

# DEUTERONOMY

## INTRODUCTION

The name Deuteronomy means “second law” or “repeated law.” It was necessary to repeat the law because a new generation had grown up in the wilderness who had not heard the law as given at Mount Sinai.

The book of Deuteronomy was needed, as a crisis had come in the life of Israel. The life of the people was to be changed from that of wandering to that of residence in cities and villages and from dependence upon heavenly manna to the cultivation of fields. Peace and righteousness would depend upon a strict observance of the laws.

The Israelites would be tempted by a new religion of Canaan against which they must be put on guard. The most seductive forms of idolatry would be met everywhere and there would be great danger of yielding to it. Especially farmers as they would be tempted to worship Baal, who was thought to be the god of the farms and crops.

The book of Deuteronomy is divided into four sections.

1. Review of the journeys (1:1-4:4)  
(The chief events of the forty years)
2. The Law of God (4:4-26:19)  
(Review of the law given at Mount Sinai)
3. The future of Israel (27:1-30:20)  
(blessings and cursings)
4. Moses' last days (34:1-34:12)  
(Joshua appointed to succeed Moses)

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Verses 1-16**

The Arabah is the valley or hollow that includes the Jordan valley and the Dead Sea. (Verse 1) Kadesh is located on the southern edge of the Promised Land, but it took Israel thirty-eight years to get very far beyond it.

Moses inserted the matter of distance and traveling time to show how simply and easily God's people entered into the land God had assured them if they would have marched forth with courage and confidence at Kadesh.

It was only eleven days from Horeb, by way of Mount Seir, as far as Kadesh, but there the discouraging report of the spies caused the congregation to cower. As a result, Kadesh-Barnea became the "headquarters" for the Israelites during their wanderings.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Verses 1-37**

About thirty-seven years elapse between Chapter 1 and Chapter 2. Chapter 2 begins Israel's journey around Edom at the conclusion of their wilderness journeys.

Israel has defeated the two kings of the Amorites. This was their first armed battle and so important both to the encouragement of a people so very unused to war and for the discouragement of the neighboring tribes round about.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Verses 1-29**

Oz, king of Bashan, was so large that he had a custom-made bed, nine cubits by four cubits. The allied nations were so afraid of open war that they undertook to corrupt Israel by their friendship and by seduction.

## CHAPTER 4

### Verses 1-49

In Chapter 4, Moses relates the blessings promised for those who heed God's all-sufficient laws. Prosperity and respect of the nations around about them was Israel's history when they wholeheartedly turned to God. Often Israel in near poverty became the laughing stock of the nations all because of their disobedience and unfaithfulness to God.

In verse 3 we learn that Baal, the sun god, was worshiped by Canaan. They believed he gave light and warmth to his worshipers. On the other hand, the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being.

Human victims were sacrificed to him in order to appease his anger. In time of plagues or other troubles, the victim usually being the first born of the sacrificer, was burnt alive.

Each locality had its own Baal who often took his name from the city or place to which he belonged. Here we have Baal-peor, the god of the Moabite mountains, who took his name from Mount Peor.

Israel was forbidden to worship idols. (Verses 16-19) We stand amazed that Israel with all its warnings against idolatry is engrossed in idolatry shortly after they cross the Jordan.

Idols were often of both sexes: Egypt, Osiris and Isis, Canaan, Baal and Astarte. (Verse 16) Horus, the hawk was worshiped in ancient Egypt. The ibis and the crane were also deified. (Verse 17) The crocodile, frog, and beetle were worshiped in Egypt.

The serpent was frequently worshiped in ancient times. (Verse 18) In Egypt all the fish of the Nile were deified. And the Philistine's god, Dagon, was represented in figures that were half man and half fish. In the earliest Egyptian texts the sun appears as divine and the moon as "the bull among stars." (Verse 19) The worship of the moon is illustrated in Ur of the Chaldees. Archaeologists have unearthed the Ziggurat, the high temple-tower erected for its worship.

“Live long in the land” refers to their national life rather than their individual life. If obedient, there would be peace, prosperity, and health for God’s people. (Verse 40)

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Verses 1-33**

The breaking of the Sabbath day law was the most severe punishment, stoning to death. The Sabbath day was in commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt. It was an appeal to their sense of gratitude.

