

C. S. Lewis says the following.

‘The mould in which a key is made would be a strange thing if you had never seen a key, and the key itself a strange thing if you had never seen a lock. Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it, made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand.’

When we allow ourselves to go beyond just believing that God exists, our souls take us much farther than our hearts can. Your soul takes you to a solid relationship with the living Lord, and as a bonus, heaven. Loving God with all your soul means evaluating yourself and working to be everything God calls you to be.

Let me ask you some tough questions, 2 Corinthians 3:18. Do you look more like Jesus than you did last week? What characteristics, gifts, and talents set you apart?

How is God leading you to use your uniqueness to serve Him and to draw others closer to Him? Are you using your resources like time, money, talent, and energy wisely and for His good purposes? Do you represent Christ with your life?

Understanding ourselves and our own special qualities, through the help of others and the Holy Spirit, teaches us how to fulfil God’s purpose in our lives. How valuable is your soul? Are you prepared for eternity? What’s more important to you, your life or your soul? Matthew 16:24-26.

Your family, your job, your wealth, or your soul? In spite of whatever circumstances you face or will face in this life, is it not your deep desire to be able to find your way to the place where you can truly say that no matter what, ‘it is well with my soul’, that no matter what, I love God with all of my soul.

LOVING GOD WITH ALL OF OUR STRENGTH

The Hebrew word for strength, Deuteronomy 6:5, is the word ‘Me’od’, but it doesn’t mean strength in terms of muscle power. The word literally means ‘muchness’; in other words, the Israelites were to love God with all their ‘muchness’.

They are to love God with all their substance, all their possessions, everything which God has given them. They are to love him with all of their might, all their being, all of their energy, Ecclesiastes 9:10.

And as Christians, we too are to love God with all of our might, all of our actions, all of our energy. We’re to love Him not just with a portion of our life but all of our life.

There shouldn’t be any part of our lives which is kept back from loving God. When we turn our hearts to the Lord, when we turn our souls to the Lord, our strength will naturally follow.

The outward actions that our bodies perform will naturally follow. Loving God with all of our strength will be seen in the way we spend our time. Loving God with all of our strength will be seen in the way we use our energy.

In other words, there's a change which takes place, and that change is demonstrated in the way we use our physical strength to pursue the Lord. It's the idea of loving God more and more and wanting to please Him more and more with every aspect of our lives.

Remember when God commands anything of us, He doesn't force us to do anything against our will. The Israelites had a choice whether to love God with all their heart, soul, and strength or not.

Let me ask you, does anyone force you to love your husband or wife? Of course not, you love them because you choose to love them. Does anyone force you to love your children or grandchildren?

Of course not, you love them because you choose to love them. Love goes way beyond our feelings. God doesn't force us to love Him because loving God is a choice. And if we choose to love Him with all of our heart, soul, and strength, He will help us to do just that.

Isaiah says that God will give us the strength to do whatever He asks of us, Isaiah 40:29-31. We all have times when we don't feel strong, we all have times when we feel weary and weak.

We all go through times when we feel hurt, broken-hearted, physically or emotionally tired, and sometimes even spiritually exhausted. But it's during those times of weakness that we should be asking God to give us that supernatural strength to keep us going.

And when He does, you too will be able to soar like the eagle. You, too, will be able to run and walk without feeling exhausted. In other words, God will give you the strength which you need to keep moving forward.

How do we love God with all of our strength? We need to be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power, if we're going to keep moving forward, Ephesians 6:10. When we get tired and weak and feel like we can't move forward anymore, then ask God to give us strength. Pray that He will give you the power to fly hundreds of miles on the wings of Christ.

Loving God with all of our strength means asking God to remind us that our present troubles are only temporary, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18. Loving God with all of our strength is going to help us to fix our eyes on what is eternal and not on our physical weakness.

Loving God with all of our strength means we remember that He will deliver us in our times of trouble, Psalms 34:17-18. Loving God with all of our strength is going to help us to remember that God is with us when we feel like we can't go on.

Loving God with all of our strength means we remember not to give up when we're weary, Galatians 6:9. Loving God with all of our strength is going to help us to keep on sharing the Good News with others, even when it looks like nothing is happening.

The point I'm making is simply this: if we want to love God with all of our strength, then we really need to get out of our comfort zones. In other words, we need to get to the point when we've used up all of our own strength, and we start to rely on His strength.

It's easy to talk about our love for God with like-minded people. It's easy to talk about our love for God in a religious setting. But what about outside our church circle?

Loving God with all my strength means stepping out in faith. Loving God with all my strength means going out of my way, even when I'm tired and exhausted, to share the Good News with others outside of my circle.

We're called to go and share that Good News with others, and we're called to serve and care for the needs of others. But all that this requires is a degree of physical strength. The point I'm getting at is that loving God with all my strength is simple to say, but it's not always easy to do.

It takes a degree of strength to visit someone who is sick in the hospital. It takes a degree of strength to sit down and listen to someone's problems. It takes a degree of strength to help someone who has a physical or financial need.

And if we want to love God with all of our strength, then we must acknowledge that we can't do anything without His strength working in us. Don't tell me you don't have the strength to share the Good News with a stranger. Don't tell me you don't have the strength to visit someone who is sick in the hospital.

Don't tell me you don't have the strength to sit down and listen to someone's problems. Don't tell me you don't have the strength to help someone who has a physical or financial need.

Tell me you won't, because Paul says that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you, [Philippians 4:13](#). And so, we have to remember that we can't do any of these things by ourselves.

Paul tells us we have a strength working within us that enables us to keep on going forward, [Ephesians 3:20](#). All the strength we have comes from God, and He gives us the strength to serve Him and serve others.

If your life is anything like mine, you have a hundred things to juggle, like being involved in church work, work, school, a social life, hobbies, and being a husband or wife. At the end of the day, you may be left feeling drained, weak, and insufficient because you can't seem to keep up with it all.

In [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#), we can hear Paul crying out for his challenging situation to be taken away. He felt like we sometimes feel, but God has a better plan for him. Instead of removing difficult circumstances from Paul's life, God provides a way to overcome them through strengthening him.

God always has a perfect solution, and He makes that clear when He says, 'My power is made perfect in weakness,' [2 Corinthians 12:7-10](#). Because of God's grace, we can find our strength and contentment in our shortcomings. Grace meets our needs and Paul's needs because it expresses God's acceptance and pleasure in us.

Let me encourage you to ask God to give you the strength to do everything He requires of you, [Psalms 68:35](#). Let me encourage you to then go and do it with the strength He gives you. Let me encourage you to love the Lord with all your strength, all your muchness, all your substance, all your possessions, everything which God has given you.

John Wesley says the following.

'Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.'

SUMMARY

The contents of [Deuteronomy 6:4-5](#) are called the 'Shema' by the Jews, and today, we could also give it the same name, as Jesus gave the same command to Christians, [Matthew 22:37-40](#) / [Mark 12:29-31](#) / [Luke 10:27](#).

The name 'Lord' is from the Hebrew Yahweh, meaning 'He is' or 'the becoming One' and for the Jews, it was a sacred word for God. The word was considered so sacred that they wouldn't pronounce it with their lips, and so, they used the word 'Adonai', which is 'my Lord'.

God is one, and there is only one God, [Deuteronomy 4:35](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:39](#) / [Ephesians 4:6](#) / [1 Timothy 2:5](#) / [1 Corinthians 8:4](#). Though He has manifested Himself throughout human history in three different ways, through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He chose to reveal Himself only through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in order to accomplish specific works for the salvation of the world.

Israel was to love Him with all their heart, soul, and strength, which implies we're to love Him with everything we've got. In other words, God needs to be the total focus of our attention every single day of our lives, John 12:42-43 / John 14:15.

“These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.” Deuteronomy 6:6-9

Moses asks Israel to keep these commandments in their hearts, Deuteronomy 6:6. He asks them to impress them on their children, Deuteronomy 6:7. They are to talk about these commandments when they sit at home and when they walk along the road, when they lie down and when they get up, Deuteronomy 6:7.

They are to tie them as symbols on their hands and bind them on their foreheads, Deuteronomy 6:8 / Exodus 13:9 / Matthew 23:5. They are to write them on the doorframes of their houses and on their gates, Deuteronomy 6:9 / Deuteronomy 11:20.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Deuteronomy 6:8-9.

‘From the earliest days, the Jews understood these verses as literal requirements. The ‘frontlets between the eyes,’ the binding of the commandments upon their hands, and they’re putting them on the door-posts and their gates led to three kinds of devices by which these instructions were honoured: One was the ‘tsitsith’, or fringe at the four corners of the outer garment; the others were the ‘tephillin’ and the ‘mezuzah’. The ‘tephillin’ were two small boxes about one cubic inch in size, containing the Scriptures.’

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following concerning Deuteronomy 6:8-9.

‘There were four Scriptural passages inside these small containers: Exodus 13:1-10 and Exodus 11:13, also Deuteronomy 6:4-9, and Deuteronomy 11:13-21. The devices called the ‘tephillin’ are referred to as ‘phylacteries’ by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 23:5, but that is the only appearance of that word in the Bible. The ‘mezuzah’, or ‘medusah’ were similar container and was placed upon every right-hand doorpost in Jewish houses. They were also for ‘door-posts’ and for ‘your gates.’ ‘The sign was to be on the door-post of the house, representing the family unit, and upon the ‘gates’, representing the community or village.’ ‘The pious Jew touches the ‘mezuzah’ on each occasion of passing or kisses his finger and says Psalms 121:8 in Hebrew, ‘Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and forevermore.’

Sadly, when Israel forgot the Lord, things went from bad to worse, Jeremiah 2:32 / Jeremiah 23:27 / Hosea 4:6.

‘When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you—a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. Do not put the LORD your God to the test as you did at Massah. Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. Do what is right and good in the LORD’s sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors, thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the LORD said.’ Deuteronomy 6:10-19

Moses tells us that God blessed the Israelites with the material things of a land of milk and honey, Deuteronomy 6:10-11. After forty years in the wilderness, we would think that they were initially overwhelmed by the bountiful nature of the land.

Sadly, after occupying the land for many years, they began to focus on their own skills of productivity, and as a result of this, they totally lost their focus on God, Proverbs 30:8-9.

Israel was warned not to forget the LORD, who brought them out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery, Deuteronomy 6:12 / Proverbs 30:7-9. Israel is again reminded that they must fear the Lord their God, Deuteronomy 6:13.

These are the words which the devil used when tempting Jesus in the wilderness, Matthew 4:10 / Luke 4:8. Again, we're reminded that fearing God means being obedient to Him and His commands, Matthew 10:28.

Once again, Israel is commanded to have no other gods besides the Lord God; they are not to make graven images of other gods or take the name of God in vain, Deuteronomy 6:13-14.

It's possible to take an oath in God's name, Deuteronomy 6:13, but in the proper context, Matthew 5:33-37, and as Christians, we too can make oaths to God, since God Himself uses oaths, Hebrews 6:13.

Here, Israel is being told they can make an oath but only in the Name of the LORD, not in the name of any other god. Each of these first four commandments found in Exodus 20:1-11 / Deuteronomy 5:6-21, illustrates a heart, mind, and soul that's dependent exclusively upon the Lord God for help and sustenance in this life.

God wants us to serve Him because it's what we desire more than any other thing in this life. God desires our hearts to be submissive, fearful, respectful, and to act in reverence toward Him rather than doing religious things for outward show, Joel 2:12-14.

Samuel had asked Saul to have such a heart, 1 Samuel 15:22-23, and David expressed such true sorrow as recorded in Psalms 51. The prophet Isaiah is described as having such a heart, Isaiah 57:15 / Isaiah 66:1-2.

The apostle Paul also had such a great heart, 2 Corinthians 7:10, and Jesus summarised the first four commandments with this one statement, Matthew 22:37 / Luke 10:27.

They are also warned that if they rebel against His commands, then they will face the 'anger of the Lord their God', Deuteronomy 6:15. The consequences would be that Israel would be wiped off the face of the earth, Deuteronomy 6:15.

Once again, God tells them that He is a jealous God, Deuteronomy 6:15 / Deuteronomy 4:24. If you look up the word 'jealous' in a concordance you will also come across the word 'jealousy', and you will be led to that striking verse which states, 'Yahweh, whose name is Jealousy, is a jealous God', Exodus 34:14.

The problem arises because these two words today do not mean what they meant in Old Testament times, and sustain a meaning which is different, even from 1611, when the Authorised Version was produced.

I am sure that we have all discovered, in reading the older version, that problems arise because, over the years, many words have acquired very different meanings. If we had the space to spare, this fact could very easily be demonstrated.

Today we list 'jealousy' among such sins as 'envy', 'malice' and 'pride'. In fact, the Oxford Dictionary defines the word 'jealous' as, resentful towards another on account of known or suspected rivalry; envious.

Because of this, jealousy is the motivation behind a great many of the sins that people commit. But the Old Testament word at which we are looking is 'quanno', and its basic meaning is, quite simply, 'zeal' and to be 'jealous', in the Old Testament sense, was, with one or two rare exceptions, to be 'zealous' or enthusiastic or passionate.

It is in this sense that the prophet Elijah uses the word when he declares his enthusiasm for God, in 1 Kings 19:10. Similarly, when God declares that He is jealous, He tells us what it is that He is jealous of.

This means that when, in Exodus 20:5, He says, 'I am a jealous God', He's declaring His zealousness for the protection of His own honour as the one True God, Isaiah 42:80.

Israel is also warned not to test the Lord, Deuteronomy 6:16, that is, they weren't to be guilty of trying God's love and mercy. They did this in the past at Massah, Deuteronomy 6:16 / Exodus 17:1-7, and when they did, they convinced themselves that God wasn't among them.

Israel knew God was with them, after all, they had the visible signs of the cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night guiding them along. They were thirsty and began making demands upon God, rather than trusting that He would care for them as He had done with the manna and quail.

The words, 'don't put the Lord God to the test' Deuteronomy 6:16, were spoken by Jesus when He was in the wilderness being tempted by the devil to show a miracle in the wilderness, Matthew 4:7 / Luke 4:12.

After delivering the covenant message to Israel, Moses now lays down commandments in relation to one's acceptance and keeping of the law, Deuteronomy 6:17-19.

God commands His people to take 'possession' of the land of Canaan, Deuteronomy 3:18, because, at this point in time, Canaan was possessed by the Canaanites. God promised them that if they simply obeyed Him, He would fight for them, Deuteronomy 6:19, and so, they are commanded not to fear the people, Deuteronomy 3:22, but rather to trust in God.

'In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees, and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Before our eyes, the LORD sent signs and wonders—great and terrible—on Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land he promised on oath to our ancestors. The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness." Deuteronomy 6:20-25

In the future, the Israelite sons would ask their fathers, what are the meaning of the Lord's stipulations, decrees and laws and they would ask their fathers Who is the source of these commands, Deuteronomy 6:20.

The reason the young ones would ask is simply because they hadn't witnessed the miracles in Egypt and they hadn't been miraculously fed and cared for in the wilderness wanderings, Ephesians 6:1-4.

Moses tells Israel to tell their sons about God's miraculous and wonderful works in Egypt and God's great care for Israel, Deuteronomy 6:21-22. Israel was slaves to the Egyptians, but the Lord redeemed them from Egypt Deuteronomy 6:23.

Israel was to tell their sons that they are a people who belong to God as His servants and are thereby commanded to obey His will, Deuteronomy 6:24-25. Obedience to the law of God is righteousness, and so, the law is the righteousness of the people when the people obey it in response to His grace and mercy.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'Later Judaism wrongly concluded that covenant-keeping was the basis for righteousness rather than an expression of faithful devotion. But true covenant keeping in the final analysis is a matter of faith, not merely of works and ritual. Thus, the central feature of the covenant stipulations is their providing a vehicle by which genuine saving faith might be displayed, Deuteronomy 24:13 / Habakkuk 2:4 / Romans 1:17 / Romans 4:1-5 / Galatians 3:6-7.'

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

‘When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations—the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you—and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your children away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD’s anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire.’ Deuteronomy 7:1-5

DRIVING OUT THE NATIONS

There are seven nations which Moses lists here, all of which Israel was to drive out of the Promised Land, which they did successfully because the Lord was with them, [Exodus 34:11-16](#) / [Joshua 3:10](#).

The Hittites, [Deuteronomy 7:1](#), were the sons of Heth who had grown into a very powerful nation of people. The Girgashites were a little-known people who probably lived in the area just west of the Jordan, [Joshua 24:11](#).

The Amorites, [Deuteronomy 7:1](#), were a people who lived on the east side of the Jordan and northern parts of Canaan, [Deuteronomy 1:7](#). The Canaanites, [Deuteronomy 7:1](#), were a people who were descendants of Canaan, the grandson of Noah, [Genesis 10:15-18](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:7](#).

The Perizzites, [Deuteronomy 7:1](#), lived in the hill country of Palestine and were probably related to the Rephaim, the giants of the land, [Joshua 17:15](#). The Hivites, [Deuteronomy 7:1](#), were a people who lived in the far northern regions of Palestine around Mount Hermon and Lebanon, [Joshua 11:3](#) / [Judges 3:3](#).

The Jebusites, [Deuteronomy 7:1](#), were a people who lived in the southern area of Palestine, around present-day Jerusalem. The original name of the area where Jerusalem was eventually established was Jebus.

Moses gives Israel five commands in relation to their treatment of the Canaanites.

1. Israel is commanded to utterly destroy the inhabitants of Canaan, [Deuteronomy 7:2](#).

2. Israel is commanded not to make any covenants with Canaan, [Deuteronomy 7:2](#).

They were to destroy them rather than try to establish any type of relationship with Canaan.

3. Israel was to show no mercy to them; all of them were to be destroyed, [Deuteronomy 7:2](#).

If they showed them any mercy, God wouldn’t be pleased, as it was against His will, and if they showed any mercy, they would lead Israel into spiritual idolatry.

4. Israel wasn’t to marry any of the Canaanites, [Deuteronomy 7:3](#).

If they married these foreign women, this would only lead to them accepting false gods, just to please their foreign wives, [Deuteronomy 7:4](#) / [2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1](#).

5. Israel was to destroy all the altars and pillars in the land of Canaan that were dedicated to other gods, [Deuteronomy 7:5](#).

One of those images they were to destroy was the ‘Asherah’, the ‘goddess of the Sidonians’, [1 Kings 11:5](#). This is first mentioned in [Exodus 34:13](#), with the same command to destroy it.

When Abraham was in the land of Canaan almost five hundred years earlier, the iniquity of the inhabitants of the land at that time hadn’t yet reached the point of no moral return, [Genesis 15:16](#) / [Deuteronomy 7:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 18:9-12](#) / [Leviticus 18:21-25](#). However, at this time, when Israel was about to enter the land, the iniquity of the Canaanites was full-grown.

Under no circumstances were the inhabitants of Canaan, who maintained the wicked culture that is mentioned here, to survive history. The Israelites were not to marry them, [Deuteronomy 7:3-4](#) / [Numbers 25:1-9](#), and neither were any remnants of their idolatrous relics of worship to be preserved, [Deuteronomy 7:5](#).

‘For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments. But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him. Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees, and laws I give you today.’ [Deuteronomy 7:6-11](#)

Israel are a people holy to the LORD their God, who chose chosen them out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be His people, His treasured possession, [Deuteronomy 7:6](#) / [1 Peter 2:9](#).

God didn’t set His affection on them and choose them because they were more numerous than other peoples, for Israel were the fewest of all peoples, [Deuteronomy 7:7](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Increase, [Deuteronomy 1:10](#) / [Deuteronomy 10:22](#) had taken place because of the very blessing of God spoken of in [Deuteronomy 7:8](#).’

Although Moses led the people, it was God who owned them and He owned them because it was God who ‘redeemed’ them out of Egypt, [Deuteronomy 7:8](#). Similarly, God owns Christians today, through the blood sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross, [Acts 20:28](#) / [1 Corinthians 6:20](#) / [1 Corinthians 7:23](#). As Christians, we were redeemed from the slavery of sin by Jesus’ blood, [Colossians 1:20-23](#).

God chose Israel because of the ‘love’ He showed in the covenant He made with Abraham, [Deuteronomy 7:8](#) / [Genesis 12:1-3](#) / [Galatians 3:6-9](#) / [Romans 9:6-18](#). God also chose Israel because He was determined to keep His covenant He made with Abraham, [Genesis 12:1-3](#) / [Galatians 3:6-9](#).

In other words, God didn’t choose Israel because of who they were; He chose them because of His promise to their fathers. God wants Israel to know that He keeps His promises, [Deuteronomy 7:9](#).

Those who hate God, God will repay to their face by destruction and He will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate Him, [Deuteronomy 7:10](#). Because God is faithful, Israel must take care to follow the commands, decrees, and laws He gives them, [Deuteronomy 7:11](#).

‘If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your ancestors. He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land—your grain, new wine, and olive oil—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you. You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor will any of your livestock be without young. The LORD will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you.’ [Deuteronomy 7:12-15](#)

Moses tells Israel that God, out of His love, will reward those who are faithful to him and punish those who reject His will, [Deuteronomy 7:12](#). Anyone who recognises God’s will for mankind through obedience can expect to be blessed. This again reminds us that God’s blessings are dependent upon our obedience to Him.

God promises to keep His covenant agreement He made with Abraham, [Deuteronomy 7:13](#), that is, the promise of land, they will be a great nation, and the seed promise, [Genesis 12:1-3](#).

He will love them by giving them the blessings of many children, and He will bless the fruit which comes from the ground. Those who are obedient to Him will be blessed with grain, new wine, and oil, and God will multiply their cattle and flocks of sheep Deuteronomy 7:13-14.

Unlike Egypt, which was plagued with disease, Israel would be blessed to be a healthy nation free from plagues, Deuteronomy 7:15. He will remove sicknesses and diseases from the people and lay them upon their enemies, Deuteronomy 7:15.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There seems to be here not so much as a reference to the plagues inflicted miraculously by God on Egypt, Exodus 15:26, as to the terrible diseases with which, above other countries, Egypt was infested, Deuteronomy 28:27 / Deuteronomy 28:35. It is not without significance that Egypt, which represents in Scripture the world as contrasted with the Church, should thus above other lands lie under the power of disease and death.’

‘You must destroy all the peoples the LORD your God gives over to you. Do not look on them with pity and do not serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you. You may say to yourselves, “These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?” But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear. Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until even the survivors who hide from you have perished. Do not be terrified by them, for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God. The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you. But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed. He will give their kings into your hand, and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. No one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them. The images of their gods you are to burn in the fire. Do not covet the silver and gold on them, and do not take it for yourselves, or you will be ensnared by it, for it is detestable to the LORD your God. Do not bring a detestable thing into your house, or you, like it, will be set apart for destruction. Regard it as vile and utterly detest it, for it is set apart for destruction.’ Deuteronomy 7:16-26

Moses again reminds Israel to destroy everyone in Canaan, and they have to show no pity towards them, Deuteronomy 7:16. They should not serve their gods and not be afraid of the Canaanites, Deuteronomy 7:16. If at any point they do become fearful, they should remember all the mighty deeds God did in Egypt, Deuteronomy 7:17-19 / Philippians 4:13.

When Israel came face to face with these mighty nations, they were to put their trust in God. In turn, God would ‘send the hornet among them’, Deuteronomy 7:20.

In other words, God would be with Israel by way of a hornet in that He would strike terror into all their enemies, Exodus 23:27-30. The ‘hornet’ sent by God is His miraculous care for them, Joshua 24:12. Israel was not to be afraid because God was going to drive out the nations, ‘little by little’, Deuteronomy 7:21-22, that is, slowly but surely.

Israel would defeat the nations of Canaan, but notice that God didn’t overthrow them all at once; this was because the wild beasts would take over the civilised areas and farms, Deuteronomy 7:22.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Israelites were not as yet sufficiently numerous to fill the whole land occupied by the seven nations mentioned, Deuteronomy 7:1. And as wild and ferocious animals might be expected to multiply where either there are no inhabitants, or the place is but thinly peopled, therefore God tells them that, though at present, by force of arms, they might be able to expel them, it would be impolitic so to do, lest the beasts of the field should multiply upon them.’

Because Israel defeated all these nations in Canaan, Moses wants Israel to understand that God really does mean it when He told them He loves them. Moses wants them to understand that God will fight for them and they will be victorious as long as they are obedient to Him and keep His commandments, Deuteronomy 7:23-24.

Moses also wants to teach an attitude in Israel in relation to the wicked practices of the Canaanites. Moses tells them that foreign wives, images, and Canaanite gold and silver were to be despised and detested Deuteronomy 7:25-26.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Deuteronomy 7:25.

‘Paul is probably alluding to this command in Romans 2:22, and his accusation of the Jew thus shows that the prohibition of the text was very necessary.’

Rather than being curious and experimental with Canaan’s idolatry and riches, Israel was to develop an attitude of hatred and disgust for those things ‘detestable’, Deuteronomy 7:26.

A ‘detestable’ thing was cursed, banned, forbidden, things that should be utterly destroyed, forbidden for common use. Israel was to develop an attitude of hatred for the things that God had a hatred for, Romans 2:22 / Romans 12:9.

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

‘Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years, to humble and test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. Your clothes did not wear out, and your feet did not swell during these forty years. Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you. Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in obedience to him and revering him. For the LORD, your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.’ Deuteronomy 8:1-10

Moses now warns Israel to be careful to follow every command he’s giving them, so that they may live and increase and may enter and possess the land God promised on oath to their ancestors, Deuteronomy 8:1 / Deuteronomy 11:10-11.

God commanded Israel to enter Canaan, but they disobeyed His command, Numbers 13-14, and as a result of their disobedience, God punished His people; those who were twenty years old and older would die in the wilderness, Numbers 14:26-35.

Moses reminds Israel of some valuable lessons they must learn from the time they wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Those who did survive also had some lessons to learn; they had to learn that God was humbling them through their trials of difficulty, Deuteronomy 8:2.

God disciplined Israel with forty years of testing to also humble them, Hebrews 2:10. God’s discipline in reference to our failure to keep His commandments is an opportunity to grow in humility; we shouldn’t resist the discipline which comes from the Lord, Hebrews 12:6-11.

Being humbled by God helps us set our minds on spiritual things, Colossians 3:1-2, and we too should learn the lesson from Israel, 1 Corinthians 10:11. During Israel's forty years of wilderness wandering, they had to become totally dependent on God; they were humbled by having to live on the same diet every day, Exodus 16:1-18.

God gave them manna when they were hungry, Deuteronomy 8:3. They were taught that man does not live on bread alone, Deuteronomy 8:3. That is, they learned that life wasn't for the purpose of living for that which sustains life, but for being spiritually sustained by the worship of God, Matthew 4:4 / Luke 4:4.

Because Israel complained about the food, they obviously showed that they weren't appreciative of God's care, they need to learn that difficult times, testing times, can actually help them to grow in their faith, James 1:2-3.

Their clothes and sandals never wore out, Deuteronomy 8:4, which implies this was a continuous miracle, which again taught them to rely on God for everything in life, Deuteronomy 29:5-6 / Exodus 12:34-35 / Matthew 6:25-34. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'God never permits any tribulation to befall his followers, which he does not design to turn to their advantage. When he permits us to hunger, it is that his mercy may be the more observable in providing us with the necessities of life. Privations, in the way of providence, are the forerunners of mercy and goodness abundant.'

As Christians, we should always be thankful for God's care for us because this demonstrates our trust in Him to take care of all our needs, Acts 22:16 / Hebrews 2:17-18. Israel had to learn that obedience is important to God, especially when they were going through suffering, Hebrews 5:8 / Hebrews 12:5-11.

We know that Jesus suffered greatly, and His suffering came from wicked men, even though He didn't do anything wrong. He suffered because these wicked men had hard hearts. God's people suffered in the wilderness under the same principle as that of Jesus.

Israel was disciplined by God through their hunger and difficult times, and they learned that God would give them help and that He would see them through difficult days. As Christians, when God disciplines us, we too must learn the lesson that He will help us through those difficult times.

Israel are to know in their heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD their God disciplines them, Deuteronomy 8:5. Israel are reminded that they should 'observe God's commands and walk in obedience to God and revere Him', Deuteronomy 8:6.

This again tells us that fearing the Lord requires obedience to His will for us, Deuteronomy 5:29 / Deuteronomy 6:1-3. The same principle is taught in the New Testament, Titus 3:8 / 1 Peter 1:17.

God is bringing them into a good land, a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills, a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey, a land where bread will not be scarce and Israel will lack nothing, a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills, Deuteronomy 8:7-9.

When they have eaten and are satisfied, Israel is to praise God for the good land He has given them, Deuteronomy 8:10. If they obeyed God's commands, then they will live, God will give them Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, Exodus 3:8 / Matthew 6:33.

DO NOT FORGET THE LORD

'Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws, and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds and flocks grow large, and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then

your heart will become proud, and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of a hard rock. He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.” But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today. If you ever forget the LORD your God and follow other gods and worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will surely be destroyed. Like the nations the LORD destroyed before you, so you will be destroyed for not obeying the LORD your God.’

Deuteronomy 8:11-20

God will not only give Israel Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, but they will also multiply in children, flocks, and wealth. This, however, will only happen if they don’t forget His commandments during these days of plenty, Deuteronomy 8:11-13 / Proverbs 30:9 / Luke 16:9.

God humbled Israel and they learned to trust Him when He miraculously brought them out of Egypt and survived the terrible wilderness, Exodus 16:1 / Numbers 21:10-35, where there were venomous snakes, Numbers 21:6, and scorpions and when they had no water, Exodus 17:6 / Psalm 78:15-16 / 1 Corinthians 10:4, and no food, Exodus 16:13, God tested them with these trials and provided their every need, Deuteronomy 8:14-16.

Now Moses warns Israel about becoming self-efficient during these days of wealth, Deuteronomy 8:17, and they are to remember their past and how God was responsible for their present as well as their future blessings, Deuteronomy 8:18.

It was God who made it possible for the land to produce for the people, but in their diligence to work the land, they would forget that it was God who made all things grow for their wealth.

When we are blessed, all glory must be given to God, who gave us the gifts to produce, but He also gives the increase to the work of our hands, Daniel 4:28. Our recognition of the fruits of our hands should be an opportunity to be grateful to God for working in our lives.

The day that Israel forgets God and follows other gods and worships and bows down to them, will be the day that they will perish, Deuteronomy 8:19-20. Sadly, this is exactly what Israel would do in the future, and God would punish them by sending them into Babylonian captivity, Jeremiah 2:32 / Hosea 4:6.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

‘Hear, Israel: You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to the sky. The people are strong and tall—Anakites! You know about them and have heard it said: “Who can stand up against the Anakites?” But be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you. After the LORD, your God, has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, “The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.” No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you. It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.’ Deuteronomy 9:1-6

NOT BECAUSE OF ISRAEL'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Previously, Moses told Israel of their failure to keep the Lord's command to take possession of Canaan, [Deuteronomy 1:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:26](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This was spoken about the eleventh month of the fortieth year of their journeying, and it was on the first month of the following year they passed over; and during this interim Moses died.'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'In referring to their various rebellions, Moses here, as elsewhere, has regard not so much for the order of time as to that of subject, [Deuteronomy 1:9-15](#).'

We remember the first time Israel came to Canaan, they sent out twelve spies into the land, but the spies came back with a bad report, speaking about fortified cities and giants in the land, [Numbers 13:25-33](#). Here, Moses tells Israel that they now know what to expect, but they should also know that if they act in faith and trust God.

Israel is now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than them, with large cities that have walls up to the sky, [Deuteronomy 9:1](#). The people are strong and tall, Anakites! Israel knows about them and has heard it said, Who can stand up against the Anakites? [Deuteronomy 9:2](#).

Israel are assured that God is the one who goes across ahead of them like a devouring fire and He will destroy them and subdue them before them and Israel will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised, [Deuteronomy 9:3](#). They will take possession of the land because God has given the land into their hands, [Deuteronomy 1:30](#) / [John 15:5](#).

I guess we could ask, why did God give the land to Israel? Did God give Israel the land because they were so righteous? The answer is certainly not, [Ezekiel 36:20-31](#).

They had failed to carry out God's will a few times, and they were certainly guilty of sinning against Him. Israel didn't receive the Promised Land from God because of their righteousness, [Deuteronomy 9:4-5](#).

God used Israel to drive the Canaanites out because they were wicked people and were heavily involved in idolatry, [Deuteronomy 9:5](#). God gave Canaan to Israel because He had made this promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, [Deuteronomy 9:5](#) / [Genesis 12:1-3](#) / [Galatians 3:16](#).

Their victory over these wicked Canaanites would stand as a warning to Israel and the surrounding nations that when a nation gives up on God, God gives up on it, [Genesis 15:16](#).

If Israel ever gave up on God, they themselves would be driven from the land as they drove the Canaanites from the land. Moses is now about to list all the times Israel had sinned against the Lord, and notice that Israel is described as a 'stiff-necked people', [Deuteronomy 9:6](#) / [Exodus 32:9](#) / [Exodus 33:3](#) / [Exodus 33:5](#) / [Exodus 34:9](#) / [Isaiah 48:4](#) / [1 Corinthians 10:12](#).

THE GOLDEN CALF

'Remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the LORD your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD. At Horeb, you aroused the LORD's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you. When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water. The LORD gave me two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments the LORD proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire, on the day of the

assembly. At the end of the forty days and forty nights, the LORD gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant. Then the LORD told me, “Go down from here at once, because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have turned away quickly from what I commanded them and have made an idol for themselves.” And the LORD said to me, “I have seen this people, and they are a stiff-necked people indeed! Let me alone, so that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make you into a nation stronger and more numerous than they.” So I turned and went down from the mountain while it was ablaze with fire. And the two tablets of the covenant were in my hands. When I looked, I saw that you had sinned against the LORD your God; you had made for yourselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD had commanded you. So I took the two tablets and threw them out of my hands, breaking them to pieces before your eyes. Then once again I fell prostrate before the LORD for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the LORD’s sight and so arousing his anger. I feared the anger and wrath of the LORD, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again the LORD listened to me. And the LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too. Also, I took that sinful thing of yours, the calf you had made, and burned it in the fire. Then I crushed it and ground it to powder as fine as dust and threw the dust into a stream that flowed down the mountain. You also made the LORD angry at Taberah, at Massah and at Kibroth Hattaavah. And when the LORD sent you out from Kadesh Barnea, he said, “Go up and take possession of the land I have given you.” But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You did not trust him or obey him. You have been rebellious against the LORD ever since I have known you. I lay prostrate before the LORD those forty days and forty nights because the LORD had said he would destroy you. I prayed to the LORD and said, “Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Overlook the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness, and their sin. Otherwise, the country from which you brought us will say, ‘Because the LORD was not able to take them into the land he had promised them, and because he hated them, he brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.’ But they are your people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm.”

Deuteronomy 9:7-29

Israel is to remember this and never forget how they aroused the anger of God in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 9:7. From the day they left Egypt until they arrived here, they have been rebellious against God, Deuteronomy 9:7. Israel, the stiff-necked nation, rebelled against God’s will when they left Egypt, Exodus 32:7-29 / Exodus 34:1-4. Just in case Israel becomes arrogant in their upcoming conquests, they must remember how easy it was for their fathers to rebel at Mount Sinai, that is, Horeb, Deuteronomy 9:8, in making the golden calf, Exodus 32-33. God, their Father, had redeemed them from Egypt and sustained them in the desert, but they were ungrateful and sinned against the Lord.

Moses had heard the noise, Exodus 32:17-18, but hadn’t seen anything while upon Sinai receiving the law written on tablets of stone, Deuteronomy 9:9-10 / Exodus 31:18 / Exodus 32:15-16.

The NET Bible says the following.

‘The very finger of God, Deuteronomy 9:10. This is a double figure of speech (1) in which God is ascribed human features (anthropomorphism) and (2) in which a part stands for the whole (synecdoche). That is, God, as Spirit, has no literal finger, nor, if he had, would he write with his finger. Rather, the sense is that God himself, not Moses in any way, was responsible for the composition of the Ten Commandments, Exodus 31:18 / Exodus 32:16 / Exodus 34:1.’ A Moses approaches the camp and sees the chaos and molten calf, he is horrified, Deuteronomy 9:11-12 / Exodus 32:1 / Exodus 32:19-21. Because God was going to destroy His people, Deuteronomy 8:13-14, Moses’ only hope to save Israel and Aaron, Exodus 32, was to pray to God and ask Him not to do so.

Because Israel sinned at Mount Sinai, God was willing to start a new nation from the seed of Moses, Deuteronomy 8:14. However, this plea to Moses by the people to intercede for Israel was answered by Moses as he pleaded for their forgiveness. Moses’ intercession focused on an appeal to God’s love and mercy, and His faithfulness to keep His promise to Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3 / Exodus 32:11-14.

Moses reminds this current generation that God had clearly told Israel not to make or worship any graven images, but yet, these stiff-necked people did it anyway, [Deuteronomy 8:15-16](#) / [Exodus 20:4](#) / [Exodus 20:22-23](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:12-16](#).

They violated God's law, which was sinful, [1 John 3:4](#). The ten commandments written on the stone tablets were the conditions for the covenant. The covenant was thus broken when the conditions were broken by the people who sinned by reverting to the false gods of Egypt, [Exodus 32:19](#).

If His promises weren't kept, the Egyptians would mock the supposed 'false god' of the Israelites who led them into the wilderness to die. We must remember that God was willing to carry out His threat.

When Moses broke the tablets of stone because of the sin of the people, [Deuteronomy 9:17](#), it was a symbol of breaking the covenant between God and Israel.

Horried at the sight of Israel's sin, Moses throws the two tablets of stone on the ground, which results in them being broken to pieces before the people, and then he falls on his face in mourning, [Deuteronomy 8:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Moses interceded for the people before he came down from the mountain the first time, [Exodus 32:11-13](#). This intercession is only briefly alluded to in this verse. Afterwards, he spent another forty days on the mountain in fasting and prayer to obtain a complete restitution of the covenant, [Exodus 34:28](#). It is these second forty days, and the intercession of Moses made therein, [Exodus 34:9](#), that are more particularly brought forward here and in [Deuteronomy 9:25-29](#).'

Moses became really frightened of the anger and displeasure of the Lord, seeing that the people had sinned by making the calf and so, Moses, the prophet of God, quickly takes the image, burns it with fire, grinds it into small pieces as fine as dust, and throws the dust into the brook, [Deuteronomy 8:18-21](#) / [Exodus 32:20](#) / [Exodus 32:30-35](#) / [Deuteronomy 10:6](#) / [Numbers 20:24-26](#).

After leaving Sinai, Israel sinned again at Taberah, [Deuteronomy 9:22](#), when they complained against the Lord about the hardship they were going through, [Numbers 11:1-3](#) / [Numbers 11:34](#).

They also sinned at Massah, [Deuteronomy 9:22](#), when they became thirsty, it was there, they put the Lord to the test, they wondered if God was amongst them or not, [Exodus 17:7](#).

Rather than praying to God about it, they complained and blamed God for their misery. When they were about to stone Moses to death, God intervened and gave them water from a rock, [Exodus 17:1-7](#). Israel also sinned at Kibroth Hattaavah, [Deuteronomy 9:22](#). When they weren't happy just eating manna, they wanted some meat to eat, [Numbers 11:4](#).

God satisfied their ungratefulness by causing a great multitude of quail to fly into the camp, [Numbers 11:18-20](#). Israel began gathering the meat, cooking, and eating it, but while the meat was chewed in their mouths.

God killed many with a great plague and the people were buried at Kibroth Hattaavah, which means 'graves of cravings', [Numbers 11:33-34](#). Israel also sinned at Kadesh-Barnea, [Deuteronomy 9:23](#), when they refused to take possession of the land of Canaan as the Lord had commanded, [Numbers 13:25-14:45](#).

It was after this sin that the Lord had determined to wipe Israel from the face of the earth because of their wicked and rebellious behaviour. We can almost feel how disappointed God was when He says, 'you have been rebellious against the LORD ever since I have known you,' [Deuteronomy 9:24](#) / [John 16:9](#) / [Hebrews 3:1-4:10](#).

Oberst, in his commentary, points out the following descriptions concerning Israel.

1. Stiff-necked, [Deuteronomy 9:6](#) / [Deuteronomy 9:13](#).
2. Rebellious, [Deuteronomy 9:7](#) / [Deuteronomy 9:23-24](#).
3. Corrupted themselves, [Deuteronomy 9:12](#).
4. Provoked Jehovah to wrath, [Deuteronomy 9:7-8](#) / [Deuteronomy 9:22](#).

5. Believed not God, Deuteronomy 9:23.

6. ‘Sinned’ and ‘were evil,’ Deuteronomy 9:18.

7. Quickly turned aside, Deuteronomy 9:12.’

It’s then that Moses falls down before the Lord God and prays for forty days and forty nights on behalf of the people Deuteronomy 9:25. He calls upon the Lord to remember the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that He may make Israel a great nation, give them a land to dwell in and bless all nations through the seed of Abraham, Deuteronomy 9:26-27 / Genesis 12:1-3. God heard Moses’ prayer and accepted it, Numbers 14:20-24. Moses says to God, if He doesn’t do everything He has promised, if He doesn’t keep His to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the country from which He brought Israel will say, because the LORD was not able to take them into the land He had promised them, and because He hated them, He brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 9:28.

Moses reminds God that Israel are His people, Ephesians 1:4, His inheritance that He brought out by His great power and His outstretched arm, Deuteronomy 9:29.

Once again, we’re reminded in this chapter that God’s blessings are conditional upon being obedient to Him and His word. We’re reminded that God will keep His promises, and more importantly, we begin to understand the patience, 2 Peter 3:9, and love of God with sinful people, 1 John 4:7-11.

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

‘At that time, the LORD said to me, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones and come up to me on the mountain. Also, make a wooden ark. I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke. Then you are to put them in the ark.” So I made the ark out of acacia wood and chiselled out two stone tablets like the first ones, and I went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hands. The LORD wrote on these tablets what he had written before, the Ten Commandments he had proclaimed to you on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me. Then I came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the ark I had made, as the LORD commanded me, and they are there now. (The Israelites travelled from the wells of Bene Jaakan to Moserah. There, Aaron died and was buried, and Eleazar, his son, succeeded him as priest. From there, they travelled to Gudgodah and on to Jotbathah, a land with streams of water. At that time, the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister and to pronounce blessings in his name, as they still do today. That is why the Levites have no share or inheritance among their fellow Israelites; the LORD is their inheritance, as the LORD your God told them.) Now I had stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights, as I did the first time, and the LORD listened to me at this time also. It was not his will to destroy you. “Go,” the LORD said to me, “and lead the people on their way, so that they may enter and possess the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.” Deuteronomy 10:1-11

TABLETS LIKE THE FIRST ONES

Moses begins by saying ‘at that time’, Deuteronomy 10:1, that is, the time Israel remained at Sinai, Deuteronomy 9:25-29. At that time, Moses was to chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones and come up to God on the mountain, Deuteronomy 10:1 / Exodus 34:1.

It appears that Moses made a temporary ark to store the two new tables, [Exodus 25:5](#) / [Exodus 25:10](#), in until the Ark of the Covenant could be constructed and the testimony could be placed inside it, [Deuteronomy 10:1-3](#) / [Exodus 40:20](#).

The final ark was made by Bezaleel which was the permanent structure that contained the tablets when the tabernacle and its furnishings were completed, [Exodus 37:1](#).

God's Word is very important in the life of Christians, they are 'God-breathed', [2 Timothy 3:16](#), that is, inspired by God Himself. His Word should be at the centre of our whole life, [2 Kings 22:8-23:25](#).

God wrote on these tablets what He had written before, the Ten Commandments He had proclaimed to Moses on the mountain, out of the fire, on the day of the assembly, and God gave them to Moses, [Deuteronomy 10:4](#) / [Exodus 20:1](#). Then Moses came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the ark he had made, as God commanded him, [Deuteronomy 10:5](#).

God cut out the first tablets of stone on which the commandments were written, [Exodus 31:18](#), but after the Israelites rebelled, Moses broke the original set of stones, [Exodus 32:19](#), signifying Israel's breaking of the conditions of the covenant.

Because the priesthood was to remain in the seed of Aaron, it is proof that God forgave Aaron for his sin at Sinai. Aaron died at Mount Hor, [Numbers 20:28](#) / [Deuteronomy 32:50](#), for an entirely different sin; he didn't trust or honour God, [Numbers 20:6-13](#).

Eleazar, his son, succeeded him as priest, [Deuteronomy 10:6](#). Israel again rebelled, and it was 'at that time' while they were at Mount Sinai that the Levites were separated from the people to be priests on behalf of the people, [Numbers 3:5-37](#). From there, Israel travelled to Gudgodah and on to Jotbathah, a land with streams of water, [Deuteronomy 10:7](#).

Kline, in his commentary, says the following concerning [Deuteronomy 10:6-7](#).

'[Deuteronomy 10:6-7](#) are relative to the context, for they enhance the covenant-renewing grace of God by recalling, just here, that the Lord re-instituted the priesthood of Aaron.'

At that time, God set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister and to pronounce blessings in His name, as they still do today, [Deuteronomy 10:7-8](#).

The Levites would receive no inheritance of land in Canaan, [Deuteronomy 10:9](#) / [Joshua 18:7](#), and so, weren't responsible for cultivating the land. The Lord Himself was their inheritance, which meant that they were to be supported by the other tribes.

The Levites received cities throughout the land, and the pasture lands around the cities, [Numbers 35:1-8](#). The people could then come to these cities with their offerings for the spiritual ministry that was provided by the Levites. After their repentance, God called on Moses to cut out their own tablets of stone on which He would again write the commandments, [Exodus 34:1](#).

Moses had stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights, as He did the first time, and God listened to him at this time also and it was not God's will to destroy them, [Deuteronomy 10:10](#).

Israel is once again reminded that they must obey God's commands to go and take possession of the land, [Deuteronomy 10:11](#). Moses then comes down and puts the tablets into the ark and prepares the people to go into Canaan and possess the land which God had 'sworn to their ancestors to give them', [Deuteronomy 10:11](#).

FEAR THE LORD

'And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's

commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good? To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD set his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations—as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. For the LORD, your God, is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing. And you are to love those who are foreigners, for you yourselves were foreigners in Egypt. Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is the one you praise; he is your God, who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. Your ancestors who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.’ Deuteronomy 10:12-22

Moses asks Israel, ‘What does the LORD your God ask of you?’, [Deuteronomy 10:12](#), which is the same question that Micah would ask many years later, [Micah 6:8](#). Solomon wrote that this was the whole duty of man, [Ecclesiastes 12:12-14](#).

Moses earlier said the same thing, [Deuteronomy 6:4-5](#), and will go on to say it a multitude of other times in this book, [Deuteronomy 10:20](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:1](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:3](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:22](#).

Moses tells them that if Israel wants to receive the Promised Land, they must do four things.

1. Israel must fear God, [Deuteronomy 10:12](#).

If anyone truly fears the Lord, this will be seen in their obedience to God and His will, [Deuteronomy 5:29](#) / [Deuteronomy 6:1-3](#). To fear God is to be aware of His anger and wrath, which would be the result of breaking His laws. This is the kind of fear Moses had towards the Lord, [Deuteronomy 9:19](#).

2. Israel must walk in all of God’s ways, [Deuteronomy 10:12](#).

This means they have to walk differently, that is, they must live differently from any other people. Those around should know they are different because of the way they live. Their lives must be one of service for His glory, [Philippians 3:20](#).

3. Israel must return love toward God, [Deuteronomy 10:12](#).

The only way to demonstrate if they truly loved God was by obeying His commandments, [Deuteronomy 7:9](#) / [John 14:15](#). God earnestly desired the people’s affection, and He didn’t want Israel to break His heart by being disobedient.

4. Israel must serve the LORD their God with everything they’ve got and observe His commands, [Deuteronomy 10:13](#).

Israel had to learn to trust God and remove any sinlessness from their lives, [Romans 6:12-13](#).

Israel was no longer servants in Egypt but rather servants of God because it was God who had redeemed them from Egyptian slavery, and so they now belonged to Him. They didn’t deserve to receive God’s blessings, but Moses helped Israel understand that even though they were sinners, God still loved them.

