



YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE

Deuteronomy

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(BIBLE INTERPRETATION)

STUDY GUIDE COMMENTARY SERIES
OLD TESTAMENT VOL. 3

BIBLE LESSONS INTERNATIONAL
MARSHALL, TEXAS
(Revised 2011)

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BRIEF EXPLANATIONS OF THE TECHNICAL RESOURCES USED IN THIS OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY SERIES

A. Lexical

There are several excellent lexicons available for ancient Hebrew.

- A. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. It is based on the German lexicon by Wilhelm Gesenius. It is known by the abbreviation BDB.
- B. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, translated by M. E. J. Richardson. It is known by the abbreviation KB.
- C. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* by William L. Holladay and is based on the above German lexicon.
- D. A new five volume theological word study entitled *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, edited by Willem A. Van Gemeren. It is known by the abbreviation NIDOTTE.

Where there is significant lexical variety, I have shown several English translations (NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB) from both “word-for-word” and “dynamic equivalent” translations (cf. Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 28-44).

B. Grammatical

The grammatical identification is usually based on John Joseph Owens’ *Analytical Key to the Old Testament* in four volumes. This is cross checked with Benjamin Davidson’s *Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

Another helpful resource for grammatical and syntactical features which is used in most of the OT volumes of “You Can Understand the Bible” Series is “The Helps for Translators Series” from the United Bible Societies. They are entitled “A Handbook on _____.”

C. Textual

I am committed to the inspiration of the consonantal Hebrew text (not the Masoretic vowel points and comments). As in all hand-copied, ancient texts, there are some questionable passages. This is usually because of the following:

- A. *hapax legomenon* (words used only once in the Hebrew OT)
- B. idiomatic terms (words and phrases whose literal meanings are not applicable)
- C. historical uncertainties (our lack of information about the ancient world)
- D. the poly-semitic semantic field of Hebrew’s limited vocabulary
- E. problems associated with later scribes hand-copying ancient Hebrew texts
- F. Hebrew scribes trained in Egypt who felt free to update the texts they copied to make them complete and understandable to their day (NIDOTTE, pp. 52-54).

There are several sources of Hebrew words and texts outside the Masoretic textual tradition.

1. The Samaritan Pentateuch
2. The Dead Sea Scrolls
3. The Nash papyrus (Decalogue)
4. The Severus scroll (Pentateuch)
5. Some later coins, letters, and ostraca (broken pieces of unfired pottery used for writing)

But for the most part, there are no manuscript families in the OT like those in the Greek NT manuscripts. For a good brief article on the textual reliability of the Masoretic Text (A.D.

900's) see “The Reliability of the Old Testament Text” by Bruce K. Waltke in the NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 51-67.

The Hebrew text used is *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (BHS) from the German Bible Society, 1997, which is based on the Leningrad Codex (A.D. 1009). Occasionally, the ancient versions (Greek Septuagint, Aramaic Targums, Syriac Peshitta, and Latin Vulgate) are consulted if the Hebrew is ambiguous or obviously confused.

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF HEBREW VERBAL FORMS WHICH IMPACT EXEGESIS

I. Brief Historical Development of Hebrew

Hebrew is part of the Shemitic (Semitic) family of southwest Asian language. The name (given by modern scholars) comes from Noah's son, Shem (cf. Gen. 5:32; 6:10). Shem's descendants are listed in Gen. 10:21-31 as Arabs, Hebrews, Syrians, Arameans, and Assyrians. In reality some Semitic languages are used by nations listed in Ham's line (cf. Gen. 10:6-14), Canaan, Phoenicia, and Ethiopia.

Hebrew is part of the northwest group of these Semitic languages. Modern scholars have samples of this ancient language group from:

- A. Amorite (*Mari Tablets* from 18th century B.C. in Akkadian)
- B. Canaanite (*Ras Shamra Tablets* from 15th century B.C. in Ugaritic)
- C. Canaanite (*Amarna Letters* from 14th century B.C. in Canaanite Akkadian)
- D. Phoenician (Hebrew uses Phoenician alphabet)
- E. Moabite (Mesha stone, 840 B.C.)
- F. Aramaic (official language of the Persian Empire used in Gen. 31:47 [2 words]; Jer. 10:11; Dan. 2:4-6; 7:28; Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26 and spoken by Jews in the first century in Palestine)
 - The Hebrew language is called "the lip of Canaan" in Isa. 19:18. It was first called "Hebrew" in the prologue of Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sira) about 180 B.C. (and some other early places, cf. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, pp. 205ff). It is most closely related to Moabite and the language used at Ugarit. Examples of ancient Hebrew found outside the Bible are
 - 1. the Gezer calendar, 925 B.C. (a school boy's writing)
 - 2. the Siloam Inscription, 705 B.C. (tunnel writings)
 - 3. Samaritan Ostraca, 770 B.C. (tax records on broken pottery)
 - 4. Lachish letters, 587 B.C. (war communications)
 - 5. Maccabean coins and seals
 - 6. some Dead Sea Scroll texts
 - 7. numerous inscriptions (cf. "Languages [Hebrew]," ABD 4:203ff)

It, like all Semitic languages, is characterized by words made up of three consonants (tri-consonantal root). It is an inflexed language. The three-root consonants carry the basic word meaning, while prefixed, suffixed, or internal additions show the syntactical function (later vowels, cf. Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, pp. 46-49).

Hebrew vocabulary demonstrates a difference between prose and poetry. Word meanings are connected to folk etymologies (not linguistic origins). Word plays and sound plays are very common (*paronomasia*).

II. Aspects of Predication

A. VERBS

The normal expected word order is VERB, PRONOUN, SUBJECT (with modifiers), OBJECT (with modifiers). The basic non-flagged VERB is the *Qal*, PERFECT, MASCULINE, SINGULAR form. It is how Hebrew and Aramaic lexicons are arranged.

VERBS are inflected to show

1. number—singular, plural, dual
2. gender—masculine and feminine (no neuter)
3. mood—indicative, subjunctive, imperative (relation of the action to reality)
4. tense (aspect)

- a. PERFECT, which denotes completion, in the sense of the beginning, continuing, and concluding of an action. Usually this form was used of past action, the thing has occurred. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says

“The single whole described by a perfect is also considered as certain. An imperfect may picture a state as possible or desired or expected, but a perfect sees it as actual, real, and sure” (p. 36).

S. R. Driver, *A Treatise on the Use of the Tenses in Hebrew*, describes it as,

“The perfect is employed to indicate actions the accomplishment of which lies indeed in the future, but is regarded as dependant upon such an unalterable determination of the will that it may be spoken of as having actually taken place: thus a resolution, promise, or decree, especially of Divine one, is frequently announced in the perfect tense” (p. 17, e.g., the prophetic perfect).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, defines this verbal form as

“views a situation from the outside, as a whole. As such it expresses a simple fact, whether it be an action or state (including state of being or mind). When used of actions, it often views the action as complete from the rhetorical standpoint of the speaker or narrator (whether it is or is not complete in fact or reality is not the point). The perfect can pertain to an action/state in the past, present or future. As noted above, time frame, which influences how one translates the perfect into a tense-oriented language like English, must be determined from the context” (p. 86).

- b. IMPERFECT, which denotes an action in progress (incomplete, repetitive, continual, or contingent), often movement toward a goal. Usually this form was used of Present and Future action.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, says

“All IMPERFECTS represent incomplete states. They are either repeated or developing or contingent. In other words, are partially developed, or partially assured. In all cases they are partial in some sense, i.e., incomplete” (p. 55).

Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *From Exegesis to Exposition*, says

“It is difficult to reduce the essence of the imperfect to a single concept, for it encompasses both aspect and mood. Sometimes the imperfect is used in an indicative manner and makes an objective statement. At other times it views an action more subjectively, as hypothetical, contingent, possible, and so on” (p. 89).

- c. The added *waw*, which links the VERB to the action of the previous VERB(s).
 - d. IMPERATIVE, which is based on the volition of the speaker and potential action by the hearer.
 - e. In ancient Hebrew only the larger context can determine the authorial-intended time orientations.
- B. The seven major inflected forms and their basic meaning. In reality these forms work in conjunction with each other in a context and must not be isolated.
1. *Qal (Kal)*, the most common and basic of all the forms. It denotes simple action or a state of being. There is no causation or specification implied.
 2. *Niphal*, the second most common form. It is usually PASSIVE, but this form also functions as reciprocal and reflexive. It also has no causation or specification implied.
 3. *Piel*, this form is active and expresses the bringing about of an action into a state of being. The basic meaning of the *Qal* stem is developed or extended into a state of being.
 4. *Pual*, this is the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Piel*. It is often expressed by a PARTICIPLE.
 5. *Hithpael*, which is the reflexive or reciprocal stem. It expresses iterative or durative action to the *Piel* stem. The rare PASSIVE form is called *Hothpael*.
 6. *Hiphil*, the active form of the causative stem in contrast to *Piel*. It can have a permissive aspect, but usually refers to the cause of an event. Ernst Jenni, a German Hebrew grammarian, believed that the *Piel* denoted something coming into a state of being, while *Hiphil* showed how it happened.
 7. *Hophal*, the PASSIVE counterpart to the *Hiphil*. These last two stems are the least used of the seven stems.

Much of this information comes from *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, by Bruce K. Walke and M. O'Connor, pp. 343-452.

Agency and causation chart. One key in understanding the Hebrew VERB system is to see it as a pattern of VOICE relationships. Some stems are in contrast to other stems (i.e., *Qal - Niphal*; *Piel - Hiphil*)

The chart below tries to visualize the basic function of the VERB stems as to causation.

VOICE or Subject	No Secondary Agency	An Active Secondary Agency	A Passive Secondary Agency
ACTIVE	<i>Qal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Piel</i>
MIDDLE PASSIVE	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hophal</i>	<i>Pual</i>
REFLEXIVE/ RECIPROCAL	<i>Niphal</i>	<i>Hiphil</i>	<i>Hithpael</i>

This chart is taken from the excellent discussion of the VERBAL system in light of new Akkadian research (cf. Bruce K. Waltke, M. O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, pp.354-359).

R. H. Kennett, *A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses*, has provided a needed warning.

“I have commonly found in teaching, that a student’s chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many of these

fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigor to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word, ‘tense’ shows, being to them a matter of secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew’s mind.

The name ‘tenses’ as applied to Hebrew verbs is misleading. The so-called Hebrew ‘tenses’ do not express the *time* but merely the *state* of an action. Indeed were it not for the confusion that would arise through the application of the term ‘state’ to both nouns and verbs, ‘states’ would be a far better designation than ‘tenses.’ It must always be borne in mind that it is impossible to translate a Hebrew verb into English without employing a limitation (of time), which is entirely absent in the Hebrew. The ancient Hebrews never thought of an action as past, present, or future, but simply as *perfect*, i.e., complete, or *imperfect*, i.e., as in course of development. When we say that a certain Hebrew tense corresponds to a Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future in English, we do not mean that the Hebrews thought of it as Perfect, Pluperfect, or Future, but merely that it must be so translated in English. The *time* of an action the Hebrews did not attempt to express by any verbal form” (preface and p. 1).

For a second good warning, Sue Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, reminds us,

“There is no way of knowing whether modern scholars’ reconstruction of semantic fields and sense relations in an ancient dead language are merely a reflection of their own intuition, or their own native language, or whether those fields existed in Classical Hebrew” (p. 128).

C. MOODS (Modes)

1. It happened, is happening (INDICATIVE), usually uses PERFECT tense or PARTICIPLES (all PARTICIPLES are INDICATIVE).
2. It will happen, could happen (SUBJUNCTIVE)
 - a. uses a marked IMPERFECT tense
 - (1) COHORTATIVE (added h), first person IMPERFECT form which normally expresses a wish, a request, or self-encouragement (i.e., actions willed by the speaker)
 - (2) JUSSIVE (internal changes), third person IMPERFECT (can be second person in negated sentences) which normally expresses a request, a permission, an admonition, or advice
 - b. uses a PERFECT tense with *lu* or *lule*

These constructions are similar to SECOND CLASS CONDITIONAL sentences in Koine Greek. A false statement (protasis) results in a false conclusion (apodosis).
 - c. uses an IMPERFECT tense and *lu*

Context and *lu*, as well as a future orientation, mark this SUBJUNCTIVE usage. Some examples from J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament* are Gen. 13:16; Deut. 1:12; I Kgs. 13:8; Ps. 24:3; Isa. 1:18 (cf. Pp. 76-77).

- D. *Waw* - Conversive/consecutive/relative. This uniquely Hebrew (Canaanite) syntactical feature has caused great confusion through the years. It is used in a variety of ways often based on genre. The

reason for the confusion is that early scholars were European and tried to interpret in light of their own native languages. When this proved difficult they blamed the problem on Hebrew being a “supposed” ancient, archaic language. European languages are TENSE (time) based VERBS. Some of the variety and grammatical implications were specified by the letter WAW being added to the PERFECT or IMPERFECT VERB stems. This altered the way the action was viewed.

1. In historical narrative the VERBS are linked together in a chain with a standard pattern.
2. The *waw* prefix showed a specific relationship with the previous VERB(s).
3. The larger context is always the key to understanding the VERB chain. Semitic VERBS cannot be analyzed in isolation.

J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*, notes the distinctive of Hebrew in its use of the *waw* before PERFECTS and IMPERFECTS (pp. 52-53). As the basic idea of the PERFECT is past, the addition of *waw* often projects it into a future time aspect. This is also true of the IMPERFECT whose basic idea is present or future; the addition of *waw* places it into the past. It is this unusual time shift which explains the *waw*'s addition, not a change in the basic meaning of the tense itself. The *waw* PERFECTS work well with prophecy, while the *waw* IMPERFECTS work well with narratives (pp. 54, 68).

Watts continues his definition

“As a fundamental distinction between *waw* conjunctive and *waw* consecutive, the following interpretations are offered:

1. *Waw* conjunctive appears always to indicate a parallel.
2. *Waw* consecutive appears always to indicate a sequence. It is the only form of *waw* used with consecutive imperfects. The relation between the imperfects linked by it may be temporal sequence, logical consequence, logical cause, or logical contrast. In all cases there is a sequence” (p. 103).

E. INFINITIVE - There are two kinds of INFINITIVES

1. INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES, which are “strong, independent, striking expressions used for dramatic effect. . .as a subject, it often has no written verb, the verb ‘to be’ being understood, of course, but the word standing dramatically alone” J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Hebrew Old Testament*” (p. 92).
2. INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, which are “related grammatically to the sentence by prepositions, possessive pronouns, and the construct relationship” (p. 91).
J. Weingreen, *A Practical Grammar for Classical Hebrew*, describes the construct state as “When two (or more) words are so closely united that together they constitute one compound idea, the dependent word (or words) is (are) said to be in the construct state” (p. 44).

F. INTERROGATIVES

1. They always appear first in the sentence.
2. Interpretive significance
 - a. *ha* - does not expect a response
 - b. *halo'* - the author expects a “yes” answer

NEGATIVES

1. They always appear before the words they negate.
2. Most common negation is *lo'*.
3. The term *'al* has a contingent connotation and is used with COHORTATIVES and JUSSIVES.

4. The term *lebhilit*, meaning “in order that. . .not,” is used with INFINITIVES.
5. The term *'en* is used with PARTICIPLES.

G. CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

1. There are four kinds of conditional sentences which basically are paralleled in Koine Greek.
 - a. something assumed to be happening or thought of as fulfilled (FIRST CLASS in Greek)
 - b. something contrary to fact whose fulfillment is impossible (SECOND CLASS)
 - c. something which is possible or ever probable (THIRD CLASS)
 - d. something which is less probable, therefore, the fulfillment is dubious (FOURTH CLASS)
2. GRAMMATICAL MARKERS
 - a. the assumed to be true or real condition always uses an INDICATIVE PERFECT or PARTICIPLE and usually the protasis is introduced by
 - (1) *'im*
 - (2) *ki* (or *'asher*)
 - (3) *hin* or *hinneh*
 - b. the contrary to fact condition always uses a PERFECT aspect VERB or a PARTICIPLE with the introductory PARTICLE *lu* or *lule*
 - c. the more probably condition always used IMPERFECT VERB or PARTICIPLES in the protasis, usually *'im* or *ki* are used as introductory PARTICLES
 - d. the less probable condition uses IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVES in the protasis and always uses *'im* as an introductory PARTICLE

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS COMMENTARY

AB	Anchor Bible Commentaries, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (6 vols.), ed. David Noel Freedman
AKOT	<i>Analytical Key to the Old Testament</i> , John Joseph Owens
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , James B. Pritchard
BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , GBS, 1997
IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> (4 vols.), ed. George A. Buttrick
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i> (5 vols.), ed. James Orr
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JPSOA	<i>The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text: A New Translation</i> (The Jewish Publication Society of America)
KB	<i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> , Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner
LAM	<i>The Holy Bible From Ancient Eastern Manuscripts</i> (the Peshitta), George M. Lamsa
LXX	<i>Septuagint</i> (Greek-English) by Zondervan, 1970
MOF	<i>A New Translation of the Bible</i> by James Moffatt
MT	<i>Masoretic Hebrew Text</i>
NAB	New American Bible Text
NASB	<i>New American Standard Bible</i>
NEB	<i>New English Bible</i>
NET	<i>NET Bible: New English Translation</i> , Second Beta Edition
NRSV	<i>New Revised Standard Bible</i>
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> (5 vols.), ed. Willem A. VanGemeren

NIV	<i>New International Version</i>
NJB	<i>New Jerusalem Bible</i>
OTPG	<i>Old Testament Passing Guide</i> , Todd S. Beall, William A. Banks and Colin Smith
REB	<i>Revised English Bible</i>
RSV	<i>Revised Standard Version</i>
SEPT	<i>The Septuagint</i> (Greek-English), Zondervan, 1970
TEV	<i>Today's English Version</i> from United Bible Societies
YLT	<i>Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible</i> , Robert Young
ZPBE	<i>Zondervan Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia</i> (5 vols.), ed. Merrill C. Tenney

A WORD FROM THE AUTHOR: HOW CAN THIS COMMENTARY HELP YOU?

Biblical interpretation is a rational and spiritual process that attempts to understand an ancient inspired writer in such a way that the message from God may be understood and applied in our day.

The spiritual process is crucial but difficult to define. It does involve a yieldedness and openness to God. There must be a hunger (1) for Him, (2) to know Him, and (3) to serve Him. This process involves prayer, confession, and the willingness for lifestyle change. The Spirit is crucial in the interpretive process, but why sincere, godly Christians understand the Bible differently is a mystery.

The rational process is easier to describe. We must be consistent and fair to the text and not be influenced by our personal, cultural, or denominational biases. We are all historically conditioned. None of us are objective, neutral interpreters. This commentary offers a careful rational process containing three interpretive principles structured to help us attempt to overcome our biases.

First Principle

The first principle is to note the historical setting in which a biblical book was written and the particular historical occasion for its authorship (or when it was edited). The original author had a purpose and a message to communicate. The text cannot mean something to us that it never meant to the original, ancient, inspired author. His intent—not our historical, emotional, cultural, personal, or denominational need—is the key. Application is an integral partner to interpretation, but proper interpretation must always precede application. It must be reiterated that every biblical text has one and only one meaning. This meaning is what the original biblical author intended through the Spirit's leadership to communicate to his day. This one meaning may have many possible applications to different cultures and situations. These applications must be linked to the central truth of the original author. For this reason, this study guide commentary is designed to provide a brief introduction to each book of the Bible.

Second Principle

The second principle is to identify the literary units. Every biblical book is a unified document. Interpreters have no right to isolate one aspect of truth by excluding others. Therefore, we must strive to understand the purpose of the whole biblical book before we interpret the individual literary units. The individual parts—chapters, paragraphs, or verses—cannot mean what the whole unit does not mean. Interpretation must move from a deductive approach of the whole to an inductive approach to the parts. Therefore, this study guide commentary is designed to help the student analyze the structure of each literary unit by paragraphs. Paragraph and chapter divisions are not inspired, but they do aid us in identifying thought units.

Interpreting at a paragraph level—not sentence, clause, phrase, or word level—is the key in following the biblical author's intended meaning. Paragraphs are based on a unified topic, often called the theme or topical sentence. Every word, phrase, clause, and sentence in the paragraph relates somehow to this unified theme. They limit it, expand it, explain it, and/or question it. A real key to proper interpretation is to follow the original author's thought on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis through the individual literary units that make up the biblical book. This study guide commentary is designed to help the student do that by comparing the paragraphing of modern English translations. These translations have been selected because they employ different translation theories:

- A. The New King James Version (NKJV) is a word-for-word literal translation based on the Greek manuscript tradition known as the Textus Receptus. Its paragraph divisions are longer than the other translations. These longer units help the student to see the unified topics.
- B. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is a modified word-for-word translation. It forms a midpoint between the following two modern versions. Its paragraph divisions are quite helpful in identifying subjects.
- C. The Today's English Version (TEV) is a dynamic equivalent translation published by the United Bible Society. It attempts to translate the Bible in such a way that a modern English reader or speaker can understand the meaning of the original text.
- D. The Jerusalem Bible (JB) is a dynamic equivalent translation based on a French Catholic translation. It is very helpful in comparing the paragraphing from a European perspective.
6. The printed text is the 1995 Updated New American Standard Bible (NASB), which is a word for word translation. The verse by verse comments follow this paragraphing.

Third Principle

The third principle is to read the Bible in different translations in order to grasp the widest possible range of meaning (semantic field) that biblical words or phrases may have. Often a phrase or word can be understood in several ways. These different translations bring out these options and help to identify and explain the manuscript variations. These do not affect doctrine, but they do help us to try to get back to the original text penned by an inspired ancient writer.

Fourth Principle

The fourth principle is to note the literary genre. Original inspired authors chose to record their messages in different forms (e.g., historical narrative, historical drama, poetry, prophecy, gospel [parable], letter, apocalyptic). These different forms have special keys to interpretation (see Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, or Robert Stein, *Playing by the Rules*).

This commentary offers a quick way for the student to check his interpretations. It is not meant to be definitive, but rather informative and thought-provoking. Often, other possible interpretations help us not be so parochial, dogmatic, and denominational. Interpreters need to have a larger range of interpretive options to recognize how ambiguous the ancient text can be. It is shocking how little agreement there is among Christians who claim the Bible as their source of truth.

These principles have helped me to overcome much of my historical conditioning by forcing me to struggle with the ancient text. My hope is that it will be a blessing to you as well.

Bob Utley
East Texas Baptist University
June 27, 1996

A GUIDE TO GOOD BIBLE READING: A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR VERIFIABLE TRUTH

Can we know truth? Where is it found? Can we logically verify it? Is there an ultimate authority? Are there absolutes which can guide our lives, our world? Is there meaning to life? Why are we here? Where are we going? These questions—questions that all rational people contemplate—have haunted the human intellect since the beginning of time (Eccl. 1:13-18; 3:9-11). I can remember my personal search for an integrating center for my life. I became a believer in Christ at a young age, based primarily on the witness of significant others in my family. As I grew to adulthood, questions about myself and my world also grew. Simple cultural and religious clichés did not bring meaning to the experiences I read about or encountered. It was a time of confusion, searching, longing, and often a feeling of hopelessness in the face of the insensitive, hard world in which I lived.

Many claimed to have answers to these ultimate questions, but after research and reflection I found that their answers were based upon (1) personal philosophies, (2) ancient myths, (3) personal experiences, or (4) psychological projections. I needed some degree of verification, some evidence, some rationality on which to base my world-view, my integrating center, my reason to live.

I found these in my study of the Bible. I began to search for evidence of its trustworthiness, which I found in (1) the historical reliability of the Bible as confirmed by archaeology, (2) the accuracy of the prophecies of the Old Testament, (3) the unity of the Bible message over the sixteen hundred years of its production, and (4) the personal testimonies of people whose lives had been permanently changed by contact with the Bible. Christianity, as a unified system of faith and belief, has the ability to deal with complex questions of human life. Not only did this provide a rational framework, but the experiential aspect of biblical faith brought me emotional joy and stability.

I thought that I had found the integrating center for my life—Christ, as understood through the Scriptures. It was a heady experience, an emotional release. However, I can still remember the shock and pain when it began to dawn on me how many different interpretations of this book were advocated, sometimes even within the same churches and schools of thought. Affirming the inspiration and trustworthiness of the Bible was not the end, but only the beginning. How do I verify or reject the varied and conflicting interpretations of the many difficult passages in Scripture by those who were claiming its authority and trustworthiness?

This task became my life's goal and pilgrimage of faith. I knew that my faith in Christ had (1) brought me great peace and joy. My mind longed for some absolutes in the midst of the relativity of my culture (post-modernity); (2) the dogmatism of conflicting religious systems (world religions); and (3) denominational arrogance. In my search for valid approaches to the interpretation of ancient literature, I was surprised to discover my own historical, cultural, denominational and experiential biases. I had often read the Bible simply to reinforce my own views. I used it as a source of dogma to attack others while reaffirming my own insecurities and inadequacies. How painful this realization was to me!

Although I can never be totally objective, I can become a better reader of the Bible. I can limit my biases by identifying them and acknowledging their presence. I am not yet free of them, but I have confronted my own weaknesses. The interpreter is often the worst enemy of good Bible reading!

Let me list some of the presuppositions I bring to my study of the Bible so that you, the reader, may examine them along with me:

I. Presuppositions

- A. I believe the Bible is the sole inspired self-revelation of the one true God. Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of the intent of the original divine author (the Spirit) through a human writer in a specific historical setting.

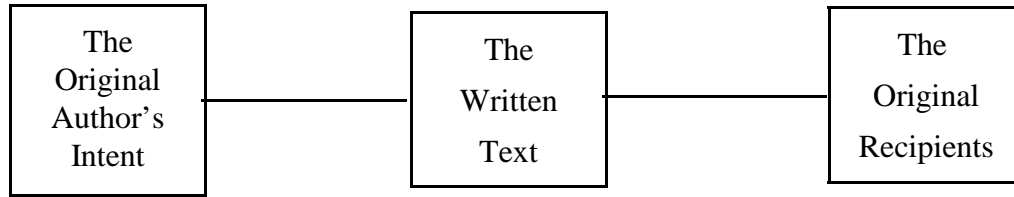
- B. I believe the Bible was written for the common person—for all people! God accommodated Himself to speak to us clearly within a historical and cultural context. God does not hide truth—He wants us to understand! Therefore, it must be interpreted in light of its day, not ours. The Bible should not mean to us what it never meant to those who first read or heard it. It is understandable by the average human mind and uses normal human communication forms and techniques.
- C. I believe the Bible has a unified message and purpose. It does not contradict itself, though it does contain difficult and paradoxical passages. Thus, the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself.
- D. I believe that every passage (excluding prophecies) has one and only one meaning based on the intent of the original, inspired author. Although we can never be absolutely certain we know the original author’s intent, many indicators point in its direction:
 1. the genre (literary type) chosen to express the message
 2. the historical setting and/or specific occasion that elicited the writing
 3. the literary context of the entire book as well as each literary unit
 4. the textual design (outline) of the literary units as they relate to the whole message
 5. the specific grammatical features employed to communicate the message
 6. the words chosen to present the message
 7. parallel passages

The study of each of these areas becomes the object of our study of a passage. Before I explain my methodology for good Bible reading, let me delineate some of the inappropriate methods being used today that have caused so much diversity of interpretation, and that consequently should be avoided:

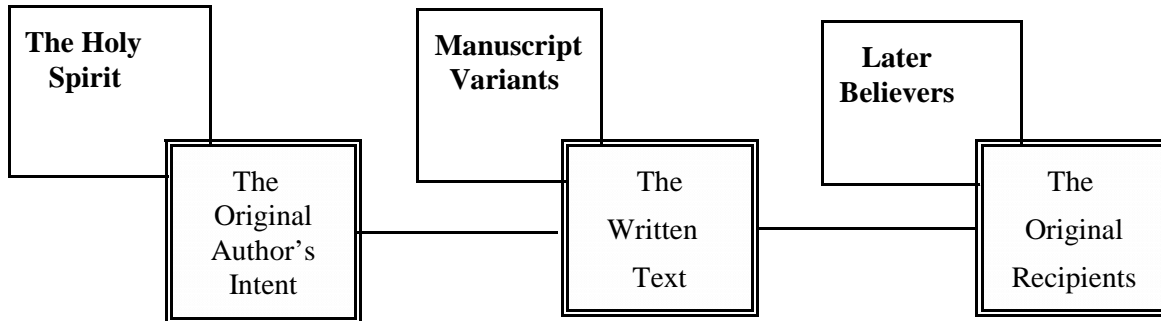
II. Inappropriate Methods

- A. Ignoring the literary context of the books of the Bible and using every sentence, clause, or even individual words as statements of truth unrelated to the author’s intent or the larger context. This is often called “proof-texting.”
- B. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by substituting a supposed historical setting that has little or no support from the text itself.
- C. Ignoring the historical setting of the books and reading it as the morning hometown newspaper written primarily to modern individual Christians.
- D. Ignoring the historical setting of the books by allegorizing the text into a philosophical/theological message totally unrelated to the first hearers and the original author’s intent.
- E. Ignoring the original message by substituting one’s own system of theology, pet doctrine, or contemporary issue unrelated to the original author’s purpose and stated message. This phenomenon often follows the initial reading of the Bible as a means of establishing a speaker’s authority. This is often referred to as “reader response” (“what-the-text-means-to-me” interpretation).

At least three related components may be found in all written human communication:



In the past, different reading techniques have focused on one of the three components, but to truly affirm the unique inspiration of the Bible, a modified diagram is more appropriate:



In truth all three components must be included in the interpretive process. For the purpose of verification, my interpretation focuses on the first two components: the original author and the text. I am probably reacting to the abuses I have observed (1) allegorizing or spiritualizing texts and (2) “reader response” interpretation (what-it-means-to-me). Abuse may occur at each stage. We must always check our motives, biases, techniques, and applications, but how do we check them if there are no boundaries to interpretations, no limits, no criteria? This is where authorial intent and textual structure provide me with some criteria for limiting the scope of possible valid interpretations.

In light of these inappropriate reading techniques, what are some possible approaches to good Bible reading and interpretation which offer a degree of verification and consistency?

III. Possible Approaches to Good Bible Reading

At this point I am not discussing the unique techniques of interpreting specific genres but general hermeneutical principles valid for all types of biblical texts. A good book for genre-specific approaches is *How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth*, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, published by Zondervan and *Cracking Old Testament Codes* by D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., published by Broadman and Holman.

My methodology focuses initially on the reader allowing the Holy Spirit to illumine the Bible through four personal reading cycles. This makes the Spirit, the text, and the reader primary, not secondary. This also protects the reader from being unduly influenced by commentators. I have heard it said: “The Bible throws a lot of light on commentaries.” This is not meant to be a depreciating comment about study aids, but rather a plea for an appropriate timing for their use.

We must be able to support our interpretations from the text itself. Five areas provide at least limited verification:

1. the original author's
 - a. historical setting
 - b. literary context

2. the original author's choice of
 - a. grammatical structures (syntax)
 - b. contemporary word usage
 - c. genre
3. our understanding of appropriate
 - a. relevant parallel passages

We need to be able to provide the reasons and logic behind our interpretations. The Bible is our only source for faith and practice. Sadly, Christians often disagree about what it teaches or affirms. It is self-defeating to claim inspiration for the Bible and then for believers not to be able to agree on what it teaches and requires!

The four reading cycles are designed to provide the following interpretive insights:

A. The first reading cycle

1. Read the book in a single sitting. Read it again in a different translation, hopefully from a different translation theory
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, NJB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
2. Look for the central purpose of the entire writing. Identify its theme.
3. Isolate (if possible) a literary unit, a chapter, a paragraph or a sentence which clearly expresses this central purpose or theme.
4. Identify the predominant literary genre
 - a. Old Testament
 - (1) Hebrew narrative
 - (2) Hebrew poetry (wisdom literature, psalm)
 - (3) Hebrew prophecy (prose, poetry)
 - (4) Law codes
 - b. New Testament
 - (1) Narratives (Gospels, Acts)
 - (2) Parables (Gospels)
 - (3) Letters/epistles
 - (4) Apocalyptic literature

B. The second reading cycle

1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify major topics or subjects.
2. Outline the major topics and briefly state their contents in a simple statement.
3. Check your purpose statement and broad outline with study aids.

C. The third reading cycle

1. Read the entire book again, seeking to identify the historical setting and specific occasion for the writing from the Bible book itself.
2. List the historical items that are mentioned in the Bible book
 - a. the author
 - b. the date
 - c. the recipients

- d. the specific reason for writing
- e. aspects of the cultural setting that relate to the purpose of the writing
- f. references to historical people and events
- 3. Expand your outline to paragraph level for that part of the biblical book you are interpreting. Always identify and outline the literary unit. This may be several chapters or paragraphs. This enables you to follow the original author's logic and textual design.
- 4. Check your historical setting by using study aids.
- D. The fourth reading cycle
 - 1. Read the specific literary unit again in several translations
 - a. word-for-word (NKJV, NASB, NRSV)
 - b. dynamic equivalent (TEV, JB)
 - c. paraphrase (Living Bible, Amplified Bible)
 - 2. Look for literary or grammatical structures
 - a. repeated phrases, Eph. 1:6,12,13
 - b. repeated grammatical structures, Rom. 8:31
 - c. contrasting concepts
 - 3. List the following items
 - a. significant terms
 - b. unusual terms
 - c. important grammatical structures
 - d. particularly difficult words, clauses, and sentences
 - 4. Look for relevant parallel passages
 - a. look for the clearest teaching passage on your subject using
 - (1) "systematic theology" books
 - (2) reference Bibles
 - (3) concordances
 - b. Look for a possible paradoxical pair within your subject. Many biblical truths are presented in dialectical pairs; many denominational conflicts come from proof-texting half of a biblical tension. All of the Bible is inspired, and we must seek out its complete message in order to provide a Scriptural balance to our interpretation.
 - c. Look for parallels within the same book, same author or same genre; the Bible is its own best interpreter because it has one author, the Spirit.
 - 5. Use study aids to check your observations of historical setting and occasion
 - a. study Bibles
 - b. Bible encyclopedias, handbooks and dictionaries
 - c. Bible introductions
 - d. Bible commentaries (at this point in your study, allow the believing community, past and present, to aid and correct your personal study.)

IV. Application of Bible interpretation

At this point we turn to application. You have taken the time to understand the text in its original setting; now you must apply it to your life, your culture. I define biblical authority as "understanding what the original biblical author was saying to his day and applying that truth to our day."

Application must follow interpretation of the original author's intent both in time and logic. We cannot apply a Bible passage to our own day until we know what it was saying to its day! A Bible passage should not mean what it never meant!

Your detailed outline, to paragraph level (reading cycle #3), will be your guide. Application should be made at paragraph level, not word level. Words have meaning only in context; clauses have meaning only in context; sentences have meaning only in context. The only inspired person involved in the interpretive process is the original author. We only follow his lead by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. But illumination is not inspiration. To say "thus saith the Lord," we must abide by the original author's intent. Application must relate specifically to the general intent of the whole writing, the specific literary unit and paragraph level thought development.

Do not let the issues of our day interpret the Bible; let the Bible speak! This may require us to draw principles from the text. This is valid if the text supports a principle. Unfortunately, many times our principles are just that, "our" principles—not the text's principles.

In applying the Bible, it is important to remember that (except in prophecy) one and only one meaning is valid for a particular Bible text. That meaning is related to the intent of the original author as he addressed a crisis or need in his day. Many possible applications may be derived from this one meaning. The application will be based on the recipients' needs but must be related to the original author's meaning.

V. The Spiritual Aspect of Interpretation

So far I have discussed the logical and textual process involved in interpretation and application. Now let me discuss briefly the spiritual aspect of interpretation. The following checklist has been helpful for me:

- A. Pray for the Spirit's help (cf. I Cor. 1:26-2:16).
- B. Pray for personal forgiveness and cleansing from known sin (cf. I John 1:9).
- C. Pray for a greater desire to know God (cf. Ps. 19:7-14; 42:1ff.; 119:1ff).
- D. Apply any new insight immediately to your own life.
- E. Remain humble and teachable.

It is so hard to keep the balance between the logical process and the spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit. The following quotes have helped me balance the two:

- A. from James W. Sire, *Scripture Twisting*, pp. 17-18:

"The illumination comes to the minds of God's people—not just to the spiritual elite. There is no guru class in biblical Christianity, no illuminati, no people through whom all proper interpretation must come. And so, while the Holy Spirit gives special gifts of wisdom, knowledge and spiritual discernment, He does not assign these gifted Christians to be the only authoritative interpreters of His Word. It is up to each of His people to learn, to judge and to discern by reference to the Bible which stands as the authority even to those to whom God has given special abilities. To summarize, the assumption I am making throughout the entire book is that the Bible is God's true revelation to all humanity, that it is our ultimate authority on all matters about which it speaks, that it is not a total mystery but can be adequately understood by ordinary people in every culture."

- B. on Kierkegaard, found in Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, p. 75:

According to Kierkegaard the grammatical, lexical, and historical study of the Bible was necessary but preliminary to the true reading of the Bible. "To read the Bible *as God's*

word one must read it with his heart in his mouth, on tip-toe, with eager expectancy, in conversation with God. To read the Bible thoughtlessly or carelessly or academically or professionally is not to read the Bible as God's Word. As one reads it as a love letter is read, then one reads it as the Word of God."

C. H. H. Rowley in *The Relevance of the Bible*, p. 19:

"No merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this book if it is to be complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study unto the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books."

VI. This Commentary's Method

The *Study Guide Commentary* is designed to aid your interpretive procedures in the following ways:

- A. A brief historical outline introduces each book. After you have done "reading cycle #3" check this information.
- B. Contextual insights are found at the beginning of each chapter. This will help you see how the literary unit is structured.
- C. At the beginning of each chapter or major literary unit the paragraph divisions and their descriptive captions are provided from several modern translations:
 1. The New American Standard Bible, 1995 Update (NASB)
 2. The New King James Version (NKJV)
 3. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)
 4. Today's English Version (TEV)
 5. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB)

Paragraph divisions are not inspired. They must be ascertained from the context. By comparing several modern translations from differing translation theories and theological perspectives, we are able to analyze the supposed structure of the original author's thought. Each paragraph has one major truth. This has been called "the topic sentence" or "the central idea of the text." This unifying thought is the key to proper historical, grammatical interpretation. One should never interpret, preach or teach on less than a paragraph! Also remember that each paragraph is related to its surrounding paragraphs. This is why a paragraph level outline of the entire book is so important. We must be able to follow the logical flow of the subject being addressed by the original inspired author.

- D. Bob's notes follow a verse-by-verse approach to interpretation. This forces us to follow the original author's thought. The notes provide information from several areas:
 1. literary context
 2. historical, cultural insights
 3. grammatical information
 4. word studies
 5. relevant parallel passages

- E. At certain points in the commentary, the printed text of the New American Standard Version (1995 update) will be supplemented by the translations of several other modern versions:
1. The New King James Version (NKJV), which follows the textual manuscripts of the “Textus Receptus.”
 2. The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), which is a word-for-word revision from the National Council of Churches of the Revised Standard Version.
 3. The Today’s English Version (TEV), which is a dynamic equivalent translation from the American Bible Society.
 4. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB), which is an English translation based on a French Catholic dynamic equivalent translation.

- F. For those who do not read the original languages, comparing English translations can help in identifying problems in the text:
1. manuscript variations
 2. alternate word meanings
 3. grammatically difficult texts and structure
 4. ambiguous texts

Although the English translations cannot solve these problems, they do target them as places for deeper and more thorough study.

- G. At the close of each chapter relevant discussion questions are provided which attempt to target the major interpretive issues of that chapter.

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY

I. SIGNIFICANCE

- A. It is one of the four OT books quoted most often in the NT (i.e., Genesis, Deuteronomy, Psalms, and Isaiah). Deuteronomy is quoted 83 times.
- B. A quote from the Tyndale OT Commentary Series, “Deuteronomy,” by J. A. Thompson:
“Deuteronomy is one of the greatest books of the Old Testament. Its influence on the domestic and personal religion of all ages has not been surpassed by any other book in the Bible” (p. 11).
- C. This must have been one of Jesus’ favorite books of the OT:
 - 1. He quoted repeatedly from it during His temptation by Satan in the wilderness
 - a. Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4 - Deut. 8:3
 - b. Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12 - Deut. 6:26
 - c. Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8 - Deut. 6:13
 - 2. It is possibly the outline behind the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7).
 - 3. Jesus quoted Deut. 6:5 as the greatest commandment (cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28).
 - 4. Jesus quoted this section of the OT (Genesis-Deuteronomy) most often because the Jews of His day considered it the most authoritative section of the canon.
- D. This is one major example in the Scripture of the reinterpretation of a previous revelation by God to a new situation. An example of this would be the slight difference between the Ten Commandments in Exod. 20:11 versus Deut. 5:15. Exodus 20 was given at Mt. Sinai and relates to the Wilderness Wandering Period while Deuteronomy 5 was given on the Plains of Moab preparing the people for a settled life in Canaan.
- E. Deuteronomy is a series of messages given by Moses on the Plains of Moab (eastern Jordan). The three sermons all begin with the designation of the physical place of the sermon. All may refer to the same place.
 - 1. “across the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazereth and Dizahab,” 1:1
 - 2. “across the Jordan in the land of Moab,” 1:5
 - 3. “across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon the king,” 4:46
 - 4. “in the land of Moab,” 29:1
- F. Deuteronomy is also the center of dialogue today among OT scholars concerning its literary formation. Modern scholarship is divided on its theories regarding the compositions of both Deuteronomy and rest of the Pentateuch.

II. THE NAME OF THE BOOK

- A. In Hebrew the titles of the books of the *Tanakh* (Pentateuch) are one of their first ten words, usually their first word:
 - 1. Genesis, “In the beginning”
 - 2. Exodus, “And these are the names”
 - 3. Leviticus, “And He called”
 - 4. Numbers, “In the desert”
 - 5. Deuteronomy, “And these are the words”
- B. In the Talmud Deuteronomy is called “repetition of the law” (*Mishnah Hattorah* from Deut.17:18).
- C. In the Greek translation of the OT, called the Septuagint (LXX), written around 250 B.C., Deuteronomy is called “the second law” because of a mistranslation of 17:18 (i.e., “make a copy of this law”).
- D. We get our English title from Jerome’s Latin Vulgate which calls it “the second law” (Deuteronomium).
- E. It is a book of instructions on how to keep God’s covenant.
 - 1. “this book of the law,” 28:61
 - 2. “this law,” 1:5; 4:8; 17:18,19; 27:3,8,26
 - 3. other descriptive phrases, 4:1,45; 6:17, 20; 12:1

III. CANONIZATION – This is the concluding book of The Torah which forms the first of the three divisions of the Hebrew canon

- A. The Torah or Law — Genesis-Deuteronomy
- B. The Prophets:
 - 1. Former Prophets — Joshua-Kings (except Ruth)
 - 2. Latter Prophets — Isaiah-Malachi (except Daniel and Lamentations)
- C. The Writings:
 - 1. The Megilloth (5 scrolls):
 - a. Song of Songs
 - b. Ecclesiastes
 - c. Ruth
 - d. Lamentations
 - e. Esther
 - 2. Daniel
 - 3. Wisdom Literature:
 - a. Job
 - b. Psalms
 - c. Proverbs
 - 4. I & II Chronicles

IV. GENRE

- A. Deuteronomy is a mixture of several genres.
 - 1. historical narrative
 - a. chapters 1-4
 - b. chapter 34
 - 2. exhortations - chapters 6-11
 - 3. guidelines, chapters 12-28
 - 4. psalms/hymns/songs--chapter 32
 - 5. blessings - chapter 33
- B. Deuteronomy describes itself as a book of guidelines from YHWH for life (Torah) in 29:21; 30:10; 31:26. It is a book of teachings about faith and life to be passed on to future generations.
- C. God's special leader is replaced by God's written revelation. Human leaders will remain, but the written revelation is emphasized as authoritative.

V. AUTHORSHIP

- A. Jewish Tradition:
 - 1. Ancient tradition is unanimous that the author was Moses.
 - 2. This is stated in:
 - a. Talmud - *Baba Bathra* 14b
 - b. *Mishnah*
 - c. Ben Sirach's Ecclesiasticus 24:23 (written about 185 B.C.)
 - d. Philo of Alexandria
 - e. Flavius Josephus
 - 3. The Scripture itself:
 - a. Judges 3:4 and Joshua 8:31
 - b. "Moses spoke":
 - (1) Deuteronomy 1:1, 3
 - (2) Deuteronomy 5:1
 - (3) Deuteronomy 27:1
 - (4) Deuteronomy 29:2
 - (5) Deuteronomy 31:1, 30
 - (6) Deuteronomy 32:44
 - (7) Deuteronomy 33:1
 - c. "YHWH spoke to Moses":
 - (1) Deuteronomy 5:4-5, 22
 - (2) Deuteronomy 6:1
 - (3) Deuteronomy 10:1
 - d. "Moses wrote":
 - (1) Deuteronomy 31:9, 22, 24
 - (2) Exodus 17:14

- (3) Exodus 24:4, 12
- (4) Exodus 34:27-28
- (5) Numbers 33:2
- e. Jesus quotes from or alludes to Deuteronomy and states “Moses said”/”Moses wrote”:

 - (1) Matt. 19:7-9; Mark 10:4-5 - Deut. 24:1-4
 - (2) Mark 7:10 - Deut. 5:16
 - (3) Luke 16:31; 24:27, 44; John 5:46-47; 7:19, 23

- f. Paul asserts Moses as author:

 - (1) Rom. 10:19 - Deut. 32:21
 - (2) I Cor. 9:9 - Deut. 25:4
 - (3) Gal. 3:10 - Deut. 27:26
 - (4) Acts 26:22; 28:23

- g. Peter asserts Moses as author in his Pentecostal sermon - Acts 3:22
- h. The author of Hebrews asserts Moses as author - Heb. 10:28; Deut. 17:2-6

B. Modern Scholarship

1. Many of the 18th and 19th century theologians, following the Graf-Wellhausen theory of multiple authorship (JEDP), assert that Deuteronomy was written by a priest/prophet during Josiah’s reign in Judah to support his spiritual reform. This would mean that the book was written in Moses’ name about 621 B.C.
2. They base this on:
 - a. II Kgs. 22:8; II Chron. 34:14-15, “I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD”
 - b. chapter 12 discussed a single site for the Tabernacle and later Temple
 - c. chapter 17 discussed a later king
 - d. the truth that writing a book in the name of a famous person from the past was common in the ancient Near East and in Jewish circles
 - e. similarities of style, vocabulary and grammar between Deuteronomy and Joshua, Kings and Jeremiah
 - f. Deuteronomy records the death of Moses (chapter 34)
 - g. obvious later editorial additions in the Pentateuch:
 - (1) Deut. 3:14
 - (2) Deut. 34:6
 - h. the sometimes unexplainable variety in the use of the names of Deity: El, El Shaddai, Elohim, YHWH, in seemingly unified contexts and historical periods.

C. There are obviously some editorial additions. Jewish scribes were trained in Egypt where they regularly updated ancient texts. Mesopotamian scribes were reluctant to add material.

Some examples in Deuteronomy are:

1. 27:3,8
2. 28:58
3. 29:21,29
4. 30:10,19
5. 31:24

VI. DATE

- A. If written by Moses there are still two possibilities related to the time and duration of the Exodus from Egypt:
1. If I Kgs. 6:1 is meant to be taken literally then about 1445 B.C. (18th dynasty of Thutmose III and Amenhotep II):
 - a. LXX has 440 years instead of 480 years
 - b. This number may reflect generations not years (symbolic)
 2. Archaeological evidences for 1290 B.C. for the Exodus (19th Egyptian dynasty):
 - a. Seti I (1390-1290) moved Egyptian capital from Thebes to delta region - Zoan/Tanis.
 - b. Rameses II (1290-1224):
 - (1) His name occurs in a city built by Hebrew slaves (cf. Gen. 47:11; Exod.1:11)
 - (2) He had 47 daughters
 - (3) He was not succeeded by his oldest son
 - c. All major walled cities of Palestine destroyed and rapidly rebuilt about 1250 B.C.
- B. Modern Scholarship theory of multiple authorship:
1. J (YHWH) 950 B.C.
 2. E (Elohim) 850 B.C.
 3. JE (combination) 750 B.C.
 4. D (Deuteronomy) 621 B.C.
 5. P (Priests) 400 B.C.

VII. SOURCES FOR CORROBORATING THE HISTORICAL SETTING

- A. The Hittite treaties of the 2nd millennium B.C. offer us an ancient, historically contemporary parallel to the structure of Deuteronomy (as well as Exodus-Leviticus and Joshua 24). This treaty pattern changed by the 1st millennium B.C. This gives us evidence for the historicity of Deuteronomy. For further reading in this area, see G. E. Mendenhall's *Law and Covenants in Israel and the Ancient Near East* and M. G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*.
- B. The Hittite pattern and its Deuteronomy parallels:
1. Preamble (Deut. 1:1-5, introduction of speaker, YHWH)
 2. Review of the past acts of the King (Deut. 1:6-4:49, God's past acts for Israel)
 3. Treaty terms (Deuteronomy 5-26):
 - a. General (Deuteronomy 5-11)
 - b. Specific (Deuteronomy 12-26)
 4. Results of treaty (Deuteronomy 27-29):
 - a. Benefits (Deuteronomy 28)
 - b. Consequences (Deuteronomy 27)
 5. Witness of deity (Deut. 30:19; 31:19, also 32, Moses' song functions as a witness):
 - a. a copy of the Treaty placed in temple of the deity
 - b. a copy of the Treaty kept in the temple of the vassal to be read annually

- c. the uniqueness of the Hittite treaties from the later Assyrian and Syrian treaties were:
 - (1) the historical review of the past acts of the king
 - (2) the cursing section was less pronounced
- C. The Hittite treaty pattern was slightly changed (one item dropped) in the first millennium B.C. The form of Deuteronomy fits the time of Moses and Joshua best!
- D. For a good discussion of these Hittite treaties see K. A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament*, pp. 99-102.

VIII. LITERARY UNITS (context)

- A. Introduction to the book, 1:1-5
- B. First Sermon, 1:6-4:43 (The past acts of YHWH for today)
- C. Second Sermon, 4:44-26:19 (The law of YHWH for today and for all days)
 - 1. General - the Ten Commandments (5-11)
 - 2. Specific examples and applications (12-26)
- D. Third Sermon, 27-30 (YHWH's Law for the future 27-29)
 - 1. Cursings (27)
 - 2. Blessings (28)
 - 3. Covenant renewal (29-30)
- E. Last Words of Moses, 31-33
 - 1. "Good bye" sermon, 31:1-29
 - 2. The song of Moses, 31:30-32:52
 - 3. The blessings of Moses 33:1-29
- F. Moses' death, 34

IX. MAIN TRUTHS

- A. Final preparations before entering the Promised Land. God's Covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15) has been fulfilled!
- B. Genesis 12:1-3 promised a land and a seed. The OT focuses on the land; the NT will focus on "the seed" (cf. Galatians 3).
- C. Moses prepares the people for a settled agricultural life versus a nomadic life. He adapts the Sinai Covenant for the Promised Land. In a sense Deuteronomy is Israel's constitution.

- D. The book emphasizes God's faithfulness in the past, the present, and the future. The covenant, however, is conditional! Israel must respond and continue in faith, repentance and obedience. If she does not the curses of chapters 27-29 will become a reality. Moses is a prime example of God's love and justice! Even God's special leader is responsible for obedience. Disobedience always carries consequences!

DEUTERONOMY 1

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS*

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Previous Command to Enter Canaan	Historical Review (1:1-3:29)	Introduction	The First Discourse of Moses (1:1-4:43) Time and Place
1:1-8	1:1-5	1:1-5	1:1-3 1:4-5 The Final Instructions at Horeb
Tribal Leaders Appointed	1:6-8	1:6-8	1:6-8
1:9-18	1:9-18	Moses Appoints Judges 1:9-15 1:16-18	1:9-18
Israel's Refusal to Enter the Land	1:19-25	The Spies are Sent Out From Kadesh Barnea	Kadesh: the Israelites Lose Faith
1:19-25	1:19-21 1:22-25	1:19-21 1:22 1:23-25	1:19-28
1:26-33	1:26-33	1:26-28 1:29-33	1:29-33
The Penalty for Israel's Rebellion	1:34-40	The LORD Punishes Israel 1:34-38 1:39-40	Yahweh's Instructions at Kadesh 1:34-40
1:41-46	1:41-45	1:41 1:42-45	1:41-46

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

*Although not inspired, paragraph divisions are the key to understanding and following the original author's intent. Each modern translation has divided and summarized the paragraph divisions as they understand them. Every paragraph has one central topic, truth or thought. Each version encapsulates that topic in its own way. As you read the text, which translation fits your understanding of the subject and verse divisions?

In every chapter you must read the Bible first and try to identify its subjects (paragraphs). Then compare your understanding with the modern versions. Only when we understand the original author's intent by following his logic and presentation at the paragraph level, can one truly understand the Bible. Only the original author was inspired—readers have no right to change or modify the message. Bible readers do have the responsibility to apply the inspired truth to their day and lives.

Note that all technical terms and abbreviations are explained fully in Appendices One, Two and Three.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:1-5

¹These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazeroth and Dizahab. ²It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh-barnea. ³In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that the LORD had commanded him to give to them, ⁴after he had defeated Sihon the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei. ⁵Across the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law, saying,

1:1 "These are the words" This is the Hebrew title for the book. The Hebrew VERB "spoke" (BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT) is a COGNATE to the NOUN "words" (BDB 182). Because the book itself says that these are the words of Moses, I believe that this excludes the possibility that this is entirely the work of a later redactor, editor, or compiler. We actually have the words of Moses, which in reality are the words of YHWH (e.g., 7:4; 11:13-14; 17:3; 29:6). This is not to say that there are not some editorial additions or that Moses recorded his own death. But the bulk of the material and the theology are Mosaic.

Similar phrases seem to divide Deuteronomy into sections:

1. "These are the words," 1:1 (1:1-5, introduction to first sermon)
2. "This is the law," 4:44 (4:44-49, introduction to second sermon)
3. "This is the commandment," 6:1
4. "These are the words of the covenant," 29:1 (start of third sermon)
5. "This is the blessing," 33:1

While I am commenting on this controversial issue of authorship/date, let me state clearly that I believe all Scripture is inspired (cf. II Tim. 3:15-17). The issue of authorship and date are hermeneutical issues, not inspiration issues! The Holy Spirit is the divine author of all canonical texts. Is this pre-suppositional? Absolutely! But it is a crucial presupposition, which must be reviewed and studied before any exegesis of Scripture has validity. The doctrines of Inspiration and Canonization are the twin pillars on which an authoritative Bible rests!

▣ **"which Moses spoke"** There were a large number of people who left Egypt with Moses and it would have been physically impossible for him to speak to all of them at one time. Possibly he spoke to the elders and then they repeated it to smaller groups or this is a literary way of denoting a written document.

▣ “to all Israel” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL (the name)

- I. The Name’s meaning is uncertain (BDB 975).
 - A. *El* Persisteth
 - B. Let *El* Persist (JUSSIVE)
 - C. *El* Perseveres
 - D. Let *El* Contend
 - E. *El* Strives
 - F. He who strives with God (Gen. 32:28)
- II. Usages in the OT
 - A. Jacob’s name (supplanter, heel grabber, BDB 784, cf. Gen. 25:26) is changed after wrestling with the spiritual personage at the river Jabbok (cf. Gen. 32:22-32; Exod. 32:13). Often the meanings of Hebrew names are sound plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 32:28). Israel becomes his name (e.g., Gen. 35:10; 32:13).
 - B. It came to be used as a collective name for all of his twelve sons (e.g., Gen. 32:32; 49:16; Exod. 1:7; 4:22; 28:11; Deut. 3:18; 10:6).
 - C. It came to designate the nation formed by the twelve tribes before the exodus (cf. Gen. 47:27; Exod. 4:22; 5:2) and after (cf. Deut. 1:1; 18:6; 33:10).
 - D. After the united monarchy of Saul, David, and Solomon the tribes split under Rehoboam (cf. I Kings 12).
 1. the distinction starts even before the official split (e.g., II Sam. 3:10; 5:5; 20:1; 24:9; I Kgs. 1:35; 4:20)
 2. designates the northern tribes until the fall of Samaria to Assyria in 722 B.C. (cf. II Kings 17).
 - E. Used of Judah in a few places (e.g., Isaiah 1; Micah 1:15-16).
 - F. After the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles it became the collective name for all of Jacob’s descendants again (e.g., Isa. 17:7,9; Jer. 2:4; 50:17,19).
 - G. Used of laity in contradistinction from priests (cf. I Chr. 9:2; Ezra 10:25; Neh. 11:3).

▣ “**across the Jordan**” This possibly means “in the region of” (BDB 719). The next two sentences are very specific as to the geographical location of the camp of Israel when Moses gave them this revelation. It became an idiom for (1) the area east of the Jordan (cf. Num. 35:14; Deut. 1:1,5; 4:41,46,47,49) and (2) the western area (cf. Deut. 3:20,25; 11:30; 9:1). It requires additional phrases to clarify which bank of the river is meant (cf. R. K Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 636-638).

▣ “**the wilderness**” This is not desert but uninhabited pasture land (BDB 184), which is dry and dead most of the year except in winter and early spring.

▣ “**the Arabah**” This is literally “arid plains” (BDB 787). This refers to the Jordan Valley (i.e., the Great Rift Valley) which goes from the Sea of Galilee to the Gulf of Aqaba (really from Turkey to Mozambique). So, it refers to the area both to the south (modern usage) and to the north of the Dead Sea and we are not certain exactly which part is meant. It can refer to the east bank of the Jordan (cf. 3:17; 4:49) or the west bank (cf. 11:30). Verse 1 is a summary of the Israelites’ trek from Egypt to Sinai.

▣ **“Suph”** This (Egyptian loan word) is literally “reeds” (BDB 693). This can refer either to salt water plants (cf. Jon. 2:5) or more commonly fresh water plants (cf. Exod. 2:5). Here it can be translated “area of reeds” or the city of Suph and may relate to v. 40 (i.e., Red Sea is literally, “sea of reeds”).

▣ **“Paran”** The term “paran” (BDB 803) can refer to a wilderness area which was north of the wilderness of Sinai, but south of the wilderness of Judea (cf. Num. 13:3,26). The oasis of Kadesh-Barnea was located in this wilderness area. See Special Topic at 2:1.

However, in this verse Paran seems to be an unknown location (possibly a city) on the eastern bank of the Jordan.

▣ **“Topel”** The term means “whitewash” (BDB 1074). This is an unknown site, but is apparently on the eastern side of the Jordan in the territory of Moab.

▣ **“Laban”** The term means “white” (BDB 526 III). This is an unknown site. Some scholars place it on the route from Sinai to Moab (cf. Libnah of Num. 33:20-21), while others make it a city or village on the eastern bank of the Jordan in Moab.

▣ **“Hazeroth”** It is this place name (BDB 348) that has caused scholars to assert that the locations mentioned after “Arabah” are Israel’s camp locations between Mt. Sinai and the plains of Moab (cf. 1:2). If so, Laban would be Libnah (cf. Num. 33:20-21) and Hazeroth would refer to Num. 33:17-18. This was the site where Aaron and Miriam murmured against Moses’ leadership or his new marriage to a Cushite woman (cf. Numbers 12).

▣ **“Dizahab”** This name (a combination of Aramaic “place of” and Hebrew “gold”) means “place of gold” (BDB 191). The rabbis related this to the Egyptians giving the Jews gold when they left Egypt (cf. Exod. 3:22; 11:2; 12:35), but in context, this was a place name. The site is unknown. It was either (1) on the east bank of the Jordan in Moab and thereby close to the other places mentioned or (2) on the route from Mt. Sinai to Moab.

1:2 “eleven days journey from Horeb. . .Kadesh-barnea” This verse may be a summary of the movement of Israel from Mt. Horeb/Sinai to the oasis at Kadesh, but if so, it does not fit well between vv. 1 and 3. This may have been included to show that the journey should have taken eleven days, but because of unbelief it took a whole generation (38 years plus). This eleven-day trip seems to confirm the site of Mt. Horeb/Sinai as in the southern tip of the Sinai Peninsula.

Notice that the place of the giving of the law is called “Horeb.” Horeb is a Hebrew word for “waste” or “desolate” (BDB 352, KB 349). Sinai (BDB 696) is a non-Hebrew word, and they seem to both refer to the place where Moses brought Israel to meet YHWH (e.g., Horeb, Exod. 3:1; Deut. 1:6,19; 4:10,15; 5:12 and Sinai Exod. 19; Lev. 7:38; 25:1; 26:46; 27:34; Num. 1:1,9; 3:1,4,14; 9:1,5).

Why the name “Horeb” is used most often in Deuteronomy and “Sinai” most often in Exodus is unknown. There is literary variety in the writings of Moses. This could refer to:

1. oral traditions recorded by different scribes
2. Moses using different scribes
3. changes by later scribes for unknown reasons
4. literary variety

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOCATION OF MT. SINAI

- A. If Moses was speaking literally and not figuratively of the three day journey he requested of Pharaoh (Ex.3:18; 5:3; 8:27), that was not a long enough time to get to the traditional site in the southern Sinai peninsula. Therefore, some scholars place the mountain near the oasis of Kadesh-Barnea.
- B. The traditional site called “Jebel Musa,” in the Wilderness of Sin, has several things in its favor:
1. There is a large plain before the mountain.
 2. Deut. 1:2 says it was an eleven day journey from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh-Barnea.
 3. The term “Sinai” is a non-Hebrew term. It may be linked to the Wilderness of Sin, which refers to a small desert bush. The Hebrew name for the mountain is Horeb (wilderness).
 4. Mt. Sinai has been the traditional site since the 4th century A.D. It is in the “land of Midian” which included a large area of the Sinai peninsula and Arabia.
 5. It seems that archaeology has confirmed the location of some of the cities mentioned in the Exodus account (*Elim, Dophkah, Rephidim*) as being on the western side of the Sinai Peninsula.
- C. The traditional site of Mt. Sinai was not established until *Pilgrimage of Silvia*, written about A.D. 385-8 (cf. F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of the Acts*, p. 151).

▣ **“Mount Seir”** BDB 973 says the term “Seir” can mean (1) goat; (2) hairy; (3) hairy as in well-wooded with trees; while KB 1989 asserts that it means “hairy.”

In the OT this term is associated with Edom (cf. Gen. 14:6; 36:20-21,30; Deut. 1:2,44; 2:1,4-5; 33:2). It is often characterized as a mountain (cf. Gen. 14:6; 36:8-9; Deut. 2:1). Therefore, originally it was a Horite mountainous area annexed by Edom.

▣ **“Kadesh-barnea”** This is a large oasis on the border of Edom (cf. Num. 20:16), about 50 miles south of Beersheba, with four natural springs. Its name has two elements. The first is from the Hebrew for “holy” (BDB 873). The second is unknown. It became the hub of their wilderness wanderings (cf. Numbers 13-14).

1:3 “the fortieth year” This is the only date in Deuteronomy. “Forty” (BDB 917) is used so often in the Bible that it seems to refer to a long, indefinite period of time. The actual chronology seems to be 38 years (from Sinai to the plains of Moab).

▣ **“on the first day of the eleventh month”** The author is making every effort to locate the place and time on these words to Israel. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN CALENDARS

Canaanite (I Kgs. 6:1,37-38; 8:2)	Sumerian-Babylonian (Nippur Calendar)	Hebrew (Geezer Calendar)	Modern Equivalents
Abib (“green heads” of barley)	Nisanu	Nisan	March-April
Zin (spring brilliance)	Ayaru	Iyyar	April-May
	Simanu	Sivan	May-June
	Du-uzu	Tammuz	June-July
	Abu	Ab	July-August
	Ululu	Elul	August-September

Ethanim (permanent water source)	Teshritu	Tishri	September-October
Bul (rains on produce)	Arah-samna	Marcheshvan	October-November
	Kislimu	Chislev	November-December
	Tebitu	Tebeth	December-January
	Shabatu	Shebat	January-February
	Adaru	Adar	February-March

▣ **“Moses spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that the LORD had commanded him to give to them”** God is the author; Moses is the channel, but all these commands come from the covenant-making Yahweh.

There is great variety in the names for deity in Moses’ writings. The following is an example from Deuteronomy 1-4.

1. The LORD (YHWH), 1:3,8,27,34,37,41,42,43,45; 2:12,14,15,17,21,31; 3:2,20,21,26(twice); 4:12,14,15,21,27
2. The LORD (YHWH) our God (*Elohim*), 1:1,19,20,25,41; 2:29,36,37; 3:3; 4:7
3. The LORD (YHWH) your God (*Elohim*), 1:10,21,26,30,31,32; 2:7(twice),30; 3:18,20,21,22; 4:2,3,4,10,19,21,23(twice),24,25,29,30,31,34,40
4. The LORD (YHWH), the God (*Elohim*) of your fathers, 1:11,21; 4:1
5. God (*Elohim*), 1:17; 2:33; 4:24 (jealous God), 31(compassionate God), 32,33
6. LORD (*Adon*) God (YHWH), 3:24
7. LORD (YHWH), my God (*Elohim*), 4:5
8. LORD (YHWH), He is God (*Elohim*), 4:35,39

There has been much speculation about this variety:

1. multiple authors
2. multiple scribes
3. theological distinctives
4. literary variety

OT scholars must admit that the authorship, compilation, editing, and scribal activity connected to the Canonical books of the OT is a mystery. We must be careful to not let our modern western literary theories or our a-priori theological assumptions demand one and only one interpretation. Mystery means mystery.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE NAMES FOR DEITY

A. *El*

1. The original meaning of the generic ancient term for deity is uncertain, though many scholars believe it comes from the Akkadian root, “to be strong” or “to be powerful” (cf. Gen. 17:1; Num. 23:19; Deut. 7:21; Ps. 50:1).
2. In the Canaanite pantheon the high god is *El* (Ras Shamra texts)
3. In the Bible *El* is not usually compounded with other terms. These combinations became a way to characterize God.
 - a. *El-Elyon* (“God Most High”), Gen. 14:18-22; Deut. 32:8; Isa. 14:14
 - b. *El-Roi* (“God who sees” or “God who reveals Himself”), Gen. 16:13
 - c. *El-Shaddai* (“God Almighty” or “God the All Compassion” or “God of the mountain”), Gen. 17:1; 35:11; 43:14; 49:25; Exod. 6:3

- d. *El-Olam* (“the Everlasting God”), Gen. 21:33. This term is theologically linked to God’s promise to David, II Sam. 7:13,16
- e. *El-Berit* (“God of the Covenant”), Jdgs. 9:46
- 4. *El* is equated with
 - a. YHWH in Ps. 85:8; Isa. 42:5
 - b. *Elohim* in Gen. 46:3; Job 5:8, “I am *El*, the *Elohim* of your father”
 - c. *Shaddai* in Gen. 49:25
 - d. “jealousy” in Exod. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15
 - e. “mercy” in Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:31; “faithful” in Deut. 7:9; 32:4
 - f. “great and awesome” in Deut. 7:21; 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4
 - g. “knowledge” in I Sam. 2:3
 - h. “my strong refuge” in II Sam. 22:33
 - i. “my avenger” in II Sam. 22:48
 - j. “holy one” in Isa. 5:16
 - k. “might” in Isa. 10:21
 - l. “my salvation” in Isa. 12:2
 - m. “great and powerful” in Jer. 32:18
 - n. “retribution” in Jer. 51:56
- 5. A combination of all the major OT names for God is found in Joshua 22:22 (*El, Elohim, YHWH*, repeated)

B. *Elyon*

- 1. Its basic meaning is “high,” “exalted,” or “lifted up” (cf. Gen. 40:17; I Kgs. 9:8; II Kgs. 18:17; Neh. 3:25; Jer. 20:2; 36:10; Ps. 18:13).
- 2. It is used in a parallel sense to several other names/titles of God.
 - a. *Elohim* - Ps. 47:1-2; 73:11; 107:11
 - b. *YHWH* - Gen. 14:22; II Sam. 22:14
 - c. *El-Shaddai* - Ps. 91:1,9
 - d. *El* - Num. 24:16
 - e. *Elah* - used often in Daniel 2-6 and Ezra 4-7, linked with *illair* (Aramaic for “High God”) in Dan. 3:26; 4:2; 5:18,21
- 3. It is often used by non Israelites.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:15
 - c. Moses, speaking of the nations in Deut. 32:8
 - d. Luke’s Gospel in the NT, written to Gentiles, also uses the Greek equivalent *Hupsistos* (cf. 1:32,35,76; 6:35; 8:28; Acts 7:48; 16:17)

C. *Elohim* (PLURAL), *Eloah* (SINGULAR), used primarily in poetry

- 1. This term is not found outside the Old Testament.
- 2. This word can designate the God of Israel or the gods of the nations (cf. Exod. 12:12; 20:3). Abraham’s family were polytheistic (cf. Josh. 24:2).
- 3. It can refer to Israeli judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6).

4. The term *elohim* is also used of other spiritual beings (angels, the demonic) as in Deut. 32:8 (LXX); Ps. 8:5; Job 1:6; 38:7. It can refer to human judges (cf. Exod. 21:6; Ps. 82:6)
5. In the Bible it is the first title/name for deity (cf. Gen. 1:1). It is used exclusively until Gen. 2:4, where it is combined with YHWH. It basically (theologically) refers to God as creator, sustainer, and provider of all life on this planet (cf. Ps. 104).
It is synonymous with *El* (cf. Deut. 32:15-19). It can also parallel YHWH as Ps. 14 (*elohim*) is exactly like Ps. 53 (YHWH), except for the change in divine names.
6. Although PLURAL and used of other gods, this term often designates the God of Israel, but usually it has the SINGULAR VERB to denote the monotheistic usage.
7. This term is found in the mouths of non-Israelites as the name for deity.
 - a. Melchizedek, Gen. 14:18-22
 - b. Balaam, Num. 24:2
 - c. Moses, when speaking of the nations, Deut. 32:8
8. It is strange that a common name for the monotheistic God of Israel is PLURAL! Although there is no certainty, here are the theories:
 - a. Hebrew has many PLURALS, often used for emphasis. Closely related to this is the later Hebrew grammatical feature called “the plural of majesty,” where the PLURAL is used to magnify a concept.
 - b. This may refer to the angelic council, which God meets with in heaven and that does His bidding (cf. I Kgs. 22:19-23; Job 1:6; Ps. 82:1; 89:5,7).
 - c. It is even possible this reflects the NT revelation of the one God in three persons. In Gen. 1:1 God creates; Gen. 1:2 the Spirit broods and from the NT Jesus is God the Father’s agent in creation (cf. John 1:3,10; Rom. 11:36; I Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:2; 2:10).

D. YHWH

1. This is the name which reflects deity as the covenant making God; God as savior, redeemer! Humans break covenants, but God is loyal to His word, promise, covenant (cf. Ps. 103).
This name is first mentioned in combination with *Elohim* in Gen. 2:4. There are not two creation accounts in Gen. 1-2, but two emphases: (1) God as the creator of the universe (the physical) and (2) God as the special creator of humanity. Genesis 2:4 begins the special revelation about the privileged position and purpose of mankind, as well as the problem of sin and rebellion associated with the unique position.
2. In Gen. 4:26 it is said “*men* began to call upon the name of the LORD ” (YHWH). However, Exod. 6:3 implies that early covenant people (the Patriarchs and their families) knew God only as *El-Shaddai*. The name YHWH is explained only one time in Exod. 3:13-16, esp. v. 14. However, the writings of Moses often interpret words by popular word plays, not etymologies (cf. Gen. 17:5; 27:36; 29:13-35). There have been several theories as to the meaning of this name (taken from IDB, vol. 2, pp. 409-11):
 - a. from an Arabic root, “to show fervent love”
 - b. from an Arabic root “to blow” (YHWH as storm God)
 - c. from a Ugartic (Canaanite) root “to speak”
 - d. following a Phoenician inscription, a CAUSATIVE PARTICIPLE meaning “the One who sustains,” or “the One who establishes”

- e. from the Hebrew *Qal* form “the One who is,” or “the One who is present” (in future sense, “the One who will be”)
- f. from the Hebrew *Hiphil* form “the One who causes to be”
- g. from the Hebrew root “to live” (e.g., Gen. 3:20), meaning “the ever living, only living One”
- h. from the context of Exod. 3:13-16 a play on the IMPERFECT form used in a PERFECT sense, “I shall continue to be what I used to be” or “I shall continue to be what I have always been” (cf. J. Wash Watts, *A Survey of Syntax in the Old Testament*, p. 67)

The full name YHWH is often expressed in abbreviation or possibly an original form

- (1) *Yah* (e.g., Hallelu - yah)
 - (2) *Yahu* (names, e.g., Isaiah)
 - (3) *Yo* (names, e.g., Joel)
3. In later Judaism this covenant name became so holy (the tetragrammaton) that Jews were afraid to say it lest they break the command of Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11; 6:13. So they substituted the Hebrew term for “owner,” “master,” “husband,” “lord”—*adon* or *adonai* (my lord). When they came to YHWH in their reading of OT texts they pronounced “lord.” This is why YHWH is written LORD in English translations.
 4. As with *El*, YHWH is often combined with other terms to emphasize certain characteristics of the Covenant God of Israel. While there are many possible combinations terms, here are some.
 - a. *YHWH - Yireh* (YHWH will provide), Gen. 22:14
 - b. *YHWH - Rophekha* (YHWH is your healer), Exod. 15:26
 - c. *YHWH - Nissi* (YHWH is my banner), Exod. 17:15
 - d. *YHWH - Meqaddishkem* (YHWH the One who sanctifies you), Exod. 31:13
 - e. *YHWH - Shalom* (YHWH is Peace), Jdgs. 6:24
 - f. *YHWH - Sabaoth* (YHWH of hosts), I Sam. 1:3,11; 4:4; 15:2; often in the Prophets)
 - g. *YHWH - Ro’I* (YHWH is my shepherd), Ps. 23:1
 - h. *YHWH - Sidqenu* (YHWH is our righteousness), Jer. 23:6
 - i. *YHWH - Shammah* (YHWH is there), Ezek. 48:35

1:4

NASB, NRSV	“after he defeated”
NKJV	“after he had killed”
TEV	“after the LORD had defeated”
NJB	“He had defeated”

The VERB (BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE) means “to smite” and the theological implication is that it was YHWH. He is the first cause and only cause!

▣ “Sihon” Sihon (BDB 695) was the Amorite king of a region next to Og, king of Bashan, on the eastern side of Jordan. Moses was commanded by God (cf. 2:4-9) not to attack the Jews’ relatives of Moab and Edom (Lot’s descendants by his own daughters, cf. Gen. 19:30-38). The only other route to the Jordan was through Sihon’s kingdom. The capital city of Heshbon was the first major city that the Israeli army conquered (cf. 2:26-37; Num. 21:21-32).

▣ “Og” Og (BDB 728) was king of the region called Bashan, which had two large cities (cf. Josh. 12:4) and many villages (cf. 3:1-10). He was apparently one of the Rephaim (giants, cf. 3:11) who inhabited Canaan (cf. 2:20; Josh 12:4). It was the descendants of these giants (cf. 2:11) at Hebron who had caused Israel to reject the two faithful spies’ report (cf. Num. 13:22).

SPECIAL TOPIC: DATE OF THE EXODUS

- A. There have been two scholarly opinions on the date of the Exodus:
1. from I Kings 6:1, which says, “480 years from the Exodus to the building of Solomon’s Temple”
 - a. Solomon began to reign in 970 B.C. This is figured by using the battle of *Qarqar* (853 B.C.) as a certain starting date.
 - b. The Temple was built in his fourth year (965 B.C.), and the Exodus occurred about 1445/6 B.C.
 2. This would make it occur in the 18th Egyptian Dynasty.
 - a. The Pharaoh of the oppression would be *Thutmose III* (1490-1436 B.C.).
 - b. The Pharaoh of the Exodus would be *Amenhotep II* (1436-1407 B.C.).
 - (1) Some believe evidence from Jericho based on the fact that no diplomatic correspondence occurred between Jericho and Egypt during the reign of *Amenhotep III* (1413-1377 B.C.).
 - (2) The *Amarna* texts record diplomatic correspondence written on ostraca about the *Habiru* over-running the land of Canaan in the reign of *Amenhotep III*. Therefore, the Exodus occurred in the reign of *Amenhotep II*.
 - (3) The period of the Judges is not long enough if the 13th century is the date of the Exodus.
 3. The possible problems with these dates are:
 - a. The Septuagint (LXX) has 440 years not 480.
 - b. It is possible that 480 years is representative of 12 generations of 40 years each, therefore, a figurative number.
 - c. There are 12 generations of priests from Aaron to Solomon (cf. I Chr. 6), then 12 from Solomon to the Second Temple. The Jews, like the Greeks, reckoned a generation as forty years. So, there is a 480 year period back and forward (symbolic use of numbers) (cf. Bimson’s *Redating the Exodus and Conquest*).
 4. There are three other texts that mention dates:
 - a. Genesis 15:13,16 (cf. Acts 7:6), 400 years of bondage
 - b. Exodus 12:40-41 (cf. Gal. 3:17)
 - (1) MT - 430 years of sojourn in Egypt
 - (2) LXX - 215 years of sojourn in Egypt
 - c. Judges 11:26 - 300 years between Jephthah’s day and the conquest (supports 1445 date)
 - d. Acts 13:19, exodus, wanderings and conquest - 450 years
 5. The author of Kings used specific historical references and did not round numbers (Edwin Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, pp. 83-85)
- B. The tentative evidence from archaeology seems to point toward a date of 1290 B.C., or the 19th Egyptian Dynasty.

1. Joseph was able to visit his father and Pharaoh in this same day. The first native Pharaoh who began to move the capital of Egypt from Thebes back to the Nile Delta, to a place called *Avaris/Zoan/Tanis* which was the old Hyksos capital, was *Seti I* (1309-1290). He would be the Pharaoh of the oppression.
 - a. This seems to fit two pieces of information about the Hyksos reign of Egypt.
 - (1) A stele has been found from the time of Rameses II that commemorates the founding of Avaris four hundred years earlier (1700's B.C. by the Hyksos)
 - (2) The prophecy of Gen. 15:13 speaks of a 400 year oppression
 - b. This implies that Joseph's rise to power was under a *Hyksos* (Semitic) Pharaoh. The new Egyptian dynasty is referred to in Exod. 1:8.
2. The *Hyksos*, an Egyptian word meaning "rulers of foreign lands," who were a group of non-Egyptian Semitic rulers, controlled Egypt during the 15th and 16th Dynasties (1720-1570 B.C.). Some want to relate them to Joseph's rise to power. If we subtract the 430 years of Exod. 12:40 from 1720 B.C., we get a date of about 1290 B.C.
3. Seti I's son was Rameses II (1290-1224). This name is mentioned as one of the store cities built by the Hebrew slaves, Exod. 1:11. Also this same district in Egypt near Goshen is called Rameses, Gen. 47:11. *Avaris/Zoan/Tanis* was known as "House of Rameses" from 1300-1100 B.C.
4. Thutmoses III was known as a great builder, as was Rameses II.
5. Rameses II had 47 daughters living in separate palaces.
6. Archaeology has shown that most of the large walled cities of Canaan (Hazor, Debir, Lachish) were destroyed and rapidly rebuilt around 1250 B.C. In allowing for a 38 year wilderness wandering period this fits a date of 1290 B.C.
7. Archaeology has found a reference to the Israelis being in southern Canaan on a memorial stele of Rameses' successor *Merneptah* (1224-1214 B.C. [cf. The Stele of Merneptah, dated 1220 B.C.]).
8. Edom and Moab seem to have attained strong national identity in the late 1300's B.C. These countries were not organized in the 15th century (Glueck).
9. The book entitled *Redating the Exodus and Conquest* by John J. Bimson, published by the University of Sheffield, 1978, argues against all of the archaeological evidence for an early date.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PRE-ISRAELITE INHABITANTS OF PALESTINE

A. There are several lists of peoples.

1. Genesis 15:19-21 (10)

- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| a. Kenite | d. Hittite | g. Amorite | j. Jebusite |
| b. Kenizzite | e. Perizzite | h. Canaanite | |
| c. Kadmonite | f. Rephaim | i. Girschite | |

2. Exodus 3:17 (6)

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| a. Canaanite | d. Perizzite |
| b. Hittite | e. Hivite |
| c. Amorite | f. Jebusite |

3. Exodus 23:28 (3)
 - a. Hivites
 - b. Canaanites
 - c. Hittites
4. Deuteronomy 7:1 (7)

a. Hittites	d. Canaanites	g. Jebusites
b. Girgashites	e. Perizzites	
c. Amorites	f. Hivites	
5. Joshua 24:11 (7)

a. Amorite	d. Hittite	g. Jebusite
b. Perizzite	e. Girgashite	
c. Canaanite	f. Hivite	

B. The origin of the names is dubious because of lack of historical data. Genesis 10:15-19 includes several as related to Canaan, a son of Ham.

C. Brief descriptions of the people mentioned

1. Kenite
 - BDB 884
 - non-Israelite
 - names related to “forger” or “smith,” which could refer to metal working or music (cf. Gen. 4:19-22)
 - connected to the area of Sinai north to Hebron
 - name connected to Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law (cf. Jdgs. 1:16; 4:11)
2. Kenizzite
 - BDB 889
 - relative of Jews
 - a clan of Edom (cf. Gen. 15:19; 30:15,42)
 - lived in Negev
 - possibly absorbed into Judah (cf. Num. 32:12; Josh. 14:6,14)
3. Kadmonite
 - BDB 870 II
 - non-Israelite, possibly a descendant of Ishmael (cf. Gen. 25:15)
 - name relates to “easterner”
 - lived in Negev
 - possibly related to “the men of the east” (cf. Job 1:3)
4. Hittite
 - BDB 366
 - non-Israelite
 - descendant of Heth
 - from kingdom of Anatolia (Asia Minor, Turkey)
 - were present very early in Canaan (cf. Genesis 23; Josh. 11:3)
5. Perizzite
 - BDB 827
 - non-Israelite, possibly Hurrians
 - lived in forested area of Judah (cf. Gen. 34:30; Jdgs. 1:4; 16:10)

- 6. Rephaim - BDB 952
 - non-Israelite, possibly giants (cf. Gen. 14:5; Num. 33:33; Deut. 2:10-11,20)
 - lived on eastern bank of Jordan
 - line of warriors/heroes
- 7. Amorite - BDB 57
 - northwestern Semitic people-group originated from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:16)
 - became general designation for inhabitants of Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:16; Deut. 1:7; Josh. 10:5; 24:15; II Sam. 21:2)
 - the name may mean “the west”
 - the ISBE, vol. 1, p. 119, says the term denotes
 - a. the inhabitants of Palestine generally
 - b. the population of the hill country as opposed to the coastal plain
 - c. a specific people group with their own king
- 8. Canaanite - BDB 489
 - from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:15)
 - general designation of all the tribes in Canaan west of the Jordan
 - meaning of Canaan uncertain, possibly “merchant” or “red-purple dye”
 - as a people group they dwelt along the coastal plain (cf. Num. 13:29)
- 9. Girgashite - BDB 173
 - from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:16) or at least “from a son of [i.e., the country of] Canaan,” ISBE, vol. 2, p. 1232)
- 10. Jebusite - BDB 101
 - from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:16)
 - from city of Jebus/Salem/Jerusalem (cf. Josh. 15:63; Jdgs. 19:10)
 - Ezek. 16:3,45 asserts they were a mixed race from Amorite and Hittite
- 11. Hivites - BDB 295
 - from Ham (cf. Gen. 10:17)
 - translated by LXX as Horite (cf. Gen. 34:2; 36:20-30; Josh. 9:7)
 - possibly from the Hebrew word “cave,” therefore cave dwellers
 - they lived in the highlands of Lebanon (cf. Josh. 11:3; Jdgs. 3:3). In II Sam. 24:6-7 they are listed next to Tyre and Sidon

▣ **“Astaroth”** This city (BDB 800) was named after the female consort of the Canaanite fertility god *Baal-Asherah/Astarte*. Because of the mentioning of Rephaim, it is possible that this city is referenced in Gen. 14:5.

▣ **“Edrei”** This was one of the capital cities of Og (cf. Josh. 12:4; 13:12).

1:5 “in the land of Moab” This is where the Israelites camped before entering the Promised Land. It is the location just north of the Dead Sea on the eastern bank of the Jordan, where Deuteronomy was written.

▣ **“Moses undertook”** This VERB (BDB 383, KB 381, *Hiphil* PERFECT) implies “volitional commitment” (cf. Gen. 18:27; Exod. 2:21; Jdgs. 19:6).

▣ **“to expound this law”** This VERB (BDB 91, KB 106, *Piel* PERFECT) means to make clear or understandable. This word only appears here and two other times where it is translated “write” (cf. 27:8; Hab. 2:2). Instruction which is not clear or understandable is useless and, in this covenantal context, dangerous.

The term “law” (i.e., Torah BDB 260) is the Hebrew term for “teaching” or “instruction” (cf. 4:8,44; 27:3,8,26; 28:58,61; 29:20,28; 30:10; 31:9,11,12; 32:46). In this context it refers to Moses’ sermons delivered to Israel on the eastern side of Jordan across from Jericho, on the plains of Moab, just before the Israelites crossed the Jordan without him.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:6-8

“The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, 'You have stayed long enough at this mountain. ⁷Turn and set your journey, and go to the hill country of the Amorites, and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland and in the Negev and by the seacoast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. ⁸See, I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them.'”

1:6 “LORD” This is the unique name for the God of Israel (i.e., YHWH, BDB 217). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.

▣ **“our God”** The personal PLURAL PRONOUN implies a covenant relationship, initiated and accepted at Sinai. This is the name of deity, “*Elohim*” (BDB 43). It is used of God as Creator, Provider, and Sustainer of all creation (e.g., Gen. 1:1-2:3). See Special Topic: The Names for Deity at 1:3.

▣ **“Horeb”** See note at 1:2.

▣ **““You have stayed long enough at this mountain””** God now tells the people it is time for them to do what He initially had commanded them, occupy Canaan (cf. Gen. 15:13-21; Numbers 13-14)! They had stayed at Mt. Horeb for about one year (compare Exod. 19:1 with Num. 10:11).

1:7

NASB “Turn and set your journey”

NKJV “Turn and take your journey”

NRSV “Resume your journey”

TEV “Break camp and move on”

NJB “Move on, continue your journey”

The first VERB (BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) means “turn,” but is used in several senses:

1. turn to look at something/someone, Exod. 2:12; 16:10; Num. 12:10
2. turn so as to change direction, Gen. 18:22; 24:49; Exod. 14:25; 21:33; Deut. 1:7,24; 2:3; 9:15; 10:5
3. turn to other gods, Lev. 19:4; Deut. 29:18; 30:17; 31:18,20
4. seek help from, Lev. 19:31; 20:6
5. the approach of
 - a. evening, Deut. 23:11
 - b. morning, Exod. 14:27

The second VERB (BDB 652, KB 704, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) means “pull out,” “pull up,” or “set out,” which is used often in Numbers for the Israelites moving their camp site. This usage continues in Deuteronomy (e.g., 1:7,19,40; 2:1,24). It originally referred to pulling up the tent stakes.

▣ **“and go”** This is the third parallel *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 97, KB 112).

▣ There are five topological divisions of Palestine running north to south mentioned:

1. “in the hill country of the Amorite” - This refers to the eastern bank of the Jordan and the kingdoms of Sihon and Og.
2. “in the Arabah” - This refers to the Jordan rift valley south of the Dead Sea (BDB 787, cf. 1:1,7; 2:8; 3:17; 4:49; 11:30; Josh. 8:14; 11:2,16; 12:3; 18:18)
3. “in the hill country and in the lowlands” - This refers to the area west and south of the Dead Sea, later to become the tribal allocation of Ephraim and Judah.
4. “the Negev” - This is the arid desert land south of the Dead Sea and to the west (BDB 616)
5. “by the seacoast” - This is the coastal plain running from Egypt to Lebanon (i.e., Shephelah, BDB 410)

All of these taken together refer to the land promised to Abraham in Genesis 15.

1:8 Verse 8 is a series of commands:

1. “See” - BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “Go in” - BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “Possess” - BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (see Special Topic at 8:1)

▣ **“I have placed the land before you”** The Hebrew term for “have placed” is the same as “given” (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT). God was now giving them the land as He had promised Abraham (Gen. 12:1, line 5; 15:12-21; Exod. 6:8), but they had to possess it. Notice the conditional aspect of even this foundational covenant (e.g., 4:1; 5:33; 6:18; 8:1; 16:20; 30:16,19).

▣ **“the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob”** See Special Topic: Covenant Promises to the Patriarchs at 9:5.

See 4:37; 6:10; 9:5; 10:11,15; 30:20; Gen. 12:5-7; 13:14-17; 15:18; 26:3; Exod. 32:13; 33:1. This land would include the area from Kadesh-Barnea in the south to Byblos and Zephaniah, Zedad and Lebo-hamath in the north (possibly even as far east as the head waters of the Euphrates, cf. Gen. 15:18). See MacMillan Bible Atlas, p. 47.

There are several places where the general boundaries of the Promised Land are given (Exod. 34:1-12; Deut. 1:6-8; 3:12-20; 11:24; Josh. 1:3-4). It was only during David’s reign that this whole general area was under Israel’s control.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:9-15

⁹“I spoke to you at that time, saying, ‘I am not able to bear *the burden* of you alone. ¹⁰The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day like the stars of heaven in number. ¹¹May the LORD, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand-fold more than you are and bless you, just as He has promised you! ¹²How can I alone bear the load and burden of you and your strife? ¹³Choose wise and discerning and experienced men from your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads.’ ¹⁴You answered me and said, ‘The thing which you have said to do is good.’ ¹⁵So I took the heads of your tribes, wise and experienced men, and appointed them heads over you, leaders of thousands and of hundreds, of fifties and of tens, and officers for your tribes.”

1:9 “at that time” This is a recurrent phrase in Deuteronomy. The first four chapters are a review of YHWH’s gracious acts on Israel’s behalf. This idiom is a way of denoting a past act (cf. 1:9,16,18; 2:34; 3:4,8,12,18;4:14).

▣ **“I am not able to bear *the burden of you alone*”** See Exodus 18:13-26 for Jethro’s advice to Moses about this very problem (i.e., Moses being the only judge).

1:10 “the LORD your God has multiplied you” This was part of God’s promise to the Patriarchs (e.g., Gen. 13:16; 17:2,20; 22:17; 48:4; Lev. 26:9; Deut. 7:13).

▣ **“as the stars of heaven”** This phrase is also found in Gen. 15:5; 26:4; Deut. 10:22; 28:62. Other parallel phrases used to portray uncountable numbers (cf. Gen. 16:10) of Israelites are: “dust of the earth” (cf. Gen. 13:16; 28:14; Num. 23:10); and “sand of the sea” (cf. Gen. 22:17; 32:12). All of these from a man who was childless until age 100 (i.e., Abraham)!

In Deut. 1:28 the Israelites, who are more numerous than the stars, are afraid of the inhabitants of Canaan because of their:

1. numbers
2. size
3. walled cities

What irony!

1:11 “the God of your fathers” This often repeated designation asserts that the same God who spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is still active in the lives and destiny of their descendants.

▣ **“increase you a thousand-fold”** This is obviously an idiomatic phrase. The number 1,000 was a multiple of ten (times 3) and, therefore, a symbol of greatness or numerousness (cf. Ps. 90:4; II Pet. 3:8). Here is a list of hyperbolic usages from NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 417:

1. the work of God in blessing, Deut. 1:11; Job 42:12; Ps. 144:13
2. military blessing, Josh. 23:10
3. military curse for unbelief, Deut. 32:30; Isa. 7:23; 30:17; Amos 5:3
4. enduring sovereignty of God, Ps. 90:4
5. God’s covenant promises, Deut. 7:9; Ps. 105:8
6. God’s wrath vs. God’s love, Exod. 34:7; Deut. 5:9-10
7. blessing of being in God’s temple, Ps. 84:10

1:12 “strife” This means “lawsuit” (BDB 936).

1:13 “Choose” This VERB (BDB 396, KB 393) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. Notice that Moses was commanding the people (i.e., their leaders) to take responsibility (they choose) for the community along with himself (Moses appoints). These new judges (i.e., tribal leaders) were to be:

1. “wise” - (BDB 314) meaning capable of thoughtful and godly choices (e.g., Joseph, Gen. 41:33,39; David, II Sam. 14:20; Solomon, I Kgs. 2:9; 3:12; 5:21)
2. “discerning” - (BDB 106, KB 122, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE) meaning someone who has discretion, discernment, and intelligence (e.g., Joseph, Gen. 41:33; negative in Jer. 4:22)
3. “experience” - (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE). This is a common word with a large semantic field.
 - a. NASB, TEV, NJB, JPSOA - experienced
 - b. NKJB - knowledgeable

- c. NRSV, REB - reputable
- d. JB - tested
- e. NIV - respected
- f. NET - known

▣ **“I will appoint them”** The VERB (BDB 962, KB 1321) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT, used in the sense of a COHORTATIVE. Moses set or appointed these chosen men to places of leadership and judgment (e.g., Exod. 1:11; 18:21; Deut. 17:14,15; Jdgs. 11:11). However, in reality, it was YHWH who “took” (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT, v. 15) them, which denotes God’s choice (e.g., 4:20,34; I Kgs. 11:37). The human process followed a divine plan!

1:15 “leaders of thousands, and of hundreds, of fifties and of tens” These divisions later became military units (cf. Exod. 18:21). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THOUSAND (*ELEPH*)

This is the Hebrew word for “thousand” (BDB 48). However, it is used in several senses.

1. a family unit, Josh. 22:14; Jdgs. 6:15; I Sam. 23:23; Zech. 9:7; 12:6
2. a military unit, Exod. 18:21,25; Deut. 1:15
3. a literal thousand, Gen. 20:16; Exod. 32:28
4. a symbolic number, Gen. 24:60; Exod. 20:6; 34:7; Deut. 7:9; Jer. 32:18
5. the Ugaritic cognate *alluph* means “chieftain,” Gen. 36:15

- ▣
- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| NASB, NKJV | “officers” |
| NRSV, TEV | “officials” |
| NJB | “scribes” |

This term (BDB 1009) originally referred to a scribe, but this does not seem to fit its usage in Deut. 1:15; 20:5,8,9; or Josh. 1:10,32. In this context it seems to refer to a lesser judge or helper to tribal leaders.

The Handbook on Deuteronomy by UBS says, “they appear with elders (Num. 11:16) and with judges (Deut. 16:18; Josh. 8:33), and also in military contexts (Deut. 20:5,8,9; Josh. 1:10; 3:2)” p. 26.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:16-18

¹⁶“Then I charged your judges at that time, saying, ‘Hear *the cases* between your fellow countrymen, and judge righteously between a man and his fellow countryman, or the alien who is with him. ¹⁷You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God’s. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it.’ ¹⁸I commanded you at that time all the things that you should do.”

1:16-17 Moses charged these new tribal judges to be impartial (cf. 16:19; 24:17). Impartiality is a characteristic of God (cf. 10:17). Israel was meant to be a people and society that revealed the character of YHWH so that the world would come to place their trust and faith in Him. Since the Fall (i.e., Genesis 3) this has been God’s plan. Israel failed, but the ideal Israelite (i.e. Jesus, cf. Isaiah 53) succeeded (e.g., John 14:5-7, 8-11).

▣ “alien” Non-Jews were to be treated as equals in the legal realm (cf. Lev. 19:33-34,35). Israel was to deal with them graciously (cf. Lev. 23:22; Deut. 10:19; 24:17; 27:19). Israel had been aliens in Egypt (cf. Exod. 22:21; 23:9) and knew how it felt!

▣ “righteously” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: RIGHTEOUSNESS

“Righteousness” is such a crucial topic that a Bible student must make a personal extensive study of the concept.

In the OT God’s character is described as “just” or “righteous.” The Mesopotamian term itself comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. He is the straight edge (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This concept asserts God’s righteousness as well as His right to judge.

Man was created in the image of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1,3; 9:6). Mankind was created for fellowship with God. All of creation is a stage or backdrop for God and mankind’s interaction. God wanted His highest creation, mankind, to know Him, love Him, serve Him, and be like Him! Mankind’s loyalty was tested (cf. Gen. 3) and the original couple failed the test. This resulted in a disruption of the relationship between God and humanity (cf. Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12-21).

God promised to repair and restore the fellowship (cf. Gen. 3:15). He does this through His own will and His own Son. Humans were incapable of restoring the breach (cf. Rom. 1:18-3:20).

After the Fall, God’s first step toward restoration was the concept of covenant based on His invitation and mankind’s repentant, faithful, obedient response. Because of the Fall, humans were incapable of appropriate action (cf. Rom. 3:21-31; Galatians 3). God Himself had to take the initiative to restore covenant-breaking humans. He did this by

1. declaring mankind righteous through the work of Christ (i.e., forensic righteousness).
2. freely giving mankind righteousness through the work of Christ (i.e., imputed righteousness).
3. providing the indwelling Spirit who produces righteousness (i.e., Christlikeness, the restoration of the image of God) in mankind.

However, God requires a covenantal response. God decrees (i.e., freely gives) and provides, but humans must respond and continue to respond in

1. repentance
2. faith
3. lifestyle obedience
4. perseverance

Righteousness, therefore, is a covenantal, reciprocal action between God and His highest creation. It is based on the character of God, the work of Christ, and the enabling of the Spirit, to which each individual must personally and continually respond appropriately. The concept is called “justification by faith.” The concept is revealed in the Gospels, but not in these terms. It is primarily defined by Paul, who uses the Greek term “righteousness” in its various forms over 100 times.

Paul, being a trained rabbi, uses the term *dikaïosun* in its Hebrew sense of the term *SDQ* used in the Septuagint, not from Greek literature. In Greek writings the term is connected to someone who conformed to the expectations of deity and society. In the Hebrew sense it is always structured in covenantal terms. YHWH is a just, ethical, moral God. He wants His people to reflect His character. Redeemed mankind becomes a new creature. This newness results in a new lifestyle of godliness (Roman Catholic focus of

justification). Since Israel was a theocracy, there was not clear delineation between the secular (society's norms) and the sacred (God's will). This distinction is expressed in the Hebrew and Greek terms being translated into English as "justice" (relating to society) and "righteousness" (relating to religion).

The gospel (good news) of Jesus is that fallen mankind has been restored to fellowship with God. This has been accomplished through the Father's love, mercy, and grace; the Son's life, death, and resurrection; and the Spirit's wooing and drawing to the gospel. Justification is a free act of God, but it must issue in godliness (Augustine's position, which reflects both the Reformation emphasis on the freeness of the gospel and the Roman Catholic emphasis on a changed life of love and faithfulness). For Reformers the term "the righteousness of God" is an OBJECTIVE GENITIVE (i.e., the act of making sinful mankind acceptable to God [positional sanctification], which for the Catholic it is a SUBJECTIVE GENITIVE, which is the process of becoming more like God [experiential progressive sanctification]. In reality it is surely both!!)

In my view all of the Bible, from Genesis 4 - Revelation 20 is a record of God's restoring the fellowship of Eden. The Bible starts with God and mankind in fellowship in an earthly setting (cf. Genesis 1-2) and the Bible ends with the same setting (cf. Revelation 21-22). God's image and purpose will be restored!

To document the above discussions note the following selected NT passages illustrating the Greek word group:

1. God is righteous (often connected to God as Judge)
 - a. Romans 3:26
 - b. II Thessalonians 1:5-6
 - c. II Timothy 4:8
 - d. Revelation 16:5
2. Jesus is righteous
 - a. Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14 (title of Messiah)
 - b. Matthew 27:19
 - c. I John 2:1,29; 3:7
3. God's will for His creation is righteousness
 - a. Leviticus 19:2
 - b. Matthew 5:48 (cf. 5:17-20)
4. God's means of providing and producing righteousness
 - a. Romans 3:21-31
 - b. Romans 4
 - c. Romans 5:6-11
 - d. Galatians 3:6-14
 - e. Given by God
 - 1) Romans 3:24; 6:23
 - 2) I Corinthians 1:30
 - 3) Ephesians 2:8-9
 - f. Received by faith
 - 1) Romans 1:17; 3:22,26; 4:3,5,13; 9:30; 10:4,6,10
 - 2) I Corinthians 5:21
 - g. Through acts of the Son
 - 1) Romans 5:21-31
 - 2) II Corinthians 5:21

- 3) Philippians 2:6-11
- 5. God's will is that His followers be righteous
 - a. Matthew 5:3-48; 7:24-27
 - b. Romans 2:13; 5:1-5; 6:1-23
 - c. I Timothy 6:11
 - d. II Timothy 2:22; 3:16
 - e. I John 3:7
 - f. I Peter 2:24
- 6. God will judge the world by righteousness
 - a. Acts 17:31
 - b. II Timothy 4:8

Righteousness is a characteristic of God, freely given to sinful mankind through Christ. It is

- 1. a decree of God
- 2. a gift of God
- 3. an act of Christ
- 4. a life to be lived

But it is also a process of becoming righteous that must be vigorously and steadfastly pursued, which will one day be consummated at the Second Coming. Fellowship with God is restored at salvation, but progresses throughout life to become a face-to-face encounter at death or the Parousia!

Here is a good quote to conclude this discussion. It is taken from *A Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* published by IVP:

“Calvin, more so than Luther, emphasizes the relational aspect of the righteousness of God. Luther's view of the righteousness of God seems to contain the aspect of acquittal. Calvin emphasizes the marvelous nature of the communication or imparting of God's righteousness to us” (p. 834).

For me the believer's relationship to God has three aspects:

- 1. the gospel is a person (emphasis of the Eastern Church and Calvin)
- 2. the gospel is truth (emphasis of Augustine and Luther)
- 3. the gospel is a changed life (emphasis of the Roman Catholic church)

They are all true and must be held together for a healthy, sound, biblical Christianity. If any one is over emphasized or depreciated, problems occur.

We must welcome Jesus!

We must believe the gospel!

We must pursue Christlikeness!

▣ **“You shall not show partiality in judgment”** The term “partiality” is literally “face” (BDB 815). The VERB (BDB 647, KB 699, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) means “to regard.” The point being that as a person approached the judge, the judge should not attempt to see or recognize who it was coming before him, but to hear the case fairly and impartially. The judge was to treat all cases without prejudice (cf. Lev. 19:15).

▣ **“You shall not fear man”** This VERB (BDB 158 III, KB 185, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “dread” or “awe.” In this context “dread” is demanded. In Deuteronomy this term is used in two contexts. God's

leaders/judges are not to fear the reactions of men to their decisions (1:17) and God's people are not to fear the messages of false prophets (18:22).

This term is used often in the Psalms to express the covenant believer's respect and awe of YHWH (e.g., 33:8; 22:23).

☐ **“The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me”** Moses was God's representative to the people. He was seen as a prophet (cf. v. 18; 18:15-22).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:19-21

¹⁹“Then we set out from Horeb, and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, just as the LORD our God had commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. ²⁰I said to you, ‘You have come to the hill country of the Amorites which the LORD our God is about to give us. ²¹See, the LORD your God has placed the land before you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Do not fear or be dismayed.’”

1:19-25 “Then we set out” The VERB (BDB 652, KB 704, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is regularly used of the Exodus (cf. Exod. 12:37; 13:20; 14:15; 16:1; and often in Numbers 33). These verses relate to the journey from Mt. Sinai to Kadesh-barnea.

1:19 “Horeb” The two titles of the sacred mountains, Horeb and Sinai, are used synonymously. Horeb is a Semitic term. Sinai is not semitic but possibly relates to the Wilderness of *Sin*. *Sin* is a term for a small desert plant common in the region. Some believe that Horeb is the mountain range and Sinai is the peak, but we don't really know for certain.

☐ **“that great and terrible wilderness”** Usually the term “wilderness” (BDB 184) means uninhabited pastureland, but this trek took them across the desert of the Sinai Peninsula. There were few sources of natural water. God provided water and food for them supernaturally during this forty year period. Today, this desert is called *Et Tih*, which means “the wandering.” This journey was about 100 miles and crossed very rough country.

☐ **“the hill country of the Amorites”** This would refer to the southern part of the land of Canaan (i.e., Negev, Arabah).

☐ **“just as the LORD our God had commanded us”** For the names for deity see the Special Topic at 1:3. God led them by:

1. Moses' words
2. the *Shekinah* cloud of glory, which rested over the tabernacle. When it moved Israel followed.

☐ **“we came to Kadesh-barnea”** The Hebrew word for holy is *kadosh* (BDB 871), from which we get “Kadesh.” Kadesh-barnea means “holy-(unknown),” possibly “holy city” or “holy place.” It was an important campground for the Israelites as it was for Abraham because it was the largest oasis in the area.

1:20-21 These verses have caused problems for commentators because of the change in usage between the PRONOUNS “our” and “your,” which is common throughout the book of Deuteronomy. This is one reason why some believe that Deuteronomy was written by several people. I think that Moses wrote (or dictated)

the majority of the revelations, but it is obvious that his writings have been edited by later scribes and may contain the comments of the original scribe.

1:21 “See, the LORD your God has placed. . .take possession” This may be a reference to v. 8, where God, through Moses, told the people to possess the land which He had promised to the Patriarchs (cf. 12:5-7; 13:14-17; 15:18; 26:3).

This verse, like vv. 7 and 8, contains several commands:

1. “See” - BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “Go up” - BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “Take possession” - BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. “Do not fear” - BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a JUSSIVE sense
5. “Be dismayed” - BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but used in a JUSSIVE sense



NASB, NRSV “Do not fear or be dismayed”
NKJV “do not fear or be discouraged”
TEV “do not hesitate or be afraid”
NJB “do not be afraid or discouraged”

This prohibition from YHWH was based on their trust in His covenant promises and presence! This phrase occurs twelve times in the OT (e.g., 31:8; Josh. 1:9; 8:10; 10:25; I Chr. 22:13; 28:20; II Chr. 20:15; 32:7; Jer. 30:10; 46:27).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:22-25

22“Then all of you approached me and said, ‘Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land for us, and bring back to us word of the way by which we should go up and the cities which we shall enter.’ **23**The thing pleased me and I took twelve of your men, one man for each tribe. **24**They turned and went up into the hill country, and came to the valley of Eshcol and spied it out. **25**Then they took *some* of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us; and they brought us back a report and said, ‘It is a good land which the LORD our God is about to give us.’”

1:22 Numbers 13:1-3 is the background for this verse. It recalls Moses’ commands to the tribes:

1. “Send” - BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. “Search out” - BDB 343, KB 340, *Qal* IMPERFECT, used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. “Bring back” - BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense

1:23 “I took twelve of your men, one man for each tribe” Moses was smart to try and include each of the tribes so that each one felt important.

1:24 “the valley of Eshcol” This term (BDB 79) means “cluster” or “stalk.” Numbers 13:23-24 says that they cut one cluster of grapes that was so big that it took two men to carry it on a pole. This is how the valley (or Wadi) got its Hebrew name, but its location in southern Palestine is uncertain, possibly somewhere close to Hebron (cf. Num. 13:22,23).

▣ **“spied it out”** “Spied” (BDB 920, KB 1183, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is a variation of the word for “foot” (BDB 919), which implies that they walked through the land. They had no animals to ride and it was a real step of faith for them to walk throughout this land and be seen by its inhabitants.

1:25 “it is a good land which the LORD our God is about to give us” What a powerful covenantal affirmation! Yet, they did not act on the theological affirmation, but on their fear (e.g., v. 21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:26-33

²⁶“Yet you were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; ²⁷and you grumbled in your tents and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us. ²⁸Where can we go up? Our brethren have made our hearts melt, saying, ‘The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.’” ²⁹Then I said to you, ‘Do not be shocked, nor fear them. ³⁰The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, ³¹and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place.’ ³²But for all this, you did not trust the LORD your God, ³³who goes before you on *your* way, to seek out a place for you to encamp, in fire by night and cloud by day, to show you the way in which you should go.”

1:26 “rebelled” The VERB (BDB 598, KB 632, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) becomes a common word in Deuteronomy (e.g., 1:26,43; 9:7,23,24; 21:18,20; 31:27; and also in the Psalms). Its COGNATE in Aramaic means “to dispute with” and in Syriac, “to contend with.” It denotes willful, known disobedience!

▣ **“the command of the LORD”** The command in vv. 8 and 21 were for them to go up and take the land.

1:27 “you grumbled in your tents” The people were in their tents grumbling (BDB 920, KB 1188, *Niphal* IMPERFECT); they were not doing it publicly, but God saw their hearts (cf. Ps. 106:25) and knew that they were rebelling against Him (i.e., “slandorous whispers,” cf. Pro. 16:28; 18:8; 26:20,22). God knows not only what we say (cf. v. 25c), but what is in our heart—our motives (cf. Num. 14:1-6).

▣ **“the LORD hates us”** In this verse the people are impugning the motives and nature of God (e.g., 9:28). They had forgotten all of the wonderful promises and provisions of God during their trek from Sinai to Kadesh and had started focusing on their present situation, which they viewed as devastating.

1:28 “Our brethren have made our hearts melt” The people tried to blame the spies for their unbelief. The term “melt” (BDB 587, KB 606) is a metaphor for a person becoming fearful and losing the will to resist (cf. 20:8; Josh. 2:11; 5:1; 7:5; and possibly 14:8).

▣

NASB, REB	“bigger and taller”
NKJV, Peshitta	“greater and taller”
NRSV, TEV,	
NJB, NIV	“stronger and taller”
NET	“more numerous and taller”

It is obvious from the different translations that the question is about the first term. Is it synonymous or does it add new information?

The ADJECTIVE (BDB 152) basically means “great.” It is used of:

1. great in extent
2. great in number
3. great in intensity

4. great in importance

The term is common and has such a wide semantic field that only context can clarify its meaning. The Septuagint seems to understand these terms as “more populous and mightier.” Part of the problem of translation is the place of “giants” in the OT!

▣ **“the cities are large and fortified to heaven”** From archeology we have found evidence about some of these cities. Lachish was a southern Amorite city which had a wall 29 feet thick. The walls of these cities had an occasional raised turret or tower. One can understand how the Israelites were overwhelmed when they saw these cities (“fortified” BDB 130, KB 148, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE means “inaccessible”).

This hyperbole “fortified to heaven” is used in the same metaphorical sense as the names of the *Ziggurats* in Babylon (cf. Gen. 11:4).

▣ **“Anakim”** The word (BDB 778 I) literally means “longneckers.” This refers to the giants (cf. Gen. 6).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS USED FOR TALL/POWERFUL WARRIORS OR PEOPLE GROUPS

These large/tall/powerful people are called by several names:

1. *Nephilim* (BDB 658) - Gen. 6:4; Num. 13:33
2. *Rephaim* (either BDB 952 or BDB 952 II) - Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:11,20; 3:11,13; Josh. 12:4; 13:12; II Sam. 21:16,18,20,22; I Chr. 20:4,6,8
3. *Zamzummin* (BDB 273), *zuzim* (BDB 265) - Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:20
4. *Emim* (BDB 34) - Gen. 14:5; Deut. 2:10-11
5. *Anakim* (sons of *Anak*, BDB 778 I) - Num. 13:33; Deut. 1:28; 2:10-11,21; 9:2; Josh. 11:21-22; 14:12,15

1:29

NASB “Do not be shocked, nor fear them”

NKJV “do not be terrified, or be afraid of them”

NRSV “Have no dread or fear of them”

TEV “Don’t be afraid of those people”

NJB “Do not take fright, do not be afraid of them”

The first VERB (BDB 791, KB 888, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “cause to tremble.” In Aramaic it means “to quiver” and in Syriac “to come upon accidentally or violently” (cf. 7:21; 20:3; 31:6).

