

# DEUTERONOMY

# INTRODUCTION

The book consists of four parts:

1. An introductory address delivered by Moses on the plains of Moab, containing a recapitulation of the principal events of the history and closing with a solemn charge of obedience and faithfulness to God. This is recorded in the first four chapters, commencing with 1:6, and closing with 4:43. This might be called retrospective.

2. Then follows a long address from 4:44 to 26:19, which might be called didactic and hortatory. This consists of a summary of the principal precepts of the Law, and a collection of important statutes and laws, with respect to their national and individual life; especially when they enter the Land of Promise. This is interspersed with several brief narratives respecting a portion of their wilderness life already past.

3. Then follows a shorter address from 27:1 to 30:20, mostly prospective in its character: referring, especially, to the inscription of the Law on pillars of stone on Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, with the blessings and the curses after they should enter the land. This is followed by a solemn declaration of the punishments and recompenses which will most surely follow their disobedience or obedience to the commandments of God, and a solemn appeal to them, as a people, to choose the way to obedience and life.

4. The last section of Deuteronomy, comprising chapters 31-34, contains a brief account of the closing scenes of Moses' life, including the appointment of Joshua, provision for the reading of the Law, the song of Moses and his parting blessing upon the tribes, closing with the account of the death, burial and eulogy of the great lawgiver.

Some of Christ's most important quotations from the Old Testament were directly from the book of Deuteronomy. He uses the authoritative expression, "It is written," as He quotes from Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13, 16, on important occasions (Matthew 4:4, 7 and 10). So, again, Matthew 22:24, compared with Deuteronomy 25:5. So again, Matthew 19:7-8; Mark 10:3-4; John 5:46-47. Again in Acts, Peter quotes from this book (3:22-23); Stephen also (7:37); and Paul (Romans 10:19; 12:19; Galatians 3:10).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

## Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43

### MOSES'S FIRST ADDRESS ON THE PLAINS OF MOAB

#### Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43

#### Retrospective

This address is introduced in the five opening verses of the book by a simple historical reference to the circumstances in which it was given. It was spoken on the plain of Moab "in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month" (Deuteronomy 1:3), after their victory over Sihon, king of the Amorites, and over the king of Bashan. It contains a striking little parenthesis which is more emphatic than the whole chapter (verse 2): "It takes eleven days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road." This little sentence stands in contrast with the 40 years of their wandering, and is a hint of what might have been had they promptly believed and obeyed God. Alas! many a journey in our Christian pilgrimage is made a thousandfold more sad and long by our refusing to obey the Lord.

The address proper consists of two portions; first, a recapitulation of their history up to the present time (1:6 to 3:29); and secondly, an exhortation to obedience (4:1-43).

#### SECTION 1—Recapitulation

##### Deuteronomy 1-3

##### Departure From Horeb

Moses goes back to their departure from Horeb (1:6-8), and their setting out for the land of promise. "You have stayed long enough at this mountain" (1:6) is the Lord's message.

Break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites; go to all the neighboring peoples in the Arabah, in the mountains, in the western foothills, in the Negev and along the coast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the Euphrates. See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them. (1:7-8)

Here there is no long interval, no weary wilderness march even suggested; the land is right before them as God's immediate purpose for them to inherit; and back of the command stands the oath of God to their fathers. It was well that it was so, for had it not been for their sakes the promise would have been of no effect; but when they forfeited their claim, the covenant with Abraham still stood fast, and by virtue of it their children entered in. It is well for us that the covenant is not with us and the mercy of God is not for our sakes, but wholly on account of the Lord Jesus Christ, our covenant Head. "For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29).

#### Organization Of The Camp

Moses next refers to his plan for the organization and government of the host.

The multitude had grown so vast that it was necessary that there should be a system of administration in detail. This was rendered the more necessary by what Moses pathetically refers to as their burden and their strife. Alas! it was this element of human self-will, discontent and murmuring, which caused most of his burdens and their sorrows. This, alas! is still true. It is not our troubles that burden the Master, but our strife. To meet the innumerable cases of complaint and litigation that would arise, Moses appointed judges and commanders "of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens" (Deuteronomy 1:15) and laid upon them the most solemn charges with regard to the patient and righteous administration of justice in all the minor difficulties that might arise. He reserved to himself for personal decision the cases that might prove too complicated for them. We have here a wise example of the importance of a careful, thorough organization in the work of the Church of Christ.

George Whitefield once said: "The Lord gave me as great a work as John Wesley, but he organized and I did not; the result was his became an enduring system, and mine, so far as visible and organic results were concerned, a rope of sand."

#### Through The Wilderness

He next recalls their journey through the wilderness from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea. "Then, as the LORD our God commanded us, we set out from Horeb and went toward the hill country of the Amorites through all that vast and dreadful desert that you have seen, and so we reached Kadesh Barnea" (1:19).

The remembrance still seems to cause a shudder of horror as he speaks of the great and terrible wilderness. Like them we too must pass into our inheritance through a waste and desolate region of separation from the world and crucifixion with Christ. But it need not be long. It was only 11 days' journey, and it was utterly unnecessary that they should return to it again and again and wander in it for the remaining 40 years. And so we too must pass through the earlier conflicts which meet us into a deeper rest; yet the ordeal need not be long, and certainly need not be renewed and

prolonged through all the weary pilgrimage of life. He that is brave enough to pass quickly through the border land and utterly to follow the Lord will find that this is the secret of a peaceful and happy life, free from the struggles and conflicts which should be settled at the beginning. But he who is afraid utterly to die and wholly to obey will find his whole life a long and ineffectual struggle of useless misery.

### **The Crisis**

The crisis of their history has now come.

Then I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. See, the LORD your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the LORD, the God of your fathers, told you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." (1:20-21)

This represents the crisis hour in our Christian life when the soul comes face to face with the question of entire consecration and entering into the fullness of Christ's blessing. It is a moment that never will come again, and on which the issues of a lifetime hang. Happy are they who stop not to reason and compromise, but literally go up at once and possess it.

### **Their First Compromise**

They began to reason about the promise of the Lord.

Then all of you came to me and said, "Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we are to take and the towns we will come to."

The idea seemed good to me; so I selected twelve of you, one man from each tribe. They left and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshcol and explored it. Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, "It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us." (1:22-25)

Alas! they now made the fatal mistake of beginning to reason about that which the Lord had distinctly promised and commanded. They came to Moses and proposed that the spies should be sent up to reconnoiter the land, and bring word again concerning the country and the way by which they should go. While, on the superficial view, this looks plausible enough as a human proposition, yet as a people supernaturally led by the very hand of God, such a resort to mere human wisdom was inconsistent and dangerous. If the Lord was to lead them what need had they of man's counsels? And if the Lord had told them what the land was, how dared they question it even sufficiently to try to find it out by human wisdom? And yet, even Moses was caught in the snare, and admits in his address, "The idea seemed good to me" (1:23). He even went to God and obtained the divine permission for this arrangement. God Himself allowed it to test their faith and show the folly of leaning on human understanding and the mistake which even the best of men are sure to make when they fail to act upon the simple principles of obedience and faith.

The spies were able to successfully accomplish their inspection and even to bring back with them a sample of the wonderful products of the land. And surely this ought to have been at least a pledge that the dangers were not insurmountable, if 12 men could go safely through this foreign territory.

### **Rebellion**

Their compromise was followed speedily by a bolder step of disobedience and rebellion.

But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You grumbled in your tents and said, "The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.'" (1:26-28)

They did not question the merits of the land but their cowardly hearts were afraid of the perils of the way. "Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there'" (1:28). Discouragement soon led to darker thoughts of God, and they dared to say, "The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us" (1:27).

So, still, the unbelief of God's people does not question the excellency of His promises or the reality of divine things and of the higher possibilities of Christian life, but it questions their own ability to live such a life, and faints before the dangers and temptations of the way and the helplessness of their own weakness and sinfulness; leaving God Himself quite out of view and forgetting that He is greater than all difficulties and mightier than all our weakness.

### **Moses' Appeal**

Moses appeals to them with this very thought.

"Then I said to you, 'Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you' " (1:29-30), and then he reminds them of their own previous experience of His victorious power "as he did for you in Egypt, . . . and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went" (1:30-31).

This is the ground of our confidence for all our spiritual victories; this is the answer to all our difficulties and all our fears; we are not sufficient for anything, but Christ is all-sufficient, and we "can do everything through him who gives [us] strength" (Philippians 4:13). When the soul sees the living Christ and His infinite resources, it has the pledge of perfect victory. They could not see God because their eyes were full of their enemies and their own insignificance.

### **Their Unbelief**

And so the crisis ends in utter unbelief and disobedience.

"In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God" (1:32). This is the root of all disobedience and sin. The fall of man at first sprang from doubting God. Salvation begins with the recovery of our lost faith, as apostasy always originates in some form of faithlessness. Let us "see to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12).

### **God's Rejection**

Their unbelief is immediately followed by the divine rejection (Deuteronomy 1:34-40).

When the LORD heard what you said, he was angry and solemnly swore: "Not a man of this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give your forefathers, except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He will see it, and I will give him and his descendants the land he set his feet on, because he followed the LORD wholeheartedly." (1:34-36)

That whole generation is refused by an angry God and consigned to an ignominious grave in the wilderness, and their little children, for whom they pretended to be afraid, are chosen to inherit the land which they refused. The only exceptions to this sweeping sentence of exclusion are Joshua and Caleb, the two faithful spies, who stood alone in the dark and awful hour of their people's revolt and pleaded with them at the risk of their lives to trust and obey Jehovah and go up at once and possess the land. Even Moses himself intimates that his own exclusion was in some measure due to the people's sin: "Because of you the LORD became angry with me also" (1:37).

It was their perverse spirit which provoked the meek and gentle lawgiver and for once in his life seemed to infect even him with the spirit of their unbelief. And, as the law could show no mercy even to its author he must become a monument of its inexorable severity.

### **Their Remorse And Recklessness**

The reaction from their desperate act soon comes and leads them into an attitude of presumption as wicked as their cowardice had been before.

Then you replied, "We have sinned against the LORD. We will go up and fight, as the LORD our God commanded us." So every one of you put on his weapons, thinking it easy to go up into the hill country.

But the LORD said to me, "Tell them, 'Do not go up and fight, because I will not be with you. You will be defeated by your enemies.' "

So I told you, but you would not listen. You rebelled against the LORD's command and in your arrogance you marched up into the hill country. The Amorites who lived in those hills came out against you; they chased you like a swarm of bees and beat you down from Seir all the way to Hormah. You came back and wept before the LORD, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you. (1:41-45)

As soon as they find that they have lost the inheritance through their wickedness, they go to the opposite extreme of remorse and regret, acknowledge their sin and offer immediately to go forward. But this is only the passionate impulse of the sorrow that works death; and even had God met them in this position they would signally have failed, and soon after proved that they did not possess any permanent element of true repentance or faith. And so He righteously refuses to allow them to go forward; they have chosen the issue and they must meet it. They soon show that their spirit is not truly chastened or penitent, by refusing to obey the warning of Moses, and rushing presumptuously forward against the enemy. They are terribly defeated and smitten by the Amorites and driven back in confusion and despair. So the willful and unbelieving heart swings from the extreme of doubt to that of daring presumption; attempts to do in its own strength what it had refused to do in the Lord's, and is met with desperate failure and disaster.

There is a time, we know not when,  
A place, we know not where,  
That marks the destiny of men  
For glory and despair.

Let none of us trifle with God's nows; but today, while it is called today, if we will hear His voice, let us harden not our hearts (Hebrews 3:13, 15). There is a sorrow that has no healing in it; a remorse that has no repentance in it, a weeping that has no softening, sanctifying power; a grief that even God has no compassion for, because it is the cry of a willful, proud and sinful heart; as self-willed in its weeping as it was in its defiance. What infinite pathos and despair there is in the closing words: "You came back and wept before the LORD, but he paid no attention to your weeping and turned a deaf ear to you" (Deuteronomy 1:45).

### **Wasted Years**

The Interval spent in Kadesh became wasted years.

"And so you stayed in Kadesh many days—all the time you spent there" (1:46).

How long they remained in Kadesh after this melancholy occurrence we do not know, and the narrative reads as if it did not matter much. There are chapters in life's history that are as blank and cold as the face of an iceberg. They count for nothing in the annals of God and eternity; they are simply, bitterly and utterly vague—barren and empty as the desert wind. What a suggestive meaning there is in this sentence, "And so you stayed in Kadesh many days—all the time you spent there" (1:46). That is to say that there were just so many days and they were counted simply by the number of days, and not by any event of the slightest interest or importance. They were just passed by and that was all. They were not according to the will of God, or according to the plan of His love and ordering, or according to the useful service with which they were filled, but they were just according to the number of the days. They had 38 years to throw away, to finish the tramp of their vain and lost existence, and it seemed to be little matter where they spent them.

Oh! it is pitiful to be living a life with God above us, immortality within us and eternity before us with such an awful record of vanity; and yet, such is the life of all who live not for God. They are just filling up the time until the next chapter, the long, the sad eternity.

### **The Wilderness Again**

The wandering in the wilderness is even sadder.

This is, if possible, still more sad. "Then we turned back and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea, as the LORD had directed me. For a long time we made our way around the hill country of Seir" (2:1).

A single verse completes the history of 3 million people for 38 years. "Then we turned back and set out toward the desert along the route to the Red Sea, as the LORD had directed me. For a long time we made our way around the hill country of Seir" (2:1). What a mournful picture; still more desolate as the speaker draws it out into days rather than years. Oh! how long and dreary they must have seemed to him in retrospect. Nearly 14,000 days of useless ineffectual wandering, and that when he himself was nearly 80 years old, and was wasting the last 38 years of his already almost finished life in this dreary land. In the 90th Psalm he has given us some conception of those scenes: "All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan" (90:9). Day by day and year by year he saw them fading before his eyes. Fathers and mothers wandered in the burning sands with their thirsty little ones, and saw one and another of their neighbors faint and sink amid the sands, gasp out their lives, and leave their bones to whiten in the desert, and they knew that soon their turn would come; for them there was no prospect but death.

Oh! how vivid a picture it is of the emptiness and failure of the Christian life which hesitates wholly to follow the Lord and to enter into the fullness of our inheritance. There will be very little history for many lives. One single verse in the book of Numbers (33:37) tells the story of most of the 40 years as we have already seen in that book. This very verse is the sole memorial, in the address of Moses, of that melancholy time from which his thoughts would gladly turn away. It is a chapter from the annals of eternity, and such awful blanks will meet many of us, it is to be feared, when we come face to face with the issues of life and the books of the judgment.

