

## Reading Through the Bible Week 10: Deuteronomy Part 1

# Remember to Love the Lord your God

### Overview:

Having completed a survey of the Book of Numbers, we go to Deuteronomy. And resumes where the Book of Numbers leaves off. The Hebrew name for the Book of Deuteronomy is Devarim (דְּבָרִים), which translates to "words" or "matters," while "Deuteronomy" comes from the Greek translation *Deuteronomion*, meaning "second law." Deuteronomy is an inexact rendering of Deut. 17:18 in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament.

This is the fifth book of the Torah, named for the opening phrase, Eleh ha-devarim ("These are the words"), reflecting Moses' final speeches to the Israelites. It is also referred to as Mishneh Torah ("Repetition of the Torah"). This book is not the "secondLaw," but only a partial restatement and expansion of former laws in the writings of Moses.

### Theme:

Numbers provides a bridge to Deuteronomy by documenting the faithlessness of the first generation in the wilderness, which necessitates the second generation and the subsequent book of Deuteronomy's urgent call to covenant obedience, love for God, and preparation for inheriting the Promised Land.

The central theme of Deuteronomy is the renewal of the covenant between God and the new generation of Israelites, urging wholehearted love, obedience, and exclusive worship of Yahweh before entering the Promised Land. It emphasizes remembering God's faithfulness, the necessity of obeying His laws, and the necessity of remembering the past, the exclusive worship of God, the call to social justice, and the anticipation of future faithfulness and ultimate return, even after exile.

### Narrative Arc of Numbers:

The narrative arc of Deuteronomy is set at the end of the 40-year wilderness wandering, addressing the new generation of Israelites that will inherit the land. It follows Moses' final, speeches on the plains of Moab, urging them to remain faithful to God's covenant before entering the Promised Land. The book systematically includes:

- **A Retrospective (Chapters 1-4):** Moses summarizes the journey from Sinai/Horeb, recalling the previous generation's disobedience and God's faithfulness.
- **The Covenant Message (Chapters 5-11):** Moses reminds the people of the Ten Commandments and the *Shema* ("Hear, O Israel"), calling for total devotion to God.
- **The Law Code (Chapters 12-26):** A detailed, topical restatement of laws regarding worship, leadership, and civil life designed for a settled society in Canaan.
- **Covenant Renewal and Choice (Chapters 27-30):** Moses sets before the people a choice between blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, urging them to "choose life".
- **Transition and Death (Chapters 31-34):** Moses commissions Joshua, delivers a final prophetic poem and blessing, and dies, marking the end of the Pentateuch.



# Study Points & Commentary

Historically, the Book of Deuteronomy acts as a redemptive-historical "bridge," connecting Israel's failure in the wilderness to the future hope of the church age. While a series of farewell sermons by Moses to the second generation of Israelites, its themes of covenant renewal and heart transformation are seen by theologians as essential precursors to the New Covenant. The Book of Deuteronomy should be read as Moses's final, passionate sermons to the Israelites—a series of passionate speeches reminding a new generation of their covenant with God before entering the Promised Land focusing on themes of loving obedience, God's faithfulness, and the blessings or curses that follow.

The church is historically viewed as standing in a position similar to the Israelites on the plains of Moab: delivered from bondage (sin/Egypt) and poised to enter a final "Promised Land" (heavenly rest), yet still "in the wilderness" of this world. And the call in Deuteronomy to love God with "all your heart" (the Shema, Deut 6:4-5) remains the ethical foundation for the church age, as reaffirmed by Jesus in the Gospels.

## A. Preamble (Deut. 1:1-5)

The preamble of a covenant modeled after ancient Near Eastern Suzerain/Vassal treaties. It anchors the entire Book of Deuteronomy in a specific historical and geographical context to validate the covenant renewal for a new generation.

Near East Suzerain/Vassal treaties were asymmetric agreements where a dominant "suzerain" state provided protection and benefits to a weaker "vassal" state in exchange for absolute loyalty, tribute, and military support. These covenants, common in the Near East (notably Hittite), often featured a specific structure: preamble, history, stipulations, witnesses, and curses/blessings.

- **Geographical Specificity (v.1):** The text lists multiple locations—the Arabah, Suph, Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab. This precision emphasizes that these are real historical events occurring "beyond the Jordan" in the Plains of Moab.
- **The "Eleven Days" Contrast (v.2):** The preamble notes it is only an 11-day journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea. This is a subtle but sharp critique of Israel's past; what should have taken less than two weeks took 40 years due to their rebellion.
- **The Fortieth Year (v.3):** Moses speaks on the first day of the eleventh month. This timing is critical because it marks the end of the wandering period and the death of the rebellious generation that left Egypt.
- **Authority and Conquest (v.4):** The mention of the defeat of Sihon and Og (Amorite kings) serves as a "legal" and spiritual credential. It proves that God is already fulfilling His promise to give them the land, providing momentum for the upcoming conquest of Canaan.
- **The Act of "Expounding" (v.5):** The Hebrew word *bē'ēr* ("to explain" or "make distinct") suggests Moses did not just repeat the law but interpreted it for the current needs of the new generation. This transitions the law from a set of rules to a living pastoral sermon.