The second VERB (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “fear” or “awe.” This is the common term for fear:

1. of enemies - Deut. 1:21,29; 2:4; 3:2,22; 7:18,19; 20:1,3; 31:6; Josh. 11:6
2. peoples of the earth fear the people of God - Deut. 28:10 (cf. Josh. 4:24); Josh. 9:24
3. Israel is to fear/awe/respect YHWH - Deut. 4:10; 5:5; 6:2,13,24; 10:12,20; 13:11; 14:23; 17:13,19; 19:20; 21:21; 25:18; 28:58; 31:12; Josh. 4:24

1:30 “The LORD your God who goes before you” This is a powerful encouraging phrase expressing God’s best gift—His personal presence and provision. Notice in v. 30 He goes ahead of them to battle (cf. 9:3); in v. 33 He goes ahead of them to lead them through the desert.

▣ **“fight on your behalf”** This is an example of “holy war” or *herem* (BDB 355, e.g., Deut. 2:24; 3:6; 7:2; 20:16-18; Josh. 6:17,21; 8:26; 10:1,28,37; 11:12, 20-21). This is God’s judgment on the Amorites/Canaanites

for their sin, not just God favoring His people (cf. Gen. 15:16). God had given the peoples of Canaan many chances to repent, but they would not, so His judgment was upon them. God will also judge His own people when they take up these same Canaanite practices (i.e., the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles)! Here, God is telling His people not to fear but to trust Him because He was on their side (e.g., Deut. 3:22; 20:4; Josh. 10:14,42; 11:5-6)!

1:31 “your God carried you, just as a man carries his son” “Carry” (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* PERFECT) can refer to physically bearing someone or something or “sustaining someone.” God as Father (i.e., Parent) is a wonderful biblical, personal family metaphor (cf. 8:5; 32:6; Exod. 4:22; Ps. 27:10; 68:5; 103:13; Pro. 3:12; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; Jer. 3:19; Hos. 11:1-4; Mal. 1:6; Acts 13:18). In the OT “son” is a corporate metaphor for YHWH’s fatherhood for Israel, but it becomes individual to Davidic king and his special royal descendant (i.e., Messiah, Ps. 2:2,7; Acts 13:33).

1:32 “But for all this” This includes God’s special, personal presence and care from the call of Abraham (Genesis 13) through the Exodus (Exodus - Numbers).

▣ **“you did not trust the LORD your God”** The VERB (BDB 52, KB 63, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) is a major theological term. It is the basis of the personal relationship central to the covenant.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BELIEVE, TRUST, FAITH, AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT (אמן)

I. Opening Statement

It needs to be stated that the use of this theological concept, so crucial to the NT, is not as clearly defined in the OT. It is surely there, but demonstrated in key selected passages and persons.

The OT blends

1. the individual and the community
2. the personal encounter and covenant obedience

Faith is both personal encounter and daily lifestyle! It is easier to describe in a person than in a lexical form (i.e., word study). This personal aspect is best illustrated in

1. Abraham and his seed
2. David and Israel

These men met/encountered God and their lives were permanently changed (not perfect lives, but continuing faith). Testing revealed weaknesses and strengths of their faith encounter with God, but the intimate, trusting relationship continued through time! It was tested and refined, but it continued as evidenced by their devotion and lifestyle.

II. Main root used

A. אמן (BDB 52)

1. VERB

- a. *Qal* stem – to support, to nourish (i.e., II Kgs. 10:1,5; Esther 2:7, the non-theological usage)
- b. *Niphal* stem – to make sure or firm, to establish, to confirm, to be faithful or trustworthy
 - (1) of men, Isa. 8:2; 53:1; Jer. 40:14
 - (2) of things, Isa. 22:23
 - (3) of God, Deut. 7:9,12; Isa. 49:7; Jer. 42:5
- c. *Hiphil* stem – to stand firm, to believe, to trust

- (1) Abraham believed God, Gen. 15:6
- (2) the Israelites in Egypt believed, Exod. 4:31; 14:31 (negated in Deut. 1:32)
- (3) Israelites believed YHWH spoke through Moses, Exod. 19:9; Ps. 106:12,24
- (4) Ahaz did not trust in God, Isa 7:9
- (5) whoever believes in it/him, Isa. 28:16
- (6) believe truths about God, Isa. 43:10-12
- 2. NOUN (MASCULINE) – faithfulness (i.e., Deut. 32:20; Isa. 25:1; 26:2)
- 3. ADVERB – truly, verily, I agree, may it be so (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; I Kgs. 1:36; I Chr. 16:36; Isa. 65:16; Jer. 11:5; 28:6). This is the liturgical use of “amen” in the OT and NT.
- B. אָמֵן (BDB 54) FEMININE NOUN, firmness, faithfulness, truth
 - 1. of men, Isa. 10:20; 42:3; 48:1
 - 2. of God, Exod. 34:6; Ps. 117:2; Isa. 38:18,19; 61:8
 - 3. of truth, Deut. 32:4; I Kgs. 22:16; Ps. 33:4; 98:3; 100:5; 119:30; Jer. 9:5; Zech. 8:16
- C. אָמֵן (BDB 53), firmness, steadfastness, fidelity
 - 1. of hands, Exod. 17:12
 - 2. of times, Isa. 33:6
 - 3. of humans, Jer. 5:3; 7:28; 9:2
 - 4. of God, Ps. 40:11; 88:12; 89:2,3,6,9; 119:138

III. Paul’s use of this OT concept

- A. Paul bases his new understanding of YHWH and the OT on his personal encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (cf. Acts 9; 22; 26).
- B. He found OT support for his new understanding in two key OT passages which use the root אָמֵן.
 - 1. Gen. 15:6 – Abram’s personal encounter initiated by God (Genesis 12) resulted in an obedient life of faith (Genesis 12-22). Paul alludes to this in Romans 4 and Galatians 3.
 - 2. Isa. 28:16 – those who believe in it (i.e., God’s tested and firmly placed cornerstone) will never be
 - a. Rom. 9:33, “put to shame” or “be disappointed”
 - b. Rom. 10:11, same as above
 - 3. Hab. 2:4 – those who know the faithful God should live faithful lives (cf. Jer. 7:28). Paul uses this text in Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11 (also note Heb. 10:38).

IV. Peter’s use of the OT concept

- A. Peter combines
 - 1. Isa. 8:14 – I Pet. 2:8 (stumbling block)
 - 2. Isa. 28:16 – I Pet. 2:6 (cornerstone)
 - 3. Ps. 111:22 – I Pet 2:7 (rejected stone)
- B. He turns the unique language that describes Israel, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession” from
 - 1. Deut. 10:15; Isa. 43:21
 - 2. Isa. 61:6; 66:21
 - 3. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6
 and now uses it for the church’s faith in Christ

V. John's use of the concept

A. Its NT usage

The term "believed" is from the Greek term (*pisteu*). which can also be translated "believe," "faith," or "trust." For example, the NOUN does not occur in the Gospel of John, but the VERB is used often. In John 2:23-25 there is uncertainty as to the genuineness of the crowd's commitment to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. Other examples of this superficial use of the term "believe" are in John 8:31-59 and Acts 8:13, 18-24. True biblical faith is more than an initial response. It must be followed by a process of discipleship (cf. Matt. 13:20-22,31-32).

B. Its use with PREPOSITIONS

1. *eis* means "into." This unique construction emphasizes believers putting their trust/faith in Jesus
 - a. into His name (John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; I John 5:13)
 - b. into Him (John 2:11; 3:15,18; 4:39; 6:40; 7:5,31,39,48; 8:30; 9:36; 10:42; 11:45, 48; Matt. 18:6; Acts 10:43; Phil. 1:29; I Pet. 1:8)
 - c. into Me (John 6:35; 7:38; 11:25,26; 12:44,46; 14:1,12; 16:9; 17:20)
 - d. into the Son (John 3:36; 9:35; I John 5:10)
 - e. into Jesus (John 12:11; Acts 19:4; Gal. 2:16)
 - f. into Light (John 12:36)
 - g. into God (John 14:1)
2. *en* means "in" as in John 3:15; Mark 1:15; Acts 5:14
3. *epi* means "in" or "upon," as in Matt. 27:42; Acts 9:42; 11:17; 16:31; 22:19; Rom. 4:5, 24; 9:33; 10:11; I Tim. 1:16; I Pet. 2:6
4. the DATIVE CASE with no PREPOSITION as in Gal. 3:6; Acts 18:8; 27:25; I John 3:23; 5:10
5. *hoti*, which means "believe that," gives content as to what to believe
 - a.. Jesus is the Holy One of God (John 6:69)
 - b. Jesus is the I Am (John 8:24)
 - c. Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 10:38)
 - d. Jesus is the Messiah (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - e. Jesus is the Son of God (John 11:27; 20:31)
 - f. Jesus was sent by the Father (John 11:42; 17:8,21)
 - g. Jesus is one with the Father (John 14:10-11)
 - h. Jesus came from the Father (John 16:27,30)
 - i. Jesus identified Himself in the covenant name of the Father, "I Am" (John 8:24; 13:19)
 - j. We will live with Him (Rom. 6:8)
 - k. Jesus died and rose again (I Thess. 4:14)

VI. Conclusion

Biblical faith is the human response to a Divine word/promise. God always initiates (i.e., John 6:44,65), but part of this Divine communication is the need for humans to respond.

1. trust
2. covenant obedience

Biblical faith is

1. a personal relationship (initial faith)

2. an affirmation of biblical truth (faith in God’s revelation)
3. an appropriate obedient response to it (daily faith)

Biblical faith is not a ticket to heaven or an insurance policy. It is a personal relationship. This is the purpose of creation and humans being made in the image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) of God. The issue is “intimacy.” God desires fellowship, not a certain theological standing! But fellowship with a holy God demands that the children demonstrate the “family” characteristic (i.e., holiness, cf. Lev. 19:2; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:15-16). The Fall (cf. Genesis 3) affected our ability to respond appropriately. Therefore, God acted on our behalf (cf. Ezek. 36:27-38), giving us a “new heart” and “new spirit,” which enables us through faith and repentance to fellowship with Him and obey Him!

All three are crucial. All three must be maintained. The goal is to know God (both Hebrew and Greek senses) and to reflect His character in our lives. The goal of faith is not heaven someday, but Christlikeness every day!

Human faithfulness is the result (NT), not the basis (OT) for a relationship with God: human’s faith in His faithfulness; human’s trust in His trustworthiness. The heart of the NT view of salvation is that humans must respond initially and continually to the initiating grace and mercy of God, demonstrated in Christ. He has loved, He has sent, He has provided; we must respond in faith and faithfulness (cf. Eph. 2:8-9 and 10)!

The faithful God wants a faithful people to reveal Himself to a faithless world and bring them to personal faith in Him.

1:33 “who goes before you on *your* way, to seek out a place for you to encamp, in fire by night and cloud by day, to show you the way in which you should go” God went before the people in a fire by night and cloud by day, which is known as the “*Shekinah* cloud of glory” (e.g., Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19,24; 19:16-18; 20:21; 24:15,18; 33:9-10; Lev. 16:2; Num. 9:15-23; 14:14; Ps. 78:14) This cloud symbolizes the presence or transportation of deity and is found throughout the Bible (e.g., I Kgs. 8:10,12; Ezek. 1:4; Dan. 7:13; Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Acts 1:9-11; I Thess. 4:17; Rev. 1:7). He is coming on the clouds!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:34-40

³⁴“Then the LORD heard the sound of your words, and He was angry and took an oath, saying, ³⁵Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers, ³⁶except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it, and to him and to his sons I will give the land on which he has set foot, because he has followed the LORD fully.’ ³⁷The LORD was angry with me also on your account, saying, ‘Not even you shall enter there. ³⁸Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there; encourage him, for he will cause Israel to inherit it. ³⁹Moreover, your little ones who you said would become a prey, and your sons, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, shall enter there, and I will give it to them and they shall possess it. ⁴⁰But as for you, turn around and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea.’

1:34 “He was angry and took an oath” This same phrase, “took an oath” (BDB 989 KB 1396, *Niphal IMPERFECT*), was used when God committed Himself to a covenant relationship with Israel. Here He is committing Himself to the covenant consequence for disobedience—cursing. Notice that God’s promise to Abraham was to succeeding generations, but the curse was only to one generation, which was the initial evil (i.e., unbelief in YHWH’s promise of giving them Canaan) generation of the Exodus.

1:35 All of the men of military age (i.e., 20 years and up), who refused to follow YHWH's command and take the land, are punished and the people had to wander in the wilderness until their deaths (i.e., 38 years). The NT book of Hebrews, chapters 3-4, discusses this very issue of faithlessness.

Only the two spies who brought the positive report, Caleb (cf. v. 36) and Joshua (cf. 1:38), were excluded. Covenant disobedience results in covenant curses for Israel (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29) and Moses (cf. Deut. 3:26-27).

▣ **“the good land”** This is a recurrent phrase (cf. Exod. 3:8; Deut. 1:35; 3:25; 4:21,22; 8:7,20; Josh. 23:13). Good denoted (1) God's presence (i.e., God is “good,” Ps. 86:5; 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1,29; 145:9; and also note the parallelism of Amos 5:4,6,14,15) and (2) “a land flowing with milk and honey” (e.g., Exod. 3:8,17; 13:5; 33:3; Num. 13:27; 14:8; 16:13,14; Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9,15; 27:3; 31:20; Josh. 5:6).

1:36 “the land on which he has set foot” The land which Caleb will capture and thereby inherit is located around Hebron. We think it is near the valley of Eshcol (cf. Josh. 15:13), where the giants lived!

▣ **“fully”** This means “wholeheartedly” (BDB 569, KB 583, *Piel* PERFECT). It refers to one without mixed motives; Caleb loved YHWH with all his heart and followed Him. It is a metaphor of true devotion (e.g., Num. 14:24; 32:11-12; Josh. 14:8,9,14; I Kgs. 11:6). It is similar to the phrase, “with all your heart and with all your soul” (cf. Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 13:3; 30:2; I Kgs. 9:4; 11:4).

1:37 “The LORD was angry with me also on your account” Moses was trying to blame the people for his own disobedience (cf. Deut. 3:26, just as Adam tried to do, cf. Gen. 3:12), but note Num. 20:7-13,24; 27:14; Deut. 4:21.

The VERB “angry” (BDB 60, KB 72, *Hithpael* PERFECT) is from the NOUN for “nostril” or “nose.” Apparently it referred to (1) the flaring of the nostril as a physical sign of anger or (2) snorting a nasal sound. This term is used consistently for divine (anthropomorphic) anger (cf. Exod. 32:12; Deut. 1:37; 4:21; 9:8,20; II Kgs. 24:20).

Another use of this word in connection to deity is the phrase, “slow to anger,” which emphasizes God's patience and longsuffering (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Neh. 9:17; Pro. 14:29).

1:38 “Joshua, son of Nun, who stands before you” The phrase, “who stands before you,” is a Hebrew idiom which refers to a leader. Joshua was the right-hand man of Moses and this may be a prophecy of his future leadership role.

▣ **“encourage him”** This VERB (BDB 304, KB 302, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) means “make strong” (e.g., 3:28). YHWH Himself does this in Josh. 1:6,7,9,18!

▣ **“for he will cause Israel to inherit it”** This promise goes back to the prophecies to the Patriarchs (e.g., Genesis 12, 15, 18, 26) about their descendants' possession of Canaan (e.g., 3:28; 31:7; Josh. 11:23).

1:39 “your little ones who you said would become a prey” This refers to Numbers 14:3,31. Because of the adults disbelief God is telling them that their children surely would inherit the land just as He had promised.

▣ **“who this day have no knowledge of good or evil”** Historically this is referring to the children who came out of Egypt. God did not hold them responsible until they were capable of covenant understanding and commitment.

In this text two sides/poles can be seen in:

1. "I will give it to them" (God's sovereignty, cf. v. 8)
2. "They shall possess it" (human choice and responsibility, cf. v. 8)

See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

The church, following Paul, has focused on Genesis 3 as the source of human sin/evil. This developed into an Augustinian/Calvinistic emphasis on total depravity (i.e., human inability to respond to God unaided). This became one of the five pillars of Calvinism and a basic principle of Christianity.

However, the rabbis never focused on Genesis 3 as the source of evil (some did focus on Genesis 6), but on individual responsibility based on knowledge and commitment. They would posit two intents (*yetzers*), one good and one evil. The classical example would be the saying, "in every human heart are two dogs, one evil and one good. The one that is fed the most becomes the biggest." Therefore, humans are only responsible after a period of maturity and covenant knowledge/commitment (i.e., *Bar Mitzvah* for boys at age 13 and *Bat Mitzvah* for girls at age 12). Other biblical examples of this theological perspective are Jonah 4:11 and Isaiah 7:15-16.

To put this in contrasting terms:

1. Paul/Augustine/Calvin focused on God's sovereignty and human inability.
2. Rabbis/Jesus/Paul focused on covenantal responsibility.

It is not an either/or, but a both/and! Be careful of theological systems! Realize that biblical truth is presented in tension-filled pairs. Believers are to live godly lives within the tension, not desire quick, easy answers or play the blame game!

1:40 "by the way to the Red Sea" This seems to be a reference to the road called "the King's Highway" that ran beside the Gulf of Aqaba from Elath to Kadesh-barnea (cf. Num. 14:25; 20:17; 21:22). This does not refer to the Egyptian body of water crossed early in the Exodus, unless it means "in the general direction of."

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE RED SEA

I. Name

A. Literally the name is *Yam Suph*.

1. "Sea of Weeds" or "Sea of Reeds" (Egyptian root)
2. "Sea at the end (of the earth)" (Semitic root)

B. This can refer to

1. salt water, I Kgs. 9:26 (Gulf of Aqaba); Jonah 2:5 (Mediterranean Ocean)
2. fresh water, Exod. 2:3; Isa. 19:6

C. The Septuagint is the first translation to call it "the Red Sea." Possibly these translators were relating it to the sea of Edom (red). This designation was perpetuated by the Latin Vulgate and later the King James English translation.

II. Location

A. There are several bodies of water referred to by this name:

1. the narrow body of water between Egypt and the Sinai peninsula about 190 miles long (Gulf of Suez)

2. the body of water between the Sinai peninsula and Arabia about 112 miles long (Gulf of Aqaba)
- B. It could relate to the shallow marsh area in the northeastern part of the Nile delta close to Tanis, Zoan, Avaris, Rameses, which is on the southern shore of Lake Menzaleh (the marshy region).
- C. It could be used metaphorically of the mysterious waters to the south, often used of the sea at the end (of the earth). This means it could refer to
 1. modern Red Sea (Gulf of Suez or the Gulf of Akaba, cf. I Kgs. 9:26)
 2. Indian Ocean (cf. Herodotus 1.180)
 3. Persian Gulf (cf. Josephus, *Antiq.* 1.7.3)

III. *Suph* in Numbers 33

- A. In Num. 33:8 the body of water that was miraculously divided is called *suph*.
- B. In Num. 33:10,11 the Israelites are said to camp by *yam suph*.
- C. There are two different bodies of water.
 1. the first is not the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez)
 2. the second is probably the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez)
- D. The term *suph* is being used in the OT in three ways.
 1. body of water parted by YHWH to allow the Israelites to pass, but the Egyptian soldiers to drown
 2. the northwestern extension of the Red Sea (Gulf of Suez)
 3. the northeastern extension of the Red Sea (Gulf of Akaba)
- E. *Yam suph* possibly does not mean “reed sea” because
 1. there were/are no reeds (papyrus) in the Red Sea (salt water)
 2. the supposed Egyptian etymology refers to a land, not a lake
- F. *Suph* could come from the Semitic root “end” and refer to the mysterious unknown waters to the south (see Bernard F. Batts, “Red Sea or Reed Sea? What *Yam Suph* Really Means” in *Approaches to the Bible*, vol. 1, pp. 291-304).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 1:41-46

⁴¹“Then you said to me, ‘We have sinned against the LORD; we will indeed go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us.’ And every man of you girded on his weapons of war, and regarded it as easy to go up into the hill country. ⁴²And the LORD said to me, ‘Say to them, “Do not go up nor fight, for I am not among you; otherwise you will be defeated before your enemies.”’ ⁴³So I spoke to you, but you would not listen. Instead you rebelled against the command of the LORD, and acted presumptuously and went up into the hill country. ⁴⁴The Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do, and crushed you from Seir to Hormah. ⁴⁵Then you returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD did not listen to your voice nor give ear to you. ⁴⁶So you remained in Kadesh many days, the days that you spent *there*.”

1:41 “We have sinned against the LORD; we will indeed go up and fight” This is apparently consequence-related repentance. Theologically this shows that many times a lost opportunity, because of unbelief, cannot be regained. This context clearly shows that they were not obeying YHWH (cf. v. 43). This theological truth is the central focus of many of the OT historical narratives.

1:42 “I am not among you” The key to victory was not their military strength, but the presence of YHWH (cf. v. 43).

1:43 Notice the parallel descriptions of Israel:

1. “You would not listen” - BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT
2. “You rebelled against the command” - BDB 598, KB 632, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
3. “Acted presumptuously” - BDB 267, KB 268, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

If Israel would have listened to YHWH earlier and done this very thing they would have successful, but by doing it now it shows their continual self-asserting waywardness!

This context clearly shows that obedience is integrally related to His covenant promises, presence, and power!

1:44 “the Amorites who lived in that hill country” See Special Topic: The Pre-Israelite Inhabitants of Palestine at 1:4.



NASB	“crushed you”
NKJV	“drove you back”
NRSV	“beat you down”
TEV	“chased you”
NJB	“pursued you”

The VERB (BDB 510, KB 507, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) means “to beat into pieces.” This is recorded in Num. 14:45.

The ADJECTIVE was used of beating oil out of olives (cf. Exod. 29:40; Num. 28:5). It is used for the destruction of (1) the golden calf (cf. Deut. 9:21) and (2) of the smashing of idols (cf. Micah 1:7).

▣ “from Seir” Seir refers to Edom.



NASB, NKJV,	
NJB	“to Hormah”
NRSV, TEV	“as far as Hormah”

Hormah means “place of the ban.” The term (BDB 356) means “devoted to destruction,” which reflects Num. 21:3. It was originally called Zephath (cf. Jdgs. 1:17). After the Israelites destroyed it, they renamed it devoted/destroyed to/for YHWH (like Jericho, Joshua 6-7). It was located in the tribal allocation of Simeon, northeast of Beersheba.

The PREPOSITION (BDB 723 III) implies that the Canaanites/Amorites chased the Israelites from Edom (Seir) to this area just northeast of Beersheba, where they totally defeated them! YHWH was not with His rebellious and presumptuous people!

1:45 “Then you returned and wept before the LORD” The people wept outwardly, but God knew their hearts. It was sorrow based on consequences, not repentance.

▣ “but the LORD did not listen to your voice, nor give ear to you” It was not that God did not hear them, but He did not hearken unto them. He heard them, but said “No.” Sin always brings consequences, even forgiven sin!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the basic purpose of Deuteronomy?
2. Why are Sihon and Og mentioned here briefly when they are discussed fully in chapters 2 and 3?
3. List the vital items concerned with the judicial system of Moses?
4. Where did the giants come from?
5. Why was God so angry at Israel?
6. Did Israel's repentance affect God's decision?

DEUTERONOMY 2

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Desert Years	Historical Review (1:1-3:29) 1:46-2:8a	The Years in the Desert 1:46-2:1	From Kadesh to the Arnon
2:1-7		2:2-6 2:7	2:1-7
2:8-15	2:8b-13a 2:13b-15	2:8-9 2:10-12 2:13-15	2:8-13a 2:13b-15
2:16-23	2:16-25	2:16-19 2:20-23	2:16-25
2:24-25		2:24-25	
King Sihon Defeated		Israel Defeats King Sihon	Conquest of the Kingdom of Sihon
2:26-37	2:26-30 2:31-37	2:26-27 2:28-30 2:31-37	2:26-29 2:30-37

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

Brief Outline of Chapter 2

- A. Israel's relations with Edom, v. 4-7
- B. Israel's relations with Moab, v. 8-15
- C. Israel's relations with Ammon, v. 16-19
- D. Verses 20-23 is a parenthesis related to the *Rephaim* (See Special Topic at 1:28)
- E. Israel's relations with Amorites on the eastern bank of Jordan, v. 24-37

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:1-7

¹"Then we turned and set out for the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea, as the LORD spoke to me, and circled Mount Seir for many days. ²And the LORD spoke to me, saying, ³"You have circled this mountain long enough. Now turn north, ⁴and command the people, saying, "You will pass through the territory of your brothers the sons of Esau who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful; ⁵do not provoke them, for I will not give you any of their land, even *as little as a footstep* because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. ⁶You shall buy food from them with money so that you may eat, and you shall also purchase water from them with money so that you may drink. ⁷For the LORD your God has blessed you in all that you have done; He has known your wanderings through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing."

2:1 "the wilderness" There are several "wildernesses" connected to the exodus.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE WILDERNESSES OF THE EXODUS

1. Wilderness of Shur - in northeast Egypt (e.g., Exod. 15:22)
2. Wilderness of Paran - central Sinai Peninsula (e.g., Gen. 21:21; Num. 10:12; 12:16; 13:3,26)
3. Wilderness of Sin - southern Sinai Peninsula (e.g., Exod. 16:1; 17:1; Num. 33:11,12, also called "wilderness of Sinai," e.g., Exod. 19:1,2; Num. 1:1,19; 3:4; 9:1,5)
4. Wilderness of Zin - southern Canaan (e.g., Num. 13:21; 20:1; 27:14; 33:36; 34:3; Deut. 32:51)

▣ **"by the way of the Red Sea"** This refers to the Arabah Road (cf. TEV "on the road to the Gulf of Aqaba"), in the Jordan Rift Valley, which runs north and south on both sides of the Dead Sea (cf. v. 8). It is a wide valley which begins near the cities of Elath or Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba and goes through the heart of Edom and Moab and the kingdom of the Amorites to Damascus, Syria. In the OT it is called "the King's Highway" (e.g., Num. 20:17 and 21:22).

The term "Red Sea" (BDB 410 CONSTRUCT with 693) is literally "sea of reeds/weeds." This term is used for "the unknown and mysterious waters to the south." It can refer to the body of water that the Israelites crossed in the exodus and, as here and 1:40, to the body of water called the Gulf of Aqaba on the eastern side of the Sinai Peninsula. In one OT passage the term refers to the Indian Ocean. See Special Topic at 1:40.

▣ **“as the LORD spoke to me”** Deuteronomy depicts itself as a revelation from YHWH to Moses (cf. vv. 1,2,9,17,31). YHWH directed His people by:

1. direct revelation to Moses (cf. v. 2)
2. the movement of the *Shekinah* cloud of glory
3. the use of the *Urim* and *Thummim* (i.e., High Priest)

▣ **“Mount Seir”** This refers to the land of Edom (cf. vv. 5; 1:2; Exod. 3:1; 17:6).

2:3

NASB “circled”
NKJV, NRSV “skirted”
TEV “wandering”
NJB “gone far enough”

This VERB (BDB 685, KB 738, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT in v. 3 and a *Qal* IMPERFECT in v. 1) means “turn about,” “go around,” “surround.” The Israelites had no clear direction because of the evil unbelieving generation. They wandered around Kadesh-barnea for thirty-eight years, but YHWH is about to give specific, clear directions to Moses. “Go around” or “skirt” fits this text best.

▣ **“Now turn north”** This may refer to Numbers 20, where Israel asked if they could pass through the land of Edom, but the Edomites would not let them. They asked to pass through the land of the Moabites, and they also said no. This is recording an early event (cf. ICC p. 34). Here they are asking if they could go up the King’s Highway, which ran through the center of these countries. They were willing to buy food and water, but the Edomites and the Moabites (the Israelites’ relatives through Lot and Esau) said, “No.” Rather than go through Edom, they went around their border.

Like so many Hebrew terms, this one (BDB 815, KB 937) has a concrete, literal meaning (e.g., here) and a developed, metaphorical meaning. “Turn” is the Hebrew term often translated “repent” (e.g., II Kgs. 17:13; II Chr. 30:6; Isa. 44:22; Jer. 3:11-4:2; Hosea 14:1).

2:4 “command” This term (BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel* IMPERATIVE), like “turn” (BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) in v. 3, shows that Moses is recording the very commands of YHWH (as does the *Hithpael* IMPERFECT used as a JUSSIVE in v. 5, “do not provoke them”). He personally directed their journey.

▣

NASB “your brothers”
NKJV “your brethren”
NRSV “your kindred”
TEV “your distant relatives”
NJB “your kinsmen”

The English translation shows the implications of the Hebrew word “brother” (BDB 26). It is used several times of Edom (descendants of Esau, cf. Num. 20:14; Deut. 2:4,8; Obadiah v. 10).

▣ **“they will be afraid of you”** This is a prophetic statement which goes back to the Song of Deliverance in which Miriam praises God for the miraculous Reed Sea crossing. God predicted that “Edom and Moab would be terrified of the Israelites” (cf. Exod. 15:15).

2:4, 9, 19 Throughout this chapter there are several noteworthy phrases connected to God’s sovereignty:

- “I will not give” (v.5, 9, 19)
- “I have given” (v.5, 9)

“the LORD gave” (v.12)

“the LORD our God is giving to us” (v.29)

“God delivered him over to us” (v.33)

This chapter shows the sovereignty of YHWH in international boundaries (cf. 32:8; Neh. 9:22), because each of these phrases stresses that YHWH is the one who gave the land to certain people groups to inherit. This chapter shows that YHWH did not exclusively give land to Israel, but He gave some to every nation. Some lost their land because of their sins (e.g., Gen. 15:16) and Israel also lost her land for a period (i.e., Assyrian and Babylonian exiles) because of her sin. This is asserting that YHWH is the universal God. In a day of polytheism, this is a wonderful statement of monotheism. There is one and only one God, Deut. 6:4-6. He is the One who gives the land even to the Edomites, Moabites, Amorites, etc. (esp. Deut. 32:8 in the Septuagint [LXX]).



NASB, NRSV,

REB

“So be very careful”

NKJV

“Therefore watch yourselves carefully”

TEV

(combines this phrase with the next one in v. 5, “but you must not start a war”)

NJB

“and you will be well protected”

The literal phrase is “so take good heed” (a CONJUNCTION, VERB [BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* PERFECT], and ADVERB [BDB 547]). The Septuagint is similar to TEV.

This phrase, in various forms, is used several times in Deuteronomy (cf. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 6:12; 8:11; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 15:9; 24:8). It implies, “keep your mind alert,” “watch what you are doing,” “think clearly about the implications of your actions.”

2:5

NASB

“even as little as a footstep”

NKJV

“not so much as one footstep”

NRSV, NJB

“even so much as a foot’s length”

TEV

“as much as a square foot”

This is a rare Hebrew term (BDB 204). It refers to a stepping place. The same root is used in 11:24 and Josh. 1:3. In a sense this was an encouraging word from YHWH. He had given land to both Edom and Moab. It was theirs, every inch of it! He was in the process of giving land to Israel. His land grant gifts were secure.

Now it must be added that eventually, because of sin, these nations (i.e., Edom and Moab) lost their land and perished as a people. All land gifts were conditional. This is also true of Israel (i.e., the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles). All of God’s covenants (except Genesis 6 and 15) are conditional.

His promises of redemption are sure (unconditional), but each person/nation must respond and continue to respond appropriately! A continuing, obedient faith relationship is crucial. YHWH requires faith, repentance, obedience, and perseverance, in both the OT and the NT.

2:6 Israel was to purchase both food and water as a gesture of their recognition of Edom’s sovereignty over their land, which was given by YHWH.

1. “Buy food” (BDB 991, KB 1404, *Qal* IMPERFECT)

2. “Purchase water” (BDB 500, KB 497, *Qal* IMPERFECT)

2:7 “These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have not lacked a thing” This passage describes the love of God even in the midst of Israel’s rebellion against Him (i.e., lack of faith in His promise to give them the land of Canaan).

The Wilderness Wandering Period was a judgment to a generation of Israelites with little faith, but it turned into a time of YHWH's personal presence and provision. The rabbis call it the honeymoon period between YHWH and Israel. YHWH provided:

1. protection
2. personal guidance
3. food
4. water
5. clothes that did not wear out
6. victory in battle

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:8-15

⁸"So we passed beyond our brothers the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road, away from Elath and from Ezion-geber. And we turned and passed through by the way of the wilderness of Moab. ⁹Then the LORD said to me, 'Do not harass Moab, nor provoke them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as a possession, because I have given Ar to the sons of Lot as a possession. ¹⁰(The Emim lived there formerly, a people as great, numerous, and tall as the Anakim. ¹¹Like the Anakim, they are also regarded as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim. ¹²The Horites formerly lived in Seir, but the sons of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, just as Israel did to the land of their possession which the LORD gave to them.) ¹³Now arise and cross over the brook Zered yourselves.' So we crossed over the brook Zered. ¹⁴Now the time that it took for us to come from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed over the brook Zered was thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war perished from within the camp, as the LORD had sworn to them. ¹⁵Moreover the hand of the LORD was against them, to destroy them from within the camp until they all perished."

2:8 "So we passed beyond our brothers, the sons of Esau who live in Seir" This use of "brothers" is somewhat ironic. They were kin. They did come from the same ancestors, Isaac and Rebekah, but they were acting like anything except relatives.

"Seir" refers to the mountain range in the country of Edom. So "Seir" and "Edom" are synonymous.

2:8, 27 "Arabah road" This refers to "the Kings Highway," from the Gulf of Aqaba to Damascus (cf. v. 1 and Num. 20:17,19; 21:22).

2:8 "Elath" This is literally "palm trees" (BDB 19). This is probably close to Ezion-geber (cf. I Kgs. 9:26), which is at the northern end of the Gulf of Aqaba.

▣ **"the way of the wilderness of Moab"** The Macmillan Bible Atlas, map 10, shows this desert road as parallel to "the King's Highway," but to the east. The southern end passes through Edom and is known as "the way of the wilderness of Edom" (cf. II Kgs. 3:8). The King's Highway and this smaller desert road meet at Rabbath-bene-ammon, which is to the east of Jericho.

2:9 "Do not harass Moab, nor provoke them to war" This is parallel to 2:5 about Edom. The terms are different, but the thought is the same.

Both of the VERBS are JUSSIVES:

1. "harass" (BDB 849 III, KB 1015, *Qal* JUSSIVE, cf. Exod. 23:22; Esther 8:11)
2. "provoke" (BDB 173, KB 202, *Hithpael* JUSSIVE, vv. 19,24; Pro. 28:4; Dan. 11:10)

▣ **“Ar”** This is either a reference to Moab in general or its capital city (cf. Num. 21:15,28; Deut. 2:9,18,29; Isa. 15:1). It was located on the left bank of the Arnon River.

▣ **“sons of Lot as a possession”** See Gen. 19:37-38.

2:10-12 These verses are an editorial comment, as are vv. 20-23; 3:9,11,13-14. The following are all terms for giants: (1) *Emim* (v. 10,11); (2) *Anakim* (v.10,11,21); and (3) *Rephaim* (vv. 11,20). These terms can mean either (a) large or tall in size; (b) of a particular ethnic origin; or (c) later in Isaiah and Jeremiah, it is used for the realm of the dead. Here it probably refers to size. See Special Topic at 1:28.

2:12 “Horites” There is some debate concerning the relation between the Horites (BDB 360) and the Hurrians (ABD, vol. 3, pp. 335-338). I do not think that they are the same (ABD, vol. 3, p. 288). I believe there were two different peoples, although there is no way to be dogmatic (NET Bible, p. 348 #5). The Horites were a tribal group that lived in the region of Edom/Seir before Edom was a nation (cf. Gen. 14:6; 36:20-30).

2:13 “Now arise and cross over” These two VERBS (BDB 877, KB 1086 and BDB 716, KB 778) are both *Qal* IMPERATIVES. YHWH is still telling Moses exactly what to do.

▣ **“brook Zered”** This is the name of a wadi between Moab and Edom (cf. Num. 21:12). A wadi is a silt-filled ravine where water runs during the rainy season, a seasonal brook, not a river. The silt often forms a “road.” It formed the border between Edom and Moab.

The meaning of the term “Zered” (BDB 279) is unknown.

2:14 “Now the time that it took for us. . .was thirty-eight years” This is a summary verse of the wilderness wandering period (cf. v. 7).

2:14, 16 “all the generation of the men of war” The “men of war” included every male between 20 and 50 years of age (cf. Exod. 30:14; 38:26; Num. 1:3; 14:29). All of this evil unbelieving generation (i.e., lack of faith in YHWH’s promises) had to die (cf. v. 15) before the younger Israelis could possess the Promised Land.

▣ **“as the LORD had sworn”** See Num. 14:28-29; Deut. 1:34-35.

2:15 “the hand of the LORD” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD DESCRIBED AS A HUMAN (ANTHROPOMORPHIC LANGUAGE)

I. Type of language is very common in the OT

A. Physical body parts

1. eyes - Gen. 1:4,31; 6:8; Exod. 33:17; Num. 14:14; Deut. 11:12; Zech. 4:10
2. hands - Exod. 15:17; Num. 11:23; Deut. 2:15
3. arm - Exod. 6:6; 15:16; Num. 11:23; Deut. 4:34; 5:15
4. ears - Num. 11:18; I Sam. 8:21; II Kgs. 19:16; Ps. 5:1; 10:17; 18:6
5. face - Exod. 32:30; 33:11; Num. 6:25; Deut. 34:10; Ps. 114:7
6. finger - Exod. 8:19; 31:18; Deut. 9:10; Ps. 8:3
7. voice - Gen. 3:8,10; Exod. 15:26; 19:19; Deut. 26:17; 27:10

8. feet - Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 43:7
9. human form - Exod. 24:9-11; Ps. 47; Isa. 6:1; Ezek. 1:26
10. the angel of the Lord - Gen. 16:7-13; 22:11-15; 31:11,13; 48:15-16; Exod. 3:4,13-21; 14:19; Jdgs. 2:1; 6:22-23; 13:3-22

B. Physical actions

1. speaking as the mechanism of creation - Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24,26
2. walking (i.e., sound of) in Eden - Gen. 3:8; 18:33; Hab. 3:15
3. closing the door of Noah's ark - Gen. 7:16
4. smelling sacrifices - Gen. 8:21; Lev. 26:31; Amos 5:21
5. coming down - Gen. 11:5; 18:21; Exod. 3:8; 19:11,18,20
6. burying Moses - Deut. 34:6

C. Human emotions

1. regret/repent - Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:29,35; Amos 7:3,6
2. anger - Exod. 4:14; 15:7; Num. 11:10; 12:9; 22:22; 25:3,4; 32:10,13,14; Deut. 6:5; 7:4; 29:20
3. jealousy - Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; 32:16,21; Josh. 24:19
4. loath/abhor - Lev. 20:23; 26:30; Deut. 32:19

D. Family terms

1. Father
 - a. of Israel - Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5
 - b. of the king - II Sam. 7:11-16; Ps. 2:7
 - c. metaphors of fatherly action - Deut. 1:31; 8:5; 32:1; Ps. 27:10; Pro. 3:12; Jer. 3:4,22; 31:20; Hosea 11:1-4; Mal. 3:17
2. Parent - Hosea 11:1-4
3. Mother - Ps. 27:10 (analogy to nursing mother); Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13
4. Young faithful lover - Hosea 1-3

II. Reasons for the use of this type of language

- A. It is a necessity for God to reveal Himself to human beings. The pervasive concept of God as male is an anthropomorphism because God is spirit!
- B. God takes the most meaningful aspects of human life and uses them to reveal Himself to fallen humanity (father, mother, parent, lover)
- C. Though necessary, God does not want to be limited to any physical form (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5)
- D. The ultimate anthropomorphism is the incarnation of Jesus! God became physical, touchable (cf. I John 1:1-3). The message of God became the Word of God (cf. John 1:1-18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:16-25

¹⁶"So it came about when all the men of war had finally perished from among the people, ¹⁷that the LORD spoke to me, saying, ¹⁸"Today you shall cross over Ar, the border of Moab. ¹⁹When you come opposite the sons of Ammon, do not harass them nor provoke them, for I will not give you any of the land of the sons of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot as a possession.' ²⁰(It is also regarded as the land of the Rephaim, *for* Rephaim formerly lived in it, but the Ammonites call them Zamzummin, ²¹a people as great, numerous, and tall as the Anakim, but the

LORD destroyed them before them. And they dispossessed them and settled in their place,²² just as He did for the sons of Esau, who live in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them; they dispossessed them and settled in their place even to this day.²³ And the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and lived in their place.)²⁴ Arise, set out, and pass through the valley of Arnon. Look! I have given Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land into your hand; begin to take possession and contend with him in battle.²⁵ This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under the heavens, who, when they hear the report of you, will tremble and be in anguish because of you.'

2:16 “all the men of war had finally perished” This shows a balance between the love of God and the justice of God. God’s purpose is not just to punish, but to help His people learn from their mistakes. Therefore, He made these people, under His death sentence, wander around for 38 years, but He fed them, He loved them and He provided for them. It wasn’t sudden death, but it was an untimely death. Everyone of the men who came up to Kadesh-barnea, 20 years of age and up, were now dead, except Joshua and Caleb.

2:19 This is parallel to 2:5 and 2:9. These are the same VERBS as v. 9. Here the first (BDB 849, KB 1015) is JUSSIVE in meaning, but not form. The second (BDB 173, KB 202) is a *Hithpael* JUSSIVE. The Ammonites were also relatives of the Israelites through Lot.

2:20 “(It is also regarded as the land of the Rephaim)” This was an ethnic group who lived in this place. They were also called *Zamzummin*. Verse 21 shows us they were part of the giants (cf. v. 9.) See Special Topic at 1:28.

▣ **“Zamzummin”** See Genesis 14:5.

2:21 YHWH had been faithful to the descendants of Esau (vv. 5,22) and Lot (vv. 9-10, 21-22). The same “holy war” vocabulary used to describe Israel’s victories of conquest are used to describe Edom and Ammon’s conquest of their tribal lands.

2:23

NASB, NRSV,

TEV, REB “Avvim”

NKJV “Avim”

NJB “Avvites”

This term (BDB 732) has two meanings:

1. A people group which inhabited the land south of Palestine. They were conquered by Aegean people (i.e., Philistines). Albright even associates them with Hyksos settlements (cf. ABD, vol. 1, p. 531). This chapter has listed original inhabitants of places who were defeated and dispossessed.
2. Later in Joshua this term becomes the name of a city in the tribal allocation of Benjamin (cf. Josh. 18:23). Some scholars have surmised that they were people from Ai.

▣ **“the Caphtorim who came from Caphtor”** This term (BDB 499) could possibly be the island of Crete, Cyprus, Cappadocia, or northern Egypt (cf. Gen. 10:13-14). We do not know exactly. The Caphtorim (plural of Caphtor) were possibly neighbors or relatives of the Philistines (cf. Gen. 10:14; Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7).

2:24 This verse has several commands:

1. “Arise” - BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Gen. 13:17
2. “Set out” - BDB 652, KB 704, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Deut. 1:19; 2:1
3. “Pass through” - BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Isa. 23:12
4. “Look” - BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
5. “Begin” - BDB 320 III, KB 319, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE, cf. Deut. 2:31
6. “To take possession” - BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Det. 1:8,21; 2:31; 9:23
7. “Contend” - BDB 173, KB 202, *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE, cf. Deut. 2:5,9,19; Dan. 11:10

YHWH is commanding, encouraging, and challenging His people to trust Him and obey His word as their parents did not. The land was theirs if they exercised faith!

▣ **“Amorite”** See note at 1:4. The capital of this kingdom was Heshbon. It became the allotted tribal territory of Reuben.

2:25 “I will begin to put” These two terms are IMPERATIVES in v. 24. God was ready to act as warrior on their behalf if they would trust Him and enter into battle with the local inhabitants!

▣ **“dread and fear”** The first term (BDB 808) means “to be in awe” or “dread”:

1. Israel’s enemies will dread them - Deut. 2:25; 11:25; Ps. 105:38
2. the Israelis will be afraid of YHWH if they sin - Deut. 28:66,67
3. YHWH is to be awed - Ps. 119:120

The second term (BDB 432) means “to fear”:

1. the fear of God - Exod. 20:20
2. reverence of God - Ps. 2:11; 5:; 90:11; 119:38
3. fear of death - Ps. 55:4-5
4. fear of Israel - Deut. 2:25

▣ **“everywhere under the heavens”** This is an obvious hyperbole (i.e., whole earth, 4:19; Dan. 9:12). This is referring to the inhabitants of Canaan.

▣ **“tremble and be in anguish”** This is parallel to “dread and fear.” The first VERB (BDB 919, KB 1182, *Qal* PERFECT) means “quake” or “quiver” (cf. Pro. 29:9; Isa. 14:9). The second VERB (BDB 296, KB 297, *Qal* PERFECT) means “dance,” “whirl” (cf. Lam. 4:6) or “writhe” (cf. Isa. 23:4; 26:18 [giving birth]).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:26-31

²⁶“So I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, ²⁷Let me pass through your land, I will travel only on the highway; I will not turn aside to the right or to the left. ²⁸You will sell me food for money so that I may eat, and give me water for money so that I may drink, only let me pass through on foot, ²⁹just as the sons of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who live in Ar did for me, until I cross over the Jordan into the land which the LORD our God is giving to us.’ ³⁰But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand, as *he is* today. ³¹The LORD said to me, ‘See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to occupy, that you may possess his land.’”

2:26 “Kedemoth” This refers to an area (or settlement) north of the Arnon River, but exactly where is uncertain. This later became a Levitical city (cf. Josh. 21:37).

2:27 “Let me pass through your land, I will travel only on the highway” The first VERB (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* COHORTATIVE) is used often in this historical summary (cf. 2:4,8,13,14,18,24,27,28,29,30; 3:18,21,25,27,28; 4:14,21,22,26). Another textual feature is that the Hebrew word ‘way’ or ‘road,’ with the PREPOSITION is doubled. This is a way of emphasizing that they would not deviate off the main highway. This refers to the King’s Highway, which goes through Edom, Moab, and the Kingdom of Sihon. Moses asserts that they had passed through these kingdoms without causing trouble even when their king would not let Israel pass through. This was the very same offer (cf. v. 29) that Moses made to Edom (cf. v. 6).

▣ **“I will not turn aside to the right or to the left”** Notice Moses is speaking in a corporate sense. Much of the misunderstanding of the Bible can be attributed to the loss of the corporate nature of biblical revelation versus the individual focus of modern, western societies. The rights and privileges of the individual have eclipsed the social collectiveness of the OT.

The phrase is based on the OT idiom of biblical faith as a path or way (e.g., Ps. 119:105). God’s will is clearly marked. This concept is literal here (i.e., a highway). So the phrase, “turn to the right or left” is literal. Usually this is used metaphorically for the spiritual life (e.g., Num. 20:17; 22:26; Deut. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14; Josh. 1:7; 23:6; I Kgs. 22:2).

2:30 “the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate” The first VERB (BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* PERFECT) means “to be hard” in the sense of stubbornness or stiffneckedness:

1. the *Qal* IMPERFECT is used in 1:17; 15:18
2. the *Hiphil* is used in Exod. 7:3; 13:15 in relation to God hardening Pharaoh’s heart just before the exodus
3. the *Hiphil* is used in Deut. 10:16 of YHWH warning the Israelites not to harden their hearts or not to be stiffnecked

Number 2 is a parallel to this context’s divine hardening of Sihon’s heart (i.e., will).

The second VERB (BDB 54, KB 69, *Piel* PERFECT) means “to be strong.” It is usually used in a positive sense (cf. Deut. 3:28; 31:6,7,23), but here it is used parallel to “stiffnecked” (cf. Deut. 15:7; II Chr. 36:13).

This is similar to what happened to Pharaoh: (1) God hardened his heart (cf. Exod. 7:3; 9:12; 10:1,20,27; 11:10; 14:4,8,17) or (2) Pharaoh hardened his own heart (cf. Exod. 8:15,32; 9:34). These verses show both God’s sovereignty and mankind’s God-given free will. The context implies that Pharaoh (in Exodus) and Sihon (in Deuteronomy) had a free will or why would Moses take the time to offer a peace initiative to them? The implication is that God is in control of all things. God set up the circumstances, but they refused (see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 142-143). Romans 9 and 10 show this same paradox. Chapter 9 focuses on the sovereignty of God while chapter 10 has several universal offers (cf. v. 4, “everyone”; vv. 11,13, “whosoever”; v. 12, “all”[twice]). See Special Topics below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE LORD HARDENED

This seeming paradox has become the theological conflict between competing theological systems:

1. God’s sovereignty vs. human free will
2. Augustine vs. Pelagius
3. Calvin vs. Arminius

For me both are biblical truths. Both truths must be held in a theological tension. The concept of “covenant” holds them together. God always comes first, sets the agenda, and calls to fallen mankind, (e.g., John 6:44,65), but we are responsible for our choices (e.g., John 1:12; 3:16). Human responsibility and its

consequences mandate a human freedom (i.e., soul competency)! Moral actions are based on real choices. The Scriptures assert both truths (i.e., theological poles)!

Notice God's sovereignty, "I have begun to deliver" and human free will, "begin to occupy, that you may possess the land"!

It is surely possible that this theological difficulty for us is predicated on our misunderstanding of ancient Hebrew theological idioms. Israel's unique monotheism demanded she defend it at all points. YHWH's cause of all things was a Hebrew way of affirming monotheism. Nothing just happened. There was one and only one cause—YHWH. The texts that assert this have caused moderns to:

1. attribute evil to God
2. assert a radical form of sovereignty to God

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE HEART

The Greek term *kardia* is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *l b*. It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403-404):

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; II Cor. 3:2-3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual (moral) life
 - a. God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; I Cor. 14:25; I Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
 - b. used of mankind's spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18-19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; I Tim. 1:5; II Tim. 2:22; I Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; II Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; II Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in II Cor. 3:14-15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; I Cor. 4:5; 7:37; II Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26,37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; II Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
6. unique place of the Spirit's activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms:
 - a. Gen. 6:6; 8:21, "God was grieved to His heart" (also notice Hosea 11:8-9)
 - b. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, "with all your heart and all your soul"
 - c. Deut. 10:16, "uncircumcised heart" and Rom. 2:29
 - d. Ezek. 18:31-32, "a new heart"
 - e. Ezek. 36:26, "a new heart" vs. "a heart of stone"

2:31 Three of the IMPERATIVES of v. 24 are repeated:

1. "See" - BDB 906, KB 115, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. "Begin" - BDB 320, KB 319, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
3. "Occupy" - BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 2:32-37

³²"Then Sihon with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz. ³³The LORD our God delivered him over to us, and we defeated him with his sons and all his people. ³⁴So we captured all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed the men, women and children of every city. We left no survivor. ³⁵We took only the animals as our booty and the spoil of the cities which we had captured. ³⁶From Aroer which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon and *from* the city which is in the valley, even to Gilead, there was no city that was too high for us; the LORD our God delivered all over to us. ³⁷Only you did not go near to the land of the sons of Ammon, all along the river Jabbok and the cities of the hill country, and wherever the LORD our God had commanded us."

2:32 "came out to meet us" Sihon lost because he left his fortified cities and was defeated on the plains. This is a good example of where God used human pride to accomplish His purpose.

▣ **"Jahaz"** The exact site is uncertain, but it is on the eastern side of Jordan in the kingdom of Sihon and probably south of the capital, Heshbon, because the Israelites were coming from the south.

2:33 "God delivered him over to us" As in v. 31, God's sovereignty (v. 32a, "God delivered" BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT) and human freedom (v. 32b, "we defeated" BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) are both plainly asserted.

2:34 "We left no survivor" This was a tenet of holy war (*herem*, BDB 355 I, cf. 3:6). All were killed because these people had been sinful for a long time (cf. Deut. 7:16; 20:14). Genesis 15:16 says that "the sin of the Amorite is not yet full" and, therefore, God had waited a long time for them to respond to Him. They did not repent and judgment finally came. If they had not been destroyed, they would have corrupted the worship and theology given on Mt. Sinai. "Holy War" was a judgment and a protective hedge!

2:35 "We took only the animals as our booty and the spoil of the cities" Here is an example of a limited ban (e.g., 3:6-7; Josh. 8:2,27; 11:14). They could take some spoils after they destroyed the people. This was a part of the OT concept of holy war. The battle belonged to YHWH and so, too, the spoils (e.g., Jericho, Joshua 7).

2:36

NASB	"the city which is in the valley"
NKJV	"the city that <i>is</i> in the ravine"
NRSV	"the town that is in the wadi itself"
TEV	"the city in the middle of that Valley"
NJB	"the town down in the valley"

The variety in the English translations shows the possibilities. For me, a city would never have been built in a wadi because of the danger of flash floods, so valley seems best.

▣ **"no city that was too high for us"** God's people had balked because the cities were too well fortified, the inhabitants were too tall. Now the Jews are saying, "Those people are big, but we will do it with God's help" (cf. Deut. 1:28).

2:37 The area of conquest was very precise (by divine command, cf. vv. 5,9,19).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Follow the route of the conquest on a map.
2. Who were the giants?
3. How does one deal with v. 34?

DEUTERONOMY 3

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
King Og Defeated	Historical Review (1:1-3:29)	Israel Conquers King Og	Conquest of the Kingdom of Og
3:1-11	3:1-7	3:1-2 3:3-7	3:1-7
	3:8-17	3:8-10 3:11	3:8-11
The Land East of the Jordan Divided		The Tribes that Settled East of the Jordan	The Partitioning of Transjordan
3:12-17		3:12-13a 3:13b-14 3:15-17	3:12-17 Further Instructions from Moses
3:18-22	3:18-22	3:18-20 3:21-22	3:18-22
Moses Forbidden to Enter the Land		Moses Is Not Permitted to Enter Canaan	
3:23-29	3:23-29	3:23-25 3:26-28 3:29	3:23-28 3:29

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:1-7

1"Then we turned and went up the road to Bashan, and Og, king of Bashan, with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Edrei. **2**But the LORD said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; and you shall do to him just as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.' **3**So the LORD our God delivered Og also, king of Bashan, with all his people into our hand, and we smote them until no survivor was left. **4**We captured all his cities at that time; there was not a city which we did not take from them: sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. **5**All these were cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars, besides a great many unwalled towns. **6**We utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women and children of every city. **7**But all the animals and the spoil of the cities we took as our booty."

3:1 “up. . .road” This refers to the King’s Highway. This was a trans-Jordan road which went directly through the center of Edom, Moab, and Ammon. It was a major caravan route from the Gulf of Aqaba to Damascus.

▣ **“Bashan”** The name means “smooth” (BDB 143), in the sense of prime agricultural land (i.e., no rocks). This was a very fertile and wooded land in the northern trans-Jordan area north of the Yarmuk River or possibly Jabbok River to just south of the foothills of Mt. Hermon, which means it included part of the area known as Gilead. It was known for its timber and large herds of cattle.

▣ **“Og, king of Bashan”** See Num. 21:33-35; Deut. 1:4.

▣ **“at Edrei”** This city is located on a fork of the Yarmuk River and was one of the royal residences. The capital was Ashtaroth to the north. Og faced Israel here, probably using the river as a defensive position.

3:2 “the LORD said to me” See note at 2:2.

▣ **“Do not fear him”** The VERB (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense) is used often in Deuteronomy (e.g., 1:19,21,29; 2:4; 3:2,22; 4:10). God was fighting in their behalf (i.e., holy war, e.g., Num. 21:34; Josh. 10:8; 11:6).

▣
NASB, NKJV **“I have delivered him”**
NRSV **“I have handed him over to you”**
TEV **“I am going to give him”**
NJB **“I have put him at your mercy”**

The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT) means “give,” “put,” or “set.” It is a common VERB. Notice its use in this literary unit of Deuteronomy (cf. 1:8,15,20,21,25,27,35,36,39; 2:5,9,12,19,24,25, 28,29,30,31,33,36; 3:2,3,12,13,15,16,18,19,20; 4:1,8,21,38,40). YHWH is the giver. There is only one God!

▣ **“we smote them until no survivor was left”** This is the language and reality of “holy war.” This reflects the Hebrew concept of *herem*, or “under the ban” (cf. v. 6). The following is a representative sample of OT

references to this term which shows how it was used in different ways. The concept of *herem* or “holy war,” “ban,” or “corban”:

1. total destruction—nothing that breathes is left alive, nothing material can be taken out (cf. Deut. 20:16-18; I Sam. 15:3; Josh. 7)
2. kill all the people, but leave the cattle (cf. Deut. 2:34, 35; 3:6, 7)
3. kill only the men (cf. Deut. 20:10-15)

3:4 “region of Argob” The term “region” (BDB 286) literally means, “a cord,” it is used of:

1. a cord rope
2. a measuring line
3. a piece of land (i.e., region, cf. Josh. 17:5, or inheritance, cf. Deut. 32:9; Josh. 17:14)
4. a group of people (i.e., band of prophets, cf. I Sam. 10:5,10)

▣ **“Argob”** This term (BDB 918) is the name of a region or plot of land. Its location is in the land of Bashan (cf. 3:4,13,14; I Kgs. 4:13). The root may be related to “clod” (BDB 918) or “heap” (BDB 918), but this is uncertain.

3:5 “All these cities were fortified with high walls, gates and bars” These cities were built from volcanic rock blocks and were quite large. They presented a rather intimidating sight. Their size may have reflected the population of the race of people living there. However, the faith of the Israelites was stronger than their fear of the giants (cf. 2:20-24).

The *Handbook on Deuteronomy* from the United Bible Societies mentions that “gates and bars” probably refers to a double gate with a metal bar across both, pp. 68-69. This may explain the plural “gates”: (1) there may just be more than one gate, or (2) this may have been the characteristic inner and outer gates (i.e., chambers).

3:6

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “utterly destroyed”

TEV “destroyed”

NJB “the curse of destruction”

REB “under solemn ban”

JPSOA “doomed”

This VERB (BDB 355, KB 353) is used twice in this verse (*Hiphil* IMPERATIVE and *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE). Its basic meaning is to devote something to God whereby it becomes too holy for human use and must be destroyed. It is regularly used in “holy war” contexts (cf. 2:34; 7:2; Exod. 22:20; Josh. 6:17,21) to assert that the victory and, thereby, the spoils belong to YHWH. In these conquest contexts the things devoted to God are Canaanites and their property. They are judged because of their abominable sins and unwillingness to repent (cf. Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24-26; Deut. 9:5).

For a good discussion of “holy war” see *Ancient Israel*, by Roland deVaux, vol. 1, pp. 258-267.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:8-11

⁸Thus we took the land at that time from the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, from the valley of Arnon to Mount Hermon ⁹(Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir): ¹⁰all the cities of the plateau and all Gilead and all Bashan, as far as Salecah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan. ¹¹(For only Og king of Bashan was left of

the remnant of the Rephaim. Behold, his bedstead was an iron bedstead; it is in Rabbah of the sons of Ammon. Its length was nine cubits and its width four cubits by ordinary cubit.)

3:8 “**Thus we took the land. . .from the hand of the two kings**” Verse 24 says it was “the strong hand of God,” which, anthropomorphically (see Special Topic at 2:15) shows the power and might of God. Here again is the interplay between God’s sovereignty and human effort.

▣ “**Mount Hermon**” Mt. Hermon was the northern limit of the land that God gave to the Israelites. It is the largest mountain in the entire area located in Lebanon, north of the Sea of Chinnereth (i.e., Galilee). Its name (BDB 356) is related to *herem* (devoted thing) and the site of many temples (cf. *Ancient Israel*, Roland deVaux, vol. 1, pp. 279-282). It is the northern limit of the conquered lands (cf. Jdgs. 1:1).

3:9 “**Sidonians**” This is the major city in ancient Phoenicia (cf. I Kgs. 16:31). It was located on the coast north of Tyre, which later became the major city. It being mentioned instead of Tyre shows the ancientness of this text.

▣ “**Sirion**” This term (BDB 970, Ps. 29:6) used for Mt. Hermon has been found in Ugaritic texts also shows the ancientness of this text.

▣ “**Senir**” This term (BDB 972, cf. I Chr. 5:23; Song of Songs 4:8; Ezek. 27:5) has been found in accounts of Shalmaneser III, an Assyrian king who attacked Damascus.

3:10

NASB, TEV “**the plateau**”

NKJV “**the plain**”

NRSV, NJB “**the tableland**”

This term (BDB 449) means “a level place.” It could refer to a plain or a flat tableland. Here it refers to the plateau between the Arnon River and the city of Heshbon (cf. 4:43; Josh. 13:9,16,17,21; Jer. 48:8,21). This plateau was part of Moab and became the tribal inheritance of Reuben (cf. Josh. 20:8).

▣ “**Gilead**” The term (BDB 166) is of unknown origin or meaning. A popular (word play) definition is given in Gen. 31:48. It can refer to:

1. a tribe (e.g., Num. 26:29; Jdgs. 5:17)
2. a land (e.g., Gen. 37:25)

It always refers to an area on the east side of the Jordan River from the Arnon River north to the land of Bashan.

▣ “**Salecah**” This city seems to form the southeastern limit of Bashan and is often used, along with Mt. Hermon, to designate the extent of Bashan (cf. Josh. 12:5; 13:11; I Chr. 5:11).

3:11 This seems to be an editorial comment, like 2:10-12,20; 3:9.

▣ “**Rephaim**” This can mean (1) an ethnic group; (2) giants; or (3) the realm of the dead. The context here seems to speak of the giants. See Special Topic at 1:28.



NASB, NKJV “his bedstead was an iron bedstead”

NRSV, NJB “his bed, an iron bed”

TEV “his coffin, made of stone”

REB “his sarcophagus of basalt”

The term (BDB 793) basically means “a wooden frame.” It could be used of a trellis, couch, bed, saddle, chair/throne. Here it refers to a place to sleep:

1. bed - II Sam. 17:28; Job 7:13; Ps. 6:6; 41:3; Amos 6:4
2. couch - Pro. 7:16
3. coffin (sarcophagus, i.e., one’s final place of rest/sleep)

It is possible that “iron” refers to basalt stone sarcophagus color (cf. NET Bible, p. 350). NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 741, says, “there is no literary support for the suggestion this was a sarcophagus or dolmen.”

▣ **“Rabbah”** This was the capital of the kingdom of Ammon (cf. Josh. 13:25). It is today the capital of Jordan, Amman.

▣ **“an ordinary cubit”** This is literally, “to the cubit of a man,” which was an idiom for a “standard cubit.” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CUBIT

There are two cubits (BDB 52, KB 61) in the Bible. The regular cubit is the distance between an average man’s longest finger and his elbow, usually around 18 inches (e.g., Gen. 6:15; Exod. 25:10,17,23; 26:2,8,13,16; 27:1,9,12,13,14,16,18; Num. 35:4,5; Deut. 3:11). There is also a longer cubit (royal cubit) used in construction (i.e., Solomon’s temple), which was common in Egypt (i.e., 21 fingers), Palestine (i.e., 24 fingers), and sometimes Babylon (i.e., 30 fingers). It was about 21 inches long (cf. Ezek. 40:5; 43:13).

The ancients used parts of the human body for measurement. The people of the ancient Near East used:

1. length from elbow to middle finger (cubit)
2. width from outstretched thumb to little finger (span, cf. Exod. 28:16; 39:9; I Sam. 17:4)
3. length between all four fingers of a closed hand (handbreadth, cf. Exod. 25:25; 37:12; I Kgs. 7:26; II Chr. 4:5)
4. length of middle joint of finger (fingerbreadth, Jer. 52:21)

The cubit (BDB 52, KB 61) was not completely standardized, but there were two basic lengths.

- a. normal male’s elbow to middle finger (about 18 inches, cf. Deut. 3:11)
- b. royal cubit was a bit longer (about 20 inches, cf. II Chr. 3:3; Ezek. 40:5; 43:13)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:12-17

¹²“So we took possession of this land at that time. From Aroer, which is by the valley of Arnon, and half the hill country of Gilead and its cities I gave to the Reubenites and to the Gadites. ¹³The rest of Gilead and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh, all the region of Argob (concerning all Bashan, it is called the land of Rephaim. ¹⁴Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and called it, *that is*, Bashan, after his own name, Havvoth-jair, *as it is to this day*.) ¹⁵To Machir I gave Gilead. ¹⁶To the Reubenites and to the Gadites I gave from Gilead even as far as the valley of Arnon, the middle of the valley as a border and as far as the river Jabbok, the border of the sons of Ammon; ¹⁷the Arabah also,

with the Jordan as a border, from Chinnereth even as far as the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah on the east."

3:12 “Reubenites and Gadites” These two tribes took over Sihons’ kingdom (cf. Josh. 13:15-23,24-28).

3:13 “half-tribe” The sons of Joseph made up the half-tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim (cf. Gen. 41:50,52; 48:1-7). Manasseh’s inheritance was split, half on the eastern side of Jordan and half on the western side.

3:14 “Jair” Rather than “son of” this means “descendant of” (cf. Num. 32:41). Several of the generations are skipped in this lineage. Verses 12-13 are general in nature and vv. 14-17 provide more detail (cf. NIC, *Deuteronomy*, Craigie, p. 121).

▣ **“the son of Manasseh”** “Son” here means descendant rather than direct son (cf. I Chr. 2:22).

▣ **“Geshurites and Maachathites”** These are different racial and ethnic groups (BDB 178 and 591). They lived on the northern border of the land of Bashan (cf. Josh. 13:13). Israel did not fight these people.

▣ **“Havoth-jair”** This means “the towns,” “regions,” or “kingdom” (BDB 795 II) of Jair.

▣ **“as it is to this day”** This phrase refers to a later period than the event (cf. 2:22; 3:14; 4:38; 10:8,15; 29:28; Josh. 7:26; 8:28,29; 9:27; 13:13; 14:14; 16:10; 22:3,17; 23:8; Jdgs. 1:21,26; 10:4; 18:12,30; 19:30). Verse 5 seems to have a similar thrust. The issue is “how much” later. It can refer to “soon after” (e.g., Josh. 6:25; 23:9) or it can mean generations later. Who recorded Moses words? Who arranged the Pentateuch? Who was the final editor? Modern scholarship cannot answer these questions!

3:15 “To Machir” Numbers 32:39-40 gives more information about this man.

3:17 “Arabah” This was another word for the Jordan Valley, which goes from above the Sea of Galilee past the Dead Sea down to the Gulf of Aqaba in the Sinai Peninsula (see note at 1:1). This is a geological rift through which the Jordan River runs, from the foothills of Mt. Hermon to the Dead Sea.

▣ **“Chinnereth”** This (BDB 490) is the name of a city in Galilee which was close to a large lake that goes by several names in the Bible”

1. Chinnereth (e.g., Num. 34:11; Josh. 12:3; 13:27)
2. Galilee (e.g., Matt. 4:18; Mark 1:16; John 6:1)
3. Gennesaret (e.g., Luke 5:1)
4. Tiberias (e.g., John 6:1; 21:1)

▣ **“the sea of the Arabah”** This (cf. 4:49; Josh. 3:16; 12:3, also called “Sea of the Plain” in II Kgs. 14:25) is another name for the Salt Sea (cf. Gen. 14:3; Num. 34:3,12; Josh. 3:16; 15:2,5; 18:19) or, as it is called today, called the Dead Sea. It is also called “the eastern sea” (cf. Ezek. 47:18; Joel 2:20; Zech. 14:8) or just “the sea” (cf. Isa. 16:8; Jer. 48:32).

▣ **“Pisgah”** This mountain (BDB 820) is identified with or is very close to Mt. Nebo (BDB 612 I, cf. 32:49; 34:1). Possibly they are twin peaks of one formation or the name of the ridge and its highest peak. These mountains are the result of erosion of the plateau of Moab above the Arabah. This name is more common in the OT than Nebo (cf. Num. 21:20; 23:14; Deut. 3:17,27; 4:49; 34:1).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:18-22

¹⁸'Then I commanded you at that time, saying, 'The LORD your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel. ¹⁹But your wives and your little ones and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock) shall remain in your cities which I have given you, ²⁰until the LORD gives rest to your fellow countrymen as to you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God will give them beyond the Jordan. Then you may return every man to his possession which I have given you.' ²¹I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, 'Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so the LORD shall do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. ²²Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you.'

3:18 “The LORD your God has given you this land” This refers to the eastern bank (trans-Jordan) of the Arabah.

▣ **“shall cross over armed before your brothers”** Because Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh settled on the eastern side of the Jordan which had already been conquered, they were now to go into battle first and fight for their brothers’ land (cf. vv. 19-20) before they could settle in their own.

3:19 “much livestock” The “much livestock” which they had were the spoils of war both from (1) Egypt and (2) the trans-Jordan nations.

▣ **“which I have given you”** The source of all blessings is God (the often used VERB “given” BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT). They had not earned the spoils of war themselves.

3:20 “the LORD gives rest to your fellow countrymen” The book of Hebrews is the best NT commentary on the Pentateuch. In Hebrews 4, the word “rest” is used three ways:

1. a seventh day rest as God rested after creation, the Sabbath
2. the Israelites rested after they conquered the Promised Land (cf. 12:10; 25:19; Josh. 23:1)
3. heaven, the eternal seventh-day rest

Here “rest” refers to security, #2.

3:21 Because of YHWH’s provision in the wilderness and victories in the trans-Jordan, the Israelis are to trust Him and march on!

3:22 “the LORD your God is the one fighting for you” This is not human effort, skills, or resources, but God’s power (cf. 1:30; 20:4; Exod. 14:14; 15:3).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 3:23-29

²³'I also pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying, ²⁴'O Lord God, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? ²⁵Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.' ²⁶But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, 'Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter. ²⁷Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see *it* with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. ²⁸But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give

them as an inheritance the land which you will see.' ²⁹So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor."

3:23-29 This is a very personal note from Moses. This is the only place in all the Bible that we have a recorded plea of Moses for himself. In other places he prayed for people or land. This is a glimpse into the heart of Moses, the man.

3:23

NASB, NKJV,

NJB "pleaded"

NRSV "entreated"

TEV "earnestly prayed"

I earnestly implored (BDB 335, KB 334, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT, cf. I Kgs. 8:33,47,59; II Chr. 6:37; Job 8:5; 9:15; Ps. 30:8; 142:1; Hosea 12:4) the Lord. Moses was in agony over not being allowed to enter the Promised Land.

3:24 "O Lord God" The term for "Lord" here is the word *adonai* (BDB 10), which is the Hebrew word for "owner," "master," "husband," or "Lord." The word "God" is the Hebrew word YHWH (BDB 217). He is saying "Lord, YHWH." This designation is seldom used in Moses' writings. This is Moses' prayer language. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.

▣ **"You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand"** Moses is pleading that his intimate knowledge of YHWH, His character (see full notes at 4:31 and 10:17), His acts should motivate YHWH to let him cross Jordan, but YHWH is no respecter of persons!

▣ **"for what god is there in heaven or earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours"** Is this the concept that God is the supreme God among many, called henotheism (e.g., Exod. 15:11 and Deut. 4:7; 5:7, see *The Jewish Study Bible*, pp. 379-380)? Does this mean that Moses is not denying the existence of other gods, but that YHWH is the strongest? Or is this monotheism (e.g., 4:35,39; 6:4; Exod. 20:2-3; Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5,6-7,14,18,21,22), one and only one God? We really do not know. I would rather believe that Moses is not referring to other gods, but to other spiritual forces, e.g., sometimes called *elohim* (cf. Ps. 8:5; 82:1,6; 1 Sam. 28:13).

3:25 "Let me, I pray, cross over and see" This phrase has two VERBS:

1. "cross over" - BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. "see" - BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but in a COHORTATIVE sense

3:26 "the LORD was angry" This is an example of anthropomorphic language ("angry" BDB 720, KB 780, see Special Topic at 2:15). How can we express God's being upset without using human terms? We can't, but we must remember that God is not a human and does not think and act like humans. We use human terms to describe the nature of God knowing that fallen humans can not ultimately describe God.

Moses' public sin (cf. 32:51; Num. 20:10-12; 27:12-14) brought public consequences!

▣ **"on your account"** See notes at 1:34,37.

▣ **“Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter”** Moses has been praying over and over (cf. Num. 20:2-13; 27:13; Deut. 1:37; 3:23-27), “I’m sorry, please let me go into the Promised Land.” Finally God said, “No, don’t ask any more” (BDB 414, KB 418, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE).

3:27 This verse and v. 28 have a series of commands in response to Moses’ prayer:

1. “go up” - BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “lift up” - BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “see” BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. “charge” - BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
5. “encourage” - BDB 304, KB 302, *Piel* IMPERATIVE
6. “strengthen” - BDB 54, KB 65, *Piel* IMPERATIVE

God made provision for Moses and for Israel (to empower Joshua, cf. v. 28b,c).

▣ **“top of Pisgah”** See note at v. 17.

▣ **“lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes”** This is a perfect example of God’s love and His wrath. “I said you cannot go in, but I will let you see it.”

▣ **“for you shall not cross over this Jordan”** God is not a respecter of persons. Moses was a great man of God, but he publicly disobeyed God and so he suffered the consequences (cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

3:29 “Beth-peor” This was literally “house/temple of Peor” (BDB 112). Peor was a mountain or city in northwest Moab. This was the site of Israel’s idolatry (*Ba’al* fertility worship, cf. Numbers 22-23). It became the inheritance of Reuben (cf. Josh. 13:20).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What theological knowledge about God do we learn from this account?
2. How do you relate the God of vv. 3 and 6 to the God of the NT?
3. Does v. 24 teach the existence of other gods?
4. How did God show mercy and yet justice to Moses in v. 27?

DEUTERONOMY 4

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Moses Commands Obedience	Conclusion to the First Address	Moses Urges Israel to be Obedient	The Apostasy at Beth-Peor contrasted with True Wisdom
4:1-8	4:1-4 4:5-8	4:1-4 4:5-6 4:7-10	4:1-8 The Revelation at Horeb; Its Demands
4:9-14	4:9-14		4:9-14
Beware of Idolatry		4:11-14	
4:15-24	4:15-20	4:15-24	4:15-20 Of Punishment to Come and of Conversion
	4:21-24		4:21-24
4:25-31	4:25-31	4:25-31	4:25-28 4:29-31 The Glory of Having Been Chosen by God
4:32-40	4:32-40	4:32-40	4:32-34 4:35-38 4:39-40
Cities of Refuge East of the Jordan	An Appendix	The Cities of Refuge East of the Jordan	The Cities of Refuge
4:41-43	4:41-43	4:41-43	4:41-43
Introduction to God's Law	Moses' Second Address (4:44-26:19;28)	Introduction to the Giving of God's Law	The Second Discourse of Moses (4:44-11:32)
4:44-49	4:44-49	4:44-49	4:44-49

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:1-4

¹Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. ²You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you. ³Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the Lord your God has destroyed them from among you. ⁴But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you."

4:1 “listen” This VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used often in Deuteronomy (e.g., 1:16; 4:1; 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:10; 33:7). Its basic meaning is “to hear so as to do.” It focuses on action, not just hearing (cf. James 1:22-25). This chapter has several warnings, vv. 1, 2, 6, 9, 13, 14, 15, 19, 23, and 26 (cf. Micah 1:2; 3:1; 6:1).

▣ **“the statutes and the judgments”** These include the collective revelations of God. It is all that God has revealed about Himself and His covenant requirements. It is similar in meaning to the word Torah (lit. “teachings,” i.e., Mosaic legislation).

SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR GOD’S REVELATION (using DEUTERONOMY and PSALMS)

I. “Statutes,” BDB 349, “an enactment, decree, or ordinance”

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| A. Masculine, קָט | - | Deut. 4:1,5,6,8,14,40,45; 5:1; 6:1,24,25; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19; 26:17; 27:10; Ps. 2:7; 50:16; 81:4; 99:7; 105:10,45; 148:6 |
| B. Feminine, קָטָה | - | Deut. 6:2; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15,45; 30:10,16; Ps. 89:31; 119:5,8,12, 16,23,26,33,48,54,64,68,71,80,83,112,124,135,145,155,171 |

II. “Law” BDB 435, “instruction”

- | | |
|---|---|
| - | Deut. 1:5; 4:44; 17:11,18,19; 27:3,8,26; 28:58,61; 29:21,29; 30:10; 31:9; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 78:10; 94:12; 105:45; 119:1,18,29,34,44,51,53,55,61,70, 72,77,85,92,97,109,113,126,136,142,150,153,163,165,174 |
|---|---|

III. “Testimonies” BDB 730, “divine laws”

- A. PLURAL, הָדַע - Deut. 4:45; 6:17,20; Ps. 25:10; 78:56; 93:5; 99:7; 119:22,24,46,59,79,95,119,125,138,146,152,167,168
- B. תָּדַע or תִּדְעוּ - Ps. 19:8; 78:5; 81:5; 119:2,14,31,36,88,99,111,129,144,157

IV. “Precepts” BDB 824, “a charge”

- Ps. 19:8; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4,15,27,40,45,56,63,69,78,87,93,94,100,104,110,128,134,141,159,168,173

V. “Commandments” BDB 846

- Deut. 4:2,40; 5:29; 6:1,2,17,25; 8:1,2,11; 10:13; 11:13; 15:5; 26:13,17; 30:11,16; Ps. 19:8; 119:6,10,19,21,32,35,47,48,60,66,73,86,96,98,115,127,131,143,151,166,176

VI. “Judgments/ordinances” BDB 1048, “rulings” or “justice”

- Deut. 1:17; 4:1,5,8,14,45; 7:12; 16:18; 30:16; 33:10,21; Ps. 10:5; 18:22; 19:9; 48:11; 89:30; 97:8; 105:5,7; 119:7,13,20,30,39,43,52,62,75,84,102,106,120,132,137,149,156,160,164; 147:19; 149:9

VII. “His ways” BDB 202, YHWH’s guidelines for His people’s lifestyle

- Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22,28; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; 32:4; Ps. 119:3,5,37,59

VIII. “His words”

- A. BDB 202 - Deut. 4:10,13,36; 9:10; 10:4; Ps. 119:9,16,17,25,28,42,43,49,57,65,74,81,89,101,105,107,114,130,139,147,160,161,169
- B. BDB 57
1. “word” - Deut. 17:19; 18:19; 33:9; Ps. 119:11,67,103,162,170,172
 2. “promise” - Ps. 119:38,41,50,58,76,82,116,133,140,148,154
 3. “command” - Ps. 119:158

▣ **“which I am teaching you”** Moses served as YHWH’s agent of deliverance and revelation (i.e., prophet, cf. 3:14; 4:1-17; 18:15-18; 34:10-12).

▣ **“to perform”** The INFINITIVE (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) encourages the people to hear God’s law and then obey it (cf. 16:12; 30:8).

▣ **“so that they may go in and take possession of the land”** Notice the conditional nature of God’s covenant (e.g., 5:33; 8:1; 16:20; 30:16,19). All of these VERBS are *Qal* PERFECTS. The last VERB in v. 1 (giving) is a *Qal* PARTICIPLE. God’s gift depends on Israel’s actions!

▣ **“the God of your fathers”** This refers to the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, cf. 1:11,21; 4:1,31,37; 6:3; 12:1; 26:7; 27:3). All of the covenants with the Patriarchs involved conditions (except Genesis 6-9 and 15:12-21).

4:2 “you shall not add to the word. . .nor take away from it” This does not refer to scribes updating the text of the Law, but rather that you cannot add to the essence of the Law (cf. 12:32; Pro. 30:5-6; Eccl. 3:14; Jer. 26:2). These bans on adding to or subtracting from are characteristic of ancient Near Eastern literature. There is a slight difference between the Ten Words as recorded in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

4:3 “Baal-peor” This refers to the place where Israelites turned from following YHWH and went after the fertility gods of Moab (cf. Num. 25:1-9).

4:4 “you who held fast to the LORD” The Hebrew word “hold,” “cleave” (BDB 180) is translated as a VERB in NASB. It is the opposite of “follow after” in v. 3 (i.e., *Ba’al*). The VERB form of this word is used:

1. of cleaving to one’s wife in Gen. 2:24
2. of Ruth clinging to Naomi in Ruth 1:14.

It denotes an attitude of loyalty or commitment. It is used in parallel with “love” in Gen. 34:3; I Kgs. 11:2; Pro. 18:24 (see NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 911).

Even in the election of God, humans had to respond appropriately. Even as God chose Israel to be His priestly nation (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), each individual had to choose God. This is a balance between God’s sovereignty and human freewill. It is also the balance of corporality (“you” PLURAL) versus individual (“everyone of you”) response.

These is no VERB in v. 4; the VERBAL idea is conveyed by two ADJECTIVES (BDB 180, 311).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:5-8

⁵“See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. ⁶So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ ⁷For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him? ⁸Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”

4:5

NASB, NRSV	“See”
NKJV	“surely”
TEV	-----
NJB	“look”

This is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 906, KB 1157). It was a literary way of asserting that Moses had fulfilled his responsibility and now the people must respond appropriately.

4:6

NASB	“So keep and do <i>them</i> ”
NKJV	“therefore be careful to observe <i>them</i> ”
NRSV	“You must observe them diligently”
TEV	“Obey them faithfully”
NJB	“Keep them, put them into practice”

There are two VERBS in this phrase:

1. “keep” (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT), which means “keep,” “watch,” or “preserve.” This VERB is used often in the Pentateuch (Deuteronomy, cf. 2:4; 4:2,6,9,15,23,40; many other places)
2. “do” (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT) means “do” or “make.” The VERB is also used often in the OT (e.g., Deut. 4:1,3,6,13,14,16,23,25).

4:6 “wisdom” This term (BDB 315) is used in Pro. 1:2,7 and the ADJECTIVE in 1:6. This wisdom is knowledge of God and His will. It is what humans seek because they are made in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen. 1:26-27), and for fellowship with Him (cf. vv. 7-8).

▣ **“understanding”** This term (BDB 108) is parallel to wisdom. Its goal is an informed, godly, happy life (e.g., Deut. 32:28; Pro. 2:1-22; 3:13-18).

▣ **“Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people”** Did God choose Israel because He loved them more than any others? God loves all men equally (John 3:16; I Tim. 2:4; II Pet. 3:9). God simply needed a place to begin. He chose Abraham and his seed to be a kingdom of priests to the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:4-6; Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8). Theirs was an election for purpose rather than election because of special love. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BOB’S EVANGELICAL BIASES

I must admit to you, the reader, that I am biased at this point. My systematic theology is not Calvinism or Dispensationalism, but it is Great Commission evangelism. I believe God had an eternal plan for the redemption of all mankind (e.g., Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Exod. 19:5-6; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 18; 36:22-39; Acts 2:23; 3:18; 4:28; 13:29; Rom. 3:9-18,19-20,21-32), all those created in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). The covenants are united in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28-29; Col. 3:11). Jesus is the mystery of God, hidden but now revealed (cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13)!

This pre-understanding colors all my interpretations of Scripture (i.e., Jonah). I read all texts through it! It is surely a bias (all interpreters have them!), but it is a Scripturally-informed presupposition.

4:7 “what great nation is there that has a god so near to it” This refers to God’s personal presence (i.e., immanence) with Israel in the form of the *Shekinah* cloud (wilderness wandering period) and later the ark of the covenant (beyond Jordan and into the monarchial period).

▣ **“whenever we call on Him”** This shows that the Jews had confidence that the God who made the world was the God who would respond to them when they prayed. He is both powerful and personal (e.g., Ps. 34:18; 145:18)! A God who acts, just opposite from the Canaanite idols!

4:8 “statutes and judgments. . .law” See Special Topic at 4:1.

▣ **“righteous”** This is a metaphor from a river reed. God’ righteousness is the standard or ruler by which we are measured. The law is based on the character of God. See Special Topic at 1:16.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:9-14

9"Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons. ¹⁰*Remember* the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.' ¹¹You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the *very* heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom. ¹²Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form — only a voice. ¹³So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, *that is*, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. ¹⁴The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it."

4:9

NASB "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently"
NKJV "Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself"
NRSV "But take care and watch yourselves closely"
TEV "Be on your guard! Make certain. . ."
NJB "But take care, as you value your lives"

This phrase has two IMPERATIVES from the same root:

1. "give heed" - BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 4:15; Josh. 23:11; Jer. 17:21).
2. "keep" - BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE in the sense of "keep by doing" (cf. 7:12).

Obedience is a life-and-death issue (cf. 30:15-20)!

▣ "so that you do not forget. . .they do not depart" See Deut. 8:11-20.

▣ "heart" In Hebrew psychology the emotions are centered in the bowels. The heart is the center of the intellect (especially memory) and personality. God is saying, "Do not forget the law!" See Special Topic: Heart at 2:30.

▣ "all the days of your life" A lifestyle commitment is required (cf. v. 10; 6:2; 12:1; 16:3).

▣ "make them known to your sons and your grandsons" This is a recurrent theme in Deuteronomy (cf. v. 10; 6:7, 20-25; 11:19; 31:13; 32:46; and note Exod. 10:2; 12:26; 13:8,14). If believers do not teach their children about God, they are failures as parents (biblically speaking)! Faith runs through families (cf. 5:10; 7:9)!

4:10 "*Remember* the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb" The hearers were the children of the exodus generation. This specifically refers to Exodus 19-20. Remembering God's great acts of deliverance (i.e., exodus) is a recurrent theme (cf. 5:15; 7:18; 8:2,18; 9:7,27; 11:2; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:9,18,22; 25:17; 32:7).

▣ **“so they may learn to fear Me”** God acted as He did on Mt. Horeb so that they would hold Him in reverential awe (cf. Exod. 20:20; Prov. 1:7; 9:10; Eccl. 12:15; Isa. 11:2-3; Ps. 34:11).

4:11 “the mountain burned with fire” Fire is a symbol of God’s presence (cf. Exod. 19:18; Deut. 5:23; 9:15; Heb. 12:18). It may symbolize purity. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE

Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.

A. Positive

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1-13)
3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15-16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22-23; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6-8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2-3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God’s leadership (cf. Exod. 12:21; Num. 14:14; I Kgs. 18:24)
7. God’s empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)

B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1-2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

C. God’s anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; II Thess. 1:7; II Pet. 3:7-10; Rev. 8:7; 13:13; 16:8)

D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the context.

▣ **“darkness, cloud and thick gloom”** YHWH’s physical presence can be understood in two ways:

1. volcanic activity - Exod. 19:18; Ps. 68:7-8; 77:18; 97:2-5; Jdgs. 5:4-5; II Sam. 22:8; Isa. 29:6; Jer. 10:10
2. storm - Exod. 19:16,19; Ps. 68:8; 77:18; Jdgs. 5:4; Isa. 29:6; Nahum 1:3

Therefore, the deep darkness (cf. 5:22; II Sam. 22:10; I Kgs. 8:12; II Chr. 6:1) might be:

1. ash clouds
2. rain clouds

This covering was for Israel’s protection (cf. Exod. 19:18). They thought that if humans looked upon God they would die (cf. Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Exod. 3:6; 20:19; 33:20; Jdgs. 6:22-23; 13:22).

4:12 “but you saw no form” God has no physical form (cf. John 4:24). He allowed Moses to see His “afterglow” in Exod. 33:23. YHWH desires no physical representation because of fallen mankind’s tendency toward idolatry (cf. vv. 15-19).

4:13 “He declared to you His covenant” This VERB (BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT), when used with God as the subject, denotes new revelation (e.g., II Sam. 7:11; Isa. 42:9; 45:19; Amos 4:13).

The IMPERFECT tense implies that the “ten words” are not all of YHWH’s revelation. Much of the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy are explanations of the implications of the Decalog. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

The OT term *berith*, covenant, is not easy to define. There is no matching VERB in Hebrew. All attempts to derive an etymological definition have proved unconvincing. However, the obvious centrality of the concept has forced scholars to examine the word usage to attempt to determine its functional meaning.

Covenant is the means by which the one true God deals with His human creation. The concept of covenant, treaty, or agreement is crucial in understanding the biblical revelation. The tension between God’s sovereignty and human free-will are clearly seen in the concept of covenant. Some covenants are based exclusively on God’s character and actions:

1. creation itself (cf. Gen. 1-2)
2. the call of Abraham (cf. Gen. 12)
3. the covenant with Abraham (cf. Gen. 15)
4. the preservation of and promise to Noah (cf. Gen. 6-9)

However, the very nature of covenant demands a response

1. by faith Adam must obey God and not eat of the tree in the midst of Eden
2. by faith Abraham must leave his family, follow God, and believe that he will have future descendants
3. by faith Noah must build a huge boat, far from water, and gather the animals
4. by faith Moses brought the Israelites out of Egypt and received specific guidelines for religious and social life with promises of blessings and cursings (cf. Deut. 27-29)

This same tension involving God’s relationship to humanity is addressed in the “new covenant.” The tension can be clearly seen in comparing Ezek. 18 with Ezek. 36:27-37. Is the covenant based on God’s gracious actions or mandated human response? This is the burning issue of the Old Covenant and the New. The goals of both are the same: (1) the restoration of fellowship lost in Gen. 3 and (2) the establishment of a righteous people who reflect God’s character.

The new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 solves the tension by removing human performance as the means of attaining acceptance. God’s law becomes an internal desire instead of an external performance. The goal of a godly, righteous people remains the same, but the methodology changes. Fallen mankind proved themselves inadequate to be God’s reflected image. The problem was not the covenant, but human sinfulness and weakness (cf. Rom. 7; Gal. 3).

The same tension between OT unconditional and conditional covenants remains in the NT. Salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Jesus Christ, but it requires repentance and faith (both initially and continually). It is both a legal pronouncement and a call to Christlikeness, an indicative statement of acceptance and an imperative to holiness! Believers are not saved by their performance, but unto obedience (cf. Eph. 2:8-10). Godly living becomes the evidence of salvation, not the means of salvation. This tension is clearly seen in Hebrews.

▣ **“Ten commandments”** Literally this means “ten words” (BDB 797 CONSTRUCT 182) and is known in Greek as the Decalogue. They are very brief, a summary of God’s revelation (cf. Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5).

▣ **“He wrote them”** God Himself wrote (anthropomorphic, see Special Topic at 2:15) the “ten words” (cf. Exod. 31:8; 32:15-16). Reflecting on the literalness of this statement does not affect the divine source of the commands!

▣ **“two tablets of stone”** From recent archaeological discoveries and what we call the Suzerain Hittite Treaties (of the 2nd millennium B.C.), we know that Deuteronomy follows their outline and form. I think that the “two tablets” refers to two, exact copies of the Ten Commandments required by these treaty patterns (also a documenting of the past act of the major power making the treaty, i.e., Deuteronomy 1-4). This establishes the historicity of Deuteronomy. See introduction to the book, VII.

4:14 “you might perform them” It is not enough to know God’s will for your life, but to do it (cf. vv. 1,2,5,6; Luke 6:46; James 2:14-20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:15-20

¹⁵“So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, ¹⁶so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, ¹⁸the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth. ¹⁹And *beware* not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven. ²⁰But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.

4:15

NASB **“So watch yourselves carefully”**
NKJV **“Take careful heed to yourselves”**
NRSV **“take care and watch yourselves closely”**
TEV **“For your own good, then, make certain”**
NJB **“be very careful what you do”**

The VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used in 4:2,6,9(twice),15,23,40. Israel’s actions were conditionally connected to YHWH’s covenant. They were to strenuously avoid idolatry (cf. 5:8-10).

4:16 “act corruptly and make a graven image” This is a reference to the golden calf (cf. Exod. 32) related to YHWH’s incorporeality. The Israelites were not to represent YHWH by anything physical (cf. vv. 16-18,23,25; 5:8; Exod. 20:4).

▣ **“the likeness of male or female”** Mankind’s tendency has been to make God like a man or woman. If we put God in a human form, we have put Him into a form which we can manage.

4:17 “likeness of any animal” This may refer to (1) other nations’ use of animals to represent their gods and goddesses or (2) characteristics of animals to describe God.

4:18 “creeps on the ground” This possibly refers to the Egyptian Scarab beetle which was holy to them.

4:19 “the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven” The ancients, as well as the moderns (horoscope), felt that the stars represented forces or powers that control the lives of humans. The worship of astral bodies seems to have started in Babylon (Genesis 1 may represent a reaction to this type of idolatry, as Exodus 20 represents a reaction to Egyptian idolatry). Israel is to vigorously reject this kind of idolatry!

▣ **“those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples”** The VERB (BDB 323, KB 322, *Qal* PERFECT) means “to divide,” but in the sense of allotment or apportionment. This could imply that God encouraged astral worship, but I think instead it is another way to show YHWH’s sovereignty over all the earth (cf. 29:26; 32:8). Idolatry was never God’s plan or will for mankind.

4:20 “the iron furnace” A furnace takes unusable ore, heats it and makes it usable metal. This is an analogy of what God did to Israel in Egypt (cf. I Kgs. 8:51; Jer. 11:4 and the same metaphor in Isa. 48:10).

▣ **“to be a people for His own possession”** This was a special title for YHWH’s covenant people (e.g., Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Titus 2:14; and I Pet. 2:9). They have a divine inheritance (YHWH and land) because YHWH had chosen them even before creation (cf. 32:8-9; Ps. 33:6-12; Jer. 10:16; 51:19) to represent Himself to the world.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:21-24

²¹“Now the LORD was angry with me on your account, and swore that I would not cross the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance. ²²For I will die in this land, I shall not cross the Jordan, but you shall cross and take possession of this good land. ²³So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you. ²⁴For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

4:21 “the LORD was angry with me on your account” Moses was reminding the people of God’s punishment to him because of his disobedience (cf. 1:37; 3:26; Num. 20:7-13). If they disobey, they will be punished also!

4:23 “So watch yourselves” The VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE) is repeated often in this chapter. There are covenant benefits, but also covenant consequences (cf. 4:25; chapters 27-29).

▣ **“that you do not forget the covenant”** The VERB (BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* PERFECT) is also found several times in this chapter (cf. vv. 9,23,31) and also in 6:12; 8:11,14,19[twice]; 9:7; 24:19[twice]; 25:19; and 30:13; 31:21; 32:18. This is a major recurrent theme!

4:24 “jealous” YHWH is described in this verse in two ways:

1. “a consuming fire” (BDB 77 and BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Exod. 24:17; Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29) which denotes
 - a. YHWH is the covenant-making God of Sinai
 - b. He is the God of judgment if the covenant is violated
2. “a jealous God” (BDB 888 and 42, cf. Exod. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 5:9; 6:15; Josh. 24:19) which denotes His personal, loving commitment to Israel, which is analogous to a marriage covenant (cf.

Hosea 1-3). The covenant broken results in rejection (e.g., Josh. 24:19; Nahum 1:2). The word has a wide semantic field:

- a. passion - Pro. 6:34; Song of Songs 8:6
 - b. anger - Pro. 14:30; 27:4
 - c. jealousy - Gen. 26:14; Num. 5:11-22; Ezek. 31:9
 - d. competition - Eccl. 4:4
 - e. devotion - Num. 11:29
- (list from NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 938)

See Special Topic: God Described as Human (Anthropomorphic Language) at 2:15.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:25-31

²⁵"When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God *so as* to provoke Him to anger, ²⁶I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. ²⁷The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you. ²⁸There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. ²⁹But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. ³⁰When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. ³¹For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them."

4:25 "have remained long in the land" This was not so much an individual promise of longevity, but a corporate promise to societies where parents teach the children about God and the children honor the parents. Stable families form stable societies (e.g., vv. 9, 10,40 and 5:16,33).

▣ **"act corruptly"** The VERB (BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Hiphil* PERFECT) means "to spoil" or "to ruin" and, by metaphorical extension, came to refer to covenant violations (i.e., idolatry, cf. 4:16,25; 9:12; 31:29).

▣ **"so as to provoke Him to anger"** This phrase is a *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 494, e.g., 32:21; I Kgs. 15:30; 16:13). Again, anthropomorphic language describes YHWH's reaction to human sin! See Special Topic at 2:15.

4:26 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today" This was part of the Suzerain Hittite Treaties (need for powerful spiritual witnesses, cf. Intro. to Book, VII). These are the two most permanent things in physical creation. They are often called on by God to act as witnesses. It also reflects the Israeli legal system's need for two witnesses in a court case (cf. Exod. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). The phrase is used often in connection with the ratification of the covenant with YHWH (cf. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28).

▣ **"you will surely perish quickly from the land"** See Deut. 27-29, but notice the theological balance of v. 31. Unaided, fallen mankind has no hope of covenant obedience! (Cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-36).

4:27 "scatter you among the peoples" This seems to predict the exile of the covenant people by Assyria (722 B.C.) and Babylon (605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.), which is predicted in 28:64 and 29:28.

▣ **“left few in number”** This is a part of the consequences involved in breaking the covenant. It is opposite to the covenant blessing promised to Abraham in Gen. 15:5.

4:28 “you will serve gods, the work of man’s hands” The VERB “serve” (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT) is used in the sense of worship or performance of cultic tasks:

1. positively of YHWH - Exod. 3:12; 4:23; Deut. 6:13; I Sam. 7:3
2. negatively of other gods - Exod. 23:33; Deut. 4:19,28; Josh. 23:7; Jdgs. 2:10,19; 10:6,10; I Sam. 22:10; I Kgs. 16:31; II Kgs. 17:12

This Hebrew root becomes an honorific title of YHWH’s servant:

1. the Patriarchs - Exod. 32:13; Deut. 9:27
2. Caleb - Num. 14:24
3. Moses - Exod. 14:31; Num. 12:7; Deut. 34:5; I Kgs. 8:53
4. Joshua - Josh. 24:29
5. David - I Sam. 23:10; 25:39
6. Isaiah - Isa. 20:3
7. Messiah - Isaiah 53; Zech. 3:8
8. Nebuchadnezzar - Jer. 25:9; 27:6; 43:10
9. Cyrus - Isa. 44:28; 45:1
10. the nation of Israel - Isa. 41:8; 44:1-2; 45:4

The references in vv. 26,27,28 show the conditional nature of God’s promise (i.e., v. 26, YHWH takes them out of the land; v. 27, YHWH scatters them to other countries; v. 28, they see idolatry firsthand) and the folly of idolatry!

4:29 “you will seek the LORD” The VERB (BDB 134, KB 152, *Piel* PERFECT) means “to seek” as in to restore the covenantal relationship with YHWH, broken by disobedience. The repentance demands total commitment (i.e., “with all of your heart and all of your soul,” cf. 26:16; 30:2,10).

God’s forgiveness is always available upon true repentance (cf. v. 29-31; 30:1-3,10). True repentance is not lip service, but complete faith. Repentance is a lifestyle change, not an emotion. We see examples of shallow, short-lived repentance in Hosea 6:1-3 and Jeremiah 3:21-25.

If they seek Him, they will find Him (cf. Jer. 24:7; 29:13). YHWH is not hard to find. He just expects His people to reflect His character! See Special Topic at 30:2.

4:30 Moses predicts Israel’s rebellion, as does Joshua (cf. Josh. 24:19-28). The fall has spiritually damaged mankind’s ability to obey God (cf. Romans 1-3; Galatians 3).

Notice that although v. 26 seems to imply an immediate judgment, v. 27 implies the Assyrian (722 B.C.) and Babylonian (605, 597, 586, 582 B.C.) exiles and v. 30 speaks of an end-time setting (“in the latter days”). Israel must be covenantally related to YHWH. She can do this by covenant obedience (which Romans 1-3 and Galatians 3 say is impossible) or she can do it by new covenant faith/repentance in Jesus. All believers pray for an end-time revival among Jewish people (possibly Zech. 12:10 or Romans 11).

4:31 “the LORD your God is a compassionate God” For the names of deity (*El*, *YHWH*, *Elohim*) see the Special Topic at 1:3.

The ADJECTIVE “compassionate” (BDB 933) means “merciful” or “compassionate.” It is one of several characteristics used to describe Israel’s God. See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD

1. Compassionate (BDB 933) - Exod. 34:6; Deut. 4:31; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
2. Gracious (BDB 337) - Exod. 34:6; II Chr. 30:9; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; 111:4; Neh. 9:17,31; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
3. Slow to anger (BDB74 CONSTRUCT BDB 60)
- Exod. 34:6; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
4. Abounding in steadfast love (BDB 912 I CONSTRUCT BDB 338)
- Exod. 34:6-7; Ps. 86:15; 103:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jer. 42:5
5. Faithful (BDB 54) - Deut. 7:9; Isa. 49:7; Jon. 42:5
6. Abundant forgiveness (BDB 699) - Neh. 9:17
7. Did not forsake them (BDB 736 I) - Neh. 9:17,31
8. Repents of evil (BDB 636, KB 688, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE + BDB 948) - Joel 2:13; Jon. 4:2
9. The great God (BDB 42, 152) - Neh. 1:5; 9:32
10. Great and terrible (BDB 152, 431) - Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32
11. Keeps covenant (BDB 1036, 136) - Neh. 1:5; 9:32
12. Steadfast love (BDB 338) - Neh. 1:5; 9:32

▣ **“He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers”** There are three negated VERBS:

1. fail - BDB 951, KB 1276, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT (literally “let the hands fall”), which means abandon or forsake (cf. 31:6,8; Josh. 1:5; 10:6; I Chr. 28:20; Heb. 13:5)
2. destroy - BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, which means “ruin,” “spoil,” and “destroy” (cf. 9:26; 10:10; Jer. 30:11)
3. forget - BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT (cf. Lev. 20:45, see Special Topic: Covenant Promises to the Patriarchs at 9:5)

The difficult theological issue is how to take seriously God's promises in this verse in relation to the previous covenant demands. The inability of Israel to keep the covenant is documented in their history and in Paul's writings (cf. Romans 2-3; Galatians 3). The need for a “new covenant,” based not on human performance but divine will and action is God's answer (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38). God never changes, but neither does Israel! God's demand for a righteous people cannot be met in human effort or will! We need a new heart and a new spirit!

You must decide! Is the OT to be viewed through the NT or is the NT to be viewed through the OT? Is the focus on Israel or the world? Is the issue faith or race? If there is a “parenthesis” in God's eternal plan of redemption, it is not the church (i.e., dispensationalism), but Israel!

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHY OT COVENANT PROMISES SEEM DIFFERENT FROM NT COVENANT PROMISES

Through the years of my study of eschatology I have learned that most Christians do not have or want a developed, systematized, end-time chronology. There are some Christians who focus or major on this area of Christianity for theological, psychological, or denominational reasons. These Christians seem to become obsessed with how it will all end, and somehow miss the urgency of the gospel! Believers cannot affect God's eschatological (end-time) agenda, but they can participate in the gospel mandate (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Most believers affirm a Second Coming of Christ and an end-time culmination of

the promises of God. The interpretive problems arising from how to understand this temporal culmination come from several biblical paradoxes.

1. the tension between Old Covenant prophetic models and New Covenant apostolic models
2. the tension between the Bible's monotheism (one God for all) and the election of Israel (a special people)
3. the tension between the conditional aspect of biblical covenants and promises ("if. . .then") and the unconditional faithfulness of God to fallen mankind's redemption
4. the tension between Near Eastern literary genres and modern western literary models
5. the tension between the Kingdom of God as present, yet future
6. the tension between belief in the imminent return of Christ and the belief that some events must happen first.

Let us discuss these tensions one at a time.

FIRST TENSION (OT racial, national, and geographical categories vs. all believers over all the world)

The OT prophets predict a restoration of a Jewish kingdom in Palestine centered in Jerusalem where all the nations of the earth gather to praise and serve a Davidic ruler, but Jesus nor the NT Apostles ever focus on this agenda. Is not the OT inspired (cf. Matt. 5:17-19)? Have the NT authors omitted crucial end-time events?

There are several sources of information about the end of the world:

1. OT prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Malachi)
2. OT apocalyptic writers (cf. Ezek. 37-39; Dan. 7-12; Zech.)
3. intertestamental, non-canonical Jewish apocalyptic writers (like I Enoch, which is alluded to in Jude)
4. Jesus Himself (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13; Luke 21)
5. the writings of Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; II Cor. 5; I Thess. 4-5; II Thess. 2)
6. the writings of John (I John and Revelation).

Do these all clearly teach an end-time agenda (events, chronology, persons)? If not, why? Are they not all inspired (except the Jewish intertestamental writings)?

The Spirit revealed truths to the OT writers in terms and categories they could understand. However, through progressive revelation the Spirit has expanded these OT eschatological concepts to a universal scope ("the mystery of Christ," cf. Eph. 2:11-3:13. See Special Topic at 10:6). Here are some relevant examples:

1. The city of Jerusalem in the OT is used as a metaphor of the people of God (Zion), but is projected into the NT as a term expressing God's acceptance of all repentant, believing humans (the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22). The theological expansion of a literal, physical city into the new people of God (believing Jews and Gentiles) is foreshadowed in God's promise to redeem fallen mankind in Gen. 3:15, before there even were any Jews or a Jewish capital city. Even Abraham's call (cf. Gen. 12:1-3) involved the Gentiles (cf. Gen. 12:3; Exod. 19:5).
2. In the OT the enemies of God's people are the surrounding nations of the Ancient Near East, but in the NT they have been expanded to all unbelieving, anti-God, Satanically-inspired people. The battle has moved from a geographical, regional conflict to a worldwide, cosmic conflict (cf. Colossians).
3. The promise of a land which is so integral in the OT (the Patriarchal promises of Genesis, cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:7,15; 17:8) has now become the whole earth. New Jerusalem comes down to a recreated earth, not the Near East only or exclusively (cf. Rev. 21-22).

4. Some other examples of OT prophetic concepts being expanded are:
 - a. the seed of Abraham is now the spiritually circumcised (cf. Rom. 2:28-29)
 - b. the covenant people now include Gentiles (cf. Hos. 1:10; 2:23, quoted in Rom. 9:24-26; also Lev. 26:12; Exod. 29:45, quoted in II Cor. 6:16-18 and Exod. 19:5; Deut. 14:2, quoted in Titus 2:14)
 - c. the temple is now Jesus (cf. Matt. 26:61; 27:40; John 2:19-21) and through Him the local church (cf. I Cor. 3:16) or the individual believer (cf. I Cor. 6:19)
 - d. even Israel and its characteristic descriptive OT phrases now refer to the whole people of God (i.e., "Israel," cf. Rom. 9:6; Gal. 6:16, i.e., "kingdom of priests," cf. I Pet. 2:5, 9-10; Rev. 1:6)

The prophetic model has been fulfilled, expanded, and is now more inclusive. Jesus and the Apostolic writers do not present the end-time in the same way as the OT prophets (cf. Martin Wyngaarden, *The Future of The Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*). Modern interpreters who try to make the OT model literal or normative twist the Revelation into a very Jewish book and force meaning into atomized, ambiguous phrases of Jesus and Paul! The NT writers do not negate the OT prophets, but show their ultimate universal implication. There is no organized, logical system to Jesus' or Paul's eschatology. Their purpose is primarily redemptive or pastoral.

However, even within the NT there is tension. There is no clear systemization of eschatological events. In many ways the Revelation surprisingly uses OT allusions in describing the end instead of the teachings of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark 13)! It follows the literary genre initiated by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah, but developed during the intertestamental period (Jewish apocalyptic literature). This may have been John's way of linking the Old and New Covenants. It shows the age-old pattern of human rebellion and God's commitment to redemption! But it must be noted that although Revelation uses OT language, persons, and events, it reinterprets them in light of first century Rome (cf. Rev. 1:7).

SECOND TENSION (monotheism vs. an elect people)

The biblical emphasis is on one personal, spiritual, creator-redeemer, God (cf. Exod. 8:10; Isa. 44:24; 45:5-7,14,18,21-22; 46:9; Jer. 10:6-7). The OT's uniqueness in its own day was its monotheism. All of the surrounding nations were polytheists. The oneness of God is the heart of OT revelation (cf. Deut. 6:4). Creation is a stage for the purpose of fellowship between God and mankind, made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen.1:26-27). However, mankind rebelled, sinning against God's love, leadership, and purpose (cf. Gen. 3). God's love and purpose was so strong and sure that He promised to redeem fallen humanity (cf. Gen. 3:15)!

The tension arises when God chooses to use one man, one family, one nation to reach the rest of mankind. God's election of Abraham and the Jews as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:4-6) caused pride instead of service, exclusion instead of inclusion. God's call of Abraham involved the intentional blessing of all mankind (cf. Gen. 12:3). It must be remembered and emphasized that OT election was for service, not salvation. All Israel was never right with God, never eternally saved based solely on her birthright (cf. John 8:31-59; Matt. 3:9), but by personal faith and obedience (cf. Gen. 15:6, quoted in Rom. 4). Israel lost her mission (the church is now a kingdom of priests, cf. 1:6; II Pet.2:5,9), turned mandate into privilege, service into a special standing! God chose one to choose all!

THIRD TENSION (conditional covenants vs. unconditional covenants)

There is a theological tension or paradox between conditional and unconditional covenants. It is surely true that God's redemptive purpose/plan is unconditional (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). However, the mandated human response is always conditional!

The “if. . .then” pattern appears in both OT and NT. God is faithful; mankind is unfaithful. This tension has caused much confusion. Interpreters have tended to focus on only one “horn of the dilemma,” God’s faithfulness or human effort, God’s sovereignty or mankind’s free will. Both are biblical and necessary.

This relates to eschatology, to God’s OT promises to Israel. If God promises it, that settles it! God is bound to His promises; His reputation is involved (cf. Ezek. 36:22-38). The unconditional and conditional covenants meet in Christ (cf. Isa. 53), not Israel! God’s ultimate faithfulness lies in the redemption of all who will repent and believe, not in who was your father/mother! Christ, not Israel, is the key to all of God’s covenants and promises. If there is a theological parenthesis in the Bible, it is not the Church, but Israel (cf. Acts 7 and Gal. 3).

The world mission of gospel proclamation has passed to the Church (cf. Matt. 28:19-20; Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). It is still a conditional covenant! This is not to imply that God has totally rejected the Jews (cf. Rom. 9-11). There may be a place and purpose for end-time, believing Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10).

FOURTH TENSION (Near Eastern literary models vs. western models).

Genre is a critical element in correctly interpreting the Bible. The Church developed in a western (Greek) cultural setting. Eastern literature is much more figurative, metaphorical, and symbolic than modern, western culture’s literary models. It focuses on people, encounters, and events more than succinct propositional truths. Christians have been guilty of using their history and literary models to interpret biblical prophecy (both OT and NT). Each generation and geographical entity has used its culture, history, and literalness to interpret Revelation. Every one of them has been wrong! It is arrogant to think that modern western culture is the focus of biblical prophecy!

The genre in which the original, inspired author chooses to write is a literary contract with the reader. The book of Revelation is not historical narrative. It is a combination of letter (chapters 1-3), prophecy, and mostly apocalyptic literature. It is as wrong to make the Bible say more than was intended by the original author as it is to make it say less than what he intended! Interpreters’ arrogance and dogmatism are even more inappropriate in a book like Revelation.