We are no longer bound in covenant relationship to any of the Mosaic Law including the Ten Commandments. This law was given to Israel alone and the covenant was between God and that nation only. (Verse 3, 15) Christ came not to destroy but to fulfill (to bring to culmination or completion) the Law of Moses.

God spoke the words of the Ten Commandments to the Israelites before they were engraved on the tablets of stone. (Verse 22)

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Verses 1-25**

Israel was promised a land flowing with milk and honey. (Verse 3) The Israel of God today is His church (Galatians 6:16) and is also a land flowing with milk and honey, the great spiritual and eternal blessings of Christ.

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **Verses 1-26**

God tells the Israelites to “utterly destroy” the seven nations mentioned in verse 1. They were to remove the idolatry from the land. Intermarriage is forbidden. The Asherim, the wooden goddess of fertility, was to be destroyed. (Verse 2) Idolatry and intermarriage was forbidden because they would become a “snare” to the Israelites. The Hebrew word for “snare” *moqesh* means “bait, lure, bird trap.” (Verse 16)

God demanded one great basic quality of His people, confidence in God's ability, unbounded faith. Nothing is more helpful when anticipating the future with its difficulties and "impossibilities" than to reflect upon what God has done for His children in the past.

God was going to "clear away the nations little by little," as it would be a number of years before Israel was sufficiently numerous to fill the whole land occupied by the seven nations. (Exodus 23:29-30)

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **Verses 1-20**

The Israelites were dependent on God's directions and help. God helped and God chastised them that they might know for certain that a man's life is absolutely and totally dependent upon the will of God and the Word of God.

## **CHAPTER 9**

### **Verses 1-29**

Chapter 9, Moses tells the story of the two tablets of stone and the Israelites' sin at Mount Sinai. This is done so Israel might see their previous course of rebellion, stubbornness, and disobedience.

## **CHAPTER 10**

### **Verses 1-22**

In Chapter 10, God demands the hearts of His servants. He was dissatisfied and displeased when service was rendered to Him only out of habit, form, and dry conformity. (Verses 12, 13)

## **CHAPTER 11**

### **Verses 1-32**

Chapter 11 tells us that a complete trust, obedience, and love for God has the promise that we are able to do things that now appear totally impossible, accomplish things that try even the imagination, and overcome difficulties that seem insurmountable.

## **CHAPTER 12**

### **Verses 1-32**

God commanded that the Israelites destroy the idols on the high mountains. The heathens had their places of worship on lofty elevations so that they would be nearer to their object of worship. They also sought the shade trees or thick foliage to perform their rituals to keep with the mysteriousness of their religion. (Verse 2)

The Israelites were not to worship in this way because God wanted a place of worship for all the tribes where nothing could be surrounded in secretiveness. The Israelites were commanded not to eat blood because, "The life is in the blood." Blood carries oxygen and food to every part of the body, fights disease, and helps the body get rid of waste. (Verse 23)

God commanded the Israelites, "Do not inquire after their gods." What we know we tend to believe, whether right or wrong. We would not stifle an investigating spirit and an inquisitive mind. Only let that mind be first firmly established in Christ. (Verse 30)

## **CHAPTER 13**

### **Verses 1-18**

In carrying out the execution of someone worthy of death, the accuser-witness was to be the first to lay hands on the guilty party or cast the first stones. This would tend to prevent off-hand, haphazard or flippant accusations. The accuser had to have the courage and strength of conviction to follow through with his charges.

## **CHAPTER 14**

### **Verses 1-29**

The heathen apparently had the practice of both shaving their heads and cutting themselves in mourning for their dead. (Verse 2) God's people are to be different.

"Tithe" means a tenth part given to the support of the Levites. Another tenth was paid for the service of the sanctuary. When it was all said and done

about one third of the property of the Jews was devoted to religious services by law. (Verse 22)

“Strong drink”, Hebrew *shecar*, means strong drink, intoxicating “liquor” usually made from barley, honey, grapes, or dates, but usually distinguished from wine. (Verse 26)

## **CHAPTER 15**

### **Verses 1-23**

The purpose of granting “a remission of debts” was not to destroy the obligation of this kind, but guard the poor and unfortunate against undue severity or oppression. The release was temporary, for a year. The debt still had to be paid.

