

Bible Companion Commentary: Deuteronomy

Bible Companion Commentary, Volume 5

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DEUTERONOMY

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PREFACE

This commentary is based around the New European Version of the Bible, which is generally printed with brief commentary on each chapter. This commentary is the hard copy of the more detailed commentary found on the *Bible Companion* app.

Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 1

Deu 1:1 These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah over against Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab-

Critics have made much of the apparent contradiction between the geographical details in Dt. 1:1 and the location details in Dt. 4:45,46. But I suggest that the names in Dt. 1:1 are not intended to be pinned down to specific locations. There are six of them, and it was unlikely that any reader would be able to pinpoint a location in the uncharted desert from these vague places. Rather, we are given a word picture of what the desert was like. The place names in Dt. 1:1 mean [in order] "Ornamental", maybe referring to the appearance of sand sculptures made by the wind; "quagmire", "whiteness", "tower" and "golden".

Another take is that these six places are all the locations of various apostacies of Israel. Six is a number associated with sin. And at each of them, Moses had appealed to Israel with the words we now have in the speech transcribed in the book of Deuteronomy. The Hebrew name for the book is *Debarim* "These are the words...", suggesting these words were repeated often. They may indeed be the "words of this song" which Moses is described as singing to Israel- as if the whole book is "this song". Israel's failures and God's abiding

grace and love is indeed a theme of this song. Deuteronomy records the sins of the generation that entered the land- at Massah (Dt. 6:16, 9:22), Horeb (Dt. 9:8-21) and at Taberah, Kibroth-hattaavah and Kadesh-barnea (Dt. 9:22,23). The context seems to indicate that it was the audience of Deuteronomy, "you", that generation and not their fathers, who had sinned at these places. Moses speaks as if he is talking with that generation when he says that the covenant was made "not with our ancestors... but with us" (Dt. 5:3). And it was "us", "you", whom he says had so sinned in the desert. They entered the land by grace.

The meanings of the place names as mentioned above could all have idol worship connotations. But the song of "Deuteronomy" is indeed the deuteronomos, the second law, which is the name of the book in Russian [vtoroe zakon]. And the law as repeated here by Moses often differs to that given previously, reflecting God's adjustment of His requirements in harmony with His grace towards them. We see here that God's 'law' can change and His requirements do change as He Himself progresses in appreciation of His peoples' frailty. We see the same after the flood, where God promises Himself not to judge the earth with a flood again because He now perceives more the wickedness of the human heart.

Deu 1:2 It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea-

It took Israel 38 years to complete this journey, but it was only 11 days if they walked directly. Their exit from Egypt through the Red Sea represents our baptism in-

to Christ (1 Cor. 10:1,2), and the wilderness journey is the prototype of our walk to God's Kingdom. We tend to walk around in circles as Israel did, rather than perceiving our end destination clearly and keeping our focus upon it. The theme of Deuteronomy is the conviction of Israel for their sins and an appeal to faithfulness to the covenant. And so Moses begins by posing the question—How come a journey of 11 days took 40 years? "The fortieth year" is mentioned in the very next verse. The answer of course was because of Israel's sin.

Deu 1:3 In the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that Yahweh had given him in commandment to them—

Moses was now at the end of his life; Israel stood on the borders of the promised land, which he was disallowed from entering. He now gives his swansong, perhaps in the last month or even day of his life he gave Israel the address transcribed for us as 'Deuteronomy', literally 'the second [giving of the] law'. He repeats some of the laws he had previously given them, with some additional comments and clarifications, and shares with them his reflections upon their journey. In this book, therefore, we perceive a man at the point of spiritual maturity.

Deu 1:4 after he had struck Sihon the king of the Amorites who lived in Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan who lived in Ashtaroath, at Edrei—

Ashtaroath was the name of one of the deities which the surrounding tribes worshipped; Edrei means

"strength". The message is that the apparent strength of the idols and those who trusted in them had been overcome. And having won victories which were foretastes of those Israel would win in Canaan, Moses now urges the people to go forward in faith. In Yahweh's strength, they could overcome the idol worshipping tribes, despite their apparent strength. But Israel still kept those idols with them.

Deu 1:5 Beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began to declare this law saying-

"This law" suggests that the law he was now given was significantly different from the previous law that it could be spoken of as "this law". Clearly, God's law was open to change and reinterpretation, from its very beginning. It is mere literalism and legalism which insists that a Divine law cannot be changed by Him and is therefore eternal in a literal sense.

Deu 1:6 Yahweh our God spoke to us in Horeb saying-

The phrase "Yahweh our God" is used 46 times in Deuteronomy but hardly ever earlier in the law. Moses is exalting in the fact Yahweh was really their God, He was abiding by His promise to Abraham to be the God of Abraham's seed- despite their weakness. This is what we also perceive in our spiritual maturity, that Yahweh is my very own God, and not just generic "God".

You have lived long enough in this mountain-

They arrived at Sinai in the third month after leaving Egypt (Ex. 19:1,2); and left it on the 20th day of the second month of the second year, so they were there nearly a year.

Deu 1:7 turn, and take your journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all the places near there, in the Arabah, in the hill country, in the lowland, in the South and by the seashore, the land of the Canaanites and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates-

This was the boundary of the land promised to Abraham. But sadly Israel lacked the spiritual ambition to even go there, let alone settle and inherit the land. It may well be that we inherit the Kingdom, but not to the extent that we could do. We in this brief life are deciding the nature of how we will spend eternity.

Deu 1:8 Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give to them and to their seed after them-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to

us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 1:9 I spoke to you at that time saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone-

Jethro had advised Moses to appoint elders so that "they shall bear the burden with you" (s.w. Ex. 18:22). These words recorded here were presumably said after Moses had accepted Jethro's advice. Ex. 18:12 says that this happened before they arrived at Sinai; whereas here we have the impression it happened afterwards. Although "at that time" can be vague. I suggest Moses is here recollecting the incidents of that broad period, but arranging them in terms of their significance and not chronologically. Or it could be that Moses accepted Jethro's advice, but not until some time later did he operationalize it. After their sin with the golden calf he may have realized more fully the weakness of the people and his own inability to personally cope with all the stress.

Deu 1:10 Yahweh your God has multiplied you and behold, you are this day as the stars of the sky for multitude-

He reminds them of the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham in them, although this is sandwiched in between his lament at their unspirituality (:9,12). The new covenant, which is based upon the promises to Abra-

ham, is fulfilled only by grace. The idea is that the stars could not be counted, but we have in Numbers a very precise account of the numbers of the people. So we can assume that Moses is seeing the fulfilment as potential.

Deu 1:11 May Yahweh the God of your fathers make you a thousand times as many as you are and bless you, as He has promised you!-

The allusion is to the blessing promised to Abraham's seed; but that is interpreted in the New Testament as the blessing of forgiveness (Acts 3:25,26 etc.). And Moses is speaking here in the context of their spiritual weakness (:9,12). The fact the people had been numbered (see the book of Numbers) showed that the promises of the seed becoming innumerable as the stars had not in fact been fully fulfilled. Moses wished for the fuller fulfilment to come; and we might detect in that wish a desire for the coming of the Messianic seed through whom alone that could happen. We can also conclude that there are degrees of fulfilment of the promises of the Kingdom, just as one star differs from another in glory, some reign over more cities than others. "Yahweh your God has multiplied you" (:10), but Moses wishes for more fulfilment.

Deu 1:12 How can I myself alone bear your encumbrance and your burden and your strife?-

Jethro had observed how stressed Moses was with the burdens of the people, and we get the sense that they were at constant strife amongst themselves. Moses' sense of inability to bear the effects of the sins of the people could be read as a desire for the Messianic figure who

would bear those sins and their effects; which was to come to full term in the sin carrying of the Lord Jesus on the cross. For the "burden" was of sin (s.w. Ps. 38:4). These feelings of Moses were not of themselves to be read as frustration or weakness; for the same words are used of how God Himself was weary of bearing the "encumbrance" of His people (s.w. Is. 1:14). Moses was sharing God's feelings.

But Moses didn't respond to this burden as he might have done; for in frustration he asks God to slay him, as he just couldn't bear the "burden" of the people (s.w. Num. 11:11). God responded at that point by giving 70 Spirit endowed elders to assist Moses (Num. 11:16), and we can assume this was because the sharing of the "burden" with a system of many elders (as suggested by Jethro and as described in Dt. 1:13-16) hadn't worked. Because those men were themselves weak and unspiritual.

"Strife" specifically refers to legal arguments, which were common amongst the Israelites (s.w. Ex. 23:2,3,6; Dt. 17:8; 19:17; 21:5; 25:1). Paul's command not to take our brother to court is an appeal for us to not be like natural Israel in this matter.

These are the words of Jethro in Ex. 18 "the thing is too heavy for you, you are not able to do it alone". His negative opinion of Moses' capabilities ["you are not able"] was absorbed by Moses and came to be felt by Moses. Yet now Moses looks back and sees what happened; he admits this weakness, and later in this chapter speaks of how Yahweh carried the people. He is recognizing that he ought to have believed that, rather than

Jethro's opinion of him. And in any case, Jethro's suggested answer to Moses' weakness never worked out in practice and was replaced by the priestly system. I discuss on Num. 11:11 how Jethro's words about "all this people" were clearly unduly on Moses' mind at this time. He was wrongly influenced by Jethro.

Deu 1:13 Take wise men of understanding and well known according to your tribes and I will make them heads over you-

As explained on :12, this system didn't really work. The 70 Spirit endowed elders had to be appointed.

Deu 1:14 You answered me and said, The thing which you have spoken is good to do-

The people liked the idea of a lay leadership, but it didn't really work. They were effectively rejecting the idea of direct Divine rule over them. It was the essence of their later desire for a human king and princes (Hos. 13:10), which was a rejection of God's rulership over them.

Deu 1:15 So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men and known, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, captains of hundreds, captains of fifties and captains of tens and officers, according to your tribes-

This system didn't really work, because Moses again felt the burden was too great for him, and the 70 Spirit filled elders were appointed (Num. 11:16). But this too didn't really work; because in Dt. 17:11; 21:5 we seem to read of the priests effectively being the judges, under the direct control of Moses and Aaron.

We note Moses set "wise men and known", but this contrasts with the qualifications required by Jethro: "You shall provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God: men of truth, hating unjust gain; and place such over them" (Ex. 18:21). Clearly there weren't that many qualified men to be judges, and so the system didn't work.

Deu 1:16 I commanded your judges at that time, saying, Hear cases between your brothers and judge righteously between a man and his brother and the foreigner who is living with him-

We can deduce from this that one of the frequent causes for interpersonal strife was the tension between the "mixed multitude" and the Hebrews. But the entire community was to be accepted as the Israel of God. It was refusal to accept this which led to so much strife; just as happens today, due to a like rejection of the idea of all Christian believers being members of the same body of Christ.

Deu 1:17 You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me and I will hear it-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They

are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 1:18 I commanded you at that time all the things which you should do-

Moses repeated to them the various laws he had received on Sinai, as recorded in the Exodus record. Or the specific reference may be to the commandments given there about how to judge.

Deu 1:19 We travelled from Horeb and went through all that great and terrible wilderness which you saw, by the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as Yahweh our God commanded us, and we came to Kadesh Barnea-

"We travelled" may mean this is Moses addressing the new generation born in the wilderness. Likewise :20, "You have come to the hill country of the Amorites". For he is speaking 40 years after Israel left Egypt and the older generation were dead. So this journey from Horeb or Sinai could suggest that the people returned to Sinai, re-entered the covenant, and then journeyed to

the promised land. The itinerary of Num. 33 would allow for this. It's as if God is starting over with His people; although Moses' criticisms of that new generation are significant. We get the impression of God trying and trying to forge a covenant relationship with the objects of His love, chosen by grace. And Moses / God appreciated how awful the wilderness was, just as He appreciates the difficulty of our path to His Kingdom. This journey was indeed through a terrible wilderness, full of aggressive snakes. It speaks of how terrible indeed is our journey after the experience of baptism / crossing the Red Sea. It was by God's grace alone they were preserved.

Deu 1:20 I said to you, You have come to the hill country of the Amorites, which Yahweh our God gives to us-

The "mountain of the Amorites" could be a way of describing the land of Canaan. The following context seems to imply this because Israel send out spies into Canaan to assess how possible it was to take the land. Thereby they lacked faith in the simple statement that it was God's will to give them the Kingdom. We can fail to accept the simple implications of the same promise to us (Lk. 12:32). Hence GNB summarizes :20,21: "You have now come to the hill country of the Amorites, which the LORD our God, the God of our ancestors, is giving us. Look, there it is. Go and occupy it as he commanded. Do not hesitate or be afraid".

Deu 1:21 Behold, Yahweh your God has set the land before you; go up, take possession, as Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has spoken to you. Don't be afraid, neither be dismayed-

“Let not your heart be troubled... neither let it be afraid” (Jn. 14:1,27) repeats Moses’ final encouragement to Israel “fear not, neither be dismayed” (Dt. 31:8; 1:21,29; 7:18). “Afraid” can carry the idea of hesitation (as GNB). If they had entered immediately, in faith in God without feeling the need to send out spies, then victory would have been certain. Quick response, “yes straight away”, is part of the life of faith. This is not reckless abandon, but the way of faith. So often the way of disbelief takes refuge behind all manner of delaying tactics which the flesh suggests to us, often in the name of wisdom and prudence.

The command to subject the animals in Eden [the land promised to Abraham?] corresponds to later commands to subject the tribes living in the land (Gen. 1:28 = Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). The “fear and dread” of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the “fear and dread” which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21; 3:8; 11:25).

Deu 1:22 You came near to me every one of you and said, Let us send men before us that they may search the land for us and bring us word again of the way by which we must go up and the cities to which we shall come-

The Divine promise was that His angel would go ahead of them. But making use of this concession to weakness led them to the sin of believing the faithless spies. There is no easy way, no short cut to the Kingdom. The apparently easier ways are only harder.

The sending out of the spies was a concession to human weakness; Num. 13:17-20 says that they were sent in order to find out whether the land of Canaan was a good land, and the feasibility of overcoming the people who lived there. But God had categorically given assurances on these points already; yet Israel preferred to believe the word of men than that of God. They had been told not to hesitate but immediately enter the land (see on :21). However, God made a concession to their weakness, and gave the command to send out the spies (Num. 13:2). But when Israel heard their faithless tales of woe, they decided they didn't want to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them. When we make use of concessions to human weakness, we often end up in situations of temptation which we find too strong for us. The best way is to simply go straight forward in faith in God's word of promise rather than relying on human strength.

Deu 1:23 The thing pleased me well and I took twelve men of you, one man for every tribe-

In this time of final spiritual maturity, Moses was keenly aware of his own spiritual failings (as Paul and Jacob were in their last days). This is one of the great themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He begins his Deuteronomy address by pointing out how grievously they had failed thirty eight years previously, when they refused to enter the good land. He reminds them how that although God had gone before them in Angelic power (Dt. 1:30,33), they had asked for their spies to go before them. And Moses admits that this fatal desire for human strength to lead them to the Kingdom "pleased

me well". It seems to me that here Moses is recognizing his own failure. Perhaps he is even alluding to his weakness in wanting Jethro to go before them "instead of eyes", in place of the Angel-eyes of Yahweh (Num. 10:31-36). Moses at the end was aware of his failures. And yet he also shows his thorough appreciation of the weakness of his people. Moses admits at the end that Israel's faithless idea to send out spies "pleased me well"-when it shouldn't have done (Dt. 1:23,32,33). He realized more and more his own failure as he got older.

Deu 1:24 They turned and went up into the hill country and came to the valley of Eshcol and spied it out-

The idea seems to be as GNB "as far as Eshcol". Num. 13:24 explains: "That place was called the valley of Eshcol because of the cluster which the children of Israel cut down from there". The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32).

Deu 1:25 They took of the fruit of the land in their hands and brought it down to us and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which Yahweh our God gives to us-

This is a very positive perspective on what the spies said; they said that Canaan was a good land, but the inhabitants of the land were far too strong for Israel, effectively calling God a liar. Moses is very positive about Israel in Deuteronomy. It's a sign of spiritual maturity that

we impute righteousness to others and seek to focus on the positive rather than for ever dwelling on the terrible failures of God's people.

They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8), although here they accept on one level that it was true. Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

If they had accepted the power of God, then *whatever* 'adversary' was in the land, in whatever form, was ultimately of no real power (Num. 13:32; 14:36; Dt. 1:25). And yet it was not God's way to specifically tell the people that there was no such dragon lurking in the land of Canaan – instead He worked with them according to their fears, by making the earth literally open and swallow up the apostate amongst them (Num. 16:30) – emphasizing that by doing this, *He* was doing "a new thing", something that had never been done before – for there was no dragon lurking in any land able to swallow up people. And throughout the prophets it is empha-

sized that *God* and not any dragon swallowed up people. “The Lord [and not any dragon] was as an enemy; *He* has swallowed up Israel” (Lam. 2:5 and frequently in the prophets). The people of Israel who left Egypt actually failed to inherit Canaan because they believed that it was a land who swallowed up the inhabitants of the land (Num. 13:32), relating this to the presence of giants in the land (Num. 13:33). As Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them, they needed to believe that whatever myths there were going around, God was greater than whatever mythical beast was there. And because they would not believe that, they failed to enter the land, which in type symbolized those who fail to attain that great salvation which God has prepared.

Deu 1:26 Yet you wouldn't go up-

This of course applied to a generation previous to that whom Moses was addressing at this point. There are examples of where the individual Israelite had the actions of the body of Israel in the past imputed to him (Dt. 1:26; 5:2; 29:1). This isn't ‘guilt by association’, but rather an example of the ineffable unity of all God's people, wherever and whenever they lived, over time as well as over space. Thus the most lonely individual can read the historical records of God's people in the past and feel a true sense of community with the people of God, knowing that these things are his very own personal legacy and spiritual inheritance.

But rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh your God-

We are left to imagine in what tone of voice Moses said that. Israel had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh through disbelief, and therefore couldn't enter Canaan (Dt. 1:26; 9:7,23,24; 31:27; Num. 27:4); they were as the rebellious son who rebelled against his father's commandment (s.w. Dt. 21:18,20). For he himself had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and because of this was also barred from entering Canaan (Num. 20:24; 27:14). One reason for this was that he had called the Israelites "rebels" (Num. 20:10), and no sooner had he done so, than he himself rebelled against Yahweh's commandment just like them, but in a different way.

Verses 26-28 form the central point of the chiasmic structure of Deuteronomy 1. The essence was that they refused the offer of the Kingdom:

- A. go in and possess the land (vv. 6-8)
- B. triumphs and multiplication of Israel (vv. 9-12)
- C. wise leaders chosen (vv. 13-18)
- D. go up and possess the land (vv. 19-21a)
- E. do not fear the peoples (v. 21b)
- F. request for spies (vv. 22-24)
- G. good report of spies (v. 25)
- H. BUT, you were not willing, you rebelled; you did not believe
(vv. 26-28)
- G'. evil report of spies (v. 28)
- F'. rejection of the spies (v. 28)
- E'. expressed fear of the peoples (v. 28)
- D'. land is withheld, and given to others (vv. 34-40)

-C'. foolish choice by the leaders (v. 41)

-B'. defeats and decrease of Israel (vv. 42-44)

-A'. do not go in and possess the land (vv. 42, 45, 46)

Deu 1:27 and you murmured in your tents and said, Because Yahweh hated us He has brought us forth out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us-

Israel continually "murmured" against Moses (Ex. 15:24; 16:2,7,8; 17:3; Num. 14:2,27,29 cp. Dt. 1:27; Ps. 106:25; 1 Cor. 10:10). Nearly all these murmurings were related to Israel's disbelief that Moses really could bring them into the land. Likewise Israel disbelieved that eating Christ's words (Jn. 6:63) really could lead them to salvation; and their temptation to murmur in this way is ours too, especially in the last days (1 Cor. 10:10-12). "In your tents" reflects how God judges apparently secret conversations and thoughts, muttered in the unspoken assumption of confidentiality or within human minds. Their words as stated here were likely their thoughts rather than their actual spoken words. But God counts thoughts as spoken words. Again we have highlighted the importance of being spiritually minded.

We marvel at how the passionate love of God for Israel at this time, falling in love with them and not beholding iniquity in Jacob, could be perceived now as hatred for Israel. It is a psychological classic, revealing the fickleness of the human mind when it is not firmly based in faith in God's stated words.

The bizarre claim that "Yahweh hates us" [perhaps they never said this, but their belief system implied it]

means that their lack of faith influenced their theology. This often happens. Because a man had an angry and abusive father, and refuses to break free from that, he ends up believing God is like his father. Either God is very good, or very bad. We continually face that choice. As Paul puts it, we place God in the dock. He is either true, or a liar. Dt. 7:8 and elsewhere in Deuteronomy, Moses seeks to correct them by teaching them quite simply that God loves them and doesn't hate them: "it is because the Lord *loves* you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out" (RSV). "Because He loved your fathers therefore He brought them out [of Egypt]" (Dt. 4:37) is Moses' answer to Israel's belief that it was because Yahweh hated Israel that He brought them out of Egypt (Dt. 1:27). This is the abiding challenge- do you feel God's huge love or not? And we see it above all in the cross, wherein "God *so* loved the world".

Deu 1:28 Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our heart melt, saying, 'The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to the sky, and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there'-

The ten spies perceived the people as so strong that they could never defeat them, whereas Joshua and Caleb perceived how things really were- which is how Rahab described it. The paradox is that the hearts of the Canaanites melted (Josh. 2:11), and this is the phrase used of how the hearts of the Israelites melted (Dt. 1:28). Both sides were scared of each other; but victory

could have been with Israel. They wasted so much potential.

The Israelites were aware of the existence of unusually large people – the Zamzumin, Zumin, Rephaim, Nephilim, Emim, and Anakim (Dt. 1:28; 2:10,11,20,21; 3:11). The bed of Og, King of Bashan, a Rephaim, was nine cubits long, over four meters (14 feet) – Dt. 3:11. In Canaanite mythology these giants came from intermarriage between human beings and the gods; but Moses in Genesis 6 is surely addressing this myth and correcting it. He's saying (by implication) that this didn't happen, but rather the Godly seed and the wicked intermarried; and yes, at that time, there were giants in the earth, but they were judged and destroyed by the flood, and the implication surely was that the Israel who first heard Moses' inspired history could take comfort that the giants they faced in Canaan would likewise be overcome by God.

Deu 1:29 Then I said to you, Don't dread, neither be afraid of them-

The fact we were called to baptism therefore inspires us to believe that we really will be there in the Kingdom. This is prefigured by the way in which Moses pleaded with those who doubted in the wilderness that the fact they had been brought through the Red Sea was a guarantee that God would likewise bring them into their inheritance in Canaan (Dt. 1:29-33). Yet they failed to believe this; they forgot the wonder of their Red Sea deliverance, just as we can forget the wondrous implications

of our baptism, and thus lose faith in our ultimate salvation.

We note that Moses in true humility doesn't mention his amazing intercession, which resulted in the anger of God being turned away in that He did not destroy Israel immediately: "I have pardoned according to your word" (Num. 14:20). Deuteronomy is after all autobiography, and yet Moses doesn't mention some of his finest spiritual moments. They remained between him and his God. And so it should be with us. Possibly Israel never knew how much they had been saved from by Moses' private intercession. Just as only in the Kingdom will we understand how much we were saved from, and how the Lord interceded for us to save us, without our knowledge.

This appears to be an offer of repentance, even at this very late stage. They decided not to enter Canaan, God says He will destroy them, Moses intercedes and this is changed; and now there is this offer to the condemned of a second chance. But they refuse it. They are then judged and told they will wander to death in the desert, and all too late they decide they want to be in the Kingdom. We get this by meshing this record with that in Numbers. Again we marvel at God's patient grace and desire to make it work with Israel. And this is such a theme of Deuteronomy. It was something Moses perceived in his maturity, and God's grace is something perceived likewise by all as they spiritually mature. "It's all of His grace" is a comment often heard in Christian old age facilities when you chat with the residents.

Deu 1:30 Yahweh your God who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all that He did for you in Egypt before your eyes-

God had 'gone before' Israel through the Angel which was to lead them through the desert (s.w. Ex. 23:23). But as with all religious but not spiritual people, they wanted a visible leader. And so when Moses apparently disappeared in the mountain, they demanded that gods be made to "go before us". It was only by grace that God responded that despite their apostasy, He would still "go before you" through the Angel (Ex. 32:34; 33:14). Even the Gentile world had more faith than Israel in this; they believed that Yahweh "went before" His people in an Angel (Num. 14:14). But Israel themselves at the time of the golden calf didn't believe that. Moses in his final speech therefore urges the people to believe that indeed the Angel was going before them (Dt. 1:30,33; 31:6,8).

Deu 1:31 and in the wilderness, where you have seen how Yahweh your God carried you as a man carries his son in all the way that you went, until you came to this place-

This is again a reflection of repentance by Moses. For in Num. 11:12, we note the alternative reading of the LXX, quoted in Acts 13:18: "as a nursing father He [God] carried them in the wilderness". It was God who carried the people, but Moses had been trying to do it in his own strength, without sharing it fully with God; and so he had wrongly complained that God was unreasonably asking *him* to carry them, and in frustration and depression wanted God to kill him. We note how God

is there likened to a woman, a nursing mother, of a very difficult infant child; although as God He is presented as a "father". In those days it was common for a wealthy woman to employ another woman to be a 'nursing mother' for her infant child. But God likens Himself to such a woman, or to a poor woman who couldn't afford to hire such a woman.

Deu 1:32 Yet in this thing you didn't believe Yahweh your God-

Heb. "In spite of this word" of grace, of a second chance; they refused to believe the word of God, preferring the word of a majority of "experts" with supposed first hand information. We see many similarities in the battle of faith today. Again Moses is quoting the words of his own condemnation, for not believing Yahweh his God (Num. 20:12). Disbelief in God was the reason Israel too were barred from entering Canaan (s.w. Dt. 1:32). When Moses reminded them of this, he was alluding to how he was in essence no better than them, having also been rejected from entering Canaan for disbelief (Num. 20:12 "Because you didn't believe in Me... therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land"). So we wonder in what tone of voice he reminded them of this. For he appealed to them as a fellow sinner, in this sense no better than them. And this was the potential power of his appeal.

Deu 1:33 Who went before you in the way, to seek you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night to show you by what way you should go, and in the cloud by day-

The tragedy was and is that God has gone ahead of us to prepare a place in His Kingdom, in our case, that 'going ahead' three days journey referring to the Lord's death and resurrection. But they chose not to believe, and to instead believe the word of 'experts', the 10 spies, and to return to Egypt. See on Num. 10:31. Moses accepted Jethro's advice on the basis that he will "surely wear away" (Ex. 18:18); even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7), and God surely would not have asked him to do the impossible. Jethro at this time seems to have seen Yahweh as only one of many gods; he was a pagan priest. He prophesied that if Moses followed his advice, "all this people shall go to their place in peace"-which they didn't. Num. 10:31 suggests Moses saw Jethro's knowledge of the desert as better than the Angelic "eyes" of Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3) who were going ahead of the camp to find a resting place (Num. 10:33 cp. Ex. 33:14 cp. Is. 63:9). It seems Moses recognized his error on the last day of his life, when he admits Yahweh, not Jethro's wisdom, had led them (Dt. 1:33). Likewise Paul in his final communication comments on the way that Mark with whom he had once quarrelled was profitable to him (2 Tim. 4:11).

We note that Yahweh both "went before" them and yet also "carried" them as a father (:31). He is both with us and yet also in the future with us, taking care of our future.

Deu 1:34 Yahweh heard the voice of your words and was angry and swore saying-

As noted on Dt. 1:26,32, Moses is pointing up the similarities between himself and Israel. Yahweh was angry with him and barred him from entry to the land (Dt. 1:37; 4:21), just as He had been angry with Israel and barred them likewise (Dt. 1:34). He however became their representative, having sinned in essence as they had, but having found forgiveness.

