



DEUTERONOMY

Read Deuteronomy 1:1–18

It has been forty years since the Israelites escaped slavery in Egypt. Except for Moses, Joshua, and Caleb, all who came out of Egypt, crossed through the sea, and witnessed and ratified the Sinai covenant have died (Num 14:20–30). On the plains of Moab opposite the Promised Land Moses instructs the new generation how to live as God's holy people.

Reflect: What are my memories of when and where I began to learn and experience what it means for me to live as a member of God's holy people?

Pray: I recall names of some who early on guided and influenced my growth in faith. I thank God for the gift of these people in my life.

Act: I will share with someone of the next generation my gratitude for the gift that I have been given.

Events at Horeb Recalled

1 These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan—in the wilderness, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahab. ² (By the way of Mount Seir it takes eleven days to reach Kadesh-barnea from Horeb.) ³ In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the Israelites just as the LORD had commanded him to speak to them. ⁴ This was after he had defeated King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon, and King Og of Bashan, who reigned in Ashtaroth and^a in Edrei. ⁵ Beyond the Jordan in the land of Moab, Moses undertook to expound this law as follows:

⁶ The LORD our God spoke to us at Horeb, saying, “You have stayed long enough at this mountain. ⁷ Resume your journey, and go into the hill country of the Amorites as well as into the neighboring regions—the Arabah, the hill country, the Shephelah, the Negeb, and the seacoast—the land of the Canaanites and the Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. ⁸ See, I have set the land before you; go in and take possession of the land that ^b swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give to them and to their descendants after them.”

Appointment of Tribal Leaders

⁹ At that time I said to you, “I am unable by myself to bear you. ¹⁰ The LORD your God has multiplied you, so that today you are as numerous as the stars of heaven. ¹¹ May the LORD, the God of your ancestors, increase you a thousand times more and bless you, as he has promised you! ¹² But how can I bear the heavy burden of your disputes all by myself? ¹³ Choose for each of

^a Gk Syr Vg Compare Josh 12.4: Heb lacks and

^b Sam Gk: MT the LORD

Read Deuteronomy 1:19–46

Moses recalls the Israelites' revolt at Kadesh-barnea some forty years earlier. The narration incorporates the new generation into their deceased parents' and grandparents' history, a theme that runs through the book of Deuteronomy. "But *you* were unwilling to go up; *you* rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. *You* grumbled in your tents..."

Reflect: What actions taken by those who came before me, my relatives, grandparents, and parents, contributed to the circumstances—good and bad—in the world in which I find myself today?

Pray: I thank God for the good example and influences that helped shape me. I am also grateful for the lessons learned and passed on to me from what may not have been the best of decisions.

Act: As a member of God's holy people I will live and act with awareness of the consequences of my decisions for coming generations.

your tribes individuals who are wise, discerning, and reputable to be your leaders." ¹⁴ You answered me, "The plan you have proposed is a good one." ¹⁵ So I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and reputable individuals, and installed them as leaders over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officials, throughout your tribes. ¹⁶ I charged your judges at that time: "Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. ¹⁷ You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God's. Any case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it." ¹⁸ So I charged you at that time with all the things that you should do.

Israel's Refusal to Enter the Land

19 Then, just as the LORD our God had ordered us, we set out from Horeb and went through all that great and terrible wilderness that you saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, until we reached Kadesh-barnea. ²⁰ I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God is giving us. ²¹ See, the LORD your God has given the land to you; go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you; do not fear or be dismayed."

22 All of you came to me and said, "Let us send men ahead of us to explore the land for us and bring back a report to us regarding the route by which we should go up and the cities we will come to." ²³ The plan seemed good to me, and I selected twelve of you, one from each tribe. ²⁴ They set out and went up into the hill country, and when they reached the Valley of Eshcol they spied it out ²⁵ and gathered some of the land's produce, which they brought down to us. They brought back a report to us, and said, "It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us."

26 But you were unwilling to go up. You rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; ²⁷ you grumbled in your tents and said, "It is because the LORD hates us that he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to hand us over to the Amorites to destroy us. ²⁸ Where are we headed? Our kindred have made our hearts melt by reporting, 'The people are stronger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified up to heaven! We actually saw there the offspring of the Anakim!'" ²⁹ I said to you, "Have no dread or fear of them. ³⁰ The LORD your God, who goes before you, is the one who will fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your very

Read Deuteronomy 2:1–25

The forty years in the wilderness waiting for a new generation has not been a time of God's absence. Moses reflects with the new generation on how they "have lacked nothing" (2:7). Through all the Israelites' journey, their God has been with them, concerned about them and blessing all their undertakings.

Reflect: In retrospect, what specific past life experiences compel me to acknowledge that God has been quietly present and with me all along?

Pray: I acknowledge how easily I drift from activity to activity through my days without a thought for my God's concern for me and presence with me.

Act: As I go through this day, I will strive to be continuously aware of God's presence with me, his concern for me, and his blessing upon my undertakings.

eyes,³¹ and in the wilderness, where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you traveled until you reached this place.³² But in spite of this, you have no trust in the LORD your God,³³ who goes before you on the way to seek out a place for you to camp, in fire by night, and in the cloud by day, to show you the route you should take."

The Penalty for Israel's Rebellion

34 When the LORD heard your words, he was wrathful and swore:³⁵ "Not one of these—not one of this evil generation—shall see the good land that I swore to give to your ancestors,³⁶ except Caleb son of Jephunneh. He shall see it, and to him and to his descendants I will give the land on which he set foot, because of his complete fidelity to the LORD."³⁷ Even with me the LORD was angry on your account, saying, "You also shall not enter there.³⁸ Joshua son of Nun, your assistant, shall enter there; encourage him, for he is the one who will secure Israel's possession of it.³⁹ And as for your little ones, who you thought would become booty, your children, who today do not yet know right from wrong, they shall enter there; to them I will give it, and they shall take possession of it.⁴⁰ But as for you, journey back into the wilderness, in the direction of the Red Sea."^a

41 You answered me, "We have sinned against the LORD! We are ready to go up and fight, just as the LORD our God commanded us." So all of you strapped on your battle gear, and thought it easy to go up into the hill country.⁴² The LORD said to me, "Say to them, 'Do not go up and do not fight, for I am not in the midst of you; otherwise you will be defeated by your enemies.'"⁴³ Although I told you, you would not listen. You rebelled against the command of the LORD and presumptuously went up into the hill country.⁴⁴ The Amorites who lived in that hill country then came out against you and chased you as bees do. They beat you down in Seir as far as Hormah.⁴⁵ When you returned and wept before the LORD, the LORD would neither heed your voice nor pay you any attention.

The Desert Years

46 After you had stayed at Kadesh as many days as you did,¹ we journeyed back into the wilderness, in the direction of the Red Sea,^a as the LORD had told me and skirted Mount Seir for many days.² Then the LORD said to me:³ "You have been skirting this hill country long enough. Head north,⁴ and charge the people as follows: You are about to pass through the territory of your kindred, the descendants of Esau, who live

^a Or Sea of Reeds

in Seir. They will be afraid of you, so, be very careful ⁵not to engage in battle with them, for I will not give you even so much as a foot's length of their land, since I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. ⁶You shall purchase food from them for money, so that you may eat; and you shall also buy water from them for money, so that you may drink. ⁷Surely the LORD your God has blessed you in all your undertakings; he knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you; you have lacked nothing." ⁸So we passed by our kin, the descendants of Esau who live in Seir, leaving behind the route of the Arabah, and leaving behind Elath and Ezion-geber.

When we had headed out along the route of the wilderness of Moab, ⁹the LORD said to me: "Do not harass Moab or engage them in battle, for I will not give you any of its land as a possession, since I have given Ar as a possession to the descendants of Lot." ¹⁰(The Emim—a large and numerous people, as tall as the Anakim—had formerly inhabited it. ¹¹Like the Anakim, they are usually reckoned as Rephaim, though the Moabites call them Emim. ¹²Moreover, the Horim had formerly inhabited Seir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them, destroying them and settling in their place, as Israel has done in the land that the LORD gave them as a possession.) ¹³"Now then, proceed to cross over the Wadi Zered."

So we crossed over the Wadi Zered. ¹⁴And the length of time we had traveled from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the Wadi Zered was thirty-eight years, until the entire generation of warriors had perished from the camp, as the LORD had sworn concerning them. ¹⁵Indeed, the LORD's own hand was against them, to root them out from the camp, until all had perished.

¹⁶Just as soon as all the warriors had died off from among the people, ¹⁷the LORD spoke to me, saying, ¹⁸"Today you are going to cross the boundary of Moab at Ar. ¹⁹When you approach the frontier of the Ammonites, do not harass them or engage them in battle, for I will not give the land of

the Ammonites to you as a possession, because I have given it to the descendants of Lot." ²⁰(It also is usually reckoned as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim formerly inhabited it, though the Ammonites call them Zamzummim, ²¹a strong and numerous people, as tall as the Anakim. But the LORD destroyed them from before the Ammonites so that they could dispossess them and settle in their place. ²²He did the same for the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, by destroying the Horim before them so that they could dispossess them and settle in their place even to this day. ²³As for the Avvim, who had lived in settlements in the vicinity of Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and settled in their place.) ²⁴"Proceed on your journey and cross the Wadi Arnon. See, I have handed over to you King Sihon the Amorite of Heshbon, and his land. Begin to take possession by engaging him in battle. ²⁵This day I will begin to put the dread and fear of you upon the peoples everywhere under heaven; when they hear report of you, they will tremble and be in anguish because of you."

Defeat of King Sihon

²⁶So I sent messengers from the wilderness of Kedemoth to King Sihon of Heshbon with the following terms of peace: ²⁷"If you let me pass through your land, I will travel only along the road; I will turn aside neither to the right nor to the left. ²⁸You shall sell me food for money, so that I may eat, and supply me water for money, so that I may drink. Only allow me to pass through on foot—²⁹just as the descendants of Esau who live in Seir have done for me and likewise the Moabites who live in Ar—until I cross the Jordan into the land that the LORD our God is giving us." ³⁰But King Sihon of Heshbon was not willing to let us pass through, for the LORD your God had hardened his spirit and made his heart defiant in order to hand him over to you, as he has now done.

³¹The LORD said to me, "See, I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you. Begin now to take possession of his

Read Deuteronomy 2:26—3:22

Moses reminds this new generation of Israelites of their own recent deliverance through God's victories over Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan. Moses instructs Joshua and the Israelites regarding future difficulties: "Do not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you."

Reflect: Do I take credit when success comes to me or when things unexpectedly go my way? How then do I respond when confronted with a setback or an unanticipated downturn in my fortunes?

Pray: Lord, I thank you for all the ways in which you have brought me this far in life. I ask that my memories may guide me to face the future without fear.

Act: I will live this day expecting that in all that comes my way, good and bad, the God who has been with me in the past will continue to bless me with his presence.

land."³² So when Sihon came out against us, he and all his people for battle at Jahaz,³³ the LORD our God gave him over to us; and we struck him down, along with his offspring and all his people.³⁴ At that time we captured all his towns, and in each town we utterly destroyed men, women, and children. We left not a single survivor.³⁵ Only the livestock we kept as spoil for ourselves, as well as the plunder of the towns that we had captured.³⁶ From Aroer on the edge of the Wadi Arnon (including the town that is in the wadi itself) as far as Gilead, there was no citadel too high for us. The LORD our God gave everything to us.³⁷ You did not encroach, however, on the land of the Ammonites, avoiding the whole upper region of the Wadi Jabbok as well as the towns of the hill country, just as^a the LORD our God had charged.

Defeat of King Og

3 When we headed up the road to Bashan, King Og of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, for battle at Edrei.² The LORD said to me, "Do not fear him, for I have handed him over to you, along with his people and his land. Do to him as you did to King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon."³ So the LORD our God also handed over to us King Og of Bashan and all his people. We struck him down until not a single survivor was left.⁴ At that time we captured all his towns; there was no citadel that we did not take from them—sixty towns, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan.⁵ All these were fortress towns with high walls, double gates, and bars, besides a great many villages.⁶ And we utterly destroyed them, as we had done to King Sihon of Heshbon, in each city utterly destroying men, women, and children.⁷ But all the livestock and the plunder of the towns we kept as spoil for ourselves.

⁸ So at that time we took from the two kings of the Amorites the land beyond the Jordan, from the Wadi Arnon to Mount Hermon⁹ (the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, while the Amorites call it Senir),¹⁰ all the towns of the tableland, the whole of Gilead, and all of Bashan, as far as Salecah and Edrei, towns of Og's kingdom in Bashan.¹¹ (Now only King Og of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. In fact his bed, an iron bed, can still be seen in Rabbah of the Ammonites. By the common cubit it is nine cubits long and four cubits wide.)¹² As for the land that we took possession of at that time, I gave to the Reubenites and Gadites the territory north of Aroer,^b that is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, as well as half the hill country of Gilead with its towns,¹³ and I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh the rest of Gilead and all of Bashan, Og's kingdom. (The

^a Gk Tg: Heb and all

^b Heb territory from Aroer

Read Deuteronomy 3:23—4:8

Moses, after a lifetime of heroic, faithful, and often unappreciated service, learns that he will not see the fruit and fulfillment of all his labors—the settlement of God’s people in the Promised Land. Still, Moses can instruct the Israelites about the closeness of their God to them when they call upon him, and about the justice of God’s statutes and decrees.

Reflect: Do I find joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment in simply serving God and in doing and fulfilling God’s will for me day by day?

Pray: I rejoice in the experience of God’s presence to me in this moment. My spirit is content to rest in God today, at this time.

Act: In my interactions with others today, I will be guided by God’s presence with me, so that through me some may come to experience the nearness of God.

whole region of Argob: all that portion of Bashan used to be called a land of Rephaim; ¹⁴ Jair the Manassite acquired the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and he named them—that is, Bashan—after himself, Havvoth-jair,^a as it is to this day.) ¹⁵ To Machir I gave Gilead. ¹⁶ And to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the territory from Gilead as far as the Wadi Arnon, with the middle of the wadi as a boundary, and up to the Jabbok, the wadi being boundary of the Ammonites; ¹⁷ the Arabah also, with the Jordan and its banks, from Chinnereth down to the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea,^b with the lower slopes of Pisgah on the east.

