

Deuteronomy: A Chapter-by-Chapter Study

Introduction

The name Deuteronomy comes from a mistranslation of the original Hebrew phrase found in chapter 17:18. The phrase “copy of this law” was meant to be used as the title of this book by the Greeks, but the Septuagint instead mistakenly changed the name to “repetition of this law.” Even though the mistake was caught early on, it was decided that this phrase was also suitable since this book does repeat many of the Mosaic laws. The original Hebrew title (debarim) follows the Jewish tradition of using the first few words of the book as the title (English translation: “these are the words”).

As with most of the Torah, Moses is believed to be the author through the use of at least one scribe recording what Moses says and does. Joshua is often attributed as being the scribe of Moses.

Although much of Deuteronomy is duplicated in Leviticus and Numbers, this book comes more from the perspective of Moses as he delivers not only his farewell address to the nation of Israel but to address a new generation of Israelites that had not been alive when God parted the Red Sea or presented the Ten Commandments. Moses reiterates the laws that he thinks are important in the moment for a generation that had only the word of their parents to adhere to.

The book of Numbers and Deuteronomy both end on the same note and in the same place in the Jewish timeline. It is commonly held that Numbers was written during the journey to the Promised Land while Deuteronomy was written on the threshold of the Promised Land as Moses recaps what God has done and promised to do for the Israelites if they only believe.

Chapter 1

V1-8

Moses begins his address to the next generation of Israel by reminding them of the journey of the previous generation.

V9-18

There is some debate about whether Moses is referring to the appointment of elders in Exodus 18 or in Numbers 11, but the remainder of this passage seems to reiterate the story found in Numbers 11.

V19-40

Moses states the reasons for his address to the new Israelites by reminding them of why they wandered the desert for forty years. The lack of faith in God led to exile and death of the old generation, including Moses himself.

V41-46

The Israelite response to God condemning them to exile was to try and enter the Promised Land on their own. Their arrogance led to death and defeat. The response to their lack of faith was to try and do what they didn’t believe possible with God on their own. The number of Israelites decreased because of their misguided attack.

Chapter 2

V1-7

Moses recounts the journey of the Israelites through the land of Mount Seir. God had given this land to the Edomites and commanded Israel to treat them with respect and peace.

V8-13

Moses continues his recollection of the journey of the Israelites by recalling the Lord's commands concerning the Moabites. The Moabites were descendants of Lot and were protected by the promise of God. The Moabites had defeated the Emim, a large and fearsome race of Canaanites that previously occupied the land.

V14-23

Moses' recollection of the 38 years of wandering is complete and he moves into more recent history. The Israelites are preparing to enter the Promised Land. But God still has warnings and boundaries for them. The Ammonites were not to be harmed due to their also being descendants of Lot.

V24-37

The Valley of Arnon was ripe for the taking, however. God had issues with the king of Heshbon and wanted him wiped out (Numbers 21). The Israelites gave the same opportunities for peace as they did with the Edomites and Moabites, but King Heshbon wanted nothing to do with them. The Israelites defeated King Sihon and his armies handily.

Chapter 3

V1-7

Chapter 3 continues where chapter 2 leaves off. Moses is recounting the victories of Israel before entering the Promised Land. In this passage, the Israelites conquer Bashan and the sixty cities throughout the region.

V8-11

Who are the Rephaim mentioned in verse 11?

King Og of Bashan was listed as the last of the Rephaim, the race of warrior giants that Israel feared when they first encountered them when spying on the Promised Land in Numbers 13. With the defeat of Og, the Rephaim were wiped out of the land of the Amorites. Verse 11 goes on to describe the size of the bed for this king, roughly 2 meters by 4 meters.

V12-22

This passage recounts that this land outside of the Promised Land will go to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh, as told in Numbers 32.

V23-29

Moses pleads one last time for God to allow him into the Promised Land, if only before he dies. God has made up his mind, though, and Moses cannot enter. This may seem like a harsh judgement, but Moses, as the leader of Israel, is held to a higher standard than the others. Even the one recorded sin of Moses (Numbers 20) is enough to keep him from being allowed to pass over the borders.

Chapter 4

V1-8

What does Moses mean by not allowing the Israelites to add to or take away from the word which he is giving them in verse 2?

Although Moses is speaking directly to the Israelites who are about to cross into the Promised Land, many scholars apply this statement to the Old Testament and even the entire Bible. The Apostle John says something very similar in Revelation 22:18-19 which appears to apply these statements as “book ends” for the Word of God. Moses is saying to not add to God’s commandments any laws from human writing which would seem to supersede or even contradict what God has told them. And they are not to leave out any part of the law to suit their needs. God’s commands are whole and just, not to be trifled with.

Moses is begging this new generation not to make the same mistakes as his generation. Follow God and He will never lead you astray.

V9-20

Moses gives strict instructions of remembrance for this generation. Only the oldest of this generation would remember hearing God speak His commandments and make His covenant at Mount Horeb (Exodus 24). Moses wants them to take this memory for those that are old enough and the stories for those that only heard about it with them into the Promised Land as reminders to not anger God.

V21-31

Moses uses himself as an example of what can happen if one should disobey God. He reminds them that serving other gods would bring nothing but suffering from the wrath of God. God’s covenant came with the caveat that the Israelites would be faithful. But even if they turned away, God wouldn’t completely abandon the Israelites. Any show of faith on their part would call God’s love back to them.

V32-40

God treated the Israelites like He had never treated another people group before. Israel knew His voice and had seen the smoke and fire over them while they wandered the desert. This should always be remembered by Israel as they enter the land of plenty.

V41-49

Even though Moses would not enter the Promised Land, he appointed the first three cities of refuge (Numbers 35:14) to be built. Moses never crossed the Jordan River to know where to appoint the last three cities. That task would be left to someone else.

The closing of the chapter is the reminder that Moses had given Israel everything they needed to take the Promised Land from its current inhabitants. If they obeyed and relied upon God, they wouldn’t need anything else.

Chapter 5

V1-5

Moses addresses the Israelites again reminding them of the covenant and commandments that God made with them.

What does Moses mean when he says that God did not make the covenant with the fathers of Israel in verse 3?

This is a figure of speech that Moses is using. He is reminding Israel that the covenant made with the previous generation is a living covenant and still valid for generations to come. Likewise, in verse 4, the phrase, “The Lord spoke with you face to face...” is used but the original Hebrew phrase is meant to state that the Lord spoke with them intimately and openly.

V6-21

In this passage, Moses recounts the Ten Commandments that God gave Israel in Exodus 20.

1. You will have no other gods before Me. (v6-7)
2. You will not make idols or graven images. (v8-10)
3. You will not take the name of the Lord in vain. (v11)
4. Keep the Sabbath holy. (v12-15)
5. Honor your father and mother. (v16)
6. You will not murder. (v17)
7. You will not commit adultery. (v18)
8. You will not steal. (v19)
9. You will not lie. (v20)
10. You will not covet. (v21)

V22-27

Moses recounts Israel’s response to the Voice of God from Mount Sinai. God wished for Israel to draw close, but Israel couldn’t draw too close because God is holy, and sin keeps us apart from God.

