

DEUTERONOMY

Chapters 18 - 34

Chapter 18

Occult Practices

⁹ When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. ¹⁰ There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, ¹¹ or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.”

a.) **You shall not learn:** God knows that many people have a natural curiosity regarding the occult, and that curiosity often leads them to gain knowledge God commands them to leave alone.

i. D.A. Thompson on **practices witchcraft**: “A variety of devices were in use in various lands, but all were designed to discern the will of the gods. The same word in Ezekiel 21:21 refers to the practice of whirling arrows in a quiver and deciding the answer to the question by the first arrow thrown out.”

ii. There is a modern revival of witchcraft, or Wicca, and many people claim that “white” witchcraft (as opposed to “black” witchcraft) is a use of spiritual powers for good, as well as being a more feminist, ecology-friendly understanding of “god” and spirituality. But whether a witch claims to be “white” or “black,” they are still using occultic powers.

iii. Some claim that “white”, or “right hand path” witches are in the majority today. They worship elements and nature deities, the “Mother Goddess,” Gaia, Ashtarte, Isis, Osiris, and a host of other names for the Goddess. They deny the existence of Satan, calling him an invention of the Christian Church. They claim to use their powers (and they do have powers) for good: sending healing energies to the sick, affirmations which bring prosperity, and loudly proclaiming their creed, “As it harm none, do as thou wilt.” It’s ironic how their creed sounds so similar to that of a man who referred to himself as “The Beast, 666” – Satanist Aleister Crowley, who wrote, “Do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.”

iv. Of course, there are black, or “left hand path,” witches. These are witches who originally were into white witchcraft and got hungry for more power. As their teachers noticed this power lust, they were taken aside and told, “You are now ready to go after the higher power, and there is only one way to achieve this power. Satan is its source.” Thus, comes the white witch’s abrupt surprise: either give up your witchly ambitions, or go for the higher power. The bottom

line is that the power behind all kinds of witchcraft is Satan. He is the author of all deception, and all rebellion. To practice or approve of witchcraft is to serve Satan.

Or a soothsayer: This has reference to astrological-type divination, predicting the future or seeking guidance through the stars, planets, clouds, or weather.

i. Theologian E.S. Kalland says that the soothsayer: “Is... predicting the future by means of physical signs (astrology).” D.A. Thompson points out “it seems to refer to divination by reading clouds, or from a root which occurs in Arabic meaning ‘to make unusual noises’, ‘croon’, ‘hum’, in which case it may refer to some kind of incantation.”

ii. Even though Astrology is unscientific – it is based on the supposition that the sun circles the earth, and the positions of the planets and stars have shifted, and are never consistently uniform; therefore, the houses of the Zodiac have shifted – despite all that, thirty-two million Americans believe in Astrology! There are 10,000 full time and 200,000 part time astrologers in America. Three out of four American newspapers carry a horoscope column.

1.) iii. So where does the real “power” of astrology come from? From what most astrologers call “intuition” – but is really psychic knowledge and ability. Astrology is _____ and stems from the demonic. It leads people away from trusting in God and encourages them to put trust in what God created. And isn’t that Satan’s goal: To replace confidence in God with a dependence on anything else?

Or one who interprets omens: The word comes from the root “to hiss” or “to whisper” and refers to psychics and fortune-tellers who use “aids” other than naturally created things to gain knowledge, tell the future, and cast spells.

i. Today, these people are the tarot card readers, crystal ball seers, tea-leaf readers, palm readers, Ouija board users, and the like. A Christian has *no business* participating or approving of any of these practices, because either they are money-grubbing frauds (at best!), or worse, they gain their knowledge from satanic, demonic, spiritual sources.

2.) ii. This is why it is dangerous for people – especially kids – to break out the Ouija board, or do a little séance, or little “dark” magic tricks. They are tapping into a source of _____ – yet evil, and unspeakably dangerous. Many, many people have been ruined on the rocks of “innocent” occult or fortune telling games, and the fact that there is a *real* power behind those things should make us all the more concerned.

¹⁵ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me (Moses) from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,”

a.) People looked for this Prophet in Jesus' day (John 6:14, 7:40) and some thought that John the Baptist might be this Prophet (John 1:19-21). But the New Testament plainly tells us that Jesus is this Prophet (Acts 3:19-26, Acts 7:37).

Chapter 19

Cities of Refuge and the Law

1. "When the Lord your God has cut off the nations whose land the Lord your God is giving you, and you dispossess them and dwell in their cities and in their houses, ² you shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of your land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess. ³ You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer may flee there.

a.) God instructed Israel to make three cities of refuge in the Promised Land, and instructed them to make them "centrally located" (in the midst of the land).

b.) Moses had already established Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan as the cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan River (Deuteronomy 4:41-43); this command is to establish three more cities of refuge on the west side of the Jordan.

4 "And this is the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past— ⁵ as when a man goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he shall flee to one of these cities and live; ⁶ lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in time past. ⁷ Therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall separate three cities for yourself.'

3.) a.) The cities of refuge were for the protection of the person who killed another _____ or in _____. In ancient Israel, when one was killed, it was the responsibility of the avenger of blood to make certain the murderer was punished.

b.) **Lest the avenger of blood:** The avenger of blood was an appointed member of the family (the goel), designated to protect the honor and lives of the family. His interest would not be in gathering evidence, but in avenging the honor of the family – so, in the case of an accidental killing, the manslayer would need protection from the avenger of blood.

8 "Now if the Lord your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers, ⁹ and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three, ¹⁰ lest innocent blood

be shed in the midst of your land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and thus guilt of bloodshed be upon you."

4.) a.) Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory: As Israel expanded, there were to be more cities of refuge. If a city of refuge was _____ to be _____ by the manslayer, it did him no good – the avenger of blood would overtake him before he could reach the city of refuge.

b.) Then you shall add three more cities for yourself: Ultimately, there were to be six cities of refuge; with three on each side of the Jordan River. Each of the three cities on either side would be positioned as north, central, and south.

c.) Joshua 20:7-8 tells of the actual cities chosen; they fulfilled the plan of being evenly distributed perfectly.

"¹¹ But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally, so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, ¹² then the elders of his city shall send and bring him from there, and deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. ¹³ Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall ^{not} put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you."

5.) a.) But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally: We can easily imagine that those truly guilty of murder would, at some time or another, seek protection in the city of refuge. So, whenever a manslayer came to seek protection at a city of refuge, the elders of the city were to judge his case and determine if he was _____.

b.) Deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood: If it was determined at this trial that the man was really guilty of murder, then he would be delivered to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. There was no protection of the guilty within the walls of a city of refuge.

c.) Put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you: God was just as concerned that the *guilty* be punished as He was that the *innocent* be protected (*lest innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land.* – (Deuteronomy 19:10)).

The cities of refuge are a picture of Jesus:

The Bible applies this picture of the city of refuge to the believer finding refuge in God on more than one occasion:

i. Psalm 46:1: *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.* More than 15 other times, the Psalms speak of God as being our refuge.

ii. Hebrews 6:18: *That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *within easy reach* of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *open to all*, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need (Numbers 35:15)

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the *only alternative* for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection *only within their boundaries*; to go outside meant death (Numbers 35:26-28).

With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the *death of the High Priest* (Numbers 35:25).

²¹ *Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*"

a.) What this *really* means: Retribution was always limited by the eye for eye principle. This law was meant to be a check to our desire to revenge, *not* a license for revenge. Our tendency is to want to do *more* to the offending party than what they have done to us. But we cannot punish from a motive of revenge, only from a motive of justice.

i. Many Rabbis in Jesus' day taught that the eye for eye law meant you were obligated to avenge yourself of a personal insult or attack brought against you. Jesus rightly disallowed the application of this law in our personal relationships; it was a law intended to guide the judges in the law courts of Israel, not to guide our personal relationships.

ii. "Jesus' criticism of this law (Mt. 5:38) arose from its use to regulate conduct between individuals. He did not reject it as a principle of justice which should operate in the courts of the land. For private relationships He proposed the ideal of brotherhood, a strong principle throughout the book of Deuteronomy. To extend the *lex talionis* to this interpersonal domain was to destroy the law of God" (D.A.Thompson).