## B. First Address: A Historical Review (Deut. 1:6-4:43)

Deuteronomy 1:6–4:43 serves as the historical prologue in a Suzerain-Vassal treaty format, where Yahweh (Suzerain) reminds Israel (vassal) of His faithfulness despite their rebellion, setting the stage for covenant renewal. Moses recounts the journey from Horeb, the 40-year punishment from the Kadesh-barnea rebellion, and God-granted victories.

### **Edom:**

In Numbers 20 and Deuteronomy 2, Israel requested permission from Edom to use the King's Highway (*Derech HaMelech*) to travel toward the Promised Land (see resource map) and promised to stay on the main road and pay for any water used. These terms highlight the diplomatic attempts of the Israelites to move peacefully. The King's Highway in Numbers and Deuteronomy was a major well-traveled ancient north-south trade route east of the Jordan River (Damascus to Aqaba). It was a crucial, ancient, and well-traveled route for trade, military, and communication connecting Egypt with Mesopotamia.

As the Israelites begin their movement toward the Promised Land (Canaan), Moses sent messengers to his "brother" Edom (Numbers 20:14-21). In Numbers 20:17, Moses pledges to the King of Edom that the Israelites will not enter fields or vineyards, nor drink from wells, but will strictly keep to the King's Highway until passing their border. Edom refused and threatened war. This rejection of passage is an indicator of pending struggle for passage when denied by regional powers.

Israel did not go to war with Edom because God explicitly commanded them not to, as the Edomites were descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother, and relatives to the Israelites. God had given Mount Seir to Edom as a possession and forbade Israel from taking any of their land. Deuteronomy 2:4-6 instructs the Israelites to pass through the territory of their brothers, the people of Esau, but to be very careful and not to contend with them. So, despite Edom's refusal to allow passage and their threat of war, Israel obeyed God and chose a longer, more arduous route, rather than engaging in conflict.

Deuteronomy 2:8 states: "So we went on past our brothers, the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir. We turned from the Arabah road, which comes from Elath [modern-day Eilat] and Ezion Geber, and turned along the way of the wilderness of Moab".

### **Amorites:**

Moses makes a similar request to Sihon, king of the Amorites, to pass through his land via the highway. Sihon, King of the Amorites (Numbers 21:22), refused to allow Israel to use the highway for peaceful, direct passage to Canaan, which resulted in Israel taking possession of the Trans-Jordanian area just before entering the Promised Land.

Moses recounts the defeat of King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan recorded in the Book of Numbers 21:21-35 and Deuteronomy 2:32-37. The Battle of Jahaz was a pivotal, divinely ordained conflict where Israel defeated Sihon, King of the Amorites, after he refused them peaceful passage and attacked them. Israel, led by Moses, destroyed Sihon's army and cities, taking only livestock and plunder. This victory secured land east of the Jordan for Israel:



- **Sihon:** Numbers 21:21-31 describes how Israel defeats Sihon, king of the Amorites, after he refuses them passage and attacks them at Jahaz.
- **Og:** Numbers 21:32-35 details the subsequent defeat of Og, king of Bashan, at Edrei after he attacks the Israelites.

Moses wrote in Deuteronomy that Israel conquered the territory from Aroer (near the Arnon Gorge) in the south to Gilead north to Mount Hermon. The Israelites stopped at Mount Hermon because it served as the definitive northern boundary of the promised land and the territory of Bashan. Mount Hermon is identified as the majestic, snow-capped northern boundary of the Amorite kingdom and the Promised Land, conquered by Israel from Sihon and Og (Deut. 3:8-9, 4:48), which was called Sirion by Sidonians and Senir by Amorites. This 10,000-ft. mountain was a prominent landmark that testified to the vastness of God's provision.

#### **Ammon:**

In Deuteronomy 2:19, God commanded the Israelites not to harass or war with Ammon. God had given this land to the descendants of Lot (Abraham's nephew) as their possession. As relatives to Israel, they were excluded from the conquest.

However, Israel fought several wars with the Ammonites after possessing the Promised Land, primarily due to Ammonite aggression against the tribes in Gilead. Major conflicts included the defeat by Jephthah, who conquered 20 cities, and later, King David's forces, which fully subdued them.