¹⁸ At that time, I charged you as follows: “Although the LORD your God has given you this land to occupy, all your troops shall cross over armed as the vanguard of your Israelite kin. ¹⁹ Only your wives, your children, and your livestock—I know that you have much livestock—shall stay behind in the towns that I have given to you. ²⁰ When the LORD gives rest to your kindred, as to you, and they too have occupied the land that the LORD your God is giving them beyond the Jordan, then each of you may return to the property that I have given to you.” ²¹ And I charged Joshua as well at that time, saying: “Your own eyes have seen everything that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so the LORD will do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. ²² Do not fear them, for it is the LORD your God who fights for you.”

Moses Views Canaan from Pisgah

²³ At that time, too, I entreated the LORD, saying: ²⁴ “O Lord GOD, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your might; what god in heaven or on earth can perform deeds and mighty acts like yours! ²⁵ Let me cross over to see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and the Lebanon.” ²⁶ But the LORD was angry with me on your account and would not heed me. The LORD said to me, “Enough from you! Never speak to me of this matter again! ²⁷ Go up to the top of Pisgah and look around you to the west, to the north, to the south, and to the east. Look well, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. ²⁸ But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, because it is he who shall cross over at the head of this people and who shall secure their possession of the land that you will see.” ²⁹ So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor.

^a That is *Settlement of Jair*

^b Heb *Salt Sea*

Read Deuteronomy 4:9–43

The narrative continues to draw this new generation of Israelites into their ancestors' history. Moses recalls a manifestation of God some forty years earlier as an event that they have seen with their own eyes. "That day you stood before the LORD, your God, at Horeb..." "He proclaimed to you his covenant..."

Reflect: What does or could it mean for me to actually experience God when I read the words of scripture, or hear them? Can I identify with the "you" that Moses addresses?

Pray: Lord, may the experience of your presence never slip from my memory as long as I live, that my life may be a continuing witness to all whom I encounter.

Act: Confident in God's promise that I will find him, today I will search after him with my whole heart and my whole soul.

Moses Commands Obedience

4 So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. ²You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you. ³You have seen for yourselves what the LORD did with regard to the Baal of Peor—how the LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, ⁴while those of you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today.

⁵ See, just as the LORD my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. ⁶You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" ⁷For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? ⁸And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

⁹ But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children—¹⁰how you once stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, "Assemble the people for me, and I will let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me as long as they live on the earth, and may teach their children so"; ¹¹you approached and stood at the foot of the mountain while the mountain was blazing up to the very heavens, shrouded in dark clouds. ¹²Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. ¹³He declared to you his covenant, which he charged you to observe, that is, the ten commandments;^a and he wrote them on two stone tablets. ¹⁴And the LORD charged me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy.

¹⁵ Since you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, ¹⁶so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure—the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any

^a Heb *the ten words*

winged bird that flies in the air, ¹⁸ the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. ¹⁹ And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven. ²⁰ But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt, to become a people of his very own possession, as you are now.

²¹ The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he vowed that I should not cross the Jordan and that I should not enter the good land that the LORD your God is giving for your possession. ²² For I am going to die in this land without crossing over the Jordan, but you are going to cross over to take possession of that good land. ²³ So be careful not to forget the covenant that the LORD your God made with you, and not to make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. ²⁴ For the LORD your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God.

²⁵ When you have had children and children's children, and become complacent in the land, if you act corruptly by making an idol in the form of anything, thus doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, and provoking him to anger, ²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to occupy; you will not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. ²⁷ The LORD will scatter you among the peoples; only a few of you will be left among the nations where the LORD will lead you. ²⁸ There you will serve other gods made by human hands, objects of wood and stone that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. ²⁹ From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul. ³⁰ In your distress, when all these things have happened to you in time to come, you will return to the LORD your God

and heed him. ³¹ Because the LORD your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them.

³² For ask now about former ages, long before your own, ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of heaven to the other: has anything so great as this ever happened or has its like ever been heard of? ³³ Has any people ever heard the voice of a god speaking out of a fire, as you have heard, and lived? ³⁴ Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of power, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? ³⁵ To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him. ³⁶ From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, while you heard his words coming out of the fire. ³⁷ And because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants after them. He brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, ³⁸ driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, giving you their land for a possession, as it is still today. ³⁹ So acknowledge today and take to heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. ⁴⁰ Keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.

Cities of Refuge East of the Jordan

⁴¹ Then Moses set apart on the east side of the Jordan three cities ⁴² to which a homicide could flee, someone who unintentionally kills another person, the two not having been at enmity before; the homicide could flee to one of these cities and

Read Deuteronomy 4:44—5:33

Moses now asserts to the new generation of Israelites that the Lord makes a covenant, not only with their parents some forty years ago, but with “*all of us* who are alive here this day.” In the recitation of the commandments the new generation hears the voice of the Lord their God. Like their parents before them, they see his glory and majesty.

Reflect: The Israelites respond that they will listen and obey. God reflects they had such a mind as this, . . . “If only so that it might go well with them and with their children forever.”

Pray: Lord, help me to match the words of my prayers with my decisions and actions.

Act: Today I will reflect on God’s glory and majesty as I strive to guide my actions by God’s word.

live: ⁴³ Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland belonging to the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead belonging to the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan belonging to the Manassites.

Transition to the Second Address

44 This is the law that Moses set before the Israelites. ⁴⁵ These are the decrees and the statutes and ordinances that Moses spoke to the Israelites when they had come out of Egypt, ⁴⁶ beyond the Jordan in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned at Heshbon, whom Moses and the Israelites defeated when they came out of Egypt. ⁴⁷ They occupied his land and the land of King Og of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites on the eastern side of the Jordan: ⁴⁸ from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, as far as Mount Sirion^a (that is, Hermon), ⁴⁹ together with all the Arabah on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of Pisgah.

The Ten Commandments

5 Moses convened all Israel, and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. ² The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³ Not with our ancestors did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. ⁴ The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire. ⁵ (At that time I was standing between the LORD and you to declare to you the words^b of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

⁶ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ⁷ you shall have no other gods before^c me.

⁸ You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, ¹⁰ but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation^d of those who love me and keep my commandments.

¹¹ You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

¹² Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall

^a Syr: Heb *Sion*

^b Q Mss Sam Gk Syr Vg Tg: MT *word*

^c Or *besides*

^d Or *to thousands*

labor and do all your work. ¹⁴ But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

¹⁶ Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹⁷ You shall not murder.^a

¹⁸ Neither shall you commit adultery.

¹⁹ Neither shall you steal.

²⁰ Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.

²¹ Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife.

Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

Moses the Mediator of God's Will

²² These words the LORD spoke with a loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and he added no more. He wrote them on two stone tablets, and gave them to me. ²³ When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain

was burning with fire, you approached me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders; ²⁴ and you said, "Look, the LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the fire. Today we have seen that God may speak to someone and the person may still live. ²⁵ So now why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, we shall die. ²⁶ For who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and remained alive? ²⁷ Go near, you yourself, and hear all that the LORD our God will say. Then tell us everything that the LORD our God tells you, and we will listen and do it."

²⁸ The LORD heard your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: "I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you; they are right in all that they have spoken. ²⁹ If only they had such a mind as this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well with them and with their children forever! ³⁰ Go say to them, 'Return to your tents.' ³¹ But you, stand here by me, and I will tell you all the commandments, the statutes and the ordinances, that you shall teach them, so that they may do them in the land that I am giving them to possess." ³² You must therefore be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn to the right or to the left. ³³ You must follow exactly the path that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you are to possess.

The Great Commandment

6 Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, ² so that you and your children and your children's children may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. ³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go

^a Or kill

Read Deuteronomy 6

Life as a member of God's holy people involves total and unconditional commitment. Love for the Lord is to involve all one's thinking (heart), all one's person (soul), and all that one influences (strength). Reflection upon God's word is to occupy all our speech and all our thoughts, and so we pass our gift on to our children.

Reflect: Because all that I have is a gift, God deserves and will be satisfied with no less than my all.

Pray: Lord, guide me in transforming my commitments and intentions from words to practice.

Act: Today I will live so as to model for the next generation the fact that justice before God consists in carefully observing in word and spirit all these commandments.

well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone.^a 5 You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. 6 Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. 7 Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. 8 Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem^b on your forehead, 9 and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Caution against Disobedience

10 When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, 11 houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, 12 take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 13 The LORD your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear. 14 Do not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are all around you, 15 because the LORD your God, who is present with you, is a jealous God. The anger of the LORD your God would be kindled against you and he would destroy you from the face of the earth.

16 Do not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. 17 You must diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his decrees, and his statutes that he has commanded you. 18 Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may go in and occupy the good land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give you, 19 thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the LORD has promised.

20 When your children ask you in time to come, “What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?” 21 then you shall say to your children, “We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 22 The LORD displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. 23 He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. 24 Then the LORD commanded

^a Or *The LORD our God is one LORD, or The LORD our God, the LORD is one, or The LORD is our God, the LORD is one*

^b Or *as a frontlet*

us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case. ²⁵ If we

diligently observe this entire commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, we will be in the right.”

Read Deuteronomy 7

God’s holy people are sacred to the Lord, chosen to be particularly his own. God has loved them and set his heart on them. All this is a gift from the faithful God who keeps his merciful covenant toward those who love him and keep his commandments.

Reflect: I have a special relationship with God because I am a member of God’s holy people. If I, with them, heed God’s decrees and observe them carefully, God promises that we will be blessed.

Pray: As a grateful member of God’s holy people I ask for the strength to do my part in heeding God’s decrees, observing them carefully, and assisting others to do so.

Act: Today I will live and act in the awareness that I am called by God as a member of the people chosen to be particularly his own.

A Chosen People

7 When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you—² and when the LORD your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy. ³ Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. ⁵ But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles,^a and burn their idols with fire. ⁶ For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

⁷ It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰ and who repays in their own person those who reject him. He does not delay but repays in their own person those who reject him. ¹¹ Therefore, observe diligently the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that I am commanding you today.

Blessings for Obedience

¹² If you heed these ordinances, by diligently observing them, the LORD your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; ¹³ he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, in the land that he swore to your ancestors to give you. ¹⁴ You shall be the

^a Heb *Asherim*

most blessed of peoples, with neither sterility nor barrenness among you or your livestock. ¹⁵ The LORD will turn away from you every illness; all the dread diseases of Egypt that you experienced, he will not inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you. ¹⁶ You shall devour all the peoples that the LORD your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity; you shall not serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

¹⁷ If you say to yourself, "These nations are more numerous than I; how can I dispossess them?" ¹⁸ do not be afraid of them. Just remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, ¹⁹ the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. ²⁰ Moreover, the LORD your God will send the pestilence^a against them, until even the survivors and the fugitives are de-

stroyed. ²¹ Have no dread of them, for the LORD your God, who is present with you, is a great and awesome God. ²² The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to make a quick end of them, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you. ²³ But the LORD your God will give them over to you, and throw them into great panic, until they are destroyed. ²⁴ He will hand their kings over to you and you shall blot out their name from under heaven; no one will be able to stand against you, until you have destroyed them. ²⁵ The images of their gods you shall burn with fire. Do not covet the silver or the gold that is on them and take it for yourself, because you could be ensnared by it; for it is abhorrent to the LORD your God. ²⁶ Do not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be set apart for destruction like it. You must utterly detest and abhor it, for it is set apart for destruction.

Read Deuteronomy 8

The Lord is about to bring the Israelites into a good land, a land where they will eat their fill, where they will build fine houses and live in them, and where their herds and flocks will flourish. But in prosperity they must remember that it is the Lord their God who gives them the power to acquire wealth in fulfillment of the covenant.

Reflect: What is my attitude toward my possessions? Do I fall into thinking that my position in life, my successes, my influence, my wealth are the product of my hard work, intelligence, and skill?

Pray: Lord, I ask for the humility to recognize the truth that all that I have is a gift.

Act: Today I will seek a way of sharing some of my excess with someone whose hard work, intelligence, and skills have not resulted in prosperity and fulfillment.

A Warning Not to Forget God in Prosperity

8 This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. ² Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commandments. ³ He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.^b ⁴ The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years. ⁵ Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the LORD your God disciplines you. ⁶ Therefore keep the commandments of the LORD your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him. ⁷ For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, ⁸ a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, ⁹ a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose

^a Or *hornets*: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Or *by anything that the LORD decrees*

stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. ¹⁰You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you.

¹¹Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. ¹²When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, ¹³and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, ¹⁴then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, ¹⁵who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poi-

sonous^a snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, ¹⁶and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. ¹⁷Do not say to yourself, “My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth.” ¹⁸But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today. ¹⁹If you do forget the LORD your God and follow other gods to serve and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. ²⁰Like the nations that the LORD is destroying before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God.

Read Deuteronomy 9

The new generation must not think their own merits or integrity earned them the Promised Land. Moses recalls how the Israelites made and worshiped the golden calf, again incorporating the current generation into this past event. “At Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you.”

Reflect: It is really because of the nations’ wickedness that God is driving them out ahead of the Israelites. What are some good things that simply happened to me in life, things that I did not earn or deserve?

Pray: Lord, teach me to remember that the world does not revolve around me, and to accept that often what comes my way, both good and bad, is neither deserved nor earned.

Act: Today I will strive to recognize and acknowledge and accept the influences outside my control that shape my life, for both good and bad.

The Consequences of Rebelling against God

9 Hear, O Israel! You are about to cross the Jordan to-day, to go in and dispossess nations larger and mightier than you, great cities, fortified to the heavens, ²a strong and tall people, the offspring of the Anakim, whom you know. You have heard it said of them, “Who can stand up to the Anakim?” ³Know then today that the LORD your God is the one who crosses over before you as a devouring fire; he will defeat them and subdue them before you, so that you may dispossess and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has promised you.

⁴When the LORD your God thrusts them out before you, do not say to yourself, “It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to occupy this land”; it is rather because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you. ⁵It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you are going in to occupy their land; but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is dispossessing them before you, in order to fulfill the promise that the LORD made on oath to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

⁶Know, then, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to occupy because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people. ⁷Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; you have been rebellious against the LORD from the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place.

⁸Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath,

^a Or fiery; Heb seraph

and the LORD was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you. ⁹When I went up the mountain to receive the stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water. ¹⁰And the LORD gave me the two stone tablets written with the finger of God; on them were all the words that the LORD had spoken to you at the mountain out of the fire on the day of the assembly. ¹¹At the end of forty days and forty nights the LORD gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant. ¹²Then the LORD said to me, “Get up, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly. They have been quick to turn from the way that I commanded them; they have cast an image for themselves.” ¹³Furthermore the LORD said to me, “I have seen that this people is indeed a stubborn people. ¹⁴Let me alone that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and more numerous than they.”