V28-33

God was pleased with Israel’s response in that they respected, feared, and were in awe of Him. But God lamented that it wouldn’t last. Verse 29 is a powerful statement about God’s will for us. If we would only obey and follow His desires for our lives, our days would be joyful.

Chapter 6

V1-3

Some chapters in Deuteronomy can be viewed as individual journal entries from Moses to the Israelites. This chapter starts off in this manner as Moses prepares the readers for an upcoming summary in verse 4. Moses spends these first three verses telling the readers that something important is about to be said.

V4-9

Verses 4 and 5 are the summary of the Old Testament covenant between God and His people. Every law, every ritual, and every sacrifice is about loving God. Putting God first in your life is the most important thing a person can do. Jesus calls verse five the “greatest commandment” in Matthew 22:37-38.

It should be noted that some skeptics use verse 5 to decry the deity of Jesus. This concept is addressed in 1 Corinthians 8:6, among other places, that address the holiness of the trinity. The trinity is One God in three forms, which is admittedly a difficult concept, but true, nonetheless.

Moses uses the remainder of this passage to tell the Jews to remind themselves of this commandment at every opportunity. They must make it a habit in their life and have this commandment in places where they will be reminded of it at every turn.

V10-19

This is an important passage for the Israelites, especially for a generation that hadn’t seen the miracles from God that their parents had. Canaan was about to be handed to Israel intact. Cities, buildings, structures, farmland, and houses would all become property of the Jews. The reason that Moses wanted them to remember the previous passage was because the Israelites were in danger of becoming spoiled with abundance. The greatest commandment must be remembered even when the Israelites felt like they didn’t need God anymore.

However rich and prosperous the Israelites were about to become and however self-reliant they would be, they needed to keep their focus on the God who gave them everything. They need to trust in God and obey God if they wanted to keep their prosperity.

V20-25

The final passage of this chapter is to remind the Israelites to teach each subsequent generation who God is and to keep the commandments. The Old Testament covenant was based on the Jews’ obedience to God. Generations that never saw strife or conflict would find it easy to not need God in their life. Yet, it was the faith and obedience of the people that kept them in God’s good graces. Moses is telling the Israelites to be a good witness to their children and grandchildren.

Chapter 7

V1-6

Why would God want to destroy a certain people or culture?

While not made clear in the last 4 books of the Torah, Genesis gives a glimpse of what these people are like and where they came from. These are cultures that had their chance to serve God but have long since turned away from the Creator to serve idols, nature, or even themselves. They overtook the land of Abraham that was promised to the Israelites while the Jews were enslaved in Egypt and turned it into a sinful land. For a Holy God to remain with His chosen people, the land had to be purified of those that sinned so easily against God.

This passage is also used as an example of our own sin. It is easy to allow “small sins” back into our life after making a commitment to Christ. We should eradicate all sin and show no mercy to things that would cause us to stumble.

V7-11

God's covenant with Abraham and his descendants still stood and the Jews would benefit from that covenant. As noted even as far back as Exodus, this didn't exclude people from following the One True God. It was possible to become a Jew in the sense that one could give up their own religion and culture to follow in the ways of the Hebrew God Yahweh. Since the Canaanites and those that occupied the land not only turned their back on God, but outright loathed Him, God promised that they would be delivered to the Israelites with ease.

V12-16

This passage indicates that as long as the Israelites remained in good standing with (obeyed) God that He would keep His end of the covenant and there would be peace and prosperity.

V17-26

In this section, God lets Israel know through Moses that although the battles would be won, they would not come all at once. The Promised Land would be taken over time. The Jews, as numerous as they were, would not be able to occupy every corner of Canaan if all the inhabitants left at the same time. God is letting them know that the battles would come as they were ready to grow into the next region so nothing would go to waste. However, there were some things that would be utterly destroyed no matter how attractive they may seem. Any precious jewels or metals that had been tainted by the worship of idols would have to be gotten rid of as these things would be an insult to God.

Chapter 8

V1-5

Although this generation of Israelites didn't see the parting of the Red Sea or anything before that with their own eyes, they still saw God in fire and cloud and saw the daily ration of manna in the desert. The wandering in the wasteland prepared this next generation to trust in God. It not only taught them reliance on God, but it humbled them, made them obedient, and made them strong.

What does it mean that man shall not live on bread alone? Don't humans need sustenance to live?

The Hebrew phrasing used here indicates that man needs sustenance to exist but to live is something else entirely. Moses is essentially telling the next generation to "get a life." The spiritual "life" that is gained by obeying God is the best possible life to live.

V6-10

This is a vivid description of the land that the Israelites would repossess. In this era, the items listed here made the land the most desirable in the world. There would be plenty of water, including springs, which meant they would have the source of the water, an important factor in this age. Fertile land meant that Israel could grow anything their hearts desired. Wheat and barley, grapes and exotic fruits, olive oil and honey would all be valuable commodities which would be plentiful for Israel. Copper and iron would mean that armor, weapons, statues, and even building materials would be abundant. God had given this land of plenty to Abraham and his descendants, and the Israelite were about to reclaim it.

V11-20

Moses is giving this next generation of Israelites sound advice. God was about to give them everything they needed and probably even wanted. Once they had this, why would they need God? Moses wants the Israelites to rely on the Gift-Giver, not the gifts.

The closing of the chapter reminds the Israelites that pride is what leads to death and destruction. Worshipping any other god but the God of Abraham would be dealt with harshly.

Chapter 9

V1-3

Moses begins this chapter by telling the Israelites that they cannot win this battle on their own. Only God can win this battle. There is a saying that “God will never give you more than you can handle.” In this passage, this cliché is proven wrong. God will give you more so than you will lean on Him and He can deal with it. It would take a strong faith for the Israelites to march against an army of giants. But God would reward their faith.

V4-6

In this passage, Moses reminds the Israelites that they are not inheriting this land because of their goodness. Rather, God is fulfilling His promise to Abraham by destroying the Canaanites.

Why would God want a people group completely decimated?

The Promised Land wasn’t a land that God decided this generation of Israel should have. This land belonged to Abraham and his descendants. It was rightfully and legally owned by the Jews. When Jacob and his family went to Egypt during a famine, they remained there and left their land uninhabited. It didn’t take long for a pagan, evil culture to settle in this land. It was their complete lack of respect for God that sealed their doom.

V7-21

Moses uses this passage to remind the Israelites that they can be a stubborn people and that they need to humble themselves before God. Moses recounts the sins of his own generation which barred them from entering the Promised Land. All these events are recorded in Exodus chapters 19, 20, and 32.

V22-29

Moses continues to humble the Israelites with the closing of this chapter with events from Exodus 17, Numbers 11, 13, and 14. Moses reminds them that prayer is what saved them from the wrath of God.