Key details regarding the conflict involved during the time of Judges was the Ammonites attack on the Israelites in Gilead (east of the Jordan), leading to a significant counter-attack by the judge Jephthah, who severely defeated them. Ammon claimed Israel took their land during the Exodus, but the biblical account is that Israel took the territory from the Amorites (Sihon), not directly from Ammon.

Conflicts persisted through the reigns of Saul and David. King David significantly defeated the Ammonites, ultimately placing them under subjection. While God initially forbade Israel from attacking Ammon during the Exodus (Deuteronomy 2:19), their continued aggression prompted subsequent wars after the settlement in the Promised Land.

#### **Moab:**

In Deuteronomy 2:9, God commanded the Israelites not to harass or war with Moab. God delivered the final instructions and renewed the covenant with the second generation of Israel on the plains of Moab. Though related by blood (via Lot), Moab feared the massive size of the Israelite camp, leading King Balak to hire Balaam to curse them. Israel was commanded not to attack Moab, but the Moabites lured them into idolatry, causing conflict.

God's instructions regarding Moab in relation to Israel is to observe strict separation, subjugation, and divine judgment due to pride and idolatry. Moab was frequently a vassal state, paying heavy tribute to Israel (lambs and wool). Moab often opposed Israel, leading to subjugation under kings like David and eventual destruction prophesied by Isaiah and Jeremiah, yet with promised future restoration.



- **Historical Review (1:6-3:29):** Moses recounts the journey from Mount Sinai, the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea, and the 40 years of wandering. Moses recounts God's faithfulness from Horeb to Moab, including the rebellion of the previous generation, the journey, and the initial victories over Sihon and Og.
  - **The Command to Move (1:6-8):** The journey from Horeb was supposed to be a short, 11-day trip.
  - **The Rebellion at Kadesh-Barnea (1:19-46):** Due to fear and lack of faith, the previous generation refused to enter the Promised Land, resulting in a 40-year, faith-testing detour where that generation died out.
  - **God's Faithfulness in the Wilderness (2:1-23):** Even during the wandering, God provided and guided, demonstrating covenant faithfulness despite Israel's disobedience.
  - **Initial Victories as Covenant Sign (2:24-3:22):** The defeats of Sihon, king of Heshbon, and Og, king of Bashan, are highlighted as early examples of God's power fighting for them, ensuring success in Canaan.
  - **Boundary Markers (3:23-29):** Moses recounts his plea to enter the land and God's refusal, reinforcing that even leaders are subject to the covenant.
- **Exhortation to Faithfulness (4:1-43):** Moses calls for the people to remain faithful to God's statutes and a warning against idolatry. A call to obey God's laws and avoid idolatry, based on the history just reviewed.
  - **The Power of Memory:** Moses commands the people to "take heed" and "not forget" what their eyes have seen. Remembering God's past miracles and judgments (like the incident at **Baal-Peor**) is presented as the primary defense against future sin.
  - **The Sufficiency of God's Word:** Verse 2 contains the famous prohibition: "*Ye shall not add unto the word... neither shall ye diminish from it.*" This underscores that God's law is complete, holy, and unchangeable.
  - **The Uniqueness of Yahweh:** Moses highlights that no other nation has a God so near or laws so righteous. This unique relationship is meant to make Israel a "light to the nations," where their wisdom is evidenced by their obedience.

### C. Second Address: The Covenant Way of Life (The Stipulations) (Duet. 4:44–26:19)

This section is considered the "heart" of the book, serving as the core covenantal stipulations for the new generation of Israelites ready to enter Canaan. It bridges the historical review (chs.1–4) with the specific application of laws (chapters 12–26) by reinforcing that the covenant is a way of life, not just a set of rules.

This "heart of the book" demonstrates that true covenant life is a life of love and obedience, aimed at enjoying God's blessings and displaying His character to the world.

- **Introduction and Context (4:44–5:5)**
  - **A Practical Renewal:** This address brings the laws up to date for a sedentary, agricultural society, having previously been a nomadic, wilderness-traveling group.
  - **"Today" in Moab:** Moses reminds the younger generation that the covenant made at Horeb is not a relic of the past, but a living, "today" reality for them.



- **The Mediator:** The people are reminded that because of the terrifying nature of God's holiness (the fire and darkness, 4:11), they asked Moses to act as mediator to receive the Law.
- **The Ten Commandments and Core Principles (5:6–33):** Moses repeats the Ten Commandments (ch.5), the Decalogue, as the foundational legal document of the covenant and gives the Great Commandment (Shema) to love God exclusively (ch.6). He emphasizes loyalty, warning against forgetting God in the new land.
  - **Sabbath as Redemption:** A major difference from the Exodus 20 account is the reason given for the Sabbath in 5:15: it is to be kept because God is their Redeemer who brought them out of slavery.
  - **Motivation for Obedience:** Obedience to these laws is not to earn salvation, but a response to the grace of being redeemed, enabling them to live fully in the promised land.
  - **Internalization:** The commandments are not merely external actions but also cover motivation, such as the prohibition against coveting (5:21), which Jesus later expanded upon in the Sermon on the Mount.
- **The Shema: The Great Commandment (6:1–25)**

Chapter 6 contains the **Shema** (Hebrew for "Hear"), the cornerstone of Jewish faith and the ultimate expression of the covenant.