When we understand that all the galaxies of the heavens, [Deuteronomy 10:14](#), to the minute particles of existence on earth, originated from God, and that He is overall, then our response to Him in obedience to His will, [Colossians 1:16-18](#).

He is the Creator of all things and exercises His sovereign will over creation. He chooses one person to favour over another and makes His promises to all humanity. Yet God set His affection on Israel’s ancestors and loved them, and He chose Israel, their descendants, above all the nations, [Deuteronomy 10:15](#).

Circumcision should be the response of Israel, [Deuteronomy 10:16](#), but this circumcision wasn’t only of the flesh, [Genesis 17:10](#), but of the heart, in that the Israelites were to change their personality from being stiff-necked, [Deuteronomy 10:16](#), to being obedient, [Leviticus 26:41](#) / [Deuteronomy 30:6](#) / [Jeremiah 4:4](#) / [Jeremiah 9:26](#) / [Ezekiel 44:7](#) / [Ezekiel 44:9](#) / [Romans 2:28-29](#) / [Colossians 2:11-12](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The grounds on which circumcision was imposed as essential by the Law are the same as those on which Baptism is required in the Gospel. The latter in the New Testament is strictly analogous to the former under the Old, Colossians 2:11-12.’

Because of who God is, that is, because He is the ‘God of gods and Lord of lords’, Deuteronomy 10:17 / Isaiah 9:6 / 1 Timothy 6:15 / Revelation 17:14 / Revelation 19:16, He and He alone is worthy of our praise.

The Lord shows preference to no man but rather makes the distinction between good and evil, Deuteronomy 10:17.

The Lord of all is the God of love and care, even for the fatherless, the widow, and the foreigner, Deuteronomy 10:18-19.

Loving foreigners was basically Israel’s great commission. They were to be a nation that reached out to those who were not Israelites, those who had been deceived by the false religions of men.

As a nation of priests, Israel was to be a national priesthood to the world, Exodus 19:5-6 / 1 Peter 2:9. They were to behave as God does, that is, He doesn’t want any to perish but come to repentance, 2 Peter 3:9.

Israel is to fear God and serve Him, and they are to hold fast to Him and take their oaths in His name, Deuteronomy 10:20. God is the one they should praise because He is their God who performed for Israel those great and awesome wonders they saw with their own eyes, Deuteronomy 10:21.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is an eternal honour to any soul to be in the friendship of God. Why are people ashamed of being taught religion? Because they know nothing of religion. He who knows his Maker may glory in his God, for without him what has any soul but disgrace, pain, shame, and perdition? How strange it is that those who fear God should be ashamed to own it, while sinners boldly proclaim their relationship to Satan!’

Seventy people went into Egypt, Exodus 1:5, and now they are a nation, as numerous as the stars in the sky, just as God had promised Abraham, Deuteronomy 10:22 / Genesis 12:1-3.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

‘Love the LORD your God and keep his requirements, his decrees, his laws, and his commands always. Remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the LORD your God: his majesty, his mighty hand, his outstretched arm; the signs he performed and the things he did in the heart of Egypt, both to Pharaoh king of Egypt and to his whole country; what he did to the Egyptian army, to its horses and chariots, how he overwhelmed them with the waters of the Red Sea as they were pursuing you, and how the LORD brought lasting ruin on them. It was not your children who saw what he did for you in the wilderness until you arrived at this place, and what he did to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab the Reubenite, when the earth opened its mouth right in the middle of all Israel and swallowed them up with their households, their tents and every living thing that belonged to them. But it was your own eyes that saw all these great things the LORD has done.’ Deuteronomy 11:1-7

LOVE AND OBEY THE LORD

Moses begins by reminding Israel that they must love and obey God, Deuteronomy 11:1. Love and obedience must go together, 1 John 2:3-6 / 1 John 4:7-11 / 1 John 4:19 / 1 John 5:3 / Revelation 2:4.

There were still some in Israel who were old enough to remember and saw what God had done, and so, Moses encourages them to ‘love the Lord your God’, Deuteronomy 11:1.

Israel’s love for God would be demonstrated in them keeping God’s laws always, John 14:15. He expects them to fear, obey, love, and serve Him with all their heart, Deuteronomy 10:12-13 /

Deuteronomy 10:20.

Out of love for them, God had performed great miracles in their sight, even though some in this new generation never saw or witnessed them, Deuteronomy 11:2, and He has promised them a productive land in Canaan, Deuteronomy 11:1-12.

Many heard what Moses had said, and many had seen the mighty works of the Lord God in Egypt and beyond, Deuteronomy 11:3-6. They knew of the promise to make Abraham a great nation and that God had fulfilled that promise, Deuteronomy 10:22.

God chose Israel because He loved them and had made a promise to them through Abraham, Deuteronomy 7:6-8, and because God redeemed Israel out of the bondage of Egypt, Deuteronomy 7:8 / Deuteronomy 9:26.

Though God had done so much for Israel, they were rebellious against His will, Deuteronomy 9:24. Israel witnessed the miraculous consequences of rebellion against the Lord’s sovereign will, when Korah, Dathan and Abiram desired the priesthood, Deuteronomy 11:6 / Numbers 16:24-33. It was then that the Lord opened up the earth and swallowed the rebellious up in the sight of all Israel.

Oberst, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Concerning the dramatic and terrible judgment of the rebels, Dathan, Abiram, etc., One would think that such an event would have put a stop to all thoughts of rebellion, murmuring, and disobedience for a long time to come, but on the very next day the people were murmuring against Moses, saying, ‘Ye killed the people of Jehovah,’ Numbers 16.’ They saw with their own eyes everything God had done, Deuteronomy 11:7. God’s judgments on the parents with such great events, therefore, should motivate obedience in the lives of the children who were present at the time Moses spoke these words east of the Jordan.

‘Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, and so that you may live long in the land the LORD swore to your ancestors to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.’ Deuteronomy 11:8-12

God had performed many miraculous and fearful miracles before the eyes of Israel, and so they must ‘observe all the commandments’ that God is giving them, Deuteronomy 11:1.

Those who keep the commandments of God will have the Promised Land to look forward to, Deuteronomy 11:8-9. A land ‘flowing with milk and honey,’ Deuteronomy 11:9, a land that’s totally different from Egypt, Deuteronomy 11:10.

In Egypt, which was basically a desert land, they had to continually build irrigation systems from the Nile River in order to produce crops. But in Canaan, there would be sufficient natural rain where they wouldn’t have to work additionally to grow crops through the construction of irrigation systems, Deuteronomy 11:11. Canaan is a place that God cares for and sends rain upon it, that it may produce much fruit for its inhabitants, Deuteronomy 11:12.

‘So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul—then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains,

so that you may gather in your grain, new wine, and olive oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and he will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the LORD is giving you.' Deuteronomy 11:13-17

Moses explains to Israel that if they love, serve, and obey the Lord with everything they have, then the blessings of rain, which produce grain, new wine, and oil, will be theirs Deuteronomy 11:13-14.

In other words, these are God's terms and conditions for Israel, if they want to be blessed by Him, Deuteronomy 10:12-13 / Matthew 6:33 / Luke 12:31. God will provide grass in the fields for their cattle, and Israel will eat and be satisfied, Deuteronomy 10:15.

Israel need to be careful, or they will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them Deuteronomy 10:16. If Israel isn't careful, if they turn away from God and turn to idolatry then God's anger will burn against them, and He will shut up the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and Israel will soon perish from the good land God is giving them, Deuteronomy 10:17.

If they were disobedient to the will of God, then God would use the drought to bring about their repentance, Deuteronomy 10:17. Their obedience would bring the continual blessing of the early and latter rains, but God would bring drought upon the land if they ignored His commandments, 1 Kings 17:1 / James 5:17-18.

A good example of this type of blessing is found in the books of Haggai and Zechariah. Haggai explains to the people that the blessing of rain and fruitful earth had been withheld from them because they hadn't followed God's command to build the temple, Haggai 1:7-11 / Ezra 1:1-2 / Ezra 6:14.

The blessings of rain and fruitful ground continued to be withheld from Israel, Haggai 2:15-17, as long as their hearts remained hard from sin, Zechariah 7:12. Zechariah uses Israel's rebellion to make an illustration regarding the blessings of obedience for future generations, that is, Jesus would one day come into the world, Zechariah 3:6-8 / Zechariah 9:9.

The blessings of obedience through Jesus would be 'fountains' of water, Zechariah 13:1, from his 'pierced' body, Zechariah 12:10. These 'living waters', Zechariah 14:8, would bless the people by cleansing their sins, Zechariah 13:1. The blessings of living waters shall ever be supplied by the 'King over all the earth', Zechariah 14:9.

'Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.' Deuteronomy 11:18-21

Earlier Moses said that these children hadn't seen the miraculous things which their parents had seen, Deuteronomy 11:2, but in order to guarantee that this generation of children does not fall away from the commandments of God, Israel are to fix God's words in their hearts and minds and tie them as symbols on their hands and bind them on their foreheads, Deuteronomy 11:18 / Deuteronomy 6:4-8 / Exodus 13:9.

Children were to see the importance of God's laws in their parents' everyday lives. At times when they sat at the house, walked along the way somewhere, woke up in the morning, and lay down at night, they were to see and hear the word of God, Deuteronomy 11:19.

It was the responsibility of the parents, not the Levites, to teach the children. The Israelite children occasionally learned from the Levites when the parents took offerings for fellowship meals to the Levites in the cities, but on the farms, the parents were to be continually educating their children in the word of God.

When the children came into their house, they were to see and hear of God, and when they entered or left the city they lived in, they were to hear of God, Deuteronomy 11:20.

The blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience were at stake. The parents were to teach their children in order that their days and the days of their children may be many in the land God swore to give their ancestors, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth, Deuteronomy 11:21.

‘If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow—to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him and to hold fast to him—then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the Mediterranean Sea. No one will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go. See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses. As you know, these mountains are across the Jordan, westward, toward the setting sun, near the great trees of Moreh, in the territory of those Canaanites living in the Arabah in the vicinity of Gilgal. You are about to cross the Jordan to enter and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you. When you have taken it over and are living there, be sure that you obey all the decrees and laws I am setting before you today.’ Deuteronomy 11:22-32

When Israel went into Canaan, a national pledge was to be made; this pledge to be obedient to the commandments of God wasn’t only a national commitment to the will of God for the generation that made it, but also a pledge for all generations that would follow throughout the history of Israel.

Moses again reminds Israel of God’s terms and conditions: they must keep His commandments, love Him, and hold fast to Him, Deuteronomy 11:22 / Deuteronomy 10:12-13 / Deuteronomy 10:20 / Deuteronomy 11:13. If they do all that God requires, then God will drive out other nations that are larger and stronger than Israel, Deuteronomy 11:23. Notice also, that God says, ‘every place where you set your foot will be yours’, Deuteronomy 11:24, these are the same words God promised to Joshua when Israel were about to cross over the Jordan River into Canaan, Joshua 1:3. He would extend Israel’s borders and put fear in the hearts of Israel’s enemies, Deuteronomy 11:24-25 / 2 Chronicles 9:26 / Numbers 34:12.

Oberst, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Christians, why can’t we learn this lesson that Israel so stubbornly refused to learn, that faithful service of God will enable us to do things that appear totally impossible, accomplish things that try even the imagination, conquer the unconquerable, and overcome difficulties that seem to be insurmountable? Who can stand up against him who is aligned with and in fellowship with Almighty God?’

Craigie, in his commentary, gives the following summary concerning the blessings and curses.

1. The blessing and curse in the present covenant renewal, Deuteronomy 11:26-28.
2. The blessing and curse in the future covenant renewal, Deuteronomy 11:29-32.
3. The specific legislation, Deuteronomy 12:1 to Deuteronomy 26:19.
4. The blessing and curse in the future covenant renewal, Deuteronomy 27:1-26.
5. The blessing and curse in the present covenant renewal, Deuteronomy 28:1 to Deuteronomy 29:1.’

Moses again repeats what He taught earlier, that is, those who obey God may expect His blessings, but those who disobey God’s laws can expect His curse, that is, they won’t be blessed by God. God says, He is setting before them a blessing and a curse, Deuteronomy 11:26.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This whole paragraph, Deuteronomy 11:26-32, regards the transfer of the leadership of Israel from Moses to Joshua.’ The blessing if they obey God’s commands and the curse if they disobey God’s commands, will be the result of Israel turning away from God, disobeying God and idolatry, Deuteronomy 11:27-28.

They are to make a memorial regarding this principle upon Mount Gerizim, where the blessings of the covenant were read, and Mount Ebal, where the cursing of God would be read, Deuteronomy 11:29-30 / Deuteronomy 27:11-26.

Ewing, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Gerizim and Ebal were two significant peaks in central Palestine about 3,000 feet in elevation. They were quite close together with a little valley in between.’

When Israel crosses the Jordan to possess the land of Canaan, God instructs them to remember these instructions, Deuteronomy 11:31-32. The blessings and curses would reemphasise the principle that’s taught throughout these words. If they remained faithful, they would be blessed, but if they disobeyed the will of God, they would be cursed and eventually driven from the land of promise, Joshua 8:30-35.

Whybray, in his commentary, says the following.

‘One of the most frequently used words in Deuteronomy is ‘today.’ It occurs almost a hundred times, most frequently in the phrase ‘the commandment that I am commanding you today.’ This usage is of great significance for the theological understanding of the book. Basically, it is used to indicate the crucial nature of the moment at which the covenant at Horeb is established, and the people are summoned to obedience, Isaiah 49:8 / 2 Corinthians 6:2.’

This is the end of Moses’ second sermon.

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

‘These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you to possess—as long as you live in the land. Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains, on the hills and under every spreading tree, where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places. You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes, and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you. You are not to do as we do here today, everyone doing as they see fit, since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the LORD your God is giving you. But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety.’ Deuteronomy 12:1-10

THIRD SERMON, DEUTERONOMY 12:1-33:29

THE ONE PLACE OF WORSHIP

Moses now begins his third sermon in which the Lord commands Israel to destroy all the places of pagan worship, [Deuteronomy 12:1-2](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:16-17](#).

The reason for this was to keep them from being deceived and turning away from the Lord to serve the gods of Canaan, [Deuteronomy 12:29-31](#) / [Exodus 20:24](#). If they did turn away from the Lord, they would be on the receiving end of the Lord's anger.

This destroying of the pagan gods also included destroying all their altars, which could be found in the high mountains, hills, and under the green trees, [Deuteronomy 12:3](#) / [Deuteronomy 7:5](#).

The Canaanites thought that they were closer to their god on high mountains and hills, hence, why they set their places of worship in high places, [Deuteronomy 12:3](#). The Canaanites also created plantations of trees as places of worship, [Romans 1:25](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In various instances, the names of whole mountains, valleys, and districts were borrowed from the gods worshipped there.’

Sadly, the Israelites didn't totally destroy these tree plantations when they entered the land, and so, they became a snare to Israel, [Jeremiah 2:20](#) / [Ezekiel 18:6](#) / [Hosea 4:13](#).

They are commanded to burn and cut them to down the ground and they were to also totally destroy the names of these pagan gods out of the land, [Deuteronomy 12:3](#).

The reason for destroying the names of these gods, was simply so that they could establish the Name of the Lord in Canaan. Israel wasn't to worship God in the way the Canaanites worshipped their gods, [Deuteronomy 12:4](#); that is, Israel wasn't to build shrines, plant trees, or make idols in reference to their worship of God.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The religion of the Canaanites was human; its modes of worship were of man's devising. It fixed its holy places on the hills in the vain thought of being nearer heaven, or in deep groves where the silence and gloom might overawe the worshipper. But such superstitious appliances were not worthy of the true religion. God had revealed Himself to people in it and manifested among them His immediate presence and power. He would Himself assign the sanctuary and the ritual of His own service.’

Notice that while the Canaanite gods were scattered everywhere, the Lord, however, would be worshipped and served at one location of the Lord's choosing, [Deuteronomy 12:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:26](#) / [John 4:24](#).

Some commentators believe that this one place was to be a permanent place, that is, Jerusalem; however, notice that the one place isn't mentioned. The place was probably revealed and announced once a year by God to be in the area of a different tribe. Every year, the place would be moved, to show no favouritism among the tribes, [Deuteronomy 12:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:14](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘How could any people have followed the moveable tabernacle for forty years, giving the demonstration that God's name had been recorded in at least the ‘forty-two stations’ of the wilderness wanderings! Moreover, there is the strongest statement in [Exodus 20:24](#) on this subject, ‘In every place where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.’ The obvious meaning of ‘the place’ in this passage is ‘any place.’

In the location of God's chooses, Israel are to bring their burnt offerings and sacrifices, tithes and special gifts, what they have vowed to give and their freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks, [Deuteronomy 12:6](#). In the presence of God, they and their families shall eat and rejoice in everything they have put their hand to, because God has blessed them, [Deuteronomy 12:7](#). God once again tells Israel of the great blessings of Canaan, it's the land flowing with milk and honey, and it will be Israel's inheritance, and Israel will experience peace from their enemies, [Deuteronomy 12:8-10](#).

'Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name—there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes, and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD. And there rejoice before the LORD your God—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites from your towns who have no allotment or inheritance of their own. Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. Offer them only at the place the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you. Nevertheless, you may slaughter your animals in any of your towns and eat as much of the meat as you want, as if it were gazelle or deer, according to the blessing the LORD your God gives you. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it. But you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. You must not eat in your own towns the tithe of your grain and new wine and olive oil, or the firstborn of your herds and flocks, or whatever you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts. Instead, you are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God will choose—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites from your towns—and you are to rejoice before the LORD your God in everything you put your hand to. Be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land. When the LORD your God has enlarged your territory as he promised you, and you crave meat and say, "I would like some meat," then you may eat as much of it as you want.' [Deuteronomy 12:11-20](#)

Moses, once again, reminds Israel that God would choose a place 'as a dwelling for his Name', [Deuteronomy 12:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:26](#) / [John 4:24](#).

God enabled Israel to eat the good of the land in their homelands, however, when they made vows or offerings of thanksgiving to the Lord they were to eat it before Him in the one place of God's choosing, [Deuteronomy 12:11](#). In other words, all the acts of worship done by Israel were to be done at the one place for the one God.

When Israel came together for worship, it would be a time of great rejoicing, but notice, that the rejoicing is actually commanded, [Deuteronomy 12:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:18](#). The New Testament commands exactly the same for Christians, [Philippians 4:4](#) / [Thessalonians 5:16](#).

Moses reminds Israel not to forget the Levites in that they had no inheritance of land, [Deuteronomy 12:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:19](#), and so because they had no inheritance, they were dependent upon the offerings of the people for food as they labour at the tabernacle.

And once again, Israel is warned not to make sacrifices to the Lord God in places other than 'the place the LORD will choose in one of your tribes,' [Deuteronomy 12:13-14](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:26](#) / [John 4:24](#).

Israel may slaughter their animals in any of their towns and eat as much of the meat as they want, as if it were gazelle or deer, according to the blessing the LORD your God gives them, [Deuteronomy 12:15](#). Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it, [Deuteronomy 12:15](#).

However, Israel must not eat the blood or pour it out on the ground like water, [Deuteronomy 12:16](#). They mustn't eat in their own towns the tithe of their grain and new wine and olive oil, or the firstborn of their herds and flocks, or whatever they have vowed to give, or their freewill offerings or special gifts, [Deuteronomy 12:17](#).

Instead, Israel are to eat them in the presence of God at the place the LORD your God will choose, [Deuteronomy 12:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:26](#) / [John 4:24](#).

Everyone, including their sons and daughters, male and female servants, and the Levites from their towns are commanded to rejoice before God in everything you put their hand to, [Deuteronomy 12:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:12](#) / [Philippians 4:4](#) / [1 Thessalonians 5:16](#).

What appears to be implied here is an annual gathering together of all the tribes to demonstrate their unity, a time when they can all come together to offer their sacrifices to the Lord as one. The men of the nation were to appear there three times a year at the Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles, [Exodus 23:14-17](#) / [Exodus 34:18-23](#). Israel is to be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as they live in their land, [Deuteronomy 12:19](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:12](#). When God has enlarged their territory as promised, and they crave meat and say, they would like some meat, then they may eat as much of it as they want, [Deuteronomy 12:20](#).

All that God was commanding was the place where the offerings were to take place, not the construction of a facility, such as a temple. Since the tabernacle was to be a mobile sanctuary that could and would be moved among the tribal territories in order to maintain the work of the priests among all the tribes, no official permanent sanctuary was to be built.

‘If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put his Name is too far away from you, you may slaughter animals from the herds and flocks the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you, and in your own towns you may eat as much of them as you want. Eat them as you would gazelle or deer. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat. But be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat. You must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. Do not eat it, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD. But take your consecrated things and whatever you have vowed to give and go to the place the LORD will choose. Present your burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD your God, both the meat and the blood. The blood of your sacrifices must be poured beside the altar of the LORD your God, but you may eat the meat. Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the LORD your God. The LORD your God will cut off before you the nations you are about to invade and dispossess. But when you have driven them out and settled in their land, and after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, “How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same.” You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods. See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.’ [Deuteronomy 12:21-32](#)

Notice again, Moses alludes to the ‘the place where the LORD your God chooses to put his Name’, [Deuteronomy 12:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:26](#) / [John 4:24](#).

Notice also, that God uses the word, ‘if’, [Deuteronomy 12:21](#), which implies that the establishment of the place would be different on each occasion it was established, [Deuteronomy 14:24](#).

If the place for the annual offerings was in the tribal area of an extreme southern or northern area, then they could kill and eat their offerings at the gates of villages near to them, [Deuteronomy 12:21](#) / [Leviticus 17:3](#).

Israel may eat the slaughtered animals as they would a gazelle or deer, they may eat both the ceremonially unclean and the clean [Deuteronomy 12:22](#). However, they are not permitted to eat the blood, because the blood is the life, [Leviticus 17:11](#), and they must not eat the life with the meat, [Deuteronomy 12:23](#).

They mustn’t eat the blood but pour it out on the ground like water, [Deuteronomy 12:24](#). They mustn’t eat the blood if they want things to go well with them and their children because they will be doing what is right in God’s eyes, [Deuteronomy 12:25](#).

Notice again, Moses alludes to the ‘the place where the LORD your God chooses’, [Deuteronomy 12:26](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:18](#) / [John 4:24](#).

Israel are to present their burnt offerings on the altar of God, both the meat and the blood, Deuteronomy 12:27. The blood of their sacrifices must be poured beside the altar of God, but they may eat the meat, Deuteronomy 12:27. God's people were to be a distinctive and holy people, Deuteronomy 7:6, and they must hear and obey God's will only. They weren't to submit to their own will or the will of the Canaanites, hence why Moses warns them to 'be careful', Deuteronomy 12:28 / Deuteronomy 11:16, they can't worship God as the Canaanites worshipped their gods, Deuteronomy 12:29 / 1 Kings 20:23 / 2 Kings 17:26 / John 4:24.

Moses points out one big difference between the way the Israelites are to worship and the way the Canaanites worshipped, Deuteronomy 12:30-31, that is, the Canaanites had no problem sacrificing their own children in fire to their supposed deities; this particular god was named Molech, Deuteronomy 12:31 / Leviticus 18:21 / Deuteronomy 18:10 / Jeremiah 32:35.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Almost all the nations in the world agreed in offering human victims to their gods on extraordinary occasions, by which it is evident that none of those nations had any right notion of the Divine nature. How necessary, then, was the volume of revelation to teach men what that religion is with which God can be well pleased!'

Sadly, Israel in the future would now only worship this god called Molech, but they would also promote the worship of this god. Solomon indorsed the worship of Molech by building a temple to this idol, 1 Kings 11:7.

King Ahaz sacrificed his own son to Molech, 2 Kings 16:3. The northern tribes of Israel worshipped Molech, 2 Kings 17:17, King Manasseh sacrificed his son to Molech, 2 Kings 21:6. Molech worship continued right up until King Josiah destroyed the idol, 2 Kings 23:10.

This act was an abomination to God, and so, Moses commands Israel that they should do everything God has commanded; they should not add or take away anything from God's commands, Deuteronomy 12:32 / Deuteronomy 4:2.

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

'If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you, and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. That prophet or dreamer must be put to death for inciting rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. That prophet or dreamer tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.' Deuteronomy 13:1-5

WORSHIPPING OTHER GODS

In the previous chapter, Moses commanded Israel to completely destroy all the idols in Canaan, [Deuteronomy 12:2-3](#), and they were commanded not to add or take away anything from God's commands, [Deuteronomy 12:32](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:5](#).

In this chapter, Moses moves on to speak about those false prophets who represented those false gods. This is the first of three cases of apostasy that are mentioned in this chapter.

This first case would be a false prophet who would give what would appear to be a sign or make a prediction that would appear to be a fulfilled prophecy, [Deuteronomy 13:1-2](#) / [Matthew 24:24](#) / [2 Thessalonians 2:9](#) / [Revelation 13:13](#) / [Revelation 13:14](#). We must remember that dreams can be from God, [Numbers 12:6](#) / [Genesis 37:5-11](#), or they can be false prophesies, [Jeremiah 23:25-26](#).

If a prophet made a prediction and that prediction came to pass, [Deuteronomy 18:22](#), the people may be curious and would often listen to what they said. Moses said if these false prophets encourage Israel to follow other gods, and worship them, they shouldn't listen to these false prophets, [Deuteronomy 13:2-3](#).

When they said something which contradicted God's law, as this was a sign that the dreams of the prophet had originated in their own minds and not from God, [1 Kings 22:6-8](#) / [1 Kings 22:20-23](#) / [Isaiah 8:19-20](#) / [Jeremiah 6:13](#) / [Jeremiah 28:1-17](#).

Notice that this is one way Israel would be tested by God, [Deuteronomy 13:3](#) / [Deuteronomy 8:2-4](#) / [Deuteronomy 8:15-16](#). It appears that the Lord allowed hardships and false teaching to happen, to see if Israel truly loved Him with all their heart and soul, or not, [Deuteronomy 13:4](#) / [Deuteronomy 8:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 8:20-21](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:1](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:13](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:22](#). This also means that Israel can't claim to love God if they don't keep His commands, [John 14:15](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'God permits such impostors to arise to try the faith of his followers, and to put their religious experience to the test; for he who experimentally knows God cannot be drawn away after idols. He who has no experimental knowledge of God may believe anything. Experience of the truths contained in the word of God can alone preserve any man from Deism, or a false religion.'

God knows how dangerous these false prophets were, and so He commands that if they are proven to be false, they must be put to death, [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) / [Acts 20:29-30](#).

In fact, He commands Israel to 'purge the evil from among you', [Deuteronomy 13:5](#). We see this happening with Elijah, who slaughtered the false prophets of Baal, [1 Kings 18:40](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The context and parallel passages, [Deuteronomy 17:7](#) / [Leviticus 20:2](#), indicate that there was to be a regular judicial procedure, and that the manner of the execution was to be by stoning. In this, the community was to take its part in order to show its horror at the crime, and to clear itself of complicity therein.'

'If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (gods that neither you nor your ancestors have known, gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), do not yield to them or listen to them. Show them no pity. Do not spare them or shield them. You must certainly put them to death. Your hand must be the first in putting them to death, and then the hands of all the people. Stone them to death, because they tried to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again.' [Deuteronomy 13:6-11](#)

Here, Moses speaks about a very difficult situation, where a false prophet turns out to be part of your family. This second temptation refers to one close in the family or a dear friend, someone who would encourage Israel to follow and worship other gods, [Deuteronomy 13:6-7](#) / [Matthew 10:37](#) / [1 Timothy 2:14](#).

Moses tells Israel, rather than tolerating, accepting, or even following these family members' false teaching, the people of God weren't to yield to them, listen to them, have no pity on them, not to spare them or shield them Deuteronomy 13:8.

They were to kill them; they must personally kill them with their own hands, and everyone should lay their hands on the heads of the false teacher to kill him, Deuteronomy 13:9-10.

The reason for them being stoned to death was also to create fear in the hearts of Israel and to prevent these evil things from happening again, Deuteronomy 13:11.

Over and over again, Moses has reminded Israel that they shouldn't follow or fall for false religion, Deuteronomy 6:14 / Deuteronomy 7:1-5 / Deuteronomy 12:2-3 / Deuteronomy 20:15-18. This same principle is also taught throughout the New Testament, Matthew 7:21-23 / Matthew 10:34-39 / Luke 14:25-35.

'If you hear it said about one of the towns the LORD your God is giving you to live in that troublemakers have arisen among you and have led the people of their town astray, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (gods you have not known), then you must inquire, probe, and investigate it thoroughly. And if it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done among you, you must certainly put to the sword all who live in that town. You must destroy it completely, both its people and its livestock. You are to gather all the plunder of the town into the middle of the public square and completely burn the town and all its plunder as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. That town is to remain a ruin forever, never to be rebuilt, and none of the condemned things are to be found in your hands. Then the LORD will turn from his fierce anger, will show you mercy, and will have compassion on you. He will increase your numbers, as he promised on oath to your ancestors—because you obey the LORD your God by keeping all his commands that I am giving you today and doing what is right in his eyes.' Deuteronomy 13:12-18

Here, Moses deals with the third temptation that Israel may face, that is, a group of false prophets who may lead whole towns astray. They are described as troublemakers, those who encourage Israel to follow and worship other gods, Deuteronomy 13:12-13. Note that some translations call them 'children of Belial', which means worthlessness, Deuteronomy 15:9 / Nahum 1:11.

If a group of false prophets were to seduce an entire city to follow their wicked ways, then God's people who heard of the event were to inquire more about the story, search for the information, and ask diligently about the matter from many sources, Deuteronomy 13:14.

If the story is found to be true, that is, an entire group of people from a town has been drawn away by these teachers, then God's people were to take further action; they were completely destroying the inhabitants of the town along with their cattle, Deuteronomy 13:15 / 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'If one city were permitted to practise idolatry, the evil would soon spread; the contagion must be destroyed in its birth.'

After the town of false teachers and worshippers is destroyed, the Israelites were to gather all the spoils of that town into the middle of the street and burn it with fire, Deuteronomy 13:16 / Deuteronomy 7:25-26. God then commands that such a place should never be rebuilt, Deuteronomy 13:16 / Joshua 6 / Joshua 7 / Judges 20:38 / Judges 20:48. God's people were to have disgust and hatred over the condemned things the false teacher taught, Deuteronomy 13:17 / Deuteronomy 7:26 / Leviticus 27:26-29 / Romans 12:9.

If Israel do as God commands, the He would turn from His fierce anger and show them mercy, and will have compassion on them, He will also increase their numbers, as He promised on oath to your ancestors, Deuteronomy 13:17-18.

It would be just to say that God's people must be in fear of forsaking the word of God or distorting it in any way that would lead to immoral behaviour on the part of God's people.

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

‘You are the children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession. Do not eat any detestable thing. These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the mountain sheep. You may eat any animal that has a divided hoof, and that chews the cud. However, of those that chew the cud or that have a divided hoof, you may not eat the camel, the rabbit, or the hyrax. Although they chew the cud, they do not have a divided hoof; they are ceremonially unclean for you. The pig is also unclean; although it has a divided hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses. Of all the creatures living in the water, you may eat any that has fins and scales. But anything that does not have fins and scales you may not eat; for you it is unclean. You may eat any clean bird. But these you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, the red kite, the black kite, any kind of falcon, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the cormorant, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat. All flying insects are unclean to you; do not eat them. But any winged creature that is clean you may eat. Do not eat anything you find already dead. You may give it to the foreigner residing in any of your towns, and they may eat it, or you may sell it to any other foreigner. But you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk.’ Deuteronomy 14:1-21

Moses continues from the previous chapter concerning Israel’s sanctification, and he begins by reminding Israel of who they are and Who they belong to, they are the children of God, Deuteronomy 14:1. He commands them ‘not to cut themselves’ or ‘shave the front of their heads for the dead’ Deuteronomy 14:1.

This appears to be a practice Israel picked up from the nations around them and it was probably connected with the idolatrous practices of the nations around them, Isaiah 3:24 / Isaiah 15:2 / Isaiah 22:12 / Jeremiah 16:6 / Jeremiah 41:5 / Ezekiel 7:18 / Amos 8:10 / Micah 1:16.

The reason they were to cease from doing this was simply that they are a sanctified people, that is, a holy people, Deuteronomy 14:2 / Leviticus 11:44-45. Because the Lord had brought them out of Egypt, they are now a holy people, God’s special possessions, Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

Because the Lord has redeemed Christians with the blood of Christ, 1 Peter 1:18-19, we too should also be holy, 1 Peter 1:15-16, we too are God’s special possession, Ephesians 1:18 / 1 Peter 2:9, and we too should stay away from anything evil, 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAR FOOD

Israel was further sanctified from the nations by the animals they ate and did not eat, Leviticus 11:2-45. The animals listed would certainly have good dietary principles that would guard the Israelites against eating anything that would harm them.

By eating only that which God commanded, Israel manifested their obedience to His will, even though they may not have fully understood the reasons for the restrictions. Moses tells them not to eat any detestable thing, Deuteronomy 14:3.

ANIMALS WHICH HAVE DIVIDED HOOFS AND CHEW THE CUD

Israel was permitted to eat ox, sheep, goat, deer, gazelle, roe deer, wild goat, ibex, antelope, and the mountain sheep, **Deuteronomy 14:5**. These are animals that have a divided hoof and chew the cud, **Deuteronomy 14:6**.

These animals, such as the camel, the hyrax, which is a small herbivorous mammal, the rabbit and the pig, weren't allowed to be eaten and were classed as unclean, **Deuteronomy 14:7-8**. To touch any dead carcass or any unclean animal, dead or alive, made a person unclean, **Deuteronomy 14:8**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The flesh of these animals is universally allowed to be the most wholesome and nutritive. They live on the very best vegetables, and having several stomachs, their food is well concocted, and the chyle formed from it is the most pure because the best elaborated, as it is well refined before it enters into the blood. On ruminating or chewing the cud, **Leviticus 11:3**.’

Leviticus 11:1-23 deals with clean food, which is food which may be eaten, and unclean food, which is food which cannot be eaten. We could summarise **Leviticus 11:1-16** like this: God commanded Israel through Moses and Aaron to eat only those animals that were ruminants, that is, they have four stomachs and have cloven hooves.

CREATURES WITHOUT FINS AND SCALES

Israel was permitted to eat any creatures living in the water that have fins and scales, **Deuteronomy 14:9**. Anything that doesn't have fins and scales wasn't allowed to be eaten and classed as unclean. Touching any dead carcass or any unclean creature, dead or alive, made a person unclean, **Deuteronomy 14:10**.

Leviticus 11:9-12 describe creatures which live in the water without fins and scales, which would include creatures such as any kind of shellfish, oysters, eels, and crabs.

BIRDS AND FLYING INSECTS

Israel may eat any clean bird, **Deuteronomy 14:11**, however, they weren't permitted to eat eagle, vulture, black vulture, red kite, black kite, any kind of falcon, any kind of raven, the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, the cormorant, stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat, **Deuteronomy 14:12-18**.

All flying insects are unclean, and Israel wasn't permitted to eat them, but any winged creature that is clean, they may eat, **Deuteronomy 14:19-20**. **Leviticus 11:13-23** describes a whole host of birds and insects which were classed as unclean and cannot be eaten.

It's interesting to note that all insects have six legs, but here we have mention of insects with four legs, which walk on all fours. Some commentators see this phrase, ‘walk on all fours’, **Leviticus 11:20-21**, as a figure of speech which means these insects which walked with their bodies horizontally to the ground were classed as unclean.

There were, however, some insects which walked on all fours and were classed as clean and could be eaten, the locust, which we know John the baptiser ate, **Matthew 3:4**, the katydid, which was similar to a cricket but larger, the cricket or grasshopper.

EATING DEAD ANIMALS

Israel wasn't permitted to eat anything they found already dead, **Deuteronomy 14:21**. However, they may give it to the foreigner residing in any of their towns, and they may eat it, or they may sell it to any other foreigner, **Deuteronomy 14:21**. Israel is to remember they are a people holy to God, **Deuteronomy 14:21**.

Notice that Israel is commanded not to cook a young goat in its mother's milk, **Deuteronomy 14:21 / Exodus 23:19 / Exodus 34:26**. The command is actually a command to not imitate a common pagan fertility ritual.

Cooking a young goat in its mother's milk may sound really strange to us, but this appears to have been a practice of the Canaanites, which displayed the base immoral principle of the people, for the Canaanites offered their own children in sacrifice to their pagan gods.

Leviticus 11:39-40 deals with touching dead animals. Any clean animal, which would include the ox, sheep, goat, deer, etc., dies, and someone touches it, then that person would become unclean until evening.

If anyone eats part of the animal's body will also be unclean; therefore, they must wash and become clean in the evening. The same applies to anyone who picks up one of these dead animals.

TOUCHING UNCLEAN ANIMALS

In **Leviticus 11:24-47**, we find a list of things which make a person unclean by touching them. We must remember that in our culture today, these ceremonial uncleanness laws may seem foreign to us in the UK. We love our 'pawed' animals, dogs, and cats, but for the Israelites, it meant the difference between being a part of the community or not. If they had become unclean, they couldn't take part in any social events or worship; this is why they had to wash their clothes and wait until the evening, at which point, they would become clean again.

ANIMALS WHICH MOVE ALONG THE GROUND AND CLAY POTS

The animals listed in **Leviticus 11:29-38** are the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink, which is a small lizard and the chameleon. They are all classed as unclean and are not to be touched; if so, the person would become unclean until evening.

Note the difference between these dead animals touching the pot and falling into the pot. If any of these animals dies or falls into a vessel, whatever it's made out of, it would make the vessel unclean; it had to be washed and kept in water until evening, then it would be clean again and ready to be used. If any of these animals fell into a clay pot, this made everything in that pot unclean; the pot had to be broken.

CREATURES WHICH MOVE ALONG THE GROUND

Leviticus 11:41-43 deals with creatures which move along the ground. Most commentators believe these verses are addressing vermin, Leviticus 11:29-30, and notice the difference; not only does the text speak of things which 'walk on all fours', but things which 'move on its belly'.

This would include animals like snakes, worms, maggots, moles, rats, mice, caterpillars, and centipedes; these are all classed as unclean. The selected foods for their consumption separated them from the nations around them, who indulged in every food, but specifically certain foods that were eaten in honour of idol gods.

This is one of the reasons these restrictions don't apply to Christians today, Mark 7:19 / Romans 14:14 / 1 Timothy 4:4. Jesus emphasised that people would know we are Christians by our love, not by what food we eat, John 13:34-35.

TITHES

'Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own. At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.' Deuteronomy 14:22-29

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'These words recall in general terms the command of the earlier legislation respecting tithes, Leviticus 27:30 / Numbers 18:26, but refer more particularly to the second or festival tithe, which was an exclusively vegetable one.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the tithe.

'Meaning the second tithe, which themselves were to eat, Deuteronomy 14:23, for there was a first tithe that was given to the Levites, out of which they paid a tenth part to the priests, Numbers 18:24-28 / Nehemiah 10:37-38. Then of that which remained, the owners separated a second tithe, which they ate before the Lord the first and second year and in the third year it was given to the Levites and to the poor, Deuteronomy 14:28-29. In the fourth and fifth years, it was eaten again by the owners, and in the sixth year was given to the poor. The seventh year was a Sabbath to the land, and then all things were common, Exodus 23:10-11.'

Moses reminds Israel of their responsibility to tithe, that is, they were to give a tenth of their produce, Deuteronomy 14:22 / Leviticus 27:30 / Numbers 18:21-32. They are to eat the tithe of their grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of their herds and flocks in the presence of God, Deuteronomy 14:23.

Notice that this will happen at the one place which God will choose, Deuteronomy 14:23 / Deuteronomy 12:18 / Deuteronomy 12:5 / Deuteronomy 12:11 / Deuteronomy 12:14 / Deuteronomy 12:21 / Deuteronomy 12:26 / John 4:24.

A tithe of the blessings of grain, oil, and new wine was to be given to the Lord at the designated place as a thanksgiving offering, **Deuteronomy 14:23**. In all of God's laws concerning food, provision was made for the Levites, the poor, widows, and foreigners. If Israel does all these things, this would prove that they truly did love and fear the Lord, **Deuteronomy 14:23**.

Moses gives comforting advice to those who live too far away from God's prescribed place of worship to bring their tithes, **Deuteronomy 14:24 / Deuteronomy 12:21**.

These individuals may sell their blessings and get money for them, and they were to take this money to the place of God's choosing and use the money to buy and sacrifice unto God, **Deuteronomy 14:25**.

Notice the words 'fermented drink', **Deuteronomy 14:26 / Leviticus 10:9**. This is a reference to strong intoxicating wine, **Proverbs 20:1**, and notice drinking wine or fermented drink is excused, **Numbers 28:7 / Deuteronomy 29:6**.

The tithe of the fruits and livestock was to be eaten as a meal before the Lord with the Levites, **Deuteronomy 14:26-27**. In this way, there was always food for the Levites, who were given no inheritance of land, **Numbers 18:21-24**.

To provide food for the Levites, along with the foreigners, fatherless, and widows, the people were to give their means to them for their survival once every three years, **Deuteronomy 14:28**.

The tithe of the crops and livestock was seasonal, **Deuteronomy 14:28**, and so, the tithe that was put in storage every three years lasted the Levites in between the harvest and the seasonal giving of the new-born of the livestock.

This tithe appears to be separate from the annual tithe given at the temple, that is, once every three years in each city, which implies that this tithe was to be placed in storage for the Levite families, foreigners, orphans, and widows to eat in between the tithe at the end of the harvest, **Deuteronomy 14:29**.

Tithing was required until after the death of Christ, which ended the old law regarding the Levites and inaugurated the new covenant, **Hebrews 9:15-17**. Today Christians pay taxes to the state, which has replaced Israel's theocracy, **Romans 13:6-7**.

When it comes to the church and the giving of the members, the sky is the limit. We aren't required to give a fixed specific amount, but according to how much we figure we have prospered. Nowhere does the New Testament require Christians to tithe.

It is a matter between each individual or couple and God. It is to be according to how we think we have prospered. Our giving takes place on the first day of the week, **1 Corinthians 16:2**.

This means the amount will vary with each individual. Giving should be planned ahead of time and not as an afterthought, **2 Corinthians 9:7**. It should not be done grudgingly but cheerfully, **2 Corinthians 9:5-7**.

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

'At the end of every seven years, you must cancel debts. This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel any loan they have made to a fellow Israelite. They shall not require payment from anyone among their own people, because the LORD's time for cancelling debts has been proclaimed. You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your fellow Israelite owes you. However, there need be no poor people among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. For the LORD, your God, will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations, but none will rule over you. If anyone is poor among your fellow Israelites in any of the towns of

the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward them. Rather, be open-handed and freely lend them whatever they need. Be careful not to harbour this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward the needy among your fellow Israelites and give them nothing. They may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore, I command you to be openhanded toward your fellow Israelites who are poor and needy in your land.’ Deuteronomy 15:1-11

THE YEAR FOR CANCELLING DEBTS

Moses begins by speaking to Israel about the year for cancelling debts, [Deuteronomy 15:1](#) / [Exodus 23:10-13](#) / [Leviticus 25:1-7](#) / [Leviticus 25:8-38](#). Israel is to work for six years, as they work six days in a week, and the seventh year is to be a year of rest for the land and people.

Every creditor is to cancel any loan they have made to a fellow Israelite, [Deuteronomy 15:2](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:10](#). They shall not require payment from anyone among their own people, because God’s time for cancelling debts has been proclaimed, [Deuteronomy 15:2-3](#).

Israel isn’t permitted to take money from a neighbour who had borrowed during this time, as the one borrowing would have no way of repaying the debt during the year of rest. We must note, however, that this didn’t release the debtor permanently from their debt; they were given a year to recover from their labours and debt.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The foreigner would not be bound by the restriction of the sabbatical year and therefore would have no claim to its special remissions and privileges. He could earn his usual income in the seventh as in other years and therefore is not exonerated from liability to discharge a debt anymore in the one, than the others.’

There would be no poor among them, [Deuteronomy 15:4](#), in the sense that provision to work for food would always be made available for the poor, [Deuteronomy 15:7](#) / [Deuteronomy 15:11](#).

Laws concerning gleaning and forgiveness of debt made it possible for the poor to always have food if they were willing to work and to borrow from their brethren if they fell under hard times.

If Israel obeys these commands, the Lord promises them that they will be greatly blessed in the land of Canaan, [Deuteronomy 15:5-6](#). If they remained obedient to God, the land would prosper to the point that other nations would come to them for food, [Deuteronomy 15:6](#).

If anyone is poor among the Israelites in any of the towns of the land God is giving them, Israel is not to be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward them, [Deuteronomy 15:7](#). Rather, Israel is to be openhanded and freely lend them whatever they need, [Deuteronomy 15:8](#).

These poor people would be poor not because of laziness, [2 Thessalonians 3:10-12](#), but of some circumstance which happened in their lives that left them in that state. There will always be the opportunity to help others, and we should never become hardened against the poor.

Israel is to be careful not to harbour this wicked thought, the seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near, so that they don’t show ill will toward the needy among their fellow Israelites and give them nothing, [Deuteronomy 15:9](#). They may then appeal to God against them, and they will be found guilty of sin, [Deuteronomy 15:9](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What a consolation to the poor and the oppressed, that they have a sure friend in God, who will hear their cry and redress their grievances!’

Israel is to give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart, and then because of this God will bless them in all their work and in everything they put their hand to, [Deuteronomy 15:10](#).

Notice also that the Lord says that ‘there will always be poor people in the land’, [Deuteronomy 15:11](#). Jesus said these very words concerning the poor, [Matthew 26:11](#) / [Mark 14:7](#).

The poor weren’t allowed to go hungry because God has always expressed concern over those who are less fortunate throughout the Scriptures, [Galatians 2:10](#).

In the Old Testament, God forbade the mistreatment of the poor, especially by those who were rich and wealthy, [Amos 2:7](#) / [Amos 4:1](#) / [Amos 5:11](#) / [Amos 8:4-6](#). In the New Testament, Jesus was always concerned about the poor, [Matthew 19:21](#) / [Luke 19:8](#) / [John 12:5](#), and the apostles cared for the poor, [Acts 2:43](#) / [Romans 15:26-26](#).

FREEING SERVANTS

‘If any of your people—Hebrew men or women—sell themselves to you and serve you six years, in the seventh year you must let them go free. And when you release them, do not send them away empty-handed. Supply them liberally from your flock, your threshing floor, and your winepress. Give to them as the LORD your God has blessed you.

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today. But if your servant says to you, “I do not want to leave you,” because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, then take an awl and push it through his earlobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your female servant. Do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because their service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand. And the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.’ Deuteronomy 15:12-18

There were times when the Hebrews were unable to repay what was borrowed due to extreme poverty, and so, these cases would enable the creditor to adopt the brother or his children, as slaves to repay the debt, [Deuteronomy 15:12](#). The Sabbatical year would be a year of ‘release’ for those people, [Deuteronomy 15:13](#). Unlike the slavery of the nations around Israel, this was a willing servant who gave themselves for the service of another to repay their debt, [Deuteronomy 15:12](#).

We must note that this wasn’t the kind of slavery other nations were practising or the slavery they experienced in Egypt. The idea here is that a man or a woman could sell themselves to another for labour in order to pay for a debt, [Exodus 21:1-6](#) / [Leviticus 25:38-55](#).

Notice the kindness that was to be displayed by the creditor to his brother, who was enslaved to him. When the seventh year rolled around, the slave was to be released, and the master was to ‘supply them liberally’ with flocks, grain, and wine, [Deuteronomy 15:13-15](#).

In other words, as God had blessed the rich, the rich were to pass this blessing on to the poor. Israel was never to think too highly of themselves as their wealth multiplied, [Deuteronomy 8:17](#). At one point, they were all slaves in Egypt, hence why the Lord reminds them they too were once slaves, [Deuteronomy 15:15](#).

Some slaves may develop such love and dependency upon their masters that they don’t want to leave after six years of service. Those who desired to stay were to go through a ritual prescribed by God.

Masters were to take an awl, that is, a pointed tool for making holes, as in wood or leather, and pierce the slave’s ear through and impale him or her, to the door of the house, [Deuteronomy 15:16-17](#) / [Exodus 21:6](#). The same procedure was done for the female servant too, [Deuteronomy 15:17](#).