Chapter 10

V1-5

Moses recounts God giving the ten commandments to the Israelites in the desert. God had to write the commandments down twice as Moses smashed the first tablets upon seeing the sin of Israel worshipping a golden calf when he came down from Mount Sinai (Exodus 32).

V6-9

This paragraph is an insertion from Moses concerning the need for the priests to act on behalf of Israel. To be a priest meant to live a life of sacrifice as they would be held to a higher standard of righteousness by God. This would be true of Jesus who lived a life in order to sacrifice it to God the Father.

V10-11

After the sin of the golden calf had been resolved by Moses and the Levites, God had Israel move from the desert to Canaan, the Promised Land.

V12-16

This passage goes into great detail as to what God requires of the Israelites, why God requires it, and what that entails.

- Verses 12-13 - What is required.
 - Fear and respect
 - Obedience
 - Love
 - Servitude
 - To know and keep the law
- Verses 14-15 - Why this is required: God created mankind in His own image and to share in a special relationship with him.
- Verse 16 – How to fulfill the requirements: Those who follow God must remove sin from their lives and be humble before God.

V17-22

The closing of the chapter shows how God wants us to behave. The reason for this lies in verse 21. God is not only worthy of our praise, but because we are made in His image, we are also praiseworthy. God wants our character to reflect his character. The traits listed here reflect the nature of God.

Chapter 11

V1-7

This chapter continues where chapter 10 leaves off. Notice that God *commands* us to love Him. This is another example of the relationship between two individuals. Just as a person chooses to love their spouse, even if they sometimes don't *feel* like it, so must we choose to love God, even if it seems difficult.

How do we show love to God?

During the Last Supper, Jesus told His disciples, "If you love me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Obedience is one way to show love to God. Another way is to show love to one another just as we would want to be loved (Luke 6:31).

The remainder of this passage is Moses reciting the history of the exodus from Egypt and some of the miracles seen along the way. The rebellion of Korah (Numbers 16) is mentioned to remind the Israelites of the wrath of their jealous God.

V8-17

Moses reminds the Israelites that the miracles performed by God were meant to lead them to obedience to Him. This obedience would be shown by adherence to the Ten Commandments and the Levitical law. Their obedience would be rewarded by the inheritance of the fertile land of Canaan.

What does the term “water it by your foot” mean in verse 10?

The Egyptians had developed a way to pump water from the Nile using a manual pump that was operated with a foot. In this passage, God tells them that the land is so welcoming that they won't need to irrigate manually. This will be done naturally. The rain will be plentiful for all their crops. This was one of the special provisions that God made to Israel if they obeyed Him.

The ending of this passage reminds the Israelites that just because they will be blessed and will lack nothing, they are not to stop worshipping God. The problem with being blessed is that the blessings can cause a sense of entitlement. If you don't “need” anything, then why would you “need” God?

V18-25

Moses references his earlier command in chapter 6 to treasure the Word of God. God's greatest command to love Him with their hearts, minds, and souls should always be close to them. The Israelites weren't just instructed to read and obey God. They were commanded to love God. This should be their life, not just reading material. If the Israelites did this, God would be with them and never let them perish. Israel would be the mightiest nation on Earth under the leadership of God!

V26-32

The blessings of God came with the caveat of obedience. If the Israelites turned away from God, He wouldn't simply disappear. He would curse their disobedience. There would be punishment for turning away from God. God cannot tolerate sin. As His creation, our best lives are lived under His guidance.

What does it mean to take the messages of the blessing and the curse and put them in different locations (verse 29)?

This is alluding to later chapters that the blessing and the curse should be made public for all to see. God didn't want this promise hidden away by priests, but available so that all would know what the promise of God means.

Chapter 12

V1-7

One of the practices of this era was for a conquering nation to destroy the army of the land they were invading, but keep the people, animals, crops, and especially the buildings. It took great effort and resources to build structures, so they were valuable to foreign forces capturing the land.

Temples, which were usually elaborately and expensively constructed, were reused to worship the gods of the new occupants. God wanted none of that! These pagan places of worship were to be destroyed and razed to the ground, their materials never to be used again. God wanted His place of worship to be used solely for Him.

V8-14

Even though the Levitical law had been established, it was still new and hard to adhere to while wandering the desert. The Israelites didn't really have a standard, formalized way to worship God. God wanted this to change. Once Israel occupies Canaan, God would choose the place of worship and Israel would find their God in His place.

V15-27

One of the rituals of the pagan world was to sacrifice every animal to a pagan god before consuming it. God makes it clear that not every animal is for Him, but only what is instructed in the Levitical law. Likewise, the Levitical command to not consume blood was to be adhered to.

V28-32

The closing of this chapter is not just a stark warning, but unfortunate foreshadowing for Israel. God did not want any other forms of worship inherited from pagan cultures to find its way into His presence. This passage serves as a command to not alter the way in which Israel had been told to worship God. Yet, the books of 1 Kings, 2 Kings, and Ezekiel all tell of how Israel failed at this command. The world does not provide the standard for worshiping God. God has His own standards.

Chapter 13

V1-5

This passage addresses false prophets and how the Israelites should deal with them. It is important to note that there are many examples throughout the Bible of prophets and fortune tellers who do have the gift to see the future. But Moses makes it clear that these gifts are not by themselves indications of God's approval. The book of Acts recounts people possessed by demons that could tell the future. God tells the Israelites that it is pertinent to not be so awestruck by fortune tellers that they turn away from their faith. Verse 3 even informs the audience that this is a test from God to prove to themselves and to others that their faith is steadfast.

Why would God allow capital punishment to be sentenced to false prophets? Is this punishment still applicable today?

There is a stark contrast between the old covenant and the new covenant. God is setting up His kingdom on Earth in the form of the Israelites. Jesus makes it clear in John 18:36 that God's kingdom is not of this world. The punishment for heresy against God's earthly kingdom is death on Earth. The punishment for heresy against God's heavenly kingdom is eternal damnation. Just as with many (but not all) commandments from the Old Testament, the adherence to the law should be kept, but the punishment is for God to deliver.

V6-11

This passage shows that God should be put first above all others, including family. Anyone that would not only worship other gods but attempt to lead others to do the same should be put to death.

V12-18

If it was found that an entire city or people had fallen away from God and worshipped other gods, this passage records how to cleanse this abomination from the nation. Verse 14 states that an inquiry must be made to determine the extent of the corruption. If there were only a few people that were found guilty, they would be dealt with individually. If, indeed, the entire city had become corrupt then those people should be executed, the buildings destroyed, crops burned, and the remnants left alone as a reminder to those who might be tempted to fall astray.

Chapter 14

V1-2

Just as Leviticus 19:28 prohibits tattoos for the purpose of communing with the dead, this passage discusses the cutting of hair for the purposes of pagan burial rituals. There is nothing wrong with getting a tattoo or a haircut. It's the reason behind getting a haircut that can be a problem. Verse 2 discusses the reasoning behind this command. As children of God and His creation, we are unique among all His creations. Incorporating pagan rituals that originated from other forms of worship should not be allowed into worshipping God.