  - **"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (6:4):** This is a declaration of monotheism—Yahweh is the only God, demanding exclusive loyalty.
  - **Love as Loyalty (6:5):** "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength." This is not just a sentiment, but a call for total commitment—a "Shema lifestyle" that permeates every aspect of daily existence.
  - **Transmission of Faith (6:6–9):** The commands are to be taught diligently to children, talked about constantly, and marked on homes, ensuring the covenant spans generations.
- **Loyalty and Warnings-Idolatry and Forgetfulness (7:1–11:32)**

Moses warns that once the people are "satisfied" in the Promised Land, they will be tempted to forget God and credit their own strength for their wealth.

  - **Separation-Exclusive Devotion (ch.7):** Israel is commanded to destroy Canaanite idols and not intermarry with nations that will turn their hearts away from God.
  - **The Danger of Prosperity (ch.8):** Moses warns that when they enter the prosperous land, they must not forget God, saying, "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth" (8:17).
  - **Grace, Not Merit (chs.9–10):** Israel is reminded that they are not receiving the land because of their righteousness, but because of God's grace and the wickedness of the current inhabitants.
 

In Deut. 10:16, Moses calls for an internal transformation ("circumcise your hearts"), a theme later developed by prophets to describe a new heart given by God.
  - **Choose Life (ch.11):** The section concludes with a blessing for obedience and a curse for disobedience, calling them to "choose life" by following God's commands.



- **The Specific Statutes Deuteronomic Law Code (12:1–26:19):** Known as the "Deuteronomic Code" these laws cover proper worship, dietary laws, tithes, the Sabbath year, and instructions for festivals.
 

The Deuteronomic Code teaches that a life of covenant loyalty is not just about religious ceremony, but about justice, compassion for the downgraded (widows, orphans, foreigners), and the centralization of worship to maintain purity and prevent the idolatrous influence of neighboring cultures.

  - **Proper Worship and the Central Sanctuary (chs.12–13)**
    - **Centralization of Worship:** The primary theme is that all burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, and vows must be brought to "the place the LORD your God will choose" (later identified as Jerusalem). This centralized worship was designed to maintain theological unity and prevent the syncretism of Canaanite practices.
    - **Elimination of Idolatry:** Israel was commanded to destroy all Canaanite high places, altars, and pillars to avoid imitating their worship (12:2-3).
    - **The "Place" Theology:** The chosen place becomes a physical representation of God's presence among them, serving as a reminder that they are a "holy" (set-apart) people.
  - **Dietary Laws and Ritual Purity (14:1-21)**
    - **Clean and Unclean Foods:** The dietary laws are presented to distinguish Israel from surrounding nations. Animals deemed unclean were often scavengers, and the restrictions served both symbolic (holiness) and hygienic purposes.
    - **Prohibition of Blood:** The command against consuming blood is absolute, as the blood represents the life, which belongs to God (12:16, 23).
    - **Separation from Pagans:** In addition to food, specific rules are given regarding not eating animals that died of themselves and not boiling a young goat in its mother's milk (14:21).
  - **The Tithes and the Sabbath Year (14:22–15:18)**

The text outlines two main types of tithes:

    - **The Festival Tithe:** Crops and livestock were tithed to be eaten in the presence of the Lord at the central sanctuary (14:22–27).
    - **The Year of Release Tithe:** Every third year, the tithe was stored locally for the Levites, the poor, widows, and orphans (14:28–29).
  - **The Sabbatical Year (Year of Release)(15:1-18):** In the seventh year, debts were to be forgiven, and Hebrew servants freed, promoting economic justice and equality.
  - **Rules on Firstborn Animals (15:19-23):** Deuteronomy concludes the regulations regarding the Sabbath year of release (debts and servants) by focusing on the sanctification of firstborn male animals from the herds and flocks. This law reiterates that all firstborn males belong to Yahweh, serving as a memorial of the Exodus, where God spared Israel's firstborn.
    - **Consecration and Prohibition (v.19):** All firstborn male cattle, sheep, and goats were to be set apart (consecrated) to the Lord. The owner was strictly forbidden from using them for personal profit—meaning they could not be used to work (plow, etc.) nor could the sheep be sheared.