¹⁵So I turned and went down from the mountain, while the mountain was ablaze; the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. ¹⁶Then I saw that you had indeed sinned against the LORD your God, by casting for yourselves an image of a calf; you had been quick to turn from the way that the LORD had commanded you. ¹⁷So I took hold of the two tablets and flung them from my two hands, smashing them before your eyes. ¹⁸Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin you had committed, provoking the LORD by doing what was evil

in his sight. ¹⁹For I was afraid that the anger that the LORD bore against you was so fierce that he would destroy you. But the LORD listened to me that time also. ²⁰The LORD was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him, but I interceded also on behalf of Aaron at that same time. ²¹Then I took the sinful thing you had made, the calf, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it thoroughly, until it was reduced to dust; and I threw the dust of it into the stream that runs down the mountain.

²²At Taberah also, and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah, you provoked the LORD to wrath. ²³And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, “Go up and occupy the land that I have given you,” you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God, neither trusting him nor obeying him. ²⁴You have been rebellious against the LORD as long as he has^a known you.

²⁵Throughout the forty days and forty nights that I lay prostrate before the LORD when the LORD intended to destroy you, ²⁶I prayed to the LORD and said, “Lord GOD, do not destroy the people who are your very own possession, whom you redeemed in your greatness, whom you brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; pay no attention to the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin, ²⁸otherwise the land from which you have brought us might say, ‘Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to let them die in the wilderness.’ ²⁹For they are the people of your very own possession, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm.”

The Second Pair of Tablets

10 At that time the LORD said to me, “Carve out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood. ²I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets, which you smashed, and you shall put them in the ark.” ³So I made an ark of acacia wood, cut two tablets of stone like the former ones, and went up

^a Sam Gk: MT / have

Read Deuteronomy 10

Israel's God is God of gods, Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome. Israel's God has no favorites, accepts no bribes, executes justice for the orphan and widow, and befriends the alien, feeding and clothing him. This is what God asks of his holy people: only that they fear the Lord their God and follow his ways exactly.

Reflect: As a member of God's own people, called to follow God's ways exactly, I too must show no favorites, accept no bribes, execute justice for the powerless, and befriend the alien.

Pray: Lord, make my thoughts conform to yours that I may see and recognize the orphan, the widow, and the alien, and befriend them and do my part to assure them justice.

Act: Today, striving to act with the mind of God, I will seek out and be a friend to someone in need.

the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. ⁴ Then he wrote on the tablets the same words as before, the ten commandments^a that the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain out of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. ⁵ So I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark that I had made; and there they are, as the LORD commanded me.

⁶ (The Israelites journeyed from Beeroth-bene-jaakan^b to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried; his son Eleazar succeeded him as priest. ⁷ From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land with flowing streams. ⁸ At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to him, and to bless in his name, to this day. ⁹ Therefore Levi has no allotment or inheritance with his kindred; the LORD is his inheritance, as the LORD your God promised him.)

¹⁰ I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights, as I had done the first time. And once again the LORD listened to me. The LORD was unwilling to destroy you. ¹¹ The LORD said to me, "Get up, go on your journey at the head of the people, that they may go in and occupy the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them."

The Essence of the Law

¹² So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God^c and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being. ¹⁴ Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the LORD your God, the earth with all that is in it, ¹⁵ yet the LORD set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today. ¹⁶ Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer. ¹⁷ For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, ¹⁸ who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. ¹⁹ You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. ²⁰ You shall fear the LORD your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear. ²¹ He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have

^a Heb *the ten words*

^b Or *the wells of the Bene-jaakan*

^c Q Ms Gk Syr: MT lacks *your God*

seen. ²²Your ancestors went down to Egypt God has made you as numerous as the seventy persons; and now the LORD your stars in heaven.

Read Deuteronomy 11

The land that God is about to give to his people is not subject to human control and manipulation. Its productivity—barley, grapes, and olives for humans, and grass for livestock—depends upon consistent seasonal rainfall. In return for fidelity to the covenant, God promises to bless the land with the early rain and the late rain.

Reflect: How different is my world. Technological advances in every realm manipulate, control, and supplant natural processes. Still, almost every day we hear warnings that these technological advances can themselves have devastating consequences.

Pray: Lord, forgive us for substituting reliance on technology for obedience to your will; forgive us for our blind selfishness in our distribution and use of the world's resources.

Act: Today I will identify some detail of how I live that contributes to a major ecological or human problem. I will take one step, however small, to reduce my part.

Rewards for Obedience

11 You shall love the LORD your God, therefore, and keep his charge, his decrees, his ordinances, and his commandments always. ²Remember today that it was not your children (who have not known or seen the discipline of the LORD your God), but it is you who must acknowledge his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm, ³his signs and his deeds that he did in Egypt to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and to all his land; ⁴what he did to the Egyptian army, to their horses and chariots, how he made the water of the Red Sea^a flow over them as they pursued you, so that the LORD has destroyed them to this day; ⁵what he did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place; ⁶and what he did to Dathan and Abiram, sons of Eliab son of Reuben, how in the midst of all Israel the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, along with their households, their tents, and every living being in their company; ⁷for it is your own eyes that have seen every great deed that the LORD did.

⁸Keep, then, this entire commandment that I am commanding you today, so that you may have strength to go in and occupy the land that you are crossing over to occupy, ⁹and so that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰For the land that you are about to enter to occupy is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sow your seed and irrigate by foot like a vegetable garden. ¹¹But the land that you are crossing over to occupy is a land of hills and valleys, watered by rain from the sky, ¹²a land that the LORD your God looks after. The eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

¹³If you will only heed his every commandment^b that I am commanding you today—loving the LORD your God, and serving him with all your heart and with all your soul— ¹⁴then he^c will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil; ¹⁵and he^c will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you will eat your fill. ¹⁶Take care, or you will be seduced into turning away, serving other gods and worshiping them, ¹⁷for then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain and the land will yield no fruit; then you will

^a Or Sea of Reeds

^b Compare Gk: Heb *my commandments*

^c Sam Gk Vg: MT I

perish quickly off the good land that the LORD is giving you.

18 You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem^a on your forehead. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. ²⁰ Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹ so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

22 If you will diligently observe this entire commandment that I am commanding you, loving the LORD your God, walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him, ²³ then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and mightier than yourselves. ²⁴ Every place on which you set foot shall be yours; your territory shall extend from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the Western Sea. ²⁵ No one will be able to stand against

you; the LORD your God will put the fear and dread of you on all the land on which you set foot, as he promised you.

26 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: ²⁷ the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today; ²⁸ and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn from the way that I am commanding you today, to follow other gods that you have not known.

29 When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that you are entering to occupy, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. ³⁰ As you know, they are beyond the Jordan, some distance to the west, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, beside the oak^b of Moreh.

31 When you cross the Jordan to go in to occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and when you occupy it and live in it, ³² you must diligently observe all the statutes and ordinances that I am setting before you today.

Pagan Shrines to Be Destroyed

12 These are the statutes and ordinances that you must diligently observe in the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has given you to occupy all the days that you live on the earth.

2 You must demolish completely all the places where the nations whom you are about to dispossess served their gods, on the mountain heights, on the hills, and under every leafy tree. ³ Break down their altars, smash their pillars, burn their sacred poles^c with fire, and hew down the idols of their gods, and thus blot out their name from their places. ⁴ You shall not worship the LORD your God in such ways. ⁵ But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there. You shall go there, ⁶ bringing there your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, your votive gifts, your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and flocks. ⁷ And you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your households together, rejoicing in all the undertakings in which the LORD your God has blessed you.

^a Or as a frontlet

^b Gk Syr: Compare Gen 12.6; Heb oaks or terebinths

^c Heb Asherim

Read Deuteronomy 12

God wills that his people live joyfully and prosperously in the land. But the land remains God's. Continued secure occupation of that land requires fidelity to God's covenant. For Israel this includes regular gathering for tithing, worship, and sacrifice at the one site that God will choose (the Jerusalem temple), abstaining from blood out of respect for life, and carefully avoiding all pagan practices.

Reflect: A commandment to "rejoice" before the Lord with families, servants, and the Levite appears three times here. What in my religious practices might begin to approximate such prayerful communal and family gatherings?

Pray: Lord, teach me to appreciate living in the place where you have put me. Guide me in your ways as a member of your holy people.

Act: In the near future I will try to partake in a family or communal meal, prayerfully rejoicing before the Lord.

8 You shall not act as we are acting here today, all of us according to our own desires, ⁹ for you have not yet come into the rest and the possession that the LORD your God is giving you. ¹⁰ When you cross over the Jordan and live in the land that the LORD your God is allotting to you, and when he gives you rest from your enemies all around so that you live in safety, ¹¹ then you shall bring everything that I command you to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and your donations, and all your choice votive gifts that you vow to the LORD. ¹² And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you together with your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levites who reside in your towns (since they have no allotment or inheritance with you).

A Prescribed Place of Worship

13 Take care that you do not offer your burnt offerings at any place you happen to see. ¹⁴ But only at the place that the LORD will choose in one of your tribes—there you shall offer your burnt offerings and there you shall do everything I command you.

15 Yet whenever you desire you may slaughter and eat meat within any of your towns, according to the blessing that the LORD your God has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as they would of gazelle or deer. ¹⁶ The blood, however, you must not eat; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. ¹⁷ Nor may you eat within your towns the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, the firstlings of your herds and your flocks, any of your votive gifts that you vow, your freewill offerings, or your donations; ¹⁸ these you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God at the place that the LORD your God will choose, you together with your son and your daughter, your male and female slaves, and the Levites resident in your towns, rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God in all your undertakings. ¹⁹ Take care that you do not neglect the Levite as long as you live in your land.

20 When the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he has promised you, and you say, "I am going to eat some meat," because you wish to eat meat, you may eat meat whenever you have the desire. ²¹ If the place where the LORD your God will choose to put his name is too far from you, and you slaughter as I have commanded you any of your herd or flock that the LORD has given you, then you may eat within your towns whenever you desire. ²² Indeed, just as gazelle or deer is eaten, so you may eat it; the unclean and the

clean alike may eat it. ²³ Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the meat. ²⁴ Do not eat it; you shall pour it out on the ground like water. ²⁵ Do not eat it, so that all may go well with you and your children after you, because you do what is right in the sight of the LORD. ²⁶ But the sacred donations that are due from you, and your votive gifts, you shall bring to the place that the LORD will choose. ²⁷ You shall present your burnt offerings, both the meat and the blood, on the altar of the LORD your God; the blood of your other sacrifices shall be poured out beside^a the altar of the LORD your God, but the meat you may eat.

²⁸ Be careful to obey all these words that I command you today,^b so that it may go well with you and with your children after you forever, because you will be doing

what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Warning against Idolatry

²⁹ When the LORD your God has cut off before you the nations whom you are about to enter to dispossess them, when you have dispossessed them and live in their land, ³⁰ take care that you are not snared into imitating them, after they have been destroyed before you: do not inquire concerning their gods, saying, “How did these nations worship their gods? I also want to do the same.” ³¹ You must not do the same for the LORD your God, because every abhorrent thing that the LORD hates they have done for their gods. They would even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. ^{32c} You must diligently observe everything that I command you; not add to it or take anything from it.

Read Deuteronomy 13

For Israel, God’s people living in God’s land, fidelity to this God of freedom and life who ransomed them from slavery and death in Egypt is the sole norm. Moses warns the Israelites against all who would add or subtract from this norm: self-declared leaders and prophets with enticing predictions and promises, family members and friends, whole groups who may fall away from the covenant.

Reflect: Each day I am barraged with certain enticements, that in subtle ways enslave me to systems and processes that exploit others.

Pray: Lord, guide me to think through my choices and purchases and make conscious decisions in accordance with your will.

13^d If prophets or those who divine by dreams appear among you and promise you omens or portents, ² and the omens or the portents declared by them take place, and they say, “Let us follow other gods” (whom you have not known) “and let us serve them,” ³ you must not heed the words of those prophets or those who divine by dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you indeed love the LORD your God with all your heart and soul. ⁴ The LORD your God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear, his commandments you shall keep, his voice you shall obey, him you shall serve, and to him you shall hold fast. ⁵ But those prophets or those who divine by dreams shall be put to death for having spoken treason against the LORD your God—who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery—to turn you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

⁶ If anyone secretly entices you—even if it is your brother, your father’s son or^e your mother’s son, or your own son or daughter, or the wife you embrace, or your most intimate friend—saying, “Let us go worship other gods,” whom neither you nor your ancestors have known, ⁷ any of the gods of the peoples that are around you, whether near you or far away from you, from one end of the earth to the other, ⁸ you must not yield to or heed any such persons. Show them no pity or compas-

^a Or on

^b Gk Sam Syr: MT lacks today

^c Ch 13.1 in Heb

^d Ch 13.2 in Heb

^e Sam Gk Compare Tg: MT lacks your father’s son or

Act: Today I will reflect upon each of my purchases, thinking about the source of the product, how and where it was produced, who produced it, and at what cost.

Read Deuteronomy 14:1–21

As God's sons and daughters, sacred to him, chosen to be a people particularly his own, Israel's manner of living in every respect must reflect God's holiness. Thus, animals and foods that are considered inappropriate for sacrifices or that might be culturally repulsive are to be avoided.

Reflect: To what can I point in the way I live that is reflective of God's holiness? What aspects of my way of life might detract from the ability of others to observe God's holiness through me?

Pray: Lord, guide my thinking and my decisions so that my way of living may more and more reflect your call for me to be holy as you are holy.

Act: Today I will pause occasionally and ask myself how what I am doing reflects my call to be part of a people sacred to the Lord.

sion and do not shield them. ⁹But you shall surely kill them; your own hand shall be first against them to execute them, and afterwards the hand of all the people. ¹⁰Stone them to death for trying to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹¹Then all Israel shall hear and be afraid, and never again do any such wickedness.