V3-8

This passage reiterates what animals the Israelites could and could not eat.

V9-10

This passage reiterates what sea creatures the Israelites could and could not eat.

V11-20

This passage reiterates what birds and flying animals the Israelites could and could not eat.

V21

This verse forbids the Israelites from eating unkosher food. This food could, however, be given to non-Jewish strangers. This verse also forbids boiling a young goat in its mother's milk. This was due to this practice being a pagan fertility ritual.

V22-27

This passage reiterates the command to tithe. It also discusses how to tithe when there is not a place of worship nearby. If the journey was too difficult to make with the livestock necessary for the tithing sacrifices, these animals could be sold and the money used to tithe.

V28-29

There is some debate over how this passage should be read. There are some that think this is a "poor tithe" meant to feed and house the poor. However, most Jewish and Christian scholars agree that this is not an additional tithe, but simply a form of distribution for the usual tithe. Since this command includes not only widows and orphans, but the Levites and priests, most do not see this as an additional requirement for tithing. Nonetheless, every third year, the tithes were to be distributed to the Levites, widows, and orphans. This would be unusual and counter-cultural as most pagan cultures thought widows and orphans were either simply property to be owned or were being punished by the gods for something they did.

Chapter 15

V1-3

One piece of God's plan for Israel was prosperity. One of the many ways to accomplish this was to remove long-term debt. The Israeli law implemented a 7-year forgiveness plan so that even those who were in debt would be freed from that debt inside of 7 years. This only applied to Israelites, though, as long-term debt could be collected from foreigners.

V4-11

Why does this passage begin with stating that no one will be poor (v4) and then end stating that the poor will never cease from the land (v11)?

This may seem contradictory, but this is instead a perfect plan from a perfect God being implemented in an imperfect world. Verse 5 is the key to this plan. As long as the Israelites obeyed God, they would always be prosperous. If they disobeyed God, then God's blessing would start to fade, and the Israelites would wallow in their own selfish plans. Being kind to those less fortunate was one of the keys to being obedient to God.

V12-18

This is another example of the English translation being misleading to readers. The word "slave" is used here, but this is more an example of indentured servitude than slavery. The Levitical law made it clear that even those in servitude were to be treated well and not serve their "master" longer than 7 years. Some servants were treated so well that they sought to remain with whomever they served for the remainder of their life.

This passage is often used as a reflection of the Christian life. We are "slaves" to Jesus, but we are so out of our own free will.

V19-23

The command to give the first-born to God was a reminder to the Jews that they were His firstborn as His chosen people. This would also serve as a sort of tithe to honor God and put Him first in their daily lives.

Chapter 16

V1-8

Moses is reminding a generation that did not see firsthand the harsh miracle of the Passover in Egypt when God cut down the first born of any house not marked by the blood of a lamb. This is recognized as the first and largest Jewish festival. The feast of Unleavened Bread is associated with Passover as this festival immediately follows Passover. Unleavened bread reminded the Israelites that it only takes a small instance of corruption (yeast) to alter a life (dough).

V9-12

The festival of Pentecost is a joy-filled celebration for the Israelites. This was a time to rejoice in the harvest and share with others the spoils of their fortune.

V13-15

The Feast of Tabernacles is meant to remind the Israelites of their time wandering the desert and how God provided for them, even when they had sinned in their disbelief. This generation would know the wandering well, but once they entered Canaan the following generations would know of it only through stories, much like the exodus from Egypt.

V16-17

This is the summary of the command to observe the three major festivals throughout the year so that Israel would not forget where they came from and Who they belonged to.

V18-20

Moses reminds Israel to conduct legal proceedings fairly. Justice was to be sought in any dispute.

V21-22

The closing of the chapter may seem random and even misplaced, but in the context of the Israelites entering Canaan it would be highly important. This is yet another reminder to not implement foreign worship practices into the Jewish worship. Some translations use the term “Asherah tree” which is a tree or totem pole used in pagan rituals to worship the goddess Asherah.

Chapter 17

V1

Chapter 17 continues the recap of the laws from chapter 16. This verse reminds the Israelites to give their best to God, not use undesirable offerings. The use of blemished or defective animals puts self before God and shows the selfish and prideful nature of humanity.

V2-7

This passage ensures that those who do evil receive justice. This justice also made certain that they were provided with a fair trial. A single accuser was not enough to sentence a person. There had to be multiple witnesses. Those accusers were also responsible for initiating the death penalty. Capital punishment was not to be thrown around lightly.

V8-13

God’s law allowed for uncertainty in legal disputes. In tougher cases, the Levites and priests would be used as the final authority. This passage also makes a provision for those that do not accept the verdict of the Levites. Disobedience of the higher court meant death.

V14-17

This passage is the source of many theological debates. Did God want Israel to have a king? There is no certain answer, but the caveat is clear that when Israel did eventually decide they wanted a king, this king must be chosen divinely and from amongst the nation of Israel.

This passage also contains the conduct and character of the chosen king. The king must trust in God, not his armies. He must not be greedy or selfish. He must be in control of himself and not be swayed by temptations that would pull him away from serving God. This king must also never return to Egypt. It should be noted that Solomon, the son of David and eventual King of Israel broke all of these commands during his life (1 Kings 4, 10, and 11).

V18-20

Finally, the future king of Israel must adhere to one of the priestly duties by writing a copy of the law for himself. By writing the words and commands of God down, he would draw closer to God and remind himself of the One that was truly in charge.

Verse 18 is the source of the misnaming of Deuteronomy as the phrase “copy of this law in a book” was mistranslated from Hebrew to Greek.

Chapter 18

V1-8

In this passage, Moses reiterates the sanctification of the tribe of Levi. The Levites would not own any land for them to possess or inhabit. The Levites would live off the offerings brought by Israel to sacrifice to God. This passage also states that any Levite from any region would be treated the same if they were visiting another region of Israel.

V9-14

These are a small handful of verses but are definitive and still referenced today by many churches on what is and is not acceptable as worshipful to God. These commands forbid:

- child sacrifices
- witchcraft
- fortune telling or divination
- psychics
- sorcery
- casting spells
- mediums
- communing with the dead

There are different interpretations as to what each of these acts or abilities entails, but God makes it clear that anything that doesn’t bring you closer to Him should be considered dangerous.

V15-19

In place of such things listed in the previous passage, God would appoint a prophet who would guide Israel when needed. A prophet could be recognized by being a fellow Israelite and found as a “man of the people,” meaning he would come from among the common man. Israel was to listen to the instructions of these prophets and adhere to what was said.

V20-22

Moses also warns of false prophets. There would be obvious signs that a person was a false prophet, such as speaking of other gods, contradicting the laws which were given, or if a prophecy did not come to pass. If someone were found to be a false prophet, they were to be executed.