- **Annual Sacrifice and Meal (v.20):** These animals were to be brought to the central sanctuary (the place God chooses) annually, where they were sacrificed and eaten by the owner and their family in a celebratory meal before the Lord. This practice served as a reminder of their dependence on God for the fertility of their livestock.
- **Handling Blemished Animals (vv.21-22):** If a firstborn animal was defective—lame, blind, or having any "serious blemish"—it was not acceptable for sacrifice at the sanctuary. However, such animals were not to be wasted; they could be eaten within the owner's local "gates" (home).
- **A "Common" Meal (v.22):** Unlike the sacred, spotless sacrifices, a blemished firstborn could be eaten by anyone, whether ceremonially clean or unclean, just like a gazelle or deer. This shows the distinction between sacred, sacrificial food and ordinary, permissible food.
- **Prohibition of Blood (v.23):** Even when eaten at home, the blood of the animal was not to be consumed. It had to be poured out on the ground like water, because the blood symbolizes life, which belongs to God.
- **The Festivals (16:1-17):** The law outlines three major pilgrimage festivals where all males were required to appear before the Lord at the central sanctuary:
  - **Passover (Pesach):** Commemorating the Exodus from Egypt.
  - **Weeks (Shavuot):** Celebrating the harvest.
  - **Booths/Tabernacles (Sukkot):** Celebrating the ingathering of the harvest.
- **Societal and Ethical Regulations (16:18–25:19)**

This section regulates the "Covenant Way of Life" in daily life by outlining Israel's social, civil, and moral laws aimed at establishing a just, compassionate, and holy society in Canaan (The Promised Land), balancing strict justice with protection for the vulnerable.

  - **Judicial Justice (16:18–20):** Judges and officers were to be appointed in every town, establishing a decentralized judicial system, often located at city gates. The core mandate is, "Justice, and only justice, you shall follow," without taking bribes or perverting judgment.
  - **Preventing Idolatry (16:21–17:7):** Strict prohibitions against Canaanite worship practices, such as Asherah poles and sacred pillars, emphasize that God alone is to be worshipped. Penalties for idolatry were severe to protect the nation's spiritual purity.
  - **Leadership Constraints (17:8–20):** Laws for kings (17:14-20) aimed to prevent them from becoming tyrants. Kings were forbidden to amass horses, wives, or silver, and were required to write a personal copy of the Law to study daily, ensuring they remained subject to God.
  - **The Role of Prophets (18:9–22):** Israel was told to listen to prophets sent by God rather than practicing pagan divination or sorcery.
  - **Social & Moral Laws (19–25):**
    - ❖ **Cities of Refuge (19):** Protection for those who caused accidental death, distinguishing between murder and manslaughter.
    - ❖ **Warfare (20):** Regulations on conducting war, including exemptions for those who recently built a house, planted a vineyard, or married.



- ❖ **Family & Community Welfare (21-25):** Provisions for the marginalized, including laws regarding runaway slaves, protecting the poor from exploitation, and Levirate marriage (25:5-10) to ensure the continuation of a deceased man's line.
- ❖ **Honest Commerce (25:13-16):** Mandates for honest weights and measures to maintain fair business dealings.
- **Covenant Affirmation (26:1-15):** Deuteronomy 26:1-15 outlines the presenting of firstfruits and the third-year tithe, serving as a vital liturgical act of covenant affirmation upon entering Canaan. This act merges gratitude for the land (firstfruits) with social responsibility (tithes), forcing Israel to remember their history of slavery and deliverance, confirming their dependence on YHWH.
  - **The Firstfruits Confession (vv. 1–11)**
    - ❖ **The Offering as Recognition:** Upon entering the Promised Land, Israelites were to bring the "first of all the fruit of the ground" to the central sanctuary. This act recites God's deliverance from Egypt and acknowledges YHWH as the source of their bounty as a contrast to pagan Canaanite worship.
    - ❖ **The Liturgy of Memory (vv. 5-10):** The worshiper recites a historical creed, affirming their identity:
      - "A wandering Aramean was my father"* (referring to Jacob/Abraham).
      - Descent into Egypt* and slavery.
      - Divine deliverance* with mighty signs.
      - Entry into the land* flowing with milk and honey.
    - ❖ **Theological Significance:** This confession acts as a re-covenanting, linking personal gratitude to collective history. The basket of firstfruits symbolizes the dedication of the entire harvest to God.
  - **The Third-Year Tithe Confession (vv. 12–15)**
    - ❖ **Social Justice Aspect (v. 12):** Every third year was a "tithe year" focused on charity, where the produce was given to Levites, strangers, orphans, and widows within local towns, ensuring communal welfare.
    - ❖ **Declaration of Integrity (vv. 13-14):** The worshiper declares that they have not used the sacred tithe for personal gain or in improper ways (such as during mourning or uncleanness).
    - ❖ **Final Appeal (v. 15):** The worshiper asks God to look down from heaven and bless His people and the land, finalizing their covenantal duty.
- **Concluding Charge (26:16-19):** The last four verses of Deut. 26 serves as the solemn, concluding charge to Moses' second address, which began in chapter 5, functioning as a formal ratification of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel before they enter the Promised Land. These verses act as a "binding contract" or "closing arguments" where both parties—God and His people—expressly affirming their mutual obligations and emphasizing that obeying the covenant is the path to receiving God's promises.
  - **The Mediator (v. 16):** Moses acts as the mediator, summing up the preceding laws (ch. 12-26) and demanding immediate, wholehearted obedience. The phrase "this day" emphasizes the urgency of this commitment.