Deu 1:35 Surely not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land, which I swore to give to your fathers-

Time and again in the Biblical record, Abraham is held up as a very real example, in whose steps all God's people are to tread. For example, as Abraham was bidden leave Ur and go and "see" the "land" of promise which God would "give" him (Gen. 13:15), so the spies were told to go and "see" the "land" which God had "given" them (Num. 13:18; 32:8,9- the same three words as in the promises to Abraham)- yet they lacked the faith of Abraham to believe that really, they could possess that land. They did "see" the land, yet they were punished by being told that they would not now "see the land" (Num. 14:23; Dt. 1:35). They saw it, but they didn't "see" it with the eyes of Abraham. And so it can be with our vision of God's Kingdom. Remember that Moses was the author of both Genesis and Numbers- such connections aren't incidental. Moses wished the people to see themselves as going forward in the spirit of Abraham- and hence he

wrote up the Genesis record for Israel's benefit an inspiration.

Deu 1:36 except Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it and to him I will give the land that he has trodden on, and to his children, because he has wholly followed Yahweh-

Joshua and Caleb were earlier characterized by the comment that they “wholly followed the Lord” when they went to spy out Canaan (Num. 14:24; 32:11,12; Dt. 1:36; Josh. 14:8,9,14), and urged Israel to go up and inherit it. This refers to the way that the Angel had gone ahead of them, and they faithfully followed where the Angel had gone, and believed that Israel could follow that Angel wherever it led. When Israel finally did go into the land, they were told that Joshua would ‘go before’ them, and they were to follow him and thereby inherit the land (Dt. 31:3). From this we see that circumstances repeat in our lives.

Caleb was head of a household within the tribe of Judah. It could be argued that he was directly related to Judah through Hezron and Pharez (1 Chron. 2:5,18,25). But “Kenizzite” (also Num. 32:12) could refer to the Gentile tribe of Gen. 15:19; or to a man called Kenaz, memorialized by Caleb naming his son with that same name (1 Chron. 4:15). And Jud. 1:13 could mean that Caleb's father was called Kenaz. ‘Caleb’ means ‘dog’ in Hebrew, and God alludes to this in describing Caleb as His faithful follower (Num. 14:24). The intimacy between a man and his dog can be seen between God and His man. The genealogies are constructed in such a way

that they don't preclude Caleb having been a Gentile who was fully accepted into the tribe of Judah.

Although not recorded in Num. 14:24; Dt. 1:36, it appears Caleb was specifically promised Hebron at that time. Caleb had explored that area as a spy (Num. 13:22) and taken a special liking to it. We see therefore his spiritual ambition; 'this shall one day be mine'. And we can do the same, as we in this life spy out our future inheritance.

Deu 1:37 Also Yahweh was angry with me for your sakes saying, You also shall not go in there-

See on :34. Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. His faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. He was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation (Ex. 32:32). In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. *For their sakes* he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that *therefore* "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Thus Moses says that he must die "Because *ye* [plural] trespassed against me" (Dt. 32:51). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a

tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). We have seen that Moses is a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). See on Ex. 32:32.

Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness "shall not enter into the land", with reference to how when Moses called the people "rebels" and beat the rock, he was disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience; and on yet another, his prayer to the effect that he didn't want to be in the land if his people weren't going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel's sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways!

We can also conclude that Moses even at the end of his life failed to appreciate the real significance of his sin. He still chafed at the perceived injustice. He repeatedly claims that he was barred from the land because of Israel's sin- it was their fault (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). Just as so many come to their graveplanks imperfect and still not accepting the full import of their failures, still blaming others, and repeating the internal narrative that "I'm just a victim and it wasn't fair". Right up to a man's graveplanks. But even that will not ultimately exclude Moses from final salvation. But we do observe how such inter-

nal narratives are indeed powerful and hard to shift. We reflect that Moses lived a long life for his time, 120 years, with the added blessing of no decline of his natural faculties. He surely ought to have been grateful for that. But he doesn't appear to have been, because he was so fixated on what he saw as the injustice of his not being allowed to physically enter the land- the land which in any case he would eternally inherit. We might also ponder whether he ought not to have appreciated more that his not entering the land was in fact what he had offered to God, in order that Israel might enter. For he had asked that his name be removed from the book, and Ez. 13:9 speaks of the book of all those who enter the land: "neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel". So to be blotted out from that writing or book was to not enter the land. So his request was answered, using his own failure and judgment for it. But he doesn't seem to want to see ahead to that. In all this we see a man coming to his end still spiritually imperfect and with residual failings, to the point that God was "angry" with Moses for trying to keep changing the judgment on him (Dt. 3:26)- just as there will be in each of us, and also in the personalities of those we live with in Christ.

Deu 1:38 Joshua the son of Nun who stands before you, he shall go in there; encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it-

This states clearly that "Joshua... he shall cause Israel to inherit [s.w. possess]" the land. Yet by the end of Joshua's life, Israel were not inheriting the land in total-

ity. He didn't live up to his potential. Joshua didn't give the people rest (Heb. 4:8); but he said he had (Josh. 22:4). He failed to fulfil the potential of Josh. 1:13-15—that he would lead the people to "rest". The Messianic Kingdom could, perhaps, have come through Joshua-Jesus; but both Joshua and Israel would not. Or we can understand that Joshua through his military victories indeed 'caused' Israel to inherit the Kingdom, but they failed to make good on his work. Exactly as in the case of his namesake, the Lord Jesus.

Deu 1:39 Moreover your little ones, whom you said should be a prey-

This is a classic example of "But think of the children!" being used as an excuse for personal lack of faith and commitment. In fact it was their little ones whom they were hurting, and condemning them to wasting much of their lives wandering in the desert as a result of their parents' sins and unbelief.

And your children, who this day have no knowledge of good or evil, they shall go in there and to them will I give it, and they shall possess it-

What were the motives of Adam and Eve for sinning, for accepting the serpent's suggestion? Considering this can help open a window onto the question of the *origin* of Adam's sin. They were attracted by the idea of "knowing good and evil". But this phrase is elsewhere used in the Bible about how an adult 'knows good and evil', but a child can't (Dt. 1:39; 2 Sam. 19:35; Is. 7:16). Adam and Eve were immature; like children, they wished to 'grow up', they resented the restraints which

their immaturity required them to be under; they wanted, just as children want, to be the all-knowing adults / mature people whom they had seen the Elohim as. As children long to escape from what they see as meaningless and onerous restrictions, whilst having no idea what this would really mean in practice and how un-free it would really be- so Adam and Eve were attracted by the idea of having the knowledge of good and evil just for the bite of the forbidden fruit. I find this a perfectly understandable explanation of the *motive* for Adam and Eve's sin. It seems a quite imaginable exercise of the freedom of choice and behaviour which God had given them. There is no hint that 'Satan made them do it', or that they were 'possessed' by some sinful spirit.

Deu 1:40 But as for you, turn, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea-

This looks ahead to the terrible sending away of the rejected from the judgment seat at the last day. "Turn" is s.w. "turn away". They had turned away from God in their time of opportunity, and often wished to return to Egypt. And so it was appropriate for them to be told to return / turn away from the Kingdom. Condemnation is really self chosen, and will be a living out of the decisions already taken by the condemned. Truly "we make the answer now"; the essence of judgment is now. The rejected will be "condemned with the world", simply sent back into the world they so loved, as Israel were sent back on the route to the Red Sea. And this will be what the weeping and gnashing of teeth will be all about, anger with themselves.

Deu 1:41 Then you answered and said to me, We have sinned against Yahweh; we will go up and fight, according to all that Yahweh our God commanded us. Every man of you put on his weapons of war and presumed to go up into the hill country-

They recognized they had "sinned", but it was just a passing flush of conscience, just as Saul and Pharaoh used the same phrase but without meaning in the words. Their sin was that of disbelief; and so it was inappropriate for them to now talking of going up with weapons to "fight" for entry to the land in their own strength. We must enquire whether our own 'repentance' is likewise just a passing feeling of bad conscience. For if they had perceived in what they had sinned, i.e. in the matter of faith, then they would have realized that all talk of weapons and fighting was inappropriate.

Deu 1:42 Yahweh said to me, Tell them, 'Don't go up, neither fight, for I am not among you, lest you be struck before your enemies'

Moses had pleaded so strongly for Yahweh to "go among" them. He realized that those prayers had been answered at the time, but not ultimately. The Angel in the pillar of cloud had already turned away into the wilderness, and was not going to go up before them into Canaan. We must compare this "I am not among you" with the other scriptures which speak of Him "carrying" them as a baby (:31) and continually caring for them. So "not among you" must mean that His 'presence amongst' His people carries with it the idea of working with them in their endeavours, positively confirming them in their

path. But even when He cannot do this, He has not abandoned us and still carries us, kicking and struggling, as best He can given our freewill choices and His respect for that freewill.

Deu 1:43 So I spoke to you and you didn't listen, but you rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and were presumptuous and went up into the hill country-

These Israelites who had crossed the Red Sea (cp. our baptism) and were now rejected from God's Kingdom, because they themselves had said they didn't want to inherit it, now wanted more than anything else to be there. This is a major Biblical theme- that the rejected will desperately ask to be allowed in to God's kingdom; the foolish virgins will knock on the closed door begging for it to be opened (Mt. 25:11; Lk. 13:25), just as the rejected, wandering Cain lived eastward of Eden, and the barred entrance to the garden was on the east. Our ultimate destiny is to stand before the Lord wanting to enter His Kingdom with every fiber in our being. But this must be our attitude now, for then it will be too late to change anything.

Deu 1:44 The Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you, as bees do, and beat you down in Seir, even to Hormah-

It was as if the Israelites had knocked the bee hive, and provoked the bees to attack them; hence the Amorites chased Israel "as bees do" (Dt. 1:44). The hornet had been sent ahead of Israel to as it were chase out the Amorites; but now it was as if this was reversed, and they

chased the Israelites. For in their hearts they were no better than the Amorites. LXX "from Seir".

Deu 1:45 You returned and wept before Yahweh; but Yahweh didn't listen to your voice, nor gave ear to you-

Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7). They "returned", i.e. repented- but only in the sense of re-thinking and wanting a changed outcome. There is no confession of sin, nor recognition that their sin consisted of unbelief. As Paul argues in 2 Cor., there is "Godly repentance" and on the other hand, the sorrow / repentance of the world which all the same leads to death. We must therefore enquire whether our repentance is sincere, or just mere regret.

Those rejected by God at His judgment still desperately want to enter His Kingdom (Mt. 25:11). In that day of final judgment, all present will desperately want only one thing- to enter the Kingdom. Nothing else will matter. We should have that spirit with us now.

The laboured emphasis in Dt. 1:45 that Yahweh did not listen nor give ear must be compared with Moses' insistence in Dt. 4:7: "Who is such a great nation, to whom there is a god so near as Yahweh our God in all our calling to him?". The contrast is intentional. The tragedy is being taught- that He was so eager to hear, but their refusal to trust Him meant that He did not hear them when they begged to be allowed to enter the Kingdom / promised land. He indeed is amazingly eager to hear and respond to those who truly want to be in His Kingdom. But He doesn't hear the vain words of those who in their hearts turned back to Egypt. Beyond dispute, therefore, God's love and responsiveness is conditional. Salvation is not on half hearted demand.

Deu 1:46 So you stayed in Kadesh many days, according to the days that you remained-

The ecclesia in the wilderness were 'types of us'. They were rejected from entry into the Kingdom; and when that finally sunk in, they "returned [s.w. convert, turn back] and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice" (Dt. 1:45). The rejected will "return [s.w. convert] at evening: they make a noise like a dog [whining for acceptance], and go round about the city [cp. the foolish virgins knocking on the closed door]" (Ps. 59:6,14). Nobody will be indifferent at the final judgment. All will desperately seek to enter the Kingdom; and we must realize that now. Like Israel at this point, they will not want to return to Egypt [the world], but will be unable to enter the Kingdom. It will be an unbearable limbo, of weeping and gnashing of teeth. The

descriptions of condemnation in figurative language all refer to this awful psychological anguish. Knowing the terror of the Lord, we are to persuade men now, to in faith go ahead and inherit the Kingdom.

Kadesh Barnea (cp. :2) is literally 'the wilderness of wandering '. The same word for wandering is used of Cain being a fugitive unable to die (Gen. 4:12), Israel wandering in the desert (Num. 32:13), the rejected outside of Zion wandering around like dogs looking for food (Ps. 59:15), Israel wander amongst the nations (Am. 9:9), the rejected wander like staggering drunks (Is. 29:9). But the pointless existence of the rejected will reflect the kind of pointless life they lived now. It is used of how Judah wandered aimlessly like blind men, from idol to idol, this passion to that (Jer. 14:10; Lam. 4:14).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

2

Deu 2:1 Then we turned and took our journey into the wilderness by the way to the Red Sea as Yahweh spoke to me, and we circled Mount Seir many days-

The territory of Edom / mount Seir was within the territory promised to Abraham. But they were told to circle around the southern part of it. And for a long time, to teach them that they were not being allowed to enter the land promised to them.

Deu 2:2 Yahweh spoke to me saying-

The directions for travel were apparently given directly to Moses at this point, rather than through simply following the cloud. This may be a tacit reflection of the peoples' disobedience, or because at this critical time they had to understand very clearly that they were to move away from the border of the promised land and retrace their steps back to Egypt- which they had earlier wished to do. They were being made to realize what their desire to return to Egypt really felt like. Their condemnation was in fact only what they themselves had asked for. And that will be equally true in the judgment of the last day.

Deu 2:3 You have circled this mountain long enough; turn to the north-

This may be a reference to mount Seir, or "mountain" is being used to refer to a kingdom, in this case that of Edom (:1).

Deu 2:4 Command the people saying, 'You are to pass through the border of your brothers the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir, and they will be afraid of you-

Dt. 2:4 was but a conditional promise. For in Num. 20:18 we learn that "Edom said to him, You shall not pass through", and they came out against them. I suggest that instead of believing these words, and the promise that the hearts of all would fear them (Ex. 15:16), the Israelites feared Esau- just as faithless Jacob had done. And so things were transferred the other way around. Esau was not afraid of Israel, as potentially they could have feared.

Take good heed to yourselves therefore-

Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9). Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves".

Deu 2:5 don't meddle with them, for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as for the sole of the foot to tread on, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau for a possession- And yet it was within the territory promised to Abraham's seed, who were now interpreted as the Israelites. We have here another recalculation of God's purpose and intended scope of salvation with His peo-

ple. The whole territory was eventually reduced to Canaan, and even that was limited- for Israel lacked the spiritual ambition to accept the full extent of God's potential Kingdom promise.

Deu 2:6 You shall purchase food of them for money that you may eat, and you shall also buy water of them for money that you may drink'

Dt. 2:4,6 sounds like definite prophecy: "Command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau... and they shall be afraid of you...ye shall buy meat of them for money.... ye shall also buy water of them for money". And yet when Israel came to these people and tried to pass through, and offered them money for bread and water, they were rejected by them (Num. 20:16-21; Jud. 11:17). The condition- that Edom had the freedom to reject them, and Israel had the faith to believe- isn't mentioned, but it nonetheless stood. Prophecy is an imperative to action- it isn't just a fascinating study of how predictions have been matched with reality.

Deu 2:7 For Yahweh your God has blessed you in all the work of your hand; He has known your walking through this great wilderness; these forty years Yahweh your God has been with you and you have lacked nothing-

Because God 'knew' Israel's journey through the wilderness, therefore they "lacked nothing". The Hebrew language reflects certain realities about the nature of God's ways. The common Hebrew word for 'to see', especially when used about God's 'seeing', means also 'to provide' (Gen. 16:13; 22:8,14; 1 Sam. 16:17;). What this

means in practice is that the fact God sees and knows all things means that He can and will therefore and thereby provide for us in the circumstances of life; for He sees and knows all things.

We must remember that the 40 years wandering were punishment for sin, it was the experience of condemnation, and serves as the basis for later Biblical pictures of the rejected. Unable to enter the Kingdom they so wanted to enter, wandering until they died. But Moses in Deuteronomy perceives that even for those condemned people, Yahweh provided and they "lacked nothing" by His grace. Dt. 8 says He ensured their clothes didn't wear out and their feet didn't swell. He ensured the condemned had comfortable footwear. How staggeringly gracious is that. We see something of God's essence here- that He cares even for the condemned. Such a far cry from the classical picture of "hell". A soldier, a man, a boxer, an army... is known by how they treat their wounded, especially their enemy. This is the measure of the man. And we see here how it is the measure of God.

Deu 2:8 So we passed by from our brothers the children of Esau who dwell in Seir, from the way of the Arabah from Elath and from Ezion Geber. We turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab-

The brotherhood between Jacob and Esau is stressed (:4). Perhaps this was to remind rejected Israel that they were no better than faithless Esau. And yet God later shows His awareness that Esau was indeed Jacob's brother, and condemns them for joining in the desecration of

Jerusalem. We see here the way that the ties that bind in family life are respected by God over the generations.

Deu 2:9 Yahweh said to me, Don't bother Moab, neither contend with them in battle, for I will not give you of his land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the children of Lot for a possession-

Moab was within the territory promised to Abraham's seed, who were now interpreted as the Israelites. We have here another recalculation of God's purpose and intended scope of salvation with His people. I suggest that this statement is a 'new' decision of God. The whole territory was eventually reduced to Canaan, and even that was limited- for Israel lacked the spiritual ambition to accept the full extent of God's potential Kingdom promise.

Deu 2:10 (The Emim lived there before, a people great and many and tall as the Anakim-

The Israelites were aware of the existence of unusually large people – the Zamzumin, Zumin, Rephaim, Nephilim, Emim, and Anakim (Dt. 1:28; 2:10,11,20,21; 3:11). The bed of Og, King of Bashan, a Rephaim, was nine cubits long, over four meters (14 feet) – Dt. 3:11. In Canaanite mythology these giants came from intermarriage between human beings and the gods; but Moses in Genesis 6 is surely addressing this myth and correcting it. He's saying (by implication) that this didn't happen, but rather the Godly seed and the wicked intermarried; and yes, at that time, there were giants in the earth, but they were judged and destroyed by the flood, and the implication surely was that the Israel who first

heard Moses' inspired history could take comfort that the giants they faced in Canaan would likewise be overcome by God.

Deu 2:11 these also are accounted Rephaim, as the Anakim, but the Moabites call them Emim-

As noted on :12, the point is that unbelieving Moab drove out these tribes, and so how much more should Israel be able to, with God on their side and the weight of the promises to Abraham behind them. But as so often happens, the unbelieving secular world have more faith, hope and brave commitment to their principles than do God's people.

Deu 2:12 The Horites also lived in Seir before, but the children of Esau succeeded them, and they destroyed them from before them and lived in their place, as Israel did to the land of his possession, which Yahweh gave to them.)-

This history had been arranged by God to encourage His people; if those in the unbelieving world could do this, then how much more could they with God behind them. God arranges our lives so that we sometimes encounter others who without faith in God have achieved great things in their lives- in order to inspire us that if they can do it, how much more can we. See on Dt. 2:21.

Deu 2:13 Now rise up and cross over the brook Zered. We went over the brook Zered-

This was a tiny brook that could be walked over easily without hardly getting the feet wet. The idea is that they had been unable to cross this tiny river which was seen as the boundary of the promised land- for 38 years (:14). The tiny brook is given such significance to

demonstrate to them how easy entrance into the land really was. It seems this was when the manna and water from the rock ceased (hence :28).

Deu 2:14 The days in which we came from Kadesh Barnea until we had come over the brook Zered were thirty-eight years, until all the generation of the men of war were consumed from the midst of the camp, as Yahweh swore to them-

Gen. 15:13 had predicted 400 years of bondage in Egypt, a period which was increased to 430 (Ex. 12:40,41). The "fourth generation" were to return to the land of Canaan, when the iniquity of the Amorites was "full" (Gen. 15:16). That is exemplified in the genealogy given at Ex. 6:16-20: (1) Levi, (2) Kohath, (3) Amram, (4) Moses. But the extra 38 years stretch this, and is an example of where time periods can be expanded or decreased. The 70 years captivity in Babylon was thus reinterpreted to 70×7 in Dan. 9. It is all multi factorial, and we cannot discern all the variables; only God can. Perhaps in this case, the sin of the Amorites took a bit longer to fill up [witness the repentant attitude of Rahab, an Amorite]; and the sin of Israel took longer to punish.

Deu 2:15 Moreover the hand of Yahweh was against them, to destroy them from the midst of the camp until they were consumed-

AV "from among the host" [i.e. army], seeing the reference was to men of military age being destroyed (:16 "the men of war").

Deu 2:16 So it happened. When all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people-

LXX "when all the men of war dying out of the midst of the people had fallen". We get the impression of these men dying in the midst of the people, falling as warriors fall in battle, but dying when no man pursued them. Ps. 91:5-7 describes Joshua surviving this kind of destruction of that generation: "You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day; nor of the plagues that stalks in darkness, nor of the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand; but it will not come near you".

Deu 2:17 Yahweh spoke to me saying-

Some texts read "to us", hence GNB "the LORD said to us". What was spoken to Moses was spoken to the people. He was fully their representative, looking ahead to the nature of the Lord Jesus.

Deu 2:18 You are today to pass over Ar, the border of Moab-

It could be implied in Num. 21:13-15 that some significant action occurred here, perhaps even a miraculous parting of the waters similar to that at the Red Sea (Num. 21:14). The essence of the Red Sea deliverance continues throughout our wilderness journey, just as the cloud of water which enveloped them at the Red Sea actually continued over them throughout the journey. This was the spot where Balak and Balaam were to later meet (Num. 22:36), at the border of Moab. The internal agreement of geographical details within the Bible

is significant, seeing that the writers lacked maps and geographical information. The chances of a contradiction are huge- but these records are Divinely inspired.

Deu 2:19 and when you come near to the children of Ammon, don't bother them or contend with them, for I will not give you of the land of the children of Ammon for a possession, because I have given it to the children of Lot for a possession-

As also commanded about other areas in :5 and :9. I suggested on those verses that these areas were within the land promised to Abraham, but God was now recalculating the land intended for Israel, in accordance with their own lack of vision. Or perhaps the idea was that Israel weren't to take anything less than the real promised land; they weren't to seek to develop their own kingdom wherever seemed easier and more convenient to them, they weren't to be satisfied with anything less than the Kingdom intended for them. Likewise we are surrounded by temptation to have our own pseudo-Kingdom of God in this life; but we are to keep focused on the one and only true Kingdom of God which is yet to come.

Deu 2:20 That also is accounted a land of Rephaim. Rephaim lived there before, but the Ammonites call them Zamzummim-

Again the point is made that the Ammonites had cast out giants, and Israel should do likewise in their intended territory. They were given these encounters with those who had done so in order to encourage them that it was possible. We too are given such meetings with

people and situations in our lives; people who have already done what we are intended to do.

Deu 2:21 a people great and many and tall, as the Anakim; but Yahweh destroyed them before them and they succeeded them and lived in their place-

If giants weren't a barrier to the children of Lot taking land for a possession, neither should they be for Israel; but they greatly feared them (Num. 13:28,33). If worldly people can achieve as they do, quitting alcoholism, achieving amazing goals... how much more can we with God on our side.

Deu 2:22 as He did for the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir, when He destroyed the Horites from before them and they succeeded them and lived in their place to this day-

Although Esau had chosen the way of idolatry, God still worked with him and his seed in order to destroy the tribes of giants in his intended inheritance. It seems God at times works with those who are not truly His people; and this is all encouragement for us to go ahead in His strength, as His true people.

Deu 2:23 and the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came out of Caphtor, destroyed them and lived in their place-

The point is that giants as far as Gaza had been destroyed by Edom. But Jacob's sons were to struggle to subdue Gaza; it was a continual source of Philistine opposition to them until the days of David.

Deu 2:24 Rise up, take your journey and pass over the valley of the Arnon. Behold, I have given into your hand

Sihon the Amorite king of Heshbon and his land; begin to possess it and contend with him in battle-

The implication could be that Moses was disobedient to this and tried to avoid confrontation with him (:27). But we can't ultimately avoid the confrontations which God at times puts in our path (:32). Moses seems to express his own weakness in his final speeches to Israel in Deuteronomy. He recalls how even towards the end of the wilderness journey, God told him to contend with Sihon in battle (Dt. 2:24); and yet Moses admits: "I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying, Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the highway, I will turn neither unto the right hand nor to the left. Thou shalt sell me food for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only let me pass through on my feet" (Dt. 2:26-28). And yet God by grace to Moses hardened Sihon's heart so that there was a battle in which, again by grace, he gave Israel victory.

Deu 2:25 This day will I begin to put the dread of you and the fear of you on the peoples who are under the whole sky, who will hear the report of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you-

Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), and were given fear and dread of humans, so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham]

and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

Deu 2:26 I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth to Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace saying-

See on :24. The Divine intention was that the victory over Sihon would put fear into the hearts of all the other tribes (:25). But it was God's ideal intention that Sihon would have accepted the message of peace- perhaps implying peace with God, as "peace" often means in the Bible. We see here the complexity of God's workings with men. Little surprise, therefore, that at times we fail to perceive what God is doing in our lives. Things appear to be left hanging, or events lack apparent meaning, or

things could have various possible outcomes, some of which are quite contradictory when compared against each other. This offering of peace before fighting was to be typical of Israel's approach (Dt. 20:10).

Deu 2:27 Let me pass through your land; I will go along by the highway; I will turn neither to the right hand nor to the left-

The king's highway; they promised not to eat food from the fields nor drink water from the wells (Num. 21:22). Such a large body of people would have required a huge amount of food and water each day.

Deu 2:28 You shall sell me food for money, that I may eat and give me water for money, that I may drink; only let me pass through on my feet-

The implication would be that the water from the rock "which followed them" and the manna had ceased-as soon as they entered the land by crossing the brook Zered (:13). To drink water for money was a sign of being subservient to the seller of the water (Lam. 5:4). Water was to be freely provided to travellers; Israel were being taught humility by offering to pay for it.

Deu 2:29 as the children of Esau who dwell in Seir, and the Moabites who dwell in Ar, did to me, until I shall pass over the Jordan-

Dt. 2:29 says that the Edomites and Moabites sold Israel food and water as they passed through. But Dt. 23:3,4 says that the Moabites didn't do this and were cursed because of it. Perhaps a few Moabites did do so, but Moab generally didn't. Or perhaps the sense of Dt. 2:29 is that Moab and Edom did let Israel pass through

without harassing them, hence GNB "All we want to do is to pass through your country... The descendants of Esau, who live in Edom, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, allowed us to pass through their territory". But Edom didn't let Israel pass through (Num. 20:18). So the point of Dt. 2:29 may be that Sihon was warned that Edom and Moab had been asked to do this but had not done so, and Sihon was to take warning from this, to learn from the mistakes of others. However, we should note that Dt. 2:29 speaks of "the children of Esau who dwell in Seir". These Edomites perhaps did let Israel pass through, whereas the Edomites in the Kadesh area didn't.

Into the land which Yahweh our God gives us-

This phrase or idea occurs many times in Deuteronomy. Moses was urging the people to believe the most basic reality- that God would really give them the promised Kingdom. And we too are likewise continually encouraged by God's word. In this particular example, Moses quite openly tells a Gentile people about their destination, in the same way as we should be unashamed to speak of our hope of the Kingdom to unbelievers.

Deu 2:30 But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him, for Yahweh your God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that He might deliver him into your hand, as at this day-

The same Hebrew words used of the hardening of Gentile heart occur in a positive context- for God also hardens or strengthens the hearts of the righteous (Ps. 27:14; Is. 35:4). Indeed, Is. 35:4 speaks of how the right-

eous shouldn't have a weak or [Heb.] 'fluid' heart, but rather a hardened one. Clearly enough, God solidifies human attitudes, one way or the other, through the work of His Spirit upon our spirit. This is a sobering thought-for He is prepared to confirm a person in their weak thinking. But on the other hand, even the weakest basic intention towards righteousness is solidified by Him too. "Obstinate" in Dt. 2:30 is the word used when appealing for Israel and Joshua to be "of good courage" (Dt. 31:6,7). The strength of heart in Dt. 2:30 was given by God's activity upon the heart of Sihon, confirming him in the way he wanted to go, 'hardening his spirit' in that way. And so the exhortation to have a courageous of strengthened heart was an appeal to let God's Spirit work upon their spirit, to allow themselves to be strengthened in their mind, that they might inherit the Kingdom. And that appeal comes to us too.

Deu 2:31 Yahweh said to me, Behold, I have begun to deliver up Sihon and his land before you; begin to possess, that you may inherit his land-

The victory against Sihon was a beginning, in that it was a guarantee of further success (:25,26). "Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like

us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 2:32 Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Jahaz-

"Jahaz" is the word for 'threshing floor', and suggests the victory was therefore a foretaste of judgment upon the tribes opposing Israel. But they could have avoided that condemnation- for peace was offered to them first (:26).