Note: "lex talionis" is "the law of retaliation, whereby a punishment resembles the offense committed in kind and degree" (Oxford Dictionary).

1“When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.”

Israel, a small nation surrounded by great empires, was rarely in a strategically superior position. In battle, they usually saw “horses and chariots and people more numerous than you.”

Do not be afraid of them: Despite the clear danger, they also had a clear command from God to not fear. Israel was commanded to not fear what any logical military man *would* fear: superior numbers, superior technology, and superior equipment.

6.) Yet, Israel was given a *reason* to not fear. God did not deny that the enemies of Israel would usually have more horses, chariots, and people than Israel. But God asked them to recognize a greater fact: That the _____ with you. As Paul said it in Romans 8:31: “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” One with God makes an unbeatable majority.

To God, the size of the army wasn’t important; the heart of the army was far more important. God could do more through a smaller army that was really committed to Him than through a bigger army that was full of compromise.

10 “When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. ¹¹ And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you.”

It was important that Israel did not fight unnecessarily. If the city would agree to terms of peace, then they should come to an agreement.

Chapter 21

Unsolved Murders

1“If anyone is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who killed him,”

- a) Presumably, death from natural causes had been ruled out and it was evident that the deceased had been murdered; yet, it was not known who killed him.
- b) It is not known who killed him: This was important based on a principle stated in Numbers 35:33-34. This passage shows that the blood of unsolved, unavenged murder defiles and pollutes the land. Therefore, if there is a murder unavenged, some kind of cleansing is necessary, so the land will not be defiled.

²then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities.

First, the matter of jurisdiction had to be settled. These elders were responsible to make the sacrifice to atone for and cleanse the murder-polluted land.

³And it shall be that the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked and which has not pulled with a yoke. ⁴The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. ⁵Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the Lord your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the Lord; by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled."

Then, appropriate sacrifice had to be made. This heifer was sacrificed by the sons of Levi in the presence of the city elders, who washed their hands over the sacrificed animal.

i. This washing of the hands, done in the presence of the sons of Levi, who by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled, was a powerful proclamation by the elders: "We have done all we could to settle this case, but cannot. We are clean from all guilt in the matter of this slain man."

7.) ii. Of course, this *ceremony* of washing the hands over the sacrificed animal meant nothing if the elders had in fact *not* done what they could to avenge the murder; apart from that, this washing of the hands was just as much an empty gesture as _____ washing of his hands at the trial of Jesus (Matthew 27:24).

Chapter 22

Various Laws

¹You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother. ²And if your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. ³You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself."

To see your brother in need, and to do nothing, is to do evil. When one has the opportunity to do good, you must not hide yourself. Exodus 23:4-5 commands Israel to also help stray animals but extends the obligation to the stray animals of an *enemy*, not just a brother.

⁵A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God."

8.) Some have taken this command to be the "proof-text" against women wearing pants and some Christian groups command that women wear only dresses. Yet, this is not a command against women wearing a garment that in some ways might be common between men and

women; it is a command against dressing in a manner which _____ blurs the lines between the sexes. This command to observe the distinction between the sexes is so important, those who fail to observe it are called an abomination to the LORD.

⁸ “*When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.*”

God commanded that a railing be made for the rooftop, so someone was protected against falling. Failure to build in a safe way would bring guilt (liability) on the owner or builder of the home. They were responsible for the safety of those who would use the home.

In his sermon on Deuteronomy 22:8, titled “Battlements,” Charles Spurgeon shows how just as there was to be a railing for the protection of people on the roofs of Israel’s homes, there are also spiritual railings for our protection. Many people, in regard to sin, get too close to the edge and fall off. Then it’s too late! We need to have “railings” protecting us from the edge. Such railings will not only protect us, but others also.

Chapter 23 The Assembly of the LORD: Exclusions and Inclusions

¹ “*He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the Lord.*”

^{9.)} This refers to those emasculated by either birth defect, accident, or by deliberate emasculation. Eunuchs were excluded because God’s covenant with Israel was vitally connected with the idea of the *seed*, and emasculation is a “crime” against the seed of man. Additionally, most eunuchs were made to be so in _____ where they were dedicated to pagan gods. However, Isaiah 56:3-5 shows that even eunuchs and foreigners could be accepted before the LORD if they would *obey* Him, and they would be accepted *before* the “normal” people who disobeyed God.

² “*One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord.*” It is difficult to define exactly what is meant by the term of illegitimate birth. Some later Jewish writers defined this as someone who was born of an incestuous relationship between Jews; others said it refers to those born of mixed marriages between the people of Israel and their pagan neighbors (as in Nehemiah 13:23).

³ “*An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever,*” ⁴ because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. ⁵ *Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God*

turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. ⁶ You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever."

10.) The Moabites and the Ammonites not only treated Israel cruelly on their way to the Promised Land, but they also were a people with a disgraceful beginning. Moab and Ammon were the two sons born to the _____ through their incest with their father (Genesis 19:30-38).

⁷ "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. ⁸ The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord."

The Edomites were ethnically related to Israel, because Israel's brother Esau was the father of the Edomite peoples. Therefore, Israel was commanded to not abhor an Edomite.

The Egyptians were also to receive more favor than the Moabites or Ammonites, because Israel was a guest in Egypt for almost 400 years. Though the years Israel spent in Egypt were hard, God had a great purpose for them. Egypt was like a mother's womb for Israel; they went in as a large family and came out as a distinct nation.

Chapter 24

Laws Concerning Divorce

1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, ² when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, ³ if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, ⁴ then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance."

If a husband finds some uncleanness in her, he has the right to give his wife a certificate of divorce. But he is not *obligated* to do so. It must also be that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her. In other words, it must be that the husband is so troubled at his wife's sexual immorality that he simply cannot look upon her with favor in his eyes any more. In the days of Jesus, Rabbis taught that it was the *duty* of a godly man to divorce his wife if she displeased him. Both Moses and Jesus make it clear that God *permits* divorce in certain circumstances, but never *commands* it.

Yet, if someone has biblical grounds of divorce (which, according to 1 Corinthians 7:15, includes abandonment by an unbelieving spouse), they certainly do have *permission* to divorce, and God

does not “hold it against them,” unless of course, He has specifically told them to *not* divorce and they are disobeying His specific word to their lives.

Some people think that in ancient Israel, only husbands had the right to divorce their wives, and wives did not have the right of divorce. But what is said here may be intended to be applied to both husband and wife. Jesus, in Mark 10:12 says *and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another*, clearly saying that in His day, a wife had the right to divorce.

Chapter 25

Social Responsibility

1“If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, 2then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. 3Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.”

They justify the righteous and condemn the wicked: This is the simple responsibility of all government and courts. As Paul described the role of government in Romans 13:4: *For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*

12.) Forty blows may he give him and no more: Though sometimes a beating was the appropriate punishment, God also agrees with the idea that there is a such thing as excessive punishment, and this was intended to _____ excessive _____. Additionally, the beating was to be administered in the presence of the judge (and be beaten in his presence), so he could make sure the punishment was not excessive.

4 “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.”

This law simply commanded the humane treatment of a working animal. In those days, grain would be broken away from its husk by having an ox walk on it repeatedly (usually around a circle). It would be cruel to force the ox to walk on all the grain, yet to muzzle him so he couldn’t eat of it.

In 1 Corinthians 9:9 and 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul applied this principle to the minister’s right to be supported by the people he ministers to. In fact, 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 leads us to believe that this is the *real* point God is making in this verse, because in that passage Paul asked, *is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?*

Chapter 26

Offerings of Firstfruits and Tithes

1 “And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, 2 that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. 3 And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, ‘I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.’”

The Promised Land lay just across the Jordan River, and though there were formidable obstacles (such as a Jordan River swollen by Spring floods and the mighty armies of Canaanites), God still assured them that they will come into the land.

Numbers 18:12 speaks of the firstfruits that must be regularly brought to the priests, but the firstfruits described here in Deuteronomy 26 seem to be a special offering of firstfruits, from the first of the harvest they gain in the Promised Land.

13.) Firstfruit giving obviously honored the LORD, because it gave the LORD His portion _____ before any was used for one's self.