### **The New Departure**

"Then the LORD said to me, 'You have made your way around this hill country long enough; now turn north' " (2:2-3).

The 38 years of wandering have about passed; and now the command comes to turn northward from the territory of Edom toward the land of promise. The last days of the wilderness are spent in passing through, for the last time, the territory of the Edomites. Their first aggressive work is now to begin. Through many adversaries they are to fight their way into their inheritance.

### **The Edomites**

The Edomites are not to be attacked.

Give the people these orders: "You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. They will be afraid of you, but be very careful. Do not provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land, not even enough to put your foot on. I have given Esau the hill country of Seir as his own." (Deuteronomy 2:4-5)

They are their own brethren, the race of Esau, and their territory is not to be disturbed because of the covenant with Esau. They are to deal honestly by them and pay for all which they shall require, both food and drink; even their inhospitality is not to be avenged, but they are to be treated with forbearance and justice, even as the children of God today should act in all their dealings with the world and even with those that are most unkind and selfish.

### **The Moabites**

The Moabites also are spared because they are the descendants of Lot, and thus distantly related to the Hebrew race.

So we went on past our brothers the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We turned from the Arabah road, which comes up from Elath and Ezion Geber, and traveled along the desert road of Moab.

Then the LORD said to me, "Do not harass the Moabites or provoke them to war, for I will not give you any part of their land. I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as a possession." (2:8-9)

### **The Years Of Wandering**

Here the narrative pauses a moment to mark the close of the 38 years of wandering.

Thirty-eight years passed from the time we left Kadesh Barnea until we crossed the Zered Valley. By then, that entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. The LORD's hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp. (2:14-15)

As they cross the brook Zered, on the borders of Moab, the last of the unbelieving generation has passed away, and Moses sets up a memorial stone, as it were, in the record, to mark the beginning of the new departure and to recognize the hand of God in the solemn and awful dissolution of a whole generation. He adds, "The LORD's hand was against them until he had completely eliminated them from the camp" (2:15). "That entire generation of fighting men had perished from the camp, as the Lord had sworn to them" (2:14). How very dreadful it is to have the hand of the Lord against us; not one of all those millions escaped. Patiently His judgment waited until the work was thoroughly finished, and every soul was sifted from among the whole population. God's purposes, both of blessing and of judgment, are as immutable as eternity. Happy is he who has that mighty Hand upon his side.

### **The Ammonites**

They next pass the territory of the Ammonites.

The LORD said to me, "Today you are to pass by the region of Moab at Ar. When you come to the Ammonites, do not harass them or provoke them to war, for I will not give you possession of any land belonging to the Ammonites. I have given it as a possession to the descendants of Lot." (2:17-19)

And they, too, share the same immunity which their brethren, the Moabites, received on account of their relationship with Israel. Some important incidents of the earlier history both of the Moabites, Ammonites and Edomites, are here interspersed, giving us an account of how these tribes had dispossessed the former inhabitants, which were of the race of the giants, and had occupied their territory.

### **Their First Campaign**

The first aggressive movement follows immediately after this.

Set out now and cross the Arnon Gorge. See, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his country. Begin to take possession of it and engage him in battle. This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you. (2:24-25)

God would not let them fight until the old generation had all passed away. Now with a new race they enter upon their career of victory. It is not until the old generation in our heart has died that we can fight the battles of the Lord or claim the victories of faith. And so, immediately after the 38 years are ended, they commence the irrepressible conflict which is to be consummated on the other side of the Jordan.

Their first antagonist is Sihon, the king of the Amorites; and he is permitted to bring upon himself the conflict which ends in his destruction. A courteous message is sent to him asking permission to pass through the territory, and promising to respect the rights of person and property, and to buy honorably all supplies that may be needed. Sihon met the request with a hostile army and disputed the passage at Jahaz, but was utterly defeated, his whole race exterminated, the spoil of his rich land confiscated, and all his fortified cities captured and held. This was Israel's first aggressive victory,

and it must have been an unspeakable inspiration to the long discouraged and passive tribes, as well as an acquisition of invaluable territory and extensive and costly possessions.

This, as well as the subsequent victory, represents the conflicts and triumphs into which the Lord leads His people, even before they cross the Jordan in the full experience of death and resurrection life. The death of the old generation and the advent of the new perhaps represents the new life and birth in Christian experience, while the passage through the Jordan symbolizes the deeper experience of death and resurrection into which the converted soul passes afterwards, before its full inheritance of the land of promise. Israel had many glorious experiences even on the wilderness side of the Jordan; and so the children of God may pass through much victory and blessing even before they enter into the full meaning of death and resurrection with Christ. Most of their victories occur just as this conflict with Sihon occurred, out of the obstacles met with in the ordinary course of life. It was the refusal of Sihon to grant them a polite request which led to the possession of his entire territory. And so, the things that we call hindrances, difficulties and even injuries are the very occasions out of which God desires to bring, if we would only let Him, the most glorious triumphs of our experience.

### **The Second Campaign**

The conflict with Og and Bashan next follows.

Next we turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan with his whole army marched out to meet us in battle at Edrei. The LORD said to me, "Do not be afraid of him, for I have handed him over to you with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon."

So the LORD our God also gave into our hands Og king of Bashan and all his army. We struck them down, leaving no survivors. (3:1-3)

His was a still more valuable territory than that of the Amorites, including Bashan and Gilead. He was the last of the primitive race of giants and his tremendous stature may well suggest some of the formidable adversaries which confront us in our earlier experiences. Every one of them may become a trophy as valuable and yield us an inheritance as precious, as their position was threatening.

### **Division Of The New Territory**

Next comes the distribution of Gilead and Bashan among the two and a half tribes.

Of the land that we took over at that time, I gave the Reubenites and the Gadites the territory north of Aroer by the Arnon Gorge, including half the hill country of Gilead, together with its towns. The rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half tribe of Manasseh. (The whole region of Argob in Bashan used to be known as a land of the Rephaites. Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, took the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites; it was named after him, so that to this day Bashan is called Hawoth Jair.) And I gave Gilead to Makir. But to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the territory extending from Gilead down to the Arnon Gorge (the middle of the gorge being the border) and out to the Jabbok River, which is the border of the Ammonites. Its western border was the Jordan in the Arabah, from Kinnereth to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), below the slopes of Pisgah.

I commanded you at that time: "The LORD your God has given you this land to take possession of it. But all your able-bodied men, armed for battle, must cross over ahead of your brother Israelites. However, your wives, your children and your livestock (I know you have much livestock) may stay in the towns I have given you, until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they too have taken over the land that the LORD your God is giving them, across the Jordan. After that, each of you may go back to the possession I have given you." (3:12-20)

This territory was divided between Manasseh, Gad and Reuben, whose families were to remain in the cities while their men of war crossed the Jordan and completed the conquest of Canaan with the other tribes. All this Moses rehearsed to them just on the eve of the last great movement across the Jordan itself.

### **Moses' Disappointment**

Now comes the most tender part of all his retrospect, his own sad disappointment.

At that time, I commanded Joshua: "You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. The LORD will do the same to all the kingdoms over there where you are going. Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you."

At that time I pleaded with the LORD: "O Sovereign LORD, you have begun to show to your servant your greatness and your strong hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do the deeds and mighty works you do? Let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan—that fine hill country and Lebanon."

But because of you the LORD was angry with me and would not listen to me. "That is enough," the LORD said. "Do not speak to me anymore about this matter. Go up to the top of Pisgah and look west and north and south and east.

Look at the land with your own eyes, since you are not going to cross this Jordan. But commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see." So we stayed in the valley near Beth Peor. (3:21-29)

His heart has been so stirred up by seeing these mighty victories of the power of God over the enemies of Israel, that he longs to cross over with the people, even into the land of promise itself. And he ventures to ask the Lord once more, even if it be but to set his foot upon it and to see it; but his request is refused, as he pathetically tells them, for their sakes. His own offense would seem to have been provoked by their sin. All that the Lord would permit him to have was the view of the land from Pisgah's top. With this he is content, and cheerfully obeys the command to prepare Joshua, his successor, for the great work which is so soon to devolve upon him and encourages him by the assurance that the same divine presence will accompany him which God has just begun to manifest through Moses. And so he pauses in the recapitulation and turns next to:

## **SECTION 2—The Exhortation**

### **Deuteronomy 4:1-40**

#### **God's Law**

He charges them to remember the sacredness and integrity of the divine law: "Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it" (4:2).

Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you. (4:1-2)

#### **God's Judgments**

He reminds them how their own eyes have seen the judgments that have come in the past to all that have transgressed divine commandments, and how their obedience has brought them divine protection and blessing to this day. "You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did at Baal Peor. The LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, but all of you who held fast to the LORD your God are still alive today" (4:3-4).

#### **Their High Calling**

He charges them as a nation to remember the distinguished honor that is put upon them in being trusted with the divine law and the direct revelation of His will, and reminds them that this is to be the glory and strength of their wisdom and their understanding in the sight of the nations.

See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today? (4:5-8)

#### **Sacred Memories**

He specially impresses upon their hearts the remembrance of the majestic and solemn scenes amid which the law was given to them at Horeb with His living voice, and graven with His fingers on tables of stone, that they might be forever impressed upon their memory and hearts with lasting solemnity.

Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children." You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of the words but saw no form; there was only a voice. He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets. And the LORD directed me at that time to teach you decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. (4:10-14)

#### **Warnings Against Idolatry**

Especially he warns them against the sin of idolatry, which he foresaw was to be their future national snare, and which involved a direct apostasy from their covenant, as a people, with Jehovah.

You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, or like any creature that

moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below. And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars—all the heavenly array—do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven. (4:15-19)

He reminds them in this connection that amid all the majestic manifestations of the divine presence at Sinai there was no similitude of God, on any ground whatever, to authorize them in forming unto themselves any image or likeness of His spiritual and invisible person.

### **The National History**

He reminds them of their previous national history, their glorious redemption from Egypt and their separation unto God as His chosen inheritance, and calls upon them by all the sacredness of their high calling to be true to their covenant with Jehovah. "But as for you, the LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are" (4:20).

### **His Own Example**

He further impresses upon them the danger of disobedience, from his own personal example, and the judgment which has fallen even upon him because of a single offence, in excluding him from the land of promise; and he warns them that the God who has dealt thus with him will prove to them an inexorable Avenger if they presume to trifle with His sacred words, and warnings.

The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he solemnly swore that I would not cross the Jordan and enter the good land the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance. I will die in this land; I will not cross the Jordan; but you are about to cross over and take possession of that good land. (4:21-22)

### **God's Judgement Of Israel**

He next warns them in the most solemn manner of the judgment which shall come upon them and their posterity if they disobey and apostatize from Jehovah.

Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time—if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and provoking him to anger, I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed. The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you. (4:23-27)

The words are almost a literal prophecy of the trials that have actually come to these people.

### **Future Restoration**

At the same time he lights up even this dark future with the gracious promise that if, even in the lands of the enemy they shall repent and turn to God, He will mercifully forgive and even yet restore.

But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him. For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath. (4:29-31)

### **The Appeal Of Love**

By the tender sanctions of love does Moses finally seek to bind them to obedience and faithfulness, as he lingers with peculiar tenderness upon the blessings and privileges which have been poured out upon them, the love which has been displayed to them and the purposes of mercy which God has in store for them if they will not hinder His gracious plan by their own transactions and rebellion.

Ask now about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created man on the earth; ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened, or has anything like it ever been heard of? Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire, as you have, and lived? Has any god ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation, by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other. From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire. Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength. (4:32-37)

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

### **Moses' First Address on the Plains of Moab – Deut. 1:1-4:43**

The Bible so often tells us where God's people have utterly failed; thus do we need to wonder why God places these occasions in there—surely for our warning! **Couldn't we deeply learn and save ourselves lots of heartaches if we earnestly heeded His Word? Here consider Jesus' dire warning to Peter about his upcoming denial, and the awful shame he soon would be bearing because he wouldn't admit to himself that in his human state he had no "strength" to withstand the temptation that he would face (Matthew 26:31-35; 69-75).**

### **Section 1 – Recapitulation-Deuteronomy chaps. 1-3**

In these chapters Moses again reviews the history of Israel in their wanderings in the wilderness. **Carefully make special note of the following statements of A. B. Simpson with regard to whether or not the Israelites learned the lessons God intended for them:**

**(1:7-8) God's command to go in and take possession of the land that His covenant had given them.**

**(1:9-18) Organization and administration of the camp.**

**(1:19-33) Through the wilderness—does this apply to our lives also; does it always have to be a long time?**

**(1:34-46) The penalty for their rebellion—their unbelief in God's promise followed by their sin of presumption and rebellion, and many wasted years in Kadesh. Does this teach us a strong lesson about belief and obedience?**

**(2:1) Failure to wholly follow the Lord, and to enter into their inheritance! What a melancholy time!**

**(2:2-19) Trying to negotiate with hostile neighbors for passage through their land. All the fighting men of fighting age in Israel die. Dreary life for everyone! Does this depict the emptiness and failure of the Christian life which hesitates to wholly follow the Lord?**

**(2:20-37) First aggressive campaign against King Sihon after the old generation had all passed away. What can this represent in our lives today?**

**(3:1-11) The second giant king defeated—Og, king of Bashan. Do these giants represent some of the formidable adversaries that confront us early on in our experience? Who is the One who gives them into our hands to conquer?**

**(3:12-22) The land east of the Jordan is divided among the tribes of Manasseh, Gad and Reuben. Yet it is not the land of Canaan which God had intended. Would their blessings be the less for it?**

**(3:23-29) Moses was forbidden by God to enter the Promised Land. Do you recall his prior action that would not permit his entrance now? (Numbers 20:8-13) What privilege did God give him? And who was to be his successor?**

### **Section 2 – The Exhortation-Deuteronomy 4:1-40**

#### **God's Law**

From the beginning of the human race in Genesis 1:1, no Divine Law was given to mankind until God's choice of Israel as a nation and Moses as their leader. **Where is that located in the Word? Are they repeated another place in Deuteronomy? What chapter? Memorize the 10 commandments. Are all other secondary laws derived from these, such as those in Leviticus?**

#### **God's Judgments**

**Give a brief explanation as to why God must punish sin.**

#### **Their High Calling**

**Why is it that the Israelites (and we also) so quickly forget this high calling?**

### **Warnings Against Idolatry**

**Complete the following sentence: The making of idols or the worshiping of neighboring idols can only bring about . . . (State here what it does to their relationship to God.)**

### **The National History**

**Should Christians remind themselves daily of their deliverance and rich heritage in Christ? What happens when it is neglected?**

### **God's Judgment on Israel**

**What does it truly mean to be "in covenant with God?" How binding is it? How awesome is it from the standpoint of a Holy God especially choosing a people (nation) and making them His firstborn son (Exodus 4:22 and Exodus 19:5,6)?**

### **The Appeal of Love**

**Give your own statement regarding the tremendous kindness, love and mercy of God for these, His people, Israel.**

## **Deuteronomy 4:44-11:32**

### **MOSES'S SECOND ADDRESS ON THE PLAINS OF MOAB The Covenant in General**

This is a recapitulation of the covenant in general, which God had made with Israel, and a series of appeals and exhortations to faithfulness (chapters 5 to 11).