Some believe that an earring would be inserted into the hole of the ear, and the earring would have an inscription of the master's name on it. The piercing of the ear appears to signify permanent ownership of the slave who voluntarily wants to remain in their master's house.

If, however, the slave decided to leave, the master was to obey the law of the Sabbatical year and release the slave with the necessities of life. He wasn't permitted to hold on to the slave even if he loved and depended upon the man or woman, Deuteronomy 15:18.

THE FIRSTBORN ANIMALS

'Set apart for the LORD your God every firstborn male of your herds and flocks. Do not put the firstborn of your cows to work, and do not shear the firstborn of your sheep. Each year, you and your family are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose. If an animal has a defect, is lame or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. You are to eat it in your own towns. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it, as if it were gazelle or deer. But you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water.' Deuteronomy 15:19-23

Moses now repeats the law, which was given at Sinai, concerning the firstborn animals, Deuteronomy 15:19 / Exodus 13:1-12. These firstborn animals were to be sanctified for the Lord, and weren't to be used for work, nor were they to be sheared, Deuteronomy 15:19.

The offering of the firstborn was to be the best of the livestock and so, they were to eat them in the presence of the Lord, Deuteronomy 15:20. That is, they were to be eaten by those who gave them and they were to be eaten with the priests, and so, this fellowship meal kept the people at the table of the spiritual leaders of Israel.

Those without blemishes, that is, the lame, blind, ill, etc, Deuteronomy 15:21 / Leviticus 22:20, weren't to be sacrificed to the Lord at the altar of burnt offering and eaten. The Lord deserved only the best, and so, if a firstborn had a blemish, it couldn't be offered to the Lord, Deuteronomy 15:21.

Those who were blemished had no place at the altar of burnt offering, and so, the owner of the blemished firstborn was to sanctify it unto the Lord and eat it within their own town, Deuteronomy 15:22.

Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it, as if it were gazelle or deer, Deuteronomy 12:22, but Israel mustn't eat the blood; they must pour it out on the ground like water, Deuteronomy 15:22-23 / Deuteronomy 12:23-24.

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

When Israel was settled in the land, they were to celebrate the feasts that are described in this chapter, Exodus 12:1-20 / Exodus 16:14-17 / Exodus 34:13-23 / Leviticus 23:1-44 / Numbers 28:16-29:40.

THE PASSOVER

‘Observe the month of Aviv and celebrate the Passover of the LORD your God, because in the month of Aviv he brought you out of Egypt by night. Sacrifice as the Passover to the LORD your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his Name. Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste—so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. Let no yeast be found in your possession in all your land for seven days. Do not let any of the meat you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain until morning. You must not sacrifice the Passover in any town the LORD your God gives you except in the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name. There you must sacrifice the Passover in the evening, when the sun goes down, on the anniversary of your departure from Egypt. Roast it and eat it at the place the LORD your God will choose. Then in the morning, return to your tents. For six days, eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day hold an assembly to the LORD your God and do no work.’ Deuteronomy 16:1-8

The Passover is only mentioned briefly here since it had been fully described in [Exodus 12:1-30](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A re-enforcement of this ordinance was the more necessary because its observance had clearly been intermitted for thirty-nine years, [Joshua 6:10](#).’

The deliverance from Egypt is such a significant act that God tells the children of Israel to remake their calendar, the new year will now start with the month of their redemption from Egypt, [Exodus 12:1](#).

On the tenth of this first month, the month of Abib, [Deuteronomy 16:1](#) / [Exodus 13:4](#), the Jews followed a lunar calendar, their month would begin with the New Moon.

This means that the 14th day of the month would be the time of the Full Moon. Some have wondered if the darkness of the sun at the death of Christ could have been caused by a solar eclipse, [Mark 15:33](#), but this could not be the case, for it took place in the season of Passover, the time of the Full Moon.

Each family, or household, is to take a lamb, [Deuteronomy 16:2](#) / [Exodus 12:2-3](#). If a household was too small for a whole lamb, then they were to share it with their nearest neighbour, taking into account the number of people staying in the house, [Exodus 12:4](#).

They are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat, [Exodus 12:4](#). The lamb was to be year-old males and without blemish, [Exodus 12:5](#). This sacrifice unto the Lord had to be as perfect as a lamb could be, [John 1:29](#) / [1 Corinthians 5:7](#) / [1 Peter 1:19](#) / [Revelation 12:13](#).

A lamb from the sheep or the goats, [Exodus 12:5](#), may sound confusing, but the Hebrew word for lamb can refer to either a young sheep or a young goat. The lamb is to live with the family for the four days until twilight, which would be Passover, [Exodus 12:6](#) / [2 Samuel 12:1-3](#).

In this way, the lamb was to be part of the family; when it was sacrificed on the fourteenth, it would be cherished and mourned. God wanted the sacrifice of something precious. The rabbis later determined that there should be at least ten people for each Passover lamb, and not more than twenty.

Remember, the Israelites couldn’t sacrifice and worship in Egypt because the sacrifice involved the killing of sheep, [Exodus 8:26](#) / [Genesis 46:34](#), and because the Egyptians also worshipped lambs.

We can only imagine what the Egyptians were thinking when they saw the Israelites taking a lamb into their homes for four days, with the intention of slaughtering and eating it.

Before the Passover lamb could be eaten, its blood had to be applied to the doorway of the home, and the top, and upon each side the blood was applied, [Exodus 12:7](#) / [Hebrews 10:22](#). The only part of this sacrifice given to God was the blood; the rest was eaten by each family or discarded.

Then, the lamb could be eaten but only if it had been roasted, with the lamb itself coming into contact with the fire, and with bitter herbs accompanying the meal, [Exodus 12:8](#).

As our Passover sacrifice, Jesus had to come into direct contact with the ‘fire’ of the Father’s judgment on our behalf, and the bitterness of the cross is reflected in the bitter herbs.

They were to eat bread made without yeast for seven days, [Deuteronomy 16:3](#) / [Exodus 12:8](#). They weren't permitted to eat the meat raw or boiled in water but roast it over a fire, with the head, legs and internal organs, [Deuteronomy 16:4](#) / [Exodus 12:9](#).

The Passover lamb had to be eaten completely; a family had to totally consume the sacrifice, and if anything was left it must be burned first thing in the morning, [Exodus 12:10](#).

Notice they are to eat it with their cloak tucked into their belt, sandals on their feet and staff in their hand, [Exodus 12:11](#). The Passover lamb had to be eaten in faith, trusting that the deliverance promised to Israel was present and that they would walk in that deliverance immediately, [Exodus 12:11](#).

Faith was essential to the keeping of Passover, [Hebrews 11:28](#). The LORD says that He Himself will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and He will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt, [Exodus 12:12](#).

The blood will be a sign for them on the houses where they live, and when He sees the blood, He will pass over them, hence no destructive plague will touch them when He strikes Egypt, [Exodus 12:13](#).

For Israel to be spared the judgment on the firstborn, they had to apply to blood just as God said they should, [Exodus 12:7](#), the blood of the lamb was essential to what God required.

If an Israelite home didn't believe in the power of the blood of the lamb, they could sacrifice the lamb and eat it, but they would still be visited by judgment. If an Egyptian home believed in the power of the blood of the lamb, and they made a proper Passover sacrifice, they would be spared the judgment.

Additionally, an intellectual agreement with what God had said about the blood was not enough; they actually had to do what God said should be done with the blood.

The judgment on the firstborn was a powerful act of God because the firstborn was always thought to be favoured and privileged before God. If God judges the firstborn, then what of the rest of us?

For Christians today, this feast is really important because Jesus is our Passover Lamb, [John 1:29](#) / [1 Corinthians 5:7](#). Just as Israel was redeemed from Egyptian slavery, so too has the Christian been redeemed from the slavery of sin, [Galatians 3:16](#) / [Titus 2:14](#).

Israel mustn't sacrifice the Passover in any town except in the place He will choose as a dwelling for His Name, [Deuteronomy 16:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:11](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:26](#) / [John 4:24](#).

Wherever God chooses as the place, Israel must sacrifice the Passover in the evening, when the sun goes down, on the anniversary of their departure from Egypt, [Deuteronomy 16:6](#).

As the location was different each year, they would assemble where the tabernacle was placed in order to celebrate as a nation their deliverance from Egyptian captivity. They are to roast it and eat it at the place God will choose and in the morning return to their tents, [Deuteronomy 16:7](#).

The day following the Passover was to begin a week of feasting, [Leviticus 23:6](#). For this entire week, God's people were to eat unleavened bread, [Deuteronomy 16:8](#) / [Leviticus 23:6](#).

On the Sabbath Day they weren't permitted to do any work, [Deuteronomy 16:8](#) / [Leviticus 23:3](#), but here they are allowed to work but they weren't permitted to do any regular work, [Leviticus 23:7-8](#) / [Leviticus 23:21](#) / [Leviticus 23:25](#) / [Leviticus 23:35-36](#), and on each day an offering was to be presented to the Lord, [Leviticus 23:8](#) / [Numbers 28:19-24](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the meaning of not working, [Leviticus 23:7-8](#).

'Literally, no work of labour, no work that belongs to one's worldly calling, such as labour in agriculture or handicraft. The preparation of food was permitted, [Exodus 12:16](#), a licence not granted on the weekly Sabbath, or on the day of atonement, [Leviticus 23:28](#) / [Leviticus 23:30](#) / [Exodus 20:10](#) / [Exodus 35:3](#).'

The Festival of Unleavened Bread was to be celebrated because it would be the day that God brought them out of Egypt, [Exodus 12:17](#). This was to be lasting ordinance for the generations to come, [Exodus 12:17](#).

In the first month they are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day, [Exodus 12:18](#). There is to be no yeast in their homes for seven days, and anyone, whether foreigner or native-born, who eats anything with yeast in it needs to be cut off from the community of Israel, [Exodus 12:19](#).

They are to eat nothing made with yeast, and wherever they live, they must eat unleavened bread, [Exodus 12:20](#). For the first Passover, the unleavened bread was a practical necessity; they left Egypt in such a hurry that there was no time to allow for the dough to rise.

Leaven was also a picture of sin and corruption because of the way a little leaven would influence a whole lump of dough, and also because of the way leaven would ‘puff up’ the lump, even as pride and sin make us ‘puffed up.’ Significantly, God called them to walk ‘unleavened’ after their initial deliverance from Egypt; symbolically, they were being called to a pure walk with the Lord.

Some suggest there was also a health aspect in getting rid of all the leaven, that since they used a piece of dough from the previous batch to make the bread for that day, and did so repeatedly, harmful bacteria could take hold in the dough, so it was good to remove all leaven and start all over at least once a year.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Bread signifies communion or fellowship with Christ, and the leaven, which was purged out, signifies sin, or evil. Christians are commanded to ‘purge out the old leaven’, [1 Corinthians 5:7-8](#) / [2 Corinthians 7:1](#) / [Galatians 5:7](#) / [Galatians 5:9](#).’

THE FESTIVAL OF WEEKS

‘Count off seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. Then celebrate the Festival of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you. And rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, the Levites in your towns, and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows living among you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and follow carefully these decrees.’

Deuteronomy 16:9-12

Israel was to count off seven weeks from the time they began to put the sickle to the standing grain, [Deuteronomy 16:9](#). The next observance was to take place fifty days after the first Sabbath of the week of unleavened bread, that is, Pentecost, [Deuteronomy 16:10](#) / [Leviticus 23:15](#).

It would also take place on the first day of the week, [Leviticus 23:16](#). The date of the Feast of Weeks varied from late May to early June of each year. The purpose of this feast was to commemorate the completion of the grain harvest. The festival of weeks is the feast of harvest, whilst the feast of firstfruits begins at the start of the harvest, the feast of weeks begins at the end of the harvest, [Exodus 34:22](#) / [Leviticus 23:15-21](#) / [Numbers 28:26-31](#).

This feast was a time of freewill offerings and celebration as they thanked God for providing the harvest in the first place, [Deuteronomy 16:11](#). Israel was to rejoice before God at the place He would choose as a dwelling for His Name, [Deuteronomy 16:11](#).

Notice again that God always takes care of the poor and anyone travelling through the land, [Deuteronomy 16:11](#). They were to leave the grain which stood in the corners of the fields for those people, [Leviticus 23:22](#) / [Leviticus 25:22](#) / [Leviticus 19:9-10](#).

However, if anyone who was poor received any food, they had to do work in return for that food. This was to be a period of great rejoicing as they witnessed their harvest for the year and remembered the blessings of God. They were also to remember their bondage in Egypt from which they were delivered, [Deuteronomy 16:12](#).

Several offerings were to be made on this day, a grain offering of two loaves of bread, but these loaves were to be baked with leaven [Leviticus 23:16-17](#). A burnt offering of seven lambs of the first year, a bull, two rams, [Leviticus 23:18](#) / [Numbers 28:27-30](#). Note the drink offering is also to be made, [Leviticus 23:18](#) / [Leviticus 23:13](#) / [Leviticus 23:37](#) / [Exodus 29:40](#).

A sin-offering of a male goat, a peace offering of two male lambs, [Leviticus 25:19](#). The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits, and they are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest, [Leviticus 23:20](#).

Israel was to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work, [Leviticus 23:21](#) / [Leviticus 23:7-8](#) / [Leviticus 23:25](#) / [Leviticus 23:35-36](#), and this was to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever they live, [Leviticus 25:21](#).

The day of Pentecost is important for Christians as this is the day the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, [Acts 2:1-4](#). It was also the day the church was established when Peter preached the first Gospel message, [Acts 2:14-41](#). The only other times the day is mentioned in the New Testament are in [Acts 20:16](#) and [1 Corinthians 16:8](#).

THE FESTIVAL OF TABERNACLES

‘Celebrate the Festival of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. Be joyful at your festival—you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levites, the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. For seven days, celebrate the festival to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD, your God, will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete. Three times a year, all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed: Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.’ [Deuteronomy 16:13-17](#)

At sundown, the Jewish festival of Sukkot will begin, the feast of tabernacles, [Deuteronomy 16:13](#) / [Leviticus 23:33-34](#). This was the last of the festivals; Purim and Hanukkah would be added much later.

Once again, Israel wasn't permitted to do any regular work, [Leviticus 23:35-36](#) / [Leviticus 23:25](#) / [Leviticus 23:21](#) / [Leviticus 23:7-8](#), and for seven days they are to present food offerings, and on the eighth day they are to hold a sacred assembly and present a food offering to the LORD, [Leviticus 23:35-36](#).

By October, the harvest season came to an end when grapes, olives, pomegranates, figs, and dates were gathered in. The feast was officially scheduled for the fifteenth day of the Jewish month of Tishrei, five days after the Day of Atonement, and it lasted for seven days.

These are the LORD's appointed festivals, which they are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing food offerings, which includes, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day, [Leviticus 23:37](#) / [Leviticus 23:18](#) / [Leviticus 23:13](#) / [Exodus 29:40](#).

These offerings are in addition to those for the LORD's Sabbaths and in addition to their gifts and whatever they have vowed and all the freewill offerings they give, [Leviticus 23:38](#).

Beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after they had gathered the crops of the land, [Deuteronomy 16:13](#) / [Leviticus 23:39](#) / [Revelation 14:15-16](#). It was to be a joyful festival to be enjoyed by everyone who lives in their towns, [Deuteronomy 16:14](#).

They are to celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days at the place that God will choose, [Deuteronomy 16:15](#), with the first day being a day of sabbath rest, and the eighth day also being a day of sabbath rest, [Leviticus 23:39](#). They are to celebrate this as a festival for seven days each year, and this is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, celebrate it in the seventh month, [Leviticus 23:41](#).

For an entire week, the people were to live in booths, [Leviticus 23:42-43](#); in other words, they were to camp out. The reason for camping out was to remind them of their wilderness wanderings.

Just like the Passover and feast of unleavened bread, this feast lasted for eight days, [Leviticus 23:39](#) / [Numbers 29:12-38](#) / [Deuteronomy 16:13-15](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:10-13](#) / [Ezra 3:4](#) / [Nehemiah 8:18](#).

According to the law, all Jews were to live in booths or huts during the celebration. These were outdoor shelters made from wild branches of olive, myrtle, palm, and other leaf trees, [Leviticus 23:42-43](#) / [Leviticus 23:40](#) / [Nehemiah 8:15](#). A booth or tabernacle was a temporary dwelling.

Three times a year, all Israel's men must appear before God at the place He will choose, [Deuteronomy 16:16](#) / [Exodus 23:14](#) / [Leviticus 23:34](#). The feasts were times when fellowship meals were eaten, and so, everyone was to bring food, [Deuteronomy 16:17](#), that is, offerings were to be eaten by everyone during the meeting. If one didn't bring an offering, then they weren't demonstrating fellowship toward others, [2 Corinthians 8:4](#).

The lulav is a palm branch, [Leviticus 23:40](#), one of the four species used during the Jewish holiday of Sukkot, along with the etrog, myrtle, and willow branches. When bound together, the lulav, myrtle, and willow branches are commonly referred to as 'the lulav', [Leviticus 23:40](#). This was a feast of thanksgiving for everything God had provided for them.

Since this was the formal end of the harvest year, it was a time of celebration. The people joined parades of pilgrims at the temple, and as they marched holding the lulav, they sang the Hallel Psalms, [Psalms 113-118](#).

Ceremonies around the temple were extensive, and celebrations were full. Sacrifice was another way they praised God during this feast. But agriculture was not the only interest at Sukkoth or any of the other festivals. The Passover tells the story of Israel fleeing Egypt. Pentecost reminds them of their coming to Mount Sinai to receive the covenant.

Tabernacles reminded them of the forty years in the wilderness, when they lived in the desert, they worshipped God at His tabernacle and built shelters for themselves as well, [Leviticus 23:42-43](#).

They were to remember that God will take care of their every need, just like He did in the wilderness wandering, [Exodus 15:22-27](#) / [Exodus 16:35](#) / [Deuteronomy 8:4](#) / [Deuteronomy 29:5](#).

The weather in Palestine was suited to this at this time of the year. The heat of summer had passed, and the early rains were still a month away. Moses now announces to the Israelites the appointed festivals of the LORD, [Leviticus 23:44](#).

WATER AND LIGHT AT TABERNACLES

We can easily imagine Jesus as a young man travelling to Jerusalem every autumn with countless families from Galilee, making a long caravan. And there in Jerusalem, He joined in the festivities, waving His lulav, and dancing and singing in the courtyards of the temple.

He had the Hallel Psalms memorised and could sing them with ease. To have a fully Jewish life, Jesus certainly must have experienced these Jewish festivals as we have described.

THE WATER CEREMONY

Each day of the Feast of Tabernacles witnessed a water ceremony in which a procession of priests descended to the south border of the city to the Gihon Spring, which flowed into the Pool of Siloam.

There, a priest filled a golden pitcher as a choir chanted, [Isaiah 12:3](#). When the procession arrived at the temple, the priest climbed the altar steps and poured the water onto the altar while the crowd circled him and continued singing.

THE LIGHT CEREMONY

People in the ancient world observed the length of days carefully, charting the solstices as well as the fall and spring equinoxes. The Mishnah tractate Sukkah provides lavish descriptions of the light ceremonies and explains that whoever has not seen these things has never seen a wonder in his or her life!

JESUS AND TABERNACLES

We possess only one record of Jesus visiting Jerusalem at Tabernacles, [John 7-9](#). On His previous visit to Jerusalem, the leaders there threatened His life after He healed a paraplegic man on the Sabbath, [John 5:18](#). Now the coming festival made those same leaders look for Him when they saw the other members of Jesus' family, [John 7:11-13](#) / [John 7:25](#).

Sometime during the middle of the Feast of Tabernacles, as Jesus was teaching in the Temple, He was interrogated by these same religious leaders. How could Jesus teach with authority when He did not have the appropriate schooling? [John 7:15](#).

The authorities wanted to know where He came from, [John 7:40-41](#). Jesus was clear that He would eventually depart Jerusalem and that where He was going, none of them would be able to follow, [John 7:33-34](#) / [John 7:37](#) / [John 7:40](#). Then on that same day, or maybe it was at night, He said something else. Jesus stood up and said, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life,' [John 8:12](#). Here in the great light ceremony of the year, Jesus makes the astounding claim to be the light of the world.

THE FINAL DAY OF TABERNACLES

One of the most memorable events in the life of our Lord took place on the morning of Hoshana Rabbah, which is the story of the woman caught in adultery, [John 8:2-11](#).

Hoshana Rabbah was the final and most important day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Every day during the feast, there was a water ceremony, [Isaiah 12:3](#). The crowd would shake their lulavs and sing the Hallel Psalms, [Psalms 113-118](#). Rabbah means 'great' and Hoshana, Hosanna, means 'God save us please!' This was also a prayer for salvation from sin, for Hoshana Rabbah was understood by the Jews to be the absolutely final chance to have one's sins for the year forgiven. Though Hoshana Rabbah was not mentioned by name in the Old Testament, it is mentioned in the New Testament, [John 7:37-38](#).

On Hoshana Rabbah, in the midst of this water pouring, trumpet blasting, palm waving, psalm chanting, and joy on the part of people seeking forgiveness, and in the presence of all twenty-four divisions of the priesthood, that Jesus cried out in the temple courts and spoke, [John 7:37-38](#) / [Jeremiah 2:13](#).

THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

Numerous problems accompany the charge made at the temple by the scribes and Pharisees on Hoshana Rabbah. We must ask if the woman is married or betrothed to another man. A woman who is sexually unfaithful to her fiancé was to be stoned to death along with her lover, [John 8:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:23-24](#).

Unfaithful wives were likewise killed, [Leviticus 20:10](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:22](#). But the Law did not indicate the method of death. The Mishnah, which was oral law in Jesus' day, specified that unfaithful fiancés should be stoned, but wives strangled, Sanhedrin 7:2.

In [John 8](#), it is the last day for these scribes and Pharisees to have their sins forgiven, and Jesus says, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first,' [John 8:7](#). What did Jesus write on the ground? It is impossible to know what Jesus wrote in the dust, [John 8:6](#) / [John 8:8](#).

Most believe that He began to write in Hebrew some verses from the Law that would shape His response to the dilemma. Two passages talk about God being the source of 'living water.'

The first in the passage we have already read, [Jeremiah 2:13](#). Please note the context of the second time Jeremiah uses the phrase 'living waters', [Jeremiah 17:9-10](#) / [Jeremiah 17:13](#).

Because Jesus must have been sitting and the woman standing, He now raises Himself up and speaks to her for the first time, [John 8:10](#). His questions do not imply that the woman is innocent since, in [John 8:11](#), He warns her to cease a sinful life that has been her habit. Jesus' final words do not imply her innocence but reflect His power to forgive sin.

The portrait of the woman in this story is powerful. Our Lord's implied judgment on her accusers and His mercy mixed with exhortation sets her free in a manner she never expected. And what Jesus did for this sinful woman, He can do for you as well.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a helpful reminder that thanksgiving is an important part of our daily lives. A thoughtful person knows that the capacities and opportunities we enjoy often should be credited less to ourselves and more to God. Tabernacles says, bring samples of what God has given you to the temple and with them in hand, wrapped in your personal lulav, thank Him.

JUDGES

'Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the innocent. Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.' Deuteronomy 16:18-20

Israel is told to appoint judges and officials, [Deuteronomy 16:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:13-15](#), but we're not told how this was carried out. The place of judgments was at the gates of the cities where the judges and officials met, [Ruth 4:1](#).

The people chosen were to judge the people fairly, not to pervert justice or show partiality, [Deuteronomy 16:18-19](#).

These judges and officials were discouraged from taking bribes simply because bribes corrupt decisions, Deuteronomy 16:19. They are to follow justice and justice alone, so that they may live and possess the land that God is giving them, Deuteronomy 16:20. When bribes are taken, judgments are twisted, and favouritism is shown. In other words, there is no justice in a system that is controlled by bribes.

WORSHIPPING OTHER GODS

‘Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to the LORD your God, and do not erect a sacred stone, for these the LORD your God hates.’ Deuteronomy 16:21-22

Israel is again reminded that they shouldn’t set up any idolatrous images, that is, they were to make nothing that became a religious symbol, Deuteronomy 16:21-22.

These were the practices of the Canaanites, and Israel needed to hate them as much as God does, Deuteronomy 16:22 / Deuteronomy 7:5 / Deuteronomy 7:13 / Zephaniah 3:3.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We have already seen that groves were planted about idol temples for the purpose of the obscene worship performed in them, Deuteronomy 12:3 / Deuteronomy 12:3. On this account, God would have no groves or thickets about his altar, that there might be no room for suspicion that anything contrary to the strictest purity was transacted there. Every part of the Divine worship was publicly performed, for the purpose of general edification.’

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION

‘Do not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep that has any defect or flaw in it, for that would be detestable to him. If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the LORD gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God in violation of his covenant, and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars in the sky, and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death. On the testimony of two or three witnesses, a person is to be put to death, but no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting that person to death, and then the hands of all the people. You must purge the evil from among you.’ Deuteronomy 17:1-7

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This verse belongs in the subject of the last chapter. It prohibits once more, Deuteronomy 15:21, that form of insult to God which consists in offering to Him a blemished sacrifice.’

Moses begins by speaking about the sacrifices which were to be given to the Lord. He says that the ‘flawed’ or ‘defective’ animal would be detestable to God, Deuteronomy 17:1. This is an animal which is lame or blind, Leviticus 22:22-24 / Deuteronomy 15:19-23.

We remember this was something God’s people were guilty of during the days of Malachi, Malachi 1:8 / Malachi 1:13-14. To violate the will of God is detestable to Him, that is, God hates it, 2 Samuel 24:24.

Only the best was to be brought before the Lord, and since the offerings were to be eaten by the Levites and the people who brought the offering, then it's reasonable that God would command them not to eat a sickly animal.

Notice that Moses defines 'evil' as a 'violation of his covenant', Deuteronomy 17:2. This tells us that God's covenant is a law, and when it is violated, then sin has occurred, 1 John 3:4. If anyone worshipped other gods, then they were to be investigated, Deuteronomy 17:3-4.

If anyone worshipped other gods, then they were to be punished by stoning to death at the city gate, Deuteronomy 17:5 / Genesis 19:1 / Acts 7:58 / Hebrews 13:12.

This needed to be proved first, with two or three witnesses, Deuteronomy 17:6 / Matthew 18:15-20 / 1 Timothy 5:19, to remove any doubt that the accusation wasn't just gossip or some personal vendetta against the accused.

Notice the hands of the witnesses must be first in putting the guilty person to death, Deuteronomy 17:7. This made certain that no one would be executed for a crime they didn't commit, John 8:7.

The stoning to death was a community event, as the hands of all the people were also involved, Deuteronomy 17:7. This is done so that the whole town would know the justice of what was being done.

The main thrust of these instructions is that the people 'purge the evil from among you'. Deuteronomy 17:7. The reason for this command is simply to remove the guilty person from the congregation; they are like leaven, 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, or gangrene, 2 Timothy 2:16-18, that can spread throughout the people.

LAW COURTS

'If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge—whether bloodshed, lawsuits, or assaults—take them to the place the LORD your God will choose. Go to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them, and they will give you the verdict. You must act according to the decisions they give you at the place the LORD will choose. Be careful to do everything they instruct you to do. Act according to whatever they teach you and the decisions they give you. Do not turn aside from what they tell you, to the right or to the left. Anyone who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the LORD your God is to be put to death. You must purge the evil from Israel. All the people will hear and be afraid and will not be contemptuous again.' Deuteronomy 17:8-13

Some cases of evil behaviour would be straightforward, that is, the sin has been identified, the two or three witnesses were in place, and the guilty person was then stoned to death. Moses here describes some cases which may not be so straightforward, Exodus 18:23-27.

Some cases may have many people speaking testimony that contradicts others. These were cases of bloodshed, that is, cases of murder; there were cases of lawsuits, that is, cases of civil actions, and finally cases of assaults, that is, cases in reference to personal assault, Deuteronomy 17:8.

Notice they are to judge these cases at the place God will choose, Deuteronomy 17:8 / Deuteronomy 12:11 / Deuteronomy 12:5 / Deuteronomy 12:14 / Deuteronomy 12:18 / Deuteronomy 12:21 / Deuteronomy 12:26 / John 4:24.

A person may conclude that a fair judgment can't be passed upon another due to the confusing situation. And so difficult cases for judgment were to be taken before the priests at the tabernacle and the judges of the land, 2 Chronicles 19:4-11.

The priests and judges of the land would hear the matter and give a judgment as God had ordained or authorised them to do, Deuteronomy 17:9 / Exodus 18:26. When these men's judgment came, all were to pay attention to the decision, Deuteronomy 17:10.

Once the verdict was delivered by the priests and or judge of the land, it was to be respected, **Deuteronomy 17:11**. The priests and judge may decide to release a man or woman from the error that is charged after hearing all the evidence.

The priests and judges may determine to give the sentence of death. Whatever the judgment of these men is, it was to be respected by all, **Deuteronomy 17:12 / Hebrews 13:17 / 1 Peter 5:5**.

Anyone bringing the difficult case before the priests and judges may not agree with their judgment and refuse to kill the guilty or refuse to save the life of the one judged innocent.

Such a person who acts contrary to God's priests or judges of the land is to be killed himself, **Deuteronomy 17:12**.

Why? Because they too have now proved to be rebellious against God's will, **John 8:7**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The man who refused to abide by this final determination forfeited his life, as being then in a state of rebellion against the highest authority, and consequently the public could have no pledge for his conduct.'

Israel must purge the evil from among themselves, and all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not be contemptuous again, **Deuteronomy 17:12-13**.

THE KING

'When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," be sure to appoint over you a king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite. The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.' **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**

Israel was to be a theocracy that was ruled by God as the sole monarch, and He would rule through the law of commandments that were given on Mount Sinai. It appears that God knew that Israel would have a desire to be like the nations around them in having a physical king, **Deuteronomy 17:14 / 1 Samuel 8:6-9**.

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following.

'In this passage, Moses prophetically announced a revolution which should occur at a later period in Israel's history. No sanction or recommendation is indicated. On the contrary, when the popular clamour had effected such a constitutional change in the theocracy by the appointment of a king, the Divine disapproval was expressed in the most unequivocal terms, **1 Samuel 8:7**.'

In the future days of Israel would see a king over the people like the nations around them, they certainly wouldn't be a foreigner but their king would be chosen by God Himself, **Deuteronomy 17:15**. This was the case when God anointed those whom He chose to be kings in Israel, **1 Samuel 10:24 / 1 Samuel 16:11-13 / 2 Samuel 5:1-3 / 2 Kings 9:1-13**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Jews extended this prohibition to all offices whatsoever, **Jeremiah 30:21**, and naturally attached the greatest importance to it: from where the significance of the question proposed to our Lord, ‘Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar?’ **Matthew 22:17**. A Gentile head for the Jewish people, which it was a principal aim of the Law to keep special and distinct from others, was an anomaly.’

Notice the terms and conditions of God’s choosing, first of all, they must follow God’s rules, that is, they weren’t to put their trust in their military strength, by multiplying the amount chariots, **Deuteronomy 17:16 / 1 Kings 10:28**, horses, **Psalms 20:7 / Psalms 33:16-17 / Psalms 147:10 / Job 39:19 / 1 Kings 4:26**, and their king wasn’t to even think about leading Israel back to Egypt, **Deuteronomy 17:16**.

The king was also forbidden from having many wives, **Deuteronomy 17:17 / Exodus 34:16 / 1 Kings 11:3**, too much silver and gold, **Deuteronomy 17:17 / 1 Kings 10:23 / 1 Timothy 6:17**, simply because these things would turn them away from God.

The king must also fully respect God’s laws; this is seen in that they must have a written copy of the law handy and read it on all the days of their life, **Deuteronomy 17:18**. The king was to ‘revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees,’ **Deuteronomy 17:19**.

In other words, just as the people who witnessed and participated in the stoning of an evil person would become fearful, **Deuteronomy 17:13**, the king was to fear God by keeping His commandments, **2 Timothy 2:15 / 1 Peter 2:17**. Finally, the king wasn’t to think too highly of himself and turn away from God’s law, **Deuteronomy 17:20**. If he did everything God commanded, then he and his descendants would enjoy a long reign.

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

‘The Levitical priests—indeed, the whole tribe of Levi—are to have no allotment or inheritance with Israel. They shall live on the food offerings presented to the LORD, for that is their inheritance. They shall have no inheritance among their fellow Israelites; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them. This is the share due the priests from the people who sacrifice a bull or a sheep: the shoulder, the internal organs, and the meat from the head. You are to give them the firstfruits of your grain, new wine, and olive oil, and the first wool from the shearing of your sheep, for the LORD your God has chosen them and their descendants out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the LORD’s name always. If a Levite moves from one of your towns anywhere in Israel where he is living and comes in all earnestness to the place the LORD will choose, he may minister in the name of the LORD his God like all his fellow Levites who serve there in the presence of the LORD. He is to share equally in their benefits, even though he has received money from the sale of family possessions.’ **Deuteronomy 18:1-8**

OFFERINGS FOR PRIESTS AND LEVITES

Moses begins by informing us that the entire tribe of Levi were to have no land portion as the other tribes of Israel, **Deuteronomy 18:1**, though they were given forty-eight towns throughout Canaan, **Joshua 21:41-42**.

They were appointed and set apart by God to work as the spiritual servants for the nation of Israel. The Levites are to live on the food offerings presented to God, for that is their inheritance, **Deuteronomy 18:1**.

They were given no portion of land because God Himself was to be their inheritance, Deuteronomy 18:2 / Numbers 18:20. Because the Levites had no land to cultivate for their food, their food was to come from the sacrifices that the people brought to God throughout the year, Deuteronomy 18:3.

The people of the other tribes were to pay ‘dues’ to the Levites in the form of parts of their sacrifices unto God, 1 Corinthians 9:13-14. The people were to sacrifice the unblemished firstborns of their flocks and give the Levites the shoulder, the internal organs and meat from the head, Deuteronomy 18:3.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The parts to be given to the priests were as follows.

1. The shoulder, probably cut off from the beast with the skin on; so Maimonides.
2. The two cheeks, which may include the whole head.
3. The maw, the whole of those intestines which are commonly used for food.’

The first fruits of their grain, oil, and wine were to be delivered to the Levites as well, Deuteronomy 18:4. The Levites were also to receive the first fleece of the people’s sheep that they may cloth and warm themselves, Deuteronomy 18:4. It was God who chose them and their descendants out of all their tribes to stand and minister in the LORD’s name always, Deuteronomy 18:5.

A similar portion was assigned to any Levite who chose to come and serve at the Lord’s altar, Deuteronomy 18:6-7. What was provided for him was beside what he might profit from the sale of his personal property, Deuteronomy 18:8 / 1 Corinthians 9:13.

He was thus not to support himself in his service at the Lord’s altar but was to partake of the offerings of the people, 1 Corinthians 9:8-18. The Levite priest who had been on a journey and returned to the temple to serve God is to be cared for like all other priests and Levites.

The reason for the journey seems to be that the priests have taken care of a death in the family and have received some form of inheritance, Leviticus 25:33-34.

Just because the priest received the inheritance didn’t mean that the people were to stop supporting him through their contributions. As the priest did his work, he was worthy of his hire.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘So we find that, though the Levites might have no part of the land by lot, yet they were permitted to make purchases of houses, goods, and cattle, yea, of fields also. See the case of Abiathar, 1 Kings 2:26, and of Jeremiah, Jeremiah 32:7-8.’

We must note that there is a difference here from the portions that were allotted in Leviticus 7:30-34. The reason for this is that, in view of Moses’ departure from Israel as the mediator between God and Israel, the original covenant mandates that were given at Mount Sinai, Exodus 19:16-19 / Exodus 20:19-21, are here updated for the people as they settle in the land.

OCCULT PRACTICES

‘When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these same detestable practices, the

LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. You must be blameless before the LORD your God.’
Deuteronomy 18:9-13

Israel is reminded that they weren’t permitted to follow the Canaanite culture, Deuteronomy 18:9, which included the Canaanite religious practice of offering their children as a burnt offering, Deuteronomy 18:10 / Leviticus 18:21 / Leviticus 20:2 / Deuteronomy 12:29-31.

They were forbidden from conjuring up fictitious spirits through divination, Numbers 23:23, sorcery, interpreting omens, Leviticus 19:26, engaging in witchcraft, Exodus 7:11 / Leviticus 19:26, or casting spells, Numbers 23:23 / Psalms 58:4-5, or mediums or spiritists, Leviticus 19:31 / 2 Chronicles 33:6, or consulting the dead, Deuteronomy 18:10-11.

We must remember that anyone who practices these things, even today, will not inherit eternal life, Galatians 5:19-21 / Revelation 22:15. Notice the Lord says these things are ‘detestable to Him’, Deuteronomy 18:12, that is, He hates them, Deuteronomy 17:1-7. These things are against the sovereign will of God and challenge His Oneness. God alone has power, and all else is of the evil one. It was because the Canaanites were involved in this kind of evil that He drove them out of Canaan, Deuteronomy 9:5.

Israel was to be blameless, or perfect as some translations render that word, Deuteronomy 18:13 / Genesis 17:1 / Job 1:1 / Matthew 5:48. In other words, Israel was to worship God alone and stay away from everything connected with idolatry.

THE PROPHET

‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your fellow Israelites. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, “Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.” The LORD said to me: “What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their fellow Israelites, and I will put my words in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command him. I myself will call to account anyone who does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, is to be put to death.” You may say to yourselves, “How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?” If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously, so do not be alarmed.’ Deuteronomy 18:14-22

Instead of listening to those who practice, divination, sorcery, etc, Deuteronomy 18:14, Israel were to listen to a prophet which God was going raise up from among themselves, Deuteronomy 18:15.

For this is what Israel asked of God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when they said, let us not hear the voice of God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die, Deuteronomy 18:16.

Moses speaks first of a succession of prophets who would be God’s spokesmen to His people. God did this throughout Israel’s history when they forsook the commandments of God, 1 Samuel 11:14-12:25 / 1 Kings 18:19-39. In this context, however, we know that Moses also referred to the Prophet who would be God’s final prophet to His people, Deuteronomy 18:17-18 / Deuteronomy 34:10. This Prophet would be the Messiah of whom Moses was a type.

Schultz, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jesus was like Moses in numerous ways. He was spared in infancy, Exodus 2 / Matthew 2:13-23. He renounced a royal court, Hebrews 11:24-27 / Philippians 2:5-8, had compassion for the people, Numbers 27:17 / Matthew 9:36, made intercession, Deuteronomy 9:18 / Hebrews 7:25, spoke with God face to face, Exodus 34:29-30 / 2 Corinthians 3:7, and was the mediator of a covenant, Deuteronomy 29:1 / Hebrews 8:6-7. The greatest revelation in the Old

Testament era came through Moses. This revelation was only surpassed in the coming of Christ, who not only revealed God's message but also provided salvation through His death.'

It's because of these very verses that Israel looked for this unique Prophet throughout their history, John 1:19-24 / John 7:40. This Prophet was Jesus, the final prophet through whom God revealed His will to man, John 1:21 / John 1:25 / John 5:45-47 / Acts 3:22-23 / Acts 7:37 / Hebrews 1:3.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This prophet is the Lord Jesus, who was in the bosom of the Father, and who came to declare him to mankind. Every word spoken by him is a living infallible oracle from God himself and must be received and obeyed as such, on pain of the eternal displeasure of the Almighty, Deuteronomy 18:19 / Acts 3:22-23 / Deuteronomy 18:22.'

Israel is commanded to listen to this prophet as they did to Moses; however, those who refuse to hear the words of this prophet will be judged by the Lord, Deuteronomy 18:19. Israel wasn't to follow these false prophets; they were to be put to death, Deuteronomy 18:20 / Deuteronomy 17:12.

The proof that someone was a false prophet was seen in the fact that what they prophesied didn't come to pass. If we remember what Moses said earlier, if a prophet didn't speak the truth, but tried to lead the people after false gods, then that prophet was truly false, Deuteronomy 13:1-5.

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

'When the LORD your God has destroyed the nations whose land he is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns and houses, then set aside for yourselves three cities in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess. Determine the distances involved and divide into three parts the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, so that a person who kills someone may flee for refuge to one of these cities. This is the rule concerning anyone who kills a person and flees there for safety—anyone who kills a neighbour unintentionally, without malice aforethought. For instance, a man may go into the forest with his neighbour to cut wood, and as he swings his axe to fell a tree, the head may fly off and hit his neighbour and kill him. That man may flee to one of these cities and save his life. Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage, overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbour without malice aforethought. This is why I command you to set aside for yourselves three cities. If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he promised on oath to your ancestors, and gives you the whole land he promised them, because you carefully follow all these laws I command you today—to love the LORD your God and to walk always in obedience to him—then you are to set aside three more cities. Do this so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land, which the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance, and so that you will not be guilty of bloodshed. But if out of hate someone lies in wait, assaults and kills a neighbour, and then flees to one of these cities, the killer shall be sent for by the town elders, be brought back from the city, and be handed over to the avenger of blood to die. Show no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you. Do not move your neighbour's boundary stone set up by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess.' Deuteronomy 19:1-14

CITIES OF REFUGE

In this chapter, Moses deals with three important matters.

1. God is giving the land of Canaan to Israel, [Deuteronomy 19:1](#), due to His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, [Genesis 12:1-3](#). Israel will dwell in houses that they had not built.
2. Moses gives instructions to Israel regarding things in the future, that is, when Israel possesses Canaan, [Deuteronomy 19:1](#). Moses is so sure that God will fulfil His promise to Israel, that he begins giving ordinances for a time when they would possess Canaan.
3. Israel was to divide Canaan into three large sections and set aside a city in each, [Deuteronomy 19:2](#) / [Numbers 35:11](#), that would provide a safe haven for someone who had killed another, either by accident or purposefully, until that man or woman may be given a trial, [Deuteronomy 19:3](#) / [Numbers 35:9-34](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:41-43](#) / [Joshua 20:1-9](#).

Cities of refuge were established in reference to the civil laws of the nation, and six of the cities were given to the Levites to which a person who has killed someone may flee, [Deuteronomy 19:1-14](#) / [Numbers 35:6](#) / [Deuteronomy 4:41-43](#) / [Joshua 20:1-9](#).

In addition, give them forty-two other towns, [Numbers 35:6](#). In all the Levites were to be given forty-eight towns, together with their pasturelands, [Numbers 35:7](#).

The towns the Levites are to be given are from the land the Israelites possess and are to be given in proportion to the inheritance of each tribe, [Numbers 35:8](#). Moses is to take many towns from a tribe that has many, but few from one that has few, [Numbers 35:8](#).

God tells Moses to speak to the Israelites and tell them that when they cross the Jordan into Canaan, they are to select some towns to be their place of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee, [Numbers 35:9-11](#).

They will be places of refuge from the avenger, [Genesis 9:6](#), so that anyone accused of murder may not die before they stand trial before the assembly, [Numbers 35:12](#) / [Joshua 20:4](#) / [Joshua 20:6](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘If he was found worthy of death, they delivered him to the avenger that he might be slain, [Deuteronomy 19:12](#), if not, they sent him back to the city of refuge, where he remained till the death of the high priest, [Numbers 35:25](#). Before the cities of refuge were appointed, the altar appears to have been a sanctuary for those who had killed a person unwittingly, [Exodus 21:13](#) / [Exodus 21:14](#).’

These six towns will be their cities of refuge, [Numbers 35:13](#). There were three cities of refuge on the west side of the Jordan and three were on the east side, [Numbers 35:14](#).

On the west side of the of Jordan, Hebron, Kiriath-Arba, was given from the tribe of Judah, [Joshua 20:7](#). Shechem was given from the tribe of Ephraim, [Joshua 21:21](#) and Kedesh in Galilee was given from the tribe of Naphtali, [Joshua 21:32](#).

From the east side of the Jordan, Golan in Bashan was given from the tribe of Manasseh, [Joshua 21:27](#). Bezer was given from the tribe of Reuben, [Joshua 21:36](#) and Ramoth-Gilead was given from the tribe of Gad, [Joshua 21:38](#). Back then, cities of refuge had meaning to their names. Shechem means shoulder or back or strength, Hebron means fellowship, Kedesh means holy, sanctuary, Golan means joy, exultation, Ramoth means high, exalted, and Bezer means fortification, stronghold.

These six cities will be a place of refuge for Israelites and for foreigners residing among them, so that anyone who has killed another accidentally can flee there, [Numbers 35:15](#).

The cities are mentioned in [Exodus 21](#) / [Numbers 35](#) / [Deuteronomy 19:1-14](#) / [Joshua 20](#). Roads leading to these cities were kept in excellent condition, with signposts reading, ‘Refuge! Refuge!’ The cities were no more than half a day’s journey from any other city, [Joshua 20:7-8](#).

The cities were in central locations where they could easily be reached from any part of the country. The cities of refuge were open to all, and the doors into the cities were never locked. The cities were stocked with food, and there was no protection if a man did not flee to a city of refuge.

The principle behind these cities is based on the law of the avenger who could avenge the death of a relative who was killed. The next of kin had the right to avenge the death of a relative.

Unless the avenging relative acted out of the heat of the moment when a relative was accidentally killed, the attacker could escape to a city of refuge until a judgment could be made, Genesis 9:6.

Moses describes a situation where two people may be working together, and an accident happens where one of them accidentally dies, Deuteronomy 19:4-5. He says that the city of refuge is to be a safe place for the person who accidentally killed someone that they had no feelings of animosity toward. Deuteronomy 19:5.

However, there might be a family member of the deceased, 'the avenger of blood', who didn't witness the accident, and so, they might chase the killer with 'rage' in their hearts, Deuteronomy 19:6.

In order to keep the innocent person from dying, they are commanded to flee to the nearest city of refuge. This is why God command they set aside for themselves three cities, Deuteronomy 19:7.

There were three refuge cities on the east side of the Jordan and three on the west side, Deuteronomy 4:41-43. The purpose of the refuge city law was to prevent unjust revenge on one who accidentally killed another person.

The enlargement of the borders of the Promised Land was conditional upon Israel's continued obedience to God's will, Deuteronomy 19:8 / Genesis 15:18 / Exodus 23:31. The enlarged land would demand more cities of refuge, which the Lord was willing to give in turn for the people's obedience, Deuteronomy 19:9.

The person who pursues the one who unintentionally killed the avenger of blood's family member, into the city of refuge to take vengeance, will themselves be guilty and subject to the penalty of death without pity, Deuteronomy 19:10 / Exodus 21:13 / Numbers 35:9-29.

If someone murdered another person, simply because they hated them, then the law of the refuge cities didn't apply, Deuteronomy 19:11 / Exodus 21:13. The person was to be judged by the elders of their own city, Deuteronomy 19:12. Israel are to show no pity and they must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with them, Deuteronomy 19:13.

If, without enmity someone suddenly pushes another or throws something at them unintentionally or, without seeing them, drops on them a stone heavy enough to kill them, and they die, then since that other person was not an enemy and no harm was intended, the assembly must judge between the accused and the avenger of blood according to these regulations, Numbers 35:22-24.

Only those who accidentally killed someone were able to flee to the cities of refuge, Numbers 35:25. They could flee to the city of refuge in order to escape the vengeance of a near relative, Numbers 35:25. However, if anyone exercised the privilege of escaping to a refuge city, they had to stay in the city until the high priest died, Numbers 35:25.

If that same person who killed someone accidentally decided to go outside of the city of refuge before the high priest died, then the near relative of the one who was killed could kill them without any guilt, Numbers 35:26-27.

If the high priest died, the one who accidentally killed someone could return to his property, and the near relative had no right to avenge the death of his relative, Numbers 35:28. This is to have the force of law for Israel throughout the generations to come, wherever they live, Numbers 35:29.

Notice that capital punishment could only be carried out when more than one witness could testify to the fact that murder was committed, Numbers 35:30 / Deuteronomy 17:6-7.

No amount of money could be paid to free the one who was guilty of murder, [Numbers 35:31](#) / [Exodus 21:30](#), and neither could any amount of money be paid in order that anyone who accidentally killed someone could leave a city of refuge before the death of the high priest, [Numbers 35:32](#).