4 “Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God. 5 And you shall answer and say before the Lord your God: ‘My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. 6 But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. 7 Then we cried out to the Lord God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. 8 So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. 9 He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, “a land flowing with milk and honey”; 10 and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O Lord, have given me.’”

This wonderful confession of thanks remembered the history of Israel from the time of Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan, to the family's going down into Egypt, and to the eventual deliverance and Exodus into the Promised Land.

Chapter 27

The Great Stones of Witness

1 “Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: “Keep all the commandments which I command you today. 2 And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. 3 You shall write on them all the words of this law, when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the Lord your God is giving

you, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey,’ just as the Lord God of your fathers promised you. ⁴Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, that on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime. ⁵And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them. ⁶You shall build with whole stones the altar of the Lord your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. ⁷You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the Lord your God. ⁸And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law.”

14.) Moses finished his preaching to the people of Israel, so there was nothing more to say, other than the simple encouragement to do what God commanded. It isn't enough for Israel to be _____ of the word; they must also be _____ of the word.

When Israel came into the Promised Land, they were to build a special altar. It was to be made of natural stone, with no iron tool used to carve the stones. With these whole stones making up the altar, they were also to write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law.

This was a special altar. It was clearly to be used for sacrifice (You shall offer peace offerings), but it was also to be a memorial of the law of Moses, and his great sermon to Israel in the book of Deuteronomy.

This command was obeyed by Joshua in Joshua 8:30-32; there, at Mount Ebal, in the Promised Land, Joshua *in the presence of the children of Israel... wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.*

Probably, what was written was the summation of the law contained in the Ten Commandments.

⁹Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel, saying, “Take heed and listen, O Israel: This day you have become the people of the Lord your God. ¹⁰Therefore you shall obey the voice of the Lord your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.”

Much of the book of Deuteronomy is written after the same pattern as ancient agreements between kings and their subjects. Here, the idea is clear: God is the king, and the people of Israel are His subjects. He has told them what He expects of them, and what they may expect from Him.

This day you have become the people of the LORD your God: Now that the agreement was settled, and it could be said to Israel, “you have become the people of the LORD your God.” The contract was signed, and Israel willingly submitted itself to the Lord God, recognizing Him as their king.

c. You shall obey the voice of the LORD your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes: If the LORD is *our* king, then it is fitting that *we* obey Him this way. Moses, and all the leadership of Israel simply declared a fact that was obvious to everyone.

Chapter 28

Obedience Brings Blessings

1 “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. 2 And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God.”

15.) If you diligently obey the voice of the LORD: The word “*if*” looms large. In this chapter, Moses exhorted the nation with *choice*. The covenant God made with Israel contained three major features: The ___, the _____, and the _____.

The idea behind the *choice* is that God was determined to reveal Himself to the world through Israel. He would do this either by making them so blessed that the world would know only God could have blessed them so; or by making them so cursed that only God could have cursed them and cause them to still survive. The choice was up to Israel.

Disobedience Brings Curses:

49 “The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand, ⁵⁰a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young.”

The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar: A disobedient Israel would be attacked and conquered by a nation of fierce countenance, and they would fight until they have destroyed you.

You shall eat the fruit of your own body: This became horribly true in the days of the later kingdom. 2 Kings 6:24-30 describes a famine so severe in a besieged Israelite city that there was a fight between two women over eating their children! A terrible fulfillment of the promise, he will not give any of the flesh of his children whom he will eat. Lamentations 4:1-11 vividly describes the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem.

Chapter 29

Renewal of the Covenant

1 “These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.”

These are the words of the covenant: Some 40 years before this, at **Horeb** (Mount Sinai), Israel made a covenant with God: Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words." (Exodus 24:7-8)

Besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb: For the most part, the people who had the blood of the covenant sprinkled upon them had died in the wilderness. The generation of unbelief had died, now it was an opportunity for the generation of faith. So, Moses will reconfirm the covenant with the new generation.

5 "And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. 6 You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or similar drink, that you may know that I am the Lord your God. 7 And when you came to this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out against us to battle, and we conquered them. 8 We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh. 9 Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do."

During their forty years in the wilderness, their clothes did not wear out, their sandals did not wear out, and though they had no bread to eat or wine to drink, their needs were provided for. Israel conquered over their enemies, and they took their land.

16.) Plainly, these are remarkable miracles. Clothes and sandals simply do not last 40 years of hard marching in the wilderness _____ from a _____. The wilderness does not provide enough food and water to meet the needs of some two million people apart from a miracle. A nation of slaves for 400 years does not conquer standing nations and take their land apart from a miracle.

In the wilderness of this world, God provides clothes for us (Revelation 3:18).

- He gives us *shoes* (Ephesians 6:15).
- He gives us bread and wine to drink (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- In Him we *conquer* our enemies (Romans 8:37).
- We can take the *land* of our spiritual enemies (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

The Consequences of Breaking the Covenant:

17 and you saw their abominations and their idols which were among them—wood and stone and silver and gold); 18 so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or

*tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood,”
20 “The Lord would not spare him; for then the anger of the Lord and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the Lord would blot out his name from under heaven. 21 And the Lord would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this Book of the Law, 22 so that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, would say, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which the Lord has laid on it:”*

We can also learn from the calamity that comes on the lives of others when they break God’s covenant. We can learn that the price of disobedience is not worth it. We can learn that the commands of God are good, and protective in our lives.

All nations would say: God’s purpose in bringing judgment against a covenant-breaking Israel was also for the sake of all nations. When they see what happens to a nation who forsakes the LORD, they will be warned to obedience.

29 “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

In the midst of this encouragement to obedience, Moses pauses to give a principle of how God speaks to us. First, God never declares *everything* to man:. There are secrets God has, and will always have. He has the right to have secrets, because He is God.

God is bigger and smarter than us and always will be. We must simply accept this. *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.”* (Isaiah 55:8-9)

God does reveal *some* things to man. Since God is there, and *He is not silent*, we must do all we can to pay close attention to Him.

God’s revelation is meant to say something to us. God did not speak just to blow our minds or to amuse us; there is a message which *belongs* to us. While we cannot perfectly understand God’s revelation, it is perfectly understandable.

Chapter 30

Restoration for a Repentant Israel

1 “Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, 2 and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice,

according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul,³ that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. ⁴If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. ⁵Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers."

Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you: Under the inspiration of the LORD, Moses carefully explained the blessings and curses that would come upon an obedient or disobedient Israel. Under the same inspiration, Moses knew that all these things *would* come upon Israel.

17.) From the height of blessing during the reigns of David and Solomon, to the depth of cursing at the fall of Jerusalem, Israel's history has been a legacy of either being _____ or _____ under the terms of the Old Covenant.

And you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you: God knew that Israel would be scattered and exiled, and here through Moses, God calls the *Diaspora* (Israel dispersed among the nations) to remember the promises of the blessing and the curse.

Return to the LORD your God: As Israel would return to the LORD, God would bless them and bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you.

Of course, this was fulfilled in part by the return of the Babylonian exiles during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. But the ultimate fulfillment of this would await the Twentieth Century, when God would regather Israel in the Promised Land. This modern regathering is a larger, broader, more sovereign, and more miraculous restoration than that recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah.

From all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you: The modern restoration of Israel more accurately fulfills this promise than the return from the Babylonian exile. Today, Israel is populated from Jews from virtually every country in the world. The breadth of this promise is important because God repeats the idea in verse 4: *If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD God will gather you.*

Adam Clarke, writing in 1811, recognized that this regathering had to be fulfilled in a future time: "As this promise refers to a return from captivity in which they had been scattered among all nations, consequently it is not the Babylonish captivity which is intended; and the

repossession of their land must be different from that which was consequent on their return from Chaldea."

Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it: The restoration had to happen in the land of Israel. The modern restoration of Israel more accurately fulfills this promise than the return from the Babylonian exile. In the return from the Babylonian exile, Israel was still a vassal state of the Persians. But in the modern restoration of Israel, **you shall possess it** is literally fulfilled.