Deu 2:33 Yahweh our God delivered him up before us and we struck him and his sons and all his people-

This would have been Israel's first battle experience. And God gave them a total victory, in order to encourage them that the opposition in Canaan would likewise crumble before them. We continually sense His hand working to educate us in the path of faith.

Deu 2:34 We took all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed every inhabited city, with the women and the little ones. We left none remaining-

Even on our wilderness journey, before we have possessed the Kingdom, we do have some foretastes of that Kingdom; in the same way as Israel began to possess the promised land in some limited sense whilst still in the desert.

There is a harder side of God, the side we'd rather not see. God almost seems to underline the hardness of it in the way He records His word; thus He emphasizes that the "little ones" of the Canaanite cities were to be killed by the sword (Dt. 2:34), the male babies of the Midianites were to be killed by God's command (Num. 31:17; which was exactly what Herod ordered). The unfulfilled believer will accept the gracious side of God (which is undoubtedly the aspect more emphasized in the Bible), but refuse to really accept this other side, while passively admitting that this harder aspect of God is revealed in His word. But it's all or nothing. We either accept the self-revelation of God in the Bible, or we reject it- that's how *He* sees it. Our temptation is to think that God sees things as we see them, to think that God is merely an ideal human being. But the day of judgment will reveal otherwise (Ps. 50:21). He is God, not man. It is not for us to set the terms.

Deu 2:35 Only the livestock we took for a prey to ourselves, with the spoil of the cities which we had taken-

We see here the widely differing possible outcomes for Sihon and his people. They were offered peace with

God and fellowship with His people (:26); and the opportunity to materially benefit by selling Israel a huge amount of food and water for money. They refused, and so they ended up losing their lives, families, cattle- everything. In the end, these are the choices facing those who encounter the gospel of peace.

Deu 2:36 From Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, and the city that is in the valley, to Gilead, there was not a city too high for us; Yahweh our God delivered up all before us-

"Too high" recalls how earlier the people had turned away from Canaan because they thought that walled cities were impossible to conquer. These victories were to lead them towards faith that even the legendary walls of Jericho would fall before them. God likewise gently educates us in the path of faith; victory over a relatively small wall leads us to believe in victory against far taller walls which we will later encounter in life.

Deu 2:37 Only to the land of the children of Ammon you didn't come near, all the side of the river Jabbok, and the cities of the hill country, and wherever Yahweh our God forbade us-

Paul speaks of how he had been given areas in which it was potentially possible for him to preach in, and he didn't enter into those areas which had either already been preached in, or which were another brother's responsibility (2 Cor. 10:16). This seems to suggest that God does indeed look down from Heaven and as it were divide up the world amongst those who could preach in it. This is why Paul perceived that he had been 'forbid-

den' from preaching in some areas [e.g. Macedonia] and yet a door was opened to him in Achaia. This language is allusive to the way in which the Lord forbade Israel to conquer certain areas on their way to the promised land (Dt. 2:37). The point is, between us, our preaching is a war of conquest for Jesus, pulling down strong holds and fortresses as Paul put it; or, as Jesus expressed it, taking the Kingdom by force, as storm troopers.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

3

Deu 3:1 Then we turned and went up the way to Bashan, and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei-

God gives us potential victories, but we still have to fight the human battle. Og lived in Ashtaroth (Dt. 1:4). Ashtaroth was the name of one of the deities which the surrounding tribes worshipped; Edrei means "strength". The message is that the apparent strength of the idols and those who trusted in them had been overcome. And having won victories which were foretastes of those Israel would win in Canaan, Moses now urges the people to go forward in faith. In Yahweh's strength, they could overcome the idol worshipping tribes, despite their apparent strength. But Israel still kept those idols with them.

Deu 3:2 Yahweh said to me, Don't fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; you shall do to him as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon-

See on Ex. 34:27. Moses seems to have appreciated fully his representative role when he addressed Israel: "The Lord said unto *me*... I will deliver [Og] into thy [singular] hand... so the Lord our God delivered into *our* hands Og" (Dt. 3:2,3). David recognized this unity between Moses and Israel; David describes both Israel and Moses as God's chosen (Ps. 16:5,23). All these things

looked forward to our victory on account of being "in" Christ; through baptism, and then through a life lived in Him and in identity with Him.

Deu 3:3 So Yahweh our God delivered into our hand Og also, the king of Bashan and all his people, and we struck him until none remained-

Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

Deu 3:4 We took all his cities at that time. There was not a city which we didn't take from them; sixty cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan-

As noted in Num. 21:33; Dt. 3:4,10, some of the places they had known in their wilderness journeys (cp. our life now after baptism, which is like crossing the Red Sea, 1 Cor. 10:1,2) were revisited and taken by Joshua (Josh. 12:4), and incorporated into God's Kingdom. Perhaps situations and places we know in this life will then become eternally ours when we possess them in God's Kingdom.

Deu 3:5 All these were fortified cities with high walls, gates, and bars, besides the unwalled towns very many-

No wall was "too high" for them (Dt. 2:36). This recalls how earlier the people had turned away from Canaan because they thought that walled cities were impossible to conquer. These victories were to lead them towards faith that even the legendary walls of Jericho would fall before them. God likewise gently educates us in the path of faith; victory over a relatively small wall leads us to believe in victory against far taller walls which we will later encounter in life.

Deu 3:6 We utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon king of Heshbon, utterly destroying every inhabited city, with the women and the little ones-

"Utterly destroyed" is the word *herem*, used of 'devotion' to Yahweh; see on :8. Their complete destruction therefore was as if these cities were whole burnt offerings, offered to Yahweh. And yet it would see from Dt. 2:26; 20:10 that they all had the opportunity to accept

peace with God. They refused to devote themselves to Him- and so they devoted to Him in their death. In this we see the logic of absolute devotion to Yahweh. The death of unbelieving rebels is not as it were a victory for sin; but it is all the same the glorification of God, His victory over flesh. But if we consciously choose to devote ourselves to Him, then we shall be as living sacrifices.

Deu 3:7 But all the livestock and the spoil of the cities we took for a prey to ourselves-

I explained on :6 that the "utter destruction" of these cities is described in terms which present them as sacrifices. But the people were allowed to eat their animals. This recalls the priests eating parts of the sacrifices, and confirms the desire of God for all Israel to see themselves as a nation of priests (Ex. 19:5,6); just as we are all a priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), not leaving spiritual work to others, but ourselves taking responsibility for it.

Deu 3:8 We took the land at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, from the valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon-

It is significant that there were mountains called Hermon in the extreme north and south of the land. It is a form of the word *herem*, the term used in :6 for the 'devotion' of the conquered land to Yahweh. Perhaps that was the idea. But we note that already, God has recalculated Israel's inheritance, bounded now by these mountains; whereas His initial intention was to give them the far wider area promised to Abraham. He likewise adjusts His hopes and expectations of His individual peo-

ple, never giving up on any of us, but always seeking to lead us to at least some inheritance in His Kingdom.

Deu 3:9 (The Sidonians call Hermon Sirion, and the Amorites call it Senir)-

This is an example of how some parts of the Bible which we have were written for its primary readership, and the language used reflects this (Dt. 3:9,11). Thus the early church possessed the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, which have now been withdrawn; yet the New Testament records commands concerning them which were relevant only to the New Testament church. We can learn general principles from these accounts, but their existence is no proof that we can possess the gifts today.

Deu 3:10 We took all the cities of the plain, all Gilead, and all Bashan, to Salecah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan-

These areas were as far north as the west of the sea of Galilee; a very large area is in view.

Deu 3:11 (For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of the Rephaim; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron. Is it not in Rabbah of the children of Ammon? Nine cubits was its length and four cubits its breadth, after the cubit of a man.)-

We note that the *Rephaim* had children like other human beings (2 Sam. 21:16,18; Dt. 3:11), inhabiting an area known as the valley of Rephaim (Josh. 15:8). The "giants" of Gen. 6:2-4 were therefore humans and not celestial beings. The record at this point seems to have been edited, under Divine inspiration, at some later

point. For the bedstead or sarcophagus of Og was now in Ammonite hands, presumably having taken it from Israel. And that was a challenge to Israel at the time- they ought to be able to take Ammon, seeing that with God's help they had destroyed Og.

The Israelites were aware of the existence of unusually large people – the Zamzumin, Zumin, Rephaim, Nephilim, Emim, and Anakim (Dt. 1:28, 2:10,11, 20,21, 3:11). The bed of Og, King of Bashan, a Rephaim, was nine cubits long, over four meters (14 feet) – Dt. 3:11. In Canaanite mythology these giants came from intermarriage between human beings and the gods; but Moses in Genesis 6 is surely addressing this myth and correcting it. He's saying (by implication) that this didn't happen, but rather the Godly seed and the wicked intermarried; and yes, at that time, there were giants in the earth, but they were judged and destroyed by the flood, and the implication surely was that the Israel who first heard Moses' inspired history could take comfort that the giants they faced in Canaan would likewise be overcome by God.

Deu 3:12 This land we took in possession at that time: from Aroer which is by the valley of the Arnon, and half the hill country of Gilead and its cities I gave to the Reubenites and to the Gadites-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross,

and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 3:13 and the rest of Gilead and all Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half-tribe of Manasseh; all the region of Argob, all of Bashan. (The same is called the land of Rephaim)-

These are the 60 cities of "Argob" (Dt. 3:4), which is "called the land of giants / Rephaim" (Dt. 3:13; Josh. 13:30). The two and a half tribes saw good pasture land and wanted it there and then, as a king of short cut to the Kingdom of God. But there are no short cuts to the Kingdom. The conditions they were given demanded even more faith from them. Their men had to leave their flocks and families unprotected on the east of Jordan

whilst they fought in the front line vanguard of Joshua's army to secure the territory on the west of Jordan. And the territory they were asked to possess was huge, far larger than the pasture lands they initially coveted, and inhabited by giants.

Deu 3:14 Jair the son of Manasseh took all the region of Argob to the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and called them, even Bashan, after his own name, Havvoth Jair, to this day-

The boundaries of Gad appear to in practice encroach upon that given to Manasseh (1 Chron. 5:11 cp. Josh. 13:8,7,11,25,30; Dt. 3:10-13). But the tribe of Manasseh had extended their borders northward (1 Chron. 5:23). The territory was given to Israel as their intended inheritance in the Kingdom of God; but God was open to some flexibility about this. We think of Caleb and Othniel asking for territory as an inheritance. And so it is with our dialogue with God's and His eternal intentions for us.

Deu 3:15 I gave Gilead to Machir-

Num. 32:39 describes how the tribes of Gilead were displaced by Machir; but Dt. 3:15 says that God through Moses "gave Gilead to Machir". The land they took was not therefore taken so much by their human effort, swords and bows, even though they played a role- but by the gracious gift of God. And it's the same with our inheritance of the Kingdom. We note that it was God's intention that Israel lived permanently in the promised land. Yet their specific inheritances were related to their behaviour during the time when they took the kingdom;

thus Machir received the territory which he had ethnically cleansed. And so our eternal inheritances, the nature of our eternity, will be a direct reflection of our work in this life. It's not that works can save us. Salvation itself is the gift of grace, represented by how Gilead was given to Machir by God. But it is so that the nature of our eternity will is being forged by our experiences and spiritual intentions now. We are right now shaping the nature of our eternal future.

Deu 3:16 To the Reubenites and to the Gadites I gave from Gilead to the valley of the Arnon, the middle of the valley and its border, to the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon-

Josh. 1:13 describes this as having been "given rest". After the pattern of the Reubenites, we have been given the promised rest of the Kingdom here and now (Josh. 1:13 cp. Heb. 4:3); but we will, like them, only take possession of that inheritance after we have ensured that our brethren have received their possession (Josh. 1:15). Josh. 1:13,15 present a paradox: the Reubenites were given their "rest", but they would only get their "rest" once their brethren had. Those Reubenites really were symbols of us: for this passage is surely behind the reasoning of Heb. 4, where *we* are told that *we* have entered into rest, but that we must labour if we want to enter into it.

Deu 3:17 the Arabah also, and the Jordan and its border, from Chinnereth to the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, under the slopes of Pisgah eastward-

These descriptions imply a birds eye awareness of the geography of the land which no man then living would have had. Clearly Moses was given Divinely inspired understanding in order to define the various allotments of the tribes at this time.

Deu 3:18 I commanded you at that time, saying Yahweh your God has given you this land to possess it; you shall pass over armed before your brothers, the children of Israel, all the men of valour-

Moses has just said that *he* gave Israel their land possessions (:12,13,15,16). So often we encounter this kind of thing; Moses loves to emphasize that God is working through him, that he is identified with God and merely His agent doing His work. Likewise the language of God can be applied to all His servants and supremely to His Son. This doesn't mean that they were God in person, neither was Jesus; but it also doesn't mean that we as individuals are meaningless because God is manifest through us.

This was no small sacrifice, because it left their much beloved flocks, as well as their women and children, without protection. That is the significance of the agreement that "all" their soldiers were to pass over Jordan. And they were to be in the front line, "before your brothers", forming the vanguard (Josh. 1:14). Further, their inheritances east of Jordan were huge, and included areas inhabited by giants and strong enemies. So the agreement required them to live by faith in God's protection far more than did the other tribes. Their attempted short cut to the Kingdom didn't work, it ended up with far

greater challenge to their faith. And that is true to this day.

Deu 3:19 But your wives and your little ones and your livestock (I know that you have much livestock)-

We see here God's awareness of every human situation. The livestock had come from the spoil of the towns they had destroyed.

Shall live in your cities which I have given you-

They had to leave their women and children without protection. That is the significance of the agreement that "all" their soldiers were to pass over Jordan. So the agreement required them to live by faith in God's protection far more than did the other tribes. Their attempted short cut to the Kingdom didn't work, it ended up with far greater challenge to their faith. And that is true to this day.

Deu 3:20 until Yahweh gives rest to your brothers as to you, and they also possess the land which Yahweh your God gives them beyond the Jordan; then you shall return every man to his possession which I have given you-

See on Josh. 22:2-4. He had promised Reuben and Manasseh that they could return to their possessions only when the others had possessed the land (Dt. 3:20). This condition never happened- yet they were allowed to return. And our very salvation from death and the consequences of sin is in a sense another example of this kind of grace. Indeed, the conditions of Dt. 3:20 were in their turn an easier form, a concession to, the terms of the initial agreement in Num. 32:20-32.

Although context is indeed important, it isn't *always* so. The New Testament writers so often quote the Old Testament *without* (apparently) attention to the context of the words they are quoting. And this is indeed the approach of the Rabbis, who tend to expound each Bible verse as a separate entity. But all the same, in seeking to understand a verse, attention should be paid to the context. Because a word or phrase means something in one context doesn't mean it *always* means this in *any* context. Thus "leaven" can be a symbol of both the Gospel and also sin. And the eagle is a symbol of several quite different enemies of Israel, as well as of God Himself. Another simple example is in Dt. 3:20; the land "beyond Jordan" refers to land on the West of the river; but in Josh. 9:10 the same phrase refers to land on the East. That same phrase "beyond Jordan" means something different in different contexts. We can't always assume, therefore, that the same phrase *must* refer to the same thing wherever it occurs.

Deu 3:21 I commanded Joshua at that time saying, Your eyes have seen all that Yahweh your God has done to these two kings; so shall Yahweh do to all the kingdoms where you go-

We are given some foretastes of the Kingdom of God even in this life; just as their victories in the wilderness were foretastes of the greater victories they would have against the inhabitants of Canaan.

Deu 3:22 You shall not fear them, for Yahweh your God, He it is who fights for you-

Fear was therefore disbelief in God's fighting for them. And so much wrong human behaviour arises from fear- fear of possible consequences, ever dwelling upon 'what if?' scenarios. But this is not the stuff of faith, but rather of secular life. Fear is always the antithesis of faith. God is often called an "awesome God" (Dt. 7:21 etc.). The Hebrew word for "awesome" is that for 'fear' (s.w. Gen. 3:10; 15:1; 18:15 etc.). The idea is that God's people are to be in such fear / awe of Him that they fear / are in awe of nothing else. Hence Dt. 7:21 says that Israel should "not be scared of" their enemies, because their God is "awesome", He is the one to be feared.

Deu 3:23 I begged Yahweh at that time saying-

"Begged" is s.w. "gracious" in Ex. 33:19, where Moses was told that Yahweh had sovereign power to "be gracious to whom I will be gracious". He cast himself upon that grace, in asking for God to change His decision about barring Moses from entry to the land (:25). Moses knew God well enough to know that He was capable of changing His stated purposes. Indeed, Moses had persuaded God to do so with regard to Israel's destruction.

Deu 3:24 Lord Yahweh, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or in earth that can do according to Your works and according to Your mighty acts?-

The might of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyp-

tians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched out arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 3:25 Please let me go over and see the good land that is beyond the Jordan, that good mountain, and Lebanon-

Moses asked at least twice (maybe three times?) for him to be allowed to enter the land (Dt. 3:25; Ps. 90); but the answer was basically the same as to Paul when he asked for his thorn in the flesh to be removed: "My

grace is sufficient for you". The fact Moses had been forgiven and was at one with his God was so great that his physical entering the land was irrelevant. And for Paul likewise, temporal blessings in this life are nothing compared to the grace of forgiveness which we have received (Ex. 34:9).

Moses knew God well enough to know that He is capable of changing His stated intentions; for Moses had persuaded God not to destroy Israel as He once planned in His wrath. God is open to dialogue, He isn't the impervious 'Allah' of Islam who must be merely submitted to; and this gives our prayer life real energy and zest, knowing that we're not simply firing requests at God in the hope we might get at least some response; we can dialogue with God, wrestling in prayer over specific, concrete situations and requests.

The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom

to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Deu 3:26 But Yahweh was angry with me for your sakes and didn't listen to me; and Yahweh said to me, Let it suffice you; speak no more to Me of this matter-

Moses says "for your sakes" several times. Although he spoke Deuteronomy in his spiritual maturity at the end of his life, it could be argued that like all of us, he died with some spiritual point of weakness; and in his case it would have been his failure to own up fully to his sin of striking the rock, still blaming it on others even at the end of his life. But Moses will be saved; without any complacency, we all the same shouldn't think that we won't be saved because we have weaknesses we failed to overcome, and likewise we shouldn't assume others won't be saved because they can't recognize what to us is an obvious failure in their behaviour or personality.

The Lord Jesus would have meditated upon the way righteous men had taken upon themselves the sins of their people. Thus Jeremiah speaks as if he has committed Israel's sins; Ezra rends his clothes and plucks off his hair, as if *he* has married out of the faith (Ezra 9:4 cp. Neh. 13:25; the Lord received the same sinner's treatment, Is. 50:6). Moses' prayer for God to relent and let him enter the land was only rejected for the sake of his association with Israel's sins.

At the very end of his life, Moses reeled off this great speech of Deuteronomy, knowing full well that he was to die without entering the land. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 was heard- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded- and yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter. Moses' fleeting requests to enter the land must be read as a flagging from the height of devotion he reached, rather like the Lord's request to escape the cross in Gethsemane. But ultimately he did what he intended- he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stresses on the last day of his life that he wouldn't enter the land for Israel's sake (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went ill with him for their sakes" (Ps. 106:32).

We can also conclude that Moses even at the end of his life failed to appreciate the real significance of his sin. He still chafed at the perceived injustice. He repeatedly claims that he was barred from the land because of Israel's sin- it was their fault (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). Just as so many come to their graveplanks imperfect and still not accepting the full import of their failures, still blam-

ing others, and repeating the internal narrative that "I'm just a victim and it wasn't fair". Right up to a man's grave-planks. But even that will not ultimately exclude Moses from final salvation. But we do observe how such internal narratives are indeed powerful and hard to shift.

Deu 3:27 Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and see with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan-

This was to encourage him that he was indeed as Abraham, who had been bidden do the same. He like Abraham was seeing the land which he would possess eternally in the Kingdom, but not in this life.

Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. His faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. We have seen something of the intensity and passion of his love for Israel, to the point where he was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation. In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. For their sakes he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that therefore "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness "shall not enter into the land", with reference to how when Moses called the people "rebels" and beat

the rock, he was disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience; and on yet another, his prayer to the effect that he didn't want to be in the land if his people weren't going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel's sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways! Thus Moses says that he must die "Because ye [plural] trespassed against me" (Dt. 32:51 AV). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). Moses was a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). As Christ declared God's Name just before his death (Jn. 17:26), so did Moses (Dt. 32:3 LXX).

Deu 3:28 But commission Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go over before this people and he shall cause them to inherit the land which you shall see-

"Obstinate" in Dt. 2:30 is the word used when appealing for Israel and Joshua to be "of good courage" (Dt. 3:28; 31:6,7). The strength of heart in Dt. 2:30 was giv-

en by God's activity upon the heart of Sihon, confirming him in the way he wanted to go, 'hardening his spirit' in that way. And so the exhortation to have a courageous or strengthened heart was an appeal to let God's Spirit work upon their spirit, to allow themselves to be strengthened in their mind, that they might inherit the Kingdom. And that appeal comes to us too.

Deu 3:29 So we stayed in the valley over against Beth Peor-

The way Israel remained in the valley and didn't enter the land is parallel with how Moses was not to pass over Jordan (:27). He was sharing in their condemnation. I suggest God forgave his sin, but he didn't enter the land because he had wished to share their judgment as their representative, so that they might enter.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

4

Deu 4:1 Now Israel, listen to the statutes and to the ordinances which I teach you. Do them so that you may live and go in and possess the land which Yahweh, the God of your fathers gives you-

He pleaded with them to "take heed to thyself" (AV- 'you' singular) that they kept God's word and taught it to their children, so that they would enter the land (Dt. 4:1,9). These words are alluded to by Paul in 1 Tim.4:16, where he says that attention to the doctrine of the new covenant will likewise save us and those who hear us. Paul's last words to Timothy are in the spirit of the whole of Deuteronomy, Moses' farewell warning: love the word, be obedient to it, because this will lead you to inherit the promised land for ever.

Deu 4:2 You must not add to the word which I command you, neither must you take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you-

Pharaoh had insisted that nothing should be "diminished" from the quota of bricks he had set (Ex. 5:11), and the same word is later used of how Israel were not to "diminish" ["take away"] from obeying Yahweh's commandments (Dt. 4:2; 12:32). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism

into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

The last message of Jesus, like that of Moses, emphasizes we are not to add to nor subtract from God's word (Rev. 22:19). The commandments we have been given are designed by God to be a system of living which brings us to Him as He wishes. Jesus was perfect before God not just because He kept the commandments fully, but because the life elicited by that obedience produced a totally God-like person. If we omit some commandments and add others, then this will not be the end result. They are intended to synthesize together to produce a truly spiritual character and way of life. If we ignore some of them and add others then we will actually find obedience to the commandments *in toto* far more difficult. See on Dt. 11:22.

Dt. 4:2 suggests that God had given them just the right commands "*that* you may keep" them. In other words, obedience to one command would lead to obedience to another, so that a whole way of life could be developed which was in accord with God's laws. Successful keeping of the commandments of Christ is similar. Viewed one by one, they can seem just too much to cope with. David found that keeping God's laws made it even

easier to keep them; there was an upward spiral of conformity to God's mind. Thus he asks God to give him any other commandments which God desired; rather than thinking 'I can't cope with all these, so no more, *please!*'

Deu 4:3 Your eyes have seen what Yahweh did because of Baal Peor; for all the men who followed Baal Peor, Yahweh your God has destroyed them from the midst of you-

Dt. 4:3 implies that all who followed Baal Peor were destroyed, and only those who "were faithful" to Yahweh survived (Dt. 4:4). But Num. 25:9,11 suggests that virtually all Israel went after Baal Peor and would all have been destroyed, had not Phinehas and his men slain 24,000 of them. What Phinehas did therefore had real and absolute meaning for God- those who did follow Baal Peor were counted as if they hadn't done so. This was imputed righteousness, and looks forward to the even greater effect of the intercession of the Lord Jesus for us.

Deu 4:4 But you who were faithful-

AV "you that did cleave to Yahweh". The idea of 'cleaving' to God is also a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of

spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

To Yahweh your God are all alive this day-

Moses in his final speech in Deuteronomy uses the name "Yahweh" over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh *thy* God" or "Yahweh *our* God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 4:5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances as Yahweh my God commanded me-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

That you should do so in the midst of the land where you go in to possess it-

The reference may specifically be to the sanctuary envisioned as being built "in the midst of the land".

Deu 4:6 Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations who shall hear all these statutes and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people!-

The preacher of the Gospel *is* the Gospel; the man is the message, just as the very same word / message was made flesh in the Lord. Israel of old were taught this. They were to keep and do the commandments of God, and *this* would be the witness of their wisdom and understanding to the nations around them- who would thereby be brought to Israel's God (Dt. 4:6-8). The imparting of wisdom and understanding therefore didn't come so much through specific doctrinal exposition, as through living out those principles in daily life.

Deu 4:7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to them as Yahweh our God is whenever we call on Him?-

"So near" is s.w. kinsman. God was as a kinsman to Israel. No other God was able to be this close and therefore this close to being human as Yahweh. A relative was seen in those days as one who would provide for you, redeem you, stand up for you, one you could always turn to. And God was Israel's kinsman *par excellence*. It is thrice emphasized that Israel were a "great nation" because of this closeness of their God (Dt. 4:6-8). The Hebrew term "great nation" is at the foundation of the

promises to Abraham which form the new covenant. Through the seed [the Lord Jesus] "I will make of you a great nation" (Gen. 12:2; 18:18). God had earlier told Moses that He would destroy Israel and make of Moses a "great nation" (Ex. 32:10; Num. 14:12); but Moses had successfully pleaded with God not to do so and to continue His attempt to make Israel the intended "great nation". So all Moses' references here to Israel as a "great nation" are a reflection of his own desire that they would come to this status. But their greatness was in having God so close to them. Moses himself had known God very near to him, had spoken with God and heard God's voice- he had experienced the 'greatness' of the relationship God intended with all His people. But Israel preferred not to hear God's voice direct, they moved away from the possible intimacy, and preferred instead a human mediator and system of religion interposing between God and man.

The Lord Jesus speaking of "The Angels of God in Heaven" (Mt. 22:30) suggests that they spend a fair proportion of their time located there physically. God 'comes near' whenever we call upon Him (Dt. 4:7 RV). Perhaps this refers to an Angel literally being sent out from Heaven to come near to us in working out the answer to our prayer. It seems that great stress is placed in Scripture on the Angels physically moving through space, both on the earth and between Heaven and earth, in order to fulfil their tasks, rather than being static in Heaven or earth and bringing things about by just willing them to happen. See on Gen. 18:10.

The laboured emphasis in Dt. 1:45 that Yahweh did not listen nor give ear must be compared with Moses' insistence in Dt. 4:7: "Who is a great nation, to whom there is a god so near as Yahweh our God in all our calling to him?". The tragedy is being taught- that He was so eager to hear, but their refusal to trust Him meant that He did not hear them when they begged to be allowed to enter the Kingdom / promised land. He indeed is amazingly eager to hear and respond to those who truly want to be in His Kingdom. But He doesn't hear the vain words of those who in their hearts turned back to Egypt.

Deu 4:8 What great nation is there that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?-

The law was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), and David often perceives this in Ps. 119. The effect of perfect obedience to it would elicit a character like that of the Lord Jesus, the only one to fully obey it- perfect in every way. This is one reason why His death fulfilled the law of Moses. It fulfilled the intentions of that law. And His righteousness and perfection of character is counted by grace to those of us who are in Him, despite our failures to keep Divine law.

Deu 4:9 Only take heed to yourself-

"Take heed" runs like a refrain throughout Moses' speech. Despite such great love for Israel, Moses knew them so well that he fully appreciated that they were extremely prone to weakness. This is one of the major themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He did not turn a

blind eye to their sins; Deuteronomy is punctuated with reminders of how grievously they had sinned during their journey. Time and again he comments on how easily they will be tempted to disobey commandments.

And keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes saw and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; therefore make them known to your children and your children's children-

Israel's guardian Angel was to "keep" them in the way (Ex. 23:20), clearly echoing how the Angels kept the way to the tree of life in Eden. The same Hebrew word for "keep" occurs very often in Exodus in the context of Israel being told to keep God's commands; but their freewill effort was to be confirmed by the Angel keeping them in the way of obedience. They were to "keep" themselves in the way (Dt. 4:9 and many others; s.w. "take heed", "observe" etc.), but the Angel would keep them in it. This mutuality is developed in Ex. 23:21, where having said the Angel will keep them, Israel are told "Beware of him, and obey his voice". "Beware" translates the same Hebrew word as "keep". The Angel would keep them, but they were to keep to the Angel. And they didn't, and so that generation died and were not brought to the Kingdom as was potentially possible. This is an example of how we are intended to have a mutual relationship with the Lord, leading to Him strengthening us in the one way. This word translated "keep" is also translated "spies" in Jud. 1:24; the spies were the keepers in the way of Israel, to bring them in to the land. And yet the Angel at the exodus was their 'keeper' to bring them into the land.

The spies were working in harmony with their Angels; and thus they succeeded.

This is an evident allusion to the Angel-cherubim keeping the way to the tree of life. But did all Israel remain "in the way" whilst in the wilderness? Evidently not. Did the Angel fail? No. The Angel was given power and strength in order to potentially enable Israel to remain "in the way", just as our Angels are given that same power. But Israel refused to work with the Angel; they didn't make use of the Angel's efforts to keep them in the way.

Deu 4:10 Remember the day that you stood before Yahweh your God in Horeb, when Yahweh said to me, Assemble me the people and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they live on the land-

The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other recorded words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). In his spiritual maturity in Deuteronomy, he was very aware of the "ecclesia". Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of his maturity. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

And that they may teach their children-

The very process of teaching or explaining something to others makes us fully conscious of the material we are teaching; and so preaching or teaching our children God's principles enables us to be the more con-

scious of them and to ourselves remember them. The whole concept of evangelization is partly for our benefit.

Deu 4:11 You came near and stood under the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the heart of the sky, with darkness, cloud and thick darkness-

The mountain appeared to be burning with fire when Moses ascended it due to the pillar of fire standing there, appearing to reach to the "midst of Heaven", showing Heaven and earth were connected through this manifestation. The Angel led them through the wilderness, and elsewhere we read that the pillar of fire led them; the conclusion is therefore that the pillar of fire was where the Angel dwelt. Thus the Angel literally "went before" them as God promised it would, in the form of the pillar. Angels are elsewhere associated with pillars of fire, e.g. the one which came to Manoah, and not least in that God came down in a pillar of fire to speak to Moses. Ex. 14:19 conclusively shows the pillar of fire/cloud and the Angel to be identical: "the Angel of God which went before the camp of Israel removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud (the Shekinah glory) went from before their face, and stood behind them".

The idea was as in Ex.19:13 LXX "when the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on Ex.19:14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on Ex.19:10. Instead of all of them ascending the mountain, only Moses was invited to ascend (Ex.19:20). This was a departure from the initial intention. And when he got to the top, he was simply told to

go down and ensure the people didn't break through the cordon and come up the mountain as originally planned. Some of them had already touched the mountain; for the commentary of Heb. 12:20 is that "They could not endure [s.w. "uphold"] that which was commanded- If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned". The argument in the context seems to be that Israel were disobedient even to the peripheral command not to touch the mountain. The whole narrative is the story of an intimacy with God which didn't come about as potentially possible. And that is the sad story of so much of the Divine-human encounter. But Moses at the end of his life was full of grace and he doesn't remind them of all this. He focuses on just one point he wishes to make- that they saw no form, and so should make no images. Faced with people with a range of immaturities, we likewise must show grace and focus on just one or two issues specifically.

Deu 4:12 Yahweh spoke to you out of the midst of the fire-

Moses graciously doesn't mention that they shied away from Yahweh's appearance at that time and wanted him only to engage with Yahweh. Grace and speaking graciously about others' weaknesses is a sign of spiritual maturity, and we see it in Moses now at the end of his life.

The references to fire, smoke, furnace, earthquake and the descent of Yahweh (Ex. 19:18) is very similar to the language of Divine judgment, especially of Sodom (Gen. 19:28; Rev. 9:2). And we know from the prophets

that Israel were considered by God as Sodom. We could read this as His wrath with Israel for breaking His simple commandments about not touching the mountain, and for not having sufficiently sanctified themselves (see on Ex. 19:10,14,18). The argument of Heb. 12 appears to be that the scene here is one of condemnation of sinful man- and we have not been called to that, but to salvation by grace in the new covenant in Christ. But out of that condemnation, God earnestly wished to reach out to His people, with words of covenant salvation.

You heard the voice of words, but you saw no form; you only heard a voice-

The fact they saw no similitude is sandwiched between two statements that they heard God's word. The idea surely is that they were the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26) and God's intention was to fashion them through His word into His moral image. Instead, they rejected this closeness to God by wanting to turn Him into a similitude, an idol, creating Him as a "likeness" of something familiar (:16-18). God's likeness is to be found in us who are made in His physical image and transformed by His word into His moral image. He has no other likeness apart from in and through us. His closeness to us is amazing.

Sinai burnt with a fire which came "from the heart of Heaven" (Dt. 4:11 RV). But the people saw nothing; all they heard was a voice. The word of God was thus visually associated with a fire coming from Heaven's heart- from the very core of God Himself. The focus was upon the voice of God's words- hence "you saw no form; only

a voice" (Dt. 4:12 Heb.). They 'saw' the voice in that they saw it associated with the fire that came from the heart of Heaven. This is the intensity of God speaking with us in His word. And Israel turned away from this intensity- for they asked that this experience not happen again, and that Moses instead be a mediator of God's word to them.

Deu 4:13 He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments, and He wrote them on two tablets of stone-

This verse makes a clear connection between the ten commandments and the old covenant. The ten commandments include the Sabbath. That old covenant has now been replaced by the new covenant. The Lord's teachings repeat the essence of nine of the ten commandments- but not the Sabbath.

Deu 4:14 Yahweh commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances that you might do them in the land you go over to possess-

Moses was indeed "apt to teach". "The servant of the Lord [A very common title of Moses] must not strive [As Israel did with him (Num. 26:9)] but be gentle unto all [The spirit of Moses] apt to teach [As was Moses (Ex. 18:20; 24:12; Dt. 4:1,5,14; 6:1; 31:22)], patient [As was Moses], in meekness [Moses was the meekest man (Num. 12:3)] instructing those that oppose themselves [at the time of Aaron and Miriam's self-opposing rebellion] if God peradventure will give them repentance [i.e. forgiveness] ["Peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin" (Ex. 32:30)]"- and he prayed 40 days

and nights for it. And note too: 2 Tim. 2:19 = Num. 16:5,26; 2 Tim. 2:20 = Num. 12:7; 2:21 = Num. 16:37; 2 Tim. 2:22 = Num. 12:2; 16:3; 2 Tim. 2:26 = Num. 16:33. This is quite something. The height of Moses' devotion for His people, the passion of his praying, shadowing as it did the matchless intercession and self-giving of the Lord, really is our example. It isn't just a height to be admired. It means that we will not half-heartedly ask our God to 'be with' brother x and sister y and the brethren in country z, as we lie half asleep in bed. This is a call to sustained, on our knees prayer and devotion to the salvation of others. For the Judaists, an appeal to be like Moses, to emulate him in teaching, was blasphemous; for they considered Moses at such a level that he could never be imitated. Yet Paul urges timid Timothy and all teachers to realistically be Moses to our audience.

Deu 4:15 Take therefore good heed to yourselves, for you saw no kind of form on the day that Yahweh spoke to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire-

Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

"Form" or "likeness" is used in the LXX in the frequent warnings not to make an image or likeness of any god, let alone Yahweh (Ex. 20:4; Dt. 4:16-25; Ps. 106:20; Is. 40:18,19). The reason for this prohibition becomes clearer in the New Testament; the ultimate likeness of God is in His Son, and we are to create the likeness of His Son not as a mere physical icon, but within the very structure of our human personality and character.

Deu 4:16 Do not corrupt yourselves-

The idea may be that it is man who is made in the form / image / likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Our emphasis must be upon replicating God's thinking in ourselves, making ourselves after His image and likeness. Rather than seeking to worship a physical image of Him in the form of an idol or animal. To do so is to corrupt both Him and the humanity which He intends to be in His image and likeness.

And make yourself an engraved image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female-

God's people are to accept Him as He is in His word, rather than try to create God in a form which seems attractive to us. As we read His word, it is not for us to say 'I don't think God would be like *that*, He will be like *this*, which is how I imagine He ought to be'. And it is not for us to work around those words of His which are inconvenient to us by forced, out of context interpretation, dismissing their inspiration or using other tricks of the human intellect. By doing so we are effectively mak-

ing a graven image, fashioning God as we want Him to be rather than accepting Him as He is.

Deu 4:17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky-

As discussed on :16, it is humans who are made in God's image and likeness. We are to seek to become after His spiritual, mental image and likeness. To worship physical idols or "nature" is a corruption of that intention, and in fact a devaluing of ourselves as humans and what it means to be human, made in God's likeness.

Deu 4:18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth-

The Egyptians were fond of making idols in the form of animals and the plagues had therefore been a judgment upon Egypt's gods. Yet Israel had taken those gods with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:7,8).

Deu 4:19 Do not lift up your eyes to the sky and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the army of the sky, be drawn away and worship them and serve them, which Yahweh your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole sky-

This warns Israel not to worship the stars, because God has shared them with "all the peoples under the whole heaven" (RV)- but He Has shared Himself only with Israel, and brought them out from the world to be separated unto Him (:20). Because of this unique and awesome entrance into their lives by God, they ought to have naturally separated themselves from any other

god. The positive separation *unto* naturally resulted in the negative separation *from*.

Deu 4:20 But Yahweh has taken you and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be to Him a people of inheritance, right up to this day-

In the eternity of the Kingdom, we will be God's inheritance (Dt. 4:20; 9:29), and He will be ours (Ps. 16:5). This mutuality between God and His people is a common theme. "The ashes of the furnace" which created the plague of boils (Ex. 9:8) may have been a reference to the furnaces used for the brick kilns, where the Hebrews were made to slave away making bricks. The result of this abuse was to come down upon the Egyptians as boils (Ex. 9:9). Egypt is therefore likened to a furnace of oppression to Israel (Dt. 4:20; Jer. 11:4). The Lord describes condemnation as being cast into a furnace (Mt. 13:42,50). He is not speaking literally, but rather using the figure of Egypt as a furnace- for the condemnation of the unworthy in God's Israel is to be sent back into Egypt / the world (Hos. 8:13; 9:3), and share their judgments.

Deu 4:21 Furthermore, Yahweh was angry with me-

As noted on Dt. 1:26,32, Moses is pointing up the similarities between himself and Israel. Yahweh was angry with him and barred him from entry to the land (Dt. 1:37; 4:21), just as He had been angry with Israel and barred them likewise (Dt. 1:34). He however became their representative, having sinned in essence as they had, but having found forgiveness.

For your sakes and swore that I should not go over the Jordan, and that I should not go in to that good land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance-

See on Dt. 1:37. The love of Moses for Israel is reflected in his final address to them in Deuteronomy, his knowledge of them, his sensitivity to their weakness, his constant desire for them to be spiritually strong and to enter the land; God's respect of him at the end of his life, shown in his burial and in subsequent comments about him. Although Moses is at a spiritual peak in Deuteronomy, he does repeatedly comment- almost under his breath as it were- that he was not going to enter the land "for your sakes", and that he was thereby bearing the anger of God against Israel (e.g. Dt. 4:21 etc.). Whilst in a sense this was true, God's anger was against Moses personally regarding the sin of striking the rock. Given that "that rock was Christ", his inappropriate striking of it was some kind of symbolic crucifixion of Christ. He was in the wrong- the record of the event makes that clear. And yet at the end of his life, Moses is blaming Israel for his sin and his exclusion from the land. Perhaps he was indicating his understanding of how his prayer to not enter the land for their sakes was being answered. On the other hand, one could argue that even on the last day of his life, Moses never came to terms with that sin, sought to justify himself in the eyes of Israel, to shift the blame... and yet even then, God's grace was big enough to accept him. Quite how to score Moses on this point will always be debatable, but the exercise certainly provokes a lot of introspection about our own attitudes to

public confession of sin, both in ourselves and in others, and its relationship to God's ultimate acceptance of a person.

In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 was heard- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. His faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. We have seen something of the intensity and passion of his love for Israel, to the point where he was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation. In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. For their sakes he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that therefore "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness "shall not enter into the land", with reference to how when Moses called the people "rebels" and beat the rock, he was disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience;

and on yet another, his prayer to the effect that he didn't want to be in the land if his people weren't going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel's sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways! Thus Moses says that he must die "Because ye [plural] trespassed against me" (Dt. 32:51 AV). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). Moses was a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). As Christ declared God's Name just before his death (Jn. 17:26), so did Moses (Dt. 32:3 LXX).

We can also conclude that Moses even at the end of his life failed to appreciate the real significance of his sin. He still chafed at the perceived injustice. He repeatedly claims that he was barred from the land because of Israel's sin- it was their fault (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). Just as so many come to their graveplanks imperfect and still not accepting the full import of their failures, still blaming others, and repeating the internal narrative that "I'm just a victim and it wasn't fair". Right up to a man's graveplanks. But even that will not ultimately exclude Moses from final salvation. But we do observe how such internal narratives are indeed powerful and hard to shift.

Deu 4:22 but I must die in this land. I must not go over the Jordan; but you shall go over and possess-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

That good land-

The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of

the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Deu 4:23 Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of Yahweh your God which He made with you, and make you an engraved image in the form of anything which Yahweh your God has forbidden you-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 4:24 For Yahweh your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God-

This is quoted about us in Heb. 12:29 with a slight change of pronoun; “*Your* (Israel’s) God” becomes “*our* God”. The God of the Christian believers is the Old Testament Yahweh God of Israel; in this we see the significance of studying the accounts of how our God revealed Himself in the Old Testament.

Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel ‘selling themselves to do iniquity’ uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

Deu 4:25 When you father children and children’s children and you have been long in the land and corrupt yourselves and make an engraved image in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh your God, to provoke Him to anger-

God can be grieved [s.w. ‘provoke to anger’]. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn’t mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are pre-

sented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

Deu 4:26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you shall soon utterly perish from off the land you go over the Jordan to possess; you shall not prolong your days on it, but shall utterly be destroyed-

Always in the OT, "I say unto you this day" was used as a Hebraism to bring home the utter solemnity of some great truth (e.g. Dt. 4:26,39; 8:19). The Lord used this idiom in assuring the thief on the cross that he could solemnly assure him, that he would share His Kingdom with Him. It's worth noting that the comma is placed after 'today' in the Curetonian Syriac version of the New Testament; the Syriac versions would reflect better the original Aramaic in which the Lord likely spoke.

Deu 4:27 Yahweh will scatter you among the nations and you shall be left few in number among the nations where Yahweh shall lead you away-

Israel were indeed disobedient and were scattered throughout the provinces of the Assyrian and Babylonian empires. "There you will serve gods..." (:28) - but the prophets (especially Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) condemned them for this. There is a downward spiral in spirituality, whereby if people choose to go to false gods, the true God confirms them in their delusions. This is why followers of false religions are so totally convinced

they are right, everything makes sense to them within the theological system they adopt- because God confirms them in the delusion they have chosen (2 Thess. 2:11).

"Left few in number" could suggest they were few in number at that time, but would remain like this instead of multiplying. This affects how we read the "thousands" with which they apparently left Egypt; see on Ex. 12:37.

Deu 4:28 There you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell-

Condemnation is always essentially the choice made by the condemned themselves. The gods of the nations were nearly always understood as local gods, which had power in their homeland. Yet Israel worshipped those gods. By doing so, they effectively identified themselves with those lands. And so they were sent to live in those lands, and as it were properly worship those gods, on their home territories. In this sense the Lord Jesus could say that He judges / condemns no man; condemnation is self inflicted, and a reflection of the dominant desire of the condemned person. And likewise, all who truly love the Lord's appearing and the things of His Kingdom will be accepted into it (2 Tim. 4:8).

Deu 4:29 But from there you shall seek Yahweh your God and you will find Him, when you search after Him with all your heart and with all your soul-

We're wrong to think that God passionlessly waits for us to repent or pray to Him, and then He will forgive or act for us. He loves us, simply so; and with all love's

manipulation of circumstances and proactive taking of the initiative, He seeks to pour out His love upon us. Thus repentance itself is a gift which God gives and is not totally upon human initiative (Dt. 4:29-31; 30:1-10; 1 Kings 8:58).

The judgment will be the time when God 'requires' of us our behaviour. And yet the Hebrew word is used about our enquiring / searching to God in prayer now (Gen. 25:22; Ex. 18:15; Dt. 4:29; 12:5; 1 Kings 22:5), as well as His 'requiring' / searching of us at the last day (Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 1 Sam. 20:16; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8). There is a mutuality between a man and his God.

Time and again in Deuteronomy, Moses speaks of the state of the *heart*. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This was perhaps his greatest wish as he faced death; that God's people should develop a spiritual *mind* and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. He saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? There is so much in our modern world which is mind-corrupting. Perceiving the importance of spiritual mindedness is a sign of our spiritual maturity.

Deu 4:30 When you are oppressed and all these things have come on you, in the latter days you shall return to Yahweh your God and listen to His voice-

This is one of many indications that just before Christ returns, at least some Jews will repent and turn to the Father and His Son in truth. For His voice is supremely in the word made flesh, His Son. We should therefore always given special attention to witnessing the Gospel to Jewish people, because their repentance will be one factor which brings about Christ's return.

Deu 4:31 for Yahweh your God is a merciful God; He will not fail you neither destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them-

"Corrupted" in Dt. 4:16,25 is s.w. "destroyed" here. All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew word for "corruption" also means "destruction", for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves.

To forsake Yahweh was to break covenant with Him (Dt. 31:16,17). Israel did forsake Yahweh (Jud. 2:13), but still He remained faithful to them, as Hosea remained faithful to Gomer despite her infidelity to their marriage covenant. Instead of forsaking them as He threatened, He instead by grace sent them saviours, judges, looking forward to His grace in sending the Lord Jesus, Yah's salvation. Consider the following examples, of where God says He won't do something; and then does: Ex. 33:3 cp. 34:9; Dt. 4:31; 31:6,8 cp. 31:17. God is therefore open to change, because of His basic love and pity being such a major component of His basic personality.

Deu 4:32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and from the one end of the sky to the other, whether there has been anything like this great thing, or has been heard like it?-

No other God came so close to His people to speak to them directly. The tragedy was that Israel asked that God *not* do this, and speak with them through Moses. They wanted to interpose a religious system between God and themselves for fear of facing up to the awesome reality of personal relationship with God. And so it has ever been amongst 'religious' people. The invitation to search through the records of all human history would have been more relevant to Judah in captivity in Babylon, with access to such records, than to Israel in the wilderness. I suggest this is another example of where Deuteronomy was rewritten under Divine inspiration for the exiles- for they too needed to quit idolatry and go forward in faith to possess the same promised land and establish God's Kingdom in it. See on :44.

Deu 4:33 Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as you have heard, and live?-

Israel complained that no other nation had ever been asked to hear the voice of their God in a personal way; they feared that hearing this voice meant their condemnation (Dt. 5:26). But God meant it so positively; the fact they had heard God's voice was a sign of His amazing grace (Dt. 4:32,33). Yet Israel turned the display of that grace into a reason to fear condemnation.

They were far happier not being confronted by such radical grace, and the personal engagement of God with them. And so they desperately sought to use mere religion to shield them from this, asking Moses to go through with this engagement with God and then give them a few rules to obey, which didn't too deeply interrupt their lives. This is the abiding tendency of men of all ages; to flee from grace to the structures of mere religion.

Deu 4:34 Or has God tried to take a nation for Himself-

The Hebrew word for "trials" means just that. God tried, He attempted, to take Israel out of Egypt and make them His own loyal people- just as He tries, unsuccessfully, with so many today. And it seems not all Israel kept the Passover, some were slain, and perhaps some chose to remain in Egypt. And the majority He took out, returned there in their hearts. But He tried, with amazing effort. In this we see the limitation of God, albeit self-imposed, due to His huge respect for human freewill. No other God tried [and tries] so hard to bring His people out from Egypt [the world] to be solely His. Every Red Sea / baptism deliverance of an individual is the sum of a huge amount of work from God. Those who were raised as believers need not think this to be irrelevant to them.

From the midst of another nation by trials, by signs and by wonders-

It is stressed that Israel were taken out from the "midst of Egypt" (Dt. 4:34; 1 Kings 8:51). The plagues

and wonders were done in "the midst of Egypt" (Ex. 3:20; Dt. 11:3). The midst of Egypt appears to be defined in Ps. 135:9; Is. 19:3; Ez. 29:3 as being Pharaoh and his servants. The narrative therefore stresses so much his response to the plagues. God's especial focus had been upon his conversion, and yet he refused. Israel were taken out right from under his nose, from the very heart of Egypt. Ez. 20:8 reveals what is not recorded in the historical record; that because the Israelites were so devoted to Egyptian idolatry still, His thought had been to destroy them "in the midst of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:8). But God's pole of grace overcame the pole of necessary judgment. He tolerated them and saved them, with enthusiasm, by the grace which comes from love- love taken to its ultimate, saving term. The whole narrative speaks as if the Hebrews were all at one place at one time and left "the midst of Egypt" together. Although unrecorded in the historical narrative, this would have meant that they gathered together "in the midst of Egypt" with Moses, who was not in Goshen but in the locality and presence of Pharaoh.

By war and by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, according to all that Yahweh your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?-

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched our arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to per-

ceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 4:35 It was shown to you so that you might know that Yahweh is God and that there is none else besides Him-

"I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God (the Hebrew word for 'god' essentially means 'power') beside Me" (Is. 45:5); "Is there a God beside Me? There is no God; I know not any", God says (Is. 44:8). Such verses occur time and again throughout the Bible. Because God is the source of all power and the only God, He is therefore a jealous God, as He often reminds us (e.g. Ex. 20:5; Dt. 4:24). God gets jealous when His people start believing in other gods, if they say to Him, 'You are a great God, a powerful God, but actually I believe there are still some other gods beside You, even if they are not as powerful as You'. This is the problem with be-

lieving that there are demons or a Devil in existence as well as the true God. This is just the mistake Israel made. Much of the Old Testament is spent showing how Israel displeased God by believing in other gods as well as in Him. The “demons” some people believe in today are equivalent to those false gods Israel believed in.

Deu 4:36 Out of heaven He made you hear his voice so that He might instruct you, and on earth He made you see His great fire and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire-

Although God spoke to Moses alone in the mount, Moses stresses that actually God “spake unto *you* in the mount out of the midst of the fire”. The word of God to His scribes really is, to the same gripping, terrifying degree, His direct word to us (Dt. 4:36; 5:45; 10:4). This explains why David repeatedly refers to the miracle at the Red Sea as if this had affected him personally, to the extent that he could ecstatically rejoice because of it. However it has to be noted that it was God's intention that Israel heard His voice directly. This would persuade them of His unique existence. But they refused to hear that word directly, preferring to hear it through Moses indirectly, and therefore the potential strengthening of faith didn't happen. And that is true of so many apparently Christian people today.

Deu 4:37 Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their seed after them and brought you out-

“You did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world” (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel “out of

all peoples" (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2). Israel stood at Sinai and were told that if they were obedient, then they would be God's people. But then they were told that actually, God accepted them anyway as His people. And only *then* was the Law given to Moses- with the message that it was to be kept out of gratitude for what God had *already* done by grace in saving them just "simply so", because he loved them and had chosen their ancestors by grace (Dt. 4:34-40). Likewise it was *because* God sanctified Israel that they were to keep the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13,14; Dt. 5:15). It wasn't that any human obedience made them holy- the laws were simply an opportunity to respond to the grace shown them. For God's salvation of them from Egypt, like ours from this world, was nothing but grace.

"Because He loved your fathers therefore He brought them out [of Egypt]" (Dt. 4:37) is Moses' answer to Israel's belief that it was because Yahweh hated Israel that He brought them out of Egypt (Dt. 1:27).

With His presence, with His great power, out of Egypt-

After the sin with the golden calf, God had told Israel that His presence would not go with them. But Moses had persuaded God to change on that (Ex. 33:15-17), and he cites this as yet another amazing grace toward Israel by God. We note that he doesn't boast about the power of his prayers, but instead glories in what God had therefore done.

Deu 4:38 to drive out nations from before you greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as at this day-

Our separation from this world isn't merely negative. We are separated *from* the world ["brought you out", :37] so that we might be separated *unto* the things of God ["to bring you in"]. These two ideas are found together in the Hebrew word for 'holiness'. We learn here that the nations of Canaan were "greater", more numerous, than Israel. I have discussed on Ex. 12:37 how the word "thousand" has a wide range of meaning; and it is used of the six hundred "thousand" military age men who left Egypt. I suggested that we need not read this as a literal number, and that therefore the people of Israel were still relatively few, rather than several million as would be required if they had 600,000 military age men amongst them. For if Israel numbered a few million people, then the nations in Canaan would have numbered many million, if they were so much more numerous than Israel. And there are huge logistical problems with supposing a population in Canaan of say 20 million people.

Deu 4:39 Know therefore this day and lay it to your heart, that Yahweh He is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is none else-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should

develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 4:40 You must keep His statutes and His commandments which I command you this day, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh your God gives you forever-

That God is one is a command, an imperative to action (Mk. 12:28,29). It underlies the whole law and prophets (Mt. 22:40)- it's that fundamental. If there were two Gods, Yahweh would only demand half our energies. Nothing can be given to anything else; for there is nothing else to give to. There's only one God. There can be no idolatry in our lives, because there is only one God (2 Kings 19:18,19). Because "there is none else, you shall keep *therefore* his statutes" (Dt. 4:39,40). The Hebrew text of Dt. 6:4 suggests: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one", thereby linking Yahweh's unity with His

being our God, the sole Lord and unrivalled Master of His people. It also links the first principle of the unity of God with that of the covenant to Abraham; for "I will be their God" was one of the features of the covenant. The one God has only one people; not all religious systems can lead to the one Hope of Israel.

So does "prolong your days" mean that long life promised to the obedient Israelite under the Old Covenant? Solomon observed that a just man perished young and "a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness" (Ecc. 7:15). Ez. 12:22 suggests that faithless Israel cynically observed that "The days are prolonged" and God's prophetic word of condemnation had failed- implying they thought that prolonged days were being experienced by them despite their disobedience. The Hebrew phrase 'to prolong days' is found in Is. 53:10, where it is applied to how Messiah would 'prolong His days' not in this life, but in the resurrection. The repeated promises recorded in Deuteronomy of prolonged days upon the land of Israel would therefore hint at the eternity of the Kingdom rather than this life. Indeed, Dt. 4:40 says they would prolong their days "for ever". For an individual Israelite might be faithful but not prolong his or her days in the land because the whole people were to be carried away captive for their sins and the land given to a Gentile power. The opposite of 'days being prolonged' was 'utter destruction' (:26)- which would then speak of condemnation in the second death. This is one of many examples of where eternal life was possible under the Old Covenant- there were multiple differ-

ent possibilities and plans God could have worked by. Israel could have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and not killed Him, and so forth. It seems the closer we probe God's word, the more open He is revealed as being.

Deu 4:41 Then Moses set apart three cities beyond the Jordan toward the east-

The emphasis was very much upon *them* making the cities of refuge, and defining the paths which led to them from all settlements in the land (Dt. 19:3): "I command you, saying, You must set apart three cities for yourselves" (Dt. 19:7). Yet the record in Joshua 18-20 shows that Israel didn't do this, because they didn't even capture all the cities which were to be cities of refuge. Moses attempted to arrange it all for them; for Moses set apart cities of refuge. But arrangements for personal salvation cannot be done by someone else.