¹²If you hear it said about one of the towns that the LORD your God is giving you to live in, ¹³that scoundrels from among you have gone out and led the inhabitants of the town astray, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods," whom you have not known, ¹⁴then you shall inquire and make a thorough investigation. If the charge is established that such an abhorrent thing has been done among you, ¹⁵you shall put the inhabitants of that town to the sword, utterly destroying it and everything in it—even putting its livestock to the sword. ¹⁶All of its spoil you shall gather into its public square; then burn the town and all its spoil with fire, as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. It shall remain a perpetual ruin, never to be rebuilt. ¹⁷Do not let anything devoted to destruction stick to your hand, so that the LORD may turn from his fierce anger and show you compassion, and in his compassion multiply you, as he swore to your ancestors, ¹⁸if you obey the voice of the LORD your God by keeping all his commandments that I am commanding you today, doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Pagan Practices Forbidden

14 You are children of the LORD your God. You must not lacerate yourselves or shave your forelocks for the dead. ²For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; it is you the LORD has chosen out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Clean and Unclean Foods

³You shall not eat any abhorrent thing. ⁴These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, ⁵the deer, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the mountain-sheep. ⁶Any animal that divides the hoof and has the hoof cleft in two, and chews the cud, among the animals, you may eat. ⁷Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cleft you shall not eat these: the camel, the hare, and the rock badger, because they chew the cud but do not divide the hoof; they are unclean for you. ⁸And the pig, because it divides the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. You shall not eat their meat, and you shall not touch their carcasses.

Read Deuteronomy 14:22–29

God calls for his holy people to gather each year in the place that he will chose (his temple in Jerusalem) with their tithes from the land's produce—grain, wine, oil, and firstlings of the livestock—and there, in the presence of the Lord their God, they are to partake and rejoice with their families. Such happy gatherings are reminders of God's place in their lives.

Reflect: One function of tithing was that God's people could enjoy their produce in a cultic setting in God's presence. The ordinary act of enjoying a fine family meal becomes an act of reverence, an acknowledgment that the food is God's gift.

Pray: Lord, help me to remember that reverence for you can and should include joy and merriment.

Act: I will host a special gathering for family and/or friends as a celebration and sharing of God's goodness to me.

9 Of all that live in water you may eat these: whatever has fins and scales you may eat. ¹⁰ And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you.

11 You may eat any clean birds. ¹² But these are the ones that you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, ¹³ the buzzard, the kite of any kind; ¹⁴ every raven of any kind; ¹⁵ the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk of any kind; ¹⁶ the little owl and the great owl, the water hen ¹⁷ and the desert owl,^a the carrion vulture and the cormorant, ¹⁸ the stork, the heron of any kind; the hoopoe and the bat.^b ¹⁹ And all winged insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. ²⁰ You may eat any clean winged creature.

21 You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to aliens residing in your towns for them to eat, or you may sell it to a foreigner. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Regulations concerning Tithes

22 Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field. ²³ In the presence of the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose as a dwelling for his name, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the firstlings of your herd and flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always. ²⁴ But if, when the LORD your God has blessed you, the distance is so great that you are unable to transport it, because the place where the LORD your God will choose to set his name is too far away from you, ²⁵ then you may turn it into money. With the money secure in hand, go to the place that the LORD your God will choose; ²⁶ spend the money for whatever you wish—oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire. And you shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your household rejoicing together. ²⁷ As for the Levites resident in your towns, do not neglect them, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you.

28 Every third year you shall bring out the full tithe of your produce for that year, and store it within your towns; ²⁹ the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake.

Laws concerning the Sabbatical Year

15 Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts. ² And this is the manner of the remis-

^a Or pelican

^b Identification of several of the birds in verses 12-18 is uncertain

Read Deuteronomy 15

God will so abundantly bless his people in his land that none should be in need among them, *provided* they heed their Lord's voice and carefully observe all his commandments. That some are in need suggests that others who claim to be God's people are not living in full observance of God's covenant.

Reflect: How do I view the needy whom I encounter amid the abundance and plenty that sometimes surround me? Do I truly believe that if everyone lived according to God's will there would be no one in need?

Pray: Lord, guide my reasoning that I may come to share your understanding of what is sufficient for me and what is surplus that I must share.

Act: Today I will find a way to transfer something from my possessions that is surplus to me to someone for whom it might be a necessity.

sion: every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor, not exacting it of a neighbor who is a member of the community, because the LORD's remission has been proclaimed. ³Of a foreigner you may exact it, but you must remit your claim on whatever any member of your community owes you. ⁴There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the LORD is sure to bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession to occupy, ⁵if only you will obey the LORD your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today. ⁶When the LORD your God has blessed you, as he promised you, you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you.

⁷If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. ⁸You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. ⁹Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought, thinking, "The seventh year, the year of remission, is near," and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt. ¹⁰Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so, for on this account the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. ¹¹Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, "Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land."

¹²If a member of your community, whether a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold^a to you and works for you six years, in the seventh year you shall set that person free. ¹³And when you send a male slave^b out from you a free person, you shall not send him out empty-handed. ¹⁴Provide liberally out of your flock, your threshing floor, and your wine press, thus giving to him some of the bounty with which the LORD your God has blessed you. ¹⁵Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; for this reason I lay this command upon you today. ¹⁶But if he says to you, "I will not go out from you," because he loves you and your household, since he is well off with you, ¹⁷then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his earlobe into the door, and he shall be your slave^c forever.

You shall do the same with regard to your female slave.^d

¹⁸Do not consider it a hardship when you send

^a Or sells himself or herself

^b Heb him

^c Or bondman

^d Or bondwoman

Read Deuteronomy 16:1–17

Three times a year God's children are to appear before him and celebrate a solemn festival: Passover, the feast of unleavened bread, recalls God's freeing them from slavery in Egypt; the festival of Weeks (Pentecost) recalls God's giving them his law; and the festival of Booths recalls God's presence and solicitude as they wandered in the desert prior to arriving in the Promised Land.

Reflect: With each festive communal gathering for a meal and recitation of God's previous saving acts, God, with his same saving presence, once again draws near to those celebrating.

Pray: Lord, with each festival day and celebration, grant that my knowledge and experience of your real saving presence may grow.

Act: I will prepare myself for coming important church festivals with prayer and reflection on God's saving presence as revealed in the assigned scripture readings.

them out from you free persons, because for six years they have given you services worth the wages of hired laborers; and the LORD your God will bless you in all that you do.

The Firstborn of Livestock

19 Every firstling male born of your herd and flock you shall consecrate to the LORD your God; you shall not do work with your firstling ox nor shear the firstling of your flock. ²⁰ You shall eat it, you together with your household, in the presence of the LORD your God by year at the place that the LORD will choose. ²¹ But if it has any defect—any serious defect, such as lameness or blindness—you shall not sacrifice it to the LORD your God; ²² within your towns you may eat it, the unclean and the clean alike, as you would a gazelle or deer. ²³ Its blood, however, you must not eat; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

The Passover Reviewed

16 Observe the month^a of Abib by keeping the passover to the LORD your God, for in the month of Abib the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt by night. ² You shall offer the passover sacrifice to the LORD your God, from the flock and the herd, at the place that the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³ You must not eat with it anything leavened. For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread with it—the bread of affliction—because you came out of the land of Egypt in great haste, so that all the days of your life you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt. ⁴ No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory for seven days; and none of the meat of what you slaughter on the evening of the first day shall remain until morning. ⁵ You are not permitted to offer the passover sacrifice within any of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you. ⁶ But at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name, only there shall you offer the passover sacrifice, in the evening at sunset, the time of day when you departed from Egypt. ⁷ You shall cook it and eat it at the place that the LORD your God will choose; the next morning you may go back to your tents. ⁸ For six days you shall continue to eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly for the LORD your God, when you shall do no work.

The Festival of Weeks Reviewed

9 You shall count seven weeks; begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. ¹⁰ Then you shall keep the festival of

^a Or new moon

Read Deuteronomy 16:18—17:20

Israel's judges must be impartial and not take bribes. Justice and justice alone must be their aim. Israel's king must not amass military might (horses), wives, or wealth. He must not consider himself above his people. Rather, Israel's king is to devote himself to study of God's law.

Reflect: For Israel's kings and politicians the source of authority is God, and it is intended to enable them to serve God's people. But with rank and authority come temptations to put self-interest and self-preservation above service to God's people.

Pray: Lord, guide my own exercise of the authority you give me. Grant that in exercising my responsibilities I may serve your people as you would have them served.

Act: I will inventory the circumstances in my life where I have some share in God's authority, and I will reflect on how I can better and more impartially exercise that authority.

weeks to the LORD your God, contributing a freewill offering in proportion to the blessing that you have received from the LORD your God. ¹¹ Rejoice before the LORD your God—you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites resident in your towns, as well as the strangers, the orphans, and the widows who are among you—at the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ¹² Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and diligently observe these statutes.

The Festival of Booths Reviewed

¹³ You shall keep the festival of booths^a for seven days, when you have gathered in the produce from your threshing floor and your wine press. ¹⁴ Rejoice during your festival, you and your sons and your daughters, your male and female slaves, as well as the Levites, the strangers, the orphans, and the widows resident in your towns. ¹⁵ Seven days you shall keep the festival to the LORD your God at the place that the LORD will choose; for the LORD your God will bless you in all your produce and in all your undertakings, and you shall surely celebrate.

¹⁶ Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the festival of unleavened bread, at the festival of weeks, and at the festival of booths.^a They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed; ¹⁷ all shall give as they are able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God that he has given you.

Municipal Judges and Officers

¹⁸ You shall appoint judges and officials throughout your tribes, in all your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall render just decisions for the people. ¹⁹ You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of those who are in the right. ²⁰ Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue, so that you may live and occupy the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

Forbidden Forms of Worship

²¹ You shall not plant any tree as a sacred pole^b beside the altar that you make for the LORD your God; ²² nor shall you set up a stone pillar—things that the LORD your God hates.

17 You must not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep that has a defect, anything seriously wrong; for that is abhorrent to the LORD your God.

² If there is found among you, in one of your towns that the LORD your God is giving you, a man or woman

^a Or tabernacles; Heb *succoth*

^b Heb *Asherah*

who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, and transgresses his covenant³ by going to serve other gods and worshiping them—whether the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven, which I have forbidden—⁴ and if it is reported to you or you hear of it, and you make a thorough inquiry, and the charge is proved true that such an abhorrent thing has occurred in Israel,⁵ then you shall bring out to your gates that man or that woman who has committed this crime and you shall stone the man or woman to death.⁶ On the evidence of two or three witnesses the death sentence shall be executed; a person must not be put to death on the evidence of only one witness.⁷ The hands of the witnesses shall be the first raised against the person to execute the death penalty, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

Legal Decisions by Priests and Judges

⁸ If a judicial decision is too difficult for you to make between one kind of bloodshed and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another—any such matters of dispute in your towns—then you shall immediately go up to the place that the LORD your God will choose,⁹ where you shall consult with the levitical priests and the judge who is in office in those days; they shall announce to you the decision in the case.¹⁰ Carry out exactly the decision that they announce to you from the place that the LORD will choose, diligently observing everything they instruct you.¹¹ You must carry out fully the law that they interpret for you or the ruling that they announce to you; do not turn aside from the decision that they announce to you, either to the right or to the left.¹² As for anyone who presumes to disobey the priest appointed to minister there to the LORD your God, or the judge, that person shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.¹³ All the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.

Limitations of Royal Authority

¹⁴ When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, “I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are around me,”¹⁵ you may indeed set over you a king whom the LORD your God will choose. One of your own community you may set as king over you; you are not permitted to put a foreigner over you, who is not of your own community.¹⁶ Even so, he must not acquire many horses for himself, or return the people to Egypt in order to acquire more horses, since the LORD has said to you, “You must never re-

Read Deuteronomy 18:1–8

The Lord himself is the heritage of the priestly tribe of Levi who minister to God's people. Accordingly, the Levites do not receive their own portion of land. Chosen by God to serve in God's name, the Levites and their families are to be supported by portions from the people's oblations and sacrifices.

Reflect: All are called to be members of God's holy people. Some are further called to devote themselves exclusively to service of God's people in God's name. Such servants must be supported from God's bounty to his people.

Pray: Lord, give me a greater appreciation for the gift of my own vocation and for those who respond to your call to devote themselves to serving your people in your name.

Act: Today I will find a special way to express my thanks and support to someone who ministers to me in God's name.

turn that way again." ¹⁷ And he must not acquire many wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; also silver and gold he must not acquire in great quantity for himself. ¹⁸ When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. ¹⁹ It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰ neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the right or to the left, so that he and his descendants may reign long over his kingdom in Israel.

Privileges of Priests and Levites

18 The levitical priests, the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no allotment or inheritance within Israel. They may eat the sacrifices that are the LORD's portion^a ² but they shall have no inheritance among the other members of the community; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.

³ This shall be the priests' due from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether an ox or a sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder, the two jowls, and the stomach. ⁴ The first fruits of your grain, your wine, and your oil, as well as the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. ⁵ For the LORD your God has chosen Levi^b out of all your tribes, to stand and minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for all time.

⁶ If a Levite leaves any of your towns, from wherever he has been residing in Israel, and comes to the place that the LORD will choose (and he may come whenever he wishes), ⁷ then he may minister in the name of the LORD his God, like all his fellow-Levites who stand to minister there before the LORD. ⁸ They shall have equal portions to eat, even though they have income from the sale of family possessions.^a

Child-Sacrifice, Divination, and Magic Prohibited

⁹ When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you must not learn to imitate the abhorrent practices of those nations. ¹⁰ No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, ¹¹ or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead. ¹² For whoever does these things is abhorrent to the LORD; it is because of such abhorrent practices that the LORD your God is driving them out before you. ¹³ You must remain completely loyal to the

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Heb *him*

Read Deuteronomy 18:9–22

God's holy people may attempt to know and control the future or to manipulate fate by relying on superstitious devices and practices used by other peoples. God's holy people must sincerely rely upon the Lord their God. Their God will raise up for them prophets who, like Moses, will speak to them for and on behalf of God. But not all who claim to speak on behalf of the Lord are true prophets.

Reflect: Even today we continue to ask, "How can we recognize a word that the LORD has not spoken?"

Pray: Lord, grant that I may seek out and attentively listen to those whom you have raised up as prophets, especially when their message is difficult for me to hear.

Act: I will identify some possible prophets speaking for and on behalf of God today, and reflect on how I might incorporate their message into my life.

LORD your God. ¹⁴ Although these nations that you are about to dispossess do give heed to soothsayers and diviners, as for you, the LORD your God does not permit you to do so.

A New Prophet Like Moses

¹⁵ The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet^a like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet.^b ¹⁶ This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." ¹⁷ Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet^a like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet,^c who shall speak to them everything that I command. ¹⁹ Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet^d shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. ²⁰ But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die." ²¹ You may say to yourself, "How can we recognize a word that the LORD has not spoken?" ²² If a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; do not be frightened by it.