Israel must not pollute the land where they are because bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it, [Numbers 35:33](#). Israel must not defile the land where they live because God's dwells there among them, [Deuteronomy 19:13](#) / [Numbers 35:34](#). Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No wonder God is so particularly strict in his laws against murderers.

1. Because he is the author of life, and none has any right to dispose of it but himself.
2. Because life is the time to prepare for the eternal world, and on it the salvation of the soul accordingly depends, therefore it is of infinite consequence to the man that his life be lengthened out to the utmost limits assigned by Divine Providence. As he who takes a man's life away before his time may be the murderer of his soul as well as of his body, the severest laws should be enacted against this, both to punish and prevent the crime.’

The death penalty was given in order to keep society pure from the sickness of murderers. Once someone murders someone else, then the land is defiled by those who have no value for life. The death penalty, therefore, was God's way of keeping society clean from moral decay in reference to anyone who had no value for life, [Genesis 9:6](#).

The land was a source of survival, and it was a family's inheritance for the future. To move or remove a landmark was the equivalent of stealing land, [Deuteronomy 19:14](#). These landmarks were usually written on stone, and once the ownership of the land was marked out, no one was to move them.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN CHRIST AND THE CITIES

The Bible Hub says the following.

1. Refuge and Safety.

Just as the Cities of Refuge provided a safe haven for the manslayer, Christ offers refuge to sinners seeking salvation. [Hebrews 6:18](#) speaks of believers who ‘have fled to take hold of the hope set before us,’ drawing a parallel to the act of fleeing to a place of safety. In Christ, believers find protection from the ultimate avenger, the justice of God, which demands retribution for sin.

2. Accessibility.

The cities were strategically located and easily accessible, ensuring that anyone in need could reach them without undue delay. This reflects the availability of Christ to all who seek Him. [Romans 10:13](#) declares, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ The open access to these cities symbolises the open invitation of the Gospel.

3. Impartiality.

The Cities of Refuge were available to all, regardless of social status or nationality, as stated in [Numbers 35:15](#). ‘These six cities will serve as a refuge for the Israelites, as well as for the foreigner or temporary resident among them.’ This inclusivity prefigures the universal offer of salvation through Christ, who breaks down barriers and extends grace to all humanity, [Galatians 3:28](#).

4. High Priest's Death.

The manslayer was required to remain in the city until the death of the high priest, at which point they could return home without fear, Numbers 35:25-28. This aspect foreshadows the death of Christ, our High Priest, whose sacrificial death liberates believers from the penalty of sin. Hebrews 9:15 states, ‘For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.’

5. Judgment and Mercy.

The cities balanced justice and mercy, ensuring that the innocent were protected while the guilty were held accountable. This balance is perfectly embodied in Christ, who fulfils the law’s demands while offering mercy through His atoning sacrifice. John 1:17 affirms, ‘For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.’

CONCLUSION

The Cities of Refuge serve as a multifaceted type of Christ, illustrating His role as a sanctuary for sinners, His accessibility and impartiality, and the profound implications of His sacrificial death.

Through this typology, believers gain a deeper understanding of the comprehensive nature of Christ’s redemptive work and the assurance of safety found in Him.

WITNESSES

‘One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offence they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse someone of a crime, the two people involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against a fellow Israelite, then do to the false witness as that witness intended to do to the other party. You must purge the evil from among you. The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.’ Deuteronomy 19:15-21

Back in Deuteronomy 17:6, we read that those who were charged with capital offences had to be found guilty at the mouth of no less than two witnesses. Here, Moses deals with accusations concerning any iniquity or sin. He says that one person’s word against another person’s word isn’t enough to establish that someone was guilty, Deuteronomy 19:15 / Numbers 35:30.

Moses says, if there were more than one witness to a crime, then the matter must be established, Deuteronomy 19:15 / Jeremiah 9:23-24. Moses tells us that there may be false witnesses who come forward to complain against another, Deuteronomy 19:16, that is, they are lying about the situation at hand to do someone harm.

These would be classed as difficult cases, and as Moses told Israel earlier, these cases should be presented to the elders and the priests, Deuteronomy 19:17 / Deuteronomy 17:8-13 / Matthew 18:15-20.

If, after investigation, a person was found to be a false witness, Deuteronomy 19:18, they suffered the punishment they wished to be inflicted on the person against whom they bore false witness, Deuteronomy 19:19.

Once again, the Lord commands that they ‘must purge the evil from among you’, Deuteronomy 19:19 / Deuteronomy 17:7 / Deuteronomy 17:12. In other words, God won’t tolerate this kind of evil. This law made accusers think twice before slanderously accusing someone of a deed for which he had no evidence, Deuteronomy 19:20.

In the days of Christ, the Jews had twisted the teaching of the Old Testament law on this matter, of an ‘eye for eye and tooth for tooth’, Deuteronomy 19:21. They basically took these principles and applied them to their everyday relationships.

The ‘eye for an eye’ was a civil law of the Old Testament where the people had the authority to punish offenders, but the punishment must fit the crime, hence why it says hand for hand and foot for foot, Deuteronomy 19:21 / Exodus 21:23-24.

The retaliation law that was given to Israel was more compassionate than the law that existed previously to the giving of the law to Israel. In reference to this law, Jesus stated that love should succeed over the will to retaliate against our neighbour, Matthew 5:38-42.

The principle of the law would be that the death penalty would be given to those who voluntarily murdered another person, this is, life for life, Deuteronomy 19:21. If someone voluntarily took the life of another, he had his right to life taken from him, Leviticus 24:19-20.

This law made accusers think twice before slanderously accusing someone of a deed for which he had no evidence, Deuteronomy 19:21. We have to remember that the law of the land before God gave his instructions was really bad.

If you kill my child, I will kill all your children, your wife, your brothers, your whole generation! If you knock out my tooth or eye, Deuteronomy 19:21, I will knock out all of yours and kill you also.

In Matthew 5:38-42, Jesus is teaching against the concept of retaliation. What Jesus was condemning was the Pharisees’ misapplication of the principle of this law. They were using the principle as a justification for personal revenge. They misunderstood the principle of the law.

That principle is that there is a punishment for the violation of the law, and the punishment must match the crime. In other words, the death penalty wouldn’t be given to one who told a lie.

Wrongdoing that is committed against Christians originates from Satan; Christians must resist the temptations of Satan, James 4:7. However, retaliation against those whom Satan uses to promote his work isn’t a Christian principle. The slap mentioned in Matthew 5:39 is an insulting blow, or what we would call an insulting blow, and anyone willing to slap a Christian is allowing Satan to use them to persecute Christians.

It’s better to suffer ill-treatment than to resist or retaliate against those who would persecute us, 1 Peter 2:18-20. It was a Roman law that a government official could command into service any person or thing that was needed to carry a soldier’s armour.

Jesus’ disciples are commanded to willingly comply with those who would compel their services. The disciples shouldn’t retaliate by withholding from those who would ask of them, Deuteronomy 15:8-10 / Galatians 6:10 / James 2:14-17. The disciples must willingly give when compelled by those who would demand of them according to law, Luke 6:29-30.

The whole point is that instead of retaliating against those who would insult us or demand things from us, the Christian can overcome evil by doing good. Hence, why Jesus goes on to speak about how to love our enemies, Luke 7:27-36.

The cross doesn’t make forgiveness easy, but it does make it possible. Love your enemies, do good to them, feed them when they are hungry, give them clothes when they are cold, and visit them when they are sick.

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

‘When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. He shall say: “Hear, Israel: Today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not panic or be terrified by them. For the LORD, your God, is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory.” The officers shall say to the army: “Has anyone built a new house and not yet begun to live in it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle, and someone else may begin to live in it. Has anyone planted a vineyard and not begun to enjoy it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle, and someone else enjoy it. Has anyone become pledged to a woman and not married her? Let him go home, or he may die in battle, and someone else marry her.” Then the officers shall add, “Is anyone afraid or fainthearted? Let him go home so that his fellow soldiers will not become disheartened, too.” When the officers have finished speaking to the army, they shall appoint commanders over it.’ Deuteronomy 20:1-9

GOING TO WAR

Moses has already reminded Israel that God was giving them the land because of the promise He made with their fathers, [Genesis 12:1-3](#) / [Deuteronomy 19:1](#). However, if Israel wanted to receive God’s promises, they mustn’t trust in their own abilities, they must learn to trust in God’s ability to save them when it comes to waging war against their enemies, [Deuteronomy 20:1](#).

God promises to strengthen the hands of those who may be intimidated by the numbers and armament of horses and chariots of the enemy, [Deuteronomy 20:1](#) / [Deuteronomy 17:16](#).

He promises to remove all fear from their hearts when they put their faith in God, [Deuteronomy 20:1](#); hence, God will fight for them against their enemies and save them, [Romans 8:31](#) / [1 Peter 1:6-7](#).

God made a promise that He would fight for the nation of Israel against all who would seek to destroy His eternal purpose with the nation, [Deuteronomy 20:4](#). He was a God of war in reference to defending Israel, [Exodus 15:3](#) / [Joshua 6:17-19](#) / [1 Samuel 30:7](#) / [2 Chronicles 13:12](#) / [Hosea 1:7](#).

It was God who fought for Israel to bring them into existence and into the land of promise, [Deuteronomy 6:18-19](#) / [Deuteronomy 7:1-2](#) / [Deuteronomy 7:16-26](#) / [Deuteronomy 9:1-6](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:22-25](#) / [Deuteronomy 12:29](#) / [Deuteronomy 19:1](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:3-8](#).

Notice that the men of the army of Israel were to keep fresh in their memories the fact that with a strong-arm God divided the Red Sea and brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage, [Deuteronomy 9:1](#).

When Israel are about to go into battle, the priest is to come forward and address the army and say, hear, Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies but do not be fainthearted or afraid, do not panic or be terrified by them, [Deuteronomy 20:2-3](#) / [Numbers 31:6](#) / [1 Samuel 4:4](#) / [1 Samuel 4:11](#) / [2 Chronicles 13:12](#).

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This priest who accompanied the troops was raised to the highest dignity next to the high priest. The priest appeared just before the battle began and began his exhortation with the formula announced in these verses, ‘Hear, O Israel,’ etc. The function of the priest here was not like that of a chaplain found in the armed services of many nations today; he was of a higher rank and spoke upon the DIRECT authority and commandment of God.’

Although the priests wouldn’t get involved with the fighting, [Numbers 1:47-53](#), they would often go with the army of Israel to encourage them, [Numbers 31:6](#) / [1 Samuel 4:4](#) / [1 Samuel 4:11](#) / [2 Chronicles 13:12](#).

We're told that the priests say that there may be some men who weren't ready or fit enough to fight in a battle. Some may have just built a house, Deuteronomy 20:5, planted a vineyard, Deuteronomy 20:6, or just got married, Deuteronomy 20:7 / Deuteronomy 24:5; it's these men who were to return home to enjoy these things before death, Ecclesiastes 2:24.

There were others, however, who would be excused from fighting because they were fearful, Deuteronomy 20:8. These were the men who could return to their homes, just in case their fear spread to the other soldiers, Judges 7:3 / Numbers 13-14 / Revelation 21:8.

When the officers have finished speaking to the army, they are to appoint commanders over it, Deuteronomy 20:9. In selecting those who would go to war, the leaders were to seek out only those who were of a strong heart with a strong faith in the fact that God would go to war with them.

We can almost imagine the scene here as the two armies come to face each other, we can imagine the enemy coming toward Israel with their horses, and chariots, Joshua 17:16 / Judges 4:3 / Judges 7:1-25 / 1 Samuel 13:5. The reality in the minds of the Israelites is surely, that they are about to die, Deuteronomy 1:21 / Deuteronomy 1:26 / 2 Timothy 2:3-4 / Revelation 2:10.

‘When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labour and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the LORD your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it.

As for the women, the children, the livestock, and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the LORD your God gives you from your enemies. This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby. However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God. When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an axe to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees people that you should besiege them? However, you may cut down trees that you know are not fruit trees and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls.’ Deuteronomy 20:10-20

The priests now turn their attention to the cities and nations that are a great distance away, but note, these aren't Canaanite cities. They say that Israel must first seek peace with them, Deuteronomy 20:10.

If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it will be subject to forced labour and will work for them, Deuteronomy 20:11. However, if no peace is extended, then they were to siege the city, Deuteronomy 20:12, kill every male, Deuteronomy 20:13.

Take women and other spoils for themselves, Deuteronomy 20:14 / 2 Kings 6:24-33. This is how Israel is to treat all the cities that are at a distance from them and do not belong to the nations nearby, Deuteronomy 20:15.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, Deuteronomy 20:16.

‘These seven Canaanite nations might be received into mercy, provided they do the following.

1. Renounced their idolatry.
2. Became subject to the Jews.
3. Paid annual tribute, and that it was only in case these terms were rejected, that they were not to leave alive in such a city anything that breathed, Deuteronomy 20:16.’

The cities in the land which were Canaanite cities weren't to be offered any peace; they were to be totally destroyed from the land of Canaan, just in case they endangered the preservation of Israel, Deuteronomy 20:16-17 / Deuteronomy 7:1-6.

The reason for this is simply because ‘they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God’, Deuteronomy 20:18 / 2 Chronicles 8:7. In other words, God won’t tolerate this kind of evil behaviour, He hates it, Deuteronomy 7:26 / Deuteronomy 13:8-9. Notice also that Israel is commanded not to cut down all of the trees of a city when they besiege it, Deuteronomy 20:19. All fruit trees were to be preserved, and it was only those trees that bore no fruit that were to be cut down in order to be used in besieging a city, Deuteronomy 20:20.

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION

‘If someone is found slain, lying in a field in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who the killer was, your elders and judges shall go out and measure the distance from the body to the neighbouring towns. Then the elders of the town nearest the body shall take a heifer that has never been worked and has never worn a yoke and lead it down to a valley that has not been ploughed or planted and where there is a flowing stream. There in the valley, they are to break the heifer’s neck. The Levitical priests shall step forward, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister and to pronounce blessings in the name of the LORD and to decide all cases of dispute and assault. Then all the elders of the town nearest the body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley, and they shall declare: “Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it done. Accept this atonement for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, LORD, and do not hold your people guilty of the blood of an innocent person.” Then the bloodshed will be atoned for, and you will have purged from yourselves the guilt of shedding innocent blood, since you have done what is right in the eyes of the LORD.’
Deuteronomy 21:1-9

ATONEMENT FOR AN UNSOLVED MURDER

Moses begins by speaking about finding someone who had been murdered, but no one witnessed the murder, and no one knows how the person was murdered, Deuteronomy 21:1.

In other words, sin took place in the land due to the fact that a body lay unattended and was obviously murdered. He says that the elders and the judges of the land are to measure the distance from the body to the nearest town, Deuteronomy 21:2.

The elders of the town nearest the body are instructed to take a heifer, which had never been used for work, lead it down to a valley that has not been ploughed or planted and where there is a flowing stream and break its neck, Deuteronomy 21:3-4 / Exodus 13:13.

The priests are to step forward, for God has chosen them to minister and to pronounce blessings in His Name and to decide all cases of dispute and assault, Deuteronomy 21:5. All the elders of the town nearest the body are to wash their hands over the heifer, Deuteronomy 21:6.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Washing the hands, in reference to such a subject as this, was a rite anciently used to signify that the persons thus washing were innocent of the crime in question. It was probably from the Jews that Pilate learned this symbolical method of expressing his innocence.’

A prayer was offered by the elders of the town on behalf of the people that the sin of murder would be forgiven and everyone was declared to be innocent of the murder, [Deuteronomy 21:7-8](#) / [Matthew 27:24](#).

The priests were to present the heifer as an atonement offering, [Numbers 35:33-34](#), and so, the heifer would be used to pay the price of sin since no murderer was found.

It appears that the elders functioned as a council to prepare the sacrifice, and the priests, the sons of Levi, would make final judgments and carry out the sacrifice, [Deuteronomy 1:9-17](#) / [Deuteronomy 16:18-20](#) / [Exodus 18:13-26](#). When Israel does this, they will have purged from themselves the guilt of shedding innocent blood, since they have done what is right in God's eyes, [Deuteronomy 21:9](#).

MARRYING A CAPTIVE WOMAN

‘When you go to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands, and you take captives, if you notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife. Bring her into your home and have her shave her head, trim her nails and put aside the clothes she was wearing when captured. After she has lived in your house and mourned her father and mother for a full month, then you may go to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. If you are not pleased with her, let her go wherever she wishes.

You must not sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonoured her.’ [Deuteronomy 21:10-14](#)

When Israel goes to war against their enemies, and God delivers them into their hands, and they take captives, and if they notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, they may take her as their wife, [Deuteronomy 21:10-11](#).

We must note that taking an enemy's beautiful woman as a wife didn't include the Canaanite women, as God said they were to be put to death, [Deuteronomy 20:16-17](#), and He had already commanded Israel not to marry Canaanite women, [Deuteronomy 7:1-5](#).

The shaving of her head, [Deuteronomy 21:12](#) / [Leviticus 14:8](#) / [Numbers 8:7](#), trimming her nails, [Deuteronomy 21:12](#) / [2 Samuel 19:24](#), and putting aside her clothes, [Deuteronomy 21:13](#), was a ceremony to demonstrate her total separation from the pagan gods and practices of the nation from which she came. In order to show respect to the woman, she was allowed to mourn her parents for a month, [Deuteronomy 21:13](#) / [Numbers 20:29](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is prescribed from motives of humanity, that the woman might have time and leisure to detach her affections from their natural ties and prepare her mind for new ones.’

Notice if the husband got to the point where he didn't care for her anymore, that is, he's not pleased with her anymore, he couldn't just sell the woman to slavery or treat her as a slave because he had already dishonoured her, that is, taken away her virginity, [Deuteronomy 21:14](#). Because she had been elevated above her captive state, she had the same rights as an Israelite woman.

THE RIGHT OF THE FIRSTBORN

‘If a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other, and both bear him sons but the firstborn is the son of the wife he does not love, when he wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to the son of the wife he loves in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the wife he does not love. He must acknowledge the son of his unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double share of all he has. That son is the first sign of his father's strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him.’ [Deuteronomy 21:15-17](#)

Here, Moses tells us that if the one who is loved less gives birth to the firstborn, the firstborn still has all the rights of the firstborn, regardless of the fact that the mother was loved less than the other wife, Deuteronomy 21:15-17 / Genesis 48:22 / 2 Kings 2:9.

It appears that having multiple wives was already happening in Israel at this time; perhaps they followed the example of Abraham, who married Sarah and Hagar and Jacob, who married Sarah and Leah.

We must note that this was never God's plan; God had always had in mind one man and one woman in a marriage, Matthew 19:5 / Matthew 19:8 / Ephesians 5:22-31. As we see with Abraham and Jacob, polygamous marriages are full of strife and jealousy, and there are always those who are loved less.

A REBELLIOUS SON

'If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard." Then all the men of his town are to stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you.

All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.' Deuteronomy 21:18-21

Is it possible that this stubborn and rebellious son was the product of a polygamous marriage? If a son could not be controlled by the parents, because he is stubborn and rebellious, Deuteronomy 21:18 / Deuteronomy 1:26, then it became the responsibility of the elders of the town to deal with the son, Deuteronomy 21:19.

We must note that the son couldn't be stoned simply because he was stubborn and rebellious. Notice he was accused of being a glutton, a drunkard and not obeying his parents, Deuteronomy 21:20 / Mark 7:10 / Ephesians 6:1 / Colossians 3:20.

If it turned out that the son was indeed stubborn and rebellious, then it was the responsibility of all the men of the town to execute the judgment of stoning the son to death, Deuteronomy 21:20-21.

He must have demonstrated in his rebellion an offence which was bad enough to receive capital punishment, Exodus 20:12 / Exodus 21:15 / Exodus 21:17 / Leviticus 20:9 / Deuteronomy 22:20-27.

Notice again that God says, 'you must purge the evil from among you', Deuteronomy 21:21. When all of Israel heard and saw what happened to the rebellious son, they would be afraid, and all the sons of Israel would certainly think twice about doing the same, Deuteronomy 21:21 / Deuteronomy 13:5 / Deuteronomy 17:7 / Deuteronomy 17:12 / Deuteronomy 19:19.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This law, severe as it may seem, must have acted as a powerful preventive of crime. If such a law were in force now, and duly executed, how many deaths of disobedient and profligate children would there be in all corners of the land!'

VARIOUS LAWS

'If someone guilty of a capital offence is put to death and their body is exposed on a pole, you must not leave the body hanging on the pole overnight. Be sure to bury it that same day because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.' Deuteronomy 21:22-23

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There were four methods of execution in use among the ancient Jews: stoning, [Exodus 17:4](#) / [Deuteronomy 13:10](#), etc, burning, [Leviticus 20:14](#) / [Leviticus 21:9](#), the sword, [Exodus 32:27](#), and strangulation. The latter, though not named in Scripture, is regarded by the rabbis as the most common, and the proper one to be adopted when no other is expressly enjoined by the Law.’

If someone was guilty of a capital offence, such as adultery, rape, disobedience to parents, etc., they were to be put to death, [Deuteronomy 21:22](#). These guilty ones weren’t to be left on the wood hanging overnight, [Deuteronomy 21:23](#) / [Joshua 8:29](#) / [Joshua 10:26-27](#).

They are to bury the corpse that same day because anyone who is hung on a pole is under God’s curse, [Deuteronomy 21:23](#). Such an offender couldn’t remain on the face of the earth without defiling it, [Deuteronomy 21:23](#) / [Leviticus 18:24-25](#) / [Leviticus 18:28](#) / [Numbers 35:34](#), and was thereby to be removed after their punishment, [Deuteronomy 21:23](#).

Death by hanging on a tree exposed the body of the one executed, their shameful deeds were publicly exposed to view, and it carried with it the curse of God, [Deuteronomy 21:23](#) / [Numbers 25:4](#) / [2 Samuel 4:12](#). In this way, Jesus was cursed by being hanged on the tree of the cross for our sins, [John 19:31](#) / [Galatians 3:13-14](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The curse of God is probably regarded as lying on the malefactor because, from the fact of his being hanged, he must have been guilty of a peculiarly atrocious breach of God’s covenant. Such an offender could not remain on the face of the earth without defiling it, [Leviticus 18:25-28](#) / [Numbers 35:34](#). Therefore, after the penalty of his crime had been inflicted, and he had hung for a time as a public example, the Holy land was to be at once and entirely delivered from his presence. The placing of the body on a tree was not that which made the person accursed, but was an external sign or token of his being an accursed one. Once again, these incidents indicate God’s passionate distaste for unlawful living.’

The apostle Paul quotes [Deuteronomy 21:22-23](#) in [Galatians 3:13-14](#), signifying the terrible death our Lord suffered in our place. The curse of the law is that man had to keep everything which was written in it, [Deuteronomy 27:26](#). The problem is that no one was capable of keeping all the law, no one was capable of being justified through the law, and as a result, everyone was left under a curse, that is deserving God’s judgement, [Romans 3:9](#) / [Romans 3:23](#). The good news is that Jesus took this curse, the punishment for sin, upon Himself for us, [Isaiah 53:8](#). Jesus didn’t become sinful as some believe when they read [2 Corinthians 5:21](#).

Notice the footnote for [2 Corinthians 5:21](#). Jesus became a sin offering, not sinful. He simply took the curse of God, the punishment for sins and thus redeemed us from having to pay the price of God’s curse against sin, [Galatians 3:13-14](#).

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

‘If you see your fellow Israelite’s ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to its owner. If they do not live near you or if you do not know who owns it, take it home with you and keep it until they come looking for it. Then give it back. Do the same if you find their donkey or cloak, or anything else they have lost. Do not ignore it.

If you see your fellow Israelite’s donkey or ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help the owner get it to its feet.’

Deuteronomy 22:1-4

Moses begins by telling us what every good community needs: respect and love for our neighbours. If we love our neighbour, we must look out for our neighbour's property. Even if we don't get along with our neighbours, we still have a responsibility to protect our neighbours' property.

Moses says that if someone sees their fellow Israelite's ox wandering around loose and doesn't do anything about it, **Deuteronomy 22:1 / Exodus 23:4-5**, this demonstrates that they simply didn't care about other people's property. Whatever a fellow Israelite loses is to be returned, **Deuteronomy 22:1**, or held on to until they claim it, **Deuteronomy 22:2**. The same law applied to someone losing a donkey, cloak, or anything else; they must not ignore it, **Deuteronomy 22:3**.

If someone sees a fellow Israelite's donkey or ox fallen on the road, they cannot ignore it; they must help the owner get it to its feet, **Deuteronomy 22:4**. In other words, they are to help them rather than acting like they don't exist. Israel was not only to universally oppose sin, but they were also to keep watch and help each other. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The priest and the Levite, when they saw the wounded man, passed by on the other side of the way, **Luke 10:31-32**. This was a notorious breach of the merciful law mentioned above.'

'A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this. If you come across a bird's nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life. When you build a new house, make a parapet around your roof so that you may not bring the guilt of bloodshed on your house if someone falls from the roof. Do not plant two kinds of seed in your vineyard; if you do, not only the crops you plant but also the fruit of the vineyard will be defiled. Do not plough with an ox and a donkey yoked together. Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together. Make tassels on the four corners of the cloak you wear.' **Deuteronomy 22:5-12**

To confuse the identity of women and men was a corruption of God's creation. A woman who puts on a man's clothes or a man who puts a woman's clothing on is to be marked as detestable to the Lord, **Deuteronomy 22:5 / 1 Corinthians 11:3-15**.

The text doesn't tell us what determined either a man's or a woman's clothing, but if the clothing was identified by society to reflect the status of either a man or a woman, then men and women should shun parading themselves as the opposite sex, **1 Corinthians 11:2-15**.

Moses goes on to give regulations regarding finding eggs or young birds being nursed by their mother. The people were not permitted to take both the mother and young together, **Deuteronomy 22:6**.

If Israel obeys this commandment and allows the mother to go free, then they would find blessings and long life, both as individuals and as a nation, **Deuteronomy 22:7**.

Moses goes on to give more regulations regarding the care for others, even when building a house, **Deuteronomy 22:8**. The parapet was the battlement or railing to prevent someone from falling off a roof, **Joshua 2:6 / 2 Samuel 11:2 / Acts 10:9**. Failure to build in a safe way would bring guilt to the owner or builder of the home, **Deuteronomy 22:8**. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Houses in the East are, in general, built with flat roofs, and on them men walk to enjoy the fresh air, converse together, sleep, etc. It was therefore necessary to have a sort of battlement or balustrade to prevent persons from falling off. If a man neglected to make a sufficient defence against such accidents, and the death of another was occasioned by it, the owner of the house must be considered in the light of a murderer.'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning **Deuteronomy 22:6-8**.

'These precepts are designed to cultivate a spirit of humanity, **Deuteronomy 25:4 / Leviticus 22:28 / 1 Corinthians 9:9-10**.'

Moses doesn't tell us why the Lord wouldn't allow planting two different types of crops in one field, other than the fact that if it is done. The crops and the fruit of the vineyard were now classed as defiled, **Deuteronomy 22:9 / Leviticus 19:19**.

In other words, the whole field was to be given up. Moses also doesn't tell us why it was unlawful to plough with an ox and an ass under the same yoke, **Deuteronomy 22:10 / Leviticus 19:19**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The ox and the donkey being of such different size and strength, it would be cruel to the latter to yoke them together. These two animals are named as being those ordinarily employed in agriculture, **Isaiah 32:20**.'

He also doesn't tell us why it was forbidden to mix different fibres, **Deuteronomy 22:11 / Numbers 15:37-41**. The mixing of fibres in garments, **Leviticus 19:19**, that is, wool and linen, is probably a reference to Canaanite garments that were worn in respect of certain Baals.

Just as the Israelites, who mingled two things that didn't lawfully belong together, the apostle Paul teaches the same principle when it comes to being spiritually yoked with an unbeliever, **2 Corinthians 6:14**. Israel is to make tassels on the four corners of the cloak they wear, **Deuteronomy 22:12 / Numbers 15:38**.

MARRIAGE VIOLATIONS

'If a man takes a wife and, after sleeping with her, dislikes her and slanders her and gives her a bad name, saying, "I married this woman, but when I approached her, I did not find proof of her virginity," then the young woman's father and mother shall bring to the town elders at the gate proof that she was a virgin. Her father will say to the elders, "I gave my daughter in marriage to this man, but he dislikes her. Now he has slandered her and said, 'I did not find your daughter to be a virgin.' But here is the proof of my daughter's virginity." Then her parents shall display the cloth before the elders of the town, and the elders shall take the man and punish him. They shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the young woman's father, because this man has given an Israelite virgin a bad name. She shall continue to be his wife; he must not divorce her as long as he lives. If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the young woman's virginity can be found, she shall be brought to the door of her father's house, and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has done an outrageous thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father's house. You must purge the evil from among you.' **Deuteronomy 22:13-21**

When a man took a woman in marriage, she was to be a virgin, **Deuteronomy 22:13-14**. It may be that when the man lies sexually with the woman, he believes she has been defiled by another man. If the man truly believes this, he is to state his cause to the woman's mother and father, **Deuteronomy 22:15**.

The woman's mother and father were to take her 'proof of virginity' before the elders, **Deuteronomy 22:15**. The reason for doing this was simply to prove the man's fears were wrong. Her father speaks to the elders and says he gave his daughter in marriage to this man, but he dislikes her, **Deuteronomy 22:16**.

The proof of virginity was the bloodstained linens on which the man and woman had sexual intercourse the night of the wedding, when the wedding was consummated, **Deuteronomy 22:17**. The linen was kept by the father of the bride, and so this was evidence that the woman was a virgin at the time of the wedding.

If the accusing man has been discovered as wrong, he was to pay his wife's father and mother one hundred shekels of silver, **Deuteronomy 22:18-19 / Exodus 22:16-17**, because he has sought to shame his wife by giving her a bad name, **Deuteronomy 22:19**, that is, she was a fornicator before she was married, **1 Corinthians 6:18**.

The man had forfeited his future right to divorce this wife, **Deuteronomy 22:19**. However, if the woman was found to be guilty of immorality previous to the marriage, **Deuteronomy 22:20**, that is, she had committed fornication with another man before she was married to the current man, then she was to be stoned at her father's house, for she had brought disgrace on her father's house, **Deuteronomy 22:21**.

Notice again, Israel is commanded to ‘purge the evil from among you’, Deuteronomy 21:21 / Deuteronomy 13:5 / Deuteronomy 17:7 / Deuteronomy 17:12 / Deuteronomy 19:19.

‘If a man is found sleeping with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel. If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death—the young woman because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man’s wife. You must purge the evil from among you.’ Deuteronomy 22:22-24

Moses speaks of a man who is found sleeping with another man’s wife; this is adultery, Deuteronomy 22:22. In the case of adultery, both the man and woman were to be stoned, Deuteronomy 22:22 / Deuteronomy 17:6-7 / John 8:1-12.

Notice again, Israel is commanded to ‘purge the evil from among you’, Deuteronomy 22:22 / Deuteronomy 22:24 / Deuteronomy 13:5 / Deuteronomy 17:7 / Deuteronomy 17:12 / Deuteronomy 19:19 / Deuteronomy 21:21.

He also speaks of a woman who is engaged to a husband. If a man had intimate relations with a virgin who was engaged to a husband, and it happened in the town, and no one heard the woman cry out in an attempt to stop the man, then both were to be stoned to death, Deuteronomy 22:23-24.

Notice again, Israel is commanded to ‘purge the evil from among you’, Deuteronomy 22:24 / Deuteronomy 22:22 / Deuteronomy 13:5 / Deuteronomy 17:7 / Deuteronomy 17:12 / Deuteronomy 19:19 / Deuteronomy 21:21.

‘But if out in the country a man happens to meet a young woman pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. Do nothing to the woman; she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbour, for the man found the young woman out in the country, and though the betrothed woman screamed, there was no one to rescue her. If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives. A man is not to marry his father’s wife; he must not dishonour his father’s bed.’ Deuteronomy 22:25-30

Moses goes on to give instructions regarding the sin of rape. If out in the country, a man happens to meet a young woman pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die, Deuteronomy 22:25.

If the fornication took place in a field, the cries of the woman couldn’t be heard; therefore, only the rapist was to be stoned, and the innocent woman left alone, Deuteronomy 22:26.

The evidence of the rape would have been the crying out of the woman in the town, Deuteronomy 22:27. However, if she didn’t cry out, then she wasn’t raped but willingly committed fornication.

Moses speaks of a case of fornication between two people who are not engaged to be married; if it is that they are found out, Deuteronomy 22:28, then the man is to pay her father fifty shekels of silver, that is, around one and a quarter pounds of silver, Deuteronomy 22:29.

Note that the NIV uses the word ‘rape’, Deuteronomy 22:28, which is very misleading, as it gives the impression that if a man rapes a woman and gets rewarded by getting her as his wife, Deuteronomy 22:29. Deuteronomy 22:25 tells us that the man who rapes a woman should be put to death.

Bahnsen, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Hebrew word *tapas*, ‘lay hold of her,’ simply means to take hold of something, grasp it in hand, and (by application) to capture or seize something. It is the verb used for ‘handling’ the harp and flute, Genesis 4:21, the sword, Ezekiel 21:11 / Ezekiel 30:21, the sickle, Jeremiah 50:16, the shield, Jeremiah 46:9, the oars, Ezekiel 27:29, and the bow, Amos 2:15. It is likewise used for ‘taking’ God’s name, Proverbs 30:9, or ‘dealing’ with the law of God, Jeremiah 2:8. Joseph’s garment was ‘grasped’, Genesis 39:12 / 1 Kings 11:30, even as Moses ‘took’ the two tablets of the law, Deuteronomy 9:17. The Hebrew verb ‘to handle, grasp, capture’ does not in itself indicate anything about the use of force.’

Bible Study Tools, in their commentary, says the following.

‘She yielding to it, and so is not expressive of a rape, as Deuteronomy 22:25, where a different word from this is there used; which signifies taking strong hold of her, and ravishing her by force; yet this, though owing to his first violent seizure of her, and so different from what was obtained by enticing words, professions of love, and promises of marriage, and the like, as in Exodus 22:16 / Exodus 22:17, but not without her consent.’

Bible Hub, in its commentary, says the following.

‘A parallel passage to Deuteronomy 22:28-29 appears in Exodus 22:16-17, which provides additional insight. ‘If a man entices a virgin who is not betrothed, and he lies with her, he must pay the bride price for her to be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, the man still must pay an amount comparable to the bride price for virgins.’ Key points from this passage. ‘Entices’ rather than ‘forces’ highlights the possibility of seduction. The father of the young woman can refuse to give her as a wife to the offender. The man must pay compensation regardless, which served as a protective measure ensuring the woman was not left destitute. Deuteronomy, therefore, complements Exodus rather than contradicting it. Taken together, these passages show that biblical law demanded a significant penalty for men who engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage with a virgin. It was a way to hold men accountable and to prevent them from discarding a woman who would otherwise face a life of economic and social hardship.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Deuteronomy 22:29.

‘The fine was to be paid to the father, because the slander was against him principally as the head of the wife’s family. If the damsel were an orphan, the fine reverted to her. The fact that the penalties attached to bearing false witness against a wife are fixed and comparatively light indicates the low estimation and position of the woman at that time.’

The two are to be married and never to divorce, because the man had violated her, Deuteronomy 22:29. Moses finishes by speaking about the sin of incest: a man isn’t to marry his father’s wife, Deuteronomy 22:30 / 2 Samuel 3:7 / 2 Samuel 16:22 / 1 Kings 2:13-25 / Ezekiel 22:10 / 1 Corinthians 5:1-2.

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION

‘No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the LORD. No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation. No Ammonite or Moabite or any of their descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, not even in the tenth generation. For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live. Do not despise an Edomite, for the Edomites are related to you. Do not despise an Egyptian, because you resided as foreigners in their country. The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.’ Deuteronomy 23:1-8

EXCLUSION FROM THE ASSEMBLY

Moses begins by saying that no man who has been emasculated or has been castrated can enter the assembly of the Lord, [Deuteronomy 23:1](#) / [Leviticus 21:17-24](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Such persons, exhibiting a mutilation of that human nature, which was made in God’s image, were rejected from the covenant entirely. However, they could be proselytes, [Acts 8:27](#). The Old Testament itself foretells, [Isaiah 56:3-5](#), the removal of this ban when under the kingdom of the Messiah, the outward and emblematic perfection and sanctity of Israel should be fulfilled in their inner meaning by the covenanted presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the Church.’

No one born from a forbidden marriage, that is, an illegitimate child, someone who was born to a woman but wasn’t married at the time, was also not allowed to enter the assembly of the Lord, [Deuteronomy 23:2](#) / [Nehemiah 13:23](#). Even in the tenth generation, weren’t allowed to enter the assembly of the Lord, [Deuteronomy 23:2](#) / [Exodus 23:19](#) / [Exodus 34:26](#) / [1 Corinthians 6:13-20](#) / [Hebrews 13:4](#).

The males were to assemble before the Lord every year on Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, but these males were forbidden from doing so, [Leviticus 11:44](#) / [Leviticus 16:16](#) / [Leviticus 16:30](#) / [Leviticus 18:30](#) / [Leviticus 20:23](#) / [Leviticus 21:18-21](#) / [Leviticus 22:21](#).

Because of their hostile treatment of Israel at the time of their entrance into the land of Canaan, the Ammonites and Moabites were also to be excluded, [Deuteronomy 23:3](#) / [Nehemiah 13:1](#) / [Isaiah 21:14](#).

They sought their demise and for their wickedness, the Lord excludes them from the assembly ‘even to the tenth generation, [Deuteronomy 23:3](#) / [Nehemiah 13:1](#). The principle of these exclusions is based on the fact that God seeks conviction in His covenant with His people, [Deuteronomy 18:3](#) / [Isaiah 56:3-5](#) / [Acts 8:27](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These nations were subjected for their impiety and wickedness, [Deuteronomy 23:4-5](#), to peculiar disgrace, and on this account were not permitted to hold any office among the Israelites. But this did not disqualify them from being proselytes: Ruth, who was a Moabitess, was married to Boaz, and she became one of the progenitors of our Lord.’ Balak, king of Moab, heard of these battles and had a great fear of Israel, and so, he attempted to hire a prophet by the name of Balaam to curse the people of God so that he might defeat them, [Deuteronomy 23:4](#) / [Numbers 22:1-6](#). Each time Balaam tried to curse Israel, he ended up blessing them instead.

After Israel had defeated Sihon, the king of the Amorites, they went to battle against Og, the king of Bashan, [Deuteronomy 23:5-6](#). Both kingdoms were routed and their land disposed of by the Israelites according to God’s commandments, [Numbers 21:21-35](#).

The Moabites and Ammonites were related to Israel, [Deuteronomy 23:7](#) / [Genesis 19:37-38](#), and Israel should have had empathy for them, [Deuteronomy 23:7](#). Israel are not to despise an Egyptian, because they lived as foreigners in their country, [Deuteronomy 23:7](#).

The exclusion also applied to the Edomites and Egyptians but only to the second generation, [Deuteronomy 23:8](#). The Edomites were also relatives of Israel, [Genesis 36:1](#), and the Egyptians preserved the nation of Israel for four years in their land, [Exodus 11:2-3](#) / [Genesis 42](#).

After the exclusion period to either the second or tenth generation, those who were excluded had to profess the covenant and laws of God that were the conditions upon which the covenant was based.

UNCLEANNES IN THE CAMP

‘When you are encamped against your enemies, keep away from everything impure. If one of your men is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, he is to go outside the camp and stay there. But as evening approaches, he is to wash himself, and at sunset, he may return to the camp. Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. As part of your equipment, have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. For the LORD, your God, moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.’

Deuteronomy 23:9-14

Moses commands Israel to keep away from anything impure when they are encamped against their enemies, [Deuteronomy 23:9](#) / [Leviticus 16:16](#) / [Leviticus 16:30](#).

Everyone was to acknowledge the man’s unclean state and expect him to go outside the camp, [Deuteronomy 23:10](#), and remain unclean until the next evening, [Deuteronomy 23:11](#).

When he has bathed in water he was permitted to come back into the camp [Deuteronomy 23:11](#). God wanted to keep the camp of Israel hygienic, [Leviticus 15:16-17](#).

Notice that the Lord goes into detail concerning the place and manner in which a man urinates or defecates, [Deuteronomy 23:12](#). No man was to use the restroom within the camp, but rather they were to go to a designated area, with their shovel, and bury their waste, [Deuteronomy 23:13](#).

The reason these laws were given was simply to keep the camp clean and prevent any nakedness among the people in the camp. They were to carry out the toiletries and necessities of life outside the camp.

The word ‘indecent’, [Deuteronomy 23:14](#), is the same word that is used in [Deuteronomy 24:1](#). Here, it’s a reference to human excrement. God says that He is going to come down and walk in the camp of the Israelites, and He doesn’t want to be stepping into that, [Deuteronomy 23:24](#). When they go out, He wants them to dig a hole and relieve themselves and cover over it; He doesn’t want to see that indecency.

MISCELLANEOUS LAWS

‘If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand them over to their master. Let them live among you wherever they like and in whatever town they choose. Do not oppress them. No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of the LORD your God to pay any vow, because the LORD your God detests them both. Do not charge a fellow Israelite interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest. You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a fellow Israelite, so that the LORD your God may bless you in everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess. If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty.

Whatever your lips utter, you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth. If you enter your neighbour’s vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. If you enter your neighbour’s grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to their standing grain.’ Deuteronomy 23:15-25

It appears that Moses is speaking about a slave who had run away from their cruel master, [Deuteronomy 23:15](#). These slaves were to be treated kindly and given a place to live, [Deuteronomy 23:16](#).

The Lord then speaks of His intolerance of female and male prostitution, within the congregation of His people, He detests this sinful behaviour, [Deuteronomy 23:17](#) / [Genesis 38:15-21](#) / [1 Kings 15:12](#) / [2 Kings 23:7](#) / [Micah 1:7](#).

He also says that anyone who attempts to bring any money. Some versions use the words ‘the price of a dog’, [Revelation 22:15](#), which was gained by prostitution into His house, was to be rejected because He detests this too, [Deuteronomy 23:18](#).

Israel is commanded not to charge any interest to a fellow Israelite, Deuteronomy 23:19, that is, they weren't to take financial advantage of someone who had fallen on hard times, Exodus 22:25 / Leviticus 25:35-37.

However, they were free to charge interest to any foreigner who needed financial assistance, Deuteronomy 23:20. The blessings of God were dependent upon whether or not Israel obeyed this command.

The Israelites lawfully offered free will offerings to God and made vows that illustrated a heart that purposed to serve Him with all their heart. These vows were to be kept as they were a promise to God, and those who didn't keep the vow were recognised as guilty of sin, Deuteronomy 23:21 / Ecclesiastes 5:4-5.

If they refrained from making a vow, they will not be guilty, Deuteronomy 23:22. Whatever comes out of their lips they must be sure to do, because they made their vow freely to God with their own mouth, Deuteronomy 23:23 / Numbers 30:2. Remember, there were no written documents in Israel, and so, when a person spoke something, he or she was to be good for his or her word, James 5:12.

Israelites were permitted to eat from their neighbour's vineyard and grain fields while travelling, but they weren't permitted to bring a basket with them and fill it, Deuteronomy 23:24-25 / Deuteronomy 24:10-22 / Mark 2:24 / Luke 6:1-5.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It was on the permission granted by this law that the disciples plucked the ears of corn, as related in Matthew 12:1. This was both a considerate and humane law and is no dishonour to the Jewish code.'

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION

'If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.' Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

'A discussion of divorce and remarriage fits into this context because both practices involve respect for the rights of others. The first of the two situations Moses dealt with in this section concerns a married, divorced, and remarried woman, Deuteronomy 24:1-4. In modern society, marriage and divorce are not only regulated by law but are also invalid unless conducted or decreed by accredited officials in accredited places (churches and register offices, or law courts in the case of divorce). In Israel, however, both were purely domestic matters, with no officials and scarcely any documents involved; the bill of divorce was the exception, and it was essential to protect the divorced woman from any charge of adultery, which was punishable by death, Deuteronomy 22:22.'

The topic of marriage, divorce and remarriage is probably the most debated topic there is within the religious world. There are many sermons, lessons and books written on the topic, some of which are very useful, and others just make the topic even more confusing to understand.

Surprisingly, the Bible really doesn't have much to say about divorce and remarriage; there aren't a lot of references on the subject. You would think, by all the books that have been produced and all the uproar that has been made over it, that the Bible says a whole lot about it, but the Bible says very little.

I think it would be useful if we look at a few passages from the Old Testament where we can highlight some important points. We'll look at these passages again in the wider context later to make further points, but for now, I want to focus on some words in the immediate context. For the purpose of this study, I will be using the N.R.S.V. unless otherwise stated.

PROMOTING DIVORCE!

You might be wondering if I'm advocating divorce; no, I'm not. I believe that marriage is for life and shouldn't be entered lightly, but at the same time, I realise that sin can enter a marriage relationship like every other part of our lives, which may end up leading to a divorce. I'm simply trying to show that some of the doctrines being put forward on this subject are not as straightforward as we think.

CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND AWAY

In Deuteronomy 24:1-4, we see that God, through Moses, was protecting the rights of women, and if one thing is clear, it's simply this: divorce and remarriage were happening back in Moses' day.

Moses gives an example of a woman who is married, but her husband isn't happy about something. We'll look at what the word 'objectionable' means later, so he divorces her. She then marries again, and sadly, the same thing happens.

Notice there are two separate actions required in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, 'write her a certificate of divorce' and 'send her out'. Notice again, there are two separate actions mentioned in Jeremiah 3:8, 'sent her away' and 'a decree of divorce'.

The Hebrew word for 'put away' is 'shalach', which means to send away, or out. And the Hebrew word for 'certificate or bill or decree of divorce' is 'kriythuwth', which means a cutting of the matrimonial bond, i.e. divorce.

Clearly, there are two separate words used to describe two separate actions. Just as there is a legal way to get married, there is also a legal way to get a divorce, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 / Jeremiah 3:8.

Any man who wants a divorce must give the woman 'a certificate of divorce' and then 'send her away', otherwise legally they are still married. They are still married because they haven't got the legal paperwork, i.e., the divorce papers, to prove they're legally divorced.

SEND AWAY

The word ‘shalach’, ‘send away’, is used seven hundred and ninety times in the Old Testament. There are too many to quote, but below are a few examples. Please take the time to read each passage because it will help clarify the point. The English equivalent word is written in blue.

THE WORD ‘SHALACH’ USED IN GENESIS

In Genesis 3:22-23, we find the words ‘reach out’ and ‘sent’, which is the word ‘shalach’. In Genesis 21:14, we find the words, ‘sent her away’, which is the word ‘shalach’.

THE WORD ‘SHALACH’ USED IN EXODUS

In Exodus 2:5, we find the words, ‘sent her’, which is the word ‘shalach’. In Exodus 8:32, we find the word ‘go’, which is the word ‘shalach’.

THE WORD ‘SHALACH’ USED IN 1 SAMUEL

In 1 Samuel 4:4, we find the word ‘sent’, which is the word ‘shalach’. In 1 Samuel 30:26, we find the words ‘he sent’, which is the word ‘shalach’.

THE WORD ‘SHALACH’ USED IN MALACHI

In Malachi 2:16, we find the word ‘divorce’, which is the word ‘shalach’. The Hebrew word used in Malachi isn’t the word ‘divorce’ as the N.R.S.V. translates it; it should be the word ‘shalach’, which means to ‘send away’ or ‘put away’, the K.J.V. renders it correctly.

TWO SEPARATE WORDS

The word ‘shalach’, ‘send away’, has a different meaning from the word ‘kriythuwth’, ‘bill of divorcement.’ They don’t mean the same thing, and neither word means divorce. I simply want us to see that there are two separate words which imply two different actions.

We’ll come back to the Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Malachi passages later and look at them in more depth. I believe this is important to understand and make the distinction between the two words used, as we go on to the New Testament passages which deal with this topic.