At one time, in the early days of the Zionist movement, the British offered the country of Uganda to the Jews as a place to establish a Jewish state. If that would have happened, and if Jews from all over the world had flocked there to establish a Jewish state, it would *not* fulfill the promise of restoration stated here and in other Old Testament passages. The promise here is plain: **The land which your fathers possessed.**

He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers: This promise is fulfilled only in the modern restoration of Israel, not in the return from the Babylonian exile. In the days of the return from the Babylonian exile, the Jewish community was small, weak, and poor. But today, under the modern restoration of Israel, the state of Israel does indeed **prosper** and the promise to **multiply you more than your fathers** is fulfilled. Israel, as a nation, is larger, stronger, and richer than at any time in Biblical history. Today Israel is a largely secular nation. There is respect for the Bible as a book of history and national identity, but there is not, and has not been, a true turning to the LORD God, particularly as a nation.

But God's promise still stands. As the final aspect of the promise to restore Israel, God will restore them spiritually. He promises to **circumcise your heart**. This is an idea repeated in the promises of the New Covenant, in passages like Ezekiel 36:26-27: *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.* Indeed, Paul promised that *all Israel will be saved* (Romans 11:26). Jesus said that He would not return until Israel embraced Him as Messiah: *For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* (Matthew 23:39)

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;* ²⁰ *that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."*

Therefore choose life: Though the choice belonged to Israel, God cared about *what* they chose. When Moses pled with Israel, crying out **choose life**, we know he reflected the heart of God toward Israel. How God glorified Himself through Israel was up to them, but it was obviously God's preference that He glorify Himself through an obedient, blessed Israel. So He pled, **choose life!**

Chapter 31

Moses Charges the People, Joshua, and the Priests

1“Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2And he said to them: “I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, ‘You shall not cross over this Jordan.’ 3The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said.”

18.) The charge to the people: I am one hundred and twenty years old today: Moses, at 120 years, was not limited by his physical condition (in a short time he will climb to the top of a mountain). Instead, he could no longer go out and come in because he was limited by _____ – the decree that Moses would not enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:7-12).

7Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. 8And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed.”

The charge to Joshua: Be strong and of good courage: Since God was going to use Joshua, he must be strong and of good courage. But Moses knew Joshua and knew that he would. So he confidently said, you shall cause them to inherit it.

Men of encouragement like Moses are a blessing. Moses knew that Joshua might be wavering, so he encouraged him, and pushed him forward to be more than he perhaps thought he could be. God uses encouraging people to help us fulfill the destiny He has for us. Joshua was the man; but the work was the LORD's: He is the one who goes before you.

9So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. 10And Moses commanded them, saying: “At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, 11when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12Gather the people together, men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this

law, ¹³ and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.”

The charge to the priests: You shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing: Part of the job of the Levites was to minister the word of God to the nation, as they were scattered throughout the nation. Every seven years they were to have a public reading and explanation of the law of God, as was modeled in Nehemiah 8:1-8.

And that their children... may hear and learn to fear the LORD: This seven-year national focus on God’s word was especially important for the children among the people of Israel. Through His word, they could come to a personal relationship with the LORD.

Chapter 32

The Song of Moses

Verses 1-4: Give ear, O heavens... and hear, O earth: Moses began by asking for attention, not only from Israel, but from all of creation.

I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God: He then gave praise to God, both for who God is (**He is the Rock... Righteous and upright is He**) and for what God does (**His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice**).

19.) v 7-14: Remember the days of old: Considering that this song was meant to be a *witness against* a rebellious Israel, Moses reminded Israel of all _____ to them. This was to both bring a greater conviction of sin, and to remind them of God’s love and grace they could return to.

Verses 28-43: The LORD states His case. That they would consider their latter end: This can be a remarkably effective preventative to backsliding. When we are in a backslidden state, we should consider where it will lead us.

And have compassion on His servants: When we are in a backslidden state, we should also see the compassion of God we *could* receive.

There is no God besides Me: When we are in a backslidden state, we should see the greatness of God. The backslidden man needs to know more of God’s character and His nature.

⁴⁸ Then the Lord spoke to Moses that very same day, saying: ⁴⁹ “Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; ⁵⁰ and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people;

Go up this mountain... and die on the mountain: Moses, as the last act of his 120 years, will climb Mount Nebo, and die at the summit of the mountain.

You shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there: Though Moses will not be allowed to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land, he can **view the land of Canaan**.

Chapter 33

Moses' Final Blessing on Israel

1" Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death."

20.) Moses the man of God: As he looked at Israel with a shepherd's heart, he could not leave them without _____ them. It must be this way. Moses could not leave this earth without a final blessing of the people he has loved and served in the LORD for these 40 years.

This chapter is similar in its effect to the blessing of Israel (Jacob) upon his twelve sons as recorded in Genesis 49. Since Moses was the one who recorded the blessing of Israel in Genesis 49, it is not a stretch to think he consciously modeled his blessing on Jacob's previous one.

The LORD came from Sinai: In the midst of images of God's glory in revealing Himself and His word to Israel (**He shone... with ten thousands of saints... a fiery law... He was King**). This adds a sense of drama and grandeur to Moses' prophetic words to each tribe.

The eternal God is your refuge: What blessing God bestowed on Israel! As Paul said in Romans 3:2: *To them were committed the oracles of God.* The true greatness of Israel is the same as the greatness of the Christian: not in and of themselves, but in their God: **There is no one like the God of Jeshurun.**

Who rides the heavens to help you: God is great and uses His greatness on behalf of His people, upholding them with **the everlasting arms**. When we are **a people saved by the LORD**, it means that God is for us and heaven is on our side! *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31) He is **the shield of your help**.

Chapter 34

Moses Dies

5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

Moses' epitaph – what we might call the line on his tombstone, though he actually had none – was simple.

- It was not "Moses, Prince of Egypt."
- It was not "Moses, Murderer of an Egyptian."

- . It was not “Moses, Shepherd in the Wilderness.”
- It was not “Moses, Spokesman for a Nation.”
- It was not “Moses, Miracle Worker.”
- It was not “Moses, Prophet.”
- It was not “Moses, the Man Who Saw a Piece of God’s Glory.”
- It was not “Moses, Who Never Entered the Promised Land.”
- At the end of it all, the title was simple: **Moses the servant of the LORD.**

This should be enough for us. We often say it, and it sounds humble to say it, but it is more difficult to really live it. To be satisfied with simply being **the servant of the LORD** is a precious thing indeed. It is the happiest of all stations in life, for when the Master is glorified, the servants are satisfied.

Works Sourced

The LORD our God

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David Guzik: *Enduring Word Bible Commentary Deuteronomy*: (2018)

+++

Deuteronomy

Chapters 18 - 34

Chapter 18

Occult Practices

⁹ “When you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations. ¹⁰ There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, ¹¹ or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.”

a.) **You shall not learn:** God knows that many people have a natural curiosity regarding the occult, and that curiosity often leads them to gain knowledge God commands them to leave alone.

i. D.A. Thompson on **practices witchcraft**: “A variety of devices were in use in various lands, but all were designed to discern the will of the gods. The same word in Ezekiel 21:21 refers to the practice of whirling arrows in a quiver and deciding the answer to the question by the first arrow thrown out.”

ii. There is a modern revival of witchcraft, or Wicca, and many people claim that “white” witchcraft (as opposed to “black” witchcraft) is a use of spiritual powers for good, as well as being a more feminist, ecology-friendly understanding of “god” and spirituality. But whether a witch claims to be “white” or “black,” they are still using occultic powers.

iii. Some claim that “white”, or “right hand path” witches are in the majority today. They worship elements and nature deities, the “Mother Goddess,” Gaia, Ashtarte, Isis, Osiris, and a host of other names for the Goddess. They deny the existence of Satan, calling him an invention of the Christian Church. They claim to use their powers (and they do have powers) for good: sending healing energies to the sick, affirmations which bring prosperity, and loudly proclaiming their creed, “As it harm none, do as thou wilt.” It’s ironic how their creed sounds so similar to that of a man who referred to himself as “The Beast, 666” – Satanist Aleister Crowley, who wrote, “Do as thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law.”

iv. Of course, there are black, or “left hand path,” witches. These are witches who originally were into white witchcraft and got hungry for more power. As their teachers noticed this power lust, they were taken aside and told, “You are now ready to go after the higher power, and

there is only one way to achieve this power. Satan is its source.” Thus, comes the white witch’s abrupt surprise: either give up your witchly ambitions, or go for the higher power. The bottomline is that the power behind all kinds of witchcraft is Satan. He is the author of all deception, and all rebellion. To practice or approve of witchcraft is to serve Satan.