- **The People's Pledge (v.17):** Israel "avouches" (declares or acknowledges) the LORD as their God, promising to walk in His ways, obey His voice, and keep His statutes.
- **The LORD's Pledge (v.18-19):** In response, the LORD declares Israel as His "treasured possession" (peculiar people), promising to exalt them above other nations in praise, fame, and honor, and to keep them as a holy, consecrated people.
- **NOTES:**
  - ❖ **"This Day":** Refers to the immediate, present necessity of choosing to follow God.
  - ❖ **"Keep and Do Them":** Implies active obedience and implementation in daily life, not just passive knowledge.
  - ❖ **"Treasured Possession" (Segullah):** Refers to a special, valuable possession, highlighting that Israel's status is due to grace, not merit.
  - ❖ **"High Above All Nations":** Refers to being a witness to the world of the superiority of God's way.

#### D. Third Address: Blessings, Curses, and Covenant Renewal (27:1–30:20)

- **The Altar on Mount Ebal (ch.27):** Deuteronomy 27 initiates the formal ratification of the covenant in the Promised Land, centering on a dramatic ceremony at Mount Ebal involving the setting up of inscribed, unhewn stones, an altar for sacrifices, and the proclamation of twelve specific curses to bind Israel to the law. It emphasizes total obedience and the spiritual reality of God's blessing or judgment. The instructions are fulfilled by Joshua in Joshua 8:30-32, emphasizing the transition from wilderness to promise.
  - **The Mandate (27:1-4):** Moses, along with the elders, instructs Israel to erect large stones covered in plaster, inscribe them with the law, and build an altar upon entering the land.
  - **The Altar Construction (27:5-7):** The altar must be built of "whole stones" (unhewn/uncut), forbidding any iron tools. This symbolizes that human workmanship cannot add to or improve God's way of salvation.
  - **Sacrifices and Celebration (27:7):** Peace offerings are to be offered, signifying fellowship with God, followed by rejoicing before Him.
  - **Location and Significance (27:11-13):** The ceremony splits the tribes between Mount Gerizim (for blessings) and Mount Ebal (for curses). While the curses are the focus in vv.14-26, the setting represents the necessity of obedience to remain in the land.
  - **The Twelve Curses (27:14-26):** These curses target secret sins (e.g., idolatry, dishonoring parents, injustice) that humans might hide but God sees, concluding with a curse on anyone who does not uphold the law. The people affirm these by saying "Amen."
    1. **Idolatry (v.15):** Making a carved or molten image in secret, violating the 2nd Commandment.
    2. **Disrespecting Parents (v.16):** Treating parents with contempt, violating the 5th Commandment.
    3. **Moving Landmarks (v.17):** Violating property boundaries.
    4. **Misleading the Blind (v.18):** Taking advantage of the vulnerable.