THE NEW TESTAMENT USE OF THE WORDS

In Matthew 5:31-32, we find the words, ‘divorces, divorce, divorced’. We will look at these verses in more depth later, but for now, I want to focus on two words again to show that we’re dealing with two separate actions. We saw earlier that the Hebrew word for ‘bill of divorcement’ is ‘kriythuwth’, which means a cutting of the matrimonial bond, i.e. divorce. Here in the New Testament passages, we have the Greek word equivalent.

The Greek word for ‘writing of divorcement’ is ‘apostasion’, and it means something separative, especially divorce. The Hebrew word for ‘put away’ is ‘shalach’, which means to send away, or out.

Here in the New Testament passages, we have the Greek word equivalent. The Greek word used for ‘put her away’ is ‘apoluo’ which means to free fully, that is, literally relieve, release, dismiss, reflexively depart, or figuratively, let die, pardon, or specifically, divorce:- (let) depart, dismiss, divorce, forgive, let go, loose, put (send) away, release, set at liberty.

I included the entire entry from Strong’s definition of the word, but remember that anything after the ‘:-’ isn’t a part of the definition but is merely a listing of ways the word was translated in the KJV.

Also, remember that Strong stated that the first word is the most reliable word, in this case, ‘free fully’, while the most radical understanding is the last word, in this case, ‘specifically divorce’.

Notice again in Matthew 19:1-9, the Greek word used for ‘writing of divorcement’ is ‘apostasion’, and it means something separative, especially divorce. The Greek word used for ‘put her away’ is ‘apoluo’, which means to free fully. The K.J.V. again makes this clearer.

Notice also in Mark 10:1-12, the Greek word used for ‘a bill of divorcement’ is ‘apostasion’, and it means something separative, especially divorce. The Greek word used for ‘put her away’ is ‘apoluo’, which means to free fully. Note again that even in the New Testament, there are two separate words used to describe two separate actions. The K.J.V. makes this clearer.

I think it’s possible that some sincere people have kind of joined the two words together to make them mean the same thing. This is possibly because of some bad translations, as we shall see later, many times the word ‘divorce’ has been translated in the Scripture when the word should be ‘put away’, you see this, especially in the N.I.V., which we’ll look at later too.

The Greek word, ‘apoluo’, ‘put away’, cannot mean the same as ‘apostasion’, ‘bill of divorcement’. It cannot mean ‘divorce’, and here are a few examples of why it can’t.

Here is a list of passages which use the word ‘apoluo’. Please take the time to read through them, as it will drive the point I’m trying to make across.

THE WORD ‘APOLUO’ USED IN MATTHEW

In Matthew 5:31-32, we find the words, divorces, divorced, this is the word ‘apoluo’. In Matthew 14:15, we find the word ‘away’, which is the word ‘apoluo’.

THE WORD ‘APOLUO’ USED IN MARK

In Mark 6:36, we find the word ‘away’, which is the word ‘apoluo’. In Mark 6:45, we find the word ‘dismissed’, which is the word ‘apoluo’.

THE WORD ‘APOLUO’ USED IN LUKE

In Luke 6:37, we find the words, ‘forgive, forgiven’, which is the word ‘apoluo’. In Luke 13:12, we find the words ‘set free’; this is the word ‘apoluo’.

THE WORD ‘APOLUO’ USED IN JOHN

In John 18:39, we find the word ‘release’, this is the word ‘apoluo’. In John 19:10, we find the word ‘release’ again, which is the word ‘apoluo’.

THE WORD ‘APOLUO’ USED IN ACTS

In Acts 3:13, we find the word ‘release’, which is the word ‘apoluo’. In Acts 23:22, we find the word ‘dismissed’, which is the word ‘apoluo’.

THE WORD ‘APOLUO’ USED IN HEBREWS

In Hebrews 12:23, we find the words ‘set free’, which is the word ‘apoluo’.

‘APOLUA’ TRANSLATED AS DIVORCE

As you have just read, the word ‘apoluo’ appears quite a lot in the New Testament, and hopefully, you noted that only one time in all of these verses was the word ‘apoluo’ translated ‘divorce’.

Please note that the Matthew 5:32 passage is the only occurrence of the word ‘divorce’ in this list and should have been rendered ‘put away’. Other translations, such as the N.I.V., use the word ‘divorce’ and the words ‘send away’, which may be the cause of much of the confusion on the subject.

If ‘divorce’ is the only possible translation of ‘apoluo’ in Matthew 5:31-32, then it must be asked, why would it not be the only legitimate translation in all other uses of the word?

Though context might often affect the appropriate translation of a particular word, it does not necessarily preclude other possible translations. The word ‘divorce’ is a legal term.

In Acts 19:41, we find the word ‘dismissed’, which is the word ‘apoluo’. So, if it’s valid to translate ‘apoluo’ only as such, then we must admit that in Acts 19:41, for example, the entire assembly were married to the town clerk of Ephesus and then divorced by him.

It seems to me that many who support the idea that Matthew 5 is addressing the matter of divorce are perhaps not making a distinction between being separated, without being divorced, and actually being divorced.

The problem Jesus was speaking about isn’t primarily focused on ‘divorce’ but on the ‘sending away’. Men were ‘sending their wives away’ without giving them the ‘certificate of divorce’, which had devastating results for the women of the time.

They couldn’t marry anyone else without this certificate, and if she did, she would end up committing adultery, hence causing the man who ‘sent her away’ to make her an adulteress. Why? Because legally she was still married, Matthew 5:31-32.

THE BRIDE PRICE AND THE DOWRIES

Jesus is dealing with the real problem, the problem of HOW they were ‘sending their wives away’. I believe it all had to do with the dowry. Let’s look at these passages, which speak about the dowry: Genesis 29:18-27 / Genesis 34:11-12 / 1 Samuel 18:25 / Hosea 3:2.

In eastern countries, the bridegroom was required to pay the father of his betrothed a stipulated portion, in money or other valuables, proportioned to the rank and position of the family to which she belonged; this was the dowry. This is still practised in many countries even today.

There were two forms of payment made on the occasion of a wedding: first, there was the bride price, and then there was the dowry Exodus 21:10-11 / Exodus 22:16-17.

Both of which were designed to support a woman and her children, should she be left widowed or divorced. The Bible constantly commands God’s people to look after the vulnerable in society, especially widows and orphans, Isaiah 1:17 / Psalms 68:5 / James 1:27.

What was the bride price? The bride price was more than money; it was about protecting the woman. If a widow or a divorced woman wanted to be independent, she needed this money to help her in her current circumstances. Women didn’t want to be at the mercy of a husband who might or might not provide for her and her children.

The prospective groom gave the bride’s father a present, either a sum of money or its equivalent in goods, cattle, land, woven goods, work, etc, we see this in Genesis 29:15-30, where Jacob paid for Rachel’s sister Leah with seven years’ work.

We see this with David in 1 Samuel 18:25-27, where David paid for Saul’s daughter Michal with the grisly gift of one hundred Philistine foreskins. We see this in Judges 1:11-15, where Othniel conquered a town as payment for Achsah.

The amount of this bride price was geared to the status and wealth of the girl’s family. It was seen as compensation to the family for the loss of the girl, as well as the means of providing her with certain necessities.

We don't know what the Israelite custom was regarding the disposal of this money, but in Babylon, the goods belonged to the girl. The father was given the interest or other income on it for life, but he wasn't allowed to touch the capital, Genesis 31:14-16.

The purpose of the bride price was to ensure the woman would not be left unsupported if she were widowed. Without a dowry, they could end up destitute.

What was the dowry? There are many passages in the Bible relating to dowries, but sadly, specific details are not given. However, in Babylon, a bride's parents had to make a settlement on her which remained her property even though the husband received the interest from the capital and was entitled to invest the money in business. If a woman was later widowed or divorced through no fault of her own, the capital reverted to her.

Pharaoh gave his daughter the city of Gezer as a marriage settlement when she married King Solomon, 1 Kings 9:16. Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel were each given a handmaid as a wedding gift from their parents. The sum of money or goods was registered in the marriage contract.

If it was money that the husband wanted to invest, he contracted to repay his wife the full amount, plus one-third interest. If it was something that would depreciate, such as clothing or household goods, the husband only had to repay one-fifth of the original value.

WHY DID THE JEWS SEND AWAY THEIR WIVES WITHOUT THE CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE?

Do you know why the Jews were 'putting their wives away' without giving them a 'certificate of divorce'? They didn't want to return the dowry; it was going to cost them, Exodus 21:10. It was much easier to just abandon them, to put them away and allow them to go back to their home or fend for themselves and ignore them.

If a man ever gave his wife the 'bill of divorce', then he had some obligations to their wife; he had to return the dowry, and he had to provide for his wife if they 'sent them away'.

This was the Jew's loophole, they 'put them away' without the official 'divorce'. If there is a 'legal divorce', then the husband would be required to return the dowry; the sad news is, he probably would have spent it.

What dowry are we speaking about? It's not the dowry the groom paid to the father, but the dowry that the bride's father gave his daughter as a gift for her marriage. This included servants, Genesis 24:59 / Genesis 24:61 / Genesis 29:24 / Genesis 29:29, land, Judges 1:15 / 1 Kings 9:16.

When the couple are married, the servants, the land, gold, silver, whatever gifts she was given by her father, now become her husband's property. However, if he were to legally divorce her, that is, give her a certificate of divorce, he has a duty, not only to care for her but to return the dowry to her that she received from her father.

The 1901 Jewish Encyclopaedia says the following.

'The dowry that the woman brought to her husband, whether real estate, slaves, or movable property, was recorded in the marriage contract (KETUBAH). Custom decided whether the sum mentioned in the marriage contract should be exactly the same as the dowry was really worth, or more or less. In some places the custom prevailed of recording an amount one-third or one-fifth more than the value of the actual dowry; in others, less than the value of the dowry (Ishut 23:11 / Eben ha-'Ezer, 66:11). This sum then became a claim upon the husband's property equally with the ketubah itself; so that when he died or divorced her, the woman could collect from his estate both the sum stipulated

in the marriage contract and the value of her dowry. During the husband's life, however, the dowry belonged to him, and he might derive all benefits from it. He might even sell it for the period of his lifetime. The laws governing the relation of the husband to the dowry vary with the manner in which the woman has acquired that property.'

Jesus is going to imply this later, He basically is going to say, 'husbands have to honour and respect the rights of their wives'. It shocked them in a society where women had no rights because they didn't have to think about this. Hence why the disciples were shocked at Jesus' teaching, Matthew 19:10.

The 'sending away' without the 'certificate of divorce' was also liked by the wives because it didn't require any court case, you didn't need to prove negligence or any other embarrassing details in public, and unless the wife had been unfaithful, she would get her marriage dowry back.

This was often enough to live on, or it would help her get a new husband. Remember Joseph didn't want to go down the court road, to 'divorce' 'apoluo' 'send away', Mary 'quietly', i.e. without a public hearing, Matthew 1:19.

THE EXCEPTION CLAUSE

What about the exception clause? Jesus said anybody who 'apoluo', 'puts away' his wife, commits adultery. Matthew 5:32 / Matthew 19:9. Why? Because he entered into a relationship with someone else, but doesn't have the legal right to do this. Now Jesus says that one can 'put away' his wife without the 'apostasion', without the 'written certificate of divorce', in the case of marital unfaithfulness.

Now, why would that be true? Why does 'unchastity', 'sexual immorality', N.I.V., 'fornication', K.J.V., become the ONLY reason that a man can 'put away' his wife without the legal, official written document of divorce?

I believe that the answer to that is very simple. But to understand it, there is something of vital importance that we must remember. What Jesus is saying is written to a society that was governed and controlled by the Law of Moses. What could be done and would be accepted practice in Jesus' day could never be done in our own culture.

THE DEATH PENALTY

Now under the Law of Moses, the penalty for adultery, for marital unfaithfulness, was death, Leviticus 20:10 / Deuteronomy 22:22-25. Now, quite obviously, if a man 'puts away' his wife because of marital unfaithfulness, legally, technically, she is to die.

Therefore, you DO NOT NEED an 'apostasion', 'certificate of divorce'. You DO NOT NEED to divorce if your wife is stoned to death, just like if your wife were to die naturally, you would be free, 1 Corinthians 7:39.

So, whether that death comes by natural causes or whether that death comes by a violation of the Law of Moses and the penalty is death, the man is free and wouldn't need the 'apostasion'.

But Jesus says, 'I tell you if anyone puts away his wife, commits adultery,' Matthew 5:32 / Matthew 19:9 / Mark 10:11, he puts her away without the 'apostasion', except for marital unfaithfulness, of course. Because then the woman comes under the penalty of death.

Now God's original law was that a man marries a woman, and if that woman committed adultery, then that woman would be stoned to death, and the man would be free to marry again.

By the time Jesus came on the scene, they weren't practising the stoning to death of people who committed 'porneia' or 'marital unfaithfulness', or 'fornication', and it appears they only wanted to stone someone when it suited their own evil purposes, [John 8:11](#) / [John 8:48-49](#).

The Romans had come in and taken over that facet of the law in the first century in Palestine and had taken away from them the right of the death penalty. That's why the Jews had to take Jesus to Pilate to get Him officially condemned and executed, [John 18:28-38](#).

Now, of course, there were some riot acts in the New Testament. Stephen was stoned to death, but that was the result of a riot, [Acts 7:54-58](#), but it wasn't a legal action.

Paul was arrested in the temple, and they were going to kill him, [Acts 21:27-40](#), but again, that was a riot, that wasn't formal legal action. The Romans had taken away from the Jews the right of formal, legal execution for any crime.

Jesus is talking about the Law of Moses.

The Pharisees said, what about Moses? Moses commanded it, [Matthew 19:7-9](#) / [Mark 10:3](#). Jesus is saying that if they're going to enter into a relationship with somebody other than the person that God intended for them to marry. They already have a relationship with a person that God expects them to honour.

If their mate is unfaithful to them, if they break this vow, the intimacy of this covenant, then, as far as the Law of Moses is concerned, technically they are dead. Therefore, they don't need an 'apostasion' because they have dissolved the relationship by virtue of their action; they have violated the covenant.

If you think about it, dead people can't marry, dead people don't marry, and here the guilty party, in the sight of God, is technically dead. That's why God doesn't give them the freedom to remarry; it's a part of their penalty for having transgressed the marital covenant.

In that culture, in that day, Jesus says to a man, 'If their wife is unfaithful to them, technically, she is dead, and you can remarry in that case'. But, if she isn't unfaithful to them, then they have no right to 'put her away'. They've entered into a covenant with her, they've entered into a contract with her, and they are to honour that.

If they 'put her away' without officially dissolving it, without going through legal channels, just like there must be legal channels to have a marriage, there must be legal channels to dissolve that marriage.

If they don't go through the legal channels, if they don't protect the rights of a woman, if they don't see that her needs are met and give the legal document, 'a certificate of divorce', that proclaims to others that she is free of this marriage bond and is free to marry someone else if they just 'put her away', they're committing adultery, that's what He says in [Matthew 19](#).

In [Matthew 5:32](#) and [Mark 10:12](#), Jesus said that when the man who marries the woman who was 'put away' and the woman who is 'put away' remarries, they commit adultery because they aren't in a legal, official situation where they are free to contract new relationships.

They thought they could just go ahead and 'put away' their wives for any old reason, but Jesus says, if they're going to 'put away' their wives, they better make it legal.

They'd better give her a 'certificate of divorce'. Otherwise, whenever any of them marry again, they will be committing adultery, and they know what the penalty is for that, stoning to death, [Leviticus 20:10](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:22-25](#).

TWO DIFFERENT WORDS WITH TWO DIFFERENT ACTIONS

No one would ever argue when Jesus said, ‘you must believe AND be baptised to be saved,’ [Mark 16:16](#), that Jesus meant the same thing and the same word was used for both. They are two different words which imply two different actions.

When we understand that there are two different words used, ‘certificate of divorce’, ‘apostasion’ and ‘putting away’, ‘apoluo’, which imply two different actions, I believe we can see that the issue Jesus was addressing wasn’t about divorce but about how they were sending their wives away.

They were sending their wives away without the certificate of divorce; this meant the divorce wasn’t legal, and they were still legally married. Notice the word, and’ in [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#) / [Jeremiah 3:8](#) / [Matthew 19:7](#). This is what Jesus emphasised when He said, ‘It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, LET HIM GIVE HER A

CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE.’ MATTHEW 5:31

If the ‘sending away’ and ‘divorce’ were two separate words used in the Old Testament, what makes the same Greek equivalent words in the New Testament, ‘sending away’ and ‘divorce’, mean the same? They don’t mean the same because they are two separate words with two separate actions implied.

The point is that the Jews had to do both; they had to give their wives the divorce certificate and then send them away. That’s what Moses said in [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#), and that’s what God did with Israel, [Jeremiah 3:8](#).

In other words, just as there was a legal way to get married, there was also a legal way to get divorced. They were just sending their wives away without making it legal, and this is what Jesus was emphasising. Jesus was doing what Moses was doing, protecting the rights of vulnerable women.

DIGGING DEEPER

Let’s go ahead and have a deeper look at all these passages mentioned above to emphasise the point further and try to answer some questions. Let’s turn to [Matthew 19](#) and [Mark 10](#), that’s where we want to start and begin to set the stage.

MOTIVES BEHIND THE QUESTION

1. Let’s look at the attack.

There’s an attack made here on the Lord Jesus. ‘Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him,’ [Matthew 19:3](#) / [Mark 10:2](#). They didn’t come because they were looking for honest answers; they didn’t come because they had some serious questions about marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

They came because they wanted to test Jesus, they wanted to attack what He was teaching, and they had two underlying motives in doing that. One of them was to ‘discredit’ Jesus so that He would lose popularity; they see Jesus as a threat.

Here is a rabbi who has no official training. He hasn't been to any seminars, and He doesn't have a certificate. He's not a qualified, certified rabbi, and yet He has a tremendous following.

That concerns the establishment, so they are seeking to discredit Jesus, to try to get him to say something that would cause Him to lose favour with the populace, so they would stop following Him. So, they are seeking to discredit Him.

2. They are seeking to 'destroy' Jesus.

They are trying not only to get Him to lose favour with the people, but they are trying to get rid of Him. So those are their underlying motivations; they aren't honest in the pursuit of the question that they raised. We have to remember that as we listen to what Jesus has to say to these men.

The Pharisees did have a particular view of divorce; divorce was a volatile issue in the first century, even as it is today. That was very common, very widespread, even among the Jewish people, but there were a lot of disputes over divorce and what would be satisfactory and what wouldn't be satisfactory to God.

SHAMMAI AND HILLEL

Just before Jesus was born, there were two rabbis living who became the most influential rabbis of the day; their names were Shammai and Hillel. Pretty much in the first century, in the time of Jesus, people lined up behind Shammai or Hillel on any given issue. It's kind of like in some churches today, you are either conservative or liberal.

You're either with Hillel or Shammai, one or the other. Who do you stand behind? Fundamentally, what these Pharisees are asking Jesus is, 'Okay, buddy, who do you line up behind?' We can see how they put the people behind them because some will be with Shammai, and some will be with Hillel.

Shammai was the conservative one. Let's read a section from the Mishnah, which is the collection of the oral traditions of the Jews, the oral law that you hear so much about.

A couple of hundred years after the time of Jesus, one of the rabbis realised that they were forgetting all this accumulation of oral knowledge, all the oral laws that the people were expected to keep. Because Jerusalem had been destroyed in 70 A.D. and the centre of Judaism had been destroyed, they began to write it down.

'The School of Shammai says a man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, because he has found in her indecency in anything.' Giteen, chapter 9, section 10.

And the School of Hillel says, 'He may divorce her even if she spoils a dish for him, for it is written that he has found indecency in anything'. Rabbi Akebah says, 'even if he found another fairer than her, for it is written if she has found no favour in his eyes.'

This is a discussion these rabbis had based on [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#), and we will get to that later, but the point is that Hillel and Shammai had two opposing points of view. They also mentioned Rabbi Akebah, who didn't live until after 100 A.D., so what he said doesn't bear on the discussion here.

Rabbi Shammai says, 'The only reason for divorce is if you find unchastity, if there is marital unfaithfulness on behalf of your partner. If you find sexual infidelity on behalf of your marriage partner, then you may divorce.'

Hillel, on the other hand, said, 'No, it says in [Deuteronomy 24](#), if you find indecency in her in anything.' You notice the text said, 'she had prepared a dish that he didn't like. Oh, dear, you scrambled these eggs. I wanted them fried, divorce her!'

In other places, it's said that Hillel said, 'if she talked to a man in the street, that was a legitimate reason for divorcing her'. 'If she turned around too quickly so that her legs became exposed, that was a reason for divorcing her'. 'If you didn't like your in-laws, good enough reason, divorce her.'

Hillel has a much more generous interpretation of what the Old Testament said about the basis for divorce. So, people of the first century were lining up behind one or the other, and the Pharisees came to test Jesus, to find out which one he would stand behind, Shammai or Hillel, and in so doing, they could turn the people against him.

After all, the majority of the people followed Hillel, who had the liberal interpretation that any old reason you could think up was an adequate reason for divorce.

Now they have already heard Jesus address the subject of divorce and remarriage before, in Matthew 5:31-32, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made a statement about it.

They have already heard about this; that's why they can come up with this test question, because they know Jesus has taken a conservative approach, and they can turn the majority of the population against Him.

Remember, that is their motivation. We need to see what it was that Jesus said back in the Sermon on the Mount that became the basis of what the Pharisees are going to use against Him or try to use against Him. When you read Matthew 5:31-32, ask yourself, which of those two rabbis does that sound like? Sounds like Shammai, doesn't it?

DO THE TWO WORDS MEAN THE SAME?

I think it is important to understand the distinction that I believe existed in the first century. The N.I.V. follows many other translations in using the word 'divorce', which I believe is a mistranslation and leads to an erroneous conclusion. Remember what we learned earlier: there are two distinct words used in the Bible that we need to be familiar with.

In the Old Testament, there is the word 'shalach', and it means 'to send away, to drive away, to drive out'. We saw that its corresponding word in the New Testament would be the word 'apoluo', which means to let loose, to set free, to send away, to drive out.

The other word we looked at earlier in the Old Testament is the word 'keriythuwth', which means 'a divorcement'. We saw that its corresponding word in the New Testament will be 'apostasion'. Now, here we have 'send away' or 'put away' for the first word I mentioned, 'shalach' or 'apoluo'.

The second one, 'apostasion', means 'divorcement'. What happens is that these two words, both Old and New Testament words, become sort of blended, and we accept them as meaning one and the same thing.

Part of the problem comes is if we were to read all of the passages in the New Testament that deal with divorce and remarriage, and we found the parallel passages, the ones that read the same, as just one test, we would find that Jesus uses the word 'apoluo' ten or eleven times.

The King James Version translates it every time when it is 'apoluo' as 'put away' with the exception of one time. Here in Matthew 5:32, the word occurs twice and the second time they translate it as 'divorce'. Every time the word 'apostasion' occurs in the New Testament, it will be rendered 'divorce'. Now there is a difference; they aren't the same.

In the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, there is only one divorce recorded. Did you know that? For all we have talked about it, for all the instruction in the Bible, in the word of God, there is only ONE divorce recorded. Do you know who it is?

In [Jeremiah 3:8](#), God says, 'I have divorced Israel,' which is the only time. You have information about divorcing and remarrying, but that is the only time that we know of in Scripture when somebody divorced somebody, when God says, 'I divorced Israel.' In [Jeremiah 3:8](#), it's the word 'keriythuwth', the word that in the New Testament is rendered 'apostasion'.

But we know from reading the Old Testament, for example, that men put away their wives. Men had more than one wife, and David had several wives. Abraham is another example; he was married to Hagar as well as Sarah, [Genesis 16:3](#).

Now look at what he did, 'he sent her away', [Genesis 21:14](#). She was still married to him, technically, but he didn't fulfil any husbandly responsibilities to her. What we have in effect then is that our word 'apoluo', which means 'to send away' or 'put away', becomes 'practical divorce.' But 'apostasion', which literally means 'a bill of divorcement', becomes 'legal divorce', and this is an important distinction.

We need to see this in Scripture. There were men who were putting away their wives and marrying somebody else, but they never gave their wives a legal divorce; therefore, she had no legal right to marry again.

In each instance, with one exception, [Matthew 5:31-32](#), the word is 'apoluo' or 'to put away', or maybe we would say 'abandon' on some occasions. A man abandons his wife and then goes out and marries somebody else. What would we call that? Bigamy, right? He technically, legally has two wives.

Jesus says, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce,' [Matthew 5:31](#). Now, see what I'm saying? Here were men who were putting away their wives, not legally, they weren't finalising it. They didn't go to court; they didn't give her the written certificate that legally sets her free.

Jesus says, 'Anyone who puts away his wife must finalise that process. He must give her a certificate of 'apostasion', a certificate of divorcement. I tell you, anyone who puts away his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery.

And anyone who marries a woman who has been put away commits adultery.' [Matthew 5:32](#) / [Matthew 19:9](#). Why? Because it hasn't been legalised, the man put her away; he sent her out. He didn't want anything else to do with her. Why didn't he want to legalise it?

As we noted earlier, he might have to pay dowry. It's just easier to put her on the back shelf and not have anything to do with her and marry someone else he liked more. Polygamy in the Old Testament is a big problem; even in the first century, there is evidence of polygamy.

Jesus understood that there were practising practical divorce, but if they are going to practically divorce somebody, they better legally divorce their wives. Because if they marry somebody who has been practically divorced, but not legally divorced, they are committing adultery.

It's not just a matter of divorce; it's a matter of whether this thing has been made official or not. I believe that this is an important distinction to make between these two words. They were proclaiming that they don't commit adultery, but Jesus tells them that they are propagating adultery all over the land, [Matthew 5:27-28](#).

Do you know how you do it? They put away their wives without giving her a bill of divorcement, they put her away without making it official, and then they go out and marry someone else.

They needed to know that when they marry someone else without officially having separated from their first wife, they commit adultery, and anybody who marries her, who has been put away without having been officially separated

with a bill of divorcement, commits adultery. Because they would now have two legally binding marriages for one person, and that's wrong. That's what He is talking about, Jesus uses a different word.

Is divorce sinful? Or is it the sending away without the divorce papers? If a couple divorces for adultery reasons and the 'guilty' party then remarries, do they have to leave their new wife and return to their former wife? Matthew 5:31-32 / Matthew 19:9.

A simple diagram may help us out here.

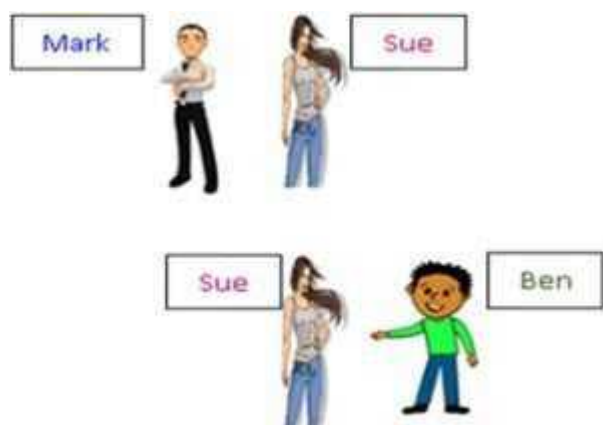


Here we have a man, let's call him Mark and a woman, let's call her Sue.

Right here in this chapter, Jesus says if this woman, Sue, is sent away and she marries another man, let's call him Ben, the result is adultery. Why?

Because she was abandoned or sent away, and she wasn't given a bill of divorcement. It's not legal.

Another diagram may be useful.



Now, we would assume also that if Mark, then, marries a woman who we will call Beth, the same thing would be true, but that's an assumption that would be adultery, based on this verse because Jesus doesn't say that in Matthew 5:31-32, or Matthew 19:9.

We'll get to that later, but here in Matthew 5:31-32, and Matthew 19:9, He doesn't say that Mark and Sue is a case of adultery. This position that we just looked at here in Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:9, is a teaching that Jesus made, you can't put your wife away unless it was for marital unfaithfulness.

That sounds a whole lot like what Shammai said; it's very unpopular, and that spread like wildfire. The Pharisees heard that back in Matthew 5, and they came to Jesus in Matthew 19, knowing they could use this teaching to turn the people against Him.

One time, John the Baptist had something to say about divorce and remarriage, and it cost him his head, Matthew 14:3-4. It's here that we see the Pharisees thinking.

They thought they could probably do the same thing with Jesus. They thought they could get people turned against Him if they could just test Him and expose Him and get Him to make a commitment on this thing.

JESUS' RESPONSE

They have come with the question, 'Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife 'apoluo' for any old reason?' Can he send her away? Matthew 19:3 / Mark 10:2. And Jesus responds to their question.

Jesus, in making His defence, goes back beyond Himself, He goes back beyond Hillel and Shammai, He goes back beyond Moses, and He goes all the way back to the creation, Matthew 19:4-6 / Mark 10:6-9. And he's going to make four points of defence as to why you shouldn't put away your wife.

All they bothered about was divorce, divorce, divorce; they were always talking about divorce. Why and how can they get a divorce? Jesus tells them that God didn't even think about divorce when He made man and woman.

And we can imagine Him thinking to Himself, why don't they talk about permanency? Why don't they talk about what they can do to keep this thing together? Why are they always talking about why and how we can put her away?

FOUR REASONS

These are the four reasons that Jesus gives why they shouldn't even be concerned about this issue.

1. Because in the Genesis account, there was one man for one woman.

Jesus was very clear. In the Garden in Eden, God didn't create Adam and Eve and Ethel. He didn't say, try it with Eve, and if that doesn't work, try it with Ethel.

If Adam had put away Eve for any old reason, if he had said, 'You ate from the tree, I'm going to put you away,' the Bible would have ended on page two; that would be the end of it. One man created for one woman, that was God's original design.

2. He says that there is a strong bond made.

He says, 'a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,' Genesis 2:24 / Matthew 19:5 / Mark 10:7. A strong bond, the word for 'united' means to be stuck fast, to be glued to, it's a bond that is being made. The Jews were always talking about ways to break the bond. They should have been talking about how strong the bond is to stay together.

Here again, we are talking about the ideal. We talked about the permitted; we'll talk about the exceptions later, but right now, Jesus is calling these Jews back to a discussion of the ideal. There will be a uniting of husband and wife, a strong bond.

3. He said, 'They will become one flesh', Genesis 2:24 / Matthew 19:5 / Mark 10:8.

In the sight of God, there formerly were two personalities, but Jesus says in marriage, those two become one. One is the indivisible number; if you divide it, you get a half, and that's not a number. One is a whole number; it's the first whole number, you can't get any less than that.

Jesus says that when God made Adam and Eve, He made them to be one. For that reason, you shouldn't try to break that bond because you end up with something less than a whole person in the sight of God; that's the way God meant it.

4. The last reason that Jesus gives is that this whole marriage business is the work of God.

Notice, He says, ‘therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate,’ [Genesis 2:24](#) / [Matthew 19:5](#) / [Mark 10:9](#). It’s not just some registrar official, it’s not just something that a minister does, it’s not even a decision that you make.

In the final analysis, when a marriage takes place, that marriage is the work of God; in the mind of God, they are one. In the mind of God, that oneness should not be broken; God intends for that oneness to be formed and to stay oneness.

It is the work of God, and to divorce is to wreck the work of God without His permission. He is the one who bound them together; if He wants to set them free, He sets the rules for setting them free. He does it.

The Jews want to talk about divorce, practical divorce, but Jesus won’t let them get away with that. Jesus talks about marriage. He goes all the way back to the beginning to stress the permanency of this relationship. All they talked about was reasons to divorce, instead of speaking about reasons to stay together. Jesus refuses to deal with the issue that they want to deal with.

WHEN IS A MARRIAGE A MARRIAGE?

I think it is important to ask the question when is a marriage a marriage? Because there seems to be a lot of confusion on this. What makes a marriage? How do I know that a marriage has taken place? There is a point of view that says, ‘when a man and a woman have a sexual relationship, at that point, they are married’.

Because people believe that, then they say that if a single man out there goes to bed with a single girl in the sight of God, they are married because they had sex, and sex makes a marriage.

If that were true, you couldn’t have ‘fornication’. You could have a marriage, but you couldn’t have ‘fornication’. The Bible does recognise fornication; it does recognise sexual activity outside the marriage relationship that God says is illegal.

If simply having sex made one married, God would talk about marriages, but He wouldn’t talk about fornication, so the Bible does recognise it. More evidence comes from Exodus in the giving of the law to Moses.

[Exodus 22:16-17](#) says if a man finds a woman who isn’t even engaged to be married and he sleeps with her, he has a moral obligation to go to her dad, pay the bride price and marry her. If her father says, ‘No way! We don’t want to be hooked up with your family. You still have to pay the bride price because you’ve dishonoured her, but no wedding takes place.’

We must remember that it’s not just a daughter marrying a man; it was the union of two families back then. This man couldn’t turn him down if the marriage had already taken place automatically because of the sex act. That gives me evidence that marriage isn’t made by sexual activity.

Furthermore, adultery doesn’t dissolve a marriage. Some people think that if they’re married and their husband or wife goes out and sleeps with someone else, that means the marriage has ended.

That’s not the case; it may give the innocent party freedom to divorce, but that doesn’t mandate it, nor does it automatically end a marriage. It’s important to recognise that.

In Malachi 2:14-16, we find that the Israelite men had been adulterers, but they still had the wives of their youth. God calls on them to be faithful to the wives of their youth. If adultery destroyed marriage, they would not have the wives of their youth anymore. God says you need to be faithful to your wives.

WHAT CONSTITUTES A MARRIAGE?

In the Old Testament and the New Testament, and even today, marriage is constituted by the covenant. Marriage is the coming together of two people who pledge a lifelong commitment to each other. God says, ‘Remember the wife of your youth with whom you entered into a covenant,’ Malachi 2:14.

It’s the entering into a covenant; it’s the intentional choice to blend your life with hers. Whatever that covenant is will vary from culture to culture. In some countries, there are different things that you do.

Maybe you take a pig and give it to the girl’s father, so he’ll give you the girl and a written contract is made, and it’s official. In other cultures, you can buy a wife; that’s a part of a covenant.

Whatever it is, when you meet those agreements, then in the sight of God and in the sight of the law of the land, you are married; you have intentionally entered into that arrangement. Jesus says that marriage should be viewed as permanent, that’s the way God intended it, that’s the ideal.

THE IDEAL

What happens if we don’t measure up to the ideal? What happens when there is a failure? What does God say about that? What are we to do? The Pharisees come to Jesus, and they ask him, ‘Is it lawful to ‘apoluo,’ is it lawful to put away your wife for any and every reason?’ Matthew 19:3 / Mark 10:3. After all, that was the practice in their culture. We know from the Talmud that polygamy was exceptionally widespread among the Jews in the first century; it was being practised. The Talmud is very clear that it was expected of a rabbi that he have only one wife. The high priest, specifically stated in the Talmud, ‘a man could only have one wife, but the average person could have more than one’.

So, polygamy was practised; a man would find something he didn’t like about a wife and become displeased with her, so he would simply send her back to her father. There would be no legal divorce, and, in that culture, he could do that.

In our British culture, that can’t be done, there are specific legal specifications that must be met for a divorce to be recognised in this culture and for remarriage to take place without there being bigamy or polygamy. But, not so in Jesus’ time.

In Biblical days, a man could simply send his wife away; he could stop meeting her emotional needs, her sexual needs, her financial needs; he could send her back to her home and go out and contract a new marriage, and it really didn’t matter.

So, ‘apoluo’ became ‘practical divorce’, while ‘apostasion’ was ‘legal, official divorce’. Jesus had commented on this back in Matthew 5. ‘It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce ‘apostasion,’ Matthew 5:31.

Jesus was saying, ‘anyone who divorces his wife, ‘apoluo’ except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced ‘apoluo’ woman commits adultery,’ [Matthew 5:32](#).

How does He do that? Because he hasn’t given her the ‘apostasion’, he hasn’t given her a ‘legal certificate of divorce’ and anybody who marries that woman who has been put away, who didn’t get the legal divorce, who didn’t have that ‘written bill of divorcement’ in her hand, anyone who would marry her also commits adultery because he’s forming a relationship with a woman who, in the eyes of God and, technically, in the laws of the land, is still married to someone else.

The Pharisees heard that Jesus took a very conservative point of view, so they came here in [Matthew 19:3](#) / [Mark 10:2](#), on the attack. They are looking to discredit Jesus; they are looking perhaps to destroy Him, to turn the masses against Him and perhaps to use His teaching against Him, as John the Baptist found his teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the situation with King Herod to work against him.

Jesus gives a reply, which we read in [Matthew 19:4-6](#) / [Mark 10:8-9](#), where Jesus goes back beyond their culture, back beyond the Law of Moses, back to the creation. They were always looking for loopholes; they were always looking for ways to get around things.

But God has a design, and that design is permanency in marriage. They were always looking for ways to break things. They always wanted to know how they could put their wives away for any and every cause, but God said they should stick together with their wives; they ought to be united as one, be one flesh in the sight of God.

THEIR ARGUMENT

The Pharisees began to press Jesus, and they came up with an argument. Their question to Jesus is, ‘What does the Law of Moses say?’ [Matthew 19:7](#) / [Mark 10:4](#). Why did Moses command us to give our wives a certificate of ‘apostasion’ and then send her away?

Jesus had been teaching that permanency in marriage is the most important thing. They ask, why did Moses talk about divorce? Why did he talk about this certificate, this legal, official thing of divorce?

Jesus will have an answer for this argument in just a moment, but let’s think about what’s behind the words of the Pharisees. The Pharisees didn’t practice divorce; rabbis were discouraged, as I mentioned earlier, but as a general rule, people in the first century, including the Pharisees, did practice the putting away of their wives.

Their rationale was based on [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#). That is the only place in the Law of Moses that speaks of divorce. Let’s go for a moment to [Deuteronomy 24](#) and find out what Moses said.

MISTRANSLATION

There is a great misunderstanding; the Pharisees misunderstood it, and that misunderstanding continues even today. If you have the King James translation of the Bible, you will find that it has a mistranslation. In fact, its mistranslation is so bad that it leads to a misunderstanding of the passage altogether.

Now, the problem here comes in the fact that the word ‘then’, which occurs in [Deuteronomy 24:1](#), in the King James translation, doesn’t occur in the Hebrew text.

The word ‘then’ draws a conclusion, and it makes it sound like Moses is saying, ‘If a man marries and finds something that he doesn’t like about his wife, THEN let him divorce her’.

But a point of fact is that was not what Moses said; the word ‘then’ doesn’t occur in the text until Deuteronomy 24:4. In the New International Version, the New American Standard Version, and perhaps in others, it’s correctly translated in Deuteronomy 24:1.

So, if you aren’t using the N.I.V. or the N.A.S.V. or a translation that has correctly translated this passage, read these four verses very carefully together. Moses is speaking to the people. In fact, this is the only place where he gives them insight into this situation of divorce and remarriage.

Now, notice the King James Version has this saying, ‘If a man marries and if he becomes displeased with his wife, THEN let him give her a bill of divorcement’, but that’s not what Moses said. Deuteronomy 24:1-2 is written without any comment, without any editorialising, without any approval or disapproval.

Moses simply says, ‘If a man marries, if he becomes displeased with that wife, if he gives her a certificate of divorce (Moses didn’t say whether that was right or wrong, he simply said if he does that), if she goes out and marries husband number two and if husband number two divorces her or if husband number two dies, THEN, (here is the conclusion). God said that a woman cannot go back to her first husband; she cannot remarry her original mate, it’s an impossibility. Moses goes on to say it is an abomination in the sight of God. So, Moses didn’t command a ‘bill of divorce’.

He simply assumed that a ‘bill of divorce’ was being given. If it were given, if the woman were legally divorced and she goes out and marries again, then she cannot under any circumstances ever go back to her first husband. God said that is morally objectionable to Him, it’s an abomination in His sight.

WHAT DOES UNCLEANLINESS MEAN?

But what does ‘uncleanness’ mean as the King James renders this? What does ‘indecenty’ mean in Deuteronomy 24:1 as the N.I.V. has it? It’s the Hebrew word, ‘ervah’, and that’s really where the Pharisees got hung up, they tried to figure out, what is this ‘indecenty’ that allows him to give her a bill of divorce and send her away so he can marry someone else.

Again, the debate between Hillel and Shammai comes in here. Shammai took a very conservative point of view; he believed it was fornication or adultery. Hillel, on the other hand, took a much more liberal view; if he finds any uncleanness in her, any indecenty in her, then he may put her away.

Hillel said that indecenty could be something like talking to men in public, spinning around so that her legs could be seen when she was out in public, or maybe cooking a meal that he didn’t like, maybe she scrambled his eggs when he wanted them fried, anything about her that she did, whether it was actions, appearance, attitude, if it displeased the husband, Hillel said that was enough justification to get rid of her. He said you can put her away, you can give her a bill of divorcement and send her out.

Well, what is this uncleanness? What did Moses have in mind? I’m not exactly sure, and to be honest, nobody knows; nobody is positive, the Pharisees debated it, and we debate it today.

However, there is something very interesting back in Deuteronomy 23, just prior to what Moses said here in Deuteronomy 24. It’s interesting because we find this same Hebrew word used, ‘ervah’, in Deuteronomy 23:14.

The word ‘indecent’ is the same word that is used in [Deuteronomy 24:1](#). In [Deuteronomy 23](#), in context, it’s a reference to human excrement. God says that He is going to come down and walk in the camp of the Israelites, and He doesn’t want to be stepping into that. When they go out, He wants them to dig a hole, relieve themselves and cover it over. He doesn’t want to see that indecency.

Moses says now says, ‘Now if a man marries a wife and he finds some indecency in her (something shameful, something vile, something corrupt, something that is a tremendous embarrassment to the husband) and he writes her a bill of divorcement and sends her away,’ [Deuteronomy 24:1](#). N.I.V.

Even Moses doesn’t pretend that it’s a light-hearted matter; it’s something vilely immoral to the man, something terribly offensive. But may I say, with all confidence, that it’s not adultery. Shammai contended that it was adultery.

I don’t believe it is for the simple reason that in [Deuteronomy 22](#), two chapters earlier, God said that the penalty for adultery is death, not divorce, [Deuteronomy 22:22-24](#).

If a husband found some indecency in his wife and God meant by that, indecency in adultery, the solution wouldn’t be divorce under the Law of Moses; it would be death.

This implies the indecency must be something short of adultery, something short of marital unfaithfulness. Whatever it is, it was something vile and terribly offensive to the husband.

Moses says if a man marries and his wife does something horrendously vile, offensive, and embarrassing to him, and if he gives her a bill of divorce and sends her away and if she marries somebody else, then he never, never, never can remarry that woman again.

No matter if he comes to forgive her and love her and wants to return to her, God says that it would be an abomination in His sight. Now that’s what is behind what the Pharisees had to say when they started talking about Moses commanding them to write a certificate of divorce.

JESUS’ ANSWER TO THEIR ARGUMENT

Remember, we are talking about ‘apoluo’, putting away a wife without giving her an official, legal certificate of divorce. They want to know, can we put them away for any reason?

The Pharisees are thinking, if God is so interested in permanency in marriage, why did Moses command us to divorce our wives? [Matthew 19:8-9](#) / [Mark 10:5](#) / [Mark 10:11-12](#).

Notice what Jesus says in [Matthew 19:8](#). Jesus is going to tell them that Moses ‘allowed’ it. Moses never ‘commanded’ it. You will not find anywhere, not even in [Deuteronomy 24](#), nor anywhere in all the Law of Moses, where Moses commanded people to divorce.

In [Matthew 19:8](#), Jesus replied, ‘Moses ALLOWED you to divorce.’ In [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#), Moses assumes that was what was happening, that there already was a certificate of divorce, but Moses didn’t command it.

Moses did recognise it, though, he did allow it. Jesus said, ‘Moses allowed you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard,’ [Matthew 19:8](#) / [Mark 10:5](#). In other words, they wouldn’t consent to live with the same woman; they wouldn’t consent to honour God’s arrangement in the marital relationship.

It’s the hardness of their heart that kept God from forcing the ideal on them, so there is the ideal of permanency, but then, there is the divorce, which is ‘allowed’. God did tolerate them putting away their wives with a legal certificate of divorce and then marrying someone else.

But, Jesus said, ‘it was not this way from the beginning’, [Matthew 19:8](#) / [Mark 10:6](#). God didn’t tell Adam, if you don’t like Eve, then give her a bill of divorcement.

From the beginning, God’s intent was for permanency, but as through sin men became corrupt, as men became hardened and rebellious, as they were determined not to honour the ways of God, God gave them the arrangement of divorce, that is, He ‘allowed’ it, permitted it. It wasn’t His pleasure, and it didn’t please Him. It wasn’t what He really wanted, it wasn’t the ideal, but God did recognise divorce, He did allow it.

Notice carefully what Jesus says. Anyone who puts away his wife has committed adultery, [Matthew 19:9](#) / [Mark 10:11](#). Why is he putting her away? Possibly because he wants to marry someone else, yet he doesn’t have the right in the eyes of God to marry that other person because he hasn’t given his first wife the certificate of divorce, ‘apostasion’. He hasn’t taken care of her.

They didn’t want to return the dowries their wives were given by their fathers. The certificate of divorce was going to cost them. It was much easier to just abandon them, to put them away and allow them to go back to their home or fend for themselves and to ignore them.

If they ever gave them the certificate of divorce, then they had some obligations; they had to provide for their wives and children’s needs if they sent them away, but this was their loophole; they put them away without the official divorce.

THE DISCIPLES REACTION

The very thought that what Jesus was saying brings the disciples to a very surprising conclusion; it shocks them, [Matthew 19:10](#). Is it possible that a person who has a ‘bill of divorcement’ is really free to marry again? Now, traditionally, some have said, ‘No!’ The only reason you could divorce your wife, or your husband, was because of ‘marital unfaithfulness’. That doesn’t seem to be what Jesus is saying, Jesus, is saying if they ‘put them away’, they must make it an official divorce for them to be able to marry again.

It seems to me that if our traditional position is the correct one, then we have jeopardised the integrity of God because God is the only one in all of the Bible who is ever said to have divorced someone and given them a bill of divorcement.

Israel had chased after pagan gods, they had chased after false gods, and they had entered into a covenant with God. They said, You’ll be our God, we’ll be your people, but they opposed that, not just once, but many, many times.

They were unfaithful to God, and so God said, ‘I gave them a certificate of divorce,’ [Jeremiah 3:8](#). When he sent her away then, he had the freedom to marry another.

The bride of Christ today is the church, but if divorce is wrong, if giving a certificate of divorce and marrying someone else is wrong, then we have jeopardised God, it would appear to me, because God Himself is the only illustration in Scripture of anybody who divorced.

He didn’t do it just for one adultery; he did it for many adulteries, [Jeremiah 3:8](#), many, many occasions. He held on as long as He could with the people, but they wouldn’t come around. This again is about the hardness of the people’s hearts, their inability, and their lack of desire to be loyal and faithful to God.

We saw earlier, [Matthew 19:1-9](#) / [Mark 10:1-12](#), that Jesus uses two different words in the text, one word that could properly be translated as ‘putting away’, which is ‘apoluo’, meaning ‘to send away’ or ‘to abandon’.

Then he uses the word ‘apostasion’, which is the legal document, certificate of divorce, granting a divorce. On the basis of the fact that there are two different words used to describe two different actions, the distinction should be maintained.

Jesus says, if they put their wives away if they don’t make it legal and they go out and marry somebody else, they commit adultery because they have married a second person when they are still married to the first person. Therein lies the problem.

Back in [Matthew 5:31-32](#), we saw the other side of the coin: if a man sends away his wife without granting divorce and she marries somebody else, then she commits adultery, and the man who marries her commits adultery because, legally, technically, she is still married to her first husband.

WHY WERE THE DISCIPLES SHOCKED?

All of this raises a question on the part of the disciples; they are in absolute shock in [Matthew 19:10](#). What is it that shocks the disciples when Jesus says to them, ‘you can’t just send your wife away’? There has to be a legal procedure before you are free to marry someone else.

If there is a legal divorce, then the husband would be required to return the dowry his wife was given by her father. Jesus is saying they have to honour and respect the rights of their wife, [Exodus 21:10](#). It shocked them in a society where women had no rights because they didn’t have to think of that.