Chapter 19

V1-7

The concept of the cities of refuge was first brought up in Numbers 35:9-28. There is more to this concept in Joshua 20:7-8. Moses had already established the location of the first three cities in Deuteronomy 4:41-43.

The idea behind these cities is for a man who may have accidentally killed someone else or killed someone in self-defense to have a fair trial and escape the vengeance of the victim's family. These cities were to be readily available, and the road well maintained for this purpose. If the accused didn't make it to one of the cities of refuge, the victim's family had the right to put him to death.

V8-10

Once the land of Canaan was fully occupied by the Israelites, there would need to be more cities of refuge added. Six cities in total were commanded in Numbers and in this passage. The book of Joshua lists all six cities that fulfilled this command.

V11-13

Although these cities were meant as refuge for those that were innocent of murder, God made certain that this provision would not be abused. If it was found that someone who had fled to one of the cities had indeed committed murder, they would be removed from the city they had sought shelter in, and vengeance would be enacted. These cities were not meant to be a free pass for murderers.

V14

This verse is one of the earliest recorded protections of private property. It was illegal to claim someone else's land as your own or destroy their crops, herds, or property.

V15-21

This final passage discusses the process of prosecution and the requirements to act on accusations. There must be at least two witnesses to a crime before punishment could be executed. Likewise, those who make false accusations are to endure the judgement that would have been made against the accused.

Chapter 20

V1-9

This passage instructs the Israelites how to carry out warfare. On the surface, some of these commands may seem contradictory since these instructions would shrink the army, not increase its numbers. But this is exactly what God wants. He doesn't want Israel to rely on itself as a nation. He wants Israel to rely on Him to fight their battles. A priest was to be brought to battle with the army and remind the men that God is with them. Their battle was His battle. The size of the army didn't matter to God. If Israel obeyed and followed God, their victory was assured.

V10-18

It was important to God that any nation Israel faced was offered mercy and peace. If these terms were rejected, then God would lead Israel into battle. This would eliminate any guilt of wrongdoing from the Israelites.

It is also made clear that any city or nation that has *not* offended God be spared the punishment of being completely wiped out. The Canaanites were to be destroyed along with their families, properties, and cities. All other lands could be conquered and taken for Israelite use.

V19-20

God also had instructions about sparing the resources around them when Israel was spending a long time besieging a city. Fruitful trees which provide sustenance were to be spared when wood was needed for the battle. This could give an advantage to the Israelites since the food would be readily available to them.

Chapter 21

V1-9

Moses lays out more legal procedures in this chapter. The first passage has to do with unsolved murders. This procedure goes into detail including jurisdiction, a sacrifice for atonement for not having solved the murder, and begging God to forgive the people for allowing a murderer to live among them. As discussed in Numbers 35:33-34, unpunished murderers are a disgrace to Israel and to God.

V10-14

This is one of many examples throughout the Bible of passages that can seem barbaric and even immoral when taken out of context. It is important to note that in this era, many conquering nations kept “spoils of war.” It was not uncommon for soldiers to take women as slaves from among the conquered people. What the Bible does here is allow for this practice, but to treat the captives fairly and make them part of the family of the captor. This process included a form of purification (hair and nails), show a willingness to join the husband as a wife (remain in the household), and allow the woman to go through a mourning period which also served as an adjustment period. This gave both parties a chance to see if this was desirable and then proceed with the marriage. If the captor decided this would not be a good marriage, the captive woman was to be set free. This practice was extremely countercultural to the practice of the day as most nations would simply sell the woman as a slave or even kill her.

V15-17

This is another example of what modern readers would see as an unwholesome practice. It was not uncommon for men to have more than one wife. Even though this was not God’s desire for His people, He made caveats to deal with relationships that went sour. Just because a man stopped loving his first wife does not mean he could overlook the right of the firstborn son.

V18-21

This practice seems to be one of the cruelest of all the laws concerning families. It is important to remember that God was establishing a new nation that was not only to follow Him but exemplify Him to other nations. Israel was to be the pinnacle of a Godly nation. Anything that could cause a disruption in the culture had to be dealt with, including such drastic measures as death.

The ruling of capital punishment for a rebellious child was taken out of the hands of the parents and given to the authorities of the community. It was up to the higher powers to decide whether this child should be condemned or not. This kept the guilt away from the parents.

It should also be noted that there is no scriptural evidence of this rule ever being used. The Jews traditionally hold that there has never been a conviction of a stubborn child.

V22-23

These last two verses address the dignity of someone who has been executed. The nations during this era often deterred rebellions and opposing armies with the bodies of the dead put on display. God forbids Israel from following this practice. Even those who had been executed for the most heinous crimes were to be buried with dignity and not have their corpse left out to rot in public. Those whose bodies were left hanging a tree were believed to be cursed by God. This law would come into play during the crucifixion of Jesus as His body was left to hang on the cross for hours before finally being removed for burial.

Chapter 22

V1-4

As with much of the law of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy these are not situational laws, but examples of guidelines on how one should conduct themselves. This passage can be summed up with one rule: if you can do some good, you should do some good. Being able to correct a wrong and doing nothing is the same as doing wrong.

V5

This is a powerful stand-alone verse, but it is also taken out of context much too often. The idea behind this verse is that one should not try to be something that they're not. A man cannot be a woman, and a woman cannot be a man. Many people take this verse too literally and forbid dressing in a costume. This verse should be taken seriously, of course, but this verse speaks of the purpose of dressing in a certain way, not the clothing itself.

V6-7

This passage may seem insignificant, and, indeed, many Jewish commentators consider this to be the least of all the laws. But it is still a command from God. This passage isn't so much about birds as it is about being kind to animals. God even offers a blessing to those that keep this command. Practicing kindness is said to be the key to long life.

V8

Verse 8 is another example of attitude, not a literal instruction. This verse instructs us to consider the safety of others when building a structure.

V9-12

These 4 verses are called the “laws of separation.” It’s not that God doesn’t want us to mix these particular items. It’s the reason behind mixing these items that is important. The mixing of seeds was used in pagan cultures to produce “magical” plants. It is unclear what the purpose of plowing a field with different animals was. This context has been lost over time. The mixing of different types of fabrics was used across many different cultures for different reasons, most of them unholy. Verse 12 was given to the Israelites to distinguish themselves among the nations so that an Israelite could be recognized immediately by other nations.

V13-19

There is a long tradition that is still in practice today, albeit by a dwindling number of cultures that a couple that has been married must consummate the marriage upon a white sheet or cloth. This sheet would become stained with the blood of the female virgin. This cloth would then be presented to the bride's parents by the groom. This sheet is kept as evidence of the virginity of the bride. This commandment speaks of how to deal with the false testimony of the groom should he decide to falsely claim that his bride was not a virgin. This commandment was mostly used to prevent the false testimony since the bride's parents would have the evidence needed to issue a steep penalty to the groom.

V20-21

The penalty for the bride not being a virgin upon marriage would result in the bride's death by stoning.