Deu 4:42 that the manslayer might flee there, who kills his neighbour unawares, and didn't hate him in time past, and that fleeing to one of these cities he might live:-

We are all in the position of the man who unintentionally committed manslaughter and must therefore die. We are under sentence of death by reason of being human, as well as for our actual sins. The avenger of blood could be seen as God, for it is He alone who has the right to execute judgment for sin. And we must note that the word *ga'al* translated "avenger" is also that translated "redeemer" or 'ransomer'. The cities of refuge are therefore understood in Heb. 6:18 as looking ahead to refuge in the Lord Jesus: "Who have fled for refuge to lay

hold on the hope set before us". The allusion is to how the person who found they had committed a sin worthy of death, yet without as it were wishing to have done so, could flee to a city of refuge and be saved there by the death of the high priest. The curse upon Levi was that the members of this tribe were to be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7). However, this resulted in the cities of the Levites being scattered throughout the land, thus providing accessible cities of refuge to all who wished to escape the consequences of sin. Those cities were evidently symbolic of the refuge we have in Christ. Again and again, the curses and consequences of human sin are used by the Father to mediate blessing. It is the sure hope before us which is our refuge. "Hope", *elpis*, is a confident knowledge of a future reality, rather than a hoping for the best. We should be confident in our salvation. The 'guilty' person was made free totally through the death of the High Priest, clearly looking forward to the significance of the death of the Lord Jesus.

Moses was so sensitive to Israel's weakness. He often reminds them that he knows that they will turn away from the Covenant he had given them (e.g. Dt. 30:1; 31:29). He knew that one day they would want a king, even though God was their king (Dt. 17:14). He foresaw how they would see horses and chariots and get frightened (Dt. 20:1-4). He knew that there would always be poor people in the land, even though if the Law was properly kept this would not be the case (Dt. 15:4mg, 11). He knew they would accidentally commit murder and would need a way of escape; therefore he twice re-

peats and explains the law concerning the cities of refuge (Dt. 4:42; 19:5). These being a symbol of the future Messiah (Heb. 6:18), this emphasis would suggest that like Paul and Jacob, the mind of Moses in his time of spiritual maturity was firmly fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ. See on 5:22

Deu 4:43 Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country for the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites-

But Ramoth Gilead passed in and out of Israelite possession; and it is doubtful whether Manasseh ever bothered securing Golan from the local inhabitants. Likewise Kedesh, a city of refuge on the west of Jordan, was listed in Josh. 19 as a city not yet taken by Naphtali; yet it was commanded to be given by them to the Levites as a city of refuge (Josh. 20:7). So their refusal or 'being slack' to take the city meant they had no wider vision, of providing a place of refuge for the needy within Israel as a whole. And there is no real evidence that this wonderful system of salvation and justice ever really worked in practice.

The cities were generally in the wilderness or mountainous areas; perhaps the idea was that they should not be used casually, but the person had to make quite some effort to get there.

Deu 4:44 This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel-

Deuteronomy is largely a transcript of the final speech of Moses, given at the very end of his life. But verses like this indicate an editorial hand, and I suggest-

ed on :32 that this was done under Divine inspiration in Babylon.

Deu 4:45 these are the testimonies, the statutes and the ordinances, which Moses spoke to the children of Israel when they came forth out of Egypt-

"Came forth" is s.w. "brought forth". Israel were "brought forth" from Egypt by God; they had been unwilling to leave Egypt, preferring to serve the Egyptians rather than Yahweh (Ex. 14:12). God had as it were forced through His project of saving Israel by bringing them out of Egypt. And He had done so largely for the sake of Moses, by whose faith the Red Sea parted and they were delivered (Heb. 11:28,29). Therefore Yahweh's bringing Israel out of Egypt was what He did for Moses, and only thereby for His people. We too are brought out of this world towards God's Kingdom by His grace alone, with His consistently taking the initiative in our hearts and life circumstances, in accord with the loving intercession of the Lord Jesus [represented by Moses]. Thus Yahweh brought Israel out of Egypt (Ex. 18:1; 19:1; Lev. 23:43; 25:55; Num. 26:4; 33:1,3,38; Dt. 4:45,46), but Moses did (Ex. 3:10,11).

Deu 4:46 beyond the Jordan, in the valley over against Beth Peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel struck, when they came forth out of Egypt-

Critics have made much of the apparent contradiction between the geographical details in Dt. 1:1 and the location details in Dt. 4:45,46. But I suggest that the names in Dt. 1:1 are not intended to be pinned down

to specific locations. There are six of them, and it was unlikely that any reader would be able to pinpoint a location in the uncharted desert from these vague places. Rather, we are given a word picture of what the desert was like. The place names in Dt. 1:1 mean [in order] "Ornamental", maybe referring to the appearance of sand sculptures made by the wind; "quagmire", "whiteness", "tower" and "golden".

Deu 4:47 They took his land in possession, and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise-

"They took" again suggests an inspired editorial hand; see on :32,44.

Deu 4:48 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, to Mount Sion (the same is Hermon)-

This is not to be confused with Mount Zion in Jerusalem, nor the Hermon in the north. It is significant that there were mountains called Hermon in the extreme north and south of the land. It is a form of the word *herem*, the term used in Dt. 3:6 for the 'devotion' of the conquered land to Yahweh. Perhaps that was the idea. But we note that already, God has recalculated Israel's inheritance, bounded now by these mountains; whereas His initial intention was to give them the far wider area promised to Abraham. He likewise adjusts His hopes and expectations of His individual people, never giving up on any of us, but always seeking to lead us to at least some inheritance in His Kingdom.

Deu 4:49 and all the Arabah beyond the Jordan eastward, even to the sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of Pisgah-

The way Deuteronomy refers to cities East of Jordan as being "on this side Jordan" (e.g. Dt. 4:41,49 AV) would suggest that the editor of the book was writing from a location East of Jordan- likely Babylon. Thus books like Deuteronomy were edited, under Divine inspiration, in the captivity- in order to show Judah how they were repeating the sins of their forefathers, and appealing to them thereby to learn the lessons. It has been observed that the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings have certain similarities. For example, they all quote the Deuteronomy version of Israel's earlier history, leading to the suggestion that Deuteronomy was the first of the collection, a kind of introductory background history. See on Dt. 28:41.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 5

Deu 5:1 Moses called to all Israel and said to them, Hear, Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I speak in your ears this day, that you may learn them and observe to do them-

Learning / understanding God's principles is the way towards being obedient to them. None of His laws are mere senseless tests of our obedience or submission to Him; they have specific intention. They were to "hear" in such a way as they learned and observed the commandments. But "hear" means effectively 'to obey'. Our attitude to God's word, how we hear it, is critical. We can be a forgetful hearer, or a hearer who "does" (James 1:25). And obedience, 'hearing', leads to further obedience. But it all depends upon our attitude to God's word.

Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" or obey God's words. "*Hear, O Israel*" in Deuteronomy must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "*Hear* ['be obedient'], O Israel" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuterono-

my Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

Deu 5:2 Yahweh our God made a covenant with us in Horeb-

But that generation to whom Moses spoke at the end of his life had not been at Horeb / Sinai 40 years previously. Israel were to teach their children that God had personally saved *them* at the Red Sea. The covenant made with Israel then was made not only with the “fathers” who were then alive, but with every member of every generation of God’s people (Dt. 5:3; 6:20). In this sense, Biblical history is a living word to every generation.

Deu 5:3 Yahweh didn’t make this covenant with our fathers but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day-

We must read in an ellipsis here; clearly the idea is that what God had done at Sinai wasn’t *only* between Him and the people there at that time, *not so much* with the first hearers as with the later ones, with all His subsequent people. In our Bible study we must be aware that we are reading translations of languages which often rely on understanding the idiom for their real meaning to be delivered to us the readers. In Hebrew especially, we often have to read in an ellipsis; and this verse is a parade example.

Deu 5:4 Yahweh spoke with you face to face on the mountain out of the midst of the fire-

Moses himself realized the extent to which God saw him as representative of Israel; thus he told Israel: "The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire, I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord" (Dt. 5:4,5). This is similar to the Lord Jesus Christ saying that because he had spoken God's words to us, we have seen God (Jn. 14:8). It was Moses who saw God face to face (Ex. 33:11), yet he knew he was so representative of Israel that in reality *they* had seen God face to face. All the honours and glory given to Moses were thereby given to Israel *if they identified themselves with him*. And ditto for us and the Lord Jesus.

Deu 5:5 (I stood between Yahweh and you at that time to show you the word of Yahweh, for you were afraid because of the fire, and didn't go up onto the mountain) saying-

The way Moses sees Israel as far more righteous than they were reflects the way the Lord imputes righteousness to us. He says that Israel didn't go near the mountain because they were afraid of the fire (Dt. 5:5), whereas Ex. 19:21-24 teaches that Israel at that time were not so afraid of the fire, and were quite inclined to break through the dividing fence and gaze in unspiritual fascination at a theophany which was beyond them. Standing between God and man means effectively to intercede (Num. 16:48), so it seems even on the first or second ascent of Sinai, Moses was interceding for the people.

Israel heard a voice, but were scared by the noise (Dt. 4:12), and so perhaps the idea is that Moses "showed" them the words by interpreting the words to them.

Deu 5:6 I am Yahweh your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage-

The fact that Yahweh really did redeem His people from Egypt is connected and associated with the command to have no other Gods apart from Him (Dt. 5:6,7). The more we believe that we really have been redeemed, perceiving the saving hand of God in leading us out of Egypt, the more evident it becomes that this Saviour God demands our whole and total devotion. The exit from Egypt is described as a jail break, from the house of bondage. Their desire to return to it was strong, and so Moses continually stresses the true and awful nature of Egypt / the world. The language echoes that of God to Abraham: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments.

Deu 5:7 You must have no other gods before Me-

It could be argued that this was a concession to weakness; for we could read this as meaning that even if Israel had other gods, Yahweh was to be supreme, and the others were not to be placed before Him. This was the attitude taken by the Lord Jesus in His tolerance of belief in demons, which were also false gods and connected with idols. But "before Me" can also mean 'in

My presence.' To come into Yahweh's presence with any idol... would be unthinkable. See on Ex. 18:11.

Deu 5:8 You must not make an engraved image for yourself, any likeness of what is in heaven above, or what is in the earth beneath, or what is in the water under the earth-

"Likeness" is used in the LXX in the frequent warnings not to make an image or likeness of any god, let alone Yahweh (Ex. 20:4; Dt. 4:16-25; Ps. 106:20; Is. 40:18,19). The reason for this prohibition becomes clearer in the New Testament; the ultimate likeness of God is in His Son, and we are to create the likeness of His Son not as a mere physical icon, but within the very structure of our human personality and character.

Deu 5:9 You must not bow down yourself to them nor serve them, for I Yahweh your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me-

It's especially easy for young people to assume that they have little influence, that they can chose to act as they like and their choices won't affect anyone much beyond themselves. Yet we read of how God "visits" (Heb. to arrange, set in order, ordain) the sins of the fathers unto the third and even fourth generations- i.e. the number of generations which an old man is likely to see gathered around him (Ex. 20:5; 34:7; Num. 14:18; Dt. 5:9). The choices of youth affect family life, which means our children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren are affected by the choices we make in carefree youth.

Throughout Ez. 18 God clarifies that He doesn't punish children for the sin of their parents; He deals with people on an individual level. However, the effect of sin is often felt in the society of subsequent generations, and in the process of how that works out, God is there enabling and permitting it to happen; in the same way as we all suffer the consequence of Adam's sin and yet can still be God's acceptable children.

Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

The prophets were up against the same passionless spirit that pervades our societies today. "The Lord thy God [is] a jealous God" (Ex. 20:5) was changed in the Targums to "I am a God above jealousy" (*Mechilta*). The prophets speak so often of God's wrath, love, hurt, pain, passion, anger, pathos... And they speak too of the terrible "repentings", the kindling of contradictory impulses, which there apparently is in the mind of God. But jeal-

ousy is a lead feature within Yahweh's personality (Ex. 20:5; 34:14). It speaks specifically of the jealousy of a man concerning the faithfulness of his wife (Num. 5:14). God was the passionate lover and husband of His people, and it is inevitable therefore that the extent of that love would produce jealousy when they spurned Him and went after other men, the idols.

Deu 5:10 and showing loving kindness to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments-

"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus.

God is His word (Jn. 1:1); to love God is to love His word. If we love Christ, we will keep His words (Jn. 14:15,21; 15:10). This is evidently alluding to the many Old Testament passages which say that Israel's love for God would be shown through their keeping of His commands (Ex. 20:6; Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,13,22; 30:16; Josh. 22:5). Israel were also told that God's commands were all related to showing love (Dt. 11:13; 19:9). So there is a logical circuit here: We love God by keeping His commands, the essence of which is love of people, therefore His commands are fundamentally about love. Thus love is the fulfilling of the law of God; both under the Old and New covenants (Rom. 13:10).

Deu 5:11 You must not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain-

One reference of this is to the idea of a wife taking her husband's name; just as we do when we call the Name upon ourselves in baptism (Acts 15:17; 22:16). The Hebrew for "take" is also translated "marry" or "accept". Perhaps 2 Cor. 6:1 alludes to the idea in urging us not to "accept" or 'take' God's grace [the essence of His Name] "in vain". The vulnerability and sensitivity of God is reflected in the way that He is concerned that His covenant people, His wife, who bears His Name, might profane His Name (Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7; Dt. 5:11). His repeated concern that His Name be taken in vain doesn't simply refer to the casual use of the word "God" as an expression of exasperation. God is concerned about His people taking His Name upon themselves (Num. 6:27) in vain- i.e., marrying Him, entering covenant relationship with Him, taking on His Name- but not being serious about that relationship, taking it on as a vain thing, like a woman who casually marries a man who loves her at the very core of his being, when for her, it's just a casual thing and she lives a profligate and adulterous life as his wife. When God revealed His Name to His people, opening up the very essence of His character to them, He was making Himself vulnerable. We reveal ourselves intimately to another because we wish for them to make a response to us, to love us for what we revealed to them. God revealed Himself to Israel, He sought for intimacy in the covenant relationship, and therefore was and is all the more hurt when His people turn away from Him, after having revealed to them all the wonders of His word (Hos. 8:12).

We take on the Name of the Lord by baptism into that Name, just as Israel carried God's Name as a people in Old Testament times. Our relationship with Him is not to be a vain thing to us, a mere social club we joined, a casual association- it is to be our life, at the very core of our being.

But the idea of not taking Yahweh's Name "in vain", 'vanity', is often associated with idolatry. Israel never formerly rejected Yahweh, and never became atheists. They mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry on the basis that they claimed that they worshipped Yahweh through worshipping the idols. This is what emboldened them to later place idols in Yahweh's temple. They were taking Yahweh's Name as a form of vanity, "in vain", a kind of idol. Thus their relationship with Yahweh was not to be a "vain thing" (Dt. 32:47).

"Guiltless" is a term which can mean "clear of responsibility to covenant relationship" (Gen. 24:8,41). God would not overlook the fact they were in covenant with Him and had taken His Name upon them, just as we take His Name upon us in baptism. And we are therefore not guiltless or clear of responsibility to Him.

Deu 5:12 Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as Yahweh your God commanded you-

We note that the Sabbath was one of the ten commandments. But the Sabbath was specifically "a sign between them (Israel) and Me (God), that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them" (Ez. 20:12). As such, it has never been intended to be binding on Gentiles (non-Jews). "... the Lord has given *you* [not

all mankind] the Sabbath (Ex. 16:29); "... You [God] made known to them [Israel] Your holy Sabbath" (Neh. 9:14). The Old Covenant refers to the Law of Moses, which was replaced on the cross by the New Covenant. The ten commandments, including that concerning the Sabbath, were part of the Old Covenant which was done away by Christ. God "declared to you (Israel) His covenant which he commanded you (Israel) to perform, that is the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone" (Dt. 4:13). God "wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments" (Ex. 34:28). If we argue that keeping the covenant made in the ten commandments is necessary, we must also observe every detail of the entire Law, seeing that this is all part of the same covenant. It is evidently impossible to do this. "There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb ... the ark, in which is the covenant of the Lord" (1 Kings 8:9,21). Those tablets, on which were the ten commandments, were the covenant. Heb. 9:4 speaks of "the tablets of the covenant". The ten commandments were written on the tablets of stone, which comprised "the (old) covenant". Paul refers to this covenant as "written and engraved on stones", i.e. on the tablets of stone. He calls it "the ministry of death... the ministry of condemnation..." that which is "... passing away" (2 Cor. 3:7-11).

However, nine of the ten commandments have been reaffirmed, in spirit at least, in the New Testament: 1st. - Eph. 4:6; 1 Jn. 5:21; Mt. 4:10; 2nd. - 1 Cor. 10:14; Rom.

1:25; 3rd. - James 5:12; Mt. 5:34,35; 5th. - Eph. 6:1,2; Col. 3:20; 6th. - 1 Jn. 3:15; Mt. 5:21; 7th. - Heb. 13:4; Mt. 5:27,28; 8th. - Rom. 2:21; Eph. 4:28; 9th. - Col. 3:9; Eph. 4:25; 2 Tim. 3:3; 10th. - Eph. 5:3; Col. 3:5. Numbers 3,5,6,7,8 and 9 can be found in 1 Tim. 1 alone, and numbers 1,2 and 10 in 1 Cor. 5. But never is the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath repeated in the New Testament as obligatory for us.

Deu 5:13 You shall labour six days and do all your work-

The context in :15 explains that one reason for the Sabbath was so that servants might rest, just as Israel had been servants in Egypt and had been given rest. The Sabbath was therefore not just to remember creation, but also the salvation from Egypt. Which is why, as explained on :12, the Sabbath was uniquely a sign between God and Israel rather than with other nations.

The idea is that man's week of labour is to reflect God's six days of labour during the creation week (:11). This parallel empowers us to see the grind of daily work as ultimately creative, and not mere vanity. The daily work which was part of the curse in Eden now becomes creative- if done "as unto the Lord". But we could also consider "you shall labour" to be a command to work, rather than laze around and by all means seek to avoid the results of the curse. Rather we are to see in the six days of labour an opportunity to reflect God's creative work; to use our labour to create, rather than to merely exist. This lifts the curse of labour so far above what it otherwise is.

Deu 5:14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to Yahweh your God in which you must not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your livestock, nor the stranger who is within your gates; so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you-

The Lord Jesus invites those who follow Him to accept the "rest" which He gives (Mt. 11:28), using the word which is used in the Septuagint for the Sabbath rest. Jesus was offering a life of Sabbath, of rest from trust in our own works (cp. Heb. 4:3,10). We shouldn't, therefore, keep a Sabbath one day per week, but rather live our whole lives in the spirit of the Sabbath. Just as we are to live the "eternal life" now, the type of life we will eternally live in the Kingdom is to be lived and experienced now. In this sense, as Hebrews makes clear, we "have entered into rest", and yet in another sense we labour now to enter into that rest at the Lord's return. This is a classic case of the "now but not yet" theme of the Bible.

Deu 5:15 You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm, therefore Yahweh your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day-

Israel stood at Sinai and were told that if they were obedient, then they would be God's people. But then they were told that actually, God accepted them anyway as His people. And only *then* was the Law given to Moses- with the message that it was to be kept out of

gratitude for what God had *already* done by grace in saving them just "simply so", because he loved them and had chosen their ancestors by grace (Dt. 4:34-40). Likewise it was *because* God sanctified Israel that they were to keep the Sabbath (Ex. 31:13,14; Dt. 5:15). It wasn't that any human obedience made them holy- the laws were simply an opportunity to respond to the grace shown them. For God's salvation of them from Egypt, like ours from this world, was nothing but grace.

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched out arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 5:16 Honour your father and your mother as Yahweh your God commanded you, that your days may be long, and that it may go well with you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you-

Paul quotes this in Eph. 6:2, with the comment that this is "the first commandment with promise". Paul clearly saw "the promise" of the old covenant as being the hope of the new covenant; the hope of the promises made to the Jewish fathers was the Christian hope, as Paul so clearly stated at his trials. This involves eternal possession of a glorified earth- and not going to Heaven on death as an immortal soul.

The contemporary Near Eastern legal codes prescribed the most severe penalties for crimes against the wealthy and their property. Rich people were given lesser punishments than poor people for the same crime. The value of persons reflected in Yahweh's law meant that all people were judged equally before the law, and truly there was no respect of persons with the true God. Both father and mother are placed together as worthy of equal honour (Lev. 19:3; Ex. 20:12)- whereas the contemporary laws were oriented towards respect of the male rather than females.

The Lord Jesus saw as parallel the commands to honour parents and also not to curse them. These two separate commands (from Ex. 20:12 and 21:17) He spoke of as only one: "*the* commandment" (Mk. 7:9). He therefore saw that not to honour parents was effectively to curse them (Mk. 7:10). *Omitting* to honour parents, even if it involved appearing to give one's labour to God's

temple, was therefore the same as *committing* the sin of cursing them. Sins of omission are perhaps our greatest weakness.

Deu 5:17 You must not murder-

The command not to murder has as its basis the fact that human life is not for us to use as we will (Ex. 20:13; Lev. 17:11; Gen. 9:6). It is God's life and is His- and this applies to our view of others lives as well as our own. Others, therefore, are not for us to use as we will. Gentleness and sensitivity to the life of others, in family life, the workplace, on the road... is therefore an outcome of our belief that the 'other' person likewise has been created by God and has life from Him. To drive in an unkind way, to act in a thoughtless way to others detriment, is therefore the same basic error as taking human life in murder.

The command "You shall not murder" must be understood in the context of a situation where the same Law also commanded certain sinners to be put to death within the community, and at times Israel were Divinely commanded and enabled to kill others outside of the community. We have to look, therefore, for a more specific meaning for this commandment- and it seems it is speaking specifically of blood revenge, killing the person who murdered one of your relatives. According to Num. 35:25-28, if the murder was unintentional, i.e. manslaughter rather than murder, then the person could flee to a city of refuge lest he be slain by the avenger of blood. There is no guidance for the avenger of blood in these 'cities of refuge' passages; rather is there the assumption that he might well attempt to take revenge

even for manslaughter, and in this case the unintentional murderer should flee from him into a city of refuge. But clearly enough, this was not God's will- for "You shall not kill". But such is God's grace that He built into His law a recognition that His people would fail. This isn't what we would expect of a $2+2=4$ God, where broken commandments are to be punished and period. In this case, we see here a tacit recognition even within the Mosaic Law that the commandments- in this case "You shall not kill"- wouldn't always be obeyed, and therefore extra legislating was added to enable this situation to be coped with. This isn't only an example of God's sensitivity to human sin and weakness of hot blood [although it is that]. It's an insight into how the very structure of His law is such that He understands human weakness, and is eager to ensure that it hurts others as little as possible. No more human 'god' would have dreamed this up. This grace has the stamp of the ultimately Divine, and any attempt to understand it within the frames of literalistic, legalistic analysis are doomed to failure.

Deu 5:18 Neither must you commit adultery-

This is as is, but we note the majority of references to "adultery" in the Hebrew Bible refer to unfaithfulness to God. And we cannot rule out the possibility that God also had that in view; for these commandments were the basis of His relationship with His people.

Deu 5:19 Neither must you steal-

The Hebrew indeed means to steal, but also carries the idea of deceit. For to deceive another is to effectively steal from them, to take away and misuse their belief and

trust in you and your integrity. And all deceit is ultimately in order to gain something wrongly, even the thing gained isn't anything material.

Deu 5:20 Neither must you give false testimony against your neighbour-

AV "bear false witness". But the Hebrew for "bear" means not only "to give" in a legal sense. Otherwise this commandment would only apply to the need to be truthful in a court case. The Hebrew *anah* is literally "to eye", 'to give heed to'. Don't pay attention to lies, don't listen to gossip- understood like that, this commandment becomes relevant to daily life, and not just to the occasional times when a person might have to bear legal witness against someone.

Deu 5:21 Neither must you covet your neighbour's wife, neither shall you desire your neighbour's house, his field, or his male servant, or his female servant, his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbour's-

The Law of Moses was the only legal code to criminalize internal attitudes; nobody knows who covets what in their hearts, and there was no legal apparatus to punish this particular transgression of law. But the Law of Moses was a direct covenant between God and every individual amongst His people, and to Him they were personally responsible and answerable.

The command not to covet what looks good is very much rooted in a warning not to commit Eve's sin of seeing the fruit and yielding to temptation (Ex. 20:17 = Gen. 3:6). The sin in Eden was every sin; we see elements of every one of our own sins in that sin. The fre-

quent command "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17 etc.) uses the same Hebrew word translated "desire" when we read of how Eve "desired" the fruit (Gen. 3:6); yet Israel "desired" the wrong fruit (Is. 1:29). As Eve saw the fruit and fell for it, so the people of Reuben and Gad saw the land East of Jordan and imagined how good it would be to have it, despite having been given 'all the land' West of Jordan to enjoy [cp. Adam and Eve's dominion in Eden] (Num. 32:1,2,7). In all these allusions [and they exist in almost every chapter of the Bible] we are being shown how human sin is a repetition in essence of that of our first parents. The insistent emphasis is that we should rise above and *not* be like them. And yet this call for personal effort and struggle with ourselves in order to overcome sin is muted and misplaced by all the stress upon a supposed Devil tempting Eve, pushing the blame onto him, and thereby de-emphasizing our role in overcoming sin within ourselves. And so we see so many loud-mouthed condemners of the Devil totally not 'getting it' about the need for personal self-control and spiritual mindedness in daily life and private character.

Deu 5:22 These words Yahweh spoke to all your assembly on the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud and the thick darkness, with a great voice; and He added no more. He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me-

When he commented about the commandments that God "added no more" (Dt. 5:22), he foresaw his people's tendency to add the Halacahs of their extra commandments... He could foresee the spiritual prob-

lems they would have in their hour by hour life, he appreciated how both their nature and their disobedience would be such a problem for them, and Moses foresaw that they would not cope well with it (ditto for our Lord Jesus). See on Dt. 4:42.

Ex. 13:21 says that there was a pillar of cloud in the day time and a pillar of fire by night. But at the time of the Exodus, there was a pillar of cloud for the Egyptians and a pillar of fire to give light in the night for the Israelites (Ex. 14:20,24). Could this mean that the meaning of time was collapsed at this time? It was night for the Israelites but daytime for the Egyptians? Is. 42:16, amidst many exodus / Red Sea allusions, speaks of how God makes the darkness light before His exiting people. The many Johanine references to the Lord Jesus being a light in the darkness for His followers would then be yet more elaborations of the idea that the Lord Jesus is the antitype of the Angel that led Israel out of Egypt (Jn. 8:12; 12:35,46). Num. 9:21 says that the pillar of cloud was with the Israelites at *night*, and sometimes it was taken up in the night and they therefore had to move on. Does this mean that there were times when the meaning of time was collapsed during their journey, and the night was made as the day (perhaps Ps. 139:12 alludes to this experience)? When Yahweh came down on Sinai, He was enveloped in a *cloud of fire*- suggesting that there was no day and night for Him (Ex. 24:15-17; Dt. 5:22).

Deu 5:23 When you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness as the mountain was burning with fire, you

came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders-

They came near to Moses, but remained at a distance from God, indeed they fled away from Him (Ex. 20:18). The original plan had been as in Ex. 19:13 LXX: "When the voices and trumpets and cloud depart from off the mountain, they shall come up on the mountain". But this didn't happen- see on Ex. 19:14. They were not sufficiently sanctified; see on Ex. 19:10. The people "perceived" Yahweh's holiness and their sinfulness and continued idolatry. And they shied away from Him, whereas His intention was that they came close. These words are so sad. It was a rejection of intimacy with God.

There were so many similarities between Elijah and Moses; Dale Allison points out:

Confronted Ahab (1 Kings 17:1) = Confronted Pharaoh (Ex. 5:1)

Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (1 Kings 19:3) = Fled into the wilderness fearing for his life (Ex. 2:15)

Miraculously fed "...bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening..." (1 Kings 17:6) = Miraculously fed "...meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning..." (Ex. 16:8, 12)

Gathered all Israel to Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:19)=Gathered all Israel to Mount Sinai (Ex. 19:17)

Combated the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20-40) = Combated the magicians of Pharaoh (Ex. 7:8-13, 20-22; 8:1-7)

Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (1 Kings 18:36-39) = Successful in his intercession for Israel to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel (Ex. 32:11-14)

Elijah took twelve stones at Carmel "...according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob..." (1 Kings 18:30-32) = Moses had twelve pillars set up at Sinai "...corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel..." (Ex. 24:4)

The Lord accepted Elijah's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (1 Kings 18:36-39) = The Lord accepted Moses and Aaron's offering by sending fire from heaven and consuming it completely. The people threw themselves down on their faces. (Lev. 9:22-24)

By Elijah's authority 3000 idolatrous prophets were slain (1 Kings 18:40) = By Moses' authority 3000 idolaters were slain (Ex. 32:25-29)

After killing the prophets of Baal Elijah climbed Carmel to pray. (1 Kings 18:42) = After killing the idolaters Moses climbed Sinai to pray (Ex. 32:30)

Went without food for forty days and forty nights (1 Kings 19:8) = Went without food for forty days and forty nights (Ex. 34:38; Dt. 9:9)

Elijah was in "the cave" on Horeb (=Sinai) when the Lord "passed by" (1 Kings 19: 9-11) = Moses was hidden "in the cleft of the rock" when the Lord passed by Sinai (Ex. 33:21-23)

Elijah saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Horeb (=Sinai). (1 Kings 19:11-12) = Moses saw storm, wind, an earthquake and fire upon Sinai (Ex. 19:16-20; 20:18; Dt. 4:11; 5:22-27).