## **CHAPTER 16**

### **Verses 1-22**

God forbid the planting of an “Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar” as He did not want His worship associated in any way with idolatry. (Verse 21) Judges and officers sat at the gates of the city. This composed the “city hall” and the chief area of business. (Verses 18-20)

## **CHAPTER 17**

### **Verses 1-20**

God knew what evil Israel would fall into. They would ask for a king that would lead to a degeneration and corruption of Israelites' Theocracy. God was still their Father and Israel was still His nation, but He was about to forsake them on account of their demands for a king. (Verse 14)

## **CHAPTER 18**

### **Verses 1-22**

Chapter 18 deals with the Levites having no portion or inheritance with Israel but shall receive support from the people for their services.

God said to Moses, “I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you.” That prophet is Jesus Christ. The Israelites were to test the prophets using three means of testing. (Verses 21-22)

1. Was the teaching of the prophet in accordance with the teachings of God?
2. Did the prophet prophecy in the name of other gods?
3. Did the prophets prophecies come to pass?

On any of these tests, if he failed, he was to be put to death. (Deuteronomy 13:1-6)

## **CHAPTER 19**

### **Verses 1-21**

Chapter 19 tells of the three cities of refuge that are to be built in the Promised Land, and how to decide the cases of the manslayers.

## **CHAPTER 20**

### **Verses 1-20**

The instructions in Chapter 20 are only given in the book of Deuteronomy. Israel was not a warlike nation, they were rather to abstain from warfare and cultivate the arts of peace. They had before them a lengthy conflict before they could occupy the land.

The priest was designated to accompany Israel to war that would call upon God for help and also act as exhorter and inspiration to the soldiers, a “chaplin.” Those who were excused from waging war were those who had built a house but had not dedicated it, planted a vineyard but had not harvested it, a man engaged but not married, and a man faint-hearted on the front line. (Luke 14:18-20)

## **CHAPTER 21**

### **Verses 1-23**

God knew that when the cities were captured and all the males killed there would be some beautiful women whom the Israelites would take captive

whom they would marry. So God provided instructions as to what should be done if such a one was taken captive.

She was to remove her garments worn at that time of captivity, shave her head, and trim her nails. These were signs of purification separating her from her former heathenism and preparing her to become a part of the people of God. She puts on the garments of mourning after her purification and mourns her parents for thirty days.

A woman captive was not to be a plaything of passion or lust, but was to be dealt with honorably and with dignity. She became his wife and he could not treat her as a slave.

## **CHAPTER 22**

### **Verses 1-30**

The finder of a lost article was not to avoid his responsibility of making a sincere effort to find the owner.

Women were not to wear men's clothing. God wanted Israel to recognize a distinction, a difference, and a separation between the male and the female. By putting on improper apparel, a woman might be known as an amazon (a female warrior) or virago (a strong man-like woman), a man might be thought effeminate. (Verse 5)

## **CHAPTER 23**

### **Verses 1-25**

Chapter 23 deals with the laws of society and domestic relations. Wages received as the "hire of a harlot or the wages of a day" are not to be brought as an offering. This refers to women who devote themselves to immoral practices (prostitution) as a part of her heathen worship and men who do the same thing. The male prostitute (sodomite) was normally attached to one of these sanctuaries also, though, like his female counterpart, his practices were apparently not restricted to that area.

## **CHAPTER 24**

### **Verses 1-22**

The Law of Moses permitted a certain liberty of divorce, but our Lord declared that the Mosaic permission was an unwilling concession because of the hardness of their hearts. Divorce is permissible only for the cause of sexual immorality. Prolonged separation is an incentive to adultery. (Verses 1-5)

## **CHAPTER 25**

### **Verses 1-19**

The ox was not to be muzzled while threshing. The ox needs sustenance while working. (Verse 4)

A new law is added to the Law of Moses concerning the problem of a man dying before any children were born and how he should deal with his wife. She was not to be married to a stranger but to her husband's brother. Her firstborn shall bear his dead father's name. (Verses 5-6) To "pull his sandal off his feet and spit in his face" means a releasing of his authority or rights over his brother's wife. It is the utmost contempt. (Verses 9-10)

These laws were designed to preserve a family from becoming extinct and to keep the property of the family from passing to a stranger.