#### **The Parties Of The Covenant**

Moses summoned all Israel and said: "Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.)" (Deut. 5:1-5)

Moses specially reminds them that they themselves, as individuals, are parties to this covenant. It was made not with the fathers who are buried in the wilderness, merely, but with them who were present as, little children, who have been kept alive all these years and who still remember the awful scenes of Horeb and Sinai. The other party was the Lord Jehovah, whose covenant name is repeated five times in these four verses. Face to face He talked with them on the mount out of the midst of the fire, and they knew Him to be the personal and present God. Moses, too, was a party in this covenant and a witness to it, the mediator through which it was administered and who is a witness to their obligations and the divine commandments. "At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain" (5:5).

#### **The Preface Of The Covenant**

"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (5:6).

The sacred law was introduced by Jehovah with a reference to their redemption, implying very tenderly both for them and for us that the supreme ground of our obligation to God and others is His redeeming love. "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (5:6).

#### **The Words Of The Covenant**

This is substantially a repetition of the 10 great words of the Decalogue as previously given in the book of Exodus. There are some slight variations, chiefly in the fourth, fifth and 10th commandments. In the fourth commandment the word *keep* is substituted for *remember* in the previous record. The manservant and the maidservant are included among those that are to be protected from toil, and the obligation to rest is based not on the law of creation but on their redemption out of Egypt.

In the fifth commandment there are two additional phrases, "As the LORD your God has commanded you," and "that it may go well with you" (5:16). And in the 10th commandment the word *desire* is used instead of *covet* in reference to "your neighbor's house" (5:21), and is added to the things which are not to be coveted.

## The Two Tables

The law contains two tables. The first, usually called "The precepts of piety," and the second, "The precepts of probity." The Ten Commandments have been thus admirably summed up by thoughtful minds.

- (1) The object of worship. God alone revealed in His unity and supremacy.
- (2) The method of worship. The avoidance of idolatry and every outward resemblance of God and the most simple and profound spirituality.
- (3) The spirit of worship. Reverence toward the divine name and all by which God makes Himself known.
- (4) The time of worship.

Under the second table we have

- (1) The religion of the home. Fifth commandment.
- (2) The religion of the temper. Sixth commandment, substantially requiring love.
- (3) The religion of the body. Seventh commandment, requiring purity.
- (4) The religion of the hand. Eighth commandment, requiring diligence and honesty.
- (5) The religion of the tongue. Ninth commandment.
- (6) The religion of the heart. Tenth commandment, requiring holy desires and motives as well as acts and words.

## The Solemn Circumstances Of The Covenant

These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leading men of your tribes and your elders came to me. And you said, "The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from *the* fire. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him. But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer. For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey."

The LORD heard you when you spoke to me and the LORD said to me, "I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

Go, tell them to return to their tents. But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess." (5:28-31)

The consuming fire, the overshadowing cloud, the thick darkness, the living voice of God, the graven words in the tables of stone, all these so overwhelmed the trembling multitude that they entreated Moses to stand between them and God. God was pleased with their veneration, and said, "Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it may go well with them and their children forever" (5:29). All this Moses reminds them of, and then adds his own exhortation.

## Moses' Exhortation

"So be careful to do what the LORD your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. Walk in all the way that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess" (Deuteronomy 5:33).

They are not only to do, but to be careful to do it; they are not only to walk, but they are not to turn aside to the right nor to the left, but to walk in all the ways of the Lord.

## The Spirit Of True Obedience

### Deuteronomy 6:1-25

This is described in the present chapter by two apparently opposite terms, whose happy blending constitutes the very essence of true Christian motive. The one is the fear, the other is the love of God. "That you . . . may fear the LORD your God" (6:2), and "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength" (6:5). "Fear the LORD God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name" (6:13). And the Lord commanded us to fear the Lord our God, "so that we might always prosper" (6:24).

Thus these two opposite threads mingle all through the texture of this address. And yet they are not opposite, but one, and together they constitute the true spirit of Christian obedience.

True however, to the spirit of the dispensation of law, there is more to fear than of love; and yet it is a fear whose foundation is love, and a love which is rooted in filial fear.

This chapter is an anticipation of the New Testament law of love and it is the basis of our Lord's own teaching in Mark 12:29. It is the first of all the commandments: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:29-30). This is the first commandment.

Without this spirit there can be no hearty obedience. It takes the bondage out of duty and enables us to see, as is so beautifully expressed in the 24th verse of the sixth chapter, that the Lord commands us to do all these statutes "that we might always prosper" (Deuteronomy 6:24).

This beautiful sentence (6:5), expresses the very essence of the ancient law. The Jews begin their daily liturgy with it, and the fifth verse is written in the manuscripts with the first letter of the first word, and the last letter of the last word in larger characters, to emphasize this golden sentence; and to mark, as they say, in an emphatic manner for a witness, the claims of Jehovah to our life and obedience.

It is not for His own selfish pleasure, or to gratify a despotic will on His own part, that He has given us His sovereign law, but it is as the expression of that which is itself eternally right and beautiful, and it is as necessary to our welfare as it is to His glory. His object is that we ourselves may be right; so it is added in the 25th verse, "And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness" (6:25). We ourselves shall be right, and what higher good can any being claim than to be right with God?

Of course, there is also in these words the judicial idea, so prominent in the Old Testament, of righteousness, in the sense of meeting the claims of God, and standing justified in His sight through perfect obedience. This was one design of the ancient law, to give to man the opportunity of proving whether he could and would thus meet the claim of righteousness. And Christ Himself expressed this in His answer to the young ruler, "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (Matthew 19:17). Of course, God knew that man in his own strength could not thus achieve righteousness, but the kindest thing that He could do was to let him find it out. Thus the law became their schoolmaster and led them to Christ.

The love side of the law must not be lost sight of amid all the severity of the ancient dispensation. In the bosom of the darkest cloud there was always a rainbow of covenant promise. While dealing with men on the principles of justice and righteousness, God was ever anticipating the tenderer revelation of His Fatherhood and grace, which was to be manifested through Jesus Christ in the gospel. And so this book of Deuteronomy especially presents the tenderest appeals of the divine heart for the love and obedience of His children. At the same time the element of fear must be added, and is still added in perfect harmony, even in spirit, with the gospel, to give additional strength to the solemn sanctions of God's holy law. This is the spirit which fears, not so much His wrath, as the loss of His favor; it has its real root in love, and so values His smile that it fears to lose it by the slightest form of disobedience.

Moses wisely foresaw the danger, that when they should have entered into their inheritance and become surrounded with prosperity and every earthly blessing, they might forget the Lord (Deuteronomy 6:10-12). Therefore, they are solemnly reminded that the Lord their God is a jealous God, and they must not slightly tempt Him or provoke His anger (6:15-16), but diligently keep His commandments (6:17), cherish them in their hearts (6:6), teach them to their children (6:7, 20), talk to them when they sit in the house, when they walk by the way, when they lie down and when they rise up; bind them for a sign upon their hand, and as frontlets between their eyes, write them upon the posts of their houses and upon their gates (6:7-8).

The original is very expressive in some of these verses. The seventh verse, which requires them to teach the law to their children, implies that they are to impress them as the incisive mark of a sharp instrument. They were to be bound upon the hand to impress the righteousness of their actions; between their eyes, signifying the direction of their thoughts and purposes; and upon their doorposts and gates as expressing the consecration of their business and their home life.

Literally following this command the Jews at a later period established the custom of carrying about their person slips of parchment with sentences of the law written upon them. These are the phylacteries referred to by Christ in the New Testament, and they retained the outward form long after they had lost the true spirit of love and obedience.

There is a beautiful sentence in the closing of this chapter which strikingly expresses the full purpose of redemption, "He brought us out from there to bring us in" (6:23). This is the story of grace both in the Old Testament and the New. God must take us out before He can bring us in; but He never takes us out without intending to give us a better incoming, and a far more blessed inheritance than anything we can lose.

## **Seperation**

The necessity of separation from the heathen nations was in order to maintain the faithful keeping of God's covenant.

When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations — the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you — and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. This is

what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. (7:1-5)

He here proceeds to show them the indispensable necessity of their being wholly separated from the world if they are to walk in faithfulness with God. This indeed is the very purpose that He has had in "bringing them out that He might bring them in." He knew it was not possible for them to be a holy people unto Him while surrounded with all the example and influence of the idolatrous Egyptians, and so He warns them with solemnity against the danger of association with the Canaanitish nations among whom they are soon to enter. They must not think of any association with them, by covenant or intermarriage, but must utterly destroy and exterminate them, and must not fear their power but trust in the strength of the Lord, and persevere until they are utterly cast out (7:1-5, 16-26).

This is for us extremely instructive. Many Christians try to obey God without being upon the ground of obedience, which is separation from the world, and, therefore, they ignominiously fail.

God's ancient people could not stand a moment in partnership with the heathen. Their assistance was much more to be deprecated than their resistance; and so still the most formidable enemy of the Church of God is a smiling and fawning world. We must, therefore, be separated wholly from it in spirit and confession, and go outside the camp with our blessed Master, bearing His reproach. Then shall we be filled with the divine power and to stand in victory and draw others to our side. The child of God can never overcome the world until he stands apart from it in protest. On its own level he will utterly fail ever to lift it to his standpoint, but from the level of the cross of Calvary he can draw all men unto his Lord, but not until he has said, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

### **Motives Of Obedience And Faithfulness**

1. God's personal love to Israel and His gracious choice of them as His people and inheritance is shown.

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands. But

those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction;  
he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him.

Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today. (Deuteronomy 7:6-11)

The words used in verse 6 mean, literally, a people of property, that is, His own peculiar property. This is the very essence and foundation of consecration, even in the New Testament sense, as expressed in First Corinthians and First Peter: "You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9).

The ground of God's gracious choice is declared to be His sovereign love to Israel, and also the covenant which He had made with their fathers. So He loves us not for our own sakes but for His sake and for the love of the Lord Jesus Christ in whom we are chosen and made accepted in the Beloved. His love is not a mere caprice, but is faithful and eternal even to a thousand generations (Deuteronomy 7:9), to those that keep His commandments; and yet back of it there is a jealous and consuming displeasure which will meet unfaithfulness with judgment and recompense (7:10).

### **Special Blessings**

2. The second motive is the promise of special blessing if they obey the Lord and keep His covenant. The blessings are then specified.

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

## Prosperity

The first is temporal prosperity, including their children, their flocks, the fruit of the land, the corn, the wine, and the oil and every other blessing of a generous, national prosperity.

The word wine here properly means the ripe grapes, and is so used in various places.

## Health And Healing

The next special blessing is health: "The LORD will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you" (7:15). This is simply a renewal of the covenant which had been made at Marah 40 years before. Lest it should be said that the covenant was only for their experience in the wilderness, the same promise is here renewed in even stronger terms for their mature national life, and so, undoubtedly, intended to be permanent, and to teach, both them and us, that God is the true Source of His people's life for body as well as for soul and spirit. To apply these words, as some have done, to the plagues of Egypt, and intimate that they simply contain a promise that they should be spared those special judgments, seems extremely frivolous when it is considered that Israel never had suffered from these plagues and certainly needed no such exemption. This is the renewal of God's ancient covenant of healing, and it is still continued in the provisions of the New Testament and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. But, as in ancient Israel, it is still connected with a life of separation and obedience unto God; and it is distinctly recognized here as a special chastening upon the enemies of God and His people even as still later in this book (chapter 28) it is distinctly referred to as the curse of disobedience.

## Victory

3. The third special blessing promised as a motive to this covenant is victory over their enemies (7:16-26).

You must destroy all the peoples the LORD your God gives over to you. (7:16)

The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you. But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed. (7:22-23)

Not all at once should this deliverance be realized, for the Lord shall "drive out those before you little by little" (7:22), but none the less complete shall the deliverance be if they will be but faithful unto the Lord and not fear their adversaries but trust in His almighty presence and victorious power.

## Past Mercies

4. The next motive by which Moses encourages Israel to obedience is the recollection of God's past mercies and especially His sustaining love and power during their wanderings in the wilderness (8:1-6).

"Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years" (8:2).

Especially are they to remember the great purpose of God in all His dealings with them, namely, their moral and spiritual discipline "to test [them] in order to know what was in [their hearts], whether or not [they] would keep his commands" (8:2). Moreover, He also designed to show them the all-sufficiency of His protecting care and how fully He was able to provide for all their needs in the most trying circumstance.

"He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD" (8:3).

The fact of God's almighty care in the face of the perils and trials of the wilderness was fitted to encourage them to trust and obey Him in the most difficult situation, and to know that if they were faithful they had nothing to fear. Our Lord quotes this passage in His answer to the tempter. He applies it not only to Himself, but to man in general, teaching us thus that God is able to sustain our physical life by His word and Spirit as directly as our spiritual life, and that there are times and circumstances in which we must rise above the natural to the supernatural provisions of His grace, and live, not by our own strength, or even the original means of sustaining it, but directly by His own life. This was really what He was teaching Israel in the wilderness, and what all His children need to learn, even in their physical life, and when we learn it, it becomes a blessed incentive and inspiration to holiness, and the physical blessing is only a steppingstone to the far higher spiritual blessing.

Not only did God's care extend to their health, but even to their very raiment. "Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell," (that is, through the wearing out of your sandals), "during these forty years" (8:4).

So, still, the blessing of God, while we need not expect it miraculously to clothe us, will provide for the wants of His trusting children in many gracious and providential ways, and the answers to prayer in the annals of Christian life, in supplying daily bread and clothing dependent children, are as wonderful as the story of the wilderness.