They could just send their wives away for any old cause as far as they were concerned. Now Jesus says, no, they can’t do that; they have to respect their wives. They have taken her into their home, they have married her, and they can’t just dismiss her.

If they’re not going to live with her, they must give her an official, legal divorce, whatever that might cost them, whatever they have to struggle with, whatever consequence that brings into their lives, they have to respect their wife as a woman and meet her needs and meet her rights and legally set her free so she can marry someone else without incurring the charge of adultery.

I think there is something else here that shocks the disciples. Jesus says, if they send away their wife without giving her a legal divorce and they marry somebody else, they commit adultery. What does the Law of Moses say about committing adultery?

The disciples realise what Jesus was saying: death is the penalty for adultery! [Leviticus 20:10](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:22-25](#). They realise that if that’s the situation between a husband and wife, it’s better not to marry.

When we read [Matthew 19:11-12](#), we must bear in mind that Jesus isn’t talking here about the person who has never been asked to be married. Nor is He talking about the person who asked someone to marry them, but was turned down when He talks about singleness here. He’s talking about people who are single for three different reasons.

1. Congenital.

They were born that way; their sexual organs were dysfunctional, so they have no sexual drive. They have no real need to be married to satisfy that desire, so they don’t get married. Jesus says some people are born that way.

2. Castration.

They were made that way by men; kings in ancient society used to do that a lot. They had their harems, and they didn't want the man in charge of the Harem messing around with the women, so they castrated them so they would lose sexual desire, and they could do their business without being attracted to the women.

3. Commitment to God.

They want to serve the kingdom of God without being tied down to a wife and the responsibilities and time commitment that would take. So, by choice, they remained single.

Jesus said, 'not everybody can accept that', Matthew 19:11. God designed man to be married, but when a man marries, here are the requirements that Jesus says he must meet. He cannot dismiss his wife for any old reason in the book and go out and marry someone else.

If they dismiss their wife, they must give her a certificate of divorce. If they don't legally divorce her, they commit adultery when they remarry; she commits adultery when she marries, and the one who marries her commits adultery because they have never legally been divorced.

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PUTTING AWAY AND DIVORCE

If this distinction stands up between 'putting away' and 'divorce', then the only conclusion that I can come to is that God has NO regulations about reasons for divorce.

Jesus is saying, if they put their wives away, they better give them the 'apostasion', they better make it legal, so she can have the certificate and show anybody else that she has the right to marry again.

If they put their wives away, if there is separation, if there is abandonment, then they must give them the legal certificate of divorce, or they are going to incur adultery, and she will incur adultery when there is remarriage.

IS DIVORCE A SIN?

I think we can also come to the conclusion that Jesus doesn't condemn 'divorce' as a sin. Many people teach that divorce is a sin, but the Bible doesn't say that. Where does the problem come from in this text? Does it come in the divorce? No!

It's in the remarriage that's where the problem is, the problem comes in the remarriage. Jesus says they can't remarry unless there has been an official divorce.

I'm sure some people will still ask, what about that passage in Malachi 2:16, in the Old Testament, where God says, 'I hate divorce'? He said, 'I hate shalach', which we now know means 'putting away'.

I hate putting away, God says. Why? Because they hadn't granted their wives the 'apostasion', they hadn't given them the 'keriythuwth', they hadn't given them the legal certificate.

God says He hates it when they just abandon their wives. He hates it when there is separation, and they don't meet her financial needs, her emotional needs, her sexual needs, and her psychological needs.

They just put her on the shelf and forget about her. And she doesn't have the right to go out and marry anybody else who will meet those needs. God says I hate that.

If the husband is going to separate from her and abandon her, give her a divorce, make it official, so she can remarry. God says, 'I hate the putting away', not I hate divorce.

Even if Jesus is talking about legal divorce all the way through, He says the problem comes when one divorces his wife and then marries another. The person who divorces and marries another commits adultery. Isn't that what He said? However, by default, we could say if a person divorces and never remarries, they have not sinned in the sight of God; therefore, divorce is not a sin.

IMAGINE!

We know that there are women out there who are severely abused by their husbands; they beat them unmercifully. He's not a Christian and has no desire to treat her right. He has literally broken her bones at times while abusing her.

And finally, after having struggled through all that and trying to make that marriage work for the sake of her own emotional and mental health, she divorces him.

Would God say to her, 'That's wrong, that is sin'? There are some who would say, 'yes', and some would say, she must stay with her husband, or if she does leave him, she can't divorce him! I don't believe for one moment that God penalises a person who is trying to do what is right.

Some suggest that a person who was married but got divorced, not for unfaithfulness or adultery, must go back to her original husband. This would go against what God said through Moses back in [Deuteronomy 24:1-4](#); this would be detestable in God's eyes.

It's really difficult speaking to anyone about divorce because we know that God wants permanency, but I believe that Jesus recognised that at times, sin enters into people's marriages as it does into people's lives.

Divorce is not what God wants; it's less than ideal, but God allows it. God permits it, but to say that they aren't free to marry again is reading into the text something which Jesus never said, [Matthew 5:31-32](#) / [Matthew 19:9](#) / [1 Corinthians 4:6](#).

CONCLUSION

I believe that the two words 'apoluo' and 'apostasion' mean different things and that Jesus is talking about 'abandonment' or 'separation' and remarriage without legal divorce from the first person. To do that means that one commits adultery when they form a second union to which they have no right because the first union still exists.

You see, slavery wasn't what God wanted. He didn't create slaves in the beginning, but He allowed it. He didn't want a man to have more than one wife. He created Adam and Eve, and that's all, but He did permit it, right?

Abraham had several wives, David had several wives, and Solomon had several wives. Others had several wives. God never came to David and said, 'All right now, David, you have to give up all your wives except the first one that

you married.’ He never said that, it wasn’t what He wanted, it wasn’t the ideal, but it was permitted. God never wanted divorce, but He did permit it.

Jesus spoke to people who were under the law of Moses, in a covenant relationship with God and as a part of that covenant, they had certain terms, certain conditions that they were to meet that flowed over into their marriage.

What about the Gentiles who weren’t under the Law of Moses, who didn’t have any special specifications laid out? Does God have any directions for them? I believe He does, and Paul addresses those questions in 1 Corinthians 7. In Matthew 5:21-32 / Matthew 19:1-9 / Mark 10:2-12, Jesus deals with the problem of ‘abandonment’. He says, ‘If a man puts away ‘apoluo’ his wife, ‘if he abandons her’, he must give her a certificate of divorcement ‘apostasion’.’ The man must make it legal. If he puts her away, but he does not make it legal, and she marries somebody else, she is committing adultery. If he marries another woman without having put her away legally, he commits adultery. There must be a legal, official termination of the marriage for there to be freedom to remarry.

Paul comes along and says in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7 that it would be better to stay unmarried for several reasons. In the present crisis, they can give devotion to the Lord, and it will keep them from getting trapped in a relationship with an unbeliever who would make it difficult for them to function properly.

But he says if the pressure is there, the sexual, emotional, and psychological needs are there to be fulfilled, and they must have them fulfilled, and he says to get married.

In 1 Corinthians 7:8-9, he tells the divorced and the widows that they can get married, and he tells the virgins in 1 Corinthians 7:25-35 that they can get married.

He tells the man who is engaged to the virgin that he can get married, that may not be the best thing to do because of the present crisis, but they can do it and do it in a way that will honour God, have a marriage that will uphold His ideals.

Then he says that where both are believers, they mustn’t contemplate divorce; they must do all they can to maintain that marriage. If they are married to an unbeliever, if they become converted after they are married, they are to maintain that marriage because it’s an acceptable marriage to God.

If the unbeliever terminates it, it’s terminated; it wasn’t what they wanted. They didn’t pursue it, they didn’t ask for it, they terminated it. Therefore, they aren’t bound in such circumstances.

This is the height, breadth, length, and width of what the Bible has to say about marriage, divorce, and remarriage. The Christian has an ideal to uphold; the Christian looks to save the marriage, strengthen the marriage, and make the marriage last.

But sometimes marriages break down, sometimes sin enters the marriage relationship, and Jesus gives us the guidelines for what to do when that does happen.

‘If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year, he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.’ Deuteronomy 24:5

Moses now speaks about how newlywed men are exempt for one year from fighting. This one year was to be spent bringing happiness to his wife, Deuteronomy 24:5 / Ephesians 5:25-32 / Colossians 3:19.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Small hand-mills which can be worked by a single person were formerly in use among the Jews and are still used in many parts of the East. Therefore, the day’s meal was generally ground for each day, they kept no stock beforehand,

hence they were forbidden to take either of the stones to pledge, because in such a case the family must be without bread. On this account, the text terms the millstone the man's life.'

'Do not take a pair of millstones—not even the upper one—as security for a debt, because that would be taking a person's livelihood as security. If someone is caught kidnapping a fellow Israelite and treating or selling them as a slave, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you. In cases of defiling skin diseases, be very careful to do exactly as the Levitical priests instruct you. You must follow carefully what I have commanded them. Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt. When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbour, do not go into their house to get what is offered to you as a pledge. Stay outside and let the neighbour to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. If the neighbour is poor, do not go to sleep with their pledge in your possession. Return their cloak by sunset so that your neighbour may sleep in it. Then they will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the LORD your God. Do not take advantage of a hired worker who is poor and needy, whether that worker is a fellow Israelite or a foreigner residing in one of your towns. Pay them their wages each day before sunset because they are poor and are counting on it. Otherwise, they may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin. Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin. Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this. When you are harvesting in your field, and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.'

Deuteronomy 24:6-22

Moses speaks here about those occasions when some of the Israelites were in need, and where they would need to borrow money from others using collateral, [Deuteronomy 24:6](#) / [Exodus 22:25-26](#).

The 'upper millstone', [Deuteronomy 24:6](#), wasn't permitted to be used as collateral, as this was essential for everyday use in making food. In other words, if you take a person's upper millstone, you're taking away their ability to prepare food for their family.

The laws of God for Israel placed a great value on human life, and so, kidnapping people and selling them as slaves was a crime punishable by death, [Deuteronomy 24:7](#) / [Genesis 37:28](#) / [Exodus 21:16](#).

Notice again, Israel is commanded to 'purge the evil from among you', [Deuteronomy 24:7](#) / [Deuteronomy 13:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 17:7](#) / [Deuteronomy 17:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 19:19](#) / [Deuteronomy 21:21](#). This again stresses the importance of purity and holiness among God's people.

Those diagnosed with leprosy were to follow the strict instructions laid down by Moses, [Deuteronomy 24:8](#). The term 'leprosy' refers to various kinds of skin disease, though it usually refers to the decaying of the flesh. Because some leprosy was contagious, the Israelites were to obey all laws in reference to it, [Deuteronomy 24:8](#) / [Leviticus 13-14](#). Moses often called on Israel to remember what happened when they failed to obey God's commands, [Deuteronomy 1:26](#). Here, Moses calls on Israel to remember Miriam's disobedient act against God's sovereign choice of Moses as the people's lawgiver, [Deuteronomy 24:9](#) / [Numbers 12:1-10](#). Anyone who rebelled against God's will was to be punished by being stoned to death.

If the time came for anyone who had borrowed money using their own clothes or covers as collateral to pay their debt, the debtor wasn't allowed to barge into the man's house and take the pledge, [Deuteronomy 24:10](#) / [Exodus 22:25-27](#).

The borrower was to bring their pledge out to the man, [Deuteronomy 24:11](#). The choice as to what was to be pledged was determined by the lender of the money, [Proverbs 11:24](#).

Moses tells us that if an outer garment for warmth was taken as collateral from someone who was poor, it had to be returned because they needed it to keep warm at night. This act would be classed as righteous, [Deuteronomy 24:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 6:25](#). It couldn't be kept overnight, [Deuteronomy 24:13](#) / [Exodus 22:26-27](#) / [Amos 2:8](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘However, he might resume his claim in the morning, and have the pledge daily returned, and thus keep up his property in it till the debt was discharged, [Exodus 22:26](#) / [Exodus 22:26](#). The Jews in several cases did act contrary to this rule, and we find them cuttingly reprov’d for it by the Prophet Amos, [Amos 2:8](#).’

Those who are wealthy and hire labourers for a day’s work weren’t to withhold their labourer’s pay, [Deuteronomy 24:14](#). They were to pay them at the end of the day because the labourer desperately needs that pay to survive, [Deuteronomy 24:15](#) / [Exodus 22:21-27](#) / [Ezekiel 18:1-9](#) / [James 5:4](#).

Notice parents aren’t to be put to death for their children, [Deuteronomy 21:18-21](#), nor are children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.

The family wouldn’t be punished for the sin of one member of the family, [Deuteronomy 24:16](#), although there were times when this happened, [Joshua 7:16-26](#) / [Esther 9:13-14](#).

The person who sinned was the person held accountable, and therefore, they had to pay the price for their sin, [Deuteronomy 24:16](#) / [2 Kings 14:6](#) / [Jeremiah 31:29-30](#) / [Ezekiel 18:19-20](#).

Although it would have been very easy to take advantage of a widow who brought her much needed clothes as a pledge, Israel wasn’t permitted to do so, [Deuteronomy 24:17](#).

Israel are to remember that they were slaves in Egypt and God redeemed you from there, hence the reason for the command, [Deuteronomy 24:18](#). God always cares for those who are vulnerable, whether they are Israelites or not. We see that the wealthy are not permitted to harvest the corners of their fields but rather leave these parts for the foreigners, widows, and fatherless, [Deuteronomy 24:19-20](#) / [Leviticus 19:9-11](#) / [Leviticus 23:22](#) / [Ruth 2:2-5](#) / [Ruth 2:15-16](#) / [Ruth 2:23](#).

Notice how God wants justice to prevail for everyone. He wants justice for the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, [Deuteronomy 24:21](#) / [James 1:27](#). Israel wasn’t to think too highly of themselves, hence why Moses reminds them that they were once slaves in Egypt, [Deuteronomy 24:22](#).

CHAPTER 25

INTRODUCTION

‘When people have a dispute, they are to take it to court, and the judges will decide the case, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty. If the guilty person deserves to be beaten, the judge shall make them lie down and have them flogged in his presence with the number of lashes the crime deserves, but the judge must not impose more than forty lashes. If the guilty party is flogged more than that, your fellow Israelite will be degraded in your eyes. Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.’ [Deuteronomy 25:1-4](#)

Moses begins by addressing the topic of justice, [Jeremiah 9:23-24](#). If anyone has a dispute, they must take it to the court where the judges will decide if a person is innocent or guilty, [Deuteronomy 25:1](#) / [Exodus 23:7](#) / [Proverbs 17:15](#). Justice must not only be done but must also be seen to be done; justice must prevail, [Romans 13:4](#).

Throughout the Scriptures, we often find the righteous being treated as though they were guilty, and the guilty being treated as though they were innocent, [Ecclesiastes 3:16](#) / [Isaiah 5:20](#).

Here, Moses says if the guilty person deserves to be beaten, then the amount of flogging should fit the crime, [Deuteronomy 25:2](#) / [Exodus 21:22-25](#). This was a safeguard against punishment that might be carried out in the heat of the moment or by an angry crowd.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This precept is literally followed in China; the culprit receives in the presence of the magistrate the punishment which the law directs to be inflicted. Thus, then justice is done, for the magistrate sees that the letter of the law is duly fulfilled, and that the officers do not transgress it, either by indulgence on the one hand, or severity on the other. The culprit receives nothing more nor less than what justice requires.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The beating here spoken of would be on the back with a rod or stick, [Proverbs 10:13](#) / [Proverbs 19:29](#) / [Proverbs 26:3](#).’

The guilty person would lie face down on the ground and have their backs beaten, [Proverbs 10:13](#) / [Proverbs 26:3](#). They were to be beaten a maximum of forty times, which is the full measure of judgment, [Deuteronomy 25:3](#) / [Genesis 7:12](#) / [Numbers 14:33-34](#) / [2 Corinthians 13:10](#).

The Israelites were so cautious about this that they would administer only thirty-nine stripes just to make sure they didn’t go over the number allotted for punishment, [2 Corinthians 11:24](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Forty signifies the full measure of judgment, [Genesis 7:12](#) / [Numbers 14:33-34](#), but the son of Israel was not to be lashed like a slave at the mercy of another. The judge was always to be present to see that the Law in this particular was not overpassed.’

God’s care for animals is seen in the fact that if they worked, they were given the right to eat that which they worked for, [Deuteronomy 25:4](#). If an ox worked at treading out grain, then it was to be given the right to eat a portion of what it tread as their wages. To do otherwise would be a matter of cruelty.

The apostle Paul used this law to illustrate God’s will in relation to a preacher’s right to receive wages from the church for his work, [1 Corinthians 9:1-14](#) / [1 Timothy 5:18](#).

‘If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband’s brother shall take her and marry her and fulfil the duty of a brother-in-law to her. The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. However, if a man does not want to marry his brother’s wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, “My husband’s brother refuses to carry on his brother’s name in Israel. He will not fulfil the duty of a brother-in-law to me.” Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, “I do not want to marry her,” his brother’s widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, “This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother’s family line.” That man’s line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsandaled.’ [Deuteronomy 25:5-10](#)

The terms and conditions for this particular law were twofold. First of all, the extended family had to be living together, [Deuteronomy 25:5](#). The widow must not marry outside the family, [Deuteronomy 25:5](#) / [Numbers 27:1-11](#). Secondly, the widow of the dead brother had to be childless, [Genesis 38:8](#) / [Matthew 22:23-28](#).

If a man dies not having a son, then his brother was to take his surviving wife, and she would become the wife of the brother for the sake of producing a son and continuing that man’s heritage, [Deuteronomy 25:6](#) / [Numbers 27:1-8](#).

When the dead man’s brother took his brother’s wife as his own and had a son, that young man was to be recognised as the dead man’s firstborn son. Only the firstborn was to take the name of the dead father, [Deuteronomy 25:6](#).

If the man doesn’t desire to take his brother’s wife, the matter was taken to the elders, [Deuteronomy 25:7](#), and if the man couldn’t be persuaded to assume his Levirate duties, [Deuteronomy 25:8](#), then he had to symbolically demonstrate his intentions before the elders of the city, [Deuteronomy 25:9](#) / [Ruth 4](#).

We read here about the seriousness of not fulfilling this law; we see this in the fact that the woman was to remove one of his sandals, [Deuteronomy 25:9](#) / [Ruth 4:5-8](#) / [Ruth 4:10](#) / [1 Samuel 24:21](#) / [2 Samuel 14:7](#) / [Psalms 60:8](#) / [Psalms 108:9](#), and spit in that man's face, [Numbers 12:14](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Planting the foot on a thing was an unusual symbol of lordship and of taking possession, [Genesis 13:17](#) / [Joshua 10:24](#), and loosening the shoe and handing it to another in like manner signified a renunciation and transfer of right and title, [Ruth 4:7-8](#) / [Psalm 60:8](#) / [Psalm 108:9](#).’

The shame not only occurred at the point of the woman spitting in the man's face but he was to live with this shame in that all Israel would look upon his house and say, ‘this is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line,’ [Deuteronomy 25:9](#). The man's family line would also be called, ‘the Family of the Unsandaled’, [Deuteronomy 25:10](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning ‘the Family of the Unsandaled’.

‘Equivalent to ‘the house of the barefooted one. To go barefoot was a sign of the most abject condition, [2 Samuel 15:30](#).’

‘If two men are fighting and the wife of one of them comes to rescue her husband from his assailant, and she reaches out and seizes him by his private parts, you shall cut off her hand. Show her no pity.’ [Deuteronomy 25:11-12](#)

Moses now deals with a situation where we find two men fighting. The wife of one may want to help her husband by taking hold of the enemy's private parts to rescue her husband, [Deuteronomy 25:11](#).

This act on the part of the woman was an act against the posterity of a family through procreation and so, if she did this, the woman's hand was to be cut off and no one was to have pity on her, [Deuteronomy 25:12](#) / [Leviticus 24:19-20](#).

‘Do not have two differing weights in your bag—one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house—one large, one small. You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. For the LORD, your God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly.’ [Deuteronomy 25:13-16](#)

In matters of buying and selling, Moses now deals with dishonest scales, [Deuteronomy 25:13-14](#) / [Leviticus 19:35-36](#). Here, the consumer was protected in that the seller was never to have dishonest measuring weights in their possession, [2 Samuel 14:26](#) / [Amos 8:5](#).

If the person measuring the wheat for sale used diverse weights to measure the sale, they would be cheating the farmer. A standard weight that was actually lighter than the true standard would give the merchant more wheat for less money, that is, they would be cheating the farmer.

Israel must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that they may live long in the land God is giving them, [Deuteronomy 25:15](#) / [Exodus 16:16](#) / [Leviticus 19:35](#).

Notice that not only are they who cheat with weights and measures considered detestable to God but also all who would do acts of unrighteousness, [Deuteronomy 25:16](#). This is something which the Lord detests, [Deuteronomy 25:15](#) / [Proverbs 20:10](#) / [Daniel 5:27](#) / [Micah 6:11](#).

‘Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget!’ [Deuteronomy 25:17-19](#)

Moses encourages Israel to remember the Amalekites, Deuteronomy 25:17 / Genesis 36:15-16, and what they did to them when they came out of Egypt, Deuteronomy 25:18.

When Israel had travelled from Egypt through the desert, Exodus 17:9-16 / Numbers 14:45, it was the Amalekites who took advantage of Israel, when they were at their weakest, by attacking them from the rear, Deuteronomy 25:18 / Exodus 17:8.

God reminds Israel of this wicked attack and commands that they 'blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven', Deuteronomy 25:19 / 1 Samuel 15:1-35 / 1 Samuel 28:18.

CHAPTER 26

INTRODUCTION

'When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name and say to the priest in office at the time, "I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the land the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD your God. Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labour. Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil, and oppression. So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me." Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.' Deuteronomy 26:1-11

FIRSTFRUITS

In this chapter, we find Moses continuing to prepare God's people to enter Canaan. Israel was to go in, possess Canaan, Deuteronomy 26:1, and take the first fruits of the ground for an offering unto the Lord. The offering of the first fruits and the tithes acknowledged God as the One who blessed them with all things.

Israel is to take some of the firstfruits of all that they produce from the soil of the land God is giving them and put them in a basket, Deuteronomy 26:2. Notice that they are to go to the place God will choose as a dwelling for His Name, Deuteronomy 26:2.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This was intended to keep them in continual remembrance of the kindness of God, in preserving them through so many difficulties and literally fulfilling the promises he had made to them. God being the author of all their blessings, the first-fruits of the land were consecrated to him, as the author of every good and perfect gift.'

With the offering of the first fruits, Numbers 18:12-13 / Deuteronomy 18:4, they were to declare that the promise of God's covenant had been fulfilled, Deuteronomy 26:3.

They also declared the great deliverances by which God brought them into the land, Deuteronomy 26:3. The priest is to take the basket from their hands and set it down in front of the altar of God, Deuteronomy 26:4.

They were also to declare before that their father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous, Deuteronomy 26:5.

Jacob is described as an Aramean, or Syrian, because his mother was from Aram Naharaim of Mesopotamia, Deuteronomy 26:5 / Genesis 24:10 / Hosea 12:12. He also lived many years in the house of Laban in Aram, Genesis 29-31.

At this point, the second promise of God to Abraham would be fulfilled, that is, they would be a mighty nation and possess the land, Deuteronomy 26:5 / Genesis 12:1-3.

Israel had grown into a powerful and numerous nation in Egypt but was cruelly treated with harsh labour, Deuteronomy 26:6. While in Egypt they cried out to the God of their ancestors, and He heard their voice and saw their misery, toil, and oppression, Deuteronomy 26:7. And so, God delivered them by His mighty hand with signs and wonders, Deuteronomy 26:8 / Deuteronomy 4:34.

It was God who brought Israel to this place and gave them this land, a land flowing with milk and honey, Deuteronomy 26:9, and now they bring the firstfruits of the soil that God have given them, Deuteronomy 26:10.

They are to place the basket before God and bow down before Him, Deuteronomy 26:10. The offering of the first fruits of Canaan upon entry of the land was to be considered an offering of thanksgiving for all that the Lord had done for them, Deuteronomy 26:11.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God intends that his followers shall be happy; that they shall eat their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, praising him. Those who eat their meat grudgingly, under the pretence of their unworthiness, profane God’s bounties and shall have no thanks for their voluntary humility.’

After the ceremonies of bringing in the first fruits, they were to join in a fellowship meal with the Levites and foreigners who had joined themselves to Israel, Deuteronomy 26:11. These foreigners were those who were converted to the God of Israel and subsequently lived according to His laws.

TITHES

‘When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. Then say to the LORD your God: “I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them. I have not eaten any of the sacred portion while I was in mourning, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor have I offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the LORD my God; I have done everything you commanded me. Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us as you promised on oath to our ancestors, a land flowing with milk and honey.” Deuteronomy 26:12-15

In the first and second years, the tithes were to be used for the feasts, Deuteronomy 14:22-28.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A strict fulfilment of the onerous and complicated tithe obligations was a leading part of the righteousness of the Pharisees, Matthew 23:23.’

The year of tithing would be every third year, and it was during this time that Israel was to offer their tithes to the Levites, foreigners, fatherless, and widows so that they may be sustained, [Deuteronomy 26:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 14:28-29](#).

The worshiper must then proclaim before the Lord at the tabernacle that they had fulfilled the duties of the tithe, [Deuteronomy 26:13](#) / [Deuteronomy 14:23](#) / [Deuteronomy 15:20](#).

They also must declare that they haven't eaten any of the sacred portion while they were in mourning, nor have they removed any of it while they were unclean, nor have they offered any of it to the dead, [Deuteronomy 26:14](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The reference is not so much to the superstitious custom of placing food on or in tombs as to the funeral expenses, and more especially the usual feast for the mourners, [Jeremiah 16:7](#) / [Ezekiel 24:17](#) / [Hosea 9:4](#). The dedicated things were to be employed in glad and holy feasting, not therefore for funeral banquets; for death and all associated with it was regarded as unclean.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘From [1 Corinthians 10:27-28](#), we learn that it was customary to offer that flesh to idols, which was afterwards sold publicly in the shambles; probably the blood was poured out before the idol in imitation of the sacrifices offered to the true God. Perhaps the text here alludes to a similar custom.’

They must declare that they have obeyed God and done everything you commanded me, [Deuteronomy 26:14](#). Having performed the law of God, the people may ask Him to ‘bless your people Israel and the land you have given us as you promised on oath to our ancestors, a land flowing with milk and honey’, [Deuteronomy 26:15](#).

Tithes were for the purpose of fully supporting the priests and Levites, [Numbers 18:21-32](#). Since the priests and Levites functioned on behalf of the people to serve the spiritual needs of the people and to maintain their focus on God, God instituted that they are fully supported on behalf of Israel. Israel was to dwell with God in all good conscience in relation to keeping His laws.

SHOULD CHRISTIANS TITHE TODAY?

Some religious groups require their members to tithe. Among our brethren, you may have heard someone say, ‘if the Jews were required to give a tenth, then Christians should give no less than a tenth because we live under a better covenant.’

This raises the question: Are Christians required to give a tenth today? The first case of giving a tenth in the Bible was Abraham, who gave a tenth of the spoils of war to Melchizedek, [Genesis 14:20](#). Jacob vowed a tenth, [Genesis 28:20-22](#). The Bible gives no hint as to when or to whom he gave his tenth.

After Moses received the law, the people were required to give a tenth in order to support the Levites. The Levites, in turn, gave a tenth to support the priests who were descendants of Aaron, who was also a Levite, [Numbers 18:21-24](#) / [Numbers 18:28](#).

At the time of the conquest, the Levites received no tribal inheritance but were given forty-eight cities with their pastures to live in. They were caretakers of the Tabernacle and later the Temple and assisted the priests. In addition, they served as teachers and even judges.

The tithe, which the other tribes paid, was the means of support for the Levites. Israel was a ‘Theocracy’, that is, a nation ruled by God. The tithe was a form of income tax, which supported their theocracy.

At times, Israel failed in their tithing. For example, Malachi severely rebuked them for not bringing the ‘whole tithe into the storehouse,’ Malachi 3:8-12. He says they had robbed the Lord in their failure to bring in their tithe. In other words, they were cheating on their income tax.

The above Malachi passage is a favourite passage for those who want to bind tithing upon people today, but what they are doing is not robbing God but robbing those who feel they need to tithe.

Ask yourself, to whom was Malachi written? It was written to Old Testament Israel, NOT Christians. So, using these verses to make people tithe today is going beyond what is written, 1 Corinthians 4:6.

The Hebrew writer says, ‘Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their fellow Israelites, even though they also are descended from Abraham,’ Hebrews 7:5.

We are not Jews, and the ‘pastor’ is not a son of Levi. Ask your ‘pastor’ if he tithes and get him to prove it. I doubt very much if he will. We are not under the Law anymore, Galatians 5:4. Tithing was required until after the death of Christ, which ended the old law regarding the Levites, and inaugurated the new covenant, Hebrews 9:15-17.

Today Christians pay taxes to the state, that is, civil government, which has replaced Israel’s theocracy, Romans 13:6-7. When it comes to the church and the giving of the members, the sky is the limit.

We are not required to give a fixed specific amount, but according to how much we figure we have prospered.

Nowhere does the New Testament require Christians to tithe. It is a matter between each individual or couple and God.

It is to be according to how we think we have prospered. Our giving takes place on the first day of the week, 1 Corinthians 16:2. This means the amount will vary with each individual.

Giving should be planned ahead of time and not as an afterthought, 2 Corinthians 9:7. It should not be done grudgingly but cheerfully, 2 Corinthians 9:5 / 2 Corinthians 9:7.

As we give, we should keep in mind that we reap in proportion to what we sow, 2 Corinthians 9:6, and that ultimately, we must give an account of our deeds, Romans 14:12.

Sometimes an emergency may arise, or some special cause may present an opportunity that causes us to want to give in addition to our regular giving. This might occur at a time other than the first day of the week.

Now, remember that 1 Corinthians 16:2 isn’t used as our authority for giving each week; the real example for giving is found in Acts: ‘they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer,’ Acts 2:42.

The word fellowship is ‘koinonia’ in Greek and carries with it the idea of giving and receiving. This is what the very first Christians practised as they shared what they had with each other as the need arose.

Is it a collection or an offering? The first time the word ‘worship’ is used in the Old Testament is in Genesis 22, when Abraham was about to offer Isaac up to the Lord on a mountain and says to his servants, ‘I’m going to go up to that mountain and worship God,’ Genesis 22:5.

And the first time the word ‘worship’ is used in the New Testament is in Matthew 2, when wise men bring gold and incense and myrrh and they lay it at the feet of the baby and they kneel and they worship him, Matthew 2:2.

And we are introduced in the Old Testament and the New Testament to this very important truth and that is the worship of God, is bringing your very best to God and laying it at his feet to honour and praise him.

A collection is when you go and do everything you want to do, you take care of all your passions and desires, and if there is anything left over, you give it to the Lord; that’s a collection.

An offering is when you take the very best, and you honour God with the firstfruits, and you say, “God, you’re first in my life, I’m going to bow down and lay this at your feet, this is my best treasure, and it’s for your glory.”

FOLLOW THE LORD'S COMMANDS

‘The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in obedience to him, that you will keep his decrees, commands, and laws—that you will listen to him. And the LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame, and honour high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.’ Deuteronomy 26:16-19

Here, Moses concludes the conditions of the covenant that God made with Israel. By setting out the terms and conditions of the covenant before they entered Canaan, they would have no excuse for breaking any of God’s laws.

Israel was to keep and do all that God commanded ‘with all your heart and with all your soul,’ [Deuteronomy 26:16](#). By doing this, they would demonstrate their love for God, [1 Samuel 15:22-23](#) / [Joel 2:12-14](#) / [Matthew 22:37-38](#) / [John 14:15](#).

Israel declared that the LORD is their God and that they will walk in obedience to Him, that they will keep His decrees, commands and laws and that they will listen to him, [Deuteronomy 26:17](#).

Since Israel accepted the promises of the covenant, they also accepted the conditions of the covenant, [Exodus 20:3](#) / [Exodus 19:8](#) / [Exodus 20:18-20](#) / [Exodus 24:7](#) / [Joshua 24:14-25](#).

Israel belonged to God, and they were His treasured possession because He had redeemed them from the bondage of Egypt, [Deuteronomy 26:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 7:6-9](#).

As God’s possession, Israel would be exalted to be high above all nations, in praise, name, and honour, [Deuteronomy 26:19](#) / [1 Peter 5:4-6](#). As Israel honoured God through their holiness, He would bless them and all nations would see their greatness with the help of the Lord, [Deuteronomy 26:19](#) / [Proverbs 14:34](#).

These words end the legal matters of the covenant, and so, in the remaining chapters, Moses encourages Israel to keep the covenant.

CHAPTER 27

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapters, Moses laid out the terms and conditions of the covenant, and in these remaining chapters, Moses sets out to encourage Israel not only to agree to those terms and conditions, that is, the blessings and curses, but also to commit to them, [Joshua 8:30-32](#).

THE ALTAR ON MOUNT EBAL

‘Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people: “Keep all these commands that I give you today. When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the LORD your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over to enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you. And when you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I command you today, and coat them with

plaster. Build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool on them. Build the altar of the LORD your God with fieldstones and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. Sacrifice fellowship offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God. And you shall write very clearly all the words of this law on these stones you have set up.” Deuteronomy 27:1-8

The first of four duties that Israel was to carry out when they entered Canaan was to set up three great stones, [Deuteronomy 27:1-2](#). They are to plaster them, [Deuteronomy 27:2](#), and write upon the stones all the words of this law, [Deuteronomy 27:3](#). The reason for doing so was that future generations would see and know the importance of keeping all of God’s laws.

Thompson, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The practice of writing laws on a plastered surface was known in other lands, notably Egypt, where the texts were painted rather than engraved.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The stones here named are not those of which the altar, [Deuteronomy 27:5](#), was to be built, but are to serve as a separate monument witnessing to the fact that the people took possession of the land by virtue of the Law inscribed on them and with an acknowledgement of its obligations.’

Moses continues to place before the minds of Israel that God had promised Canaan to them, [Deuteronomy 27:3](#), and thereby they were to accept God’s gift of land through their obedience. They are to do this when they enter the land flowing with milk and honey, God of their ancestors promised them, [Deuteronomy 27:3](#).

They set up the stones on Mount Ebal, [Deuteronomy 27:4](#), which was located about a mile to the North of Shechem and Mount Gerizim was located around one mile just south of Shechem. The city of Shechem was located between the two mountains in a valley.

The second duty which Israel were to carry out when they entered Canaan was to build an altar of un-carved and unworked stones for the Lord, [Deuteronomy 27:5](#).

This was a common practice among ancient people in reference to codes of law and the purpose for making such stone inscriptions of the law was to signify the permanent conditions by which a society declared to conduct itself.

Israel was to offer burnt offerings, peace offerings, and so, eat with rejoicing, [Deuteronomy 27:6-7](#). The day was to be a day of festive rejoicing and remembrance of the great things God had done for them. In other words, the Israelites were making a commitment to all the generations of Israel throughout their history.

Since God didn’t want any cut stones for the construction of altars, the same applied here for the writing of the law, [Deuteronomy 27:8](#), and so, a layer of plaster was to be applied to the stone. Before the plaster dried, the laws of the covenant were to be impressed on the plaster.

CURSES FROM MOUNT EBAL

‘Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, “Be silent, Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the LORD your God. Obey the LORD your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today.” On the same day, Moses commanded the people: When you have crossed the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. And these tribes shall stand on Mount Ebal to pronounce curses: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.’ Deuteronomy 27:9-13

Notice this day of rejoicing would mark the day that Israel, ‘became the people of the Lord your God, [Deuteronomy 27:9](#). They are commanded to obey God and follow His commands and decrees, [Deuteronomy 27:10](#) / [Exodus 19:8](#).

They must listen to the One who originated the covenant, and who gave the laws, Nehemiah 8:11 / Zephaniah 1:7 / Zechariah 2:13.

The third event, which happened, was that the six tribes of Israel were to stand upon Mount Gerizim and bless Israel, Deuteronomy 27:11-12 / Joshua 8:30-35. The fourth event, which happened, was that the six tribes of Israel were to stand upon Mount Ebal and pronounce the curses of which there were twelve and one summary curse, Deuteronomy 27:13.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The representatives of the six tribes who stood on Mt. Gerizim were all sons of Leah and Rachel. The tribes on Mt. Ebal were descendants of the maids of these women (Gad, Asher, Dan, and Naphtali) plus Reuben and Zebulun. Reuben was the son of Leah, who had lost his birthright because of his sin, and Zebulun was the youngest son of Leah.’

The sons of Jacob’s legitimate wives were to stand on Mount Gerizim to pronounce the blessings, and the sons of Jacob through his concubines were to stand on Mount Ebal and pronounce the curses.

Reuben, who gave up his birthright, Genesis 49:4, and Zebulun, Leah’s youngest son, Genesis 30:19-20, were placed in the group that was to stand on Mount Ebal in order to make up six tribes standing on each Mount.

There could also be indicated in this division the geographical settlement of the tribes, for the tribes of blessing, with the possible exception of Issachar, settled in the southern regions of Canaan. The other six tribes generally settled in the northern regions, including Reuben and Gad.

‘The Levites shall recite to all the people of Israel in a loud voice: “Cursed is anyone who makes an idol—a thing detestable to the LORD, the work of skilled hands—and sets it up in secret.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who dishonours their father or mother.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who moves their neighbour’s boundary stone.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who leads the blind astray on the road.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his father’s wife, for he dishonours his father’s bed.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who has sexual relations with any animal.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his mother-in-law.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who kills their neighbour secretly.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” “Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.” Then all the people shall say, “Amen!” Deuteronomy 27:14-26

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the first of two sections of curses, Deuteronomy 28:15-68, that sandwich one section of blessings, Deuteronomy 28:1-14. The present group of curses explains the consequences of disobedience to specific stipulations of the covenant, whereas the second group of curses clarifies the consequences of disobedience to general stipulations of the covenant.’

The ceremony described here was different from the pronouncing of the blessings and curses of the covenant, Deuteronomy 31:16-17 / Galatians 3:10. In this ceremony, the Levites pronounced only the curses for disobedience. Notice on this occasion, the Levites were to be the spokesmen, then all the people were to respond, with amen, Deuteronomy 27:14 / Numbers 5:22.

The Levites begin by saying cursed is anyone who makes an idol, a thing detestable to God, the work of skilled hands and sets it up in secret, Exodus 20:4, and the people respond by saying amen, Deuteronomy 27:15.

Cursed is anyone who dishonours their father or mother, [Exodus 20:12](#), and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:16](#). Cursed is anyone who moves their neighbour's boundary stone, [Deuteronomy 19:14](#) / [Deuteronomy 19:14](#) / [Exodus 20:17](#), and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:17](#).

Cursed is anyone who leads the blind astray on the road, [Exodus 20:13](#), and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:18](#). Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:19](#).

Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his father's wife, for he dishonours his father's bed and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:20](#). Cursed is anyone who has sexual relations with any animal and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:21](#).

Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:2](#).

Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his mother-in-law, and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:23](#).

Cursed is anyone who kills their neighbour secretly, and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:24](#).

Cursed is anyone who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person, and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:25](#). Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out, [Galatians 3:10](#), and the people respond by saying amen, [Deuteronomy 27:26](#).

Notice how God requires Israel to agree with His laws; this is seen in how Moses, over and over again, encourages the people to say, 'Amen.' By doing this, the people called down judgment on themselves if they disobeyed the conditions of the covenant.

Many of the laws that are mentioned here are laws that could be violated in secret and without the knowledge of others. However, God would obviously know, as nothing is hidden from His sight, [Hebrews 4:13](#).

The curses mentioned are the same thing as being condemned to eternal damnation. The curses indicate God's hatred of idolatry, disrespect toward parents, unjust behaviour, cruelty, sexual immorality, and murder.

The apostle Peter associated the curse with false teachers and all unrighteous men, [2 Peter 2:9](#) / [2 Peter 2:14](#). The apostle Paul quoted [Deuteronomy 27:26](#), in [Galatians 3:10](#), to indicate the hopeless condition people under the Mosaic Law were in, [Galatians 3:13](#).

Joshua, the faithful leader who followed Moses, dutifully carried out the orders which Moses delivered here and the account of that obedience is in [Joshua 8:30-35](#).

CHAPTER 28

INTRODUCTION

'If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God: You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out. The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you. The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and

walk in obedience to him. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your ancestors to give you. The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.’ Deuteronomy 28:1-14

BLESSINGS FOR OBEDIENCE

In the previous chapter, Moses proclaimed the terms and conditions of God’s covenant with Israel, and all of Israel agreed by saying ‘amen’, [Deuteronomy 27:14-26](#).

In this chapter, Moses now sets about encouraging Israel to keep the covenant, and once again, it’s all about obedience, [Deuteronomy 11:22-23](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:26-32](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A comparison of this chapter with [Exodus 23:20-23](#), and [Leviticus 26:1-36](#), will show how Moses here resumes and amplifies the promises and threats already set forth in the earlier records of the Law.’

The Lord says that He will bless Israel and glorify them among the nations around them if they obey the covenant, [Deuteronomy 28:1-2](#) / [Leviticus 26:3-13](#) / [Deuteronomy 26:18-19](#).

If Israel obeys God, then they will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country, [Deuteronomy 28:3](#). God will bless Israel with a physical substance such as fruitful land, cattle, and the womb of women, [Deuteronomy 28:4](#). Their basket and their kneading trough will be blessed, and they will be blessed when they come in and blessed when they go out, [Deuteronomy 28:5-6](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ‘basket’ or bag was a customary means in the East for carrying about whatever might be needed for personal uses, [Deuteronomy 26:2](#) / [John 13:29](#). The ‘store’ is rather the kneading-trough, [Exodus 8:3](#) / [Exodus 12:34](#).’

God will grant that the enemies who rise up against them will be defeated, and they will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, [Deuteronomy 28:7](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is a promise of security from foreign invasion, or total discomfiture of the invaders, should they enter the land.’

God will send a blessing on their barns and on everything they put their hand to, [Deuteronomy 28:8](#). God will bless them in the land He is giving them, [Deuteronomy 28:8](#).

If Israel obeys God, then they will be established as God’s holy people among the nations, [Deuteronomy 28:9](#) / [Genesis 22:16](#) / [Hebrews 6:13-14](#). God also said He would defeat all their enemies and their enemies would be afraid of them, [Deuteronomy 28:10](#) / [Exodus 23:20-23](#).

God will grant them abundant prosperity, in the fruit of their womb, the young of their livestock and the crops of their ground, in the land God swore to their ancestors to give them, [Deuteronomy 28:11](#).

God will open the heavens, the storehouse of His bounty, to send rain on their land in season and to bless all the work of their hands, [Deuteronomy 28:12](#). Israel will lend to many nations but will borrow from none, [Deuteronomy 28:12](#).

God will make them the head, not the tail, [Deuteronomy 28:13](#).

If Israel pay attention to the commands of God that He gives them and carefully follow them, they will always be at the top, never at the bottom, Deuteronomy 28:13.

For God to bless Israel they mustn't turn aside from any of the commands He gives them, they mustn't turn to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them, Deuteronomy 28:14.

CURSES FOR DISOBEDIENCE

‘However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country. Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed. The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.’ Deuteronomy 28:15-19

After describing the blessings which He would give Israel if they obeyed Him, the Lord now says there will be consequences, that is, curses, for disobedience to His covenant, Leviticus 26:14-46.

We must keep in mind that God was speaking nationally to a nation of people. Though individuals would enjoy the specifics of a national blessing in a nation that is obedient to the moral laws of God, they, as a nation, would also suffer the specifics of national disobedience, Hosea 9:15-16.

He warns them that all these blessings will be taken away from them if they are disobedient, and they will be cursed, Deuteronomy 28:15. Notice that these curses are the opposite of the blessings.

They will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country, Deuteronomy 28:16 / Deuteronomy 28:3, and their basket and their kneading trough will be cursed, Deuteronomy 28:17 / Deuteronomy 28:5.

The fruit of their womb will be cursed, and the crops of their land, and the calves of their herds and the lambs of their flocks, Deuteronomy 28:18 / Deuteronomy 28:4. They will be cursed when they come in and cursed when they go out, Deuteronomy 28:19 / Deuteronomy 28:6.

‘The LORD will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him. The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. The LORD will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed. The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. Your carcasses will be food for all the birds and the wild animals, and there will be no one to frighten them away.’ Deuteronomy 28:20-26

If Israel disobeys God, then God will send on them curses, confusion and rebuke in everything they put their hand to, until they are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil they have done in forsaking Him, Deuteronomy 28:20 / Deuteronomy 7:23 / 1 Samuel 14:20.

Notice the effect of the curses, they are going to affect both the physical and material areas of life of both men and women and the animals. God will plague them with diseases until He has destroyed them from the land they are entering to possess, Deuteronomy 28:21.

God will strike them with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague them until they perish, Deuteronomy 28:21. The sky over their head will be bronze, the ground beneath them iron, Deuteronomy 28:23.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The atmosphere should not be replenished with aqueous vapours, in consequence of which they should have neither the early nor the latter rain; hence the earth, the ground, must be wholly intractable, and, through its hardness, incapable of cultivation. God shows them by this that he is Lord of nature and that drought and sterility are not casualties but proceed from the immediate appointment of the Lord.’

God will turn the rain of their country into dust and powder and it will come down from the skies until they are destroyed, Deuteronomy 28:24. God will cause them to be defeated before their enemies and Israel will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, Deuteronomy 28:25 / Deuteronomy 28:7.

The punishment is totally devastating for Israel and they would be an example of horror to all the nations around them, Deuteronomy 28:25. Their carcasses will be food for all the birds and the wild animals, and there will be no one to frighten them away, Deuteronomy 28:26.

‘The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumours, festering sores, and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind. At midday, you will grope about like a blind person in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day, you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you. You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her and rape her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit. Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will eat none of it. Your donkey will be forcibly taken from you and will not be returned. Your sheep will be given to your enemies, and no one will rescue them. Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand. A people that you do not know will eat what your land and labour produce, and you will have nothing but cruel oppression all your days. The sights you see will drive you mad. The LORD will afflict your knees and legs with painful boils that cannot be cured, spreading from the soles of your feet to the top of your head. The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your ancestors. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. You will become a thing of horror, a byword, and an object of ridicule among all the peoples where the LORD will drive you.’ Deuteronomy 28:27-37

The more we read, the worse things get for Israel if they disobey God. He will afflict Israel with the boils of Egypt, Exodus 9:9, and with tumours, 1 Samuel 5:6 / 1 Samuel 5:9, festering sores, and the itch, from which you cannot be cured, Deuteronomy 28:27.

The body of man would be physically affected with boils and the infections that come with plagues. They would suffer from madness, blindness and confusion, Deuteronomy 28:28 / Lamentations 4:14 / Zephaniah 1:17 / 2 Corinthians 3:14.

At midday, they will grope about like a blind person in the dark, and they will be unsuccessful in everything they do. The invading nations would oppress them and eat their crops, and they would have no one to rescue them, Deuteronomy 28:29 / Deuteronomy 28:33.

If they were disobedient, then they would experience the pain of seeing one’s wife being raped, Deuteronomy 28:30 / Lamentations 3:1. Israel will build a house, but they will not live in it, they will plant a vineyard, but they will not even begin to enjoy its fruit, Deuteronomy 28:31.

Their ox will be slaughtered before their eyes, but they will eat none of it and their donkeys will be forcibly taken from them and will not be returned and their sheep will be given to their enemies, and there will be no one will rescue them, Deuteronomy 28:33 / Deuteronomy 28:29.

Their children will be taken into slavery by a ruthless nation, and they will wear out their eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand, Deuteronomy 28:34.

A people that Israel doesn’t know will eat what their land and labour produce, and they will have nothing but cruel oppression all their days, Deuteronomy 28:35.

When Israel sees all this happening, it would drive them mad, Deuteronomy 28:34. God will afflict their knees and legs with painful boils that cannot be cured, spreading from the soles of their feet to the top of their head, Deuteronomy 28:35.

The final punishment would be that they would be taken into another land where another king would be set over them, Deuteronomy 28:36. There they would be forced to serve the idol gods of their captors, Deuteronomy 28:36 / Amos 9:8.