The Church has never agreed on a proper interpretation of Revelation. My concern is to hear and deal with the whole Bible, not some selected part(s). The Bible’s eastern mind-set presents truth in tension-filled pairs. Our western trend toward propositional truth is not invalid, but unbalanced! I think it is possible to remove at least some of the impasse in interpreting Revelation by noting its changing purpose to successive generations of believers. It is obvious to most interpreters that Revelation must be interpreted in light of its own day and its genre. An historical approach to Revelation must deal with what the first readers would have, and could have, understood. In many ways modern interpreters have lost the meaning of many of the symbols of the book. Revelation’s initial main thrust was to encourage persecuted believers. It showed God’s control of history (as did the OT prophets); it affirmed that history is moving toward an appointed terminus, judgment or blessing (as did the OT prophets). It affirmed in first century Jewish apocalyptic terms God’s love, presence, power, and sovereignty!

It functions in these same theological ways to every generation of believers. It depicts the cosmic struggle of good and evil. The first century details may have been lost to us, but not the powerful, comforting truths. When modern, western interpreters try to force the details of Revelation into their contemporary history, the pattern of false interpretations continues!

It is quite possible that the details of the book may become strikingly literal again (as did the OT in relation to the birth, life, and death of Christ) for the last generation of believers as they face the onslaught of an anti-God leader (cf. II Thess.2) and culture. No one can know these literal fulfillment of the Revelation until the words of Jesus (cf. Matt. 24; Mark.13; and Luke 21) and Paul (cf. I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4-5; and II Thess. 2) also become historically evident. Guessing, speculation, and dogmatism are all inappropriate.

Apocalyptic literature allows this flexibility. Thank God for images and symbols that surpass historical narrative! God is in control; He reigns; He comes!

Most modern commentaries miss the point of the genre! Modern western interpreters often seek a clear, logical system of theology rather than being fair with an ambiguous, symbolic, dramatic genre of Jewish apocalyptic literature. This truth is expressed well by Ralph P. Martin in his article, "Approaches to New Testament Exegesis," in the book *New Testament Interpretation*, edited by I. Howard Marshall:

"Unless we recognize the dramatic quality of this writing and recall the way in which language is being used as a vehicle to express religious truth, we shall grievously err in our understanding of the Apocalypse, and mistakenly try to interpret its visions as though it were a book of literal prose and concerned to describe events of empirical and datable history. To attempt the latter course is to run into all manner of problems of interpretation. More seriously it leads to a distortion of the essential meaning of apocalyptic and so misses the great value of this part of the New Testament as a dramatic assertion in mythopoetic language of the sovereignty of God in Christ and the paradox of his rule which blends might and love (cf. 5:5,6; the Lion is the Lamb)" (p. 235).

W. Randolph Tate in his book *Biblical Interpretations* said:

"No other genre of the Bible has been so fervently read with such depressing results as apocalypse, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. This genre had suffered from a disastrous history of misinterpretation due to a fundamental misunderstanding of its literary forms, structure, and purpose. Because of its very claim to reveal what is shortly to happen, apocalypse has been viewed as a road map into and a blueprint of the future. The tragic flaw in this view is the assumption that the books' frame of reference is the reader's contemporary age rather than the author's. This misguided approach to apocalypse (particularly Revelation) treats the work as if it were a cryptogram by which contemporary events can be used to interpret the symbol of the text. . . First, the interpreter must recognize that apocalyptic communicates its messages through symbolism. To interpret a symbol literally when it is metaphoric is simply to misinterpret. The issue is not whether the events in apocalyptic are historical. The events may be historical; they may have really happened, or might happen, but the author presents events and communicates meaning through images and archetypes" (p. 137).

From *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, edited by Ryken, Wilhost and Longman III:

"Today's readers are often puzzled and frustrated by this genre. The unexpected imagery and out-of-this-world experiences seem bizarre and out of sync with most of Scripture. Taking this literature at face value leaves many readers scrambling to determine 'what will happen when,' thus missing the intent of the apocalyptic message" (p. 35).

FIFTH TENSION (the Kingdom of God as present yet future)

The kingdom of God is present, yet future. This theological paradox becomes focused at the point of eschatology. If one expects a literal fulfillment of all OT prophecies to Israel then the Kingdom becomes mostly a restoration of Israel to a geographical locality and a theological pre-eminence! This would necessitate that the Church is secretly raptured out at chapter 5 and the remaining chapters relate to Israel (but note Rev. 22:16).

However, if the focus is on the kingdom being inaugurated by the promised OT Messiah, then it is present with Christ's first coming, and then the focus becomes the incarnation, life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Christ. The theological emphasis is on a current salvation. The kingdom has come, the OT is fulfilled in Christ's offer of salvation to all, not His millennial reign over some!

It is surely true that the Bible speaks of both of Christ's comings, but where is the emphasis to be placed? It seems to me that most OT prophecies focus on the first coming, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom (cf. Dan. 2). In many ways this is analogous to the eternal reign of God (cf. Dan. 7). In the OT the focus is on the eternal reign of God, yet the mechanism for that reign's manifestation is the ministry of the Messiah (cf. I Cor. 15:26-27). It is not a question of which is true; both are true, but where is the emphasis? It must be said that some interpreters become so focused on the millennial reign of the Messiah (cf. Rev. 20) that they have missed the biblical focus on the eternal reign of the Father. Christ's reign is a preliminary event. As the two comings of Christ were not obvious in the OT, neither is a temporal reign of the Messiah!

The key to Jesus' preaching and teaching is the kingdom of God. It is both present (in salvation and service), and future (in pervasiveness and power). Revelation, if it focuses on a Messianic millennial reign (cf. Rev. 20), is preliminary, not ultimate (cf. Rev. 21-22). It is not obvious from the OT that a temporal reign is necessary; as a matter of fact, the Messianic reign of Daniel 7 is eternal, not millennial.

SIXTH TENSION (imminent return of Christ vs. the delayed *Parousia*)

Most believers have been taught that Jesus is coming soon, suddenly, and unexpectedly (cf. Matt. 10:23; 24:27,34,44; Mark 9:1; 13:30; Rev. 1:1,3; 2:16; 3:11; 22:7,10,12,20). But every expectant generation of believers so far has been wrong! The soonness (immediacy) of Jesus' return is a powerful promised hope of every generation, but a reality to only one (and that one a persecuted one). Believers must live as if He were coming tomorrow, but plan and implement the Great Commission (cf. Matt. 28:19-20) if He tarries.

Some passages in the Gospels (cf. Mark 13:10; Luke 17:2; 18:8) and I and II Thessalonians are based on a delayed Second Coming (*Parousia*). There are some historical events that must happen first:

1. world-wide evangelization (cf. Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10)
2. the revelation of "the man of Sin" (cf. Matt. 24:15; II Thess. 2; Rev. 13)
3. the great persecution (cf. Matt. 24:21,24; Rev. 13)

There is a purposeful ambiguity (cf. Matt. 24:42-51; Mark 13:32-36)! Live every day as if it were your last but plan and train for future ministry!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:32-40

³²"Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and *inquire* from one end of the heavens to the other. Has *anything* been done like this great thing, or has *anything* been heard like it? ³³Has *any* people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard *it*, and survived? ³⁴Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within *another* nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? ³⁵To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him. ³⁶Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. ³⁷Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, ³⁸driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in *and* to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today. ³⁹Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. ⁴⁰So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

4:32 “ask” The VERB (BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) means inquire of God about the uniqueness of Israel’s relationship to deity (cf. vv. 32-40).

▣ **“since the day that God created man on earth”** This refers to Genesis 1-2; also see Psalm 104.

4:34 “by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm” These are anthropomorphic idioms (see Special Topic at 2:15) used to describe YHWH’s power of deliverance on behalf of Israel (cf. 5:15; 6:21; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 26:8). In some texts the phrase is shortened to “mighty hand” (cf. 3:24; 6:21; 7:8; 9:26; Josh. 4:24) or “outstretched arm” (cf. 9:29; Exod. 6:6). This idiomatic terminology has a specific parallel in Egyptian texts related to the “king” (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 92).

4:35 “that you might know” The miracles of v. 34 were for the purpose of establishing Israel’s faith (cf. Exod. 7:5,17; 10:2; 31:13). For “know” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) see Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: KNOW (using mostly Deuteronomy as a paradigm)

The Hebrew word “know” (BDB 393) has several senses (semantic fields) in the *Qal*.

1. to understand good and evil - Gen. 3:22; Deut. 1:39; Isa. 7:14-15; Jonah 4:11
2. to know by understanding - Deut. 9:2,3,6; 18:21
3. to know by experience - Deut. 3:19; 4:35; 8:2,3,5; 11:2; 20:20; 31:13; Josh. 23:14
4. to consider - Deut. 4:39; 11:2; 29:16
5. to know personally
 - a. a person - Gen. 29:5; Exod. 1:8; Deut. 22:2; 28:35,36; 33:9
 - b. a god - Deut. 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:64; 29:26; 32:17
YHWH - Deut. 4:35,39; 7:9; 29:6; Isa. 1:3; 56:10-11
 - c. sexual - Gen. 4:1,17,25; 24:16; 38:26
6. a learned skill or knowledge - Isa. 29:11,12; Amos 5:16
7. be wise - Deut. 29:4; Pro. 1:2; 4:1; Isa. 29:24
8. God’s knowledge
 - a. of Moses - Deut. 34:10
 - b. of Israel - Deut. 31:21,27,29

▣ **“the LORD, He is God”** See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.

▣ **“no other besides Him”** There is no other spirit or god in YHWH’s category (e.g., v. 39; 6:4; 32:39). See full note at 6:4.

4:36 “Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice” This verse is referring to YHWH’s physical manifestation of His presence on Mt. Horeb/Sinai, recorded in Exodus 19.

4:37 “Because He loved your fathers” This refers to God’s choice of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the Patriarchs of Genesis 12-50, cf. 7:7-8; 10:15).

▣ **“He chose”** Election (i.e., choose” BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERFECT) in the OT is for service (e.g., Cyrus, Isa. 44:24-45:7), not salvation as in the NT.

▣ **“He personally brought you from Egypt”** The term “personally” (BDB 815) is literally “face,” which denotes God’s personal presence (cf. 5:4; Gen. 32:30; Exod. 33:14-15; Isa. 63:9, “the angel of His presence”). This is also the root behind “face to face” (cf. Exod. 33:11; Deut. 34:10 and same thought in “mouth to mouth” of Num. 12:8).

YHWH truly is the God who is with us (i.e., *Immanuel* of Isa. 7:14; 8:8,10). Sin breaks the intimacy and YHWH turns His face away (cf. 31:17; Lev. 17:10; 20:3,6; Isa. 59:2; Jer. 18:17; Ezek. 7:22; 39:23,24,29).

4:38

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “nations greater and mightier”

TEV, REB “nations greater and more powerful”

NJB “nations greater and more populous”

These nations can be seen (4:38; 7:1; 11:23; Josh. 23:9) as”

1. more numerous in population (cf. 7:7)
2. inhabitants physically greater (giants) in size (cf. Num. 13:22,28,33; Deut. 1:28)

▣ **“as it is today”** This seems to be a sign of a later editor’s statement, but it can refer to the kingdoms of Sihon and Og on the eastern side of Jordan. See note at 3:14.

4:39 This is another strong statement of monotheism. See note at 6:4.

4:40 “statutes. . .commandments” See Special Topic at 4:1.

▣ **“that you may live long on the land”** The VERB is literally “prolong” (BDB 73, KB 88, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Exod. 20:12; Deut. 4:26,40; 5:16,33; 6:2; 11:9; 17:20; 22:7; 25:15; 30:18; 32:47). Notice the conditional element!

▣ **“which the LORD your God is giving you for all time”** The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) must be interpreted in light of the meaning of “for all time.” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FOREVER (‘OLAM)

The etymology of the Hebrew term *’olam*, מְלֹוֹעַ (BDB 761) is uncertain (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 345). It is used in several senses (usually determined by context). The following are only selected examples.

1. ancient things
 - a. peoples, Gen. 6:4; I Sam. 27:8; Jer. 5:15; 28:8
 - b. places, Isa. 58:12; 61:4
 - c. God, Ps. 93:2; Pro. 8:23; Isa. 63:16
 - d. things, Gen. 49:26; Job 22:15; Ps. 24:7,9; Isa. 46:9
 - e. time, Deut. 32:7; Isa. 51:9; 63:9,11
2. future time
 - a. one’s life, Exod. 21:6; Deut. 15:17; I Sam. 1:22; 27:12
 - b. hyperbole for king, I Kgs. 1:31; Ps. 61:7; Neh. 2:3
 - c. continuous existence

- (1) earth, Ps. 78:69; 104:5; Eccl. 1:4
- (2) heavens, Ps. 148:5
- d. existence of God
 - (1) Gen. 21:33
 - (2) Exod. 15:18
 - (3) Deut. 32:40
 - (4) Ps. 93:2
 - (5) Isa. 40:28
 - (6) Jer. 10:10
 - (7) Dan. 12:7
- e. the covenant
 - (1) Gen. 9:12,16; 17:7,13,19
 - (2) Exod. 31:16
 - (3) Lev. 24:8
 - (4) Num. 18:19
 - (5) II Sam. 23:5
 - (6) Ps. 105:10
 - (7) Isa. 24:5; 55:3; 61:8
 - (8) Jer. 32:40; 50:5
- f. special covenant with David
 - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25,29; 22:51; 23:5
 - (2) I Kgs. 2:33,45; 9:5
 - (3) II Chr. 13:5
 - (4) Ps. 18:50; 89:4,28,36,37
 - (5) Isa. 9:7; 16:5; 37:35; 55:3
- g. God's Messiah
 - (1) Ps. 45:2; 72:17; 89:35-36; 110:4
 - (2) Isa. 9:6
- h. God's laws
 - (1) Exod. 29:28; 30:21
 - (2) Lev. 6:18,22; 7:34; 10:15; 24:9
 - (3) Num. 18:8,11,19
 - (4) Ps. 119:89,160
- i. God's promises
 - (1) II Sam. 7:13,16,25; 22:51
 - (2) I Kgs. 9:5
 - (3) Ps. 18:50
 - (4) Isa. 40:8
- j. Abraham's descendants and the Promised Land
 - (1) Gen. 13:15; 17:19; 48:4

- (2) Exod. 32:13
- (3) I Chr. 16:17
- k. covenantal feasts
 - (1) Exod. 12:14,17,24
 - (2) Lev. 23:14,21,41
 - (3) Num. 10:8
- l. eternity everlasting
 - (1) I Kgs. 8:13
 - (2) Ps. 61:7-8; 77:8; 90:2; 103:17; 145:13
 - (3) Isa. 26:4; 45:17
 - (4) Dan. 9:24
- m. what the Psalms say believers will do forever
 - (1) give thanks, Ps. 30:12; 79:13
 - (2) abide in His presence, Ps. 41:12; 61:4,7
 - (3) trust in His mercy, Ps. 52:8
 - (4) praise the LORD, Ps. 52:9
 - (5) sing praises, Ps. 61:8; 89:1
 - (6) declare His justice, Ps. 75:9
 - (7) glorify His name, Ps. 86:12; 145:2
 - (8) bless His name, Ps. 145:1
- 3. both backward and forward in time (“from everlasting to everlasting”)
 - a. Ps. 41:13 (praise to God)
 - b. Ps. 90:2 (God Himself)
 - c. Ps. 103:17 (the lovingkindness of the LORD)

Remember, context determines the extent of the term’s meaning. The everlasting covenants and promises are conditional (i.e., Jeremiah 7). Be careful of reading your modern view of time or your NT systematic theology into every OT usage of this very fluid word. The NT universalized OT promises.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:41-43

⁴¹Then Moses set apart three cities across the Jordan to the east, ⁴²that a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live: ⁴³Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, and Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

4:41 “three cities across the Jordan to the east” These cities are called “cities of refuge” (cf. Numbers 35; Deuteronomy 19; Joshua 20). There were six of them, three for each side of the Jordan. They were all Levitical cities (cf. Joshua 21), where the Levites, who had not land inheritance, lived. They were part of the “eye for eye” justice system of Israel. If someone accidentally killed a covenant partner then that family had the legal right to kill him (i.e., the blood avenger of Num. 35:12; Deut. 19:6,12; Josh. 20:3,5,9). If the one who accidentally killed another fled to one of these special cities, there was a trial by the elders; if he

was found not to be a premeditated murderer, then he could live in the city safely (until the death of the High Priest). Then he could return to his home safely (in a legal sense).

Notice “across Jordan” is here qualified so as to refer to the eastern bank.

4:42 “unintentionally” The negated term (BDB 395) refers to the death of a fellow Israelite accidentally, without premeditation or prejudice. We would call it manslaughter.

The lack of evil motive is the key element. It becomes the theological heart of the sacrificial system. Any sin committed intentionally had no sacrifice available (cf. Exod. 21:12-14; Lev. 4:2,22,27; 5:15-18; 22:14; Num. 15:27,30; Deut. 17:12-13; Josh. 20:1-6). Even the national sacrifice by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) did not cover premeditated sin (cf. Ps. 51:14-17)! Are you not glad we are under the NT sacrifice of Jesus?!

At this point I would like to add a quote from NIDOTTE, vol. 2, discussing the concept of:

“‘Unintentionally’ or ‘inadvertently’ (Lev. 4:2) is both strategic and problematic (cf. 4:13,22,27; 5:15,18; 22:14; Num. 15:22,24-29). Because of it some scholars have concluded that the sin offering only treated inadvertent sin, that is, sins that were committed by mistake or sins which were done not knowing that the particular act was sinful (see Melgrom, 1991, 228-29). However, the word ‘unintentionally’ means basically ‘in error’ (the vb. means to commit an error, go astray). Although it can also mean that the error was unintentional or inadvertent (see e.g. Num. 35:11,15,22-23; Josh 20:39), this is not necessarily the case (see I Sam. 26:21; Eccl. 5:6)” (p. 94).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 4:44-49

⁴⁴Now this is the law which Moses set before the sons of Israel; ⁴⁵these are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, when they came out from Egypt, ⁴⁶across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out from Egypt. ⁴⁷They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who were across the Jordan to the east, ⁴⁸from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion (that is, Hermon), ⁴⁹with all the Arabah across the Jordan to the east, even as far as the sea of the Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.

4:44-45 “Law. . .testimonies. . .statutes. . .ordinances” See Special Topic at 4:1.

4:45 “these are the testimonies” These are the words the psalmist used to describe the Torah, or the Law of God. The word “Torah” means “teachings” of God. The Law was not given as a burden meant to break man. The oral traditions which grew up around the Law made it a great burden. The OT is nothing more than the loving, self-revelation of God in the midst of human ignorance. The OT Law points up the seriousness of sin, the frailty of mankind, and the need for a savior, but it was given in love (cf. Ps. 19:7-9).

▣ **“which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel when they came out from Egypt”** Moses is going over the Ten Commandments for the second time here. But the people who were hearing them this time were only children the first time they were given in Exodus 20 at Mt. Sinai. He is retelling it. Moses is doing for the children of Israel what he expects the father to do in his own home. Every generation has to tell the new generation about the will of God for their lives.

4:46-49 These verses are an historical summary of these two victories. The reason that God allowed two victories on the east side of Jordan is analogous to the concept of first fruits. The first fruits in Judaism are a little bit of the harvest to prove that God is faithful and that the whole harvest is going to come. The defeat

of the two Amorite kings on the east side of the Jordan said to Israel, “I love you. I promised to give you the land. You know that I mean it. Trust and obey me and I’ll give you the rest.”

This is another brief summary statement of the experience of Israel at the end of the wilderness wandering period in Moab.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Was OT faith basically a law to keep or a relationship with God?
2. Why does the Bible stress parents teaching their own children about God?
3. Why does God forbid man to make a physical representation of Him?
4. How was Israel God’s special treasure? And why?
5. List the two prerequisites for a healthy lasting society.
6. List the three consequences for breaking the covenant.
7. Does this passage teach monotheism or henotheism?
8. Why did God choose Israel?
9. What was the purpose of the “eye for eye” revenge?
10. Did the sacrificial system adequately deal with man’s sin? Why or why not?
11. How is Christ’s sacrifice superior?

DEUTERONOMY 5

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Ten Commandments Reviewed	Giving of the Law at Sinai	The Ten Commandments	The Ten Commandments
5:1-5	5:1-5	5:1-5	5:1 5:2-5
5:6-7	5:6-7	5:6 5:7	5:6 5:7
5:8-10	5:8-10	5:8-10	5:8-10
5:11	5:11	5:11	5:11
5:12	5:12	5:12	5:12
5:13	5:13	5:13	5:13
5:14	5:14	5:14	5:14
5:15	5:15	5:15	5:15
5:16	5:16	5:16	5:16
5:17	5:17	5:17	5:17
5:18-21	5:18-21a 5:21b	5:18-21	5:18-21
5:22	5:22-27	5:22	5:22
The People Afraid of God's Presence		The People's Fear	Moses the Mediator
5:23-33		5:23-27	5:23-27
	5:28-33	5:28-31	5:28-31
		5:32-33	To Love Yahweh is the Essence of the Law (5:32-6:13) 5:32-6:3

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND STUDY

A. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 143-144, lists the OT law codes:

1. the Decalogue - Exod. 20:2-17; Deut. 5:6-21
2. the Code of the Covenant - Exod. 20:22-23:33
3. Deuteronomy - Deuteronomy 12-26
4. the Law of Holiness - Leviticus 17-26
5. the Priestly code - Leviticus 1-7, 11-16

All of these are considered *Torah*. They are specific divine prescriptions on actions and attitudes.

B. Types of Israeli laws

1. Casuistic - laws characterized by the “if. . .then” format. There are consequences to actions. These are usually guidelines for societies.
2. Apodictic - laws stated as general prohibitions (usually SECOND PERSON PLURAL statements - “you shall not. . .”). These are usually guidelines for the spiritual life.

C. Cultural influences

1. in content - earlier law codes
 - a. Lipit-Ishtar
 - b. Code of Hammurabi
2. in form - Hittite treaties (Suzerain), which occur in several set patterns, but Deuteronomy and Joshua 24 follow the pattern of the 2000 B.C.. period, which shows its historicity (cf. John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in Its Cultural Context*, pp. 95-107; K.A. Kitchen, *The Bible in Its World*, pp. 80-95; see introduction to the book, VII.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:1-5

¹Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing, that you may learn them and observe them carefully. ²The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, *with* all those of us alive here today. ⁴The LORD spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire, ⁵*while* I was standing between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain. He said,"

5:1 “all Israel” The Law was for everyone (not an elite group), but Moses probably spoke to the elders who then told his words to all the people (i.e., tribes, clans). For “Israel” see Special Topic at 1:1.

▣ **“Hear”** See note at 4:1.

▣ **“the statutes and the ordinances”** See note at 4:1.

▣ **“learn them and observe them carefully”** This phrase has three VERBALS:

1. “learn them” (BDB 540, KB 531, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 4:10; 5:1; 14:23; 17:19; 18:9; 31:12,13)
2. “observe them” (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 4:2,6,9,40; 5:10,12,29,32; 6:2,3,17[twice],25; 7:8,9[twice],11,12[twice], etc.
3. “carefully” - literally “do” (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)

These three VERBALS summarize the meaning of *shema* (BDB 1033, KB 1570, e.g., 4:1; 5:1,23,24,25,26,27[twice],28[twice]; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:9), which means “hear so as to do”!

5:2 “The LORD our God” See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.

▣ **“made”** This is literally “cut” (BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* PERFECT [twice]). This was a method of OT covenant ratification (i.e., “to cut a covenant,” cf. Gen. 15:18; 21:27,32; 31:44; Exod. 34:27; Deut. 5:3; 29:12; 31:16). Abraham took a goat, a bull, and other animals, cut them in half, laid the halves on each side, and walked through the middle of those halves as a sign of covenant. It possibly implies a curse on those who break the covenant (cf. Gen. 15:9-18; Jer. 34:18) or even a meal to seal the covenant.

▣ **“covenant with us”** See note at 4:13.

▣ **“at Horeb”** Horeb is the Hebrew word for Mt. Sinai. See Special Topic at Deut. 1:2.

5:3 “our fathers” Some scholars see this phrase referring to the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but others see it referring to the parents, the evil generation who died in the wilderness (cf. Num. 26:63-65). The next phrase seems to confirm the second option.

▣ **“with all those of us alive here today”** This refers to the children (i.e., under twenty years) of the evil generation. This clearly shows that the words of YHWH had relevance to this generation and every generation, including today.

5:4 “face to face” This refers to a personal encounter (not literally) at Mt. Horeb/Sinai in Exodus 19. It is a recurrent idiom (cf. Gen. 32:30; Exod. 33:11; Deut. 5:4; 34:10; Jdgs. 6:22; Ezek. 20:35).

▣ **“from the midst of the fire”** This is a repeated reference to Exodus 19 (cf. 4:12,15,33,36; 5:4,22,24,26; 9:10; 10:4).

5:5 “while I was standing between the LORD and you. . .for you were afraid” The people were afraid of YHWH so Moses was a mediator between YHWH and the Israelites (cf. Exod. 19:16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:6

“I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

5:6 “I am the LORD” This may be paraphrased: “I am the ‘I Am.’” I am the ever living, only living God. I am the ever existing One. YHWH is a form of the Hebrew VERB “to be” (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.

▣ **“who brought you out of the land of Egypt”** Notice that YHWH’s grace and elective choice came before the Law was given. God chose Israel, she did not choose him. This choice was made plain to Abraham in the unconditional promise/covenant of Gen. 15:12-21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:7

⁷“You shall have no other gods before Me.”

5:7 “no other gods before Me” “Before” (BDB 818 #7) is literally “before *My Face*,” which is an idiom for “no other in My category” (cf. Exod. 20:3,23). YHWH is alone, unique, ever-existing! This is an assertion of monotheism (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 33:26; I Sam. 2:2; II Sam. 7:22; 22:32; Isa. 46:9). This first assertion and command is the uniqueness of Israel’s faith in a polytheistic ancient Near East! See note at 6:4.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:8-10

⁸“You shall not make for yourself an idol, or *any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.* ⁹You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, ¹⁰but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

5:8 “an idol” This is literally “graven image” (BDB 820). This can refer to (1) any physical representation of YHWH (cf. 4:12,15-19,23,25). The golden calf of Exodus 32 was a representation of YHWH; or (2) foreign idols (cf. Lev. 19:4; 26:1).

▣ **“earth”** See Special Topic: Land, Country, Earth (אָרֶץ) below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LAND, COUNTRY, EARTH (אָרֶץ)

Like all Hebrew roots, context is crucial in determining their intended meaning. The limited number of Hebrew roots (i.e., an ancient Semitic language) causes each of them to function with different meanings and connotations. This root (BDB 75, KB 90) can mean

1. the whole planet (although the ancients did not realize its size and shape. Usually it is used of the “known world”)
 - a. Genesis 1-2; 6-9; 10:32; 11:1,4,8,9; 14:19; 18:18,25; 22:18, etc.
 - b. Exodus 9:29; 19:5
 - c. Psalm 8:1,9; 24:1; 47:2,7; Jer. 25:26,29,30
 - d. Proverbs 8:31
 - e. Isaiah 2:19,21; 6:3; 11:4,9,12; 12:5
2. earth in contrast to heaven
 - a. Genesis 1:2

- b. Exodus 20:4
- c. Deuteronomy 5:8; 30:19
- d. Isaiah 37:16
- 3. metaphor for the human inhabitants of the planet
 - a. Genesis 6:11; 11:1
 - b. I Kings 2:2; 10:24
 - c. Job 37:12
 - d. Psalm 33:8; 66:4
- 4. country or territory
 - a. Genesis 10:10,11; 11:28,31
 - b. esp. Israel (a gift from YHWH, He owns it)
- 5. soil, cf. Joshua 7:21
- 6. underworld (KB 91)
 - a. Exodus 15:12
 - b. Psalm 22:29; 71:20; Jer. 17:13; Jonah 2:6
- 7. new world
 - a. Isaiah 9:1-7; 65:17; 66:22
 - b. see NT, Rom. 8:19-22; Gal. 6:15; II Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1,5

Remember, context, context, context is crucial. Often cognate roots can help, but not always.

5:9 “You shall not worship them or serve them” These are two negated VERB forms:

1. “worship” - BDB 1005, KB 295 *Hishtaphel* IMPERFECT or *Hithpael* IMPERFECT, which means “bow down,” “prostrate” (cf. 4:19; 8:19; 11:16; Exod. 20:5; 23:24)
2. “serve” - BDB 712, KB 773, *Hophal* IMPERFECT, which means “do” “serve as a slave,” or “perform acts of worship (cf. 13:2; Exod. 20:5; 23:24)

YHWH knew the “religious” and “superstitious” tendency of the fallen human heart and tried to protect the revelation of Himself and His purposes from the destructive influences of Near Eastern idolatry.

▣ **“jealous”** See note at 4:24.

▣ The VERB “visiting” (BDB 823, KB 955, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) has several senses:

1. visit to bless - Gen. 21:1; 50:24,25; Exod. 13:19; Ruth 1:6; Ps. 65:9; 106:4; Jer. 27:22; 29:10; 32:5
2. visit to punish - Exod. 20:5; 34:7; Jer. 11:22; 13:21; 21:14; 24:25; Amos 3:2,14; Hosea 1:4; 2:15; 4:14; 12:2

▣ **“the iniquity of the fathers”** The term “iniquity” (BDB 730) may be related to the similar root, “to twist” (e.g., II Sam. 19:20; 24:17; I Kgs. 8:47; Ps. 106:6). Israel is punished for her disobedience (e.g., Exod. 20:5; 34:7; Lev. 18:25; Num. 14:18; Deut. 19:15; Jer. 25:12; 36:31; Amos 3:2).

▣ **“on the children, and on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me”** Notice the punishment is not arbitrary or indiscriminate, but directed toward those who “hate” YHWH (BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). This implies that unbelief runs through families. The influence of the parents is crucial to the development of faith (see notes at 4:10). In the ancient Near East several generations of families lived together. One generation’s unbelief and/or disobedience affected the entire family. This is part of the Hebrew concept of corporality (i.e., one affects the whole—Adam, Achan, David, Jesus).

To this sense of corporality must be added the individual aspect of faith (cf. 24:16; II Kgs. 14:6; Jer. 31:29-30; Ezekiel 18)!

5:10 “showing” This VERB (BDB 793, KB 889) is a *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, which matches the ongoing action of the VERB in v. 9.

▣ **“lovingkindness”** See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*HESED*)

This term has a wide semantic field. The BDB characterizes it this way (338-339).

- A. Used in connection to human beings
 - 1. kindness to fellow men (e.g., I Sam. 20:14; II Chr. 24:22)
 - 2. kindness toward the poor and needy (e.g., Micah 6:8)
 - 3. affection (cf. Jer. 2:2; Hos. 6:4)
 - 4. appearance (cf. Isa. 40:6)
- B. Used in connection to God
 - 1. covenant loyalty and love
 - a. “in redemption from enemies and troubles” (e.g., Jer. 31:3; Ezra 27:28; 9:9)
 - b. “in preservation of life from death” (e.g., Job 10:12; Ps. 86:13)
 - c. “in quickening of spiritual life” (e.g., Ps. 119:41,76,88,124,149,150)
 - d. “in redemption from sin” (cf. Ps. 25:7; 51:3)
 - e. “in keeping the covenants” (e.g., II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32)
 - 2. describes a divine attribute (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Micah 7:20)
 - 3. kindness of God
 - a. “abundant” (e.g., Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8)
 - b. “great in extent” (e.g., Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9)
 - c. “everlasting” (e.g., I Chr. 16:34,41; II Chr. 5:13; 7:3,6; 20:21; Ezra 3:11)
 - 4. deeds of kindness (e.g., II Chr. 6:42; Ps. 89:2; Isa. 55:3; 63:7; Lam. 3:22)

▣ **“to thousands”** These two verses help me see the nature of YHWH. His basic nature is longsuffering love, but He does punish those who wilfully reject Him (especially those who have some knowledge of His revelation, i.e., the covenant people). The numbers in these two verses make my point.

- 1. visiting iniquity to the third and fourth generations
- 2. showing covenant love to the thousandth generation (cf. 7:9)

▣ **“those who love Me and keep My commandments”** It is a characteristic of Deuteronomy to link obedience to YHWH’s covenant to love for YHWH (cf. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1,13,22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6,16,20).

YHWH’s love is not capricious, but clearly defined. He shows no partiality. His initiating covenant love is maintained by covenant obedience.

“Keep” (BDB 1036, KB 1581) is the key concept in this chapter (cf. 5:1,10,12,29,32 and many more times in Deuteronomy). The OT was based on the grace of YHWH and human obedience/performance. YHWH wanted to show human inability to respond appropriately (cf. Galatians 3). The NT (cf. Jer:31: 31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) is based on God’s gracious initiation and redemption in Christ. Believers are still

destined to be righteous (cf. Eph. 1:14; 2:10), but they have been accepted and forgiven by grace through faith (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). Now they obey/perform out of a sense of gratitude and family love (i.e., “those who love Me”). The goal is the same, a righteous (Christlike) people, but the mechanism has changed from human performance to Christ’s performance (cf. Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:11

¹¹You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.

5:11 “You shall not take” The VERB (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “to lift,” to carry,” or “to take.” It seems to imply an act of speech. The Israelites were called on to speak “the name” in worship (cf. 6:13; 10:20), but not the name of other gods!

This emphasis begins in Gen. 4:25-26, where the line of Seth “began to call upon the name of the LORD”; Abraham did the same (Gen. 12:8; 21:33); Isaac did the same (Gen. 26:25). This same concept is put in an eschatological setting by Joel 2:28-32. This is continued by the Apostle Peter on Pentecost and asserted to be fulfilled (cf. Acts 2:14-21); the Apostle Paul uses the phrase to offer universal salvation in Rom. 10:9-13.

The name represents the person and character of YHWH. The Israelites were to be a kingdom of priests to the world (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), but the tragedy is that their covenant disobedience, which caused YHWH to punish them (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29), meant that the message to the world was distorted by:

1. God’s judgment of Israel instead of blessing
2. God’s people turning to idolatry
3. God’s people’s developing arrogance, exclusiveness, and self-righteousness!

▣ **“in vain”** This term (BDB 996) means “empty,” “non-existent,” “vain” (cf. Exod. 20:7; Ps. 139:20). This is the same word used in 5:20 for a “false” witness. It is possible that this commandment does not refer to taking oaths in YHWH’s name (cf. 6:13; 10:20), but in using His name in false legal testimony. Israel became a “false” witness to the character and purposes of YHWH because of their recurrent disobedience, which resulted in YHWH’s judgment (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29). See Special Topic at 4:6.

▣ **“for the LORD will not leave him unpunished”** The VERB (BDB 667, KB 720, *Piel* IMPERFECT which means “acquit”) is a metaphor for something clean, thereby innocent or free from guilt (cf. Exod. 20:7; 34:7; Num. 14:18; Jer. 30:11; 46:28; Joel 3:21; Nah. 1:3). There are consequences to human sin. To misrepresent YHWH is a most serious sin, especially for those who know Him (cf. Luke 12:48; Heb. 10:26-31)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:12-15

¹²Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

5:12 “Observe” This VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE) means “keep” and is used repeatedly in Deuteronomy.

▣ “the sabbath” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SABBATH

This term (BDB 992) means “rest” or “cessation of activity.” The usage as a day of worship starts with Gen. 2:2-3, where YHWH uses His rest as a pattern for animals (cf. Exod. 23:12) and mankind (humans need a regular schedule of work, rest, and worship). The first specialized use of this day by Israel was in Exod. 16:25-26 in the gathering of manna. It then becomes part of “the Ten Words” (cf. Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15). This is one example where the Ten Words in Exodus 20 are slightly different from the Ten Words in Deuteronomy 5. Deuteronomy is preparing Israel for the settled, agricultural life in Canaan.

▣ “holy” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HOLY (שׁוֹדֵף)

I. The Old Testament

- A. The etymology of the term *kadosh* (BDB 872) is uncertain, possibly Canaanite. It is possible that part of the root (i.e., *kd*) means “to divide.” This is the source of the popular definition “separated (from Canaanite culture, cf. Deut. 7:6; 14:2,21; 26:19) for God’s use.”
- B. It relates to God’s presence in things, places, times, and persons. It is not used in Genesis, but becomes common in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers.
- C. In the Prophetic literature (esp. Isaiah and Hosea) the personal element previously present, but not emphasized comes to the fore. It becomes a way of designating the essence of God (cf. Isa. 6:3). God is holy. His name representing His character is Holy. His people who are to reveal His character to a needy world are holy (if they obey the covenant in faith).
- D. God’s mercy and love are inseparable from the theological concepts of covenants, justice, and essential character. Herein is the tension in God toward an unholy, fallen, rebellious humanity. There is a very interesting article on the relationship between God as “merciful” and God as “holy” in Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 112-113.

II. The New Testament

- A. The writers of the NT (except Luke) are Hebrew thinkers, but are influenced by Koine Greek (i.e., the Septuagint). It is the Greek translation of the OT, not Classical Greek literature, thought, or religion that controls their vocabulary.
- B. Jesus is holy because He is of God and like God (cf. Luke 1:35; 4:34; Acts 3:14; 4:27,30). He is the Holy and Righteous One (cf. Acts 3:14; 22:14). Jesus is holy because He is sinless (cf. John 8:46; II Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 7:26; I Pet. 1:19; 2:22; I John 3:5).
- C. Because God is holy, His children are to be holy (cf. Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26; Matt. 5:48; I Pet. 1:16). Because Jesus is holy, His followers are to be holy (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; II Cor. 3:18; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 1:4; I Thess. 3:13; 4:3; I Pet. 1:15). Christians are saved to serve in Christlikeness (holiness).

5:13 “work” Laws like vv. 13-14 caused the development of the Oral Traditions (cf. Matt. 5:21-48) to be written because a question like, “What is work?” became crucial. The rabbis devised a definition so that

the faithful Jew would not break the Law. The ambiguity of the written Law caused the legalistic Oral Law to be developed.

5:14 “seventh day is a sabbath” The Sabbath was a day of rest (BDB 992). There are two origins given for the Sabbath: (1) Exodus 20:11 orients it to Genesis 1-2, while Deuteronomy orients it to the Egyptian bondage (cf. 5:15). It became a covenant marker (like circumcision) of YHWH’s people (cf. Exod. 31:13,17; Ezek. 20:12,20). Obedience was mandated (cf. Isa. 56:2; 58:13; Jer. 17:21-22).

Like the sun and moon (cf. Gen. 1:14) the Sabbath provided a division of time for mankind’s activities (cf. Ecclesiastes 3). The seven day week became a way to mark special days and years (cf. Exodus 23 and Leviticus 23). Specifically, the Sabbath begins on Friday evening and goes through Saturday evening, because Israelites marked the day in Genesis 1 categories (“evening and morning,” cf. Gen. 1:5,8,13,19,23,31).

5:15 “You shall remember” See note at 7:18.

▣ **“that you were a slave in the land of Egypt”** Moses uses this experience of slavery to motivate the Israelites to compassionate action toward underprivileged people in their society:

1. to allow servants (and animals) a day of rest - 5:12-15; 16:12
2. to freely release and empower Hebrew slaves - 15:12-15
3. to be fair and just with the underprivileged and disenfranchised - 24:17-18
4. to leave the corners of the field and the second gathering of crops for the poor - 24:19-22

This phrase is also used numerous times to warn Israel to act appropriately in light of YHWH’s gracious gift of the land (e.g., 6:10-15) and to obey the covenant (e.g., 8:1-10) lest serious consequences come (e.g., 8:11-20)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:16

¹⁶ Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with you on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

5:16 “Honor” This VERB (BDB 457, KB 455, *Piel* IMPERATIVE) originally meant “to be heavy” and developed a metaphorical meaning of “give due weight to” or “honor.” This honor is not based on agreement, but authority and respect. In a sense it models the relationship between God and mankind. A submissive attitude toward authority is crucial in religious life!

Jesus mentions these commandments several times as well as other portions of Deuteronomy:

1. 5:16 - Matt. 15:4; Mark 7:10
2. 5:16-20 - Matt. 19:18-19a; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20
4. 5:17 - Matt. 5:21
5. 6:4-5 - Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27
6. 6:13 - Matt. 4:10; Luke 4:8
7. 6:16 - Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12
8. 19:15 - Matt. 18:16
9. 19:15 - Matt. 5:38

Paul also quotes Deuteronomy often:

1. 5:16 - Eph. 6:2-3
2. 5:21 - Rom. 7:7
3. 19:15 - II Cor. 13:1

4. 21:23 - Gal. 3:13
5. 25:4 - II Cor. 9:9; I Tim. 5:18
6. 27:26 - Gal. 3:10
7. 30:12-14 - Rom. 10:6-8
8. 32:21 - Rom. 11:8
9. 32:35 - Rom. 12:19-20
10. 32:43 - Rom. 15:10

(cf. Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, pp. 42-43, 92-95). Apparently the NT writers used the OT extensively, but not legalistically!

▣ **“and your mother”** This shows high regard for motherhood even though in the Oriental society women were legally on the level of chattel or property. A Hebrew mother was honored in her own home. The authority of parents was strictly respected (cf. Exod. 21:17; Deut. 27:16). Both were to be respected and obeyed (cf. Pro. 1:8; 6:20; 15:20; 19:26; 20:20; 23:22-25; 30:11,17).

▣ **“your days may be prolonged”** Verse 33; 4:40; 11:9 show that this was a promise to a society, not primarily to an individual. If a society is characterized by honor in the home and respect for family life, that society will be stable and last through time. See note at 4:40.

5:17-21 These are laws that are common to all eastern societies. From archaeological discoveries we know of the Babylonian Law Codes of Lipit-Ishtar and Hammurabi which predate the Law of Moses by several hundred years. The Code of Hammurabi is similar to the Ten Commandments. This similarity shows (1) that there are some things that are innately wrong in every situation and society and (2) that Moses was a child of his own day and culture as well as a prophet of God.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:17

¹⁷ You shall not murder.

5:17 “murder” The Hebrew VERB “murder” (BDB 953, KB 1283, *Qal* IMPERFECT) originally meant “to violently crush.” Life belongs to God. This does not mean killing of any kind because Israel had both capital punishment (e.g., Num. 35:30) and Holy War (e.g., 20:13,16-17). The commandment is saying “Thou shalt not violently murder for selfish reasons or revenge” or “do not commit non-legal, premeditated murder.” In my opinion this passage cannot be used as a biblical admonition against military service or capital punishment.

SPECIAL TOPIC: NOTES ON EXODUS 20 (MURDER)

I. CONTEXT

- A. It needs to be remembered that even the commands that seem to be of a social nature are really religious. God’s sovereignty over creation and redemption are shadowed in these commands. The command not to murder is, in proper focus, a word about the image of God in every human being and God’s care and concern for human life.
- B. It needs to be remembered that each command reflects the community of faith. The prohibition on taking a life in an illegal manner is primarily and originally focused with the believing community. Its implications are as wide as humanity!

II. WORD STUDY OF SIGNIFICANT TERMS

A. "Murder"

1. This is a rare term (*rasah*) for taking a life, used only 46 times in the OT. There are two other much more common terms.
 - a. *Harag*, used 165 times
 - b. *Hemit*, used 201 times
2. The term (*Rasah*) seems to have an original limited meaning and an expanded meaning.
 - a. Originally it related to taking the life of a covenant partner in a legal, premeditated way, often associated with "the kinsman redeemer" or "go'el." This usage involved premeditation but in a sense of legal revenge (cf. Num. 35:30-34; Lev. 24:13-23). In reality the Lex Talionis, "eye for eye," (cf. Gen. 9:5-6) was a way to limit revenge. Later, the cities of refuge (Deut. 4:41; Josh. 20:3) were established so that a covenant member who accidentally or passionately killed another member of the community could flee the wrath of the victim's family.
 - b. Later the term came to refer to the motive or attitude behind the taking of a life. The concept of "intentionality" becomes uppermost! (cf. Exod. 21:12-14; Num. 35:11,22; Deut. 28:24).
 - c. This distinction becomes very significant in this command. It seems in context to refer only to others within the covenant community. It is related to the kinsman redeemer, or blood revenge. However, the term is used in later passages which reflect the Decalogue, Hosea 4:2 and Jeremiah 7:9, to refer to a murderer. This word relates not only to the law but to the motive. It expands from neighbor to fellow human being.
3. This term certainly does not relate to our modern ethical issue of capital punishment or war. The Jews never had a problem with community execution or holy war (or, for that matter, unholy war!).
4. The best translation for our modern culture would be "premeditated murder."

III. CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. The sixth, seventh, and eighth commands are made up of only two Hebrew words. They are very short and to the point.
- B. Life, like all of life, is related to God. How we treat others reflects our thoughts about God

IV. NEW TESTAMENT PARALLELS

A. Jesus

1. His expansion of this commandment (cf. Matt. 5:21-26) gives us the proper orientation for our modern discussion about how to apply this text to our day.
2. Jesus obviously moved the Decalogue from the realm of actions into the realm of motives. We are what we think! "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." The thought life is much more relevant and significant than we normally give it credit.

B. John

1. I John. 3:15, this same concept of hate being considered murder is stated.
2. The Greek terms used in Matthew 5:21ff and I John 3:15 are different but the meaning is essentially the same.
3. Note the positive aspect in I John 4:19-21.

V. APPLICATION TRUTHS

- A. Even though an unintentional murder can escape the blood avenger by fleeing to a city of refuge (cf. Num. 35; Josh. 20), he has to pay the penalty of confinement in that city until the death of the High Priest. The consequences of his act still remain!
- B. Although this verse does not directly relate to suicide, as the ancients probably never thought of this event, the text still gives a spiritual principle concerning the sanctity of human life and God's sovereignty and purpose for human life made in His image. This text speaks a strong word to our day in this area!
- C. This text does not, however, speak a decisive word to the modern question of: (1) capital punishment or (2) war. For Israel, these were not evil things in themselves. The Israelites were involved in both of these acts. Still, the principle of the significance of life made in God's image and under His control is an important truth in this area.
- D. This text does speak a needed word about the dignity and sanctity of human life! We in the believing community are stewards, not only of our own actions, but of our society. The gift of life is both individual and corporate.

We are responsible for the physical, social, and psychological abuse of our own bodies as we are the physical, social, and psychological abuse of others in our community. This is especially true in a culture like ours where we are allowed to speak to and, thereby, change the system. We are our brothers' keeper!

SPECIAL TOPIC: PEACE AND WAR

I. Introduction

- A. The Bible, our sole source for faith and practice, has no definitive passage on peace. In fact, it is paradoxical in its presentation. The OT may be alluded to as an approach to peace which is militaristic. The NT, however, puts the conflict into spiritual terms of light and darkness.
- B. Biblical faith, as well as world religions of the past and present, sought and still expect, a golden age of prosperity which is absent from conflict.
 - 1. Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:6-9; 32:15-18; 51:3; Hosea 2:18; Micah 4:3
 - 2. Biblical faith prophesies the personal agency of the Messiah, Isa. 9:6-7
- C. However, how do we live in a world of conflict? There have been three basic Christian responses which have developed chronologically between the death of the Apostles and the Middle Ages.
 - 1. Pacifism--although rare in antiquity, it was the early church's response to the Roman military society.
 - 2. Just war--after the conversion of Constantine (313 A.D.) the church began to rationalize the military support of a "Christian state" in response to successive Barbarian invasions. This was basically the classical Greek position. This position was first articulated by Ambrose and expanded and developed by Augustine.
 - 3. Crusade--this is similar to the Holy War concept of the OT. It developed in the Middle Ages in response to Muslim advances in the "Holy Land" and ancient Christian territories such as North Africa, Asia Minor, and the Eastern Roman Empire. It was not on behalf of the state, but on behalf of the Church and under its auspices.

4. All three of these views developed in a Christian context with differing views on how Christians should relate to a fallen world system. Each emphasized certain Bible texts to the exclusion of others. Pacifism tended to separate itself from the world. The “Just War” response has advocated the power of the state to control an evil world (Martin Luther). The Crusade position has advocated that the Church attack the fallen world system so as to control it.

5. Roland H. Bainton, in his book, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace*, published by Abingdon, page 15, says,

“The Reformation precipitated wars of religion, in which the three historic positions reappeared: the just war among the Lutherans and the Anglicans, the crusade in the Reformed Churches, and pacifism among the Anabaptists and later the Quakers. The eighteenth century in theory and in practice resuscitated the humanist peace ideals of the Renaissance. The nineteenth century was an age of comparative peace and great agitation for the elimination of war. The twentieth century has seen two world wars. In this period again, the three historic positions have recurred. The churches in the United States particularly took a crusading attitude toward the First World War; pacifism was prevalent between the two wars; the mood of the Second World War approximated that of the just war.”

D. The exact definition of “peace” has been disputed.

1. For the Greeks it seems to refer to a society of order and coherence.
2. For the Romans it was the absence of conflict brought about through the power of the state.
3. For the Hebrews peace was a gift of YHWH based on mankind’s proper response to Him. It was usually put in agricultural terms (cf. Deut. 27-28). Not only prosperity, but divine security and protection are included.

II. Biblical Material

A. Old Testament

1. Holy War is a basic concept of the OT. The phrase “kill not” of Exod. 20:13 and Deut. 5:17 in Hebrew refers to premeditated murder (BDB 953), not death by accident or passion or war. YHWH is even seen as a warrior on behalf of His people (cf. Joshua - Judges and Isa. 59:17, alluded to in Eph. 6:14).
2. God even uses war as a means of punishing His wayward people - Assyria exiles Israel (722 B.C.); Neo-Babylon exiles Judah (586 B.C.).
3. It is shocking, in such a militaristic atmosphere, to read of the “suffering servant” of Isaiah 53 which can be classified as redemptive pacifism.

B. New Testament

1. In the Gospels soldiers are mentioned without condemnation. The Roman “centurion” are mentioned often and almost always in a noble sense.
2. Even believing soldiers are not commanded to give up their vocation (early church).
3. The New Testament does not advocate a detailed answer to social evils in terms of political theory or action, but in spiritual redemption. The focus is not on physical battles, but on the spiritual battle between light and dark, goodness and evil, love and hate, God and Satan (Eph. 6:10-17).
4. Peace is an attitude of the heart amidst the problems of the world. It is related solely to our relationship with Christ (Rom. 5:1; John 14:27), not the state. The peacemakers of Matt. 5:9

5. are not political, but proclaimers of the gospel! Fellowship, not strife, should characterize the Church life, both to itself and to a lost world.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:18

¹⁸You shall not commit adultery.

5:18 “adultery” In the OT adultery (BDB 610, KB 658, *Qal* IMPERFECT) refers to only extra-marital sexual activities. This was a serious crime because of OT views of the afterlife. They believed that in some sense a person lived on through his seed. Also, the importance of tribes inheriting and passing on land allotted to them by YHWH made adultery a significant issue.

Notice, the first law is faithfulness to parents; the second law is faithfulness in not taking your brother’s life; the third idea is faithfulness within the home. Even betrothed women were treated as married (cf. Deut. 22:23ff. Mary was accused of unfaithfulness because she was betrothed to Joseph.

This idea of adultery is often used symbolically for idolatry. Ezekiel and Hosea analogously present God as a husband to Israel, therefore, when Israel went after other gods, it was called “going a whoring” and was considered spiritual adultery or faithlessness.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:19

¹⁹You shall not steal.

5:19 “steal” This is probably a reference to kidnaping and selling (BDB 170, KB 198, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 24:7; Exod. 21:16), because of the context of the surrounding laws. This expresses a faithfulness to one’s covenant brother whose life belongs to God. All of the surrounding laws brought the death penalty. This seems harsh for petty theft.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:20

²⁰You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

5:20 “bear false witness” In ancient societies, when accused of something, it was the responsibility of the accused to prove the accuser wrong rather than our modern American judicial practice of assuming one innocent until proven guilty. If you proved your accuser wrong he had to take the penalty for the crime he accused you of (cf. 19:16-21). Since disobedience to the Ten Words caused death, false witness was a serious crime! Bearing false witness reveals an unfaithfulness within the community of faith. Lies destroy the reputation and take an innocent life of a covenant brother or sister. God takes this lying seriously (cf. Job 17:5; Ps. 101:5; Pro. 11:9; Jer. 9:8-9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:21

²¹You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.'

5:21 “shall not covet. . .shall not desire” These two VERBS are synonymous:

1. “covet” - BDB 326, KB 325, *Qal* IMPERFECT, means “a strong desire” for material things, which can be positive or negative. In this context it is an uncontrollable, selfish desire for something which belongs to a covenant brother.
2. “desire” - BDB 16, KB 20, *Hiphthael* IMPERFECT, means “desire” (cf. 14:26) or “lust” (often has a sexual context as in 5:21) for more and more for me at any cost (e.g., Num. 11:4; Ps. 106:14; Pro. 13:4; 21:26; 23:3,6; 24:1).

This relates to one’s inner attitudes and motives. It is capstone to all the other commandments. This is the only commandment that deals with why, not how. This one says not only “don’t do” but “don’t think this.” Jesus taught that we should not only not kill, we should not hate, or display an attitude that might result in murder. Jesus took this last commandment and raised the rest of the commandments to the level of inner motive and attitude as over against outer action (cf. Matt. 5:17-48). There is all the difference in the world in a man who does not steal because it is not pleasing to God and the man who does not steal because he is afraid of getting caught. One is acting on Christian principles and the other is acting on self-interest.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:22-27

²²“These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, of the cloud and of the thick gloom, with a great voice, and He added no more. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me. ²³And it came about, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. ²⁴And you said, ‘Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. ²⁵Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we shall die. ²⁶For who is there of all flesh, who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? ²⁷Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it.”

5:22 “He added no more” The Ten Words (Decalog) and their explanations are from YHWH, not Moses (compare Exod. 31:18 & 34:27-28). This is revelation (from God), not human discovery or rationalization. The phrase “and He added no more” is a literary way of asserting a complete revelation (cf. 4:2; 12:32).

Verses 22-27 are referring to the experience of Israel at Mt. Horeb/Sinai and recorded in Exodus 19-20. This revelation must be respected and untampered with (cf. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:6; Eccl. 3:14).

5:23 “all the heads of your tribes and your elders” The elders came to Moses because they were frightened (cf. vv. 25-26; Exod. 19:16,18; 20:18-20) by the physical manifestations connected to YHWH’s personal presence on Mt. Horeb/Sinai.

5:24 “His glory and His greatness” The Hebrew root “glory” (BDB 458) is the same root as “honor” (BDB 457) of v. 16. Both are commercial terms meaning “heavy” or “weighty,” which came to denote honor. It is used often of God’s name (e.g., Ps. 29:2; 66:2; 79:9; 96:8), person (e.g., Exod. 24:16-17; 33:18,22; 40:34-35; Num. 14:22), and actions (e.g., Exod. 16:7,12).

The second term “greatness” (BDB 152) is often used of God in Deuteronomy (cf. 3:24; 5:24; 9:26; 11:2; 32:3; Ps. 150:2). See notes at 4:31 and 10:17.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GLORY

The biblical concept of “glory” is difficult to define. Believers’ glory is that they understand the gospel and glory in God, not in themselves (cf. John 1:29-31; Jer. 9:23-24).

In the OT the most common Hebrew word for “glory” (*kbd*) was originally a commercial term relating to scales (“to be heavy”). That which was heavy was valuable or had intrinsic worth. Often the concept of brightness was added to the word to express God’s majesty (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; 24:17; Isa. 60:1-2). He alone is worthy and honorable. He is too brilliant for fallen mankind to behold (cf. Exod 33:17-23; Isa. 6:5). YHWH can only be truly known through Christ (cf. Jer. 1:14; Matt. 17:2; Heb. 1:3; James 2:1).

The term “glory” is somewhat ambiguous: (1) it may be parallel to “the righteousness of God”; (2) it may refer to the “holiness” or “perfection” of God; or (3) it could refer to the image of God in which mankind was created (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1; 9:6), but which was later marred through rebellion (cf. Gen. 3:1-22). It is first used of YHWH’s presence with His people during the wilderness wandering period in Exod. 16:7,10; Lev. 9:23; and Num. 14:10.

▣ **“that God speaks with man”** God does reveal Himself and humanity can understand and relate to Him! This is the basis of our understanding of God’s revelation and God’s covenant requirements.

5:27 “Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says” This has two *Qal* IMPERATIVE VERBS:

1. “go near” - BDB 897, KB 1132, which means “come near” or “approach.” Approaching YHWH often had dangerous consequences (cf. Exod. 16:7; Lev. 16:1; Num. 16:16).
2. “hear” - BDB 1033, KB 1570, this is the often repeated VERB *shema* (i.e., “we will hear and do it”).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 5:28-33

²⁸And the LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. ²⁹Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever! ³⁰Go, say to them, "Return to your tents." ³¹But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe *them* in the land which I give them to possess.' ³²So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong *your* days in the land which you shall possess."

5:28-33 Notice that God says “that it may be well for you.” These commandments weren’t given to burden the people. God gave them to give His people freedom. God gave His laws to give us a whole, healthy, and happy life.

5:29 “Oh that they had such a heart. . .and would keep all My commandments” This introductory exclamation (“Oh that they had,” BDB 566 plus BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is a common phrase in the OT used twenty-five times, mostly in Job (NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 209). Here it expresses a wish (cf. II Sam. 18:33; Ps. 55:6).

God longs for mankind’s happiness and peace, but this involves responsibilities. If they would obey, it would be good for them, for their children, for their children’s children and on and on (cf. Deut. 27-29).

5:30,31 These two verses have a series of commands:

1. “go” - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 30
2. “say” - BDB 55, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 30
3. “return” - BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 30
4. “stand” - BDB 763, KB 840, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 31
5. “speak” - BDB 180, KB 210, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, v. 31
6. “teach” - BDB 540, KB 531, *Piel* IMPERFECT (possibly in this context COHORTATIVE in meaning), v. 31

5:31 “all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments” See Special Topic at 4:1.

▣ **“which I give them to possess”** There are two VERBALS in this phrase:

1. “give” - BDB, 678, KB 733, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
2. “to possess” - BDB, 429, KB 441, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

This statement is based on:

1. God’s promise to Abraham, Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18-21
2. God’s promise to Isaac, Gen. 26:3-5
3. God’s promise to Jacob, Gen. 28:13-15; 35:9-12
4. God’s promise to Israel, Gen. 15:16; Exod. 6:4,8; Deut. 4:38,40; 19:10; 20:16; 21:23; Josh. 1:2,3,6,11,13,15; 2:9,24; 18:3; 21:43; 24:13

God gave/promised a special land to Israel, but Israel had to (1) take it, (2) settle it, and (3) maintain covenant faithfulness in it (cf. 4:40; 7:12-13; 8:1-20).

5:32 “you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left” This is an idiom related to God’s word as a clearly defined path or road (cf. Ps. 119:105; Pro. 6:23). To deviate from God’s clear path/road was sin (cf. 9:12,16; 17:11,20; 28:14; Josh. 1:7; 23:6; 31:29; II Kgs. 22:2; II Chr. 34:2; Pro. 4:27). See note at 2:27.

5:33 “You shall walk” In this context “walk” means “lifestyle” (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT). Biblical faith is not only laws to be kept, it is a daily lifestyle: 24 hours a day, 7 days-a-week relationship to God by faith. This faith must issues in a godly life.

▣ **“that it may be well with”** The VERB (BDB 373, KB 370, *Qal* PERFECT) is literally “pleasing” or “good.” The ADJECTIVE is often used to describe the Promised Land (cf. 1:25,25; 3:25; 4:21,22, etc.). The VERB describes the good life God promises for covenant obedience (cf. 15:16; 19:13).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the relationship between law and grace? Should Christians keep the Ten Commandments?
2. What is the purpose of the Law?
3. Why are the Ten Commandments different when comparing Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5?
4. What is the purpose of the Sabbath? Why don't we worship on Saturday?
5. What unifying theme do we see in vv. 16-21?

DEUTERONOMY 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Greatest Commandment	The Meaning of the First Commandment	The Great Commandment	To Love Yahweh is the Essence of the Law (5:32-6:13) 5:32-6:3
6:1-3	6:1-3	6:1-3	
6:4-5	6:4-9	6:4-9	6:4-9
6:6-9			
Caution Against Disobedience		Warning Against Disobedience	
6:10-15	6:10-15	6:10-15	6:10-13 An Appeal for Loyalty 6:14-15
6:16-19	6:16-19	6:16-19	6:16-19
6:20-25	6:20-25	6:20-25	6:20-25

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND

There has been some discussion among commentators as to whether chapter 6 forms a conclusion to the Ten Commandments or the introduction to a section on expansion of the concepts presented in the Ten Commandments. Because of 5:28-33 it seems obvious to me that we are beginning a new section which emphasizes obedience.

- A. Many have assumed that chapter 6 is an expansion of the first commandment which asserts the priority of YHWH in our lives.
- B. There is a continuing emphasis in this chapter on YHWH's original promises to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 and their fulfillment (cf. 6:1, 3, 10, 18, and 23).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:1-3

¹Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded *me* to teach you, that you might do *them* in the land where you are going over to possess it, ²so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ³O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do *it*, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, *in a land flowing with milk and honey.*

6:1 “the commandment, the statutes and the judgments” See Special Topic at 4:1.

▣ **“the LORD your God”** See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.

▣ **“teach. . .do”** Chapter 6, along with the conclusion of chapter 5, could be characterized as a strenuous emphasis on the need for obedience (cf. 5:29,31,32,33; 6:1,2,3,4,17,24, and 25). This same emphasis on the need for obedience is repeated in the NT (cf. Luke 6:46; John 14:21; James 2:14-26; I John 5:2). One way that we show Him that we really love Him is that we do what He has told us to do. The focus of this obedience is directed first toward God and then toward our covenant brother/sister. God always takes the initiative in grace (covenant benefits), yet He expects us to obey His covenant requirements!

▣ **“in the land where you are going to possess it”** This of course, refers to Gen. 12:1-3. In the OT the “land” aspect of the Abrahamic promise is emphasized while in the NT the “seed” aspect of the Abrahamic promise is emphasized (tribe of Judah, family of Jesse, line of David).

6:2 “so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God” This concept of family reverence and worship is emphasized in Deuteronomy (cf. 4:9-10; 5:29; 6:13; 11:19; 32:46). It is the theological opposite of Deut. 5:9!

▣ **“fear. . .keep”** The reverence (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is demonstrated in “keeping” (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) all His covenant requirements!

▣ **“keep”** See note at 5:1.

▣ **“all the days of your life”** Notice that this is an emphasis on lifestyle—daily obedience, not just particular worship periods or annual feasts. Biblical faith is initial faith and repentance followed by lifestyle faith and repentance (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 3:16,19; 20:21).

▣ **“that your days may be prolonged”** This phrase has often been interpreted in connection with Deut. 5:16 as a promise of individual longevity to those who honor their parents. However, because of the repeated use of this phrase in Deut. 4:40; 5:16,33; 6:2; 11:9, it is obviously an idiom for the promise of a stable society, not individual longevity. God’s covenant is designed to promote a godly, stable, healthy, productive society (cf. v. 3; and full note at 4:40).

6:3 Notice how the VERBS and concepts are repeated again and again.

▣ **“that it may be well with you”** This parallels the phrase, “that your days may be prolonged,” of v. 2. Notice the phrase is also found in 5:33; 15:16; 19:13

▣ **“that you may multiply greatly. . .in a land flowing with milk and honey”** It needs to be stated that YHWH’s basic method of attracting the nations to Himself was to bless Israel in a unique way. However, Israel’s disobedience never allowed this scenario to become effective. The cursing and blessing section of Deuteronomy 27-29 is pivotal in understanding the history of the children of Abraham. They were told specifically of the abundance that would accrue to them if they would follow God and the cursing that would accrue to them if they disobeyed. The history of Israel is one of disobedience.

The phrase, “land flowing with milk and honey,” is a technical phrase in both Ugaritic and Egyptian documents to denote Palestine. It is used often (cf. Exod. 3:8,17; 13:5; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; 14:8; 16:13; Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9; 27:3; 31:20).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:4-9

⁴“Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! ⁵And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; ⁷and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. ⁸And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

6:4 “Hear” This is the Hebrew VERB *shema* (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE). See full note at 4:1. It means “to hear so as to do.” This is the focus of biblical covenant. The usage of this VERB in Deuteronomy implies that it was used liturgically at set worship times (e.g., 4:1; 5:1; 9:1; 20:3; 27:9-10). This prayer in Deut. 6:4-6, since the days of the second temple (516 B.C.), is repeated even to this day by Jewish people in both the morning and evening and at every worship occasion. It is their central confession of faith.

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NET, NIV “the LORD is one”

NRSV, TEV “the LORD alone”

NJB “the only Yahweh”

LXX “the LORD is one”
JPSOA “the LORD alone”
REB “the LORD our one God”

There is no VERB. This is the central pillar of the Jewish affirmation of monotheism (although it must be admitted that this central theological truth is not contextually highlighted). Israel was very distinct from the polytheism of her neighbors and especially the Canaanites’ emphasis on the many local *Ba’als*.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MONOTHEISM

The concept of “monotheism” (one and only one God), not just the “high god” of polytheism or the good god of Iranian dualism (Zoroastrianism), is unique to Israel (Abraham, 2000 B.C.). There is one rare exception briefly in Egypt (Amenhotep IV, also known as Akhenaten, 1367-1350 or 1386-1361 B.C.).

This concept is expressed in several phrases in the OT.

1. “no one like YHWH our *Elohim*,” Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 33:26; I Kgs. 8:23
2. “no other besides Him,” Deut. 4:35,39; 32:39; I Sam. 2:2; II Sam. 22:32; Isa. 45:21; 44:6,8; 45:6,21
3. “YHWH is one,” Deut. 6:4; Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; I Tim. 2:5; James 2:19
4. “none like thee,” II Sam. 7:22; Jer. 10:6
5. “Thou alone are God,” Ps. 86:10; Isa. 37:16
6. “Before Me there was no God formed, and there will be none after Me,” Isa. 43:10
7. “there is no other; besides Me. . .there is no other,” Isa. 45:5,6,22
8. “there is none else, no other God,” Isa. 45:14,18
9. “there is none except Me,” Isa. 45:21
10. “there is no other;. . .there is no one like Me,” Isa. 46:9

It must be admitted that this crucial doctrine has been revealed in progressive ways. The early statements could be understood as “henotheism” or practical monotheism (there are other gods, but only one God for us, cf. Exod. 15:11; 20:2-5; Deut. 3:28; 5:7; 6:4,14; 10:17; 32:12; I Kgs. 8:23; Ps. 83:18; 86:8; 136:1-2).

The first texts that begin to denote a singularity (philosophical monotheism) are early (cf. Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Deut. 4:35,39; 33:26). The full and complete claims are found in Isaiah 43-46 (cf. 43:11; 44:6,8; 45:7,14,18,22; 46:5,9).

The NT alludes to Deut. 6:4 in Rom. 3:30; I Cor. 8:4,6; Eph. 4:6; I Tim. 2:5; and James 2:19. Jesus quotes it as the first commandment in Matt. 22:36-37; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:27. The OT, as well as the NT, asserts the reality of other spiritual beings (demons, angels), but only one creator/redeemer God (YHWH, Gen. 1:1).

Biblical monotheism is characterized by

1. God is one and unique (ontology is assumed, not specified)
2. God is personal (cf. Gen. 1:26-27; 3:8)
3. God is ethical (cf. Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8-10)
4. God created humans in His image (Gen. 1:26-27) for fellowship (i.e., #2). He is a jealous God (cf. Exod. 20:2-3)

From the NT

1. God has three eternal, personal manifestations (see Special Topic: The Trinity at 8:11)

2. God is perfectly and completely revealed in Jesus (cf. John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-19; Heb. 1:2-3)
3. God's eternal plan for fallen humanity's redemption is the sacrificial offering of His only Son (Isaiah 53; Mark 10:45; II Cor. 5:21; Phil. 2:6-11; Hebrews)

6:5 “and you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” This is a strong emphasis which asserts that our response to God is to involve our entire person. Jesus used this same verse in combination with Lev. 19:18 to affirm the entire essence of the law (cf. Matt. 22:36-38; Mark 12:29-34; Luke 10:27-38).

Believers' "love" (BDB 12, KB 17 *Qal* PERFECT) is assumed. It is characteristic of Deuteronomy to link obedience to YHWH's covenant as evidence of one's love for Him (cf. 5:10; 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1,13; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). See full note at 5:10.

The terms "heart" and "soul" are often used together to show the complete person (cf. 4:29; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2,6,10).

The term "soul" (BDB 659) describes the life-force (i.e., breath) in both humans and animals (e.g., Gen. 1:20-30; 2:7,19; 7:22; Job 34:14-15; Ps. 104:29,30; 146:4; Eccl. 3:19-21). Here it refers to passionate desire.

"Might" (BDB 547) means "abundance" or "strength" (cf. II Kgs. 23:25). These three terms "heart," "soul," "might," represent the complete person and is, therefore, parallel to the phrase, "with a whole heart." Notice the term "all" (BDB 481) is repeated three times for emphasis.

This commandment is highlighted by Jesus as the greatest of the commandments (cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:29-30; Luke 10:25-37). Each of these is addressed to different types of Jewish leaders. However, it must be understood that the life of Jesus and the Apostles was a transition period from the OT to the NT. These two laws, love God (Deut. 6:5) and love your brother (Lev. 19:18) are surely also summaries of the new covenant!

For the question, "how should NT believers respond?" to OT laws see:

1. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Douglas Stuart, pp. 165-169
2. *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, pp. 123-125.

6:6 “these words” “These words” refer to YHWH's covenant, which was given through Moses.

▣ **“shall be on your heart”** The heart (BDB 523), in Hebrew, signifies the directing focus of an individual's life. The emphasis in the OT was also meant to be internal faithfulness, as in the NT (cf. Deut. 4:29; 6:5, 6; 10:12; 11:13,18; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10; NT, “with all your mind,” Mark 12:30; Luke 10:27). We sometimes make a false distinction between the Old Covenant being an external law and the New Covenant being internal faith. We probably get this fallacy from Jer. 31:31-34, which emphasizes “a new heart.” However, even in the OT, the individual believer was expected to direct his entire person, actions and motives toward the Lord his God.

6:7 “you shall teach them diligently to your sons” The VERB (BDB 1041, KB 1606, *Piel* PERFECT) means “to sharpen” and in *Piel* this is the only usage. The term in Ugaritic means “to repeat.” That seems to be the basic emphasis of this verse. The rabbis use this verse to assert that the *Shema* should be “repeated” morning and evening. We are to talk about God's will for our lives during the entire scope of daily activities. It is the responsibility of parents to pass on lifestyle faith (cf. Deut. 4:9; 6:20-25; 11:19; 32:46, see full note at 4:9). It is interesting that the flow of these different times for teaching falls into the same literary pattern as Ps. 139:2-6 and Prov. 6:20-22. This emphasis on parental responsibility is repeated in

Prov. 22:6. Our modern day church school cannot take the place of parental training but it surely can supplement it!

6:8 “you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead”

Originally this phrase seems to be used as a metaphor (cf. LXX). The context is lifestyle teaching opportunities for God’s word. However, the rabbis took this verse very literally and they began to wrap a leather strap around their left hand with a small box (*tefillin*) attached which contained selected Scriptures from the Torah. The same kind of box was also strapped to their forehead. These “phylacteries” or “frontals” (BDB 377) are also mentioned in Deut. 11:18 and Matt. 23:5.

6:9 “And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates”

This again is a symbolic gesture that God is to have a part, not only in our home life, but in our social life (i.e., gate, cf. 21:19; 22:15,24). As the threshold (BDB 265) of the home was often seen as the place of the demonic in the Greek and Roman worlds, in the Jewish world it represented the presence of God (i.e., the place where the blood of the Passover was placed, cf. Exod. 12:7,22,23).

“Your gates” (BDB 1044) may refer to the place of social meeting and justice (i.e., like the city gates). Usually, these small boxes and door markers (*mezuza*) contained several set passages of Scripture: Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21 and Exod. 13:1-10,11-16.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:10-15

¹⁰“Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, ¹¹and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, ¹²then watch yourself, lest you forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹³You shall fear *only* the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by His name. ¹⁴You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, ¹⁵for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.”

6:10-11 This shows that Israel was going to possess the land of the Canaanites (cf. Gen. 15:16). She would take over their homes, fields and vineyards. Yet, v. 12 emphasizes that she was not to forget that it was the Lord who provided these and not her own resources (cf. 4:9; 8:11-20; Ps. 103:2). If they forgot YHWH the reverse would occur. They would lose their homes, fields, and vineyards (cf. 28:27-48). Divine love started the covenant relationship, but human obedience maintained it.

6:12 “watch yourself” The VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE) is used often in Deuteronomy, but usually in the *Qal* stem. The *Niphal* is found in 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 6:12; 8:6,11; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 15:9; 23:9; 24:8 and usually with the sense of “be careful”!

▣ **“lest you forget”** The VERB (BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is a recurrent warning in Deuteronomy (cf. 4:9,23,31; 6:12; 8:11,14,19[twice]; 9:7; 25:19).

▣ **“the LORD who brought you from this land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery”** This is the continuing emphasis of the book of Deuteronomy that God’s grace came to Israel first (cf. Deut. 4:10; 5:29; 6:2). It is unfortunate to characterize the OT as law and the NT as grace (Martin Luther).

6:13 This verse gives several things that Israel should do towards YHWH when they victoriously enter the Promised Land:

1. “fear *only* the LORD your God” - BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. “worship Him” - BDB 712, “serve” KB 773, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. “swear by His name” - BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* IMPERFECT. See full note at 5:11.

All of these involve worship and are used often in Moses’ writings.

Part of the cultic worship of Israel was to make statements in the name of YHWH. Jesus seems to quote this verse in Matt. 4:10 in His confrontation with the Evil One. He changes the word “fear” in v. 13 to the word “worship,” which shows us that these two terms are basically synonymous. The name of God reflected His character and person.

6:14 This verse adds another requirement to the list of v. 13:

4. “shall not follow other gods” - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT

Here the worship of Canaanite fertility gods is strictly forbidden.

▣ **“gods. . .gods”** These are the terms *Elohim* (BDB 43) and *El* (BDB 43). See Special Topic at 1:3.

6:15 “for the LORD your God in the midst of you” This was the purpose of creation. God wants to dwell with those made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). This is the Messianic concept of *Immanuel*, which means “God with us” (cf. Isa. 7:14 and Matt. 28:20).

▣ **“jealous God”** This Hebrew term can mean “zealous” or “jealous” (BDB 888, cf. Deut. 4:24; 5:9; see note at 4:24). Jealousy is a love word. We are only jealous of those for whom we have a deep, abiding love. This is another affirmation of the love of God anthropomorphically stated in human, family terms. See Special Topic at 2:15.

▣ **“the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you and He will wipe you off the face of the earth”** As revelatory as the love of God is, the same book reveals the wrath of God. The same book that overwhelms us with His love shocks us with His anger (“kindled” BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 11:16-17; 31:16-17; Jdgs. 2:14; 6:13, and “wipe off” or “exterminate” BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. 1:27; 2:22; 9:20; Josh. 9:24). A good way to understand the relationship between God’s love and His wrath is to compare Deut. 5:9 with 7:9. As God does visit lifestyle, priority sins from father to son to the third and fourth generations, He visits the blessing of faith to the thousandth generations of those who love Him. God’s love spurned is God’s wrath. Isaiah calls God’s wrath “His strange work” (cf. Isa. 28:21).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:16-19

¹⁶“You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah. ¹⁷You should diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. ¹⁸And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give your fathers, ¹⁹by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.”

6:16 “You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah” The place was named “test,” *massah* (BDB 650). This is a reference to an event that happened in Exod. 17:1-7 (“tested” BDB 650, KB 702, *Piel* PERFECT), where the people grumbled against God’s provision and presence (cf. Deut. 9:22; 33:8). They showed lack of faith (cf. Ps. 95:8; Hebrews 3-4). Do not do it again (“test” *Piel*

IMPERFECT)! This verse is also used by Jesus in His temptation experience with Satan (cf. Matt. 4:7; Luke 4:12).

6:17 “You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God” See note at 6:3. This continual emphasis on obedience (see note at 5:1) is overwhelming and sets the stage for the covenant relationship. All of God’s covenants with mankind are initiated by Him unconditionally, but they must respond conditionally (cf. 5:32, 33; 6:1, 2, 3, 17, 24, 25).

▣ **“the commandments. . .His testimonies and His statutes”** See Special Topic at 4:1.

6:18 There are three terms that qualify Israel experiences:

1. “you shall do what is right” - VERB, BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT, “do”
 - a. “right” - BDB 449 means “right” or “pleasing,” cf. Exod. 15:26; Deut. 6:18; 12:25,28; 13:18; 21:9
 - b. “good” - BDB 373 II, used twice, “what is pleasing,” cf. Gen. 16:6; Deut. 12:28 (BDB 375 III, v. 24)
2. “that it may be well with you” - BDB 405, KB 408, *Qal* IMPERFECT, “be good,” cf. 4:40; 5:16,29,33; 6:3,18; 12:25,28; 22:7

Notice that all three are found in 12:25,28. If Israel keeps the covenant requirements, YHWH will bring prosperity and longevity!

6:19 “by driving out all your enemies from before you” God gave them the Promised Land (“by driving out,” BDB 213, KB 239, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. Gen. 15:16-21). He gave them military victory, but Israel still had to prepare for battle and go out and fight. This is probably a good combination to show the provision of God and the necessary faithful covenantal response (cf. Josh. 1-12).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 6:20-25

²⁰“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What *do* the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments *mean* which the LORD our God commanded you?’ ²¹then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt; and the LORD brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand. ²²Moreover, the LORD showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household; ²³and He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.’ ²⁴So the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God for our good always and for our survival, as *it is* today. ²⁵And it will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the LORD our God, just as He commanded us.”

6:20 This is the continuing emphasis on the spiritual, covenantal training of the children (see full note at 4:10).

The unusual aspect of this context (i.e., vv. 20-33) is that the eyewitnesses were dead and their descendants were telling the story. Therefore, this may have become a liturgical formula (i.e., “when your children ask. . .you shall say. . .,” Exod. 12:26,27; 13:14-15; Deut. 6:20-25; Josh. 4:6-7,21-24).

It is possible that 6:20-24 is one of several passages that recite Israel’s faith journey with YHWH, from the call of Abraham to the Exodus-Conquest (cf. 26:5-9; Josh. 24:2-13; Psalm 77; 78; 105; 136).

6:21 “with a mighty hand” See note at 4:34.

6:22 This is referring to the ten plagues of Egypt. Each one of the plagues was a judgment against one of the Egyptian gods. Apparently these plagues spanned a period of about eighteen months, if one assumes there was some degree of natural phenomena involved. God could have delivered them much faster but it is my personal belief that He was working with the Egyptians' faith as well as that of the Hebrews. The mixed multitude which left Egypt contained some believing Egyptians.

6:24 This verse expresses the benefits to Israel for obedience to God's commandments (1) for their good (BDB 375 III, cf. v. 18) always and (2) for their survival (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) as a people (e.g., 4:1; 8:1; 30:16,19).



NASB, NKJV,

TEV "always"

NRSV "lasting"

NJB "for ever"

This is literally a construct "all" (BDB 481) and "days" (BDB 398) used as a metaphor for permanence (cf. 5:29; 28:33; Gen. 6:5; Ps. 52:1, see Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 316).

6:25 "And it will be righteousness for us" As Abraham's initial faith/belief and subsequent obedience was accepted by YHWH (cf. Gen. 15:6) as "righteousness," so too, covenant obedience on the part of Israel (cf. 24:13). See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1:16.

▣ **"if we are careful to observe all of this commandment"** Notice the repeated conditional nature of these promises:

1. "if we are careful" - BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 4:6,9,40; 5:1,10,12,29,32; 6:2,3,17(twice)
2. "to observe" - BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* INFINITIVE, cf. 4:6; 5:1,15,27,32; 6:1,3,18,24,25. See note at 5:1.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How is chapter 6 related to the Ten Commandments?
2. Why is there such an emphasis on obedience to the covenant?
3. What is the significance of Deut. 6:4-6 and how does it relate to polytheism, henotheism and monotheism?
4. What is the responsibility of believing parents toward their children?
5. Explain the etymology and the Biblical use of the term "righteousness" in both its OT and NT focus.

DEUTERONOMY 7

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Chosen People 7:1-5 7:6-11	Life in Canaan 7:1-6 7:7-11	The Lord's Own People 7:1-6 7:7-11	Israel a People Apart 7:1-6 God's Election and His Favour 7:7-11
Blessings of Obedience 7:12-16	7:12-16	The Blessing of Obedience 7:12-16	7:12-15 7:16 The Power of Yahweh
7:17-26	7:17-26	7:17-26	7:17-20 7:21-24 7:25-26

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:1-5

¹"When the LORD your God shall bring you into the land where you are entering to possess it, and shall clear away many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and

stronger than you,² and when the LORD your God shall deliver them before you, and you shall defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.³ Furthermore, you shall not intermarry with them; you shall not give your daughters to their sons, nor shall you take their daughters for your sons.⁴ For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will quickly destroy you.⁵ But thus you shall do to them: you shall tear down their altars, and smash their *sacred* pillars, and hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire."

7:1 “Hittites” See Special Topic: Pre-Israelite Inhabitants of Canaan at 1:4.

▣ **“seven nations”** The lists of nations vary from 10, 7, 5, 3, or 1 (i.e. Canaanite or Amorite).

7:1-5 There are several VERBS used to mandate Israel’s response to the tribal groups living in Canaan:

1. “shall clear away” - v. 1, BDB 675, KB 730, *Qal* PERFECT, literally it means “to drop off,” cf. II Kgs. 16:6; here, metaphorically, “clear away,” cf. v. 2.
2. “God shall deliver them before you” - v. 2, BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. v. 23; Num. 21:3 and God will do this to Israel because of her sin in I Kgs. 14:16
3. “you shall defeat them” - v. 2, BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* PERFECT, “smite,” cf. Exod. 9:25; 21:20
4. “utterly destroy” - v. 2, BDB 355, KB 353, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, cf. 2:34; 3:6(twice); 7:2(twice)
5. “make no covenant” - v. 2, BDB 503, KB 500, *Qal* IMPERFECT, “cut no covenant,” cf. Exod. 23:32; 34:12
6. “show them no favor” - v. 2, BDB 335, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. v. 16; 13:8
7. “you shall not intermarry” - v. 3, BDB 368, KB 364, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT, literally “not to be son-in-law,” cf. Gen. 34:9; Josh. 23:12
8. “you shall tear down their altars” - v. 5, BDB 683, KB 736, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 12:3; Exod. 34:13(23:24); II Kgs. 23:12; II Chr. 31:1
9. “smash their *sacred* pillars” - v. 5, BDB 990, KB 1402, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. II Kgs. 11:18, phallic stone symbols of the male fertility god, *Ba’al*, cf. II Chr. 31:1
10. “hew down their Asherim” - v. 5, BDB 154, KB 180, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. v. 25; 12:3; II Chr. 14:3; 31:1; 34:4,7
11. “burn their graven images” - v. 5, BDB 976, KB 1358, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. I Chr. 14:12 in Micah 1:7, the cultic items of idolatry are burned

7:2 “utterly destroy them” This is the word *herem* (BDB 355, KB 353, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE) It meant that something was dedicated to God for destruction. The NT word for this concept is *corban*. It is related to the idea of holiness or something being set apart for God’s use. Since something was so holy it could not be used by human beings, the only way to assure its non-use was to destroy it. So, within the bounds of Israel, when cities were taken, the men, and sometimes women, children, and animals were also killed. To moderns this seems very cruel, but it was a common practice in that day. A good example of this would be Jericho in Joshua 6 or Lachish in Josh. 10:28,35. Genesis 15:16; Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:13 state the theological reason for the complete destruction of the Canaanites.

▣ **“make no covenant with them”** Joshua 9 gives us one historical example of the Israelites’ failure to keep this commandment.



NASB “show no favor to them”
NKJV “nor show mercy to them”
NRSV “show them no mercy”
TEV “do not. . .show them any mercy”
NJB “not. . .show them any pity”

The negated VERB (BDB 335 I, KB 334, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “show favor” or “be gracious.” However, Israel does not have this option (cf. v. 16; 13:11-16; 19:13,21; 25:12). Mercy would pollute the land with evil; mercy would forgive what YHWH would not!

7:3 “you shall not intermarry with them” This has no racial overtones at all; it was for religious reasons (cf. Exod. 34:12-17). The major passages regarding this are in Ezra 10 and Nehemiah 13. God did not want His people to marry the Canaanites because of their idolatry, which would pull their heart away from Him and corrupt His revelation of Himself to the world.

7:4 “For they will turn your sons away from following Me” See Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:13. This is where the modern Jewish concept of the mother being the key to one’s legal Jewish standing originated.

7:5 “tear down. . .smash. . .hew down. . .burn” See full list at 7:1-5.

▣ “Asherim” The KJV translation has “groves.” The literal meaning was “wooden symbols of a female deity” (BDB 81). This was a wooden pole which was planted beside the raised stone pillar of Baal, the male fertility god. Asherah or Astartes was the female consort and was represented by this wooden pole. It is uncertain if they were live trees or carved stakes.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:6-11

“For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments; ¹⁰but repays those who hate Him to their faces, to destroy them; He will not delay with him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face. ¹¹Therefore, you shall keep the commandment and the statutes and the judgments which I am commanding you today, to do them.”

7:6 “holy people. . .God has chosen you” OT election (i.e., “chosen” - BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal*, PERFECT) was for service, which did not always involve salvation (cf. Cyrus in Isa. 44:28; 45:1). “Chosen,” like “holy,” had more to do with their relationship to YHWH than personal piety, like the NT use of “saint” for believers. God chose Israel to choose a nation to choose a world (cf. Exod. 19:5-6). He wants a “holy people” (BDB 872) to show the world His character and desire to know them. But, even within that nation, it was always an individual act of faith that made a person right with God, not simply being a part of the covenant community (cf. Ezekiel 18). The covenant community was made up of individuals who submitted themselves, by faith, to the Law of God. It was made up of more than just Jews; the stranger in their midst,

the alien in their land, and the foreign slaves in the home were all graciously adopted and were allowed to partake of the covenant of election (cf. Exod. 12:38).



NASB	“own possession”
NKJV, NASB Footnote	“a special treasure”
NRSV, NIV	“treasured possession”
TEV	-----
NJB	“His treasured people”
JPSOA, REB	“special possession”
NET Bible	“prized”

This is literally “a people for possession” (BDB 766 I and 688, cf. Exod. 19:5) or “a special treasure.” The word means valued property, used metaphorically of God’s covenant people (cf. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Ps. 135:4; Titus 2:14; I Pet. 2:9). Maybe today we would say Israel was YHWH’s crown jewel (i.e., for spreading His knowledge and revelation to all the nations). See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 4:6.

7:7 “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples” The initial VERB (BDB 365 I, KB 362, *Qal* PERFECT) means “to press together” or “bind,” cf. 10:15 (different word for love [cf. v. 8], but same truth in 4:37) and possibly Isa. 38:17. The VERB is used for desire in Gen. 34:8; Deut. 21:11).

This verse accentuates the unmerited, undeserved mercy, grace, and love of God! See Special Topic: YHWH’s Grace Acts to Israel at 9:4-6. As a matter of fact, Israel was difficult to love because of her stiffnecked stubbornness (cf. 9:6,13; 31:27). God’s grace is displayed even more clearly because of Israel’s rebellion!

7:8 “because the LORD loved you” Many times the OT stresses that God will fulfill His promises to their forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Genesis 12, 15, 18, 26, 28). But here God shows that He did it because He loves this generation, too!

▣ **“brought you out”** The VERB (BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is very common and used in many senses (examples from Deuteronomy):

1. literal
 - a. an army came out for battle, 1:44; 2:32; 3:1; 20:1,10; 24:5; 29:7
 - b. water from spring, 8:7
 - c. left, 9:7; 16:3,6
 - d. field’s produce, 14:22; 28:38
 - e. produce the pledge, 24:11
2. metaphorical
 - a. parallel to deliver, 1:27; 4:20; 5:6,15, etc.
 - b. place of origin, 2:23
 - c. parallel to redeem, 7:8
 - d. slander or bad name, 22:14
 - e. to give in marriage, 22:19; 24:2
 - f. daily life, 28:6,19; 33:18
 - g. lead, 31:2

Only context can determine the appropriate meaning. This is true of all words!

▣ **“redeemed”** This VERB (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “to buy with a price.” It was used of buying or purchasing (1) the firstborn (cf. Exod. 13:1-22; Num. 18:15-17) and the Levites (Num. 3:44-51) or (2) a slave (cf. 15:15; 24:18, i.e., Israel).

SPECIAL TOPIC: RANSOM/REDEEM

I. OLD TESTAMENT

A. There are primarily two Hebrew legal terms which convey this concept:

1. *Ga'al*, which basically means “to free” by means of a price paid. A form of the term *go'el* adds to the concept a personal intermediary, usually a family member (i.e., kinsman redeemer). This cultural aspect of the right to buy back objects, animals, land (cf. Lev. 25,27), or relatives (cf. Ruth 4:15; Isa. 29:22) is transferred theologically to YHWH's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (cf. Exod. 6:6; 15:13; Ps. 74:2; 77:15; Jer. 31:11). He becomes “the redeemer” (cf. Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Prov. 23:1; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 44:6,24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7,26; 54:5,8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; Jer. 50:34).
2. *Padah*, which basically means “to deliver” or “to rescue”
 - a. the redemption of the first born, Exod. 13:13,14 and Num. 18:15-17
 - b. Physical redemption is contrasted with spiritual redemption, Ps. 49:7,8,15
 - c. YHWH will redeem Israel from sin and rebellion, Ps. 130:7-8

B. The theological concept involves three related items:

1. There is a need, a bondage, a forfeiting, an imprisonment.
 - a. physical
 - b. social
 - c. spiritual (cf. Ps. 130:8)
2. A price must be paid for freedom, release, and restoration:
 - a. of the nation, Israel (cf. Deut. 7:8)
 - b. of the individual (cf. Job 19:25-27; 33:28)
3. Someone must act as intermediary and benefactor. In *ga'al* this one is usually a family member or near kin (i.e., *go'el*).
4. YHWH often describes Himself in familial terms:
 - a. father
 - b. husband
 - c. near kin

Redemption was secured through YHWH's personal agency; a price was paid, and redemption was achieved!

II. NEW TESTAMENT

A. There are several terms used to convey the theological concept:

1. *Agoraz* (cf. I Cor. 6:20; 7:23; II Pet. 2:1; Rev. 5:9; 14:34). This is a commercial term which reflects a price paid for something. We are blood-bought people who do not control our own lives. We belong to Christ.
2. *Exagoraz* (cf. Gal. 3:13; 4:5; Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). This is also a commercial term. It reflects Jesus' substitutionary death on our behalf. Jesus bore the “curse” of a performance-based law (i.e., Mosaic Law), which sinful humans could not accomplish. He bore the curse (cf. Deut. 21:23) for us all! In Jesus, God's justice and love merge into full forgiveness, acceptance, and access!

3. *Lu* , “to set free”
 - a. *Lutron*, “a price paid” (cf. Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). These are powerful words from Jesus’ own mouth concerning the purpose of His coming, to be the Savior of the world by paying a sin-debt He did not owe (cf. John 1:29).
 - b. *Lutro* , “to release”
 - (1) to redeem Israel, Luke 24:21
 - (2) to give Himself to redeem and purify a people, Titus 2:14
 - (3) to be a sinless substitute, I Pet. 1:18-19
 - c. *Lutr sis*, “redemption, deliverance, or liberation”
 - (1) Zacharias’ prophecy about Jesus, Luke 1:68
 - (2) Anna’s praise to God for Jesus, Luke 2:38
 - (3) Jesus’ better, once offered sacrifice, Heb. 9:12
 4. *Apolytr sis*
 - a. redemption at the Second Coming (cf. Acts 3:19-21)

(1) Luke 21:28	(3) Ephesians 1:14; 4:30
(2) Romans 8:23	(4) Hebrews 9:15
 - b. redemption in Christ’s death

(1) Romans 3:24	(3) Ephesians 1:7
(2) I Corinthians 1:30	(4) Colossians 1:14
 5. *Antilytron* (cf. I Tim. 2:6). This is a crucial text (as is Titus 2:14), which links release to Jesus’ substitutionary death on the cross. He is the one and only acceptable sacrifice; the one who dies for “all” (cf. John 1:29; 3:16-17; 4:42; I Tim. 2:4; 4:10; Titus 2:11; II Pet. 3:9; I John 2:2; 4:14).
- B. The theological concept in the NT implies:
- a. mankind is enslaved to sin (cf. John 8:34; Rom. 3:10-18; 6:23).
 - b. mankind’s bondage to sin has been revealed by the OT Mosaic Law (cf. Gal. 3) and Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matt. 5-7). Human performance has become a death sentence (cf. Col. 2:14).
 - c. Jesus, the sinless lamb of God, has come and died in our place (cf. John 1:29; II Cor. 5:21). We have been purchased from sin so that we might serve God (cf. Rom. 6).
 - d. By implication both YHWH and Jesus are “near kin” who act on our behalf. This continues the familial metaphors (i.e., father, husband, son, brother, near kin).
 - e. Redemption was not a price paid to Satan (i.e., medieval theology), but the reconciliation of God’s word and God’s justice with God’s love and full provision in Christ. At the cross peace was restored, human rebellion was forgiven, the image of God in mankind is now fully functional again in intimate fellowship!
 - f. There is still a future aspect of redemption (cf. Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), which involves our resurrection bodies and physical intimacy with the Triune God.

7:9 “Know” See full note at 4:35.

- ▣ Notice what the Israelites were to “know” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) about God:
1. “LORD your God He is God” - all NOUNS, cf. 4:35,39 with the DEFINITE ARTICLE before the last *Elohim*
 2. “the faithful God” - BDB 52, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. Isa. 49:7. This is a major theological assertion (cf. Psalm 89)! It is defined by the next two items.
 3. “who keeps His covenant” - VERB, BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. v. 12; Gen. 28:15,20; Josh. 24:17; Ps. 146:6
 4. “and His lovingkindness” - NOUN, BDB 338, cf. vv. 9,12; I Kgs. 8:23; II Chr. 6:14; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4

In light of this they were to:

1. love Him, v. 9, BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE (cf. 6:5; 7:13; 11:1,13,22; 13:3). See full note at 5:10.
2. keep His commandments, v. 9, BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE. See note at 5:1.

Notice the balance between God’s faithfulness and Israel’s faithfulness! The blessing from a loving, obedient personal relationship with YHWH flowed to the “thousandth generation. Thousand is a metaphor for great abundance, not always literal (cf. Ps. 90:4; Rev. 20:2,3,4,7). See note at 5:9.

▣ “the faithful God” See Special Topic at 1:32.

7:10-11 Notice YHWH’s response to those who “hate Him” - BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. 5:9; Exod. 20:5; Num. 10:35; II Chr. 19:2; Ps. 68:1; 81:15; 83:2; 139:21:

1. “destroy them” - BDB 1, KB 2, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. “repay him to his face” - BDB 1022, KB 1532, *Piel* IMPERFECT, means “recompense,” “requite,” cf. Jer. 51:24

7:11 “the commandment and the statutes and the judgments” See Special Topic at 4:1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:12-16

¹²“Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. ¹³And He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your forefathers to give you. ¹⁴You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall be no male or female barren among you or among your cattle. ¹⁵And the LORD will remove from you all sickness; and He will not put on you any of the harmful diseases of Egypt which you have known, but He will lay them on all who hate you. ¹⁶And you shall consume all the peoples whom the LORD your God will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that *would be* a snare to you.”

7:12 Notice the reciprocal relationship (i.e., mutual covenant responsibilities). Notice that “His covenant” and “His lovingkindness” are parallel.

7:13-15 Notice the covenantal blessings of YHWH:

1. love you
2. bless you
3. multiply you
4. bless your children

5. bless your crops
 - a. grain
 - b. new wine
 - c. oil
6. bless your herds
7. no barrenness (cf. Exod. 23:26)
 - a. human (cf. Gen. 11:30; 16:1; 25:21; 29:31)
 - b. cattle (cf. 28:4; 30:9)
8. no sickness (rare term used only here and 28:10)
9. defeat your enemies

These abundant blessings (cf. Exod. 23:25-26) are also clearly set out in Deuteronomy 28, but they are surrounded by the consequences of disobedience (cf. Deuteronomy 27 and 28:15-58). The conditional nature of Moses' covenant is clear. The rest of Israel's history can be understood in light of Deuteronomy 27-29. God's promises and blessings are only available to a faithful, trusting, obedient Israel. Israel was never able to sustain this level of performance, thus the need for a new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38; Galatians 3), which is based on YHWH's actions.

All OT loving followers of Jesus pray for and expect an end-time revival (cf. Romans 9-11). But it must be stated clearly, without Jesus there is no covenant hope (cf. John 14:6; 1:12; 3:16; 20:31).

7:16 “snare” The Canaanite gods must be completely avoided lest they become a snare (BDB 430, cf. Exod. 23:33; Num. 33:55; Josh. 23:13; Jdgs. 2:3; 8:27; Ps. 106:36), which is literally “a baited animal trap”!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 7:17-26

¹⁷“If you should say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?’
¹⁸you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: ¹⁹the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. ²⁰Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish. ²¹You shall not dread them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God. ²²And the LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you. ²³But the LORD your God shall deliver them before you, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. ²⁴And He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you shall make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them. ²⁵The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. ²⁶And you shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned.”

7:17 “If you should say in your heart” This is a Hebrew idiom for “if you are thinking or doubting” (cf. v. 21; 9:23; Ps. 95:8). The whole point of this paragraph is to encourage Israel:

1. by YHWH's actions against Egypt (i.e., the plagues), vv. 18-19
2. by YHWH's promised actions against Canaan (i.e., hornets), vv. 20-24

7:18 “you shall well remember” This VERB (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used often for emphasis (cf. 5:15; 7:2[twice]; 8:18; 9:7,27; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:9,18,22; 25:17;

32:7). Believers must take the backward look to see the present hand of God. As He was in the past, so He will be (“to those who love Him and keep His commandments). YHWH has acted and will act in history on behalf of His people!

7:19 Notice the words to describe YHWH’s redemptive acts in Egypt:

1. “the great trials” BDB 152 and 650 II, cf. 4:34; 29:3 (this same root [III] is used for Israel “testing” YHWH during the wilderness wandering period, cf. 6:16, 9:22)
2. “the signs” BDB 16, cf. 4:34; 7:19; 26:8; 29:2; 34:11; Ps. 28:43; 105:27; 135:9
3. “the wonders” BDB 68, cf. 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 34:11; Ps. 78:43; 105:27; 135:9
4. “the mighty hand” BDB 305 and 388, cf. 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 7:8,19; 9:26; 11:2; 26:8; 34:12, see note at 4:34
5. “the outstretched arm” BDB 283 and 639 (*Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE), cf. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 9:29; 11:2; 26:8

I have just shown the parallels in Deuteronomy. They also appear in Exodus. The redemptive acts of YHWH are Israel’s great hope! They are the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 15:12-21). They are the inauguration of the national covenant.

7:20 “God will send the hornet” There are two possible meanings for “hornets” (BDB 864): (1) it is either figurative (cf. Deut. 1:44, which described an army as a swarm of bees) or (2) literal (cf. Exod. 23:28; Josh. 24:12, where hornets were sent by God to defeat foreign armies). God shows His people that He is fighting on their behalf!

7:21 “You shall not dread them” This VERB (BDB 791, KB 888, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is repeated several times (cf. 1:29; 7:21; 20:3; 31:6; Josh. 1:9).

▣ **“the LORD your God is in your midst”** This is a marvelous truth. The transcendent God, the Holy One, dwells with His people (cf. Exod. 29:45; Num. 5:3; 35:34). This is what *Emmanuel* means (cf. Isa. 7:14; 8:8,10).

▣ **“a great and awesome God”** This phrase is made up of:

1. an ADJECTIVE - “great” BDB 42
2. a *Niphal* PARTICIPLE - “terrible” BDB 431, KB 432

This description of YHWH (using *Niphal* stem) is also found in 10:17; Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32; Dan. 9:4.

7:22 This verse shows the balance between the power of YHWH (i.e., “clear away” BDB 675, KB 730, *Qal* PERFECT) and human limits:

1. “you will not be able to put an end to them quickly”
2. “lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you”

7:23 God’s actions are described as:

1. “the LORD your God will send the hornet against them,” v. 20
2. “the LORD your God. . . will throw them into great confusion, v. 23 (NOUN and VERB from same root), v. 23, cf. Exod. 23:27 (this is the vocabulary of holy war)
3. “He will deliver their kings into your hand,” v. 24

7:24 “you shall make their name perish from under heaven” The VERB (BDB 1, KB 2, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used here in an idiom of complete and total destruction and death so that there are no descendants (i.e., holy war).

▣ **“no man will be able to stand before you”** This is a Hebrew idiom for military confrontation (i.e., two armies, cf. 11:25; Josh. 1:5; 10:8; 23:9).

7:25-26 These verses describe how Israel was to treat the Canaanite idols (i.e., “graven images” (BDB 820 CONSTRUCT 43; see fuller note at 12:3):

1. “burn with fire” - BDB 976, KB 1358, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. vv. 5,25; 12:3
2. “shall not covet the silver or the gold”
 - a. do not take it into your house, vv. 25,26
 - b. lest you be snared (BDB 430) by it
 - c. it is an abomination (BDB 1072, cf. 12:3)
 - d. it is under the ban (i.e., “an accursed thing,” BDB 214)
 - e. you shall utterly detest (BDB 1055, both VERB and NOUN), abhor (BDB 1073) it

7:26 “something banned” This is related to the word *herem*, which meant “dedicated to God for total destruction.” This is usually translated “under the ban.” Any secular use of an object under the ban would be to profane it, therefore, it was to be totally destroyed.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why was God taking one nation’s land and giving it to another nation?
2. Does the Bible say, “No!” to interracial marriages?
3. What does it mean that God chose Israel as a special people?

DEUTERONOMY 8

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Remember the LORD Your God	The Temptation to Pride and Self-Sufficiency	A Good Land to be Possessed	The Ordeal in the Desert
8:1-10	8:1-10	8:1-10	8:1-4 8:5-6 The Promised Land and Its Temptations
		Warning Against Forgetting the LORD	8:7-10
8:11-20	8:11-20	8:11-20	8:11-16 8:17-20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:1-10

¹All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore *to give* to your forefathers. ²And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. ³And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of

the mouth of the LORD. ⁴Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. ⁵Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. ⁶Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. ⁷For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; ⁸a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; ⁹a land where you shall eat food without scarcity, in which you shall not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. ¹⁰When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you."

8:1 "All the commandments that I am commanding you today" Notice the NOUN (BDB 846, see Special Topic at 4:1) and VERB (BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) are COGNATE (from the same root).

▣ "you shall be careful to do" The VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT, see note at 6:12) is used often in Deuteronomy (cf. *Qal*, 4:2,6,9,40; 5:1,10,12,29,32; 6:2,3,17[twice],25; 7:8,9,11,12[twice]; 8:1,2,6,11; 10:13; 11:1,8,22[twice],32; *Niphal* 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 6:12; 8:11; 11:16). This verse shows that a loving covenant relationship and obedience are God's way of blessing humanity and fulfilling His promises (cf. vv. 2,6,16, 18; 4:1).

▣ "possess the land" See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: POSSESS THE LAND

This VERB (BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* PERFECT) is used repeatedly in connection with:

1. YHWH's promise/oath to the Patriarchs (cf. 1:8; 10:11)
2. Israel acting on these promises and invading the land (cf. 2:24; 3:18-20)
3. It parallels "inheritance" (3:28)
4. Israel must obey the covenant so as to maintain possession of the land (cf. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 8:1; 11:8-9,26-32)

8:2 "remember" This VERB (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 5:15; 7:18[twice]; 8:2,18; 9:7,27; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:9,18,22; 25:17; 32:7), "remember," is used in two ways in the OT. It is covenant humanity's requirement to remember God's acts and His laws. This was a Hebrew idiom, "keep God as priority." It is humanity's request that God not remember our sins.

▣ "in the wilderness" Israel (i.e., her rabbis) looked back on the wilderness wandering period as the "honeymoon" between YHWH and Israel. God was never closer to His people than during this trying time because they had to depend on Him for everything. Now they were going to have abundance and blessings in the Promised Land. God was warning them to continue to depend on Him because He was and is the source of all things (cf. v. 18).

▣ "forty years" This number was often used in a figurative way to designate a long period of time, longer than a lunar cycle (i.e., 28 days). However, at other times it was literal. It is often difficult to know which to choose without other historical or Scriptural information. The wilderness wandering period lasted about 38 years.

▣ **“He might humble you, testing you”** Notice the sequence:

1. CONJUNCTION, “in order that” (BDB 775)
2. three *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS:
 - a. “to humble” (BDB 776, KB 853, cf. vv. 2,3,16)
 - b. “to test” (BDB 650, KB 702, cf. v. 16)
 - c. “to know” (BDB 393, KB 390, cf. vv. 2[*twice*],3[*thrice*],5,16)

God tests (BDB 650, KB 702, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, v. 16; 13:3; Jdgs. 2:22; 3:1,4) us with a view toward strengthening our faith (e.g., Gen. 22:1; Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3; Jdgs. 2:22; II Chr. 32:31 and Matt. 4:1; Heb. 12:5-13). If we are a child of God we will be tested! We are usually tested in the area of our life that is priority to us. Testing is meant to make us more like Christ.

The term “humble” (BDB 776, KB 853, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is used in vv. 2,3,16. The OT only calls Moses humble (cf. Num. 12:3; and many times in the Psalms) and the NT calls Jesus humble (cf. Matt. 11:29). God desires a humble and trusting attitude in His people (e.g., 10:3; Ezra 8:21).

The term “heart” is used figuratively of our motives (cf. v. 2,5,14, and 17). See Special Topic at 2:30.

SPECIAL TOPIC: GOD TESTS HIS PEOPLE

The term “test” (BDB 650, KB 702, *Piel* PERFECT) is used in the sense of “to try.” It is used in the sense of bringing someone to the place whereby they recognize and act on their own stated priorities. It is obvious from Genesis 12 through 22 that God is presenting Abraham with a series of situations (the rabbis say ten) in order to focus his love and trust into God and God alone. These tests were not so much for God’s sake, but for Abraham’s sake and his understanding of the God who called him out of Ur of the Chaldees. Abraham is asked to give up family, home, friends, inheritance, tradition and even the future (his promised son) to follow God by faith. God tests all of His children in the area of their priority (cf. Matt. 4:1ff; Heb. 5:8; 12:5-13).

God tests (BDB 650) in order to know (BDB 393). Israel often tested God by their disobedience and God proved to be true to His word. Now God will give Israel and her people a chance to demonstrate their spoken allegiance and faith.

1. God tested His people corporately
 - a. Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20
 - b. Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3
 - c. Jdgs. 2:22; 3:1,4
2. God tested individual Israelites
 - a. Abraham, Gen. 12:1-12
 - b. Hezekiah, II Chr. 32:31
3. The Psalm writers cry out for God to test them so as to remove any hidden flaws (cf. 26:2; 139:23)
4. The NT people of God are equally tested, as was Jesus (Matthew 4; Luke 4; Heb. 5:8).

8:3 “manna” This (BDB 577 I, the people called it “manna” [Exod. 16:31] from the question of Exod. 16:15, “What is it?” Moses called it “bread from heaven,” Exod. 16:4) was God’s special provision of food during the wilderness wandering period. It is described in Exod. 16:4, 14-15; 31; Num. 11:7-8, but its exact substance is unknown to us (BDB says it was known to Bedouins in the Sinai and that it was strictly a juice from a certain twig, but this does not fit the biblical description). God provided what they needed for each day, not for a long period of time so the people would learn to trust Him for their daily needs. He does this for new covenant believers also (cf. Matt. 6:11).

▣ **“know”** This (BDB 393, KB 390) root is used three times in this verse (see full note at 4:35):

1. “which you did not know” - *Qal* PERFECT
2. “nor did your fathers know” - *Qal* PERFECT
3. “that He might make you understand” - *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

Also notice other places in this chapter:

- v. 2 “to know” - *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
- v. 5 “to know” - *Qal* PERFECT
- v. 16 repeat of #2

▣ **“that man does not live by bread alone”** This is one of the passages Jesus quoted to Satan in His temptation experience (cf. Matt. 4:14; Luke 4:4). Humans need a personal, trusting relationship with God more than anything (e.g., Ps. 42:1-4; 63:1; 143:6, Augustine said there is a god-shaped hole in every person)! The physical is not enough for authentic life (i.e., “by everything that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD”).

8:4 “Your clothing did not wear out on you” Both Rashi (Jewish commentator of the Middle Ages) and Justin Martyr (early church father) asserted that the children’s clothing grew as they grew and never wore out (cf. Deut. 29:5 adds neither did their sandals; Neh. 9:21)! What a wonderful expression of God’s care for every need.

▣ **“nor did your foot swell”** This is a rare Hebrew VERB (BDB 130, KB 148, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Neh. 9:21) that means “swell.” The same root as a NOUN refers to bread rising. This asserts that their physical bodies were also strengthened to withstand the long, hard journey.

8:5 “God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son” Here is the specific analogy of YHWH as a loving father (cf. Pro. 3:15). He disciplines us for our own good (Heb. 12:5-13). See Special Topic at 2:15. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: FATHERHOOD OF GOD

I. Old Testament

A. There is a sense that God is father by means of creation:

1. Gen. 1:26-27
2. Mal. 2:10
3. Acts 17:28

B. Father is an analogy used in several senses:

1. father of Israel (by election)
 - a. “Son” - Exod. 4:22; Deut. 14:1; 39:5; Isa. 1:2; 63:16; 64:8; Jer. 3:19; 31:20; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; Mal. 1:6
 - b. “firstborn” - Exod. 4:22; Jer. 31:9
2. father of the king of Israel (Messianic)
 - a. II Sam. 7:11-16
 - b. Ps. 2:7; Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5; 5:5
 - c. Hosea 11:1; Matt. 2:15
3. analogy of loving parent
 - a. father (metaphor)

- (1) carries his son - Deut. 1:31
- (2) disciplines - Deut. 8:5; Pro. 3:12
- (3) provision (i.e., Exodus) - Deut. 32:6
- (4) will never forsake - Ps. 27:10
- (5) loves - Ps. 103:13
- (6) friend/guide - Jer. 3:4
- (7) healer/forgiver - Jer. 3:22
- (8) mercy giver - Jer. 31:20
- (9) trainer - Hosea 11:1-4
- (10) special son - Mal. 3:17
- b. mother (metaphor)
 - (1) will never forsake - Ps. 27:10
 - (2) love of a nursing mother - Isa. 49:15; 66:9-13 and Hosea 11:4 (with the proposed textual emendation of “yoke” to “infant”)

II. New Testament

A. The Trinity (texts where all three are mentioned)

- 1. Gospels
 - a. Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19
 - b. John 14:26
- 2. Paul
 - a. Rom. 1:4-5; 5:1,5; 8:1-4,8-10
 - b. I Cor. 2:8-10; 12:4-6
 - c. II Cor. 1:21; 13:14
 - d. Gal. 4:4-6
 - e. Eph. 1:3-14,17; 2:18; 3:14-17; 4:4-6
 - f. I Thess. 1:2-5
 - g. II Thess. 2:13
 - h. Titus 3:4-6
- 3. Peter - I Pet. 1:2
- 4. Jude - vv. 20-21

B. Jesus

- 1. Jesus as “only begotten” - John 1:18; 3:16,18; I John 4:9
- 2. Jesus as “Son of God” - Matt. 4:3; 14:33; 16:16; Luke 1:32,35; John 1:34,49; 6:69; 11:27
- 3. Jesus as Beloved Son - Matt. 3:17; 17:5
- 4. Jesus’ use of *Abba* for God - Mark 14:36
- 5. Jesus’ use of PRONOUNS to show both His and our relationship to God
 - a. “My Father,” e.g., John 5:18; 10:30,33; 19:7; 20:17
 - b. “your Father,” e.g., Matt. 6:9,14,26
 - c. “our Father,” e.g., Matt. 6:9,14,26

C. One of many family metaphors to describe the intimate relationship between God and humankind:

- 1. God as Father

- | | |
|------------------|------------------|
| 2. Believers as: | |
| a. sons of God | e. adopted |
| b. children | f. brought forth |
| c. born of God | g. family of God |
| d. born again | |

8:6 “to walk in His ways” This is a common biblical metaphor for lifestyle (e.g., 5:33; 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16). God wants us to live for Him every day. Biblical faith is not a creed, nor a sacramental act, nor a memory lesson nor a systematic theology, but a daily relationship with God.