Further, they are to remember not only this blessing in the wilderness, but also the chastenings of the Lord, as an incentive to faithfulness. "That as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you" (8:5). It is a good thing to remember God's chastenings. He means that we shall remember them, therefore He sometimes makes them

very sharp, but He also means that we shall remember them without bitterness or sting. Therefore, He adds, "Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you" (8:5).

The memory of our trials is salutary, and linked with the deepest spiritual blessings of our lives. Thus he recalls to their minds the blessings and the trials of the 40 years which they had passed together and encourages them, by the review, to faithfulness in the oft-repeated sentence: "Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and revering him" (8:6).

### **Future Prospects**

5. He next incites them to obedience by looking forward to the future, and reminds them of the good land into which the Lord is about to bring them in blessing (8:7-20).

The fertility and abundance of the land is described. "A land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills" (8:7-9).

All these material blessings are but types of the richer spiritual inheritance into which God brings His children now, where they still may find the fountains of grace and the depths that come both from the valleys and the hills; not only the staple blessings of our spiritual life, but also the pomegranates and the honey, and even the stern rocks yield us the iron and brass of spiritual strength.

Then they are next reminded that in the fullness of their blessings they are not to forget the bounty of the Giver and imagine that they have achieved these triumphs and blessings by their own power, but are still to recognize their dependence upon Him and "remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your forefathers" (8:18).

So, too, in our spiritual inheritance, even our highest blessings will become a curse if they ever encourage us to self-sufficiency or independence of God, or lead us to forget that "in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28), and must ever cling to Him as helplessly in our fullest blessing as in the time of our deepest depression.

### **Their Own Unworthiness**

6. The next consideration by which he urges them to a spirit of humble obedience and faithfulness is the review of their own past unworthiness and the signal mercy of God in forgiving their repeated sins, and sparing them through his own intercession for them (Deuteronomy 9:4-10:20). The special object for this review is to anticipate any thought of self-righteousness on their part.

After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, "The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness." No it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you. It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people. (9:4-6)

And then, in order to thoroughly humble all their pride, he takes them back to the humiliating story of their provocations in the wilderness.

Remember this and never forget how you provoked the LORD your God to anger in the desert. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD. At Horeb you aroused the LORD's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you. (9:7-8)

Then, after the account of his own separation with God on the mount, Moses reminds them of the sin which he witnessed on his return.

Then the LORD told me, "Go down from here at once, because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have turned away quickly from what I commanded them and have made a cast idol for themselves."

And the LORD said to me, "I have seen this people, and they are a stiff-necked people indeed! Let me alone, so that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make you into a nation stronger and more numerous than they."

So I turned and went down from the mountain while it was ablaze with fire. And the two tablets of the covenant were in my hands. When I looked, I saw that you had sinned against the LORD your God; you had made for yourselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD had

commanded you. So I took the two tablets and threw them out of my hands, breaking them to pieces before your eyes.

Then once again I fell prostrate before the LORD for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the LORD's sight and so provoking him to anger. I feared the anger and wrath of the LORD, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again the LORD listened to me. And the LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too. Also I took that sinful thing of yours, the calf you had made, and burned it in the fire. Then I crushed it and ground it to powder as fine as dust and threw the dust into a stream that flowed down the mountain. (9:12-21)

Then comes the brief glance at the scenes of their murmurings and chastisement at Taberah, Massah, Kibroth Hattaavah and finally the culminating rebellion which shut their fathers out of the land forever.

"And when the LORD sent you out from Kadesh Barnea, he said, 'Go up and take possession of the land I have given you.' But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You did not trust him or obey him, You have been rebellious against the LORD ever since I have known you" (9:23-24).

Then, more fully he recalls to them his own intercession for them for 40 days and 40 nights at Sinai, and shows them that it was not their worthiness, or for their sake that they were preserved and blessed, but through the mercy and grace of God.

In the opening verse of the following chapter Moses continues the account of his intercession the second time in Horeb; referring more especially to the results of this intercession (10:1-5), namely, the giving of the tables of the law a second time, written with the finger of God, and preserved in the ark of the covenant. It would seem as though Moses thus reminded them that God had forgiven them on account of that of which the ark was a type (foreshadow), His new covenant with us in Christ.

For the same reason, probably, also he refers next (10:8-11) to the separation of the tribe of Levi for the service of the priesthood as a type (foreshadow) of the intercession of the Lord Jesus, our Great High Priest. Thus from their own unworthiness, even, their thoughts were led up to the mercy of God in the new covenant of grace, which all His dealings with them are meant to teach us more fully.

### **A Significant Change**

In connection with this there may be a typical meaning in the brief accounts of their journeyings introduced at this point.

"The Israelites traveled from the wells of the Jaakanites to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried, and Eleazar his son succeeded him as priest. From there they traveled to Gudgodah and on to Jotbathah, a land with streams of waters" (10:6-7).

Some have supposed that the transition from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan, which signifies "the wells of trouble," to Jotbathah, the land of rivers of waters, which means "pleasantness," was intended to symbolize the gracious dealings of God with them. All this long review of the saddest story of all their past, namely, their wickedness and rebellion, was designed to humble them and to guard them against all thought of self-righteousness.

And so, sometimes it is well for us to remember our faults and errors and to be deeply humbled by the forbearance and mercy of God toward our unworthiness. Even sin itself is sometimes overruled, like David's and Simon Peter's, to lead to a deeper self-crucifixion and a humbler and holier walk with God.

The verses that follow are simply the application of this style of exhortation common to this class of writings. But, although so oft repeated, it is never a vain repetition, but full offender pleading and holy sweetness. How full of the spirit of the gospel were such appeals as these:

What does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. (10:12-16)

### **The Greatness Of Their God**

7. The next motive to which Moses appeals is the majesty and greatness of the God to whom they are bound in covenant obligation, as shown in all His glorious dealings and mighty works in their past history (10:17-11:8).

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt. Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name. He is your praise; he is your God,

who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes. Your forefathers who went down into Egypt were seventy in all, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky.

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

Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. (10:17-11:8)

It is well for us also to realize the majesty of our King, and to transfer all this glory to the head of Jesus of Nazareth, our beloved Lord. It is well for us at times to ascend the transfiguration mount with Him, and behold His majesty, or lie prostrate, with John, at His feet, and hear Him say, "I am the First and the Last" (Revelation 1:17), or amid all the majesty and splendor of His throne to listen to the gentle whisper which assures us, "It is I. Don't be afraid" (Matthew 14:27).

### **The Balance Of Hope And Fear**

8. The final motive presented for their obedience is the mingled light and shadow of promise and warning, hope and fear, the blessing and curse (Deuteronomy 11:26-29). It is summed up in the closing words of this chapter.

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses. (11:26-29)

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

### **The Covenant in General**

#### **The Parties of the Covenant**

##### **Deuteronomy 5:1-5**

Moses is making it very clear to them that *they* are parties to the Covenant, and *not* their fathers who now are perished. **Does this bring the emphasis of the strength of the Covenant into strong light for their receiving, understanding and obeying? Who are the other parties to the Covenant? Was Moses' role as a mediator here to be a type ( a person believed to foreshadow another) of Christ in the New Testament?**

#### **The Solemn Circumstances of the Covenant**

##### **Deuteronomy 5:22-31**

**Try putting yourself into their place, considering the fact that for 430 years while living as slaves in Egypt they had not known their God intimately.**

#### **Moses' Exhortation**

**What would be the rewards if they obeyed?**

#### **The Spirit of True Obedience**

##### **Deuteronomy 6:1-25**

**State how you grasp and comprehend the following:**

- a. **Fearing the Lord your God, and loving the Lord your God.**
- b. **This chapter anticipates the N. T. law of love and is the basis of the Lord's teaching in Mark 12:29.**
- c. **God knew that man in his own strength could not achieve righteousness.**

#### **Separation**

##### **Deuteronomy 7:1-5**

**Give your understanding of 1 John 2:15-17. Who is the present world ruler (give Scripture)?**

## Health and Healing

Could disobedience be the cause of disease and other judgments in lives today?

## Victory

Deuteronomy 7:16-26

Continuing in the same vein as health and healing, could our deliverance from enemies be assured when we walk in faith in our Lord, not fearing our adversaries?

## Past Mercies

Deuteronomy 8:1-6

The matter of truly remembering what the Lord has done for His people is recognized throughout the Word. Note the following therein that strongly encourage our remembering:

The rainbow

God's Covenant

Passover

Sabbath

Offering

Seed

God's Book of Remembrance

Lord's Supper

Malachi 3:16 states: "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a Book of Remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord, and who meditate on His name." God truly remembers those who are His. **How then does this speak to us who have received so much, and always will—through His never-ending grace and love?**

## Future Prospects

Deuteronomy 8:7-20

Would you say that many people today are truly thankful and remembering God as the Giver of rich bounties? What has your heart said in good times and in bad? And in what danger are we when we cease to be thankful and fail to recall from where all blessings have come?

## Their Own Unworthiness

Deuteronomy 9:4–10:20

Moses is known as a type of Christ—that is, one who prefigures the coming of a future one by his character and actions. **Can you think of any other reason why Moses begged God not to destroy these corrupt, stiff-necked people?** Moses, himself, had been very frustrated over and over by their continual sinning, and yet he begged God's mercies for them. **How do you explain this—and, how would you have felt in his place?**

## A Significant Change

Deuteronomy 10:6-16

This lesson tells us that the combination of their wickedness and rebellion, as well as God's gracious dealings with them was designed to humble them and to guard them against all thoughts of self-righteousness. **Do we need to use this same kind of introspection for our lives—and fairly often? Comment.**

## The Greatness of Their God

Deuteronomy 10:17- 11:8

In these days we are studying, there was no Bible reference for them to study as to how they should live and walk with God. **Do you believe they could grasp what God desired of them by all these situations they passed through?**

## The Balance of Hope and Fear

Deuteronomy 11:26-19

Would you be able to say that the Israelites were beginning to understand the meaning of Covenant—God's covenant? The awe and seriousness of it?

## Deuteronomy 12:1-26:19

### MOSES'S SECOND ADDRESS ON THE PLAINS OF MOAB

Particular Statutes and Judgments with Reference to Details of Religious, Civil, and Social Life

This is a series of particular statutes and judgments with reference to the details of their personal, social and national life (chapters 12 to 26).

## **1. Religious**

### **Idolatry Destroyed**

The shrines of heathen idolatry were to be destroyed.

"Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places" (12:2-3).

These would be incitements to them to follow the customs of the heathen, and every link of association must be removed.

### **The Place Of Worship**

They were to worship Jehovah in the place which He Himself should choose.

But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you. (12:5-7)

Not in every place were they, at their own capricious will, to worship after their own pleasure, but in the one place which God would choose, thus preparing their minds for the New Testament revelation of Jesus Christ, as the only way of access to the Father, and the limitations of prayer, according to Jesus' revealed will and way of approach.

Still, we too must be led of the Lord to the place that He should choose for the consecration and service of our life.

### **Blood Prohibited**

They were at liberty to eat freely of the flesh of all clean animals, but they must sacredly remember the law prohibiting the use of blood.

Nevertheless, you may slaughter your animals in any of your towns and eat as much of the meat as you want, as if it were gazelle or deer, according to the blessing the LORD your God gives you. Both the ceremonially unclean and clean may eat it. But you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. (12:15-16)

### **The Tithes**

There is a beautiful provision for their eating their own tithes—corn, wine, oil and the firstlings of their flocks—before the Lord in the place that He should choose; thus transforming their very sacrifices into feasts of joy and holy gladness.

You must not eat in your own towns the tithe of your grain and new wine and oil, or the firstborn of your herds and flocks, or whatever you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts. Instead, you are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God will choose— you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns—and you are to rejoice before the LORD your God in everything you put your hand to. (12:17-18)

This sheds a lovely light on the principle of sacrifice and consecration, teaching us that it is meant to be to us a joy as well as service for God and others. At the same time they were by no means to forget the Levite in the sacrifices, and the principle of love was to be thus the handmaid of joy.

### **Heathen Customs**

They were carefully to avoid all the customs of the heathen.

And after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods. . . . You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. (12:30-31)

It is possible that even after we have protested against the sin of another we may ourselves imitate it.

### **False Prophets**

Still more stringently to guard against these dangers, all false prophets and enticers to idolatry were to be put to death (13). Three such cases are supposed. The first is that of a worker of signs and wonders, or a false prophet, who should entice them to idolatry and appeal, perhaps, to his signs and wonders (13:1-5). He was to be put to death.

The second is the case of a near relative; a brother, a son, a daughter, a wife, a friend, who should entice them to idolatry. The command was: "Do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him. You must certainly put him to death. Your hand must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people. Stone him to death, because he tried to turn you away from the LORD your God" (13:8-10).

What a solemn spiritual lesson this is, for us to resist, at any cost, the enticements of those that we love the best to lead us from God. While we may not now literally put the tempter to death, we are to slay without mercy the affections that would lead us astray, and cut off the tie that would thus ensnare us.

The third case is the case of a city among them that should be led into idolatry.

In this case they were to destroy the inhabitants with the sword, and burn with fire every particle of the spoil, and thus solemnly and utterly exterminate the very roots of idolatry from among them (13:12-18).

### **Personal Defilement**

They were to avoid all personal defilement.

First, in regard to their bodies, by imitating the customs of mourning in heathen nations, the mutilating of their flesh, the shaving of their eyebrows.

You are the children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, for you are a holy people to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession. (14:1-2)

Compare Leviticus 19:28; Jeremiah 16:6; 48:37; Ezekiel 7:18; 27:31.

Secondly, this is to apply to their food.

They are not to eat any unclean animals. The same distinctions already given in Leviticus are here repeated. This, as already shown, was intended as an object lesson to lead up to the higher conception of moral and spiritual right and wrong.

There is a very striking prohibition at the close of these injunctions. "Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk" (Deuteronomy 14:21).

There seems to be something here suggesting the utmost delicacy of feeling, teaching us that there are certain things that are unnatural, and which are to be avoided from a fine instinct of spiritual sensitiveness. It could not harm either the kid or the mother, but it seemed a little hard, and apparently suggests the cruel and painful separation between the little victim and its dam.

### **Their Offerings**

The system of tithes was to be faithfully observed.