5. **Perverting Justice (v.19)**: Denying justice to the stranger, fatherless, or widow.
  6. **Incest (v.20)**: Sleeping with a father's wife.
  7. **Bestiality (v.21)**: Unnatural vice.
  8. **Incest (v.22)**: Sleeping with a sister or half-sister.
  9. **Incest (v.23)**: Sleeping with a mother-in-law.
  10. **Secret Murder (v.24)**: Violating the 6th Commandment in secret.
  11. **Bribery/Judicial Murder (v.25)**: Taking bribes to kill the innocent.
  12. **General Disobedience (v.26)**: Failure to confirm or obey all the words of the law.
- **Blessings and Curses (ch. 28)**: Deuteronomy 28 acts as the covenant ratification for a ceremony, presenting blessings for obedience (vv.1–14) and severe curses for disobedience (vv.15–68), emphasizing that Israel's relationship with God is tied to faithful obedience. The passage functions as a stark choice, with the curse section being much longer to highlight the dire, ultimately, the prophetic, nature of disobedience. These are detailed instructions for a ceremony at Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal.
    - **The Blessings of Obedience (28:1-14)**: If Israel obeys God's law, they will be elevated above all nations. Blessings will encompass agricultural success, prosperity in the "basket and store" (food and resources), reproductive fertility, and military victory.
    - **The Curses of Disobedience (28:15-68)**: Conversely, disobedience will lead to divine judgment, including diseases, plagues, famine, and defeat in war. The curses symbolize the removal of blessings and result in the nation's reputation becoming a "horror, a proverb, and a byword."
    - **The Ultimate Curse - Exile (28:58-68)**: The culmination of disobedience is being removed from the Promised Land, which is a spiritual curse of banishment from the Lord's presence. The final curse is a symbolic, or literal, return to Egypt, suggesting a total reversal of the Exodus salvation, where the Israelites are sold into slavery.
    - **Context in Covenant Law**: The structure mirrors ancient Near Eastern treaties, where a sovereign (God) lays out the benefits of loyalty and the penalties for treason.
    - **Theological Implications**: These curses, while physical, symbolize the spiritual consequences of failing to trust in God. They remind Israel [and us] that obedience brings life, and persistent, impenitent disobedience brings destruction.
  - **Final Exhortation (29:1–30:20)**: A final call to commitment, promising restoration even after failure, and the charge to "choose life". Moses' third address focuses on renewing the covenant with the new generation in Moab before entering Canaan. It emphasizes accountability, the inevitability of curses for disobedience, the promise of restoration upon repentance, and a final, urgent call to choose life over death by obeying God.
    - **Covenant Renewal (29:1-15)**: Moses reminds the new generation of God's faithfulness in the wilderness (e.g., clothes not wearing out) and compels them to enter a binding covenant with Him, including both present leaders and future generations.



- **Consequences of Apostasy (29:16-28):** A stern warning against turning to idolatry, which will bring destruction on the land, mirroring the ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- **Secret vs. Revealed Things (29:29):** A pivotal verse highlighting that while God's hidden plans are His own, the revealed Law is the responsibility of Israel to follow.
- **Promise of Repentance and Restoration (30:1-10):** God promises that even after the inevitable exile caused by disobedience, He will circumcise their hearts to love Him when they return, enabling future obedience. Verse 6 indicates that true obedience requires an internal transformation by God, not just external compliance.
- **The Proximity of the Commandment (30:11-14):** The Torah is not far away in heaven or across the sea; it is accessible, "very near you" in your mouth and heart.
- **The Final Choice (30:15-20):** Moses concludes with a direct appeal to choose life, love, and obedience to God, which represents blessing, rather than death and curses.

### **E. Conclusion: Leadership Succession and Final Actions (31:1–33:29)**

- **Commissioning of Joshua (31:1–29):** This marks the transition of leadership from Moses to Joshua, emphasizing divine sovereignty in succession, the necessity of courage, and the preservation of the law. Moses commissions Joshua publicly, encourages the people with God's promise of presence, and entrusts the written Law to priests to prevent covenant disobedience. This chapter ensures that as Israel enters the Promised Land, they are anchored in the Word of God and, under divinely appointed leadership, bridging the work of Moses with the ministry of Joshua.
- **Divine Succession (vv.1-8):** Moses, at 120, recognizes his limitation and announces his impending death. He affirms that God chooses leaders and has chosen Joshua, ensuring the transition is based on divine decree rather than human maneuvering.
- **Commissioning of Joshua (vv.7-8, 14-15, 23):** Moses publicly charges Joshua to "be strong and courageous" to lead Israel into Canaan. God directly reinforces this, promising to be with Joshua, echoing the assurance given to Moses.
- **The Law as Witness (vv.9-13, 24-26):** Moses writes down the Law and entrusts it to the Levitical priests to be placed beside the Ark of the Covenant. This ensures the Law serves as a permanent witness and guide for the nation.
- **Public Reading Protocol (vv.10-13):** Moses commands a public reading of the Law every seven years during the Festival of Booths, ensuring all generations (men, women, children, and foreigners) know and fear the Lord.
- **Prophecy of Disobedience (vv.16-22, 27-29):** God warns Moses that the people will break the covenant after his death. To counter this, God orders the writing of a song to be taught to the Israelites, serving as a lasting testimony against their future rebellion.