Laws concerning the Cities of Refuge

19 When the LORD your God has cut off the nations whose land the LORD your God is giving you, and you have dispossessed them and settled in their towns and in their houses, ² you shall set apart three cities in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess. ³ You shall calculate the distances^e and divide into three regions the land that the LORD your God gives you as a possession, so that any homicide can flee to one of them.

⁴ Now this is the case of a homicide who might flee there and live, that is, someone who has killed another person unintentionally when the two had not been at enmity before: ⁵ Suppose someone goes into the forest with another to cut wood, and when one of them swings the ax to cut down a tree, the head slips from the handle and strikes the other person who then dies; the killer may flee to one of these cities and live. ⁶ But if the distance is too great, the avenger of blood in hot anger might pursue and overtake and put the killer to death, although a death sentence was not deserved, since the two had not been at enmity before. ⁷ Therefore I command you: You shall set apart three cities.

^a Or prophets

^b Or such prophets

^c Or mouths of the prophets

^d Heb he

^e Or prepare roads to them

Read Deuteronomy 19

Deuteronomic law acknowledges that there will be unfortunate incidents in which one person accidentally causes the death of another. At such times anger and the desire for vengeance, however irrational, can be strong. The cities of refuge were one means by which the law both acknowledged the reality of the pain and loss and also sought to limit bloodshed and violence.

Reflect: Here, as throughout the Bible, God meets people where they are in their humanity, while nudging them to move beyond their violent inclinations.

Pray: Lord, in my striving to live as a member of your holy people, incline my heart toward understanding, compassion, and forgiveness in all circumstances.

Act: Today I will reflect on my reactions to how others' words and actions affect me. I will strive to shape my thoughts and reactions to reflect God's will.

8 If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he swore to your ancestors—and he will give you all the land that he promised your ancestors to give you,⁹ provided you diligently observe this entire commandment that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God and walking always in his ways—then you shall add three more cities to these three,¹⁰ so that the blood of an innocent person may not be shed in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, thereby bringing bloodguilt upon you.

11 But if someone at enmity with another lies in wait and attacks and takes the life of that person, and flees into one of these cities,¹² then the elders of the killer's city shall send to have the culprit taken from there and handed over to the avenger of blood to be put to death.¹³ Show no pity; you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, so that it may go well with you.

Property Boundaries

14 You must not move your neighbor's boundary marker, set up by former generations, on the property that will be allotted to you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

Law concerning Witnesses

15 A single witness shall not suffice to convict a person of any crime or wrongdoing in connection with any offense that may be committed. Only on the evidence of two or three witnesses shall a charge be sustained.¹⁶ If a malicious witness comes forward to accuse someone of wrongdoing,¹⁷ then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the LORD, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days,¹⁸ and the judges shall make a thorough inquiry. If the witness is a false witness, having testified falsely against another,¹⁹ then you shall do to the false witness just as the false witness had meant to do to the other. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.²⁰ The rest shall hear and be afraid, and a crime such as this shall never again be committed among you.²¹ Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Rules of Warfare

20 When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots, an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.² Before you engage in battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the troops,³ and shall say to them: "Hear, O Israel! Today you are drawing near to do battle against your enemies. Do not lose

Read Deuteronomy 20

Deuteronomy both accepts the reality of war and insists on limits to the horrors that wars entail. In practice, some of these provisions belie common sense. Israel is not to be concerned with the apparent superiority of enemy forces. Personal issues, a new house, a new vineyard, engagement to be married, even fear of death all take priority over a strong military.

Reflect: God's thoughts and ways often do not correspond to those of humans. Success and victory even in war for Israel does not depend upon superiority in numbers, weapons, or strategies.

Pray: Lord, grant me the faith and courage to trust that gentleness, compassion, and love can achieve long-term results and success far beyond what seems expedient at the moment.

Act: Today I will watch for temptations to put the expediency of the moment above your will for the good of all people and of all your universe.

heart, or be afraid, or panic, or be in dread of them; ⁴ for it is the LORD your God who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to give you victory.” ⁵ Then the officials shall address the troops, saying, “Has anyone built a new house but not dedicated it? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another dedicate it. ⁶ Has anyone planted a vineyard but not yet enjoyed its fruit? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another be first to enjoy its fruit. ⁷ Has anyone become engaged to a woman but not yet married her? He should go back to his house, or he might die in the battle and another marry her.” ⁸ The officials shall continue to address the troops, saying, “Is anyone afraid or disheartened? He should go back to his house, or he might cause the heart of his comrades to melt like his own.” ⁹ When the officials have finished addressing the troops, then the commanders shall take charge of them.

¹⁰ When you draw near to a town to fight against it, offer it terms of peace. ¹¹ If it accepts your terms of peace and surrenders to you, then all the people in it shall serve you at forced labor. ¹² If it does not submit to you peacefully, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; ¹³ and when the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall put all its males to the sword. ¹⁴ You may, however, take as your booty the women, the children, livestock, and everything else in the town, all its spoil. You may enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the LORD your God has given you. ¹⁵ Thus you shall treat all the towns that are very far from you, which are not towns of the nations here. ¹⁶ But as for the towns of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. ¹⁷ You shall annihilate them—the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—just as the LORD your God has commanded, ¹⁸ so that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods, and you thus sin against the LORD your God.

¹⁹ If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down. Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you? ²⁰ You may destroy only the trees that you know do not produce food; you may cut them down for use in building siege-works against the town that makes war with you, until it falls.

Read Deuteronomy 21

Being members of God's community does not mean that everything works out perfectly. Here Deuteronomy makes provision for several unfortunate but real-life circumstances: unsolved murders, treatment of captured women when their forced marriages go sour, fair treatment of children in polygamous families, handling consistently rebellious and undisciplined children, and dealing with corpses of executed criminals.

Reflect: We may not care for some of these answers, but we can still find comfort in the conviction that no detail or circumstance of human existence lies beyond God's care and concern.

Pray: Lord, teach me to seek your will in dealing with the difficult circumstances that confront me in life. Then give me the courage to accept your will and carry it out.

Act: Today I will reflect on my own and my society's responses to the misfortunes and abuses I see around me.

Law concerning Murder by Persons Unknown

21 If, in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess, a body is found lying in open country, and it is not known who struck the person down,² then your elders and your judges shall come out to measure the distances to the towns that are near the body.³ The elders of the town nearest the body shall take a heifer that has never been worked, one that has not pulled in the yoke;⁴ the elders of that town shall bring the heifer down to a wadi with running water, which is neither plowed nor sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the wadi.⁵ Then the priests, the sons of Levi, shall come forward, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister to him and to pronounce blessings in the name of the LORD, and by their decision all cases of dispute and assault shall be settled.⁶ All the elders of that town nearest the body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the wadi,⁷ and they shall declare: "Our hands did not shed this blood, nor were we witnesses to it."⁸ Absolve, O LORD, your people Israel, whom you redeemed; do not let the guilt of innocent blood remain in the midst of your people Israel." Then they will be absolved of bloodguilt.⁹ So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst, because you must do what is right in the sight of the LORD.

Female Captives

10 When you go out to war against your enemies, and the LORD your God hands them over to you and you take them captive,¹¹ suppose you see among the captives a beautiful woman whom you desire and want to marry,¹² and so you bring her home to your house: she shall shave her head, pare her nails,¹³ discard her captive's garb, and shall remain in your house a full month, mourning for her father and mother; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife.¹⁴ But if you are not satisfied with her, you shall let her go free and not sell her for money. You must not treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

The Right of the Firstborn

15 If a man has two wives, one of them loved and the other disliked, and if both the loved and the disliked have borne him sons, the firstborn being the son of the one who is disliked,¹⁶ then on the day when he wills his possessions to his sons, he is not permitted to treat the son of the loved as the firstborn in preference to the son of the disliked, who is the firstborn.¹⁷ He must acknowledge as firstborn the son of the one who is disliked, giving him a double portion^a of all that he has;

^a Heb two-thirds

since he is the first issue of his virility, the right of the firstborn is his.

Rebellious Children

18 If someone has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father and mother, who does not heed them when they discipline him, ¹⁹ then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his town at the gate of that place. ²⁰ They shall say to the elders of his town, “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a drunkard.” ²¹ Then all

the men of the town shall stone him to death. So you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel will hear, and be afraid.

Miscellaneous Laws

22 When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, ²³ his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not defile the land that the LORD your God is giving you for possession.

Read Deuteronomy 22:1–12

“You shall not...ignore them.” God’s holy people are not to be indifferent toward their brothers and sisters. When they find something lost, here a work animal or piece of property, they are to get involved with its care and protection, even when the owner is unknown. Further, they are not to be indifferent to the suffering of animals or to abuse them. While they may take a mother bird’s eggs or her brood for food, they are to free the mother that the species will continue.

Reflect: I am “my brother’s keeper.” Because I have been made in God’s image, I am called to exercise responsible stewardship over all God’s creatures.

Pray: Lord, grant that I may not be indifferent to the needs of my brothers and sisters, or to the exploitation and extermination of your creatures.

Act: Today I will respond in love and without judgment when someone reaches out to me for help.

22 You shall not watch your neighbor’s ox or sheep straying away and ignore them; you shall take them back to their owner. ² If the owner does not reside near you or you do not know who the owner is, you shall bring it to your own house, and it shall remain with you until the owner claims it; then you shall return it. ³ You shall do the same with a neighbor’s donkey; you shall do the same with a neighbor’s garment; and you shall do the same with anything else that your neighbor loses and you find. You may not withhold your help.

⁴ You shall not see your neighbor’s donkey or ox fallen on the road and ignore it; you shall help to lift it up.

⁵ A woman shall not wear a man’s apparel, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment; for whoever does such things is abhorrent to the LORD your God.

⁶ If you come on a bird’s nest, in any tree or on the ground, with fledglings or eggs, with the mother sitting on the fledglings or on the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young. ⁷ Let the mother go, taking only the young for yourself, in order that it may go well with you and you may live long.

⁸ When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof; otherwise you might have blood-guilt on your house, if anyone should fall from it.

⁹ You shall not sow your vineyard with a second kind of seed, or the whole yield will have to be forfeited, both the crop that you have sown and the yield of the vineyard itself.

¹⁰ You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.

¹¹ You shall not wear clothes made of wool and linen woven together.

¹² You shall make tassels on the four corners of the cloak with which you cover yourself.

Read Deuteronomy 22:13–30

These laws regarding “crimes against marriage” protect both the married woman and her parents. Even the earliest Rabbinic commentaries recognized that the ease with which the “evidence” of virginity could be faked or fabricated made it unlikely that any unhappy husband seeking to divorce his wife would resort to these provisions to attempt to recover the “bride price.”

Reflect: While the patriarchal and male-oriented Old Testament world allowed for husbands to divorce their wives, taking such an action was not to be easy or profitable.

Pray: Lord, may I imitate the patience, gentleness, and wisdom with which you accept, but then nudge a very imperfect world in the direction of greater wholeness.

Act: Today I will pay attention to subtle minor details, small ways in which I can help others to find and experience the goodness and beauty of the world as God intended it from the beginning.

Laws concerning Sexual Relations

13 Suppose a man marries a woman, but after going in to her, he dislikes her ¹⁴ and makes up charges against her, slandering her by saying, “I married this woman; but when I lay with her, I did not find evidence of her virginity.” ¹⁵ The father of the young woman and her mother shall then submit the evidence of the young woman’s virginity to the elders of the city at the gate. ¹⁶ The father of the young woman shall say to the elders: “I gave my daughter in marriage to this man but he dislikes her; ¹⁷ now he has made up charges against her, saying, ‘I did not find evidence of your daughter’s virginity.’ But here is the evidence of my daughter’s virginity.” Then they shall spread out the cloth before the elders of the town. ¹⁸ The elders of that town shall take the man and punish him; ¹⁹ they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver (which they shall give to the young woman’s father) because he has slandered a virgin of Israel. She shall remain his wife; he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives.

20 If, however, this charge is true, that evidence of the young woman’s virginity was not found, ²¹ then they shall bring the young woman out to the entrance of her father’s house and the men of her town shall stone her to death, because she committed a disgraceful act in Israel by prostituting herself in her father’s house. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

22 If a man is caught lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman as well as the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.

23 If there is a young woman, a virgin already engaged to be married, and a man meets her in the town and lies with her, ²⁴ you shall bring both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death, the young woman because she did not cry for help in the town and the man because he violated his neighbor’s wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

25 But if the man meets the engaged woman in the open country, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. ²⁶ You shall do nothing to the young woman; the young woman has not committed an offense punishable by death, because this case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor. ²⁷ Since he found her in the open country, the engaged woman may have cried for help, but there was no one to rescue her.

28 If a man meets a virgin who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are caught in the act, ²⁹ the man who lay with her shall give fifty shekels of silver to the young woman’s father, and she shall be-

Read Deuteronomy 23:1–14

The association here of provisions for cleanliness in Israel's military camps and the kinds of people to be excluded from membership in God's community reflects human prejudices rather than God's will. Isaiah (56:3–4) foresaw that Israel's God would welcome the worship of eunuchs and foreigners in the temple. The tribe of Judah came from an incestuous union (Gen 38). Ruth, David's grandmother and Jesus' ancestor, was a Moabite.

Reflect: How easy it is for humans, myself included, to assume that God shares our prejudices and distorted reasoning about those who are different.

Pray: Lord, remind me often of your real presence and goodness within every person, especially those whom I am inclined to judge as inferior or sinners.

Act: When I encounter others today, I will recall that I am on holy ground, standing in the presence of God's image and likeness.

come his wife. Because he violated her he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives.

30^a A man shall not marry his father's wife, thereby violating his father's rights.^b

Those Excluded from the Assembly

23 No one whose testicles are crushed or whose penis is cut off shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

2 Those born of an illicit union shall not be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

3 No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD. Even to the tenth generation, none of their descendants shall be admitted to the assembly of the LORD, ⁴because they did not meet you with food and water on your journey out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam son of Beor, from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. ⁵(Yet the LORD your God refused to heed Balaam; the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loved you.) ⁶You shall never promote their welfare or their prosperity as long as you live.

7 You shall not abhor any of the Edomites, for they are your kin. You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an alien residing in their land. ⁸The children of the third generation that are born to them may be admitted to the assembly of the LORD.