They were to be presented either in kind, or by commutation to be paid for in money. The principle of the tithes was that God was to be recognized as the owner of all their possessions, and the offering was given as a pledge of the whole. But, even the presenting of this to God was to be accompanied with rejoicings. It was not to be a task, but a feast, and the givers themselves partakers of the feast when their offering was presented. The first two years' tithes were given for the support of the ordinances of the Lord. Every third year the tithe was devoted to the poor, the stranger and the Levite. The New Testament law of giving is not lower, but higher. We are to count all as the Lord's and give abundantly, as He has prospered us, and to give systematically for the support of His cause, and the relief of His suffering children.

### **The Year of Release**

#### **Deuteronomy 15:1-11**

"At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts" (15:1).

Every seventh year was to be sabbatic. The land was to rest from cultivation; debts were to be suspended for a whole year in the case of their own brethren, but in the case of aliens, they might exact payment. They were to be especially ready to lend unto their poor brethren, and must not allow the approach of the year of release to limit their generosity in this respect, or tempt them to say, "The year for canceling debts is near" (15:9). They were especially to remember the poor and have them in their midst, and open their hands wide unto them, nor be grieved when they had thus helped them, "because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to" (15:10).

### **The Release Of Slaves**

#### **Deuteronomy 15:12-18**

Every slave was to be set free at the end of seven years without respect to the ordinary year of release; no matter at what time his service began, the seventh year brought his freedom; and he was to be dismissed and started in his new life with liberal supplies for all his needs.

"And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you" (15:13-14).

One exception was made to this rule if the servant did not want to be released, namely, to thrust an awl through his ear into the door, and dedicate himself to perpetual servitude. Then the beautiful custom formerly referred to in Exodus 21:1-6, was to be performed as the ceremony that sealed this voluntary contract: "Then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your maidservant" (15:17).

## **The Firstlings of Their Flocks**

### **Deuteronomy 15:19-23**

All the firstborn of animals, they are reminded again, are to be the Lord's. "Do not put the firstborn of your oxen to work, and do not shear the firstborn of your sheep" (15:19). It was to be sacredly the Lord's, sacrificed unto Jehovah, and eaten in the sacrificial meal in token of the mutual fellowship of God and the worship in the blessed service of consecration. If there should be any blemish in it, it must not be sacrificed to the Lord, but might be eaten in their own homes. The first fruits, in this case, were intended to recognize all the rest of their flocks as the property of the Lord.

## **The Yearly Feasts**

The three great feasts which required the presence of the whole people at the sanctuary are here re-enacted, namely, the Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement were not referred to here, because they did not require the assembling of all the people. There is no special difference between the requirements here given and the previous enactments for these festivals. We have already seen that these three feasts specially symbolized the three great events of the Christian Dispensation, namely, the sacrificial death of Christ, the descent of the Holy Spirit and the Second Coming of our Lord, introducing the age of glory and blessedness. It is fitting that this beautiful picture of the gospel age should close this section with respect to the religious laws and institutions of the Mosaic age.

## **2. Civil and Social Statutes**

### **The Appointment of Judges and Officers**

Judges were to be appointed from each tribe. "Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly" (16:18).

Two classes of officers are here provided, judges and officers, or secretaries, who would be the lawyers and clerks of the courts. God is author of civil government and requires the most impartial righteousness and uprightness on the part of all who administer justice. Some of the highest examples of Christian character, even in modern times, have been found among this class, and when this great office is perverted the fountains of public righteousness are defiled, and the foundations of civil society in danger.

### **To Guard the Claims of God**

The highest exercise of public justice is to guard the claims of religion, and to punish disloyalty to the Supreme Judge, God Himself.

Therefore, the very first statute in their civil code had reference to idolatry. It was never intended that human government should be detached from religion, but distinctly recognize it as its first concern; not in the sense of controlling the religious life of the people, but of requiring fidelity to the religious laws already established by the Lord Himself, and punishing treason against Jehovah in the form of idolatry. Therefore, in verses 21 and 22, in connection with the appointment of judges, it is required that no asherah, or idol, nor any pillar, such as that associated with idolatry, should be set up near the altar of the Lord.

In connection also with the judicial office, it was required that they should guard against any perversion of the divine worship by the offering of a blemished sacrifice. "Do not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep that has any defect or flaw in it, for that would be detestable to him" (17:1).

### **To Punish Idolatry**

#### **Deuteronomy 17:2-7**

The punishment of idolatry was to be faithfully executed.

The trial was to be justly administered, and not less than two or three witnesses required, and the hands of these witnesses were to be the first that should be laid upon him to inflict the punishment of death.

### **A Court of Appeal**

A supreme court seems to be provided for.

If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge—whether bloodshed, lawsuits or assaults—take them to the place the LORD your God will choose. Go to the priests, who are Levites, and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict. You must act according to the decisions they give you at the place the LORD will choose. Be careful to do everything they direct you to do. (17:8-10)

In cases where the local judge was not able to decide, the matter was to be referred, in this case, to the court at the sanctuary, consisting of the priests and the judge presiding there. The sentence of this court was to be final, anyone replying against it being regarded as acting in defiance of the authority of God Himself.

### **Provision for the Kingly Office**

#### **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**

There is here an anticipation of what actually occurred in the time of Samuel. While the choice of the king is recognized even here as their will, rather than the Lord's, yet it is provided for on condition that they shall choose one whom the Lord shall choose, and that he shall be one of their brethren, and in no case a foreigner.

Then several important rules are laid down for the government of the king, which it would have been well for Israel if their rulers had always obeyed. He must not multiply horses or wives, or treasures of silver and gold, and he must keep a copy of the law of the Lord, and faithfully keep its commandments as the condition of personal blessing and national prosperity.

The spirit of a true king is beautifully expressed by the closing verse, requiring, on his part, that humility which is always the accompaniment of true greatness, and that righteousness on the part of himself and his children which ever afterwards brought blessing to Israel, as in the reigns of David, Jehoshaphat and Josiah, while the absence of humility ever involved them in disaster and national judgment.

### **Care for the Priesthood**

In connection with the judicial office, the protection of the Levite, the granting of their rights and their support by the people is provided for. They had no inheritance in Israel, but they were to receive the sacrifices of the people and the tithes, and they were to be always welcome whenever they should come among the people from any quarter of the land, the object of a common hospitality, and the Lord's own charge upon the bounty and beneficence of His people.

### **False and True Prophets**

#### **Deuteronomy 18:9-22**

The most stringent laws were to be executed against false prophets and all forms of superstition.

The worship of Moloch is first forbidden (18:10). Divination, which is more fully described in Ezekiel 21:21, was the observing of times, referring to augury or sorcery, and was common among the Romans and other nations. Enchantments referred to the arts of magic and witchcraft which were practiced through nostrums and unlawful arts. A dreamer seems to refer to the custom of opening certain knots of different colors of threads connected with certain incantations. A consulter with familiar spirits is identical with modern clairvoyance and the ancient oracles of Apollo. A wizard literally means a wise one, one that portended to occult science and arts not commonly known. A necromancer means, literally, one dealing with the dead, those who profess to call up the dead, and is thus identical with modern spiritualism. All these things were an abomination to the Lord, as well as forms of devil worship. In contrast with all these, Moses utters the solemn prediction of the coming of the true Prophet, and the purity and authority of His divine teachings.

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."

The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account." (Deuteronomy 18:15-19)

Any false prophet who should presume to speak that which the Lord had not spoken should be punished with death; and a sufficient test was given by which they might distinguish the false from the true.

There never was an age when these solemn touchstones of truth and warning against error were more practical and timely than our own.

### **Cities of Refuge**

#### **Deuteronomy 19:1-13**

This is why I command you to set aside for yourselves three cities.

If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he promised; on oath to your forefathers, and gives you the whole land he promised them, because you carefully follow all these laws I command you today—to love the LORD your God and to walk always in his ways—then you are to set aside three more cities. Do this so that innocent blood will not be

shed in your land, which the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance, and so that you will not be guilty of bloodshed. (19:7-10)

This section provides for the three cities of refuge which were to be set apart on the west side of the Jordan. The law for those on the east of the Jordan had been enunciated (4:41). These were to be in the midst of the land. Provision is here specially made for the roads leading to these cities.

Provision was also made for three additional cities of refuge, when the land should be further enlarged to the utmost limits of the ancient covenant promise.

The purpose of these cities was not to protect a willful murderer, but to prevent the shedding of innocent blood. In the case of the willful murderer, just retribution was to be inflicted. While this was the foreshadowing of the gospel, it was also a wise and humane judicial provision, preventing private revenge and yet guarding, by the most careful sanctions, the sacredness of human life.

### **Protection of Landmarks and the Rights of Property**

"Do not move your neighbor's boundary stone set up by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess" (19:14).

Much is said in other portions of the Scriptures about the sacred regard that should be paid to ancient landmarks (Job 34:2; Proverbs 22:28; 23:10; Hosea 5:10).

The object of this was not only to protect individual rights, but to emphasize the immutable and inalienable title by which the inheritance of every Israelite was secured to him, according to the original apportionment of the land.

Even so God has guarded our spiritual inheritance, and it would be well if Christians as firmly held to all their redemption rights, and clung to the landmarks of primitive Christianity.

### **Rules of Evidence Against Accused Persons**

It was required that no person should be convicted of any crime on the testimony of a single witness, and the punishment of bearing false witness was that the false accuser should be punished with the same punishment that he had sought to have inflicted upon his neighbor. Thus all malice and slander were guarded against and the utmost candor required in all matters of litigation.

### **Rules of War**

Many humane and merciful statutes were appointed for the government of military affairs. Every war was to be regarded as the Lord's battle, and the Lord as their Commander. Therefore, they were to march forth without doubt or fear, but to be assured of victory through His presence and power. Certain exemptions were to be made from military service: a man who had built a new house and not dedicated it, a man who had planted a vineyard, and not eaten its fruit, a man that had betrothed a wife, and had not taken her, and whosoever was afraid and fainthearted, lest he should discourage his comrades by his timidity.

Rules were also laid down for dealing with their enemies. The city which submitted to them was to be spared and to become tributary; and that which resisted was to be captured, the men smitten and the women and children and spoil retained by the conquerors. An exception was to be made always in the case of the nations of Canaan, who were to be wholly exterminated (Deuteronomy 18:16-18).

Provision was also made for sparing the fruit trees around the cities that they might besiege, and keeping the track of war as far as possible from the desolation which usually follows the march of human armies.

### **Provision for Vindication**

The case supposed is that of a murder committed by some unknown person. The law provided for certain ceremonies by which the elders of the city where the victim was found might publicly protest against the crime, and be exonerated, by saying, "Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it done. Accept this atonement for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, O LORD, and do not hold your people guilty of the blood of an innocent man" (21:7-8). Thus God provided against even all suspicion of guilt, and showed the sacredness with which He regarded human life.

This was accompanied by a beautiful ceremony, in which the elders of the city were to slay a heifer in the open valley, and wash their hands over her. It must have been in allusion to this that Pilate washed his hands over the Savior's false condemnation and vainly sought to vindicate himself of the crime, and the Israelites, unlike the elders in this picture, assumed the awful guilt.

### **Conclusion of The Address**

Moses now sums up his long and comprehensive address by solemnly appealing to the covenant which has just been consummated and declaring its sacred meaning and obligations.

The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in his ways,

that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws, and that you will obey him. And the LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honor high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised. (Deuteronomy 26:16-19)

This word *declared* means the public acknowledgment and profession which both God and the people have made, which has constituted a covenant bond of eternal separation and sanctification.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

## **Particular Statutes and Judgments with Reference to Details of Religious, Civil and Social Life**

### **1. Religious Statutes**

#### **Idolatry Destroyed**

Places of idolatry were to be utterly destroyed, in order that they might no longer be identified as places of worship to the true God. It was also seen as an act of rejection of all foreign gods.

The “heathen gods” of today may not carry the same names they did years ago, but they are all too prevalent in our world.

**By what means are we enabled to avoid all such “heathen traps” that exist today? And in what way does true worship of our true God prevent our entanglement with the idolatry of the heathens?**

#### **The Place of Worship**

**Describe the differences between the worship of that day, and the way our Lord has directed for those who know Him in our present day.**

John 4:21-24

#### **Blood Prohibited**

**Why was the eating of blood prohibited?**

Lev. 17:11, 14

#### **The Tithes**

**As you read these instructions that pertain to their giving and to their consecration, can you freely rejoice and be glad for God’s ways in every part of life—that indeed God has not overlooked any portion of their lives in order that they might live in the fullness and joyous peace of His presence and care. And, all praise to our Lord, these blessings are no less ours!**

#### **Heathen Customs**

Be continually aware that Satan is desirous of trapping us in his evil snares, and especially in our worship toward God.

#### **False Prophets**

The Bible warns us of these evil people throughout every age of mankind. **Read 2 Timothy 3:1-15 for their continued sinful enticements in the world today.**

#### **Personal Defilement**

**How would these decrees found here in Deuteronomy strike many of our young people today?**

#### **Their Offerings**

**Give us your views on the following statement:**

**The great, inestimable Gift that God has given us through His Son, eternal salvation in Glory, not to mention all the supplying of our every need as we travel this earthly path, is worthy of our highest giving to Him and to others in need, as He gives us direction so to do.**

#### **The Year of Release**

**Deuteronomy 15:1-11**

**Please give your evaluation of this decree, especially as to its wisdom.**

#### **The Release of Slaves**

**Deuteronomy 15:12-18**

This teaching (decree) was given to the masters of slaves for them to faithfully carry out. **In your words, tell how this also declares the heart of the Great Master, God.**

## **The Firstlings of Their Flocks**

**Deuteronomy 15:19-23**

**Why, in your thinking, was it necessary for God to give such a ruling as this?**

## **The Yearly Feasts**

**Deuteronomy 16:1-17**

**For your careful and complete review of all the feasts, once again read chapter 23 of Leviticus in connection with this passage.**

## **2. Civil and Social Statutes**

### **To Guard the Claims of God**

**Deut. 16:18-22 & Deut. 17:1**

**How important are these decrees to God's overall plan?**

### **To Punish Idolatry**

**Deuteronomy 17:2-13**

**Idolatry was indeed the most capital crime in God's eyes. Would you say His methods of judgment were fair to those who transgressed this decree?**

### **Provision for the Kingly Office**

**Deuteronomy 17:14-20**

**Would we be guaranteed a Godly and wise ruler of our own country if we would require rules such as these?**

### **False and True Prophets**

**Deuteronomy 18:9-22**

**All that is not of God must be destroyed. Please comment on this statement.**

### **Cities of Refuge**

**Deuteronomy 19:1-13**

**Altogether there would be six cities of refuge (six is the number of man in the Bible). This was God's plan for Israel in the Old Testament. Under the New Covenant in place today, what is the place of refuge that we have, when we are innocent, yet condemned by others?**

### **Protection of Landmarks and the Rights of Property**

**Carefully study all Scripture references given here. Under our New Covenant, we too have a spiritual inheritance. Read and note all that we have in God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit in Ephesians chapter 1.**

### **Rules of Evidence Against Accused Persons**

**Would our system of law today be more effective if these rules were applied in our courts?**

### **Rules of War**

**Until Christ returns to rule the world, there will be wars. What does God promise when His people fully walk in His ways?**

### **Provision for Vindication**

**Deuteronomy 21:7-8**

**Would you say that God is completely mindful of every possible situation that could occur, and He has utterly provided for these needs?**

### **Conclusion of the Address**

**Can you give praise to the Lord for a solid knowledge that you are in Covenant with Him?**

## **Deuteronomy 27:1-30:20**

### **MOSES'S THIRD ADDRESS ON THE PLAINS OF MOAB**

#### **Prospective**

In this shorter address Moses seeks to bind them to their sacred obligations, by pointing them forward to the blessing and the curse which are to be dependent upon their obedience or disobedience, and which are here solemnly added as the sanctions of the divine law.