▣ **“to fear Him”** This *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT is parallel to “to walk.” This is the concept of awe and respect (cf. 4:10; 5:29; 6:2,13,24; 7:19; 8:6; 10:12,20; 13:4; 14:23; 17:19; 31:12-13).

8:7-10 This is an emphasis on the value of water to an agricultural society and the fruitfulness of the soil of the Promised Land. In the ancient documents of Mesopotamia, Palestine was known as “the land flowing with milk and honey” (cf. Exod. 3:8,17; 13:5; 33:3; Deut. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9; 27:3; 31:20). It also had tremendous mineral deposits, v. 9. God’s blessings on Israel were meant to create a grateful response (cf. v.10). God wants us to enjoy His creation but to remember that He gave it to us.

8:10 The first part of this verse is the source of the rabbinical mandate to pray after one has eaten. This type of non-contextual literalism, though pious, has nothing to do with “authorial intent”!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 8:11-20

¹¹“Beware lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; ¹²lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived *in them*, ¹³and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, ¹⁴then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹⁵He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, *with its* fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. ¹⁶In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. ¹⁷Otherwise, you may say in your heart, ‘My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.’ ¹⁸But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day. ¹⁹And it shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God, and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you shall surely perish. ²⁰Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God.”

8:11 “Beware” This VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 5:12; ;8:6; 11:8; 16:1) is translated “keep,” “observe,” “carefully to do” (see note at 6:12). It is a call to obedience.

▣ **“forget”** This VERB (BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 4:9,23,31; 6:12; 8:11,14,19[twice]; 9:7; 25:19) is the opposite of “remember” (cf. 5:15; 7:18; 8:2,18; 9:7,27; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:9,18; 25:17; 32:7). This is the tendency of satisfied, fallen man, even religious man. When we forget God’s blessing we deceive

ourselves into thinking that we did it ourselves by our own resources! The Giver must be priority, not the gift (cf. Ps. 103:20)!

▣ **“the LORD your God”** Notice they are to remember God and the proper way to do that is obedience (cf. Luke 6:46). For the names of deity, see Special Topic at 1:3.

▣ **“His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes”** See Special Topic: Terms for God’s Revelation at 4:1.

8:13 “multiply” This VERB (BDB 915, KB 1176, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is repeated three times to show different categories of God’s blessings.

8:15 “fiery serpents” It is uncertain if they (ADJECTIVE, BDB 977 I and NOUN BDB 638) have this name because of their color (from VERB) or the pain (from poison) of their bite (cf. Numbers 21).

▣ **“He brought water for you out of the rock of flint”** This event is recorded in Exod. 17:6 and again in Num. 20:11. Paul, in I Cor. 10:4, says this rock was a symbol of God’s Messianic provision.

8:16 YHWH tests so as to bless (e.g., Abraham in Genesis 22; Israel in Exod. 20:20; manna in Exod. 16:4). Testing (BDB 650, KB 702) even becomes a prayer in Ps. 26:2 and in different terms, but same thought, in Ps. 139:1,23.

8:17 “My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth” Watch out for self-sufficiency and pride (cf. v. 18; James 4:13-17). See Special Topic: YHWH’s Grace Acts to Israel at 9:4-6.

8:18 “you shall remember” See note at 7:18.

▣ **“His covenant which He swore to your fathers”** The Conquest was the culmination of YHWH’s redemptive plan going back to Gen. 3:15; 12:1-3; 26:24; 28:13-15. This phrase becomes a repeated affirmation in Deuteronomy (cf. 1:8; 6:10; 8:18; 9:5,27; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4).

The VERB (BDB 989, KB 1396) is a *Niphal* PERFECT, which in covenant promises can be PASSIVE or REFLEXIVE (e.g., Gen. 12:3).

8:19 The results of disobedience are as plain as the result of obedience! Notice the VERBS “go after” (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* PERFECT), “serve” (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT), and “worship” (BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel* PERFECT) are parallel.

▣

NASB	“if you ever forget the LORD”
NKJV	“if you by any means forget the LORD”
NRSV	“if you do forget the LORD”
TEV	“Never forget the LORD”
NJB	“Be sure, if you forget Yahweh”

The construction is the VERB “forget” (BDB 1013, KB 1485) repeated, an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE followed by a *Qal* IMPERFECT. This construction is an Hebraic method of emphasis. This same form is seen with “perish” in v. 19.

8:20 “you shall perish” Notice that in vv. 19 and 20 the VERB “perish” (BDB 1, KB 2) is used four times (INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE in v. 19; *Qal* IMPERFECT twice in vv. 19 and 20, and a *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE in v. 20). This is a common word of warning in Deuteronomy. It is used in several ways:

1. God will destroy the Israelites if they do not obey His covenant - 4:26(twice); 8:19,20; 9:3; 11:17; 28:20,22,51,63; 30:18(twice).
2. God commands Israel to completely destroy the Canaanites - 7:24; 8:20; 12:2,3.
3. God will destroy those who hate Him - 7:10.
4. God destroyed the Egyptian Army - 11:4

Israel will be put under the consequences to “holy war” if she violates the covenant (Deuteronomy 27-29)! God is no respecter of persons!

There are grave consequences for disobedience as well as great benefits for obedience. Privilege brings responsibility! “To whom much is given, much is required” (cf. Luke 12:48)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. List God’s gracious miracles which He performed for His people in the wilderness which are listed in chapter 8.
2. Does God test His people? Why?
3. Why is humbleness stressed so many times in this chapter?

DEUTERONOMY 9

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Israel's Rebellion Reviewed	The Temptation to Self-Righteousness (9:1-10:11)	The People's Disobedience	Yahweh, not Israel, Wins the Victory
9:1-12	9:1-3	9:1-3	9:1-6
	9:4-5	9:4-6	
	9:6-7		Israel's Conduct at Horeb; Moses Intercedes
		9:7-11	9:7-14
	9:8-14		
		9:12	
9:13-24		9:13-14	
	9:15-21	9:15-21	9:15-21
			Israel Sins Again. A Prayer of Moses
	9:22-24	9:22-24	9:22-24
9:25-29	9:25-29	9:25-29	9:25-29

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:1-6

¹"Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, ²a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard *it said*, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?' ³Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you. ⁴Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is dispossessing them before you. ⁵It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ⁶Know, then, *it is* not because of your righteousness *that* the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people."

9:1 "Hear" This is the Hebrew term *shema* (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 4:1; 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:9), which means "to hear so as to do." See note at 4:1.

▣ **"O Israel"** See Special Topic at 1:1.

▣ **"nations greater and mightier than you"** This is a repeated theme (see note at 1:28). The theological point (i.e., YHWH's sovereign choice and His promise to the Patriarchs) is in 7:6-9. He is trustworthy and true. His character is magnified in Israel's stubbornness and stiffneckedness (cf. vv. 6,7,13,24,27; 10:16; 31:27).

9:2 "the Anakim. . . sons of Anak" Etymologically this term means "long neck" and, therefore, refers to the giants. In Deut. 2:10-11 they are linked to the *Rephaim* and in Num. 13:33 they are linked to the *Nephilim*. See Special Topic at 1:28.

▣ **"know"** See full note at 4:35.

9:3 "Know" This VERB (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) is used often and in several senses. See Special Topic at 4:35.

▣ **"a consuming fire"** This is BDB 77 plus BDB 37. This metaphor is describing the judgment of God on the people of the land because of their wickedness (cf. v.4-5; Gen 15:16). See note at 4:24. For a good brief discussion of the imagery used to describe God see *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp.332-336.

▣ **"He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you"** These two VERBS of conquest are parallel and denote YHWH's actions on Israel's behalf:

1. "destroy" - BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
2. "subdue" - BDB 488, KB 484, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

Also note that Israel must act in faith and attack:

1. "you may drive them out" - BDB 439, KB 441, *Hiphil* PERFECT
2. "destroy them quickly" - BDB 1, KB 2, *Hiphil* PERFECT plus the ADVERB (BDB 555 II)

Notice the theological and covenantal balance between the promised action of the sovereign YHWH and the mandated faithful response of the Israeli army and leaders. Both are crucial!

It is also to be noted that YHWH accomplished His task, but Israel did not complete the task of totally removing the indigenous inhabitants (cf. Judges 1-2). Israel should have acted quickly (cf. 7:22), but she did not!

9:4-6 “Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness’” This is similar to 8:11-20. God is showing the people again that He is acting, not because they are good, but because of (1) the wickedness of the people in the land (cf. Gen. 15:12-21; Lev. 18:24-25; 20:13-14) and (2) His promise to their Patriarchs beginning in Gen. 12:1-3. He wants them to remember that He is in full control.

The initial VERB “say” (BDB 55, KB 65) is a *Qal* IMPERFECT, used in a JUSSIVE sense. The fallen heart of humanity is still ever present and spiritually dangerous.

The second VERB “has driven” (BDB 213, KB 239, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) shows YHWH’s active involvement in the Conquest (cf. 6:19; Josh. 23:5).

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH’S GRACE ACTS TO ISRAEL

It must be stated clearly that the Exodus, the Wilderness Wandering, and the Conquest were grace acts on YHWH’s part, not merited rewards due to Israel’s actions:

1. It was YHWH’s love for “the fathers” - Deut. 4:37-38; 7:8; 10:15
2. It was not Israel’s number - Deut. 7:7
3. It was not Israel’s strength and power - Deut. 8:17
4. It was not Israel’s righteousness or uprightness - Deut. 9:5-6
5. YHWH continues to love Israel even amidst judgment - Jer. 31:3

9:5 “It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart” These two NOUNS are parallel in this context:

1. “righteousness” - BDB 842, cf. 6:25; 9:4,5,6; 24:13; 33:21, see Special Topic at 1:16
2. “uprightness” - BDB 449, means integrity or moral lifestyle, cf. I Chr. 29:17; Ps. 119:7

Israel is not being given the land Canaan because of her godliness, but because of the Canaanite’s ungodliness (cf. v. 4; Gen. 15:12-21; Lev. 18:24-28, see note at 3:6).

▣ **“to confirm the oath the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob”** Notice the VERBS:

1. “to confirm the oath” - BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. “the LORD swore” - BDB 989, KB 1396, *Niphal* PERFECT

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT PROMISES TO THE PATRIARCHS

This initial promise of a special covenant relationship was made to:

1. Abraham, Gen. 12:1-3
 - a. land, Gen. 12:7; 13:4-15; 15:18-21
 - b. people, Gen. 13:16; 15:4-5; 17:2-6; 22:18
 - c. blessing to the world, Gen. 18:18; 22:18
2. Isaac, Gen. 26:2-4

- a. land
- b. people
- c. blessing to the world
- 3. Jacob, Gen. 28:2-4,13; 35:9-12; 48:3-4
 - a. land
 - b. people
- 4. the nation of Israel (a land), Exod. 3:8,17; 6:8; 13:5; 33:1-3; Deut. 1:7-8,35; 4:31; 9:3; 11:25; 31:7; Josh. 1:6

▣ “righteousness” See Special Topic at 1:16.

9:6, 13 “you are a stubborn people” This was originally an agricultural phrase referring to unruly oxen. Literally this means “hard of neck” or “stiff-necked” (BDB 904 CONSTRUCT BDB 791, cf. 6,7,13,24,27; 10:16; 31:27; Exod. 32:9; 33:3,5; 34:9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:7-21

⁷ "Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD. ⁸Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you. ⁹When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD had made with you, then I remained on the mountain forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water. ¹⁰And the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. ¹¹And it came about at the end of forty days and nights that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. ¹²Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, go down from here quickly, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made a molten image for themselves.' ¹³The LORD spoke further to me, saying, 'I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people. ¹⁴Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.' ¹⁵So I turned and came down from the mountain while the mountain was burning with fire, and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. ¹⁶And I saw that you had indeed sinned against the LORD your God. You had made for yourselves a molten calf; you had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you. ¹⁷And I took hold of the two tablets and threw them from my hands, and smashed them before your eyes. ¹⁸And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you had committed in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke Him to anger. ¹⁹For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was wrathful against you in order to destroy you, but the LORD listened to me that time also. ²⁰And the LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him; so I also prayed for Aaron at the same time. ²¹And I took your sinful *thing*, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that came down from the mountain."

9:7 “Remember, do not forget” These two initial VERBS (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVES, cf. 5:15; 7:18[twice]; 8:2; 9:7,27; 15:15; 16:3,12; 24:9,18,22; 25:17; 32:7 and BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT, functioning as a JUSSIVE, cf. 4:9,23; 6:12; 8:11,14,19[twice]; 9:7) are to help Israel remember (see note at 7:18) and not repeat her lack of faith in YHWH, His promises and His power as they did on several occasions during the exodus and wilderness wandering period.

Moses mentions their act of idolatry and rebellion at the foot of Mt. Horeb in v. 8, where Aaron fashioned a golden calf at the insistence of the people!

9:7-8 “how you provoked the LORD” See Exodus 16; 32; and Numbers 13-14; 16:21,25 as some examples.

9:7-22 These verses refer to the actions of Israel while Moses was on Mt. Horeb/Sinai receiving the Law (cf. Exodus 32).

9:9 “the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD had made with you” Obviously the phrase “tablets of stone, and the tablets of the covenant” are parallel. See Special Topic: Covenant at 4:13. These were YHWH’s words, not Moses’. This is revelation, not human opinion or discovery.

9:9,11,18 “forty days” This number is often symbolic of a long, indefinite period of time, longer than a lunar cycle (i.e., 28 days) but less than a seasonal change. The time from leaving Mt. Horeb/Sinai to entering Canaan was thirty eight years.

9:9, 18 “I neither ate bread nor drank water” This refers to two separate 40 day fasts meaning either (1) a miraculous preservation (cf. Exod. 24:18; 34:28) or (2) a hyperbolic idiom for a limited fast (no food, but water).

9:10 “the two tablets of stone” Because of Hittite Suzerain Treaties as a possible historical background, this may refer to two complete copies of the Law. See introduction to the book, VII.

▣ **“written by the finger of God”** This is an idiom for the divine origin of the Ten Words and their explanations (cf. Exod. 31:18; 32:15-16; Deut. 4:13). See Special Topic: God Described as a Human (Anthropomorphic Language) at 2:15.

▣ **“the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire”** This is a recurrent theme (cf. 4:12,15,33,36; 5:5,22,24,26; 9:10; 10:4). The phrase emphasizes God’s acts and the content of personal covenant revelation at Mt. Horeb/Sinai.

9:12-14 As Moses records his dialogue with God on Mt. Horeb/Sinai YHWH uses several commands:

1. “arise,” v. 12 - BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “go down,” v. 12 - BDB 432, KB 434, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “let Me alone,” v. 14 - BDB 951, KB 1276, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
4. “I may destroy them,” v. 14 - BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense
5. “blot out their name,” v. 14 - BDB 562, KB 567, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a COHORTATIVE sense

▣ **“for your people whom you brought out of Egypt”** This VERB (BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* PERFECT) is used many times of YHWH, but only here of Moses.

▣ **“molten image”** This was not idolatry, but a physical representation of YHWH. This was a violation of the second commandment. They wanted a god they could see and touch like the peoples of Egypt and Canaan had.

9:14 Is this an example of the wrath of God or is it a test of Moses’ leadership (cf. v. 25ff, Exod. 32:30-35)?

▣ **“blot out their name from under heaven”** This is a Hebrew idiom (cf. 25:5; Ps. 41:5) for the complete extermination of Israel!

9:15 “mountain was burning with fire” Burning fire or bright light was a symbol of God’s presence (cf. 1:32-33; Isa. 66:15). See Special Topic: Fire at 4:11.

9:16 “You had made for yourselves a molten calf” This same VERB (BDB 793 I, KB 899, *Qal* PERFECT) is used in vv. 12 and 21. Here this image is called a (1)“molten calf” (BDB 722, cf. Exod. 32:4,8) (2) in v. 21, “the calf,” but (3) in v. 12 a “molten image” (cf. Exod. 34:17; Lev. 19:4).

9:17 “smashed them before your eyes” The very day the covenant was written by God it was broken (both literally and figuratively).

9:19 “the LORD listened to me” See Exodus 34. Notice the source of Moses’ fear (BDB 388, KB 386, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 28:60):

1. YHWH’s anger - BDB 60, cf. Exod. 32:12
2. YHWH’s hot displeasure - BDB 404, cf. 29:23
3. YHWH’s wrath - BDB 893, KB 1124, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 1:34; Lev. 10:6; Num. 16:22
4. in order to destroy you - BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. 6:15; 9:20

Numbers 1 and 2 may function as a hendiadys (cf. TEV, NET Bible).

9:20 “for Aaron” Moses praying for Aaron is not recorded in Exodus 32.

9:21 See Exodus 32:20. Notice how many VERBS are used to describe what Moses did to the golden calf, the sinful thing:

1. “burned it,” BDB 926, KB 1358, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. “crushed it,” BDB 510, KB 507, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. II Kgs. 18:4; Micah 1:7
3. “grinding it very small,” BDB 377, KB 374, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE
4. “it was as fine as dust,” BDB 200, KB 229, *Qal* PERFECT
5. “threw its dust into the brook,” BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:22-24

²² "Again at Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath. ²³And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, 'Go up and possess the land which I have given you,' then you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; you neither believed Him nor listened to His voice. ²⁴You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day I knew you."

9:22 “Taberah” This place name comes from a word play on the VERB “to burn” (BDB 129). This was the geographical location where YHWH answered their constant complaining with a judgment of fire (cf. Num. 11:1-3,34-35). It was about a three day journey north of Mt. Horeb/Sinai.

▣ **“Massah”** This was another location of conflict between YHWH and Israel during the exodus (cf. Exod. 17:7). It is usually linked to Meribah (cf. Deut. 33:8), but not always (cf. 6:16; 9:2). Together they mean “testing (BDB 650 III, cf. 6:16; 9:22; 33:8; Exod. 17:7; Ps. 95:8) and strife.”

▣ **“Kibroth - Hattaavah”** The name means “graves of lust” (BDB 869, cf. Num. 11:31-35). In Numbers 11 there is no movement recorded between Taberah and Kibroth-Hattaavah, but here in Deuteronomy the two sites are separate.

9:23 “Go up and possess this land” These are both *Qal* IMPERATIVES and reflect YHWH’s direct speech through Moses to Israel:

1. “go up” - BDB 748, KB 828
2. “possess” - BDB 439, KB 441

Notice again YHWH’s command for Israel to act on her belief in His sovereignty and promises. But instead of faith Israel demonstrated unbelief:

1. “you rebelled against the command” - BDB 598, KB 632, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Num. 20:24; 27:14; Deut. 1:26,43; 9:23; Ps. 107:11
2. “you neither believed Him” - BDB 52, KB 63, *Hiphil* PERFECT (See Special Topic at 1:32)
3. “nor listened to His voice” - BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT (these *Qal* PERFECTS reflect a settled condition). This is exactly opposite of covenant obedience and responsibility.

▣ **“you rebelled”** See note at 1:26.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 9:25-29

²⁵“So I fell down before the LORD the forty days and nights, which I did because the LORD had said He would destroy you. ²⁶I prayed to the LORD, and said, ‘O Lord God, do not destroy Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look at the stubbornness of this people or at their wickedness or their sin. ²⁸Otherwise the land from which You brought us may say, “Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which He had promised them and because He hated them He has brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.” ²⁹Yet they are Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have brought out by Your great power and Your outstretched arm.””

9:25 Moses’ intercessory prayer uses two VERBS:

1. “I fell down” - BDB 656, KB 709
 - a. *Hithpael* IMPERFECT, v. 25
 - b. *Hithpael* PERFECT, v. 25
2. “I prayed” - v. 26 - BDB 813, KB 933, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT

9:26-29 Verses 26-29 show three reasons Moses gave to God in answer to His question, “Why should I spare Israel?”:

1. His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. Exod. 32:13)
2. Canaan will misunderstand YHWH’s character
3. Canaan will not understand YHWH’s judgment on Israel

The paragraph contains three prayer request VERBS:

1. “do not destroy,” v. 26 - BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE
2. “remember,” v. 27 - BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

3. “do not look” (i.e., “turn”), v. 27 - BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* JUSSIVE

Moses appeals to YHWH’s character and eternal redemptive plan for all people as the basis for not destroying His disobedient covenant people. More is at stake than just one people group! See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 4:6.

9:26 Notice how Moses’ prayer reminds YHWH of His covenant relationship:

1. “Lord God” (literally, “*adon* YHWH,” cf. 3:24. See Special Topic at 1:3.
2. “Thy people” - covenant title, cf. v. 29
3. “Thine inheritance” - covenant gift, cf. v. 29
4. “Thou has redeemed - BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* PERFECT, the covenant grace act (see Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem at 7:8). YHWH delivered them from slavery to family (cf. 7:8; 9:26; 13:5)
5. “Thou hast brought out of Egypt” - BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* PERFECT, covenant promise to Abraham (cf. v. 29; Gen. 15:16-21)

God acts because of who He is! He follows His redemptive plan! The great hope of all mankind is the unchanging, gracious, merciful, loving character of YHWH (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Mal. 3:6). See notes at 4:31 and 10:17.

▣ **“with a mighty hand”** This phrase and “outstretched arm” of v. 29 have both been found in Egyptian texts referring to the Egyptian king. Moses chose phrases that Israel had heard before in relationship to Pharaoh. YHWH was their true king!

9:27 Notice the character of Israel:

1. “the stubbornness of this people” - BDB 904, cf. vv. 6,7,13,24,27
2. “their wickedness” - BDB 957, cf. Jer. 14:20; Ezek. 3:19; 33:12
3. “their sin” - BDB 308, cf. Exod. 32:30; Deut. 9:18; Ps. 32:5; 51:5; Pro. 5:22; 13:6; 14:34; 21:4; 24:9 (Deuteronomy shares the vocabulary of the sages)

9:28 “Otherwise the land from which You brought us may say” God, because of Your reputation and worldwide purpose of redemption, spare Israel. Another phrase used in the same sense is, “for God’s namesake” (cf. Isa. 48:9-11; Ezek. 20:9,14,22,44; 36:21-23; Dan. 9:17-19).

9:29 “Your great power and Your outstretched arm” See full note at 4:34.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did God choose Israel?
2. Is v. 14 a true reflection of God’s nature? If not, what is it?
3. List and discuss the three reasons Moses gives as to why YHWH should not destroy Israel.

DEUTERONOMY 10

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Second Pair of Tablets	The Temptation to Self-Righteousness (9:1-10:11)	Moses Receives the Commandments Again	The Ark of the Covenant; the Choice of Levi
10:1-5	10:1-5	10:1-5	10:1-5
10:6-11	10:6-9 10:10-11	10:6-9 10:10-11	10:6-9 10:10-11
The Essence of the Law	What the Lord Requires (10:12-11:32)	What God Demands	Circumcision of the Heart
10:12-22	10:12-22	10:12-22	10:12-13 10:14-22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:1-5

¹"At that time the LORD said to me, 'Cut out for yourself two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to Me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood for yourself. ²And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets which you shattered, and you shall put them in the ark.' ³So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and went up on the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. ⁴And He wrote on the tablets, like the former writing, the Ten Commandments which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. ⁵Then I turned and came down

from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, as the LORD commanded me."

10:1 “the mountain” This refers to Mt. Horeb/Mt. Sinai. See Special Topic at 1:2.

▣ Moses is to prepare for his second encounter with YHWH:

1. “cut out for yourself two tablets of stone” - BDB 820, KB 949, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. Exod. 34:1,4
2. “come up to Me” - BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. “make an ark” - BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Exod. 25:10

The Hittite Treaties also required two copies of the agreements. One was given to the lesser king to read every year and the other placed in the temple of the greater king’s god. See Introduction to the book, VII.

▣ **“ark of wood for yourself”** Exodus 37:1 says Bezalel made the Ark of the Covenant. Rashi says details of the ark were not even given until Moses came down the second time from Mt. Sinai. Therefore, Moses must have made a crude ark first and then later Bezalel made another more elaborate one (cf. Exod. 25:10-22). This first ark, made quickly by Moses, held only the Ten Commandments (cf. I Kgs. 8:9). The later one contained: the Ten Commandments, a sample of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded. For a good brief discussion see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 2, pp. 292-303.

10:2 “I will write” YHWH wrote the law, verse 4 and Exod. 34:1. However, Exod. 34:27 speaks of Moses writing. Possibly God wrote the Ten Commandments, but Moses wrote the descriptive and declarative material, which explained and applied it. It was not Moses’ mentality nor his cultural influence, but God who originated the Law. God used cultural examples and forms that Moses would have been familiar with. In many ways the form of the Law is similar to Babylonian law, but the content is different.

▣ **“in the ark”** This depositing of special documents before the god is characteristic of the Near East. Compare *Egyptian Book of the Dead* (in a box under Thot’s feet) and the Hittite Suzerain Treaties of the second millennium B.C. See Introduction to the book, VII.

10:3 “acacia wood” This was a hard, brownish-orange wood (BDB 1008) that grows in the desert. It was a common small desert tree (cf. Isa. 41:19). This wood is associated with all of the furniture of the tabernacle. It occurs only here outside the book of Exodus.

10:4 “the Ten Commandments” This is literally “the ten words” (BDB 796 CONSTRUCT BDB 182). These basic characteristic, foundational laws are very brief and stated in general principles. They mandate an intimate, exclusive relationship with YHWH (cf. v. 20), which is reflected in exclusive worship and obedience, which in turn mandates an appropriate commiserate relationship with other covenant members (and also non-members, cf. 10:17-19). Knowing YHWH impacts all of life and its priorities!

▣ **“on the mountain from the midst of the fire”** This refers to God’s presence on Mt. Horeb/Sinai, recorded in Exod. 19:16-20. His presence is described as a “consuming fire on the mountain” (cf. Exod. 24:17). This phrase is used several times Deuteronomy (cf. 4:12,15,33,36; 5:4,24,26).

The fire (BDB 77) was a symbol of YHWH’s glorious presence:

1. a torch in Gen. 15:17
2. the burning bush in Exod. 3:2
3. fire on Mt. Horeb, Exod. 19:18; Deut. 4:11,12,15,33,36

4. the *Shekinah* pillar of fire in Exod. 13:21,22; 14:24; Num. 9:15,16; 14:14; Ps. 78:14
5. coals of fire in Ezekiel's vision of YHWH's portable throne chariot in Ezek. 1:13; 10:2

The Ten Commandments are repeatedly said to have been spoken from the midst of the fire (cf. 4:12,15,33; 5:4,22,24,26; 9:10; 10:4). The commandments were personal, covenantal revelations from YHWH, not the mind of Moses.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:6-9

⁶(Now the sons of Israel set out from Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and there he was buried and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his place. ⁷From there they set out to Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water. ⁸At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day. ⁹Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God spoke to him.)

SPECIAL TOPIC: LATER ADDITIONS TO DEUTERONOMY

This paragraph (10:6-9) is seen by many modern scholars to be one of several later editorial additions to the writings of Moses. Although it cannot be proven that this summary is not from the Mosaic period, it is clear that there are several editorial inserts. Israel was in Egypt for centuries and Egyptian scribes, unlike Mesopotamian scribes, were trained to update texts at will. For those of us who believe in the inspiration and protection of divine revelation assert the Spirit's guidance in the OT related to these supposed additions. They do not affect major doctrines or call into question the historicity of the surrounding texts. It must be admitted by moderns that we simply do not know:

1. the time
2. the author
3. the method of compilation

of the OT in its earliest stages. We presuppositionally accept the MT as preserving the words of God!

A new theory for some of the supposed editorial additions has been suggested by R. H. Polzin, "Deuteronomy" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*. It posits the added comments are from a narrator, not an editor. He suggests that this narrator's comments can be seen in 1:1-5; 2:10-12, 20-23; 3:9, 11, 13b-14; 4:4-5:1a; 10:6-7, 9; 27:1a, 9a, 11; 28:69; 29:1; 31:1, 7a, 9-10a, 14a, 14c-16a, 22-23a, 24-25, 30; 32:44-45, 48; 33:1; 34:1-4a, 5-12. Polzin asserts that this supposed narrator is claiming an authority as reliable as Moses, which sets the stage for the "Deuteronomic history" of Joshua - Kings. This theory would explain the similarities between the Pentateuch and the Former Prophets.

10:6 "Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah" The first two words (BDB 91,122) translate literally, "the wells of the sons of Jaakan" (cf. Num. 33:31). Moserah means "chastisement" (BDB 64). Moserah (possibly a district), which may be synonymous with Mt. Hor (cf. Num. 20:22-29; 33:38), is the place where Aaron died. These both refer to geographical areas where the Israelites wandered.

▣ **"Aaron died there"** Numbers 20:27-28 says this happened at Mt. Hor. Aaron, like Moses, did not enter the Promised Land because of his disobedience (cf. Num. 20:8,12).

▣ **"Eleazar"** His name means "God has helped" (BDB 46). He was the third son of Aaron (cf. Exod. 6:23). The first two sons were killed because they took God's commands lightly (cf. Lev. 10:1-7; Num. 3:4). The rabbis say that because Lev. 10:9 restricts alcohol to priests while they are on duty that these, Nadab and Abihu, were drunk.

The High Priesthood was to pass on through Aaron's family (cf. Exod. 29:9; 40:15; Num. 3:5-10; 25:13).

10:7 "Gudgodah" The meaning of the name is uncertain (BDB 151). It is seemingly identified with Horhaggidgad in Num. 32:32. They are both places where Israel camped in her journey from Mt. Horeb/Sinai to Kadesh-barnea. The JPSOA has "Gudgod."

▣ **"Jotbathah"** The word means "pleasantness" (BDB 406, probably because of the presence of water). It is also mentioned as a campsite in Num. 33:33-34. The JPSOA has "Jotbath."

10:8 "the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi" The VERB "set apart" (BDB 95, KB 110, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. Num. 8:14; 16:9; I Chr. 23:13) means "to divide." Here the separation is for

- (1) special cultic service related to the tabernacle and later temple;
- (2) blessings of the people (cf. 10:8; Lev.9:22-23; Num. 6:22-27);
- (3) judging the people's disputes (cf. 21:5); and
- (4) judging between clean and unclean (cf. Lev. 10:10). This VERB is parallel to "choose" (BDB 103, KB 119, cf. 18:5; 21:5).

Israel was to be separate from the other nations (cf. Lev. 20:24-26; I Kgs. 8:53; i.e., "a holy nation," cf. Exod. 19:6), so the tribe of Levi was to be separated from the other tribes as YHWH's special cultic servants. They were chosen because

- (1) Levi was from the tribe of Moses and Aaron;
- (2) the Levites took the place of the "first born" for the Hebrews (cf. Exod.13; Num. 3:12; 8:14-19);or
- (3) the Levites faithfully responded to Moses' call to punish Israel (cf. Exod. 32:25-29). In Gen. 29:34, Leah called her third son Levi because her husband did not love her, but the child's name meant, "Jacob was attached (or joined) to me" (BDB 532).

As the priestly tribe, they will

- (1) carry the ark of the covenant
- (2) stand before the Lord to serve Him (i.e., all the duties at the tabernacle and later, the temple, in Jerusalem, cf 18:5; Num. 18:1-7
- (3) bless in His name (e.g., Num. 6:24-27)

Later there will develop specific tasks given to some families of Levi to be priests and others will function as Levites. However, in Deuteronomy all Levites can act as priests (compare 31:9 and 25). See Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 2, pp. 358-371.

10:9 "Levi does not have a portion or inheritance" Though the tribe of Levi was not given any land, parts of forty-eight cities were given to them with their surrounding pasture land (cf. Num. 35:1-8; Josh. 21).

▣ **"the LORD is his inheritance"** This denoted their special place of service (cf. Num. 18:20; Deut. 10:9; 18:1,2; Josh. 13:33; Ezek. 44:28)! This wonderful promise to the tribe of Levi became a cry from the heart of every true believer (cf. Ps. 16:5; 73:23-28; 119:57; 142:5; Lam. 3:24).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:10-11

¹⁰"I, moreover, stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights like the first time, and the LORD listened to me that time also; the LORD was not willing to destroy you. ¹¹Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, proceed on your journey ahead of the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.'"

10:10 “forty nights like the first time” See Exod. 34:28; Deut. 9:18.

▣ **“the LORD was not willing to destroy you”** This was Moses’ intercessory ministry (cf. 9:25-29; Exod. 32:9-14).

10:11 YHWH commanded Israel to act on what He had already promised—the conquest of the Promised Land:

1. “arise” - BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERATIVE SINGULAR, cf. 2:13,24, which are PLURAL and refer to Israel. Here the SINGULAR refers to Moses.
2. “proceed” - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERATIVE SINGULAR, literally means “break camp and start the next stage of the journey” (cf. Exod. 17:1; 40:36,38; 1 Num. 10:2,12; 33:1,2). Moses was to lead the people onward.
3. “they may go in” - BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* IMPERATIVE PLURAL, which may be functioning as a JUSSIVE
4. “and possess the land” - BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* IMPERFECT PLURAL, which may be functioning as a JUSSIVE

Israel is called on to fulfill YHWH’s oath to the Patriarchs (cf. 1:8; Josh. 21:43). God uses human instrumentality (e.g., Exod. 3:7-12)! It is His power and purpose, but His covenant people must act in faith and trust!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 10:12-22

¹²“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to keep the LORD's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? ¹⁴Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. ¹⁵Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. ¹⁶Circumcise then your heart, and stiffen your neck no more. ¹⁷For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality, nor take a bribe. ¹⁸He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. ²⁰You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. ²¹He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen. ²²Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons *in all*, and now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.”

10:12-13 See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: YHWH’S COVENANT REQUIREMENTS OF ISRAEL

YHWH’s requirements (BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) are stated clearly in a series of *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS:

1. “to fear the LORD” - BDB 431, KB 432, cf. 4:29; 10:20
2. “to walk in all His ways” - BDB 229, KB 246, cf. 4:29
3. “to love Him” - BDB 12, KB 17, cf. 6:5; 10:15; see full note at 5:10
4. “to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” - BDB 712, KB 773, cf. 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:2,6,10

5. “to keep the LORD’s commandments and His statutes” - BDB 1036, KB 1581

This passage is similar to Micah 6:6-8. Both speak of a faith that affects daily life!

10:13 “for your good” Obedience brings blessing; disobedience brings judgment (cf. chapters 27-29).

10:14 This verse implies monotheism. This refers to the atmosphere of this planet, the universe (starry canopy), and the throne of God (i.e., the three heavens).

10:15 Notice the parallel ways of describing YHWH’s election of Israel as His special people (i.e., “even you above all peoples,” cf. Exod. 19:5-6; Deut. 7:6; 14:2):

1. “set His affection” - BDB 365 I, KB 362, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 7:7. In 4:37 the other word for love (BDB 12, KB 17) is used.
2. “He chose their descendants” - BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 4:37.

▣ **“as it is this day”** See note at 3:14.

10:16 Israel was to respond to YHWH’s choice by:

1. “circumcise your heart” - BDB 557, KB 555, *Qal* PERFECT. This is a metaphor of openness to God (cf. Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26). It is expressed in several ways:
 - a. circumcise your flesh - Gen. 17:14 (covenant sign)
 - b. circumcise your lips - idiom in Exod. 6:12,30
 - c. circumcise your ears - Jer. 6:10
 - d. refers to a true heart, not just body circumcision - 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Ezek. 44:9; Rom. 2:28-29
2. “stiffen your neck no more” - BDB 904, KB 1151, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. 9:6,7,13,24,27; 31:27. See note at 2:30.

10:17 Notice the accolades used to describe YHWH:

1. God of gods - BDB 43, cf. Ps. 136:2
2. Lord of lords - BDB 10, cf. Ps. 136:3
3. the great God - BDB 152, cf. 3:24; 5:24; 9:26; 11:2; 32:3; Neh. 1:5; 9:32
4. the mighty God - BDB 150, cf. Neh. 9:32; Ps. 24:8; Isa. 10:21
5. the awesome God - BDB 431, KB 432, *Niphal* PARTICIPLE, cf. 7:21; Neh. 1:5; 9:32

▣ **“who does not show partiality”** The Hebrew phrase means “who does not lift up faces” (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT plus BDB 815). This is used often of judges (cf. 1:17; 16:19; 24:17; Lev. 19:15). This implies that God is a God of fair judgment (cf. Deut. 10:17; II Chr. 19:7).

▣ **“nor take a bribe”** YHWH’s character is described in human legal terms (cf. vv. 18-19). This is often associated with the above phrase.

10:18-19 Notice how the legal characteristics of God in v. 18 are put into practice:

1. “He executes (BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) justice for”:
 - a. the orphan
 - b. the widow (cf. 24:17; 26:12-13; 27:19; Ps. 68:4-5)

2. “shows His love (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) for the alien by giving him” (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT):
 - a. food
 - b. clothing

The Israelites are to do these things for two reasons:

1. It reflects the character of their God (v. 17; Isa. 58:6-7,10).
2. They know how being treated unfairly feels (v. 19; 24:18,22; Exod. 22:21; 23:9).

Exodus 22:22-23 also mentions that God will hear the prayers of these socially powerless ones and act on their behalf (cf. Ps. 146:9; Mal. 3:5; as will the Messiah, cf. Isa. 11:4).

10:20 As the requirements of God were set out in vv. 12-13 by several INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS, here they are set out again in *Qal* IMPERFECT VERBS:

1. “fear the LORD” - BDB 431, KB 432, cf. 5:29; 6:13; 13:4
2. “serve Him” - BDB 712, KB 773, cf. 13:4
3. “cling to Him” - BDB 179, KB 209, cf. 11:22; 13:4
4. “swear by His name” - BDB 989, KB 1396, cf. 5:11; 6:13. See full note at 5:11.

All of these relate to proper motives and actions of worship.

10:21 “He is your praise” The language of Deuteronomy has much in common with Wisdom Literature. This phrase is seen in Ps. 109:1. There is no VERB with this phrase or the next one. They are strong affirmations that YHWH’s redemptive action during the exodus and wilderness wandering period are praiseworthy:

1. their praise (BDB 239)
2. their *Elohim* (BDB 43)

▣ **“who has done these great and awesome things for you which you have seen”** This refers to YHWH’s actions and provisions during the exodus from Egypt, the wilderness wandering period (cf. 11:2), and that which will be repeated during the conquest!

10:22 “seventy persons in all” Seventy is a round number used of people. See Genesis 46:27; Exod. 1:5.

One text of Exod. 1:5, found at Qumran (i.e., Dead Sea Scrolls) has the number 75, which matches Acts 7:14-15. For a good brief discussion of the different numbers, see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 521 or Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, pp. 378-379.

▣ **“as the stars of heaven”** This is a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham. See full note at 1:10.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the purpose of God's law (OT sense)?
2. Does this chapter reflect monotheism? Where and how?
3. How does Deuteronomy express God's love for mankind?

DEUTERONOMY 11

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Love and Obedience Rewarded	What the LORD Required (10:12-11:32)	The LORD's Greatness	Israel's Past Experiences
11:1-7	11:1-7	11:1-7	11:1-7
		The Blessings of the Promised land	Promises and Warnings
11:8-12	11:8-12	11:8-12	11:8-9 11:10-17
11:13-17	11:13-17	11:13-17	Conclusion
11:18-21	11:18-21	11:18-21	11:18-21
11:22-25	11:22-25	11:22-25	11:22-25
11:26-32	11:26-28 11:29-30 11:31-32	11:26-32	11:26-32

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:1-7

¹"You shall therefore love the LORD your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments. ²Know this day that I am not *speaking* with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the LORD your God — His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm, ³and His signs and His works which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land; ⁴and what He did to Egypt's army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the LORD completely destroyed them; ⁵and what He did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place; ⁶and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among all Israel — ⁷but your own eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did."

11:1 Notice how the two VERBS of this verse are related. They are theologically parallel. One should result in the other!

1. "love the LORD" - BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. vv. 13,22. See full note at 5:10.
2. "keep His charge" - BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT

This is a repeat of 6:2,4-5; 10:12. Love is both an action (obedience) and a feeling ("with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might," cf. 13:3)

▣ **"His charge, His statutes, His ordinances and His commandments"** See Special Topic at 4:1.

11:2 **"And know this day that I am not *speaking* with your sons who have not known and who have not seen"** Moses is appealing to those who were eye witnesses (as Levites and children under the age of military service, below 20 years old, cf. 1:6,9,14; 5:2,5; 11:2,7) to the events of the Exodus and wilderness wanderings (cf. 4:34; 7:19).

▣ **"Know"** See full note at 4:35.

▣ **"the discipline of the Lord"** God's discipline (BDB 416) is positive, v. 3; and negative, v. 6. Child training is a characteristic of our father God (cf. Heb. 12:5-13). This is another wisdom term used so often in Proverbs.

▣ **"His greatness"** See notes at 10:17 and 4:31.

▣ **"His mighty hand, and His outstretched arm"** This is an anthropomorphic phrase used for God's power (cf. 4:34; 5:15; 6:21; 9:29). See note at 4:34.

11:4 **"Red Sea to engulf them"** The Hebrew word here is "Red Sea" (BDB 410 CONSTRUCT 693 I). See Special Topic at 1:40. Engulf is literally "flow over their faces" (BDB 847, KB 1012, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. Exod. 14:23-31), which is an idiom for drowning.

11:5 This is a reminder of God's supernatural provisions during the wilderness wanderings. See full note at 8:4.

11:6 “Dathan and Abiram” See Numbers 16:1-35; 26:9-10; Ps. 106:16-18.

▣ **“among all Israel”** See Special Topic at 1:1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:8-12

⁸“You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it; ⁹so that you may prolong *your* days on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. ¹¹But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, ¹²a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year.”

11:8 “therefore” This refers to all preceding historical allusions of chapter 11 or possibly even farther back. Much of Deuteronomy, up to this point, has rehearsed again and again the same admonitions.

11:9 “so that you may prolong *your* days on the land” Compare v. 21 with Deut. 5:16. This is not an individual promise of longevity but a cultural promise of stability to a society which honors the Law of God (cf. 4:1; 8:1) and thereby honors the family (cf. 4:40; 5:16,33; 6:2). See full note at 4:40.

▣ **“the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them”** See Special Topic: Covenant Promises to the Patriarchs at 9:5.

▣ **“a land flowing with milk and honey”** This is not only a physical description but a technical designation for the land of Palestine in Ugaritic and Egyptian documents. See note at 6:3.

11:10 “not like the land of Egypt” The cultivation of crops was quite different in Egypt than Palestine. Palestine had seasonal rain (cf. v.11), Egypt had to depend on irrigation from the Nile and its annual flood.

▣ **“water it with your foot”** This probably refers to (1) an irrigation system in which a field was flooded and then the foot was used to punch a hole in the dike to let water out or (2) a treadmill used to lift water for irrigation.

11:11 “the land. . .drinks water from the rain of heaven” For desert peoples there is no greater blessing than adequate, regular water (cf. 8:7-9). This good land is conditional on covenant obedience (cf. vv. 16-17; Lev. 26:14-20; Deut. 28:12,23-24; I Kgs. 8:35; 17:1; II Chr. 7:11-14; Isa. 5:6; Jer. 14; Amos 4:7-8).

11:12 “the eyes of the LORD” This is an anthropomorphic description of the Lord like v. 2. It expresses His special care and presence in the Promised Land. See Special Topic at 2:15.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:13-17

¹³“It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, ¹⁴that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. ¹⁵He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will

eat and be satisfied. ¹⁶Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them. ¹⁷Or the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you."

11:13 Notice the conditional (“if” BDB 49, cf. v. 22; and “obey” BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT from the same root, which shows emphasis and means “to hear so as to do!”) nature of YHWH’s blessing is:

1. “to love” - BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. “to serve” - BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT. In Arabic this root means to worship and obey God, cf. Exod. 3:12; 4:3; 7:16; 8:1
3. “with all your heart and all your soul,” cf. 4:29; 6:5; and especially 10:12.

Moses is repeating this exhortation again and again for emphasis.

▣ **“heart”** For the ancient Hebrew the “heart” stood for the mind and intent, the intellect and motive of an individual. See Special Topic at 2:30.

▣ **“soul”** This word means “the life force given by God” (BDB 659). It can refer to humans or animals in Genesis.

11:14 “He will give the rain” “He will give” (BDB 678, KB 733) describes YHWH’s covenant blessings and cursings:

1. v. 9 - *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (blessing)
2. v. 14 - *Qal* PERFECT (blessing)
3. v. 15 - *Qal* PERFECT (blessing)
4. v. 17 - *Qal* IMPERFECT (curse)
5. v. 17 - *Qal* PERFECT (curse)
6. v. 21 - *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (blessing)
7. v. 25 - *Qal* IMPERFECT (blessing)
8. v. 26 - *Qal* PARTICIPLE (blessing/curse)
9. v. 29 - *Qal* PERFECT (blessing/curse)
10. v. 31 - *Qal* PARTICIPLE (blessing)
11. v. 32 - *Qal* PARTICIPLE (blessing/curse)

YHWH wants to bless, but Israel’s covenant obedience determines which response (blessing or cursing, cf. chapters 27-29) she receives.

God is separate from nature yet is in control of it. He uses it to reveal Himself to mankind (cf. Deut. 27-28; Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:19-25; 2:14-15).

▣ **“early”** Palestine has two annual times of rainfall. The early rains (for planting) come in October - November (BDB 435, cf. Jer. 5:24; Hos. 6:2; Joel 2:23).

▣ **“late rains”** The late rains (for maturing crops) come in February - April (BDB 545, cf. Jer. 3:3; Joel 2:23). At other times heavy dew is the only source of moisture. Hosea 6:3 uses this as a metaphor of end-time spiritual renewal.

▣ **“your grain and your new wine and your oil”** These were staples of their diet (cf. 7:13).

11:15 “for your cattle” This term “cattle” (BDB 96) refers to:

1. all living creatures other than humans, Gen. 8:1; Exod. 9:9,10,22
2. domestic animals, Gen. 47:17; Exod. 20:10; Lev. 19:19; 26:22; Num. 3:41,45; Deut. 2:35

▣ **“you shall eat and be satisfied”** This VERB is a recurrent promise in Deuteronomy (cf. 6:11; 8:10; 11:15; 14:29). It is made up of two VERBS:

1. “eat” - BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* PERFECT
2. “be satisfied” - BDB 959, KB 1302, *Qal* PERFECT

11:16-17 These verses are a warning (“beware,” BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 4:9,15,23; 6:12; 8:11; 11:16; 12:13,19,28,30; 15:9; 24:8, see note at 6:12) about idolatry and its consequences.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CONSEQUENCES OF IDOLATRY

- A. “hearts are not deceived” - BDB 834, KB 984, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Job 31:27
 1. “turn away” - BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Exod. 32:8; 9:12; 17:11,17; Jer. 5:23
 2. “serve other gods” - BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 7:4,16; 8:19; 11:16; 13:6,13; 17:3; 28:14,36,64; 29:26; 30:17; 31:20; Josh. 23:16; 24:2,16; Jer. 11:10; 13:10; 16:11,13; 22:9; 25:6; 35:15
 3. “to worship” - BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hithpael* (Owens, p. 805) and *Hishtaphel* (Parsing Guide, p. 146)

Obviously this was a recurrent tendency on Israel’s part! The consequences for idolatry were severe.

- B. “the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you” - BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Exod. 4:14; 22:24; 32:10; Num. 11:1,10; 12:9; 32:10; Deut. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17; 29:27; Josh. 23:11
 1. “He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain.” This is part of the curse for disobeying the covenant, cf. 28:24; II Chr. 6:26-28; 7:13
 2. “the ground will not yield its fruit” - results of no rain
- C. “you will perish quickly from the good land” - BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 4:26; 7:4; 8:19,20; 28:20,22; 30:18; Josh. 23:13,16

There is no middle option! God presents His covenant as fully compliant or in default. Fallen humanity cannot obtain this level of consistent or complete obedience (cf. Josh. 24:19). Therefore, there was/is a need for a new covenant based on God’s mercy and His performance (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38; Rom. 3:9-18,23; Galatians 3)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:18-25

¹⁸“You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ¹⁹You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. ²⁰You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens *remain* above the earth. ²²For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and hold fast to Him, ²³then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you. ²⁴Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; your border will be from the wilderness to Lebanon, and

from the river, the river Euphrates, as far as the western sea. ²⁵No man will be able to stand before you; the LORD your God will lay the dread of you and the fear of you on all the land on which you set foot, as He has spoken to you."

11:18-20 These verses are a recapitulation of chapter 6:6-9. They are meant to impress on the faithful the need to live life in light of God's words!

▣ **"You shall therefore impress these words"** This is metaphorical, BDB 962, KB 1321, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 32:46. This is what the metaphors of 6:8 and Exod. 13:9,16 mean. Always keep God's word in the forefront of your thoughts. Review every action in light of them!

11:19 "teach them to your sons" See note at 4:9.

11:20 "write" In the past some scholars have questioned the ability of Moses and the early Israelites to write. As the archaeological evidence has grown, no one today would deny this. See "The Question of Israelite Literary" in *Approaches to the Bible*, vol. 2, pp. 142-53 (from Biblical Archaeology Society, 1995).

11:21

NASB "as long as the heavens *remain* above the earth"

NKJV "like the days of the heavens are above the earth"

NRSV "as long as the heavens are above the earth"

TEV, NJB "as long as there is sky above the earth"

This is a parallel statement to "perpetual ordinance" (e.g., Exod. 12:14,17,24,25; 13:10). This is a metaphor of permanence.

11:22 The conditional nature of the covenant (cf. v. 13) and its requirements are recurrent:

1. the condition is similar to v. 13, but slightly different:
 - a. "for if" and, BDB 49
 - b. "to keep" BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB (grammatical construction used to bring emphasis)
2. the requirements (series of *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS, like v. 13):
 - a. "to do" - BDB 793, KB 889
 - b. "to love" - BDB 12, KB 17
 - c. "to walk" - BDB 229, KB 246, cf. 8:6
 - d. "to hold fast to" - BDB 179, KB 209, cf. 10:20; 13:4

11:23-25 These are the promised results (i.e., "as He has spoken to you," v. 25) of the conditional covenant:

1. "The LORD will drive out all the nations before you," v. 23, BDB 439, KB 441, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. Exod. 34:24; Num. 32:21; Deut. 4:37-38; 9:4-5; Josh. 23:5,13
2. "You will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you," v. 23, BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 7:17; 9:3; Num. 33:52
3. "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours," v. 24, BDB 201, KB 231, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Josh. 1:3. Their borders are described in Gen. 15:18; Exod. 23:31; Deut. 1:7; 3:12-17; Josh. 1:1-4; 13:8-12
4. "No man will be able to stand before you," v. 25, BDB 426, KB 427, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT, cf. 7:24; Josh. 1:5; 10:8; 23:9
5. "The LORD your God will lay," BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT

- a. “fear” - BDB 808, cf. 2:25
 - b. “dread” - BDB 432, cf. Gen. 9:2
- This same truth, but in different terms is in Exod. 23:27 and Josh. 2:9.

11:24 For full notes on the boundaries of the Promised Land see 1:8.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:26-28

²⁶“See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today; ²⁸and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.

11:26-28 These verses continue the consequences of the conditional covenant between YHWH and His people. They are expanded in Deuteronomy 27-29. These verses explain much of the history of the Jews.

This paragraph starts out with a common call for attention, “See” - BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. 1:8,21; 2:24; 4:5; 11:26; 30:15; 32:39. The term “today” (BDB 398) is a way of urging decisive, immediate action (cf. 4:39).

- 1. “blessing” - BDB 139
 - a. “if you listen” - BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT, “hear so as to do,” cf. commanded in 4:1; 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3; 27:10; 33:7; conditioned in 7:12; 11:13(twice); 15:5(twice); 28:1(twice),13; 30:10,17
- 2. “curse” - BDB 887
 - a. “if you do not listen,” same as above, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - b. “turn aside” - BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* PERFECT
 - c. “following other gods” - BDB 229, KB 246, literally, “walking,” cf. 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14; Jdgs. 2:12; Jer. 7:6,9; 11:10; 13:10

This contrast of destinies is often called “the two ways” (cf. chapter 28 and 30:1,15-20; Ps. 1; Jer. 21:8; Matt. 7:13-14).

11:28 “following” This is literally “know.” See full note at 4:35.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 11:29-32

²⁹“It shall come about, when the LORD your God brings you into the land where you are entering to possess it, that you shall place the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. ³⁰Are they not across the Jordan, west of the way toward the sunset, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh? ³¹For you are about to cross the Jordan to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall possess it and live in it, ³²and you shall be careful to do all the statutes and the judgments which I am setting before you today.”

11:29 “the blessing. . .the curse” This verse describes the covenant renewal ceremony conducted by Joshua at Shechem (cf. chapters 27-28 and Josh. 8:30-35). Apparently two groups of Levitical singers sang or chanted the blessing from Mt. Gerezim and the curses from Mr. Ebal. These two mountains flank Shechem (i.e., meaning shoulder blades, BDB 1014). Archaeology has found a large stone altar on Mt. Ebal which matches the description of this altar in the Talmud. See Introduction to the book VII.

This follows the Suzerain Hittite Treaties, which relate to the king and his subjects (cf. Deut. 27; Josh. 24 for the same pattern).

11:30 “Arabah” This is the Jordan Valley south of the Dead Sea. See note at 1:1.

▣ **“Gilgal”** This means a “circle of stones” (BDB 166 II), which was the name of the Israelites’ first camp site in Canaan (cf. Josh. 4:19). However, this one may be farther north near Shechem (see *The IVP Bible Background Commentary, OT*, p. 181).

▣ **“oaks of Moreh”** This was a sacred tree or grove. We know this was a sacred site near Shechem because of Gen. 12:6 and 35:4. Moreh means “teacher” (BDB 435).

11:31-32 These are summary verses recounting what has been stated many times before.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why does Deuteronomy repeat the same phrases and historical incidents so much?
2. How are the conditional or volitional elements of the Covenant emphasized?
3. How is the sovereignty of YHWH emphasized?

DEUTERONOMY 12

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
A Prescribed Place of Worship	The Centralization of Worship	The One Place for Worship	The Deuteronomic Code (12:1-26:15)
12:1-28	12:1	12:1-3	12:1
	12:2-7		The Place of Worship
		12:4-7	12:2-3
	12:8-12	12:8-14	12:4-7
			12:8-12
	12:13-14		Sacrificial Regulations
	12:15-19	12:15-19	12:13-14
			12:15-16
	12:20-27	12:20-28	12:17-19
	12:28		12:20-28
Beware of False Gods		Warning Against Idolatry (12:29-13:18)	Against Canaanite Cults
12:29-32	12:29-32	12:29-31	12:29-13:1
	Warning Against Idolatry (12:32-13:18)	12:32	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

INTRODUCTION

- A. This starts the amplification of the Ten Words into daily regulations (i.e., chapters 12-26), which cover Israel's secular and sacred life. If one follows the outline of the Hittite Treaties, then (1) 4:1-11:32 contains the foundational laws and (2) 12:1-26:19 is the characteristic expansion and explanation of those laws.

Scholars have delineated four "Law Codes" in the Pentateuch:

1. Book of the covenant, Exod. 20:22-23:33
2. Priestly Code, Exodus 25-31 and 34:29 through Leviticus 16
3. Holiness Code, Leviticus 17-26
4. Deuteronomic Code, Deuteronomy chapters 12-26 and 28

However, this listing is more effected by Julius Wellhausen's source critical approach (i.e., J=YHWH; E=*Elohim*; D=Deuteronomy; and P=priestly writers) to the Pentateuch than contemporary, second millennium B.C. parallels (cf. R. K. Harrison, *Old Testament times* and John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature In Its Cultural Context*).

- B. This is the chapter where the controversy concerning the date of Deuteronomy rages. It centers around vv. 1-7 which call for one central worship altar (later Jerusalem).
- C. It seems that this text relates to two separate periods and purposes: (1) in the wilderness (i.e., tabernacle) and (2) in the Promised Land. The purpose of all laws is proper worship of YHWH in place, motive and form. Idolatry and its worship sites are rejected. The tension seems to be between legitimate local places of worship (Exod. 20:24; Deut. 16:21) and a central place of Israeli worship. Local and special altars (cf. Deuteronomy 27) were allowed (e.g., I Kgs. 3:3-5), but the Ark, tabernacle, and later the Temple are emphasized.
- D. Historically it is to be noted that Hezekiah's reform was more oriented toward a central worship site than was Josiah's reform, which is usually used as the supposed historical occasion for the writing of Deuteronomy (i.e., 621 B.C., cf. II Kgs. 18:22; II Chr. 32:12 and Isa. 36:7). Josiah's reform primarily dealt with idolatry not centralized worship! I personally reject the JEDP theory of Pentateuch source criticism (cf. Josh McDowell *More Evidence That Demands A Verdict*).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:1-7

¹"These are the statutes and the judgments which you shall carefully observe in the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess as long as you live on the earth. ²You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. ³You shall tear down their altars and smash their *sacred* pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods and obliterate their name from that place. ⁴You shall not act like this toward the LORD your God. ⁵But you shall seek *the LORD* at the place which the LORD your God will choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come. ⁶There you shall bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the contribution of your hand, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. ⁷There also you and your households shall eat before the LORD your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you."

12:1 “the statutes and judgments” See Special Topic at 4:1.

▣ **“you shall carefully observe”** This is a combination of a VERB, “keep watch” (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT) and a *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, (BDB 793, KB 889). This is a recurrent theme (e.g., Exod. 23:13,21; 34:11-12; Lev. 18:4-5,26,30; Deut. 4:6,9,15,23,40; and many more especially in Deuteronomy and Wisdom Literature).

▣ **“which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you”** The VERB shows completed action (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT), yet the events are future. It is a Hebrew way of showing certainty (i.e., Prophetic Perfect). This is a recurrent theme in Deuteronomy (cf. 1:8,20,21,25,35,36,39; 2:29; 3:18,20; 4:1,21,38,40; 5:16,31; 6:10,23; 7:13,16; 8:10; 9:6,23; 10:11; 11:9,17,21,31; 12:1,9; 15:4; 17:14; 18:9; 19:1,2,8,14; 21:23; 24:4; 25:15,19; 26:1,2,3,6,9,10,15; 27:3; 28:8,11,52; 31:7; 32:49; 34:4). It shows YHWH’s gracious choice and provision for Israel.

▣ **“to possess”** The VERB (BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is a recurrent promise. See Special Topic: Possess the Land at 8:1.

▣ **“on the earth”** “On the earth” is another way of saying “in the Land” (cf. v. 19). As long as the Israelites kept God’s commandments, they could live in the Promised Land. See note at 4:40.

This verse has two different words for “land”:

1. “in the land” - BDB 75
2. “on the earth” - BDB 9

They both refer to the whole earth or to the land of Canaan. They are usually synonyms (cf. 4:38-40; 11:8-9; 12:1; 26:2,15).

12:2 “utterly destroy all the places” “Utterly destroy” comes from a Hebrew word that means “cause to perish” (BDB 1, KB 2, *Piel* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Piel* IMPERFECT, which show intensity, cf. v. 3; Num. 33:52[twice]; II Kgs. 21:3). God was admonishing the Israelites to destroy the pagan altars so as not to become a part of their fertility worship (cf. Exod. 23:24; 34:13).

▣ **“on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree”** These are the locations of local *Ba’al* and *Asherah* altars where fertility rites were practiced (cf. Jer. 2:20; 3:2,6; 17:2; Isa. 57:5,7; Hosea 4:13).

12:3 “sacred pillars” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ISRAEL’S MANDATED RESPONSE TO CANAANITE FERTILITY WORSHIP

This verse lists several cultic items of *Ba’al* worship and how Israel is to destroy them.

1. “You shall tear down their altars”
 - a. the VERB, BDB 683, KB 736, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 7:5; II Chr. 31:3; 34:4
 - b. the item, “altars,” BDB 258, *Ba’al’s* altars were raised platforms of cut stone with an uplifted stone (pillar) and a hole to plant a tree or secure a wooden, carved stake (*Asherah*)
2. “smash their *sacred* pillars”
 - a. the VERB, BDB 990, KB 1402, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 7:5; II Kgs. 3:2; 10:27
 - b. the item, “pillars,” BDB 663. These were uplifted stones used as a phallic symbol for the male fertility god (cf. 16:22).

3. “burn their *Asherim* with fire”
 - a. the VERB, BDB 976, KB 1358, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Deut. 7:5, in II Chr. 31:1 and 34:4; they were to be “chopped down.”
 - b. the item, *Asherim*, BDB 81. It symbolized the tree of life. Asherah (cf. ABD, vol. 1, pp. 483-87, although in the poetic literature from Ugarit, Anath is *Ba'al's* consort, cf. ABD, vol. 1, pp. 225-27), was the female consort of *Ba'al*. It may have been a live tree or a curved stake.
4. “you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods”
 - a. the VERB, BDB 154, KB 180, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Deut. 7:5; II Chr. 14:2; 31:1; 34:4,7
 - b. the item, “engraved images of their gods,” BDB 820 CONSTRUCT 43. Deut. 7:5; and II Chr. 34:7 make a distinction between the *Asherim* and the images.
5. “obliterate their name from that place”
 - a. the VERB, BDB 1, KB 2, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Deut. 12:2(twice)
 - b. the item, “name,” BDB 1027. This seems to represent the god’s name as owner of the place, which is now destroyed and, therefore, their names have perished. It is YHWH’s name that has a name/worship site now (cf. Deut. 12:5,11).

12:5 “the place which the LORD your God shall choose” God chose (BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. vv. 11,14,18,21,26; 14:23-25; 15:20; 16:2,6,11,15; 17:8,10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11) the worship site (cf. Exod. 20:24).

The tabernacle (ark) traveled with Israel:

1. Gilgal, Josh. 4:19; 10:6,15
2. Shechem, Josh 8:33
3. Shiloh, Josh 18:1; Jdgs. 18:31; I Sam. 1:3
4. Bethel, (possible) Jdgs. 20:18,26-28; 21:2
5. Kiriath-jearim, ark, I Sam. 6:21; 7:1-2 (priests at Nob, cf. I Samuel 21-22)
6. Jerusalem
 - a. David captures the citadel of Jebus (cf. II Sam. 5:1-10)
 - b. David brings the ark to Jerusalem (cf. II Samuel 6)
 - c. David purchases the site of the temple (II Sam. 24:15-25; II Chr. 3:1)

Many modern scholars have tried to assert that Deuteronomy was written late to accommodate Hezekiah and Josiah’s reforms of centralizing Israel’s worship. However, Deuteronomy does not name Jerusalem as the specific site that YHWH will choose. In context the theological contrast is between:

1. the local *Ba'al* shrines and the one shrine of Israel
2. the monotheism of Israel versus the polytheism of Canaan (and the rest of the ancient Near East)



NASB “to establish His name there for His dwelling”
NKJV “to put His name for His habitation”
NRSV “as his habitation to put his name there”
TEV “where the people are to come into his presence”
NJB “there to set his name and give it a home”

The translation of this verse is influenced by v. 11. Verse 5 has “for his dwelling” (BDB 1015), while v. 11 has “to make dwell” (BDB 1014, KB 1496, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). In meaning they are very similar and have no theological difference or connotation.

The Jews substituted God's name for God's presence. This is a direct reference to the Tabernacle in the early days.

SPECIAL TOPIC: "THE NAME" OF YHWH

The use of "the name" as a substitute for YHWH Himself is parallel to the Exod. 23:20-33 use of "angel," who is called "My name is in him." This same substitution can be seen in the use of "His glory" (e.g., John 1:14; 17:22). All are attempts to soften the personal anthropomorphic presence of YHWH (cf. Exod. 3:13-16; 6:3). YHWH is surely spoken of in human terms, but it was also known that He was spiritually present throughout creation (cf. I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 139:7-16; Jer. 23:24; Acts 7:49 quotes Isa. 66:1).

There are several examples of "the name" representing YHWH's divine essence and personal presence:

1. Deut. 12:5; II Sam. 7:13; I Kgs. 9:3; 11:36
2. Deut. 28:58
3. Ps. 5:11; 7:17; 9:10; 33:21; 68:4; 91:14; 103:1; 105:3; 145:21
4. Isa. 48:9; 56:6
5. Ezek. 20:44; 36:21; 39:7
6. Amos 2:7
7. John 17:6,11,26

The concept of "calling on" (i.e., worshiping) the name of YHWH is seen early in Genesis:

1. 4:26, the line of Seth
2. 12:8, Abraham
3. 13:4, Abraham
4. 16:13, Hagar
5. 21:33, Abraham
6. 26:25, Isaac

and in Exodus:

1. 5:22-23, speak in Thy name
2. 9:16, show My name through all the earth (cf. Rom. 9:17)
3. 20:7, do not take the name of the Lord your God in vain (cf. Lev. 19:12; Deut. 5:11; 6:13; 10:20)
4. 20:24, where I cause my name to be remembered (cf. Deut. 12:5; 26:2)
5. 23:20-21, an angel ("since My name is in him")
6. 34:5-7, Moses calls on (or "called out") the name of the Lord. This is one of a handful of texts that describe YHWH's character (cf. Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; Joel 2:13).

Knowing someone by name implies an intimacy (cf. Exod. 33:12), Moses knows YHWH's name and in 33:17, YHWH knows Moses' name. This is the context where Moses wants to see God's glory (cf. v. 18), but God allows him to see "His goodness" (v. 19), which is parallel to "the name" (v. 19).

The Israelites are to destroy "the names" of Canaan's gods (cf. Deut. 12:3) and call on Him (cf. Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 26:2) at the special place He causes His name to dwell (cf. Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:5,11,21; 14:23,24; 16:2,6,11; 26:2).

YHWH has a universal purpose involving His name:

1. Gen. 12:3
2. Exod. 9:16
3. Exod. 19:5-6

4. Deut. 28:10,58
5. Micah 4:1-5

12:6 This verse lists several kinds of offerings:

1. **“burnt offerings”** This meant wholly burnt offerings (BDB 750 II). This was a way of showing total, complete dedication to God. It was a voluntary sacrifice (cf. Leviticus 1).
2. **“sacrifices”** This refers to partially burnt, partially consumed offering (BDB 257). These were sin offerings, peace offerings, thanksgiving offerings, etc. These were any offerings which had blood involved (cf. Leviticus 7).
3. **“tithes”** The tithe was Israel’s way of supporting the priests, who were given no land inheritance. There seem to be three tithes (BDB 798):
 - a. for the central sanctuary
 - b. for the local Levites, with the possibility of a
 - c. every three years for the local poor (Lev. 27:30-33; Num. 18:21-22)
4. **“contributions of your hand”** This is the Hebrew word for “heave-offerings” (BDB 929, cf. Lev. 7:32). This refers to a sacrifice where some part of the animal is lifted off for the priests to eat.
5. **“votive offerings”** This (BDB 623) is an example of a conditional vow to God, “I’ll do this, if You will do that.” This is the Jews keeping their part of the vow (Lev. 7:16-18).
6. **“freewill offerings”** This (BDB 621) refers to an offering in thanks or praise from one who was overwhelmed with the goodness of God (cf. Lev. 22:18ff).
7. **“first-born”** This (BDB 114) is a reference to the Death Angel going through Egypt killing the first born of cattle and mankind. In light of this event all the first born of cattle and humans belonged uniquely to God (cf. Exod.13; Lev. 27:26-27)!

12:7 “you and your household shall eat before the LORD” This refers to a fellowship meal, which is a theological precursor of both Passover and Eucharist (cf. vv. 12,18; 14:26; Rev. 3:20). God’s people were created to rejoice (BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* PERFECT) with Him in the physicalness of creation and the intimacy of worship (cf. Lev. 23:40; Num. 10:10; Deut. 12:7,12,18; 14:26; 16:11; 26:11; 27:7; 28:47).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:8-12

⁸“You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man *doing* whatever is right in his own eyes; ⁹for you have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the LORD your God is giving you. ¹⁰When you cross the Jordan and live in the land which the LORD your God is giving you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around *you* so that you live in security, ¹¹then it shall come about that the place in which the LORD your God will choose for His name to dwell, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution of your hand, and all your choice votive offerings which you will vow to the LORD. ¹²And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you.”

12:8 “You shall not do at all what we are doing here today” Things will be more uniform in the Promised Land. The religious practices during the wilderness wanderings period were simpler than the more organized practices in the Promised Land and, especially at the temple, later located in Jerusalem.

▣ **“every man *doing whatever is right in his own eyes*”** This phrase has a neutral connotation here, but in Judges it takes on a sinister connotation of an individual asserting freedom from covenant obligations either through sinful choice or covenant ignorance (cf. 17:6; 21:25).

12:9 See note at 12:1

12:10 “He gives you rest. . .security” YHWH gives you rest (BDB 628, KB 679, *Hiphil* PERFECT) from your enemies. This security (BDB 442, KB 444, *Qal* PERFECT) was not achieved because of Israel’s great military might, but because of the presence of YHWH.

12:11 “the place in which the LORD your God shall choose” This is a reference to the centralized place of worship (i.e., the tabernacle and the ark, cf. vv. 5,14), which was first at Shiloh. See full note at 12:5.

12:12 “you shall rejoice” This is the purpose of God’s laws (cf. vv. 7,18; 14:26; 28:47).

▣ **“you and”** Notice how everyone in the family including servants and the local Levites (cf. v. 19) were to be included! In a sense these were all extended family members. They were loved and provided for, both in life’s necessities and for the next life (i.e., worship).

12:12, 19 “Levite who is within your gates” All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. Here “Levite” refers to the non-priests of the family of Levi who symbolized the poor and needy (cf. vv. 18,19; 14:27,29; 16:11,14; 26:12-13), because the Levites had been given no land. They were respected local teachers of the Law.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:13-14

¹³“Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every *cultic* place you see, ¹⁴but in the place which the LORD chooses in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you.”

12:13 “Be careful that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every *cultic* place you see” God will show you the special places for offering (cf. vv. 5,11,14). Do not use the many local Canaanite altars just because they are there. Don’t offer a sacrifice to YHWH on altars erected for *Ba’al*. However, there were some local altars made for YHWH (cf. Deut. 16:21; I Kgs. 3:4).

This verse has three VERBS:

1. “be careful” - BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE
2. “do not offer” - BDB 748, KB 828, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
3. “see” - BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERFECT

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:15-19

¹⁵“However, you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your gates, whatever you desire, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the deer. ¹⁶Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water. ¹⁷You are not allowed to eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil, or the firstborn of your herd or flock, or any of your votive offerings which you vow, or your freewill offerings, or the contribution of your hand. ¹⁸But you shall eat them before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD your God will choose, you and your son and daughter, and your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before

the LORD your God in all your undertakings. ¹⁹Be careful that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land."

12:15, 20-24 "you may slaughter" This shows a widening of the Law (cf. Lev. 17:1ff). If an animal was killed (BDB 256, KB 261, *Qal* IMPERFECT) for food and not sacrifice, it could be killed anywhere.

12:15 "unclean and the clean" This does not refer to unclean animals as far as food (cf. vv. 20-22; Lev. 11), but unclean animals as far as sacrifice. A blemished sheep could be eaten by humans as could some wild animals like deer, but not pigs, etc.

12:16 "you shall not eat the blood" This relates to the Hebrew reverence for blood as the symbol for life. Even when they killed animals, whether for eating or sacrifice, they poured the blood out (cf. 15:23; Lev. 17:13) and did not eat it, because life belonged to God. The blood represented life, life belongs to God (cf. vv. 23-25; Gen. 9:4; Lev. 7:11-12; 17:10-11)!

12:17-18 This is another warning about only using the central shrine for worship (cf. v. 26).

12:17 "the tithe" This verse lists several things that were to be tithed (BDB 798 cf. 14:23; 18:4; Num. 18:12):

1. "grain" - BDB 186
2. "wine" - BDB 440
3. "oil" - BDB 850

This was an agricultural society.

12:19 See note at v. 12.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:20-28

²⁰"When the LORD your God extends your border as He has promised you, and you say, 'I will eat meat,' because you desire to eat meat, *then* you may eat meat, whatever you desire. ²¹If the place which the LORD your God chooses to put His name is too far from you, then you may slaughter of your herd and flock which the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your gates whatever you desire. ²²Just as a gazelle or a deer is eaten, so you will eat it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat of it. ²³Only be sure not to eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. ²⁴You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. ²⁵You shall not eat it, so that it may be well with you and your sons after you, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the LORD. ²⁶Only your holy things which you may have and your votive offerings, you shall take and go to the place which the LORD chooses. ²⁷And you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; and the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the LORD your God, and you shall eat the flesh. ²⁸Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, in order that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God."

12:20 "I will eat meat" This VERB (BDB 37, KB 46) is repeated three times:

1. *Qal* COHORTATIVE
2. *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
3. *Qal* IMPERFECT

If they desire to eat meat in the Promised Land they may surely do it:

1. right kind of meat (vv. 17,22)
2. killed at the right place (vv. 15,18,21,27)
3. killed in the right way (vv. 16,23-25)

12:23 “be sure” This VERB (BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) means “be strong” (cf. 31:6,7,23) in the sense of firmly refrain from something (cf. I Chr. 28:7).

12:26 “holy things” This refers to the things mentioned in v. 17.

12:28 “Be careful” This VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used repeatedly in Deuteronomy (cf. 4:9,15,23; 6:12; 8:11; 11:16; 12:13,19,28,30; 15:9; 24:8) to encourage obedience to YHWH’s covenant.

▣ **“in order that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever”** The VERB (BDB 405, KB 408, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used several times in Deuteronomy (cf. 4:40; 5:16,29,33; 6:3,18; 12:25,28; 22:7) and in Jeremiah (cf. 7:23; 38:20; 42:6) and refers to the blessed, happy, wholesome life of YHWH’s people. Again, covenant obedience is linked to blessing and longevity in the land. This total obedience is admonished to successive generations i.e., forever). See Special Topic: Forever (*’Olam*) at 4:40.

▣ **“for you will be doing what is good and right”**

1. “good” BDB 373 II
 - a. in God’s eyes, 6:18; 13:18; II Chr. 14:2
 - b. in man’s eyes, Josh. 9:25; Jdgs. 19:24; Jer. 26:14
2. “right” BDB 449, same as above, but also Deut. 12:25; 13:18; I Kgs. 11:38; 14:8; 15:11; 22:43; II Kgs. 12:2 (for a parallel to 1. b. above, see 12:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:29-31

²⁹“When the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, ³⁰beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?’ ³¹You shall not behave thus toward the LORD your God, for every abominable act which the LORD hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.”

12:29 “before the LORD your God cuts off before you the nations” The VERB (BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) means YHWH eliminated people by killing them (cf. 19:1; Josh. 23:4; II Sam. 7:9; Jer. 44:8). This indicates that YHWH is fighting Israel’s battles.

12:30 “beware” See note at v. 28.

▣ **“that you are not ensnared”** The VERB (BDB 669, KB 723, *Niphal* IMPERFECT), in its *Qal* stem, literally means, “to bring down with a stick” (cf. Ps. 9:16). The *Niphal* stem, used only here, is a metaphorical extension implying “throw a stick at a target.”

▣ **“do not inquire after their gods”** The VERB (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means “to seek after”:

1. YHWH in 12:5; 4:29; Jer. 10:21; 29:13
2. Canaanite gods in 12:30; II Chr. 25:15,20; Jer. 8:2

12:31 YHWH is clearly saying to Israel that if they practice the same abominable fertility rites, He will remove them from the land (cf. 7:4; Lev. 18:24-30) as He did the Canaanites (cf. Gen. 15:16-21). YHWH “hates” (BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT) idolatry (cf. 12:31; 16:22; see Special Topic: God Described as a Human [Anthropomorphic Language] at 2:15). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MOLECH

YHWH prohibits the worship of *Molech* (BDB 574), the Canaanite (Ammon) fire god, who was worshiped by sacrificing the first born child of every family in the community in order to insure fertility. His name (as used by Israelites) is a Hebrew pun on the consonants for “king” and the vowels for “shame.” Israel is warned about this god early and often (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:2,3,4,5; I Kgs. 11:7; II Kgs. 23:10; Jer. 32:35; Micah 6:7). This worship was often characterized by the phrase, “passing through the fire” (cf. 12:31; 18:10; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17,31; 21:6; Ps. 106:37; Jer. 7:31; 19:5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 12:32

³²“Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.”

12:32 “you shall not add nor take away from it” God is serious about obedience to His word (see note at 4:2). However, Deuteronomy shows some adaptation of the laws of the desert period. We must apply the truths of the Bible for every new age and culture. God revealed Himself to a particular culture at a particular time. Some of it is related only to that time and people (e.g., holy war, polygamy, slavery, subjugation of women), but much of it is timeless truth to be applied to every age (for a discussion of how to distinguish between the eternal and the cultural, see Fee and Stuart, *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, pp. 149-164 and Gordon Fee, *Gospel and Spirit*, pp. 1-36).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is there so much emphasis on a central worship site?
2. Why did some of the laws change?
3. Why is the blood so important to the Hebrews?
4. Why are these rules so detailed?

DEUTERONOMY 13

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB (uses LXX versing)
Punishment of Apostates	Warnings Against Idolatry (12:32-13:19)	Warning Against Idolatry (12:29-13:18) 12:32-13:5	Against Canaanite Cults (12:29-13:1)
13:1-5	13:1-5		Against the Enticements of Idolatry 13:2-6
13:6-11	13:6-11	13:6-11	13:7-12
13:12-18	13:12-18	13:12-18	13:13-19

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND STUDY

- A. This is a difficult passage of Scripture to interpret and understand. It is not a passage one would use to describe the love of God.
- B. This chapter is a polemic against idolatry at all levels of religious, as well as, civic life.
 1. Verses 1-5 speak about false prophets (cf. 18:20).
 2. Verses 6-11 speak about family members who try to draw other family members into idolatry.
 3. Verses 12-18 talk about the entire city or community which embraces idolatry (cf. 29:18).

- C. There seems to be a distinction in the OT between a prophet and a dreamer of dreams. A vision is experienced by a person who is awake and in control of his mental faculties. Ezekiel, by the River Kebar, is an example of a vision. Daniel is an example of one who interpreted dreams. Both are revelations from God. The normative way for God to speak to people today is not through visions nor dreams, yet He has the power to do either.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:1-5

¹"If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, ²and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them,' ³you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him. ⁵But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you."

13:1 Not all persons claiming to speak for deity can be trusted. We must test them (cf. Deut. 18:20-22; Matthew 7; 24:24; I John 4:1-6; II Pet. 3:15-16).

13:1,3 "prophet" See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: OT PROPHECY

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Opening Statements:

1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy:
 - a. premonarchial:
 - (1) individuals called prophets
 - (a) Abraham - Gen. 20:7
 - (b) Moses - Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
 - (c) Aaron - Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)
 - (d) Miriam - Exod. 15:20
 - (e) Medad and Eldad - Num. 11:24-30
 - (f) Deborah - Jdgs. 4:4
 - (g) unnamed - Jdgs. 6:7-10
 - (h) Samuel - I Sam. 3:20
 - (2) references to prophets as a group - Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
 - (3) prophetic group or guild - I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.

- (4) Messiah called prophet - Deut. 18:15-18
- b. non-writing monarchial (they address the king):
 - (1) Gad - I Sam. 22:5; II Sam. 24:11; I Chr. 29:29
 - (2) Nathan - II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22
 - (3) Ahijah - I Kgs. 11:29
 - (4) Jehu - I Kgs. 16:1,7,12
 - (5) unnamed - I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22
 - (6) Elijah - I Kgs. 18-II Kgs. 2
 - (7) Micaiah - I Kgs. 22
 - (8) Elisha - II Kgs. 2:9,12-13
- c. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king): Isaiah-Malachi (except Daniel)

B. Biblical Terms

1. *Ro'eh* = "seer," I Sam. 9:9. This reference itself shows the transition to the term *Nabi*. *Ro'eh* is from the general term "to see." This person understood God's ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God's will in a matter.
2. *Hozeh* = "seer," II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *Ro'eh*. It is from a rarer term "to see." The participled form is used most often to refer to prophets (i.e., "to behold").
3. *Nabi'* = "prophet," cognate of Akkadian VERB *Nabu* = "to call" and Arabic *Naba'a* = "to announce." This is the most common term in the Old Testament to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain but "to call" at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH's description of Moses' relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4.)
4. All three terms are used of the prophet's office in I Chr. 29:29; Samuel - *Ro'eh*; Nathan - *Nabi'* and Gad - *Hozeh*.
5. The phrase, *'ish ha - 'elohim*, "Man of God," is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of "prophet."
6. The term "prophet" is Greek in origin. It comes from: (1) pro = "before" or "for" and (2) phemi = "to speak."

II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term "prophecy" had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) are labeled by the Jews as "the former prophets." Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:5) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. "Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896.
- C. "The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present," "Prophets and Prophecy," *Encyclopedia Judaica* vol. 13 p. 1152.

III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God's people about Himself and His plans. They hold God's people to fidelity to God's covenants. To this must be added that often it is used to clearly reveal God's choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected this into an eschatological setting. This end-time view of history is unique in Israel and its sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and usurp the office of High Priest as a way to know God's will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God's spokesman. The office of prophet seems also to have passed away in Israel after Malachi. It does not reappear until 400 years later with John the Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of "prophecy" relates to the Old Testament. New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 14:29,32,37; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation or Scripture, but forth-tellers and foretellers of God's will in covenant situations.
- D. Prophecy is not exclusively or primarily predictive in nature. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted "less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic. Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come." (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166)
- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.
- F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time frame or clear division between oracles. These books are difficult: (1) to read through in one sitting; (2) to outline by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of "prophet" and "prophecy." In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase, "the sons of the prophets," was used to designate this group (II Kgs. 2). The prophets were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into individual prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israeli society (Amos). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14.)
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on man's immediate response. Often the prophet's task was an unfolding of God's universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of the ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets are primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation.

- D. Most prophetic material was orally presented. It was later combined by means of theme, chronology or other patterns of Near Eastern Literature which are lost to us. Because it was oral it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.
- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages:
 1. Court Scene - God takes His people to court, often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
 2. Funeral dirge - the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic “woe” sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
 3. Covenant Blessing Pronouncement - the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positive and negative, are spelled out for the future (Deut. 27-28).

V. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.
- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book.
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember this Ancient Near Eastern literature is not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat prediction with care:
 1. Are they exclusively for the author’s day?
 2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel’s history?
 3. Are they yet future events?
 4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
 5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.
- F. Special concerns
 1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
 2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
 3. Is there a possibility both Biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfillment?
 4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or word play. Since we are not inspired we best leave this approach to them.

VI. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* by Carl E. Amending and W. Ward Basque
- B. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. *My Servants the Prophets* by Edward J. Young
- D. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* by D. Brent Sandy
- E. *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, vol. 4, pp. 1067-1078



NASB, NKJV,

NJB

“dreamer of dreams”

NRSV

“those who divine by dreams”

TEV

“interpreters of dreams”

JPSOA

“dream-diviner”

This term is a construct of the VERB (BDB 321, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) and the PLURAL NOUN (BDB 321). Divination (cf. 18:14-15) or the attempt to understand, foreknow, or effect the will of god/gods was common in the ancient Near East. There were many ways to divine:

1. dreams/trances (mental states)
2. lots, sticks (man-made items)
3. clouds/storms/droughts (weather)
4. birds (flight of and type of)
5. events in the sky (movement of constellations, comets, eclipses, etc.)
6. condition of sheep’s liver (other sacrificial animals)

13:1, 2 “sign” It seems to me the word “sign” (BDB 16) in the Bible is used when talking about something that had been predicted and then fulfilled. This term is used in several different senses in Deuteronomy:

1. The miracles/plagues that YHWH did through Moses in Egypt to force Pharaoh to let Israel leave, 4:34; 6:22; 7:18-19; 11:3; 26:8; 29:2-3; 34:11.
2. Small containers which contained Scripture texts, 6:8; 11:8
 - a. on left arm
 - b. on forehead
 - c. on doorpost
3. Miracles/predictions of false prophets to lead Israel away from the exclusive worship of YHWH, 13:1-2.
4. YHWH’s judgments on a disobedient Israel will function as a future warning to generations of Israelites, 28:46.

“or wonder” “Wonder” (BDB 65) seems to refer to a miraculous deed done in the presence of witnesses. It is often used in tandem with “signs.”

13:2 “and the sign or the wonder comes true” Miracles are not automatically from God (cf. Exod. 7:11,22; Matt. 24:24; II Thess. 2:9). This is also true of accurate predictions (cf. 18:22).

If “the Prophet” of Deut. 18:18-19 is a foreshadowing of the Messiah, then this false prophet is a foreshadowing of the Anti-Christ (cf. 18:20). The “falseness” is revealed if:

1. the word does not come true
2. the word is not of YHWH

“Let us go after. . .let us serve them” These two VERBS document the proposed deviation from the exclusive worship of YHWH:

1. “go after” - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* COHORTATIVE. This is a repeated warning, cf. 6:14; ;8:19; 11:28; 13:2,6,13; 28:14; 29:18,26
2. “serve” - BDB 712, KB 773, *Hophal* IMPERFECT, used in a COHORTATIVE sense. This is also a repeated warning, cf. 5:9; 7:4,16; 8:19; 11:16; 13:2,6,13; 17:3; 28:14,36,64; 29:18,26; 30:17; 31:20.

The phrase “Let us go after other gods” is a repeated warning, not just in Deuteronomy, but in Jeremiah.

▣ **“gods (whom you have not known)”** The issue here is not the ability to perform power signs, but the exclusive worship of YHWH. See Special Topic: Know at 4:35.

13:3 “you shall not listen to the words of that prophet” The VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is the often repeated *shema*, which means “to hear so as to do.” See note at 4:1.

▣ **“for the LORD your God is testing you”** The VERB (BDB 650, KB 702, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) expresses the truth that God puts humans in situations of testing or temptation in order to know and strengthen their faith/trust/obedience in Him (cf. Gen. 22:1-12; Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; Jdgs. 2:22; 3:1,4; II Chr. 32:31). Even the presence of false prophets among the people is a divine way to separate true believers from peripheral believers. God uses evil for His own purposes (cf. Genesis 3)!

▣ **“with all your heart and with all your soul”** See note at 4:29. This is a metaphor for total and complete devotion. Israel is repeatedly called on to love YHWH with complete devotion (cf. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1,13,22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6,16,20).

13:4 This verse contains a series of *Qal* IMPERFECTS, which serve as guidelines for the exclusive worship of YHWH:

1. “follow,” BDB 229, KB 246, cf. 8:6
2. “fear,” BDB 431, KB 432
3. “keep,” BDB 1036, KB 1581, cf. 5:29; 6:2
4. “listen,” BDB 1033, KB 1570
5. “serve,” BDB 712, KB 773
6. “cling,” BDB 179, KB 209

This verse is similar to 6:13 and 10:20.

13:5 “that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death” YHWH is concerned with the pollution of His worship as Deuteronomy 12 clearly shows. If the worship of YHWH had become polluted here, the NT would not be a reality. God was concerned that His people perform their worship in the exact way He commanded (cf. 4:2; 12:32). If it was not pure worship, the consequence was death, which included Canaanites and false prophets within Israel (cf. 13:5,9,15). Seduction was possible for individuals within the community (cf. 4:19; 13:5,10).

▣ **“redeemed”** This term (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is a way of expressing a price paid to release someone from slavery or prison. See Special Topic at 7:8.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:6-11

“If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom neither you nor your fathers have known, ⁷of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end), ⁸you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him. ⁹But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. ¹⁰So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹¹Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.”

13:6, 8 “If your brother. . .your son. . .daughter. . .the wife. . .your friend” If even one who was an extremely close loved one, relative, or friend attempts to entice you to worship another god, the faithful Israelite must turn them in to be stoned by the community (cf. vv. 9-10). This is the heart of individual covenant responsibility. This is a radical statement in the context of the cultural structure where family was most important (cf. Matt. 10:34-39; Luke 14:25-27).

13:6 “Let us go and serve other gods” These VERBS are both *Qal* COHORTATIVES:

1. “go” - BDB 229, KB 246
2. “serve” - BDB 712, KB 773

They serve as collective metaphors for worship.

13:7 “the gods of the people who are around you, near you, or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end” This text has several possible interpretations. The phrase can refer to:

1. the Canaanite gods, whether in the north or south of Canaan (“earth” = “land”)
2. foreign gods, whether in Mesopotamia or Palestine (“near you or far from you”)
3. particular caution against the worship of astral gods, whether the sun, moon, stars, planets, constellations, comets, shooting stars, novas, eclipses, etc. (things that rise and set)

13:8 This verse lists (a series of negated *Qal* IMPERFECTS) how a true follower of YHWH should treat a follower of a foreign god(s):

1. You shall not yield to him - BDB 2, KB 3
2. You shall not listen to him - BDB 1033, KB 1570
3. Your eye shall not pity him - BDB 299, KB 298, cf. 7:2,16
4. You shall not spare him - BDB 328, KB 328, cf. I Sam. 15:3
5. You shall not conceal him - BDB 491, KB 487 (literally “cover”)

Just a brief comment on #3. This form is an idiom for “do not let your human emotions affect your actions required by God.” It is found several times in Deuteronomy 7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12 (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 50).

13:9 “But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him” The MT does not have the term “stone” in this verse, though that is surely the method of death that is alluded to (cf. v. 10). The MT has the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the *Qal* IMPERFECT of the VERB “kill” BDB 246, KB 255 (i.e., “surely kill”), which denotes emphasis.

The one who witnessed against a person was the one who had to cast the first stone (cf. v. 10; 17:7). If one lied about the accused, he then committed premeditated murder (cf. 5:20).

13:10 “you shall stone him to death” The MT has the VERB for “stoning to death” (BDB 709, KB 768, *Qal* PERFECT) and the term for “stone” (BDB 6), which literally would be “stone him with stones.” Stoning was a capital punishment which was done by the whole covenantal community (cf. Lev. 20:2,27; 24:13-23; Num. 15:32-36; Deut. 13:10; 21:21; Josh 7:22-26).

This is not the regular term used for judicial capital punishment. This term speaks of the urgency of immediate, radical purging of evil (cf. Exod. 32:27; Lev. 20:15,16; Num. 25:5; Deut. 13:10; Ezek. 9:6).

Persons were stoned by the community for:

1. idolatry, Lev. 20:2-5 (also possibly 6-8); Deut. 13:1-5; 17:2-7
2. blasphemy, Lev. 24:10-23; I Kings 11-14; Luke 4:29; Acts 7:58 (both reflect Exod. 22:28); also note John 8:59; 10:31; 11:8
3. rejection of parental authority, Deut. 21:18-21 (possibly Lev. 20:9)

4. marital unfaithfulness, Deut. 22:22,23-27 (possibly Lev. 20:10-16)
5. treason (known disobedience to YHWH), Joshua 7



NASB	“to seduce”
NKJV	“to entice”
NRSV	“trying to turn you away”
TEV	“tried to lead you away”
NJB	“tried to divert you”

This is the VERB (BDB 623, KB 673, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) that means “thrust.” These false prophets (v. 1) and supposedly covenant members (v. 6) were trying to impel believers away from YHWH to other national gods. This VERB (cf. vv. 5,12; 4:19; II Kgs. 17:21) is parallel to “entice” (BDB 694, KB 749, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) of v. 6.

It is interesting that this same Hebrew root is used to describe the exile (i.e., scattering).

13:11 There is more involved in punishment than the punitive aspect to the individual. The ones committing the rebellion did suffer the consequences (i.e., stoning), but there is also a deterrent for those who witness or hear about the punishment (cf. 17:12-13; 19:15-21; 21:18-21; Rom. 13:4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 13:12-18

¹²“If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, *anyone* saying *that* ¹³some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom you have not known), ¹⁴then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true *and* the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, ¹⁵you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. ¹⁶Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt. ¹⁷Nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand, in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers, ¹⁸if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.”

13:13 “worthless men” Literally this means “sons of *Belial*” (BDB 116). The Hebrew word meant “worthless one” or “good for nothing” (cf. Jdgs. 19:22; 20:13; I Sam. 10:27; 30:22; I Kgs. 21:10,13; Pro. 6:12). By the NT time, *Belial* had become synonymous with Satan (cf. II Cor. 6:15).

▣ “seduced” See note at v. 10.

13:14 This verse lists a series of VERBS of investigation (all *Qal* PERFECTS):

1. NASB “investigate”
- NKJV, NRSV “inquire”
- NJB “look into the matter”

The VERB is BDB 205, KB 233, meaning “investigate,” cf. 17:4,9; 19:18

2. NASB, NKJV “search out”
 NJB “examine it”

The VERB is BDB 350, KB 347, meaning “search,” cf. Ps. 139:1,23; Pro. 18:17

3. NASB “inquire thoroughly”
 NKJV “ask diligently”
 NJB “inquire most carefully”

This is a combination of BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* PERFECT, “inquire” and BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, “thoroughly,” cf. 17:4; 19:8

13:15 “you shall. . .utterly destroy” This phrase “utterly destroy” (BDB 355) means “totally dedicated to God for destruction.” See full note at 3:6. The same consequence meted out to pagans would be suffered by the Jews if they worshiped other gods.

13:16

- NASB “it shall be a ruin forever”
 NKJV “it shall be a heap forever”
 NRSV “it shall remain a perpetual ruin”
 TEV “it must be left in ruins forever”
 NJB “you must lay it under the curse of destruction”

This last phrase was a Hebrew curse idiom (e.g., Josh. 8:28; Jer. 49:2). For the concept of “forever” see Special Topic at 4:40.

13:16 “put under the ban” This is the Hebrew concept of dedicating the spoils of “holy war” to Him (BDB 356). The very thing treated here (and v. 17) occurs in Joshua 6-7!

13:17-18 Notice the flow of thought:

1. Idolatry deserves judgment (i.e., holy war, all that breathes, dies), vv. 12-15.
2. All the spoils of the city are given to YHWH as a whole burnt offering (i.e., in holy war, all valuables given to YHWH), vv. 16-17
3. Obedience brings blessing, vv. 17-18:
 - a. He turns from His burning anger
 - b. He shows mercy, cf. 30:3
 - c. He has compassion (same root as above, BDB 933)
 - d. He brings abundance
 - e. He fulfills oath to the fathers
4. Blessing is conditional on obedience, v. 18

▣ **“doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God”** This phrase occurs several times in Deuteronomy (cf. 6:18; 12:28; 13:18). It also occurs in I Kgs. 11:38; 14:8; 15:11; 22:43; II Kgs. 12:3. YHWH is the standard of justice and righteousness by which all are judged. See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1:16.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is this chapter so severe in its treatment of other faiths?
2. Can this chapter be a basis of our dealing with other faiths in our day?
3. How do you recognize a false spokesman for God? What about the miraculous?
4. Explain the OT concept of corporality (ie. one effects all), which answers a multitude of questions about the NT.

DEUTERONOMY 14

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Improper Mourning 14:1-2	The Lifestyle of a Holy Person 14:1-2	A Forbidden Mourning Practice 14:1-2	Against An Idolatrous Practice 14:1-2
Clean and Unclean Meat 14:3-8 14:9-10 14:11-20	14:3-8 14:9-10 14:11-20	Clean and Unclean Animals 14:3-8 14:9-10 14:11-18 14:19-20	Clean and Unclean Animals 14:3-8 14:9-10 14:11-20
14:21	14:21a 14:21b	14:21a 14:21b	14:21a 14:21b
Tithing Principles 14:22-27 14:28-29	14:22-27 14:28-29	The Law of the Tithe 14:22-26 14:27-29	The Annual Tithe 14:22-23 14:24-27 The Third-year Tithe 14:28-29

**READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
 FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO 14:1-16:17

- A. Deuteronomy 14:1-2 is a preliminary affirmation that Israel, as YHWH's unique people (cf. Exod. 19:5-6), must live like it!
- B. Deuteronomy 14:3-16:17 is a recapitulation of some main covenant requirements of God's people set forth in Exodus - Numbers
1. Clean vs. unclean food in 14:1-21 is originally found in Lev. 11:1-23.
 2. Tithes in 14:22-29 are originally given in Num. 18:21-29.
 3. Debt cancellation in 15:1-11 is originally given in Lev. 28:8-38.
 4. Freeing Hebrew slaves in 15:12-18 is originally given in Lev. 25:38-55.
 5. Redeeming the firstborn in 15:19-23 is originally given in Exod. 13:1-16.
 6. The three annual pilgrim feasts in 16:1-17 are originally given in Lev. 23:4-8 and also Num. 28:16-29:40.
- (Outline from *Old Testament Theology*, by Paul R. House, p. 184)
7. The summary nature of Deuteronomy is clearly seen. Often the laws are slightly changed for the new setting.
It must be stated again that moderns do not know the how, when, or why of the structure of OT books.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:1-2

¹"You are the sons of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead. ²For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

14:1 "You are the sons of the LORD" Notice the family metaphors used as covenant terminology (cf. 1:31; 8:5; 32:5). See Special Topic: Fatherhood of God at 8:5. Note the three special titles for the Israelites used in vv. 1-2.

▣ **"cut yourselves"** The VERB is BDB 151, KB 177, *Hithpoel* (a rare variant of the *Hithpael* stem) IMPERFECT and is often found in "gashing" or "cutting" texts. This was a pagan worship practice (either to get the attention of the deity or cause feelings of mourning for the dead, cf. Lev. 19:28; 21:5; I Kgs. 18:28; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 47:5; 48:37).

SPECIAL TOPIC: GRIEVING RITES

The Israelites expressed sorrow for the death of a loved one and for personal repentance, as well as corporate crimes, in several ways:

1. tear outer robe, Gen. 37:29,34; 44:13; Jdgs. 11:35; II Sam. 1:11; 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Job 1:20
2. put on sackcloth, Gen. 37:34; II Sam. 3:31; I Kgs. 21:27; Jer. 48:37
3. take off shoes, II Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:3
4. put hands on head, II Sam. 13:19; Jer. 2:37
5. put dust on head, Josh. 7:6; I Sam. 4:12; Neh. 9:1
6. sit on the ground, Lam. 2:10; Ezek. 26:16 (lay on the ground, II Sam. 12:16) Isa. 47:1

7. beat the breast, I Sam. 25:1; II Sam. 11:26; Nah. 2:7
8. cut the body, Deut. 14:1; Jer. 16:6; 48:37
9. fast, II Sam. 1:12; 12:21; I Kgs. 21:27; I Chr. 10:12
10. chant a lament, II Sam. 1:17; 3:31; II Chr. 35:25
11. baldness (hair pulled out or shaved), Jer. 48:37
12. cut beards short, Jer. 48:37
13. cover head or face, II Sam. 15:30; 19:4

▣ **“shave your forehead”** This (“making baldness, BDB 901) also refers to the mourning rites of surrounding nations (cf. Jer. 16:6; 41:5; Ezek. 27:31; 44:20). In contrast (1) Israeli priests were not allowed to shave at all (cf. Lev. 21:5) and (2) Israelites were not even allowed to trim their beards (cf. Lev. 19:27). Many of the laws of Israel were given in direct opposition to regular Canaanite practices!

▣ **“for the sake of the dead”** The mourning rites described are connected to:

1. ancestor worship
2. *Ba'al* worship (the dying [winter] and rising [spring] nature god of the Canaanite pantheon)

14:2 “holy people” The concept relates to Israel’s task of revealing YHWH and His Messiah (cf. Exod. 19:6; Deut. 7:6). See Special Topic at 4:6.

Deuteronomy typifies covenant language, which describes deity as “the LORD your God” and His “holy,” “chosen,” “special treasure” people (cf. 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; 28:9; 29:12-13). Also notice Jeremiah (cf. 7:23; 11:4; 13:11; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1,33; 32:38). And of course, who can forget Hosea 1-3!

▣ **“the LORD has chosen you”** The VERB (BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* PERFECT) is used of God’s sovereign choice of:

1. Abraham, Gen. 12:1; Neh. 9:7
2. the Patriarchs, Deut. 7:8
3. the descendants of the Patriarchs, Deut. 4:37; 10:15
4. Israel, Deut. 7:6; Ps. 135:4; Isa. 44:1,8; 43:10; Ezek. 20:5
5. Jeshurun (Israel or Jerusalem), Deut. 32:15; 33:5,26; Isa. 44:2
6. an Israeli king (a symbol of YHWH’s rule, which would foreshadow David [cf. I Sam. 10:24; 16:8,9,10; II Sam. 6:21], who became a Messianic figure), Deut. 17:14-17
7. place for His name to dwell (i.e., central sanctuary), Deut. 12:5,11,14,18,21,26; 14:24; 15:20; 16:2,6,7,11,15; 17:8,10; 31:11

God’s sovereignty and purpose is expressed in His choice of Israel. God’s “choice” in the OT is always related to service, not necessarily salvation, as it is in the NT. Israel was to reveal YHWH to the whole world, so that all the world might be saved (cf. Gen. 12:3; quoted in Acts 3:25 and Gal. 3:8). See Special Topic at 4:6.

▣ **“a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth”** The term “possession” (BDB 688) means a special treasure (cf. Exod. 19:5; Ps. 135:4; Mal. 3:17). This phrase is recurrent in Deuteronomy (cf. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). Please read the Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 4:6! From this you will see the way I view the interpretation of Scripture! It shows the integrating center of my worldview (i.e., the Great Commission)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:3-8

³"You shall not eat any detestable thing. ⁴These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, ⁵the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. ⁶Any animal that divides the hoof and has the hoof split in two *and* chews the cud, among the animals, that you may eat. ⁷Nevertheless, you are not to eat of these among those which chew the cud, or among those that divide the hoof in two: the camel and the rabbit and the shaphan, for though they chew the cud, they do not divide the hoof; they are unclean for you. ⁸The pig, because it divides the hoof but *does not chew* the cud, it is unclean for you. You shall not eat any of their flesh nor touch their carcasses."

14:3 "You shall not eat" Verses 3-21 reflect Leviticus 11:2-19, but with differences. It is differences like this which are so hard to explain that have caused the speculation of numerous sources. Notice the VERB "eat" (BDB 37, KB 46) is used 17 times in this chapter. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE OT FOOD LAWS

In my opinion, these food laws (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14) are not given primarily for health or hygienic reasons (i.e., Maimonides, *Guide* 3:48; *Kiddushin* 49b [Talmudic tractate]), but for theological reasons. Israelis are to have no contact with Canaanites (cf. Isa. 65:4; 66:3,17). Many of the regulations given to Israel through Moses relate to Canaanite eating, socializing, and worshiping practices (e.g., Exod. 8:23).

On the question of "are these food laws binding or even helpful for NT believers," I would say No! No! No! Here are my reasons:

1. Jesus rejected the food laws as a way to approach and please God, Mark 7:14-23 (surely the editorial comment by either Peter or John Mark in v. 19 is equally inspired)
2. This very question was the issue of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15, where it was decided that Gentiles did not have to follow OT cultic laws (cf. esp. v. 19). Verse 20 is not a food law, but a fellowship concession to believing Jews who may be in their Gentile churches.
3. Peter's experience in Acts 10 in Joppa is not about food, but about the acceptability of all people, yet the Spirit used the food law's irrelevance as the symbol to teach Peter!
4. Paul's discussion of "weak" and "strong" believers cautions us not to force our personal interpretation, particularly of OT laws, on all other believers (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13; I Corinthians 8-10).
5. Paul's warnings about legalism and judgmentalism in relation to the Gnostic false teachers recorded in Col. 2:16-23 ought to be a warning to all believers in every age!

SPECIAL TOPIC: ABOMINATIONS

"Abominations" (BDB 1072) can refer to several things:

1. things related to Egyptians:
 - a. they loathe eating with Hebrews, Gen. 43:32
 - b. they loathe shepherds, Gen. 46:34
 - c. they loathe Hebrew sacrifices, Exod. 8:26
2. things related to YHWH's feelings toward Israel's actions:
 - a. unclean food, Deut. 14:2

- b. idols, Deut. 7:25; 18:9,12; 27:15
 - c. pagan spiritists, Deut. 18:9,12
 - d. burning children to *Molech*, Lev. 18:21-22; 20:2-5; Deut. 12:31; 18:9,12; II Kgs. 16:3; 17:17-18; 21:6; Jer. 32:35
 - e. Canaanite idolatry, Deut. 13:14; 17:4; 20:17-18; 32:16; Isa. 44:19; Jer. 16:18; Ezek. 5:11; 6:9; 11:18,21; 14:6; 16:50; 18:12
 - f. sacrificing blemished animals, Deut. 17:1 (cf. 15:19-23; Mal. 1:12-13)
 - g. sacrificing to idols, Jer. 44:4-5
 - h. remarrying a woman whom you had previously divorced, Deut. 24:2
 - i. women wearing man's clothes (possibly Canaan worship), Deut. 22:5
 - j. money from cultic prostitution (Canaanite worship), Deut. 23:18
 - k. Israel's idolatry, Jer. 2:7
 - l. homosexuality (possibly Canaanite worship), Lev. 18:22; 20:13
 - m. use of false weights, Det. 25:15-16; Pro. 11:1; 20:23
 - n. food laws violated (possibly Canaanite worship), Deut. 14:3
3. Examples in Wisdom Literature:
- a. Proverbs 3:32; 6:16-19; 11:1,20; 12:22; 15:8,9,26; 16:5; 17:15; 20:10,23; 21:27; 28:9
 - b. Psalms 88:8
 - c. Job 30:10
4. There is a recurrent eschatological phrase "abomination of desolation," which is used in Daniel (cf. 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). It seems to refer to three different occasions (multiple fulfillment prophecy):
- a. Antiochus IV Epiphanes of the interbiblical Maccabean period (cf. I Macc. 1:54,59; II Macc. 6:1-2)
 - b. the Roman general (later Emperor), Titus, who sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in A.D. 70 (cf. Matt. 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:20)
 - c. an end-time world leader called "the man of lawlessness" (cf. II Thess. 2:3-4) or "the Antichrist" (cf. I John 2:18; 4:3; Revelation 13)

▣ "detestable things" This phrase (BDB 481 CONSTRUCT 1072) is also used in Deut. 14:3.

14:5 "the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck" These are wild animals unclean for sacrifice but not for food. They are not mentioned in Leviticus 11 because they were unknown in Egypt. Several are difficult for moderns to identify specifically.

14:6 "Any animal that divides the hoof and . . .chews the cud" This is the basic guideline for a sacrificially clean animal given in Lev. 11:4.

The phrase, "divides the hoof," is an intensified form (VERB BDB 828, KB 969, *Hiphil* PERFECT CONSTRUCT with the NOUN BDB 828) as in v. 7. To this description is combined a second intensified form (VERB BDB 1042, KB 1608, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE CONSTRUCT with the NOUN (BDB 1043). This description is very specific and clear.

▣ Some animals which only partially fulfill the two requirements (“divides the hoof” and “chews the cud”) are listed in v. 7.

14:7

NASB “shapshan”
NKJV “rock hyrax”
NRSV, TEV “rock badger”
LXX, NJB,
NJB, NIV “the coney”
JPSOA “the daman”

This animal (BDB 1050 I) is apparently mentioned in Lev. 11:6 as “hare” or “rabbit.” It is interesting that Leviticus says (as assumed here) that the rabbit chews the cud. This is a good place to remind readers that the Israelites based their knowledge of nature on observable characteristic (phenomenological language). Rabbits do not, in actuality, chew the cud, but the rapid movement of their noses look as if they do. This is not an error in the Bible, but the recognition the ancients based their knowledge on observation, not modern, scientific methods.

14:18 “pig” The pig was eaten and used in sacrificial ritual by the Canaanites (cf. Isa. 65:4; 66:3,17). It was classified as unclean because of its eating habits (the same is true for dogs) and preferred resting places (mud holes). Pigs were sacrificed regularly in Hittites, Greek, and Roman cultures. They were also eaten (by some groups) in all of the Mediterranean cultures. For an extended discussion of food and sacrifices of the ancient Near East see ABD, vol. 6, “Zoology,” pp. 1109-1167, for pigs, see pp. 1130-1135.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:9-10

⁹“These you may eat of all that are in water: anything that has fins and scales you may eat, ¹⁰but anything that does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.

14:9 “anything that has fins and scales” This is the basic guideline of Lev. 11:9-12. Again the exact reasons for the prohibitions are not given anywhere in the OT. See note at 14:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:11-20

¹¹“You may eat any clean bird. ¹²But these are the ones which you shall not eat: the eagle and the vulture and the buzzard, ¹³and the red kite, the falcon, and the kite in their kinds, ¹⁴and every raven in its kind, ¹⁵and the ostrich, the owl, the sea gull, and the hawk in their kinds, ¹⁶the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, ¹⁷the pelican, the carrion vulture, the cormorant, ¹⁸the stork, and the heron in their kinds, and the hoopoe and the bat. ¹⁹And all the teeming life with wings are unclean to you; they shall not be eaten. ²⁰You may eat any clean bird.”

14:11 This parallels Lev. 11:13-19. The reason for the “uncleanness” is not stated, but it seems obvious that the listed birds ate carrion.

14:18 “hoopoe” This type of bird (BDB 189) eats all kinds of insects, including dung beetles. It became known for its eating in unclean places and having a dung-filled nest, therefore, it became an “unclean” migratory bird.

14:19 “teeming life” This phrase (BDB 481 CONSTRUCT 1056 & 733, cf. Gen. 7:14,21) refers to flying insects. This is paralleled in Lev. 11:20-23, where some insects are clean to eat (i.e., locusts, cf. Matt. 3:4; Mark 1:6). These insects are the food for many of the unclean birds listed.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:21

²¹“You shall not eat anything which dies of *itself*. You may give it to the alien who is in your town, so that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to the LORD your God. You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk.

14:21 “You shall not eat anything which dies of *itself*” This may reflect Exod. 22:31. One reason was because the blood was still in it (cf. 12:16,23-25; Gen. 9:4). This law did not apply to everyone in the Promised Land (i.e., aliens and foreigners were exempt, but note Lev. 17:15). These food laws were meant to separate Israel from Canaanite society and worship practices.