Prayed that he might die (1 Kings 19:1-4) = Prayed that he might die. (Num. 11:10-15).

The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon his enemies (2 Kings 1:9-12) = The Lord brought down fire from heaven upon those who rebelled against him (Num. 16; cf. Lev. 10:1-3)

Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan by striking the waters with his cloak and passed over on dry ground. (2 Kings 2:8) = Moses parted the waters of the Red Sea by stretching out his staff and passed over on dry ground (Ex. 14:16, 21-22)

His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had (2 Kings 2) = His successor was one who had served him and came to resemble him in many ways, parting the waters of the Jordan as he had the Red Sea (Josh. 3)

Was taken away in the Transjordan (2 Kings 2:9-11) = Died in the Transjordan (Dt. 34:5)

Mysteriously translated (2 Kings 9-18) = Died mysteriously and buried in a valley, but his burial place was unknown. (Dt. 34:6)

The point of these similarities was that the Angel wanted Elijah to be like Moses; to pray for the peoples' salvation, to return to the people and lead them and teach them. Moses had begged for God's mercy for His

people; but Elijah was so full of self-justification that he prayed against Israel. And so with us, we are potentially led into situations where we are to discern the similarities between us and Bible characters; we are set up with opportunities to respond in a way that reflects how we have learnt the lessons from them. The way the Lord Jesus perceived this in His wilderness temptations is a great example.

Deu 5:24 and you said, Behold, Yahweh our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice out of the midst of the fire. We have seen this day that God does speak with man and he lives-

They recognized the theory- that they had heard the voice of their God, and that God could speak with a man like Moses directly without the man dying. But they didn't want that intimacy; it was not for them (:25). And they justified it beneath a veneer of fake humility, claiming they were too sinful to hear God's voice. They rejected intimacy with God for religion and following a man, even if he were a very good and genuine man.

Deu 5:25 Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of Yahweh our God any more, then we shall die-

The tragedy was that to hear the personal voice of their God was intended to build their faith, and was the most wonderful empirical, experiential evidence that He was real (Dt. 4:32,33). But faced with it, they hurriedly turned away. And this is true in essence of so many people. See on :26.

Deu 5:26 For who is there of all humanity that has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire as we have, and has lived?-

Israel complained that no other nation had ever been asked to hear the voice of their God in a personal way; they feared that hearing this voice meant their condemnation (Dt. 5:26). But God meant it so positively; the fact they had heard God's voice was a sign of His amazing grace (Dt. 4:32,33). Yet Israel turned the display of that grace into a reason to fear condemnation. They were far happier not being confronted by such radical grace, and the personal engagement of God with them. And so they desperately sought to use mere religion to shield them from this, asking Moses to go through with this engagement with God and then give them a few rules to obey, which didn't too deeply interrupt their lives. This is the abiding tendency of men of all ages; to flee from grace to the structures of mere religion.

Deu 5:27 Go near and hear all that Yahweh our God shall say, and tell us all that Yahweh our God shall tell you, and we will hear it and do it-

See on Dt. 30:12. God wanted to speak directly with Israel at Sinai; and yet they urged Moses personally to go and hear what God wished to say, and tell them about it: "Go thou [you singular] near and hear" (Dt. 5:23,27). Moses urged them not to fear, and told them that this was all a test from God for them (Ex. 20:20). But they didn't rise to it. Yet God accepted this lower level, so did He wish to communicate with them. And He used

Moses as a mediator through whom He spoke His word to His people.

We too have a tendency to shy away from a direct relationship with God through His word, and prefer a system of human mediators to bring God to us- as we see in the established churches. But God wants to have direct contact with us through the medium of His word.

Deu 5:28 Yahweh heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me and Yahweh said to me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you; they have well said all that they have spoken-

This is all intentionally similar to the situation with Pharaoh in Ex. 10:29, when "Moses said, You have spoken well. I will see your face again no more". For Israel had seen God's face insofar that Moses had seen it (Dt. 5:24). And they didn't want it, and so they would not be given it.

Deu 5:29 Oh that there were-

God's capacity to imagine, to see possible futures to some extent, explains the poignancy behind His words in places like Is. 48:18: "O that you had hearkened to my commandments!", "Oh that they would have a mind such as this always" (Dt. 5:29), "O Israel, if you would but listen to me" (Ps. 81:8,13). It's as if He could see the potentially happy future which they could've had stretching out before Him.

Such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!-

Adam Clarke correctly understands the Hebrew here as meaning "Who will give such a heart to them, that they may fear, etc. They refuse to receive such a heart from me; who then can supply it?". God was willing to give them a new heart, to work through His Spirit directly upon their spirit. But they didn't accept that gift, just as many refuse it today, preferring to keep God at a distance and follow mere religion. The new covenant as explained in Jeremiah and Ezekiel is all about accepting this new heart and spirit from God.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that

"love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 5:30 Go, tell them, Return to your tents-

God went along with their rejection of intimacy with Him, and so He surely said these words with much regret. They preferred *their* tents to His tent.

Deu 5:31 But as for you, stand here by Me-

God through the Angel had earlier stood upon a rock in Sinai with Moses next to Him (Ex. 17:6). Later, Yahweh asks Moses to stand upon a rock in Sinai next to Him (Ex. 33:21 s.w.). We see how God gently and progressively leads His people closer to Him, using every experience He gives us to prepare for the next one, on an ever more intimate level with Him.

And I will tell you all the commandments, the statutes and the ordinances, which you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a

culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 5:32 You must observe to do therefore as Yahweh your God has commanded you; you must not turn aside to the right hand or to the left-

The wall of water on their right hand and left when they crossed the Red Sea is twice emphasized (Ex. 14:22,29). It is alluded to later, when they are urged to not depart from God's way, not to the right hand nor left (Dt. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14). We passed through the Red Sea when we were baptized (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were set upon a path which is walled up to keep us within it. And we are to remain in that path upon which we were set. To turn aside from it would be as foolish as Israel turning away from their path and trying to walk into the walls of water.

Deu 5:33 You must walk in all the way which Yahweh your God has commanded you, in order that you may live and that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days-

Does "prolong your days" mean that long life promised to the obedient Israelite under the Old Covenant? Solomon observed that a just man perished young and "a wicked man who prolongs his life in his wickedness" (Ecc. 7:15). Ez. 12:22 suggests that faithless

Israel cynically observed that "The days are prolonged" and God's prophetic word of condemnation had failed- implying they thought that prolonged days were being experienced by them despite their disobedience. The Hebrew phrase 'to prolong days' is found in Is. 53:10, where it is applied to how Messiah would 'prolong His days' not in this life, but in the resurrection. The repeated promises recorded in Deuteronomy of prolonged days upon the land of Israel would therefore hint at the eternity of the Kingdom rather than this life. Indeed, Dt. 4:40 says they would prolong their days "for ever". For an individual Israelite might be faithful but not prolong his or her days in the land because the whole people were to be carried away captive for their sins and the land given to a Gentile power. The opposite of 'days being prolonged' was 'utter destruction' (:26)- which would then speak of condemnation in the second death. This is one of many examples of where eternal life was possible under the Old Covenant- there were multiple different possibilities and plans God could have worked by. Israel could have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and not killed Him, and so forth. It seems the closer we probe God's word, the more open He is revealed as being.

In the land which you shall possess-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross,

and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 6

Deu 6:1 Now these are the commandments-

Dt. 6:1 RV reads: "Now this is *the commandment* [singular], the statutes and the judgments... the Lord our God is one" (:4). And then they are told to write the statutes on their door posts etc. It would have been hard to literally write all 613 of them there. Yet the whole way of life for Israel was epitomized in the single command... that God is one. It was and is a *command*; not a mere statement; and it was this they were to speak to their children about and continually meditate upon. Thus the unity of God is even today a summary of all God's desires and requirements for us, that He should be the one and only in our lives, with all this means in practice. The Jewish zealots who died at Massada had as their battle cry "the Lord our God is one!", and some time later Rabbi Akiba was flayed alive by the Romans, crying as the skin was stripped from his bones: "The Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might". And there are many accounts from the Holocaust of similar things.

The statutes and the ordinances which Yahweh your God commanded to teach you, that you might do them in the land which you go over to possess-

Dt. 6:1,2,6,7 stress that Israel must *do* the law so that their children would do it also. Whilst on one hand we

each have sovereign free will, there can be no doubt that we are affected by others.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 6:2 in order that you might fear Yahweh your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, yes you, your son and your son's son, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged-

The commandments were given in order to be obeyed (:1), so that they would keep the commandments. This at first blush appears circular reasoning. But rather the idea is of an upward spiral of spirituality, whereby obedience led to obedience. The various laws were designed to be self reinforcing, which is why the law was "perfect", and was not to be added to nor subtracted from. The intention was that obedience to the commandments elicited a spirit of life which was spiritual, and which facilitated further obedience and spirituality.

Deu 6:3 Hear therefore, Israel, and observe to do it, so that it may be well with you and that you may increase mightily, as Yahweh the God of your fathers has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey-

It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity.

Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" or obey God's words. "*Hear*, O Israel" in Deuteronomy must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "*Hear* ['be obedi-

ent'], O Israel" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuteronomy Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 6:4 Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is one-

The fact there is only one God means that He is to have our total loyalty and love (:5). If there were two gods, each would have 50%. But the one God demands our total devotion. That God is one is a command, an imperative to action (Mk. 12:28,29). It underlies the whole law and prophets (Mt. 22:40)- it's that fundamental. If there were two Gods, Yahweh would only demand half our energies. Nothing can be given to anything else; for there is nothing else to give to. There's only one God. There can be no idolatry in our lives, because there is only one God (2 Kings 19:18,19). Because "there is none else, you shall keep *therefore* his statutes" (Dt. 4:39,40). The Hebrew text of Dt. 6:4 suggests: "The Lord is our God, the Lord is one", thereby linking Yahweh's unity

with His being our God, the sole Lord and unrivalled Master of His people. It also links the first principle of the unity of God with that of the covenant to Abraham; for "I will be their God" was one of the features of the covenant. The one God has only one people; not all religious systems can lead to the one Hope of Israel.

Dt. 6:4 is far more than a Sunday School text. Indeed God is one; but consider the context. Moses has set the people up to expect him to deliver them a long list of detailed commands; he has told them that God told him to declare unto them "all the commandments... that they may do them... ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you... ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you... now these are the commandments... that ye might do them... *hear therefore O Israel and observe to do it* [singular]...". Now we expect him to reel off a long list of commands. But Moses mirrors that last phrase with simply: "*Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one*" (Dt. 5:31-6:4). And in this context he gives no other commandments. "Observe to do *it*" is matched with "The Lord our God is one". This is the quintessence of all the commands of God. And he goes straight on to say: "And these words...shall be in your heart" and they were to talk of them to their children in the house and by the way, bind them upon their hands and on the posts of their homes. Some Jewish traditions, perhaps correctly, place the *shema*, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one" in their phylacteries. And this is indeed the context. It was the unity of God and the imperative from it to love Him

with all the heart which is what was to be programmatic for their daily living. This is why it was Jewish practice to recite the *shema* several times a day, and also on their deathbed.

The record in Mk. 12:32 presents an obviously monotheistic Jewish scribe as being in complete agreement with the Lord Jesus about the unity of God. The Lord Jesus evidently supported the Old Testament's strict monotheism. When Jesus speaks of His Father as "the one who alone is God" (Jn. 5:44 NRSV), He is evidently alluding to the classic statement of monotheism in Dt. 6:4- that Yahweh is the one God. And the inspired writers of the New Testament did the same thing. James commented to Jews upon their belief in one God: "You believe that God is one. You do well" (James 2:19). He doesn't seek to correct their monotheism. Why, if the Trinity issue was so utterly vital and obvious?

Deu 6:5 and you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might-

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating

in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

"Love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your might". Time and again, Moses in his final hours used these words, as he pleaded on that last day of his life for Israel to grasp the nettle, to take on board the idea of loving God, of giving our all (Dt. 6:5; 10:12; 11:13,22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6; an impressive seven-fold emphasis). I can almost hear his voice cracking as he stressed the word "all". Having pleaded six times for them to love God with *all* their soul and *all* their might, Moses then makes the point that if they enter the Kingdom, there they will be *made by God* to love Him then with all their soul and might (Dt. 30:6). The logic is over-powering. In the Kingdom, our very nature, every fiber of our being, will be bent towards love of God. If this will be our eternal destiny, isn't it logical that we at least aspire to it now? Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life

(Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Loving Yahweh with all the heart, soul and mind was understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

Deu 6:6 These words which I command you this day shall be on your heart-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship

with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

The names of God's people are in the heart of the Lord Jesus, our great High Priest (Ex. 28:29); just as God's words are to be upon the hearts of His people (Dt. 6:6). Through the medium of His word, there is thus a mutuality between God and man.

Deu 6:7 and you must teach them diligently to your children and talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up-

The latter day repentant remnant will be characterized by talking to each other of spiritual things (Mal. 3:16 cp. Dan. 12:2), especially of the law (Mal. 3:7). But we are to do this now in our day of opportunity, and not be forced to it by tribulation. The priests were the official teachers of Israel, but it was ever God's intention that all Israel should be priests. All under the new covenant are declared priests (1 Pet. 2:5). All Israel were to be teaching each other (Jer. 31:34), especially their children- not leaving it to others, nor over relying upon a priesthood or spiritual eldership to teach their children. This is a myth inadvertently created by the Sunday School movement, excellent and commendable as that movement is- that a child is sent to "Sunday School" and there learns God's ways. The real teaching is done sitting

in the house and walking by the way, and not by specialist teachers. The specific reference to teaching when you lie down and rise up could suggest that God specifically intended His people to teach their children, every morning and every evening. This is the essence of family life in the Lord.

Deu 6:8 You shall bind them for a sign on your hand and they shall be for memorials between your eyes-

As taught in Dt. 6:6, the essence was that "These words which I command you this day shall be on your heart". The heart refers to the mind, the brain, if you will; and we could understand this as meaning that this was to be externally memorialized by binding them between the eyes. This is how orthodox Judaism understands it. But I suggest that the memorial was essentially in the heart, and this is just another way of speaking about the wholeness of internal and external devotion to God's words. Whatever is done externally with the hand, whatever is thought about in our mind between our eyes, is to be dominated by our awareness of God's laws. We fail to read in later scripture any mention of literally making boxes containing God's law and wearing them. The Passover deliverance was likewise to be a "frontlet" (s.w. "memorial") between the eyes and upon the hand (Ex. 13:16); but not in any literal sense. They were to be ever mentally aware of their great salvation, and live accordingly.

The idea is not that the entire law could literally be placed there. Rather, the equivalent of pagan amulets was to be a mental awareness of God's law. The use of

phylacteries in Judaism is a complete missing of this point.

Contemporary ideas about Satan, demons etc. are often alluded to in the Pentateuch, and Israel are given the true understanding. Wearing a phylactery wasn't a new concept; the idea "refers to amulets which were worn in order to protect their wearers against demons". So by giving this command, Israel's God was showing His people that instead of being on the *defensive* against demons, needing good luck charms against them, they should instead replace these by a positive remembrance of God's words in their hearts and actions. Rejoicing in His salvation and constantly remembering it was intended to totally sideline the various false beliefs about demons which were prevalent at the time. It could be argued that God is saying that instead of the literal phylacteries of the pagan Gentile world, they were to have an internal mental awareness of their God.

Deu 6:9 You shall write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates-

Writing God's laws on door posts recalls the daubing of Passover lamb blood on the door posts. Indeed at Passover time, the faithful Israelite would have painted over the laws of Moses with the blood of the Passover lamb. This was looking ahead to how those laws were to be blotted out by the Lord's sacrifice. It was perhaps also to remind them that the blood of the Passover lamb, shed for their salvation, was an imperative to their obedience to God's laws. And again we see contemporary religious ideas deconstructed; for "It was the custom of the

ancient Egyptians to inscribe on lintels and door-posts sentences of good omen". Such good luck charms were to be replaced with realistic practical calls for obedience in real life; for this was the basis of Divine blessing, and not good luck charms.

Deu 6:10 When Yahweh your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers to give you, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, great and good cities which you didn't build-

This continues the repeated reminder that they had been shown grace and a place in the Kingdom not according to works. This emphasis upon grace now leads up to the appeal to quit any other gods (:14)- because Yahweh alone is the God of grace. The other gods had no concept of this; it was unique to Yahweh. And true grace is likewise the unique feature of true Christianity.

Jonah 2:8 reflects Jonah's understanding of this: "Those who regard lying vanities forsake their own mercy". This is a profound truth; true grace ["mercy" is *hesed*] and salvation is only found in Yahweh the God of Israel. To forsake Him is to forsake our own access to mercy and grace. Jonah was surely reflecting upon how the sailors had begged their idols and gods for salvation, and not found it. Only Yahweh had provided such saving grace, both to them and to Jonah. This reflection was surely to motivate Jonah to now go and try to persuade the Ninevites of Yahweh's grace. Jonah is constantly quoting from the Psalms, and here he may have in mind Ps. 31:6: "I have hated them that regard lying vanities". But now Jonah doesn't hate the idolaters personal-

ly, but rather perceives the tragedy of the fact that they are rejecting their own access to Yahweh's grace. Yahweh is all about mercy, or grace; again, Ps. 59:17 "the God of my mercy" is in mind. But we preclude His grace if we trust in the lying vanities of this world.

Deu 6:11 houses full of all good things which you didn't fill, and wells dug out which you didn't dig, vineyards and olive trees which you didn't plant, and you shall eat and be full-

The gift of these things to Israel was by God's grace-for He could have commanded them to destroy all such vineyards. They were intended to learn from this grace, that works cannot save, and our blessings are a pure gift from God rather than achieved by our works. But instead they forgot Yahweh (:12) and turned to justification by religious works, because they had refused to be awed by His grace.

Deu 6:12 then beware lest you forget Yahweh, who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage-

Israel never became atheists, they never formally abrogated Yahweh, never formally rejected Him. But they forgot Him, in that in daily life they forgot the wonder of His grace, especially in His historical salvation of them. And it is day by day spiritual mindedness which is the context here. The exit from Egypt is described as a jail break, from the house of bondage. Their desire to return to it was strong, and so Moses continually stresses the true and awful nature of Egypt / the world. The language echoes that of God to Abraham: "I am Yahweh

who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments.

Deu 6:13 You must fear Yahweh your God and you shall serve Him and shall swear by His name-

Lk. 4:8 records how "Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve". He understood that we can only serve two masters: God or the flesh ("mammon" is another personification of the flesh, similar to 'satan'). He saw His own flesh, His own internal thoughts, as a master begging to be served which He must totally reject. His words are a quotation from Dt. 6:13, which warns Israel to serve Yahweh alone and not idols. He perceived His own natural mind and desire as an idol calling to be served.

Deu 6:14 You must not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you-

The Lord quoted Dt. 6:13 against His wilderness temptations "You shalt fear the Lord your God (alone)". He probably had Dt. 6:14 in mind "You shall not go after other gods". Perhaps He interpreted the pagan idols as the evil thoughts of His heart. Earlier Dt. 6:7,8 had warned that not repeating the Law would result in idol worship – and Christ saw that His neglect of the Father's word would result in His serving His evil desires. Thus the purpose of the temptations was to prove whether Christ would really keep and apply the word in His heart (Dt. 8:2), as it was for Israel in their wilderness.

"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God, then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh, throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations and heart, as revealed

in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

Deu 6:15 for Yahweh your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of Yahweh your God shall be kindled against you and He shall destroy you from off the face of the land-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Israel is so often set up as the bride of God (Is. 54:5; 61:10; 62:4,5; Jer. 2:2; 3:14; Hos. 2:19,20). This is why any infidelity to God is spoken of as adultery (Mal. 2:11; Lev. 17:7; 20:5,6; Dt. 31:16; Jud. 2:17; 8:27,33; Hos. 9:1). The language of Israel 'selling themselves to do iniquity' uses the image of prostitution. This is how God feels our even temporary and fleeting acts and thoughts of unfaithfulness. This is why God is jealous for us (Ex. 20:15; 34:14; Dt. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15)- because His undivided love for us is so exclusive. He expects us to be totally His. Just as Israel were not to be like the Egyptians they were leaving, nor like the Canaanites into whose land

they were going (Lev. 18:1-5; 20:23,24). We are to be a people separated unto Him.

If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for the salvation of others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10,11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again—because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

Deu 6:16 You must not test Yahweh your God as you tested Him in Massah-

Meditate upon scripture as you go around daily life. Israel were told: "Ye (plural) shall not tempt the Lord". The Lord Jesus personalized this to Himself, and quoted it as: "Thou (singular) shalt not tempt the Lord" (Dt. 6:16 cp. Mt. 4:7). He told the Jews that when it is written "I am the God of Abraham", this was God speaking unto *them personally* ("...which was spoken unto you by God, saying..."), teaching them personally that there would be a resurrection (Mt. 22:31).

At the very time Israel put God to the test at Marah (Dt. 6:16), God responded by testing *them* (Ex. 15:25). When Israel were weary of God, He wearied them (Is. 43:22,24). Because they turned their back on Him (Jer. 2:27), He turned His back on them (Jer. 18:17); because

they broke His eternal covenant with them, He eventually did likewise. On the other hand, God set the rainbow in the sky so that whenever *He* looks upon it, He will remember His covenant with man (Gen. 9:16). The pronouns seem wrong; we would expect to read that the rainbow is so that whenever *we* look upon it, we remember... but no. God condescends to man to such an extent that He invites us to understand that whenever we remember the covenant with Him, He does likewise.

God comes down to the terms and language of men in His zeal to save. He invites the Jews to put Him to the test: if they paid their tithes, He would bless them with fruitful harvest (Mal. 3:10). And yet surely the whole message of God's revelation is that we are to accept His hand in our lives, that obedience won't automatically bring blessing now, that we are not to put our God to the test (Dt. 6:16 cp. Mt. 4:7) but to trust in Him and the coming of His Kingdom to resolve all things. And yet Yahweh seems to come down from these high principles in Malachi's time, to try to convince them of the logic of devotion to Him.

Ahaz quoted these words about not testing God. "The pride that apes humility" says all that is necessary. We can appear to be humble, and by doing so actually express our pride. The point has been made elsewhere that a brother may say to a sister full of praise for his Bible study: "It was nothing really, no, not that good". But if another sister says to him: "I thought your Bible study was nothing really, not much good at all"; how does he react? Did he *really* mean his 'humble' words to his ad-

mirer? Ahaz is one of many Biblical examples of this kind of false humility. He refused to ask a sign of Yahweh, when invited to, lest he be like apostate Israel in the wilderness, and tempt Yahweh (Is. 7:12 cp. Dt. 6:16). But this was actually a 'wearying' of God, and he was given a sign relating to his condemnation (Is. 7:12,13).

Deu 6:17 You must diligently keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you-

The word so often used for "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of

the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 6:18 You must do that which is right and good in the sight of Yahweh, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which Yahweh swore to your fathers-

Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is *constantly* thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. "The

Lord thy God *shall* bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands", even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Israel had been told by Moses that their doing what was "good and right" was required for them to possess the land (Dt. 6:18; 12:28). The Gibeonites use the same phrase in appealing for Joshua to do what was "good and right" (Josh. 9:25) in not slaying them but accepting them into covenant relationship with Yahweh. The people generally didn't want to do this (Josh. 9:26). It seems God's providence used Joshua's initial unwisdom in order to give Joshua a chance to do what was "good and right", so that Israel could indeed possess Canaan. We marvel at how God works through human unwisdom and dysfunction, in order to achieve His final purpose of giving His people His Kingdom.

The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith

in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Deu 6:19 to thrust out all your enemies from before you, as Yahweh has spoken-

The thrusting out of Israel's enemies from the land was conditional upon Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19). They were disobedient, and yet still God thrust out the tribes and warned them therefore not to think that this was done because of their righteousness (Dt. 9:4). It was by grace alone that they inherited the Kingdom, as with us. But there was always a tendency for Israel to forget that they had been given the Kingdom despite their lack of the required personal righteousness; they became over familiar with living in it under such grace. And so the warning comes down to us.

Deu 6:20 When your son asks you in time to come, What do the testimonies, the statutes and the ordinances which Yahweh our God has commanded you mean?-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves

burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 6:21 then you shall tell your son, We were Pharaoh's bondservants in Egypt and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand-

The might of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Deu 6:22 and Yahweh showed great and awesome signs and wonders on Egypt, on Pharaoh and on all his house, before our eyes-

Subsequent generations were to consider that the wonder of redemption had been played out before their own eyes. There is a deep sense in human beings that history is bunk, or at best of merely passing historico-cultural interest, which the hurrying man of modern life has little serious time for. This is where Biblical history is so

different; and it's why God's word in the Bible is in a sense all history. But it is history to live by, moment by moment. The implications of our redemption on a hill just outside Jerusalem, on a Friday afternoon, on a day in April... affect today and every day our every thought and action in secular life.

Deu 6:23 He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore to our fathers-

The meaning of 'holiness' is both to be separated *from* and separated *unto*. Separation isn't only something negative; it's more essentially something positive. We are separated *from* this world because we are separated *unto* the things of God's Kingdom; the separation *from* is a natural, unpretended outcome of our involvement in the things of God's Kingdom. It's not part of a cross which the believer must reluctantly, sacrificially bear. Like all spiritual growth, it is unaffected; the number of hours spent watching TV. goes down (to zero?) *naturally*; the friendships with the world *naturally* frizzle out, the way we dress, the things we hope for and talk about... all these things will alter in their own time. Israel were brought out from Egypt through the Red Sea (cp. baptism) that they might be *brought in* to the land of promise (Dt. 6:23). The Nazarite was separated *from* wine, because he was separated *unto* the Lord (Num. 6:2,3).

Deu 6:24 Yahweh commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear Yahweh our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive-

A striking difference between the Pentateuch and other contemporary legal codes is that those codes are straight codices of statutes; whereas God's law isn't like that. It is commandment interspersed between historical documents and incidents. We read of some incident in the wilderness journey, then we have some commandments recounted, then another incident, some more commandments, etc. This surely reflects how God intended obedience to His law to not be a legalistic exercise- it was a code for real human life, which should affect the very spirit of human existence in a way which no dry legal code really could. It was to set a rhythm of life, revealing how that law was "for our good always, that God might preserve us" (Dt. 6:24)- the person who obeyed the law was to live in it (Hab. 2:4 etc.). The motive for obedience to the law was not so that God might give them salvation or status as His people- it was precisely because He had done that, by grace, that they were to respond in obedience (Ex. 12:26; 13:8,14; Dt. 6:20).

It might help if we try to visualize the practical benefits of keeping the laws. "In keeping of them is great reward", David commented (Ps. 19:11). Moses likewise: "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes... *for our good always*" (Dt. 6:24)- not for their irritation, or as a pointless test of obedience. Perhaps this is why the giving of the Law is described as an expression of God's *love* for Israel (Dt. 33:2-4). It was the loving marriage contract between God and Israel. We must see the keeping of the law by the faithful Israelite as being done within a certain spiritual atmosphere. It would have been impos-

sible to keep all those laws from a series of deliberate acts of the will. The truly obedient Israelite would have developed a way of life and thinking, a culture of kindness to others, which achieved obedience to them. This was surely how Jesus was able to perfectly fulfil the Law. "If a man do (the commands) he shall even live in them" (Lev. 18:5) seems to refer to this atmosphere of obedience.

As at this day-

Israel were to teach their children that God had personally saved *them* at the Red Sea. The covenant made with Israel then was made not only with the "fathers" who were then alive, but with every member of every generation of God's people (Dt. 5:3; 6:20). In this sense, Biblical history is a living word to every generation.