### **Monumental Records**

He provides for the writing of the law on monuments of stone after they enter the land of promise.

Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people: "Keep all these commands that I give you today. When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the LORD your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over to enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. And when you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I command you today, and coat them with plaster. . . And you shall write very clearly all the words of this law on these stones you have set up." (Deuteronomy 27:1-4, 8)

This was to be done in the valley of Samaria, that lies between Mounts Ebal and Gerizim. The former was to be the mount of cursing; the latter, of blessing.

It was very significant that the law was to be written upon the mount of cursing. This suggests that the predominant idea in the ancient covenant was judgment and condemnation. Therefore it is called by the apostle, "The ministry that condemns" (2 Corinthians 3:9). It was to be recorded on the face of great stones, plastered over so as to bring out the characters in bolder outlines, and to afford a smooth surface on which to make the inscription. Such monuments and inscriptions are still to be found in ancient ruins.

The law written on these stones may have been the entire Mosaic code. Undoubtedly it was the principal portion of it, moral and civil.

All the words of this law are distinctly specified, and it is added, "You shall write very clearly" (Deuteronomy 27:8).

God has made His will most explicit, and He expects His witnesses to proclaim it unmistakably.

### **Mercy Amid Judgement**

In the midst of this paragraph there is a beautiful provision, right on the mount of cursing, for the setting up of an altar of sacrifice.

"Build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool upon them. Build the altar of the LORD your God with fieldstones and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. Sacrifice fellowship offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God" (27:5-7).

This passage shines with all the light and glory of the cross, and corresponds, most signally, to the beautiful provision for the altar of sacrifice at the close of the 20th chapter of Exodus, just after the terrors of the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai had been recorded (Exodus 20:24-26).

There, as we have already seen, the meaning was typical of God's gracious provision in the gospel for the transgression of His law.

Here also it is assumed that the law would be broken and the curse incurred; yet, notwithstanding, under the shadow of Ebal, there was an altar of sacrifice where the sin could be expiated, and they could still enter into the fellowship of a reconciled God, and "sacrifice fellowship offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 27:7).

### **Responsive Service**

A still more impressive ceremony was then provided for (27:11-26).

The whole camp of Israel was to be assembled in the valley, and divided into two sections, one-half consisting of the tribes descended from Rachel and Leah, representing the firstborn rights, who were to stand on Mount Gerizim, the mount of blessing. The other half, representing the tribes descended from the bondwomen whom Rachel and Leah gave to Jacob, with the addition of Reuben, the cursed son of Leah, and Zebulun, representing the youngest born, were to stand on Mount Ebal, the mount of cursing, and respond alternately, in chorus, the blessing and the curse, and the mighty host on the mountain, in a voice of thunder to say, "Amen!"

It is very remarkable that the words of the curse only are recorded here, the formula of the blessing being omitted. This, too, is significant of the Old Testament spirit of condemnation under the law.

The curses are arranged in a series of 12, corresponding with the 12 tribes. The first 11 represent special acts of sin, standing for the other sins of the same class. Verse 15 represents the first table of the law; verses 16-25 the second table of the law; verse 16 representing the fifth commandment; verses 17-19, the sixth commandment, all offenses against the civil rights of others; verses 20-23, the seventh commandment; verse 24, the eighth commandment; verse 25, the ninth commandment; and verse 26 covers the whole law by pronouncing a curse upon everyone that does not carry out all the words of the law.

### **The Blessing And The Curse**

Moses' exhortation to obedience was founded upon this announcement of blessing and cursing (28:1-68).

This is divided into two parts: verses 1-14, the blessing; 15-68, the curse. Here again the blessing occupies 14 verses only, and the curse 54, nearly four times as many. The blessing is repeated six times, the curse as often. The blessing is personified in the strong figurative language as a pursuer, and as following close behind and overtaking them.

### **The Blessing**

"All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God" (28:2).

It covers all the relationships of their life as individuals, families and the covenant people. Of course this was, primarily, a temporal blessing, and in this respect it differs from the terms of the gospel, but their earthly blessings were types of our higher spiritual welfare.

The promise was to cover all possible blessings both in the city and the field. It was to include all fruitfulness in their body, their grounds and their flocks. It was to be in their basket, or wallet, and in their kneading trough. It was to be with them in coming in and going out. It was to give them victory over their enemies and prosperity in all to which they should set their hands. It was especially to separate them unto God as a holy and peculiar people in the sight of all the nations, to be crowned with all the fullness of His good pleasure, the bounty of His Providence, abundance of wealth and pre-eminence above all other peoples.

### **The Curse**

The curse, however, is amplified still more fully until it becomes an awful and literal prediction of the calamities that have actually come upon Israel.

There seem to be five panoramic pictures of the curse, in as many distinct paragraphs, corresponding to the stages of judgment threatened in Leviticus 26.

a. The curse is to rest upon all they do, to bring upon them the pestilence, disease in every form known to us, including consumption (a disease that causes the body or part of the body to waste away; tuberculosis), fever, inflammation. It is to fall upon their land, by the sword of their enemies and the elements of nature in the form of blasting, mildew, skies of brass, rain of dust and sand, defeat before their enemies and dispersion among all peoples.

b. The next series is pictured from verses 27 to 37.

The curse falls as the plague, the scourges of Egypt, revolting disease, madness, blindness and astonishment of heart, disappointment in their tenderest affections, disaster in all their business and property, the captivity of their children, the oppression of their enemies, madness because of their grief and sorrow and such horrors and calamities as shall make them an astonishment and proverb above all nations (verse 37).

c. The next series extends from verses 38 to 48, and portrays the failure of all their work, their harvests through locust, their vineyards through the worm, their olive trees through casting their fruit, their very children through their shameful captivity, their subordination to the alien and the stranger in their midst, until they shall become the tail and not the head, and shall suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness, and want of all things, and a yoke of iron upon their necks.

d. The next picture is a vivid description of the horrors of foreign invasion, and their subjugation and captivity under the Chaldeans.

They are described as a nation of fiercest countenance and without mercy to young or old. They shall sweep away the fruit of their land and their cattle shall perish in their cities until parents shall eat their very children for hunger, and the ties of human affection shall be changed into unnatural hatred until they strive for a morsel of each other's flesh. And even the tender and delicate mother shall be glad to eat her newborn babe and her very own flesh in the horrors of famine.

e. The last picture gives the climax of the curse, and seems to be a literal prediction of the later calamities of Israel since the last destruction of Jerusalem and their dispersion among the Gentiles. How solemn are some of the awful words!

The closing picture of their slavery in Egypt was literally fulfilled in the Middle Ages, in the case of the multitudes of Hebrews driven from Spain to northern Africa and sold as slaves by their oppressors.

### **The Covenant Renewed**

The solemn renewal of the covenant was done in view of these threatenings and promises (Deuteronomy 29-30).

a. Brief recital of their past mercies.

He reminds them of all that God has done for them, and yet stops to bewail their blindness and stupidity to understand all His teachings and blessings.

b. Solemn renewal of the covenant.

All degrees and classes of the people are solemnly united in this great covenant—the captains, the elders, the officers and all the men of Israel, their wives, their little ones, the stranger in their midst and the very bondmen that waited on them.

The covenant was expressed in the most imperative language, not only a covenant, but an oath of the most solemn and binding obligation, but no less sacred than the pledge which He Himself had sworn unto their fathers. The question of how far we should enter into such personal covenants with God is a very important one. If we rightly understand the

nature of God's covenant relation with us as individuals, and the divine ground on which the covenant rests, namely, the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ, we cannot too impressively seal our engagements with Him.

It is delightful to know that to each of us in Christ, God has sworn His oath of eternal faithfulness, and that in the strength of Christ we may enter into the covenant with equal definiteness and sacredness; and that He will accept our plighted vow and become in us the power to keep it, if we enter into it with intelligent faith, not as the covenant of the law, but as the covenant of grace, of which Christ is the sponsor and the pledge. "See, I have made him a witness to the peoples" (Isaiah 55:4).

If our covenant is thus in Him, it will be eternal and unbroken, and our part will be kept through Him as well as His unchangeable promises to us.

c. Warnings against unfaithfulness to the covenant, or omission on their part, with respect to these obligations, are terrible intimations of the retribution which will follow unfaithfulness.

Especially are the warnings directed against all whose heart is even already turning away from the Lord, and beginning presumptuously to say, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry" (Deuteronomy 29:19), that is, perhaps, not only desiring evil, but satiating himself with evil.

This he calls a root that bears bitter poison. This is the passage which the apostle quotes in Hebrews 12:15, "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many."

The threatenings denounced against the soul that dares thus deliberately to calculate upon the pleasures of sin, quiver like the fiery lightnings in their consuming blaze. "The LORD will never be willing to forgive him; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. . . . The LORD will single him out... for disaster" (Deuteronomy 29:20-21).

The same judgments are denounced against the land if it shall become apostate, until it shall be made a frightful monument before the eyes of all nations of the Lord's displeasure.

d. Exhortation to faithfulness.

"The secret things belong to the LORD our God; but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law" (29:29).

The meaning of this verse seems to be that the reason why Moses is so plainly and practically speaking to them the word of the law instead of merely entertaining them with curious revelations is because the very purpose of God's Word is not to minister to our speculative curiosity, but to guide our feet into the path of obedience, and to preserve us from the snares of sin and death.

Therefore we are not vainly to inquire into the secret things with which we have no concern, or use our Bibles for the mere gratification of the love of novelty, but to treat God's Word as a plain and faithful message from a loving Father of "the things revealed [which] belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law" (29:29).

e. Promises of restoration even to those who should depart from the law, on condition of their sincere repentance.

Moses here assumes that they shall apostatize from God, and be scattered among the nations, and that the words that he is speaking to them now shall come into their hearts in the days of their captivity. He tells them that even then, if they shall return unto the Lord with all their heart, and with all their soul:

"Then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. He will bring you into the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers." (30:3-5)

Not only so, but still better, "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live" (30:6).

And this spiritual restoration will bring the fullness of temporal prosperity and national blessing. "Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers" (30:9).

This blessed promise still awaits repentant Israel, and shall be literally fulfilled in the spiritual revival and national restoration of God's ancient people.

f. Concluding appeal in which Moses applies God's message solemnly to their hearts and consciences, and sets before them for personal decision, the blessing and the curse, the evil and the good, the way of death and the way of life.

First, he meets the possible excuse that the word he has spoken is too hard, too mysterious, too far off, or too high up. It is not in heaven, nor is it beyond the sea, but it is very near them, even in their mouth and in their heart.

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. (30:11-14)

This is the foundation of the Holy Spirit's appeal to us even in the gospel (see Romans 10:6, etc.).

For us the meaning is that God's message is not impracticable, or His demands impossible, requiring some long preparation, some lofty height of experience, some profound depth of feeling or meaning. It meets us just where we are and as we are, and may be accepted and acted upon by every one of us the very instant we hear it.

And so, secondly, Moses demands of each of them an immediate decision: "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses" (Deuteronomy 30:19).

It is a personal matter, not with the nation now, but with each man, woman and child. It is not something to be put off, but to be decided this day. And according to the spirit in which we are willing to meet the decision promptly and fully, shall be the issue of our future life.

The soul that hesitates in making this choice will be very apt to hesitate in executing it, and in each emergency demanding promptness in the future, will be almost sure to falter and discuss until even the act of obedience is frustrated by indecision.

Very solemnly does he call to witness both heaven and earth in this momentous covenant, and very rarely does the universe thus witness every man's decision. Eyes innumerable are looking down at every crisis of our lives; tablets, more enduring than stone, are receiving the record of our conduct, and even as some of us read these lines it may be that the years of eternity are being determined for us.

"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (30:19-20).

Let the voice of the lawgiver, long silent in Nebo's grave, speak to us with the added witness of the gospel, these ancient words in their New Testament light: "I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years" (30:19-20).

"Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' " (that is, to bring Christ down) "or 'Who will descend into the deep?' " (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (Romans 10:6-10)

More deeply than we sometimes think, the heart of Moses understood the spiritual meaning of God's covenant. There is nothing more profound in the New Testament than the words, "the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years" (Deuteronomy 30:20). It is the very heart of Christianity, nay, rather, the very heart of Christ.

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

## **Monumental Records**

### **Deuteronomy 27:1-4, 8**

Even as God made His laws very plain under Moses, so has He also done in our New Testament. **When we transgress (or sin) do we do so willfully in spite of knowledge?**

Matt. 5:17-20

## **Mercy Amid Judgment**

### **Deuteronomy 27:5-7**

In spite of God's long dealing with people whose constant inclination was to sin, it is amazing to recognize how His every provision was full of grace for everyone. **Comment as to the effect this thought has upon you.**

## **Responsive Service**

Here you can definitely see that nothing in the Bible is happenstance, lacking definite meaning. **Give your impression regarding this impressive service of alternate blessing and cursing. What would the sound be coming from mountain tops, especially in chorus, with this great number of people?**

## **The Blessing and the Curse**

### **Deuteronomy 28:1-68**

**From this arrangement by God, what was His intended result upon His people?**

## **The Blessing**

**Could any more fullness possibly be added to this gracious list of the Lord?** Here are 14 short verses (Deut. 28:1-14), but they contain every possible blessing required by man.