Or a soothsayer: This has reference to astrological-type divination, predicting the future or seeking guidance through the stars, planets, clouds, or weather.

i. Theologian E.S. Kalland says that the soothsayer: “Is... predicting the future by means of physical signs (astrology).” D.A. Thompson points out “it seems to refer to divination by reading clouds, or from a root which occurs in Arabic meaning ‘to make unusual noises’, ‘croon’, ‘hum’, in which case it may refer to some kind of incantation.”

ii. Even though Astrology is unscientific – it is based on the supposition that the sun circles the earth, and the positions of the planets and stars have shifted, and are never consistently uniform; therefore, the houses of the Zodiac have shifted – despite all that, thirty-two million Americans believe in Astrology! There are 10,000 full time and 200,000 part time astrologers in America. Three out of four American newspapers carry a horoscope column.

1.) iii. So where does the real “power” of astrology come from? From what most astrologers call “intuition” – but is really psychic knowledge and ability. Astrology is idolatry and stems from the demonic. It leads people away from trusting in God and encourages them to put trust in what God created. And isn’t that Satan’s goal: To replace confidence in God with a dependence on anything else?

Or one who interprets omens: The word comes from the root “to hiss” or “to whisper” and refers to psychics and fortune-tellers who use “aids” other than naturally created things to gain knowledge, tell the future, and cast spells.

i. Today, these people are the tarot card readers, crystal ball seers, tea-leaf readers, palm readers, Ouija board users, and the like. A Christian has *no business* participating or approving of any of these practices, because either they are money-grubbing frauds (at best!), or worse, they gain their knowledge from satanic, demonic, spiritual sources.

2.) ii. This is why it is dangerous for people – especially kids – to break out the Ouija board, or do a little séance, or little “dark” magic tricks. They are tapping into a source of spiritual power that is real – yet evil, and unspeakably dangerous. Many, many people have been ruined on the rocks of “innocent” occult or fortune telling games, and the fact that there is a *real* power behind those things should make us all the more concerned.

¹⁵ “The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me (Moses) from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,”

a.) People looked for this Prophet in Jesus' day (John 6:14, 7:40) and some thought that John the Baptist might be this Prophet (John 1:19-21). But the New Testament plainly tells us that Jesus is this Prophet (Acts 3:19-26, Acts 7:37).

Chapter 19

Cities of Refuge and the Law

1. *When the Lord your God has cut off the nations whose land the Lord your God is giving you, and you dispossess them and dwell in their cities and in their houses,² you shall separate three cities for yourself in the midst of your land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.³ You shall prepare roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, that any manslayer may flee there.*

a.) God instructed Israel to make three cities of refuge in the Promised Land, and instructed them to make them “centrally located” (in the midst of the land).

b.) Moses had already established Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan as the cities of refuge on the east side of the Jordan River (Deuteronomy 4:41-43); this command is to establish three more cities of refuge on the west side of the Jordan.

⁴ *And this is the case of the manslayer who flees there, that he may live: Whoever kills his neighbor unintentionally, not having hated him in time past—⁵ as when a man goes to the woods with his neighbor to cut timber, and his hand swings a stroke with the ax to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he shall flee to one of these cities and live; ⁶ lest the avenger of blood, while his anger is hot, pursue the manslayer and overtake him, because the way is long, and kill him, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated the victim in time past. ⁷ Therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall separate three cities for yourself.’*

3.) a.) The cities of refuge were for the protection of the person who killed another accidentally or in self-defense. In ancient Israel, when one was killed, it was the responsibility of the avenger of blood to make certain the murderer was punished.

b.) **Lest the avenger of blood:** The avenger of blood was an appointed member of the family (the goel), designated to protect the honor and lives of the family. His interest would not be in gathering evidence, but in avenging the honor of the family – so, in the case of an accidental killing, the manslayer would need protection from the avenger of blood.

⁸ *Now if the Lord your God enlarges your territory, as He swore to your fathers, and gives you the land which He promised to give to your fathers, ⁹ and if you keep all these commandments*

and do them, which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three, ¹⁰ lest innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and thus guilt of bloodshed be upon you."

4.) a.) Now if the LORD your God enlarges your territory: As Israel expanded, there were to be more cities of refuge. If a city of refuge was too far to be readily reached by the manslayer, it did him no good – the avenger of blood would overtake him before he could reach the city of refuge.

b.) Then you shall add three more cities for yourself: Ultimately, there were to be six cities of refuge; with three on each side of the Jordan River. Each of the three cities on either side would be positioned as north, central, and south.

c.) Joshua 20:7-8 tells of the actual cities chosen; they fulfilled the plan of being evenly distributed perfectly.

"¹¹ But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally, so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, ¹² then the elders of his city shall send and bring him from there, and deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. ¹³ Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall ¹⁴put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you."

5.) a.) But if anyone hates his neighbor, lies in wait for him, rises against him and strikes him mortally: We can easily imagine that those truly guilty of murder would, at some time or another, seek protection in the city of refuge. So, whenever a manslayer came to seek protection at a city of refuge, the elders of the city were to judge his case and determine if he was truly worthy of protection.

b.) Deliver him over to the hand of the avenger of blood: If it was determined at this trial that the man was really guilty of murder, then he would be delivered to the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. There was no protection of the guilty within the walls of a city of refuge.

c.) Put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you: God was just as concerned that the *guilty* be punished as He was that the *innocent* be protected (*lest innocent blood be shed in the midst of your land*. – (Deuteronomy 19:10).

The cities of refuge are a picture of Jesus:

The Bible applies this picture of the city of refuge to the believer finding refuge in God on more than one occasion:

i. Psalm 46:1: *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.* More than 15 other times, the Psalms speak of God as being our refuge.

ii. Hebrews 6:18: *That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.*

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *within easy reach* of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *open to all*, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need (Numbers 35:15)

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the *only alternative* for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.

Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection *only within their boundaries*; to go outside meant death (Numbers 35:26-28).

With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the *death of the High Priest* (Numbers 35:25).

²¹ *Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*"

a.) What this *really* means: Retribution was always limited by the eye for eye principle. This law was meant to be a check to our desire to revenge, *not* a license for revenge. Our tendency is to want to do *more* to the offending party than what they have done to us. But we cannot punish from a motive of revenge, only from a motive of justice.

i. Many Rabbis in Jesus' day taught that the eye for eye law meant you were obligated to avenge yourself of a personal insult or attack brought against you. Jesus rightly disallowed the application of this law in our personal relationships; it was a law intended to guide the judges in the law courts of Israel, not to guide our personal relationships.

ii. "Jesus' criticism of this law (Mt. 5:38) arose from its use to regulate conduct between individuals. He did not reject it as a principle of justice which should operate in the courts of the land. For private relationships He proposed the ideal of brotherhood, a strong principle throughout the book of Deuteronomy. To extend the *lex talionis* to this interpersonal domain was to destroy the law of God" (D.A.Thompson).

Note: "lex talionis" is "the law of retaliation, whereby a punishment resembles the offense committed in kind and degree" (Oxford Dictionary).

Chapter 20Warfare

1 "When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt."

Israel, a small nation surrounded by great empires, was rarely in a strategically superior position. In battle, they usually saw “horses and chariots and people more numerous than you.”

Do not be afraid of them: Despite the clear danger, they also had a clear command from God to not fear. Israel was commanded to not fear what any logical military man *would* fear: superior numbers, superior technology, and superior equipment.

6.) Yet, Israel was given a *reason* to not fear. God did not deny that the enemies of Israel would usually have more horses, chariots, and people than Israel. But God asked them to recognize a greater fact: That the LORD your God is with you. As Paul said it in Romans 8:31: “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” One with God makes an unbeatable majority.