▣ **“You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk”** The *Ras Shamra* (see Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Handbook*, p. 174) texts show that this was done in other cultures as a symbol of fertility. Judaism developed strict dietary rules (separate cooking vessels and plates for meat and dairy products) based on this verse. However, the thrust seems to relate to Canaanites’ sacrificial worship (cf. Exod. 23:19; 34:26). It has little or nothing to do with disease or hygiene.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:22-27

²²“You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year. ²³You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. ²⁴If the distance is so great for you that you are not able to bring *the tithe*, since the place where the LORD your God chooses to set His name is too far away from you when the LORD your God blesses you, ²⁵then you shall exchange *it* for money, and bind the money in your hand and go to the place which the LORD your God chooses. ²⁶You may spend the money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice, you and your household. ²⁷Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance among you.”

14:22 “tithe” Numbers 18 discusses the tithes for the local Levites as well as the priests at the central shrine. However, this passage parallels chapter 12 and deals mostly with local agricultural tithing issues. See notes at chapter 12.

14:23 “at the place where He chooses to establish His name” See full note at 12:5.

14:26 “You may spend the money for whatever your heart desires” This refers to items to be tithed at the central sanctuary. This is parallel to 12:20. This phrase must drive “legalists” crazy! YHWH desires our happiness! He just wants to share it with us (cf. 12:7,18; 16:14; 27:7; I Chr. 29:22; Ps. 104:15; Eccl. 2:24; 3:12,13,22; 5:18; 8:15; 9:7-9; Isa. 22:13). The NT even widens this concept by clearly stating that nothing in the physical creation is unclean in and of itself (e.g., Acts 10:15; Rom. 14:2,14,20; I Cor. 6:12; 10:23-33; I Tim. 4:4). This is not meant to give humans a license to sin, but to encourage Christian freedom from legalism and judgmentalism (cf. Col. 2:16-23). However, the mature believer will be careful while

in this fallen world to do nothing that might offend a weaker brother for whom Christ died (cf. Rom. 14:1-15:13)!

▣ **“strong drink”** This (BDB 1016) was wine to which other natural fermented juices were added to make the percentage of alcohol higher (i.e. more intoxicating). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ALCOHOL (FERMENTATION) AND ALCOHOLISM (ADDICTION)

I. Biblical Terms

A. Old Testament

1. *Yayin* - This is the general term for wine (BDB 406), which is used 141 times. The etymology is uncertain because it is not from a Hebrew root. It always means fermented fruit juice, usually grape. Some typical passages are Gen. 9:21; Exod. 29:40; Num. 15:5,10.
2. *Tirosh* - This is “new wine” (BDB 440). Because of climatic conditions of the Near East, fermentation started as soon as six hours after extracting the juice. This term refers to wine in the process of fermenting. For some typical passages see Deut. 12:17; 18:4; Isa. 62:8-9; Hos. 4:11.
3. *Asis* - This is obviously alcoholic beverages (“sweet wine” BDB 779, e.g., Joel 1:5; Isa. 49:26).
4. *Sekar* - This is the term “strong drink” (BDB 1016). The Hebrew root is used in the term “drunk” or “drunkard.” It had something added to it to make it more intoxicating. It is parallel to *yayin* (cf. Prov. 20:1; 31:6; Isa. 28:7).

B. New Testament

1. *Oinos* - the Greek equivalent of *Yayin*
2. *Neos oinos* (new wine) - the Greek equivalent of *tirosh* (cf. Mark 2:22).
3. *Gleuchos vinos* (sweet wine, *asis*) - wine in the early stages of fermentation (cf. Acts 2:13).

II. Biblical Usage

A. Old Testament

1. Wine is a gift of God (Gen. 27:28; Ps. 104:14-15; Eccl. 9:7; Hos. 2:8-9; Joel 2:19,24; Amos 9:13; Zech. 10:7).
2. Wine is a part of a sacrificial offering (Exod. 29:40; Lev. 23:13; Num. 15:7,10; 28:14; Deut. 14:26; Judg. 9:13).
3. Wine is used as medicine (II Sam. 16:2; Prov. 31:6-7).
4. Wine can be a real problem (Noah - Gen. 9:21; Lot - Gen. 19:33,35; Samson - Judg. 16:19; Nabal - I Sam. 25:36; Uriah - II Sam. 11:13; Ammon - II Sam. 13:28; Elah - I Kin. 16:9; Benhadad - I Kin. 20:12; Rulers - Amos 6:6; and Ladies - Amos 4).
5. Wine can be abused (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5; Isa. 5:11,22; 19:14; 28:7-8; Hosea 4:11).
6. Wine was prohibited to certain groups (Priests on duty, Lev. 10:9; Ezek. 44:21; Nazarites, Num. 6; and Rulers, Prov. 31:4-5; Isa. 56:11-12; Hosea 7:5).
7. Wine is used in an eschatological setting (Amos 9:13; Joel 3:18; Zech. 9:17).

B. Interbiblical

1. Wine in moderation is very helpful (Ecclesiasticus 31:27-30).
2. The rabbis say, “Wine is the greatest of all medicine, where wine is lacking, then drugs are needed.” (BB 58b).

C. New Testament

1. Jesus changed a large quantity of water into wine (John 2:1-11).
2. Jesus drank wine (Matt. 11:18-19; Luke 7:33-34; 22:17ff).
3. Peter accused of drunkenness on “new wine” at Pentecost (Acts 2:13).
4. Wine can be used as medicine (Mark 15:23; Luke 10:34; I Tim. 5:23).
5. Leaders are not to be abusers. This does not mean total abstainers (I Tim. 3:3,8; Titus 1:7; 2:3; I Pet. 4:3).
6. Wine used in eschatological settings (Matt. 22:1ff; Rev. 19:9).
7. Drunkenness is deplored (Matt. 24:49; Luke 11:45; 21:34; I Cor. 5:11-13; 6:10; Gal. 5:21; I Pet. 4:3; Rom. 13:13-14).

III. Theological Insight

A. Dialectical tension

1. Wine is a gift of God.
2. Drunkenness is a major problem.
3. Believers in some cultures must limit their freedoms for the sake of the gospel (Matt. 15:1-20; Mark 7:1-23; I Corinthians 8-10; Romans 14).

B. Tendency to go beyond given bounds

1. God is the source of all good things.
2. Fallen mankind has abused all of God’s gifts by taking them beyond God-given bounds.

C. Abuse is in us, not in things. There is nothing evil in the physical creation (cf. Mark 7:18-23; Rom. 14:14,20; I Cor. 10:25-26; I Tim. 4:4; Titus 1:15).

IV. First Century Jewish Culture and Fermentation

- A. Fermentation begins very soon, approximately 6 hours after the grape is crushed.
- B. Jewish tradition says that when a slight foam appeared on the surface (sign of fermentation), it is liable to the wine-tithe (*Ma aseroth* 1:7). It was called “new wine” or “sweet wine.”
- C. The primary violent fermentation was complete after one week.
- D. The secondary fermentation took about 40 days. At this state it is considered “aged wine” and could be offered on the altar (*Edhuyyoth* 6:1).
- E. Wine that had rested on its lees (old wine) was considered good but had to be strained well before use.
- F. Wine was considered to be properly aged usually after one year of fermentation. Three years was the longest period of time that wine could be safely stored. It was called “old wine” and had to be diluted with water.
- G. Only in the last 100 years with a sterile environment and chemical additives has fermentation been postponed. The ancient world could not stop the natural process of fermentation.

V. Closing Statements

- A. Be sure your experience, theology, and biblical interpretation does not depreciate Jesus and first century Jewish/Christian culture! They were obviously not total-abstainers.
- B. I am not advocating the social use of alcohol. However, many have overstated the Bible’s position on this subject and now claim superior righteousness based on a cultural/ denominational bias.
- C. For me, Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8-10 have provided insight and guidelines based on love and respect for fellow believers and the spread of the gospel in our cultures, not personal freedom

or judgmental criticism. If the Bible is the only source for faith and practice, then maybe we must all rethink this issue.

- D. If we push total abstinence as God's will, what do we imply about Jesus, as well as those modern cultures that regularly use wine (e.g., Europe, Israel, Argentina)?

▣ **“there you shall eat in the presence of the LORD”** This refers to the peace offering whereby God and the offerer and his family symbolically ate together. In the ancient East, eating together was the sign of covenant.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 14:28-29

²⁸“At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit *it* in your town. ²⁹The Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.”

14:29 “the alien, the orphan and the widow” Deuteronomy is emphatic in its care of all who lived in the Promised Land (cf. 10:18; 26:12-15)! This third-year tithe was for the Levite and the local poor.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What criteria was used to decide what was clean and what was not?
2. Are these laws from God? If so, why don't we observe them today?
3. What was the purpose of the tithe?

DEUTERONOMY 15

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Debts Cancelled Every Seven Years	The Lifestyle of a Holy People (14:1-15:23)	The Seventh Year	The Sabbatical Year
15:1-6	15:1-6	15:1-3	15:1-6
Generosity to the Poor		15:4-6	
15:7-11	15:7-11	15:7-11	15:7-11
The Law Concerning Bond Servants		The Treatment of Slaves	Slaves
15:12-18	15:12-17a	15:12-15	15:12-15
		15:16-18	15:16-17
	15:17b		
	15:18		15:18
The Law Concerning Firstborn Animals		The First-Born Cattle and Sheep	The First-Born
15:19-23	15:19-23	15:19-23	15:19-23

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS TO CHAPTER 15

- A. Chapter 15 is a continuation of the specific laws that deal with some of the unique agricultural needs and symbolic relational truths that YHWH wanted to build into His people.
- B. This chapter divides nicely into three distinct sections:
1. Verses 1-11 deal with the expansion of the Sabbath year's rest of Exod. 23:10-13 and Lev. 25:1-7 to the debtors and local poor. II Chronicles 36:21 says that the exile was a result of the Jews' failure to keep this Law.
 2. Verses 12-18 deal with the kinsman slave, the Hebrew (man or woman) who had to work for someone to pay off debts.
 3. Verses 19-23 deal with the first born of the flocks, or the offering of the first born animals.
- C. This chapter is characterized by the use of double VERBS:
1. Some are INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES and IMPERFECT VERBS of the same root (which is a grammatical form for intensifying the meaning):
 - a. "surely bless," v. 4, *Piel* of BDB 138, KB 159
 - b. "listen obediently," v. 5, *Qal* of BDB 1033, KB 1570
 - c. "freely open," v. 8, *Qal* of BDB 834 I, KB 986
 - d. "generously lend," v. 8, *Hiphil* of BDB 716, KB 778
 - e. "generously give," v. 10, *Qal* of BDB 678, KB 733
 - f. "freely open," v. 11, *Qal* of BDB 834, KB 986
 - h. "furnish liberally," v. 14, *Hiphil* of BDB 778, KB 858
 2. Some are the same VERB, used twice:
 - a. "lend. . .not borrow," v. 6, a *Hiphil* PERFECT and a *Qal* IMPERFECT of BDB 716, KB 778
 - b. "rule. . .not rule," v. 6, a *Qal* PERFECT and a *Qal* IMPERFECT of BDB 605, KB 647
 - c. "set free. . .free. . .not send," vv. 12,13, all three *Piel* IMPERFECTS of BDB 1018, KB 1511
 - d. "eat. . .not eat," vv. 22,23, both *Qal* IMPERFECTS of BDB 37, KB 46Notice the second category is a positive followed by a negative usage.
 3. There is a repetition of the NOUN and the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE of the same root in v. 2 - "remission. . .release," both from BDB 1030, KB 1557

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:1-6

¹"At the end of every seven years you shall grant a remission of debts. ²This is the manner of remission: every creditor shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because the LORD's remission has been proclaimed. ³From a foreigner you may exact it, but your hand shall release whatever of yours is with your brother. ⁴However, there will be no poor among you, since the LORD will surely bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, ⁵if only you listen obediently to the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all this commandment which I am commanding you today. ⁶For the LORD your God will bless you as He has promised you, and you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; and you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you."

15:1 “At the end of every seven years” Two things happened: (1) the land was to lie fallow as a symbol of God’s ownership of the land as well as His care for the poor (cf. Exod. 23:10-13; Lev. 25:1-7). In Josephus’ *The Antiquities of the Jews*, XIII.8.1, we find a reference to the Jews’ habit of letting the land rest and (2) here fellow Israelites were released from debts (cf. v. 2; 31:10). Seven was seen as the perfect number because of the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest in Gen. 1:1-2:3.

15:2 “remission” This term (BDB 1030) means “let drop.” In Exod. 23:10-11 the VERB is used for the land lying fallow every seven years. The NOUN is used in the OT only twice, here and 31:10. Here it is used metaphorically of forgiving debt, since the share cropper could not pay his loan in the year in which planting was prohibited and also there was no work for the hired laborer. The foreigner, on the other hand, could work his field and pay his debts.

▣ **“every creditor shall release”** Whether this meant permanent release or temporary release is not known. The context seems to favor a permanent release, but I believe that it may have been only for the year the land stood fallow that the debt was forgiven (cf. NET Bible, p. 368 #16). God’s forgiveness of them was the basis for these land owners’ forgiving debts (symbolically, temporarily).

15:3 “foreigner” This refers to a non-Israelite who permanently lived in Palestine (BDB 648, cf. 14:21; 15:3; 17:15; 23:20; 29:22), who was granted limited civil rights and legal protection by the Mosaic legislation.

The other term “alien” (BDB 158) is used of newcomers or sojourners who also were granted limited rights and protection (cf. 1:16; 5:14; 10:18,19[twice]; 14:21,29; 16:11,14; 23:7; 24:14,17,19,20,21; 26:11,12,13; 27:19; 28:43; 29:11; 31:12).

This care for the non-Israelite clearly showed:

1. the character of YHWH
2. the inclusion possible
3. the past experience of Israel in Egypt

15:4 “there will be no poor among you” Verses 4-6 state the ideal situation (symbolized in the requirements of the Sabbath Year and Year of Jubilee). The ideal is rarely historical. Many Israelites lost their family lands. There were always poor among the Jews (cf. Matt. 26:11).

15:5 This is a recurrent warning about obedience to the covenant.

1. “If only you listen obediently” - the *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the *Qal* IMPERFECT of BDB 1033, KB 1570 (which shows intensity)
2. “To observe carefully all this commandment” - two *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS of BDB 1036, KB 1581 and BDB 793, KB 889

YHWH’s covenant promises are conditional on continuing obedient response.

15:6 YHWH’s spoken/promised (BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* PERFECT) blessings are delineated:

1. “The LORD your God will bless you,” *Piel* PERFECT of BDB 138, KB 159, cf. v. 4 (twice); 1:11; 2:7; 7:13 (twice); 12:7; 14:24,29; 15:10,14,18; 16:10,15.
2. “You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow.” This is the *Hiphil* PERFECT and the negated *Qal* IMPERFECT of BDB 716, KB 778.
3. “You will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.” This is the *Qal* PERFECT and the negated *Qal* IMPERFECT of BDB 605, KB 647.

These promises have international and eschatological implications (cf. Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-10; Micah 5:1-5a).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:7-11

7"If there is a poor man with you, one of your brothers, in any of your towns in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; **8**but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need *in whatever he lacks*. **9**Beware that there is no base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you. **10**You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings. **11**For the poor will never cease *to be* in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.'"

15:7 "if there is a poor man with you" The reality is stated in v. 11. Poverty could be defined as the lack of respect and honor. Here that lack is caused by the loss of family land caused by borrowing money with it as collateral.

▣ "one of your brothers" The Mosaic Law shows YHWH's special concern about and mercy to:

1. other poor covenant brothers/sisters
2. widows
3. orphans
4. alien residents
5. aliens

It is this compassion across socio-economic lines that makes the Israeli legal code unique. The other ancient law codes favored the elite, the wealthy, and the royal. Israel favored the weak, socially and economically deprived, legally vulnerable, and disenfranchised!

▣ "in any of your towns in your land" Notice it is not just local poor, but how society treats the poor. YHWH wants His people to act to the needy the way He acts toward them!

▣ "you shall not harden your heart nor close your hand from your poor brother" Both motive and deed are involved (cf. II Cor. 9:7):

1. "You shall not harden your heart," *Piel* IMPERFECT, BDB 54, KB 65, cf. II Chr. 36:13
2. "Nor close your hand," *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 891, KB 1118

15:8 Notice the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES matched to their corresponding IMPERFECTS for emphasis:

1. "you shall freely open your hand to him" - *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT of BDB 834, KB 986. This metaphor is parallel to v. 7.
 - a. open your heart (do not be hard hearted)
 - b. open your hand (do not be tight fisted) cf. vv. 11,13
2. "shall generously lend him" - *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Hiphil* IMPERFECT of BDB 716, KB 778

▣ "lend him sufficient for his need" This is BDB 191 CONSTRUCT with 341, which denotes enough to meet the brother's need, not just a token in passing (cf. James 2:15-26; I John 3:16-17).

15:9 “Beware” This is a *Niphal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 1036, KB 1581), which is a recurrent theme (cf. 4:9,15,23; 6:12; 8:11; 11:16; 12:13,19,28,30; 15:9; 24:8). There are covenant consequences for obedience and disobedience.

▣ **“base thought”** The word “base” is from the same root (BDB 116) as *Belial*. It refers to a “worthless,” “thoughtless,” “evil person” (cf. Pro. 6:12). See note at 13:14.

▣

NASB “eye is hostile”

NKJV “eye be evil”

NRSV “view. . .with hostility”

TEV -----

NJB “scowl”

The term “hostile” (BDB 949, KB 1269, *Qal* PERFECT) means “bad” or “evil.” A similar idiom is used in 28:54,56. This same VERB is repeated in v. 10, where it is translated “grieved.” This idiom relates to an attitude which swells up in a person in certain circumstances and/or toward certain persons. Motives are crucial in both the OT and NT. God looks at the heart!

▣ **“he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you”** The poor man’s prayer does not make it a sin (i.e., illegal), but it highlights to YHWH the sin in the heart of the selfish, conspiring man (cf. 24:18; Exod. 22:23). YHWH’s blessings are conditional on appropriate covenant motives and actions. His people are to model His character!

15:10 This is a summary of the context from v. 7.

▣ **“You shall generously give”** See Contextual Insights, C, 1, e.

15:11 “You shall freely open your hand” See Contextual Insights, C, 1, f.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:12-17

¹²“If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. ¹³When you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. ¹⁴You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. ¹⁵You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. ¹⁶It shall come about if he says to you, ‘I will not go out from you,’ because he loves you and your household, since he fares well with you; ¹⁷then you shall take an awl and pierce it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also you shall do likewise to your maidservant.”

15:12 This is literally “brother” (BDB 26), but used in the national sense of “covenant partner” or “kinsman” (cf. Lev. 19:17; 25:25,35,36,39,47; Deut. 15:12; 17:15). It emphasized a national unity vs. a tribal or family distinctiveness. This terminology and theology is similar to Gal. 6:10.

▣ **“Hebrew”** The word “Hebrew” (BDB 720, KB 782) is a rare OT word. This refers to either (1) the racial descendants of Eber, Shem’s grandson (cf. Gen. 10:21; (2) a term that describes a large group of Semites (*Habiru*) in the Ancient Near East, who migrated across Mesopotamia as nomads in the second millennium

B.C.; or (3) a loose group of poor foreign laborers (the term used by foreigners to describe Abraham's, Jacob's and Joseph's family).

▣ **“man or woman”** This shows legal equality (cf. v. 17, also note Gen. 1:26-27). Earlier law codes separated them (i.e., men - Exod. 21:2-6; women - Exod. 21:7-11). This was a radical departure from the Code of Hammurabi, a Babylonian legal document that predates Moses, and the cultural systems of the nations of Canaan. God's people were different!

▣ **“is sold to you”** The VERB (BDB 569, KB 581, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) refers to someone selling himself/herself into indentured servitude (cf. Lev. 25:39,47,48,50; the fellow Hebrew is discussed in vv. 39-46; Exod. 21:2-6).

▣ **“he shall serve you six years”** This seems to be unrelated chronologically to the Sabbatical year mentioned in vv. 1-11, but if so, then the meaning of v. 9 is uncertain.

▣ **“you shall set him free”** This VERB (BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is so important that it is repeated three times in vv. 12-13.

15:14 When a slave was freed after his six years of service, he was to be given all he would need to establish his family.

1. “you shall furnish him liberally,” This is another INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB. It is a Hebrew idiom, literally, “you shall surely make a necklace for him.” See Contextual Insight C, 1, g.
2. Notice the items to be given:
 - a. from the flock
 - b. from the threshing floor
 - c. from the wine vat
 - d. added guidelines are given in Exod. 21:3-4; Lev. 15:41
3. This giving was to be done in the spirit and quantity that YHWH had shown to Israel, cf. vv. 4,6,10,18 and why specifically in v. 15 and Lev. 25:41.

15:15 “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt” The basis for the generosity of the slave owner was the fact that his family was once a slave in Egypt and God was generous to him. See full note at 5:15.

▣ **“the LORD your God redeemed you”** This VERB (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used several times in Deuteronomy, always referring to YHWH's gracious act of delivering Israel from Egyptian slavery (cf. 7:8; 9:26; 13:5; 15:15; 21:8; 24:18). See Special Topic at 7:8. The OT is as much a witness to the initiating love and mercy of God as is the NT! Humans did not seek God, He sought and redeemed them! His initial acts and unchanging character are our great hope! The actions of the Messiah for all are foreshadowed in the actions of YHWH for Israel!

15:16 This verse is parallel to Exod. 21:5. It illustrates a voluntary submissive relationship which reflects the faith/love/obedient covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel. The goal of the covenant is a loving, blessed life on earth followed by a continuation of an even more intimate relationship in the spiritual realm. The blessings are always a by-product of the relationship, never the goal!

15:17 “pierce it through his ear into the door” This has two symbols: (1) the ear was symbolic of obedience and (2) the door was symbolic of love for the home (TEV). This rite was done at home not at the sanctuary or city gate, depending on to whom *Elohim* of Exod. 21:6 refers. The Septuagint, Peshitta, and the Aramaic Targums understand it as “judges”, which is a change from an earlier rite (cf. Exod. 21:1-6). This made him a permanent slave.

▣ **“forever”** The Hebrew term is *'olam* (BDB 761). This usage shows that the Hebrew word must be defined by its context. It can mean “forever” or “for a long time with set boundaries.” The rabbis said it meant “until the year of Jubilee,” but in this context it means the slave’s lifetime. See Special Topic at 4:40.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:18

¹⁸“It shall not seem hard to you when you set him free, for he has given you six years *with* double the service of a hired man; so the LORD your God will bless you in whatever you do.”

15:18 “It shall not seem hard to you when you set him free” This means that one should not be complaining when a slave is set free after six years of service.

▣

NASB “double the service”

NKJV “he has been worth a double hired servant”

NRSV “worth the wages of hired laborers”

TEV “at half the cost of hired servants”

NJB “he is worth twice what a paid servant would cost you”

NET Bible “twice the time of a hired worker”

There is some doubt as to the correct translation (literally, “for at half the cost of,” BDB 1041 CONSTRUCT 969 I). There are three possibilities:

1. a slave was a servant day and night
2. a slave worked free, while a hired man was paid
3. Isa. 16:14 lists three years as the period of work for a hired man (as does the Code of Hammurabi), therefore, a slave worked twice as long.

▣ **“so the LORD your God will bless you in whatever you do”** Covenant blessing follows covenant obedience, especially when the appropriate loving, forgiving, helping attitude is present!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 15:19-23

¹⁹“You shall consecrate to the LORD your God all the firstborn males that are born of your herd and of your flock; you shall not work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock. ²⁰You and your household shall eat it every year before the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses. ²¹But if it has any defect, *such as* lameness or blindness, *or* any serious defect, you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. ²²You shall eat it within your gates; the unclean and the clean alike *may eat it*, as a gazelle or a deer. ²³Only you shall not eat its blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water.”

15:19-23 These verses deal with the appropriate use and non-use of the first born of the cattle. This goes back to Exod. 13:2, which is the context of the plague of the death angel killing the firstborn of mankind and beast in Egypt and Goshen whose houses were not marked with blood. It was a symbolic way of showing God’s ownership of everything (cf. Exod. 13:2; Lev. 2:14-16).

15:19 “**You shall consecrate. . .all first-born males. . .of your herd or your flock**” Exodus 13 gives us the Biblical origin, also notice Num. 18:15-16. This became a way to supplement the income of the Levites.

15:20 This goes back to 12:17-19; 14:23. See full note at 12:5.

15:21 “**But if it has any defect. . .you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God**” An animal that had a defect (abnormality) of any kind, i.e., blindness, discoloration, sickness, lameness, deformity, etc. could not be sacrificed, but could be eaten with family and friends in a local setting (cf. 12:15-16).

15:22

NASB “**the unclean and the clean alike *may eat it***”

NKJV “**the unclean and the clean *person alike may eat it***”

NRSV “**the unclean and the clean alike**”

TEV “**all of you, whether ritually clean or unclean, may eat them**”

NJB “**the clean and the unclean**”

In Hebrew this could refer to:

1. those who eat it
2. that which is eaten

Option #1 seems best (LXX).

15:23 “**Only you shall not eat its blood**” Blood was the symbol of life and life belongs to God (cf. Gen. 9:4-6; Lev. 1:17; 7:26-27; 17:10-16; 19:26; Deut. 12:16, 23-25; I Sam. 14:32-34). The symbols in the preceding verses show God’s ownership of all creation, especially that which is alive.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Is there any historical evidence for the Sabbatical year ever being observed?
2. What is the basic purpose of these laws in chapter 15?
3. What are the possible origins of the term “Hebrew”?

DEUTERONOMY 16

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Passover Reviewed 16:1-8	A Festal Calendar 16:1-8	The Passover 16:1-4 16:5-8	The Feasts: Passover and Unleavened Bread 16:1-8
The Feast of Weeks Reviewed 16:9-12	16:9-12	The Harvest Festival 16:9-12	Other Feasts 16:9-12
The Feast of Tabernacles Reviewed 16:13-17	16:13-15 16:16-17	The Festival of Shelters 16:13-15 16:16-17	16:13-15 16:16-17
Justice Must be Administered (16:18-17:13) 16:18-20	Laws Dealing with Justice and Religion (16:18-17:20) 16:18-20	Administration of Justice (16:18-17:13) 16:18-20	Judges 16:18-20
16:21-17:1	16:21-17:1	16:21-17:1	Abuses in Worship (16:21-17:7) 16:21-17:1

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:1-8

¹“Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. ²You shall sacrifice the Passover to the LORD your God from the flock and the herd, in the place where the LORD chooses to establish His name. ³You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), so that you may remember all the days of your life the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. ⁴For seven days no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory, and none of the flesh which you sacrifice on the evening of the first day shall remain overnight until morning. ⁵You are not allowed to sacrifice the Passover in any of your towns which the LORD your God is giving you; ⁶but at the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name, you shall sacrifice the Passover in the evening at sunset, at the time that you came out of Egypt. ⁷You shall cook and eat *it* in the place which the LORD your God chooses. In the morning you are to return to your tents. ⁸Six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD your God; you shall do no work *on it*.”

16:1 “Observe” This is such a recurrent term (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE) in Deuteronomy— 73 times! This chapter is written in the same Hebraic style as the Ten Commandments of chapter 5.

▣ **“month”** This is the same root as “new moon” (BDB 294 I). See Special Topic: Ancient Near Eastern Calendar at 1:3.

▣ **“Abib”** This word means “new grain” (BDB 1), which would denote the first ripened sheaves of barley. It was the Canaanite designation for the time period of March-April. Later in the writing the Babylonian word *Nisan* is used for this time period. Exodus 12:2,6 gives specific dates mentioned here generally.

▣ **“celebrate”** This common VERB, “do,” “make” (BDB 793, KB 1581) is used several times in chapter 16 and is translated several ways:

1. “celebrate,” vv. 1,10,13
2. “shall be,” v. 8
3. “shall be careful to observe,” v. 12
4. “shall not. . .make,” v. 21

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE PASSOVER

I. Opening Statements

- A. This divine act of judgment of Egyptians and deliverance for Israel is the touchstone for YHWH’s love and establishment of Israel as a nation (i.e., esp. for the Prophets).
- B. The exodus is a specific fulfillment of YHWH’s promise to Abraham in Gen. 15:12-21. The Passover commemorates the exodus.
- C. This is the last and most pervasive (geographically, i.e, Egypt and Goshen) and devastating (first born of humans and cattle killed) of the ten plagues sent by YHWH on Egypt through Moses.

II. The Term Itself (BDB 820, KB 947)

- A. Meaning of NOUN is uncertain
 - 1. connected to “plague,” thereby “to strike a blow” (i.e., Exod. 11:1); YHWH’s angel strikes the firstborn of humans and cattle
- B. Meaning of VERB:
 - 1. “to limp” or “to hobble” (cf. II Sam. 4:4), used in sense of “jump over the marked homes” (i.e., Exod. 12:13,23,27, BDB 619, a popular etymology)
 - 2. “to dance” (cf. I Kgs. 18:21)
 - 3. Akkadian - “to appease”
 - 4. Egyptian - “to strike” (see A. 1.)
 - 5. parallel VERBS in Isa. 31:5, “to stand guard over” (cf. REB of Exod. 12:13)
 - 6. early Christian popular sound play between Hebrew *pasah* and Greek *pasch* , “to suffer”
- C. Possible historical precedents:
 - 1. shepherd sacrifice for a new year
 - 2. Bedouin sacrifice and communal meal at the time of moving tents to spring pasture to ward off evil
 - 3. sacrifice to ward off evil from nomadic people
- D. The reasons it is so hard to not only be sure of the meaning of the word itself, but also its origins, is that so many varied features of the Passover are also found in other ancient rituals:
 - 1. spring date
 - 2. etymology of NOUN uncertain
 - 3. connected to night watchings
 - 4. use of blood
 - 5. imagery of angels/demons
 - 6. special meal
 - 7. agricultural elements (unleavened bread)
 - 8. no priests, no altar, local focus

III. The Event

- A. The event itself is recorded in Exodus 11-12.
- B. The annual feast is described in Exodus 12 and is combined into an eight day festival with the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
 - 1. originally it was a local event, cf. Exod. 12:21-23; Deut. 16:5 (cf. Numbers 9)
 - a. no priest
 - b. no special altar
 - c. specialized uses of blood
 - 2. it became an event at the central shrine
 - 3. this combination of a local sacrifice (i.e., lamb’s blood to commemorate the passing over of the death angel) and a harvest feast at the central sanctuary was accomplished by the close proximity of dates *Abib* or *Nisan* 14 and 15-21
- C. The symbolic ownership of all of the firstborn of humans and cattle and their redemption is described in Exodus 13.

IV. Historical Accounts of Its Observance

- A. The first Passover celebrated in Egypt, Exodus 12
 - B. At Mt. Horeb/Sinai, Numbers 9
 - C. The first Passover celebrated in Canaan (Gilgal), Josh. 5:10-12
 - D. At the time of Solomon's dedication of the temple, I Kgs. 9:25 and II Chr. 8:12 (probably, but not specifically stated)
 - E. the one during Hezekiah's reign, II Chronicles 30
 - F. the one during Josiah's reforms, II Kgs. 23:21-23; II Chr. 35:1-18
 - G. Notice II Kgs. 23:22 and II Chr. 35:18 mention Israel's neglect in keeping this annual feast
- V. The Significance
- A. This is one of three required annual feast days (cf. Exod. 23:14-17; 34:22-24; Deut. 16:16):
 1. Passover/Unleavened Bread
 2. Feast of Weeks
 3. Feast of Booths
 - B. Moses foreshadows the day it will be observed at the central sanctuary (as were the other two feasts) in Deuteronomy.
 - C. Jesus used the occasion of the annual Passover meal (or the day before) to reveal the New Covenant in the symbol of bread and wine, but did not use the lamb:
 1. communal meal
 2. redemptive sacrifice
 3. ongoing significance to later generations

▣ **“by night”** When the Death Angel passed over at night (BDB 538), Pharaoh said, “go now” (cf. Exod.12:31-33). The Israelites left immediately.

16:2 “from the flock and the herd” Compare Exod. 12:5 with II Chr. 30:24; 35:7, which opened up the sacrifice from a sheep or a goat to the entire range of domestic animals.

▣ **“in the place where the LORD chooses to establish His name”** In Egypt this was a family service; in Deuteronomy it has been reserved for central sanctuary worship (cf. 12:5,11,13,14,18,21,26; 14:23,25; 15:20; 16:2,6,7,11,15,16; 17:8,10; 18:6; 23:16; 26:2; 31:11).

16:3 “unleavened bread” The Israelites could not wait until morning for the bread to rise. This detail of the exodus night gave rise to the Exodus' Passover feast being combined with an agricultural feast (cf. Exod. 12:15-20; 23:14-17; 34:18).

Leaven, which was regularly used in sacrificial items (cf. Lev. 7:13; 23:17), became a symbol of sin and rebellion. The fermentation was viewed in this symbolic feast as Israel's opportunity on an individual basis to examine their lives for any hint of rebellion or disobedience to YHWH. As the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16) functioned on a national level, the Feast of Unleavened Bread functioned on an individual or family level.

This annual required feast being combined with the Passover feast kept the gracious deliverance of YHWH ever before the minds and hearts of His people. As grace and promise provided deliverance from Egypt, so Israel depended on these unchanging divine characteristics to save her as the years went by (cf. 4:9).

▣ **“bread of affliction”** See Exod. 12:8.

▣ **“(for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste)”** The Jews left in haste at Pharaoh’s request (cf. Exod.12:31-33).

▣ **“that you remember. . .Egypt”** The Passover has historical and theological significance. In Egypt the Passover experience was family oriented; in Deuteronomy it foreshadowed the coming central sanctuary service; in Jesus’ day it became a combination of both (part at the temple and part at home or where pilgrims were staying while in Jerusalem).

16:4 Remember, Moses is addressing, for the most part, the children of the exodus generation. This verse implies that every generation should put themselves in the place of that first generation who experienced the power and presence of God, yet rebelled and died in the wilderness. Each of the annual feasts were to help Israel trust more in YHWH’s presence and provision. He was with them and for them, as He had been with their ancestors.

16:5 “in any of your towns” This is literally “gates” (BDB 1044, cf. 12:15,17,21), thereby referring to a future time after Israel had conquered Canaan (cf. v. 18).

16:6 “in the evening at sunset” For the Israelites this was the beginning of a new day (cf. Genesis 1, cf. Exod. 12:6.).

16:7 “You shall cook and eat it” The Hebrew can mean “boil” or “cook” (BDB 143, KB 164, *Piel* PERFECT), but because of Exod. 12:8-9, it must mean “cook.”

▣ **“you are to return to your tents”** This can mean: (1) the wilderness wandering setting (or at least on the plains of Moab); (2) the pilgrims going to Jerusalem stayed in tents during these seven feast days; or (3) it is an idiom meaning “return to your homes.

16:8 “a solemn assembly to the Lord your God” The festival ended with a corporate worship setting (cf. Exod. 12:16, “a holy assembly”). One purpose for the central sanctuary was to develop a sense of corporate identity and community.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:9-12

⁹“You shall count seven weeks for yourself; you shall begin to count seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. ¹⁰Then you shall celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with a tribute of a freewill offering of your hand, which you shall give just as the LORD your God blesses you; ¹¹and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite who is in your town, and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your midst, in the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. ¹²You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall be careful to observe these statutes.”

16:10 “the Feast of Weeks” This is also called (1) the Feast of Harvest in Exod. 23:16) and (2) the Feast of First Fruits in Num. 28:26. Later, it became Pentecost (rabbinically linked to the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai), which means “fifty days.” It was the May-June harvest festival or the time of the wheat harvest. YHWH, not *Ba’al*, was the provider!

▣ **“a freewill offering”** This allowed the people to bring an offering in accordance to how much the Lord had blessed each one (cf. v. 17). This is a universal principle of giving (cf. II Corinthians 8-9).

16:11 YHWH wants everyone to know His past acts for Israel and His special care for those in need (cf. v. 14; 12:12,18,19; 14:27,29; 26:11-13).

16:12 “You shall remember” The theological reason for the Feast of Weeks (agricultural harvest) was Israel’s experience of slavery in Egypt.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:13-15

¹³“You shall celebrate the Feast of Booths seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and your wine vat; ¹⁴and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns. ¹⁵Seven days you shall celebrate a feast to the LORD your God in the place which the LORD chooses, because the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you will be altogether joyful.”

16:13 “Feast of Booths” The Feast of Booths came in the fall and was during the ingathering time (cf. Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:33-43).

The background to “booths” is said to reflect the Israelites’ experience of:

1. agricultural life in Egypt, where booths were built in the fields at harvest time
2. living in temporary housing (i.e., tents) during the exodus and wilderness wandering period
3. the temporary shelters needed for pilgrims to stay at the central sanctuary (less probable)

16:15 YHWH wants to bless His people so that they may rejoice (BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* PERFECT) individually, as a family, and as the people of God (cf. 12:7,12,18; 14:26; 16:11,14; 26:11; 27:7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:16-17

¹⁶“Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed. ¹⁷Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you.”

16:16 “Three times in a year all your males shall appear” Verses 16 and 17 are summary verses which apply to all three feasts (cf. Exod. 23:14,17). Remember meals were special times of friendship and family fellowship. These feasts allowed Israel to:

1. develop a sense of national community
2. teach God’s gracious acts to new generations
3. help the poor and needy
4. rejoice in the goodness of the God of Israel and His fulfillment of covenant promises/blessings

Why only men? Does this reflect the submissive role of women? Surely the ancient Near East was not egalitarian, but women were honored within Israel (e.g., Proverbs 31).

I think there are two good possibilities:

1. the women were needed at home in a ranching and agricultural setting, especially if the men were absent
2. the practice of men only would have noticeably marked Israel’s worship as different from Canaanite fertility worship, where women were expected

For a good, brief discussion of these three annual pilgrimage feasts see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 2, pp. 484-502.

▣ **“Feast”** This Hebrew term (BDB 290, KB 290), both the VERB and the NOUN, refers to one of the three annual worship days at the central sanctuary. It could be translated “pilgrim-feast.”

16:17 “give as he is able” This refers to the universal principle of giving—each is to give as he is able (cf. v. 10; II Corinthians 8-9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:18-20

18“You shall appoint for yourself judges and officers in all your towns which the LORD your God is giving you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. **19**You shall not distort justice; you shall not be partial, and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous. **20**Justice, *and only* justice, you shall pursue, that you may live and possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”

16:18-20 This is a separate section which should go with chapter 18. It deals with guidelines for civil leadership (tribal judges, Levitical judges, kings, priests, and prophets).

16:18 “You shall appoint for yourself, judges and officers in all your towns” These are the same as the local elders of the gates (e.g., 21:19; 22:15; Amos 5:10,12,15). Moses was chief judge, but he appointed helpers (cf. Deut. 1:9-18; Exod.18:13-27).

16:19 “You shalt not” This verse lists three guidelines for the judges, Moses’ helpers:

1. You shalt not distort justice (BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Exod. 23:6; 27:19; Deut. 16:19; 24:17; 27:19)
2. You shalt not show partiality (BDB 647, KB 699, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, the literal Hebrew is “ye shall not look at a face”)
3. You shalt not take a bribe (BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Deut. 27:25).

▣ **“bribe”** A bribe does two things:

1. “blinds the eyes of the wise” - BDB 734, KB 802, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Exod. 23:8; it is metaphorical for the power of money
2. “perverts (literally ‘twist’) the words of the righteous” - BDB 701, KB 758, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Exod. 23:8; remember the term “just” or “righteous” is from the term, “measuring reed” or “straight edge” (see Special Topic at 1:16). Most words for sin in the Bible are a word play on this concept.

16:20 “Justice” The words “justice” in v. 20 and “righteousness” in v. 18 are from the same Hebrew root (BDB 841), which speaks of a standard. A judge ruled according to the standard which was the revealed will of God (“justice, *and only* justice”). Leaders (local and priestly judges) were to model the mercy, yet fairness, of YHWH (cf. Exod. 23:6-8).

▣ **“you shall pursue”** This VERB (BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used literally in Deut. 11:4; 19:6, but here it is metaphorical of Israel’s judicial system. Other metaphorical uses are found in Ps. 34:14; Pro. 21:21; Isa. 51:5; and Hosea 6:3.

▣ “that” Israel’s possession of the land and the promises/blessings of YHWH were conditional (cf. 4:1,25-26,40; 5:16,29,33; 6:18; 8:1; 11:8-9,18-21; 16:20; 32:46-47).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 16:21-22

²¹“You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the LORD your God, which you shall make for yourself. ²²You shall not set up for yourself a *sacred* pillar which the LORD your God hates.”

16:21 Deuteronomy 16:21, 22 and 17:1 are one paragraph. The paragraph deals with appropriate ways of offering sacrifices. For a brief description of Canaanite worship see Alfred J. Hoerth, *Archaeology and the Old Testament*, pp. 219-222 and William Foxwell Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, pp. 67-92.

▣ “**You shall not plant. . .an Asherah of any kind of tree**” This “grove” or Asherah implies either a grove of trees or holes in the raised worship platforms of the Canaanites where the carved poles, or live trees representing the female consort of the male fertility gods, were put. This symbolized fertility worship. See note at 12:3.

16:22 “You shall you not set up for yourself a *sacred* pillar” See note at 12:3.

▣ “**God hates**” See note at 12:31.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did the Lord want to have three annual assemblies?
2. Were all three feasts related to agriculture? Does this imply that Moses took already existing feasts and changed their purposes?
3. List and describe these feasts.
4. List three rules for the judges.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
5. How is 16:21-22 related to 17:1?

DEUTERONOMY 17

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Justice Must be Administered (16:18-17:13)	Laws Dealing with Justice and Religion (16:18-17:20)	The Administration of Justice (16:18-17:13)	Abuses in Worship (16:21-17:7)
16:21-17:1	16:21-17:1	16:21-17:1	16:21-17:1
17:2-7	17:2-7	17:2-7	17:2-7
			Levitical Judges
17:8-13	17:8-13	17:8-13	17:8-13
Principles Governing Kings		Instructions Concerning a King	Kings
17:14-17	17:14-20	17:14-20	17:14-15
			17:16-20
17:18-20			

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:1

¹"You shall not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep which has a blemish or any defect, for that is a detestable thing to the LORD your God."

17:1 “blemish or any defect” This verse is contextually related to 16:21-22, which also deals with appropriate places and types of sacrifices. In the OT “blemish” (BDB 548) refers to any kind of physical defect (cf. 15:21; Lev. 22:20-25). Malachi 1:6-8 records an example of Israel giving God less than the best.



NASB “a detestable thing”
NKJV “an abomination”
NRSV “abhorrent”
TEV “the LORD hates this”
NJB “detestable”

This term (BDB 1072) is discussed at 14:3.

▣ **“the LORD your God”** This is the common covenantal phrase using YHWH and *Elohim*. See the Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:2-7

²“If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, by transgressing His covenant, ³and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded, ⁴and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, ⁵then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, *that is*, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death. ⁶On the evidence of two witnesses or three witnesses, he who is to die shall be put to death; he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. ⁷The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.”

17:2-13 These verses deal with administrative justice. Verses 2-7 deal with idolatry and legal witnesses. Verses 8-13 deal with the practical setup of the courts.

17:2

NASB “who does what is evil”
NKJV “who has been wicked”
NRSV “who does what is evil”
TEV “has sinned”
NJB “who does what is wrong”

This phrase is a *Qal* IMPERFECT VERB (BDB 793 I, KB 889) and a DIRECT OBJECT (BDB 948). This is the common two-consonant root ער, which means “bad,” “evil,” “distress,” “misery,” “injury,” or “calamity.” Here the context defines it as (1) “transgressing His covenant,” v. 2 (BDB 716, KB 778, literally “passing over”) and (2) “has gone and served other gods and worshiped them,” v. 3:

1. “has gone” - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT
2. “served” - BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. “worshiped” - BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel* IMPERFECT

▣ **“by transgressing His covenant”** This VERB (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) basically means “to pass over” or “pass through.” It is most often used in a literal sense, but sometimes in a theological sense. Originally it may have referred to the act of halving an animal as a covenant act and

walking between the parts (e.g., Gen. 15:17). Violation of the covenant resulted in death or destruction (i.e., like the halved animal). It denoted the violation of clearly defined actions (i.e., covenant stipulations, cf. 26:13; Josh. 7:11,15; Jdgs. 2:20; II Kgs. 18:12; Jer. 34:18-19; Hos. 6:7; 8:1).

17:3 “the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host” The ancient Babylonians were the first, but not the last, to see the heavenly bodies as representatives of gods and goddesses (cf. 4:19; II Kgs. 17:16; 21:3,5; 23:4-5; II Chr. 33:3,5; Jer. 8:2; 19:13). They felt that the lights of the sky controlled mankind’s destiny (physically and spiritually).

17:4 This verse is similar to 13:14. The VERB “you shall inquire thoroughly” (BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PERFECT) implies a complete investigation (cf. 13:14; 17:4,9; 19:18; Lev. 10:16; Jdgs. 6:29). Accusations and second-hand knowledge were not enough to convict. Israel’s judicial system was harsh (“stoned to death,” v. 5), but thorough.



NASB, TEV “if it is true”

NKJV “if it is indeed true”

NRSV “the charge is proved true”

NJB “it is found true and confirmed”

This Hebrew idiom (hypothetical PARTICLE, BDB 243 II, b and NOUN BDB 54) is repeated three times in Deuteronomy (i.e., 13:14; 17:4; 22:20).



NASB “this detestable thing”

NKJV “that such an abomination”

NRSV “an abhorrent thing”

TEV “this evil thing”

NJB “this hateful thing”

This same term (BDB 1072) is used in 17:1, where it refers to a blemished sacrifice. Here it refers to idol worship (i.e., “the host of heaven”).

▣ **“Israel”** See Special Topic at 1:1.

17:5 “to your gates” This phrase meant “to your local court.” This was where the local elders sat.

▣ **“stone them to death”** This was a form of corporate punishment (cf. v. 7). Every adult member of the community acted to rid itself of the evil (see full note at 13:10).

▣ The Hebrew text has a series of VERBS that refer to death in vv. 5-7:

1. “stone to death” - BDB 709, KB 768, *Qal* PERFECT, v. 5
2. death - BDB 559, KB 562
 - a. v. 5, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. v. 6, *Hophal* IMPERFECT
 - c. v. 6, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
 - d. v. 6, *Hophal* IMPERFECT
 - e. v. 7, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

Covenant violations carried severe consequences (cf. Deuteronomy 27-29)! Evil within the community must be eradicated.

17:6 “On the evidences of two witnesses” This is a Mosaic requirement (cf. Num. 35:30 and Deut. 19:15; also note Matt. 18:16; John 8:7; II Cor. 13:1; and I Tim 5:19).

▣ **“he shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness”** See 19:15-21 and Num. 35:30.

17:7 “The hand of the witness shall be first against him” The ones who witnessed against a person were to throw the first stones (cf. 13:9; Lev. 24:14). Thus, if the witnesses were lying, then God would punish them for shedding innocent blood (i.e., murder).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:8-13

⁸“If any case is too difficult for you to decide, between one kind of homicide or another, between one kind of lawsuit or another, and between one kind of assault or another, being cases of dispute in your courts, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses. ⁹So you shall come to the Levitical priest or the judge who is *in office* in those days, and you shall inquire of them and they will declare to you the verdict in the case. ¹⁰You shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the LORD chooses; and you shall be careful to observe according to all that they teach you. ¹¹According to the terms of the law which they teach you, and according to the verdict which they tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the word which they declare to you, to the right or the left. ¹²The man who acts presumptuously by not listening to the priest who stands there to serve the LORD your God, nor to the judge, that man shall die; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel. ¹³Then all the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.”

17:8 The very difficult (BDB 810, KB 927, *Niphal* IMPERFECT) cases were to be referred to the priests at the central sanctuary (cf. 12:5,11,13).

These types of judicial difficulties are described as:

1. “blood to blood” (BDB 196), meaning homicide
2. “judgment to judgment” (BDB 192)
 - a. NRSV, “one kind of legal right and another”
 - b. TEV, “certain cases of property rights”
 - c. NJB, “conflicting claims”
 - d. REB, “civil rights”
 - e. JPSOA, “civil law”
 - f. NET Bible, “legal claim”
 - g. NIV, “lawsuits”
3. “stroke to stroke” (BDB 619), meaning some kind of assault (cf. 21:5)

The Jewish Study Bible, p. 405, asserts that the difficult cases involved a lack of evidence. By referring these to the priests at the central sanctuary, Moses is assuming that divine insight will determine the guilt or innocence of the parties involved.

▣ **“the place which the LORD your God chooses”** This verb (BDB 103, KB 119) is used in Deuteronomy for several things:

1. YHWH’s choice of Israel’s forefathers, 4:37
2. YHWH’s choice of Israel, 7:6,7; 10:15; 14:2
3. YHWH’s choice of the place of a central sanctuary, 12:5,11,14,18,21,26; 14:23,24,25; 15:20; 16:2,6,7,11,15,16; 17:8,10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11
4. YHWH’s choice of a king, 17:15

5. YHWH's choice of an Aaronic (Levitical) priesthood, 18:5; 21:5

17:9 “the Levitical priest” The Masoretic Text (Hebrew), the Septuagint (Greek), and the Peshitta (Aramaic) have the plural, “priests.” This indicates a pool or guild of priests (cf. 19:17). This was the rabbinical proof text for the Sanhedrin (set up by Ezra).

▣ **“the judge”** The Masoretic Text has the singular. This refers to a single judge (cf. II Chr. 19:11 for historical example of this) or leader of a group of judges.

17:9-12 Israel is to be respectful and obedient to judicial discussions because they reflect the authority of YHWH. Notice the VERBS used:

1. “declare” - BDB 616, KB 665
 - a. v. 9, *Hiphil* PERFECT
 - b. v. 10, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
 - c. v. 11, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
2. “do” - BDB 793, KB 889
 - a. v. 10, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. v. 10, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
 - c. v. 11, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - d. v. 12, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. “teach” - BDB 434, KB 436
 - a. v. 10, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
 - b. v. 11, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
4. “not listening” - BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

17:11 “you shall not turn aside from the word. . .to the right or the left” This is a Hebrew idiom for not changing the verdict and punishment handed down by the Levitical judges. A similar metaphor is used of YHWH's words in 4:2; 12:32. Once YHWH's will is known, turning right or left means disobedience (cf. 5:32; 17:20; 28:14; Josh. 1:7; 23:6; II Kgs. 22:2; Pro. 4:27).

17:12 “presumptuously” This term (BDB 268) is used of wilful disobedience (cf. 1:43; 17:12,13; 18:20,22). The judge and priest were representatives of YHWH's authority. Therefore, to reject their decisions was to reject YHWH! In 18:20-22, it is prophets who do not know YHWH speaking in His name, using His authority!

▣ **“the priest who stand there to serve the LORD”** This is a metaphor for a Levitical priest.

▣

NASB, NRSV “you shall purge the evil from Israel”
NKJV “you shall put away the evil *person* from Israel”
TEV “you will remove this evil from Israel”
NJB “You must banish this evil from Israel”

The VERB (BDB 128, KB 145, *Piel* PERFECT) means to burn or consume (cf. Num. 11:3). Here it is used metaphorically as in 13:5; 17:7,12; 19:13,19; 21:21.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:14-17

¹⁴"When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' ¹⁵you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, *one* from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. ¹⁶"Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.' ¹⁷He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself."

17:14-20 These are some of the most controversial verses in the OT, especially the Pentateuch. These verses speak about a coming king. Many OT scholars of our day say that Deuteronomy is the book that was found during Josiah's reform hundreds of years later during the monarchical period, and that it was written by the priests then to centralize worship at Jerusalem (cf. II Kgs. 22:8; II Chr. 34:14-15). They assert that this is evidence that it was not written by Moses because nowhere else in the Pentateuch is there mention of a king. It is an anachronism referring to Solomon, so obviously it must have been written later. I do not believe any of this! Some verses which show that vv. 14-20 are not unique in the Pentateuch are Gen. 17:6, 35:11; 36:31; Num. 24:7; Jdgs. 8:22,23; 9:6. See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP OF THE PENTATEUCH

I. Genesis

- A. The Bible itself does not name the author. Genesis has no "I" sections like Ezra, Nehemiah or "we" sections like Acts.
- B. Jewish tradition:
 1. Ancient Jewish writers say Moses wrote it:
 - a. Ben Sirach, Ecclesiasticus 24:23, written about 185 B.C.
 - b. The *Baba Bathra* 14b, a part of the Talmud
 - c. Philo of Alexandria, Egypt, a Jewish philosopher, writing just before Jesus' ministry
 - d. Flavius Josephus, a Jewish historian, writing just after Jesus' ministry.
 2. The Torah is one unified historical account. After Genesis each book begins with the conjunction "and" (except Numbers).
 3. This was a revelation to Moses
 - a. Moses is said to have written:
 - (1) Exodus 17:14
 - (2) Exodus 24:4, 7
 - (3) Exodus 34:27, 28
 - (4) Numbers 33:2
 - (5) Deuteronomy 31:9, 22, 24-26
 - b. God is said to have spoken through Moses:
 - (1) Deuteronomy 5:4-5, 22
 - (2) Deuteronomy 6:1
 - (3) Deuteronomy 10:1
 - c. Moses is said to have spoken the words of the Torah to the people:

- (1) Deuteronomy 1:1, 3
 - (2) Deuteronomy 5:1
 - (3) Deuteronomy 27:1
 - (4) Deuteronomy 29:2
 - (5) Deuteronomy 31:1, 30
 - (6) Deuteronomy 32:44
 - (7) Deuteronomy 33:1
4. OT authors attribute it to Moses:
- a. Joshua 8:31
 - b. II Kings 14:6
 - c. Ezra 6:18
 - d. Nehemiah 8:1; 13:1-2
 - e. II Chronicles 25:4; 34:12; 35:12
 - f. Daniel 9:11
 - g. Malachi 4:4
- C. Christian tradition
- 1. Jesus attributes quotes from the Torah to Moses:
 - a. Matthew 8:4; 19:8
 - b. Mark 1:44; 7:10; 10:5; 12:26
 - c. Luke 5:14; 16:31; 20:37; 24:27, 44
 - d. John 5:46-47; 7:19, 23
 - 2. Other NT authors attribute quotes from the Torah to Moses:
 - a. Luke 2:22
 - b. Acts 3:22; 13:39; 15:1,15-21; 26:22; 28:23
 - c. Romans 10:5, 19
 - d. I Corinthians 9:9
 - e. II Corinthians 3:15
 - f. Hebrews 10:28
 - g. Revelation 15:3
 - 3. Most early Church Fathers accepted Mosaic authorship. Ireneus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Tertullian all had questions about Moses' relationship to the current canonical form of Genesis.
- D. Modern Scholarship
- 1. There have obviously been some editorial additions to the Torah (seemingly to make the ancient work more understandable to contemporary readers):
 - a. Genesis 12:6; 13:7; 14:14; 21:34; 32:32; 36:31; 47:11
 - b. Exodus 11:3; 16:36
 - c. Numbers 12:3; 13:22; 15:22-23; 21:14-15; 32:33ff
 - d. Deuteronomy 3:14; 34:6
 - e. Ancient scribes were highly trained and educated. Their techniques differed from country to country:

- (1) in Mesopotamia they were very careful not to change anything, and even checked their works for accuracy. Here is an ancient Sumerian scribal footnote, (“the work is complete from beginning to end, has been copied, revised, compared, and verified sign by sign” from about 1400 B.C.)
 - (2) in Egypt they freely revised ancient texts to update them for contemporary readers. The scribes at Qumran followed this approach.
2. Scholars of the 19th Century theorized that the Torah is a composite document from many sources over an extended period of time (Graft-Wellhausen). This was based on the following:
 - a. the different names for God
 - b. apparent doublets in the text
 - c. the form of the accounts
 - d. the theology of the accounts
3. Supposed sources and dates:
 - a. J source (use of YHWH), 950 B.C.
 - b. E source (use of Elohim), 850 B.C.
 - c. JE combined, 750 B.C.
 - d. D source (“The Book of the Law,” 22:8, discovered during Josiah’s reform while remodeling the Temple was supposedly the book of Deuteronomy, written by an unknown priest of Josiah’s time to support his reform.), 621 B.C.
 - e. P source (all priestly material especially ritual and procedure), 400 B.C.
 - f. There have obviously been editorial additions to the Torah. The Jews assert that it was:
 - (1) The High Priest at the time of the writing
 - (2) Jeremiah the Prophet
 - (3) Ezra the Scribe - IV Esdras says he rewrote it because the originals were destroyed in the Fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.
 - g. However, the J. E. D. P. theory says more about our modern literary theories and categories than evidence from the Torah (R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 495-541 and *Tyndale Commentary Series*, “Leviticus,” pp. 15-25).
 - h. Characteristics of Hebrew Literature
 - (1) Doublets, like Gen. 1 & 2, are common in Hebrew. Usually a general description is given and is then followed by a specific account. This may have been a way to accent truths or help oral memory.
 - (2) The ancient rabbis said the two most common names for God have theological significance:
 - (a) YHWH - the Covenant name for Deity as He relates to Israel as Savior and Redeemer (cf. Ps. 103)
 - (b) Elohim - Deity as Creator, Provider, and Sustainer of all life on earth (cf. Ps. 104)
 - (3) It is common in non-biblical Near Eastern Literature for a variety of styles and vocabulary to occur in unified literary works (Harrison, pp. 522-526).

E. The evidence from Ancient Near Eastern literature implies that Moses used written cuneiform documents or Mesopotamian style oral traditions to write Genesis. This in no way means to imply a lessening of inspiration but is an attempt to explain the literary phenomenon of the book of Genesis. Beginning in Gen. 37 a marked Egyptian influence of style, form and vocabulary seems to indicate Moses used either literary productions or oral traditions from the Israelites' days in Egypt. Moses' formal education was entirely Egyptian! The exact literary formation of the Pentateuch is uncertain. I believe that Moses is the compiler and author of the vast majority of the Pentateuch, though he may have used scribes and/or written and oral traditions. The historicity and trustworthiness of these first few books of the OT is certain.

II. Exodus

- A. The Torah is one unified account. Exodus starts with the conjunction "and." See lengthy discussion in Genesis outline.
- B. There are several places in Exodus where it says that Moses wrote:
 - 1. 17:14
 - 2. 24:4, 12
 - 3. 34:27, 28
- C. Joshua 8:31 quotes Exodus 20:25 and attributes it to Moses. Jesus quotes Exod. 20:12,17 and attributes it to Moses, Mark 7:10.

III. Numbers

- A. This is the first book of the Torah to name a written source, "*The Book of the Wars of the Lord*," 21:14-15. This clearly shows that Moses did use other written documents.
- B. This book states that Moses could and did record the events of the Wilderness Wandering Period.
- C. Numbers also provides several examples of obvious editorial additions (possibly Joshua or Samuel):
 - 1. 12:1,3
 - 2. 13:22
 - 3. 15:22-23
 - 4. 21:14-15
 - 5. 32:33ff
 - 6. 32:33ff
- D. In most cases Moses is referred to in the third person except in direct quotes. This implies Moses used scribal help in compiling these materials.
- E. It is interesting to notice that Numbers includes two non-Israelite literary productions: (1) the Amorite taunt poem in 21:27-30 (possibly v. 30 was an Israelite addition); and (2) Balaam's conversations with Balak, King of Moab in 23-24. They do show the use of written or oral material included in the compilation of the book (cf. *The Book of the Wars of the Lord*).

IV. Deuteronomy

- A. Jewish Tradition:
 - 1. Ancient tradition is unanimous that the author was Moses.
 - 2. This is stated in:
 - a. Talmud - Baba Bathra 14b
 - b. Mishnah
 - c. Ben Sirach's Ecclesiasticus 24:23 (written about 185 B.C.)

- d. Philo of Alexandria
- e. Flavius Josephus
- 3. The Scripture itself:
 - a. Judges 3:4 and Joshua 8:31
 - b. “Moses spoke”:
 - (1) Deut. 1:1, 3
 - (2) Deut. 5:1
 - (3) Deut. 27:1
 - (4) Deut. 29:2
 - (5) Deut. 31:1, 30
 - (6) Deut. 32:44
 - (7) Deut. 33:1
 - c. “YHWH spoke to Moses”:
 - (1) Deut. 5:4-5, 22
 - (2) Deut. 6:1
 - (3) Deut. 10:1
 - d. “Moses wrote”:
 - (1) Deut. 31:9, 22, 24
 - (2) Exodus 17:14
 - (3) Exodus 24:4, 12
 - (4) Exodus 34:27-28
 - (5) Numbers 33:2
 - e. Jesus quotes from or alludes to Deuteronomy and states “Moses said”/”Moses wrote”:
 - (1) Matthew 19:7-9; Mark 10:4-5 - Deut. 24:1-4
 - (2) Mark 7:10 - Deut. 5:16
 - (3) Luke 16:31; 24:27, 44; John 5:46-47; 7:19, 23
 - f. Paul asserts Moses as author:
 - (1) Romans 10:19 - Deut. 32:21
 - (2) I Cor. 9:9 - Deut. 25:4
 - (3) Gal. 3:10 - Deut. 27:26
 - (4) Acts 26:22; 28:23
 - g. Peter asserts Moses as author in his Pentecostal sermon - Acts 3:22
 - h. The author of Hebrews asserts Moses as author - Hebrews 10:28 - Deut. 17:2-6
- B. Modern Scholarship
 - 1. Many of the 18th- and 19th-century theologians, following the Graf-Wellhausen theory of multiple authorship (J.E.D.P.), assert that Deuteronomy was written by a priest/prophet during Josiah’s reign in Judah to support his spiritual reform. This would mean that the book was written in Moses’ name about 621 B.C.
 - 2. They base this on:
 - a. II Kings 22:8; II Chr. 34:14-15, “I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD”
 - b. chapter 12 discussed a single site for the Tabernacle and later Temple

- c. chapter 17 discussed a later king
- d. it is true that writing a book in the name of a famous person from the past was common in the Ancient Near East and in Jewish circles
- e. there are similarities of style, vocabulary and grammar between Deut. and Joshua, Kings and Jeremiah
- f. Deuteronomy records the death of Moses, chapter 34
- g. there are obvious later editorial additions in the Pentateuch:
 - (1) Deuteronomy 3:14
 - (2) Deuteronomy 34:6
- h. the sometimes unexplainable variety in the use of the names of deity: El, El Shaddai, Elohim, YHWH, in seemingly unified contexts and historical periods

V. Conclusion

Ancient tradition and archaeology give credible evidence that Moses was the editor/author behind Genesis - Deuteronomy. He may have used oral and written sources also, as well as scribes to produce this biblical literature. It is obvious that later scribes or prophets updated the text for their generations.

17:14 “and you say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me’” The VERB is a *Qal* COHORTATIVE (BDB 962, KB 1321). It is repeated four times in vv. 14 and 15. The second (*Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE) and third (*Qal* IMPERFECT) usages go together as a way of intensification:

1. NASB, NKJV “you shall surely set”
2. NRSV “you may indeed set”
3. TEV “be sure”

The problem was not a king, but a king “like all the nations who are around me”! The king was to represent YHWH (cf. v. 8), not Oriental pagan courts. This very issue is dealt with when Israel asked Samuel for a king in I Samuel 8.

17:15 “whom the LORD your God chooses” God is sovereign, He (not Israel, cf. v. 14) chooses the man, but Israel confirms His choice by their affirmation (e.g., Jdgs. 11:11; Hos. 1:11).

Notice the guidelines for kingship:

1. when Israel possesses the land, v. 14
2. one whom YHWH chooses, v. 15
3. not a foreigner, v. 15
4. he shall not trust in military armament (“multiply horses”), v. 16
5. he shall not seek help from Egypt, v. 16
6. he shall not trust in political allegiances (“multiply wives”), v. 17
7. he shall not trust in wealth (“increase silver and gold”), v. 17

The numbers 4-7 above reflect Solomon’s abuses! It is unique in ancient Near Eastern law that the king has his powers limited, but in Israel God:

1. sets the place and procedures of justice
2. sets the pattern of worship
3. sets limits on kingly power, succession, and wealth
4. the king is one among many covenant partners (cf. v. 20)
5. the king must study regularly and implement (personally and officially) God’s laws (cf. vv. 18-19)

17:16 “he shall not multiply horses” Horses were owned only by rulers, not local people. A horse was a battle weapon for war. In other words, “Don’t trust in your military might. I, God, am protecting you.”

▣ **“You shall never again return that way”** This possibly refers to a later practice of trading Hebrew mercenaries for horses. One historical example is the Elephantine community. However, in context, it again asserts that the coming king must trust totally in YHWH alone!

17:17 “He shall not multiply wives” This refers to (1) lustful use of power or more probably (2) political and religious alliances. This was the ancient Near Eastern way to form “non-aggression” pacts.

▣ **“nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself”** God placed the king as His under shepherd. That under shepherd should never strive for personal wealth or power.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 17:18-20

¹⁸Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. ¹⁹It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.”

17:18-20 These verses are a summary of the king’s relationship to God’s revealed will (i.e., the Law).

17:18 “he shall write for himself copy of this law” This probably refers to someone (i.e., a Levitical priest) making a copy for him (cf. II Kgs. 11:12). This is the verse from which the Septuagint got the title for the book of Deuteronomy (i.e., the Second Law), but in context this verse refers to a second copy of the Law, not a revised version of the Law.

17:19 This verse and vs. 20 has a series of *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS, which flow from the king’s reading (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* PERFECT) and learning (BDB 540, KB 531, *Qal* IMPERFECT) from YHWH’s revelation of His will through Moses (i.e., Pentateuch):

1. to fear (BDB 431, KB 432)
2. to keep (BDB 1036, KB 1581)
3. to do (BDB 793, KB 889)
4. heart not be lifted up above his countrymen (BDB 926, KB 1202, cf. 8:14)
5. not turn aside from the commandment (BDB 693, KB 747)

This copy of God’s law is to remain with the king (this refers to the first VERB in v. 19, BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* PERFECT). This reflects the parallel of the Hittite treaties, where two copies of the covenant were made. One was put in the temple of the covenant partners’ deity (here YHWH’s tabernacle) and the other remained with the vassel king (i.e., to be read regularly so as to be in compliance).

▣ **“this law and these statutes”** See Special Topic at 4:1.

17:20 “to the right or the left” This is a Hebrew idiom of obedience. God’s will was described as a “path” or “trail.” It was clearly marked (by the Law). Israelites were to stay on the path (e.g., Ps. 119:105), which referred to lifestyle (e.g., Pro. 6:23).

▣ “so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom” Kingship, like the high priesthood, was to be a hereditary descent. The kingship (i.e., later concept of Messiah) was predicted to be in the line of Judah (cf. Gen. 49:10; II Samuel 7).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How is 16:21-22 related to 17:1?
2. How was justice to be administered?
3. Why are vv. 14-20 so controversial?
4. What was Israel's King's relationship to law?

DEUTERONOMY 18

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Portion of the Priests and Levites	The Proper Worship of God	The Share of the Priests	The Levitical Priesthood
18:1-5	18:1-2 18:3-5	18:1-2 18:3-5	18:1-2 18:3-5
18:6-8	18:6-8	18:6-8	18:6-8
Avoid Wicked Customs		Warning Against Pagan Practices	Prophets
18:9-14	18:9-14	18:9-13 The Promise to Send a Prophet	18:9-12 18:13-20
A New Prophet Like Moses		18:14-15	
18:15-22	18:15-22	18:16-20 18:21-22	18:21-22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS — 16:18 - 18:22 deals with Israel's leadership

- A. Judges - 16:18-20; 17:8-13
- B. King - 17:14-20
- C. Levites/Priests - 18:1-8
- D. Prophets - 18:9-22
 1. false - chapters 9-13

2. true - chapters 14-22
 - a. current (Moses)
 - b. future (pre and post exilic)
 - c. eschatological (Messiah)

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:1-2

¹"The Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the LORD's offerings by fire and His portion. ²They shall have no inheritance among their countrymen; the LORD is their inheritance, as He promised them."

18:1 "Levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi" According to Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 2, p. 358, the name Levi can have three possible etymological sources:

1. "to whirl around," assuming a ritual dance or procedure (similar to the dance of the prophets of *Ba'al* in I Kgs. 18:26)
2. "to accompany someone" or "to be attached to someone," possibly the popular etymology given in Gen. 29:34, also note Num. 18:2,4
3. "to lend," "to give as a pledge," possibly referring to and parallel to "given" referring to the firstborn to YHWH (Num. 3:12; 8:16) or to Samuel being given to YHWH in I Sam. 1:28

There are several developmental stages involved:

1. at the Exodus it was the firstborn from every family that was given to YHWH, to serve Him (cf. Exodus 13)
2. this was changed (Mosaic Covenant) to one particular tribe (i.e., Levi) who functioned as YHWH's special servants (cf. Num. 3:12; 8:16)
3. this was modified in Israel's history:
 - a. some Levitical families served at the central sanctuary
 - b. others ministered locally
 - c. later rabbinical Judaism expanded the concept of local Levitical teachers into local rabbis or scribes, but not necessarily from the tribe of Levi
4. for a good discussion of another theory see (1) *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, by G. B. Caird, p. 70 and (2) *Ancient Israel* by Roland de Vaux, vol. 2, pp. 360-371

▣ **"shall have no portion or inheritance"** The inheritance of the Levites was God Himself (cf. 10:9; 12:12; 14:27, 29; Ps. 16:5; 73:23-26; Lam. 3:24; Ezek. 28). In Joshua 20-21 the Levites are given portions of 48 cities and the surrounding land as a possession. Among these 48 cities there were also six Cities of Refuge, three on each side of the Jordan, where a person could flee if he accidentally killed a covenant partner in order to escape the "blood avenger" (cf. 19:1-13; Num. 35:9-15).

▣ **"they shall eat the LORD's offerings"** Originally all Levites participated in a portion of the sacrifices of Israel (cf. vv. 6-8). Later the priests were supported by food from the altar and small pieces of private land surrounding the Levitical cities. Also Levites were supported by a third-year local tithe (cf. 14:27; Num. 18: 25-29; Neh. 10:37, 38).

There are some variations in how the whole tribe of Levi was supported. These are not contradictions, but developments related to the central sanctuary.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:3-5

³"Now this shall be the priests' due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, either an ox or a sheep, of which they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach. ⁴You shall give him the first fruits of your grain, your new wine, and your oil, and the first shearing of your sheep. ⁵For the LORD your God has chosen him and his sons from all your tribes, to stand and serve in the name of the LORD forever."

18:3 Note Lev. 7:28-36; Num. 18:8-19 where different portions of the sacrifices are given to the priests.

▣ **“cheeks”** This (BDB 534 I) refers to the jowls (jawbones and meat hanging down, forming the cheeks).

▣ **“the stomach”** This term (BDB 867) basically means “hollow” or “cavity” and in this context, refers to one of the stomachs, probably the fourth of animals that chew the cud. *Webster’s Third International Dictionary*, p. 1922, says that the lining of the fourth stomach of cattle was used for curdling milk. The mucous membrane was processed until it became a yellowish powder which was used for making cheese.

18:4 “the first fruits of... your oil” This first press of the first ripe olives was a gift of the people to YHWH and from Him to the Levites/priests (cf. Num. 18:12; Deut. 12:17; 14:23; 18:4).

▣ **“the first shearing of your sheep”** This requirement is mentioned only here.

18:3-5 Those who ministered at YHWH’s altar received YHWH’s share. Moderns need to be reminded that:

1. the Sabbath
2. the first fruits
3. the firstborn
4. the tithe

are all Hebraic ways of asserting YHWH’s ownership. It does not mean that humans get six days, all the remaining crops, or nine tenths of their income! Humans are owners of nothing and stewards of everything! The planet and the gift of life belong to its Creator and Sustainer.

▣ **“God has chosen”** In 10:8 this same act is called “set apart” (NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 604). These kinds of parallels help moderns define ancient verbal connotations and semantic overlap.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:6-8

⁶"Now if a Levite comes from any of your towns throughout Israel where he resides, and comes whenever he desires to the place which the LORD chooses, ⁷then he shall serve in the name of the LORD his God, like all his fellow Levites who stand there before the LORD. ⁸They shall eat equal portions, except *what they receive from the sale of their fathers' estates.*"

18:6 They were to replace the “firstborn” of Exodus 13. This was based on God’s choice, not human merit, which is obvious from the sins of Levi, Moses, and Aaron.

18:6-7 This allowed Levites/priests to live outside of Jerusalem and to be available to teach and judge in every town. But they had access and the right to function at the central sanctuary also.

18:8

NASB	“except <i>what they receive</i> from the sale of their father’s <i>estates</i> ”
NKJV	“besides what comes from the sale of his inheritance”
NRSV	“even though they have income from the sale of family possessions”
TEV	“and he may keep whatever his family sends him”
NJB	“what he has from the sale of his patrimony notwithstanding”
JPSOA	“without regard to personal gifts or patrimonies”
LXX	“besides the sale of his hereditary property”
REB	“besides what he may inherit from his father’s family”

The different translations show the options. It refers to the sale of family possessions (but not land).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:9-14

⁹“When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. ¹⁰There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices witchcraft, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, ¹¹or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. ¹²For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD; and because of these detestable things the LORD your God will drive them out before you. ¹³You shall be blameless before the LORD your God. ¹⁴For those nations, which you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice witchcraft and to diviners, but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you *to do so.*”

18:10-11 There is a series of PARTICIPLES, which denote Canaanite idolatry:

1. NASB, “who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire” - BDB 716, KB 778, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE
2. NASB, “one who uses divination” - BDB 890, KB 1115, *Qal* PARTICIPLE (uses both VERB and NOUN)
NKJV, NET, “one who practices witchcraft”
NRSV, NJB, NIV, “who practices divination”
JPSOA, “an augur”
3. NASB, “one who practices witchcraft” - BDB 778 II KB 857, *Poel* PARTICIPLE
NKJV, NRSV, NJB, JPSOA, “a sooth sayer”
NIV, “sorcery”
NET, “an omen reader”
4. NASB, NKJV, NIV, “one who interprets omens” - BDB 638 II, KB 690, *Piel* PARTICIPLE
NRSV, NJB, “an augur”
JPSOA, “a diviner”
NET, “a soothsayer”
5. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB, JPSOA, NET, “a sorcerer” - BDB 506, KB 503, *Piel* PARTICIPLE
NIV, “engages in witchcraft”
6. NASB, “one who casts a spell” BDB 287, KB 287, *Qal* PARTICIPLE (uses VERB and NOUN)
NKJV, “one who conjures spells”
NRSV, JPSOA, NIV, NET, “one who casts spells”
NJB, “weaver of spells”

7. NASB, NKJV, “one who inquires” (i.e., a medium) BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
NRSV, JPSOA, “consults ghosts”
NJB, “consulter of ghosts”
NIV, “medium”
NET, “one who conjures up spirits”

8. NASB, NKJV, NIV, “one who inquires” [assumed] (i.e., a spiritist) BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* PARTICIPLE (assumed)
NRSV, “consults spirits”
NJB, “mediums”
JPSOA, “familiar spirits”
NET, “a practitioner of the occult”

9. NASB, NKJV, “one who calls up the dead”
 - a. BDB 205, KB 233, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
 - b. BDB 559, KB 562, *Qal* PARTICIPLE
 NRSV, “who seeks oracles from the dead”
 NJB, NET, “necromancer”
 JPSOA, “one who inquires of the dead”
 NIV, “who consults the dead”

As you can see from the different English translations these words have some overlap. These terms seem to refer to different types of pagan worship practice, but their exact definitions are uncertain to modern Bible students. See a brief discussion in (1) *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, pp. 524-528 and 608-610 and also *Synonyms of the Old Testament* by Robert B. Girdlestone, pp. 296-302. The general picture is an attempt to know and manipulate the future for personal benefit. YHWH’s people are to trust Him and serve Him. The old original sin of “me first” is the root of all of mankind’s problems!

18:10 “who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire” This is a reference to the worship of the fertility god, *Molech*. In Israel the firstborn (cf. Exodus 13) was to be given to YHWH to serve Him. In Canaan the firstborn was to be sacrifice by fire to *Molech* in order to insure fertility, (cf. Deut. 12:31; Lev. 18:21). There is even one account in II Kgs. 21:6 where God’s people worshiped this false god! It also possibly somehow relates to knowing the future (cf. II Kgs. 3:26-27). See Special Topic: *Molech* at 12:31.

▣ **“divination”** This is from the Hebrew root for “divine” (BDB 890, cf. Num. 22:7; 23:23; Ezek. 21:21; II Kgs. 17:17). It is the general term describing several different methods, but all intent on determining the will of a deity by mechanical or natural means, such as examining the livers of sheep or casting arrows. It is based on the pagan worldview that there is information about the future hidden in natural events and that gifted humans (i.e., false prophets, e.g., Jer. 27:9; 29:8; Ezek. 13:9; 22:28) know it and influence this future.

▣ **“one who practices witchcraft”** This term (BDB 778 II, KB 857) is related to the term “cloud” (BDB 777). Linguists think the term is related to sound:

1. the hum of insects
2. sound of wind in the trees
3. unknown etymology (if cloud, then related to sight)

The parallel passage in Moses’ writings which prohibits these same pagan practices is in Lev. 19:26-20:8 (see esp. 19:26). This same term is also found in Jdgs. 9:37; II Kgs. 21:6; II Chr. 33:6; Isa. 2:6; 57:3; Jer. 27:9; Micah 5:12.

▣ **“one who interprets omens”** The meaning of this term (BDB 638 II, KB 690) is uncertain. In Syrian it means “to murmur an obscure incantation” (KB 690). The root has several usages:

1. serpent - BDB 638 I
2. VERB in *Piel* only, (BDB 638 II) meaning :
 - a. practice divination
 - b. observe signs/omens
3. copper - bronze - BDB 638 III
4. unknown - BDB 638 IV

▣ **“a sorcerer”** This term (BDB 506, KB 503) basically means “to cut up” (1) as in the shredding of ingredients for a magical potion or (2) cutting oneself as a way of getting the deity’s attention (i.e., Syrian usage, cf. I Kgs. 18:28). This term was used to describe Pharaoh’s wise men in Exod. 7:11 and Nebuchadnezzar’s wise men in Dan. 2:2.

18:11 “one who casts a spell” This literally is “to tie knots,” “to be allied with,” or “join together” (BDB 287, KB 287). In Psalm 58:5 and Eccl. 10:11 it refers to snake charming. A slightly different vocalization describes a Babylonian false wise man in Isa. 47:8-11.

▣ **“medium”** The PARTICIPLE’s (BDB 981, KB 1371) basic meaning is to “ask” or “inquire.” Here to inquire of the spirit realm (e.g., YHWH, Josh. 9:14 or idols, Hosea 4:12).

The first NOUN, “medium” (BDB 15) is a difficult term to define. Some see the term as it is used in Lev. 19:31; 20:6,27 as (1) a pit, or place of sacrifice, or (2) form of “father” which refers to ancestor worship. It is translated in the LXX in Isa. 8:19 as “ventriloquist.” Because of this and Isa. 29:4 some think it means “to chirp” or “to mutter.” This would imply to “talk with a different voice.” However, from I Sam. 28:7-9, it is related to the ability to call or talk to someone in the ground or to communicate with the dead or spirits of the underworld, i.e., necromancy.

The second NOUN, “spiritists” (BDB 396) was a form of the Hebrew word “to know” (BDB 395). It refers to one who has knowledge of the spiritual realm or has contact with those in the spiritual realm who have knowledge (cf. Isa. 8:19; 19:3).

▣ **“one who calls up the dead”** This phrase is a combination of two *Qal* PARTICIPLES (BDB 205, KB 233, “to ask” and BDB 559, KB 562, “the dead ones”). In context it refers to mediums and “spiritists.” These elite, supposedly gifted, people contact the dead for information about the future and the power to affect it.

All ancient cultures believed in an afterlife. For many in the ancient Near East this had two possibilities:

1. ancestor worship where the spirits of family members could affect the present and future
2. the power of physical (stars, forces of nature) or spiritual (demons, demi-gods) could be utilized to know and affect personal destinies

18:12 “detestable” The term (BDB 1072) is used most often in Deuteronomy, Proverbs, and Ezekiel. See Special Topic at 14:3.

▣ **“the LORD your God will drive them out before you”** This is an aspect of “holy war.” This was revealed to Abraham as a promise in Gen. 15:16 and their sins are described in Lev. 18:24-28.

18:13 “blameless” This is a sacrificial term (BDB 1071) for a clean animal which is “perfect,” without blemish, and therefore, acceptable for sacrifice (cf. Exod. 12:5; 29:1; Lev. 1:3,10; 3:1,6,9; 4:3,23,28,32; 5:15,18; 6:6; etc.). It becomes a metaphor for those who are acceptable by God based on conformity to the

covenant stipulations (cf. Gen. 6:9; 17:1; II Sam. 22:24,26; Job 1:1,8; 2:3; 12:4; Ps. 15:2; 18:23,25; Ezek. 28:15). See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLAMELESS, INNOCENT, GUILTLESS, WITHOUT REPROACH

A. Opening Statements

1. This concept theologically describes mankind's original state (i.e., Gen. 1, the Garden of Eden).
2. Sin and rebellion have decimated this condition of perfect fellowship (i.e., Gen. 3).
3. Humans (male and female) long for the restoration of fellowship with God because they are made in His image and likeness (i.e., Gen. 1:26-27).
4. God has dealt with sinful mankind in several ways
 - a. godly leaders (i.e., Abraham, Moses, Isaiah)
 - b. sacrificial system (i.e., Lev. 1-7)
 - c. godly examples (i.e., Noah, Job)
5. Ultimately God provided the Messiah
 - a. as full revelation of Himself
 - b. as the perfect sacrifice for sin
6. Christians are made blameless
 - a. legally through Christ's imputed righteousness
 - b. progressively through the work of the Spirit
 - c. the goal of Christianity is Christlikeness (cf. Rom. 8:28-29; Eph. 1:4), which in reality, is the restoration of the image of God lost in the fall of Adam and Eve
7. Heaven is a restoration of the perfect fellowship of the Garden of Eden. Heaven is the New Jerusalem coming down out of God's presence (cf. Rev. 21:2) to a purified earth (cf. II Pet. 3:10). The Bible begins and ends on the same themes.
 - a. intimate, personal fellowship with God
 - b. in a garden setting (Gen. 1-2 and Rev. 21-22)
 - c. by prophetic statement, the presence and companionship of animals (cf. Isa. 11:6-9)

B. Old Testament

1. There are so many different Hebrew words that carry the concept of perfection, blamelessness, innocence that it would be hard to name and show all the intricate relationships.
2. The main terms carrying the concept of perfection, guiltlessness, or innocence (according to Robert B. Girdlestone, *Synonyms of the Old Testament*, pp. 94-99) are:
 - a. *shalom*
 - b. *thamam*
 - c. *calah*
3. The Septuagint (i.e., the Bible of the early church) translates many of these concepts into Koine Greek terms used in the NT.
4. The key concept is connected to the sacrificial system.
 - a. *am mos* (cf. Exod. 29:1; Lev. 1:3,10; 3:1,6,9; Num. 6:14; Ps. 26:1,11)
 - b. *amiantos* and *aspilus* also have cultic connotations

C. New Testament

1. the legal concept
 - a. Hebrew legal cultic connotation is translated by *am mos* (cf. Eph. 5:27; Phil. 2:15; I Pet. 1:19)
 - b. Greek legal connotation (cf. I Cor. 1:8; Col. 1:22)
2. Christ is the sinless, blameless, innocent One (*am mos*) (cf. Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:19)
3. Christ's followers must emulate Him (*am mos*) (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; II Pet. 3:14; Jude 24; Rev. 14:5)
4. This concept is also used of church leaders
 - a. *anegkl tos*, "without accusation" (cf. I Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6-7)
 - b. *anepileptos*, "above criticism" or "no handle for reproach" (cf. I Tim. 3:2; 5:7; 6:14; Titus 2:8)
5. The concept of "undefiled" (*amiantos*) is used of
 - a. Christ Himself (cf. Heb. 7:26)
 - b. the Christian's inheritance (cf. I Pet. 1:4)
6. The concept of "wholeness" or "soundness" (*holokl ria*) (cf. Acts 3:16; I Thess. 5:23; James 1:4)
7. The concept of "without fault," guiltless innocence is conveyed by *amemptos* (cf. Luke 1:6; Phil. 2:15; 3:6; I Thess. 2:10; 3:13; 5:23)
8. The concept of "not subject to blame" is conveyed by *am m tos* (cf. II Pet. 3:14)
9. The concept of "spotless," "unblemished" is often used in passages that have one of the above terms also (cf. I Tim. 6:14; James 1:27; I Pet. 1:19; II Pet. 3:14)

D. The number of words in Hebrew and Greek which convey this concept shows its importance. God has provided our need through Christ and now calls on us to be like Him.

Believers are positionally, forensically declared "right," "just," "blameless" by the work of Christ. Now believers are to possess their position. "Walk in the light as He is in the light" (cf. I John 1:7). "Walk worthy of the calling" (cf. Eph. 4:1,17; 5:2,15). Jesus has restored the image of God. Intimate fellowship is now possible, but remember God wants a people who reflect His character, as His Son did. We are called to nothing less than holiness (cf. Matt. 5:20,48; Eph. 1:4; I Pet. 1:13-16). God's holiness, not only legally, but existentially!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 18:15-22

¹⁵"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. ¹⁶This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.' ¹⁷The LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. ¹⁸I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require *it* of him. ²⁰But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.' ²¹You may say in your heart, 'How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' ²²When a prophet speaks in the name

of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him."

18:15-22 Deuteronomy 18:9-14 shows the improper way to seek God's will for one's life. Verses 15-22 describe the proper way to ascertain knowledge about God and His purposes.

18:15 "a prophet like me" This became a title for the Messiah (cf. John 1:21, 25, 45; 5:46; 6:14; 7:40; Acts 3:22; 7:37). Jesus acted like the "new" Moses:

1. gave the law of the new covenant (cf. Matthew 5-7)
2. fed the people as they expected (cf. John 6)
3. met God on a mountain (cf. Matthew 17)
4. interceded for the covenant people (cf. John 17)

For an excellent discussion of the function of prophecy in Israel see *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, pp. 184-189. This helpful discussion continues dealing with the interpretation of prophetic passages and books, pp. 189-204.

18:16 This reflects Israel's encounter with YHWH at Mt. Sinai (cf. Exodus 19-20). Direct revelation from God is an awesome thing (cf. Exod. 20:18-21)! The people wanted an intermediary!

This context is, in a sense, a multiple fulfillment prophecy. It obviously refers to the recurrent ministry of the prophet in Israel's national life (cf. TEV). The king and priest were from one family, but the prophets were individually called by God to mediate His covenant to each new generation. However, it also points toward the special spokesman of YHWH (Hebrew SINGULAR, vv. 15,18 and the comment in 34:10, i.e., the Suffering Servant, the Messiah). This is the one spoken of in Gen. 3:15; 49:10; II Sam. 7:12-13,16; Isa. 7:14; 9:1-7; 11:1-5; Dan. 7:13; 9:25; Micah 5:2-5a; Zech. 9:9. Also notice John 1:45 and 5:46.

18:17 This same idiom, "they have spoken well," is also found in 5:28, but not in Exodus 19-20. So this is unrecorded revelation. We must remember that the Bible is only part of the word of God. By faith, believers assert that all that is necessary for life and doctrine has been included, but it is not exhaustive. In this sense, it is analogous to Jesus' words (cf. John 20:30; 21:25).

18:18 "I will raise up a prophet" The VERB (BDB 877, KB 1080, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is used often of YHWH's purposeful, covenantal actions in history (e.g., Gen. 6:18; 9:9,11,17; 17:7,19,21; Exod. 6:4; Deut. 18:15,18; 28:9; Jdgs. 2:16,18; 3:9,15; I Sam. 2:35; I Kgs. 9:5; 11:14,23; 14:14; II Chr. 7:18, etc.).

YHWH is in control of history, as predictive prophecies like this one referring to Jesus (also notice Micah 5:2) clearly shows. The Bible is the only "holy book" that contains prophecy!

☐ **"I will put My words in His mouth"** This refers to him speaking the message of YHWH! He will speak only what YHWH tells him (just what Jesus affirmed, cf. John 3:34; 12:49; 14:10; 17:8).

18:19 We are responsible to act on God's will once we know it. The real question is how do we know who truly speaks for God (cf. v. 21)? Verses 20-22 are a partial answer. There are other criteria (cf. Deut. 13:1-2; 18:20-22; Matt. 7; I John 4:1-6). This verse is quoted in Acts 3:22-23!

18:20-22 God's speaker will be known by (1) speaking in YHWH's name, not the names of other gods (cf. v. 20); (2) the accuracy of his statements (cf. v. 22); and (3) Deut. 13:1-2 must also be taken into account because God's dealing with Israel was based on their spiritual response.

One wonders how contemporary hearers are to judge a prophet if their prediction is beyond their lifetime. Also, what about conditional prophecy that depends on the repentant faith response of the people of that day to which it is addressed (i.e., Jonah)?

The evaluation of those who claim to speak for God is not easy. Here are some criteria:

1. content of message
2. lifestyle of the messenger
3. correlation of the message with other Bible passages

False prophets, false teachers, are often very dynamic, educated, logical, and winsome people. In our day the marks of a false speaker might be:

1. an emphasis on money
2. a sexual license
3. a claim to exclusive access to God

(see *A General Introduction to the Bible* by Norman Geisler and William Nix, pp. 241-242)

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THE REALITY OF AN EVIL SPIRITUAL REALM

1. *Christian Counseling and the Occult* by Kurt Kouch
2. *Demons in the World Today* by Merrill F. Unger
3. *Principalities and Powers* by John Warwich Montgomery
4. *Demons, Demons, Demons* by John Newport
5. *Biblical Demonology* by Merrill F. Unger
6. *Three Crucial Questions About Spiritual Warfare* by Clinton E. Arnold

DEUTERONOMY 19

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Three Cities of Refuge	The Administration of Justice	The Cities of Refuge	Homicide and Cities of Refuge
19:1-3	19:1-3	19:1-7	19:1-4a
19:4-10	19:4-7		19:4b-6
			19:7-10
	19:8-10	19:8-10	
19:11-13	19:11-13	19:11-13	19:11-13
Property Boundaries		Ancient Property Lines	Boundaries
19:14	19:14	19:14	19:14
The Law Concerning Witnesses		Concerning Witnesses	Witnesses
19:15-21	19:15-21	19:15-21	19:15
			19:16-21

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:1-3

¹"When the LORD your God cuts off the nations, whose land the LORD your God gives you, and you dispossess them and settle in their cities and in their houses, ²you shall set aside three cities for

yourself in the midst of your land, which the LORD your God gives you to possess. ³You shall prepare the roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God will give you as a possession, so that any manslayer may flee there."

19:1 “cuts off” This VERB (BDB 503, KB 500, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) is used in several senses:

1. to make (“cut”) a covenant, 4:23; 5:2,3; 7:2; 9:9; 29:1,12,14,25; 31:16
2. remove, destroy, 12:29; 19:1
3. cut down (literal, i.e., a tree), 19:5; 20:19,20

▣ **“whose land the LORD your God gives you”** See note at 1:8.

▣ **“settle in their cities”** The description of God’s activity in accomplishing this task on the eastern side of the Jordan River is seen in Deut. 4:41-43.

19:2,7 “three cities” These were Levitical cities of refuge, discussed in Num. 35; Josh. 20, where someone accused of murder (i.e., “manslayer”) could flee to protect himself from the dead person’s relatives (i.e., “blood avenger”). The leaders of these cities were to hold a trial (cf. vv. 11-13) to determine the facts of the case.

A list of the cities of refuge is found in Joshua 20:7-8:

1. Trans-jordan
 - a. Bezer in Reuben
 - b. Ramoth-Gilead in Gad
 - c. Golan in Manasseh (Bashan)
2. Canaan
 - a. Kadesh in Naphtali (Galilee)
 - b. Shechem in Ephraim
 - c. Hebron in Judah

The idea of a place of safety or refuge was not unique to Israel. Most ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean cultures provided these special places. Usually they were located at religious shrines. Israel also had this concept by one grabbing the “horns of the altar” (cf. Exod. 27:2; 30:10) at the central shrine (cf. Exod. 21:14; I Kgs. 1:50-53; 2:28-34). However, special cities were unique to Israel. YHWH was concerned with the death of innocent manslaughterers.

19:3 “prepare the roads” The VERB (BDB 465, KB 464, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) here means “prepare a road.” There are three possible meanings:

1. equal distance apart
2. easy access
3. “provide road signs pointing the way” (Rashi quoting a Maccabean document)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:4-7

⁴“Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously—⁵as when a man goes into the forest with his friend to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down the tree, and the iron head slips off the handle and strikes his friend so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and live; ⁶otherwise the avenger of blood might pursue the manslayer in the heat of his anger, and overtake him, because the way is long, and take his life, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated him previously. ⁷Therefore, I command you, saying, ‘You shall set aside three cities for yourself.’”

19:4 “case of the manslayer” This is an expansion of Exod. 21:12-14, which relates to the central sanctuary. This expanded the safety of the central sanctuary to the six Levitical cities of refuge.

▣ **“who may flee there and live”** If the one who killed someone fled (BDB 630, KB 681, *Qal* IMPERFECT) to one of the designated cities and if the ensuing trial found that there was no premeditation then he must live (BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* PERFECT) in that city of safety until the death of the current High Priest (cf. Josh. 20:6).

▣ **“unintentionally”** See note at 4:42. This is the opposite of “premeditated act.”

19:6 “avenger of blood” The phrase is a construct (BDB 145 I, KB 169, *Qal* PARTICIPLE and BDB 196, cf. Num. 35:9-28). This person is also known as “kinsman redeemer”(one who acts on behalf of the family). This is an example of v. 21’s limited revenge (cf. Exod. 21:23-25; Lev. 24:19-22).

▣ **“though he was not deserving of death”** This is a theological development of Gen. 9:5-6. Here the motive behind the action is taken into consideration. That which was accidental and unpremeditated is relieved from “eye-for-an-eye” retaliation. There were consequences (had to live in the city of refuge until the death of the current High Priest).

Israel, like YHWH, was to be concerned with justice and limited revenge!

19:7 Moses gave them YHWH’s word in vv. 1-3; he explained them in vv. 4-6 and, then he reasserts YHWH’s command in v. 7.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:8-10

8“If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, just as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give your fathers—**9**if you carefully observe all this commandment which I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in His ways always—then you shall add three more cities for yourself, besides these three. **10**So innocent blood will not be shed in the midst of your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and bloodguiltiness be on you.”

19:8 “If” The hypothetical PARTICLE (BDB 49) expresses the conditional nature of YHWH’s covenant with Israel (cf. v. 9). He had given them the trans-jordan area and now if they obeyed He would give them Canaan.

19:9 “carefully observe” There is one VERB “to observe” (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT, see note at 6:12) followed by several INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS:

1. “to do” - BDB 793, KB 889
2. “to love” - BDB 12, KB 17
3. “to walk” - BDB 229, KB 246, cf. 10:12; 11:1,13,22; 30:16

▣ **“all this commandment”** This SINGULAR term (BDB 846, see Special Topic at 4:1) is used to describe all of YHWH’s covenant (cf. 4:2; 6:1; 11:8; 15:5; 19:9).

▣ **“you shall add three more cities”** These three plus the three of v. 2 show the six cities of refuge mentioned in Joshua 20. These refer to (1) the future three cities on the western side of the Jordan, not yet conquered or (2) Israel’s later expansion of the text after Joshua’s conquest (editorial update).

19:10 YHWH is concerned about the death of people who do not deserve to die (i.e., “innocent blood,” cf. II Kgs. 21:16; 24:4; Jer. 22:17). In the OT there is no distinction between ethical and ritual purity. Life is precious! Its loss has consequences (“blood-guiltiness,” cf. Num. 35:33-34). It is this consequence and other ritual uncleanness that is dealt with (1) annually by the Day of Atonement, described in Leviticus 16 and (2) locally by the sacrifice of a heifer (cf. 21:1-9). As the cities of refuge dwelt with individuals, Deut. 21:1-9 deals with the ritual guiltiness of communities.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:11-13

¹¹“But if there is a man who hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him so that he dies, and he flees to one of these cities, ¹²then the elders of his city shall send and take him from there and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. ¹³You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that it may go well with you.”

19:11 Notice the series of VERBS describing the premeditated murder:

1. “hates” - BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PARTICIPLE, cf. 4:42
2. “lies in wait” - BDB 70, KB 83, *Qal* PERFECT
3. “rises up” - BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* PERFECT
4. “strikes” - BDB 645, KB 697, *Qal* PERFECT

19:12 “the elders of his city” This refers to either the city nearest the crime or the city of the man’s residence.

19:13 “You shall not pity him” This (BDB 299, KB 298, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is a recurrent theme in Deuteronomy (cf. 7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12). Human compassion or national feelings cannot change YHWH’s laws. Israel must be holy! Israel’s future prosperity (and even her remaining in the Promised Land) is conditioned on her obedience.



NASB “you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel”

NKJV “you shall put away *the guilt of innocent blood from Israel*”

NRSV “you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel”

TEV “Israel must rid itself of murders”

NJB “You must banish the shedding of innocent blood from Israel”

The VERB (BDB 128, KB 145, *Piel* PERFECT) means “burn,” used metaphorically here of the complete removal (cf. 13:8; 17:7,12; 19:13,19; 21:21; 22:21,22,24; 24:7).

Murder affects individual’s (cf. Genesis 4) and communities’ (cf. 21:1-9) relationships with and the blessings of YHWH. Sin and self destroy everything they touch!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:14

¹⁴“You shall not move your neighbor’s boundary mark, which the ancestors have set, in your inheritance which you will inherit in the land that the LORD your God gives you to possess.”

19:14 “you shall not move your neighbor’s boundary mark” In the ancient world villages farmed the land together (i.e., plowing, sowing, reaping). From a passerby’s observation it looked like one big field. However, each family had its own field, which was marked by white stones. That family, though working the entire field with the village, received the produce of their land. If someone moved the stones, thereby

giving themselves more land (i.e., produce), it was a crime against the whole community and YHWH, because He gave the land as an inheritance for each tribe and family (cf. 27:17; Pro. 22:28; 23:10; Hos. 5:10).

▣ **“which the ancestors have set”** This is the kind of statement that has caused many scholars to reject Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy. It seems to refer to the allocation of land by lot, which occurred after Joshua’s conquest (cf. Joshua 13-19). Egyptian scribes updated their texts, while Mesopotamian scribes did not. Israel’s scribes were trained in Egypt.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 19:15-21

¹⁵“A single witness shall not rise up against a man on account of any iniquity or any sin which he has committed; on the evidence of two or three witnesses a matter shall be confirmed. ¹⁶If a malicious witness rises up against a man to accuse him of wrongdoing, ¹⁷then both the men who have the dispute shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who will be *in office* in those days. ¹⁸The judges shall investigate thoroughly, and if the witness is a false witness *and* he has accused his brother falsely, ¹⁹then you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you. ²⁰The rest will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such an evil thing among you. ²¹Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.”

19:15 This verse shows how careful they were to be in their judicial process (cf. 17:6; Num. 35:30). The VERB “rise up” (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used three times in the Hebrew text in vv. 15 and 16.

19:16 “malicious witness” The NOUN “malicious” (BDB 329) basically means “violence,” but here it denotes a purposeful, false judicial witness (cf. Exod. 23:1; Ps. 27:12; 5:11), they speak in YHWH’s name (legal oath), but knowingly distort the truth. Verse 19 shows the consequences of a false witness (cf. Deut. 5:20 and chapter 11).

▣

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV “wrongdoing”

TEV “false accusations”

NJB “a charge of apostasy”

The Hebrew term (BDB 694 II) usually means “a rebellious attitude which becomes an action,” cf. 13:5; Jer. 28:16; 29:32. Here the context implies purposeful, premeditated “lying.”

19:17 “the priests and the judges” This refers to:

1. local judges, 16:18-20; 17:8-13
2. Levitical priests of the central sanctuary, 18:1-8

Notice that appearing before these appointed judges is the same as appearing before YHWH (cf. 17:9,12).

19:18 “The judges shall investigate thoroughly” See note at 13:15. This same word (BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE) is also used in 17:4.

19:19 “you shall do to him just as he had intended to do to his brother” This is an example of “we reap what we sow” or “an eye-for-an-eye” justice (cf. Lev. 24:19).

19:20 “The rest will hear and be afraid” There is a social deterrent in individual punishment by the community (cf. 13:11; 17:13).

19:21 See note at v. 13. The “eye-for-an-eye” justice of Israel, which seems so cruel (i.e., *Lex talionis*, which is also characteristic of the Code of Hammurabi, see *Old Testament Times*, by R. K. Harrison, pp. 57-59) was in reality meant to stop “revenge wars” between families and tribes as well as maintain the ritual purity of God’s covenant people.

One wonders about how literally this law was actually carried out. It seems that physical mutilation was replaced by appropriate compensation. This is based on the surrounding context of the parallel in Exod. 21:23-25. The immediately preceding and following contexts deal with compensation. The later rabbis assigned appropriate compensation for actions resulting in personal damage. However, murder retained its religious taboo. It negatively impacted the covenant of blessings from YHWH and had to be dealt with appropriately!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did God establish cities of refuge?
2. Explain the concept of “the avenger of blood.”
3. How did the Hebrews handle perjury?
4. What was the purpose of “eye-for-eye” justice?

DEUTERONOMY 20

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Principles Governing Warfare 20:1-9	Rules for Waging Holy War 20:1-9	Concerning War 20:1-4 20:5-7 20:8-9	War and Combatants 20:1-4 20:5 20:6 20:7 20:8 20:9 Captured Towns
20:10-18	20:10-18	20:10-15 20:16-18	20:10-14 20:15-18
20:19-20	20:19-20	20:19-20	20:19-20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND STUDY

- A. Chapter 20 is a description of how Israel was to conduct holy war, which is a war done in the name of God, commanded by God, the rules controlled by God, for the glory of God (cf. 20:1-20; 21:10-14; 23:9-14; 24:5; 25:17-19).
- B. The problem moderns have with this type of text usually involve an ethical outrage. However, it is just not fair to apply modern notions of ethics and warfare to ancient military practices.
- Another issue is the problem of modern Christians trying to apply every OT text to their day. It is not God's will that every generation in every locality reproduce an ancient Near Eastern culture, but that we seek the eternal truths bound up in the cultural actions, then apply these universal truths to our culture. A good book at this point is *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart.
- Because it happened and is recorded in the Bible does not automatically mean it is God's will for every age and every culture (e.g., food laws, holy war, polygamy, slavery, subjection of women, etc.).
- C. This chapter is a mixture of compassion and severity!
- D. For a good brief discussion see Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 258-267.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:1-9

¹"When you go out to battle against your enemies and see horses and chariots *and* people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, is with you. ²When you are approaching the battle, the priest shall come near and speak to the people. ³He shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel, you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them, ⁴for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.' ⁵The officers also shall speak to the people, saying, 'Who is the man that has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would dedicate it. ⁶Who is the man that has planted a vineyard and has not begun to use its fruit? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would begin to use its fruit. ⁷And who is the man that is engaged to a woman and has not married her? Let him depart and return to his house, otherwise he might die in the battle and another man would marry her.' ⁸Then the officers shall speak further to the people and say, 'Who is the man that is afraid and fainthearted? Let him depart and return to his house, so that he might not make his brothers' hearts melt like his heart.' ⁹When the officers have finished speaking to the people, they shall appoint commanders of armies at the head of the people."

20:1 "horses and chariots" The Canaanites had many horses and chariots (i.e., the ultimate military weapon of that time and place); the Israelis had none (cf. Josh. 11:4; 17:16; Isa. 31:1-3; Hos. 14:3). The Israelites must trust in YHWH to provide the victory, not better weaponry (cf. Isa. 30:15-17; 31:1-9).

▣ **"do not be afraid of them"** This VERB (BDB 431, KB 4387, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is a recurrent theme in holy war contexts (cf. 1:21,29; 3:2,22; 7:18; 20:1,3; 31:6,8). They were not to fear the power or number of their

Canaanite enemies, but they were to fear YHWH (cf. 4:10; 5:29; 6:2,13,24; 10:12,20; 13:4; 14:23; 17:19; 28:58; 31:12,13), because He is an awesome God (same Hebrew term, cf. 7:21; 10:17; 28:58).

▣ **“for the LORD your God, who brought you up from the land of Egypt”** See Exod. 14:26-28 for a reference to God’s deliverance of His people from Pharaoh. Israel’s trust was based on:

1. previous revelation to the Patriarchs
2. miraculous Egyptian deliverance
3. miraculous wilderness wandering provisions
4. victories on the eastern bank of Jordan

20:2 “the priest shall come near and speak to the people” The rabbis called this person “the anointed priest of battle.” Before battle, the priest admonished them to be brave because God was with them. Even if some died in battle, God would still take care of them and their families.

20:3-4 Notice the series of admonitions (“hear” BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) of the priest in verse 3:

1. “do not be fainthearted” - BDB 939, KB 1236, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning, cf. Isa. 7:4; Jer. 51:46
2. “do not be afraid” - BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning, see note at v. 1
3. “do not panic” - BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning, cf. Job 40:23 (examples: I Sam. 23:26; II Kgs. 7:15; Ps. 48:5)
4. “do not tremble before them” - BDB 791, KB 888, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning, cf. 1:29; 7:21; 31:6; Josh. 1:9

The reason for the confidence is stated in v. 4:

1. “the Lord your God is the one who goes with you” - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
2. “to fight for you” - BDB 535, KB 526, *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
3. “to save you” - BDB 446, KB 448, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

20:5-8 “The officers” This is a special Hebrew word (BDB 1009) sometimes used in conjunction with the local judges or military leaders. It means “the representatives from each tribe” (cf. 1:15; 29:10; 31:28). The officers made the judgment on any exemptions.

Here is a list of exemptions that allowed an Israelite man to not go into battle:

1. One who built a new house and had not dedicated it, v. 5 (obviously a future event; there is no record of the nature or purpose of this procedure recorded in the OT, but the term is the same as the one used for dedicating the temple, BDB 335 II).
2. One who has planted a vineyard and has not begun to use its fruit, v. 6 (obviously a future event, vineyard took three years to produce fruit, cf. Lev. 19:23-25).
3. One who is engaged, but has not married yet, v. 7, cf. 24:5.
4. One who is afraid or fainthearted, v. 8, because it may cause others to be afraid, cf. Jdgs. 7:3; I Macc. 3:56.

Numbers 1, 2, and 3 are related to inheritance issues. But they may also be seen in light of Deut. 28:30. These very things are mentioned as being results of covenant disobedience.

▣ **“Let him depart and return to his house”** This phrase is made up of the VERBS:

1. “depart” - BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* IMPERFECT used as a JUSSIVE
2. “return” - BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* JUSSIVE

It is repeated with each possible exemption listed (cf. vv. 5,6,7,8). It was not the size of Israel's army, but the power of Israel's God that made the difference! The smaller and less equipped the army, the more it magnified God's victory (cf. Judges 7).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:10-18

¹⁰"When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. ¹¹If it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. ¹²However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. ¹³When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword. ¹⁴Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you. ¹⁵Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby. ¹⁶Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. ¹⁷But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as the LORD your God has commanded you, ¹⁸so that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God."

20:10-15 These are surrender instructions about distant cities, cities on the periphery or out of the bounds of the Promised Land that God gave (i.e., outside Israel's inheritance, cf. v. 15).

20:11 "shall become your forced labor and shall serve you" This reflects a common element of ancient Near Eastern warfare.

20:13 "the edge of the sword" The literal Hebrew is "to the mouth of the sword." The implication is that all the men of a certain age were killed.

20:14 In the ancient world soldiers were not paid a salary, but their compensation was the spoils of victory. In Israel, especially "holy war," the spoils belonged to YHWH to show that the victory was His victory and that the land was His land. These verses are exceptions because these cities were outside the Promised Land.

▣ **"the women"** Even captured slaves had some rights (cf. 21:10-14).

20:16-18 These verses refer to cities within the Promised Land. These cities are totally under the ban of destruction (cf. vv. 16-17).

20:16 "you shall not leave alive anything that breathes" This means small children, pregnant women, old people, animals. . .anything that breathes (cf. Josh. 10:40; 11:11,14).

20:17 "utterly destroy" The word here is *herem* (BDB 355, KB 353, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, which was a grammatical way to show intensity), which is the idea of total and complete destruction because it has been dedicated to God (cf. 2:34; 7:1-5).

▣ **"the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite"** See Special Topic: the Pre-Israelite Inhabitants of Palestine at 1:4.

20:18 How can this be done by a loving God? One answer is found in v. 18 - a theological reason. If you don't wipe them out they will theologically pollute you. Another answer is found in Deut. 9:4 and a third in Gen. 15:12-21. Human sins have consequences!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 20:19-20

¹⁹"When you besiege a city a long time, to make war against it in order to capture it, you shall not destroy its trees by swinging an axe against them; for you may eat from them, and you shall not cut them down. For is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you? ²⁰Only the trees which you know are not fruit trees you shall destroy and cut down, that you may construct siegeworks against the city that is making war with you until it falls."

20:19-20 Walled cities in the ancient Near East were attacked by wooden siege machines. The wood was to be taken from non-fruit bearing tree, probably because this produce would be needed later by the Israeli inhabitants of the defeated city.

20:19

NASB, NJB "is the tree of the field a man"

NKJV "for the tree of the field *is* man's food"

NRSV "are trees in the field human beings"

TEV "the trees are not your enemy"

The Hebrew text is difficult here. It seems to mean that the trees are not the enemy! They were YHWH's way of providing immediate and future food for His people.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How was Israel's fear of greater numbers and technology dealt with?
2. List the four exemptions from military service:
3. Did God advocate slavery (v. 11)?
4. How can one reconcile vv. 16-17 with our view of God?
5. List all the humanitarian aspects of this chapter.

DEUTERONOMY 21

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Law concerning Unsolved Murder	Miscellaneous Laws (21:1-23:14)	Concerning Unsolved Murder	The Unidentified Murderer
21:1-9	21:1-9	21:1-9	21:1-9
Female War Prisoners		Concerning Women Prisoners of War	Women Taken in War
21:10-14	21:10-14	21:10-14	21:10-14
Firstborn Inheritance Rights		Concerning the First Son's Inheritance	Birthright
21:15-17	21:15-17	21:15-17	21:15-17
The Rebellious Son		Concerning a Disobedient Son	The Rebellious Son
21:18-21	21:18-21	21:18-21	21:18-21
Miscellaneous Laws (21:22-22:12)		Various Laws (21:22-22:12)	Various Rulings (21:22-22:12)
21:22-23	21:22-23	21:22-22:3	21:22-22:2

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Notice the recurrent pattern of "if . . . then." This is one type of ancient Near Eastern law (i.e., case law or casuistic law), which is distinct from apodictic law (e.g., the Ten Words/Ten Commandments).