The memory of Amalek was to be blotted out and exterminated as a tribe because he attacked Israel from the rear as they journeyed through the wilderness.

## **CHAPTER 26**

### **Verses 1-19**

Chapter 26 deals with the first fruits that are to be offered to God and with the third-year tithes.

## **CHAPTER 27**

### **Verses 1-26**

Chapter 27 deals with Moses' command to the people to write the law upon stones when they come into the Promised Land. These stones were to be set up at Mount Ebal. Six tribes were to stand on Mount Ebal to curse the transgressors and the curses are listed in verses 15 through 26.

## **CHAPTER 28**

### **Verses 1-68**

Chapter 28 deals with the six tribes who stood on Mount Gerazim and pronounced the blessings promised to an obedient Israel and what would be withheld if they were disobedient.

Israel was disobedient and much of the rest of the Old Testament deals with these curses coming upon Israel. They were subdued and taken into captivity by the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Romans and later were scattered among all the nations of the earth.

## **CHAPTER 29**

### **Verses 1-29**

This was not a new covenant in addition to that made at Mount Sinai, but simply a renewal and reaffirmation of that covenant. God made His covenant with everyone in the nation of Israel, strangers and sojourners who made Israel their home.

“A root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood” are descriptive terms of one who was rebellious, stubborn, and disobedient towards God and His Word. (Verse 18)

Verse 29 reminds us that the things in God's purpose known only to Him belong to Him and are to be left to Him. What God has revealed He expects His children to study, meditate upon and obey.

## **CHAPTER 30**

### **Verses 1-20**

God has made His plan simple enough and easy enough for the sincere and devoted to observe it. It was not mysterious or occult.

Verses 15 through 20 summarize the book of Deuteronomy. Blessings when you love, obey, and observe but innumerable, excruciating hardships and curses if you do not.

## **CHAPTER 31**

### **Verses 1-30**

Chapter 31 through 34 tells of Moses' last days and his appointment of a new leader, Joshua. Joshua was a newcomer to the role of a leader in Israel. He had been the military leader and captain of Israel's army. He had gone with Moses upon Mount Sinai. He and Eleazer were instructed to oversee the division of the land. He had just finished leading Israel in victorious battles on the east side.

Joshua is now about seventy-eight years old. He died thirty-two years later at the age of one hundred ten. (Joshua 24:29) Joshua's responsibility was very grave and sobering especially that of utterly destroying the Canaanite tribes.

The law was to be read to the people at the end of every seven years during the festival of the year of release, the Feast of Tabernacles. (Verse 10) The new leader needed encouragement for he had witnessed the ups and downs of Israel during the entire journey from Egypt. (Verse 23)

## **CHAPTER 32**

### **Verses 1-52**

Chapter 32 is a prophetic and historical song of Moses showing forth the nature of God's doctrine, the character of God, the corruption of the people, and a call to remember God's kindness.

In the song, Israel is rebuked for placing their confidence not in the Rock but in the “rock” of their own making, an idol.

Neither Moses nor Aaron was allowed to enter the Promised Land and yet we find no indication on their part of bitterness or inner rebellion against God because of this prohibition.

## **CHAPTER 33**

### **Verses 1-29**

This song represents Moses’ blessing upon the people. It was probably spoken prior to his ascension onto Mount Nebo and his death.

In both songs, Moses is bidding farewell to Israel. In the song of Chapter 32 Moses dwelt on the calamities and chastisements that shall come upon Israel, in this song. (Chapter 33) He reveals the blessings of the future through the favor, generosity, and love of God.

## **CHAPTER 34**

### **Verses 1-12**

Moses has journeyed up the mountain knowing when and where he should die. His death, as his life, was in obedience to God’s Word and will.

God buried Moses somewhere unknown to Israel. It might have been a temptation to build a shrine for Moses and use it as a place of worship if the burial spot were known.

Moses most resembles the Savior in character and the life of both were readily responsive to the will and teachings of the Father.