Israel will become a thing of horror a byword, an object of riddle among the nations they were supposed to drive out, Deuteronomy 28:37. In other words, they will be an example to the nations around them of how God punishes people for disobedience.

‘You will sow much seed in the field, but you will harvest little, because locusts will devour it. You will plant vineyards and cultivate them, but you will not drink the wine or gather the grapes, because worms will eat them. You will have olive trees throughout your country, but you will not use the oil, because the olives will drop off. You will have sons and daughters, but you will not keep them, because they will go into captivity. Swarms of locusts will take over all your trees and the crops of your land. The foreigners who reside among you will rise above you higher and higher, but you will sink lower and lower. They will lend to you, but you will not lend to them. They will be the head, but you will be the tail. All these curses will come on you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God and observe the commands and decrees he gave you. They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, therefore, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you.’
Deuteronomy 28:38-48

The curses continue; they would suffer plague and famine, which would bring Israel to its financial knees. Israel will become a devastated nation living in a land ravaged by plague and famine.

They will sow much seed in the field, but they will harvest little, because locusts will devour it, Deuteronomy 28:38. They would experience all of their labour failures because of a lack of rain, worms, and insects, Deuteronomy 28:39. Israel will have olive trees throughout their country, but they will not use the oil, because the olives will drop off, Deuteronomy 28:40. They will become a nation stricken with poverty, the opposite of the land of milk and honey into which they were about to venture when these words were spoken.

They will have sons and daughters, but they will not keep them, because they will go into captivity, Deuteronomy 28:41. Swarms of locusts will take over all their trees and the crops of their land, Deuteronomy 28:42.

The foreigners who reside among them will rise above them higher and higher, but they will sink lower and lower, Deuteronomy 28:43. They will lend to Israel, but Israel will not lend to them, and they will be the head, but Israel will be the tail, Deuteronomy 28:44 / Deuteronomy 28:13.

Israel must learn to trust God and His promises but they must also learn that these promises and curses are real and God will have no hesitation in bringing these curses upon them if they are disobedient to Him, Deuteronomy 28:45. They must love Him and demonstrate that love for Him by being obedient to Him, Deuteronomy 6:4 / Deuteronomy 10:12-13 / Deuteronomy 10:20 / Deuteronomy 11:1 / Deuteronomy 11:13-14 / Deuteronomy 11:22 / Deuteronomy 26:16.

The curses will be a sign and a wonder to them and their descendants forever, Deuteronomy 28:46 / Romans 9:27 / Romans 11:5. The reason for these curses would be that in the future, Israel would give up on God, and so, God would give up on them and hand them over to their enemies.

Because they didn’t serve God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, Israel will serve the enemies God sends against them, and He will put an iron yoke on their neck until He has destroyed them, Deuteronomy 28:47-48.

‘The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young. They will devour the young of your livestock and the crops of your land until you are destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine, or olive oil, nor any calves of your herds or lambs of your flocks until you are ruined.

They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the LORD your God is giving you. Because of the suffering that your enemy will inflict on you during the siege, you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the LORD your God has given you. Even the most gentle and sensitive man among you will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating. It will be all he has left because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of all your cities. The most gentle and sensitive woman among you—so sensitive and gentle that she would not venture to touch the ground with the sole of her foot—will begrudge the husband she loves and her own son or daughter the afterbirth from her womb and the children she bears. For in her dire need, she intends to eat them secretly because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of your cities.’ Deuteronomy 28:49-57

If Israel disobeys God, then God will bring a nation against them from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, Matthew 24:28, a nation whose language they will not understand, Deuteronomy 28:49. The nation God sends will be a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young, Deuteronomy 28:50. They will devour the young of Israel’s livestock and the crops of their land until they are destroyed, Deuteronomy 28:51. They will leave Israel no grain, new wine, or olive oil, nor any calves of their herds or lambs of their flocks until they are ruined, Deuteronomy 28:51. The nation that God sends will lay siege to all the cities throughout their land until the high fortified walls in which Israel trusts fall down, Deuteronomy 28:52 / 2 Kings 25:1-2. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land God is giving them, Deuteronomy 28:52.

Because God is omniscient, He knows the beginning from the end, Isaiah 46:9-10. Israel was delivered out of the bondage of Egypt, but they would again be brought into the bondage of the Assyrian and Babylonian kingdoms, which at this time were only small kingdoms.

The things written here came to pass at a time when Israel forgot God and forsook His commandments, Jeremiah 5:23-25. When these invading forces eventually approach poverty-stricken Israel, the Israelites would resort to the most base behavioural actions of life in order to survive, Deuteronomy 28:53-57 / 2 Kings 6:28.

Israel, that is, the people of God in Judah, was besieged by Babylon, and they ate the flesh of their children in a cannibalistic manner, Deuteronomy 28:53 / 2 Kings 6:24-30 / Jeremiah 19:9 / Lamentations 4:10, and went into Babylonian captivity for seventy years, Jeremiah 25:11, for their ungodliness.

Even the most gentle and sensitive man among Israel will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating, Deuteronomy 28:54-55. It will be all he has left because of the suffering Israel’s enemy will inflict on them during the siege of all their cities, Deuteronomy 28:55.

The most gentle and sensitive woman among Israel, so sensitive and gentle that she would not venture to touch the ground with the sole of her foot, will begrudge the husband she loves and her own son or daughter the afterbirth from her womb and the children she bears, Deuteronomy 28:56-57.

For in her dire need, she intends to eat them secretly because of the suffering Israel’s enemy will inflict on them during the siege of their cities, Deuteronomy 28:57 / 2 Kings 6:29 / Leviticus 26:29 / Leviticus 26:29.

‘If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name—the LORD your God—the LORD will send fearful plagues on you and your descendants, harsh and prolonged disasters, and severe and lingering illnesses. He will bring on you all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded, and they will cling to you. The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed. You who were as numerous as the stars in the sky will be left but few in number, because you did not obey the LORD your God. Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess. Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods—gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give

you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life. In the morning, you will say, “If only it were evening!” and in the evening, “If only it were morning!”—because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. The LORD will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.’ Deuteronomy 28:58-68

Moses states the conditions of escaping the dreadful curses by saying that Israel is to ‘revere this glorious and fearful name, the LORD your God,’ [Deuteronomy 28:58](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:29](#) / [Deuteronomy 6:2](#).

Harrison, in his commentary, points out the following names of God within the book.

‘The Living God’, [Deuteronomy 5:26](#), ‘The Lord, the God of your fathers’, [Deuteronomy 6:3](#), ‘The God of gods, and Lord of lords’, [Deuteronomy 10:17](#), ‘The Rock, a God of faithfulness’, [Deuteronomy 32:4](#), ‘The Most High’, [Deuteronomy 32:8](#), and ‘The Eternal God’, [Deuteronomy 33:17](#).’

The curses were a prophecy of what God knew would eventually happen in the history of Israel. However, because He knew such would happen doesn’t mean that He predestined these events.

Israel could make a choice concerning their future; it could choose to obey and continue to enjoy the blessings of the covenant. However, if they chose to disobey Him, they were condemned to suffer the consequences of disobedience.

Note again that the nature of the curses is the complete opposite of the nature of the blessings. They escaped the plagues of Egypt through obedience, but they would suffer plagues because of disobedience, [Deuteronomy 28:59-60](#). God will also bring on Israel every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until they are destroyed, [Deuteronomy 28:61](#).

Because of obedience, they multiplied in Egypt, [Exodus 1:12](#), but their disobedience would result in the destruction of their population to a remnant, [Deuteronomy 28:62-63](#) / [Romans 9:27](#) / [Romans 11:5](#). Obedience brought the blessing of the Promised Land, but disobedience would send them as captives into a foreign land, [Deuteronomy 28:63](#).

Obedience brought them together as a nation, but disobedience would scatter them throughout the nations, [Deuteronomy 28:64](#). Israel will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone, which neither they nor their ancestors have known, [Deuteronomy 28:64](#).

Among those nations, Israel will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of their foot, and there God will give them an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart, [Deuteronomy 28:65](#). Israel will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of their life, [Deuteronomy 28:66](#).

In the morning, they will say, If only it were evening! and in the evening, if only it were morning! because of the terror that will fill their hearts and the sights that their eyes will see, [Deuteronomy 28:67](#).

Finally, God will send Israel back in ships to Egypt on a journey He said they should never make again, and the nations would even reject them as slaves, [Deuteronomy 28:68](#).

CHAPTER 29

INTRODUCTION

‘These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb. Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them: Your eyes have seen all that the LORD did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. With your own eyes, you saw

those great trials, those signs, and great wonders. But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear. Yet the LORD says, “During the forty years that I led you through the wilderness, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God.” When you reached this place, Sihon, king of Heshbon and Og, king of Bashan, came out to fight against us, but we defeated them. We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh. Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do.’ Deuteronomy 29:1-9

RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT

Moses not only repeated the Law given at Horeb, that is, Sinai, Exodus 24:7-8, but he also delivered additional divine laws here in Moab, Deuteronomy 29:1.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This verse seems properly to belong to the preceding chapter, as a widely different subject is taken up at Deuteronomy 29:2 of this, and it is distinguished as the sixty-ninth verse in some of the most correct copies of the Hebrew Bible.’

After speaking these words, that is, the three sermons, Moses calls upon the people to remember all that their eyes had seen in relation to God’s works, Deuteronomy 29:2.

They saw the signs and great wonders of God as Egypt were brought to their knees through the plagues and crushing blow of the Red Sea, Deuteronomy 29:3. Despite Israel seeing all these signs and wonders, ‘the LORD has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear,’ Deuteronomy 29:4 / Deuteronomy 5:29. Though Israel saw the signs and wonders, they didn’t really see them, Matthew 13:10-17.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Ability to understand the things of God is the gift of God, 1 Corinthians 2:13-14, yet man is not guiltless if he lacks that ability. The people had it not because they had not felt their want of it, nor asked for it, 2 Corinthians 3:14-15.’ God’s people would only become His possession when they obeyed His commandments, Deuteronomy 27:9-10. God had specifically chosen Israel to be a people for His own possession, Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

God didn’t choose them because of any righteousness in them, Deuteronomy 9:6 / Deuteronomy 9:24, and neither did He choose them because they were great in number, Deuteronomy 7:7.

God’s sovereign choice of the people of Israel was due to His love for them, Deuteronomy 7:8 / Romans 9:13-24.

God had made a promise to Abraham, and He intended to keep it, Genesis 12:1-3.

Due to these great promises, the signs, and wonders that the people saw in Egypt and during their forty years of wandering, and the warnings of the Law before them, the people should have, with a spirit of fear, sought out the Lord’s will.

With open eyes of understanding, they should have been terrified to break God’s laws and, at the same time, anxious to receive His promises by faithful living. Moses not only reminds the people of the signs and wonders performed in Egypt but also of God’s miraculous care for them through the wilderness wanderings, Deuteronomy 29:5.

Their clothes didn’t wear out, nor did the sandals on their feet, Deuteronomy 29:5 / Deuteronomy 8:4. The Lord miraculously provided them with bread to eat, that is, manna and wine, that is, grape and pomegranate juice, Deuteronomy 29:6 / 2 Corinthians 6:1.

Furthermore, the Lord defeated their enemies for them, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan and gave Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh lands that did not previously belong to them Deuteronomy 29:7-8.

Seeing that God had blessed Israel with so much, they were expected to follow His commandments, Deuteronomy 29:9. As they followed the commandments of God, their blessings would continue, Deuteronomy 28:1-14.

‘All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God, your leaders and chief men, your elders, and officials, and all the other men of Israel, together with your children and your wives, and the foreigners living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God, but also with those who are not here today. You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold.’ Deuteronomy 29:10-17

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They were about to enter into a covenant with God, and as a covenant implies two parties contracting, God is represented as being present, and they and all their families, old and young, come before him.’

Moses is addressing all of Israel, including the children and the foreigner, Deuteronomy 29:10-11 / Acts 2:39. The purpose of the assembly was that all would ‘enter into the covenant of the Lord your God’, Deuteronomy 29:12. To enter into a covenant or oath with God was to be ‘established as a people belonging to God’, Deuteronomy 29:12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Thus, we find that in a covenant there are these seven particulars.

1. The parties about to contract were considered as being hitherto separated.
2. They now agree to enter into a state of close and permanent amity.
3. They meet together in a solemn manner for this purpose.
4. A sacrifice is offered to God on the occasion, for the whole is a religious act.
5. The victim is separated exactly into two equal parts, the separation being in the direction of the spine and those parts are laid opposite to each other, sufficient room being allowed for the contracting parties to pass between them.
6. The contracting parties meet in the victim, and the conditions of the covenant by which they are to be mutually bound are recited.
7. An oath is taken by these parties that they shall punctually and faithfully perform their respective conditions, and thus the covenant is made and ratified, Jeremiah 34:18-19 / Genesis 6:18 / Genesis 15:18 / Exodus 29:45 / Leviticus 26:44-45.’

The Lord’s purpose of driving out Canaan and giving the people great blessings was that His promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may be established, that is, fulfilled, Deuteronomy 29:13 / Genesis 15:18 / Deuteronomy 8:17-19 / Deuteronomy 9:4-5 / Deuteronomy 28:9.

Israel would only belong to God as they obeyed His commandments, and they would only receive blessings as they obeyed the voice of God. To enter into the covenant oath of God was thereby a conscientious decision, on the part of Israel, to obey God’s will so that they may receive His protection and blessings, Exodus 24:3 / Deuteronomy 5:27-29. Up until this point, Israel had only failed to be established as God’s own possession because they hadn’t obeyed His command to take Canaan, Deuteronomy 1:21 / Deuteronomy 1:26. All of those who were standing were willing to obey the voice of God, and would be recipients of God’s blessings.

Israel had passed through many lands and not only gained people that followed them, that is, foreigners, but also they have had exposure to other religious cultures in the process of travelling great distances.

Those twenty years old and older who had rebelled thirty-eight years before by not taking the land immediately were not present at the time these words were spoken; they had died in the wilderness, [Deuteronomy 29:14-15](#).

But the new generation of all the Israelite families, the servants, and foreigners, were present for the taking of the oath to renew the covenant at this time. Those yet unborn in the future were also taking the oath by their living families.

Israel had seen with their eyes not only God's great and miraculous works in Egypt and the desert but they had also seen the detestable acts of the nations they passed through, [Deuteronomy 29:16-17](#). They saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold, [Deuteronomy 29:17](#) / [Leviticus 26:30](#).

Israel was now at a crossroads in its decisions that would affect it for all eternity. Israel was to either enter into a covenant with God by accepting and doing His will or follow the detestable acts of the nations, [Leviticus 26:30](#).

'Make sure there is no man or woman, clan, or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison. When such a person hears the words of this oath, and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way," they will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. The LORD will never be willing to forgive them; his wrath and zeal will burn against them. All the curses written in this book will fall on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven. The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law. Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it. The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulphur—nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger. All the nations will ask: "Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?" And the answer will be: "It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. They went off and worshipped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them. Therefore, the LORD's anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. In furious anger and in great wrath, the LORD uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now." The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.' [Deuteronomy 29:18-29](#)

Moses has already delivered the danger of personal contamination through an individual's wickedness, [Deuteronomy 13](#). These people are described as a 'root that produces such bitter poison', [Deuteronomy 29:18](#) / [Hebrews 12:15](#). The KJV uses the words 'gall and wormwood', [Jeremiah 9:15](#) / [Lamentations 3:19](#) / [Amos 6:12](#) / [Hosea 10:4](#) / [Matthew 27:34](#) / [Acts 8:23](#) / [Revelation 8:11](#).

When such a person hears the words of this oath and they invoke a blessing on themselves, thinking, they will be safe, even though they persist in going their way, they will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry, [Deuteronomy 29:19](#) / [Jeremiah 23:17](#) / [Job 15:16](#). The bitter results of practising idolatry are seen in those who forsake the covenant agreement of the oath of God.

The Lord will not forgive them, [Deuteronomy 29:20](#), and they are subject to the anger of the Lord, [Deuteronomy 29:20](#). That person will be cursed with all the curses written in this book, [Deuteronomy 29:20](#). In other words, they will receive the curses of [Deuteronomy 28:15-68](#).

God will blot out their names from under heaven, [Deuteronomy 29:20](#). God will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law, [Deuteronomy 29:21](#) / [Deuteronomy 28:15-68](#).

The land where the idolater lives will be destroyed, to the point of causing astonishment by the nations, [Deuteronomy 29:22](#). The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulphur, nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it, [Deuteronomy 29:23](#). It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboyim, which God overthrew in fierce anger, [Deuteronomy 29:23](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Those towns of the vale of Siddim, of which were Admah and Zeboim, were fertile and well-watered, Genesis 13:10, until devastated by the wrath of God, Genesis 19:24-25, and the ruin of Israel would follow that pattern. The desolate state of Palestine today, and the traces of former fertility and prosperity are attested by every traveller.’ All the nations will ask why the LORD has done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger? Deuteronomy 29:24. And the answer will be, it is because these people abandoned the covenant of God, the God of their ancestors, the covenant He made with them when He brought them out of Egypt, Deuteronomy 29:25.

If God’s people forget about God and His will, they will end up getting involved in idol worship, Deuteronomy 29:26. This was the main threat to Israel.

The nation would eventually become ignorant of the Word of God, for the priests would fail to be diligent in keeping the word of God before the people. As a result, the people would easily adopt the concepts and practices of the gods of the nations around them. They would eventually come to fulfil the words of Hosea, Hosea 4:6.

Because of their idolatry, God’s anger burned against this land, so that He brought on it all the curses written in this book, Deuteronomy 29:27 / Deuteronomy 28:15-68. In furious anger and in great wrath, God uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now, Deuteronomy 29:28.

There are things that man can’t know; they are secret things, which belong to God, Deuteronomy 29:29 / Isaiah 55:8-9. We can’t predict or calculate the providential work of God in anyone’s life, Ecclesiastes 8:17.

Neither can we know things that God hasn’t revealed. Moses’ point is that we’re not at liberty to do things that we haven’t seen or heard from God, Deuteronomy 4:12-16.

CHAPTER 30

INTRODUCTION

‘When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today. Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.’ Deuteronomy 30:1-

PROSPERITY AFTER TURNING TO THE LORD

It appears that the Lord knew that Israel would let Him down and so, here, through Moses, God pronounces the end before the beginning, [Isaiah 46:10](#). This chapter takes into consideration a time when God's people would fall away in sin and then return, through a heart of sorrow and repentance, unto the Lord, [Deuteronomy 4:29-31](#) / [1 Kings 8:46-50](#).

When all these blessings and curses God has set before them come on Israel and they take them to heart wherever God disperses them among the nations, [Deuteronomy 30:1](#).

Though Israel intended to obey every word of God, they eventually sin against God's divine will. All the cursings would come upon Israel because of their disobedience, and since the cursings would be inevitable, they must struggle to see how long they can prolong the blessings by their obedience.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the people being dispersed among the nations.

'Here is simply no way that this means 'the Babylonian captivity,' although, to be sure, that episode, along with the ravaging of the Northern kingdom by Assyria, was part of the total picture of Israel's rejection.' 'The reason that this cannot be limited to the Babylonian period is the mention of the scattering of Israel 'among all the nations', [Deuteronomy 30:1](#), among 'all the peoples', [Deuteronomy 30:3](#), even 'the uttermost parts of heaven', [Deuteronomy 30:4](#). None of this ever occurred until after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Also, God's promise to 'turn thy captivity', [Deuteronomy 30:3](#), could not possibly refer to the return of a handful of Jews to Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity ended, except as a kind of symbol and token of what is really promised here.'

God wanted Israel to keep His commands so that everything would go well with them and their children, [Deuteronomy 30:2](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:28-29](#). When they and their children return to God and obey him with all their heart and with all their soul according to everything He has commanded them, then God will restore their fortunes.

He will have compassion on them and gather them again from all the nations where He scattered them, [Deuteronomy 30:2-3](#) / [Deuteronomy 30:6](#) / [Deuteronomy 30:10](#) / [Deuteronomy 6:4-5](#) / [Matthew 22:37](#).

Even if Israel has been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there God will gather them and bring them back, [Deuteronomy 30:4](#). God will bring Israel to the land that belonged to their ancestors, and they will take possession of it, and God will make them more prosperous and numerous than their ancestors, [Deuteronomy 30:5](#).

Notice God says He, 'will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live,' [Deuteronomy 30:6](#) / [Deuteronomy 30:2](#) / [Deuteronomy 30:10](#) / [Matthew 22:37](#).

This spiritual circumcision would be a restoration of the covenant because of their restoration to obedience from the heart, [Deuteronomy 10:16](#) / [Jeremiah 32:39](#) / [Ezra 11:19](#).

Within these words, Moses was certainly looking toward a time of spiritual restoration when the Messiah would eventually come to make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#) / [Ezekiel 36:26-28](#) / [Romans 2:28-29](#) / [Colossians 2:10-11](#).

The apostle Paul commanded the same thing over in [Romans 2:28-29](#), and he tells us what he meant in [Colossians 2:11](#). God wants us to remove everything from our hearts that is contrary to His will, that competes with sincere devotion, and that hinders obedience. God wants inward trust instead of outward claims, a true heart instead of a hypocritical ceremony.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning God restoring Israel's fortunes.

‘The Septuagint (LXX) has, ‘the Lord will heal thy sins as the meaning of this passage’. The reference here, then, must refer to a much more extensive captivity than that in Babylon. The Jews themselves do not consider this prophecy fulfilled by their return from Babylon. The reasons why the Jews take this position are as follows.

1. Not all of them returned after the Babylonian exile.
2. They had not, at that time, been scattered among all nations.
3. They were not multiplied above their fathers, Deuteronomy 30:5.
4. Their hearts were not circumcised to love the Lord, Deuteronomy 30:6, etc.’

Jamieson, in his commentary, says the following concerning the return.

‘The Jews ardently look to this promise, believing that God will yet fulfil it by bringing them back from their exile among all nations and entering them again into Canaan. For these and many other reasons, we cannot believe that the turning of Israel’s captivity refers to anything less than the spiritual blessings in the kingdom of the Son of God’s love, even that of Jesus Christ our Lord,’ Luke 4:18.’

God desires that mankind would serve Him with all their heart and soul, Deuteronomy 30:6 / Deuteronomy 30:2 / Deuteronomy 30:10 / Deuteronomy 6:4-5 / Matthew 22:37.

Man’s obedience should happen not only out of a sense of duty, gratitude for what God has done for them, and because it is the right thing to do but also because it is what a man’s earnest desire to do is.

We should serve God because we see that He loves us, provides for us, and is compassionate toward us when we fail and humbly ask for His forgiveness, Exodus 19:4-6.

God will put all these curses on Israel’s enemies who hate and persecute them, Deuteronomy 30:7. Israel is to look upon God’s wondrous works, love, and law and be determined to follow His every commanded direction, Deuteronomy 30:8-9. When their hearts are set on serving God, then we are recognised as His possession, Deuteronomy 14:2 / Deuteronomy 26:18 / Deuteronomy 27:9-10.

God will again delight in Israel and make them prosperous, just as He delighted in their ancestors, if they obey God and keep His commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to God with all their heart and with all their soul, Deuteronomy 30:9.

If disobedience brought disaster and exile for Israel, then repentance would bring renewal and restoration. If ignorance of the law resulted in their creation of gods after their own imagination, then knowledge of the law would restore their commitment to the one true and living God.

Moses, for the third time in this chapter, commands obedience in connection with our turning to God with all the heart and soul, Deuteronomy 30:10 / Deuteronomy 30:2 / Deuteronomy 30:6 / Deuteronomy 6:4-5 / Matthew 22:37.

THE OFFER OF LIFE OR DEATH

‘Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so you may obey it. See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death, and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees, and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call the

heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings, and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Deuteronomy 30:11-20

The command to love God with our heart and soul isn’t too difficult or beyond our reach, Deuteronomy 30:11 / Luke 17:21. It is not up in heaven, so that they have to ask, Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to them so they may obey it? Deuteronomy 30:12.

Nor is it beyond the sea, so that they have to ask, who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to them so they may obey it? Deuteronomy 30:13. No, the word is very near them, it is in their mouth and in their heart so they may obey it, Deuteronomy 30:14 / Deuteronomy 11:18-20.

In other words, God’s commandments are not too difficult or so far out of reach to obtain that we cannot reach God’s requirements, Deuteronomy 17:8. God hasn’t set a goal so high as to reach the heavens or across the sea but rather His will is right in front of them and is very obtainable to anyone who so desires to obtain it.

The apostle Paul quoted from Deuteronomy 30:12-14 in Romans 10:6-8. Romans 10:5 points out that Moses said that if a man kept the law, he would be a righteous man.

But Paul has already shown that no one ever succeeded in keeping the whole law, and therefore, by the law, no one could be justified. The law required perfect obedience, Leviticus 18:5 / Galatians 3:10-12.

A person had to live by it and do exactly as it said in order to obtain righteousness. Since all had sinned and violated the law, and since the law had no means of pardon, it was impossible to be made righteous by the law.

The design of the law was to bring men to Christ, where they could be justified by faith. Paul gave a quote from the law to describe what the law required. He will do the same regarding the word of faith which they preached.

Romans 10:6-7 tells us that, on the one hand, neither does righteousness come through merit or as a reward for good behaviour. You do not need to ascend into heaven to bring Christ down. You do not need to descend into the Abyss, into Hades, to bring Christ up from the dead. It is so much simpler than all that; it is a matter of faith.

The righteousness of faith is personified in Deuteronomy 30:12-13, where Moses told the children of Israel that God’s commandments were not in heaven, nor beyond the sea, but were at their disposal so that they could do them. As Paul draws from Moses’ words, he adds his own information and shows that the same is true regarding the righteousness of faith. The Jews expected their Messiah to remain forever, John 12:34.

In Romans 10:8-11, Paul says, it is a matter of hearing, believing, and obeying the Gospel. It is then the case that Israel doesn’t believe because they have not heard. Romans 10:18 says certainly not, they have heard because the Gospel has gone out into all the earth. If it says neither of those things, what does it say?

There is no need to ascend into heaven or descend into the deep to learn the word of faith. It is as close as belief in one’s heart or words in one’s mouth. His word has been implanted in our minds, Hebrews 8:10.

These verses reveal the accessibility of the word and the simplicity of what is required, in contrast with the obedience necessary under the law. ‘With the mouth’ and so, here the ‘confession’ does not refer to confessing Him by the way we live. We must go to other passages for that.

Moses brings his audience to a point of decision here at the end of his third sermon on the plains of Moab. He’s revealed the compassionate nature of God in that He would bless Israel if only they would obey and turn to Him with all their heart. With obedience, there is life and good, but with disobedience, there is death and destruction, Deuteronomy 30:15.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘And why were these set before them?’

1. That they might comprehend their import.
2. That they might feel their importance.
3. That they might choose life, and the path of believing, loving obedience, that led to it.
4. That they and their posterity, thus choosing life and refusing evil, might be the favourites of God in time and eternity.'

There was nothing difficult about this for Israel to understand; they had been given free choice, and so, if they chose death and destruction, they would be held accountable.

God commanded them to love Him, walk in obedience to Him, and to keep His commands, decrees, and laws, and if they do, they will live and increase, and God will bless them in the land they are entering to possess, Deuteronomy 30:16.

However, if their heart turns away and they are not obedient, and if they are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, then God declares that they will certainly be destroyed, Deuteronomy 30:17-18.

They will not live long in the land they are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess, Deuteronomy 30:18. God will call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against Israel that He has set before them life and death, blessings, and curses, Deuteronomy 30:19.

Israel has come to a crossroads in its choices again, Deuteronomy 29:10. They had seen with their eyes God's mighty power, Deuteronomy 29:2-3, and they had seen with their eyes the detestable practices of the nations, Deuteronomy 29:17; they had seen God's care, Exodus 19:4 / Deuteronomy 29:5-6.

What direction will they choose? Moses encourages them to 'choose life', Deuteronomy 30:19. Israel is to love God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him, Deuteronomy 30:20. When a person stays close to God, they will have life, John 10:10 / 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9 / 1 John 5:11.

Moses says they should choose life because the Lord is their life, Deuteronomy 30:20 / Deuteronomy 4:40 / Deuteronomy 32:47 / Joshua 24:15. This is an encouragement to make a free-moral decision to choose that which will bring life and good, Deuteronomy 4:40 / Deuteronomy 32:47. If they choose life then God will give them many years in the land He swore to give to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Deuteronomy 30:20.

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION

'Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: "I am now a hundred and twenty years old, and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross the Jordan.' The LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the LORD said. And the LORD will do to them what he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, whom he destroyed along with their land. The LORD will deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." Deuteronomy 31:1-6

Moses' third and final sermon is concluded with words that would demoralise some and invigorate others. He speaks these words to all of Israel while in the plains of Moab when he was one-hundred and twenty years old, Deuteronomy 29:10-11.

The end of Moses' life had come, and he couldn't lead the people into Canaan for two reasons.

1. Moses was at this time one-hundred and twenty years old, **Deuteronomy 31:2 / Exodus 7:7 / Deuteronomy 34:7**. He was one who had experienced a phenomenal number of events, from the Egyptian palace to the east banks of the Jordan River. Nevertheless, he confessed here that he was too old to enter Canaan to be with Israel throughout the coming years of war with the Canaanites.

2. The Lord said he wouldn't enter the land, **Deuteronomy 31:2**.

This banishment of God from crossing the Jordan came as a result of his earlier sin at Meribah, **Deuteronomy 4:21-22 / Numbers 20:12**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The life of Moses, the great prophet of God and lawgiver of the Jews, was exactly the same in length as the time Noah employed in preaching righteousness to the antediluvian world. These one hundred and twenty years were divided into three remarkable periods, forty years he lived in Egypt, in Pharaoh's court, acquiring all the learning and wisdom of the Egyptians, **Acts 7:20 / Acts 7:23**, forty years he sojourned in the land of Midian in a state of preparation for his great and important mission, **Acts 7:29-30**, and forty years he guided, led, and governed the Israelites under the express direction and authority of God: in all, one hundred and twenty years.'

Although Moses wouldn't be with the people, he assured them that God would be with them and destroy the nations before them, **Deuteronomy 31:3 / Numbers 27:17**.

They were to be led by Joshua as Moses had said earlier, **Deuteronomy 31:3 / Deuteronomy 1:34-39**. At the time of his appointment to succeed Moses, Joshua was seventy-eight years of age. He died thirty-two years later at age one-hundred and ten, **Joshua 24:29**.

God had already approved this transfer of authority in **Numbers 27:17**, but here the formal transfer occurs. Joshua was the new leader, the one who had been with Israel from the days of the exodus from Egypt, **Deuteronomy 1:38 / Numbers 27:18-23**.

Sihon and Og were the kings and nations which were the greatest that Israel would face, **Deuteronomy 31:4**. God is going to deliver them to Israel, and they must do to them all that He has commanded them, **Deuteronomy 31:5**.

Israel are to be strong and courageous, and they have not to fear or be terrified because of them, **1 Corinthians 16:13**, for God goes with them and He will never leave them nor forsake them, **Deuteronomy 31:6**. Israel's victory over them was God's guarantee that they would defeat any other nation within the borders of Canaan, **Deuteronomy 2:32-3:10**.

JOSHUA TO SUCCEED MOSES

'Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." **Deuteronomy 31:7-8**

Joshua, along with Caleb, was one of the only two of the twelve spies who went into Canaan that brought back a favourable report. While the wicked ten spies brought the evil report of pessimism, Joshua and Caleb reacted in faith and proclaimed that with the help of God, they could defeat Canaan, **Numbers 13:30-14:10**.

Moses said that it was Joshua who 'followed the LORD wholeheartedly', **Deuteronomy 1:36**. Moses reminds them of God's command that they had earlier broken and thereby wandered in the wilderness for forty years.

The Lord commanded them to take possession of the land, Deuteronomy 1:21 / Deuteronomy 1:26 / Deuteronomy 1:29-32, but they failed. The Lord told them not to be afraid of the people of Canaan, Deuteronomy 1:29-32, but they were. The Lord commanded Israel to kill everything which has life in Canaan, Deuteronomy 20:16-18, but they didn't.

Moses summons Joshua and tells him in the presence of all Israel to be strong and courageous, for Joshua must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and they must divide it among them as their inheritance, Deuteronomy 31:7.

Moses tells Israel that Joshua would be their new leader and that God would be with him, Deuteronomy 31:8. Moses tells Joshua that God will never leave him nor forsake him, and so, Joshua isn't to be afraid or discouraged, Deuteronomy 31:8 / Deuteronomy 1:38 / Numbers 27:23.

This public commissioning of Joshua to 'be strong and courageous', wasn't only personal for the benefit of Joshua, but it was public for all the people, 1 Corinthians 16:13.

The commissioning was an indirect encouragement for the people to remember the promise of God that they take the land, and to be assured that He would always be with them.

Moses summons Joshua before all the people to officially commission him as their next military leader so that all may faithfully follow his lead. The Lord would be with Joshua, and thereby the people were to recognise God's divine presence in this next leader of Israel. God would fight for them, and He would physically empower every soldier of Israel. He won't forsake them; they can fearlessly face the Canaanites.

PUBLIC READING OF THE LAW

'So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the Levitical priests, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. Then Moses commanded them: "At the end of every seven years, in the year for cancelling debts, during the Festival of Tabernacles, when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess." Deuteronomy 31:9-13

Moses delivers a copy of the Law of God to the priest and to all the elders of Israel, the priests carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, Deuteronomy 31:9 / Deuteronomy 17:18.

Moses instructs the priests to have the entire law read in the hearing of the people once every seven years during the feast of tabernacles, Deuteronomy 31:10 / Exodus 33:11.

This was one of three annual feasts where all Israel was to gather in Jerusalem to celebrate or mark the conclusion of the harvest season. The Feast of Tabernacles was conducted on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of Tishri.

The first day of the feast, that is, the fifteenth of Tishri, was to be a holy rest day, and the people were to do no work. Seven straight days were to be spent making a fire sacrifice to the Lord God, and then on the eighth day, they were to close the feast with another holy rest day, Leviticus 23:33-43.

In the seventh year, when there was the release of all those who had given themselves to the bondage of another because of debt, Deuteronomy 15:1-15, at the feast of Tabernacles, Deuteronomy 16:13-15, they were to publicly read the law of the covenant to the people.

It was the responsibility of the Levites and elders to perform this reading in the ears of the people, Deuteronomy 31:11 / Nehemiah 8:1-8. The whole of the law was to be read that men, women, and children would 'hear, learn, fear, and obey the Lord your God', Deuteronomy 31:12 / John 6:44-45 / Romans 10:17.

For six years, only the males were obligated to attend the feast of Tabernacles, but for the seventh year at the feast of Tabernacles, all Israel, men, women, children and foreigners, were to attend the reading of the law, **Deuteronomy 31:13**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is strange that this commandment, relative to a public reading of the law every seven years, should have been rarely attended to. It does not appear that from the time mentioned, **Joshua 8:30**, at which time this public reading first took place, till the reign of Jehoshaphat, **2 Chronicles 17:7**, there was any public seventh-year reading, a period of 530 years. The next seventh-year reading was not till the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, **2 Chronicles 34:30**, a space of two hundred and eighty-two years. Nor do we find any other publicly mentioned from this time till the return from the Babylonish captivity, **Nehemiah 8:2**. Nor is there any other on record from that time to the destruction of Jerusalem.’

ISRAEL’S REBELLION PREDICTED

‘The LORD said to Moses, “Now the day of your death is near. Call Joshua and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, where I will commission him.” So Moses and Joshua came and presented themselves at the tent of meeting.

Then the LORD appeared at the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the cloud stood over the entrance to the tent. And the LORD said to Moses: “You are going to rest with your ancestors, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. And in that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and calamities will come on them, and in that day they will ask, ‘Have not these disasters come on us because our God is not with us?’ And I will certainly hide my face in that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods. “Now write down this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them. When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised on oath to their ancestors, and when they eat their fill and thrive, they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me and breaking my covenant. And when many disasters and calamities come on them, this song will testify against them, because it will not be forgotten by their descendants. I know what they are disposed to do, even before I bring them into the land I promised them on oath.” So Moses wrote down this song that day and taught it to the Israelites. The LORD gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: “Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you.” **Deuteronomy 31:14-23**

God tells Moses that the day of his death is near, and he is to call Joshua and present themselves at the tent of meeting, where He will commission Joshua. So Moses and Joshua came and presented themselves at the tent of meeting, **Deuteronomy 31:14**.

God appeared at the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the cloud stood over the entrance to the tent, **Deuteronomy 31:15 / Numbers 11:25 / Numbers 12:5**. The encouragement given to Moses and Joshua took place at the tabernacle, where God communed with the leaders of Israel, **Exodus 25:22 / Exodus 29:42 / Exodus 30:36**.

The purpose of this direct encounter with the Lord by Joshua was to reconfirm his commissioning, **Acts 13:2-3**. Words were earlier spoken to commission him, but here the words were confirmed with action by the direct communication of God with Joshua. God once again tells Moses that he is going to rest with his ancestors, **Deuteronomy 31:16**.

The Lord, in the hearing of Moses and Joshua, reveals the wickedness of Israel’s future. The Lord says that Israel will prostitute themselves to the foreign gods and His people will forsake Him, and they will break His covenant, **Deuteronomy 31:16**.

He says this in order for Joshua to lead a stiff-necked people. Joshua needed to understand the inevitable apostasy that awaited the nation in the years to come. Although Israel would forsake the Lord, Deuteronomy 31:17, Joshua was determined to serve the Lord and the Lord only, Joshua 24:15 / Joshua 24:31.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The future apostasy of the people is announced in the presence of Joshua that the latter might be fully aware of the danger and strive in his day to avert it. This he faithfully did, Joshua 24:31, but we find him in his own last address to Israel repeating, Joshua 23:15-16, the self-same prediction and warning.’

Moses had earlier revealed Israel’s failures of refusing to obey God’s command to possess Canaan, and he also reminded them of their wickedness at Sinai, Deuteronomy 9:16.

After detailing Israel’s acts of rebellion in Deuteronomy 9, Moses concludes by saying, ‘you have been rebellious against the LORD ever since I have known you,’ Deuteronomy 9:24.

Although Israel had proclaimed that they would do all of God’s commands, the Lord knew that they were a rebellious people, Exodus 19:8 / Deuteronomy 5:29. Although the Lord said He wouldn’t forsake Israel they would indeed forsake Him in the future, Deuteronomy 31:6.

The Lord God, is a God of fierce anger against those who break His covenant law, Deuteronomy 29:24 / Deuteronomy 29:28. Notice that the day Israel forsakes God’s commandments is the day that God ‘forsakes them and hides his face from them’, Deuteronomy 31:17.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Hiding the Lord’s face, Deuteronomy 31:17-18 / Deuteronomy 32:20, is the opposite of making His face shine on His people and turning His face toward them in blessing, Numbers 6:25-26.’

The reason God forsakes and hides His face from them so that people say, ‘our God is not among us’, Deuteronomy 31:18, is because of ‘I will certainly hide my face in that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods’, Deuteronomy 31:19 / Deuteronomy 32:20 / James 1:13 / 1 John 1:5.

God says many disasters and calamities will come on them, and in that day they will ask, have not these disasters come on them because their God is not with them? Deuteronomy 31:17.

As long as Israel put their faith and obedience in God, He would never fail nor forsake them, Deuteronomy 31:6. The moment, however, Israel forsook God and broke His commandments, is the moment God forsakes them.

Remember, Moses called upon the people to make a choice, Deuteronomy 30:15 / Deuteronomy 30:19, and he commanded them many times to love the Lord God with all their heart, mind, and soul, Deuteronomy 30:15-16.

He warned them of the miserable existence for their disobedience, Deuteronomy 27:26 / Deuteronomy 28:15 / Deuteronomy 28:47. Israel has seen some wondrous things, Deuteronomy 11:7 / Deuteronomy 29:2-3, and they had seen the detestable practices of the nations, Deuteronomy 29:17.

Once in Canaan, they will be free to make a choice as to serve the Lord with all their heart or get involved with the detestable practices of the people around them. It’s their choice, and many will choose to get involved in detestable living.

The song Moses writes, Deuteronomy 31:19, is recorded in Deuteronomy 32:1-43. The main purpose of the song was to communicate the words of God in song to the people, they could memorise the song, and so, continually have on their lips the word and will of God, Deuteronomy 31:19 / Deuteronomy 31:22 / Ephesians 5:19 / Colossians 3:16.

The other purpose of the song was to expose the dark minds of many of the people of Israel so that they would be without excuse as they experience the miserable torment of God’s fierce curse against the disobedient, Deuteronomy 31:20-21. So Moses wrote down this song that day and taught it to the Israelites, Deuteronomy 31:22 / Deuteronomy 31:19.

Joshua is once again told to be strong and courageous and that God will be with him in the conquest, Deuteronomy 31:23 / Joshua 1:6-7 / Joshua 1:9 / Joshua 1:18, which later, he encourages Israel to do the same, Joshua 10:25.

‘After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end, he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: “Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you. For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you are. If you have been rebellious against the LORD while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die! Assemble before me all the elders of your tribes and all your officials, so that I can speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to testify against them. For I know that after my death, you are sure to become utterly corrupt and to turn from the way I have commanded you. In days to come, disaster will fall on you because you will do evil in the sight of the LORD and arouse his anger by what your hands have made.” Deuteronomy 31:24-29

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ‘book’ here spoken of would contain the whole Pentateuch up to this verse, and be ‘the Book of Moses,’ called generally by the Jews ‘the Law’, Matthew 22:40 / Galatians 4:21.’

After writing the words of the law, Moses commands the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant, the Kohathites, Joshua 3:3 / Joshua 4:9-10 / Joshua 6:6 / Joshua 6:12 / Joshua 8:33 / 1 Kings 8:3, to place the writing beside the ark, Deuteronomy 31:24-26.

Because the structure of the ark contained the commandments of the covenant, the Ten Commandments were written on stone; it was known as the ark of the covenant.

Moses explains to the priests that the book of law would serve as a witness against them, Deuteronomy 31:26. Notice the words of the written law, the Torah, were placed beside, Deuteronomy 31:26, not in the ark, Exodus 25:16 / Exodus 16:33-34 / Numbers 17:10-11 / Hebrews 9:4. In this way, it would continually be a witness to the sin that Israel would commit, 2 Kings 22:8.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The two tables of the Decalogue were in the ark, 1 Kings 8:9, the Book of the Law was to be laid up in the holy of holies close by the ark of the covenant, probably in a chest, 2 Kings 22:8.’

As Moses speaks directly to the priests, he tells them that they had been rebellious throughout the days he had been acquainted with them, and he is confident that they will continue to be rebellious after his death, Deuteronomy 31:27. I wonder what was going through the minds of the priests when he told them this? Jeremiah 15:1.

The priests, elders, and officials were representatives of all the people. These men heard these disparaging words and were to relay them to all of Israel, Deuteronomy 31:1. Moses tells the elders and officers of the people the same thing he told the priests, Deuteronomy 31:28.

Moses had little confidence in the people’s faith; he knew they would be utterly corrupt and turn from the way He had commanded them when he died, Deuteronomy 31:29 / Matthew 7:13-14.

Moses knew that in days to come, disaster would fall on Israel because they would do evil in the sight of God and arouse His anger by what their hands had made, Deuteronomy 31:29.

Merrill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What appears to be in view is a miniature pre-enactment of the ceremony that the whole nation was to engage in at Ebal and Gerizim once Canaan had been overcome and occupied, Deuteronomy 27:1-14.’

While the people were called upon to remember all the wondrous signs God had performed before them and warned regarding the detestable things they saw, we find Moses also paying attention to some things. Moses lived his life seeing Israel’s rebellious spirit and thereby made his conclusion.

THE SONG OF MOSES

‘And Moses recited the words of this song from beginning to end in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel.’
Deuteronomy 31:30

This last verse should be the introduction to the song of Moses in the next chapter. The song was to be memorised by the nation and sung while they were in their homes, [Ephesians 5:19](#) / [Colossians 3:16](#).

CHAPTER 32

INTRODUCTION

The last verse of the previous chapter, [Deuteronomy 31:30](#), should be the introduction to the song of Moses recorded in this chapter. The song was to be memorised by the nation and sung while they were in their homes, [Ephesians 5:19](#) / [Colossians 3:16](#). Moses’ song can be divided into three parts.

THE SONG OF MOSES

‘Listen, you heavens, and I will speak; hear, you earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching fall like rain, and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright, and just is he. They are corrupt and not his children; to their shame, they are a warped and crooked generation. Is this the way you repay the LORD, you foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you? Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father, and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you. When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the LORD’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance. In a desert land, he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye, like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them aloft. The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him. He made him ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields. He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from the flinty crag, with curds and milk from herd and flock and with fattened lambs and goats, with choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat. You drank the foaming blood of the grape.’ Deuteronomy 32:1-14

SONG OF MOSES PART 1

As we begin this chapter, I think it’s important to note that the Exodus both begins and ends with a Song of Moses, [Exodus. 15:1-18](#) / [Psalm 90](#).

Moses begins his song by doing three things.

1. Moses calls all of creation to hear and listen to the song, [Deuteronomy 32:1](#).

The heavens and the earth are called upon to give witness to the covenant between God and Israel, Deuteronomy 32:1.

2. He defines his words as divine nourishment that makes things grow healthy, Deuteronomy 32:2.

The teaching of God brings forth fruit when it falls on contrite hearts, Deuteronomy 32:2 / Isaiah 55:10-11.

3. He commands all creation to ‘praise the greatness of God’, Deuteronomy 32:3.

He says that God is the Rock, in other words, God is the stability of Israel and for all who will conform to His teachings, Matthew 7:24-27. The term, ‘Rock’, relating to God, appears several times in this song, Deuteronomy 32:13 / Deuteronomy 32:15 / Deuteronomy 32:18 / Deuteronomy 32:30-31.

His teachings are perfect because they’re the reflection of His perfect character. Jacob had ascribed the rock-like identity to God, Genesis 49:24, by referring to him as a ‘stone’.

David often referred to God as a Rock, Deuteronomy 32:4 / 2 Samuel 22:1-3 / 2 Samuel 22:32 / Psalms 18:1-2 / Psalms 18:46 / Psalms 19:14 / Psalms 31:2-4 / Psalms 62:1-7 / Psalms 71:3 / Psalms 95:1. The work of God is perfect, and He continues to do all things possible for Israel’s success now and on into eternity, Deuteronomy 32:4.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning God being their Rock.

‘This epithet, repeated no less than five times in the Song, Deuteronomy 32:15 / Deuteronomy 32:18 / Deuteronomy 32:30-31, represents those attributes of God which Moses is seeking to enforce, immutability and impregnable strength. Compare the expression ‘the stone of Israel’ in Genesis 49:24, and see 1 Samuel 2:2 / Psalms 18:2 / Matthew 16:18 / John 1:42.’

All God’s ways are just, Deuteronomy 32:4. Jeremiah identified God as just, Jeremiah 9:23-24. He is the standard or measuring stick that all of humanity is measured by.

God is faithful in that when He gives a promise, He keeps it, and God does no wrong, Deuteronomy 32:4. Doing wrong is the complete opposite of justice and right things, 1 John 3:4.

While God is identified as the just standard by which man is judged perfect or imperfect, the people are depicted as a ‘warped’, Deuteronomy 32:5. The idea of being warped is to have an imperfection within our being, Leviticus 22:20-21, and thereby unacceptable to the perfect God, Leviticus 21:16-23.

Moses says that Israel was warped in three ways.

1. They had dealt corruptly with Him, Deuteronomy 32:5 / Romans 1:26-27.

When Israel made the golden calf, they had made a great mistake, Deuteronomy 9:16.

2. Israel was corrupt in that they committed fornication with the daughters of Moab, Numbers 25:1.

3. They were a crooked generation in that they failed to do God’s will so that they may receive His promises, Deuteronomy 32:5 / Deuteronomy 1:21 / Deuteronomy 1:26-25.

Moses, on several occasions, identified Israel as rebellious, Deuteronomy 1:26 / Deuteronomy 9:24 / Deuteronomy 31:27 / Acts 2:40. Notice that Moses says that Israel is ‘not his children’. True children would love their father and do what he tells them to do, but Israel is likened to an ungrateful foreigner, John 14:15.