- B. Deuteronomy's law code has several unique features:
1. recurrent emphases on covenant love
 - a. YHWH to Israel
 - b. Israelite to Israelite
 - c. Israelite to foreigner
 - d. Israelite to animals
 2. special care for the poor, disenfranchised, and powerless
- C. YHWH instructs His people in clear ways (paths). He wants them to understand and act appropriately. Their actions are to reflect His character as a means of reaching those who do not yet know Him (personal and national faith relationship). The Law is God's gift to fallen humanity, not a capricious exercise of control! They show in many practical and specific ways how an "unholy people" can stay in fellowship with holy God!

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:1-9

¹If a slain person is found lying in the open country in the land which the LORD your God gives you to possess, *and* it is not known who has struck him, ²then your elders and your judges shall go out and measure *the distance* to the cities which are around the slain one. ³It shall be that the city which is nearest to the slain man, that is, the elders of that city, shall take a heifer of the herd, which has not been worked and which has not pulled in a yoke; ⁴and the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water, which has not been plowed or sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. ⁵Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come near, for the LORD your God has chosen them to serve Him and to bless in the name of the LORD; and every dispute and every assault shall be settled by them. ⁶All the elders of that city which is nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley; ⁷and they shall answer and say, 'Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see *it*. ⁸Forgive Your people Israel whom You have redeemed, O LORD, and do not place the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of Your people Israel.' And the bloodguiltiness shall be forgiven them. ⁹So you shall remove the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, when you do what is right in the eyes of the LORD.'

21:1-9 This is a context about how to cleanse the land when a murdered person is found in an open field, away from any city. Murder pollutes YHWH's land (e.g., 7:13; 11:9,21; 28:11; 30:20) and must be dealt with in an appropriate manner (i.e., sacrifice).

21:2 "elders and judges" There are local appointed leaders who sat in the gates of the city and tried the cases of the community. Only if they had a problem did they take the cases to a higher authority (i.e., Levitical priests, cf. v. 5). They measured the distance from the found body to the cities around. The nearest town had to perform certain rituals (cf. vv. 3-8). This demonstrates their sense of guilt by proximity. The closest city was responsible for the blood-guiltiness, which could affect YHWH's blessings on the whole region (cf. 19:13).

21:3 "heifer. . . which has not been worked and which has not pulled in a yoke" This means a heifer which has not been used for agricultural work.

21:4 “a valley with running water which has not been plowed or sown” The valley, too, had to be unpolluted by human activity or in a natural state. The water symbolized carrying the guilt away (similar to the goat of Leviticus 16).

▣ **“shall break the heifer’s neck”** Later rabbis said “chopped head off with an ax” because breaking the neck was a difficult task (cf. Exod. 13:13; 34:20). However, blood does not seem to be involved in the ritual, but the concept of substitution. The innocent heifer ceremonially takes the place of the unknown murderer. The purpose was to rid the land of innocent bloodguiltiness (cf. Num. 35:33-34).

21:5 “the priests” They may refer later to local Levites.

▣ **“to bless in the name of the LORD”** Blessing was one of the functions of priests/Levites (cf. 10:8; I Chr. 23:13). One example of a priestly blessing is recorded in Num. 6:22-26. This blessing is related to Israel’s covenant keeping (cf. Num. 6:27; Deut. 28:3-6). YHWH’s personal presence (i.e., name) was honored or rejected by each Israelite’s obedience or willful disobedience to YHWH’s revelation (i.e., covenant). Israel’s blessing, both individual (cf. Exod. 19:5-6) and corporate, was determined not by arbitrary or capricious choice, but by personal faith in YHWH, demonstrated by covenant obedience (lifestyle). YHWH wanted to bless (cf. Exod. 20:24; II Chr. 30:27).

▣ **“every dispute and every assault shall be settled by them”** The VERB is the common one, “to be” (BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* IMPERFECT). The translation “be settled” comes from the previous NOUN phrase, “by their word” (BDB 804).

There are two types of legal problems mentioned:

1. “dispute” (i.e., lawsuit) - BDB 936, cf. 1:12; 19:17; 21:5; 25:1; Exod. 23:2,3,6
2. “assault” - BDB 619, cf. 17:8. Here it refers to physical attack, but the term can mean disease, cf. 24:8 (many times in Leviticus).

21:6 “wash their hands over the heifer” This symbolizes cleansing (cf. Ps. 26:6; 73:13) from guilt by the proximity of the dead body. The elders represent the whole community as they corporately wash the guilt away from the village and area.

21:7 “Our hands did not shed this blood nor did our eyes see it” The rabbis relate this to help for the stranger, poor, orphan, or widow. Since the villagers did not see the stranger’s need for help they were absolved from meeting that need. This may have been a way to stop the victim’s family (i.e., blood avenger) from killing an innocent member of the nearest village in retaliation.

21:8

NASB, TEV,

NJB

“Forgive”

NKJV

“Provide atonement”

NRSV

“Absolve”

REB

“accept expiation”

This is the Hebrew VERB “cover” (BDB 497, KB 493, *Piel* IMPERATIVE). It is used twice in this verse (the second use is a *Nithpael* PERFECT). This term, so common in Leviticus and Numbers, is used only three times in Deuteronomy (21:8[twice]; 32:43). Its basic meaning is “to ritually cover by means of a sacrifice.”

▣ **“redeemed”** This VERB (BDB 804, KB 911, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning) is parallel to “forgive” (i.e., cover). See Special Topic: Ransom/Redeem at 7:8.



NASB “do not place the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of Your people”

NKJV “do not lay innocent blood to the charge of Your people”

NRSV “do not let the guilt of innocent blood remain in the midst of your people”

TEV “do not hold us responsible for the murder of an innocent person”

NJB “let no innocent blood be shed among your people”

The VERB (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but in a JUSSIVE sense) is a prayer for ritual absolution from the consequences of an unsolved murder. Notice how NJB translates the phrase as a JUSSIVE.

21:9 The ritual (cf. vv. 1-8) was seen as “purging” (BDB 128, KB 145, *Piel* IMPERFECT) the effects of corporate sin (i.e., unsolved murders) from the whole community (similar to the rituals of “the Day of Atonement” in Leviticus 16). Sin, even unintentional corporate sin, affects the blessing of YHWH and even brings collective wrath (i.e., curses, cf. Deuteronomy 27-29).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:10-14

10“When you go out to battle against your enemies, and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands and you take them away captive, **11**and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and have a desire for her and would take her as a wife for yourself, **12**then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and trim her nails. **13**She shall also remove the clothes of her captivity and shall remain in your house, and mourn her father and mother a full month; and after that you may go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife. **14**It shall be, if you are not pleased with her, then you shall let her go wherever she wishes; but you shall certainly not sell her for money, you shall not mistreat her, because you have humbled her.”

21:10-14 These verses address how to appropriately deal with women (i.e., not Canaanites, but others, cf. 20:10-15) captured in war, even they had rights in YHWH’s land. This care for the poor and powerless is unique in the ancient world’s law codes.

21:11 “woman” This was not a Canaanite woman, a foreigner, perhaps, but not Canaanite.

Notice the verbal progression:

1. “see” - BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* PERFECT
2. “love” - BDB 365 I, KB 362, *Qal* PERFECT, used of YHWH’s love for Israel in 7:7; 10:15
3. “take” - BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* PERFECT. Here it does not imply a sexual union, but a taking into one’s house (cf. v. 12).

This same sequence is found in Gen. 3:6!

21:12 “she shall shave her head and trim her nails” This was a (1) concluding (cf. Num. 6:9,18-19); (2) cleansing (cf. Lev. 13:33; 14:8-9); or (3) mourning (cf. 14:1; Lev. 21:5; Jer. 41:5; Ezek. 44:20) ritual. Here it symbolized a new day, a new life, a new family. It is interesting that her conversion to YHWH is assumed, but not stated. The husband’s faith was the family’s faith!

21:13 “and mourn her father and mother” Although the text does not specifically state that this woman must be unmarried, it is implied. There is no mention of mourning over the loss of a husband nor the mention of children.

“after that you may go in to her” This is a Hebrew idiom for sexual intercourse (i.e., which consummated the marriage). Notice that a desire for sexual relations, even with a non-Israelite, is not

condemned, but there is an appropriate time. This month of mourning gives the Hebrew man time to get to know his potential wife. If things do not go well, there is a way out without divorce.

Also note the apparent absence of an actual marriage ceremony (cf. Gen. 24:67).

21:14 “let her go” This is the technical word for divorce (BDB 1018, KB 1511, *Piel* PERFECT). She could not be sold (*Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT of BDB 569, KB 5181, which was a grammatical way to express emphasis) like a slave, but she could be divorced. See note at 24:1-4.



NASB “you shall not mistreat her”
NKJV “you shall not treat her brutally”
NRSV, TEV “you must not treat her as a slave”
NJB -----

The VERB (BDB 771 II, KB 849, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT) means “deal tyrannically with” or “forced to submit to the will of a more powerful person” (cf. 24:7). YHWH cares for the fair treatment of even captured women!



NASB, NKJV “because you have humbled her”
NRSV “since you have dishonored her”
TEV “since you forced her to have intercourse with you”
NJB “since you have exploited her”
REB “since you have had your will with her”

This VERB (BDB 776, KB 853, *Piel* PERFECT), in this context, is best translated as the TEV (e.g., Gen. 34:2; Deut. 22:24,29; Jdgs. 19:24; 20:5; II Sam. 13:12,14,22,32). These women would have suffered:

1. capture in war
2. loss of family
3. forced integration into marriage, which also assumes a religious conversion
4. now forced removal from the home (with implied sin, cf. Deut. 24:1-4) with no place to go

Notice that this paragraph, and the next also, limits the cultural power of male Israelites!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:15-17

¹⁵“If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and *both* the loved and the unloved have borne him sons, if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, ¹⁶then it shall be in the day he wills what he has to his sons, he cannot make the son of the loved the firstborn before the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn. ¹⁷But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn.”

21:15 This paragraph recognizes the cultural practice of polygamy. The first example in the OT is Lamech (Gen. 4:23). The most famous early polygamist was Jacob in Genesis 29. Polygamy was practiced among wealthy or powerful people, not usually the common people (although vv. 10-14 could refer to bigamy).

The exact motive for the practice is uncertain:

1. sexual
2. reproductive (an heir)
3. economic
 - a. help poor family
 - b. a way to gain wealth and influence

- c. a way to handle the spoils of war
- 4. political unions to help neighboring nations maintain peace (i.e., David, Solomon)

▣ **“unloved”** This is literally “hated” (BDB 971, cf. vv. 15[twice],16,17). But it is functioning here as a Hebrew idiom of comparison—loved versus unloved (cf. Gen. 29:30-31; Mal. 1:2-3; Rom. 9:13 [quotes Mal. 1:2-3]; Luke 14:26).

▣ **“firstborn son”** The firstborn’s rights were established even if he were the son of the unloved (cf. v. 17; Exod. 13:14-15; Lev. 3:12-13).

21:17 “double portion” The Hebrew idiom (BDB 804, “mouth” and BDB 1040, “double”) is also used of Elisha’s desire related to Elijah in II Kgs. 2:9. This is the only place in the OT that this double portion is specifically mentioned. If there were two sons, the older would receive two-thirds and the younger one-third; if three sons, then 50%, 25%, 25%, etc. The oldest son was to care for the aged parents.

It is interesting that the historicity of these laws is demonstrated by the archaeological finds of other ancient law codes:

1. Jacob in Genesis 49 gives all his twelve sons equal inheritance. This is reflected in the Code of Hammurabi
2. Here the mention of a double share for the firstborn is paralleled in the Nuzi and Mari tablets.
3. The differences recorded in Scripture reflect the differences in their contemporary culture (see *The Old Testament Documents* by Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., p. 86).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:18-21

¹⁸If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, ¹⁹then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his home town. ²⁰They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' ²¹Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear."

21:18-21 This section deals with rebellious sons and how parents were to treat them (cf. Exod. 21:15,17; Lev. 20:9). Parents did not have the right of life or death over a child, but the courts did. This concerned (1) the violation of 5:16; (2) the inheritance within a family; and (3) community solidarity.

21:18 This type of antisocial youth was characterized as:

1. “stubborn” - BDB 710, KB 770, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
2. “rebellious” - BDB 598, KB 632, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
3. both of these things are used together in Ps. 78:8 and Jer. 5:23

The five PARTICIPLES in this verse show continuous action. The rest of the verse describes their actions:

1. who will not obey parents, vv. 18,20
2. he will not even listen to them, v. 18
3. glutton, v. 20 - BDB 272 II
4. drunkard, v. 20 - BDB 684

See *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp.174-175.

21:19 “father and mother shall seize him” This means either (1) both mutually restrain (BDB 1074, KB 1779, *Qal* PREFECT) or (2) the need for two witnesses (cf. 17:6; 19:15; Num. 35:10).

▣ **“at the gateway”** The local place of justice was the city gate, where the elders sat (e.g., 19:12; 22:15; 25:7).

21:21 “all the men of his city shall stone him to death” Notice the humanitarian aspect that the parents did not have to stone their own son. The community (cf. Lev. 20:2,27; 24:14-23; Num. 15:35) acted to rid itself of evil, willfully recalcitrant members.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEATH PENALTY IN ISRAEL

Ancient Israel was to reflect the character of YHWH to the world (cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Exod. 19:5-6). When intentional covenant rebellion distorted this missionary purpose, serious consequences manifested (i.e., death penalty).

The Pentateuch lists several categories:

1. sins against YHWH
 - a. Canaanite worship practices - Exod. 22:18; Lev. 20:2-3,27; Deut. 18:10-11
 - b. idolatry (heavenly hosts) - Exod. 22:20; Deut. 17:2-7
 - c. blasphemy - Exod. 22:28; Lev. 24:15-16
 - d. false prophecy - Deut. 13:1-11; 18:20-22
 - e. Sabbath violations - Exod. 31:14-15; 35:2
2. sexual sins
 - a. incest - Lev. 20:11-21
 - b. fornication - Lev. 19:29; 21:9; Deut. 22:13-21; 23:17-18
 - c. adultery - Exod. 20:14; Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:23-24
 - d. sodomy - Lev. 18:22; 20:13
 - e. bestiality - Exod. 22:19; Lev. 20:15-16
3. violation of covenant regulations against fellow Israelites
 - a. murder - Exod. 20:13; 21:12-14; Lev. 24:17; Num. 35:16-21; Deut. 5:17
 - b. kidnaping (to sell) - Exod. 21:16; Deut. 24:7 and possibly Exod. 20:15; Deut. 5:19
 - c. rebellion against parents - Deut. 21:18-21
 - d. false witness
 - e. taking holy war spoils - Joshua 7

The methods of execution also varied:

1. stoning - most common
2. burning - Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9
3. hanging/impaling - Deut. 21:22-23
4. sword - Deut. 13:15

Exceptions for special cases:

1. cities of refuge and subsequent trial - Joshua 20
2. stringent investigations of accusations - Deut. 13:15; 17:4; 19:18
3. need for two witnesses - Num. 35:36; Deut. 17:6; 19:15

The death penalty was to be:

1. a way to cleanse the land - Deut. 13:5; 17:12; 19:13,19; 21:9,21; 22:21,22,24; 24:7
2. a deterrent to others - Deut. 17:13; 19:20; 21:21

3. a way of stopping clan violence (i.e., no personal revenge, except regulations set for blood-avenger)

See *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, pp. 147-163).



NASB “you shall remove”

NKJV “you shall put away”

NRSV “you shall purge”

TEV “you will get rid of”

NJB “you must banish”

The Hebrew VERB (BDB 128, KB 145, *Piel* PERFECT) means to burn in the sense of utterly remove (cf. 13:5; 17:7,12; 19:13,19; 21:9,21; 22:21,22,24; 24:7).

▣ “and all Israel will hear *of it* and fear” Societal punishment functions as a deterrent. See note at 13:11.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 21:22-23

²²“If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, ²³his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.”

21:22 “you hang him on a tree” See Special Topic following.

SPECIAL TOPIC: HANG

The VERB “hang” (BDB 1067, KB 1738) has two senses:

1. literally to hang by a rope
 - a. Arabic, “let down a rope”
 - b. a Hebrew practice, II Sam. 17:23 and NT, Matt. 17:5
 - c. a Babylonian practice, Code of Hammurabi
 - d. a Persian practice, cf. Ezra 6:11; Esther 5:14; 7:9-10; 9:13,25
2. to impale the person on a sharpened stake
 - a. an Egyptian procedure, cf. Gen. 40:19; 41:13
 - b. a Babylonian procedure, cf. Code of Hammurabi
 - c. an Assyrian procedure

Usually it was done after someone was killed by other means as a way of public shaming. A proper burial was very important to ancient people and affected their view of a contented afterlife (e.g., Deut. 21:23).

In the Bible itself it is hard to know for sure if #1 or #2 above is right. Clearly in Deut. 21:22-23; Josh. 10:26-27; I Sam. 31:10,12; II Sam. 4:12; 21:12, the people publicly exposed were already dead, but what about Josh. 8:29 and II Sam. 21:9?

The rabbis of Jesus’ day saw this text as referring to crucifixion. The religious leaders wanted Jesus crucified so that as a Messianic pretender He would be cursed by YHWH (cf. Deut. 21:23). The normal death for blasphemy was stoning. I have often heard it said that the Jewish leaders of Jesus’ day did not have the legal right of capital punishment under Roman rule, so they took Jesus to Pilate to have Him killed.

However, they stoned Stephen (cf. Acts 7) without Roman permission. Why not Jesus? They wanted Him crucified to reflect not only death and public shame, but the curse of God!

21:23 “you shall surely bury” This intensified construction combines the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT of “bury” (BDB 868, KB 1064). YHWH’s wrath demanded the offender’s death as the penalty for his stubborn rebellion. However, YHWH’s displeasure would transfer to the community if the body of the executed covenant violator was not dealt with properly and in a timely fashion.

▣ **“(for he who is hanged is accursed of God)”** See Gal. 3:13 for Paul’s use of this phrase. Paul saw the substitutionary death of Jesus as taking on Himself the curse of the Mosaic law. Originally this curse was related to proper burial procedures in the holy land.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CURSE

The Hebrew term “accursed” (BDB 887, KB 1105) is used in two senses:

1. the curses of people against people (common in the ancient world) - Jdgs. 9:57; II Sam. 16:12; I Kgs. 2:8; Ps. 109:17-18; Pro. 27:14
2. the opposite of divine blessing
 - a. patriarchal - Gen. 27:12,33
 - b. YHWH - Deut. 11:26,28; 21:23; 23:5; 28:15,45; 30:1; Josh. 8:34; II Kgs. 22:19; Jer. 24:9; 25:18; 26:6; Zech. 8:13 (related to covenant obedience)

The key text theologically is Deut. 11:26,28. This sets the volitional stage for the consequences of covenant disobedience to become a reality. YHWH desires all peoples to know and honor Him so that He can bless and prosper them on the earth. However, disobedience results in the lack of, even the taking away of, physical blessing. These blessings are always related to an intimate, personal, and obedient relationship with God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why were innocent town's people guilty for unknown murder?
2. What is unusual about the heifer and its death?
3. Why did the captured women shave their heads?
4. List the privilege of the first-born.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
5. How does v. 23 differ from Jesus' death? How are they related?

DEUTERONOMY 22

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Miscellaneous Laws (21:22-22:12)	Miscellaneous Laws (21:1-23:14)	Various Laws (21:22-23:12)	Various Rulings (21:22-23:12)
		21:22-22:3	
22:1-3	22:1-3		22:1-2 22:3
22:4	22:4	22:4	22:4
22:5	22:5	22:5	22:5
22:6-7	22:6-7	22:6-7	22:6-7
22:8	22:8	22:8	22:8
22:9	22:9	22:9	22:9
22:10	22:10	22:10	22:10
22:11	22:11	22:11	22:11
22:12	22:12	22:12	22:12
Laws of Sexual Morality		Laws Concerning Sexual Purity	A Young Wife's Reputation
22:13-21	22:13-19	22:13-14 22:15-19	22:13-19
	22:20-21	22:20-21	22:20-21 Adultery and Fornication
22:22	22:22	22:22	22:22
22:23-24	22:23-24	22:23-24	22:23-27
22:25-27	22:25-27	22:25-27	
22:28-29	22:28-29	22:28-29	22:28-23:1
22:30	22:30	22:30	

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:1-4

¹"You shall not see your countryman's ox or his sheep straying away, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly bring them back to your countryman. ²If your countryman is not near you, or if you do not know him, then you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall remain with you until your countryman looks for it; then you shall restore it to him. ³Thus you shall do with his donkey, and you shall do the same with his garment, and you shall do likewise with anything lost by your countryman, which he has lost and you have found. You are not allowed to neglect *them*. ⁴You shall not see your countryman's donkey or his ox fallen down on the way, and pay no attention to them; you shall certainly help him to raise *them* up."

22:1 "You shall not see. . .and pay no attention" Purposeful or apathetic neglect ("hide oneself," BDB 761, KB 834, cf. 22:1,3,4; Lev. 20:4; Pro. 28:27; Ezek. 22:26) of a needy covenant brother's property is prohibited (cf. v. 3; Exod. 23:4-5).

▣ **"bring them back"** This common VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hithapel*) is used three times in vv. 1-2. Its basic meaning is "return" or "turn back." Israel was meant to function as a caring family unit. Paragraphs like this spell out what Lev. 19:18 means in practical, specific ways. Brothers look out for brothers!

This first usage is intensified by the use of the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and the IMPERFECT VERB of the same root, "you shall certainly bring them back!" This same type of intensification is used in v. 4, "you shall certainly help him to raise *them* up" (i.e., INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT verb of BDB 877, KB 1086).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:5

⁵"A woman shall not wear man's clothing, nor shall a man put on a woman's clothing; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God."

22:5 This verse has been proofed-texted to dictate appropriate dress for modern worship (i.e., women cannot wear slacks to church). It must be remembered that both male and female wore robes in the ancient Near East. The only difference being that women's robes in Israel had blue decoration around the shoulders.

The basic thrust of this text is not patriarchal, but the rejection of Canaanite worship practices (i.e., "abomination," cf. Lev. 18:26,27,29,30). There is to be an appropriate distinction between the God-given difference between males and females (i.e., the created order). This is not meant to be a negative, restricting distinction, but an affirmation of the different strengths and cultural functions of the sexes!

It is surely possible that this text is connected to the Mosaic covenant's condemnation of homosexuality (cf. Lev. 18:22; 20:13) practiced in worship settings by the Canaanites.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:6-7

6"If you happen to come upon a bird's nest along the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs, and the mother sitting on the young or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; **7**you shall certainly let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, in order that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days."

22:6-7 These verses seem to relate to the preservation of food sources through many generations of Israelites. After Genesis 3 humanity could eat meat, but they must guard against the destruction of the source of the meat for the benefit of future generations of covenant brothers (i.e., "that you may prolong your days," cf. 4:40). Wild animals were God's gift of protein for His people. Many of these specific detailed regulations were meant to cause Israelites to think about their covenant responsibility to love, protect, and provide for the health and growth of the covenant people.

22:7 "you shall certainly let the mother go" The same type of emphasis found in vv. 1 and 4 (i.e., INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root, BDB 1018, KB 1511) is repeated.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:8

8"When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you will not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it."

22:8 "parapet for your roof" A parapet (BDB 785, which in Arabic means "hinder") was a protective barrier around the top of flat-roofed homes to keep people from falling. Again Israel was to think about how to protect covenant brothers, sisters, and family members!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:9

9"You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, or all the produce of the seed which you have sown and the increase of the vineyard will become defiled."

22:9 "You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed" This apparently does not specifically refer to the types of grapevines in a field, but it is assumed the principle would dictate only one type per vineyard. This refers to the seasonal crops sowed between the grapevines.

This may reflect (1) a Canaanite practice to appease the gods or (2) the mentality that mixing things causes the loss of purity (cf. Lev. 19:19).

▣ "defiled" *Kadosh* (BDB 872, KB 1073, *Qal* imperfect) means set apart for God (cf. 15:19). This could mean (1) it had to be destroyed or (2) given to the priests. Does this principle apply today? I would assert that OT laws must be repeated in the NT to be binding on New Covenant believers (cf. Acts 15; I Corinthians 8-10; Galatians 3). Jesus, Himself negated both the sacrificial system and the food laws (cf. Mark 7:17-23). See the whole structure of the NT book of Hebrews (i.e., the superiority of the NT over the OT). Two books that have helped me think through the issue are:

1. *How To Read the Bible For All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Doug Stuart
2. *Gospel and Spirit* by Gordon Fee

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:10

10"You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together."

22:10 “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey” Oxen were clean, donkeys were unclean, but this prohibition, so said the rabbis, was done as a humanitarian gesture to animals of different strengths and characteristics. However, in context, it is just one more example of “do not mix things!”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:11

¹¹“You shall not wear a material mixed of wool and linen together.”

22:11 “You shall not wear a material mixed” This is another exclusion of mixed things (cf. Lev. 19:19). It may have been a metaphor of mixing YHWHistic and Canaanite worship practices. Some even see it (1) connected to magic clothes (i.e., patterns of mixed materials) or (2) the Dead Sea Scrolls (i.e., 4QMMT) mentions that only certain types of clothing could be mixed (i.e., priestly garments were made from wool and linen, which would denote a sacred sense. Maybe that is why unsanctioned mixing was considered “defiled.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:12

¹²“You shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of your garment with which you cover yourself.”

22:12 In this context this probably continues the rejection of anything Canaanite. Israel was to have different worship, different God, different dress! In Num. 15:37-42 these tassels have the added meaning of reminding the Israelites to keep and cherish the law. This same type of symbolism is reflected in the *tallith* (prayer shawl) of Jesus’ day. The garment referred to was a rectangular cloth used to cover the upper part of the person, especially during worship, prayer, and reading Scripture. It is unsure if the tassels were also required (or allowed) on women’s clothing. This may be another item related to cross-dressing (cf. v. 5).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:13-19

¹³“If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and *then* turns against her, ¹⁴and charges her with shameful deeds and publicly defames her, and says, ‘I took this woman, *but* when I came near her, I did not find her a virgin,’ ¹⁵then the girl’s father and her mother shall take and bring out the evidence of the girl’s virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. ¹⁶The girl’s father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man for a wife, but he turned against her; ¹⁷and behold, he has charged her with shameful deeds, saying, “I did not find your daughter a virgin.” But this is the evidence of my daughter’s virginity.’ And they shall spread the garment before the elders of the city. ¹⁸So the elders of that city shall take the man and chastise him, ¹⁹and they shall fine him a hundred *shekels* of silver and give it to the girl’s father, because he publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. And she shall remain his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days.”

22:13 “goes in to her” This is one of three euphemisms for sexual intercourse used in this context:

1. “goes in to her,” v. 13 (BDB 97)
2. “when I came near her,” v. 14 (BDB 897)
3. “lying with,” vv. 22,23,25,28,29 (BDB 1011)

☐ **“turns against her”** This is the Hebrew word “hates” (BDB 971, KB 1338). It is the same word used in 21:15, which is translated “unloved” and is a Hebrew idiom of comparison, which is the concept of “loved more,” “preferred.” However, here it takes on the meaning of “rejects” or “is not happy with.”

22:14

NASB, NJB “publicly defames her”
NKJV, REB “brings a bad name on her”
NRSV “slandering her”
TEV “makes up false charges against her”

Literally this is “brings upon her an evil name” (VERB - BDB 422, KB 425, *Hiphil* PERFECT and NOUN - BDB 1027, and ADJECTIVE - BDB 948). This is similar to Deut. 24:1-4, where a certificate of divorce is issued for “some indecency,” which is assumed to be sexual in nature. The accused woman has little or no recourse for the loss of her (and her family’s) reputation. Her future marriage opportunities and the inheritance of her child (if one is conceived early) is at stake. This was a very serious issue to Near Eastern people!

▣ **“I did not find her a virgin”** The Hebrew society put a premium on virginity (cf. v. 19). Inheritance was a very important issue and promiscuity was aggressively condemned!

The VERB “find” (BDB 592, KB 619) is used several times in this context:

1. to find, to discover
 - a. legally, vv. 14,17,20
 - b. physically, vv. 23,27,28
2. to catch in an act, vv. 22,23

22:15 “the girl’s father and mother shall take and bring out the evidence” This is either (1) the Deuteronomy concept of mutuality of the raising up of women to be included in the Law or (2) two witnesses being required.

▣ **“the evidence of the girl’s virginity”** This can refer to:

1. the parents broke the hymen before they gave their daughter to be married and kept the issue of fluids on a garment
2. the bed covering at the time of the initial consummation of the marriage was given to and kept by the parents
3. evidence that the girl was regularly menstruating before the wedding to prove that she was not pregnant

Number 2 seems to be ruled out because the husband would not have known for sure when this was done.

▣ **“elders of the city at the gate”** This would refer to the appointed judges who held court at the city gate or at a designated place (i.e., large tree, unique landmark, or main road).

22:18 “shall take the man and chastise him” This may mean to beat the man with forty stripes (cf. 25:2-3), but if so it is the only usage of this term (BDB 415, KB 418) in the OT where it usually refers to instruction (cf. 21:18, NIDOTTE, vol. 2, pp. 479-481).

22:19 “fine him” The man was to be punished and fined because he had defamed (literally, “brought an evil name”) a virgin of Israel. The fine was apparently double what he paid (dowry) for the girl as a bride (cf. 22:29). The implication may be that he simply wanted to get his money back from the girl’s father.

▣ **“a virgin of Israel”** This was an honorific (but expected) descriptive title of all brides-to-be in God’s theocracy.

22:19, 29 “she shall remain his wife; he cannot divorce her all his day” This was a limit on the man’s rights. Women in Israel had no right to divorce. This rule was protecting the woman’s children’s rights to inheritance (cf. 21:15-17).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:20-21

²⁰“But if this charge is true, that the girl was not found a virgin, ²¹then they shall bring out the girl to the doorway of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death because she has committed an act of folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father's house; thus you shall purge the evil from among you.

22:20, 21 Normally, stoning was done outside the gate of the city. See Special Topic: The Death Penalty in Israel at 21:21. Because of the Hebrew concept of corporality, the father was responsible for his daughter’s actions and, therefore, the punishment occurred at his door!

The penalty for a false witness was usually death. A clear double standard is seen here where, if the husband’s accusation is true the girl is stoned, but if it is false (even malicious) he is chastened and fined, but not stoned (cf. 19:19). Women did not have the same legal rights and protection as males in the OT. Compassion is shown, but not rights!

22:21 “an act of folly” This term (BDB 615) is used of inappropriate sexual activity:

1. Gen. 34:7 (non-Israelite forces himself on Jacob’s daughter)
2. Deut. 22:21 (loss of virginity)
3. Jdgs. 19:23; 20:6,10 (pagans attack a Levite’s concubine)
4. II Sam. 13:12-13 (Amnon, David’s first son, rapes his half-sister)

▣ “playing the harlot” This term is the *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT of a term (BDB 275, KB 275), which denoted inappropriate sexual activity involving fornication (sex before marriage), adultery (sex after marriage with someone other than your spouse), and prostitution (sex for hire).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:22

²²“If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.”

22:22 “If a man is found lying with a married woman” Even if there is suspicion there is recourse (cf. Num. 5:11-31).

The phrase “a married woman” is literally “the wife of another man,” which is a double use of the term *b'l* (BDB 127, KB 142, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE and NOMINATIVE MASCULINE SINGULAR NOUN form). This term, normally translated “lord” or “husband,” has the same root as *Ba'al*, the male Canaanite fertility god. The husband was “lord” over his home. His wife and children were, in a legal sense, property. In actuality sexual violations were seen as a sin against God (cf. Gen. 39:9; II Sam. 12:13). It violates the God-given order and stability of society and affects the God-given inheritance of families and clans.

▣ “both of them shall die” The later rabbis interpreted this to mean the child, too, if the woman was pregnant, because of the idea of corporate sin. Notice the equality of the punishment, which is unusual in the OT.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:23-24

²³"If there is a girl who is a virgin engaged to a man, and *another* man finds her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death; the girl, because she did not cry out in the city, and the man, because he has violated his neighbor's wife. Thus you shall purge the evil from among you."

22:23 "engaged" In Israel being engaged (BDB 76, KB 91) was as legally binding as being married (i.e., Joseph and Mary, cf. Matt. 1:18-19).

22:24 "you shall stone them. . .because she did not cry out in the city" Both would be stoned to death (cf. Lev. 20:10); the man because he violated a neighbor's wife, the woman because she did not cry out (BDB 858, KB 1042, *Qal* PERFECT) for help.

▣ **"Thus you shall purge the evil from among you"** See note at 13:5.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:25-27

²⁵"But if in the field the man finds the girl who is engaged, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lies with her shall die. ²⁶But you shall do nothing to the girl; there is no sin in the girl worthy of death, for just as a man rises against his neighbor and murders him, so is this case. ²⁷When he found her in the field, the engaged girl cried out, but there was no one to save her."

22:25-27 The legislation of Israel was meant to be fair, not just legalistic. There were innocent parties to sinful acts!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:28-29

²⁸"If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her and they are discovered, ²⁹then the man who lay with her shall give to the girl's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall become his wife because he has violated her; he cannot divorce her all his days."

22:28 "If a man finds a girl who is a virgin, who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her" Considering the early age at which Jewish girls were usually engaged, it seems to me this might be referring to (1) child abuse or (2) the abuse of poor families. The Mosaic covenant protects the under privileged and socially powerless!

22:29 "the man... shall give to the girl's father fifty *shekels*. . .cannot divorce her" If a father was too poor to have his daughter engaged or the girl was mentally incapacitated and a man defiled her, then he must pay for her and marry her for life (cf. Exod. 22:16).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 22:30

³⁰"A man shall not take his father's wife so that he will not uncover his father's skirt."

22:30 "A man shall not take his father's wife" This probably means a man cannot marry his stepmother (possibly one of several wives), even if the father has died or the woman has been divorced.

▣ **“his father’s skirt”** This is an idiomatic way of referring to the father’s marital activities (cf. Ruth 3:9; Ezek. 16:8). To be intimate with a woman who had previously been intimate with one’s father was, in a sense, a violation of the father (cf. 27:20; Lev. 18:8; 20:11).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How much of this chapter would you say applies to our culture? How do you determine your decision?
2. What is the background of these laws?

DEUTERONOMY 23

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Those Excluded from the Congregation	Miscellaneous Laws (21:1-23:14)	Exclusion From the Lord's People	Adultery and Fornication (22:22-23:1) 22:28-23:1
23:1	23:1	23:1	Participation in Public Worship
23:2	23:2	23:2	23:2-7
23:3-8	23:3-6 23:7-8	23:3-6 23:7-8	23:8-9
Cleanliness of the Camp Site		Keeping the Military Camp Clean	Hygiene in Camp
23:9-14	23:9 23:10-11 23:12-14	23:9-11 23:12-14	23:10-12 23:13-15
Miscellaneous Laws	Laws Dealing with Humanitarian and Religious Obligations (23:15-25:19)	Various Laws	Miscellaneous
23:15-16	23:15-16	23:15-16	23:16-17
23:17-18	23:17-18	23:17-18	23:18-19
23:19-20	23:19-20	23:19-20	23:20-21
23:21-23	23:21-23	23:21-23	23:22-24
23:24-25	23:24 23:25	23:24-25	23:25-26 [follows MT numbering]

**READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
 FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL**

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:1-6

¹"No one who is emasculated or has his male organ cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD. ²No one of illegitimate birth shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of his *descendants*, even to the tenth generation, shall enter the assembly of the LORD. ³No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the LORD; none of their *descendants*, even to the tenth generation, shall ever enter the assembly of the LORD, ⁴because they did not meet you with food and water on the way when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. ⁵Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you. **"You shall never seek their peace or their prosperity all your days."**

23:1 "emasculated" This English word translated two Hebrew terms:

1. "by crushing" - BDB 194
2. "to wound or bruise" - BDB 822, KB 954, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE

This refers to (1) a male's testicles being removed or (2) the severing of the spermatic cord (possibly by crushing).

▣ **"or has his male organ cut off"** This refers to a severed penis (BDB 1050, "a place of pouring fluid"). This would be another way of describing a eunuch (cf. Matt. 19:12). These two damaged males are the first in a series of those who are excluded from attendance at the assemblies of Israel (i.e., events at the tabernacle). Their exclusion is symbolic of the purity and wholeness of God's people seen as a kingdom of priests (cf. Exod. 19:6 and Lev. 21:17-23; 22:17-25). Later in the OT many of these excluded ones are included (e.g., Ruth the Moabitess and the eunuch of Isa. 56:3-5 and Acts 8:26-40).

It is also possible that this practice of damaging a male's sexual potential was part of Canaanite practices. Many of the seemingly unusual prohibitions in the Mosaic legislation were directed at a total break with Canaanite society and worship practices.

▣ **"shall enter"** This VERB (BDB 97, KB 112) is used several times in this chapter:

1. "enter," vv. 1, 2(twice), 3(twice), 8, 11(twice), 20, 24, 25
2. "bring in," v. 18

Most usages relate to:

1. people who may not enter (or attend tabernacle events) the congregation of Israel:
 - a. damaged males

- b. illegitimate persons or their descendants
- c. Ammonites, Moabites, or their descendants
- 2. people who may enter:
 - a. Edomites
 - b. Egyptians
- 3. people who must leave the camp of Israel for a period of time:
 - a. males with nocturnal emissions
 - b. all Israelites to relieve themselves

▣ **“the assembly of the LORD”** The phrase “assembly of the LORD” is used of the gathered covenant people of YHWH for worship beginning at Mt. Horeb/Sinai:

1. Exod. 12:6, “the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel”
2. Lev. 16:17, “all the assembly of Israel”
3. Num. 16:3, “all the congregation,” “the assembly of the LORD”
Num. 20:4, “the LORD’s assembly”
4. Deut. 5:22, “all your assembly”
Deut. 9:10; 10:4; 18:16, “on the day of assembly”
Deut. 23:1,2,3,8, “assembly of the LORD”
Deut. 31:30, “all the assembly of Israel”
5. Josh. 8:33, “the people of Israel”

This phrase represents:

1. worshiping Israel
 - a. Mt. Sinai/Horeb
 - b. the tabernacle
2. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 418, based on Jdgs. 20:2, asserts that it refers to a leadership council or governing body (cf. Num. 16:3; 20:4)

These excluded ones still have the legal rights of “resident aliens” spelled out in Exod. 22:21; Lev. 19:9-10,33-34; 23:22; Deut. 1:16; 5:14; 27:19.

The Septuagint translated the Hebrew term *qahal* (BDB 874) as *ekklesia*, from which we get the English word, “church.” Jesus and the NT authors chose this term to communicate that the New Covenant people of God are to be identified as an extension of the Old Covenant people of God (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38; Gal. 6:16; I Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6).

23:2 “illegitimate birth” This (BDB 561) is defined as either (1) a child conceived out of wedlock; (2) an incident of incest (cf. Lev. 18:6-18); or (3) a child of a mixed marriage (Jewish and pagan, cf. Ezra 9:2; Neh. 13:23-25; Zech. 9:6). The Hebrew word best fits option #2.

23:2,3 “the tenth generation” Note the parallel structure in the phrase, “shall (not) ever enter” in v. 2 and 3. The number ten is idiomatic for completeness or forever (see Special Topic at 4:40).

SPECIAL TOPIC: SYMBOLIC NUMBERS IN SCRIPTURE

- A. Certain numbers functioned both as numerals and symbols:
1. One - God (e.g., Deut. 6:4; Eph. 4:4-6)
 2. Six - human imperfection (one less than 7, e.g., Rev. 13:18)
 3. Seven - divine perfection (the seven days of creation). Notice the symbolic usages in Revelation:

- a. seven candlesticks, 1:13,20; 2:1
 - b. seven stars, 1:16,20; 2:1
 - c. seven churches, 1:20
 - d. seven spirits of God, 3:1; 4:5; 5:6
 - e. seven lamps, 4:5
 - f. seven seals, 5:1,5
 - g. seven horns and seven eyes, 5:6
 - h. seven angels, 8:2,6; 15:1,6,7,8; 16:1; 17:1
 - i. seven trumpets, 8:2,6
 - j. seven thunders, 10:3,4
 - k. seven thousand, 11:13
 - l. seven heads, 13:1; 17:3,7,9
 - m. seven plagues, 15:1,6,8; 21:9
 - n. seven bowls, 15:7
 - o. seven kings, 17:10
 - p. seven vials, 21:9
4. Ten - completeness
- a. use in Gospels:
 - (1) Matt. 20:24; 25:1,28
 - (2) Mark 10:41
 - (3) Luke 14:31; 15:8; 17:12,17; 19:13,16,17,24,25
 - b. use in Revelation:
 - (1) 2:10, ten days of tribulation
 - (2) 12:3; 17:3,7,12,16, ten horns
 - (3) 13:1, ten crowns
 - c. multiples of 10 in Revelation:
 - (1) 144,000 + 12x12x10, cf. 7:4; 14:1,3
 - (2) 1,000 = 10x10x10, cf. 20:2,3,6
5. Twelve - human organization
- a. twelve sons of Jacob (i.e., twelve tribes of Israel, Gen. 35:22; 49:28)
 - b. twelve pillars, Exod. 24:4
 - c. twelve stones on breast plate of High Priest, Exod. 28:21; 39:14
 - d. twelve loaves, for table in Holy Place (symbolic of God's provision for the twelve tribes), Lev. 24:5; Exod. 25:30
 - e. twelve spies, Deut. 1:23; Josh. 3:22; 4:2,3,4,8,9,20
 - f. twelve apostles, Matt. 10:1
 - g. use in Revelation:
 - (1) twelve thousand sealed, 7:5-8
 - (2) twelve stars, 12:1
 - (3) twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve tribes, 21:12
 - (4) twelve foundation stones, names of the twelve apostles, 21:14
 - (5) New Jerusalem was twelve thousand stadia squared, 21:16

- (6) twelve gates made of twelve pearls, 21:21
- (7) tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit, 22:2
- 6. Forty = number for time:
 - a. sometimes literal (exodus and wilderness wanderings, e.g., Exod. 16:35); Deut. 2:7; 8:2
 - b. can be literal or symbolic
 - (1) flood, Gen. 7:4,17; 8:6
 - (2) Moses on Mt. Sinai, Exod. 24:18; 34:28; Deut. 9:9,11,18,25
 - (3) divisions of Moses life:
 - (a) forty years in Egypt
 - (b) forty years in the desert
 - (c) forty years leading Israel
 - (4) Jesus fasted forty days, Matt. 4:2; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2
 - c. Note (by means of a Concordance) the number of times this number appears in time designation in the Bible!
- 7. Seventy - round number for people:
 - a. Israel, Exod. 1:5
 - b. seventy elders, Exod. 24:1,9
 - c. eschatological, Dan. 9:2,24
 - d. mission team, Luke 10:1,17
 - e. forgiveness (70x7), Matt. 18:22
- B. Good references
 - 1. John J. Davis, *Biblical Numerology*
 - 2. D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*

23:3 “No Ammonite or Moabite” These nations were the result of incest mentioned in v. 2. Some rabbis say that Gen. 19:30-38 (nations from Lot’s incestuous relations with his daughters) shows that this applies only to the men, thereby getting around Ruth’s being a Moabite and a progenitor of King David. However, beyond incest, the other specific reasons for their being rejected is spelled out in vv. 4-6.

23:4 “Balaam” This prophet was not a descendant of Abraham, but knew YHWH, as did Melchizedek and Job, who were also not descendants of Abraham. Balaam’s story is recounted in Numbers 22-24.

23:5 “because the LORD your God loves you” This is a recurrent theme in Deuteronomy:

- 1. 4:37, “He loved your fathers”
- 2. 7:7-8, “the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers:
- 3. 7:12-13, “He will love you and bless you and multiply you” (if obedient)
- 4. 10:15, “Yet on your fathers did the LORD set His affection to love them”
- 5. 33:3, “He loves the people(s)”

YHWH’s actions are based on His choice, not Israel’s goodness (cf. 7:7-8). He chose Abraham to choose a world (see Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 4:6).

23:6 “their peace or their prosperity” This may be a reference to (1) treaties or alliances (e.g., Ezra 9:12) or (2) prayers on their behalf (e.g., Jer. 14:11).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:7-8

⁷"You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. ⁸The sons of the third generation who are born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD."

23:7 "detest" This VERB (BDB 1073, KB 1765, *Piel* IMPERFECT, used twice) means "abhor," from the NOUN "abomination" (e.g., 7:26). See Special Topic: Abominations at 14:3.

▣ **"Edomite, for he is your brother"** Rashi says the difference between vv. 3 and 7 is that those countries listed in v. 3 caused Israel to sin (cf. Gen. 36). The nation of Edom is descended from Jacob's brother Esau (cf. Gen. 25:24-26; 36:1).

23:8 "The sons of the third generation" The wait was possibly due to the time necessary to fully integrate with Israeli society and worship practices.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:9

⁹"When you go out as an army against your enemies, you shall keep yourself from every evil thing."

23:9 Israel was involved in "holy war" (cf. chapter 20). YHWH fought for them, but they must remain "ceremonially" pure for YHWH's presence to remain with them (cf. v. 14; Josh. 5:13-15).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:10-11

¹⁰"If there is among you any man who is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he must go outside the camp; he may not reenter the camp. ¹¹But it shall be when evening approaches, he shall bathe himself with water, and at sundown he may reenter the camp."

23:10 "a nocturnal emission" The Hebrew is "a happening or event at night" (BDB 899 CONSTRUCT 538). It could include other types of bodily fluids such as urination and diarrhea, etc. Any leakage of bodily fluids makes one ceremonially unclean (cf. Leviticus 15). Remember, this has to do with ceremonial cleanliness, not sin.

23:11 "sundown" Israel starts a new day at sundown, following the pattern in Genesis 1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:12-14

¹²"You shall also have a place outside the camp and go out there, ¹³and you shall have a spade among your tools, and it shall be when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and shall turn to cover up your excrement. ¹⁴Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you."

23:12 "a place" Hebrew has the term "hand" (BDB 388), which possibly referred to a marker to designate a general area for the purpose of excrement (BDB 844).

23:13

NASB “a spade”

NKJV “an implement”

NRSV, NJB “a trowel”

TEV “a stick”

The Hebrew term (BDB 450) refers to some type of digging instrument. Whether it was a military weapon used for two purposes or a separate item such as a tent peg carried for this one purpose is uncertain.

▣

NASB “tools”

NKJV, TEV,

NJB “equipment”

NRSV “utensils”

The term’s (BDB 24) meaning is uncertain. The Arabic means “possessions,” while the Aramaic means “weapons.” In context it seems to be a military weapon which was also used as a digging tool involved in the ceremonial and hygiene covering of excrement. It is used only here in the entire OT.

23:14 “the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp” This is a possible reference to the Levites carrying the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Exod. 25:10-22), which took the place of the *shekinah* cloud (e.g., Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 16:10; 19:9,16; Lev. 16:2,13) as the symbol of the divine Presence after Israel crossed the Jordan. The rabbis later took this verse literally and ruled that no manure could be used in the gardens in the city of Jerusalem.

▣ **“anything indecent”** This is a CONSTRUCT of “word” (BDB 182 IV, #6) with “nakedness” (BDB 788, #2, cf. 24:1). In this context it refers to ceremonial cleanness related to bodily fluids (cf. Leviticus 15). It seems to be a way to teach Israel that YHWH’s presence and power with them must be matched by their “holiness” and constant vigil.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:15-16

¹⁵You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you. ¹⁶He shall live with you in your midst, in the place which he shall choose in one of your towns where it pleases him; you shall not mistreat him."

23:15 “You shall not hand over to his master a slave” The central interpretive question is the nationality of a slave and of his master. To whom does this exactly refer? This must refer to a foreign slave or a foreign slave-master (or both). This does clearly show Israel’s understanding that a slave is more than an animated tool. YHWH allows servitude under certain restrictions and limits, but He also cares for the powerless, helpless, and vulnerable!

23:16 Notice the repeated freedoms YHWH demands for the escaped foreign slave:

1. “live in your midst” - BDB 442, KB 444
2. “the place which he shall choose” - BDB 103, KB 119, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. “where it pleases him” - BDB 373 II
4. “you shall not mistreat him” - BDB 413, KB 416, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT

What freedom and protection! All other ancient Near Eastern law codes demanded the return (and with it probable death) of runaway slaves. The Mosaic covenant focuses on the rights and protection of the weak, powerless, socially ostracized, and poor. The catch phrase is “the widow, the orphan, and the alien” (cf. 10:18; 14:29; 16:11; 24:17,19; 26:12,13; 27:19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:17-18

¹⁷"None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute. ¹⁸You shall not bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog into the house of the LORD your God for any votive offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God."

23:17 "cult prostitute" This is a feminine term "holy one" (BDB 873 I). It shows the presence of cultic prostitution in Canaan (cf. Exod. 34:15-16; II Kgs. 23:7). However, there is little hard archaeological evidence of this in Canaan (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1124, #6). If there was cultic prostitution and these abominations developed also within Israeli society, it makes them all the more evil (cf. Hosea 4:11-14; Luke 12:48).

▣ **"cult prostitute"** This is a masculine term "holy one" (BDB 873 I). In this period a male prostitute is called "a dog" (cf. v. 18).

23:18 "the hire of a harlot" This is a different word from v. 17 (cf. Hosea 9:1). This is the common term for a fertility worship partner (BDB 1072). There is some debate whether the terms for cult prostitution in v. 17 are parallel to this term of v. 18 or if v. 18 refers to non-cultic prostitution (BDB 1072). In many texts there is a distinction, but here the parallelism seems purposeful. The wages charged are attempted to be given back to the deity (cf. Micah 1:7). YHWH refuses all revenue from sexual fees!

▣ **"the wages of a dog"** This is the fee charged by a male prostitute. YHWH rejects all fertility worship and its income!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:19-20

¹⁹"You shall not charge interest to your countrymen: interest on money, food, or anything that may be loaned at interest. ²⁰You may charge interest to a foreigner, but to your countrymen you shall not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are about to enter to possess."

23:19 "You shall not charge interest" The Hebrew is literally "something bitten off" (BDB 675). This is also discussed in Exod. 22:25 and Lev. 25:35-37.

23:20 There was a different set of guidelines between covenant partners and Gentiles (BDB 648, cf. 14:21; 15:3).

▣ **"so that the LORD your God may bless you in all that you undertake"** Notice YHWH's blessing, which was meant to be a sign which attracted the world to Him, was conditioned on Israel's covenant obedience. The old covenant, like the new covenant, was grace-based, but performance to the covenant obligations was expected between God and His people because God wants to reflect His character through His people to a spiritually lost and needy world. New Covenant salvation is absolutely free in the finished work of Christ, but it too has conditions and expectations (i.e., repentance, faith, obedience, perseverance). The goal of knowing God is living in His revealed will and character. See Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 4:6.

It is interesting that several of these "blessing texts" occur in the context of Israel helping the poor and needy (e.g., 14:29; 24:19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:21-23

²¹"When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you. ²²However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. ²³You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised."

23:21 "a vow" The laws on vows (BDB 623, KB 674, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 12:11,17) are discussed in Leviticus 27 and Numbers 30 (Nazarite vows are described in Numbers 6). It was a promise made to YHWH based on certain events and circumstances.

This phrase has:

1. a negated *Piel* IMPERFECT of BDB 29, KB 24
2. a *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT of BDB 1023, KB 1532

If you make a vow, fulfill it in a timely manner!

▣ **"shall not delay to pay it"** The rabbis later interpreted this time as "not past three festivals" (i.e., one year).

▣ **"will surely require it of you"** This phrase is emphatic (INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and IMPERFECT VERB of the same root, BDB 205, KB 233). YHWH takes vows in His name seriously (cf. Eccl. 5:1-7).

23:22-23 This shows the wisdom of not making rash vows (e.g., Judges 11). This does show the Hebrews' view of the power and importance of the spoken word (e.g., Genesis 1; Isa. 55:11; John 1:1). YHWH takes what we say in His name seriously (cf. Ex. 20:7, ie. marriage vow and other promises made in His name; [ie. "from your lips"]). Words have consequences (cf. Lev. 27; Rom. 10:13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:24

²⁴"When you enter your neighbor's vineyard, then you may eat grapes until you are fully satisfied, but you shall not put any in your basket."

23:24-25 "you" This refers to the needy of the land, the orphan, the widow, the alien, and the poor. This was part of the law of gleaning. It is mentioned in several texts (cf. Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut. 24:21; Jdgs. 8:2; 20:45; Ruth 2; Isa. 17:6; 24:13; Jer. 6:9; 49:9; Mic. 7:1). It shows both God's care for the poor and His ownership of the harvest.

23:24 "until you are fully satisfied" This is a combination of "according to your desire" (BDB 659) and "your fill" (BDB 959, cf. Exod. 16:3; Lev. 25:19; Ruth 2:18; Ps. 78:25; Pro. 13:25). It speaks, not of eating enough just to get by, but of eating all you want. What a marvelous provision for the poor, needy, and alien passing by. There is also no limit of how many times one can return.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 23:25

²⁵"When you enter your neighbor's standing grain, then you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not wield a sickle in your neighbor's standing grain."

23:25 Verses 24 and 25 both show that the needy can eat all they want, but they cannot take any of the crop away with them for later consumption or sale (e.g., Matt. 12:1-8; Mark. 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5). YHWH cares for both the poor and the rights of the farmers.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why would God exclude anyone who wanted to be a part of His people from being so?
2. Why did God make a distinction between certain countries?
3. How is ritual cleanliness related to sin in the OT?
4. How do vv. 24-25 balance property owners' rights with the poor and needy?

DEUTERONOMY 24

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Laws Concerning Divorce	Laws Dealing with Humanitarian and Religious Obligations (23:15-25:19)	Divorce and Remarriage	Divorce
24:1-4	24:1-4	24:1-4	24:1-4
Miscellaneous Laws		Various Laws	Protection of the Individual
24:5	24:5	24:5	24:5
24:6-7	24:6	24:6	24:6
	24:7	24:7	24:7
24:8-9	24:8-9	24:8-9	24:8-9
24:10-13	24:10-13	24:10-13	24:10-13
24:14-16	24:14-15	24:14-15	24:14-15
	24:16	24:16	24:16
24:17-18	24:17-18	24:17-18	24:17-18
(24:19-25:4) 24:19-25:3	24:19-20	24:19-22	24:19
			24:20
	24:21-22		24:21
			24:22

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:1-4

¹"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out from his house, ²and she leaves his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, ³and if the latter husband turns against her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts *it* in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, ⁴then her former husband who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance."

24:1-4 “when. . . then” This construction is a *Qal* PERFECT (BDB 224, KB 243) of “come to pass” with the hypothetical PARTICLE (BDB 49). This hypothetical situation is continued for the first three verses. Verses 1-4 are one sentence with the conclusion stated in v. 4. Notice that this is not a general discussion on divorce, but a special case of divorce, remarriage, and divorce/death and remarriage to the original partner. It is difficult to draw too many universal truths from this context. Even Jesus discussion about this passage and the issue of divorce is colored by the religious leaders’ attempts to trap Him in controversy for the purpose of reducing His support among the people and to find legal/theological grounds to charge Him. Divorce has never been the best option!

▣ **“she finds no favor in his eyes”** This common VERB (BDB 592, KB 619) is used twice in this verse (first, *Qal* IMPERFECT and the second *Qal* PERFECT). It is used in the sense of “to recognize an existing condition” (cf. 22:14,17).

The term “favor” (BDB 336) is used of both God’s favor (e.g., Gen. 6:8; Exod. 33:17) and mankind’s (e.g., Gen. 30:27; 33:8,10,15; Ruth 2:2,10,13). It means a favorable acceptance or attitude of responsiveness. Here it is negated. It recognized the fallen condition of human love, which is sometimes fickle and fleeting.

This text has been a source of great controversy among the rabbis. Shammai (the conservative group of rabbis) said it only referred to adultery, while Hillel (the liberal group of rabbis) said it could refer to anything, even trivial things (i.e., bad food, bad in-law relations, found a prettier woman). In Israel only the husband had the legal right of divorce.



NASB “some indecency”

NKJV “some uncleanness”

NRSV “something objectionable”

TEV “something about her that he doesn’t like”

NJB “some impropriety”

JPSOA “something obnoxious”

Literally this is “the nakedness of a thing” (BDB 788). In 23:14 the same term is used in a non-moral sense. This cannot refer to proven adultery because the automatic penalty was death (cf. 22:22). Jesus, when quoting this text, seems to interpret it by the phrase “fornication” in Matt. 19:9, which was a Greek term (*porneia*) that involved any sexual impropriety or unfaithfulness. The term is meant to be ambiguous and, thereby covers the widest possible circumstances.

Moses wrote this text to protect the rejected, vulnerable wife. It is shocking to me that Jesus asserts that this legal protection of divorce and remarriage was never God’s intention (cf. Matt. 5:27-32; 19:7-12; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:14-18), but Moses’ idea because of the hardness of the hearts of the Israelites. How

many other things recorded in the Pentateuch are not the intended will of God? Jesus, as Lord of Scripture, showed His authority by correcting both OT texts and their interpretation (cf. Matt. 5:17-48; Mark 7:1-23). This is distressing to us modern evangelicals who put such an emphasis on the Bible as the “word of God” (and it surely is!), but we must remember that Jesus is the Living Word and we only have a fraction of all the things He did and said (cf. John 20:30). The Bible is primarily designed to first give us salvation (cf. John 20:31; II Tim. 3:15) and then to guide us in living the Christian life (cf. II Tim.3:16-17). We have all the information that we need to be saved and live a life pleasing to God. We do not need additional rules and laws. The texts we have and the indwelling Spirit guide us from the texts we have into the areas of uncertainty. I am reminded that Jesus commented that all Scriptural teaching on how to live for God is summed up in only two priority statements (cf. Matt. 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28):

1. Deut. 6:4-5 - love God completely
2. Lev. 19:18 - love your neighbor as yourself

▣ **“certificate of divorce”** This was a legal document of separation. It may have involved giving back the dowry. This later required an involved legal procedure which hopefully gave time for the partners to reconcile, but here it seems to be written by the husband or his representative (i.e., a Levite).

Divorce and remarriage are also discussed in relation to priests in Lev. 21:7,14 and 22:13. It must have been common (cf. Num. 30:9).

24:2 “becomes another man’s wife” The right of remarriage was assumed and stated. This was the very purpose of the procedure.

24:3 “if the latter husband turns against her” The word “if” is not in the Hebrew MSS. It is assuming another hypothetical situation (like v. 1).

The VERB “turns against” is literally “hates” (BDB 971, KB 1338, *Qal* PERFECT) and was used in Aramaic for “divorce.”

▣ **“if the latter husband dies”** This is another possible scenario.

24:4 “her former husband. . . is not allowed to take her again to be his wife” The original couple are encouraged to reconcile (legal procedure of the bill of divorcement), but once separated and the wife remarries, reconciliation is forbidden! This is the purpose of all of the conditions found in vv. 1-3. This may have been a way to protect the second marriage.

▣ **“she has been defiled”** The defilement seems to be related to knowing two different men sexually, which would make the original husband taking her again a type of adultery!

The ambiguity of the wording of the paragraph makes it difficult to pronounce universal spiritual principles. This is not a context on the evil of divorce and remarriage, but on the first husband taking his divorced wife again after a second marriage. Divorce and remarriage were common and not condemned in the ancient Near East.

The IVP Bible Background Commentary has an interesting comment:

“The very unusual form of the Hebrew verb used in verse 4 makes it clear that the woman in this case is the victim, not the guilty party. She has been forced to declare her uncleanness by the uncharitable actions of the first husband, and the second marriage demonstrates that another husband has been capable of accommodating whatever ‘impurity’ she was plagued with. The prohibition is aimed at preventing the first husband from marrying the woman again (in which case he might be able to realize some financial gain), whereas if

the woman were impure the prohibition would be against her and would preclude a marriage relationship with anyone” (p. 198).

▣ **“you shall not bring sin on the land”** God desires strong, godly marriages and families. They provide strength, stability, and education for the next generation of covenant people. Marriage is modeled more than taught! Divorce is not the sin, but the first husband taking back his wife after another husband!

Two Prophets use this passage metaphorically to describe God’s dealing with Israel’s faithlessness (Isa. 50:1; Jer. 3:1,8). Going after other gods was considered “spiritual adultery.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:5

⁵“When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army nor be charged with any duty; he shall be free at home one year and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken.”

24:5 “When a man takes a new wife” The new husband was not required to serve in the army or perform other civic duties for one year. This was for the purpose of insuring an heir (cf. 20:7).

▣ **“shall give happiness to his wife”** This VERB (BDB 970, KB 1333, *Piel* PERFECT) means “to rejoice” or “be glad.” This was YHWH’s purpose for His covenant people. The laws of Deuteronomy were to aid fallen humanity to obtain and maintain a happy, content society.

The NIDOTTE, vol. 3, p. 1252, has a good quote on this subject:

“Joy should also be prominent in family relationships. Moses exhorts the new husband to devote himself to make his wife happy (Deut. 24:5) and the sage counsels the husband to rejoice in the wife of his youth (Pro. 5:18). Although the father of a fool cannot rejoice (Pro. 17:21), a wise son brings great joy and delight to his father (Prov.10:1; 15:20; 23:24-25; 27:11; 29:3).”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:6

⁶“No one shall take a handmill or an upper millstone in pledge, for he would be taking a life in pledge.”

24:6 “handmill or an upper millstone” This refers to the upper stone of a two-stone grinding mill (BDB 932, 939, cf. Exod. 11:5; Jdgs. 9:53; II Sam. 11:21), which was used to prepare daily bread. The upper part was useless without the matching bottom piece.

▣ **“in pledge”** This term, “in pledge,” (BDB 286, KB 285) basically means “to bind.” When one borrows he is obligated to repay. To secure this repayment (without interest to a fellow Israelite) the creditor could take something of value and hold it:

1. grinding stone, 24:6
2. garments, 24:17; Exod. 22:25-27; Job 24:7,10
3. ancestral land and houses, Neh. 5:3 (possibly Job 24:2)
4. an essential animal, Job 24:3
5. essential help, the children, Exod. 21:7; Lev. 25:39-43; II Kgs. 4:1; Job 24:9

Each of these items were a necessary part of daily agricultural existence. To remove any one of these jeopardized the family, even life itself. YHWH’s compassion and care for Israel was to be emulated by those Israelites who had resources. God would bless them for their compassion. They would be given more so that they could share more (cf. v. 13; II Cor. 9:6-10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:7

7" If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel, and he deals with him violently or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from among you."

24:7 "kidnapping" The Hebrew VERB here is "stealing" (BDB 170, KB 198, *Qal* PERFECT). "Kidnaping" was seen as stealing a life (literally, "stealing *nephesh*, BDB 659). Many believe this is what the Ten Commandments refer to in the command "Thou shall not steal." The penalty for this was death, which seems severe for simple theft (cf. Exod. 21:16; Deut. 5:19).



NASB "deals... violently"
NKJV "mistreats"
NRSV "enslaving"
TEV "make them your slaves"
NJB "he makes him is slave"

The root (BDB 771) has several meanings:

1. sheaf, Deut. 24:19 or bind sheaves, Ps. 129:7
2. omer - BDB I, Exod. 16:18,22,32,33
3. deal tyrannically - BDB II, Deut. 21:14; 24:7
4. live long (Arabic root) - BDB III

The pronunciation and context designated which meaning was intended for this trilateral root. Option #3 is found only twice in the OT, both in Deuteronomy.

▣ **"so you shall purge the evil from among you"** This is a recurrent idiom. See note at 13:5 (cf. 17:7,12; 19:13,19; 21:9,21; 22:21,22,24; Jdgs. 20:13).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:8-9

8" Be careful against an infection of leprosy, that you diligently observe and do according to all that the Levitical priests teach you; as I have commanded them, so you shall be careful to do. 9Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on the way as you came out of Egypt."

24:8 "Be careful" The VERB (BDB 1036, KB 1581) is used three times in this verse:

1. *Niphal* IMPERATIVE, "be careful"
2. *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, plus the ADVERB "very" (BDB 547) and the VERB "to do" (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
3. *Qal* imperfect, "careful to do" plus VERB "to do" (BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT)

The basic meaning is "to keep," "to watch," or "to preserve." Careful obedience to YHWH's guidelines is stressed by the three-fold repetition.

▣ **"leprosy"** This (BDB 863) is not the modern disease as we know it. This term covered many different things (i.e., skin, clothes, leather, houses). The guidelines and procedures are discussed in Leviticus 13-14. This implies that Leviticus was already available at this time. The Pentateuch is a unified whole.

24:9 The incident referred to is recorded in Numbers 12, where both Aaron and Miriam complained about Moses' leadership and marriage to a Cushite woman (black woman). In response YHWH affirms Moses' leadership and inflicts Miriam with leprosy (Miriam loses her skin pigment), but at Moses' intercession, He restores her color.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:10-13

¹⁰"When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not enter his house to take his pledge. ¹¹You shall remain outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. ¹²If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his pledge. ¹³When the sun goes down you shall surely return the pledge to him, that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it will be righteousness for you before the LORD your God."

24:10 "you shall not enter his house to take his pledge" The honor and privacy of one's home was protected. This man also could choose which garment to use as the pledge.

The VERB (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) is intensified by the use of the same NOUN (BDB 716) "pledge." A pledge was a physical object, in this context, a man's outer garment used as security for a loan (cf. vv. 11-13).

These garments were not very valuable, but were necessary to the daily needs of the poor. Taking a man's garment was more than security for a loan. It was an expression of contempt for the poor man. In God's eyes all humans are valuable because they are made in His image and likeness (cf. Gen. 1:26-27). God's covenant people must recognize the value and worth He places on humans and respond appropriately!

24:12 "If he is a poor man, you shall not sleep with his pledge" This referred to the outer cloak which the poor used as a sleep covering (cf. Exod. 22:26-27).

24:13 "you shall surely return" This is the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE combined with the IMPERFECT VERB of the same root (BDB 996, KB 1427), which denotes intensity.

▣ **"and bless you"** YHWH defends the poor, widow, alien, and orphan's rights and person. To abuse them caused a reaction from YHWH Himself (e.g., Exod. 22:23; Deut. 15:9; 24:15)!

▣ **"it will be righteousness for you"** The Septuagint understands this term as it is used here to refer to Jewish "almsgiving" (cf. 6:25; 15:7-11; Matt. 6:1-4).

SPECIAL TOPIC: ALMSGIVING

- I. The term itself
 - A. This term developed within Judaism (i.e., the Septuagint period).
 - B. It refers to giving to the poor and/or needy.
 - C. The English word "almsgiving" comes from a contraction of the Greek term *ele mosun* .
- II. Old Testament concept
 - A. The concept of helping the poor was expressed early in the Torah (writings of Moses, Genesis-Deuteronomy).
 1. typical context, Deut. 15:7-11
 2. "gleaning," leaving part of the harvest for the poor, Lev. 19:9; 23:22; Deut. 24:20
 3. "sabbath year," allowing the poor to eat the produce of the seventh, fallow year, Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:2-7.
 - B. The concept was developed in Wisdom Literature (selected examples)
 1. Job 5:8-16; 29:12-17 (the wicked described in 24:1-12)

2. the Psalms 11:7
3. Proverbs 11:4; 14:21,31; 16:6; 21:3,13

III. Development in Judaism

A. The first division of the Mishnah deals with how to treat the poor, needy, and local Levites.

B. Selected quotes

1. “as water extinguishes a blazing fire, so almsgiving atones for sin” (Ecclesiasticus [also known as the Wisdom of Ben Sirach] 3:30, NRSV)
2. “store up almsgiving in your treasury and it will rescue you from every disaster” (Ecclesiasticus 29:15, NRSV)
3. “for those who act in accordance with truth will prosper in all their activities. To all those who practice righteousness ⁷give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. ⁸If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. ⁹So you will be laying up a good treasure for yourself against the day of necessity. ¹⁰For almsgiving delivers from death and keeps you from going into the Darkness. ¹¹Indeed, almsgiving, for all who practice it, is an excellent offering in the presence of the Most High.” (Tobit 4:6-11, NRSV)
4. “⁸Prayer and fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is better to give alms than to lay up gold. ⁹For almsgiving saves from death and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life.” (Tobit 12:8-9, NRSV)

C. The last quote from Tobit 12:8-9 shows the problem developing. Human actions/human merits were seen as the mechanism for both forgiveness and abundance.

This concept developed further in the Septuagint, where the Greek term for almsgiving (*ele mosun*) became a synonym for righteousness (*dikaïosun*). They could be substituted for each other in translating the Hebrew term *hesed* (God’s covenant love and loyalty, cf. Deut. 6:25; 24:13; Isa. 1:27; 28:17; 59:16; Dan. 4:27).

D. Human acts of compassion became a goal in themselves to achieve one’s personal abundance here and salvation at death. The act itself, instead of the motive behind the act, became theologically preeminent. God looks at the heart, then judges the work of the hand. This was the teaching of the rabbis, but it somehow got lost in the pursuit of individual self righteousness (cf. Micah 6:8).

IV. New Testament reaction

A. The term is found in

1. Matt. 6:1-4
2. Luke 11:41; 12:33
3. Acts 3:2-3,10; 10:2,4,31; 24:17

B. Jesus addresses the traditional Jewish understanding of righteousness (cf. II Clement 16:4) in His Sermon on the Mount (cf. Matthew 5-7) as referring to

1. almsgiving
2. fasting
3. prayer

Some Jews were trusting in their actions. These actions were meant to flow out of a love for God, His word, and covenant brothers and sisters, not self-interest or self-righteousness! Humility is a guideline for proper action. The heart is crucial. The heart is desperately wicked. God must change the heart. The new heart emulates God!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:14-15

¹⁴"You shall not oppress a hired servant *who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns.* ¹⁵You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it become sin in you."

24:14 "or one of your aliens" God's care for the widow, orphan, and alien is clearly seen in Deuteronomy (cf. 10:18; 14:29; 16:11,14; 24:17,19,20,21; 26:12,13; 27:19).

24:15 "You shall give him his wages on his day" The poor needed (i.e., "set his heart on it") the daily wage to buy food for himself and his family. The landowner wanted to keep it to assure that the worker would return to work the next day (cf. Lev. 19:13; Mal. 3:5; James 5:4).

▣ "so that he will not cry against you to the LORD" God cares and hears the cry of the poor, alienated and ostracized! See note at 24:13.

▣ "it become sin in you" In context this is the opposite condition of "righteousness" in v. 13.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:16

¹⁶"Fathers shall not be put to death for *their* sons, nor shall sons be put to death for *their* fathers; everyone shall be put to death for his own sin."

24:16 This verse is very similar to Ezek. 18:1-33; 17:12-20; Jer. 31:29-30; and II Kgs. 14:6. It focuses on the rare OT concept of individual responsibility. This is a balance to Exod. 20:5; 34:7; Num. 14:18. The OT usually focuses on corporality (cf. Deut. 5:9).

Notice the three-fold use of the VERB "put to death" (BDB 559, KB 562, all *Hophal* IMPERFECTS). Rebellion is a serious matter! Disobedience has consequences!

This law does not refer to rebellion against God (e.g., idolatry), but to actions designated civil (e.g., acts against established civil authority or acts against a covenant partner).

Humans are held responsible for personal sins, but often these sins are related to family or cultural practices. All of us are historically, culturally conditioned. We make choices, but these choices are limited by precedent. Society, family, and individuals are inseparably bound together! All are affected by parents, culture, and personal choices! God judges society, families, and individuals. Human freedom is a wonderful/terrible gift!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:17-18

¹⁷You shall not pervert the justice due an alien *or* an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge. ¹⁸But you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and that the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing."

24:17 "You shall not pervert the justice due" The VERB (BDB 639, KB 692) basically means "stretch out," "spread out" or "turn." Often this is used metaphorically of "turn to the right or left and leaving God's clearly revealed law" (cf. Deut. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14; Josh. 1:7; 23:6).

There are several places where the object of this turning/perverting is "justice" (BDB 1048, cf. Exod. 23:6; Deut. 16:19; 24:17; 27:19; I Sam. 8:3; Pro. 17:23; Lam. 3:35; and Amos 2:7). Justice is YHWH's will for everyone in Israelite society because it reflects His character and treatment of them (cf. 32:4).

▣ **"alien *or* an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge"** See 10:18 and Exod. 22:22-24. Moses' Law Code is different from the other ancient Mesopotamian Law Codes in its care for the poor, needy, and socially powerless!

24:18 "But you shall remember" Notice that this emphasis on remembering (BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* PERFECT) is mentioned three times in this chapter (24:9,18,22). The past does affect the future. Israel was to remember and then act appropriately today!

▣ **"redeemed"** See Special Topic at 7:8.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:19-20

¹⁹"When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰When you beat your olive tree, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow."

24:19-21 These agricultural regulations were meant to provide food for the poor and needy (see Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Ruth 2). This is called "gleaning."

There are several laws in Deuteronomy about providing food for the needy:

1. the third-year local tithe for the poor, 14:28-29; 26:12-15
2. food provided at the celebration of the Feast of Weeks/Feast of Booths, 16:9-17
3. the yearly gleanings from the annual harvests, 24:19-21

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 24:21-22

²¹"When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not go over it again; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow. ²²You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this thing."

24:22 The Israelites were to have compassion on servants and aliens because they once shared this condition in Egypt. God was gracious to them; they, too, should be gracious to others!

Several times in Deuteronomy the call to remember Israel's period of enslavement is used to stimulate current action:

1. all in the community to observe the Sabbath, 5:12-15
2. release the Israelite slave on the seventh year, 15:12-18

3. all in the community to participate in the Feast of Weeks, 16:9-17
4. do not pervert justice due an alien or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge, 24:17-18
5. do not reap all the way to the corners of the field and do not do a second reaping, 24:19-22
6. using other words, but with the same emphasis, obedience, 6:10-15; 8:2,18

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How does Deuteronomy 24:1-4 relate divorce and remarriage?
2. How does this relate to Jesus' words on divorce?
3. List the humanitarian elements in this chapter.
4. Why is v. 16 so very important? Relate it to Deuteronomy 5:9.

DEUTERONOMY 25

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Miscellaneous Laws (24:5-25:4)	Laws Dealing with Humanitarian and Religious Obligations (23:15-25:19)	Various Laws (24:5-25:4)	Protection to the Individual (24:5-25:4)
24:19-25:3			
	25:1-3	25:1-3	25:1-3
25:4	25:4	25:4	25:4
Marriage Duty of the Surviving Brother		Duty to a Dead Brother	The Levirate Law
25:5-10	25:5-10	25:5-10	25:5-10
Miscellaneous Laws		Other Laws	Modesty in Brawls
25:11-12	25:11-12	25:11-12	25:11-12
			Appendices
25:13-16	25:13-16	25:13-16	25:13-16
Destroy the Amalekites		The Command to Kill the Amalekites	
25:17-19	25:17-19	25:17-19	25:17-19

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. Different areas covered by Mosaic Legislation
 - 1. criminal law
 - 2. civil law
 - 3. family law
 - 4. cultic law
 - 5. charitable law

- B. For a good discussion on the genre of law and how to apply it today see:
 - 1. *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* by Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard, pp. 278-283
 - 2. *How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Fee and Stuart, pp. 163-180
 - 3. *Cracking Old Testament Code*, chapter 6, “Law” by Richard E. Everbeck, pp. 113-138

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:1-3

1“If there is a dispute between men and they go to court, and the judges decide their case, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, **2**then it shall be if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall then make him lie down and be beaten in his presence with the number of stripes according to his guilt. **3**He may beat him forty times *but* no more, so that he does not beat him with many more stripes than these and your brother is not degraded in your eyes.”

25:1 **“If there is a dispute”** This refers to a legal case between covenant brothers (BDB 936, cf. 17:8-13; 19:17; 21:5). Legal cases are meant to stop personal revenge.

▣ **“justify the righteous”** The court decides fairly and accurately (cf. 1:16-17). The VERB (BDB 842, KB 1003, *Hiphil* PERFECT) and the ADJECTIVE (BDB 843) are from the same root. See Special Topic: Righteousness at 1:16.

▣ **“condemn the wicked”** Like the previous pair, this involves the VERB (BDB 957, KB 1294, *Hiphil* PERFECT) and the ADJECTIVE (BDB 957) from the same root.

25:2 **“the judge”** This is either (1) the observing Levite or (2) the striking Levite. Later Judaism required three witnesses to a beating. The beater, the counter, and the reader of the Scriptural requirement.

▣ **“in his presence”** This is literally, “before his face,” which means the judge must watch to assure the carrying out of the sentence. This phrase was interpreted by later Judaism to refer to the position of the one to be punished, “beat on chest one third of the strokes and on the back two thirds of strokes.”

▣ **“the number of stripes according to his guilt”** The punishment needs to fit the crime. The number of strokes varied (cf. Neh. 13:25).

25:3 **“forty times”** This was the maximum number of strokes with either a rod (cf. Exod. 21:20; Middle Assyrian Laws, A18) or a whip made of leather. By NT times thirty-nine stripes were the maximum (cf. Mishnah Makkoth, III, 13-14; II Cor. 11:24).

▣ **“stripes”** This term (BDB 912 I) means lash marks. It has a wide semantic field and can refer to (1) a wound (cf. Isa. 1:6) or (2) a disease (cf. 28:61).

▣ **“your brother is not degraded in your eyes”** Even in punishment a humanitarian spirit prevails. Restoration and changed character are always the goal.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:4

⁴“You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing.”

25:4 “You shall not muzzle the ox” This shows kindness to animals (cf. 22:6-7; Pro. 12:10). This was used by Paul in the NT to support wages for Christian leaders (cf. I Cor. 9:9; I Tim. 5:18). Paul is using (1) Jesus’ words in Luke 10:7 (cf. I Tim. 5:18) and (2) a rabbinical method of interpretation and application called “lesser to greater.” If this statement is true for oxen, surely it is true for human workers. See *Expository Hermeneutics* by Elliott E. Johnson, pp. 235-236.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:5-10

⁵“When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. ⁶It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. ⁷But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' ⁸Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And if he persists and says, 'I do not desire to take her,' ⁹then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, 'Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' ¹⁰In Israel his name shall be called, 'The house of him whose sandal is removed.'”

25:5 “When brothers live together” This is the beginning of the discussion of “Levirate marriages” (cf. Genesis 38). The term “Levirate” came from the Latin term for brother-in-law. The whole purpose of this legislation is to keep the inheritance within the family. If there is no one in the family who wants to marry the widow then the brother shall raise up an heir for him (cf. Matt. 22:24; Mark 12:19; Luke 20:28).

Notice that the texts specifically state that the two brothers “live together.” The maintenance of the ancestral inheritance from YHWH, given through Joshua, is the issue of this legislation.

Deuteronomy foresees the establishment of villages and towns. Its laws are geared to this rural agricultural society.

25:6 “the firstborn” The firstborn son would inherit the dead brother’s property (cf. Num. 27:6-11).

25:7 “does not desire” The motive is unstated, but it may be greed on the living brother’s part or possibly jealousy of the dead brother. The consequences of an unwilling brother are clearly delineated.

▣ **“the gate”** This was the site of the local court of the elders (e.g., 16:18-20; 19:12; 21:1-9,19; 22:15).

25:9-10 “pull his sandal off his foot” In context this was an act of humiliation (cf. Isa. 20:2). The NET Bible, p. 381, SN #16, mentions that the removal of the sandal may symbolize that the living brother gives

up all legal rights to the brother's inheritance. In Ps. 60:8 and 108:9 casting YHWH's sandal across Edom symbolically showed His ownership. This may explain Ruth 4. The removal of a sandal also recorded in the Nuzi tablets (Lacheman 53-56) had legal symbolism.

25:9 “spit in his face” This was a symbolic act of humiliation (cf. Num. 12:14). It made one ceremonially unclean (cf. Lev. 15:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:11-12

¹¹“If two men, a man and his countryman, are struggling together, and the wife of one comes near to deliver her husband from the hand of the one who is striking him, and puts out her hand and seizes his genitals, ¹²then you shall cut off her hand; you shall not show pity.”

25:11 “his genitals” Again, this shows the significance of inheritance rights in ancient Israel!

25:12 “you shall cut off her hand” This is the only specific mutilation mentioned in the Mosaic legislation. Exact “eye for eye” (*Lex talionis*) judgment in this case was not possible. Later Judaism interpreted this as “give restitution for,” which they applied to many Mosaic texts.

▣ **“you shall not show pity”** This phrase is repeated in several contexts (cf. 7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12; and a similar phrase in 7:2). God's law, not human emotion, must be carried out.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:13-16

¹³“You shall not have in your bag differing weights, a large and a small. ¹⁴You shall not have in your house differing measures, a large and a small. ¹⁵You shall have a full and just weight; you shall have a full and just measure, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. ¹⁶For everyone who does these things, everyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD your God.”

25:13 “differing weights” Literally “a stone and a stone,” one size to buy with, one size to sell with (cf. Ps. 11:1; 16:11). Fairness and honesty among covenant brothers was crucial.

SPECIAL TOPIC: ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN WEIGHTS AND VOLUMES (METROLOGY)

The weights and measurements used in commerce were crucial in ancient agricultural economy. The Bible urges the Jews to be fair in their dealings with one another (cf. Lev. 19:35-36; Deut. 25:13-16; Prov. 11:1; 16:11; 20:1). The real problem was not only honesty, but the non-standardized terms and systems used in Palestine. It seems that there were two sets of weights; a “light” and a “heavy” of each amount (see *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, p. 831). Also the decimal system (base of 10) of Egypt had been combined with the sexagesimal (base of 6) of Mesopotamia.

Many of the “sizes” and “amounts” used were based on human body parts, animal loads, and farmer's containers, none of which were standardized. Therefore, the charts are only estimations and are tentative. The easiest way to show weights and measures is on a relational chart.

I. Volume terms used most often

A. Dry measures

1. Homer (BDB 330, possibly a “donkey-load,” BDB 331), e.g., Lev. 27:16; Hosea 3:2

2. Letekh (or letech, BDB 547), cf. Hosea 3:2
3. Ephah (BDB 35), e.g., Exod. 16:36; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:10-11,13,24
4. Se'ah (BDB 684, e.g., Gen. 18:6; I Sam. 25:18; I Kgs. 18:32
5. Omer (BDB 771 II, possibly "a sheaf: [a row of fallen grain], BDB 771 I), e.g., Exod. 16:16,22,36; Lev. 23:10-15
6. 'Issaron (BDB 798, "a tenth part"), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 14:21
7. Qav (or Kab, BDB 866), cf. II Kgs. 6:25

B. Liquid Measures

1. Kor (BDB 499), e.g., I Kgs. 5:2,25; Ezek. 45:14
2. Bath (BDB 330, equal to a Ephah), e.g., II Chr. 2:10; Ezek. 45:10-11,14
3. Hin (BDB 228), e.g., Exod. 29:40; Lev. 19:36; Ezek. 45:24
4. Log (BDB 528), cf. Lev. 14:10,12,15,21,24

C. Chart (taken from Roland deVaux, *Ancient Israel*, vol. 1, p. 201 and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 16, p. 379.

homer (dry) = kor (liquid)	1						
ephah (dry) = bath (liquid)	10	1					
se'ah (dry)	30	3	1				
hin (liquid)	60	6	2	1			
omer/issaron (dry)	100	10	-	-	1		
qav/kab (dry)	180	18	6	3	-	1	
log (liquid)	720	72	24	12	-	4	1

II. Weight terms used most often

A. The three most common weights are the talent, the shekel, and the gerah.

1. The largest weight in the OT is the talent. From Exod. 38:25-26 we learn that one talent equals 3,000 shekels (i.e., "Round weight," BDB 503).
2. The term shekel (BDB 1053, "weight") is used so often that it is assumed, but not stated in the text. There are several values of shekel mentioned in the OT.
 - a. "commercial standard" (NASB cf. Gen. 23:16)
 - b. "the shekel of the sanctuary" (NASB cf. Exod. 30:13)
 - c. "by the king's weight" (NASB cf. II Sam. 14:26), also called "royal weight" in the Elephantine papyri.
3. The gerah (BDB 176 II) is valued at 20 per shekel (cf. Exod. 30:13). These ratios vary from Mesopotamia to Egypt. Israel followed the evaluation most common in Canaan (Ugarit).
4. The mina (BDB 584) is valued at either 50 or 60 shekels. This term is found mostly in later OT books (i.e., Ezek. 45:12; Ezra 2:69; Neh. 7:70-71). Ezekiel used the 60 to 1 ratio, while Canaan used the 50 to 1 ratio.
5. The beka (BDB 132, "half a shekel," cf. Gen. 24:22) is used only twice in the OT (cf. Gen. 24:22; Exod. 38:26) and is valued at one-half a shekel. Its name means "to divide."

B. Chart

1. Based on Exodus					
talent	1				
mina	60	1			
shekel	3,000	50	1		
beka	6,000	100	1		
gerah,	60,000 (cf. Exod. 30:13; Lev. 27:25; Num. 3:47; 18:16; Ezek. 45:12)				
2. Based on Ezekiel					
talent	1				
mina	60	1			
shekel	3,600	60	1		
beka	7,200	120	2	1	
gerah	72,000	1,200	20	10	1

25:15 “that your days may be prolonged in the land” This is a societal promise of longevity (cf. 4:40; 5:16,33; 6:2; 11:9; 22:7; 25:15; 30:18; 32:47).

25:16 “anyone who acts unjustly is an abomination to the LORD” Blessings and curses are related to covenant obedience (cf. chapters 27-29).

▣ **“abomination”** See Special Topic at 14:3.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 25:17-19

¹⁷“Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, ¹⁸how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. ¹⁹Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget.”

25:17-19 Deuteronomy has several passages related to how Israel should conduct “holy war” (cf. 7:1-26; 20:1-10; 21:10-14; 25:17-19). Holy War was YHWH’s war. It had special rules and procedures!

25:17 “Amalek” This group may be descendants from Esau (cf. Gen. 36:15-16), became a symbol of evil to Israel because of their raiding techniques (cf. v. 18-19; 17:8-16). They were a nomadic group who lived south of the Dead Sea. Both Saul and David fought against them (cf. I Sam. 15:2; 27:8).

25:18 “rear” This term (BDB 275) means “tail.” When used as a VERB (BDB 275, KB 274, *Piel* IMPERFECT) it means to attack (1) at the rear or (2) the rear guard. It is found only here and in Josh. 10:19.

25:19 “you shall blot out the memory” In vv. 5-10 the loss of a brother with no descendants is discussed. Here the loss of descendants is commanded! They did not fear God (v. 18); they attacked Israel’s most vulnerable; they must die (cf. Exod. 17:14; I Sam. 15:2-4; 30:16-20; I Chr. 4:43)!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is verse 1 so important to theology?
2. What was the purpose of Levirate marriage?
3. Why are vv. 11-12 included in the Pentateuch?
4. Who was Amalek and why are they cursed?

DEUTERONOMY 26

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Offerings of First Fruits and Tithes	Concluding Liturgies and Exhortation	Harvest Offerings	First-Fruits
26:1-11	26:1-11	26:1-3 26:4-10a 26:10b-11	26:1-3 26:4-10a 26:10b-11 The Third-Year Tithe
26:12-15	26:12-15	26:12-15	26:12-15
A Special People of God		The Lord's Own People	End of the Second Discourse (26:16-28:68)
26:16-19	26:16-19	26:16-19	26:16 26:17-19

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:1-11

¹Then it shall be, when you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, and you possess it and live in it, ²that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground which you bring in from your land that the LORD your God gives you, and you shall put *it* in a basket and go to the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name. ³You shall go to the

priest who is in office at that time and say to him, 'I declare this day to the LORD my God that I have entered the land which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us.' ⁴Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God. ⁵You shall answer and say before the LORD your God, 'My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; but there he became a great, mighty and populous nation. ⁶'And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, and imposed hard labor on us. ⁷Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction and our toil and our oppression; ⁸and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders; ⁹and He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰Now behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O LORD have given me.' And you shall set it down before the Lord your God, and worship before the LORD your God; ¹¹and you and the Levite and the alien who is among you shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household."

26:1 “when you enter the land” This documents the fact that Israel was still on the plains of Moab on the eastern side of the Jordan when these words of Moses were given.

▣ **“the LORD your God”** See Special Topic at 1:3.

▣ **“gives you as an inheritance”** This is an idiom of Israel’s election (cf. Exod. 6:4,8; 15:17; 23:30; 32:13; Deut. 1:6-8; 4:38,40; 5:31; 7:13; 8:1-10; 9:4-6; 11:8-12,17; 26:1,9; 32:49,52; 34:4). The land (all land) belongs to YHWH (cf. Exod. 19:5; Lev. 25:23). If Israel is not obedient to YHWH’s covenant He will dispossess them (cf. Lev. 26:14-33; Deut. 4:25-28; Josh. 23:14-16), but still YHWH will have mercy (cf. Deut. 4:29-31; 30:1-3,10).

26:2 “you shall take some of the first of all the produce” The exact amount for the offering of the first fruits is not specified (but it could fit in one basket, cf. vv. 3,4). This account seems to be a one time event on the plains of Moab but it reflects a later regular harvest ritual (cf. Exod. 22:29; 23:16,19). This practice was a metaphorical way of showing God’s ownership of the entire crop. The same ownership symbolism is exemplified in (1) the firstborn; (2) tithing; (3) the Sabbath; (4) the sabbath year; and (5) the Year of Jubilee.

▣ **“the place where the LORD your God chooses to establish His name”** This refers to God’s choice of the location of the central sanctuary, which is a distinctly Deuteronomistic emphasis (cf. 12:5,11,14,18,21,26; 14:23,24,25; 15:20; 16:2,6,7,11,15,16; 17:8,10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11). It was originally at Gilgal, then Shechem, then Shiloh, then Mizpah, and later, after David’s conquest of Jebus, Jerusalem (cf. II Sam. 5:6-7; I Chr. 11:5,7). The purpose of a central sanctuary was tribal and religious unity. It was also to keep the Israelites away from local *Ba’al* shrines.

26:3 “the priest who is in office at that time” At first this seems to refer to the High Priest of Aaron’s line (cf. The Tyndale OT Commentary, “Deuteronomy,” p. 254), but the context demands that it refers to the different families of Aaronic priests who took turns ministering at the central altar.

▣ **“and say to him”** All that follows is a liturgy to be repeated by those who obediently bring their first fruits to the Tabernacle or later the central sanctuary.

▣ **“the LORD my God”** The MT has “your” God. This variation in PRONOUNS had no theological meaning. It was simply a Hebrew idiom of talking to someone of religious authority.

26:4 “priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar” Many compare v. 10 and claim a contradiction. The problem is, we do not have a detailed account of the ritual.

26:5 “My father” This refers to the patriarch Jacob, later called Israel (cf. Gen. 32:28 and Special Topic: Israel at 1:1). This was a theological statement about their being God’s chosen people. This was a creedal affirmation.



NASB, NRSV,

TEV, NJB “wandering”

NKJV “about to perish”

REB “homeless”

JPSOA “fugitive”

This means “perishing” (BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). Sometimes this term is used of a lost or wandering animal (I Sam. 9:3; Jer. 50:6; Ezek. 34:4,16).

☐ **“Aramean”** This refers to Padan-Aram or Syria (BDB 74, cf. Gen. 25:20; 28:5; 31:20,24). Laban was from this area which included the city of Haran (cf. Gen. 31:40-42). Jacob lived there for several years and then fled from Laban.

☐ **“sojourned”** This VERB (BDB 157, KB 184, *Qal* IMPERFECT) means to dwell as a newcomer or resident alien (cf. Gen. 47:4).

☐ **“few in number”** In Gen. 46:27 and Exod. 1:5 it says that they were originally only 70 persons. When they left Egypt their number was as high (cf. 1:10; 20:22; Exod. 1:9) as 1,500,000 to 2,500,000 persons. The number depends on the proper interpretation of the Hebrew term “thousand.” It can mean (1) a literal 1,000; (2) a clan; or (3) a military unit (cf. Exod. 12:37). See Special Topic at 1:15.

26:7 “we cried to the LORD. . .heard our voice and saw our affliction” God had promised and foretold Abraham about this (cf. Gen. 15:12-21; Exod. 3:7, 9).

☐ **“the LORD, the God of our fathers”** This identified the God of the Patriarch’s, El Shaddai (cf. Exod. 6:2-9), with YHWH, who confronted Moses (cf. Exod. 3:14). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.

26:8 “a mighty hand and an outstretched arm” This is expressed in anthropomorphic language of power and victory. See note at 4:34. It is also possible that this particular idiom was chosen because it is used so often in Egyptian literature and art for Pharaoh’s power

☐ **“with great terror and with signs and wonders”** This relates to the ten plagues on Egypt (e.g., 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 11:3; 26:8; 29:2; 34:11).

26:9 “a land flowing with milk and honey” This was both a physical description and the legal designation for Palestine in the Assyrian documents. God gave them a wonderfully productive and beautiful inheritance (i.e., Canaan or Palestine, cf. 6:3; 11:9; 26:9; 27:3; 31:20).

26:10 “You, O LORD have given me” This shows a true religious perspective on life (cf. v. 2; 8:11-20). This verse implies that one growing season has past or that the Israelites dedicated the produce they found growing.

▣ **“worship”** This is literally “prostrate oneself” (BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtapael* PERFECT).

26:11 “you. . . shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given you and your household” Note the festival element in God’s dealings with His covenant people (and others who lived with them, i.e., aliens). Worship should be joyful! Reverence cannot be defined as silence and somberness! The rabbis later used this verse to refer to rejoicing over the giving of the Law (cf. v. 14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:12-15

¹²“When you have finished paying all the tithe of your increase in the third year, the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan and to the widow, that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. ¹³You shall say before the LORD your God, ‘I have removed the sacred *portion* from my house, and also have given it to the Levite and the alien, the orphan and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed or forgotten any of Your commandments. ¹⁴I have not eaten of it while mourning, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor offered any of it to the dead. I have listened to the voice of the LORD my God; I have done according to all that You have commanded me. ¹⁵Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel, and the ground which You have given us, a land flowing with milk and honey, as You swore to our fathers.’”

26:12 “**tithe**” See Special Topic below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: TITHES IN THE MOSAIC LEGISLATION

A. Scripture References:

For Priests and Central Sanctuary	For Local Levites	For Local Poor
1. Lev. 27:30-32		
2. Deut. 12:6-7,11,17	Deut. 12:12	
3. Deut. 14:22-26	Deut. 14:27	Deut. 14:28-29
4.		Deut. 26:12-15
5. Num. 18:21-24	Num. 18:25-29 (Levites must tithe of their tithe to central shrine)	Num. 18:21-29
6.	Neh. 10:37,38	Neh. 12:44
7. Mal. 3:8,19		

B. Examples of tithing predate Mosaic legislation

1. Genesis 14:20, Abraham to Melchizedek (Heb. 7:2-9)
2. Genesis 28:22, Jacob to YHWH

C. The tithes of Israel were used to support the central sanctuary, but every third year the national tithes were directed exclusively to the local poor.

▣ **“in the third year”** This refers to the “poor tithe,” administered locally (cf. 14:28-29) by the tither, but attested to at the central sanctuary (cf. v. 13).

26:13 **“the sacred *portion*”** The tithe belonged to the Lord and was, therefore, holy (cf. Lev. 27:30).

26:14 “while mourning” Some mourning rites were pagan in origin. This Hebrew word is associated with idolatry (BDB 19, cf. Hos. 9:4 and Jer. 16:5-7), which includes some of these local pagan customs. Many scholars believe all of the procedures mentioned in v. 14 relate to local Canaanite annual worship practices.

▣ **“while I was unclean”** The Jerusalem Bible translates this as, “I have consumed nothing that was unclean”; the Septuagint has “for an unclean purpose” (cf. Hag. 2:13), but the MT is referring to the testimony of the individual offerer.

▣ **“nor offered any of it to the dead”** Lamsa, in a footnote to The Peshitta, translated in English, has “not used to feed relatives after the funeral,” but in context, it probably refers to pagan ancestral worship practices.

▣ **“I have listened. . .I have done according to”** The individual offerer is affirming his obedience and conformity (both VERBS are *Qal* PERFECTS) to YHWH’s law revealed through Moses (“commanded” BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel* PERFECT).

26:15 This describes YHWH in transcendent terms (cf. 4:36; I Kgs. 8:27-30; Isa. 66:1). He remained in heaven. He sent an angel to lead His people (cf. Exod. 23:20,23; 32:34; 33:2). One must balance God’s holy otherness (transcendence) and His present intimate love (immanence).

The VERBS, “look down” (BDB 1054, KB 1645, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) and “bless” (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERATIVE), are imperatives or requests.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 26:16-19

¹⁶“This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. ¹⁷You have today declared the LORD to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice. ¹⁸The LORD has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; ¹⁹and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the LORD your God, as He has spoken.”

26:16 This is a summary conclusion and commitment (i.e., ratification) to the specific laws of chapters 12-26. This covenant affirmation was to be repeated by each new generation, individually.

▣ **“these statutes and ordinances”** See Special Topic: Terms for YHWH’s Revelation at 4:1.

▣ **“be careful to do them”** Obedience is crucial!

▣ **“with all your heart and with all your soul”** Obedience alone was inadequate. It must flow from a desire to honor, love, and serve YHWH (cf. 4:29; 6:5; 10:12).

26:17

NASB	“declared”
NKJV	“proclaimed”
NRSV, NJB	“obtained”
TEV	“acknowledged”

This is a rare Hebrew term (BDB 55, KB 65) in the *Hiphil* stem, used only here in v. 17 and in v. 18. The worshiper declared his obedience and allegiance to YHWH and YHWH declared back to the worshiper his election and call to be His unique people (i.e., covenant).

26:18

NASB “a treasured possession”

NKJV “His special people”

NRSV “His treasured people”

TEV, NJB “his own people”

This is also a rare Hebrew term (BDB 688, cf. Exod. 19:5; Deut. 7:6; 14:2; Ps. 135:4).

Because the liturgy of this chapter does not specifically mention the Mt. Sinai/Horeb event, then some modern scholars reject the historicity of the event. However, the rare use of this term, both in Exod. 19:5 and Deuteronomy (cf. 7:6; 14:2; and here) suggests that by its very usage it is an allusion to the event!

This creed also does not mention creation. Is it then to also be rejected as a historical event?

26:19 “He will set you high above all nations” This is repeated in 28:1,13, but note the tragedy of Jer. 13:11 and 7:23-26! The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 1035, also sees this verse as Israel’s obligation to reflect YHWH’s praiseworthiness to the world! Therefore, this is a “Great Commission” verse! Israel had a “missionary” task (e.g., Jer. 3:17; 4:2; 12:14-17; 16:19; 33:9)! See Special Topic at 4:6!

▣ **“a consecrated people”** This is literally “holy” (BDB 872), which means “set apart for God’s use.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. How are the first fruits related to the tithe? How many tithes were there?
2. Why is v. 5 so important?
3. Explain the historical background of vv. 14ff.
4. Why and how are the Jews chosen?

DEUTERONOMY 27

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Law Inscribed on Stone	The Shechem Ceremony	God's Laws Written on Stones	The Writing of the Law and Religious Ceremonies
27:1-8	27:1-8	27:1-8	27:1-3 27:4-8
27:9-10	27:9-10	27:9-10	27:9-10
Curses Pronounced from Mount Ebal		The Curses on Disobedience	
27:11-13 27:14-26	27:11-14	2:11-14	27:11-14
	27:15	27:15	27:15
	27:16	27:16	27:16
	27:17	27:17	27:17
	27:18	27:18	27:18
	27:19	27:19	27:19
	27:20	27:20	27:20
	27:21	27:21	27:21
	27:22	27:22	27:22
	27:23	27:23	27:23
	27:24	27:24	27:24
	27:25	27:25	27:25
	27:26	27:26	27:26

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph

3. Third paragraph

4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

A. Moses is mentioned in the third person (v. 1). Does this imply a literary variety or a scribe (contemporary or later)? Moderns must admit that the structure and process of the formation of OT books is unknown to us.

There seems to be textual evidence for an editor (contemporary or later). Some examples in Deuteronomy of this editor or third voice (narrator) are 1:1-5; 2:10-12,20-23; 3:9,11,13b-14; 4:41-5:1a; 10:6-7,9; 27:1a,9a,11; 28:69; 29:1; 31:3,7a,9-10a,14a,14c-16a,22-23a,24-25,30; 32:44-45,48; 33:1; 34:1-4a,5-12 (see *An Introduction to the Old Testament* by Raymond B. Dillard and Tremper Longman III, p. 100).

B. An initial covenant ceremony at Shechem does not fit a supposed later date to support the concept of a centralized sanctuary in Jerusalem. Much of the Pentateuch is contemporary with Moses' day. It is obvious that editors have had a part in its formation (one clear example is Num. 12:3).

C. There is an obvious literary parallel between Deut. 11:26-32 and Deuteronomy 27. This covenant renewal ceremony forms a literary structure which divides Deuteronomy into legislation and narrative and identifies the different sermons of Moses.

D. This chapter describes a royal land-grant treaty following the pattern of Hittite treaties (i.e., Deuteronomy as a whole and Joshua 24). Ebal, the highest point in the center of the land of Canaan symbolically shows the transfer of land to the Israelites. However, to maintain the rights and privileges of occupation, covenant obedience and loyalty to YHWH is demanded.

E. Israel's stormy history can be seen through the lens of Deuteronomy 27-29. Her repeated covenant disobedience reaped the judgment of YHWH. She was to be a beacon of a happy and prosperous society (righteous brotherhood), but she reaped the whirlwind of YHWH's curses! YHWH's promises are only applicable to a repentant, believing, obedient, covenant people. Election does not replace obedience (cf. Galatians 3).

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:1-8

¹Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged the people, saying, "Keep all the commandments which I command you today. ²So it shall be on the day when you cross the Jordan to the land which the LORD your God gives you, that you shall set up for yourself large stones and coat them with lime ³and write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over, so that you may enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you. ⁴So it shall be when you cross the Jordan, you shall set up on Mount Ebal, these stones, as I am commanding you today, and you shall coat them with lime. ⁵Moreover, you shall build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones; you shall not wield an iron tool on them. ⁶You shall build the altar of the LORD your God of uncut stones, and you shall offer on it burnt offerings to the LORD your God; ⁷and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and eat there, and

rejoice before the LORD your God. ⁸You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very distinctly."

27:1 “and the elders of Israel” Moses knew that soon the people would go into the Promised Land and that he would not be able to go (cf. Num. 20:12; 27:12-14; Deut. 3:26-27). He was trying to empower the tribal leadership group.

▣ **“Keep all the commandments”** This is a recurrent theme (cf. v. 10) and condition for Israel’s stay in the land.

27:2 “on the day when you cross the Jordan. . .set up for yourself large stones” There were three sets of stones:

1. at Gilgal (vv. 1-3, cf. Joshua 4)
2. at Shechem (vv. 4-8)
3. after the conquest and division of the land God’s law was written on a large stone and on a book/scroll (BDB 706, cf. Josh. 24:26-27)

It is possible that the phrase “on the day” can be understood as “when,” meaning both refer to Shechem.

Exactly what was written on the stones is debated. They were large stones so they could hold a considerable amount of text. Many assume it is Deuteronomy 12-26 or 27-28 or 5:8-21 or even Exod. 20:22-23:33.

▣ **“coat them with lime”** This VERB (BDB 966, KB 1319, *Qal* PERFECT) is found only in the OT in vv. 2 and 4. This was an Egyptian method of preparation for writing. It was a long lasting way for writing to stay visible. The reason for writing the Law down was so that each person could read it for themselves (cf. v. 8).

27:3 “write on them” There are several references in the Pentateuch which mention Moses’ writing:

1. Exodus - 17:14; 24:4; 34:27,28
2. Numbers - 33:2
3. Deuteronomy - 27:3,8; 28:58; 29:21; 30:10; 31:9,22,24-26

▣ **“as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you”** (cf. v. 12) Shechem [Mt. Gerizim] is the place where Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:6-9) and Jacob (cf. Gen. 33:18-20) built altars. This showed the fulfillment of God’s earlier promises to them.

27:4 “Mount Ebal” There are two mountains (i.e., 3,080 feet high) on either side of the city of Shechem (i.e., shoulder blade). This was one of them. Shechem was the first place Abraham had earlier built an altar (cf. Gen. 12:6-7).

27:5 “you shall not wield an iron tool on them” This is possibly related to the structure of Canaanite altars (cf. Exod. 20:24-25). God required that His altars had to be different from the manmade Canaanite altars (i.e., cut stones, v. 6). This account reflects Josh. 8:30-35.

27:6 “burnt offerings” A burnt offering is one that is totally consumed (i.e., given completely to YHWH, Lev. 1:1-7).

27:7 “peace offering” This is partially burnt on the altar, part is given to priests, part is given back to the offerer for a communal meal (cf. Lev. 3:1,7).

▣ **“you shall... rejoice”** This is a theme in Deuteronomy (BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* perfect, cf. 12:7,12,18; 14:26; 16:11,14; 26:11; 27:7). YHWH wanted to bless Israel so as to attract the attention of the surrounding nations.

27:8

NASB “very distinctly”

NKJV “very plainly”

NRSV “very clearly”

TEV “write clearly”

NJB “carefully”

This English translation is made up of two Hebrew INFINITIVE ABSOLUTES:

1. BDB 91, KB 106, *Piel*
2. BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil*

This is saying that these words, each and every word, are important.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:9-10

⁹Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, "Be silent and listen, O Israel! This day you have become a people for the LORD your God. ¹⁰You shall therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today."

27:9-10 In these verses Moses and the priests spoke to all Israel. The people were commanded to be quiet (BDB 698, KB 756, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) and listen (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) with a view toward obedience (cf. v. 10).

27:9 **“This day you have become a people”** There is some discussion on exactly when the covenant begins:

1. at Israel leaving Egypt, Exod. 6:6-7
2. at Mt. Sinai/Horeb, Deut. 4:20; Exod. 19:5-6
3. on the Plains of Moab, v. 9; 28:1
4. at the crossing of the Jordan, Josh. 4:19-24
5. at Gilgal (first camp site)
6. at Shechem (covenant renewal), Josh. 8:30-35

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:11-14

¹¹ Moses also charged the people on that day, saying, ¹² "When you cross the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. ¹³For the curse, these shall stand on Mount Ebal: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali. ¹⁴The Levites shall then answer and say to all the men of Israel with a loud voice,"

27:11 This verse begins the section on the cursings and blessings. The blessings are not specifically listed in this chapter, but in chapter 28.

27:12-13 Half of the tribes of Israel would be on Mt. Gerizim (speak blessing, cf. 28:1-14) the other half would be on Mt. Ebal (speak curses, cf. 28:15-68), Gerizim being the southern mountain, Ebal the northern. The priests stood between the two mountains with the Ark of the Covenant (cf. Josh. 8:30,35).

▣ **“Joseph”** Notice the division of Joseph into Ephraim and Manasse had not yet been documented (cf. Gen. 49:22-26; Exod. 1:5; Deut. 33:13-17).

27:14 “The Levites” It must refer to keepers of the Ark. All priests were Levites, but not all Levites were priests. Obviously, some Levites (i.e., from the tribe of Levi, v. 12) were up on the mountain (cf. v. 12).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:15

¹⁵ "Cursed is the man who makes an idol or a molten image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret. And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.'"

27:15-26 “Cursed” “Cursed” is a word that means, “Cursed by YHWH” (BDB 76). There are twelve curses (the term is used 39 times in Deuteronomy 27-29). All are in the form of *Qal* passive participles (vv. 15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26; see also 28:16-19). The first is a curse against idolatry (cf. Deut. 4:15-18; 5:8-9; Exod. 20:3-4,23; 34:17). Many, if not all, of the Mosaic laws can be seen in their contrast to Canaanite society.

27:15 “sets it up in secret” The VERB (BDB 962, KB 1321) is *Qal* PERFECT, cf. v. 24). Usually it is used of wicked activity.

▣ **“Amen”** This repeated liturgical formula shows acceptance of the laws by the people (cf. vv. 15-26). Note the Jewish concept of corporality.

SPECIAL TOPIC: AMEN

I. OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The term “Amen” is from a Hebrew word for truth (*emeth*) or truthfulness (*emun, emunah*) and faith or faithfulness.
- B. Its etymology is from a person’s physical stable stance (BDB 52-54). The opposite would be one who is unstable, slipping (cf. Deut. 28:64-67; Ps. 40:2; 73:18; Jer. 23:12) or stumbling (cf. Ps. 73:2). From this literal usage developed the metaphorical extension of faithful, trustworthy, loyal, and dependable (cf. Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4).
- C. Special usages:
 - 1. a pillar, II Kgs. 18:16 (I Tim. 3:15)
 - 2. assurance, Exod. 17:12
 - 3. steadiness, Exod. 17:12
 - 4. stability, Isa. 33:6; 34:5-7
 - 5. true, I Kgs. 10:6; 17:24; 22:16; Prov. 12:22
 - 6. firm, II Chr. 20:20; Isa. 7:9
 - 7. reliable (Torah), Ps. 119:43,142,151,168
- D. In the OT two other Hebrew terms are used for active faith:
 - 1. *bith*, trust (BDB 105)
 - 2. *yr’*, fear, respect, worship (BDB 431, cf. Gen. 22:12)
- E. From the sense of trust or trustworthiness developed a liturgical usage which was used to affirm a true or trustworthy statement of another (cf. Deut. 27:15-26; Neh. 8:6; Ps. 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48).

- F. The theological key to this term is not mankind's faithfulness, but YHWH's (cf. Exod. 34:6; Deut. 32:4; Ps. 108:4; 115:1; 117:2; 138:2). Fallen humanity's only hope is the merciful faithful covenant loyalty of YHWH and His promises.

Those who know YHWH are to be like Him (cf. Hab. 2:4). The Bible is history and a record of God restoring His image (cf. Gen. 1:26-27) in mankind. Salvation restores mankind's ability to have intimate fellowship with God. This is why we were created.