Deu 6:25 It shall be righteousness to us if we observe to do all these commandments before Yahweh our God, as He has commanded us-

"Righteousness to us" is an Old Testament foretaste of Paul's teaching about imputed righteousness. For that is the idea here; not that they should congratulate themselves at their own righteousness in keeping Passover. But rather that remembering their deliverance with faith and gratitude would be counted to them as righteousness. The NIV in Tit. 1:1 speaks of "the truth which leads to Godliness". Thus true understanding *is* related to true Godly living- *if* we translate the doctrines into practice. The Passover would only be properly kept, Moses explained, if the meaning of it was understood (Dt. 6:20-25).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

7

Deu 7:1 When Yahweh your God brings you into the land where you go to possess it and casts out many nations before you, the Hittite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite, seven nations greater and mightier than you-

God and Moses had stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, but here Moses enthuses that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (see too Dt. 6:18,19). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech in Deuteronomy, Moses is constantly thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. Roughly 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart; just as like Paul we should enthuse about others' salvation, not simply our own. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 show how

His thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Seven nations were to be destroyed (Dt. 7:1), but Josh. 12:8 lists six as having been defeated. The Girgashites are omitted from the list there. So it seems that only the Girgashites were completely destroyed as was potentially possible. The remaining six were defeated by

Joshua, but remained in the land, to be thorns in the flesh for Israel.

Passages like Dt. 7:1 confidently proclaim that "When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land... and shall pluck off / cast out many nations...". Yet this casting out was dependent upon Israel doing this work; if they did it, God was eager to work mightily with them. But the reality is that they didn't drive out all the nations. This doesn't falsify Scripture; rather does it indicate the positive hope of God that His people will work with Him to make His potentially true prophecies turn into reality. Even the promises to Abraham were to some extent conditional- Israel would no longer be "as the stars of heaven for multitude; because you would not obey the voice of the Lord" (Dt. 28:62). Hence the fulfillment of those promises was dependent to some extent upon the obedience of the promised seed. Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is constantly thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom ab-

olutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. "The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands", even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Deu 7:2 and when Yahweh your God delivers them up before you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. You must make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them-

Heb. 11:31 comments that "By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace". Rahab's faith was faith in God's grace. For Rahab was an Amorite and according to the law of Moses there was to be no pity or covenant with them- only death (cp. Dt. 7:2). Rahab had the spiritual ambition to ask that they make a covenant with her- she requests *hesed*, the common term for covenant relationship ("deal kindly with me", Josh. 2:12 cp. 1 Sam. 20:8). And the spies made a covenant with her. Grace, like love, finds a way.

Rahab was aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and not make

covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18). When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (Josh. 2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "Your terror is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word for "terror" is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "fainting" in fear- quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "faint" (AV "melt away") because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the impossible- that she would be the exception, that with her a covenant would be made. When she says that "we have heard" about the Exodus (Josh. 2:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people shall hear and be afraid". In this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have"- 'yes, we have heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we are afraid'. Seeking God's face is actually to strive for the unachievable in this life; but it's what we are to do. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

God stressed to the later children of Abraham that since they had a covenant with Him, they were not to make covenants with the people who lived around them in the land- time and again God references His covenant with His people, and in that context tells them not to make covenants with the peoples of the land (Ex. 34:10-12,15,27; Dt. 7:2; Jud. 2:1,2,20). Yet Abraham

made covenants with those very people (Gen. 14:13; 21:27,32)- perhaps indicating his lack of appreciation of his covenant relationship with Yahweh?.

Deu 7:3 neither shall you arrange marriages with them; your daughter you shall not give to his son, nor shall you take his daughter for your son-

Israel were in covenant with God, *therefore* they were not to make covenants with the other nations, and marriage is mentioned as an example of this (Ex. 34:10,12). In his repetition of this part of the law in Deuteronomy, Moses gave even more repeated emphasis to the fact that our covenant with God precludes any covenant relationship with anyone else (Dt. 7:2-11). The wonder of our relationship with Yahweh is stated time and again. To marry back into Egypt, the house of bondmen from which we have been redeemed, is to despise the covenant, to reverse the redemptive work which God has wrought with us. In this context of marriage out of the Faith, we read that God will destroy "him that hates Him" (Dt. 7:2-11), and repay him to his face. On the other hand, not marrying Gentiles was part of *loving* God (Josh. 23:12,13).

Deu 7:4 For he will turn away your son from following me to serve other gods; so the anger of Yahweh would be kindled against you and He would destroy you quickly-

The pronouns often change (in Deuteronomy especially), showing a confusion between the voice of God and that of Moses. Dt. 7:4 is an example: "They will turn away thy son from following me (this is Moses speaking for God)... so will the anger of the Lord be kindled

against you". Thus Moses' comments on God's words are mixed up with the words of God Himself. There are other examples of this in Dt. 7:11; 29:1,10,14,15 ("I" cp. "us"). Consider especially Dt. 11:13,14: "If ye shall diligently hearken unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord... that I will give you the rain of your land... I will send grass in thy fields". The "I" here switches at ease between God and Moses. The Moses/God pronouns are also mixed in Rom. 10:19.

Many passages make the connection between marriage out of the covenant, and adopting idolatry: Ex. 34:12-16; Dt. 7:2-9; Jud. 3:6,7; 1 Kings 11:2,3; Mal. 2:11; 2 Cor. 6:14. Dt. 7:4 RV dogmatically predicts that a Gentile man will definitely turn away the heart of his Hebrew son-in-law... So certain is it that marriage to Gentiles leads to accepting their idols that Ezra 9:1,2 reasons that Israel hadn't separated from idols *because* they had married Gentiles. Time and again, those who marry out of the covenant claim that they feel strong enough to cope with it, that marriage is only a human thing, and that their spiritual relationship with God is between them and God, and unaffected by their worldly partner. Yet this is exactly the opposite of what God's word says. It's not true that you can marry into the world and be unaffected in your own spirituality. Solomon thought he could handle it; and apparently, he did- for the first 20 years or so. But his Gentile wives were his spiritual ruin at the end.

If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22;

25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for the salvation of others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10.11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again—because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

Deu 7:5 But you must deal with them like this: break down their altars and dash their pillars in pieces and cut down their Asherim poles and burn their engraved images with fire—

Israel were told to "throw down", "break in pieces" and "utterly destroy" the idols and altars of Canaan. There were times during their history when they obeyed this command by purging themselves from their apostasy in this. The Hebrew words used scarcely occur elsewhere, except very frequently in the context of how God "broke down", "threw down" and "destroyed" Israel at the hands of their Babylonian and Assyrian invaders as a result of their not 'breaking down' (etc.) the idols. "Throw down" in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 is the same word in 2 Chron. 36:19; Jer. 4:26; 31:28; 33:4; 39:8; 52:14; Ez. 16:39; Nah. 1:6. "Cut down" in Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 later occurs in Is. 10:33; Jer. 48:25; Lam. 2:3. So Israel faced the choice: either cut down your idols, or you will be cut down in the day of God's judgment. Those who worshipped idols were like unto

them. The stone will either fall on us and destroy us, or we must fall on it and become broken men and women (Mt. 21:44). For the man untouched by the concept of living for God's glory, it's a hard choice. God will conquer sin, ultimately. When a man dies, it isn't just a biological, clockwork process. It is God's victory over sin in that individual. Either we must be slain by God; or with His gracious help, we must put sin to death in our members through association with the only One who really did this- and thereby rise to life eternal.

Deu 7:6 For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God; Yahweh your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession above all peoples who are on the face of the earth-

We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they would be His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His “peculiar treasure” by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that “the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people [s.w.]... *that* thou shouldest keep all his commandments” (Dt. 26:18). See what's happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people.

Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world" (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel "out of all peoples" (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2).

Deu 7:7 Yahweh didn't set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any people, for you were the fewest of all peoples-

The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resolvable using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest

numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start

to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night.

Deu 7:8 but because Yahweh loves you and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, therefore has Yahweh brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you out of the house of bondage from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt-

Israel were not to marry people from the surrounding world because God had chosen them to be His special people, "and because he would keep the oath that he had sworn unto your fathers" (Dt. 7:2,8). Those "fathers" were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. By baptism, we enter into the same covenant as they did; the promises to Abraham are made to us (Gal. 3:27-29). We enter that same Abrahamic covenant which in prospect extended to Israel (although it was only ratified or enabled by the death of Christ). The everlasting, Abrahamic covenant extended to *all* generations of Abraham's seed (Gen. 17:7-9). The fact Israel were forbidden to marry Gentiles was not only a *type* of how the new Israel should not marry unbelievers; we are in essence in their position. We *are* the Israel of God, not just their antitype. We too have been chosen, we too share the same fathers, and the covenant made to them.

Deu 7:9 Know therefore that Yahweh your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps covenant and loving kindness with them who love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations-

"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme

in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus. But the truth is that God kept His love and covenant with Israel even when they didn't love Him nor abide in His covenant. The more legal statement here, that God's love is for those who love Him, therefore provides the backdrop for the awesome marvel of the way He often protests His eternal love for Israel, e.g. in Hosea. His love for Israel was eternal, despite their not loving Him.

I discussed on Ex. 20:5 that "unto / upon a thousand generations" uses a word for "generations" that is strangely singular. The idea is therefore 'a generation of a family', as discussed on Ex. 20:5.

Deu 7:10 and repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them; He will not be slack to him who hates Him, He will repay him to his face-

This implies a face to face meeting between God and the sinner in judgment. But this will only happen finally at the last day, when the responsible dead are raised to judgment. For as the Bible often notes, in this life the wicked apparently prosper. Judgment day will be a personal, face to face encounter with God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

Deu 7:11 You must therefore keep the commandment, the statutes and the ordinances which I command you this day, to do them-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after

considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 7:12 If you listen to these ordinances and keep and do them, Yahweh your God will keep with you the covenant and the loving kindness which He swore to your fathers-

On one hand, the promises to Abraham and the fathers depended for their realization upon human obedience; even though on the other hand, the covenant of Gen. 15 appears to be a unilateral expression of God's grace and assurance to His people. "If you listen to these ordinances and keep and do them, Yahweh your God will keep with you the covenant and the loving kindness which He swore to your fathers" (Dt. 7:12). That covenant was initially given in terms which omitted direct reference to any conditions for fulfilment. But it

would be 'kept' by God if His people 'kept' His ways. The promises that God would multiply the seed of Abraham were conditional also; *if* Israel separated themselves from the peoples of the land, *then* He would "multiply you, as He has sworn unto your fathers" (Dt. 13:17). The strength of God's grace also makes some of His promises 'conditional' in a different sense; thus He had promised Reuben and Manasseh that they could return to their possessions only when the others had possessed the land (Dt. 3:20). This condition never happened- yet they were allowed to return. And our very salvation from death and the consequences of sin is in a sense another example of this kind of thing.

Deu 7:13 He will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your new wine and your oil, the increase of your livestock and the young of your flock, in the land which He swore to your fathers to give you-

Analyzing usage of the word "love" in the Pentateuch reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers). Love is indeed the proof of spiritual maturity (Col. 3:14).

Reflection upon the nature of God's covenant relationship reveals His grace. There are no lack of Bible passages which speak of His love and blessing in the covenant as being conditional- *if* the people were obedient, then God would keep His covenant "and he will love you and bless you and multiply you". Yet the record of the

history of Israel shows that Israel were not obedient; and yet God still kept His covenant, loved them and multiplied them. It's rather like a parent setting conditions for a child, and yet not abiding by the deal, so great is the love felt for the child. God's covenant is in a sense conditional; and yet in another sense it isn't, because His love has the characteristic of unconditionality about it, simply because we are His children. The whole history of Israel is encouragement in this.

Deu 7:14 You will be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock-

The Law could not give life, but it offered temporal blessings, within the context of the Middle East in the two millennia BC, as a recognition of the principle that God rewards obedience. Thus they were promised long life, fruitful land and wombs (i.e. many children) if they were righteous (Dt. 7:13). But now, long life and fruitful land aren't seen by us as blessings. They were blessings relevant to the context in which they were given; and likewise fertility is to be seen in the same light. And this must be given due weight when we consider issues of fertility, choices to have or not have children, and infertility.

Deu 7:15 Yahweh will take away from you all sickness, and none of the evil diseases of Egypt which you know, will He put on you, but will lay them on all those who hate you-

This is not to be read as meaning that Israel would be free from all sickness; for mortality involves sickness, and that is part of the human condition. And sickness

came upon righteous men, we think of Hezekiah, and how the Lord Jesus "bore our sicknesses" as predicted in Is. 53. Israel were smitten with sickness, but the Lord Jesus bore the result of their sins. The sickness here is parallel with the "evil diseases of Egypt", the specific judgments which came upon Egypt at the time of Israel's deliverance from them. This is made specific in Ex. 15:26; Dt. 28:27.

Deu 7:16 You shall consume all the peoples whom Yahweh your God shall deliver up unto you; your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you-

Moses warns them not to "take pity" on false teachers, but to purge them from the community (Dt. 7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12). Not once in the earlier Law does this warning occur. Moses had come to know Israel so well that he could see how they were tempted to fail, and so he warned them forcibly against it. The way the Lord Jesus knows our thought processes, the mechanism of our temptations, is wondrously prefigured here. There are so many other examples of Moses showing his recognition of exactly *how* Israel were likely to be tempted (Dt. 6:11-13; 8:11-20; 9:4; 11:16; 12:13,19,23,30; 13:1-4; 14:27; 15:9,18; 17:11,12 ("will"),14,16,17; 21:18; 22:1-4,18; 23:21; 25:8).

Twice in 1 Timothy, Paul speaks about a snare; the snare of the devil (1 Tim. 3:7), and the snare of wanting wealth (1 Tim. 6:9). The desire for wealth in whatever form is the very epitome of the devil, our inherent sin which we must struggle against. The idea of a snare is

that it results in a sudden and *unexpected* destruction. The unexpectedness of the destruction should set us thinking: surely the implication is that those who are materialistic don't realize that in fact this is their be-setting sin, and therefore their rejection in the end because of it will be so tragically unexpected. It's rather like pride; if you're proud and you don't know it, then you really are proud. And if we're materialistic and don't know it, we likewise really have a problem. The idea of riches being a snare connects with copious OT references to idols as Israel's perpetual snare (Ex. 23:33; Dt. 7:16; Jud. 2:3; 8:27; Ps. 106:36; Hos. 5:1). Paul's point is surely that the desire of wealth is the equivalent of OT idolatry.

Despite such great love for Israel, Moses knew them so well that he fully appreciated that they were extremely prone to weakness. This is one of the major themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. He did not turn a blind eye to their sins; Deuteronomy is punctuated with reminders of how grievously they had sinned during their journey, and yet at the same time Moses is so positive about them—setting a wonderful pattern for us in how to deal with others. Time and again he comments on how easily they will be tempted to disobey commandments. "Take heed" runs like a refrain throughout Moses' speech. He warns them here not to "take pity" on false teachers, but to purge them from the community (7:16; 13:8; 19:13,21; 25:12). Not once in the earlier giving of the Law does this warning occur. Moses had come to know Israel so well that he could see how they were tempted to fail,

and so he warned them forcibly against it. The way Jesus knows our thought processes, the mechanism of our temptations, is wondrously prefigured here.

Deu 7:17 If you say in your heart, These nations are more than I, how can I dispossess them?-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 7:18 you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what Yahweh your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular- very often in Dt. 7], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

"Let not your heart be troubled... neither let it be afraid" (Jn. 14:1,27) repeats Moses' final encouragement to Israel "fear not, neither be dismayed" (Dt. 31:8; 1:21,29; 7:18).

Deu 7:19 the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand and the stretched out arm by which Yahweh your God brought you out; so shall Yahweh your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid-

God addresses those who had not been present at the Red Sea and who hadn't seen the plagues on Egypt as if they had personally been there. He speaks of these things "which your eyes saw". The people were to so feel themselves into God's word, into Biblical history, into their membership in the people of God, that it was as if they had seen these things with their own eyes. And in

the context, God uses this as the basis to appeal for their trust that He will likewise give them the victory over the Egyptians and crises in *their* lives.

The great works of Yahweh which He showed at the time of their exodus from Egypt (cp. the world) and baptism at the Red Sea were in essence repeated throughout their wilderness journey (Dt. 7:19). Therefore whenever they faced discouragement and an apparent blockage to their way, they were to remember how God had redeemed them at their baptism, and to realize that in fact His work was still ongoing with them (Dt. 20:1). He told them in the desert that He was "Yahweh that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 11:45). Therefore the overcoming of Edom, Moab and the Canaanite tribes is described in language lifted from the Red Sea record (e.g. Ex. 15:15-17). Throughout their history, Israel were reminded that what God had done for them in their Red Sea deliverance He was continuing to do, and therefore all their enemies would likewise perish if they remained God's people (e.g. Is. 43:16).

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched out arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez.

20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 7:20 Moreover Yahweh your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left and hide themselves perish from before you-

The fear amongst the Canaanites prior to Israel's approach and the weakness of those nations was due to "the hornet" being sent before Israel (Dt. 7:20; Josh. 24:12); it would seem that this is a reference to the Angels softening up the Canaanite tribes, perhaps through inciting the Egyptians to raid them and ruin the economy. And specifically, the two kings of the Amorites attacking the other Canaanites (Josh. 24:12). "The hornet" could also refer to the Phoenician raiders, who had hornets as totems; they too weakened Canaan before the Israelites arrived, and would have been manipulated to do so by an Angel. In Ex. 23:27 God says He will "send My fear before you, and will destroy all the people to whom you shall come". Jacob likens his guardian Angel to "the God before whom my fathers walked" (Gen. 48:16), who is called "the fear of Isaac" (Gen. 31:42,53) when Jacob de-

scribes the personal presence of God in his life. So the "fear of God" is associated with an Angel; God sent His fear, an Angel, before Israel into Canaan, as promised explicitly in Ex. 23. "The hornet" could have referred to literal hornets, used by God to destroy the nations of Canaan. For they were indeed a problem in the land; "Zorah" in Judah means "place of hornets". But I prefer the idea that the Angel manipulated Gentile nations to soften up the Canaanites before Israel's arrival. The same figure is found in Is. 7:18, where God whistled for the "fly that is in Egypt and the bee that is in Assyria". We note that this was all built in to God's wider plan; for had Israel entered Canaan 40 years before they did, they would've found the Canaanites that much stronger than they were after "the hornet" had weakened them for 40 years. It's as if God recalculated the program according to the great weakness of Israel. They didn't enter when they could have done, and so He used the period of their wilderness wanderings to make their entrance to the land that much easier than it would otherwise have been.

Deu 7:21 You shall not be scared of them, for Yahweh your God is in the midst of you, a great and awesome God-

They were not to repeat the failure of Israel when they first approached Canaan. They allowed their fear of the local tribes to displace their faith in God, and His repeated word of salvation and promise of possession of His Kingdom. Fear is always the antithesis of faith. God is often called an "awesome God" (Dt. 7:21 etc.). The Hebrew word for "awesome" is that for 'fear' (s.w. Gen.

3:10; 15:1; 18:15 etc.). The idea is that God's people are to be in such fear / awe of Him that they fear / are in awe of nothing else. Hence Dt. 7:21 says that Israel should "not be scared of" their enemies, because their God is "awesome", He is the one to be feared.

Deu 7:22 Yahweh your God will cast out those nations before you by little and little; you may not consume them at once-

Perhaps God's ideal intention for Israel wasn't fulfilled, and therefore according to some later plan of action, He gave Israel the land "at one time" (Josh. 10:42).

Lest the animals of the field increase on you-

Time and again Israel's surrounding, neighbouring enemies are likened to "wild beasts". The list of references is impressive: Hos. 2:12; Ez. 5:17; 14:15; Ps. 80:13; Jer. 7:33; 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; Dt. 7:22. Job's Sabean (i.e. Arab) invaders are called "the beasts of the earth... the beasts of the field" (Job 5:22,23). It is possible that "beasts" in these passages can be read as an intensive plural - i.e. 'the great beast', which symbolizes all of Israel's various enemies. This equivalence of the multitude of these enemies with a singular beast is seen in Ez.. 34:28, which parallels "the heathen" (enemies of Israel) with "the beast of the land" (singular). Rev. 17 similarly exhibits *the* (singular) beast as comprising a number of nations (heads / horns).

Deu 7:23 But Yahweh your God will deliver them up before you and will confuse them with a great confusion until they are destroyed-

There are no conditions attached to this prediction in the record, and yet we must clearly understand it as

meaning 'This is what is potentially possible for you, I have enabled it in my plan, but it depends upon your faith.' And tragically, Israel would not.

Deu 7:24 He will deliver their kings into your hand and you shall make their name perish from under the sky; no man shall be able to stand before you, until you have destroyed them-

Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt. 2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

Deu 7:25 You must burn the engraved images of their gods with fire. You must not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourself, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to Yahweh your God-

Materialism is perhaps the direct equivalent of idol worship under the old covenant. They were to not even desire "the silver and gold that is on them... for it is an abomination to the Lord your God... you shall utterly detest it; and *you* [like God] shall utterly abhor it" (Dt. 7:25,26). God despises idolatry; and we also must go a step beyond merely avoiding materialism; we must despise it.

Deu 7:26 You must not bring an abomination into your house and become a devoted thing like it. You shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is a devoted thing-

Those who make and worship idols are "like unto them" (Ps. 115:8; 135:18). We become like that which we worship. If we worship Yahweh, then we become devoted to Him; and all else becomes detestable to us. As Israel were to "detest" idols and idolatry as "abomination" (Dt. 7:26), so they were to "abhor" and treat as "abomination" unclean animals (Lev. 11:11,13,43), lest they "make yourselves abominable [s.w. "detestable"] with any creeping thing" (Lev. 20:25). I suggest this is the reason why God designated some animals as 'abominable'; because of their association with idol worship. The idols of Egypt were often in the form of animals, and sex with animals was part of the rites. Just as in primitive societies today. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14);

no animal is morally more or less clean than another. The commandments about unclean animals were clearly intended just for Israel living within a culture of idolatry / abomination involving those kinds of animals.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

8

Deu 8:1 You must observe to do all the commandments which I command you this day, that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers-

Again we perceive God's grace. They were not obedient, and yet by grace they did go in and possess the Kingdom. We cannot presume upon such grace, but we can note the deep good pleasure and will of God that His people inherit His Kingdom, despite their weaknesses.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You

shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 8:2 You shall remember all the way which Yahweh your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that He might humble you-

Recollection of our spiritual biography is intended to humble us. And the intention of our wilderness walk is to humble us; for humility is one of the most critical characteristics which God seeks to develop in His children. We must be humbled beneath His mighty hand, that we might be exalted in due time (1 Pet. 5:6). And so life's really a race to the bottom; by the end of our days, the intention is that we have been suitably humbled. So that we might be exalted at the resurrection. It's no surprise, therefore, that life often doesn't work out- so that we are humbled.

We must remember that the 40 years wandering were punishment for sin, it was the experience of condemnation, and serves as the basis for later Biblical pictures of the rejected. Unable to enter the Kingdom they so wanted to enter, wandering until they died. But Moses in Deuteronomy perceives that God wanted to humble them and give them even another chance. For this was why He led them 40 years... "Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers didn't know, that He might humble you and that He might prove you, to

do you good at your latter end" (:16). But they didn't want that and perished in the desert.

To prove you, to know what was in your heart-

The original is ambiguous. It was to reveal to God what was the state of their hearts; and yet God knows the human heart without the need for experimentation. But it can also imply that the experiences were so that they knew what their heart was. Hence LXX "that the things in thine heart might be made manifest". The idea may be that man's self examination is in fact God's examination of that heart; hence Prov. 20:27: "The spirit of man is the candle of Yahweh, searching all the inward parts of the belly". Our wilderness journey is therefore partly intended for us to come to fuller self knowledge, as to whether or not we have a heart for God. At the start of our journey, we may simply hope we have a heart for God; but in maturity, we are intended to know for sure that we do, despite many imperfections.

Alternatively, it could be argued that it was the Angel gave them trials in order to find out what was in their heart. God "knows the secrets of the heart" (Ps. 44:21); "I Yahweh search the heart" (Jer. 17:10), and therefore He does not have to test us in order to know what is in our hearts. But His Angels do. Abraham and Hezekiah are other examples; see on 2 Chron. 32:31. We know that Angels can't sin: and yet they are limited in knowledge (e.g. Mt. 24:36). an Angel commented that now he knew that Abraham feared God, after he had seen his willingness to offer Isaac (Gen. 22:12); Israel's guardian Angel lead them through the wilderness in order to learn

about Israel's spirituality (Dt. 8:2,3). God Himself, of course, already knew the hearts of men. The "sons of God", in the context of the book of Job, refer to the Angels (Job 38:7), and Job's 'satan' may have likewise been an Angel testing him to see his response.

Whether you would keep His commandments or not-

The grace of all this is that the forty years wanderings showed what was the heart of Israel- that they were disobedient. But all the same, God brought them in to the promised land.

Deu 8:3 He humbled you-

Perhaps we find ourselves facing a situation that our upbringing and culture never addressed; we are alone, humiliated, before our God. This is what happened to Israel and to the Lord in the wilderness. The tragedy is that so many fail to respond as intended to the humbling hand of God as a loving Father. The Hebrew word there translated "humbled" is so often used about the afflictions of Israel- in Egypt, in the wilderness, at the hands of their invaders. But they wriggled against it, their bitterness driving them deep within themselves rather than to God and His Son. This is the enduring tragedy of Israel, and Jewish history. And it is the same with so many lives today.

And allowed you to suffer hunger-

How God works through sin is revealed in the way that although God always provided food for Israel in the wilderness, He 'suffered them to hunger' for 40 years, in order to try to teach them that man lives not by bread alone, but by God's word (Dt. 8:2,3). The Jews in the wilderness despised the food God gave them as worth-

less (Num. 21:3); they went hungry not literally, but in the sense that they despised the manna of God's provision. And He allowed them to have that hunger, in order that He might [try to] teach them about the value of His word. He didn't simply punish them for their ingratitude. He sought to work through it in order to teach them something. Even the process of rejection results in the victims coming to 'know the Lord'.

And fed you with manna-

Israel were to be filled with the manna, so that they would know that "I am Yahweh your God" (Ex. 16:12). This was to be the meaning of the manna. There was a daily manifestation of God's glory along with the manna (Ex. 16:7 cp. 12). The daily sense of living with God's glory is so vital for each of us in our deeply personal spirituality. We know that faith comes from hearing God's word; so our feeding on God's word should lead us to know Yahweh. There was something intensely personal about the teaching of the manna: "He fed thee (singular-not "ye") with manna, that he might make thee know that (every) man (lives spiritually) by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord" (Dt. 8:3 AV).

Which you didn't know, neither did your fathers know-

Part of our humbling process is to be given experiences and situations which neither we nor our fathers knew. On one hand, the essence of all situations and temptations has been experienced before at some point in Biblical history. But on the other, we are tested by experiences which are unique to us, without known prece-

dent; that we might be brought to God in trust and humility.

That He might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of Yahweh-

Every gift of manna was the result of a specific Divine word of command being given. And this was to teach the wider lesson- that God's word is to be engaged with by us every day, and by this we shall spiritually live. Whilst the manna appeared the same old, same old thing- it actually was uniquely created by a specific, consciously given word from God. And so it is with our spiritual food, given daily.

The passages quoted by Jesus in the desert to strengthen Himself against His human desires ("the devil") are all from the same part of Deuteronomy, regarding Israel's experience in the wilderness. Jesus clearly saw a parallel between His experiences and theirs. The description of Him as being in the wilderness with beasts and Angels (Mk. 1:13) is another connection with Israel's experience in the wilderness- they were plagued there by "wild beasts" (32:19-24). Jesus was led up of the spirit for forty days in the wilderness, as Israel were led forty years by a Spirit-Angel. The mind of Jesus was likewise proved by the temptations. Jesus overcame by quoting the Scriptures that were in His heart (Ps. 119:11). Jesus also was allowed to hunger, to reinforce His understanding of the fact that we are to live not by physical food but by the word of God. The reference to Israel being 'chastened' (:5) in the desert recall how God chas-

tened His Son, Jesus (2 Sam. 7:12; Ps. 89: 32). Thus Jesus showed us how to read and study the Word - He thought Himself into the position of Israel in the wilderness, and therefore took the lessons that can be learnt from their experiences to Himself in His wilderness trials.