Moses asks the people, ‘Is this the way you repay the Lord?’ Deuteronomy 32:6. To repay is to make repayment or return for, requite another’s love. The height of foolishness is not to return the great love that God has shown toward us. Israel had repaid God’s favour, protection, and care for them with disobedience.

Moses asks them if God is their Father, their Creator, Deuteronomy 32:6. Since God made them, then certainly it is God they must follow. It was God who bought, that is, redeemed Israel out of Egyptian bondage through the miraculous and powerful signs and wonders performed, Deuteronomy 7:8, and as a result, Israel was now God’s own possession, Deuteronomy 7:6 / 1 Peter 2:9 / Acts 20:28 / 1 Corinthians 6:20 / 1 Corinthians 7:23.

Moses calls upon Israel to remember the ‘days of old’, [Deuteronomy 32:7](#). Their fathers and elders had told them the stories of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, [Deuteronomy 32:7](#), and they had been told of God’s power as revealed in the flood of [Genesis 6](#).

Nations were created by God when He separated the descendants of Adam, [Deuteronomy 32:8](#). Jacob, that is, Israel, then became the possession of the Lord; they were His own people, [Deuteronomy 32:9](#).

As His people, He watched over them during their wilderness wanderings, [Deuteronomy 8:2](#), and Israel became the adopted child of God who cared for her. Israel was the ‘apple of God’s eye’, [Deuteronomy 32:10](#) / [Psalm 17:8](#) / [Zechariah 2:8](#) / [Proverbs 7:2](#), that is, God closely looked upon Israel with care, and so, the reflection of Israel could be seen in the pupil of God’s eye.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nothing can exceed the force and delicacy of this expression. As deeply concerned and as carefully attentive as man can be for the safety of his eyesight, so was God for the protection and welfare of these people. How amazing this condescension!’

God’s pleasure was to be in His faithful people. He exercised tender care for them, and He is compared to an ‘eagle’ that cares and protects her nest,’ [Deuteronomy 32:11](#) / [Genesis 1:2](#) / [Exodus 19:4](#).

The Lord guided them through the wilderness with a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, [Deuteronomy 32:12](#). He provided them with manna to eat and water to drink, and He took care of them all the way.

It was the Lord and Him alone who guided them, not some imaginative god, [Deuteronomy 32:12](#); it was the Lord Himself who delivered them from their enemies, not some imaginative god.

It was the Lord who made Israel ‘ride on the heights of the land’, [Deuteronomy 32:13](#), that is, God exalted them to rule over the occupying nations of Canaan. They ate the increase of the field, sucked honey out of unlikely places, along with being blessed with oil, wine, and bread, [Deuteronomy 32:13](#).

Furthermore, God blessed them with cruds, milk, lambs, rams, and goats, [Deuteronomy 32:14](#) / [Psalms 22:12](#) / [Ezekiel 39:18](#). Truly, Israel was a child who was completely cared for both physically and emotionally. God loved them and took care of them, and He was their Rock.

SONG OF MOSES PART 2

‘Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; filled with food, they became heavy and sleek. They abandoned the God who made them and rejected the Rock as their Saviour. They made him jealous of their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to false gods, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods, your ancestors did not fear. You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.’ [Deuteronomy 32:15-18](#)

The term ‘Jeshurun’ is found four times in the Old Testament: [Deuteronomy 32:15](#) / [Deuteronomy 32:15](#) / [Deuteronomy 33:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:26](#) / [Isaiah 44:2](#), and it means the ‘upright one,’ [1 Samuel 23:11-12](#).

This may be something like a nickname for Israel since it is derived from the same Hebrew word that is translated as ‘Israel’. The name is used ironically here in that God ceased to show favour toward them because the upright became unrighteous.

When Israel’s bellies were full, they abandoned God, [Deuteronomy 32:15](#). Israel has proven itself rebellious and God, by divine ability, professes their future failures.

Not only have they failed Him in the past, but they will continue to fail him in the future. Once in Canaan, they will occupy lands, cattle, and vineyards that they didn't have to work for, and thereby, in a state of comfort and ease, they deserted God, the Rock of their salvation, Deuteronomy 32:15.

Israel disregarded God's warnings regarding idolatry and so, they made Him jealous and moved Him to anger Deuteronomy 32:16 / Deuteronomy 31:16. The KJV says they 'sacrificed to devils', this word is used only one other time in the Old Testament, Psalms 106:37.

We would assume that those who were reading this song for the first time cringed when they heard these prophetic pronouncements of what their descendants would eventually do.

Having deserted God, they began to follow other gods of the nations, Deuteronomy 32:17. Israel was warned about seeing and imitating the detestable practices of the nations around them in relation to idolatry, Deuteronomy 4:15-40 / Deuteronomy 29:17.

Israel turned from the God who revealed Himself from heaven to the gods that were revealed to them by the Canaanites, Deuteronomy 13:7 / Deuteronomy 29:25.

They dreamed up gods that even those who were first hearing these words, that is, their fathers, hadn't and couldn't conceive in their minds. They deserted the Rock, who fathered them and forgot the God who gave them birth, Deuteronomy 32:18 / Deuteronomy 32:4.

'The LORD saw this and rejected them because he was angered by his sons and daughters. "I will hide my face from them," he said, "and see what their end will be; for they are a perverse generation, children who are unfaithful. They made me jealous by what is no god and angered me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding. For a fire will be kindled by my wrath, one that burns down to the realm of the dead below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains. "I will heap calamities on them and spend my arrows against them. I will send wasting famine against them, consuming pestilence, and deadly plague; I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust. In the street, the sword will make them childless; in their homes, terror will reign. The young men and young women will perish, the infants and those with gray hair. I said I would scatter them and erase their name from human memory, but I dreaded the taunt of the enemy, lest the adversary misunderstand and say, 'Our hand has triumphed; the LORD has not done all this.'" Deuteronomy 32:19-27

God saw all Israel's wickedness; He saw it all. They had abandoned and rejected Him, Deuteronomy 32:19. The consequence of their perverted actions was the anger of God, Deuteronomy 32:19 / Hebrews 3:8-15. Since the children left their Father, the Father wouldn't be found by the children, Deuteronomy 32:20.

Since they wanted to go their own way by creating their own gods that approved of their wicked behaviour, God would allow them the freedom to go, Romans 1:24-28.

God was going to hide His face from them, Deuteronomy 32:20. In other words, if they wanted to live like savage barbarians according to the desires of their lusts, then God would allow them the opportunity.

They made God jealous by what is no god and angered Him with their worthless idols, Deuteronomy 32:21. God is going to make them envious by those who are not a people, and He will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding, Deuteronomy 32:21.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Deuteronomy 32:21.

'The terms, 'not a people,' and 'a foolish nation,' mean such a people as, not being God's, would not be accounted a people at all, Ephesians 2:12 / 1 Peter 2:10, and such a nation as is destitute of that which alone can make a really 'wise and understanding people,' Deuteronomy 4:6, namely, the knowledge of the revealed word and will of God, 1 Corinthians 1:18-28.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Deuteronomy 32:21.

'This verse contains a very pointed promise of the calling of the Gentiles, in consequence of the rejection of the Jews, threatened, Deuteronomy 32:19, and to this great event it is applied by St. Paul, Romans 10:19.'

He would kill them with the sword of war and scatter them throughout the earth. The realm of the dead is the word, ‘Sheol’, which simply means the grave, [Deuteronomy 32:22](#). The Lord is going to heap evils upon them, [Deuteronomy 32:23](#).

He will cause them to starve, [Deuteronomy 32:24](#), devour them with burning heat, bite them with poisonous insects and beasts, [Deuteronomy 32:24](#) / [Leviticus 26:22](#) / [Jeremiah 15:2](#) / [Ezekiel 5:17](#) / [Ezekiel 14:21](#).

In the street, the sword will make them childless, and in their homes terror will reign, [Deuteronomy 32:25](#) / [Job 6:4](#) / [Psalms 38:2-3](#) / [Psalms 91:5](#) / [Ezekiel 5:16](#) / [Jeremiah 50:14](#) / [2 Samuel 22:14-15](#).

The young men and young women will perish, and the infants and those with grey hair, [Deuteronomy 32:25](#). God specifically brought on them the curses that were pronounced earlier by Moses, [Deuteronomy 28:15-68](#), because Israel, as a unique nation were in a covenant relationship with God.

God says He will scatter them, [Deuteronomy 32:26](#). This was done through the Assyrian captivity when the northern kingdom of Israel was scattered among the nations and in the Babylonian captivity when the southern kingdom was also scattered among the nations, [Deuteronomy 9:28-29](#) / [Ezekiel 20:9](#) / [Ezekiel 20:14](#) / [Ezekiel 20:22](#).

Israel’s enemies might say, ‘our hand has triumphed’, [Deuteronomy 32:27](#) / [Exodus 32:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 9:28-29](#) / [Ezekiel 20:9](#) / [Ezekiel 20:14](#) / [Ezekiel 20:22](#). The enemies of Israel might make this statement in their conquest of Israel, but the fact would be that God worked through the enemies of Israel in order to judge Israel. However, God won’t destroy Israel completely.

‘They are a nation without sense; there is no discernment in them. If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be! How could one man chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the LORD had given them up? For their rock is not like our Rock, as even our enemies concede. Their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are filled with poison, and their clusters with bitterness. Their wine is the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras.’

[Deuteronomy 32:28-33](#)

God’s anger is poured out on His people because they have no discernment and no understanding, [Deuteronomy 32:28](#). It appears they have forgotten God and cared nothing about spiritual things. God desires that Israel will discern what their end will be, [Deuteronomy 32:29](#) / [Deuteronomy 5:29](#).

However, they had become unprofitable to Him, and He sells them to other nations to be abused, [Deuteronomy 32:30](#). Moses asks how one man could chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the LORD had given them up? [Deuteronomy 32:30](#).

God, the Rock, had bought Israel from Egypt, [Deuteronomy 32:31](#); the Lord redeemed Israel, and they belonged to Him. Israel no longer belonged to God; they now belonged to the wicked nations, [Psalms 80:8](#) / [Psalms 80:14](#) / [Jeremiah 2:21](#) / [Hosea 10:1](#), that are compared to Sodom and Gomorrah, [Deuteronomy 32:32](#) / [Isaiah 1:10](#) / [Isaiah 5:2](#) / [Isaiah 5:7](#) / [Jeremiah 23:14](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘For they often acknowledged the irresistible power of that God who fought for Israel, [Exodus 14:25](#) / [Numbers 23:8-12](#) / [Numbers 23:19-21](#) / [1 Samuel 4:8](#).’

Their wine is the venom of serpents, the deadly poison of cobras, [Deuteronomy 32:33](#), which means they are a cruel and uncaring people, and so, now, Israel serves a master that cares nothing for them and is cruel. They are the complete opposite of God.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is a true prophecy of the complete degradation of Israel through their shameful debaucheries. [Ezekiel 16](#) states categorically that Israel became worse than Sodom and Gomorrah, [Ezekiel 16:46-58](#). Also see [Isaiah 3:9](#),

and [Jeremiah 23:14](#). Some of the prophets also expanded the figure of the vine to include the charge that Israel's vine became a wild vine, [Hosea 10:1](#) / [Jeremiah 2:21](#).'

SONG OF MOSES PART 3

'Have I not kept this in reserve and sealed it in my vaults? It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near, and their doom rushes upon them.' The LORD will vindicate his people and relent concerning his servants when he sees their strength is gone, and no one is left, slave or free. He will say: "Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in, the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter! "See now that I myself am he! There is no god besides me. I put to death, and I bring to life, I have wounded, and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. I lift my hand to heaven and solemnly swear: As surely as I live forever, when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me. I will make my arrows drunk with blood, while my sword devours flesh: the blood of the slain and the captives, the heads of the enemy leaders." Rejoice, you nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people.' Deuteronomy 32:34-43

God's judgment against the ungrateful nation of Israel has now come; this will be a day of vengeance and recompense, [Romans 12:17-19](#) / [Hebrews 10:26-31](#). Moses asks has God not kept this in reserve and sealed it in His vaults? [Deuteronomy 32:34](#).

God says it is His to avenge, He will repay, and in due time their foot will slip and their day of disaster is near, and their doom rushes upon them, [Deuteronomy 32:35](#). Once judgment had been given to Israel through their destruction by their enemies, then the Lord would have compassion on them, [Deuteronomy 32:36](#).

He would demonstrate His compassion by the destruction of Israel's enemies, and once Israel had been brought to their knees in captivity, they would again be restored because of their repentance.

Moses challenges Israel to call upon their gods that they have now accepted for help and protection, [Deuteronomy 32:37](#). Notice Moses calls their false gods 'the rock', [Deuteronomy 32:37](#).

These false gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? [Deuteronomy 32:38](#). God says let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter! [Deuteronomy 32:38](#). This is certainly sarcasm since God was their true Rock of salvation.

There is no god besides me, God says, and He alone kills, makes alive, wounds, and heals, [Deuteronomy 32:39](#). The gods of the nations did not exist and thereby could offer Israel no hope, help or protection; God was their deliverer, [Deuteronomy 32:39](#).

God lifted His hand to heaven and solemnly swore, as surely as He lives forever, [Deuteronomy 32:40](#) / [Deuteronomy 6:13](#) / [Isaiah 45:23](#) / [Jeremiah 22:5](#) / [Hebrews 6:17](#). The lifting up of the hand was a gesture used in making an oath, [Genesis 14:22](#) / [Revelation 10:5](#).

The Lord is going to sharpen His flashing sword and devour in judgment all that forsake and hate His Holy Name, [Deuteronomy 32:41](#) / [Isaiah 63:1-6](#) / [Revelation 14:17-20](#).

The Rock of the one true and living God would render vengeance on those nations who took pride in their conquest of His people. He will make His arrows drunk with blood, while His sword devours flesh and the blood of the slain and the captives, the heads of the enemy leaders, [Deuteronomy 32:42](#).

All Israel will rejoice in God's righteous judgment of Israel and His just vengeance on the enemies of Israel because He is just both in His judgment and in the salvation of His people, [Deuteronomy 32:43](#) / [Isaiah 45:21](#) / [Romans 11:25-36](#) / [Romans 15:9](#).

‘Moses came with Joshua, son of Nun and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people. When Moses finished reciting all these words to all Israel, he said to them, “Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.”
Deuteronomy 32:44-47

Notice that both Moses and Joshua are given credit for writing and delivering the song to the people, Deuteronomy 32:44. Joshua’s original name was Hoshea, and it was changed to Joshua, which means ‘the Lord is salvation’ by Moses, Numbers 13:8 / Numbers 13:16.

Moses encourages them to take to heart all the words he had spoken to them, Deuteronomy 32:45-46, that is, they need to make it their purpose in their lives. Moses reminded them that they are not just idle words for them, they are their life, and by them they will live long in the land they are crossing the Jordan to possess, Deuteronomy 32:47. Unless the entire nation submitted to the principles of the song, they would fall into apostasy. The reason they all had to listen and obey the words was to prevent the next generation from falling away, Hosea 4:6.

MOSES TO DIE ON MOUNT NEBO

‘On that same day, the LORD told Moses, “Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain that you have climbed, you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel.”
Deuteronomy 32:48-52

The departure of Moses from Israel was on the same day he delivered the message of the song to Israel. God told him to go up to Mount Nebo, where he would have a view of the land of Canaan before he died, Deuteronomy 32:48-50 / Numbers 27:12. Abarim was probably a range of mountains of which Nebo was one of many peaks. Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The paragraph here concerning Moses’ ascent of Mount Nebo differs in form from the previous mention of it in Numbers 27:12-14, partly in the fact that the situation of Mount Nebo is more fully described, and partly in the use of the imperative, and a few other trifling points. These differences are all explained by the fact that the account here was not written by Moses himself.’

Notice that God stuck to His promises as He tells Moses that Canaan is the land He still promises to give to Israel, Deuteronomy 32:49. Although Moses wasn’t allowed to enter the land because of previous sin at Meribah, Deuteronomy 32:51 / Numbers 20:12, he was allowed to see the land, Deuteronomy 32:52 / Numbers 27:12 / Numbers 33:37-39.

CHAPTER 33

INTRODUCTION

‘This is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, pronounced on the Israelites before his death. He said: “The LORD came from Sinai and dawned over them from Seir; he shone forth from Mount Paran. He came with myriads of holy ones from the south, from his mountain slopes. Surely it is you who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand. At your feet they all bow down, and from you receive instruction, the law that Moses gave us, the possession of the assembly of Jacob. He was king over Jeshurun when the leaders of the people assembled, along with the tribes of Israel.’ Deuteronomy 33:1-5

In this chapter, we read of Moses blessing Israel, just as Isaac and Jacob did before He died, [Deuteronomy 33:1](#) / [Genesis 27:34-38](#) / [Genesis 49:1-27](#). Remember, a blessing which was spoken was binding; it was a will and testimony.

Moses begins his blessing to Israel by speaking about God’s relationship with His people in the past. They experienced the awesome power of God and were thereby thoroughly impressed by the seriousness of His Laws, [Deuteronomy 33:2](#) / [Exodus 13:21](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These four places, Sinai, Seir, Paran, and Meribah-Kadesh, mentioned by Moses in the text, are the identical places where God manifested his glory in a fiery appearance, the more illustriously to proclaim his special providence over and care of Israel.’

He came with myriads of holy ones, that is, angels, from the south, from His mountain slopes, [Deuteronomy 33:2](#) / [Zechariah 14:5](#). He says that God has always ‘loved’ them, [Deuteronomy 33:3](#) / [Exodus 19:4](#) / [Deuteronomy 32:10-12](#), and He has demonstrated this by delivering a law to them.

Notice that the holy ones, that is angels, attended the work of God among them, [Deuteronomy 33:3](#) / [Acts 7:54](#) / [Galatians 3:19](#) / [Hebrews 2:2](#). Israel had sat down at God’s feet and received His words when receiving the Law at Sinai, [Deuteronomy 33:3-4](#). They experienced the fire and smoke and were terrified at the sight, [Exodus 13:21](#) / [Exodus 19:16-21](#) / [Exodus 20:18-21](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The people’ are the twelve tribes, not the Gentiles; and his saints refer to God’s chosen people just before spoken of, [Deuteronomy 7:18](#) / [Deuteronomy 7:21](#) / [Exodus 19:6](#) / [Daniel 7:8-21](#).’

Upon receiving the Law, God became their King, [Deuteronomy 33:5](#), and their greatest possession, as citizens of God’s kingdom, was the law. The law set Israel apart from all the other nations, [Deuteronomy 4:8](#), and so, they were sanctified through law-keeping and thereby brought near to God.

The term ‘Jeshurun’ is found four times in the Old Testament, [Deuteronomy 33:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 32:15](#) / [Deuteronomy 22:26](#) / [Isaiah 44:2](#), and it means the ‘upright one.’ This may be something like a nickname for Israel since it is derived from the same Hebrew word that is translated as ‘Israel’.

MOSES BLESSES THE TRIBES

‘Let Reuben live and not die, nor his people be few.’ And this he said about Judah: “Hear, LORD, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands, he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes!” About Levi, he said: “Your Thummim and Urim belong to your faithful servant. You tested him at Massah; you contended with him at the waters of Meribah. He said of his father and mother, ‘I have no regard for them.’ He did not recognise his brothers or acknowledge his own children, but he watched over your word and guarded your covenant. He teaches your precepts to Jacob and your law to Israel. He offers incense before you and whole burnt offerings on your altar. Bless all his skills, LORD, and be pleased with the work of his hands. Strike down those who rise against him, his foes till they rise no more.” About Benjamin, he said: “Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long, and the one the LORD loves rests between his shoulders.” About Joseph he said: “May the LORD

bless his land with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep waters that lie below; with the best the sun brings forth and the finest the moon can yield; with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills; with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favour of him who dwelt in the burning bush. Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers. In majesty, he is like a firstborn bull; his horns are the horns of a wild ox. With them, he will gore the nations, even those at the ends of the earth. Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim; such are the thousands of Manasseh.” About Zebulun, he said: “Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and you, Issachar, in your tents. They will summon peoples to the mountain, and there offer the sacrifices of the righteous; they will feast on the abundance of the seas, on the treasures hidden in the sand.” About Gad, he said: “Blessed is he who enlarges Gad’s domain! Gad lives there like a lion, tearing at arm or head. He chose the best land for himself; the leader’s portion was kept for him. When the heads of the people assembled, he carried out the LORD’s righteous will, and his judgments concerning Israel.” About Dan, he said: “Dan is a lion’s cub, springing out of Bashan.” About Naphtali, he said: “Naphtali is abounding with the favour of the LORD and is full of his blessing; he will inherit southward to the lake.” About Asher, he said: “Most blessed of sons is Asher; let him be favoured by his brothers and let him bathe his feet in oil. The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze, and your strength will equal your days.” Deuteronomy 33:6-25

There is a comparison between the blessing of Moses here and that of Jacob in [Genesis 49:1-27](#), which is significant. The comparisons show that while some tribes continued their spiritual weakness, others transformed into great tribes to the glory of God.

I’m sure you would have noticed that Simeon is missing from this list of tribes, which Moses is about to bless. The reason for this is simply because Jacob had prophesied that Simeon would be scattered among the other tribes due to his part in avenging Dinah of the Shechemites, [Genesis 49:5-7](#). All the tribes were blessed except Simeon, who was eventually absorbed into the tribe of Judah, [Numbers 1:22-23](#) / [Numbers 26:12-14](#) / [Joshua 19:2-9](#).

REUBEN

The preeminence among all the brothers belonged to Reuben, [Deuteronomy 33:6](#), because he was the firstborn of Jacob, [Genesis 49:3-4](#). However, he forfeited his firstborn rights with his sin when he slept with Rachel’s handmaid Bilhah, Jacob’s wife, [Genesis 35:22](#), and in his rebellion with Korah, [Numbers 16:1-3](#). Though he sinned, Moses continues the blessing of Jacob for this tribe and says they would grow into a great company of people, rather than seeing them blotted out in death, [Deuteronomy 33:6](#).

JUDAH

Jacob had reserved the greatest blessing upon Judah in [Genesis 49:8-12](#). Judah was to experience preeminence, great power, and authority among his brethren, [Deuteronomy 33:7](#) / [Genesis 49:9](#). Jacob states that the ‘sceptre’ of sovereignty and authority won’t depart from Judah ‘until Shiloh comes.’ The name Shiloh is the title of the Messiah, [Genesis 49:10](#).

The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus came from the tribe of Judah, [Hebrews 7:14](#). The genealogies of [Matthew 1:1-17](#) illustrate the lineage of Christ through Judah, [Matthew 1:2-3](#).

The importance of Jacob’s announcement was that he made a prophetic proclamation of who the promised Messiah would be. Since Judah would eventually comprise the southern kingdom of Israel, in the future, they would be received back into the fold of the other tribes of Israel after the Babylonian captivity.

LEVI

As keepers of the judgments of God, that is, the Thummim and Urim, [Deuteronomy 33:8](#), Levi was scattered among the tribes, [Genesis 49:5-7](#), for priestly functions and thus blessed in their work to keep the tribes close to God. During the events of the golden calf at Mount Sinai, Levi remained strong for God, [Exodus 32:26-29](#). However, at Meribah, they were tested and failed in their tribal leadership, [Deuteronomy 33:8](#) / [Exodus 6:16](#) / [Exodus 17:1-7](#). Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘From the words of St. Paul, [1 Corinthians 10:8-12](#), it is evident that these words, at least in a secondary sense, belong to Christ. He is the Holy One who was tempted by them at Massah, who suffered their manners in the wilderness, who slew 23,000 of the most incorrigible transgressors, and who brought them into the promised land by his deputy, Joshua, whose name, and that of Jesus, have the same signification.’
He said of his father and mother, I have no regard for them. He did not recognise his brothers or acknowledge his own children, but he watched over your word and guarded your covenant, [Deuteronomy 33:9](#) / [Matthew 10:37](#) / [Luke 14:26](#).

The high calling of Levi was that they were to be teachers of the law of God, [Deuteronomy 33:10](#) / [Leviticus 10:11](#), and attend to the temple with its sacrifices, [Deuteronomy 33:10](#). Moses calls upon God’s protection against Levi’s enemies that may rise up against him, [Deuteronomy 33:11](#) / [Numbers 16:1-50](#).

Levi would continue to exercise their duties of instructing Israel in the law and carrying out the sacrifices for Israel. Bless all his skills, LORD, and be pleased with the work of his hands. They will strike down those who rise against him, his foes till they rise no more, [Deuteronomy 33:11](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The blessing of God to the tribe of Levi was peculiarly necessary because they had no inheritance among the children of Israel and lived more immediately than others upon the providence of GOD. Yet, as they lived by the offerings of the people and the tithes, the increase of their substance necessarily implied the increase of the people at large: the more fruitful the land was, the more abundant would the tithes of the Levites be and thus in the increased fertility of the land, the substance of Levi would be blessed.’

THUMMIM AND URIM

The Urim and the Thummim were to be kept in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron’s heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD, and so Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD, [Exodus 28:30](#).

The breastplate was folded double to form a pocket [Exodus 28:16](#) / [Exodus 39:9](#). Inside the pocket, the Urim and Thummim were kept. Urim means ‘lights’ and Thummim means ‘perfections’.

They were probably two jewels. When someone had to make an important decision, the request was made known to the high priest. He would stand before the lampstand, holding the Urim in one hand and the Thummim in the other.

As the light reflected from the Urim and the Thummim onto the stones of the breastplate, this flash of light provided up to twenty-four combinations, two by twelve. Since there are twenty-two letters in the Hebrew alphabet, the flashes of light could produce strings of letters.

As God breathed through the ark, the veil would move, permitting a breeze to flicker the flames in the Lampstand to momentarily alter the direction of the light onto the Urim and Thummim, and thence to the Breastplate. Thus, God was able to communicate directly, but not audibly, to the high priest and answer the enquiry.

The Urim and Thummim were a means of revelation entrusted to the high priest. No description of them is given. This oracular apparently consisted of a material object or objects since it was physically stored in the breastpiece of the high priest, Exodus 28:30 / Leviticus 8:8.

Most people today think that the Urim and Thummim were a lottery oracle, but this is by no means certain. Besides being mentioned by their full name, Exodus 28:30, and Leviticus 8:8, and Ezra 2:63, and Nehemiah 7:65, in reverse order with possessives, Deuteronomy 33:8, the Urim and Thummim could also be referred to by Urim alone, Numbers 27:21, and 1 Samuel 28:6.

Sometimes the mention of the ephod, on which the breastpiece housing the Urim and Thummim were fastened, includes a reference to the Urim and Thummim, 1 Samuel 23:9-12, and 1 Samuel 30:7-8. Also, the verb 'inquire of' followed by 'the Lord' or 'God' when no means of revelation is specified refers to a usage of the Urim and Thummim.

The Urim and Thummim were used at critical moments in the history of God's people when special divine guidance was needed. The civil leader was expected to make use of this means for all important matters for which he needed direction.

Although referred to in Ezra 2:63 and Nehemiah 7:65, there is no convincing evidence that the Urim and Thummim were used after the time of David. The reason for the demise of the Urim and Thummim is not explicitly given. Since the Urim and Thummim, in whatever way they functioned, were a physical means of revelation.

It appears that God was taking his people away from the easy certainty inherent in a mechanical means of revelation to the more consistent use of prophecy and the Word alone.

This would require the more difficult application of the norms for true and false prophecy, Deuteronomy 13:1-4 and Deuteronomy 18:20-22 and thus necessitate a faithful teaching priesthood, Deuteronomy 33:10 / Malachi 2:7. Although the lot theory has wide support today, there are significant difficulties in identifying the Urim and Thummim. It is questionable whether the key evidence, the Greek text of 1 Samuel 14:41, is really to be preferred over the Hebrew text.

Also, the vocabulary of lot casting is not used, and the answers contain more information than the casting of lots could yield, e.g. 1 Samuel 1:1, and 1 Samuel 5:23-24.

This last point suggests the involvement of prophecy and the divine inspiration of the high priest in giving revelation. It can also be noted that the use of the actual object(s) constituting the Urim and Thummim appears to have been self-authenticating.

Even in extremely difficult circumstances, the guidance of the Urim and Thummim is followed, Judges 20:18-28. It could be theorised that a perfect light that miraculously shone from the gem(s) constituting the Urim and Thummim, which belonged to God, Deuteronomy 33:8, gave the needed authentication to the actual answer spoken by the high priest under divine inspiration.

In this way, the judgment of the Urim, the light, may have been given, Numbers 27:21. Such authentication would not have been out of place in Old Testament times when special signs were provided more often.

Newton, in his commentary, says the following.

'They were something in Aaron's breastplate, but what, critics and commentators are by no means agreed. It is most probable that they were only names given to signify the clearness and certainty of Divine answers which were

obtained by the High Priest consulting God with his breastplate on, in contradistinction to the obscure, enigmatical, uncertain, and imperfect answers of the heathen oracles.'

BENJAMIN

Benjamin was the second son born to Jacob through his beloved wife Rachel, [Genesis 35:24](#). The tribe of Benjamin was to inherit the small portion of land just northwest of the Dead Sea.

The people of Benjamin were powerful and warlike, and so, Benjamin is compared to a ravening wolf devouring the prey, [Genesis 49:27](#). As Benjamin occupied a special place in Jacob's heart, the Lord would show this love by protecting them against their enemies, [Deuteronomy 33:12](#).

God would dwell with this tribe because Benjamin would bear God upon his shoulders, [Deuteronomy 33:12](#) / [Deuteronomy 1:31](#). God would be the headship of this tribe throughout her history.

JOSEPH

Ephraim and Manasseh, the sons of Joseph, were the tribal extensions of the seed of Joseph, [Genesis 48:20](#). Joseph was the favoured and well-beloved son of Jacob, being the firstborn of his beloved Rachel, [Genesis 48:9](#). By far, the lands of Joseph, that is, Ephraim and Manasseh, exceeded the other tribes in landmass, [Deuteronomy 33:13](#). Joseph's land will be blessed with the precious dew from heaven above and with the deep waters that lie below, [Deuteronomy 33:13](#). It will be blessed with the best the sun brings forth and the finest the moon can yield, [Deuteronomy 33:14](#).

It will be blessed with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills, [Deuteronomy 33:15](#). It will be blessed with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness and the favour of him who dwelt in the burning bush, [Deuteronomy 33:16](#).

Let all these rest on the head of Joseph, on the brow of the prince among his brothers, [Deuteronomy 33:17](#). Jacob said that Joseph's lands would be fruitful, but not without problems from enemies, [Genesis 49:22-26](#).

Although the enemy's bow and arrow would annoy Joseph, he would still prevail against them. God's blessings and help would be with Joseph, and others would look to him as the rock of Israel for influence and strength, [Deuteronomy 33:17](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'A bullock was the most excellent of animals among the Jews, not only because of its acceptableness in sacrifice to God, but because of its great usefulness in agriculture. There is something peculiarly noble and dignified in the appearance of the ox, and his greatest ornament are his fine horns, these the inspired penman has particularly in view, as the following clause proves and it is well known that in Scriptural language horns are the emblem of strength, glory, and sovereignty, [Psalms 75:5](#) / [Psalms 75:10](#) / [Psalms 89:17](#) / [Psalms 89:24](#) / [Psalms 112:9](#) / [Daniel 8:3](#) / [Luke 1:69](#) / [Revelation 17:3](#).'

These two tribes would grow into great military strength, Ephraim becoming the predominant tribe of Israel, [Deuteronomy 33:17](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘That is, the horns signify the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh. Jacob prophesied, Genesis 48:19, that the younger should be greater than the elder, so here TENS of thousands are given to Ephraim, and only thousands to Manasseh. See the census, Numbers 1:33-35.’

ZEBULUN

Moses blesses Zebulun’s goings out, Deuteronomy 33:18. Jacob said Zebulun would live by the seashore, Genesis 49:13. Interestingly, this prophecy actually came to pass for Asher rather than Zebulun. Zebulun didn’t border the Mediterranean or the Sea of Galilee but was rather located between Asher and Naphtali, Joshua 13-21.

ISSACHAR

Moses blesses Issachar in their tent dwellings, Deuteronomy 33:18 / Genesis 49:14-15. Issachar’s inheritance in Canaan was small and located south of Zebulun.

Issachar seemed only interested in gaining wages through agriculture rather than warring with the Canaanites and helping their brethren. They would use their religious celebrations as opportunities for commercial negotiations, Deuteronomy 33:19 / Psalms 4:5 / Psalms 51:19.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Zebulun and Issachar.

‘Both tribes distinguished themselves in the contest with Jabin, Judges 5:14-15 / Judges 5:18, and of Zebulun it is particularly noted that it produced the officers and tacticians who led and marshalled the host which vanquished Sisera, Judges 5:14 / 1 Chronicles 12:33.’

GAD

Gad are described as a lion, tearing at arm or head, Deuteronomy 33:20 / 1 Chronicles 12:8. Gad was blessed because he became a strong military force, Deuteronomy 33:20 / Genesis 49:19.

This tribe chose the fruitful pasture lands east of the Jordan, Deuteronomy 33:21 / Numbers 32:1-5 / Numbers 32:17 / Numbers 32:21 / Numbers 32:32 / Joshua 1:14, despite being irritated by various attacks of troops, they still prevail, Judges 11:33 / 1 Chronicles 12:14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The warlike character of this tribe is shown by their leading the van in the long campaigns of Joshua, Joshua 4:12-13 / Joshua 22:1-4.’

DAN

Jacob said that Dan would be like a snake which sits on the site of a path, [Genesis 49:16-17](#). Moses, on the other hand, compares Dan to ‘a lion’s cub,’ [Deuteronomy 33:22](#).

Dan would bring trouble to his enemies like a young lion leaping out of the brush in ambush. They were known for sudden and devastating military attacks against the enemies of God, [Joshua 19:47](#) / [Judges 18:27](#).

Dan’s inheritance in Canaan would border the Mediterranean Sea to the south and west of Ephraim. The sad news concerning Dan was that they were the tribe to introduce idolatry into Israel, [Judges 18:30](#) / [1 Kings 12:26-30](#) / [Amos 8:14](#).

NAPHTALI

Jacob compared Naphtali to a free-moving gazelle, [Genesis 49:21](#). The inheritance of Naphtali was a large plot of land primarily to the Northwest of the Sea of Galilee, [Deuteronomy 33:23](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The light of the glorious Gospel of Christ shone brightly here, [Matthew 4:13](#) / [Matthew 4:15-16](#). Christ’s chief residence was at Capernaum in this tribe, [Matthew 9:1](#) / [Mark 2:1](#), and this city, through Christ’s constant residence, and the mighty miracles he wrought in it, is represented as being exalted unto heaven, [Matthew 11:23](#).’

ASHER

Asher was blessed with great prosperity, [Genesis 49:20](#). Asher would grow into a populous tribe and enjoy great popularity, [Deuteronomy 33:24](#). The inheritance of Asher would lie due west of Naphtali and bordering the Mediterranean Sea.

Although the tribe settled in the north-western part of the land, they would be a strong tribe to buffer Israel from any invasion from the north, [Deuteronomy 33:25](#) / [Isaiah 26:4](#) / [Revelation 1:15](#).

‘There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens to help you and on the clouds in his majesty. The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. He will drive out your enemies before you, saying, ‘Destroy them!’ So Israel will live in safety; Jacob will dwell secure in a land of grain and new wine, where the heavens drop dew. Blessed are you, Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD? He is your shield and helper and your glorious sword. Your enemies will cover before you, and you will tread on their heights.’

Deuteronomy 33:26-29

There is no one like the God of Jeshurun, who rides across the heavens to help Israel and on the clouds in His majesty, [Deuteronomy 33:26](#). The term ‘Jeshurun’ is found four times in the Old Testament, [Deuteronomy 22:26](#) / [Deuteronomy 33:5](#) / [Deuteronomy 32:15](#) / [Isaiah 44:2](#), and it means the ‘upright one.’ This may be something like a nickname for Israel since it is derived from the same Hebrew word that is translated as ‘Israel’.

The eternal God is Israel’s refuge, [Deuteronomy 33:27](#) / [Psalms 90:1](#) / [Psalms 91:9](#) / [Romans 3:2](#). Moses declares that God will help, provide a dwelling place, and exercise everlasting love for His people, there is no one else like Him, [Deuteronomy 33:27](#).

God offers land that has had His people’s enemies thrust out and blessed with grain and new wine, [Deuteronomy 33:27-28](#) / [Psalms 68:26](#) / [Isaiah 48:1](#). God is pictured as the help of Israel who comes to her rescue in times of

trial, Romans 8:31. Israel was the dwelling place of God on earth because the prosperity and religious nature of the people demonstrated His presence.

The protecting arms of God are always around Israel, even while they digress into sin, Deuteronomy 33:29. Although the enemies of Israel would seek to destroy them, through the help of God, Israel would occupy their high places, Deuteronomy 33:29.

CHAPTER 34

INTRODUCTION

‘Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea, the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar. Then the LORD said to him, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.” And Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone. The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over.’ Deuteronomy 34:1-8

THE DEATH OF MOSES

Alexander, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Most commentators are of the opinion that Ezra was the author of the last chapter of Deuteronomy; some think it was Joshua, and others the seventy elders, immediately after the death of Moses, adding that the book of Deuteronomy originally ended with the prophetic blessing upon the twelve tribes. This opinion will not appear unnatural if it is considered that sections and other divisions, as well as points and pauses, were invented long before these books were written; for in those early ages several books were connected together and followed each other on the same roll. The beginning of one book might therefore be easily transferred to the end of another, and in the process of time be considered as its real conclusion, as in the case of Deuteronomy, especially as this supplemental chapter contains an account of the last transactions and death of the great author of the Pentateuch.’

After completing the three sermons, his song, and blessing the people, Moses now follows God’s instructions and ascends Mount Nebo, Deuteronomy 34:1 / Deuteronomy 32:48-52.

Nebo was a mountain range that included a peak called Pisgah, Deuteronomy 34:1, and it’s here that Moses would have a dynamic view of the land which Israel was about to possess.

Moses, now one-hundred and twenty years old, after struggling for forty years, finally led God’s people to the Promised Land and although he wasn’t allowed to enter the land, because of his sin, Numbers 20:1-12, he was blessed to see it, Luke 4:5.

God showed Moses the whole land, from Gilead to Dan, all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea, the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar, Deuteronomy 34:2-3 / Genesis 19:22.

The land of Canaan was the land that God had previously sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Deuteronomy 34:4 / Genesis 12:1-3 / Genesis 15:18, and Israel would continue to be blessed in Canaan as long as they continued to obey God's word, Deuteronomy 1:19-30.

The text tells us that Moses died in Moab and God Himself buried Moses, Deuteronomy 34:5-6. What a privilege that must have been, and no one knows where Moses' grave is located, even to this day, Deuteronomy 34:6.

In versions such as the A.V., the Revised Version, the Revised Standard Version, and certain other translations, Deuteronomy 34:6 reads as though God personally buried Moses.

But the verse ceases to be a problem if we understand that an action performed at the command of a person is sometimes described as having been performed by that person. God caused Moses to die and to be buried, therefore He 'buried' Moses.

In fact, later translations, such as the New Revised Standard Version, clarify the verse by giving us, 'and he was buried in a valley', without revealing who was responsible for the burial.

But, of course, we're tempted to speculate! Was Moses buried by Joshua, his divinely appointed successor? Or was he, as a Jewish tradition claims, buried by Michael the archangel himself?

The fact is that we don't know, we're not meant to know, nor is it important that we should know. The probable reason for keeping the location hidden is that, if it had been revealed, it may well have become a shrine and a place of pilgrimage for the Israelites.

Remember that the 'serpent of bronze', which Moses erected in the wilderness, Numbers 21:9-10, centuries later had actually become an object of worship, and which had to be destroyed by Nehemiah, the reformer, who scornfully described it exactly when he said I was 'Nehushtan', 'a piece of brass', 2 Kings 18:4.

What is important is that we should understand that the death and burial of this great servant of God were at God's command, and the only truly sad aspect of the event is that, after a wearisome journey lasting for almost forty years, Moses died within sight of the Promised Land, not allowed to enter because of an act of disobedience, Numbers 20:8-12 / Numbers 27:12-14.

Why does Jude mention the dispute about the body of Moses? Jude 9. Jude had intended to write a letter concerning basic Christian doctrine, Jude 3, but, as a result of information that had reached him, he felt it necessary, instead, to deal with problems created by false teachers who had succeeded in entering the fellowship by stealth, and who were undermining the faith of others.

He describes the character of these interlopers and exposes both their motives and methods in very vivid and uncompromising language. They are arrogant, rebellious, disrespectful, and thoroughly ungodly people, whose conduct, he declares, stands in stark contrast with that of Michael the archangel in his confrontation with the devil.

Jude says that, out of respect for the position of honour once occupied by the now-fallen Satan, or to give him his original name, Lucifer, Isaiah 14:12, Michael refrained from pronouncing a reproachful judgment on him, but simply said, 'The Lord rebuke you!' Jude 9.

The form of this reproach is significant because the word 'rebuke' is a verb in the 'optative mode', that is, in the form used to express a wish, and as used here, it means, 'may the Lord rebuke you'! Michael leaves the passing of judgment on Satan to God Himself.

This is a lesson we all may learn from Jude 6. But is there evidence that a dispute about the body of Moses actually occurred? The Bible itself doesn't contain anything that corroborates the story. A single verse, here in Jude's letter, is the only place in the Scriptures that mentions it. So, where did the story originate?

It's found in one of the 'apocryphal' books, which are books that were written mainly during the Inter-Testamental Period, that is, in the four hundred years between the Old and New Testaments.

This was the period during which prophetic witness was silent, and when, as a result, literature appeared claiming to be inspired, often under the name of some genuinely inspired and well-known servant of God.

This particular book is known as 'The Assumption of Moses', and, in common with all the other 'apocryphal' writings, it has never been regarded as inspired or authoritative by either Jews or Christians, and was never accepted as the Word of God, and never included in the 'canon' of either Old or New Testament Scriptures.

Indeed, the word 'apocryphal' itself means 'of questionable or doubtful authenticity'. The document was probably produced early in the Inter-Testamental Period by an unidentified Jewish writer.

Among his other 'revelations' is the claim that, like Elijah, Moses was translated directly into heaven, and it's this assertion that gives the book its name, 'The Assumption of Moses'. The word 'assumption' in the title means 'ascension'.

You perhaps already know that the 'Church of Rome' makes the same claim for Mary, the Lord's mother and speaks of 'The Assumption of Mary'. This doctrine states that, when she died, 'her body was preserved from corruption and shortly after word it was assumed.' The Latin word 'assumere' means 'to take to', in this case, to Heaven!

The odd thing is that, according to Catholic teaching, to believe that Mary was taken bodily to Heaven isn't an article of faith, but it's said to be 'impious and blasphemous' to deny it! Of course, we know from Matthew 17:3 that more than 1500 years later, Moses appeared with Elijah when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain.

The difference between the two, Moses and Elijah, is that the Scriptures tell us plainly that Moses 'died and was buried', Deuteronomy 34:5-6, whilst Elijah, like Enoch before him, was 'taken from this life so that he did not experience death', Genesis 5:24 / 2 Kings 2:11 / Hebrews 11:5.

However, considering what we read in Hebrews 11:23-27, where Moses is honoured as a man of faith if, at the end of his life, he had indeed been taken up into heaven, we might have expected such an important fact to have been mentioned in those verses.

Probably because Daniel 12:1 seems to suggest that the archangel Michael was appointed by God to be the 'Guardian of Israel', the writer of 'The Assumption of Moses' also states that Michael was also commissioned to bury the body of Moses, and to be the guardian of his grave.

But the book declares that Satan opposed the burial of the patriarch, and claimed that the body belonged to him, on the grounds that he claims to be the 'lord of matter', to this Michael is said to have replied, 'The Lord rebuke thee, for it was God's Spirit who created the world and all mankind'.

There is no doubt that this piece of 'primitive Jewish tradition', as Dean Alford, the very highly respected theological scholar, described it, was known to those to whom Jude sent his letter.

It ranks with other stories of a similar nature, such as the claim that, after predicting the Fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian Captivity, the prophet Jeremiah took the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, and the Altar of Incense, and hid them in a cave on Mount Nebo, intending, after the 'Return from the Babylonian captivity', to retrieve and restore them.

Tradition said that, after the return from captivity, Jeremiah lived on in Jerusalem for another three hundred years, and that he even appeared to Judas Maccabees, another two centuries later, as ‘a man with grey hairs and exceeding glorious’.

It seems, then, that, in exposing those who were troubling the church with their false teaching, their denial of the Lord Jesus and their rejection of authority, Jude makes use of a story that, even though it lacks Scriptural endorsement, was familiar to his readers.

He used the story in order to encourage them to remember that the apostles of the Lord had warned that such men would arise, and being aware of the danger, they should build themselves up in their faith, keeping themselves in the love of God, waiting for the eternal life that comes through the mercy of the Lord Jesus.

Despite being one-hundred and twenty years of age, Moses’ eyes remained good, and His physical strength never failed, Deuteronomy 34:7. This indicates that God was miraculously keeping Moses in good physical condition throughout his years and because he was in good condition physically, it indicates that he didn’t have a natural death. Israel mourned the death of Moses for thirty days, which demonstrates their love and respect for him, Deuteronomy 34:8 / Genesis 50:1-10. We must remember that although Moses was gone physically, he certainly wasn’t gone spiritually, Matthew 17:1-10.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Many students of Moses’ life have noticed similarities to Christ’s and regard him as a type of Christ. Both men were divinely chosen deliverers, Exodus 3:7-10 / John 3:16 / Acts 7:25. Both experienced rejection by Israel and so turned to the Gentiles, Exodus 2:11-15 / Acts 7:23-29 / Acts 18:5-6 / Acts 28:17-28. Both gained a bride during their rejection by Israel, Exodus 2:16-21 / Matthew 12:14-21 / 2 Corinthians 11:2 / Ephesians 5:30-32. Following his period of rejection, Moses again appeared as Israel’s deliverer and was accepted, as Jesus will be, Exodus 4:29-31 / Romans 11:24-26 / Acts 15:14-17. Both were prophets, Acts 3:22-23, advocates, Exodus 32:31-35 / 1 John 2:1-2, intercessors, Exodus 17:1-6 / Hebrews 7:25, and leaders or kings, Deuteronomy 33:4-5 / Isaiah 55:4 / Hebrews 2:10 / Revelation 19. Moses was faithful as a servant over another’s house, whereas Christ is faithful as a Son over His own house, Hebrews 3:5-6.’

‘Now Joshua, son of Nun, was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses. Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.’ Deuteronomy 34:9-12

Joshua was picked as Moses’ successor to lead Israel into Canaan, Deuteronomy 3:28 / Deuteronomy 31:3. Moses had ‘laid his hands upon’ Joshua and so, he was ‘full of the spirit of wisdom,’ Deuteronomy 34:9. The spirit of wisdom enabled, Genesis 41:37 / Exodus 31:3.

Joshua was now to speak and lead Israel, Deuteronomy 34:9 / Numbers 11:26-29 / Numbers 27:18-23. Notice how highly the Lord thought of Moses; He says that ‘no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses’, Deuteronomy 34:10 / Numbers 12:6-8.

Although there would come another prophet greater than Moses, that is, Jesus, the Christ, Deuteronomy 18:15-19 / Numbers 12:6-8 / Acts 3:22 / Hebrews 3:2-6. These words from the Lord speak volumes about Moses’ character and leadership skills. The Lord knew and spoke with Moses face-to-face,’ Deuteronomy 34:10, which was also a privilege.

Keil, in his commentary, says the following.

‘After the justice of God had been satisfied by this punishment, he was to be distinguished in death before all the people and glorified as the servant who had been found faithful in all the house of God, whom the Lord had known face to face, Deuteronomy 34:10, and to whom he had spoken mouth to mouth, Numbers 12:7-8.’

The Lord declares that Moses did everything He wanted him to do whilst in Egypt, Deuteronomy 34:11. The uniqueness of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt will always stand as evidence of God’s work among men, and specifically, in the life of Moses, Deuteronomy 34:12. These final words of Moses conclude the Pentateuch, and they were written to preserve Israel until the coming of the Messiah.