To God, the size of the army wasn’t important; the heart of the army was far more important. God could do more through a smaller army that was really committed to Him than through a bigger army that was full of compromise.

¹⁰ “*When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it.*”¹¹ And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you.”

It was important that Israel did not fight unnecessarily. If the city would agree to terms of peace, then they should come to an agreement.

Chapter 21Unsolved Murders

1 "If anyone is found slain, lying in the field in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who killed him,"

a) Presumably, death from natural causes had been ruled out and it was evident that the deceased had been murdered; yet, it was not known who killed him.

b) It is not known who killed him: This was important based on a principle stated in Numbers 35:33-34. This passage shows that the blood of unsolved, unavenged murder defiles and pollutes the land. Therefore, if there is a murder unavenged, some kind of cleansing is necessary, so the land will not be defiled.

² *then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure the distance from the slain man to the surrounding cities.*

First, the matter of jurisdiction had to be settled. These elders were responsible to make the sacrifice to atone for and cleanse the murder-polluted land.

³ And it shall be that the elders of the city nearest to the slain man will take a heifer which has not been worked and which has not pulled with a yoke. ⁴ The elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with flowing water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and they shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. ⁵ Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the Lord your God has chosen them to minister to Him and to bless in the name of the Lord; by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled."

Then, appropriate sacrifice had to be made. This heifer was sacrificed by the sons of Levi in the presence of the city elders, who washed their hands over the sacrificed animal.

i. This washing of the hands, done in the presence of the sons of Levi, who by their word every controversy and every assault shall be settled, was a powerful proclamation by the elders: "We have done all we could to settle this case, but cannot. We are clean from all guilt in the matter of this slain man."

7.) ii. Of course, this *ceremony* of washing the hands over the sacrificed animal meant nothing if the elders had in fact *not* done what they could to avenge the murder; apart from that, this washing of the hands was just as much an empty gesture as Pilate's washing of his hands at the trial of Jesus (Matthew 27:24).

Chapter 22

Various Laws

¹ You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep going astray, and hide yourself from them; you shall certainly bring them back to your brother. ² And if your brother is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. ³ You shall do the same with his donkey, and so shall you do with his garment; with any lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found, you shall do likewise; you must not hide yourself."

To see your brother in need, and to do nothing, is to do evil. When one has the opportunity to do good, you must not hide yourself. Exodus 23:4-5 commands Israel to also help stray animals but extends the obligation to the stray animals of an *enemy*, not just a brother.

⁵ A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God."

8.) Some have taken this command to be the “proof-text” against women wearing pants and some Christian groups command that women wear only dresses. Yet, this is not a command against women wearing a garment that in some ways might be common between men and women; it is a command against dressing in a manner which deliberately blurs the lines between the sexes. This command to observe the distinction between the sexes is so important, those who fail to observe it are called an abomination to the LORD.

⁸ *“When you build a new house, then you shall make a parapet for your roof, that you may not bring guilt of bloodshed on your household if anyone falls from it.”*

God commanded that a railing be made for the rooftop, so someone was protected against falling. Failure to build in a safe way would bring guilt (liability) on the owner or builder of the home. They were responsible for the safety of those who would use the home.

In his sermon on Deuteronomy 22:8, titled “Battlements,” Charles Spurgeon shows how just as there was to be a railing for the protection of people on the roofs of Israel’s homes, there are also spiritual railings for our protection. Many people, in regard to sin, get too close to the edge and fall off. Then it’s too late! We need to have “railings” protecting us from the edge. Such railings will not only protect us, but others also.

Chapter 23 The Assembly of the LORD: Exclusions and Inclusions

1 “He who is emasculated by crushing or mutilation shall not enter the assembly of the Lord.”

9.) This refers to those emasculated by either birth defect, accident, or by deliberate emasculation. Eunuchs were excluded because God’s covenant with Israel was vitally connected with the idea of the *seed*, and emasculation is a “crime” against the seed of man. Additionally, most eunuchs were made to be so in pagan ceremonies where they were dedicated to pagan gods. However, Isaiah 56:3-5 shows that even eunuchs and foreigners could be accepted before the LORD if they would *obey* Him, and they would be accepted *before* the “normal” people who disobeyed God.

2 “One of illegitimate birth shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord.”

It is difficult to define exactly what is meant by the term of illegitimate birth. Some later Jewish writers defined this as someone who was born of an incestuous relationship between Jews; others said it refers to those born of mixed marriages between the people of Israel and their pagan neighbors (as in Nehemiah 13:23).

3 “An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever, ⁴because they

did not meet you with bread and water on the road when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. ⁵ Nevertheless the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. ⁶ You shall not seek their peace nor their prosperity all your days forever."

10.) The Moabites and the Ammonites not only treated Israel cruelly on their way to the Promised Land, but they also were a people with a disgraceful beginning. Moab and Ammon were the two sons born to the daughters of Lot through their incest with their father (Genesis 19:30-38).

⁷ "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. ⁸ The children of the third generation born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord."

The Edomites were ethnically related to Israel, because Israel's brother Esau was the father of the Edomite peoples. Therefore, Israel was commanded to not abhor an Edomite.

The Egyptians were also to receive more favor than the Moabites or Ammonites, because Israel was a guest in Egypt for almost 400 years. Though the years Israel spent in Egypt were hard, God had a great purpose for them. Egypt was like a mother's womb for Israel; they went in as a large family and came out as a distinct nation.

Chapter 24

Laws Concerning Divorce

1When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, ² when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, ³ if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, ⁴ then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance."

If a husband finds some uncleanness in her, he has the right to give his wife a certificate of divorce. But he is not *obligated* to do so. It must also be that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her. In other words, it must be that the husband is so troubled at his wife's sexual immorality that he simply cannot look upon her with favor in his eyes any more. In the days of Jesus, Rabbis taught that it was the *duty* of a godly man to divorce his wife if she displeased him. Both Moses and Jesus make it clear that God *permits* divorce in certain circumstances, but never *commands* it.

11.) Yet, if someone has biblical grounds of divorce (which, according to 1 Corinthians 7:15, includes abandonment by an unbelieving spouse), they certainly do have *permission* to divorce, and God does not “hold it against them,” unless of course, He has specifically told them to *not* divorce and they are disobeying His specific word to their lives.

Some people think that in ancient Israel, only husbands had the right to divorce their wives, and wives did not have the right of divorce. But what is said here may be intended to be applied to both husband and wife. Jesus, in Mark 10:12 says *and if a woman divorces her husband and marries another*, clearly saying that in His day, a wife had the right to divorce.

Chapter 25

Social Responsibility

1 “*If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, 2 then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows. 3 Forty blows he may give him and no more, lest he should exceed this and beat him with many blows above these, and your brother be humiliated in your sight.*”

They justify the righteous and condemn the wicked: This is the simple responsibility of all government and courts. As Paul described the role of government in Romans 13:4: *For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.*

12.) Forty blows may he give him and no more: Though sometimes a beating was the appropriate punishment, God also agrees with the idea that there is such thing as excessive punishment, and this was intended to prevent excessive punishment. Additionally, the beating was to be administered in the presence of the judge (and be beaten in his presence), so he could make sure the punishment was not excessive.

4 “*You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.*”

This law simply commanded the humane treatment of a working animal. In those days, grain would be broken away from its husk by having an ox walk on it repeatedly (usually around a circle). It would be cruel to force the ox to walk on all the grain, yet to muzzle him so he couldn't eat of it.

In 1 Corinthians 9:9 and 1 Timothy 5:18 Paul applied this principle to the minister's right to be supported by the people he ministers to. In fact, 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 leads us to believe that this is the *real* point God is making in this verse, because in that passage Paul asked, *is it oxen God is concerned about? Or does He say it altogether for our sakes?*

Chapter 26Offerings of Firstfruits and Tithes

1 "And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, 2 that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. 3 And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, 'I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.'"

The Promised Land lay just across the Jordan River, and though there were formidable obstacles (such as a Jordan River swollen by Spring floods and the mighty armies of Canaanites), God still assured them that they will come into the land.

Numbers 18:12 speaks of the firstfruits that must be regularly brought to the priests, but the firstfruits described here in Deuteronomy 26 seem to be a special offering of firstfruits, from the first of the harvest they gain in the Promised Land.