V22-29

Verse 22 is used more as a prevention of sexual immorality as this penalty was rarely carried out. Deuteronomy 17 speaks of how capital punishment can only be carried out by two or more witnesses who must also be willing to cast the first stones to carry out the execution. Rarely would two people having sexual relations let their act be known to the public.

However, rape was a different topic. Two consenting adults (by Jewish standards, early teenagers are considered adults) caught in the act of adultery would be put to death. If it was found that the man forced himself on a woman who was engaged or married (prior to consummation), then the rapist had earned the death penalty. The woman would be found innocent and blameless.

If a man forced himself on a woman who had not yet been promised to another, then that man would become the husband of the woman he raped. Most Jewish commentators believe that this is only if the woman and her family allowed this. He was also fined heavily in addition to the dowry for the bride.

V30

At first glance, this final verse looks as if it should be unnecessary as it is almost grotesque to think about a son having sexual relations with his mother. And, indeed, this was not an accepted practice amongst the Israelites. This verse does speak more to a son having relations with his stepmother or any of the other wives of his father, although disallowing an incestuous relationship, as well.

Chapter 23

V1

This chapter continues with the "dos and don'ts" for the nation of Israel. However, this chapter presents many Mosaic laws without much description. Proper interpretation of many of the following passages has been debated for many centuries. The first verse presents one of many examples of possible interpretations.

The phrase "assembly of the Lord" used in this verse can mean the entire nation of Israel or it can mean the elders and officers of the tribes of Israel. Depending on how this verse is translated, it could mean exclusion from the religious life of Israel or just the political offices of Israel.

Why would eunuchs be excluded in this way?

There is also debate about the reasoning behind the exclusion of eunuchs. One idea is that Israel represented the seed of God, and that emasculation would be seen as repulsive to God. Other ideas stem from emasculation being included in many pagan ceremonies.

V2

Just as in verse 1, there is much speculation about how this verse is to be interpreted. The term “illegitimate birth” has been defined multiple ways over the past few thousand years. Some define it as the offspring of an incestuous relationship. Some say it is the offspring of a child born out of wedlock. Still, others define it as the offspring of relationships between Israelites and pagan nations.

V3-6

The Moabites and Ammonites were the nations born from Moab and Ammon, the sons of Lot and his daughters. These nations treated Israel harshly and cruelly while they wandered the desert. Their punishment was to forever be excluded from the nation of Israel.

V7-8

Contrary to the previous passage, the Edomites, sons of Esau, brother of Jacob, were to be welcomed by Israel due to their lineage. Egyptians were also to be treated well, despite the enslavement of the past few generations. Egypt welcomed the family of Joseph, and the Israelites flourished there during the famine of the middle East. It is not clear when Egyptian leadership decided to enslave Israel, but the Egyptians were not to be mistreated due to their initial welcoming of Jacob’s offspring.

V9-14

This passage is addressed mainly to the armies when they are camped away from their own cities. This law refers to Leviticus 15:16-18 about ceremonial cleanliness. This is another example of God telling His creation what’s good for them long before His creation would know why it’s good for them. Keeping excrement buried and away from people is extremely beneficial, but this was not well known until a few centuries ago. Here, God tells His people to do it even though the Israelites didn’t realize that this was a healthy practice.

V15-16

There is not much provided in these 2 verses in the way of context. The assumption is that the slaves in question were from outside of Israel. God’s people were to welcome the slaves of foreign nations and treat them kindly.

V17-18

This verse plainly calls out temple prostitution. Some translations use the phrase “wages of a harlot” and “price of a dog” to describe female and male prostitutes respectively. Prostitution is wrong and using the earnings from prostitution towards sacrifices to God would not redeem the sinner. It would only make it worse.

V19-20

Most scholars refer this passage to Exodus 22:25. It is traditionally accepted that interest was not to be charged on basic needs for people. It is widely believed that this excluded traditional business transactions such as the purchase of property, but this is up for debate.

V21-23

Moses reminds the Israelites to not take a vow before God lightly. If an oath is made before God and then broken, it would have been better to have never made that oath at all.

V24-25

The final verses of the chapter speak to compassion for those in need, but also fairness to those providing the needs. If one is hungry and passing through a vineyard or a field, they may eat freely what they find readily available. However, they are not to take advantage of the situation and take what they can't immediately consume.

Chapter 24

V1-4

This passage speaks specifically to the divorced man and his wife that he has sent away. If his ex-wife finds another husband, she is then off-limits to the previous husband if she should once again become free to marry. Most scholars attribute this law to God not wanting Israel to treat marriage lightly. Couples should not get married, then divorced, then married again as they see fit. Marriage is supposed to be permanent. If a marriage was dissolved, then the divorce was to be permanent.

V5

This verse may seem separate from the first 4 verses, but it speaks about the importance of marriage. A man making his wife happy is so important that the man would be exempt from any dangerous, life-threatening endeavors for one year. If newlyweds took their marriage seriously from the start, their marriage would hopefully last a lifetime.

V6

This verse speaks to loans and the ability to pay back a loan. If someone in debt could not make a payment on their loan, the loaner could not take away anything that would allow the debtor to make money to pay back the loan. The debtor must be allowed to continue to work in hopes of paying off the loan.

V7

This law addresses the cruelty of selling someone into slavery just as Jacob's sons did to their brother, Joseph (Genesis 37:28). Anyone found doing this deed was to be put to death.

V8-9

Here, God reminds Israel to take leprosy seriously. Leviticus 13 and 14 provide great detail on how to deal with lepers. Even Miriam, sister of Moses, was required to follow these statutes.

V10-13

This passage isn't dealing with loans and collateral as much as it is the dignity of the person in debt. Collateral is allowed as this presents personal accountability to the one taking the loan. But the loaner should not treat the debtor inhumanely or cruelly.

V14-15

This command is for employers. Employers are to be fair, honest, and humane. Having money doesn't mean they can throw people away as they see fit.

V16

This verse speaks of personal accountability. No one else can be held responsible for the actions of another person, not even a father for his son.

V17-18

God reminds Israel of their humble beginnings. They are not to treat anyone else badly, including the poor, the widows, or orphans.

V19-22

The closing of this chapter speaks of compassion. If you are fortunate enough to own a field, don't feel the need to bring in every head of grain, every grape, or every olive. Whatever has fallen to the ground can be left for those in need. Those who have more shouldn't be so greedy as to forget those that don't have anything.

Chapter 25

V1-3

This Mosaic law pertains to the limitation of corporal punishment. Anyone condemned of a crime could be sentenced with up to 40 lashes. Traditionally, the Jewish leaders maximized the punishment at 39 so as not to accidentally exceed the limitation. Paul references this practice in Romans 13:4.

V4

This single verse simply speaks to the humane treatment of working animals. However, Paul references this verse in 1 Corinthians 9:9-10 to speak of God providing for the people that do His work.

V5-10

This passage addresses the familial responsibility of a brother to marry his brother's wife in the event of the brother's death. If the living brother refused his brother's wife, then she would publicly shame him in front of the elders.