Sanitary, Ritual, and Humanitarian Precepts

9 When you are encamped against your enemies you shall guard against any impropriety.

10 If one of you becomes unclean because of a nocturnal emission, then he shall go outside the camp; he must not come within the camp. ¹¹When evening comes, he shall wash himself with water, and when the sun has set, he may come back into the camp.

12 You shall have a designated area outside the camp to which you shall go. ¹³With your utensils you shall have a trowel; when you relieve yourself outside, you shall dig a hole with it and then cover up your excrement. ¹⁴Because the LORD your God travels along with your camp, to save you and to hand over your enemies to you, therefore your camp must be holy, so that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you.

15 Slaves who have escaped to you from their owners shall not be given back to them. ¹⁶They shall reside with you, in your midst, in any place they choose in any

^a Ch 23.1 in Heb

^b Heb *uncovering his father's skirt*

Read Deuteronomy 23:15–25

Sin and its effects are a very present reality. Deuteronomy's precepts here accept but seek to mitigate that reality. At least some escaped slaves are to be protected. Sexual exploitation has no place in the worship of Israel's God. Those whom God has blessed with surplus resources and food may not take advantage of the needy. That which is produced by each person's labor must be respected.

Reflect: We fulfill the law when we treat each other as a community in which the needs of all are addressed and no one is exploited, abused, or taken advantage of.

Pray: Lord, through my prayerful study of your word lead me to an ever better understanding of your will for the world and its people.

Act: Today I will speak out in defense of someone or some group that is being taken advantage of.

Read Deuteronomy 24:1–5

Deuteronomy accepts that marriages sometimes do not work out, and allowing for the hardness of human hearts, permits Israelite husbands to divorce their wives. Still Deuteronomy is clearly on the side of marriage, fidelity, and family. For a new husband the needs of a new family and the "joy" of a new wife take priority over the demands of military or public service.

Reflect: Even in Jesus' time, this text was seen as having to do with the extent to which divorce was to be permitted, ignoring what the passage suggests regarding family values or the priority of a wife's concerns.

Pray: Lord, grant that our society and our churches may be more attentive to your concern for families.

one of your towns, wherever they please; you shall not oppress them.

17 None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute; none of the sons of Israel shall be a temple prostitute. ¹⁸You shall not bring the fee of a prostitute or the wages of a male prostitute^a into the house of the LORD your God in payment for any vow, for both of these are abhorrent to the LORD your God.

19 You shall not charge interest on loans to another Israelite, interest on money, interest on provisions, interest on anything that is lent. ²⁰On loans to a foreigner you may charge interest, but on loans to another Israelite you may not charge interest, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings in the land that you are about to enter and possess.

21 If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not postpone fulfilling it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and you would incur guilt. ²²But if you refrain from vowing, you will not incur guilt. ²³Whatever your lips utter you must diligently perform, just as you have freely vowed to the LORD your God with your own mouth.

24 If you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes, as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in a container.

25 If you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.

Laws concerning Marriage and Divorce

24 Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house ²and goes off to become another man's wife. ³Then suppose the second man dislikes her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house (or the second man who married her dies); ⁴her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that would be abhorrent to the LORD, and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession.

Miscellaneous Laws

5 When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be charged with any related duty. He shall be free at home one year, to be happy with the wife whom he has married.

^a Heb a *dog*

Act: As I learn of local and national news events today I will reflect on these in light of God's priority for families and their concerns.

Read Deuteronomy 24:6—25:4

The rights of all to dignity, to earn a living, to shelter and feed their families are fundamental biblical values. Respecting these values brings God's blessings for all. The God who responded to the oppressed Israelites' cries in Egypt continues to hear and respond to all who are deprived of their rights.

Reflect: Fundamental in Deuteronomy is the view that all God's people can live in comfort in the land with which God has blessed them, provided that all are in accord with God's values.

Pray: Lord, grant me a growing consciousness that the very presence of needy and oppressed people around me reflects my own and others' failures to observe your covenant.

Act: Today I will seek to respond to another's need in a manner that both respects the other's dignity and that brings my life more into correspondence with God's will.

Read Deuteronomy 25:5–10

The practice of levirate marriage is reflected in Genesis 38 (Judah and Tamar), the book of Ruth, and in the Sadducees' argument with Jesus (Mt 22:23–33, Mk 12:18–27; Lk 20:27–40). While Deuteronomy focuses on preserving the dead brother's name and family line, another advantage was financial support for a vulnerable widow, who would then also have a son to represent and support her.

6 No one shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge, for that would be taking a life in pledge.

7 If someone is caught kidnaping another Israelite, enslaving or selling the Israelite, then that kidnaper shall die. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

8 Guard against an outbreak of a leprous^a skin disease by being very careful; you shall carefully observe whatever the levitical priests instruct you, just as I have commanded them. ⁹Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam on your journey out of Egypt.

10 When you make your neighbor a loan of any kind, you shall not go into the house to take the pledge. ¹¹You shall wait outside, while the person to whom you are making the loan brings the pledge out to you. ¹²If the person is poor, you shall not sleep in the garment given you as^b the pledge. ¹³You shall give the pledge back by sunset, so that your neighbor may sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before the LORD your God.

14 You shall not withhold the wages of poor and needy laborers, whether other Israelites or aliens who reside in your land in one of your towns. ¹⁵You shall pay them their wages daily before sunset, because they are poor and their livelihood depends on them; otherwise they might cry to the LORD against you, and you would incur guilt.

16 Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; only for their own crimes may persons be put to death.

17 You shall not deprive a resident alien or an orphan of justice; you shall not take a widow's garment in pledge. ¹⁸Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this.

19 When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be left for the alien, the orphan, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all your undertakings. ²⁰When you beat your olive trees, do not strip what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.

21 When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow. ²²Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I am commanding you to do this.

25 Suppose two persons have a dispute and enter into litigation, and the judges decide between them, declaring one to be in the right and the other to be in the wrong. ²If the one in the wrong deserves to be flogged, the judge shall make that person lie down and

^a A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

^b Heb lacks *the garment given you as*

Reflect: While the fact that Israelite women sometimes could not inherit property or testify in court may trouble us, we must also acknowledge efforts to address and mitigate the injustices. See also Numbers 27:5–11.

Pray: Lord, give me the wisdom to recognize those times when what is legally allowed leads to injustice and undeserved hardship. Give me the courage to try to change such practices.

Act: In whatever conflicts and confrontations I encounter today, I will at least reflect upon whether the usual rules contribute to equity and justice.

Read Deuteronomy 25:11–19

Sandwiched between two understandably troubling ancient provisions is an assertion that dishonesty in any business practice is an abomination to the Lord.

Reflect: We are repulsed by ancient Israel's misplaced focus on male honor and the intense ethnic hatred reflected in the command to annihilate Amalek. Still, in our own modern world we should be just as repulsed by common but unjust and unethical business practices that devastate people, depriving them of their homes and the ability to support themselves and their families.

Pray: Lord, teach us to focus on aspects of our life and culture that conflict with the spirit of Deuteronomy, not on simplistic comparisons in our favor.

Act: Today I will pay close attention to my feelings about gender-based and ethnic differences, and I will rigorously examine my own justice and honesty in all my interactions.

be beaten in his presence with the number of lashes proportionate to the offense. ³Forty lashes may be given but not more; if more lashes than these are given, your neighbor will be degraded in your sight.

⁴You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

Levirate Marriage

⁵When brothers reside together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband's brother shall go in to her, taking her in marriage, and performing the duty of a husband's brother to her, ⁶and the firstborn whom she bears shall succeed to the name of the deceased brother, so that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. ⁷But if the man has no desire to marry his brother's widow, then his brother's widow shall go up to the elders at the gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me." ⁸Then the elders of his town shall summon him and speak to him. If he persists, saying, "I have no desire to marry her," ⁹then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, pull his sandal off his foot, spit in his face, and declare, "This is what is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house." ¹⁰Throughout Israel his family shall be known as "the house of him whose sandal was pulled off."

Various Commands

¹¹If men get into a fight with one another, and the wife of one intervenes to rescue her husband from the grip of his opponent by reaching out and seizing his genitals, ¹²you shall cut off her hand; show no pity.

¹³You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, large and small. ¹⁴You shall not have in your house two kinds of measures, large and small. ¹⁵You shall have only a full and honest weight; you shall have only a full and honest measure, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ¹⁶For all who do such things, all who act dishonestly, are abhorrent to the LORD your God.

¹⁷Remember what Amalek did to you on your journey out of Egypt, ¹⁸how he attacked you on the way, when you were faint and weary, and struck down all who lagged behind you; he did not fear God. ¹⁹Therefore when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your enemies on every hand, in the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; do not forget.

Read Deuteronomy 26:1–11

Moses looks to a future when the Israelites will have harvested their crops in the Promised Land. They are to bring some of their produce as a thanksgiving offering to the sanctuary. In a beautiful creed-like prayer they acknowledge God's interventions in their history since the time when their ancestor Jacob, "a wandering Aramean" settled in Egypt.

Reflect: As indicated in previous instructions in Deuteronomy for celebrating a feast in God's presence, the festive family meal is meant to be shared.

Pray: Lord, today as I thank you for all your gifts, I am especially grateful for the influences of all those people, known and unknown to me, who have brought me to this time in your presence.

Act: Today I will express my gratitude by sharing some of my time and attention with someone who is alone or hurting.

Read Deuteronomy 26:12–19

After the Israelites announce that they have appropriately shared the abundance with which God has blessed them with those less fortunate, and that they have observed all God's commandments with all their hearts and souls, they ask their God to continue to look upon them and bless them. In this manner they show themselves to be a people particularly God's own, a people sacred to the Lord their God.

Reflect: What today might stand in the way of my honestly repeating Israel's confident confession?

Pray: Lord, grant that my way of life might increasingly reflect what it means to be part of a people particularly your own and sacred to you.

Act: Today I will pause several times and ask myself how I am observing all God's commandments with all my heart and soul.

First Fruits and Tithes

26 When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, ² you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³ You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." ⁴ When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, ⁵ you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. ⁶ When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, ⁷ we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸ The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; ⁹ and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. ¹¹ Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

¹² When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year (which is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, so that they may eat their fill within your towns, ¹³ then you shall say before the LORD your God: "I have removed the sacred portion from the house, and I have given it to the Levites, the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows, in accordance with your entire commandment that you commanded me; I have neither transgressed nor forgotten any of your commandments: ¹⁴ I have not eaten of it while in mourning; I have not removed any of it while I was unclean; and I have not offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the LORD my God, doing just as you commanded me. ¹⁵ Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our ancestors—a land flowing with milk and honey."

Read Deuteronomy 27

Moses directs the Israelites to renew their covenant commitments after they enter God's land. With the people gathered around a monument inscribed with the law, the Levites will proclaim, "This very day you have become the people of the LORD, your God." There follow twelve curses that will fall upon those who violate the provisions of God's law. To each curse, the people affirm, "Amen."

Reflect: At Easter and at baptisms all present are invited to renew their baptismal commitment to renounce sin and live as members of God's covenanted people.

Pray: Lord, forgive me if I have neglected to attend to my baptismal promises in becoming and living as one of your people.

Act: Today I will frequently remind myself of my promise in baptism to renounce sin, and I will reflect on the role this promise plays in my daily affairs.

Concluding Exhortation

16 This very day the LORD your God is commanding you to observe these statutes and ordinances; so observe them diligently with all your heart and with all your soul. 17 Today you have obtained the LORD's agreement: to be your God; and for you to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, and his ordinances, and to obey him. 18 Today the LORD has obtained your agreement: to be his treasured people, as he promised you, and to keep his commandments; 19 for him to set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honor; and for you to be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.

The Inscribed Stones and Altar on Mount Ebal

27 Then Moses and the elders of Israel charged all the people as follows: Keep the entire commandment that I am commanding you today. 2 On the day that you cross over the Jordan into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones and cover them with plaster. 3 You shall write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over, to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you. 4 So when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I am commanding you today, on Mount Ebal, and you shall cover them with plaster. 5 And you shall build an altar there to the LORD your God, an altar of stones on which you have not used an iron tool. 6 You must build the altar of the LORD your God of unhewn^a stones. Then offer up burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God, 7 make sacrifices of well-being, and eat them there, rejoicing before the LORD your God. 8 You shall write on the stones all the words of this law very clearly.

9 Then Moses and the levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying: Keep silence and hear, O Israel! This very day you have become the people of the LORD your God. 10 Therefore obey the LORD your God, observing his commandments and his statutes that I am commanding you today.

Twelve Curses

11 The same day Moses charged the people as follows: 12 When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim for the blessing of the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. 13 And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and

^a Heb *whole*

Read Deuteronomy 28

This long chapter centers on four blessings (vv. 3–6) and four corresponding curses (vv. 16–19). The blessings, as expounded in detail in the text, are to fall upon an obedient Israel, living as God’s people in God’s land. Likewise the curses, developed in considerable and specific detail, will result from failure to carefully observe all God’s commandments. The descriptions of invasion, siege, and exile foreshadow what is to be Israel’s future.

Reflect: The short first section devoted to blessings has a remorseful “if only” tone. The long, detailed curses section reflects the allure, power, and devastating consequences of sin.

Pray: Lord, help me to believe that the blessings that can flow from observing your will are beyond imagining.

Act: Today I will live in the hope that the blessings in my life can attract others to seek and follow God’s will.

Naphtali. ¹⁴Then the Levites shall declare in a loud voice to all the Israelites:

15 “Cursed be anyone who makes an idol or casts an image, anything abhorrent to the LORD, the work of an artisan, and sets it up in secret.” All the people shall respond, saying, “Amen!”

16 “Cursed be anyone who dishonors father or mother.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

17 “Cursed be anyone who moves a neighbor’s boundary marker.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

18 “Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind person on the road.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

19 “Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

20 “Cursed be anyone who lies with his father’s wife, because he has violated his father’s rights.”^a All the people shall say, “Amen!”

21 “Cursed be anyone who lies with any animal.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

22 “Cursed be anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

23 “Cursed be anyone who lies with his mother-in-law.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

24 “Cursed be anyone who strikes down a neighbor in secret.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

25 “Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

26 “Cursed be anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by observing them.” All the people shall say, “Amen!”

Blessings for Obedience

28 If you will only obey the LORD your God, by diligently observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth; ²all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the LORD your God:

3 Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field.

4 Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your livestock, both the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock.

5 Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

6 Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.