## The Curse

Here is listed "the other side of the coin" in dire contrast with the blessings. These require 53 verses, as compared to the 14 verses containing all the rich blessings! **Does this not place a burden upon us to teach our children, and all who will listen, the glorious ways of the Lord, in order that they might be fully warned as to their choices!**

## The Covenant Renewed

Please memorize Deuteronomy 30:19-20.

## Deuteronomy 31:1-34:12

### CONCLUSION OF THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

#### SECTION 1—Concluding History

##### Deuteronomy 31:1-29

Moses gathers Israel around him after his three long addresses, and announces to them the approaching end of his life. Verses 1 and 2 reiterate to them the promise of their victorious entrance into the land of Canaan, under Joshua, his successor; verse 3 assures them of the subjugation and destruction of all their enemies; verses 4, 5 and 6 solemnly charge them to be strong and of good courage, to fear not, nor be dismayed, for the Lord would go before them and not fail them nor forsake them.

Then he calls Joshua unto him in the sight of all Israel and commits to him his sacred charge, promising him the divine protection and presence in all his ways (verses 7, 8).

a. He writes the law and delivers it to the priests and Levites, and solemnly charges them, every seven years, "the year for canceling debts" (15:9), as Israel shall gather before the Lord, that it is to be publicly read to them in the Feast of Tabernacles, that they may hear and learn and fear the Lord their God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children, which have not known anything, may hear and learn to fear the Lord their God, as long as they live in the land they go to possess.

b. He takes Joshua and presents him before the Lord in the tabernacle of the congregation, and solemnly inducts him into his ministry. Then the glory of the Lord appears above the door of the tabernacle, Jehovah Himself recognizing the new leader of His people.

Then the Lord reveals to Moses that after his death the people are going to backslide into unfaithfulness and idolatry, and to be visited with many judgments and sorrows; and He therefore commands Moses to write a song and rehearse it in the ears of all Israel, that it may be a witness in the day of their declension, of the faithful warnings of their covenant God.

And the LORD said to Moses: "You are going to rest with your fathers, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. On that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and difficulties will come upon them, and on that day they will ask, 'Have not these disasters come upon us because our God is not with us?' And I will certainly hide my face on that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods.

"Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them." (31:16-19)

c. He commits the law to the hands of the Levites and priests to be kept in the ark of the covenant, as a further witness for Jehovah.

Finally he gathers the elders and officers of Israel around him and publicly utters in their hearing, the song itself.

#### SECTION 2—Moses' Song

##### Deuteronomy 32:1-47

It consists of seven parts.

(1) Introduction.

"Listen, O heavens, and I will speak; hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants" (32:1-2).

In the most solemn manner he appeals to the heavens and the earth to witness to the gracious words which he is about to speak, and which he compares to the gentle rain and the soft dew of night as it falls upon the heated earth and withered grass and herb.

(2) The theme of his song.

"I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he" (32:3-4).

It is the name of the Lord and the greatness of our God, the Rock, "his works are perfect" (32:4).

(3) The contrasted picture of God's people.

"They have acted corruptly toward him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation. Is this the way you repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? Is he not your Father, your Creator, who made you and formed you?" (32:5-6).

Very different are they from Him. "They have acted corruptly toward him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation" (32:5). They are a foolish people and unwise, thus to requite so great and good a God for all His kindness.

(4) The recital of His goodness and faithfulness to them (32:7-14). "Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you" (32:7). Far back in the past His love began, and many generations have magnified it. Even in the commencement of earth's nations, when the Most High divided to them their inheritance, and separated the sons of Adam, He formed His great providential plans with reference to Israel's honor and blessing. "He set up boundaries for the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel" (32:8), for He had set His heart on them, choosing them for His portion and His inheritance. His providential care and love had been in all their past: He had found them in the desert waste and had led them and kept them as the apple of His eye; as sensitive to their slightest want as the tender pupil of our eye is to the slightest particle of dust. As the mother eagle trains her young to fly by breaking up her nest and then compelling her fluttering brood to strike out their little wings and learn to bear themselves upon their native air, and, when weary and sinking, puts her own strong pinions under their sinking strength and bears them on her wings, so God had led them and trained them to trust and obedience. And then the days of trial had been exchanged for the fullness of blessing; the wilderness had given place to the fruitful land of Gilead and Bashan, and He had made him to "ride on the heights of the land and fed him with the fruit of the fields. He nourished him with honey from the rock, and with oil from flinty crag, with curds and milk from herd and flock and with fattened lambs and goats, with choice rams of Bashan and the finest kernels of wheat. You drank the foaming blood of the grape" (32:13-14). So had He loved and led them all their days.

And so does He still love and lead His unworthy children. A picture more beautiful of His fatherly and motherly care has never been written by the inspired pen of prophet or apostle, than the poetic imagery of these solemn words.

(5) Israel's ingratitude in spite of all God's goodness (32:15-18). Very characteristic is the name with which the lawgiver introduced the picture of Israel's sins. Jeshurun, he calls them, meaning the righteous one, as if solemnly asking the question, How true has Israel been to their high name? "Jeshurun grew fat and kicked" (32:15). Like the ox that has become unruly through his very abundance, "he abandoned the God who made him and rejected the Rock his Savior" (32:15). The Hebrew here for "rejecting," means to treat as a fool, and it implies the indignation with which God had felt their insulting conduct towards one so great.

Then he describes their cursed wickedness. "They made him jealous with their foreign gods and angered him with their detestable idols. They sacrificed to demons, which are not God—gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth" (32:16-18).

The *word jealousy* implies very tenderly the marriage bond which God had established with His people, and in connection with this, their worship of demons implies that the great adversary has been received by them instead of Jehovah Himself.

(6) At length the notes of judgment fall, and the sorrow of God's anger is dealt out in terrible eloquence and majesty. And yet, it is more like a wail of love than a thunder of vengeance. Pathetically, He pauses in the midst of His purpose of judgment, and cries: "But I dreaded the taunt of the enemy, lest the adversary misunderstand and say, 'Our hand has triumphed; the LORD has not done all this' " (32:27); and then bursts out into upbraiding complaint: "they are a nation without sense, there is no discernment in them. If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be! How could one man chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the LORD had given them up?" (32:28-30).

Reluctantly returning again to the inevitable sentence of judgment. He says, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time, their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them" (32:35). And yet it is rather as the sentence of a judge who stops to weep over the criminal that he is about to commit to the bonds of shame, or the doom of death; but even when the sentence is uttered it is immediately arrested by the closing message (32:36-40).

Already He sees them sinking beneath His stroke; their power is gone and there is none shut up or left. Their idols have failed them, their enemies are gloating over their helplessness and misery. Then He waves the sword of His vengeance against their persecutors and lifting up His hand to heaven, he swears:

See now that I myself am He!  
There is no God besides me.  
I put to death and I bring to life,  
I have wounded and I will heal,  
and no one can deliver out of my hand.  
I lift my hand to heaven and declare:  
As surely as I live forever,

when I sharpen my flashing sword  
and my hand grasps it in judgment,  
I will take vengeance on my adversaries  
and repay those who hate me.  
I will make my arrows drunk with blood,  
while my sword devours flesh:  
the blood of the slain and the captives,  
the heads of the enemy leaders. (32:39-42)

This is not the picture of Israel's judgment, but of God's judgment on Israel's foes, as He awakes for their defense in the hour of their captivity and sorrow.

And then the song closes as it began, with an appeal to the nations to witness His vengeance upon His foes, and His mercy to His people and His land.

"Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies and make atonement for his land and people" (32:43).

And so the solemn song is ended, and Moses thus adds his own conclusion: "He said to them, 'Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess'" (32:46-47).

Like the dying swan, which sings itself to death, Moses closes his song by receiving the intimation of his immediate death on Mount Nebo.

On that same day the LORD told Moses, "Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites. Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel." (32:48-52)

It would seem as though it was intended to be God's very seal in the eyes of the people, of the words that Moses had so often spoken, that they might know and see in the death of their lawgiver how inviolable were the threatenings of the law that he himself had given them, and came with ten thousands of saints. They saw how inexorable God's sentence was, from which even Moses could not escape and that in his death they might have a still more memorable and never-to-be-forgotten pledge, that the word of God must stand and that they could not with impunity disobey its statutes or despise its judgments.

### **SECTION 3—Moses' Blessing**

#### **Deuteronomy 33:1-29**

Under the formal announcement of his death Moses pronounces his blessing upon the tribes of Israel. Was this a foreshadowing of the greater spiritual truth, that the blessing of the gospel would come with the passing away of the law?

(1) The introduction.

This is the blessing that Moses the man of God pronounced the Israelites before his death. He said:

"The LORD came from Sinai  
and dawned over them from Seir;  
he shone forth from Mount Paran.  
He came with myriads of holy ones  
from the south, from his mountain slopes.  
Surely it is you who love the people,  
all the holy ones are in your hand.  
At your feet they all bow down,  
and from you receive instruction,  
the law that Moses gave us,  
the possession of the assembly of Jacob.  
He was king over Jeshurun  
when the leaders of the people assembled,  
along with the tribes of Israel." (33:1-5)

It commences with the majestic description of the appearing of Jehovah at Mt. Sinai as He came, literally, from the midst of ten thousand of His holy ones to give His fiery law, and yet, to gather His people as a loving Father at His feet

and to reveal Himself as the true King in Jeshurun, His righteous nation. Moses was but the mediator of the law, which he left to Israel as their precious inheritance from their heavenly King.

(2) The blessing of Reuben.

"Let Reuben live and not die, nor his men be few" (33:6).

On account of Reuben's shameful crime Jacob had left an hereditary cloud upon the tribe and therefore we find that even in the brief history of the wilderness the numbers of the tribe have greatly diminished, so that it may have seemed to many of them that there was a serious danger of their extinction. The blessing of Moses seems to suggest this danger and to answer this fear. "Let Reuben live and not die, nor his men be few" (33:6). And the blessing was fulfilled in their succeeding history by their continuance, although they never became a leading tribe of Israel. Compare Numbers 1:21 with Numbers 26:7.

(3) The blessing of Judah.

"And this he said about Judah: 'Hear, O LORD, the cry of Judah; bring him to his people. With his own hands he defends his cause. Oh, be his help against his foes!' (Deuteronomy 33:7).

The expression here, "The cry of Judah," implies that Judah is to call upon Jehovah and to recognize God as the source of his prosperity and blessing. "Bring him to his people" means, bring him back in triumph as he goes forth in war. "With his own hands he defends his cause" has been translated, "with his hands he contendeth with the people," as describing his warlike enterprise. "Be his helper against his foes," pledges divine assistance in all his conflicts. The blessing was fulfilled in Judah's preeminence among the tribes of Israel, and the victorious wars of David, Uzziah, and others of Judah's kings.

The same picture had been given in Jacob's blessing, in even more vivid colors.

(4) The blessing of Levi.

This is a far higher blessing. Judah was to be helped of God, but Levi was to be wholly the Lord's and absolutely carried and sustained by Him.

About Levi he said:

"Your Thummim and Urim belong  
to the man you favored.

You tested him at Massah;  
you contended with him at the waters of Meribah.

He said of his father and mother,  
'I have no regard for them.'

He did not recognize his brothers  
or acknowledge his own children,  
but he watched over your word  
and guarded your covenant.

He teaches your precepts to Jacob  
and your law to Israel.

He offers incense before you  
and whole burnt offerings on your altar.

Bless all his skills, O LORD,  
and be pleased with the work of his hands.

Smite the loins of those who rise up against him;  
strike his foes till they rise no more." (33:8-11)

Levi is here called "your holy one," the tribe separated and consecrated wholly unto the Lord; and his fidelity had been tried not only in Moses and Aaron themselves, as they stood firm amid the murmurings of the people at Massah and Meribah, but also in the loyal stand of the Levites themselves in the frightful hour of Israel's apostasy (Exodus 32:25-28), when they stood up even against their dearest friends and were faithful to God, to the sacrifice of their fathers and mothers, their brethren and their children (Deuteronomy 33:9). But their righteousness was not their own.

Let your Thummim and your Urim be with Levi is Moses' prayer. God is their Urim and their Thummim, their Light and their Might. Their highest honor is that they are to "teach [God's] precepts to Jacob and [God's] law to Israel. Offer incense before [God] and whole burnt offerings on [God's] altar" (33:10).

Levi represents the spiritual priesthood, that live where we are wholly the Lord's and have no portion of our own, not even of strength, or righteousness, but the Lord is our inheritance, both for holiness and happiness, both for strength and all-sufficiency.

(5) The blessing of Benjamin.

"About Benjamin he said: 'Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in him, for he shields him all day long, and the one the LORD loves rests between his shoulders' (33:12).

This is nearer and dearer still; to be the beloved of the Lord, to dwell secretly in His presence, or more literally, on Him, as one that lies upon His breast, to be covered by the Lord all the day long, and hidden under the robes of His

righteousness, the wings of His unfolding love, and to dwell between His shoulders. That may be in His bosom, or on His back, where the father carries his children, representing the supporting and upholding strength of God. This is the place of John, on Jesus' breast.

Some have found in this beautiful blessing an allusion to Benjamin's future location, as a tribe, with Jerusalem and Zion and the abiding presence of Jehovah in the temple, within the borders of their tribe. An added beauty is given when we remember that the original of Benjamin is Benoni, "the son of my sorrow," and it afterwards became Benjamin, "the son of my right hand."

(6) The blessing of Joseph.

About Joseph he said:

"May the LORD bless his land  
with the precious dew from heaven above  
and with the deep waters that lie below;  
with the best the sun brings forth  
and the finest the moon can yield;  
with the choicest gifts of the ancient mountains  
and the fruitfulness of the everlasting hills;  
with the best gifts of the earth and its fullness  
and the favor of him who dwelt in the burning bush.  
Let all these rest on the head of Joseph,  
on the brow of the prince among his brothers.  
In majesty he is like a firstborn bull;  
his horns are the horns of a wild ox.  
With them he will gore the nations,  
even those at the ends of the earth.  
Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim;  
such are the thousands of Manasseh." (33:13-17)

It begins with the rich bounty of nature and providence. The precious things of the heavens, with their fertilizing rains, the dew, with its gentle refreshing, the deep that coucheth beneath, with its subterranean fountains, the sunshine of heaven, the mild and quickening radiance of the gentle moon, the treasures of the mountains and the hills and the fruitfulness of the earth, all these are upon the land of Joseph, and the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh. Better still is the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush, that is, the covenant blessing pronounced in Midian on Moses, when God first revealed His glorious name *Jehovah* as the title of His covenant relation with Israel. It may also mean the good will of the God who comes to us in our fiery trials as well as in our earthly prosperity, and in whose presence no flame can consume or sorrow harm.