- **The Song of Moses (31:30–32:47):** The Song of Moses serves as a prophetic “national anthem” and witness to Israel's future infidelity and God’s justice, intended to be memorized to provoke repentance. It highlights God as the faithful “Rock” who nurtures Israel, warns against apostasy when prosperous, and concludes with promises of vengeance on enemies and mercy for His people. It summarizes their covenant history through the lens of God’s unchanging faithfulness and the people's recurring rebellion.
  - **A "Witness" Song (31:19-21):** Because the Lord knew Israel would forsake Him after Moses' death, this song acts as a lasting testament, reminding them of the truth and calling them back to covenant loyalty.
  - **The Character of God (32:3-4):** The song opens by exalting God's, righteousness, faithfulness, and justice. God is described as the “Rock” five times (vv. 4, 15, 18, 30, 31) – *Jehovah-Tsuri*. This title emphasizes God’s stability, perfect justice, and role as the unchanging source of salvation.
  - **Israel’s Corruption and God’s Care (32:5-18):** Moses contrasts God’s faithful care—described as an eagle hovering over its young—with Israel's corrupt behavior and rebellion. Despite being “bought” by God, they acted as unfaithful children.
  - **Divine Judgment and Jealousy (32:19-25):** Because of their disobedience, God expresses jealousy, bringing judgment and curses upon the nation for turning to false gods.
  - **Vindication and Restoration (32:36-43):** The conclusion turns to hope. God will judge the nations that oppressed Israel and ultimately show compassion to His servants, cleansing the land and restoring His people.
  - **Final Charge (32:44-47):** Moses and Joshua formally present the song to all Israel, emphasizing that this is not just a poem, but their very life, crucial for long life in the promised land.
- **Blessing of Moses (32:48–33:29):** Deuteronomy 32 concludes Moses' ministry with his death sentence on Mount Nebo and a final prophetic blessing upon the tribes of Israel like Jacob’s in Genesis. Contrasted with Jacob’s more critical blessings, Moses emphasizes the tribes' security, unity, and divine favor as they prepare to inherit the Promised Land.
  - **Final Command (32:48-52):** God instructs Moses to ascend Mount Nebo to view the Promised Land before dying, a consequence of his disobedience at Meribah. His willingness to die reflects his absolute consecration to God.
  - **The Blessing (33:1-5):** Moses is styled “the man of God” (a prophetic designation) and begins by praising Yahweh as the giver of the Law and the true King over the assembly of Israel.
  - **Tribal Blessings (33:6-25):**
    - **Reuben (v.6):** A prayer for survival, acknowledging the tribe's decline in numbers.
    - **Judah (v.7):** A prayer for strength against enemies and reunion with Israel.
    - **Levi (vv.8-11):** Acknowledges their priestly duties, teaching the law, and faithfulness.
    - **Benjamin (v.12):** Described as secure, with God dwelling between his shoulders (referencing the future Temple location).



- **Joseph (Ephraim/Manasseh) (vv.13-17):** Receives the most fruitful land, symbolizing power and prosperity.
- **Zebulun/Issachar (vv.18-19):** Blessed with maritime trade and agricultural abundance.
- **Gad (vv. 20-21):** Praised for their strength and role as lawgivers.
- **Dan/Naphtali/Asher (vv 22-25):** Portrayed as swift, fertile, and prosperous, respectively.
- ❖ **NOTE:** The tribe of Simeon is omitted, believed to be absorbed into Judah due to its diminished role, fulfilling Jacob's prophecy in Genesis 49:7.
- **Conclusion - Security in God (33:26-29):** Moses proclaims that Israel is unique, saved by the Lord. He highlights the "everlasting arms" supporting them. In verse 26, Jeshurun is used as a poetic name and term of endearment for the nation of Israel meaning "the upright one" or "the righteous one" emphasizing the special bond between God and His people (also used in Deut. 32:15, 33:5, and Isa. 44:2).

#### F. Death and Burial of Moses (34:1-12)

Deuteronomy 34:1-12 records the death and burial of Moses, serving as the conclusion to the Pentateuch. At age 120, with undiminished vigor, Moses views the Promised Land from Mount Nebo before dying "by the word of the Lord". God Himself buries Moses in a secret location in Moab, preventing idolatry, while Israel mourns him for 30 days.

- **The View from Pisgah (v.1-4):** God takes Moses up to survey the entire Promised Land, fulfilling the promise to Abraham, though Moses is not allowed to enter due to his disobedience at Kadesh (Numbers 20).
- **The Death "By the Word of the Lord" (v. 5):** Moses' death is portrayed not as a consequence of old age, but a direct act of submission to God. He goes to the mountain knowing he will not return, showing a calm, faithful acceptance of his mortality.
- **God as Undertaker (v.6):** The text explicitly states "He [God] buried him." This unique divine action highlights the intimate relationship between God and His servant, but also serves to hide the grave. The unknown location prevents the site from becoming an object of idolatrous worship for Israel.
- **Vigor at Death (v.7):** Moses is described as 120 years old with "eyes not dim nor his natural vigor diminished," emphasizing his death was not due to natural infirmity, but divine appointment.
- **Mourning and Transition (vv.8-9):** Israel mourns for 30 days, a standard period for a great leader, followed by the seamless transition of leadership to Joshua, who is filled with the spirit of wisdom.
- **The Epitaph of Moses (vv.10-12):** The closing verses likely written by Joshua or another successor, declare that no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face-to-face, emphasizing his unique role in bringing the Covenant.