7 The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out

^a Heb *uncovered his father’s skirt*

against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. ⁸The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns, and in all that you undertake; he will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. ⁹The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. ¹⁰All the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you. ¹¹The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground in the land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give you. ¹²The LORD will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. ¹³The LORD will make you the head, and not the tail; you shall be only at the top, and not at the bottom—if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I am commanding you today, by diligently observing them, ¹⁴and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I am commanding you today, either to the right or to the left, following other gods to serve them.

Warnings against Disobedience

15 But if you will not obey the LORD your God by diligently observing all his commandments and decrees, which I am commanding you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you:

16 Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field.

17 Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl.

18 Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your ground, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock.

19 Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out.

20 The LORD will send upon you disaster, panic, and frustration in everything

you attempt to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly, on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me. ²¹The LORD will make the pestilence cling to you until it has consumed you off the land that you are entering to possess. ²²The LORD will afflict you with consumption, fever, inflammation, with fiery heat and drought, and with blight and mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. ²³The sky over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you iron. ²⁴The LORD will change the rain of your land into powder, and only dust shall come down upon you from the sky until you are destroyed.

25 The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out against them one way and flee before them seven ways. You shall become an object of horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. ²⁶Your corpses shall be food for every bird of the air and animal of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away. ²⁷The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt, with ulcers, scurvy, and itch, of which you cannot be healed. ²⁸The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind; ²⁹you shall grope about at noon as blind people grope in darkness, but you shall be unable to find your way; and you shall be continually abused and robbed, without anyone to help. ³⁰You shall become engaged to a woman, but another man shall lie with her. You shall build a house, but not live in it. You shall plant a vineyard, but not enjoy its fruit. ³¹Your ox shall be butchered before your eyes, but you shall not eat of it. Your donkey shall be stolen in front of you, and shall not be restored to you. Your sheep shall be given to your enemies, without anyone to help you. ³²Your sons and daughters shall be given to another people, while you look on; you will strain your eyes looking for them all day but be powerless to do anything. ³³A people whom you do not know shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors; you shall be continually abused and crushed, ³⁴and driven mad by the sight that your eyes shall see. ³⁵The LORD will strike you on the

knees and on the legs with grievous boils of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head. ³⁶The LORD will bring you, and the king whom you set over you, to a nation that neither you nor your ancestors have known, where you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone. ³⁷You shall become an object of horror, a proverb, and a byword among all the peoples where the LORD will lead you.

³⁸You shall carry much seed into the field but shall gather little in, for the locust shall consume it. ³⁹You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink the wine nor gather the grapes, for the worm shall eat them. ⁴⁰You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off. ⁴¹You shall have sons and daughters, but they shall not remain yours, for they shall go into captivity. ⁴²All your trees and the fruit of your ground the cicada shall take over. ⁴³Aliens residing among you shall ascend above you higher and higher, while you shall descend lower and lower. ⁴⁴They shall lend to you but you shall not lend to them; they shall be the head and you shall be the tail.

⁴⁵All these curses shall come upon you, pursuing and overtaking you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God, by observing the commandments and the decrees that he commanded you. ⁴⁶They shall be among you and your descendants as a sign and a portent forever.

⁴⁷Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and with gladness of heart for the abundance of everything, ⁴⁸therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the LORD will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and lack of everything. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you. ⁴⁹The LORD will bring a nation from far away, from the end of the earth, to swoop down on you like an eagle, a nation whose language you do not understand, ⁵⁰a grim-faced nation showing no respect to the old or favor to the young. ⁵¹It shall consume

the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your ground until you are destroyed, leaving you neither grain, wine, and oil, nor the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, until it has made you perish. ⁵²It shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls, in which you trusted, come down throughout your land; it shall besiege you in all your towns throughout the land that the LORD your God has given you. ⁵³In the desperate straits to which the enemy siege reduces you, you will eat the fruit of your womb, the flesh of your own sons and daughters whom the LORD your God has given you. ⁵⁴Even the most refined and gentle of men among you will begrudge food to his own brother, to the wife whom he embraces, and to the last of his remaining children, ⁵⁵giving to none of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating, because nothing else remains to him, in the desperate straits to which the enemy siege will reduce you in all your towns. ⁵⁶She who is the most refined and gentle among you, so gentle and refined that she does not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground, will begrudge food to the husband whom she embraces, to her own son, and to her own daughter, ⁵⁷begrudging even the afterbirth that comes out from between her thighs, and the children that she bears, because she is eating them in secret for lack of anything else, in the desperate straits to which the enemy siege will reduce you in your towns.

⁵⁸If you do not diligently observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, fearing this glorious and awesome name, the LORD your God, ⁵⁹then the LORD will overwhelm both you and your offspring with severe and lasting afflictions and grievous and lasting maladies. ⁶⁰He will bring back upon you all the diseases of Egypt, of which you were in dread, and they shall cling to you. ⁶¹Every other malady and affliction, even though not recorded in the book of this law, the LORD will inflict on you until you are destroyed. ⁶²Although once you were as numerous as the stars in heaven, you shall be left few

in number, because you did not obey the LORD your God. ⁶³And just as the LORD took delight in making you prosperous and numerous, so the LORD will take delight in bringing you to ruin and destruction; you shall be plucked off the land that you are entering to possess. ⁶⁴The LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known. ⁶⁵Among those nations you shall find no ease, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you a trembling heart, failing eyes, and a languishing spirit. ⁶⁶Your life shall hang in doubt before you; night and day

you shall be in dread, with no assurance of your life. ⁶⁷In the morning you shall say, “If only it were evening!” and at evening you shall say, “If only it were morning!”—because of the dread that your heart shall feel and the sights that your eyes shall see. ⁶⁸The LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, by a route that I promised you would never see again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer.

29^aThese are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in the land of Moab, in addition to the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb.

Read Deuteronomy 29

From the first verses of Deuteronomy, Moses has recalled God's past favors to Israel in a manner that incorporates the present generation of Israelites into that history. Moses' summary here continues that practice but then extends it to include all future generations. Forever, with each recitation of the story to a new generation, the Israelites' descendants will experience and be incorporated into God's saving covenant.

Reflect: Reaching across the centuries, Deuteronomy's account of God's saving interventions on behalf of his people extends down to and incorporates me into that sacred history.

Pray: Lord, I thank you for the gift of inclusion as a member of a people whom you saved and made sacred to yourself.

Act: Today I will seek to do some special and significant act of kindness for someone in a manner that does not draw attention to myself.

The Covenant Renewed in Moab

^{2b}Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, ³the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders. ⁴But to this day the LORD has not given you a mind to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear. ⁵I have led you forty years in the wilderness. The clothes on your back have not worn out, and the sandals on your feet have not worn out; ⁶you have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink—so that you may know that I am the LORD your God. ⁷When you came to this place, King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan came out against us for battle, but we defeated them. ⁸We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. ⁹Therefore diligently observe the words of this covenant, in order that you may succeed^c in everything that you do.

¹⁰You stand assembled today, all of you, before the LORD your God—the leaders of your tribes,^d your elders, and your officials, all the men of Israel, ¹¹your children, your women, and the aliens who are in your camp, both those who cut your wood and those who draw your water—¹²to enter into the covenant of the LORD your God, sworn by an oath, which the LORD your God is making with you today; ¹³in order that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you and as he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ¹⁴I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath, not only with you who

^a Ch 28.69 in Heb

^b Ch 29.1 in Heb

^c Or *deal wisely*

^d Gk Syr: Heb *your leaders, your tribes*

stand here with us today before the LORD our God,¹⁵ but also with those who are not here with us today.¹⁶ You know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed.¹⁷ You have seen their detestable things, the filthy idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold, that were among them.¹⁸ It may be that there is among you a man or woman, or a family or tribe, whose heart is already turning away from the LORD our God to serve the gods of those nations. It may be that there is among you a root sprouting poisonous and bitter growth.¹⁹ All who hear the words of this oath and bless themselves, thinking in their hearts, “We are safe even though we go our own stubborn ways” (thus bringing disaster on moist and dry alike)^a—²⁰the LORD will be unwilling to pardon them, for the LORD’s anger and passion will smoke against them. All the curses written in this book will descend on them, and the LORD will blot out their names from under heaven.²¹ The LORD will single them out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the law.²² The next generation, your children who rise up after you, as well as

the foreigner who comes from a distant country, will see the devastation of that land and the afflictions with which the LORD has afflicted it—²³all its soil burned out by sulfur and salt, nothing planted, nothing sprouting, unable to support any vegetation, like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD destroyed in his fierce anger—²⁴they and indeed all the nations will wonder, “Why has the LORD done thus to this land? What caused this great display of anger?”²⁵ They will conclude, “It is because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.²⁶ They turned and served other gods, worshiping them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them;²⁷ so the anger of the LORD was kindled against that land, bringing on it every curse written in this book.²⁸ The LORD uprooted them from their land in anger, fury, and great wrath, and cast them into another land, as is now the case.”²⁹ The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the revealed things belong to us and to our children forever, to observe all the words of this law.

God’s Fidelity Assured

30 When all these things have happened to you, the blessings and the curses that I have set before you, if you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you,² and return to the LORD your God, and you and your children obey him with all your heart and with all your soul, just as I am commanding you today,³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom the LORD your God has scattered you.⁴ Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world,^b from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you back.⁵ The LORD your God will bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.

6 Moreover, the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Heb of heaven

Read Deuteronomy 30

Moses anticipates that Israel will not observe God's covenant and will consequently be scattered among the nations. When Israel later returns to their God, the Lord will again gather them to himself, now with circumcised hearts. For God's people, the choice remains between blessing and curse, between life and death. Moses exhorts them to choose life, that they and their descendants may have long life with their God in his Promised Land.

Reflect: Sin's devastating consequences play themselves out. God, patient and compassionate, waits, holding out the promise of blessing and life in his company.

Pray: Lord, help me to keep ever in mind that your will is very near to me, already in my mouth and in my heart. I have only to carry it out.

Act: Today I will do something special to both celebrate and share the special gift of life that I enjoy as a member of God's holy people.

love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live. ⁷ The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on the adversaries who took advantage of you. ⁸ Then you shall again obey the LORD, observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, ⁹ and the LORD your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your soil. For the LORD will again take delight in prospering you, just as he delighted in prospering your ancestors, ¹⁰ when you obey the LORD your God by observing his commandments and decrees that are written in this book of the law, because you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Exhortation to Choose Life

11 Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" ¹³ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?" ¹⁴ No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.

15 See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God^a that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Joshua Becomes Moses' Successor

31 When Moses had finished speaking all^b these words to all Israel, ² he said to them: "I am now

^a Gk: Heb lacks *If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God*

^b Q Ms Gk: MT *Moses went and spoke*

Read Deuteronomy 31:1–29

Moses' instruction of the new generation of Israelites, an instruction that began in the first chapter of Deuteronomy, now draws toward a close. Acknowledging his age and his weakness, Moses affirms that God has told him that he will not cross into the Promised Land. God himself, not Moses, will cross over the Jordan before Israel, and destroy the nations before them. Joshua, Moses' aide, will lead Israel across but, like Moses, Joshua will be merely God's agent.

Reflect: Throughout his life, Moses accepted that he was a part of something much bigger than himself. He spoke for and was the agent through which God rescued and saved the people of Israel. But he also repeatedly stood with Israel and interceded on their behalf.

Pray: Lord, may it be enough for me that I can be your servant, someone through whom you sometimes speak and act.

Act: Today I will seek to encourage and empower another to serve as God's spokesperson and agent.

one hundred twenty years old. I am no longer able to get about, and the LORD has told me, 'You shall not cross over this Jordan.' ³The LORD your God himself will cross over before you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua also will cross over before you, as the LORD promised. ⁴The LORD will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when he destroyed them. ⁵The LORD will give them over to you and you shall deal with them in full accord with the command that I have given to you. ⁶Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is the LORD your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you."

⁷Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel: "Be strong and bold, for you are the one who will go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their ancestors to give them; and you will put them in possession of it. ⁸It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; he will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

The Law to Be Read Every Seventh Year

⁹Then Moses wrote down this law, and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. ¹⁰Moses commanded them: "Every seventh year, in the scheduled year of remission, during the festival of booths,^a ¹¹when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. ¹²Assemble the people—men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns—so that they may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God and to observe diligently all the words of this law, ¹³and so that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess."

Moses and Joshua Receive God's Charge

¹⁴The LORD said to Moses, "Your time to die is near; call Joshua and present yourselves in the tent of meeting, so that I may commission him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tent of meeting, ¹⁵and the LORD appeared at the tent in a pillar of cloud; the pillar of cloud stood at the entrance to the tent.

¹⁶The LORD said to Moses, "Soon you will lie down with your ancestors. Then this people will begin to prostitute themselves to the foreign gods in their midst, the gods of the land into which they are going; they will for-

^a Or *tabernacles*; Heb *succoth*

Read Deuteronomy 31:30—32:44

In dramatic and beautiful poetry, Deuteronomic concepts are combined with prophetic and wisdom themes into a vivid account of God's generous and merciful love for Israel, and of Israel's consistent failure to reciprocate that love. The speaker alternates between a narrator and God. Of special interest is the frequent mention of God as Israel's rock, as well as images of God as an intimate father and mother, with the imagery sometimes combined.

Reflect: This poem, with its many references to God as a loving parent, is one of several Old Testament precedents for Jesus' teaching about God as Father.

Pray: Lord I thank you for being the rock that fathered me and the God who gave me birth.

Act: Today I will do something in honor of my father and mother, to thank them for being the image and likeness of my rock, my God.

sake me, breaking my covenant that I have made with them. ¹⁷My anger will be kindled against them in that day. I will forsake them and hide my face from them; they will become easy prey, and many terrible troubles will come upon them. In that day they will say, 'Have not these troubles come upon us because our God is not in our midst?' ¹⁸On that day I will surely hide my face on account of all the evil they have done by turning to other gods. ¹⁹Now therefore write this song, and teach it to the Israelites; put it in their mouths, in order that this song may be a witness for me against the Israelites. ²⁰For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I promised on oath to their ancestors, and they have eaten their fill and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, despising me and breaking my covenant. ²¹And when many terrible troubles come upon them, this song will confront them as a witness, because it will not be lost from the mouths of their descendants. For I know what they are inclined to do even now, before I have brought them into the land that I promised them on oath." ²²That very day Moses wrote this song and taught it to the Israelites.