II. NEW TESTAMENT

- A. The use of the word "amen" as a concluding liturgical affirmation of the trustworthiness of a statement is common in the NT (cf. I Cor. 14:16; II Cor. 1:20; Rev. 1:7; 5:14; 7:12)
- B. The use of the term as a close to a prayer is common in the NT (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; Gal. 1:5; 6:18; Eph. 3:21; Phil. 4:20; II Thess. 3:18; I Tim. 1:17; 6:16; II Tim. 4:18).
- C. Jesus is the only one who used the term (often doubled in John) to introduce significant statements (cf. Luke 4:24; 12:37; 18:17,29; 21:32; 23:43)
- D. It is used as a title for Jesus in Rev. 3:14 (possibly a title of YHWH from Isa. 65:16).
- E. The concept of faithfulness or faith, trustworthiness, or trust is expressed in the Greek term *pistos* or *pistis*, which is translated into English as trust, faith, believe.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:16

¹⁶"Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother." And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:16 "dishonors" To make small or of little weight (BDB 885 II, KB 1101, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE). It is the opposite of the Hebrew word "honor" (BDB 457, cf. 5:16; Exod. 20:12). It may specifically refer to a child "cursing" his parents (cf. Exod. 21:17; Lev. 20:9), but the term itself means lack of respect and honor, which could denote disobedience. Religious instruction came through the parents (cf. 4:9,10,20-25; 6:7; 11:19; 32:46). Rejection of parents resulted in defective faith!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:17

¹⁷"Cursed is he who moves his neighbor's boundary mark. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:17 "moves his neighbors boundary mark" This was serious because it had to do with the theft of the land inheritance of God, given through Joshua (cf. Joshua 12-19; Deut. 19:14; Job 24:2; Pro. 22:28; 23:10; Hosea 5:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:18

¹⁸"Cursed is he who misleads a blind person on the road. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:18 "blind person on the road" This may be a Hebrew metaphor for one who gives counsel to someone in an area in which he is not expert and thus gives bad counsel. Because of the compassionate characteristics of Deuteronomy, I think this may simply be saying not to take advantage of the handicapped (cf. Lev. 19:14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:19

¹⁹"Cursed is he who distorts the justice due an alien, orphan, and widow. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:19 This is paralleled in 24:17 and shows no partiality or taking of a bribe in 1:17; 10:17; 16:19. The VERB “distort” (BDB 639, KB 692, *Hiphil* PARTICIPLE) means “turn,” but here and 16:19; 24:17; and Exod. 23:6, it denotes a perverting or twisting of that which is right/just.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:20

²⁰"Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:20 “lies with” This (BDB 1011, KB 1486, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is a euphemism for “sexual relationship,” usually of a restricted nature (i.e., incest, bestiality, or homosexuality, cf. Lev. 20:11,12,13,18,20; Deut. 27:20,21,22,23). Human sexuality is both a divine gift and a powerful urge. It must be defined and regulated for a peaceful, long-lasting society. For a good discussion of sexual regulations in ancient Israel see NIDOTTE, vol. 4, pp. 1198-1211.

Incest affected the stability of the home and family as well as the society. The exact persons from whom one is prohibited from marrying changes from culture to culture, but all cultures of the Ancient Near East (except the Egyptian royal family) have rules about incest!

▣ **“father’s skirt”** This is a symbol of the act of marriage (cf. 22:30; Lev. 18:8). This is another violation of honor. It typifies sin as more and more for me at any cost!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:21

²¹"Cursed is he who lies with any animal. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:21 “Cursed is he who lies with any animal” This is prohibited in Lev. 18:23; 20:15. Exodus 22:19 and Luke 15:23 show contextually this has to do with idolatry (i.e., ritual magic from Ugarit). Hittite texts show cohabiting with sacred animals symbolized unity with deity.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:22

²²"Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or of his mother. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:22 These are part of the laws of incest (cf. Leviticus 18).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:23

²³"Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:23 This prohibition is recorded in Lev. 18:8; 20:14.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:24

²⁴"Cursed is he who strikes his neighbor in secret. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:24-25 These verses deal with murder (cf. 5:17; Exod. 20:13; 21:12; Lev. 24:17,21). A murder polluted all the land (cf. 21:1-9).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:25

²⁵"Cursed is he who accepts a bribe to strike down an innocent person. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:25 This is recorded in Exod. 23:6-8. This could refer to (1) an assassin or (2) a bribed judge who has a person put to death.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 27:26

²⁶"Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them. And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'"

27:26 "Cursed. . .who does not confirm the words of this law" This is a summary verse similar to the closing of the Decalogue. It is quoted by Paul in Gal. 3:10.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is Moses mentioned in the third person?
2. Why is such great importance given to Shechem (Mt. Gerizim)?
3. Why are the blessings not mentioned with the cursing?

DEUTERONOMY 28

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Blessings on Obedience	The Conclusion of Moses Second Address	The Blessing of Obedience	Promised Blessings
28:1-14	28:1-2	28:1-2	28:1-2
	28:3	28:3	28:3-8
	28:4	28:4	
	28:5	28:5	
	28:6	28:6	
	28:7-14	28:7	
		28:8	
		28:9-14	28:9-14
Curses on Disobedience		The Consequences of Disobedience	Curses
28:15-19	28:15	28:15	28:15
	28:16	28:16	28:16-19
	28:17	28:17	
	28:18	28:18	
	28:19	28:19	
28:20-46	28:20-24	28:20-24	28:20-26
	28:25-44	28:25-29	28:27-29a
			28:29b-35
		28:30-35	
		28:36-37	28:36-37
		28:38-42	28:38-42
		28:43-44	28:43-44
	28:45-46	28:45-52	28:45-46
			Of War and Exile to Come
28:47-57	28:47-57		28:47-48
			28:49-57
		28:53-57	
28:58-63	28:58-63	28:58-63	28:58-62a
			28:62b-68
28:64-68	28:64-68		

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

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1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

BACKGROUND STUDY

This is part of a literary unit, chapters 27-28, which is often referred to as “the cursing and blessing” section of the Covenant.

- A. I think the whole OT can be seen as a consequence of Israel's inability to perform the Covenant stipulations, and thereby, was visited with the curses of 27:15-26; 28:15-68.
- B. YHWH wanted Israel to be a revelatory channel for all the world to come to know Him. He wanted to bless Israel to gain the attention of the nations and thereby to attract the nations unto Himself. See Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 4:6.
- C. The curses for disobedience are more numerous than the promised blessings.
This same structure is paralleled in the treaties of the ancient Near East (see Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great Kings: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy* and D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr., *Cracking Old Testament Codes*, pp. 125-128.
- D. This cursing and blessing section is parallel to Leviticus 26.
- E. This is the second sermon of Moses (i.e., chapters 5-28). The first sermon looked back to YHWH's gracious, powerful extraction of Israel from Egypt and His presence and provision through the wilderness wandering period.
The second sermon focuses on YHWH's will for national Israel in the Promised Land. He establishes Israel's distinctiveness so as to reveal Himself to the world.
The third sermon (chapters 29-32) deal with covenant renewal and affirmation of Israel's loyalty and obedience to YHWH alone.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:1-2

¹"Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ²All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God:"

28:1,2,9,13 “if you will” This clearly shows the conditional nature of the Mosaic Law and for that matter, all OT covenants (see Special Topic: Covenant at 4:13) except with Noah (cf. Gen. 9:8-17). This conditional aspect is also seen in the NT (cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 20:21 and Eph. 2:8-9 and 10). The “if you will . . . I will” nature of the covenant shows the needed response expected on the believer’s part. The tragedy is that fallen humanity cannot and will not conform or perform, therefore, the OT demands the need for a NT (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-32; Gal. 3:15-29).

28:1,2,13 “diligently obey. . .being careful to do all His commandments” The first VERBAL “diligently obey” is an INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Qal* IMPERFECT of the same root (BDB 1033, KB 1570), which was a grammatical way of showing emphasis. This is followed by two *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS:

1. “being careful” - BDB 1036, KB 1581
2. “to do” - BDB 793, KB 889

It must be stated that believers’ ongoing covenant relationship with God is affected by their obedience to the light and truth they have and live.

▣ **“commandments”** See Special Topic at 4:1.

▣ **“which I command you today”** This VERB (BDB 845, KB 1010, *Piel* PARTICIPLE) is repeated throughout this chapter (cf. vv.1,8,13,15,45). YHWH is sovereign. He always sets the limits and content of the covenant and initiates the encounter with humans.

28:1 “God will set you high above all the nations of the earth” The purpose of the elevation is revelation (cf. 26:19; 28:13)! God wants to draw the world to Himself through Israel (cf. Gen. 12:3; 22:18; Exod. 19:5-6). See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 4:6.

28:2 “blessings” The term (BDB 139) is related to the root “to kneel” (BDB 138). YHWH offers Israel the choice (cf. 11:26-31; 30:1,19). This conformity to YHWH’s covenant requirements determines their destiny!

▣ **“will come upon you”** This idiomatic phrase (BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PERFECT) is used here for blessing, but in v. 15 for the curses.

▣ **“overtake”** The VERB (BDB 673, KB 727, *Hiphil*) is used of:

1. blessing, pursuing, and overtaking Israel because of her obedience, v. 2
2. cursing, pursuing, and overtaking Israel because of her disobedience, vv. 15,45

▣ **“obey”** In v. 1 this term (BDB 1033, KB 1570) was an intensified *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and a *Qal* IMPERFECT. Here it is a *Qal* IMPERFECT (cf. vv. 15,49; 30:10,12,13,17; 31:12) and in vv. 45, 62 a *Qal* PERFECT (cf. 30:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:3

³"Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country."

28:3 "Blessed shall you be in the city. . .in the country" This is a metaphorical way of expressing universal blessing (cf. v. 4-6, 8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:4

⁴"Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock."

28:4 "Blessed. . .offspring of your body. . .the herd. . .crops. . .flock" Many and healthy cattle and children were a sign of prosperity and wealth. The man with large families, large herds, was one who was blessed by God (cf. 7:13; 28:4,11; 30:9). These were physical signs of God's blessings (cf. Gen. 1:22,28).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:5

⁵"Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl."

28:5 "Blessed. . .basket" This basket was used to carry fruit or grain (cf. 26:2). This speaks of prosperity in agriculture.

▣ "Blessed. . .kneading bowl" This was a bowl used to prepare family meals (i.e., daily bread). This was a way of saying, "there will always be food on the table." The opposite is stated in v. 17.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:6

⁶"Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out."

28:6 "Blessed. . .when you come in. . .when you go out" This is a Hebraic idiom (cf. 31:2; Ps. 121:8; Isa. 37:28) for a blessed life in all areas (cf. contrast in v. 19).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:7-14

⁷The Lord shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways. ⁸The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you. ⁹The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways. ¹⁰So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will be afraid of you. ¹¹The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. ¹²The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe *them* carefully, ¹⁴and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them."

28:7 “enemies” This PARTICIPLE (BDB 33, KB 38 *Qal* PARTICIPLE) is used eight times in this chapter (cf. vv. 7,25,31,48,53,55,57,68). It refers to the active hostility of a person or group against a person or group. YHWH promised to be an enemy to Israel’s enemies (cf. Exod. 23:22), but because of covenant disobedience He is now an enemy to Israel!

If Israel is obedient YHWH will fight her enemies (cf. 30:7; 33:27-29).

▣ **“will flee before you seven ways”** This idiom refers to the fearful, unorganized retreat of Israel’s enemies (cf. vv. 20, 25). See Special Topic: Symbolic Numbers in Scripture at 23:3.

28:8 “blessing upon. . . barns” This refers to grain storehouses (cf. Prov. 3:10). Later Judaism says this refers to YHWH blessing one in secret.

▣ **“in the land which the LORD your God gives you”** This goes back to the promise to Abraham in Gen. 12:1-3. The land was God’s special promise fulfilled in the Exodus/conquest.

28:9 “the LORD will establish you” This VERB (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) basically means “to raise up.” It is used in several different senses in Deuteronomy in the *Hiphil* (i.e., [1] confirm a covenant, cf. 8:18; [2] being on the scene, cf. 18:15,18; [3] raise up fallen livestock, cf. 22:4; and [4] to set up memorial stones, cf. 27:3). Here it is used in the metaphorical sense of “establish,” as in 25:7 and 29:13.

▣ **“a holy people”** The word “holy” means “set apart for God’s service” (BDB 871 and 872, see Special Topic at 5:12, cf. Exod. 19:5-6). Israel was meant to be a kingdom of priests to bring all the nations to YHWH.

▣ **“walk”** This is a biblical metaphor for lifestyle faith and obedience (cf. 5:33; 8:6; 10:12; 11:22; 19:9; 26:17; 30:16).

28:10 “So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD” The phrase “called by the name of the LORD” (BDB 894, KB 1128, *Niphal* PERFECT) denotes YHWH’s ownership of Israel (cf. II Sam. 6:2; Isa. 43:7; Jer. 7:10-12; 14:9; 15:16; 32:34; Dan. 9:18,19; Amos 9:12).

YHWH wanted Israel to be a revelatory channel for all the world to come to know Him. He wanted to bless Israel to gain the attention of the nations and thereby to attract the nations unto Himself (cf. v. 25, 37). See Special Topic at 4:6.

▣ **“afraid of you”** The blessings of YHWH, both in domestic and military areas, will cause fear/reverence (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 7:19; 17:13) on the part of superstitious pagans of the surrounding nations.

Israel was not to fear (BDB 431, KB 432) because YHWH was with them, for them, and fought on their behalf (e.g., 1:21,29; 3:2,22; 7:18; 20:1,3; 31:6,8).

28:11 This is a summary verse of God’s blessing to an obedient covenant people (e.g., 11:14).

28:12 “His good storehouse” This (BDB 373 II and 69) was a symbol of heaven and rain (cf. vv. 23-24; Ps. 85:12; Mal. 3:10). It is possibly a sarcastic reference to *Ba’al* worship. *Ba’al* was the Canaanite god of prosperity (i.e., rain, cf. I Kings 17-18). Yet, it was YHWH who provided all blessings to His people (cf. v. 47; 11:14; Lev. 26:4).

▣ **“to give rain to your land in its season”** This verb (BDB 678, KB 733) is used regularly in this chapter for YHWH’s covenant gifts of blessing (cf. vv. 1,7,8,11,12,13).

Not only will YHWH open the windows of heaven and send rain, but He will do it at the appropriate time (i.e., early and later rains, the time of planting and the time of maturing crops).

▣ **“you shall lend to many nations but you shall not borrow”** This was another sign of God’s blessing that they had surplus to loan (cf. 23:20)! The results of disobedience are sharply contrasted in v. 44!

28:13 This verse has two idioms of prosperity and power:

1. the head and not the tail
2. you only shall be above, not be underneath

But note the conditional element. The same idiom was used in v. 1, “being careful to do” (two INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS). The reversal caused by disobedience is seen in v. 44.

28:14 “do not turn aside. . .to the right or to the left” It is used literally in Num. 20:17; 22:26; Deut. 2:27, but usually it is a Hebrew idiom for “any deviation from the standard or clearly marked path is sin” (cf. 5:32; 17:11,20; Josh. 1:7; 23:6; II Kgs. 22:2). Notice here, idolatry is specifically referenced (cf. 5:7-9; 27:15; Exod. 20:23; 34:17).

▣

NASB, NRSV “which I command you today”
NKJV “which I command you this day”
TEV
NJB “the words which I am laying down for you today”

This phrase seems to imply a special day of giving the law (cf. vv. 1,13,14,15). However, *’olam* can refer to a period of time. See Special Topic at 4:40. The reason for the question is exactly to what does “the book” of vv. 58 and 61 refer?:

1. all of Deuteronomy
2. one of Moses’ sermons in Deuteronomy
3. larger body of legislation including parts of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:15

¹⁵“But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:”

28:15-37 This section of cursings does not demand a literal interpretation. Rather, they were to build up an impression of disaster. These kinds of blights will follow if disobedience occurs. It was a way of building up a mindset on what will happen if Israel violates YHWH’s law.

28:15 “to observe to do” This is the exact terminology and grammatical form found in vv. 1,13; 32:46. Similar forms of the same terms are found in 28:58 and 29:8. Obedience is crucial. Obedience is not the foundation of the covenant, but its natural outflow! The covenant is established in the love and sovereignty of YHWH, but its continuance and fruitfulness is maintained by obedience. If you love Me, keep My commandments!

▣ **“His commandments and His statutes”** See Special Topic at 4:1.

▣ **“curses”** This is a NOUN form from the root “to be small” (BDB 886-887, cf. 27:15-26, 28:15-68). These curses were meant to cause Israel to return to YHWH.

▣ **“overtake”** See note at v. 2.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:16

¹⁶“Cursed *shall you be* in the city, and cursed *shall you be* in the country.”

28:16-19 These verses parallel completely. Verses 3-6 are the blessings; vv. 16-19 are the cursings.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:17

¹⁷“Cursed *shall be* your basket and your kneading bowl.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:18

¹⁸“Cursed *shall be* the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock.”

2:18

NASB, NJB “offspring of your body”

NKJV “fruit of your body”

NRSV “fruit of your womb”

TEV “children”

The literal phrase is, “the fruit of your womb.” Many healthy, happy children were one of the blessings (cf. vv. 4,11), but disobedience brought covenant promise reversal!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:19

¹⁹“Cursed *shall you be* when you come in, and cursed *shall you be* when you go out.”

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:20-24

²⁰“The LORD will send upon you curses, confusion, and rebuke, in all you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me. ²¹The LORD will make the pestilence cling to you until He has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it. ²²The LORD will smite you with consumption and with fever and with inflammation and with fiery heat and with the sword and with blight and with mildew, and they will pursue you until you perish. ²³The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. ²⁴The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.”

28:20 **“confusion”** This is a word (BDB 223) that is used of defeat in battle (cf. 7:23). It is opposite of vv. 7 and 25. The confusion will be upon Israel if she disobeys God’s word.

▣ **“rebuke”** This term (BDB 172) is found only here in the OT.

▣ **“until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly”** Notice the parallelism:

1. “destroyed” - BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. 4:26; 6:15

2. “perish” - BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. Lev. 26:38; Deut. 4:26; 8:19-20; 11:17; 30:18-20; Josh. 23:13,16 plus the ADVERB “quickly” (BDB 555 II)

▣ **“on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken Me”** Notice that deviation from the commandments is seen as forsaking YHWH!

28:21 “pestilence” This (BDB 184) refers to a plague (cf. Lev. 26:25; Num. 14:12) like YHWH sent on Egypt (cf. Exod. 5:3; 9:15).

▣ **“cling”** The VERB (BDB 179, KB 209, *Hiphil*) is JUSSIVE in form. YHWH’s judgment will stick close to them until it has finished its task (i.e., “consumed you,” BDB 477, KB 476, *Piel* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT). The term is used for what Israel was to do to YHWH (i.e., cling to Him, cf. 10:20; 11:22; 30:20).

28:22 “sword” Note the list of things YHWH will send against a disobedient Israel:

1. consumption (BDB 1006, cf. Lev. 26:16), a disease of the lungs
2. fever (BDB 869, cf. Lev. 26:16)
3. inflammation (BDB 196)
4. fiery heat (BDB 359, #2,3, and 4 all involve heat; this one seems to imply drought conditions, cf. NRSV)
5. sword (BDB 352)
6. blight (BDB 995, smut on crops, cf. I Kgs. 8:37; II Chr. 6:28; Amos 4:9)
7. mildew (BDB 439, cf. I Kgs. 8:37; II Chr. 6:28; Amos 4:9; Hag. 2:17; the word means “green,” therefore, a “green mildew”)

Both humans and agriculture will suffer and die! Notice the symbolic number of afflictions (i.e., seven; there are also seven blessings listed in this chapter). See Special Topic at 23:3.

28:23 “iron” Iron is often a metaphor for difficulties:

1. the land will not produce, because of no rain it turns as hard as metal, v. 23, cf. Lev. 26:19
2. the yoke of iron is placed on Israel’s neck, v. 48
3. Egypt as an iron furnace of affliction, cf. 4:20

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:25-26

²⁵“The LORD shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be *an example of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth*. ²⁶Your carcasses will be food to all birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten *them* away.”

28:25 “you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them” This is a metaphor describing Israel’s military planning as being totally useless. Seven is a numerical symbol for “perfection.” Israel will be in total retreat. The promises of “holy war” have been reversed!

▣ **“you will be *an example of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth*”** Israel will be used by YHWH to reveal Himself to the world; either positively (i.e., the blessings) or negatively (i.e., the curses, cf. v. 37; II Chr. 29:8; Jer. 15:4). YHWH wanted to use Israel to reach all mankind (see Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 4:6). This is a reversal of His purposes!

28:26 “Your carcasses shall be food” For Israel it was a great tragedy to be unburied and thus able to be picked apart by animals (cf. I Sam. 17:44-46). Because of the mentioning of “birds,” many see this as an eschatological reference (cf. Isa. 18:14; Jer. 7:33; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20; Ezek. 29:5; 32:4; 39:4).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:27-37

²⁷“The LORD will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors and with the scab and with the itch, from which you cannot be healed. ²⁸The LORD will smite you with madness and with blindness and with bewilderment of heart; ²⁹and you will grope at noon, as the blind man gropes in darkness, and you will not prosper in your ways; but you shall only be oppressed and robbed continually, with none to save you. ³⁰You shall betroth a wife, but another man will violate her; you shall build a house, but you will not live in it; you shall plant a vineyard, but you will not use its fruit. ³¹Your ox shall be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will not eat of it; your donkey shall be torn away from you, and will not be restored to you; your sheep shall be given to your enemies, and you will have none to save you. ³²Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people, while your eyes look on and yearn for them continually; but there will be nothing you can do. ³³A people whom you do not know shall eat up the produce of your ground and all your labors, and you will never be anything but oppressed and crushed continually. ³⁴You shall be driven mad by the sight of what you see. ³⁵The LORD will strike you on the knees and legs with sore boils, from which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head. ³⁶The LORD will bring you and your king, whom you set over you, to a nation which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone. ³⁷You shall become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where the Lord drives you.”

28:27 “with the boils of Egypt” Notice the list of plagues and problems (plagues of Egypt and reversal of covenant blessings) YHWH will visit on Israel if they do not obey His covenant. To whom much is given, much is required (e.g., Luke 12:48).

1. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV “boils,” cf. vv. 27,35
 NJB “Egyptian ulcers”
 JPSOA “inflammation”
 BDB 1006, cf. Exod. 9:9-11. It refers to some kind of abscess.

2. NASB, JPSOA “tumors,” v. 27
 NKJV “emerods”
 NRSV “ulcers”
 TEV “sores”
 NJB “swelling in the groin”
 BDB 779 II, cf. I Sam. 5:6,9,12. Many scholars have interpreted this as the symptoms of plague (i.e., buboes, large darkened, swollen areas, cf. I Sam. 5:9-6:17, which, by implication, associates it with mice)

3. NASB, NKJV “the scab,” v. 27
 NRSV, NJB “scurvy”
 JPSOA “boil-scars”
 BDB 173, cf. Lev. 21:20; 22:22

4. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB “the itch,” v. 27
 BDB 360 III. This term is found only here in the OT and refers to skin irritation caused by mites (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 2, p. 278).

5. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB “madness,” vv. 28,35
TEV “lose your mind”
BDB 993, cf. Zech. 12:4
6. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB “blindness, vv. 28,29
BDB 734, cf. Lam. 4:14; Zeph. 1:17
7. NASB “bewilderment of heart,” v. 28
NKJV “confusion of heart”
NRSV “confusion of mind”
TEV “confusion”
NJB “distraction of mind”
BDB 1069, cf. Zech. 12:4
8. NASB, NKJV “oppressed ... continually,” v. 29
NRSV “continually abused”
TEV “constantly oppressed”
NJB “exploited”
BDB 798, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Lev. 6:2
9. NASB, TEV “robbed continually,” v. 29
NKJV “plundered continually”
NRSV “continually robbed”
NJB “plundered”
BDB 159, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. Lev. 6:2
10. NASB “wife ... violated,” v. 30
NKJV, NRSV “lie with her”
BDB 993, KB 1415, *Qal* IMPERFECT
11. your home lived in by another, v. 30
12. your vineyard enjoyed by another, v. 30
13. your livestock taken by another, v. 31
14. your children taken, v. 32
15. your crops given to another, v. 33
16. your labors enjoyed by another, v. 33
17. NASB, NKJV “oppressed,” v. 33
NRSV “abused”
TEV “oppression”
NJB “exploited”
BDB 798, KB 897, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. v. 29; I Sam. 12:4; Amos 4:1
18. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB “crushed,” v. 33
TEV “harsh treatment”
BDB 954, KB 1285, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE, cf. I Sam. 12:3-4; Amos 4:1
19. NASB, NKJV, NRSV, NJB “driven mad,” v. 34
TEV “make you lose your mind”
BDB 993, KB 1415, *Pual* PARTICIPLE, cf. v. 30

20. NASB “strike you. . .with sore boils,” v. 35
 NKJV “strike you. . .with severe boils”
 NRSV “strike you. . .with grievous boils”
 TEV “will cover you. . .painful sores, boils”
 NJB “strike you down with foul ulcers”
 BDB 645, KB 697, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT and two OBJECTS, BDB 1006 and 948
21. your king removed and replaced by pagan rulers, v. 36
22. you shall serve foreign gods, v. 36
23. you will become:
- a.**
- NASB “a horror,” v. 37
 NKJV “an astonishment”
 NRSV “object of horror”
 NJB “the astonishment”
 BDB 1031 I, cf. II Kgs. 22:19; Jer. 5:30; 25:9,11,18,38; 29:18; 42:18; 44:12,22; 49:13,17; 50:23; 51:37,41
- b.**
- NASB, NKJV, NRSV “a proverb,” v. 37
 NJB “the byword”
 BDB 605, cf. I Kgs. 9:7; Jer. 24:9
- c.**
- NASB “a taunt,” v. 37
 NKJV, NRSV “a byword”
 NJB “the laughing-stock”
 BDB 1042, cf. I Kgs. 9:7; Jer. 24:9
24. NASB “the LORD will drive you”
 NKJV, NRSV “the LORD will lead you”
 NJB “Yahweh is taking you”

This VERB (BDB 624 I, KB 675, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is used of leading livestock (e.g., Exod. 3:1). It became a metaphor of (1) leading people in judgment (e.g., 4:27; I Sam. 30:2,22; Isa. 20:4) or (2) YHWH leading as a caring shepherd (cf. Ps. 48:14; 78:26,52; 80:1). Humans will be led (shepherd) or driven (judge) by their faith obedience.

This reminds them of the plague of the boils on the Egyptians (cf. Exod. 9:8ff). These plagues are now visited on disobedient Israel (cf. 7:15; 28:60,61).

28:32 Notice the plight of these Israeli parents:

1. children given to other people (BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLE)
2. they see it happening (BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE)
3. their eyes fail with longing all the day (the term, BDB 479, is found only here in the OT)
4. they have no power to stop it (BDB 34 II, CONSTRUCT BDB 43)

28:33 “oppressed” This term was used regularly of the wealthy taking advantage of the poor and socially ostracized, but here it is used of YHWH breaking His disobedient people.

28:35 “from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head” This is a metaphor for widespread sickness of which one cannot be healed (cf. Job 2:7; Isa. 1:5-6).

28:36 “your king” Moses recognized that there would be a king someday (cf. 17:14-20). The Israelites were a tribal society. There was no king until Saul (cf. I Samuel 8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:38-44

³⁸You shall bring out much seed to the field but you will gather in little, for the locust will consume it. ³⁹You shall plant and cultivate vineyards, but you will neither drink of the wine nor gather *the grapes*, for the worm will devour them. ⁴⁰You shall have olive trees throughout your territory but you will not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives will drop off. ⁴¹You shall have sons and daughters but they will not be yours, for they will go into captivity. ⁴²The cricket shall possess all your trees and the produce of your ground. ⁴³The alien who is among you shall rise above you higher and higher, but you will go down lower and lower. ⁴⁴He shall lend to you, but you will not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you will be the tail."

28:38-42 Again notice the list of Israel’s attempts at prosperity, which will be thwarted by YHWH:

<u>Their Actions</u>	<u>Results</u>
1. much seed, v. 38	locusts destroy
2. plant vineyards, v. 39	worms destroy
3. plant olive trees, v. 40	olives drop off
4. have children, v. 41	children taken captive
5. trees and produce, v. 42	crickets destroy

The promised prosperity of YHWH is negated by the covenant disobedience of Israel!

28:40 “anoint yourself” The people of the ancient Near East put olive oil on their faces as a symbol of prosperity and joy (e.g., Ruth 3:3; II Sam. 12:20; 14:2).

28:43-44 These two verses describe the role reversal of Israelites and resident aliens (sojourners, BDB 158):

1. aliens shall rise above you
 - a. they higher and higher (BDB 751)
 - b. you lower and lower (BDB 641)[the reversal of v. 13]
2. alien shall lend to you
[the reversal of v. 12]
3. alien shall be the head
[the reversal of v. 13]

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:45-46

⁴⁵"So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. ⁴⁶They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever."

28:45-48 Notice the cause and effect of YHWH’s covenant judgments:

1. the cause

- a. Israel would not listen (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT) and keep (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) YHWH's commandments and statutes, v. 45
 - b. Israel did not serve (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT [twice]) YHWH, v. 47:
 - (1) with joy
 - (2) with a glad heart
 - (3) thankfully for the abundance of all things
2. the effect
- a. curses
 - (1) shall come on you, v. 45, BDB 97, KB 112, *Qal* PERFECT
 - (2) pursue you, v. 45, BDB 922, KB 1191, *Qal* PERFECT
 - (3) overtake you, v. 45, BDB 673, KB 727, *Hiphil* PERFECT
 - (4) until you are destroyed, v. 45, BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Niphal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. 4:25-26
 - b. enemies
 - (1) you shall serve your enemies, v. 48
 - (a) in hunger (BDB 944)
 - (b) in thirst (BDB 854)
 - (c) in nakedness (BDB 735)
 - (d) lack of all things
 - (e) put iron yoke on you
 - (f) until destroyed (BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. 4:25-26)

28:46 “forever” See Special Topic at 4:40.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:47-48

⁴⁷"Because you did not serve the LORD your God with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; ⁴⁸therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness, and in the lack of all things; and He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you."

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:49-57

⁴⁹"The LORD will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as the eagle swoops down, a nation whose language you shall not understand, ⁵⁰a nation of fierce countenance who will have no respect for the old, nor show favor to the young. ⁵¹Moreover, it shall eat the offspring of your herd and the produce of your ground until you are destroyed, who also leaves you no grain, new wine, or oil, nor the increase of your herd or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. ⁵²It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout your land, and it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout your land which the LORD your God has given you. ⁵³Then you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters whom the LORD your God has given you, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you. ⁵⁴The man who is refined and very delicate among you shall be hostile toward his brother and toward the wife he cherishes and toward the rest of his children who remain, ⁵⁵so that he will not give *even* one of them any of the flesh of his children which he will eat, since he has nothing *else* left, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in all your towns. ⁵⁶The refined and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and refinement, shall be hostile toward the husband she cherishes and toward her son and daughter, ⁵⁷and toward her afterbirth

which issues from between her legs and toward her children whom she bears; for she will eat them secretly for lack of anything *else*, during the siege and the distress by which your enemy will oppress you in your towns."

28:49-57 The consequences of disobedience are continued. This paragraph lists the problems related to siege warfare in the ancient Near East:

1. The invaders described:
 - a. invader brought by YHWH, v. 49
 - b. a nation from afar, v. 49
 - c. a nation with a strong and swift army, v. 49
 - d. a nation with an unknown language, v. 49
 - e. a nation with no respect for those whom they invade, v. 50
 - f. a nation that will consume all the produce and livestock of Israel for food, v. 51
 - g. a nation who will besiege every fortified city in Israel, v. 52
2. The consequences for Israel:
 - a. they will perish for lack of food, v. 51
 - b. Israel shall eat her own young, v. 53 (cf. Lev. 26:29) and not share even this food (cf. v. 57)
 - c. gentle (BDB 940) men and women will lose their natural and family affections and turn hostile, vv. 54,56
 - d. they will not share their children as food, v. 57

28:49 “The LORD will bring a nation against you” This refers to Assyria (cf. Hos. 8:1) and/or Babylon (cf. Jer. 5:15).

28:50 “no respect for the old; nor show favor to the young” The Assyrians especially, but also the Babylonians, would kill the elderly (opposite of Lev. 19:32) and the children as a way of demoralizing the population before they were deported to a distant region and resettled in someone else’s houses.

28:51 In this verse the invading nations are described in terms of a total devastation of resources similar to the locust plagues of Joel, Amos, and Micah.

28:52 “high and fortified walls in which you trusted” Israel would be trusting (BDB 105, KB 120, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) in their military preparations (cf. II Chr. 32:7-8)!

28:53-57 “you shall eat the offspring of your own body” This shows the desperate nature of a siege (i.e., cannibalism, cf. Lev. 26:29; II Kgs. 6:24-30; Jer. 19:9; Lam. 2:20; 4:10; Ezek. 5:10).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 28:58-68

⁵⁸“If you are not careful to observe all the words of this law which are written in this book, to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God, ⁵⁹then the LORD will bring extraordinary plagues on you and your descendants, even severe and lasting plagues, and miserable and chronic sicknesses. ⁶⁰He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they will cling to you. ⁶¹Also every sickness and every plague which, not written in the book of this law, the LORD will bring on you until you are destroyed. ⁶²Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the LORD your God. ⁶³It shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you

are entering to possess it. ⁶⁴Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known. ⁶⁵Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. ⁶⁶So your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you will be in dread night and day, and shall have no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷In the morning you shall say, 'Would that it were evening!' And at evening you shall say, 'Would that it were morning!' because of the dread of your heart which you dread, and for the sight of your eyes which you will see. ⁶⁸The LORD will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I spoke to you, 'You will never see it again!' And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.'

28:58-68 “if. . .then” Notice the covenant obligations and the consequences for disobedience:

1. “if you”
 - a. “are not careful to observe all the words of this law” (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* IMPERFECT and BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - b. “to fear this honored and awesome name, the LORD your God” (BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. 4:10; 5:29; 6:2,13,24; 10:12,20; 13:4; 14:23; 17:19; 28:58; 31:12,13)
 - c. note vv. 1,13,15,58; 29:9; 31:12; 32:46. Obedience is crucial!
2. “then”
 - a. YHWH will bring plagues, v. 59
 - (1) extraordinary (BDB 810, KB 927, *Hiphil* PERFECT)
 - (2) severe (BDB 152)
 - (3) lasting (BDB 52, KB 63, *Niphal* PERFECT)
 - (4) miserable, (BDB 948)
 - (5) chronic (BDB 52, KB 63, *Niphal* PERFECT)
 - b. YHWH will bring back the plagues (BDB 188, cf. 7:15), of which the Israelites were afraid (BDB 388, KB 386, *Qal* PERFECT), of Egypt to cling (BDB 179, KB 209, *Qal* PERFECT) to them, v. 60
 - c. YHWH will bring every sickness (BDB 315) and every plague (BDB 646, cf. Lev. 26:21) not mentioned in the book of the law, v. 61
 - d. YHWH will reverse His promise of prosperity and abundance, vv. 62-63
 - e. YHWH will reverse the exodus from Egypt to the Promised Land and scatter (BDB 806, KB 918, *Hiphil* PERFECT) His covenant people, v. 64
 - (1) serve other gods, v. 64
 - (2) find no rest, v. 65
 - (3) have trembling heart, v. 65
 - (4) failing eyes, v. 65
 - (5) despair of soul, v. 65
 - (6) be in dread night and day, vv. 66,67
 - (7) no assurance of life, v. 66 (See Special Topic at 1:32)
 - (8) slavery, v. 68

28:58

NASB

NKJV, NRSV

TEV

“this honored and awesome name”

“the glorious and awesome name”

“this wonderful and awesome name”

NJB “this glorious and awe-inspiring name”

The “name” stands for the person and character of YHWH (e.g., Job 1:21; Isa. 48:9-11; Ezek. 20:44; Amos 2:7). He is described by the two *Niphal* PARTICIPLES:

1. BDB 457, KB 455, from the VERB, “to be heavy or weighty,” used metaphorically for honorable or glorious (cf. Isa. 26:15; 66:5; Ezek. 28:22; 39:13)
2. BDB 431, KB 432, from the VERB, “to fear,” used in the sense of reverential awe of YHWH and His redemptive acts (e.g., 7:21; 10:17,21; Neh. 1:5; 4:14; 9:32; Ps. 145:6)

28:61 “the words of this law which are written in this book” It is uncertain what this refers to specifically:

1. the entire Torah
2. the laws of Exodus - Numbers
3. all of Deuteronomy (cf. 31:24)
4. parts of Deuteronomy
 - a. law codes
 - b. cursing and blessing

Of course “book” means scroll, but this does assert that Moses wrote or had someone record YHWH’s law dictated through him (cf. 27:3,8; 28:58; 29:21,29; 30:10).

28:62 “few in number” This was a reversal of the Abrahamic promises. God promised that they would be (1) like the “stars of heaven” (cf. Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 26:4); (2) like “the sand” (cf. Gen. 22:17; 32:12); and (3) like “the dust” (cf. Gen. 13:16; 28:14; Num. 23:10).

28:63 “the Lord delighted over you” This VERB (BDB 965, KB 1314) is used in two ways:

1. to bless (*Qal* PERFECT, cf. 30:9)
 - a. prosper you (BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - b. multiply you (BDB 915 I, KB 1176, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
2. to curse (*Qal* IMPERFECT)
 - a. perish (BDB 1, KB 2, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - b. destroy (BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - c. torn from the land (BDB 650, KB 702, *Niphal* PERFECT)

YHWH both rewards and disciplines His children. The discipline is for the purpose of restoration and inclusion.

☐ **“you will be torn from the land”** The VERB (BDB 650, KB 702, *Niphal* PERFECT) is often used of YHWH’s judgment (cf. Ps. 52:5; Pro. 15:25). This was a total reversal of the Abrahamic promises (cf. Gen. 12:1-3).

28:64 “the LORD will scatter you among all peoples” This refers to exile, a reverse exodus (cf. v. 68.)

☐ **“no resting place”** This (BDB 629 I) was also used twice for the Genesis 8 account of the flood of Noah’s day:

1. the Ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, v. 4
2. the dove sent out to find dry land could not find a place to rest, v. 9

YHWH wants His people to have a place of rest (i.e., the Promised Land, cf. 3:20; 12:9-10; 25:19; Josh. 1:13,15; 21:44), but their willful covenant disobedience brought a reverse exodus (i.e., exile, cf. Ps. 95:11).

28:65 “failing of eyes” This chapter mentions loss of sight several times:

1. blindness as YHWH’s judgment on covenant disobedience, vv. 28-29
2. judgment seen before your eyes, vv. 30-33
3. what you see will drive you mad, v. 34
4. metaphor for premeditated violence against another family member (i.e., “eye shall be evil toward”), vv. 54-56
5. Egyptian plagues, one of which was utter darkness, vv. 60-61
6. “failing eyes,” a metaphor for fear and despair, utter hopelessness, vv. 65-66
7. sight caused further dread, v. 67

28:66-67

NASB, NRSV	“dread”
NKJV	“fear”
TEV	“terror. . .fear”
NJB	“afraid. . .terror”
JPSOA	“terror. . .dread”

This term (BDB 808 I) means “trembling,” or “shaking,” caused by fear or joy! Here it is fear (e.g., Isa. 33:14). YHWH wanted to cause “dread” in Israel’s enemies (cf. 2:25; 11:25), but because of their disobedience they were the fearful ones!

28:68 “the LORD will bring you back to Egypt” The reversal of the Exodus. The re-captivity of Israel!

▣ **“by the way about which I spoke to you”** This reference to this statement by YHWH is uncertain.

▣ **“there will be no buyer”** The VERB “to buy” (BDB 888, KB 1111, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) was often used of YHWH purchasing Israel out of Egyptian bondage (cf. Exod. 15:16; Ps. 74:2), but here it is used of the fate of Israel whereby even Egypt would not buy them back as slaves. They were totally rejected by God and man.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the cursing section so much longer than the blessing?
2. What is the purpose of this chapter?
3. How is works-righteousness related to the blessing enjoined here?
4. Why is God’s judgment so severe?
5. Have these things occurred in Israel’s history?

DEUTERONOMY 29

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Covenant Renewed in Moab	Moses' Third Address (29:1-30:20)	The LORD'S Covenant with Israel in the Land of Moab	The Third Discourse (28:69-30:20) Historical Introduction
29:1	29:1	29:1	29:1-3
29:2-9	29:2-9	29:2-9	29:4-5 29:6-7 29:8 The Covenant in Moab 29:9-14
29:10-13	29:10-29	29:10-15	
29:14-29			29:15-16 29:16-21 29:17-20 A Threat of Exile 29:21-23 29:22-28 29:24-28 29:29
			[MT Versing]

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:1

¹These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb.

29:1 “the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses” This is Moses’ third address in Deuteronomy (chapters 29-30). He reminds us that these laws are from YHWH, not himself.

▣ **“besides the covenant”** This refers to the covenant at Mt. Sinai/Horeb (see Special Topic at 1:2, cf. 5:2ff; Exodus 19-24) and on the plains of Moab (cf. 1:5; 5:1,3,5-26). It was spelled out clearly in Exodus 20-31. It was renewed in Exodus 34; Deuteronomy 29-30; and Joshua 24. For “Covenant” see Special Topic at 4:13.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:2-9

²And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land; ³the great trials which your eyes have seen, those great signs and wonders. ⁴Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear. ⁵I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot. ⁶You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or strong drink, in order that you might know that I am the LORD your God. ⁷When you reached this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out to meet us for battle, but we defeated them; ⁸and we took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. ⁹So keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do."

29:2 “all Israel” This usually refers to only the elders, but because of vv. 1-13, it seems to refer to the entire nation. For “Israel” see Special Topic at 1:1.

29:2-3 “You have seen. . .your eyes have seen” This is a figure of speech (cf. 4:34; 7:19) because these people were the children of those who had seen (cf. Num. 14:29). Verses 2-8 form a historical review like chapters 1-4, which was a common element of Near Eastern treaties.

▣ **“sign and wonders”** These terms “signs” (BDB 16) and “wonders” (BDB 68) are mentioned often in Deuteronomy (cf. 4:34; 6:22; 7:19; 11:3; 26:8; 29:2; 34:11) to help the current generation of Israelites to remember YHWH’s powerful, gracious acts of deliverance and provisions (cf. vv. 5-7) during the Exodus and Wilderness Wandering Period.

29:4 “to this day” The blindness of Israel to their special place in YHWH’s eternal redemptive plan was not just an ancient problem (i.e., v. 4), but also a current problem (cf. Matt. 13:14-17; Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:9-10; John 12:36b-43; Acts 28:26-27; and especially Rom. 11:25-32).

The gospel is described as the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God (cf. Acts 2:23; also note 3:18; 4:28; 13:29). See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 4:6.

▣ **“the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear”** The Israelites of the exodus and wilderness wanderings saw the physical, but did not comprehend the spiritual dimension of YHWH’s actions (i.e., they were a special covenant people who were part of an eternal redemptive plan).

This phrase becomes a metaphor for spiritual blindness and hardness (cf. Isa. 6:9-10; Acts 28:26-27; Rom. 11:8).

There is a word play between v. 2, “you have seen” and v. 4, where it is stated they cannot see! This may refer to Israel’s rebellions mentioned in 9:7-24. Without faith God is invisible in history, but with faith history becomes God’s track record. It takes a gift (i.e., “given,” BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT) of YHWH’s grace for fallen humans to sense and understand His presence!

29:5 “clothes have not worn out. . .sandal has not worn out” Rashi says clothes and shoes grew as the children grew (cf. 8:4; Neh. 9:21).

29:6 Verses 5 and 6 show God’s providential care during the entire period of judgment known as the Wilderness Wandering Period (cf. 8:2-3). The Israelites were to help maintain the relationship by focusing on YHWH (not food, drink produced by human hands, but on His provision). But these verses also show the continual spiritual blindness of God’s people (cf. Isa. 6:9-10).

29:7 This shows YHWH’s military presence on behalf of Israel (cf. Num. 21:21-24, 33-35; and Deut. 2:26-3:17).

29:8 These are the tribes that settled on the eastern side of Jordan (cf. 3:12-13; Num. 32:28-32).

29:9 “So keep the words. . .do th” The conditional nature of the covenant (i.e., “keep,” BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT and “do,” BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT) is recurrent in Deuteronomy (cf. 4:2,6,9,15,23,40; 5:1,10,12,29,32; 6:2,3,12,17,25; 7:9,11,12; 8:1,2,6,11; 10:13; 11:1,8,16,22,32; 12:1,28,32; 15:5; 16:12; 17:19; 19:9; 24:8; 26:16,17,18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13,15,45,58; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). Obedience is a visible measure of the spiritual faithfulness of Israel. To love YHWH is to obey YHWH!

This verse was later read by the rabbis when some of the people were publicly whipped (cf. 25:3). It contains 13 words to correspond to 13 stripes. Psalm 78:38 was also read.

▣ **“that you may prosper in all that you do”** This VERB (BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) usually means “be prudent” or “circumspect,” but in the *Hiphil* stem it can mean “prosper,” “have success” (cf. Josh. 1:7-8; I Sam. 18:5,14,15; I Kgs. 2:3; II Kgs. 18:7; I Chr. 22:13). Notice that success and prosperity are contingent on obedience!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:10-13

¹⁰You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel, ¹¹your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, ¹²that you may enter into the covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the Lord your God is making with you today, ¹³in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

29:10 “You stand” Notice the different groupings of Israeli society mentioned in vv. 10-11:

1. chiefs, BDB 910
2. tribal members, BDB 986
3. tribal elders, BDB 278
4. tribal officers, BDB 1009, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
5. all the men of Israel, BDB 481, 35, 975 (same as #2)

6. children, BDB 381
7. wives, BDB 61
8. resident aliens, BDB 158
9. servants, described in their servant tasks

All these different groups are called upon to attest to their commitment to the covenant (cf. vv. 14-15). This is a formal covenant renewal ceremony!

The number of groups mentioned varies from translation to translation. Some translations (REB) assume that #1 and 2 should be combined (e.g., KJV, “your captains of your tribes,” JPSOA, “your tribal leaders”). The ASV, NASB, NIB all have #1-4.

29:12-13 This is a covenant renewal text. Notice how “the covenant” (BDB 136) and “the oath” (BDB 46) are parallel. YHWH’s regulations are linked to His promises!

YHWH wants to culminate the promises made to the Patriarchs in Genesis by establishing a people (cf. 28:9), a people who reflect His character!

29:12

NASB, NKJV,

NRSV, TEV “that you may enter into the covenant”

NJB

“and you are about to pass into the covenant”

The VERBAL (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) literally means “pass over.” It is used only in the sense of entering into a covenant here. It is possibly connected to the idea of “cutting” a covenant by passing between the parts of the sacrificial animal as in Gen. 15:17-18. The inference is that the fate of the animal will pass on to the one making the covenant if they disobey the stipulations.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:14-21

¹⁴“Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, ¹⁵but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today ¹⁶(for you know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed; ¹⁷moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which *they had* with them); ¹⁸so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood. ¹⁹It shall be when he hears the words of this curse, that he will boast, saying, ‘I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered *land* with the dry.’ ²⁰The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. ²¹Then the LORD will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the law.”

29:15 “and with those who are not with us here today” This refers to future generations (cf. vv. 22,29; 5:3-5; 12:25,28).

29:16-17 These verses form a summary parenthesis about the pagan nations Israel encountered in its pilgrimage to the Promised Land.

▣ **“their abominations”** See Special Topic: Abominations at 14:3.

29:18 The warnings against covenant disobedience (esp. idolatry) is clearly spelled out for each and every member and social group in Israeli society (i.e., individuals, families, tribes).

▣ **“a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood”** This phrase is parallel to “whose heart turns away” (BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE). The poison is disobedience and the consequences are severe!

1. YHWH will never be willing to forgive him (v. 20, negated *Qal* IMPERFECT, BDB 2, KB 3) and a *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT (BDB 699, KB 757).
2. YHWH’s anger and jealousy will burn against him (v. 20, BDB 798, KB 896, *Qal* IMPERFECT).
3. every curse will rest on him (v. 20, BDB 918, KB 1181, *Qal* PERFECT). This same VERB describes sin as a crouching animal in Gen. 4:7.
4. YHWH will blot out his name from under heaven (v. 20, BDB 562, KB 567, *Qal* PERFECT).
5. YHWH will single him out for adversity (v. 21, BDB 95, KB 110, *Hiphil* PERFECT).

29:19 “he will boast, saying, ‘I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart’ This is the recurrent attitude of sinners who take God’s patience as an excuse to continue to rebel. God’s judgment, though often seemingly delayed, will call every stubborn covenant violation into account (i.e., we reap what we sow, cf. Job 34:11; Ps. 28:4; 62:12; Pro. 24:12; Eccl. 12:14; Jer. 17:10; 32:19; Matt. 16:27; 25:31-46; Rom. 2:6; 14:12; I Cor. 3:8; II Cor. 5:10; Gal. 6:7-10; II Tim. 4:14; I Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 20:12; 22:12).

▣

NASB “to destroy the watered *land* with the dry”
NKJV “as though the drunkard could be included with the sober”
NRSV “(thus bringing disaster on moist and dry alike)”
TEV “That would destroy all of you, good and evil alike”
NJB “much water drives away thirst”
JPSOA “to the utter ruin of moist and dry alike”
NET Bible “This will destroy the watered ground with the parched”

This is a proverb whose exact meaning is unsure, but the context demands an idiom of complete destruction. Because of one stubborn violator of YHWH’s covenant all Israel would suffer. Today we might say, “one bad apple spoils the barrel” or “one bad egg spoils the omelet.”

29:20 “The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him” This hyperbole must be seen against the background of YHWH’s willingness to forgive and accept any repentant believer. Some Bible teachers link this verse with Ps. 103:9 and assert that there is a limit or threshold to YHWH’s grace. I do not accept this. Psalm 103:9 in context (i.e., vv. 8-14) shows He will forgive! The problem is not God’s forgiveness, but fallen, rebellious mankind’s continual sin! The relationship is broken from mankind’s side and it remains broken from mankind’s side. Unbelief and rebellion issue in destruction, both temporally and eternally!

▣ **“jealousy”** This term (BDB 888) is derived from something dyed an intense red (i.e., when anger or zeal caused the blood to flush the face). Human emotions are used to describe YHWH’s emotions (anthropomorphism). He is zealous for His people (cf. Isa. 26:11). This zealousness can turn to jealousy (cf. Ezek. 5:13; 16:38,42; 23:25; 36:5,6; 38:19; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8).

▣ **“will blot out his name from under heaven”** This idiom means (1) no children or (2) death (cf. Gen. 7:4; Exod. 17:14; 32:32; Deut. 9:14; II Kgs. 14:27; Ps. 9:5-6).

29:21 “all the curses of the covenant” See vv. 27-28; 27:15-26; 28:15-19,20-26,27-37,38-48,49-57.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:22-28

22"Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it, will say, **23**'All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.' **24**All the nations will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?' **25**Then *men* will say, 'Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. **26**They went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they have not known and whom He had not allotted to them. **27**Therefore, the anger of the LORD burned against that land, to bring upon it every curse which is written in this book; **28**and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and in fury and in great wrath, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.'"

29:22-23 YHWH's blessing, which was meant to attract those who did not know Him, will be turned into a mocking questioning by foreigners:

1. plagues of the land, v. 22
2. diseases, v. 22
3. land is brimstone, v. 23
4. land is salt, v. 23
5. land is a burning waste, v. 23
6. land is sown, and no germination, v. 23
7. land is unproductive, v. 23
8. land has no grass, v. 23
9. land like the cities of the Plain (cf. Gen. 19:24)

All of these YHWH sent (cf. vv. 22-28).

29:22 "Now the generation to come. . . will say" This literary form (i.e., children asking questions) is seen earlier in 6:20, which reflects Exod. 13:8,14; 10:2; 12:26,27. Deuteronomy often speaks of teaching the children (e.g., 4:10; 6:7).

29:23 "All its land is brimstone and salt" The land will be as the Dead Sea area, which was the site of Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Gen. 19:24-26).

29:24 "And all nations will say" Israel was a sign to all nations concerning YHWH. It was meant to be a blessing sign but even if judgment, still a sign!

29:25 "Because they forsook the covenant" This was and is the basic reason for the divine curses (cf. II Kgs. 17:9-23; II Chr. 36:13-21).

29:26 "gods. . . gods" Literally this is *Elohim*. This term is plural. It usually is translated "God." It can also refer to angelic beings and judges. See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.



NASB, NRSV,

JPSOA

"He had not allotted to them"

NKJV

"He has not given to them"

NJB

"no part of their heritage from him"

In the Septuagint translation of 32:8 the term “*Elohim*” (i.e., “according to the number of the angels of God”) seems to refer to national angels, as here (cf. Isa. 24:21; Dan. 10:13,20).

29:27 “the anger of the LORD burned against the land” The land is effected by Israel’s sin (cf. Gen. 3:17) and human sin in general (cf. Rom. 8:18-22). God uses natural phenomena to redirect mankind’s thoughts and priorities.

29:28 “the LORD uprooted them” This VERB (BDB 684, KB 737, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. I Kgs. 14:15; II Chr. 7:20; Jer. 12:14) is the opposite of “planted”! The covenant has been reversed!

Notice how YHWH’s actions are described:

1. in anger - BDB 60 I
2. in fury - BDB 404
3. in great wrath - BDB 893 and 152
4. cast them into another land (i.e., exile, BDB 1020, KB 1527, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 29:29

²⁹“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.”

29:29 “The secret things belong to the LORD our God” This refers to (1) the destiny of humans (cf. v. 19-20); (2) complete knowledge of God; or (3) to His future plans.

▣ **“but the things revealed belong to us”** Humans are responsible for the light they have. If they have no contact with the Bible or the gospel, they are responsible for the revelation in nature (cf. Ps. 19:1-6; Romans 1) and an inner moral nature (cf. Romans 2). If they have been exposed to Scripture, they are responsible for its content! Believers can know truth and are responsible for it!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why did God have the covenant renewed so often (v. 1)?
2. Why did God blind the eyes of the Jews to His purposes (vv. 4-6)?
3. Does God ever become unwilling to forgive man (v. 20)?
4. Why does the land suffer for man’s sins (v. 27)?
5. What is v. 29 referring to?

DEUTERONOMY 30

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Blessing of Returning to God 30:1-10	Moses' Third Address (29:1-30:20) 30:1-5	Conditions for Restoration and Blessing 30:1-10	Return From Exile and Conversion 30:1-5
The Choice of Life and Death 30:11-14	30:6-10 30:11-14	30:11-14	30:6-10 30:11-14
30:15-20	30:15-20	30:15-20	The Two Ways 30:15-20

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:1-5

¹"So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call *them* to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, ²and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, ³then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. ⁵The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers."

30:1 “when all of these things have come upon you” Israel’s future will be one of two realities based on their covenant obedience. YHWH desires “blessings,” but their choices will determine which of the realities (i.e., blessings or cursings) comes into being. There are no other choices!

▣ **“the blessing and the curse”** This is known in wisdom literature as “the two ways.” They are described in chapters 27 and 28.

▣ **“I have set before you”** This VERB (BDB 678, KB 723, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. vv. 15,19 and note 11:26) is a metaphor for Israel’s need to choose one of the two divine consequences related to His covenant.

▣ **“and you call them to mind”** This is an idiom “cause to return to your heart” (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. 4:39; I Kgs. 8:47; Isa. 44:19; 46:8).

▣ **“in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you”** This is predictive prophecy of the choices Israel would make which would result in exile. Notice YHWH did this because of Israel’s continual covenant violations and imitations of the Canaanite practices.

30:2 “return” This same VERB (BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* perfect) was used in v. 1 (*Hiphil* perfect) in reference to Israel recalling YHWH’s covenant. Here it is used in the sense of repentance.

SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

This concept is crucial but difficult to define. Most of us have a definition which comes from our denominational affiliation. However, usually a “set” theological definition is imposed on several Hebrew (and Greek) words which do not specifically imply this “set” definition. It must be remembered that NT authors (except Luke) were Hebrew thinkers using Koine Greek terms, so the place to start is the Hebrew terms themselves, of which there are primarily two.

1. *nhm* (BDB 636, KB 688)
2. *swb* (BDB 996, KB 1427)

The first, *nhm*, which originally seems to have meant to draw a deep breath, is used in several senses.

- a. “rest” or “comfort” (e.g., Gen. 5:29; 24:67; 27:42; 37:35; 38:12; 50:12; often used in names, cf. II Kgs. 15:14; I Chr. 4:19; Neh. 1:1; 7:7; Nahum 1:1)
- b. “grieved” (e.g., Gen. 6:6,7)
- c. “changed mind” (e.g., Exod. 13:17; 32:12,14; Num. 23:19)
- d. “compassion” (e.g., Deut. 32:36)

Notice that all of these involve deep emotion! Here is the key: deep feelings that lead to action. This change of action is often directed at other persons, but also toward God. It is this change of attitude and action toward God that infuses this term with such theological significance. But here care must be exercised. God is said to “repent” (cf. Gen. 6:6,7; Exod. 32:14; Jdgs. 2:18; I Sam. 15:11,35; Ps. 106:45), but this does not result from sorrow over sin or error, but a literary way of showing God’s compassion and care (cf. Num. 23:19; I Sam. 15:29; Ps. 110:4; Jer. 4:27-28; Ezek.24:14). Due punishment for sin and rebellion is forgiven if the sinner truly turns away from his/her/their sin and turns to God.

This term has a wide semantical field. Context is crucial in determining its intended meaning.

The second term, *swb*, means “to turn” (turn from, turn back, turn to). If it is true that the two covenant requirements are “repentance” and “faith” (e.g., Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:4,15; 2:17; Luke 3:3,8; 5:32; 13:3,5; 15:7; 17:3), then *nhm* refers to the intense feelings of recognizing one’s sin and turning from it, while *swb* would refer to the turning from sin to the turning to God (one example of these two spiritual actions is Amos

4:6-11, “you have not returned to Me” [five times] and Amos 5:4,6,14, “seek Me. . .seek the Lord. . .seek good and not evil”).

The first great example of the power of repentance is David’s sin with Bathsheba (cf. II Sam. 12; Ps. 32, 51). There were continuing consequences for David, his family, and Israel, but David was restored to fellowship with God! Even wicked Manasseh can repent and be forgiven (cf. II Chr. 33:12-13).

Both of these terms are used in parallel in Ps. 90:13. There must be a recognition of sin and a purposeful, personal turning from it, as well as a desire to seek God and His righteousness (cf. Isa. 1:16-20). Repentance has a cognitive aspect, a personal aspect, and a moral aspect. All three are required, both to start a new relationship with God and to maintain the new relationship. The deep emotion of regret turns into an abiding devotion to God and for God!

30:2-3 This context brings a needed theological balance to the stark judgment of 29:19. The problem is not rebellion, but sustained, continual rebellion. Repentance is always possible from God’s side, but humans harden their own hearts with willful rebellion and disobedience!

▣ **“LORD”** YHWH is the covenant name of God that the rabbis say reflects His mercy (cf. Exod. 3:13-14). See Special Topic: Names for Deity at 1:3.

▣ **“God”** *Elohim* is the general name for God which conveys power, might and strength. The rabbis say it is used of God’s justice and righteousness. This distinction between these two names can be seen in Psalm 103, YHWH, and Psalm 104, *Elohim*. See Special Topic at 1:3.

▣ **“obey”** Notice that “returns to the LORD” is parallel to “obey Him” (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* PERFECT). Obedience is described in personal terms:

1. obey his voice - BDB 876
2. with all your heart - BDB 523
3. with all your soul - BDB 659

This is parallel to 4:29-30; 6:5; 10:12

Notice the number of times and the different senses of the term *shub* (BDB 996, KB 1427):

1. “call *them* to mind” is literally “cause them to return to your heart, v. 1
2. “you return to the LORD,” v. 2
3. “God will restore you from captivity,” v. 3
4. “again,” vv. 3,8,9
5. “if you turn to the LORD,” v.10

▣ **“with all your heart and soul”** This is an idiom of one’s whole being (cf. vv. 2,6,10; 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16).

▣ **“you and your sons”** The ancient covenant is being renewed to the current generation (cf. 29:1). Israel was to educate the children as to the historical bases of their faith (cf. 4:9,10; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 32:46).

30:3-4 “God will restore. . .God has scattered” Notice God is in control of history. He uses nations and individuals but He is sovereign (cf. Isa. 10:5; 44:28-45:1).

30:3-9 Notice what YHWH promised to do for Israel (if they obey, vv. 8,10):

1. He will restore (v. 3, BDB 996, KB 1427, *Qal* PERFECT)
2. He will have compassion (v. 3, BDB 933, KB 1216, *Piel* PERFECT)
3. He will gather you (BDB 867, KB 1062, *Piel* PERFECT, twice, vv. 3 and 4)
4. He will bring you back (v. 4, BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
5. He will bring you into the land (v. 5, BDB 97, KB 112, *Hiphil* PERFECT)
6. He will prosper you (v. 5, BDB 405, KB 408, *Hiphil* PERFECT)
7. He will multiply you (v. 5, BDB 915 I, KB 1176, *Hiphil* PERFECT)
8. He will circumcise your heart (v. 6, BDB 557 II, KB 555, *Qal* PERFECT)
9. He will inflict all the curses on your enemies (v. 7, BDB 678, KB 733, *Qal* PERFECT)
10. He will prosper you abundantly (v. 9, BDB 451, KB 451, *Hiphil* PERFECT)
 - a. the work of your hand
 - b. the offspring of your body
 - c. the offspring of your cattle
 - d. the produce of your land (the opposite is in 28:38-42)
11. He will again rejoice over you for good (v. 9, BDB 965, KB 1314 [twice], *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT and *Qal* PERFECT)

30:4

NASB “at the ends of the earth”

NKJV “to the farthest *parts* under heaven”

NKJV “to the ends of the world”

TEV “to the farthest corners of the earth”

NJB “to the very sky’s end”

This is literally “to the end of the heavens,” which is a hyperbole (cf. 4:32; 28:64; Jer. 31:8). It refers to the farthest civilizations they knew (i.e., the ancient Near East and Mediterranean cultures).

30:5 “which your fathers possessed” This could refer to:

1. the Patriarchs (Moses’ day)
2. the return from the exile (post-exilic editor)

From my study #1 seems best. Verse 9 speaks of the same group.

☐ **“He will prosper you and multiply you”** This is part of God’s promise to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12, 15, 17, etc).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:6-10

“Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. ⁷The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. ⁸And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. ⁹Then the LORD your God will prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; ¹⁰if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.”

30:6 “God will circumcise your heart” This is a metaphor for an open and accessible hearing of God’s word. The opposite is stated in v. 17. In 10:16 and Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26, the Israelite is called upon to perform

this spiritual act (cf. Rom. 2:28-29), yet here God must do it. This same tension between God’s sovereignty and human action is seen in Ezek. 18:31 vs. 36:26. Here circumcision is a metaphor for a proper spiritual attitude. See full note at 10:16.

▣ **“heart”** For the Hebrews this was the center of intellectual activity. See Special Topic at 2:30.

▣ **“descendants”** This is literally “seed” (BDB 282). This term is used in this metaphorical sense several times in Deuteronomy (cf. 1:8; 4:37; 10:15; 11:9; 28:46,59; 30:6,19; 31:21; 34:4).

▣ **“soul”** This is the Hebrew word *nephesh* (BDB659). See note at 11:13.

30:8-9 This reflects what God wanted to do for Israel and for the whole world! See Special Topic: Bob’s Evangelical Biases at 4:6.

30:10 “if. . .if” This shows the conditional nature of the covenant. Notice that obedience (listen and keep) are paralleled with sincere and total commitment (with all your heart and soul).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:11-14

¹¹For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. ¹²It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' ¹³Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' ¹⁴But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it."

30:11-14 YHWH’s will for Israel was not impossible (cf. 28:29). This verse seems to depreciate the reformers doctrine of “total depravity.” There are several places in the OT where human resistance to sin is possible (e.g., Gen. 4:7).

The church picks up on Genesis 3 as the origin of sin in mankind, while many rabbis pick up on Genesis 6 as the source of the conflict. As Christianity asserts the fallenness of all creation, including humanity, Judaism asserts the basic goodness of humanity. For them the evil is in the choice, not the basic nature.

However, it seems to me that moral accountability is based on the real possibility of comprehending God’s will and the ability to act on it. Without the possibility of appropriate action, divine accountability is inappropriate! Can I be held responsible for that which I cannot do?

30:12 “Who will go up to heaven” Paul uses this in Rom. 10:6-9. It possibly reflects the Sumerian legend of Etana, but probably relates to the Hebrew view of God’s sovereignty.

There are several VERBS used in an imperatival sense in this verse (according to OT Parsing Guide):

1. “to get it” - BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning
2. “make us hear” - BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, but JUSSIVE in meaning
3. “we may observe it” - BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT, but COHORTATIVE in meaning

30:13 “beyond the sea” Some see this as related to the Babylonian flood account called the Gilgamesh Epic, but it probably relates to the Jewish fears of sailing or a metaphor of the ends of the earth.

30:14 “But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart” This refers to YHWH’s revealed covenant. The ancients read Scripture aloud! They had to appropriately respond inwardly to what they had heard (i.e., read themselves or read aloud).

▣ **“that you may observe it”** Man must make the decision. It is in his ability to do so. God initiates but mankind must respond and continue to respond in repentance, faith, and obedience!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 30:15-20

¹⁵“See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; ¹⁶in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong *your* days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, ²⁰by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

30:15 “See” This (BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) VERB is used as an idiom for “pay close attention to” (cf. Gen. 27:27; 31:50). It is used several times in Deuteronomy (cf. 1:8,21,35; 2:24,31; 4:5; 11:26; 30:15; 32:39).

▣ **“I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity”** Even covenant Israel had to choose! This is referring to the blessing and cursing (cf. Lev. 26 and Deut. 27-28). Remember the choice is set in a covenant of grace. This is very similar to Wisdom Literature’s idiom of the “two ways” (cf. Pro. 4:10-19; Jer. 21:8; Matt. 7:13-14). Our choices show who we are! How we respond to life’s inexplicable “in and outs” reveals our spiritual orientation!

30:16-18 These verses are a summary of covenant conditions and consequences:

1. the responsibility (cf. 8:6; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9)
 - a. “to love the Lord,” v. 16 (BDB 12, KB 17, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - b. “walk in His ways,” v. 16 (BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT)
 - c. “keep His commandments,” v. 16 (BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* INFINITIVE)
2. the consequences of obedience
 - a. “you may live,” v. 16 (BDB 310, KB 309, *Qal* PERFECT)
 - b. “you may multiply,” v. 16 (BDB 915, KB 1156, *Qal* PERFECT)
 - c. “your God may bless you,” v. 16 (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* PERFECT)
3. the conditions and consequences of disobedience
 - a. if your heart turns away,” v. 17 (BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
 - b. “if you will not obey,” v. 17; (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT)
 - c. idolatry
 - (1) drawn away (BDB 623, KB 673, *Niphal* PERFECT)
 - (2) worship (BDB 1005, KB 295, *Hishtaphel* PERFECT)
 - (3) serve (BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT)
 - d. “you shall surely perish,” v. 18 (BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Qal* IMPERFECT, which expresses intensity)
 - e. “you shall not prolong your days,” v. 18 (BDB 73, KB 88, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT)

Notice how v. 20 reinforces these covenant responsibilities so that the Patriarchal blessing can be fulfilled! This terminology is characteristic of Deuteronomy.

30:19 “I call heaven and earth to witness” These witnesses were not unique to Israel’s covenant, but are found in several ancient Near Eastern texts. These two permanent aspects of God’s creation (cf. Gen. 1:1) function as God’s two required witnesses (cf. 17:6; 19:15; Num. 35:30). This legal emphasis occurs several times in Deuteronomy (cf. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1). For “Earth” see Special Topic at 5:8.

▣ **“So choose life in order that you may live”** God has given humans the right and responsibility to make moral choices. It is part of His image and likeness in mankind! The Hebrew VERB, “to choose” or “to elect,” is used 70% of the time for mankind’s choice (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 639). We must choose (cf. Ezek. 18:30-32).

▣ **“you and your descendants”** Deuteronomy characteristically emphasizes the need to pass on the covenant history and responsibilities to the succeeding generations (cf. 4:9,10; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 32:46).

Our children are affected by our lifestyle choices and instruction (cf. Exod. 20:5-6; Deut. 5:9-10; 7:9).

30:20 There is a series of *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCTS which summarize the covenant:

1. responsibilities
 - a. loving
 - b. obeying
 - c. holding fast
2. consequences
 - a. that you may dwell in the land

See note at 30:16-18. YHWH’s covenant demanded an initial and a continual faith, love, obedience, and perseverance.

YHWH promised the land to Israel’s patriarchs (cf. Gen. 12:7; 13:14-17; Deut. 9:4-6), but Israel must obey His covenant requirements or the land would be forfeited (cf. 11:31-32; 28:36,63-68; 30:19-20). The free gift must be responded to and maintained!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. What is the central truth of this chapter?
2. Is this chapter speaking about someone becoming a believer or believers being faithful?
3. Does this chapter contradict Paul’s theology about mankind’s inability to keep the law (i.e., Galatians 3; Romans 3)?

DEUTERONOMY 31

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Joshua the New Leader of Israel 31:1-8	Concluding Events of Moses' Life 31:1-6 31:7-8	Joshua Becomes Moses' Successor 31:1-6 31:7-8	Commissioning of Joshua 31:1-6 31:7-8
The Law to Be Read Every Seven Years 31:9-13	31:9-13	The Law Is To Be Read Every Seven Years 31:9-13	The Ritual Reading of the Law 31:9-13
Prediction of Israel's Rebellion 31:14-15 31:16-23	31:14-15 31:16-22 31:23	The LORD'S Last Instructions to Moses 31:14-15 31:16-18 31:19-21 31:22 31:23	Yahweh's Instructions 31:14-15 31:16-18 The Song of Witnesses 31:19-22 31:23
31:24-29	31:24-29	31:24-29	The Law Placed Beside the Ark 31:24-27
The Song of Moses (31:30-32:47) 31:30	31:30	The Song of Moses (31:30-32:44) 31:30	Israel Gathers to Hear the Song (31:28-32:44) 31:28-29 31:30

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:1-6

¹So Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. ²And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross this Jordan.' ³It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken. ⁴The LORD will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them. ⁵The LORD will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you. ⁶Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."

31:1 “spoke these words” Possibly this should be “finished speaking,” following the Septuagint and some manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which transpose two Hebrew consonants (cf. NRSV, REB). This is the end of Moses’ three sermons.

31:2 “I am a hundred and twenty” Moses’ life of 120 years (cf. 34:7) can be divided into three 40 year segments. Moses was 40 years being prepared at the royal academies of Egypt, 40 years in the desert training for his call, and 40 years from the time of the burning bush to the present (cf. Exod. 7:7 and Acts 7:23ff). Why mention his age? These are possible reasons: (1) in Egyptian literature 110 years was the age of wise men, but in Syria it was 120 years; (2) age limit of Gen. 6:3; or (3) another excuse of Moses for why he will not lead them into the Promised Land.

▣ **“I am no longer able to come and go”** This is a Hebrew idiom for vitality (Josh. 14:11; NRSV, TEV, NJB, JPSOA)! However, old age had not taken away Moses’ strength, cf. Deut. 34. Possibly this was an excuse (cf. 1:37) related to Moses’ public disobedience recorded in Num. 20:11-12. Deuteronomy 3:23-29 records Moses’ pleading with God to let him enter the Promised Land (cf. 32:48-52).

31:3 “the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you” God fights for them, though they must prepare for battle and participate (cf. vv. 3-6, i.e., holy war terminology). Moses was a tool used by God. God, Himself, was the one who delivered the people. In reality it is YHWH, not Joshua, who goes into battle ahead of His people!

▣ **“Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you”** A new leader was needed because of Moses’ disobedience. God will be with Joshua, but he too must do his covenant obligations (cf. 1:38; 3:28).

31:6 “Be strong and courageous” This verse has several imperatival forms:

1. “be strong” - BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. vv. 7,23
2. “be courageous” - BDB 54, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, cf. vv. 7,23
3. “do not be afraid” - BDB 431, KB 432, negated *Qal* IMPERFECT, used in a JUSSIVE sense
4. “do not tremble” - BDB 791, KB 888, negated *Qal* IMPERFECT, used in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. 1:29; 7:21; 20:3; Josh. 1:9

Numbers 1 and 2 are repeated by Moses to Joshua in v. 7 and numbers 3 and 4 are repeated in v. 8 (#4 is parallel, but a different VERB, “be dismayed,” BDB 369, KB 365, *Qal* IMPERFECT).

A proper attitude and faith are essential! There are giants in the land, but YHWH is with His people (cf. vv. 3,4,5,6).

▣ **“He will not fail you or forsake you”**

1. YHWH goes with them (i.e., “walks,” BDB 229, KB 246, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE)
2. YHWH will not fail them (i.e., “abandon,” BDB 951, KB 1276, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT)
3. YHWH will not forsake them (“leave,” BDB 736 I, KB 806, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Gen. 28:15)

This promise is repeated to Joshua in Josh. 1:5 and is repeated as a promise to NT believers in Heb. 13:5! Our hope is in the unchanging gracious character of YHWH (e.g., Exod. 34:6; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:7-8

⁷Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. ⁸The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

31:7 This is a public transfer of power! This is the fulfillment of 1:38 and 3:28!

31:8 “He will be with you” This is restated, “I will be with you,” in v. 23! The promise of YHWH’s personal presence is the greatest blessing that can be given (cf. Exod. 3:12; 4:12,15; 33:14-16; Deut. 4:37; Josh. 1:5). It is the reason why His leaders and people should not be fearful of anyone or anything!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:9-13

⁹So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. ¹⁰Then Moses commanded them, saying, "At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, ¹¹when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. ¹²Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. ¹³Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

31:9 “Moses wrote this law” Several times in the Pentateuch it says, “Moses wrote” (cf. Exod. 17:14; 24:4,22; 34:1,27,28; Num. 17:2,3; 33:2; Deut. 4:13; 5:22; 31:9,22). Moses gave the Law to Israel to standardize the will of God for future generations.

▣ **“to the priests, the sons of Levi”** It is interesting that there is some divergency in exactly who are “priests”:

1. tribe of Levi (always)
2. sons of Aaron (often)

All priests are Levites, but not all Levites are priests.

▣ **“to the elders”** This refers to tribal elders. In this verse Moses entrusts the law to Israel’s religious and secular (i.e., tribal) leaders. However, in reality, all of Israel’s leaders and laws were seen as religious (i.e.,

YHWH's will). There was no secular versus sacred in Israel. All was sacred because all belonged to YHWH! There were special days and special places, but all of life was regulated by divine decrees!

31:10 There are two dates referred to in this verse:

1. one was every year, the Feast of Booths
 - a. Exod. 23:16-17; 34:22
 - b. Lev. 23:33-43
 - c. Deut. 16:13-15
2. one was every seventh year (i.e., the Sabbatical year)
 - a. Exod. 23:10,11
 - b. Lev. 25:1-7
 - c. Deut. 15:1-6

Here Moses adds to the regular rituals the reading of the covenant.

The Feast of the Booths was an annual event meant to remind Israel of YHWH's gracious and powerful acts of deliverance from Egypt and His provision and presence during the wilderness wanderings. This festival of thanksgiving for deliverance/freedom, as well as the freedom from debt ceremony, occurred every seventh year (i.e., Sabbath year, cf. Leviticus 25). The combination of these two freedom events was a perfect time to review the Mosaic law covenant with this gracious, covenant-making God!

SPECIAL TOPIC: FEASTS OF ISRAEL

- I. Mosaic Annual Feasts (cf. Exod. 23:14-17; Lev. 23; Num 28; Deut. 16)
 - A. All male Jews were required to attend three annual feasts (cf. Exod. 23:14,17; 34:23) if possible.
 - B. These feasts had agricultural, as well as national significance.
 - C. Each was a day of rest, worship, and community fellowship.
 - D. The three required annual feasts
 1. Passover (cf. Exod. 12:1-14,21-28; Lev. 23:4-14; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8)
 - a. thanksgiving and dedication of the barley harvest
 - b. commemorates the Exodus
 - c. it was followed by an seven day Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. Exod. 12:15-20; 34:18-20)
 2. Pentecost (Feast of Weeks, cf. Exod. 23:16; 34:22)
 - a. thanksgiving and dedication of the wheat harvest
 - b. commemorates the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mt. Sinai by rabbinical reckoning
 - c. See Lev. 23:15-21; Num. 28:26-31
 3. Tabernacles/Booths/Huts (Succoth)
 - a. thanksgiving for the general harvest
 - b. commemorates the beginning of the wilderness wandering period
 - c. see Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:34-44; Deut. 16:13-17
 - d. it was followed by an eight day feast (cf. Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35-38)
 - E. Other annual feasts
 1. New Year Celebration (Rosh Hashanah)
 - a. see Lev. 23:23-25; Num. 29:1-6
 - b. this day of rest and sacrifice was held on the first day of Tishri
 - c. the feast aspect of this day, so common in the NT era, is unspecified in the Torah

2. Day of Atonement - “day of covering” or Yom Kippur (the only fast day)
 - a. a day of rest, fasting, and repentance
 - b. a ritual for the removal of corporate uncleanness (tabernacle, priests, and people)
 - c. see Exod. 30:10; Lev. 16; 23:26-32; 25:9; Num. 29:7-11
 - d. it is difficult to pin down when this feast was re-instituted after the Exile

II. Other Mosaic Feast Days

A. the Sabbath

1. weekly day of rest and worship
2. see Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 16:22-30; 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-16; Lev. 23:1-3; Num. 28:9-10

B. Sabbath Year

1. every seventh year the land rested (no sowing)
2. see Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7; Deut. 15:1
3. it signified that YHWH owned the land and gave it to Israel
4. all slaves were set free (cf. Exod. 21:2-6) and all debts were forgiven (cf. Deut. 15:1-6)

C. Jubilee Year

1. every seventh Sabbath year (i.e., 50th year)
2. see Lev. 25:8-18; 27:17-24
3. release of debt and returning of land, freeing of slaves (cf. Lev. 25:10,13, very similar to Sabbath Year)
4. its inauguration is never recorded

D. New Moon

1. special offerings and a day of rest
2. see Num. 10:10; 28:11-15
3. possibly commemorated the setting up of the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 40:2,17)
4. Jewish calendar is based on lunar cycles

III. These rituals and regulations show a development over time. These feasts and fasts may have had a beginning in pagan calendars, but developed into uniquely Jewish praise and devotion to YHWH. Nature (seasonal), agricultural (planting, rain, and harvest), and national events (Exodus, giving of the Law, etc.) combined to highlight certain times of the year for worship.

31:11 “the place which He will choose” This verse in Moses’ day referred to the gathering of all males three times a year (cf. Leviticus 23) at the tabernacle (cf. Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:5,11,13; 14:25; 15:20; 16:7,16; 17:8,10; 18:6; 26:2).

Later it would refer to the central shrine located in Jerusalem.

▣ **“you shall read this law in front of all Israel”** This was a covenant renewal event. The Law was clearly revealed (i.e., read) and Israel committed herself to its keeping! Everyone in Israel’s society was present (cf. vv. 12-13), even the newest generation (i.e., of *Bar Mitzvah* age, e.g., Isa. 7:16).

The law was not only for a later king nor current leaders, but for all the people through their generation and even resident aliens!

31:12 “may hear. . .learn. . .fear” Notice the progression of VERBS:

1. “hear” - BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT, common in Deuteronomy, meaning “to hear so as to do”
2. “learn” - BDB 540, KB 531, *Qal* IMPERFECT
3. “fear” - BDB 431, KB 432, *Qal* PERFECT (see last paragraph below)
4. “be careful to observe”
 - a. BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. BDB 793, KB 889, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT

Notice that #1,2,3 are repeated in v. 13 to relate to the new generation, which did not as yet know (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT). This law was meant to be known and kept through multiple generations of Israelis.

In some ways this progression reminds me of Ezra (cf. Ezra 7:10). Israel is to fear or revere (BDB 431) YHWH (cf. 4:10; 14:23; 17:19), but not fear anyone or anything else!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:14-18

¹⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting. ¹⁵The LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the doorway of the tent. ¹⁶The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. ¹⁷Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?' ¹⁸But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods."

31:14 “call. . .present” These are two IMPERATIVES.

1. “call” - BDB 894, KB 1128, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. “present” - BDB 426, KB 427, *Hithpael* IMPERATIVE (this refers to an official commissioning by YHWH, cf. I Sam. 10:19, or covenant renewal, cf. Josh. 24:1)

▣ **“the tent of meeting”** There seems to have been two special tents connected to YHWH:

1. the tabernacle described in Exodus 25-27, which housed the Ark of the Covenant and was positioned at the center of the Israelite camp
2. the tent of meeting described in Exod. 33:7-11, erected outside of the camp of Israel, where Moses went to meet with YHWH
3. usually the cloud (i.e., which the rabbis call the *Shekinah* Cloud of Glory), which symbolized YHWH’s personal presence, manifested itself at #1, but here at #2 (cf. v. 15; Exod. 33:9)
4. It is possible that several other references relate to #2—Exod. 18:7-16; Num. 11:16,24,26; 12:4

▣ **“that I may commission him”** In v. 7 Moses calls Joshua before the people. Here YHWH calls Moses and Joshua before Himself.

31:15 “a pillar of cloud” This same pillar of cloud was what separated the children of Israel from the army of Egypt (cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19-20). This pillar is what filled the Temple when Isaiah saw God “high and lifted up” in Isaiah 6. This was a physical symbol of the presence of God. It stayed with the Israelites throughout their wilderness wandering. It functioned in several ways:

1. it showed YHWH’s presence

2. it led the Israelites from place to place
3. it shaded them by day
4. it lit up their camp by night

Once they crossed Jordan, YHWH's presence was manifested over the Ark of the Covenant, but the cloud disappeared.

31:16 “this people will arise and play the harlot” This reveals YHWH's foreknowledge of Israel's continuing sin of idolatry (cf. 4:15-28; 31:29). Notice the progression of the idolatry in the VERBS:

1. “will arise” - BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* PERFECT, e.g., Exod. 32:6
2. “play the harlot” - BDB 275, KB 275, *Qal* PERFECT
 - a. act as a harlot
 - (1) Lev. 21:7,9,14
 - (2) Deut. 22:21; 23:18
 - b. metaphorically of the Promised Land, Lev. 19:29
 - c. metaphorically of foreign alliances
 - (1) Isa. 23:17
 - (2) Jer. 3:1
 - (3) Ezek. 16:26,28
 - d. metaphorically of fertility idolatry
 - (1) Exod. 34:15,16
 - (2) Lev. 17:7; 20:5
 - (3) Deut. 31:16
3. “will forsake Me” - BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 28:20; Jdgs. 10:6,10; Jer. 1:16
4. “break My covenant” - BDB 830, KB 974, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. 31:20; Lev. 26:15; Jer. 11:10

31:17 “My anger will be kindled” This VERB (BDB 354, KB 351, *Qal* PERFECT) is often used of YHWH's anger:

1. against Moses, Exod. 4:14
2. against Israel, Exod. 22:24; 32:10; Num. 11:1,10; 32:10; Deut. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17; 31:17
3. against the spies, Num. 12:9
4. against Balaam, Num. 22:22
5. against the land, Deut. 29:27

▣ **“I will forsake them and hide My face from them”** These two VERBS describe anthropomorphically YHWH's nullification of the covenant. YHWH does to them what they did to Him (cf. v. 16).

1. “I will forsake them” - BDB 736, KB 806, *Qal* PERFECT
2. “hide My face from them” - BDB 711, KB 771, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. v. 18; 32:20; Isa. 59:2; 64:7). This is an idiom for the removal of covenant fellowship and blessing.

The consequences are:

1. they shall be consumed
 - a. VERB, “to be” - BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. consumed/devoured - BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT
2. many evils and troubles will come
 - a. “will come” - BDB 592, KB 619, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. evil - BDB 949
 - c. troubles - BDB 865 I
3. YHWH's presence (cf. vv. 6,8) will not be with them (i.e., “our God is not among us”)

31:18 The threat from v. 17 (i.e., “I will hide my face from them”) is emphatically repeated (*Hiphil* INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE and *Hiphil* IMPERFECT).

▣ **“other gods”** The *Jewish Study Bible* asserts that “our God” of v. 17 should be translated “our gods” and relate to “other gods” in v. 18 (cf. P. 439).

The first term (BDB 43) seems to be a singular form derived from *Elohim* (BDB 43) in v. 18. The first term can be used of a pagan god (cf. II Chr. 32:15; Dan. 11:37), but also for YHWH (cf. Deut. 32:15,17; Ps. 50:22; 114:7; 139:19; Pro. 30:5; Isa. 44:8).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:19-22

¹⁹“Now therefore, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it on their lips, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel. ²⁰For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant. ²¹Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore.” ²²So Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the sons of Israel.

31:19 “write this song for yourselves” This would be a witness for God against the future actions of Israel. This, of course, is a legal metaphor (cf. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; Josh. 24:22)! Israel was responsible to instruct every new generation in YHWH’s law!

31:20 “they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous then they will turn to other gods” The hardest times for the people of God are during the times of great prosperity! We tend to forget so easily (cf. 6:10-15; 8:11-20; 32:15-18).

▣ Notice the downward progression into rebellion:

1. they will turn to other gods - BDB 815, KB 937, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. v. 18; 29:18; 30:17
2. serve them - BDB 712, KB 773, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 4:19; 7:4; 8:19; 11:16; 13:6,13; 17:3; 28:14,36,64; 29:18,26; 30:17
3. spurn Me - BDB 610, KB 658, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. Num. 14:11,23; Isa. 1:4
4. break My covenant - BDB 830, KB 974, *Hiphil* PERFECT, cf. v. 16; Lev. 26:15; Jer. 11:10; 31:32

31:21 “when many evils and troubles have come upon them” These evils and troubles were mentioned in v. 17 and predicted in 4:30.

▣ **“(for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants)”** This is a promise of a faithful remnant and continued knowledge of YHWH’s law.

▣ **“intent”** The Hebrew word *yetzer* is sometimes translated “imagination of the heart” (BDB 428 I, it can be in a positive sense, Isa. 26:3). This is the OT way of saying that YHWH knows the tendency toward rebellion which is within mankind (i.e., Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Ps. 103:14; Jer. 18:23).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:23

²³Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

31:23 Moses spoke these words to Israel in 31:6. Moses spoke these words to Joshua in 31:7 (cf. 1:38; 3:28). Now (v. 23) YHWH speaks these words directly to Joshua (cf. Josh. 1:6,7,9), who stood with Moses at the door of the tabernacle.

1. "be strong" - BDB 304, KB 302, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. "be courageous" - BDB 54, KB 65, *Qal* IMPERATIVE

▣ **"I will be with you"** This statement identifies the PRONOUN "he" of v. 23a. This is YHWH's greatest gift (cf. Exod. 3:12; 4:12,15; 33:14-16; Deut. 4:37; 31:6,8; Josh. 1:5)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:24-29

²⁴It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, ²⁵that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, ²⁶"Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. ²⁷For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death? ²⁸Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. ²⁹For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands."

31:26 "beside the ark" The KJV has "in," but the better translation is "beside" (NKJV, NRSV, TEV, NJB, cf. Exod. 25:16; 1 Kgs. 8:9); and for "the ark" see Exod. 25:10-22.

In the OT apparently only the two tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments written by God (Exod. 31:18) were contained in the Ark (as well as the pieces of the first set that Moses broke, e.g., Exod. 32:19; 34:1). There are three other items which were placed beside the Ark:

1. a jar of manna, Exod. 16:33-34
2. Aaron's rod that budded, Num. 17:10
3. this copy of the law written by Moses

However, there must have been some confusion about this within rabbinical circles, because the author of Hebrews asserts that the Ark contained the stone tablets and #1 and #2 (cf. Heb. 9:4).

▣ **"covenant"** See Special Topic at 4:13.

31:27 "For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness" Moses had experienced Israel's rebellious tendencies (cf. v. 21) during his lifetime (cf. 9:7-29).

▣

NASB "stubbornness"
NKJV "stiff neck"
NRSV, TEV "stubborn"
NJB "stiff necked"

The term is a combination of “neck” (BDB 791) and “stiff” or “hard” (BDB 904). Israel is often described by this unflattering combination (cf. Exod. 32:8; 33:3,5; 34:9; Deut. 9:6,13; 31:27). The VERB is used in Deut. 10:16; II Kgs. 17:14; Neh. 9:16,17,29; Jer. 7:26; 17:23; 19:15. The same thought is expressed in Isa. 48:4 and Ezek. 2:4; 3:7.

In a sense vv. 27-29 are a prophecy, based on the past actions of Israel. This same kind of prophecy is also found in Josh. 24:19-20. Israel’s best efforts were not enough. The first covenant would fail to restore the intended intimacy between YHWH and His highest creation (i.e., mankind) in the Garden of Eden. It would take a New Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:22-38) based on YHWH’s actions. Mankind was incurably rebellious (cf. Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Jer. 17:9).

31:28 This verse has three imperatival VERBS:

1. “assemble” - BDB 874, KB 1078, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
2. “speak” - BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
3. “call” - BDB 729, KB 795, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE

Moses addresses the leaders (i.e., elders and officers), who symbolize all Israel, directly. This may refer to a representative national council (e.g., Jdgs. 21:16).

▣ **“the heavens and the earth to witness against them”** The ratification witnesses are often mentioned in covenant contexts (cf. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28; 32:1).

In this chapter there are also two other witnesses:

1. Moses’ song, vv. 19,21
2. law scroll, v. 26

31:29 Notice the downward progression prophecies after Moses’ death (cf. Josh. 24:19-28):

1. you will act corruptly - BDB 1007, KB 1469, both the *Hiphil* IMPERFECT and the INFINITIVE ABSOLUTE, cf. 4:16,25; 9:12
2. turn from the way - BDB 693, KB 747, *Qal* PERFECT
3. you will do that which is evil (BDB 948 II) in the sight of the Lord - BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* IMPERFECT
4. provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands (BDB 795 and 388, i.e., idolatry) - BDB 494, KB 491, *Hiphil* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT, cf. 4:25; 9:18; 32:16; I Kgs. 16:7; II Kgs. 17:7; 21:6; Jer. 25:6,7; 32:30; 44:8

31:30 This verse should go with chapter 32.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is God changing leaders?
2. How is God’s foreknowledge and man’s choice related in this chapter?
3. Why did Israel turn away from God?

DEUTERONOMY 31:30-32:52

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Song of Moses (31:30-32:47)	The Song of Moses (31:30-32:47)	The Song of Moses (31:30-32:44)	Israel Assembles to Hear the Song (31:28-32:44)
32:1-14	32:1-43	32:1-43	32:1-44
(vv. 1-6)	(vv. 1-3)	(vv. 1-3)	(vv. 1-3)
	(vv. 4-9)	(vv. 4-6)	(vv. 4-9)
(vv. 7-9)		(vv. 7-9)	
(vv. 10-12)	(vv. 10-27)	(vv. 10-12)	(vv. 10-11)
			(vv. 12-14)
(vv. 13-14)		(vv. 13-14)	
32:15-18		(vv. 15-18)	(vv. 15-39)
32:19-22		(vv. 19-22)	
32:23-27		(vv. 23-27)	
32:28-33	(vv. 28-33)	(vv. 28-33)	
32:34-43			
(vv. 34-35)	(vv. 34-38)	(vv. 34-38)	
(vv. 36-38)			
(vv. 39-42)	(vv. 39-43)	(vv. 39-42)	
			(vv. 40-42)
(v. 43)		(v. 43)	(v. 43)
32:44-47	32:44-47	32:44	(v. 44)
		Moses' Final Instructions	The Law, the Source of Life
		32:45-47	32:45-47
Moses to Die on Mount Nebo			Moses' Death Foretold
32:48-52	32:48-52	32:48-52	31:48-52

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)

FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This may be a literary genre of the ancient Near East whereby a leader gives his last blessing, warning, and prophecy before his death:
 1. Jacob - Genesis 49 (also poetic form)
 2. Moses - Deut. 29:2-34:12
 3. Joshua - Josh. 23:1-24:33
 4. Samuel - I Samuel 12
 5. David - I Kgs. 2:1-9
- B. Some scholars see this poem: (1) in light of a Hittite treaty pattern, but (2) others see it as a court scene. In the context of the book of Deuteronomy, option 2 seems best, although the whole book of Deuteronomy fits the second millennium B.C. treaty pattern (which gives evidence for Mosaic authorship).
- C. The poem is ancient (archaic forms). Almost all scholars assume it goes back to ancient times in Israel's history.
- D. There are many allusions to songs in the OT, particularly Psalms and Isaiah. They are sung at times of victory:
 1. the Egyptian palace guard destroyed in the Red Sea, Exodus 15
 2. before entering the transJordan, Num. 21:17
 3. the Canaanite army of Hazor destroyed, Judges 5
 4. Babylon destroyed (Isaiah 13) by YHWH's Messiah (Isaiah 11), Isa. 12:5
- E. Hebrew Poetry

SPECIAL TOPIC: HEBREW POETRY

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. This type of literature makes up 1/3 of the Old Testament. It is especially common in the "Prophets" (all but Haggai and Malachi contain poetry) and "Writings" sections of the Hebrew canon.
- B. It is very different from English poetry. English poetry is developed from Greek and Latin poetry, which is primarily sound-based. Hebrew poetry has much in common with Canaanite poetry. It is basically thought-based in balanced, parallel lines.
- C. The archaeological discovery north of Israel at Ugarit (Ras Shamra) has helped scholars understand OT poetry. This poetry from the 15th century B.C. has obvious literary connections with biblical poetry.

II. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF POETRY

- A. It is very compact.
- B. It tries to express truth, feelings or experiences in imagery.
- C. It is primarily written not oral. It is highly structured. This structure is expressed in:
 - 1. balanced lines (parallelism)
 - 2. word plays
 - 3. sound plays

III. THE STRUCTURE (R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 965-975)

- A. Bishop Robert Lowth in his book, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753) was the first to characterize biblical poetry as balanced lines of thought. Most modern English translations are formatted to show the lines of poetry.
 - 1. synonymous - the lines express the same thought in different words:
 - a. Psalm 3:1; 49:1; 83:14; 103:13
 - b. Proverbs 19:5; 20:1
 - c. Isaiah 1:3,10
 - d. Amos 5:24; 8:10
 - 2. antithetical - the lines express opposite thoughts by means of contrast or stating the positive and the negative:
 - a. Psalm 1:6; 90:6
 - b. Proverbs 1:29; 10:1,12; 15:1; 19:4
 - 3. synthetic - the next two or three lines develop the thought - Ps. 1:1-2; 19:7-9; 29:1-2
 - 4. chiasmic - a pattern of poetry expressing the message in a descending and ascending order. The main point is found in the middle of the pattern.
- B. Charles A. Briggs in his book, *General Introduction to the Study of Holy Scripture* (1899) developed the next stage of analysis of Hebrew poetry:
 - 1. emblematic - one clause literal and the second metaphorical, Ps. 42:1; 103:3
 - 2. climactic or stair-like - the clauses reveal truth in an ascending fashion, Ps. 19:7-14; 29:1-2; 103:20-22
 - 3. introverted - a series of clauses, usually at least four are related by the internal structure of line 1 to 4 and 2 to 3 - Ps. 30:8-10a
- C. G. B. Gray in his book, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (1915), developed the concept of balanced clauses further by:
 - 1. complete balance - where every word in line one is repeated or balanced by a word in line two, Psalm 83:14 and Isaiah 1:3
 - 2. incomplete balance where the clauses are not the same length, Ps. 59:16; 75:6
- D. Today there is a growing recognition of literary structural pattern in Hebrew called a chiasm, which usually denotes a number of parallel lines (a,b,b,a; a,b,c,b,a) forming an hour glass shape, often the central line(s) is emphasized.
- E. Type of sound patterns found in poetry in general, but not often in eastern poetry
 - 1. play on alphabet (acrostic, cf. Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff; Lamentations 1-4)
 - 2. play on consonants (alliteration, cf. Ps. 6:8; 27:7; 122:6; Isa. 1:18-26)
 - 3. play on vowels (assonance, cf. Gen. 49:17; Exod. 14:14; Ezek. 27:27)

4. play on repetition of similar sounding words with different meanings (paronomasia)
 5. play on words which, when pronounced, sound like the thing they name (onomatopoeia)
 6. special opening and close (inclusive)
- F. There are several types of poetry in the Old Testament. Some are topic related and some are form related:
1. dedication song - Num. 21:17-18
 2. work songs - (alluded to but not recorded in Jdgs. 9:27); Isa. 16:10; Jer. 25:30; 48:33
 3. ballads - Num. 21:27-30; Isa. 23:16
 4. drinking songs - negative, Isa. 5:11-13; Amos 6:4-7, and positive, Isa. 22:13
 5. love poems - Song of Songs, wedding riddle - Jdgs. 14:10-18, wedding song - Ps. 45
 6. laments/dirge - (alluded to but not recorded in II Sam. 1:17 and II Chr. 35:25)
II Sam. 3:33; Ps. 27, 28; Jer. 9:17-22; Lam.; Ezek. 19:1-14; 26:17-18; Nah. 3:15-19)
 7. war songs - Gen. 4:23-24; Exod. 15:1-18,20; Num. 10:35-36; 21:14-15; Josh. 10:13; Jdgs. 5:1-31; 11:34; I Sam. 18:6; II Sam. 1:18; Isa. 47:1-15; 37:21
 8. special benedictions or blessings of leader - Gen. 49; Num. 6:24-26; Deut. 32; II Sam. 23:1-7
 9. magical texts - Balaam, Num. 24:3-9
 10. sacred poems - Psalms
 11. acrostic poems - Ps. 9,34,37,119; Prov. 31:10ff and Lamentations 1-4
 12. curses - Num. 21:22-30
 13. taunt poems - Isa. 14:1-22; 47:1-15; Ezek. 28:1-23
 14. a book of war poems (Jashar) - Num. 21:14-15; Josh. 10:12-13; II Sam. 1:18

IV. GUIDELINE TO INTERPRETING HEBREW POETRY

- A. Look for the central truth of the stanza or strophe (this is like a paragraph in prose.) The RSV was the first modern translation to identify poetry by stanzas. Compare modern translations for helpful insights.
- B. Identify the figurative language and express it in prose. Remember this type of literature is very compact, much is left for the reader to fill in.
- C. Be sure to relate the longer issue-oriented poems to their literary context (often the whole book) and historical setting.
- D. Judges 4 & 5 are very helpful in seeing how poetry expresses history. Judges 4 is prose and Judges 5 is poetry of the same event (also compare Exod. 14 & 15).
- E. Attempt to identify the type of parallelism involved, whether synonymous, antithetical, or synthetic. This is very important.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 31:30

³⁰Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete:

31:30 “Then Moses spoke. . .the words of this song” This verse should go with chapter 32 of Deuteronomy. Notice that NASB marks it as the beginning of a paragraph with a final colon, not a period (cf. JPSOA).

▣ **“in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel”** One wonders how many people made up this assembly. It would have included men, women, and older children or the model of 31:12. But this referred to a city or town. How many people would have been able to hear one man speak? Usually the leader spoke to:

1. the tribal leaders and they passed it on (cf. 31:28)
2. the Levites and they passed it on

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:1-14

¹Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak;

And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

²Let my teaching drop as the rain,

My speech distill as the dew,

As the droplets on the fresh grass

And as the showers on the herb.

³For I proclaim the name of the LORD;

Ascribe greatness to our God!

⁴The Rock! His work is perfect,

For all His ways are just;

A God of faithfulness and without injustice,

Righteous and upright is He.

⁵They have acted corruptly toward Him,

They are not His children, because of their defect;

But are a perverse and crooked generation.

⁶Do you thus repay the LORD,

O foolish and unwise people?

Is not He your Father who has bought you?

He has made you and established you.

⁷Remember the days of old,

Consider the years of all generations.

Ask your father, and he will inform you,

Your elders, and they will tell you.

⁸When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,

When He separated the sons of man,

He set the boundaries of the peoples

According to the number of the sons of Israel.

⁹For the LORD's portion is His people;

Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.

¹⁰He found him in a desert land,

And in the howling waste of a wilderness;

He encircled him, He cared for him,

He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.

¹¹Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,

That hovers over its young,

He spread His wings and caught them,

He carried them on His pinions.

**¹²The LORD alone guided him,
And there was no foreign god with him.**

**¹³He made him ride on the high places of the earth,
And he ate the produce of the field;
And He made him suck honey from the rock,
And oil from the flinty rock,**

**¹⁴Curds of cows, and milk of the flock,
With fat of lambs, And rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats,
With the finest of the wheat—
And of the blood of grapes you drank wine."**

32:1-3 There is a series of imperatival language:

1. In v. 1 three related to hearing:
 - a. “give ear” - BDB 24, KB 27, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE
 - b. “speak” - BDB 180, KB 210, *Piel* COHORTATIVE
 - c. “hear” - BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
2. In v. 2 two related to moisture:
 - a. “drop” - BDB 791, KB 887, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
 - b. “distill” - BDB 633, KB 683, *Qal* IMPERFECT used in a JUSSIVE sense
3. In v. 3 “ascribe” - BDB 396, KB 393, *Qal* IMPERATIVE (possibly “proclaim” as *Qal* IMPERFECT is also used in a COHORTATIVE sense, which gives a balanced structure as in vv. 1 and 2)

32:1 “O heavens. . .the earth” These are two permanent things (cf. Micah 6:1-2). There was a need for two witnesses to confirm truth (cf. 4:26; chapters 4 and 31-32 [cf. 30:19; 31:28; 32:1] form a literary bracket). The “heavens” represents the sky (cf. Gen. 1:1). This phrase is similar to how Isaiah introduces YHWH’s court case (cf. Isa. 1:2).

32:2 Moisture was used as an analogy of the life-giving qualities of God’s word. Four different words for rain are used (BDB 564, 378, 973, 914). This is also a possible allusion to YHWH as the giver of fertility, not *Ba’al* (cf. 11:14,17; 28:12,24; 33:28).

32:3 “the name of the LORD” Hebrew names were very important as representing character. The rabbis said that “Lord” reflected God in His love, kindness, and mercy. See Special Topic at 1:3.

▣ Notice in vv. 3-4 several attributes are used to describe Israel’s God:

1. “greatness” - BDB 152, cf. 3:24; 5:24; 9:26; 11:2; 32:3; Num. 14:19
2. “His work is perfect” - BDB 1071, meaning “wholesome,” “having integrity”
 - a. used of God’s work, Deut. 32:4
 - b. used of God’s way, Ps. 18:30
 - c. used of God’s law, Ps. 19:7-8
3. “all His ways are just” - BDB 1048, cf. Gen. 18:25; Ps. 33:5; 37:28; 99:4; 111:7; Isa. 5:16; 28:17; 30:18; 61:8
4. “a God of faithfulness” - BDB 53, cf. Ps. 36:5; 88:11; 89:1,2,5,8,24,33,49; 92:2, 119:90; Isa. 25:1; Hosea 2:22

5. “a God ... without injustice” - BDB 732, cf. Job 34:10, this is condemned in His people, Lev. 19:15,35; Deut. 25:16
6. “righteous is He” - BDB 843, cf. Job 34:17; Ps. 116:5; 119:137; 129:4; 145:17
7. “upright is He” - BDB 449, cf. Ps. 25:8; 92:15

▣ **“God”** This is from the Hebrew word *Elohim*. See Special Topic at 1:3.

32:4 “The Rock” This title (BDB 849) was used of God in vv. 15,18,30, and Ps. 18:1-2; 19:14; II Sam. 22:2ff; Ps. 78:35; Isa. 44:8). It speaks of (1) the strength, stability, the unchanging nature of the one true God or (2) God as a mighty, impregnable fortress.

▣ **“perfect”** The Hebrew word (BDB 1071) means “self-sufficient,” “whole,” “complete” (cf. II Sam. 22:31; Ps. 18:30).

Notice the different ways YHWH is characterized (i.e., “the greatness of God,” v. 3):

1. His work is perfect - BDB 1071
2. all His ways are just - BDB 1048
3. a God of faithfulness - BDB 53
4. a God without injustice - BDB 732
5. He is righteous - BDB 843
6. He is upright - BDB 449

What a powerful description of the God of creation and salvation. A God in whom all humans can trust and rely (e.g., for other characterizations see Exod. 34:6; Num. 14:18; Deut. 4:31; Neh. 9:17; Ps. 103:8; 145:8).

▣ **“A God of faithfulness”** This is the same word (BDB 53) used in v. 20 referring to man’s actions. It is translated “faith” in Hab. 2:4, “the righteous will live by his faith.” This shows the priority that God puts on His faithfulness and v. 20 shows the priority He puts on the faith of His children. Faith and grace are both biblical concepts rather than just NT concepts. The only way to respond to God’s grace is through faith. See Special Topic at 1:32.

32:5 As YHWH is described in vv. 3-4, now His covenant children, who were supposed to reflect His character (cf. vv. 3-4), but did not, are described:

1. “acted corruptly toward Him” - BDB 1007, KB 1469, *Piel* PERFECT, cf. 4:16,25; 9:12; 31:29; Gen. 6:12; Exod. 32:7; described in Ps. 14:1-3, it usually denotes idolatry
2. “not His children” - BDB 119 negated
3. “because of their defect” - BDB 548
 - a. physical mutilation which excluded one from priestly service, cf. Lev. 21:17,18,21,23, and animals from being offered as sacrifice, cf. Lev. 22:20-21; Deut. 15:21; 17:1
 - b. moral blemish, cf. Lev. 22:25; Job 11:15; Pro. 9:7
4. “perverse” - BDB 786 I, cf. v. 20, the basic meaning is twisted, which denotes a defection from the standard (rule) of YHWH’s character (righteous)
5. “crooked” - BDB 836, found only here, the meaning is parallel to #4

32:6 “He your Father” The NIDOTTE, vol. 1, p. 222, has an interesting comment on this metaphor for God. It is used reluctantly in the OT because of the possible association with fertility worship (e.g., Jer. 2:27). This song of Moses is one of the earliest usages to describe God (cf. Exod. 4:22; Deut. 1:31; 8:5 and later in the prophets, cf. Isa. 1:2; 63:16; Jer. 3:19; Hos. 11:1-3; Mal. 1:6). God’s “fatherhood” is mentioned in vv. 6,18 and 19-20.

This fatherhood of corporate Israel is identified in God's relationship to the Davidic king (cf. II Sam. 7:14; Ps. 2:7; and 89:26).

Family metaphors (father-son; husband-wife) are the most powerful ways to communicate the intimate relationship that God desires with His human creation (made in His image and likeness). Humans can understand the depth of God's feelings and commitment by analogy to these foundational human experiences (i.e., family, marriage, children).

32:6-14 This continues a description of Israel and begins a legal case against them by enumerating all that YHWH had done for them:

1. their actions toward YHWH
 - a. "foolish" - BDB 614 I, cf. V. 21
 - b. "unwise" - BDB 314, opposite in v. 29; 4:6; Ps. 107:43
2. YHWH's actions toward them:
 - a. He was their Father, v. 6 - BDB 888 I, KB 1111, *Qal* PERFECT
 - b. He made them, v. 6 - BDB 793 I, KB 889, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Gen. 14:19,22 (this could refer to initial creation, but more likely in context, His founding them as a nation in the Exodus)
 - c. He established them, v. 6 - BDB 465, KB 464, *Polel* IMPERFECT, Job 31:15; Isa. 62:7
 - d. He found them, v. 10 - BDB 592, KB 679, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - (1) in a desert land
 - (2) in a howling waste of wilderness
 - e. He encircled them, v. 10 - BDB 685, KB 738, *Polel* IMPERFECT, i.e., for protection
 - f. He cared for them, v. 10 - BDB 106, KB 122, i.e., for protection, i.e., attentively consider (only here)
 - g. He guarded them, v. 10 - BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 25:21; 31:23; 41:11-12; 61:7; Isa. 26:3; 42:6; 49:8
 - h. cared for them as a mother eagle, v. 11, cf. Exod. 19:4
 - (1) "stirs up its nest" - BDB 734, KB 802, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, i.e., to activity
 - (2) "hover over" - BDB 934, KB 1219, *Piel* IMPERFECT, cf. Gen. 1:2
 - (3) teach babies to fly
 - (a) spread wings - BDB 831, KB 975, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - (b) caught them - BDB 542, KB 534, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - (c) carried them - BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - i. He guided them, v. 12 - BDB 634, KB 685, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
 - j. He made them ride on the high places of the earth, v. 13 - BDB 938, KB 1230, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. Isa. 58:14
 - k. He fed them, vv. 13-14
 - (1) "ate" - BDB 37, KB 46, *Qal* IMPERFECT
 - (2) "suck" - BDB 413, KB 416, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
 - (3) "drank" - BDB 1059, KB 1667, *Qal* IMPERFECT

32:7 There are several commands in this verse related to Israel remembering YHWH's care and provision:

1. "remember" - BDB 269, KB 269, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. "consider" - BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. "ask" - BDB 981, KB 1371, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. "elder will tell you" - BDB 616, KB 665, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE

It was this historical information testified to in (1) the ancestral tradition passed down from generation to generation (cf. 4:9-10; 6:7,20-25; 11:19; 32:46) and (2) this Song of Moses that witnessed against Israel!

32:8 This verse asserts that Israel's God is also the only God (cf. 4:35,39; Isa. 54:5; Jer. 32:27). He and He alone sets the boundaries of all nations (cf. 2:5,9,19; Genesis 10). This is not henotheism, but monotheism!

▣ **“The Most High”** This name for God (BDB 751) is first used in Num. 24:16 (*Elyon*). This seems to be an abbreviation for *El Elyon* (cf. Gen. 14:18,19,20,21; Ps. 78:35). This name for deity is used in connection with “the nations” (cf. Ps. 47:1-3). See Special Topic: Names For Deity at 1:3.

▣

NASB “According to the number of the sons of Israel”

NKJV, NJB “according to the number of the children of Israel”

NRSV “according to the number of the gods”

TEV “He assigned to each nation a heavenly being”

REB “according to the number of the sons of God”

The Septuagint has “the number of the angels of God” (*El*). This translation seems to fit better (cf. *The Jewish Study Bible*, p. 441) because: (1) cf. 29:26; (2) it follows the reading of the scroll from cave four of Qumran scrolls; (3) national angels are mentioned in Daniel 10 and 12. Each nation had an assigned angel (cf. Dan. 10:13), but Israel had YHWH (although Michael is also said to be Israel's angel, cf. Dan. 12:1).

32:9 “the LORD's portion is His people” Conversely His people's portion is God Himself (cf. Exod. 19:5; Ps. 16:5; 73:26; Lam. 3:24). The Israelites were in a unique sense YHWH's special covenant people (cf. 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 26:18). See Special Topic: Bob's Evangelical Biases at 4:6.

32:10 “He found him in a desert land,

And in the howling waste of a wilderness” This is an allusion to YHWH's choice of Israel in romantic terms (cf. Jer. 2:23-; Hos. 2:14-15). This imagery supplements the exodus motif (cf. 1:19). It expresses in a powerful metaphor YHWH's initiating love for Israel (cf. 10:14-15; Amos 3:2).

There are two contrasting ways in the Mosaic literature of evaluating the wilderness wandering period:

1. a time of faith and faithfulness
 - a. Deut. 32:10-14
 - b. Jer. 2:1-3
 - c. Hosea 2:14-23
2. a time of faithlessness
 - a. Num. 14:1-17:11
 - b. Deut. 1:26-33
 - c. Ps. 95:8-11
 - d. Hosea 9:10-14
 - e. Jer. 2:4-13
 - f. Ezekiel 23

▣ **“the pupil of His eye”**

In English this would be “the apple of His eye.” This is another metaphor which denotes Israel as a special child (cf. Ps. 17:8). Literally the Hebrew is “little man of His eye.”

32:11

NASB, NKJV “Like an eagle. . .that hovers over its young”

NRSV “like an eagle that stirs up its nest”

TEV “like an eagle watching its nest”

NJB “as an eagle watches over its young”

This shows God as an extremely protective and powerful parent (cf. v. 19). This concept of God as an eagle is that of God as a mother bird (cf. v. 18; Gen. 1:2; Exod. 19:4; Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34). Deity is described as both male (cf. v. 6) and female (cf. v. 11). The NJB and REV translations follow the Septuagint.