Why remove a sandal in verse 9?

In this era, sandals weren't just for protecting one's feet, but they were a symbol of status and power. For the widow to take away her brother-in-law's sandal would be to remove his power. Doing this in public would greatly ridicule him and make his life difficult going forward.

V11-12

As far as examples of harsh punishments in the Mosaic law, this one is much debated and the purpose of it is not immediately clear. Some scholars think that this punishment was meant to protect modesty, while others believe it was meant to protect the reproductive organs as anything that could cause a man to not be able to produce an heir was seen as a heinous crime.

V13-16

This is one of the more straight-forward laws that addresses being just in dealing with the prices of goods. Simply put, don't cheat people out of money.

V17-19

Moses breaks from issuing law here and switches to a command concerning the relationship between the Israelites and the Amalekites. In Exodus 17, The Amalekites attacked the Israelites while they were wandering the desert. God tells Israel to remember this once Israel is settled in the land of Canaan. It wouldn't be until King Saul in 1 Samuel 15 that the Israelites would destroy the Amalekites. Saul disobeyed this command by not completely wiping out the Amalekites and this was one of the reasons he lost the throne.

Chapter 26

V1-11

Here, Moses tells the Israelites that once they take possession of Canaan that the first fruits of the first harvest should be given to God as an offering of gratitude. During this offering, they are to remember where they came from, what their status was, and Who it was that set them free. They are to rejoice in this offering as a promise fulfilled by God!

V12-15

Although tithe was required regularly, the tithe of every third year was to be shared with the poor, widows, and orphans. Moses elaborates on not only the offering, but also the heart behind the offering in this passage. The giver should be obedient, humble, and with God in mind and heart.

V16-19

Moses finishes this chapter by making three statements. Verse 16 commands Israel to be obedient to God. In verse 17, Israel has proclaimed that God is their God, and they will follow Him. The final 2 verses record God's declaration of favor towards Israel.

Chapter 27

Chapters 27-30 provide a description of the curses and blessing from God over Israel.

V1-10

Although not made clear in this passage, most scholars believe that the ten commandments or possibly a summary of the ten commandments was carved on this stone.

Why use lime for the commandments?

This would be a form of paint to increase the contrast. God wanted these commands to be as legible as possible.

Why not use iron tools on the altar?

There is no clear motive behind this instruction. It could be that this was to be a natural altar that represented God's pure creation, the way it was meant to be in the Garden of Eden. Most commentators think that this was meant to keep the focus on God and not the craftsmanship of the artisan who would carve the stone for an altar.

The creation of this monument to the ten commandments acted as a decree between king (God) and His subjects (Israel). This would be in keeping with the practice of the era.

V11-13

This was a command that Moses gave that he never saw fulfilled. This act would not happen until Joshua 8:32-35.

The tribes are divided into 2 groups to represent the curses and blessings of God's commands. However, the remainder of the chapter only lists the curses. The blessings are continued in chapter 28.

V14-26

Each of the twelve curses is clearly stated. Each curse is to be acknowledged by the people of Israel with the statement, "amen." These curses are noteworthy as part of the old covenant that was replaced by the sacrifice of Jesus. Not that these acts are permissible under the new covenant, but that Jesus took the curse in our place. We can now be forgiven for these acts simply by acknowledging Christ as our savior.

Chapter 28

V1-14

This chapter resumes where the previous chapter left off.

One of the key words in this passage is the word, "if" in verse 1. The blessings are all contingent upon obedience. Obedience will bring many blessings, including being the richest and most powerful nation on earth. Israel's relationship with God would flourish and He would be pleased with his people. The glory of Israel would shine so that other nations would seek to be like them and worship the same God. The whole point of God having a "chosen people" was to make other people want to join them in following God. Pride would make the Israelites think that God chose them because they were better.

V15-19

Just as there were blessings for obedience, there were curses for disobedience. The remainder of the chapter recounts in great detail the amount of suffering that would come with disobeying God. There would be no escaping the suffering. The curse would follow Israel wherever they went.

V20-24

Israel's health would be cursed. Even the weather would turn against them.

V25-26

Israel would see no more victories in battle. Their losses would result in humiliation, even in death.

V27-37

Moses describes further health issues related to the curse of disobedience. Israel would not be safe from robbers, rapists, and slave traders. They would find no peace or relief among other nations.

V38-44

The Israelites will toil in labor that results in nothing. The lack of produce would ruin their economy and other nations would dominate them financially.

V45-48

Moses reminds Israel that it doesn't have to be this way. The blessings of obedience would mean no curse of disobedience.

V49-57

This section is both a curse and a prophecy. There are many examples of this passage throughout history. Jerusalem has been captured many times, first by Nebuchadnezzar II (see books of Daniel and Ezekiel), Rome, and many others. There are examples of the Jews eating their own infants because of being under siege for so long they ran out of food. And, of course, the Jews being scattered throughout the world before World War I and after World War II is well documented.

V58-68

The closing of this chapter is a final reminder to not let this curse happen. Obedience would not only keep the curse at bay but bring prosperity and blessings!

Chapter 29

V1-4

The original covenant took place in Horeb at Mount Sinai during the first year of the exodus. Since then, the “generation of unbelief” had mostly died off. This chapter is a reiteration of the covenant with the new generation.

The previous generation was also witness to great miracles performed by God in Egypt and after the Israelites had left Egypt. Yet, they still turned away from God and didn't put their faith in Him. Moses is reminding the new generation that even though they hadn't seen the same miracles with their own eyes, God was with them and would show them who He is.

V5-9

Even though this generation didn't see the plagues of Egypt or the parting of the sea, they saw God remain faithful to them throughout the forty years of wandering the desert. These miracles may be smaller in significance, but their longevity was not lost on Israel.

V10-15

Moses reminds the people that God's covenant is not with the high priest, the elders, or leaders. This covenant is with the entirety of Israel. This would include their descendants. The Jewish nation was the chosen people of God.

V16-20

God reminds Israel that a curse shall be upon any of the chosen people that turn away from Him. Even if they find satisfaction for a little while they will not escape the effects of defying God.

V21-28

This is a reminder to Israel that the curse wasn't just to punish the individual that turned away, but to separate them from Israel so their disobedience wouldn't spread to other Israelites. It would even be an example to other nations who watched Israel from afar. If Israel disobeyed their God and their God punished them, then that would be an example of a real God, not just a pagan idol.

V29

The final verse of this chapter informs Israel that God has not and will not reveal His entire self to anyone. It is impossible for us to know the whole entity of God. But this makes it all the more important to pay attention to the things that God does reveal to us. The things that God does show us are eternal. God does not change, and His revelations do not change. All one need do is look at the prophecies of the Old Testament and see those prophecies fulfilled in the New Testament to know that God is constant. He has given us these signs to reveal Himself to us.

Chapter 30

V1-5

This chapter continues the “blessings” and “curses” that God promises Israel when they enter Canaan. This section acts as a prophecy in that Moses uses phrasing that indicates these things will happen, not if they happen.