13.) Firstfruit giving obviously honored the LORD, because it gave the LORD His portion off the top before any was used for one's self.

4 "Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God. 5 And you shall answer and say before the Lord your God: 'My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. 6 But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. 7 Then we cried out to the Lord God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. 8 So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. 9 He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, "a land flowing with milk and honey"; 10 and now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, O Lord, have given me.'"

This wonderful confession of thanks remembered the history of Israel from the time of Jacob and his family in the land of Canaan, to the family's going down into Egypt, and to the eventual deliverance and Exodus into the Promised Land.

Chapter 27The Great Stones of Witness

1 "Now Moses, with the elders of Israel, commanded the people, saying: "Keep all the commandments which I command you today. 2 And it shall be, on the day when you cross over the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, that you shall set up for yourselves large stones, and whitewash them with lime. 3 You shall write on them all the words of this law,

when you have crossed over, that you may enter the land which the Lord your God is giving you, ‘a land flowing with milk and honey,’ just as the Lord God of your fathers promised you. ⁴Therefore it shall be, when you have crossed over the Jordan, that on Mount Ebal you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, and you shall whitewash them with lime. ⁵And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall not use an iron tool on them. ⁶You shall build with whole stones the altar of the Lord your God, and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. ⁷You shall offer peace offerings, and shall eat there, and rejoice before the Lord your God. ⁸And you shall write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law.”

14.) Moses finished his preaching to the people of Israel, so there was nothing more to say, other than the simple encouragement to do what God commanded. It isn’t enough for Israel to be hearers of the word; they must also be doers of the word.

When Israel came into the Promised Land, they were to build a special altar. It was to be made of natural stone, with no iron tool used to carve the stones. With these whole stones making up the altar, they were also to write very plainly on the stones all the words of this law.

This was a special altar. It was clearly to be used for sacrifice (You shall offer peace offerings), but it was also to be a memorial of the law of Moses, and his great sermon to Israel in the book of Deuteronomy.

This command was obeyed by Joshua in Joshua 8:30-32; there, at Mount Ebal, in the Promised Land, Joshua *in the presence of the children of Israel... wrote on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written.*

Probably, what was written was the summation of the law contained in the Ten Commandments.

⁹Then Moses and the priests, the Levites, spoke to all Israel, saying, “Take heed and listen, O Israel: This day you have become the people of the Lord your God. ¹⁰Therefore you shall obey the voice of the Lord your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.”

Much of the book of Deuteronomy is written after the same pattern as ancient agreements between kings and their subjects. Here, the idea is clear: God is the king, and the people of Israel are His subjects. He has told them what He expects of them, and what they may expect from Him.

This day you have become the people of the LORD your God: Now that the agreement was settled, and it could be said to Israel, “you have become the people of the LORD your God.” The

contract was signed, and Israel willingly submitted itself to the Lord God, recognizing Him as their king.

c.) You shall obey the voice of the LORD your God, and observe His commandments and His statutes: If the LORD is *our* king, then it is fitting that *we* obey Him this way. Moses, and all the leadership of Israel simply declared a fact that was obvious to everyone.

Chapter 28

Obedience Brings Blessings

1 "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. 2 And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the Lord your God."

15.) If you diligently obey the voice of the LORD: The word “*if*” looms large. In this chapter, Moses exhorted the nation with *choice*. The covenant God made with Israel contained three major features: The *law*, the *sacrifice*, and the *choice*.

The idea behind the *choice* is that God was determined to reveal Himself to the world through Israel. He would do this either by making them so blessed that the world would know only God could have blessed them so; or by making them so cursed that only God could have cursed them and cause them to still survive. The choice was up to Israel.

Disobedience Brings Curses:

49" The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you will not understand,⁵⁰ a nation of fierce countenance, which does not respect the elderly nor show favor to the young."

The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar: A disobedient Israel would be attacked and conquered by a nation of fierce countenance, and they would fight until they have destroyed you.

You shall eat the fruit of your own body: This became horribly true in the days of the later kingdom. 2 Kings 6:24-30 describes a famine so severe in a besieged Israelite city that there was a fight between two women over eating their children! A terrible fulfillment of the promise, he will not give any of the flesh of his children whom he will eat. Lamentations 4:1-11 vividly describes the horrors of the siege of Jerusalem.

Chapter 29

Renewal of the Covenant

1 “These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb.”

These are the words of the covenant: Some 40 years before this, at **Horeb** (Mount Sinai), Israel made a covenant with God: Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has said we will do and be obedient.” And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words.” (Exodus 24:7-8)

Besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb: For the most part, the people who had the blood of the covenant sprinkled upon them had died in the wilderness. The generation of unbelief had died, now it was an opportunity for the generation of faith. So, Moses will reconfirm the covenant with the new generation.

5 “And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. 6 You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or similar drink, that you may know that I am the Lord your God. 7 And when you came to this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out against us to battle, and we conquered them. 8 We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, to the Gadites, and to half the tribe of Manasseh. 9 Therefore keep the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.”

During their forty years in the wilderness, their clothes did not wear out, their sandals did not wear out, and though they had no bread to eat or wine to drink, their needs were provided for. Israel conquered over their enemies, and they took their land.

16.) Plainly, these are remarkable miracles. Clothes and sandals simply do not last 40 years of hard marching in the wilderness apart from a miracle. The wilderness does not provide enough food and water to meet the needs of some two million people apart from a miracle. A nation of slaves for 400 years does not conquer standing nations and take their land apart from a miracle.

In the wilderness of this world, God provides *clothes* for us (Revelation 3:18).

- He gives us *shoes* (Ephesians 6:15).
- He gives us bread and wine to drink (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- In Him we *conquer* our enemies (Romans 8:37).
- We can take the *land* of our spiritual enemies (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

The Consequences of Breaking the Covenant:

¹⁷ and you saw their abominations and their idols which were among them—wood and stone and silver and gold); ¹⁸ so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations, and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood,”

²⁰ “The Lord would not spare him; for then the anger of the Lord and His jealousy would burn against that man, and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him, and the Lord would blot out his name from under heaven. ²¹ And the Lord would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this Book of the Law, ²² so that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you, and the foreigner who comes from a far land, would say, when they see the plagues of that land and the sicknesses which the Lord has laid on it:”

We can also learn from the calamity that comes on the lives of others when they break God’s covenant. We can learn that the price of disobedience is not worth it. We can learn that the commands of God are good, and protective in our lives.

All nations would say: God’s purpose in bringing judgment against a covenant-breaking Israel was also for the sake of all nations. When they see what happens to a nation who forsakes the LORD, they will be warned to obedience.

²⁹ “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

In the midst of this encouragement to obedience, Moses pauses to give a principle of how God speaks to us. First, God never declares *everything* to man:. There are secrets God has, and will always have. He has the right to have secrets, because He is God.

God is bigger and smarter than us and always will be. We must simply accept this. “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,*” says the LORD. “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.*” (Isaiah 55:8-9)

God does reveal *some* things to man. Since God is there, and *He is not silent*, we must do all we can to pay close attention to Him.

God’s revelation is meant to *say* something to us. God did not speak just to blow our minds or to amuse us; there is a message which *belongs* to us. While we cannot perfectly understand God’s revelation, it is perfectly understandable.

1“Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, 2and you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, 3that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. 4If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. 5Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.”

Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you: Under the inspiration of the LORD, Moses carefully explained the blessings and curses that would come upon an obedient or disobedient Israel. Under the same inspiration, Moses knew that all these things *would* come upon Israel.

17.) From the height of blessing during the reigns of David and Solomon, to the depth of cursing at the fall of Jerusalem, Israel's history has been a legacy of either being blessed or cursed under the terms of the Old Covenant.

And you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you: God knew that Israel would be scattered and exiled, and here through Moses, God calls the *Diaspora* (Israel dispersed among the nations) to remember the promises of the blessing and the curse.

Return to the LORD your God: As Israel would return to the LORD, God would bless them and bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you.

Of course, this was fulfilled in part by the return of the Babylonian exiles during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. But the ultimate fulfillment of this would await the Twentieth Century, when God would regather Israel in the Promised Land. This modern regathering is a larger, broader, more sovereign, and more miraculous restoration than that recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah.