SPECIAL TOPIC: SHADOW AS METAPHOR FOR PROTECTION AND CARE

The idiom of “shadow” was common in the ANE. Note the examples in the Bible.

1. idiom of protection, Isa. 16:3; 30:2-3; Lam. 4:20
2. idiom of “shadow of the hand,” Ps. 121:5; Isa. 49:2; 51:16
3. idiom of “shadow of the roof,” Gen. 19:8
4. idiom of “shadow of God’s special cloud,” cf. Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19,20,24; Isa. 4:6; 25:4-5; 32:1-2
5. idiom of “shadow of the wing,” Ps. 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; 91:1,4 (similar metaphors in Deut. 32:10-11; Ruth 2:12; Isa. 31:5; Matt. 23:37; Luke 13:34)
6. idiom of “shadow of a tree,” Jdgs. 9:15; Ezek. 17:23; 31:6,17; Dan. 4:12; Hosea 14:7

32:12 “The Lord alone guided him” This term (BDB 94) is used to designate YHWH’s exclusive relationship to Israel. He and He alone guided them!

32:13 “ride on the high places of the earth” This is a metaphor for YHWH’s abundance (as is all of v. 14) given to Israel (cf. Isa. 58:14; Hab. 3:19).

▣ **“honey from the rock”** This refers to the honey of wild bees, which often lived in the cracks of the rocks (cf. Ps. 81:16).

▣ **“oil from the flinty rock”** This refers to the wild olive trees that grew where not even grass could grow. Verses 13 and 14 are talking about the abundant produce of the Promised Land.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:15-18

- ¹⁵“But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—
You are grown fat, thick, and sleek—
Then he forsook God who made him,
And scorned the Rock of his salvation.
¹⁶They made Him jealous with strange *gods*;
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.
¹⁷They sacrificed to demons *who were not God*,
To gods whom they have not known,
New *gods* who came lately,
Whom your fathers did not dread.
¹⁸You neglected the Rock who begot you,
And forgot the God who gave you birth.

32:15 “Jeshurun” This word means “the upright one” (BDB 449), and is a poetic name for Israel (cf. 33:5,26; Isa. 44:2, see Special Topic: Israel the Name at 1:1). This is a touch of sarcasm (i.e., vv. 15-16).

▣ **“kicked”** This VERB (BDB 127, KB 142, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is used only twice in the OT and seems to be a metaphor of rejection (cf. I Sam. 2:29). As cattle kick at their owners so Israel kicks at her God!

32:15-18 “fat” When Israel was blessed (cf. 31:20) she rejected YHWH:

1. “forsook God who made him” (cf. v. 6) - BDB 643, KB 695, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 31:16,17; Jdgs. 10:6
2. “scorned the Rock of his salvation” (cf. v. 4) - BDB 614, KB 663, *Piel* IMPERFECT, this is the VERB form of the ADJECTIVE “foolish,” found in v. 6 (cf. Ps. 74:18)

How did Israel “forsake” and “scorn” YHWH?

1. they made Him jealous with strange gods, v. 16
2. they made Him jealous with abominations, v. 16
3. they sacrificed to demons, v. 17
 - a. who were not known
 - b. new gods
 - c. unknown to their fathers
4. they neglected the Rock, v. 18 - BDB 1009, KB 1477, *Qal* JUSSIVE but in an IMPERFECT sense (only here)
5. they forgot their God, v. 18 - BDB 1013, KB 1489, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. 4:23, forgetting the covenant is forgetting YHWH

32:17 “They sacrificed to demons who were not God” This concept is also used in Ps. 106:37. The OT talks very little about the demonic. Paul alludes to this verse in I Cor. 10:20.

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE DEMONIC IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- A. The exact relationship between fallen angels and the demonic is uncertain. I Enoch asserts that the *Nephilim* of Gen. 6:1-8 is the source of evil (the rabbis also focus on this text and not Genesis 3). I Enoch says that these half angel/half human beings were killed by the flood (it even asserts that their death was the purpose of the flood), but now their disembodied spirits are seeking a body host.
- B. There are several hostile spirits or demons named in the OT:
 1. *Satyrs* or “hairy ones,” possibly goat demons (BDB 972 III) - Lev. 17:7; II Chr. 11:15; Isa. 13:21; 34:14
 2. *Shedim* (BDB 993) - Deut. 32:17; Ps. 106:37, to which sacrifices were made (similar to *Molech*)
 3. *Lilith*, the female night demon (BDB 539) - Isa. 34:14 (part of Babylonian and Ugarit myth)
 4. *Azazel*, demon of the desert (name of chief demon in I Enoch, cf. 8:1; 9:6; 10:4-8; 13:1-2; 54:5; 55:4; 69:2) - Lev. 16:8,10,26
 5. Psalm 91:5-6 are personifications of pestilence (cf. v. 10), not spiritual beings (cf. Song of Songs 3:8)
 6. Isaiah 13:21 and 34:14 list several desert animals as a way to show the desolation of destroyed places. Some assume that the list includes the demonic to illustrate that these destroyed places are also haunted (cf. Matt. 12:43; Luke 11:24; Rev. 18:2)
- C. The OT monotheism silenced and modified the legends of the pagan nations, but sometimes names and titles of their superstitions are referred to (esp. poetic texts). The reality of evil spirits is a part of progressive revelation and is developed in the NT as is the person/angel of Satan. See Special Topic: Personal Evil below.

SPECIAL TOPIC: PERSONAL EVIL

I. SATAN IS A VERY DIFFICULT SUBJECT

- A. The OT does not reveal an arch enemy to good (God), but a servant of YHWH who offers mankind an alternative and accuses mankind of unrighteousness (A. B. Davidson, pp. 300-306).
- B. The concept of a personal arch enemy of God developed in the inter-biblical (non-canonical) literature under the influence of Persian religion (*Zoroastrianism*). This, in turn, greatly influenced rabbinical Judaism.
- C. The NT develops the OT themes in surprisingly stark, but selective, categories.

If one approaches the study of evil from the perspective of biblical theology (each book or author or genre studied and outlined separately) then very different views of evil are revealed.

If, however, one approaches the study of evil from a non-biblical or extra-biblical approach of world religions or eastern religions then much of the NT development is foreshadowed in Persian dualism and Greco-Roman spiritism.

If one is presuppositionally committed to the divine authority of Scripture, then the NT development must be seen as progressive revelation. Christians must guard against allowing Jewish folklore or English literature (i.e., Dante, Milton) to further clarify the concept. There is certainly mystery and ambiguity in this area of revelation. God has chosen not to reveal all aspects of evil, its origin, its purpose, but He has revealed its defeat!

II. SATAN IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the OT the term Satan (BDB 966) or accuser seems to relate to three separate groups.

- A. human accusers (I Sam. 29:4; II Sam. 19:22; I Kgs. 5:40, 11:14,23,25; Ps. 109:6,20,29)
- B. angelic accusers (Num. 22:22-23; Zech. 3:1)
 - 1. the Angel of the Lord - Num. 22:22-23
 - 2. Satan - I Chr. 21:1; Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1
- C. demonic(possibly Satan)accusers (I Kgs. 22:21; Zech. 13:2)

Only later in the intertestamental period is the serpent of Genesis 3 identified with Satan (cf. Book of Wisdom 2:23-24; II Enoch 31:3), and even later does this become a rabbinical option (cf. *Sot* 9b and *Sanh.* 29a). The “sons of God” of Genesis 6 become the evil angels in I Enoch 54:6. They become the origin of evil in rabbinical theology. I mention this, not to assert its theological accuracy, but to show its development. In the NT these OT activities are attributed to angelic, personified evil (i.e., Satan) in II Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9.

The origin of personified evil is difficult or impossible (depending on your point of view) to determine from the OT. One reason for this is Israel’s strong monotheism (cf. I Kgs. 22:20-22; Eccl. 7:14; Isa. 45:7; Amos 3:6). All causality was attributed to YHWH to demonstrate His uniqueness and primacy (cf. Isa. 43:11; 44:6,8,24; 45:5-6,14,18,21,22).

Sources of possible information are (1) Job 1-2, where Satan is one of the “sons of God” (i.e., angels) or (2) Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28, where prideful near eastern kings (Babylon and Tyre) are used to illustrate the pride of Satan (cf. I Tim. 3:6). I have mixed emotions about this approach. Ezekiel uses Garden of Eden metaphors not only of the king of Tyre as Satan (cf. Ezek. 28:12-16), but also for the king of Egypt as the Tree of the

Knowledge of Good and Evil (Ezekiel 31). However, Isaiah 14, particularly vv. 12-14, seems to describe an angelic revolt through pride. If God wanted to reveal to us the specific nature and origin of Satan this is a very oblique way and place to do it. We must guard against the trend of systematic theology of

taking small, ambiguous parts of different testaments, authors, books, and genres and combining them as pieces of one divine puzzle.

III. SATAN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Alfred Edersheim (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. 2, appendices XIII [pp. 748-763] and XVI [pp. 770-776]) says that Rabbinical Judaism has been overly influenced by Persian dualism and demonic speculation. The rabbis are not a good source for truth in this area. Jesus radically diverges from the teachings of the Synagogue. I think that the rabbinical concept of angelic mediation and opposition in the giving of the law to Moses on Mt. Sinai opened the door to the concept of an arch-angelic enemy of YHWH as well as mankind. There are two high gods of Persian (Zoroastrian) dualism, *Ahkiman* and *Ormaza*, good and evil. This dualism developed into a Judaic limited dualism of YHWH and Satan.

There is surely progressive revelation in the NT as to the development of evil, but not as elaborate as the rabbis proclaim. A good example of this difference is the “war in heaven.” The fall of Satan(Devil) is a logical necessity, but the specifics are not given. Even what is given is veiled in apocalyptic genre (cf. Rev. 12:4,7,12-13). Although Satan(Devil) is defeated and exiled to earth, he still functions as a servant of YHWH (cf. Matt. 4:1; Luke 22:31-32; I Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

We must curb our curiosity in this area. There is a personal force of temptation and evil, but there is still only one God and mankind is still responsible for his/her choices. There is a spiritual battle, both before and after salvation. Victory can only come and remain in and through the Triune God. Evil has been defeated and will be removed!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:19-22

¹⁹“The Lord saw *this*, and spurned *them*

Because of the provocation of His sons and daughters.

²⁰Then He said, 'I will hide My face from them,

I will see what their end *shall be*;

For they are a perverse generation,

Sons in whom is no faithfulness.

²¹They have made Me jealous with *what* is not God;

They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.

So I will make them jealous with *those who* are not a people;

I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,

²²For a fire is kindled in My anger,

And burns to the lowest part of Sheol,

And consumes the earth with its yield,

And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

32:19-22 This paragraph is repetitious of preceding themes. Poetry is very repetitious. God’s covenant people reject Him and He rejects them (cf. Hosea 1:9; 2:23; Rom. 9:25). His rejection (i.e., anger) is for the purpose of reconciliation. He will use “a people” to provoke Israel to jealousy (and hopefully faith, cf. Rom. 11:11,14). This sounds very much to me like Paul’s discussion in Romans 9-11. Paul even quotes v. 21 in Rom. 10:19!

The added irony is that Israel left YHWH for non-existent gods (i.e., vanities, cf. Jer. 2:13). Oh, the stupidity of human idolatry (cf. Isa. 40:19-20; 44:9-20; Jer. 10:3-5,14)!

32:20 “I will hide My face from them” This is a metaphor for the cessation of YHWH’s personal care and attention (cf. 31:17-18).

▣ **“For they are a perverse generation, Sons in whom is no faithfulness”** These two lines of poetry describe the tragedy of Israel who had YHWH’s special care and presence (cf. Rom. 9:4-5). They are characterized as:

1. perverse (BDB 246) - a term usually used in Proverbs (cf. 2:12,14; 6:14; 8:13; 10:31,31; 16:30; 23:33). It is related to the Hebrew word for “stocks” (BDB 246), which put one’s body into a crooked or twisted posture.
2. no faithfulness (BDB 53 negated) - a term also common to Proverbs (cf. 13:17; 20:6; also note Ps. 31:23; Isa. 26:3; see Special Topic at 1:32).
3. This characterization is parallel to 32:5:
 - a. perverse (BDB 786 I)
 - b. crooked (BDB 836)

YHWH is the true standard or rule (see Special Topic at 1:16). His covenant people have deviated from the standard.

▣ **“I will see what their end shall be”** YHWH had previously shown Moses the future of Israel in 31:29, as He will later do Joshua in 24:19.

32:21 “idols” This is literally “vapor” or “vanity” (BDB 210) and represents that which is worthless or non-existent. Here, like Jer. 2:5; 8:19; 10:14-15; 16:19-20, it is used of idols. See a play on the word in Isa. 57:13.

32:22 This verse is metaphorical of the complete destruction and judgment that God will bring on rebellious Israel (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4). All of God’s creation (i.e., earth, *sheol*) are affected! This is not a reference to the place of eternal punishment.

SPECIAL TOPIC: WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

I. Old Testament

- A. All humans go to *She’ol* (etymology uncertain, BDB 1066), which is a way of referring to death or the grave, mostly in Wisdom Literature and Isaiah. In the OT it was a shadowy, conscious, but joyless existence (cf. Job 10:21-22; 38:17; Ps. 107:10,14).
- B. *She’ol* characterized
 1. associated with God’s judgment (fire), Deut. 32:22
 2. associated with punishment even before Judgment Day, Ps. 18:4-5
 3. associated with *Abaddon* (destruction), also open to God, Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Amos 9:2
 4. associated with “the Pit” (grave), Ps. 16:10; Isa. 14:15; Ezek. 31:15-17
 5. wicked descend alive into *She’ol*, Num. 16:30,33; Ps. 55:15
 6. personified often as an animal with a large mouth, Num. 16:30; Isa. 5:14; 14:9; Hab. 2:5
 7. people there are called *Repha’im*, Isa. 14:9-11)

II. New Testament

- A. The Hebrew *She’ol* is translated by the Greek *Hades* (the unseen world)
- B. *Hades* characterized

1. refers to death, Matt. 16:18
2. linked to death, Rev. 1:18; 6:8; 20:13-14
3. often analogous to the place of permanent punishment (*Gehenna*), Matt. 11:23 (OT quote); Luke 10:15; 16:23-24
4. often analogous to the grave, Luke 16:23

C. Possibly divided (rabbis)

1. righteous part called paradise (really another name for heaven, cf. II Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7), Luke 23:43
2. wicked part called *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4, where it is a holding place for evil angels (cf. Gen. 6; I Enoch)

D. *Gehenna*

1. Reflects the OT phrase, “the valley of the sons of Hinnom,” (south of Jerusalem). It was the place where the Phoenician fire god, *Molech* (BDB 574) was worshiped by child sacrifice (cf. II Kgs. 16:3; 21:6; II Chr. 28:3; 33:6), which was forbidden in Lev. 18:21; 20:2-5
2. Jeremiah changed it from a place of pagan worship into a site of YHWH’s judgment (cf. Jer. 7:32; 19:6-7). It became the place of fiery, eternal judgment in I Enoch 90:26-27 and Sib. 1:103.
3. The Jews of Jesus’ day were so appalled by their ancestors’ participation in pagan worship by child sacrifice, that they turned this area into the garbage dump for Jerusalem. Many of Jesus’ metaphors for eternal judgment came from this landfill (fire, smoke, worms, stench, cf. Mark 9:44,46). The term *Gehenna* is used only by Jesus (except in James 3:6).
4. Jesus’ usage of *Gehenna*
 - a. fire, Matt. 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43
 - b. permanent, Mark 9:48 (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. place of destruction (both soul and body), Matt. 10:28
 - d. paralleled to *She’ol*, Matt. 5:29-30; 18:9
 - e. characterizes the wicked as “son of hell,” Matt. 23:15
 - f. result of judicial sentence, Matt. 23:33; Luke 12:5
 - g. the concept of *Gehenna* is parallel to the second death (cf. Rev. 2:11; 20:6,14) or the lake of fire (cf. Matt. 13:42,50; Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14-15; 21:8). It is possible the lake of fire becomes the permanent dwelling place of humans (from *She’ol*) and evil angels (from *Tartarus*, II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6 or the abyss, cf. Luke 8:31; Rev. 9:1-10; 20:1,3).
 - h. it was not designed for humans, but for Satan and his angels, Matt. 25:41

E. It is possible, because of the overlap of *She’ol*, *Hades*, and *Gehenna* that

1. originally all humans went to *She’ol/Hades*
2. their experience there (good/ bad) is exacerbated after Judgment Day, but the place of the wicked remains the same (this is why the KJV translated *hades* (grave) as *gehenna* (hell).
3. only NT text to mention torment before Judgment is the parable of Luke 16:19-31 (Lazarus and the Rich Man). *She’ol* is also described as a place of punishment now (cf. Deut. 32:22; Ps. 18:1-5). However, one can not establish a doctrine on a parable.

III. Intermediate state between death and resurrection

- A. The NT does not teach the “immortality of the soul,” which is one of several ancient views of the after life.

1. human souls exist before their physical life
 2. human souls are eternal before and after physical death
 3. often the physical body is seen as a prison and death as release back to pre-existent state
- B. The NT hints at a disembodied state between death and resurrection
1. Jesus speaks of a division between body and soul, Matt. 10:28
 2. Abraham may have a body now, Mark 12:26-27; Luke 16:23
 3. Moses and Elijah have a physical body at the transfiguration, Matt. 17
 4. Paul asserts that at the Second Coming the souls with Christ will get their new bodies first, I Thess. 4:13-18
 5. Paul asserts that believers get their new spiritual bodies on Resurrection Day, I Cor. 15:23,52
 6. Paul asserts that believers do not go to *Hades*, but at death are with Jesus, II Cor. 5:6,8; Phil. 1:23. Jesus overcame death and took the righteous to heaven with Him, I Pet. 3:18-22.

IV. Heaven

- A. This term is used in three senses in the Bible:
1. the atmosphere above the earth, Gen. 1:1,8; Isa. 42:5; 45:18
 2. the starry heavens, Gen. 1:14; Deut. 10:14; Ps. 148:4; Heb. 4:14; 7:26
 3. the place of God's throne, Deut. 10:14; I Kgs. 8:27; Ps. 148:4; Eph. 4:10; Heb. 9:24 (third heaven, II Cor. 12:2)
- B. The Bible does not reveal much about the afterlife. Probably because fallen humans have no way or capacity to understand (cf. I Cor. 2:9).
- C. Heaven is both a place (cf. John 14:2-3) and a person (cf. II Cor. 5:6,8). Heaven may be a restored Garden of Eden (Gen. 1-2; Rev. 21-22). The earth will be cleansed and restored (cf. Acts 3:21; Rom. 8:21; II Pet. 3:10). The image of God (Gen. 1:26-27) is restored in Christ. Now the intimate fellowship of the Garden of Eden is possible again.

However, this may be metaphorical (heaven as a huge, cubed city of Rev. 21:9-27) and not literal. I Corinthians 15 describes the difference between the physical body and the spiritual body as the seed to the mature plant. Again, I Cor. 2:9 (a quote from Isa. 64:6 and 65:17) is a great promise and hope! I know that when we see Him we will be like Him (cf. I John 3:2).

V. Helpful resources

- A. William Hendriksen, *The Bible On the Life Hereafter*
- B. Maurice Rawlings, *Beyond Death's Door*

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:23-27

²³“I will heap misfortunes on them; I will use My arrows on them.

²⁴*They will be* wasted by famine, and consumed by plague

And bitter destruction;

And the teeth of beasts I will send upon them,

With the venom of crawling things of the dust.

²⁵**Outside the sword will bereave,**

And inside terror —

Both young man and virgin,

The nursling with the man of gray hair.

**²⁶I would have said, "I will cut them to pieces,
I will remove the memory of them from men,"**

**²⁷Had I not feared the provocation by the enemy,
That their adversaries would misjudge,
That they would say, "Our hand is triumphant,
And the Lord has not done all this."**

32:23-25 This paragraph describes metaphorically YHWH's judgment on Israel:

1. "I will heap misfortunes on them" - BDB 705, KB 763, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, found only here. The *Qal* means "to sweep away" or "snatch away."
2. "I will use My arrows on them" - BDB 477, KB 476, *Piel* IMPERFECT. This VERB'S basic meaning "is to bring something to completion," i.e., totally destroy (cf. v. 22).
 - a. wasted by famine, v. 24, cf. 28:22
 - b. consumed by plague, v. 24 (or famine, BDB 536 II, "burning heat")
 - c. bitter destruction, v. 24 (or poisonous pestilence, cf. #e)
 - d. the teeth of beasts, v. 24, cf. Lev. 26:22
 - e. venom of crawling things, v. 24, cf. Amos 5:18-19
 - f. sword (outside), v. 25
 - g. terror (inside), v. 25
 - (1) young men (of marriageable age)
 - (2) young women (virgin of marriageable age)
 - (3) children (nursing)
 - (4) elderly (man of gray hair)

32:26-27 YHWH would have destroyed them:

1. cut them to pieces, v. 26 - BDB 802, KB 907, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, but COHORTATIVE in meaning to match the next VERB (only here, LXX has "scattered them")
2. remove the memory of them, v. 26 - BDB 991, KB 1407, *Hiphil* COHORTATIVE (i.e., totally exterminate)
3. This is only one of several texts which assert Israel's complete annihilation if they disobey the covenant (cf. 4:26; 28:20-22; 30:19).

But to do so would thwart His purpose for Israel. Israel's enemies would claim victory and attribute it to YHWH (cf. v. 27).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:28-33

**²⁸"For they are a nation lacking in counsel,
And there is no understanding in them.**

**²⁹Would that they were wise, that they understood this,
That they would discern their future!**

**³⁰How could one chase a thousand,
And two put ten thousand to flight,
Unless their Rock had sold them,
And the LORD had given them up?**

**³¹Indeed their rock is not like our Rock,
Even our enemies themselves judge this.**

**³²For their vine is from the vine of Sodom,
And from the fields of Gomorrah;
Their grapes are grapes of poison,
Their clusters, bitter.**

**³³Their wine is the venom of serpents,
And the deadly poison of cobras.**

32:28-33 The question is to whom this paragraph is directed—Israel or their enemies (cf. vv. 26-27)?

1. against Israel?
 - a. vv. 28-29
 - b. v. 30 as reverse holy war
 - c. v. 32 Israel's current rebellion
2. against her enemies?
 - a. v. 30 as current military failure of Israel's part (cf. Josh. 23:10)
 - b. v. 30-31, their Rock had sold them and the Lord had given them up
 - c. vv. 32-33, Canaanite abominations
 - d. vv. 34-43 are about YHWH's rejection and judgment of Canaanite idolatry

32:28-29 Notice the words in vv. 28-29 for "thinking":

1. "lacking in counsel" - BDB 1, KB 2, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE
2. "no understanding in them" - BDB 108 negated
3. "that they were wise" - BDB 53, *Qal* PERFECT
4. "they understood this" - BDB 968, KB 1328, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT
5. "that they would discern" - BDB 106, KB 122, *Qal* PERFECT

Israel is incapable of right thinking!

32:30 Notice the parallel of verse 30 c and d:

1. "their Rock had sold them" - BDB 569, KB 581, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. Jdgs. 2:14; 3:8; 4:2; 10:7; Ps. 44:10; Isa. 50:1
2. "the LORD had given them up" - BDB 688, KB 742, *Hiphil* PERFECT

Israel's defeat is possible because the divine Warrior (holy war) has left them because of the covenant disobedience. Verses 32-33 are an extended metaphor of wine symbolizing Canaanite worship. It is deadly (i.e., poison, bitter, venom)!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:34-43

**³⁴"Is it not laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up in My treasuries?"**

**³⁵Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,
In due time their foot will slip;
For the day of their calamity is near,
And the impending things are hastening upon them.'**

**³⁶For the LORD will vindicate His people,
And will have compassion on His servants,**

**When He sees that *their* strength is gone,
And there is none *remaining*, bond or free.**

**³⁷And He will say, 'Where are their gods,
The rock in which they sought refuge?**

**³⁸Who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
And drank the wine of their drink offering?
Let them rise up and help you,
Let them be your hiding place!**

**³⁹See now that I, I am He,
And there is no god besides Me;
It is I who put to death and give life.
I have wounded and it is I who heal,
And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.**

**⁴⁰Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven,
And say, as I live forever,**

**⁴¹If I sharpen My flashing sword,
And My hand takes hold on justice,
I will render vengeance on My adversaries,
And I will repay those who hate Me.**

**⁴²I will make My arrows drunk with blood,
And My sword will devour flesh,
With the blood of the slain and the captives,
From the long-haired leaders of the enemy.'**

**⁴³Rejoice, O nations, *with* His people;
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,
And will render vengeance on His adversaries,
And will atone for His land *and* His people."**

32:34 It seems to me contextually that v. 34 can relate to vv. 32-33. It is also possible that it refers to v. 35 (a quote from YHWH [i.e., vv. 34-35] like vv. 39-42). The larger context is still YHWH heaping judgment on Israel so that the nations will not get the wrong message. YHWH will judge them and vindicate His people. It does not state whether Israel repents or that YHWH's eternal redemptive purposes must be allowed to manifest in history. A rebellious covenant people is the lesser of two evils (i.e., the idolatrous nations). The Messiah will come and Israel will still be covenant breakers!

This verse has two *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLES:

1. laid up in store - BDB 485, KB 481 (found only here)
2. sealed up - BDB 367, KB 364, cf. Job 14:17

32:35 The first line of this verse is quoted in the NT in Rom. 12:19 and Heb. 10:30. The term "vengeance" (BDB 668) is also mentioned in vv. 41 and 43. It is often used by Isaiah and Jeremiah:

1. against Israel - Isa. 59:17
2. against Israel's enemies - Isa. 34:8; 35:4; 61:2; 63:4; Jer. 46:10; 50:15,18; 51:6,11

The term "retribution" (BDB 1024) is also found in Isa. 59:18 (twice) in a context where YHWH will restore a sinful Israel (i.e., Zion).

▣ **“In due time their foot will slip”** This VERB (BDB 556, KB 555, *Qal* IMPERFECT) can refer to:

1. a personal fall into trouble - David in Ps. 38:17
2. a divine judgment - Isa. 24:19
3. a divine promise of restoration - Ps. 94:18; Isa. 54:10

Humans stumble and nature is disrupted (cf. Isa. 24:19), but God will restore both (cf. Rom. 8:18-25).

▣ The last two lines of poetry in v. 35 denote the rapid and sure coming of God’s justice:

1. day of calamity (BDB 15) is near (BDB 898)
2. the impending things are hastening upon them (BDB 301 I, KB 300, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE)

32:36 In this song of warning and prediction of Israel’s disobedience resulting in divine judgment, there is also the promise of YHWH’s forgiveness and restoration.

1. The LORD will vindicate His people - BDB 192, KB 220, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 135:14
2. The LORD will have compassion on His servants - BDB 636, KB 688, *Hithpael* IMPERFECT

God will judge His people (Ps. 7:8; 96:10), but in so doing, will establish them!

32:37-38 YHWH mocks Canaanite idolatry (cf. Jer. 2:27-28; 11:12-13). He calls on their gods to act on their behalf (v. 38):

1. Let them rise - BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* IMPERFECT used as a JUSSIVE
2. Let them help - BDB 740, KB 810, *Qal* IMPERFECT used as a JUSSIVE
3. Let them be your hiding place - BDB 224, KB 243, *Qal* JUSSIVE (this term [BDB 340, KB 337, *Qal* PERFECT] is always used of taking refuge in YHWH. He and He alone is the safe place)

32:39-40 YHWH establishes His uniqueness (monotheism). Notice the use of antithetical parallelism:

1. See - BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. I am He - cf. Exod. 3:13-14 (YHWH)
3. There is no god beside Me - cf. 4:35,39; 33:26; Exod. 8:10; 9:14; Isa. 44:6,8; 45:7
4. I who put to death or give life - cf. I Sam. 2:6; II Kgs. 5:7 (also note Romans 9)
5. I have wounded, and it is I who heal - cf. Job 5:18; Isa. 45:7; Hos. 6:1; Amos 3:6 (often in the OT all causality is attributed to God as a way to express the truth of monotheism)
6. There is no one who can deliver from My hand - cf. Ps. 50:22; Isa. 43:13; Dan. 4:35

In v. 40 YHWH (the ever-living, only living God) takes an oath by His own character! This lifting of the hand (BDB 669, KB 724, *Qal* IMPERFECT) may be in contrast to the nations (i.e., lifting their hand as a sign of victory over Israel) in v. 27. YHWH lifts His hand to swear an oath (cf. Ezek. 20:5-6).

32:41-43 YHWH describes His actions of justice against idolaters (vv. 41-42). In v. 43 He asserts His commitment to His promise to Israel.

Paul uses the first line of v. 43 in Rom. 15:10 and asserts that it shows that YHWH loves and includes Gentiles. Paul, in Romans 15, also quotes Ps. 18:49 or II Sam. 22:5; Ps. 117:1 and Isa. 11:10; 42:4 (cf. Matt. 12:21) to assert the same truth.

YHWH is willing to forgive Israel based on His character and promises, not their actions. This, in essence, is the new covenant of Jer. 31:31-34 and Ezek. 36:22-38. Human hope is ultimately in the unchanging character of a gracious God in Whose image and likeness they are created!

32:43 “Rejoice” This VERB (BDB 943, KB 1247) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. It is a shout of joy, cf. Job 38:7; Isa. 12:6; 24:14; 44:23; 49:13; 54:1; Jer. 31:7.

▣ There is a phrase added here by the Septuagint which is quoted by the author of the NT book of Hebrews (who used the Septuagint) in 1:6.

▣ Notice how the PRONOUNS in vv. 34-43 change from first person to third person. This is literary variety, not different authors. YHWH is speaking.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:44-47

⁴⁴Then Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he, with Joshua the son of Nun. ⁴⁵When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, ⁴⁶he said to them, "Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, *even* all the words of this law. ⁴⁷For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

32:44 "Joshua" The names Joshua and Jesus are based on the same two Hebrew words, "YHWH" and "salvation" (a VERB must be supplied).

Joshua is positioned with Moses before the people to confirm and establish his leadership role.

32:46 "Take to your heart" This VERB (BDB 962, KB 1321) is a *Qal* IMPERATIVE. The same idiom can be seen in Ezek. 44:5. Israel has a choice, an informed choice based on YHWH's past actions and current promises (cf. 4:26; 30:19; 31:28), but she must choose now!

For "Heart" see Special Topic at 2:30.

▣ **"you shall command your sons"** This emphasizes the educational responsibility of parents (cf. v. 32:7).

32:47 "it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life" This is the concept of God's word as having an independent power once spoken (cf. Duet. 8:3; Ps. 33:6,9; Isa. 55:11). This word (Moses writings) can bring life and health (cf. 30:20) or death and destruction (cf. 30:19). Obedience is the continuing key to its effectiveness!

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 32:48-52

⁴⁸The LORD spoke to Moses that very same day, saying, ⁴⁹"Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession. ⁵⁰Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people, ⁵¹because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel. ⁵²For you shall see the land at a distance, but you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving the sons of Israel.

32:49-50 These two verses have several IMPERATIVES:

1. "go up," v. 49 - BDB 748, KB 828, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
2. "look at," v. 40 - BDB 906, KB 1157, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
3. "die," v. 50 - BDB 559, KB 562, *Qal* IMPERATIVE
4. "be gathered," v. 50 - BDB 62, KB 74, *Niphal* IMPERATIVE

The last acts of Moses are scripted by a God who loved him, used him, and held him responsible for his actions!

32:49 “Abarim” This is the mountain range (cf. Num. 27:12-14).

▣ **“Mount Nebo”** This is the highest peak in that mountain range. Possibly this peak is very close to the northern part of the Dead Sea across from Jericho on the opposite side of the Jordan Valley.

32:50 “Then die on the mountain” The implication of the verse is that this will be the end of Moses’ earthly life (cf. v. 34), but he will live on with his family and countrymen who have died before.

▣ **“Mount Hor”** Aaron’s death and burial are first recorded in Num. 20:22-29; 33:38-39. However, Deut. 10:6 says he died and was buried at Moseroth (cf. Num. 33:30-31). *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, p. 166, says Moserah is the name of the area and Mount Hor the name of the specific mountain.

32:51 “because you broke faith with Me” (cf. Numbers 20; 27:14; Deut. 1:37; 3:23-27). This is parallel to “because you did not treat Me as holy.” Moses’ open and obvious disobedience before all the people in Numbers 20 and again in Numbers 27, caused him to be publicly judged by God and not allowed to enter the Promised Land.

32:52 This is further expanded in chapter 34.

DEUTERONOMY 33

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Moses' Final Blessing On Israel	The Blessing of Moses	Moses Blesses the Tribes of Israel	The Tribes
33:1-5	33:1-29 (vv. 1-5)	33:1-5 (vv. 2-5)	33:1-29 (v. 1) (v. 2) (v. 3) (v. 4-6)
33:6-7	(vv. 6-7)	33:6 33:7	(v. 7)
33:8-11	(vv. 8-11)	33:8-11	(vv. 8-11)
33:12	(v. 12)	33:12	(v. 12)
33:13-17	(vv. 13-17)	33:13-17	(vv. 13-17)
33:18-19	(vv. 18-19)	33:18-19	(vv. 18-19)
33:20-21	(vv. 20-21)	33:20-21	(vv. 20-21)
33:22	(v. 22)	33:22	(v. 22)
33:23	(v. 23)	33:23	(v. 23)
33:24-29	(vv. 24-25) (vv. 26-29)	33:24-29 (vv. 24-25) (vv. 26-29)	(vv. 24-25) (vv. 26-29)

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section)
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

CONTEXTUAL INSIGHTS

- A. This chapter is very similar to Genesis 49. Both reflect the ancient Jewish tradition of a Patriarchal blessing on the children (i.e., Jacob to his sons in Genesis 49). Here Moses is a surrogate father to the tribes of Israel and pronounces the family blessing and warning on each one.
- B. The song of chapter 32, with its severe warnings, must be combined with the blessing of chapter 33 to see the full counsel of YHWH's word!
- C. This poem seems to break the continuity between 32:48-52 and chapter 34. Why it was inserted here, when and by whom, cannot be answered. It is assumed to be an inspired poetic blessing linked to Moses.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:1-5

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

²He said, "The LORD came from Sinai,
And dawned on them from Seir;
He shone forth from Mount Paran,
And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones;
At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.

³Indeed, He loves the people;
All Your holy ones are in Your hand,
And they followed in Your steps;
Everyone receives of Your words.

⁴Moses charged us with a law,
A possession for the assembly of Jacob.

⁵And He was king in Jeshurun,
When the heads of the people were gathered,
The tribes of Israel together."

33:1 "the blessing. . .blessed" The VERB (BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* PERFECT) and the NOUN occur in v. 1.

SPECIAL TOPIC: BLESSING

There are several kinds of blessings (BDB 139) in the OT. The two most common are:

1. blessings of God:
 - a. to all nations through Abraham (and the Patriarchs), Gen. 12:3; 27:29; cf. Acts 3:25; Gal. 3:8
 - b. conditioned on repentance, Exod. 32:29; Joel 2:12-14
 - c. conditioned on obedience to the covenant, Lev. 25:18-21
 - d. a proper relationship with God brings prosperity (i.e., the cursings vs. blessings), Deut. 11:26,27,29; 23:5; 28:2,8; 30:1,19; Josh. 8:34; Ps. 133:3; Pro. 10:22
 - e. on obedient Israel, Deut. 12:15; 16:17; 32:23; Isa. 44:3; Ezek. 34:25-31; Mal. 3:10-12

- f. on Levitical priests, Ezek. 44:28-31; Mal. 3:10-12
- g. on David and the Messianic line, II Sam. 7:29; Ps. 3:8; 21:3; 118:26 (cf. Matt. 21:9; 23:39; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; 19:38; John 12:13)
- h. on the one who is sent by God, Ps. 118:26; 129:8
- 2. the blessing of parents:
 - a. Isaac blessing Jacob (by trickery), Gen. 27:12,18-29,35
 - b. Jacob, Gen. 49:3-27,28-29
 - c. Moses (surrogate parent), Deut. 33:1-25

God's word, and for that matter, the spoken blessings of the Patriarchs, became an independent, self-directed power to accomplish its purpose, Isa. 55:11; 45:23; Matt. 24:35 (5:17-19); Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33. The power of the spoken word can be seen in:

- 1. creation (i.e., "He said. . .")
- 2. Messiah called "word," John 1:1,14; I John 1:1; Rev. 19:13

God's greatest blessing is Himself! His personal presence with, for us!

▣ **"the man of God"** This phrase (BDB 35 CONSTRUCT 43) was used to describe prophets (cf. Josh. 14:6; I Sam. 2:27; 9:6-7; I Kgs. 9:6; 12:22; 13:1,30; II Kgs. 1:9-13; 5:8; 23:17; Jer. 35:4).

33:2 This describes a revelatory appearance of YHWH to Israel (i.e., theophany). This awesome encounter between the divine and humans was terrifying (cf. Exodus 19; Ps. 50:2-3). YHWH's presence was continued in the form of the special cloud (i.e., *Shekinah* cloud of glory). YHWH came and stayed with His people from Mt. Sinai/Horeb until they crossed the Jordan. Even then, His special presence was with the Ark, above the wings of the cherubim.

It is obvious from this verse that YHWH is seen as associated with mountains (cf. I Kgs. 20:23,28).

- 1. Moriah (Gen. 22:2; II Chr. 3:1, site of the temple)
- 2. Mt. Sinai/Horeb (Exodus 19-20)
- 3. Mt. Seir (here, Jdgs. 5:4)
- 4. Mt. Paran (here, Hab. 3:3)
- 5. Ebal/Gerizim (27:4; Josh. 8:30-33)
- 6. Tabor (Jdgs. 4:6)
- 7. Carmel (I Kgs. 18:20-39; II Kgs. 4:25-27)
- 8. Perazim (II Sam. 5:20; Isa. 28:21)
- 9. Mt. Zion (Isa. 2:1-4; Mic. 4:1-4; Ps. 68:16, name for Jerusalem)
- 10. Mt. Nebo (Deuteronomy 34, to Moses only)

▣ **"Sinai"** This is the place of the giving of the Law. It is called Sinai (BDB 696) only here in Deuteronomy. It is usually called Horeb (BDB 352). See Special Topic: The Location of Mt. Sinai at 1:2.

▣ **"Seir"** This name (BDB 973) has several different referents in the OT:

- 1. It can refer to the land of Edom - Gen. 32:3; 36:30; Num. 24:18; Deut. 1:44; 2:8,12,22,29; 33:1; Josh. 11:17; Jdgs. 5:4.
- 2. It can refer to a mountain/hill in Edom - Gen. 36:8-9; Deut. 1:2; 2:14; Josh. 24:4.
- 3. It can refer to a people - Gen. 36:20-30; II Chr. 25:11,14; Ezek. 25:8 (of Edom)
- 4. It can refer to a mountain/hill in Judah - Josh. 15:10(?).

▣ **“Mount Paran”** This is the mountain range (BDB 803) close to the plains of Moab (cf. 1:1) on the west side of Arabah, down the west side of the Gulf of Aqaba.

Perhaps this listing is of the travel of the children of Israel as they left Sinai going into the Promised Land (also can be a wilderness, cf. Num. 10:12; 12:16; 13:3,26). God was saying that He had been with them throughout the wanderings and He was still with them.

▣

NASB **“the midst of ten thousand holy ones”**
NKJV **“with ten thousands of saints”**
NRSV **“myriads of holy ones”**
TEV **“ten thousand angels were with him”**
NJB -----

The MT here has “Ribboth-Kodesh.” Deuteronomy 32:51 translates similar consonants as “Meribah-Kadesh. This could refer to (1) a place name or (2) “angels” (cf. Dan. 7:10; Rev. 5:11) or “saints” (cf. v. 3; 7:6; 14:2; 26:19; 28:9). Rabbis use this as text to assert the intermediary role of angels (cf. Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19; Heb. 2:2).

▣

NASB **“flashing lightning”**
NKJV **“a fiery law”**
NRSV **“a host of his own”**
TEV **“a flaming fire”**
NJB **“blazed forth”**

Literally this is “fiery law” (BDB 77 and 206). However, in this context it refers to the coming glory of the brilliance of YHWH’s glory (cf. Isa. 60:1-3).

33:3 “He loves the people” The VERB (BDB 285, KB 284, *Qal* PARTICIPLE) seems to reflect 4:37; 7:7-8; 10:15.

The OBJECT “people” is PLURAL and refers to the descendants of the Patriarchs.

▣

NASB **“All Your holy ones are in Your hand”**
NKJV **“All His saints *are* in your hand”**
NRSV **“All his holy ones were in your charge”**
TEV **“protects those who belong to him”**
NJB **“Your holy ones are all at your command”**

The term “holy ones” (BDB 481 CONSTRUCT 872) refers to the covenant people. This could be translated “saints” (e.g., 7:6; 14:2,21; “holy people”).

▣

NASB **“followed”**
NKJV **“sit down”**
NRSV **“marched”**
TEV **“bow”**
NJB **“fell”**

This is literally “lie down at” (BDB 1067, KB 1730, *Pual* PERFECT, unusual VERB only here). It could also refer to the position of a learner (i.e., bowed low, cf. TEV, sit at your feet, cf. NET Bible). “They” refers to the people of Israel.

☐ **“Everyone receives of Your words”** This refers to the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai/Horeb in Exodus 20 and following. God’s people knew God’s will and law. The covenant people have a special responsibility to reflect God’s character.

All of them affirmed their willingness to follow God’s law.

33:4 “Moses charged us with a law” This seems to confirm the idea in the preceding verses that the reference in v. 3 is to a place name and that these verses are talking about God’s people, not angels.

☐ **“A possession for the assembly of Jacob”** The term “possession” (BDB 440) refers to an inheritance (BDB 439). It was used first of the tribe of Israel (Jacob, BDB 784) in Exod. 6:8 and is mentioned often in Ezekiel (cf. 11:15; 33:24; 36:2,3,5).

The term “assembly” (BDB 875) means “congregation” (cf. same root in 23:2,3,4,8; 31:30).

Because of the parallelism in v. 4, this particular usage of “possession” may be a metaphor for the covenant (i.e., law). God’s people possess a revelation as well as a land!

33:5 “He was king” This may be a reference to YHWH as King (BDB 572 I, cf. Exod. 15:18; Num. 23:21; 24:7; I Sam. 8:4-9).

☐ The last two lines parallel “heads of the people” and “the tribes of Israel.” It refers to the inauguration of the covenant with the new people of God at Mt. Sinai/Horeb (cf. Exodus 19-20).

☐ **“Jeshurun”** This is literally “the upright ones” (BDB 449) and refers to Israel (cf. v. 26; 32:15; Isa. 44:2). See Special Topic at 1:1.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:6

**“May Reuben live and not die,
Nor his men be few.”**

33:6 “May Reuben live and not die” Verse 6 has three *Qal* JUSSIVE forms:

1. live - BDB 310, KB 309
2. die - BDB 559, KB 562 (negated)
3. be - BDB 224, KB 243 (negated)

Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob, but he sinned against his father (cf. Gen. 35:22) and lost his preeminence (cf. Gen. 49:3-4).

☐

NASB “Nor his men be few”
NKJV “*nor* let his men be free”
NRSV “even though his numbers are few”
TEV “although their people are few”
NJB “though his men be few”

If so, this is part of the loss of preeminence (cf. TEV, NJB). This phrase often means “not very many men” (cf. Gen. 34:30; Deut. 4:27; Ps. 105:12; Jer. 44:28).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:7

**⁷And this regarding Judah; so he said,
"Hear, O LORD, the voice of Judah,
And bring him to his people.
With his hands he contended for them,
And may You be a help against his adversaries."**

33:7 "Hear" This VERB (BDB 1033, KB 1570, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used often in Deuteronomy, but usually it is YHWH (or Moses) speaking to Israel.

▣ **"O LORD"** See Special Topic: The Names for Deity at 1:3.

▣ **"the voice of Judah"** In context Moses is asking YHWH to hear Judah's prayer (i.e., the tribe of Judah's prayer). There is nothing in Moses' blessing that hints of Judah's special place as royal tribe, so evident in Jacob's blessing of Gen. 49:8-12.

The fact that the tribe of Simeon is not mentioned has caused some to relate this prophecy to a later period when Simeon was incorporated into Judah (cf. Josh. 19:1-9; Jdgs. 1:3-4). Simeon's allotment was southwest of Judah, which was adjacent to the five Philistine cities.

▣

NASB "With his hands he contended for them"

NKJV "Let his hands be sufficient for him"

NRSV "strengthen his hands for him"

TEV "Fight for them, LORD"

NJB "that his hands may defend his rights"

This Hebrew phrase is uncertain. It may refer to Judah defending itself against enemies, which may point toward the division of the unified monarchy in 922 B.C. into Judah and Israel (only speculation).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:8-11

**⁸Of Levi he said,
"Let Your Thummim and Your Urim *belong* to Your godly man,
Whom You proved at Massah,
With whom You contended at the waters of Meribah;
⁹Who said of his father and his mother,
'I did not consider them';
And he did not acknowledge his brothers,
Nor did he regard his own sons,
For they observed Your word,
And kept Your covenant.
¹⁰They shall teach Your ordinances to Jacob,
And Your law to Israel.
They shall put incense before You,
And whole burnt offerings on Your altar.
¹¹O Lord, bless his substance,**

**And accept the work of his hands;
Shatter the loins of those who rise up against him,
And those who hate him, so that they will not rise *again*."**

33:8-11 In the Qumran literature, scrolls found in caves northwest of the Dead Sea, Deut. 18:18 and Num. 24:15-17, which are definite Messianic prophecies, are linked with this passage. They thought that the Messiah was related to the Levites (cf. Ps. 110:4-7; Zechariah 3-4).

This blessing includes not only the past faithful acts of Aaron (cf. Ps. 106:16), but also of Moses (cf. last two lines of v. 8 and Exod. 17:1-7).

33:8 “Your Thummim and Your Urim” These two items (BDB 1070 and 22) were (1) a mechanical way (i.e., lots) or (2) a visible light which denoted a prophecy to know the will of YHWH. Apparently they were kept by the High Priest in a pouch behind the breast plate (cf. Exod. 28:30; Lev. 8:8; I Sam. 14:37-42; 23:9-12). Exactly what they were and how they worked has been lost (cf. NIDOTTE, vol. 1, pp. 329-331).

▣ **“Your godly man”** This may refer to Aaron or Moses or the descendant of the High Priest, but the historical reference mentioned refers to Moses.

▣ **“Massah. . .Meribah”** Read Exod. 17:7. However, the rebellion at this location did not mention Levi or the priests in any way. The exact connection is uncertain.

▣ Apparently YHWH tested both Israel and her leadership during the wilderness wandering period to see if they really trusted Him and His care and guidance (cf. Exod. 17:7).

1. proved/test - BDB 650, KB 702, *Piel* PERFECT
2. strive/contend - BDB 936, KB 1224, *Qal* IMPERFECT

Notice that YHWH regularly tests (BDB 650) the motives and commitment of those who claim to know and trust Him:

1. Abraham - Genesis 22
2. Israel - Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2,16; 13:3 Jdgs. 2:22; 3:1,4
3. Moses - Deut. 33:8
4. Hezekiah - II Chr. 32:31
5. Jesus was also tested - Matthew 4; Luke 4

This same word is used often for humans “testing” God, which is always seen in a negative light!

33:9 This refers to the passage in Exodus 32, where Israel became involved in idolatry in the making and worshiping (i.e., sexual orgy) of the golden calf. At this point Moses ordered the faithful Levites (his own tribe) to kill many of their fellow Israelites in judgment (cf. 32:25-29).

By this action, even against their own family, they are honored for:

1. they observed Your word - BDB 1036, KB 1581, *Qal* PERFECT, cf. 29:9
2. they kept Your covenant - BDB 665, KB 718, *Qal* IMPERFECT, cf. Ps. 25:10; 78:7; 119:2,22, 33,34,56,69,100,115,129,145

33:10 “teach. . .put incense. . .and whole burnt offerings” These are the duties of the Levitical priests:

1. teaching - BDB 434, KB 436, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT, cf. 31:9-13, which includes judging, cf. 17:9-10
2. duties at the tabernacle/temple

33:11 This short verse has four VERBS and two PARTICIPLES:

1. “bless” - BDB 138, KB 159, *Piel* IMPERATIVE, cf. vv. 1,13,20,24; 28:3(twice),4,5,6(twice),8,12,19; 30:16. This is what YHWH wants to do!
2. “accept” - BDB 953, KB 1280, *Qal* IMPERFECT. This is a sacrificial term, cf. Lev. 1:4; 7:18; 19:7; 22:23,25,27, which can also mean “enjoy,” Lev. 26:34 (twice)
3. “shatter” - BDB 563, KB 571, *Qal* IMPERATIVE, used of YHWH in 32:39, here of their enemies (cf. #4, #5, and #6)
4. “those who rise up” - BDB 877, KB 1086, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE, used of adversaries
 - a. to God, Exod. 15:7
 - b. to Israel, Exod. 32:25; Ps. 109:28
 - c. to one’s neighbor, Deut. 19:11
5. “those who hate him” - BDB 971, KB 1338, *Piel* PARTICIPLE, often in the Psalms for enemies, cf. 18:40; 44:7,10; 55:12; 68:1; 89:23
6. “rise again” (negated) - same root as #4, but here a *Qal* IMPERFECT. This could refer to the other Israelites who attacked Moses’ and Aaron’s leadership during the wilderness wandering period.



NASB, NKJV

NRSV “bless his substance”

TEV “help their tribe to grow strong”

NJB “bless his worthiness”

This term (BDB 298) can have several connotations:

1. its basic meaning is “capacity” or “power”
2. “strength”
3. “ability,” “skills”
4. “worthiness”
5. “accomplishments”
6. “possessions”

▣ **“Shatter the loins”** This is literally “break the thigh” (i.e., the largest muscle in the body used as a symbol for the whole person). This is a Hebrew metaphor for making someone powerless. It is even possible that it has the connotation of stopping procreation, thereby, no future generations.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:12

¹²Of Benjamin he said,

"May the beloved of the Lord dwell in security by Him,

Who shields him all the day,

And he dwells between His shoulders."

33:12 “Of Benjamin. . .beloved of the LORD” He (BDB 122) may be called beloved of the Lord because he was the favorite of his father, Jacob (cf. Gen. 44:20).

▣ **“dwell in security by Him”** The VERB (BDB 1014, KB 1496, is a *Qal* IMPERFECT, but in a JUSSIVE sense, cf. v. 12 [twice],16,20,28; Exod. 25:8; 29:45,46). YHWH is his close companion in v. 12.



NASB "Who shields him all the day"
NKJV "who shelters him all the day long"
NRSV "surrounds him all day long"
TEV "He guards them all the day long"
NJB "protects him day after day"

The VERB (BDB 342, KB 339, *Qal* ACTIVE PARTICIPLE) is used only here and can mean "to enclose" or "to surround" or "to cover."



NASB, NKJV "dwells between His shoulders"
NRSV "rest between his shoulders"
TEV "he dwells in their midst"
NJB "dwells between his hillsides"

This is a metaphor for (1) a place of peace and security (vv. 20,28) or (2) living in a sheltered place (i.e., Shiloh, Bethel, or Jerusalem [a suggestion of S. R. Driver]).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:13-17

¹³Of Joseph he said,
 "Blessed of the LORD *be* his land,
 With the choice things of heaven, with the dew,
 And from the deep lying beneath,
¹⁴And with the choice yield of the sun,
 And with the choice produce of the months.
¹⁵And with the best things of the ancient mountains,
 And with the choice things of the everlasting hills,
¹⁶And with the choice things of the earth and its fullness,
 And the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush.
 Let it come to the head of Joseph,
 And to the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.
¹⁷As the firstborn of his ox, majesty is his,
 And his horns are the horns of the wild ox;
 With them he will push the peoples,
 All at once, *to* the ends of the earth.
 And those are the ten thousands of Ephraim,
 And those are the thousands of Manasseh."

33:13-17 The longest of the blessings, except for Levi, goes to the sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. v. 17, his two sons in Egypt). These were the most powerful of the northern tribes.

In vv. 13-16b Moses enumerates agricultural blessings on these two tribes. In v. 16 c and d Joseph's status in Egypt is acknowledged. In v. 17 the power of these two tribes is expressed in animal metaphors.

33:13 This verse refers to the abundance of moisture from dew and underground sources (cf. Gen. 49:25). Water meant agricultural abundance!

33:15 “the best things of the ancient mountains. . .And... of the everlasting hills” This may refer to trees, both for food and construction.

33:16 “And the favor of Him who dwelt in the bush” This may refer to the burning bush (cf. Exod. 3:2-4). This word for bush (BDB 702) is used only five times in the OT, four of them in Exod. 3:2-4.



NASB “And to the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers”

NKJV “And on the crown of the head of him *who was* separate from his brothers”

NRSV “on the brow of the prince among his brothers”

TEV “because he was the leader among his brothers”

NJB “on the brow of the consecrated one among his brothers”

This reflects Jacob’s blessing in Gen. 49:26. The leadership and preeminence of Joseph continues in his sons’ descendants.

33:17 “And his horns are the horns of the wild ox” In Hebrew the word “horn”(BDB 901) is a symbol of power.

☐ **“to the ends of the earth”** This is a CONSTRUCT of BDB 67 and 75. It has such powerful theological significance.

1. uniqueness of YHWH (and thereby monotheism)
 - a. Isa. 45:6,14; 46:9; 47:8,10
 - b. Zeph. 2:15
2. the power and glory of YHWH
 - a. Pro. 30:4
 - b. many of those under #3
3. the extension of YHWH’s worship and rule to all the earth
 - a. Deut. 33:17
 - b. I Sam. 2:10
 - c. Ps. 22:25-31; 59:13; 67:1-7; 98:2-9
 - d. Isa. 45:22; 52:10
 - e. Jer. 16:19
4. Messianic
 - a. I Sam. 2:10
 - b. Ps. 2:8
 - c. Micah 5:4-5

☐ **“the ten thousands of Ephraim. . .and the thousands of Manasseh”** This phrase shows the priority of Ephraim in size and power. See Special Topic: Thousand at 1:15.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:18-19

¹⁸Of Zebulun he said,

**"Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going forth,
And, Issachar, in your tents.**

**¹⁹They will call peoples *to* the mountain;
There they will offer righteous sacrifices;**

**For they will draw out the abundance of the seas,
And the hidden treasures of the sand."**

33:18 “Of Zebulun. . .And, Issachar” These two tribes are also listed together as in Gen. 49:13-15.

▣ **“Rejoice”** This VERB (BDB 970, KB 1333, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used in the sense of “enjoy the good, safe abundance of life.”

▣ **“going forth”** This (BDB 422, KB 425, *Qal* INFINITIVE CONSTRUCT) seems to be used in the sense of a free life (cf. 28:6,19; 31:2).

▣ **“in your tents”** This (BDB 13) refers to their home during the wilderness wandering period, but became a metaphor for one’s house.

These two parallel lines imply a happy, settled life.

33:19 The parallelism between “mountain” (BDB 249) and “offer righteous sacrifices” (cf. Ps. 4:5; 51:19) implies a worship setting (cf. Exod. 15:17).

The next interpretive question is, do the next two lines of poetry continue this thought or change to another topic? Zebulun’s involvement in the sea is mentioned in Gen. 49:13.

▣ **“abundance of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand”** These two lines are parallel. They are both OBJECTS of one VERB, “suck” or “draw out” (BDB 413, KB 416, *Qal* IMPERFECT). This is a metaphor for abundance (cf. 32:13).

1. The first one refers to:
 - a. food (i.e., sacrifices or good living)
 - b. merchandise (i.e., coral, shells, sponges or dye)
2. The second is made up of two *Qal* PASSIVE PARTICIPLES:
 - a. “to cover,” but only here it means “reserved” or “laid up” (BDB 706)
 - b. “to hide” (BDB 380)

They seem to refer to the shipping trade (cf. Gen. 49:13-14).

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:20-21

²⁰**Of Gad he said,
"Blessed is the one who enlarges Gad;
He lies down as a lion,
And tears the arm, also the crown of the head.**

²¹**Then he provided the first *part* for himself,
For there the ruler's portion was reserved;
And he came *with* the leaders of the people;
He executed the justice of the LORD,
And His ordinances with Israel."**

33:20 “Blessed is the one who enlarges Gad” This seems to be a reference to YHWH.

▣ **“He lies down as a lion”** The word is “lioness” (BDB 522, cf. Gen. 49:9; Num. 24:9; Job 4:11). The lioness was the one who hunted and provided food for the male lion and cubs. Gad was referred to as the lioness. The tribe of Gad was blessed because of their faithfulness in battle (cf. Gen. 49:19).

33:21 This verse is a play on Gad or a valiant warrior (in the metaphor of a lion). He chose part of the land on the eastern side of Jordan to inherit, but he and the Reubenites and the half-tribe of Manasseh were the first military group to go into battle in the Promised Land (cf. Josh. 4:12-13; 22:1-3).

▣ **“For there the ruler’s portion was reserved”** The Hebrew meaning is uncertain!

▣ **“And he came *with* the leaders of the people”** This may refer to these three tribes asking Moses and the elders for permission to settle on the eastern side of Jordan.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:22

²²Of Dan he said,

"Dan is a lion's whelp,

That leaps forth from Bashan."

33:22 “Dan is a lion’s whelp, that leaps from Bashan” The mention of Dan as somehow connected to Bashan (cf. 1:4; 3:1,3,4,10,11,13,14) is surprising. Originally Dan’s tribal allocation by lot was in the southwest (i.e., the Philistine area) and later they moved to the far north (cf. Judges 18). This may be a prophecy connected to this unauthorized relocation.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:23

²³Of Naphtali he said,

"O Naphtali, satisfied with favor,

And full of the blessing of the LORD,

Take possession of the sea and the south."

33:23 “Take possession of the sea and the south” The VERB (BDB 439, KB 441, *Qal* IMPERATIVE) is used several times in Deuteronomy for Israel to possess the land (cf. 1:8,21,39; 2:24,31; 9:23; 11:31; 17:14; 26:1). It implies a taking by force and securing it as a permanent inheritance.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:24-25

²⁴Of Asher he said,

"More blessed than sons is Asher;

May he be favored by his brothers,

And may he dip his foot in oil.

²⁵Your locks will be iron and bronze,

And according to your days, so will your leisurely walk be."

33:24 “Of Asher he said

‘More blessed than sons is Asher;

May he be favored by his brothers” This VERB (BDB 224, KB 243, “be”) is a *Qal* JUSSIVE. This shows the working of the Hebrew mind. To a Jew, a son was the greatest blessing possible.

The rabbis interpret this verse to mean that because of the extreme beauty of Asher's daughters they were more sought after than sons. The meaning is uncertain.

▣ **“And may he dip his foot in oil”** The location of Asher, on the northern seacoast, is the best area for olives. This phrase possibly refers to the act of treading oil out of the olives by foot.

33:25 “Your locks will be iron and bronze” The Hebrew root for “locks” (BDB 653) or “bars” (BDB 653) can also be translated “shoes” (BDB 653). The form used here is found only here. Because of Asher's geographical position, on the major highway route from the Fertile Crescent down to Egypt, if Asher fell, the whole land fell (from a southerly invasion). She was considered the door and lock to the Promised Land.

▣

NASB **“according to your days, so shall your leisurely walk be”**

NKJV, NJB **“refuge”**

NRSV **“He subdues the ancient gods”**

TEV **“defense”**

The interpretive question is what does the last NOUN mean (BDB 179)?

1. strength (i.e., vital life)
2. security (i.e., no invasion)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 33:26-29

²⁶“There is none like the God of Jeshurun,

**Who rides the heavens to your help,
And through the skies in His majesty.**

²⁷The eternal God is a dwelling place,

**And underneath are the everlasting arms;
And He drove out the enemy from before you,
And said, 'Destroy!'**

²⁸So Israel dwells in security,

**The fountain of Jacob secluded,
In a land of grain and new wine;
His heavens also drop down dew.**

²⁹Blessed are you, O Israel;

**Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD,
Who is the shield of your help
And the sword of your majesty!
So your enemies will cringe before you,
And you will tread upon their high places.”**

33:26-29 These verses are a transition section which praises YHWH's uniqueness and power! Jeshurun is used as a designation for Israel (cf. 32:15). These verses (i.e., v. 26 line b & c; v. 28 line c & d; v. 29:line f) use phrases that commonly referred to the fertility god, *Ba'al*, implying that all the things that had been said about *Ba'al* were not true about him, but were true of YHWH. YHWH is the only God.

33:26 “There is none like the God” Sees note at 4:35.

33:27 “**The eternal God**” *Elohim* is often combined with attributes:

1. the eternal *Elohim*, here
2. the everlasting *Elohim*, Isaiah 26
3. the true *Elohim*, II Chr. 15:3; Isa. 65:16
4. the *Elohim* of all flesh, Jer. 32:27 (similar to Num. 16:22; 27:16)
5. the *Elohim* of heaven, Gen. 24:3,7; II Chr. 36:23; Ezra 1:2; Neh. 1:4,5; 2:4,20
6. a *Elohim* at hand (or near), Jer. 23:23
7. *Elohim* of my (or our) salvation, Ps. 18:46; 24:5; 25:5; 27:9; 65:5; 79:9; 85:4; Isa. 17:10
8. *Elohim* of my righteousness, Ps. 4:1
9. *Elohim* who is my rock, II Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:2
10. *Elohim* who is my stronghold, Ps. 43:2
11. *Elohim* who is my praise, Ps. 109:1

(This list is from BDB p. 44, #4, b.)



NASB “dwelling place”

NKJV “your refuge”

NRSV “your dwelling place”

TEV -----

NJB “the well-spring of Jacob is chosen out”

This term (BDB 733) can refer to an animal’s lair (cf. Job 37:8; 38:40; Amos 3:4) or a metaphor for the refuge offered by God for His people (only here). A similar concept is found in Ps. 71:3; 91:9.

▣ “**And underneath are the everlasting arms**” This is a metaphor for:

1. YHWH’s fighting on their behalf (cf. line c, v. 29)
2. YHWH’s perpetual care and attention

YHWH is the God who acts! It is possible that this is an allusion to Gen. 49:24 (lines b & c).

▣ “**Destroy**” This VERB (BDB 1029, KB 1552, *Hiphil* IMPERATIVE) means “to exterminate.” It is part of the terminology of “holy war,” cf. 1:27; 2:22; 6:15; 9:20; Josh. 7:12; 9:24. If Israel is obedient to the covenant He will fight for them, but if not, He will fight against them!

The Israelites were expected to dress for battle and take the field against her enemies, but it was YHWH who won the battle!

33:28

NASB “The fountain of Jacob secluded”

NKJV “the fountain of Jacob alone”

NRSV “untroubled in Jacob’s abode”

TEV -----

NJB “the well-spring of Jacob is chosen out”

“Fountain” (BDB 745 II) means “spring” and refers to descendants. The term “secluded” (BDB 94, “alone”) is a metaphor for security.

33:29 This verse uses “holy war” terminology to describe YHWH’s deliverance from Egypt, from the desert, and from the Canaanites!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why could Moses not enter the Promised Land?
2. Why are there so many translations of 33:2-3?
3. Why is Simeon not listed in blessings?
4. Is there a Messianic reference in these blessings?

DEUTERONOMY 34

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
Moses Dies on Mount Nebo	The Death of Moses	The Death of Moses	The Death of Moses
34:1-8	34:1-8	34:1-8	34:1-4 34:5-9
34:9-12	34:9 34:10-12	34:9 34:10-12	34:10-12

READING CYCLE THREE (see p. vii in introductory section) FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3, p. viii). Compare your subject divisions with the four modern translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

1. First paragraph
2. Second paragraph
3. Third paragraph
4. Etc.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 34:1-8

¹Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, ²and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, ³and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. ⁴Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see *it* with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." ⁵So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. ⁶And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. ⁷Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. ⁸So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping *and* mourning for Moses came to an end.

34:1 “the plains of Moab” This is the geographical setting of the conclusion of Numbers (cf. 36:13), and the entire book of Deuteronomy (cf. 4:44-49). It is on the eastern side of Jordan, right across from Jericho (cf. v. 1).

▣ **“to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah”** This same mountain is mentioned in Deut. (cf. 3:17). It is the Hebrew term for “ridge” or “height” (BDB 612 I). It seems that Mount Nebo and Pisgah (BDB 820 “cleft”) refer to the very same mountain peak. God uniquely chose this location to be able to fulfill His word to Moses that He would show him the Promised Land even though Moses would not be able to enter into it. Later, in v. 5, Mount Nebo will be the place of Moses’ death. Also, Jewish tradition says that Jeremiah hid the Ark of the covenant on this mountain.

▣ **“And the LORD showed him all the land”** There are several passages which record Moses’ sin which kept him from entering the promised land (cf. Deut. 3:23-28; 32:48-52 and Num. 27:12-14). Moses made several prayers and requests to God about this, yet he was not allowed to enter into the Promised Land. Although sin always runs its course and has its consequences, the graciousness of God is seen in allowing Moses to see the Promised Land even though he could not enter it.

34:2 “the western Sea” This refers to the Mediterranean Sea (cf. 11:24). The term “western” is literally “the place behind” (BDB 30).

34:3 “the Negev” This is the Hebrew word for “south country” (BDB 616) and it refers to the uninhabited desert land which is south of Beersheba.

▣ **“the plain”** This refers to the depression known as the Rift Valley in which lies the Dead Sea. Jericho is at the northwest and Zoar at the southwest.

▣ **“Jericho, the city of palm trees”** Jericho is known as the city of palms (cf. Jdgs. 1:16) and is one of the oldest cities in this part of the world. It was right across the Jordan River from the place where Israel camped.

▣ **“Zoar”** The word (BDB 858) means insignificant (cf. Gen. 19:20-22).

34:4 “This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob” This is the fulfillment of God’s promise recorded in Gen. 12:7; 26:3; 28:13. The promise to Abraham included both land and seed. The OT emphasizes the land and children while the NT emphasizes the special child (cf. Isa. 7-12). This ancient promise is repeated often. Here are some examples: Exod. 33:1; Num. 14:23; 32:11; Deut. 1:8; 6:10; 9:5; 30:20.

▣ **“I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there”** Apparently the sin of publicly striking the rock instead of speaking to it (cf. Num. 20:7-12) is the offense for which Moses has been judged. The people witnessed this flagrant disobedient act of Moses.

34:5 “So Moses the servant of the LORD” The term “servant of the LORD” is an honorific title given to Moses. It is given to Joshua only after his death. It was conferred upon King David. It later refers to the coming Messiah (cf. the Servant Songs of Isaiah 40-56). It may be the source of the NT Pauline phrase, “slave of God.” The concept of an OT servant is extremely significant. In the OT election or servanthood was to fulfill the purpose of God, not necessarily for salvation. Cyrus is called “God’s anointed” (cf. Isa. 45:1) and Assyria is called “the rod of His anger” (cf. Isa. 10:5). This cruel nation and pagan king fit into God’s plan

but were not spiritually related to Him. The terms “election” and “choice” have a spiritual connotation only in the NT.

▣ **“died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD”** The literal Hebrew here is “by the mouth of the Lord,” (BDB 804), which seems to be a metaphor for the word of God (cf. Gen. 41:40; 45:21; Exod. 17:1; 38:21; Num. 3:16,39).

However, the rabbis say that this is the “kiss of God.” They say that God kissed Moses on the mouth and took away his breath. This is very similar to our cultural idiom “the kiss of death.” If so, it is a beautiful account of the balance between the justice and mercy of God in the life of Moses.

34:6 “And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab” The “He” implies God Himself. This is much like Gen. 7:16, where God closed the door to the ark. One reason for God burying Moses Himself is because God has taken away all of the ancient sites and artifacts that we might worship instead of Him. Notice that Moses was not buried on Mount Nebo itself but down in the valley. The strange NT passage in Jude 9 is related to this account, but how is not exactly clear. Jude 9 seems to quote an extra-canonical book known as The Assumption of Moses. The exact purpose for the devil wanting the body of Moses is uncertain.

▣ **“but no man knows his burial place to this day”** This is obviously the work of a later editor. Many assert that Moses could not have written this last chapter which relates to his death. Rashi says that Joshua wrote about Moses’ death, while IV Esdras asserts that Moses wrote of his own death. I believe in Mosaic authorship of the Torah, but that does not rule out some editorial comments such as this which appear from time to time. The similarity of the Hebrew between the Pentateuch and the book of Joshua seems to imply that Joshua did have a part in writing Moses’ memoirs. However, the significant place of Ezra in rabbinical Judaism as the editor of the entire OT is also a possibility.

34:7 “Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died” This one hundred and twenty year span is developed in Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7:23ff into a threefold division of forty years each: (1) forty years in the educational system of Egypt; (2) forty years in the very desert into which he would later lead the children of Israel; and (3) forty years in the wilderness wandering period. D. L. Moody said, “For 40 years Moses thought he was a somebody. For 40 years he thought he was a nobody. For 40 years he found out what God can do with a nobody.”

▣ **“his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated”** This seems to refer to the health of Moses, while Deut. 31:2 seems to be an excuse given by Moses for why he cannot enter the Promised Land (that he was too weak and old). This is not a contradiction, but one more attempt by Moses to try to explain away his sin by either blaming the people or his age or other factors.

34:8 “So the sons of Israel wept for Moses. . .thirty days” This would be one lunar cycle. This same amount of time was given to the mourning of Aaron (cf. Num. 20:29). Everyone of the generation who rebelled in the wilderness died there except for Joshua and Caleb.

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: 334:9-12

⁹Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. ¹⁰Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, ¹¹for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, ¹²and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

34:9 “Now Joshua the son of Nun” The name Joshua means “YHWH saves” (BDB 221). It is the very same name as “Jesus” (cf. Matt. 1:21). It is made up of the Hebrew word, “Hosea,” which means “salvation” and an abbreviation of the Covenant name for God attached to the beginning.

▣ **“was filled with the spirit of wisdom”** This concept of “filled” (BDB 569, KB 583, *Qal* PERFECT) should be compared with Num. 27:18 and a similar concept used of the artisans in Exod. 28:3. Obviously the Spirit of God was involved in the lives of people in the OT as well as the NT.

▣ **“wisdom”** This seems (BDB 315) to refer to Joshua’s ability to guide the people into battle and in administrative justice. Joshua was not from the tribe of Levi and, therefore, could not in any way be a priest, but he was a gifted leader.

▣ **“for Moses had laid his hands on him”** This concept of laying on of hands is very significant in the OT. We see this very act in Num. 27:22-23; also note Deut. 31:1-8. It is somehow related to the laying on of hands on the sacrificial victim where somehow the sin is transferred. In some way Moses’ leadership was transferred to Joshua.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LAYING ON OF HANDS IN THE BIBLE

This gesture of personal involvement is used in several different ways in the Bible.

1. passing on the family leadership (cf. Gen. 48:18)
2. identifying with the death of a sacrificial animal as a substitute
 - a. priests (cf. Exod. 29:10,15,19; Lev. 16:21; Num. 8:12)
 - b. laypersons (cf. Lev. 1:4; 3:2,8; 4:4,15,24; II Chr. 29:23)
3. setting persons aside to serve God in a special task or ministry (cf. Num. 8:10; 27:18,23; Deut. 34:9; Acts 6:6; 13:3; I Tim. 4:14; 5:22; II Tim. 1:6)
4. participating in the judicial stoning of a sinner (cf. Lev. 24:14)
5. receiving a blessing for health, happiness, and godliness (cf. Matt. 19:13,15; Mark 10:16)
6. relating to physical healing (cf. Matt. 9:18; Mark 5:23; 6:5; 7:32; 8:23; 16:18; Luke 4:40; 13:13; Acts 9:17; 28:8)
7. receiving the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 8:17-19; 9:17; 19:6)

There is a surprising lack of uniformity in the passages that have been historically used to support the ecclesiastical installation of leaders (i.e., ordination).

1. In Acts 6:6 it is the Apostles who lay hands on the seven for local ministry.
2. In Acts 13:3 it is the prophets and teachers who lay hands on Barnabas and Paul for missionary service.
3. In I Tim. 4:14 it is the local elders who were involved in Timothy’s initial call and installation.
4. In II Tim. 1:6 it is Paul who lays hands on Timothy.

This diversity and ambiguity illustrates the lack of organization in the first century church. The early church was much more dynamic and regularly used the spiritual gifts of believers (cf. I Cor. 14). The NT is simply not written to advocate or delineate a governmental model or ordination procedure.

34:10 “Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses” Verses 10-12 are a comment from Moses’ scribe or, more probably, a later editor. This apparently refers to the Messianic prophecy of Deut. 18:15-22. This theme is developed in Heb. 3:1-6, where Jesus and Moses are contrasted.

▣ **“whom the LORD knew face to face”** The term “knew” (BDB 393, KB 390, *Qal* PERFECT) is a Hebrew idiom for “intimate, close fellowship” (cf. Gen. 4:1; Jer. 1:5). It does not refer to cognitive knowledge. The phrase “face to face” shows the intimacy with which God spoke to Moses (cf. Exod. 33:11; Num. 12:6-8).

34:11-12 Verse 11 seems to imply that the plagues of Egypt, which took a period of about eighteen months, were meant to judge the gods of Egypt and to try to lead the Egyptians to a place of trust in YHWH. Verse 12 shows us that the miracles that God did against the Egyptian gods were also meant to increase the faith of the Israelites just as Jesus’ miracles were to increase the faith of the disciples. It is also possible that v. 12 relates to the wilderness wandering period.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought provoking, not definitive.

1. Why is the geographical location of the events in the book of Deuteronomy so significant?
2. Why did God hide the grave of Moses?
3. How does v. 7 seem to contradict 31:2?
4. What is the significance of Moses laying on of hands on Joshua? How does this relate to modern ordination?
5. Why is Joshua not considered a prophet like Moses (cf. v. 10)?
6. What is the purpose of miracles (cf. v. 11-12)?

APPENDIX ONE

I. INTRODUCTION TO OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

A. Opening Statements

1. The believing community does not agree on how to interpret prophecy. Other truths have been established as to an orthodox position throughout the centuries, but not this one.
2. There are several well defined stages of OT prophecy
 - a. premonarchial (before King Saul)
 - 1) individuals called prophets
 - a) Abraham - Gen. 20:7
 - b) Moses - Num. 12:6-8; Deut. 18:15; 34:10
 - c) Aaron - Exod. 7:1 (spokesman for Moses)
 - d) Miriam - Exod. 15:20
 - e) Medad and Eldad - Num. 11:24-30
 - f) Deborah - Jdgs. 4:4
 - g) unnamed - Jdgs. 6:7-10
 - h) Samuel - I Sam. 3:20
 - 2) references to prophets as a group - Deut. 13:1-5; 18:20-22
 - 3) prophetic groups or guilds - I Sam. 10:5-13; 19:20; I Kgs. 20:35,41; 22:6,10-13; II Kgs. 2:3,7; 4:1,38; 5:22; 6:1, etc.
 - 4) Messiah called prophet - Deut. 18:15-18
 - b. non-writing monarchial prophets (they address the king)
 - 1) Gad - I Sam. 7:2; 12:25; II Sam. 24:11; I Chron. 29:29
 - 2) Nathan - II Sam. 7:2; 12:25; I Kgs. 1:22
 - 3) Ahijah - I Kgs. 11:29
 - 4) Jehu - I Kgs. 16:1,7,12
 - 5) unnamed - I Kgs. 18:4,13; 20:13,22
 - 6) Elijah - I Kgs. 18; II Kgs. 2
 - 7) Micaiah - I Kgs. 22
 - 8) Elisha - II Kgs. 2:9, 12-13
 - c. classical writing prophets (they address the nation as well as the king): Isaiah—Malachi (except Daniel)

B. Biblical Terms

1. *ro'eh* = seer, I Sam. 9:9. This reference shows the transition to the term *Nabi*, which means “prophet” and comes from the root, “to call.” *Ro'eh* is from the general Hebrew term “to see.” This person understood God’s ways and plans and was consulted to ascertain God’s will in a matter.
2. *hozeh* = seer, II Sam. 24:11. It is basically a synonym of *ro'eh*. It is from a rarer Hebrew term “to see in a vision.” The participle form is used most often to refer to prophets.
3. *nabi'* = prophet, cognate of Akkadian verb *nabu* = “to call” and Arabic *naba'a* = “to announce.” This is the most common OT term to designate a prophet. It is used over 300 times. The exact etymology is uncertain, but “to call” at present seems the best option. Possibly the best understanding comes from YHWH’s description of Moses’ relationship to Pharaoh through Aaron (cf. Exod. 4:10-16; 7:1; Deut. 5:5). A prophet is someone who speaks for God to His people (cf. Amos 3:8; Jer. 1:7,17; Ezek. 3:4).

4. All three terms are used of the prophet's office in I Chron. 29:29; Samuel - *Ro'eh*; Nathan - *Nabi*'; and Gad - *Hoze*h.
5. The phrase *'ish ha - 'elohim*, "man of God," is also a broader designation for a speaker for God. It is used some 76 times in the OT in the sense of "prophet."
6. The word "prophet" is Greek in origin. It comes from (1) *pro* = "before" or "for"; (2) *phemi* = "to speak."

II. DEFINITION OF PROPHECY

- A. The term "prophecy" had a wider semantic field in Hebrew than in English. The Jews labeled the history books of Joshua through Kings (except Ruth) "the former prophets." Both Abraham (Gen. 20:7; Ps. 105:5) and Moses (Deut. 18:18) are designated as prophets (also Miriam, Exod. 15:20). Therefore, beware of an assumed English definition!
- B. "Propheticism may legitimately be defined as that understanding of history which accepts meaning only in terms of divine concern, divine purpose, divine participation" (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 3, p. 896).
- C. "The prophet is neither a philosopher nor a systematic theologian, but a covenant mediator who delivers the word of God to His people in order to shape their future by reforming their present" ("Prophets and Prophecy," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 13, p. 1152).

III. PURPOSE OF PROPHECY

- A. Prophecy is a way for God to speak to His people, providing guidance in their current setting and hope in His control of their lives and world events. Their message was basically corporate. It is meant to rebuke, encourage, engender faith and repentance, and inform God's people about Himself and His plans. They hold God's people to fidelity to God's Covenants. Often it is used to clearly reveal God's choice of a spokesman (Deut. 13:1-3; 18:20-22). This, taken ultimately, would refer to the Messiah.
- B. Often, the prophet took a historical or theological crisis of his day and projected it into an eschatological setting. This end-time view of history (teleological) is unique to Israel and her sense of divine election and covenant promises.
- C. The office of prophet seems to balance (Jer. 18:18) and supplant the office of High Priest as a way of knowing God's will. The Urim and Thummim transcend into a verbal message from God's spokesman. The office of prophet seems to also have passed away in Israel after Malachi (or the writing of Chronicles). It does not appear until 400 years later with John the Baptist. It is uncertain how the New Testament gift of "prophecy" relates to the OT. New Testament prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 14:29,32,37; 15:32; I Cor. 12:10,28-29; Eph. 4:11) are not revealers of new revelation, but forth-tellers and fore-tellers of God's will in recurrent situations.
- D. Prophecy is not exclusively or primarily predictive in nature. Prediction is one way to confirm his office and his message, but it must be noted "... less than 2% of OT prophecy is Messianic. Less than 5% specifically describes the New Covenant Age. Less than 1% concerns events yet to come" (Fee & Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*, p. 166).

- E. Prophets represent God to the people, while Priests represent the people to God. This is a general statement. There are exceptions like Habakkuk, who addresses questions to God.
- F. One reason it is difficult to understand the prophets is because we do not know how their books were structured. They are not chronological. They seem to be thematic, but not always the way one would expect. Often there is no obvious historical setting, time-frame, or clear division between oracles, it is difficult (1) to read the books through in one sitting; (2) to outline them by topic; and (3) to ascertain the central truth or authorial intent in each oracle.

IV. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHECY

- A. In the Old Testament there seems to be a development of the concept of “prophet” and “prophecy.” In early Israel there developed a fellowship of prophets, led by a strong charismatic leader such as Elijah or Elisha. Sometimes the phrase “the sons of the prophets” was used to designate this group (II Kgs. 2). The prophets at times were characterized by forms of ecstasy (I Sam. 10:10-13; 19:18-24).
- B. However, this period passed rapidly into the time of individual prophets. There were those prophets (both true and false) who identified with the King, and lived at the palace (Gad, Nathan). Also, there were those who were independent, sometimes totally unconnected with the status quo of Israelite society (Amos, Micah). They are both male and female (II Kgs. 22:14).
- C. The prophet was often a revealer of the future, conditioned on a person’s or a people’s immediate response. Often the prophet’s task was to unfold God’s universal plan for His creation which is not affected by human response. This universal eschatological plan is unique among the prophets of Israel in the ancient Near East. Prediction and Covenant fidelity are twin foci of the prophetic messages (cf. Fee and Stuart, p. 150). This implies that the prophets were primarily corporate in focus. They usually, but not exclusively, address the nation of Israel.
- D. Most prophetic material was presented orally. It was later combined by means of theme or chronology, or other patterns of Near Eastern literature, which are lost to us. Because it was oral, it is not as structured as written prose. This makes the books difficult to read straight through and difficult to understand without a specific historical setting.
- E. The prophets use several patterns to convey their messages
 1. Court scene - God takes His people to court; often it is a divorce case where YHWH rejects his wife (Israel) for her unfaithfulness (Hosea 4; Micah 6).
 2. Funeral dirge - the special meter of this type of message and its characteristic “woe” sets it apart as a special form (Isaiah 5; Habakkuk 2).
 3. Covenant blessing pronouncement - the conditional nature of the Covenant is emphasized and the consequences, both positively and negatively, are spelled out for the future (Deuteronomy 27-29).

V. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR VERIFICATION OF A TRUE PROPHET

- A. Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (predictions/signs are linked to monotheistic purity)
- B. Deuteronomy 18:9-22 (false prophets/true prophets)

- C. Both men and women are called and designated as prophets or prophetesses
 1. Miriam - Exodus 15
 2. Deborah - Judges 4:4-6
 3. Huldah - II Kings 22:14-20; II Chronicles 34:22-28

- G. In the surrounding cultures prophets were verified by means of divination. In Israel they were verified by
 1. a theological test - the use of the name of YHWH
 2. a historical test - accurate predictions

VI. HELPFUL GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING PROPHECY

- A. Find the intent of the original prophet (editor) by noting the historical setting and the literary context of each oracle. Usually it will involve Israel breaking the Mosaic Covenant in some way.
- B. Read and interpret the whole oracle, not just a part; outline it as to content. See how it relates to surrounding oracles. Try to outline the whole book (by literary units and to paragraph level).
- C. Assume a literal interpretation of the passage until something in the text itself points you to figurative usage; then attempt to put the figurative language into prose.
- D. Analyze symbolic action in light of historical setting and parallel passages. Be sure to remember that this is ancient Near Eastern literature, not western or modern literature.
- E. Treat predictions with care
 1. Are they exclusively for the author's day?
 2. Were they subsequently fulfilled in Israel's history?
 3. Are they yet future events?
 4. Do they have a contemporary fulfillment and yet a future fulfillment?
 5. Allow the authors of the Bible, not modern authors, to guide your answers.
- F. Special concerns:
 1. Is the prediction qualified by conditional response?
 2. Is it certain to whom the prophecy is addressed (and why)?
 3. Is there a possibility both biblically and/or historically for multiple fulfillments?
 4. The NT authors under inspiration were able to see the Messiah in many places in the OT that are not obvious to us. They seem to use typology or word play. Since we are not inspired, we best leave this approach to them.

VII. HELPFUL BOOKS

- A. *A Guide to Biblical Prophecy* by Carl E. Armerding and W. Ward Gasque
- B. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart
- C. *My Servants the Prophets* by Edward J. Young

- D. *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic*
by D. Brent Sandy
- E. *Cracking the Old Testament Code*, D. Brent Sandy and Ronald L. Giese, Jr.

APPENDIX TWO

A BRIEF HISTORICAL SURVEY OF THE POWERS OF MESOPOTAMIA

(using dates based primarily on John Bright's *A History of Israel*, p. 462ff.)

I. Assyrian Empire (Gen.10:11)

A. Religion and culture were greatly influenced by the Sumerian/Babylonian Empire.

B. Tentative list of rulers and approximate dates:

1. 1354-1318 - Asshur-Uballit I:
 - (a) conquered the Hittite city of Carchemish
 - (b) began to remove Hittite influence and allowed Assyria to develop
2. 1297-1266 - Adad-Nirari I (powerful king)
3. 1265-1235 - Shalmaneser I (powerful king)
4. 1234-1197 - Tukulti-Ninurta I
 - first conquest of Babylonian empire to the south
5. 1118-1078 - Tiglath-Pileser I
 - Assyria becomes a major power in Mesopotamia
6. 1012- 972 Ashur-Rabi II
7. 972- 967 - Ashur-Resh-Isui II
8. 966- 934 - Tiglath-Pileser II
9. 934- 912 - Ashur-Dan II
10. 912- 890 - Adad-Nirari II
11. 890- 884 - Tukulti-Ninurta II
12. 883- 859 - Asshur-Nasir-Apal II
13. 859- 824 - Shalmaneser III
 - Battle of Qarqar in 853
14. 824-811 - Shamashi-Adad V
15. 811-783 - Adad-Nirari III
16. 781-772 - Shalmaneser IV
17. 772-754 - Ashur-Dan III
18. 754-745 - Ashur-Nirari V
19. 745-727 - Tiglath-Pileser III:
 - a. called by his Babylonian throne name, Pul, in II Kings 15:19
 - b. very powerful king
 - c. started the policy of deporting conquered peoples
 - d. In 735 B.C.. there was the formation of the "Syro-Ephramatic League" which was an attempt to unify all the available military resources of the transjordan nations from the head waters of the Euphrates to Egypt for the purpose of neutralizing the rising military power of Assyria. King Ahaz of Judah refused to join and was invaded by Israel and Syria. He wrote to Tiglath-Pileser III for help against the advise of Isaiah (cf. II Kgs. 16; Isa. 7-12).
 - e. In 732 Tiglath-Pileser III invades and conquers Syria and Israel and places a vassal king on the throne of Israel, Hoshea (732-722). Thousands of Jews from the Northern Kingdom were exiled to Media (cf. II Kings 15).
20. 727-722 - Shalmaneser V
 - a. Hoshea forms an alliance with Egypt and is invaded by Assyria (cf. II Kgs.17)
 - b. besieged Samaria in 724 B.C.

21. 722-705 - Sargon II:
 - a. After a three year siege started by Shalmaneser V, his successor Sargon II conquers the capital of Israel, Samaria. Over 27,000 are deported to Media.
 - b. The Hittite empire is also conquered.
 - c. In 714-711 another coalition of transjordan nations and Egypt rebelled against Assyria. This coalition is known as “the Ashdud Rebellion.” Even Hezekiah of Judah originally was involved. Assyria invaded and destroyed several Philistine cities.
22. 705-681 - Sennacherib:
 - a. In 705 another coalition of transjordan nations and Egypt rebelled after the death of Sargon II. Hezekiah fully supported this rebellion. Sennacherib invaded in 701. The rebellion was crushed but Jerusalem was spared by an act of God (cf. Isa. 36-39 and II Kgs. 18-19).
 - b. Sennacherib also put down the rebellion in Elam and Babylon.
23. 681-669 - Esarhaddon:
 - a. first Assyrian ruler to attack and conquer Egypt
 - b. had great sympathy with Babylon and rebuilt its capital city
24. 669-633 - Ashurbanipal:
 - a. also called Osnapper in Ezra 4:10
 - b. His brother Shamash-shum-ukin was made king of Babylon (later demoted to viceroy). This brought several years of peace between Assyria and Babylon, but there was an undercurrent of independence which broke out in 652 led by his brother (who had been demoted to Viceroy).
 - c. fall of Thebes, 663 B.C.
 - d. defeated Elam, 653, 645 B.C.
25. 633-629 - Asshur-Etil-Ilani
26. 629-612 - Sin-Shar-Ishkun
27. 612-609 - Asshur-Uballit II:
 - a. enthroned king in exile in Haran
 - b. the fall of Asshur in 614 B.C. and Nineveh in 612 B.C.

II. Neo-Babylon Empire:

- A. 703-? Merodach-Baladan
 - Started several revolts against Assyrian rule
- B. 652 Shamash-shum-ukin:
 1. Esarhaddon’s son and Asshurbanipal’s brother
 2. he started a revolt against Assyria but was defeated
- C. 626-605 Nabopolassar:
 1. was the first monarch of the Neo-Babylonian Empire
 2. he attacked Assyria from the south while Cyaxares of Media attacked from the northeast
 3. the old Assyrian capital of Asshur fell in 614 and the powerful new capital of Nineveh fell in 612 B.C.
 4. the remnant of the Assyrian army retreated to Haran. They even installed a king.
 5. In 608 Pharaoh Necho II (cf. II Kings 23:29) marched north to help the remnant of the Assyrian army for the purpose of forming a buffer zone against the rising power of Babylon. Josiah, the godly king of Judah (cf. II Kings 23), opposed the movement of the Egyptian army through Palestine. There was a minor skirmish at Megiddo. Josiah was wounded and died (II Kgs.

23:29-30). His son, Jehoakaz, was made king. Pharaoh Necho II arrived too late to stop the destruction of the Assyrian forces at Haran. He engaged the Babylonian forces commanded by the crown prince Nebuchadnezzar II and was soundly defeated in 605 B.C. at Carchemesh on the Euphrates River.

On his way back to Egypt Pharaoh Necho stopped at Jerusalem and sacked the city. He replaced and deported Jehoahaz after only three months. He put another son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, on the throne (cf. II Kings 23:31-35).

6. Nebuchadnezzar II chased the Egyptian army south through Palestine but he received word of his father's death and returned to Babylon to be crowned. Later, in the same year, he returned to Palestine. He left Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah but exiled several thousand of the leading citizens and several members of the royal family. Daniel and his friends were part of this deportation.

D. 605-562 - Nebuchadnezzar II:

1. From 597-538 Babylon was in complete control of Palestine.
2. In 597 another deportation from Jerusalem occurred because of Jehoakim's alliance with Egypt (II Kings 24). He died before the arrival of Nebuchadnezzar II. His son Jehoiachin was only king for three months when he was exiled to Babylon. Ten thousand citizens, including Ezekiel, were resettled close to the City of Babylon by the Canal Kebar.
3. In 586, after continued flirtation with Egypt, the City of Jerusalem was completely destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (II Kgs. 25) and a mass deportation occurred. Zedekiah, who replaced Jehoiachin, was exiled and Gedaliah was appointed governor.
4. Gedaliah was killed by Jewish renegade military forces. These forces fled to Egypt and forced Jeremiah to go with them. Nebuchadnezzar invaded a fourth time (605, 596, 586, 582) and deported all remaining Jews that he could find.

E. 562-560 - Evil-merodach, Nebuchadnezzar's son, was also known as Amel-Marduk (Akkadian, "Man of Marduk")

- He released Jehoiachin from prison but he had to remain in Babylon (cf. II Kings 25:27-30; Jer. 52:31).

F. 560-556 - Neriglissar

- He assassinated Evil-merodach, who was his brother-in-law
- He was previously Nebuchadnezzar's general who destroyed Jerusalem (cf. Jer. 39:3,13)

G. 556 - Labaski-Marduk

- He was Neriglissar's son who assumed kingship as a boy, but was assassinated after only nine months (Berossos).

H. 556-539 - Nabonidus (Akkadian, "Nebo is exalted"):

1. Nabonidus was not related to the royal house so he possibly (Herodotus) married a daughter (Nitocris) of Nebuchadnezzar (Nitocris was one of his Egyptian wives).
2. He spent most of the time building a temple to the moon god "Sin" in Tema. He was the son of the high priestess of this goddess. This earned him the enmity of the priests of Marduk, chief god of Babylon.
3. He spent most of his time trying to put down revolts (in Syria and north Africa) and stabilize the kingdom.

4. He moved to Tema and left the affairs of state to his son, Belshazzar, in the capital, Babylon (cf. Dan.5).

I. ? - 539 - Belshazzar (co-reign)

- The city of Babylon fell very quickly to the Persian Army under Gobryas of Gutium by diverting the waters of the Euphrates and entering the city unopposed. The priests and people of the city saw the Persians as liberators and restorers of Marduk. Gobryas was made Governor of Babylon by Cyrus II. Gobryas may have been the Darius the Mede of Dan. 5:31; 6:1. “Darius” means “royal one.”

III. Medio-Persian Empire: Survey of the Rise of Cyrus II (Isa. 41:2,25;44:28-45:7; 46:11; 48:15):

- A. 625-585 - Cyaxares was the king of Media who helped Babylon defeat Assyria.
- B. 585-550 - Astyages was king of Media (capital was Ecbatana). Cyrus II was his grandson by Cambyses I (600-559, Persian) and Mandane (daughter of Astyages, Median).
- C. 550-530 - Cyrus II of Ansham (eastern Elam) was a vassal king who revolted:
 1. Nabonidus, the Babylonian king, supported Cyrus.
 2. Astyages' general, Harpagus, led his army to join Cyrus' revolt
 3. Cyrus II dethroned Astyages.
 4. Nabonidus, in order to restore a balance of power, made an alliance with:
 - a. Egypt
 - b. Croesus, King of Lydia (Asia Minor)
 5. 547 - Cyrus II marched against Sardis (capital of Lydia) and it fell in 546 B.C.
 6. 539 - In mid-October the general Ugbaru and Gobryas, both of Gutium, with Cyrus' army, took Babylon without resistance. Ugbaru was made governor, but died of war wounds within weeks, Gobryas was then made governor of Babylon.
 7. 539 - In late October Cyrus II "the Great" personally entered as liberator. His policy of kindness to national groups reversed years of deportation as a national policy.
 8. 538 - Jews and others (cf. the Cyrus Cylinder) were allowed to return home and rebuild their native temples (cf. II Chr. 36:22,23; Ezra 1:1-4). He also restored the vessels from YHWH's temple which Nebuchadnezzar had taken to Marduk's temple in Babylon (cf. Ezra 1:7-11; 6:5).
 9. 530 - Cyrus' son, Cambyses II, succeeded him briefly as co-regent, but later the same year Cyrus died while in a military campaign.
- D. 530-522 - reign of Cambyses II
 1. added Egyptian empire in 525 B.C. to the Medo-Persian Empire;
 2. he had a short reign:
 - a. some say he committed suicide;
 - b. Heroditus said he cut himself with his own sword while mounting his horse and died of the resulting infection.
 3. brief usurpation of the throne by Pseudo-Smerdis (Gaumata) - 522
- E. 522-486 - Darius I (Hystapes) came to rule
 1. He was not of the royal line but a military general.
 2. He organized the Persian Empire using Cyrus' plans for Satraps (cf. Ezra 5-6; also during Haggai's and Zechariah's time).
 3. He set up coinage like Lydia.
 4. He attempted to invade Greece, but was repulsed.
- F. 486-465 - Reign of Xerxes I:

1. put down Egyptian revolt
2. intended to invade Greece and fulfill Persian dream but was defeated in the battle of Thermopyli in 480 B.C. and Salamis in 479 B.C.
3. Esther's husband, who is called Ahasuerus in the Bible, was assassinated in 465 B.C.
- G. 465-424 - Artaxerxes I (Longimanus) reigned (cf Ezra 7-10; Nehemiah; Malachi):
 1. Greeks continued to advance until confronted with the Peloponnesian Civil Wars
 2. Greece divides (Athenian - Peloponnesian)
 3. Greek civil wars lasted about 20 years
 4. during this period the Jewish community is strengthened
 5. brief reign of Xerxes II and Sekydianos - 423
- H. 423-404 - Darius II (Nothos) reigned
- I. 404-358 - Artaxerxes II (Mnemon) reigned
- J. 358-338 - Artaxerxes III (Ochos) reigned
- K. 338-336 - Arses reigned
- L. 336-331 - Darius III (Codomannus) reigned until the Battle of Issus 331 and was defeated by Greece

IV. Survey of Egypt:

- A. Hyksos (Shepherd Kings - Semitic rulers)-1720/10-1550
- B. 18th Dynasty (1570-1310):
 1. 1570-1546 - Amonhotep I
 - a. made Thebes the capital
 - b. invaded southern Canaan
 2. 1546-1525 - Amenhotep I (Amenhotep I)
 3. 1525-1494 - Thutmose I
 4. 1494-1490 - Thutmose II - married Thutmose I's daughter, Hatshepsut
 5. 1490-1435 - Thutmose III (nephew of Hatshepsut)
 6. 1435-1414 - Amenhotep II (Amenhotep II)
 7. 1414-1406 - Thutmose IV
 8. 1406-1370 - Amenhotep III (Amenhotep III)
 9. 1370-1353 - Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten)
 - a. worshiped the Sun, Aten
 - b. instituted a form of high-god worship (monotheism)
 - c. Tel-El-Amarna letters are in this period
 10. ? Smenkhkare
 11. ? Tutankhamun (Tutankhaten)
 12. ? Ay (Aye-Eye)
 13. 1340-1310 Haremhab
- C. 19th Dynasty (1310-1200):
 1. ? Rameses I (Ramses)
 2. 1309-1290 - Seti I (Sethos)
 3. 1290-1224 - Ramesses II (Ramses II)
 - a. from archaeological evidence most likely Pharaoh of the exodus
 - b. built the cities of Avaris, Pithom and Ramses by Habaru (possibly Semites or Hebrew) slaves
 4. 1224-1216 - Merneptah (Merenptah)
 5. ? Amenmesse
 6. ? Seti II

- 7. ? Siptah
- 8. ? Tewosret
- D. 20th Dynasty (1180-1065)
 - 1. 1175-1144 - Rameses III
 - 2. 1144-1065 - Rameses IV - XI
- E. 21st Dynasty (1065-935):
 - 1. ? Smendes
 - 2. ? Herihor
- F. 22nd Dynasty (935-725 - Libyan):
 - 1. 935-914 - Shishak (Shosenk I or Sheshong I)
 - a. protected Jeroboam I until Solomon's death
 - b. conquered Palestine about 925 (cf. I Kgs. 14-25; II Chr. 12)
 - 2. 914-874 - Osorkon I
 - 3. ? Osorkon II
 - 4. ? Shoshnek II
- G. 23rd Dynasty (759-715 - Libyan)
- H. 24th Dynasty (725-709)
- I. 25th Dynasty (716/15-663 - Ethiopian/Nubian):
 - 1. 710/09-696/95 - Shabako (Shabaku)
 - 2. 696/95-685/84 - Shebteko (Shebitku)
 - 3. 690/689, 685/84-664 - Tirhakah (Taharqa)
 - 4. ? Tantamun
- J. 26th Dynasty (663-525 - Saitic):
 - 1. 663-609 - Psammetichus I (Psamtik)
 - 2. 609-593 - Neco II (Necho)
 - 3. 593-588 - Psammetichus II (Psamtik)
 - 4. 588-569 - Apries (Hophra)
 - 5. 569-525 - Amasis
 - 6. ? - Psammetichus III (Psamtik)
- K. 27th Dynasty (525-401 - Persian):
 - 1. 530-522 - Cambyses II (Cyrus II's son)
 - 2. 522-486 - Darius I
 - 3. 486-465 - Xerxes I
 - 4. 465-424 - Artaxerxes I
 - 5. 423-404 - Darius II
- L. Several brief dynasties (404-332)
 - 1. 404-359 - Artaxerxes II
 - 2. 359/8 - 338/7 - Artaxerxes III
 - 3. 338/7 - 336/7 - Arses
 - 4. 336/5 - 331 - Darius III

*for a differing chronology see Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Encyclopedia, vol. 2 p. 231.

V. Survey of Greece:

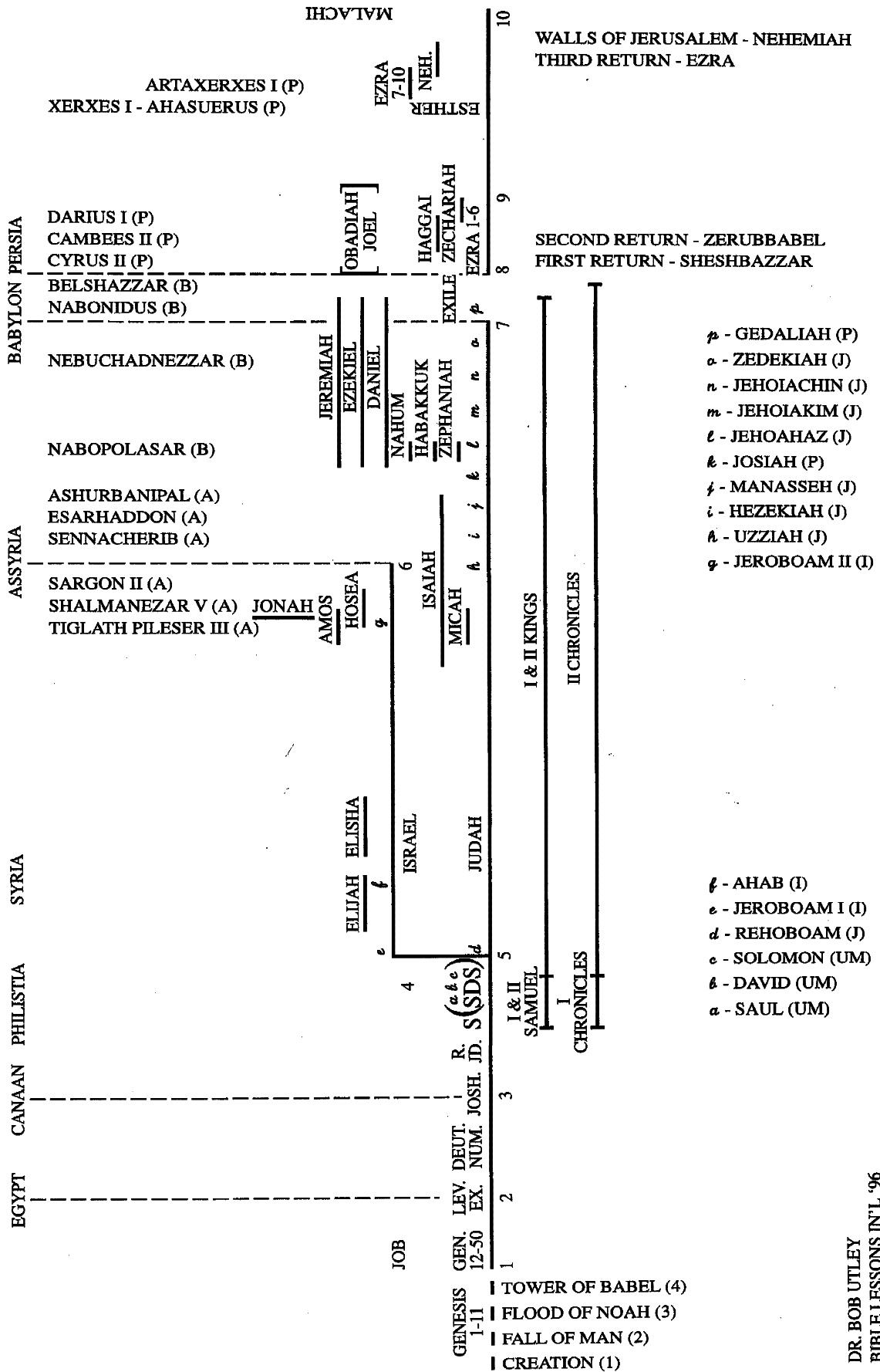
- A. 359-336 - Philip II of Macedon:
 - 1. built up Greece
 - 2. assassinated in 336 B.C.

- B. 336-323 - Alexander II “the Great” (Philip’s son):
1. routed Darius III, the Persian king, at the battle of Isus
 2. died in 323 B.C. in Babylon of a fever at 32/33 yrs. of age
 3. Alexander’s generals divided his empire at his death:
 - a. Cassander - Macedonia and Greece
 - b. Lysimicus - Thrace
 - c. Seleucus I - Syria and Babylon
 - d. Ptolemy - Egypt and Palestine
 - e. Antigonus - Asia Minor (He did not last long)
- C. Seleucids vs. Ptolemies struggle for control of Palestine:
1. Syria (Seleucid Rulers):
 - a. 312-280 - Seleucus I
 - b. 280-261 - Antiochus I Soter
 - c. 261-246 - Antiochus II Theus
 - d. 246-226 - Seleucus II Callinicus
 - e. 226-223 - Seleucus III Ceraunus
 - f. 223-187 - Antiochus III the Great
 - g. 187-175 - Seleucus IV Philopator
 - h. 175-163 - Antiochus IV Epiphanes
 - i. 163-162 - Antiochus V
 - j. 162-150 - Demetrius I
 2. Egyptian (Ptolemaic Rulers):
 - a. 327-285 - Ptolemy I Soter
 - b. 285-246 - Ptolemy II Philadelphus
 - c. 246-221 - Ptolemy III Euegetes
 - d. 221-203 - Ptolemy IV Philopator
 - e. 203-181 - Ptolemy V Epiphanes
 - f. 181-146 - Ptolemy VI Philometor
 3. Brief Survey:
 - a. 301 - Palestine under Ptolemy rule for 181 years.
 - b. 175-163 - Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the eighth Seleucid ruler, wanted to Hellenize Jews by force, if necessary:
 - (1) constructed gymnasiums
 - (2) constructed pagan altars of Zeus Olympius in the Temple
 - c. 168 - December 13 - hog slain on the altar in Jerusalem by Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Some consider this to be “the abomination of desolation” in Daniel 9 & 11.
 - d. 167 - Mattathias, priest in Modin, and sons rebel. The best known of his sons was Judas Maccabeas, “Judas the Hammer.”
 - e. 165 - December 25 - Temple rededicated. This is called Hanukkah or “Festival of Lights.”

For a good discussion of the dating problems, procedures and presuppositions see *The Expositors Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 10-17.

APPENDIX THREE

CHART OF THE OLD TESTAMENT (on following page)



DR. BOB UTLEY
BIBLE LESSONS IN 'L '96

Undateable Events (Genesis 1-11)

1. Creation (Gen. 1-2)
2. Fall of Man (Gen. 3)
3. Flood of Noah's Day (Gen. 6-9)
4. Tower of Babel (Gen. 10-11)

Dateable Events

- | | |
|--|-------------------|
| 1. Patriarchal Period (Gen. 12-50 and Job) | 2000 B.C. |
| 2. Exodus from Egypt (Exodus) | 1445 or 1290 B.C. |
| 3. Conquest of Canaan (Joshua) | 1440 or 1250 B.C. |
| 4. United Monarchy (Saul, David, Solomon) | 1000 B.C. |
| 5. Divided Monarchy (Rehoboam-Jeroboam I) | 922 B.C. |
| 6. Fall of Samaria (Israel) to Assyria | 722 B.C. |
| 7. Fall of Jerusalem (Judah) to Babylon | 586 B.C. |
| 8. Decree of Cyrus (Persia) to Return | 538 B.C. |
| 9. Temple Rebuilt | 516 B.C. |
| 10. Close of OT Period (Malachi) | 430 B.C. |

List of Kings

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. United Monarchy | D. Assyria |
| 1. Saul (a) | 1. Tiglath Pileser III (745-727) |
| 2. David (b) | 2. Shalmanesar V (727-722) |
| 3. Solomon (c) | 3. Sargon II (722-705) |
| B. Israel | 4. Sennacherib (705-681) |
| 1. Jeroboam I (e) | 5. Esarhaddon (681-669) |
| 2. Ahab (f) | 6. Ashurbanipal (669-663) |
| 3. Jeroboam II (g) | E. Babylon |
| C. Judah | 1. Nabopolassar (626-605) |
| 1. Rehoboam (d) | 2. Nebuchadnezzar (605-562) |
| 2. Uzziah (h) | 3. Nabonidus (556-539) |
| 3. Hezekiah (i) | 4. Belshazzar |
| 4. Manasseh (j) | F. Persia |
| 5. Josiah (k) | 1. Cyrus II (550-530) |
| 6. Jehoahaz (l) | 2. Cambes II (530-522) |
| 7. Jehoiakim (m) | 3. Darius I (522-486) |
| 8. Jehoiachin (n) | 4. Xerxes I (486-465) |
| 9. Zedekiah (o) | 5. Artaxerxes I (465-424) |
| 10. Gedaliah (p) | |

APPENDIX FOUR

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

I do not particularly care for statements of faith or creeds. I prefer to affirm the Bible itself. However, I realize that a statement of faith will provide those who are unfamiliar with me a way to evaluate my doctrinal perspective. In our day of so much theological error and deception, the following brief summary of my theology is offered.

1. The Bible, both the Old and New Testament, is the inspired, infallible, authoritative, eternal Word of God. It is the self-revelation of God recorded by men under supernatural leadership. It is our only source of clear truth about God and His purposes. It is also the only source of faith and practice for His church.

2. There is only one eternal, creator, redeemer God. He is the creator of all things, visible and invisible. He has revealed Himself as loving and caring although He is also fair and just. He has revealed Himself in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Spirit; truly separate and yet the same in essence.

3. God is actively in control of His world. There is both an eternal plan for His creation that is unalterable and an individually focused one that allows human free will. Nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission, yet He allows individual choices both among angels and humans. Jesus is the Father's Elect Man and all are potentially elect in Him. God's foreknowledge of events does not reduce humans to a determined pre-written script. All of us are responsible for our thoughts and deeds.

4. Mankind, though created in God's image and free from sin, chose to rebel against God. Although tempted by a supernatural agent, Adam and Eve were responsible for their willful self-centeredness. Their rebellion has affected humanity and creation. We are all in need of God's mercy and grace both for our corporate condition in Adam and our individual volitional rebellion.

5. God has provided a means of forgiveness and restoration for fallen humanity. Jesus Christ, God's unique son, became a man, lived a sinless life, and by means of his substitutionary death, paid the penalty for mankind's sin. He is the only way to restoration and fellowship with God. There is no other means of salvation except through faith in His finished work.

6. Each of us must personally receive God's offer of forgiveness and restoration in Jesus. This is accomplished by means of volitional trust in God's promises through Jesus and a willful turning from known sin.

7. All of us are fully forgiven and restored based upon our trust in Christ and repentance from sin. However, the evidence for this new relationship is seen in a changed, and changing, life. The goal of God for humanity is not only heaven someday but Christlikeness now. Those who are truly redeemed, though occasionally sinning, will continue in faith and repentance throughout their lives.

8. The Holy Spirit is "the other Jesus." He is present in the world to lead the lost to Christ and develop Christlikeness in the saved. The gifts of the Spirit are given at salvation. They are the life and ministry of Jesus divided among His body, the Church. The gifts which are basically the attitudes and motives of Jesus need to be motivated by the fruit of the Spirit. The Spirit is active in our day as He was in the biblical times.

9. The Father has made the resurrected Jesus Christ the Judge of all things. He will return to earth to judge all mankind. Those who have trusted Jesus and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will receive their eternal glorified bodies at His return. They will be with Him forever. However, those who have refused to respond to God's truth will be separated eternally from the joys of fellowship with the Triune God. They will be condemned along with the Devil and his angels.

This is surely not complete or thorough but I hope it will give you the theological flavor of my heart. I like the statement:

"In essentials—unity, In peripherals—freedom, In all things—love."