Three reasons are given for Joseph's blessing. The first is that he was separated from his brethren. This may mean his early trials and separation. For us, it most surely does mean that complete separation unto God and from the world in which the fullness of blessing must ever begin.

The second and higher reason was "In majesty he is like a firstborn bull" (33:17). This figure, we need not say, expressed the idea of sacrifice and entire consecration.

The firstling of the Hebrew flock was the Lord's, and was wholly laid upon the altar. And so Joseph thus stands as the type (foreshadow) of our complete surrender as a living sacrifice unto Jehovah. Then shall we know the fullness of His love.

The third reason is, "His horns are the horns of a wild ox [unicorns, KJV]" (33:17). One peculiarity is that the unicorn has but one horn, and so Joseph is to have only one source of strength, God, and God alone. They of whom this is true, like Joseph, "will gore the nations, even those at the ends of the earth. Such are the ten thousands of Ephraim; such are the thousands of Manasseh" (33:17).

This is a beautiful picture of the secret of blessing; separated unto God, covenanted with Him, as He that dwelt in the bush, baptized with His holy presence and His consuming fire, consecrated on His altar and armed with His strength alone, we must have Joseph's blessing and Joseph's victory.

(7) The blessing of Zebulun and Issachar.

"About Zebulun he said: 'Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out, and you, Issachar, in your tents. They will summon peoples to the mountain and there offer sacrifices of righteousness; they will feast on the abundance of the seas, on the treasures hidden in the sand' " (33:18-19).

Bold enterprise and peaceful rest are the promises given to these two tribes.

The territory of Zebulun reached to the shores of the sea of Galilee; and from the sand of the coast the most costly glass work of ancient times was made. This may explain the reference to "the abundance of the seas, on the treasures hidden in the sand" (33:19).

The other promises seem to refer to their bold aggressive spirit, and their faithfulness to God's covenant, in the conflicts with Jabin and Sisera (Judges 4:15-18).

Perhaps this prophecy was also more distinctly fulfilled in the parts which these two tribes sustained, as the counselors and helpers of David, when he assumed the kingdom of Israel (1 Chronicles 12:32-33).

(8) The blessing of Gad.

"About Gad he said: 'Blessed is he who enlarges Gad's domain! Gad lives like a lion, tearing at arm or head. He chose the best land for himself; the leader's portion was kept for him. When the heads of the people assembled, he carried out the LORD's righteous will, and his judgments concerning Israel' " (Deuteronomy 33:20-21).

His spacious territory is first referred to, covering as it did the fertile plains of Gilead; next, his bold, swift, martial movements, sweeping as the lion, upon his enemies; next his claiming for himself the first inheritance in the conquered regions east of the Jordan.

This is the correct translation of the 21st verse because there the leader's portion was reserved. Gad was the leader in the wars of Joshua, going before their brethren armed, until the rest of Canaan was subdued, and then returning to gain their inheritance in Gilead, and faithfully keeping the covenant, as they had promised Moses. Thus, Moses here assumes in his blessing, "he carried out the LORD's righteous will, and his judgements concerning Israel" (33:21).

(9) The blessing of Dan.

"About Dan he said: 'Dan is a lion's cub, springing out of Bashan' " (33:22).

The figure is that of a wild and swift attack upon his foes. Perhaps this is an allusion to the bold and even cruel attack of Dan upon the defenseless tribes of the north (Joshua 19:47; Judges 18:27).

(10) The blessing of Naphtali.

"About Naphtali he said: 'Naphtali is abounding with the favor of the LORD and is full of his blessing; he will inherit southward to the lake' " (Deuteronomy 33:23).

This is a picture of earthly prosperity. Their inheritance lay on the west coast of Galilee, which was "the garden of Palestine," extending up to the head water of the Jordan, and including the most beautiful scenery and the most productive land in the whole country. But they were also to have the blessing of the Lord.

(11) The blessing of Asher.

"About Asher he said: 'Most blessed of sons is Asher; let him be favored by his brothers, and let him bathe his feet in oil. The bolts of your gates will be iron and bronze, and your strength will equal your days' " (33:24-25).

Asher's inheritance was in the extreme northwest of Palestine, reaching up from Mount Carmel to the coast of Tyre and Sidon, and the base of Lebanon and Hermon.

If we take the "bolts of your gates" to mean fortress, and strength to mean rest, the significance of the promise will be that Asher should be strongly defended from his enemies, and that the inheritance should be stable and quiet as long as his days should last.

However, the words have become too precious to change their meaning without very high authority, and the received translation is reasonably sustained by the best authorities. It makes the promise a heritage of spiritual blessing to the Christian heart, pledging to us the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the keeping power and love of God in all our steps, and strength according to our daily need, whether for soul or body.

(12) The blessing of Jehovah. Above all Israel's tribes, Moses blesses God Himself. Moses ascribes to God Himself his closing benediction.

There is no one like the God of Jeshurun,  
who rides on the heavens to help you  
and on the clouds in his majesty.  
The eternal God is your refuge,  
and underneath are the everlasting arms.  
He will drive out your enemy before you,  
saying, "Destroy him!"  
So Israel will live in safety alone;  
Jacob's spring is secure  
in a land of grain and new wine,  
where the heavens drop dew.  
Blessed are you, O Israel!  
Who is like you,  
a people saved by the LORD?  
He is your shield and helper  
and your glorious sword.  
Your enemies will cower before you,  
and you will trample down their high places.  
(33:26-29)

He gives Him the tender name of the God of Jeshurun, that is, "the Righteous One," lovingly assuming, as ever, to allure his brethren to fidelity, that Israel will keep their covenant with God, and prove indeed His Jeshurun.

How sublime the picture of God's protection, reaching to heaven in His help, and riding upon the sky for our deliverance, and then stooping to the profoundest depths, as He places under our lowest need His everlasting arms. It is before Him and not them that the enemy should be thrust out. He is the shield of their help, and the sword of their excellency, and through Him shall they tread upon the high places of their foes.

But the secret of Israel's blessing must ever be to dwell alone. They cannot mingle with the nations, but they must be wholly separated unto the Lord their God. Then shall it indeed be true, "Blessed are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD?" (33:29).

What if they failed to claim the fullness of their blessing? It remains for us through Jesus Christ, our true Jeshurun, who leads us into their "land of uprightness" (Psalm 143:10, KJV) and becomes for us a surety of all the promises.

Simeon is absent from this catalogue of blessings, and afterwards seems to have performed an insignificant part in the national history of Israel.

Was there a lost tribe among the Israelites as there was a Judas among the twelve?

## **SECTION 4— The Death of Moses**

### **Deuteronomy 34:1-12**

This, of course, was added by a later hand.

(1) We have the dying vision.

Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as Zoar. Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it." (34:1-4)

How oft the closing hour is an hour of vision to the saints of God. Moses saw not only the beautiful land of promise, but also its spiritual meaning; and, in the distant future, no doubt, the form of the Son of man who should traverse it, and perhaps the hour when he should stand with Him in the transfiguration glory and talk of the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, and in which all the fullness of the Mosaic ritual should at last be fulfilled.

We, too, may have such a vision, but before beholding it we must come to the place of death, the death of self. Standing beside our own grave we can see farther than Moses saw, and then come down, as he could not, and literally enter in.

(2) The death of Moses.

"And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is" (34:5-6).

Even Moses must die. The giver of the law must be the most preeminent monument of its truth and sanctions; and his death must have in it the dark shadow of judicial execution. While it was glorious indeed, it was also sad. It had the remembrance of sin, and was the divine mark of a single act of disobedience and unbelief.

So, even to the saint of God, death is the decree of justice and the fruit of sin; and yet for us, as for him, it becomes an hour of transfiguration and the gate of heaven.

The actual nature of Moses' death we know not. Perhaps God sweetly kissed his spirit away. Perhaps, like Enoch and Elijah, his body was transformed in anticipation of the resurrection to the heavenly glory. More probably, however, he really died, and was literally buried, and raised from the tomb afterwards, to stand on the mount of transfiguration with Christ, and enter the land of promise through Jesus Christ, as he could not through the law.

The contention of the devil about his body may have been on account of God's preserving it from corruption and guarding it for his future resurrection. Satan may have claimed his right to every human body after death, on account of the penalty of sin.

(3) Moses' supernatural strength.

"Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone" (34:7).

This remarkable strength is mentioned, no doubt, with the intention of suggesting its supernatural cause in the sustaining grace and power of God.

The same strength was given to Caleb, and the same quickened life is promised to us through Jesus Christ, and the abiding of the Holy Spirit, for "if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you" (Romans 8:11).

(4) The character and influence of Moses.

The Israelites grieved for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days, until the time of weeping and mourning was over....

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those miraculous signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel. (Deuteronomy 34:8, 10-12)

His influence among his own people is shown in the sincere mourning of Israel for him for 30 days, and in the almost supernatural respect paid to him in later times. God Himself bears witness here to his place of honor and service. No other prophet stood so near to the Lord, "whom the LORD knew face to face" (34:10).

However, we must remember that this high eulogy was paid to Moses before the days of Elijah, Isaiah and John the Baptist, and we must read it in the light of the time when it was given. Our Lord tells us that "among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he" (Luke 7:28).

So high is the new dispensation above the old, that in the bosom of Jesus, and leaning upon His breast, we shall find that God has "planned something better for us" (Hebrews 11:40), and that "(for the law made nothing perfect), and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God" (7:19).

(5) The succession of Joshua and the testimony paid to his wisdom.

"Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses" (Deuteronomy 34:9).

This perhaps is not the least testimony to Moses himself, for the wisdom of Joshua is connected with the fact that Moses had laid his hands upon his successor and, with a spirit as beautiful and humble as it was effectual, committed to him not only his work, but the same divine efficiency which had been given to him.

The highest spiritual lessons of the book of Deuteronomy will be perceived by us if we remember that it was a temporary message, and represented the transfer, or transition, from the law to that period under Joshua which was to be especially the type (foreshadow) of the gospel. We must not, therefore, be surprised at Israel's failure, or even Moses' death, for all this was intended to prepare us for the insufficiency of the law to bring in the fullness of the blessing.

These were great educational dispensations, and the law was but the schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Hence, before entering the land of promise, we find a complete reorganization and new departure.

There is a new generation of Israel, a new numbering of the people, a new edition, as it were, of the very law itself, at least a renewal of the covenant based upon the law, and a new leader; preparing our minds for the great spiritual truth that before we can enter into our full inheritance in Christ "the old has gone," the world, the flesh, the law, the life of self, "the new has come" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Then we are prepared for the next great message with which the book of Joshua begins: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give them—to the Israelites" (Joshua 1:2).

(The Christ in the Bible Commentary, A. B. Simpson)

## Section 1—Concluding History

### Deuteronomy chapters 31-34

**Has all that Moses predicted come to pass regarding the children of Israel?**

## Section 2—Moses' Song

### Deuteronomy 32:1-47

God made Himself known to His people, the apple of His eye (Deut. 32:10), not only in word (Deut. 32:1-2), but also showed Himself through deeds of power and grace. This was done progressively and in order without the possibility of the least flaw (Deut. 32:4). God has caused all things to work together for the good of them that love Him — to them that are called according to His purpose. **What is His purpose?**

God had every right to Israel's obedience and love because He had made them and established them (Deut. 32:6). Israel, instead of loving Jehovah their God with all their heart, and soul, and might and rendering Him obedience, repaid Him with ingratitude and rebellion. **Explain how God makes and establishes believers? What is required of each believer to give God the proper gratitude?**

"For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance." (Deut. 32:9) Great and mysterious are these words, that God should find His special portion and peculiar inheritance in man. **Explain how this fact unlocks the true meaning not only of the creation but of redemption.**

God never has and never will change His mind in regard to Israel, in spite of all their sins and apostasies. (Ex. 19:5, Deut. 7:6) **When has God extended His hand to the Gentiles?**

Eph. 2:11-22 1 Pet. 2:9-10

## Are there any warnings concerning this extension of God's grace to the Gentiles?

Rom. 11:13-32

"And when the Lord saw *it*, He spurned *them*, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters." (Deut. 32:19) The sin on the part of God's professing people is more grievous in His sight, and more provocative to His holiness, than the sins of those who stand in no relationship with Him. "And He said: 'I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end *will be*, For they *are* a perverse generation, children in whom *is* no faith.'" (Deut. 32:20) **How did Israel provoke His holy jealousy? In what ways was Israel repaid by God for provoking Him?**

"For a fire is kindled in My anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell; It shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains." (Deut. 32:22) **Is there any escape for those who are not His people?**

This was Moses' final message to the people at large, depicting the same love for them that came from God. He pled with them to obey the laws of God (soon to be known as "the Law of Moses") and follow the Lord explicitly regarding His commands. We well know from history that they fell away by their varied sinning over the years. **Considering your knowledge of the New Testament, what was yet required to take place that would enable man to forsake his sinful ways and walk in humble obedience to God?**

### Section 3—Moses' Blessing

#### Deuteronomy 33:1-29

In this last chapter, as well as a few places in Psalms, there is a name for Israel that is not frequently heard—Jeshurun. It is known by scholars as the poetic name of endearment for Israel, and it is used in one context (or interpretation) only. **Can you state what that is? Also, does it especially apply in this final chapter, as it looks toward the future? Does Moses clearly state about each tribe not only something of their history, but also their future, when their restoration shall be complete? Choose any two of Jacob's sons, with regard to their blessings, and make your own statements pertaining to them.**

### Section 4—The Death of Moses

#### Deuteronomy 34:1-12

**In what sense of meaning is sin related to the death of the human body? The law too, had to die, did it not, for it made nothing perfect?**

Heb. 7:19

We quote from the lesson: "... he really died (Moses), and was literally buried, and raised from the tomb afterwards, to stand on the mount of transfiguration with Christ, and enter the land of promise through Jesus Christ, as he could not through the law." **Please explain this in your own wording.** God prepared for Israel a new leader, who would take them "into the land" by a new covenant. **His name is? Explain how he would be a type of the Lord Jesus. Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:17 as you close this wondrous book.**