Many scholars point to the time of Ezra and Nehemiah as at least a partial fulfillment of this prophecy, but modern scholars of the late 20th century point to the Jewish people repopulating Israel for the first time in centuries as an even larger and grander fulfillment. In just the past few decades, Israel has become larger and more prosperous than at any time in Biblical history.

V6-10

In this passage, Moses gives a prophecy that has not yet been fulfilled even though the Jews have returned to Israel. The Jewish people flourish as a nation, but most of the Jews are Jewish by race only, and not by religion. Many believe that the lack of the Jews turning to Jesus is what keeps them from fulfilling the remainder of the prophecy.

V11-14

Moses tells the Israelites that even though the law of God may be hard to keep, it is not impossible. One must choose to follow the ways of God. It is the sinful nature of man that makes adherence to the law seem impossible. And it was the sinful nature of man that required God to make a new covenant with a New Sacrifice in Jesus.

V15-20

The closing of the chapter is an ultimatum from Moses. Israel can choose life and good or they can choose death and evil. Moses urges Israel to follow God and choose life. Although the old covenant is gone and replaced by the new covenant, the choice is still the same. One must choose Jesus to choose life.

Chapter 31

V1-6

Although Moses was 120 years old and approaching the end of his life, he was still physically active. In the next chapter, he will even climb a mountain! The phrase “no longer go out and come in” is used as a limitation of God upon Moses, not of Moses’ health. Moses would not wander the desert anymore, but he could also not enter Canaan with the Israelites.

Moses tells Israel that his life is reaching an end. Moses was the only leader this generation of Israel had ever known. It would be difficult for them to move on without him. Moses offers words of comfort in preparation for this.

V7-8

Moses passes the torch to Joshua and offers similar words of comfort and encouragement. Moses knew all too well how difficult it would be for Joshua to lead Israel.

V9-13

One of Moses’ final commands to the priesthood was to teach the law, or what is now known as the Torah, to Israel every seven years. The establishment of the Jewish religion would be complete upon the final entry of Deuteronomy.

V14-22

There would be one final public ceremony at the tabernacle where God would announce the retirement of Moses and designate Joshua the new leader. God would also foretell the fate of Israel. God would remind Israel in song that their disobedience would be their downfall. Even though they would sing it to themselves, the future generations of Israel would still disobey God.

V23-29

Joshua hears the phrase, “be strong and of good courage,” for the third time in this chapter (v6 and 7) and he hears it 4 more time in Joshua chapter 1. This phrase was used as a way to encourage Joshua to live up to the role he was given.

The ten commandments were placed inside the ark of the covenant, but the books of Moses would sit beside the ark. These books and the prophecies contained therein would be a reminder to Israel that God knew they would disobey. And that God had a plan to remedy their disobedience. Moses calls his final assembly of the elders to remind them of God’s promises.

V30

This verse connects to the next chapter and continues the final days of Moses.

Chapter 32

V1-43

While Moses has Israel assembled at the tabernacle (from last chapter), he has Israel sing the song of God’s promise to His people. The song is broken up into sections as follows:

- V1-4 are the introduction to the song.
- V5-6 are the accusation.

- V7-14 recount God's faithfulness to Israel to this point.
- V15-18 recount how Israel responded to God's faithfulness.
- V19-27 show God's reaction to Israel.
- V28-43 speak of God's plea with the Israelites.

V44-47

Moses reminds Israel that the law and the song are to be taken seriously. God is over all and to disobey Him carries consequence. But to obey Him brings such peace and joy.

V48-52

Moses spends the remainder of his life on Mount Nebo, overlooking the Jordan River and the land of Canaan. Moses would pass away within site of the Promised Land.

Chapter 33

V1

One of the final acts of Moses was to offer a “fatherly” blessing to the nation of Israel. It is believed Moses was the author of Genesis and was familiar with the blessing of Jacob upon his twelve sons (Genesis 49). Moses gave a similar blessing to the tribes of those sons.

V2-5

Moses reminds the tribes that they have the favor of God. Israel is the chosen people, their king is God, and they should follow His commands.

V6

This is the blessing of the tribe of Reuben: that they should grow and survive (Genesis 49:4).

V7

This is the blessing of the tribe of Judah: The name “Judah” means praise. Moses prayed that this tribe would fulfill their name towards their Creator (Genesis 49:10).

V8-11

This is the blessing of the tribe of Levi: Moses prayed for the Levites to be blessed for their obedience in teaching the word to the Israelites (Genesis 49:7)

V12

This is the blessing of the tribe of Benjamin: The Benjaminites would form the city of Jerusalem, thus becoming the strong protector of the nation of Israel (Genesis 49:27).

V13-17

This is the blessing of the tribe of Joseph, the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh: The sons of Joseph would become the most prolific in all of Israel, far surpassing the numbers of the other tribes (Genesis 49:22).

V18-19

This is the blessing of the tribes of Zebulun and Issachar: these two tribes lived in the region of Galilee, which provided them with their livelihood (Genesis 49:13-14).

V20-21

This is the blessing of the tribe of Gad: the tribe of Gad supplied David some of his best warriors (Genesis 49:19).

V22

This is the blessing of the tribe of Dan: this passage is not so much a blessing as it is a prophecy. The tribe of Dan is recorded throughout the Old Testament as being the most troublesome of the tribes of Israel (Genesis 49:17). Moses also prophesies that they shall migrate from their original settlement in the south to the northern region of Bashan.

V23

This is the blessing of the tribe of Naphtali: this tribe was favored as not only being along the Sea of Galilee but also contained the areas where Jesus would do the majority of His teachings (Genesis 49:21).

V24-25

This is the blessing of the tribe of Asher: although it isn't made clear *how* the tribe of Asher would prosper, this tribe would be considered one of the more successful tribes of Israel (Genesis 49:20).

V26-29

The closing of the chapter contains a blessing for all of Israel. They have found the favor of God! They are always welcome and can seek refuge in His arms.

Chapter 34

V1-4

It is believed Joshua added the final chapter (or more) to the book of Deuteronomy. Moses ascends Mount Nebo in chapter 32 and that is where he passes. Joshua briefly recaps that in this passage. Moses died within sight of the Promised Land but was never allowed to enter. God does fulfill His promise to give the land over to the Israelites after Moses passes.

V5-8

The most notable characteristic of Moses is stated in verse 5: "...the servant of the Lord." For all of Moses' accomplishments, this was his greatest.

It should be noted that God Himself buried Moses. This is mentioned in Jude 1:9 where Michael the archangel had to fight off Satan while God buried Moses. This dispute is the subject of much debate among biblical scholars. Questions such as, "Why did Satan want Moses' body?" and "Why did God want to bury Moses where no one could find him?" are the source of much speculation.

V9-12

Joshua shows humility here as he admits that God's hand is upon him, but no one, not even himself, would become as great as Moses. Moses held the office of priest, prophet, and leader, and he did it with God's grace.

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