From all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you: The modern restoration of Israel more accurately fulfills this promise than the return from the Babylonian exile. Today, Israel is populated from Jews from virtually every country in the world. The breadth of this promise is important because God repeats the idea in verse 4: *If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the LORD God will gather you.*

Adam Clarke, writing in 1811, recognized that this regathering had to be fulfilled in a future time: "As this promise refers to a return from captivity in which they had been scattered among all nations, consequently it is not the Babylonish captivity which is intended; and the repossession of their land must be different from that which was consequent on their return from Chaldea."

Then the LORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it: The restoration had to happen in the land of Israel. The modern restoration of Israel more accurately fulfills this promise than the return from the Babylonian exile. In the return from the Babylonian exile, Israel was still a vassal state of the Persians. But in the modern restoration of Israel, **you shall possess it** is literally fulfilled.

At one time, in the early days of the Zionist movement, the British offered the country of Uganda to the Jews as a place to establish a Jewish state. If that would have happened, and if Jews from all over the world had flocked there to establish a Jewish state, it would *not* fulfill the promise of restoration stated here and in other Old Testament passages. The promise here is plain: **The land which your fathers possessed.**

He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers: This promise is fulfilled only in the modern restoration of Israel, not in the return from the Babylonian exile. In the days of the return from the Babylonian exile, the Jewish community was small, weak, and poor. But today, under the modern restoration of Israel, the state of Israel does indeed **prosper** and the promise to **multiply you more than your fathers** is fulfilled. Israel, as a nation, is larger, stronger, and richer than at any time in Biblical history. Today Israel is a largely secular nation. There is respect for the Bible as a book of history and national identity, but there is not, and has not been, a true turning to the LORD God, particularly as a nation.

But God's promise still stands. As the final aspect of the promise to restore Israel, God will restore them spiritually. He promises to **circumcise your heart**. This is an idea repeated in the promises of the New Covenant, in passages like Ezekiel 36:26-27: *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.* Indeed, Paul promised that *all Israel will be saved* (Romans 11:26). Jesus said that He would not return until Israel embraced Him as Messiah: *For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!"* (Matthew 23:39)

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;* ²⁰ *that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may*

cling to Him, for He *is your life* and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

Therefore choose life: Though the choice belonged to Israel, God cared about *what they chose*. When Moses pled with Israel, crying out **choose life**, we know he reflected the heart of God toward Israel. How God glorified Himself through Israel was up to them, but it was obviously God's preference that He glorify Himself through an obedient, blessed Israel. So He pled, **choose life!**

Chapter 31

Moses Charges the People, Joshua, and the Priests

1 "Then Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them: "I am one hundred and twenty years old today. I can no longer go out and come in. Also the Lord has said to me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.' 3 The Lord your God Himself crosses over before you; He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua himself crosses over before you, just as the Lord has said."

18.) The charge to the people: I am one hundred and twenty years old today: Moses, at 120 years, was not limited by his physical condition (in a short time he will climb to the top of a mountain). Instead, he could no longer go out and come in because he was limited by God's command – the decree that Moses would not enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:7-12).

7 Then Moses called Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage, for you must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it. 8 And the Lord, He is the One who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you nor forsake you; do not fear nor be dismayed."

The charge to Joshua: Be strong and of good courage: Since God was going to use Joshua, he must be strong and of good courage. But Moses knew Joshua and knew that he would. So he confidently said, you shall cause them to inherit it.

Men of encouragement like Moses are a blessing. Moses knew that Joshua might be wavering, so he encouraged him, and pushed him forward to be more than he perhaps thought he could be. God uses encouraging people to help us fulfill the destiny He has for us. Joshua was the man; but the work was the LORD's: **He is the one who goes before you.**

9 So Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses commanded them, saying: "At the end of every seven years, at the appointed time in the year of release, at the Feast of Tabernacles, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Gather the people together,

men and women and little ones, and the stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear the Lord your God and carefully observe all the words of this law, ¹³ and that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you cross the Jordan to possess.”

The charge to the priests: You shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing: Part of the job of the Levites was to minister the word of God to the nation, as they were scattered throughout the nation. Every seven years they were to have a public reading and explanation of the law of God, as was modeled in Nehemiah 8:1-8.

And that their children... may hear and learn to fear the LORD: This seven-year national focus on God’s word was especially important for the children among the people of Israel. Through His word, they could come to a personal relationship with the LORD.

Chapter 32

The Song of Moses

Verses 1-4: Give ear, O heavens... and hear, O earth: Moses began by asking for attention, not only from Israel, but from all of creation.

I proclaim the name of the LORD: Ascribe greatness to our God: He then gave praise to God, both for who God is (**He is the Rock... Righteous and upright is He**) and for what God does (**His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice**).

19.) Verses 7-14: Remember the days of old: Considering that this song was meant to be a *witness against* a rebellious Israel, Moses reminded Israel of all God’s goodness to them. This was to both bring a greater conviction of sin, and to remind them of God’s love and grace they could return to.

Verses 28-43: The LORD states His case. **That they would consider their latter end:** This can be a remarkably effective preventative to backsliding. When we are in a backslidden state, we should consider where it will lead us.

And have compassion on His servants: When we are in a backslidden state, we should also see the compassion of God we *could* receive.

There is no God besides Me: When we are in a backslidden state, we should see the greatness of God. The backslidden man needs to know more of God’s character and His nature.

⁴⁸ Then the Lord spoke to Moses that very same day, saying: ⁴⁹ “Go up this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho; view the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel as a possession; ⁵⁰ and die on the mountain which you ascend, and be gathered to your people, just as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people;

Go up this mountain... and die on the mountain: Moses, as the last act of his 120 years, will climb Mount Nebo, and die at the summit of the mountain.

You shall see the land before you, though you shall not go there: Though Moses will not be allowed to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land, he can **view the land of Canaan**.

Chapter 33

Moses' Final Blessing on Israel

1" Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death."

20.) Moses the man of God: As he looked at Israel with a shepherd's heart, he could not leave them without blessing them. It must be this way. Moses could not leave this earth without a final blessing of the people he has loved and served in the LORD for these 40 years.

This chapter is similar in its effect to the blessing of Israel (Jacob) upon his twelve sons as recorded in Genesis 49. Since Moses was the one who recorded the blessing of Israel in Genesis 49, it is not a stretch to think he consciously modeled his blessing on Jacob's previous one.

The LORD came from Sinai: In the midst of images of God's glory in revealing Himself and His word to Israel (**He shone... with ten thousands of saints... a fiery law... He was King**). This adds a sense of drama and grandeur to Moses' prophetic words to each tribe.

The eternal God is your refuge: What blessing God bestowed on Israel! As Paul said in Romans 3:2: *To them were committed the oracles of God.* The true greatness of Israel is the same as the greatness of the Christian: not in and of themselves, but in their God: **There is no one like the God of Jeshurun.**

Who rides the heavens to help you: God is great and uses His greatness on behalf of His people, upholding them with **the everlasting arms**. When we are **a people saved by the LORD**, it means that God is for us and heaven is on our side! *If God is for us, who can be against us?* (Romans 8:31) He is **the shield of your help**.

Chapter 34

Moses Dies

5 So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD."

Moses' epitaph – what we might call the line on his tombstone, though he actually had none – was simple.

- It was not "Moses, Prince of Egypt."

- It was not “Moses, Murderer of an Egyptian.”
- It was not “Moses, Shepherd in the Wilderness.”
- It was not “Moses, Spokesman for a Nation.”
- It was not “Moses, Miracle Worker.”
- It was not “Moses, Prophet.”
- It was not “Moses, the Man Who Saw a Piece of God’s Glory.”
- It was not “Moses, Who Never Entered the Promised Land.”
- At the end of it all, the title was simple: **Moses the servant of the LORD.**

This should be enough for us. We often say it, and it sounds humble to say it, but it is more difficult to really live it. To be satisfied with simply being **the servant of the LORD** is a precious thing indeed. It is the happiest of all stations in life, for when the Master is glorified, the servants are satisfied.

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