²³Then the LORD commissioned Joshua son of Nun and said, "Be strong and bold, for you shall bring the Israelites into the land that I promised them; I will be with you."

²⁴When Moses had finished writing down in a book the words of this law to the very end, ²⁵Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, ²⁶"Take this book of the law and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God; let it remain there as a witness against you. ²⁷For I know well how rebellious and stubborn you are. If you already have been so rebellious toward the LORD while I am still alive among you, how much more after my death! ²⁸Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officials, so that I may recite these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to witness against them. ²⁹For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly, turning aside from the way that I have commanded you. In time to come trouble will befall you, because you will do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands."

The Song of Moses

³⁰Then Moses recited the words of this song, to the very end, in the hearing of the whole assembly of Israel:

32 Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak;
let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

- 2 May my teaching drop like the rain,
my speech condense like the dew;
like gentle rain on grass,
like showers on new growth.
- 3 For I will proclaim the name of the LORD;
ascribe greatness to our God!
- 4 The Rock, his work is perfect,
and all his ways are just.
A faithful God, without deceit,
just and upright is he;
- 5 yet his degenerate children have
dealt falsely with him,^a
a perverse and crooked generation.
- 6 Do you thus repay the LORD,
O foolish and senseless people?
Is not he your father, who created you,
who made you and established you?
- 7 Remember the days of old,
consider the years long past;
ask your father, and he will inform you;
your elders, and they will tell you.
- 8 When the Most High^b apportioned
the nations,
when he divided humankind,
he fixed the boundaries of the peoples
according to the number of the gods;^c
- 9 the LORD's own portion was his people,
Jacob his allotted share.
- 10 He sustained^d him in a desert land,
in a howling wilderness waste;
he shielded him, cared for him,
guarded him as the apple of his eye.
- 11 As an eagle stirs up its nest,
and hovers over its young;
as it spreads its wings, takes them up,
and bears them aloft on its pinions,
- 12 the LORD alone guided him;
no foreign god was with him.
- 13 He set him atop the heights of the
land,
and fed him with^e produce of the field;
he nursed him with honey from the
crag,
with oil from flinty rock;
- 14 curds from the herd, and milk from
the flock,
with fat of lambs and rams;
Bashan bulls and goats,
together with the choicest wheat—
you drank fine wine from the
blood of grapes.
- 15 Jacob ate his fill;^f
Jeshurun grew fat, and kicked.
You grew fat, bloated, and gorged!
He abandoned God who made him,
and scoffed at the Rock of his
salvation.
- 16 They made him jealous with strange
gods,
with abhorrent things they
provoked him.
- 17 They sacrificed to demons, not God,
to deities they had never known,
to new ones recently arrived,
whom your ancestors had not feared.
- 18 You were unmindful of the Rock that
bore you;^g
you forgot the God who gave you birth.
- 19 The LORD saw it, and was jealous;^h
he spurnedⁱ his sons and daughters.
- 20 He said: I will hide my face from them,
I will see what their end will be;
for they are a perverse generation,
children in whom there is no
faithfulness.
- 21 They made me jealous with what is
no god,
provoked me with their idols.
So I will make them jealous with what
is no people,
provoke them with a foolish nation.
- 22 For a fire is kindled by my anger,
and burns to the depths of Sheol;
it devours the earth and its increase,
and sets on fire the foundations of
the mountains.
- 23 I will heap disasters upon them,
spend my arrows against them:

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Traditional rendering of Heb *Elyon*

^c Q Ms Compare Gk Tg: MT *the Israelites*

^d Sam Gk Compare Tg: MT *found*

^e Sam Gk Syr Tg: MT *he ate*

^f Q Mss Sam Gk: MT lacks *Jacob ate his fill*

^g Or *that begot you*

^h Q Mss Gk: MT lacks *was jealous*

ⁱ Cn: Heb *he spurned because of provocation*

24 wasting hunger,
 burning consumption,
 bitter pestilence.
 The teeth of beasts I will send against
 them,
 with venom of things crawling in
 the dust.

25 In the street the sword shall bereave,
 and in the chambers terror,
 for young man and woman alike,
 nursing child and old gray head.

26 I thought to scatter them^a
 and blot out the memory of them
 from humankind;

27 but I feared provocation by the enemy,
 for their adversaries might
 misunderstand
 and say, "Our hand is triumphant;
 it was not the LORD who did all this."

28 They are a nation void of sense;
 there is no understanding in them.

29 If they were wise, they would
 understand this;
 they would discern what the end
 would be.

30 How could one have routed a thousand,
 and two put a myriad to flight,
 unless their Rock had sold them,
 the LORD had given them up?

31 Indeed their rock is not like our Rock;
 our enemies are fools.^a

32 Their vine comes from the vinestock
 of Sodom,
 from the vineyards of Gomorrah;
 their grapes are grapes of poison,
 their clusters are bitter;

33 their wine is the poison of serpents,
 the cruel venom of asps.

34 Is not this laid up in store with me,
 sealed up in my treasures?

35 Vengeance is mine, and recompense,
 for the time when their foot shall slip;
 because the day of their calamity is
 at hand,
 their doom comes swiftly.

36 Indeed the LORD will vindicate his
 people,
 have compassion on his servants,
 when he sees that their power is gone,
 neither bond nor free remaining.

37 Then he will say: Where are their gods,
 the rock in which they took refuge,
 38 who ate the fat of their sacrifices,
 and drank the wine of their
 libations?
 Let them rise up and help you,
 let them be your protection!

39 See now that I, even I, am he;
 there is no god besides me.
 I kill and I make alive;
 I wound and I heal;
 and no one can deliver from my
 hand.

40 For I lift up my hand to heaven,
 and swear: As I live forever,
 41 when I whet my flashing sword,
 and my hand takes hold on
 judgment;
 I will take vengeance on my
 adversaries,
 and will repay those who hate me.

42 I will make my arrows drunk with
 blood,
 and my sword shall devour flesh—
 with the blood of the slain and the
 captives,
 from the long-haired enemy.

43 Praise, O heavens,^b his people,
 worship him, all you gods!^c
 For he will avenge the blood of his
 children,^d
 and take vengeance on his
 adversaries;
 he will repay those who hate him,^e
 and cleanse the land for his people.^e

44 Moses came and recited all the
 words of this song in the hearing of the
 people, he and Joshua^f son of Nun.

45 When Moses had finished reciting all

^a Gk: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Q Ms Gk: MT *nations*

^c Q Ms Gk: MT lacks this line

^d Q Ms Gk: MT *his servants*

^e Q Ms Sam Gk Vg: MT *his land his people*

^f Sam Gk Syr Vg: MT *Hoshea*

Read Deuteronomy 32:45–52

Moses' final legacy to the people he has led for forty troubled years is an exhortation stating that his repeated warnings are not trivial. This law will be the source of Israel's very life as they cross the Jordan and occupy the Promised Land. The Lord instructs Moses to go up Mt. Nebo from where he will be allowed to view the Promised Land before he dies.

Reflect: Moses remains God's faithful servant to the end. Undaunted by the knowledge that he will not experience the fulfillment of what has been his life's work, Moses continues to call Israel to faithfulness.

Pray: Lord, grant that, like Moses, I may ever be your faithful servant, focused on your will rather than upon my own success.

Act: Today I will focus on my motives for what I am doing, putting God's will ahead of my own interests.

these words to all Israel, ⁴⁶ he said to them: "Take to heart all the words that I am giving in witness against you today; give them as a command to your children, so that they may diligently observe all the words of this law. ⁴⁷ This is no trifling matter for you, but rather your very life; through it you may live long in the land that you are crossing over the Jordan to possess."

Moses' Death Foretold

⁴⁸ On that very day the LORD addressed Moses as follows: ⁴⁹ "Ascend this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, across from Jericho, and view the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the Israelites for a possession; ⁵⁰ you shall die there on the mountain that you ascend and shall be gathered to your kin, as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his kin; ⁵¹ because both of you broke faith with me among the Israelites at the waters of Meribath-kadesh in the wilderness of Zin, by failing to maintain my holiness among the Israelites. ⁵² Although you may view the land from a distance, you shall not enter it—the land that I am giving to the Israelites."

Moses' Final Blessing on Israel

33 This is the blessing with which Moses, the man of God, blessed the Israelites before his death. ² He said:

The LORD came from Sinai,
and dawned from Seir upon us;^a
he shone forth from Mount Paran.
With him were myriads of holy ones;^b
at his right, a host of his own.^c

³ Indeed, O favorite among^d peoples,
all his holy ones were in your charge;
they marched at your heels,
accepted direction from you.

⁴ Moses charged us with the law,
as a possession for the assembly of Jacob.

⁵ There arose a king in Jeshurun,
when the leaders of the people assembled—
the united tribes of Israel.

⁶ May Reuben live, and not die out,
even though his numbers are few.

⁷ And this he said of Judah:

O LORD, give heed to Judah,
and bring him to his people;
strengthen his hands for him,^e
and be a help against his adversaries.

^a Gk Syr Vg Compare Tg: Heb *upon them*

^b Cn Compare Gk Sam Syr Vg: MT *He came from Ribebboth-kadesh,*

^c Cn Compare Gk: meaning of Heb uncertain

^d Or *O lover of the*

^e Cn: Heb *with his hands he contended*

Read Deuteronomy 33

An ancient poem, inserted here as Moses' final "blessing on Israel," foreshadows the coming conquest of the land of Canaan and its division among the tribes of Israel. The details of Israel's conquest and occupation proceed here as a theophany, a vivid self-manifestation of God's active involvement in Israel's history.

Reflect: Moses' poem is but one of many ways in which the Bible reflects Israel's attempts to understand and explain how it came to find itself established and in possession of God's holy and Promised Land.

Pray: Lord, grant that I may increasingly recognize and acknowledge your self-manifestation in the events of my life.

Act: Today I will do an inventory of my past, focusing on some events that suggest to me that God has been and is actively involved in bringing me to this point in my life.

- ⁸ And of Levi he said:
 Give to Levi^a your Thummim,
 and your Urim to your loyal one,
 whom you tested at Massah,
 with whom you contended at the waters of
 Meribah;
- ⁹ who said of his father and mother,
 "I regard them not";
 he ignored his kin,
 and did not acknowledge his children.
 For they observed your word,
 and kept your covenant.
- ¹⁰ They teach Jacob your ordinances,
 and Israel your law;
 they place incense before you,
 and whole burnt offerings on your altar.
- ¹¹ Bless, O LORD, his substance,
 and accept the work of his hands;
 crush the loins of his adversaries,
 of those that hate him, so that they do not rise
 again.
- ¹² Of Benjamin he said:
 The beloved of the LORD rests in safety—
 the High God^b surrounds him all day long—
 the beloved^c rests between his shoulders.
- ¹³ And of Joseph he said:
 Blessed by the LORD be his land,
 with the choice gifts of heaven above,
 and of the deep that lies beneath;
- ¹⁴ with the choice fruits of the sun,
 and the rich yield of the months;
- ¹⁵ with the finest produce of the ancient mountains,
 and the abundance of the everlasting hills;
- ¹⁶ with the choice gifts of the earth and its fullness,
 and the favor of the one who dwells on Sinai.^d
 Let these come on the head of Joseph,
 on the brow of the prince among his brothers.
- ¹⁷ A firstborn^e bull—majesty is his!
 His horns are the horns of a wild ox;
 with them he gores the peoples,
 driving them to^f the ends of the earth;
 such are the myriads of Ephraim,
 such the thousands of Manasseh.
- ¹⁸ And of Zebulun he said:
 Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out;
 and Issachar, in your tents.
- ¹⁹ They call peoples to the mountain;
 there they offer the right sacrifices;
 for they suck the affluence of the seas
 and the hidden treasures of the sand.

^a Q Ms Gk: MT lacks *Give to Levi*

^b Heb *above him*

^c Heb *he*

^d Cn: Heb *in the bush*

^e Q Ms Gk Syr Vg: MT *His firstborn*

^f Cn: Heb *the peoples, together*

Read Deuteronomy 34

After finally viewing the Promised Land from the distant Mt. Nebo in Jordan, Moses dies and is buried there. Moses, God's faithful servant through whom God liberated the Israelites from Egypt, gave them the law, and led them to the very edge of the Promised Land, is not himself allowed to enter that land. There is no cult or ritual to honor Moses. There is not even a monument to mark the place of his grave.

Reflect: Often when God seemed ready to destroy the Israelites Moses intervened on their behalf. The people of Israel themselves are forever Moses' memorial and heritage.

Pray: Lord, may I ever strive to imitate your servant Moses. May it be sufficient for me to be your instrument for accomplishing your will.

Act: Today I will find some way to do something especially beneficial for another or others, without drawing attention to or seeking credit for myself.

- ²⁰ And of Gad he said:
 Blessed be the enlargement of Gad!
 Gad lives like a lion;
 he tears at arm and scalp.
- ²¹ He chose the best for himself,
 for there a commander's allotment was reserved;
 he came at the head of the people,
 he executed the justice of the LORD,
 and his ordinances for Israel.
- ²² And of Dan he said:
 Dan is a lion's whelp
 that leaps forth from Bashan.
- ²³ And of Naphtali he said:
 O Naphtali, sated with favor,
 full of the blessing of the LORD,
 possess the west and the south.
- ²⁴ And of Asher he said:
 Most blessed of sons be Asher;
 may he be the favorite of his brothers,
 and may he dip his foot in oil.
- ²⁵ Your bars are iron and bronze;
 and as your days, so is your strength.
- ²⁶ There is none like God, O Jeshurun,
 who rides through the heavens to your help,
 majestic through the skies.
- ²⁷ He subdues the ancient gods,^a
 shatters^b the forces of old;^c
 he drove out the enemy before you,
 and said, "Destroy!"
- ²⁸ So Israel lives in safety,
 untroubled is Jacob's abode^d
 in a land of grain and wine,
 where the heavens drop down dew.
- ²⁹ Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you,
 a people saved by the LORD,
 the shield of your help,
 and the sword of your triumph!
 Your enemies shall come fawning to you,
 and you shall tread on their backs.

Moses Dies and Is Buried in the Land of Moab

34 Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the LORD showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, ² all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³ the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. ⁴ The LORD said to him, "This is the land of which I swore

^a Or *The eternal God is a dwelling place*

^b Cn: Heb from underneath

^c Or *the everlasting arms*

^d Or *fountain*

to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there." ⁵Then Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, at the LORD's command. ⁶He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. ⁷Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. ⁸The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

⁹ Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁰Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, ¹²and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

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