The fact that God's word is true means that we also ought to be truthful- for we should speak "as oracles of God". Moses surely intended a connection between his words recorded in Dt. 8:3 and Dt. 23:23- for they are the only times he uses a particular Hebrew word translated "proceed" or 'go out', within the same speech uttered the same day: "By every word that *proceeds* out of the mouth of the Lord does man live... that which *goes forth* [s.w. "proceeds"] out of *your* lips / mouth you shall keep and perform". The influence of continually hearing *God's* word should be that *our* words are likewise truthful and trustworthy. The fact that the Bible as God's word is true has implications for our own truthfulness. *Pistos* is listed as a fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5; but the idea it can carry is not so much of faith in the sense of belief, but of faithfulness, loyalty, reliability, utter dependability. If this is how God's words are to us, then this is how we and our words should be to others.

Exactly because the Lord Jesus was human, and yet perfect, He was so exalted. It's perhaps noteworthy that in the wilderness temptation, Jesus was tempted "If you are the Son of *God*..." (Mt. 4:3), and He replies by quoting Dt. 8:3 "*man* shall not live by bread alone"- and the Jonathan Targum has *bar nasha* [son of man] here for "man". If we are correct in understanding those wilder-

ness temptations as the Lord's internal struggles, we see Him tempted to wrongly focus upon His being Son of *God*, forgetting His humanity; and we see Him overcoming this temptation, preferring instead to perceive Himself as Son of *man*. Twice in Mark, Jesus is addressed as "Messiah" but He replies by calling Himself "the Son of man" (Mk. 8:29-31; 14:61,62). If this was His preferred self-perception, should it not be how we perceive Him?

Deu 8:4 Your clothing didn't grow old on you, neither did your foot swell, these forty years-

God has likewise promised to provide us on our wilderness journey with basic clothing and food (Ps. 37:25). We should be content with this, and instead of giving our strength to earn money to tickle our taste buds and buy fine clothing, instead give our lives to serving God.

Apart from the jewellery taken from the Egyptians for the construction of the tabernacle, the total unmaterialism of Israel on Passover night is something to be marvelled at. They only had the clothes they wore, and just the one pair of shoes. This is confirmed by the reminder that these things were miraculously preserved throughout the wilderness journey (Dt. 8:4). It is also highlighted that they had no food when they left - they just grabbed some dough which later they baked into "unleavened cakes" (Ex. 12:34,39).

We must remember that the 40 years wandering were punishment for sin, it was the experience of condemnation, and serves as the basis for later Biblical pic-

tures of the rejected. Unable to enter the Kingdom they so wanted to enter, wandering until they died. But Moses in Deuteronomy perceives that even for those condemned people, Yahweh provided and they "lacked nothing" by His grace. We see something of God's essence here- that He cares even for the condemned. Such a far cry from the classical picture of "hell".

Deu 8:5 You shall consider in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so Yahweh your God chastens you-

Dt. 8:2-7 describes God leading Israel through the wilderness for 40 years *so that* they could then enter the land. 'Israel' here must refer to the under 20s, Joshua, Caleb and the Levites. It was only they who went through the wilderness for 40 years. It was 'Israel' in this sense with whom God was in love. They considered in their heart, that God was treating them as a father does his son (Dt. 8:5). This has a practical significance to it; the under 20s would have been at variance with their natural parents, who knew they were condemned to death in the wilderness, and who refused to take their covenant with God seriously. That young remnant were led to meditate that God was their Heavenly Father; natural relationships that were not based around a true love of God, paled into insignificance as they spiritually matured. Dt. 8:3 says that they learnt to live by every word of God during those 40 years. This is just not true of rebellious Israel generally. But the under 20s, Levites, Joshua and Caleb all developed into keen lovers of the word during that time. They are classic Biblical examples for young people.

Deu 8:6 You must keep the commandments of Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him-

Whilst there are of course conditions for entry into the Kingdom, it must ever be remembered that it is not right to therefore reason that if we *do* certain things, then we will be in the Kingdom. For this would be justification by works and not by faith. However, because we believe we will be in the Kingdom, we will therefore naturally respond by living according to God's precepts. Moses encouraged Israel to keep the Law exactly because God would surely give them the promised land- not *so that* they would enter the land but because He would give them the land: "For Yahweh your God brings you into a good land" (:7).

Deu 8:7 For Yahweh your God brings you into a good land-

The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom

to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

A land of brooks of water, of springs and underground water gushing into valleys and hills-

A land of brooks of water" is precisely the phrase used of a place they stopped at on the way to Canaan (Dt. 10:7). They were constantly given foretastes of the Kingdom before entering it, just as we are on our wilderness journey.

Deu 8:8 a land of wheat and barley, vines, fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and honey-

Rabshakeh alluded to this: "Make an agreement with me... and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree... until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey" (2 Kings 18:31-32). The repetition of the word "land" and the evident allusions to the description of the promised land Israel would have if they were faithful, show that Rabshakeh was offering the Jews a fake kingdom of God. The reference to each man eating his own vine and fig tree is alluding to Mic. 4:4, a prophecy which was uttered during this period, and doubtless repeated by the prophets within Jerusalem: "They shall sit every man under his vine and... fig tree". The world likewise offers us a fake kingdom of God. We have a

choice between the kingdoms of men now, and God's true Kingdom.

Deu 8:9 a land in which you shall eat bread without scarcity. You shall not lack anything in it-

There can be little doubt that standing on a mountain looking out over God's Kingdom would have reminded Christ of Moses on Nebo, who for one slip was denied it all. And that must have sobered Him (Dt. 34:1). And having quoted Dt. 8:3 to Himself about living on the bread / word of God, His mind would have gone on to Dt. 8:9 with its description of eating bread without scarceness in the Kingdom – i.e. feeding fully on spiritual things, in the allegory.

The connection is with how in the wilderness years, they were made to hunger (:3)- so that they might better appreciate the fertility and food of the promised land. We too suffer deficits in our journey, perhaps of fellowship, of acceptance... to prepare us for the fullness of those things in the Kingdom.

But when under judgment for sin, the bread of the land was scarce (Ez. 4:17; Am. 4:6), and they lacked all things (Dt. 28:48,57). This promise is therefore conditional upon their obedience- it was what was potentially possible.

A land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you may dig copper-

They would inherit a land which was blessed with iron, and from whose hills “you *may* dig brass”; and yet they failed to make the effort to dig this out, and therefore they were dominated by the Canaanite tribes who

had iron weapons. The Angels had made it potentially possible, but the realization of their potential plans depended upon Israel's freewill effort. But in Judges and 1 Samuel we read several times of how Israel hardly had any iron weapons and were dominated by the Philistines who did. So this was a potential for them- they *could* have had this blessing, but like us so often, they chose to be satisfied with the minimum and didn't realize it for themselves.

The men of Dan quote the words of Dt. 8:9 in Jud. 18:10, but out of context. Those words were true of the entire land promised to Abraham. But the men of Dan didn't drive out the tribes from the land. Instead, they applied these words to a tiny, remote part of it in Laish, and encouraged themselves on the basis of these words to go and massacre a group of unsuspecting people and take their land- with the blessing of Micah's false gods.

Deu 8:10 When you shall eat and be full, then you shall bless Yahweh your God for the good land which He has given you-

Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

"The good land" uses the same words as in the creation account (Gen. 1:10). Their entry into Canaan is being cast as a new creation, a possibility of attaining some form of the Kingdom of God.

Deu 8:11 Beware lest you forget Yahweh your God-

They never literally forgot Yahweh. Indeed they always professed loyalty to Him. But God sees to the essence, and considered they effectively were acting without Him present in their conscience. And He counts that as having forgotten Him. The same warning is in Dt. 6:12; 25:19; Hos. 2:13- to not allow material blessing to lead us to forget Yahweh. Seeing that such blessing clearly leads to forgetting Yahweh, we wonder why ever He gives any of His children such blessing. It is given as a test; or, perhaps it is simply a case of a doting Father giving us what He knows we will like, although it is not good for us. The connection between material blessing and forgetting God is very strong; to seek for material blessing is spiritual suicide.

In not keeping His commandments-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt.

11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

His ordinances and His statutes which I command you this day-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a

culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 8:12 lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and lived therein-

When they had eaten and were full (Dt. 8:10), they were to beware "lest" the prosperity made them forget God (Dt. 8:12,13). This is a profound warning to all afflicted with prosperity in this life. Dt. 31:20 states that when they had "eaten and are full" (s.w.) they would certainly forget Yahweh and turn to other gods; but this prophecy was conditional, for it was by no means bound to happen. For the appeal in Dt. 8:10-13 had been *not* to let this happen. So much of Bible prophecy is not so much prediction as stating conditional situations, with the implicit appeal that in the gap between pronouncement and fulfilment, we can change the outcomes by prayer and changed behaviour.

We note that God promised them to eat and be full, and also to be given houses in Canaan which they didn't build (Dt. 6:11). God foresaw that they would follow the addictive, insatiable path of materialism in then wanting to build additional homes. Materialism is by nature addictive; and it is foolhardy to consider we can dabble in it without becoming addicted.

Deu 8:13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply and your silver and your gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied-

They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, knowing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and failure. We wonder why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He rejoiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

Deu 8:14 then your heart be lifted up-

There is a clear connection between material success and pride, a lifted up heart. Yet humility is clearly of the essence to God. If we accept this, we will not seek material success. We will value humility and covet it.

And you forget Yahweh your God, Who brought you forth out of the land of Egypt-

Israel never became atheists, they never formally abrogated Yahweh, never formally rejected Him. But they forgot Him, in that in daily life they forgot the wonder

of His grace, especially in His historical salvation of them. And it is day by spiritual mindedness which is of the essence. The exit from Egypt is described as a jail break, from the house of bondage. Their desire to return to it was strong, and so Moses continually stresses the true and awful nature of Egypt / the world. The language echoes that of God to Abraham: "I am Yahweh who brought you out of Ur" (Gen. 15:7). They were being asked to act as Abraham's seed, and respond as He did to the Divine initiative in separating them from the world- by following His commandments.

Out of the house of bondage-

They were continually reminded of how awful Egypt was; this phrase is often used (e.g. Ex. 13:3,14; 20:2; Dt. 5:6; 6:12). For there is a strong human tendency to consider the past as halcyon and wonderful. When for the believer, the past is awful, and the best is ahead, in God's Kingdom.

Deu 8:15 Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness-

From the perspective of God's Kingdom, we will look back upon our wilderness journey in this life as having been extremely dangerous. We could have wandered so easily from the pathway or been spiritually consumed. In spiritual terms, our journey right now is intense and very dangerous.

With fiery serpents, scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; Who brought you forth water out of the rock of flint-

The records make it clear enough that the miraculous provision of water was in the same context as God's constant provision of food and protection to the people (Dt. 8:15,16). The rock gave water throughout the wilderness journey (Is. 48:21). This would surely necessitate that the giving of water at Horeb was not a one-off solution to a crisis. There is a word play in the Hebrew text of Is. 48:21: "He led them through the Horebs [AV 'desert places']" by making water flow from the rock. The Horeb experience was repeated for 40 years; as if the rock went on being smitten. Somehow the water from that smitten rock went with them, fresh and bubbling as it was the first moment the rock was smitten, right through the wilderness. It was living, spring water- not lying around in puddles. The water that came from that one rock felt as if God had opened up fresh springs and torrents in the desert (Ps. 74:15 NAS). It always tasted as if it was just gushing out of the spring; and this wonder is commented upon by both David and Isaiah (Ps. 78:15,16,20; 105:41; Is. 48:21). It was as if the rock had just been struck, and the water was flowing out fresh for the first time. In this miracle, God clave the rock and there came out rivers (Hab. 3:9; Ps. 78:16,20; Is. 43:20). Each part of Israel's encampment had the water as it were brought to their door. And so it is in our experience of Christ, and the blessing enabled by His sacrifice. The blessings that come to us are deeply personal, and directed to us individually. He died once, long ago, and yet the effect of His sacrifice is ever new. In our experience, it's as if He has died and risen for us every time we obtain for-

givenness, or any other grace to help in our times of need. We live in newness of life.

Deu 8:16 Who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers didn't know, that He might humble you and that He might prove you, to do you good at your latter end-

"Humble you" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing.

The humbling and testing was through testing how deeply they believed that it was God's intention to do His people eternal good in the end- through present suffering.

Deu 8:17 and lest you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand has given me this wealth-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which

our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 8:18 But you must remember Yahweh your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as at this day-

"The liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand" (Is. 32:8) may suggest that the generous will "stand" in the last day because of their generous spirit. Indeed, being in covenant with God may even depend upon our recognition of the fact that all human wealth is from God. The power to get wealth, be it education, intelligence or hard work (or 'good luck' in a secular sense) is all from God. It is not our "power" (:17) but God's. Moses urges the peoples' faithfulness so that Yahweh might "establish His covenant" with them (Dt.

8:18); and we note that despite their disobedience, He still "established" the covenant with them, by grace alone (Dt. 9:5).

"That He may establish His covenant" could suggest that ultimate, eternal covenant relationship is for those who have been prepared through a correct response to wealth. If we accept that any wealth we have is from God and not our own efforts- then we are ready for Him to establish His covenant with us. That seems to be the force of the unusual language here, although GNB glosses it with "Remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you the power to become rich. He does this because he is still faithful today to the covenant that he made with your ancestors".

Deu 8:19 If you forget Yahweh your God, and walk after other gods and serve them and worship them-

"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads

to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God, then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh, throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations and heart, as revealed in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

I testify against you this day that you shall surely perish-

Always in the OT, "I say unto you this day" was used as a Hebraism to bring home the utter solemnity of some great truth (e.g. Dt. 4:26,39; 8:19). The Lord used this idiom in assuring the thief on the cross that he could solemnly assure him, that he would share His Kingdom with Him. It's worth noting that the comma is placed after 'today' in the Curetonian Syriac version of the New Testament; the Syriac versions would reflect better the original Aramaic in which the Lord likely spoke. Dt. 9:1

is another example of where "this day" doesn't mean "to-day", but is rather a way of signally a solemn statement.

Deu 8:20 As the nations that Yahweh makes to perish before you, so you too shall perish, because you wouldn't listen to the voice of Yahweh your God-

Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

9

Deu 9:1 Hear, Israel-

Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" or obey God's words. "*Hear, O Israel*" in Deuteronomy must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "*Hear* ['be obedient'], O Israel" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuteronomy Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

You are to pass over the Jordan this day-

They did not pass over that day because they mourned for Moses 30 days (Dt. 34:8). It is possible that Moses felt so despised by them that he assumed there would be no period of mourning for him. He could be using "this day" in a general sense of "at this time", but this may also be an example of 'I tell you this day' being a solemn statement, as discussed on Dt. 8:19.

To go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and walled up to the sky-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 9:2 a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard say, Who can stand before the sons of Anak?-

This was apparently a proverbial expression of the time, but it caught hold of the minds of the spies who

first entered the land, and came to dominate the thinking of the generation who refused to enter the Kingdom and were therefore condemned in the wilderness. We see here the power of words and phrases; the little credos by which men live are often taught by snatches of lyrics from popular songs, or half remembered quotations once seen somewhere online. This is why we are to speak to ourselves in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, and not allow our self talk to be dominated by the phrases of the secular world (Eph. 5:19). We are to speak also to each other in these terms (Col. 3:16); for our self talk is reflected in our words to others. And this is what happened to that generation who failed to enter the land; it was exactly this repetition of the words "Who can stand before the sons of Anak?", in their hearts and to each other, which led to a generation of Israel being denied the Kingdom which had been prepared for them.

Deu 9:3 Know therefore this day that Yahweh your God is He who goes over before you as a devouring fire-

It was the Angel in the pillar of fire which was to go before Israel. Deborah in Jud. 4:14 quotes the words of Dt. 9:3 concerning the Angel going before Israel to drive out the nations to Barak, to inspire him with courage in fighting them. She recognized that the work the Angels did when they went out many years ago to do all the groundwork necessary for Israel to destroy all the tribes of Canaan was done for all time. It was not too late to make use of that work by making a human endeavour in faith. So with us, the smaller objectives in our lives as well as our main goal of reaching the Kingdom have

all been made possible through the work of Christ and the Angels in the past. Deborah's recognition of this is shown in her song- Jud. 5:20: "They (the Angels) fought from Heaven; the stars (Biblical imagery for Angels) in their courses fought against Sisera".

He will destroy them and He will bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out-

The nations in the land being "subdued" or 'brought down' was the outcome of Israel being obedient to the covenant (s.w. Dt. 9:3). We read this word "subdued" used of how the land was at times subdued before Israel (Jud. 3:30; 4:23; 8:28; 11:33). But each time it is clear that the people generally were not obedient to the covenant. One faithful leader was, and the results of his faithfulness were counted to the people. This is what happened with the Lord's death leading to righteousness being imputed to us.

And make them perish quickly, as Yahweh has spoken to you-

See on Josh. 5:13,14; Jud. 1:8. The implications that we should respond 'quickly' to the Gospel surely mean that we should not have any element of indifference in our response to the call of God, and yet the foundations of a true spiritual life cannot be laid hastily. The Father drove out the tribes from Canaan slowly, not immediately- or at least, He potentially enabled this to happen (Jud. 2:23). But Israel were to destroy those tribes "quickly" (Dt. 9:3). Here perhaps we see what is meant- progress is slow but steady in the spiritual life, but there must be a quickness in response to the call of God for

action in practice. Compare this with how on one hand, God does not become quickly angry (Ps. 103:8), and yet on the other hand He *does* get angry quickly in the sense that He immediately feels and responds to sin (Ps. 2:12); His anger 'flares up in His face'.

Deu 9:4 Don't say in your heart-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

After Yahweh your God has thrust them out from before you, For my righteousness Yahweh has brought me in to possess this land; because Yahweh drives them out before you because of the wickedness of these nations-

The thrusting out of Israel's enemies from the land was conditional upon Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19). They were disobedient, and yet still God thrust out the tribes and warned them therefore not to think that this was done because of their righteousness (Dt. 9:4). It was by grace alone that they inherited the Kingdom, as with us. But there was always a tendency for Israel to forget that they had been given the Kingdom despite their lack of the required personal righteousness; they became over familiar with living in it under such grace. And so the warning comes down to us.

Deu 9:5 Not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart do you go in to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations Yahweh your God drives them out from before you-

The grace of God guarantees our salvation. Yet we find it so hard to believe- that I, with all my doubts and fears, will really be there. Israel were warned that they were being given the land (cp. salvation) "not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thy heart... for thou art a stiffnecked people" (Dt. 9:5,6). These words are picked up in Tit. 3:5 and applied to the new Israel: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing (baptism) of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit" - by His grace alone. Moses urges the peoples' faithful-

ness so that Yahweh might "establish His covenant" with them (Dt. 8:18); but here we note that despite their disobedience, He still "established" the covenant with them, by grace alone (Dt. 9:5).

And that He may establish the word which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob-

We could say that the promises to Abraham which form the basis of the covenant are about grace. Dt. 9 spells out that Israel would not inherit the land sworn to their fathers because they were righteous- the implication was that it was a gift promised by pure grace.

Deu 9:6 Know therefore that Yahweh your God doesn't give you this good land to possess-

The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and em-

pirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

Deu 9:7 Remember, don't forget, how you provoked Yahweh your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you went forth out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place you have been rebellious against Yahweh-

We are left to imagine in what tone of voice Moses said that. Israel had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh through disbelief, and therefore couldn't enter Canaan (Dt. 1:26; 9:7,23,24; 31:27; Num. 27:4); they were as the rebellious son who rebelled against his father's commandment (s.w. Dt. 21:18,20). For he himself had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and because of this was also barred from entering Canaan (Num. 20:24; 27:14). One reason for this was that he had called the Israelites "rebels" (Num. 20:10), and no sooner had he done so, than he himself rebelled against Yahweh's commandment just like them, but in a different way.

Deu 9:8 Also in Horeb you provoked Yahweh to wrath and Yahweh was angry with you to destroy you-

God can be provoked to anger (Dt. 9:7; Ezra 5:12), His wrath 'arises' because of sinful behaviour (2 Chron. 36:16). He drove Israel into captivity in anger and fury (Jer. 32:37). The wrath of God 'waxes hot' against sinful men, and Moses begged God to 'turn' from that wrath (Ex. 32:11,12). The whole intercession of Moses with God gives the impression of God changing His mind because of the intercession of a mere man. Admittedly the idea of anger flaring up in God's face and then Him 'turning' from that wrath is some sort of anthropomorphism. The very same words are used about Esau's wrath 'turning away', i.e. being pacified, as are used about the pacification of God's wrath (Gen. 27:45). But all the same, this language must be telling us something. The wrath of God did come upon Israel in the wilderness (Ps.

78:31; Ez. 22:31), but Moses 'turned' God from executing it as He planned (Ps. 106:23). Many times He turned away from the full extent of His wrath (Ps. 78:38). It is by righteous behaviour and repentance that the wrath of God turns away (Dt. 13:17; 2 Chron. 12:12; 29:10; 30:8). Ezra 10:14 speaks of God's wrath turning away because those who had married Gentile women divorced them. God's wrath is also turned away by the death of the sinner- the heads of the sinners in Num. 25:4 were to be 'hung up' before the Lord so that His wrath would turn away. A similar example is to be found in Josh. 7:26. Jeremiah often comments that God's wrath is turned away by the execution of judgment upon the sinner (e.g. Jer. 30:24). In this sense His anger and wrath are poured out or 'accomplished,' i.e. they are no more because they have been poured out (Lam. 4:11). The fact that men such as Moses and Jeremiah (Jer. 18:20) turned away God's wrath without these things happening, or simply by prayer (Dan. 9:16) therefore means that God accepted the intercession of those men and counted their righteousness to those from whom His wrath turned away. We shouldn't assume that these righteous men merely waved away God's wrath. That wrath was real, and required immense pleading and personal dedication on their behalf.

Deu 9:9 When I had gone up onto the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which Yahweh made with you. Then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights-

Ex. 24:16 says that Moses was six and a half days on the mountain waiting for the call to meet God, so he was with God for 33 and a half days. This perhaps looks forward to the 33 and a half years ministry of the Lord Jesus.

I neither ate bread nor drank water-

It could be argued that this is not speaking of absolutely not eating nor drinking (it would be hard not to drink for 40 days), but rather that He didn't eat bread nor drink water. The implication is that He had food to eat from God, associated with the word given him, which others weren't aware of. The Lord may allude to this in Jn. 4:32. This is the third period of 40 days which Moses was there, and the Rabbis calculate that he would have therefore returned from the mountain (cp. the Lord's second coming from Heaven) on the Day of Atonement.

Deu 9:10 Yahweh delivered to me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God-

The tables themselves were made by God, and were written on both sides (Ex. 32:15,16). As they were small enough to be carried, we assume they contained the ten commandments and not the rest of the laws given to Moses. They were the tables of the covenant, and so the letter of the law which was to give way to the spirit of the new covenant therefore includes the command about the Sabbath. For that was one of the ten commandments.

And on them were all the words which Yahweh spoke with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly-

Moses graciously doesn't mention that they shied away from Yahweh's appearance at that time and wanted him only to engage with Yahweh. Grace and speaking graciously about others' weaknesses is a sign of spiritual maturity, and we see it in Moses now at the end of his life.

The references to fire, smoke, furnace, earthquake and the descent of Yahweh (Ex. 19:18) is very similar to the language of Divine judgment, especially of Sodom (Gen. 19:28; Rev. 9:2). And we know from the prophets that Israel were considered by God as Sodom. We could read this as His wrath with Israel for breaking His simple commandments about not touching the mountain, and for not having sufficiently sanctified themselves (see on Ex. 19:10,14,18). The argument of Heb. 12 appears to be that the scene here is one of condemnation of sinful man- and we have not been called to that, but to salvation by grace in the new covenant in Christ. But out of that condemnation, God earnestly wished to reach out to His people, with words of covenant salvation.

Deu 9:11 At the end of forty days and forty nights Yahweh gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant-

The tables had the ten commandments written upon them, for this was the old covenant which was made with Israel (Dt. 4:13). We are not now under the old covenant, but under the new. Which means we are not

bound to keep the Sabbath, seeing this was one of the ten commandments. Knowing the apostacy of Israel, God still gave Moses the tokens of the covenant. The implication was that there was grace as the basis of the giving of that covenant.

Deu 9:12 Yahweh said to me Arise, get down quickly from here, for your people whom you have brought out of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made themselves a molten image-

When God told Moses to leave Him alone to destroy them, and go back down to the people immediately (Dt. 9:12), Moses stayed on to plead with God not to destroy them. And God listened (Ex. 32:7-14). He repented of the evil He had thought to do. He changed His mind, because Moses stayed on. There is an element of striving with God in prayer, knowing that His mind is open to change (Rom. 15:30). Jacob is a symbol of us all. He became Israel, he who struggles with God. And this is a key feature of all those who comprise the true Israel. This is what stimulates me to what intensity in prayer I can muster. That God is open to hearing and even changing His holy mind about something. Such is His sensitivity to us. Such is His love, that God changing His mind becomes really feasible as a concept. And such is the scary implication of the total freewill which the Father has afforded us. This is why God could reason with Moses as a man speaks to his friend and vice versa. It was a dynamic, two way relationship in thought and prayer and being.

Deu 9:13 Furthermore Yahweh spoke to me saying, I have seen this people and truly it is a stiff-necked people-

Pharaoh was condemned and Egypt overthrown because of his hard heart- but the very word is used to describe the hardness of Israel's heart at the time (Ex. 32:9; 33:3-5; 34:9). Israel were really no better than Egypt- just as Egypt was plagued "so that they could not drink the water" (Ex. 7:24), so we find Israel in the same situation right after leaving Egypt (Ex. 15:23). As the Egyptians were stripped of their jewellery, so Israel stripped themselves of it before the golden calf (Ex. 12:36; 33:6). Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience. We contrast this with the God who demands respect, the God who slew Uzzah and insists upon loyalty to Him.

Deu 9:14 let Me alone-

This reflects the amazingly close relationship between God and Moses. It's as if God is saying: 'I know you might persuade Me to change My mind on this one, but please, don't try, I might give in, when really they do need to be destroyed'. We too can have this level of intimacy with God.

This seems to suggest that God knew both Himself and Moses well enough to know that Moses could well persuade Him to change His mind, against His ideal intention. And Moses doesn't leave God alone, and does persuade Him. We marvel at the humility and humanity of God, and His extreme openness to human intercession.

Think of God's bitter disappointment with Israel when He invites Moses into the mount as their representative, in order to enter into further covenant with them. Down below, they started worshipping other gods. When God says to Moses "Leave me alone..." (Ex. 32:10), He may well refer to the desire for isolation / solitude which a person in extreme grief desires. And of course we are aware of how Moses reasons with God, and asks God to consider His own future and how it might turn out, and how that can be avoided. And God takes Moses seriously, with integrity, and appears to even acquiesce to his arguments. It's amazing. This God is our God.

That I may destroy them and blot out their name from under the sky, and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they-

Moses prayed that *his* name would be 'blotted out' instead (Ex. 32:32). To be blotted out of the book God had written may have been understood by Moses as asking for him to be excluded from an inheritance in the promised land; for later, a 'book' was written describing the various portions (Josh. 18:9). The connection is made explicit in Ez. 13:9. If Israel were to be blotted out

there and then in the wilderness, then Moses wanted to share this experience, such was his identity with his ungrateful people; and yet this peak of devotion is but a dim shadow of the extent of Christ's love for us. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 *was heard*- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them throughout Deuteronomy to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he didn't enter the land. And yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter the land. This is why Moses stresses now at the end of his life that he wouldn't enter the land *for Israel's sake* (1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went badly with him *for their sakes*" (Ps. 106:32).

Despite knowing their weakness and his own righteousness, Moses showed a marvellous softness and humility in that speech recorded in Deuteronomy. When he reminds them how God wanted to reject them because of their idolatry with the golden calf, he does not mention how fervently he prayed for them, so fervently that God changed His expressed intention (Dt. 9:14); and note deeply, Moses *does not mention how he offered his physical and eternal life for their salvation*. That fine, fine act and desire by Moses went unknown to Israel until the book of Exodus came into circulation. And like-

wise, the depth of Christ's love for us was unrecognized by us at the time. Moses had such humility in not telling in Israel in so many words how fervently he had loved them. The spiritual culture of the Lord is even greater. See on Ex. 32:32.

There is almost a pattern with God- to devise His purpose, and then in the 'gap' until its fulfillment, be open to the persuasion of His covenant people to change or ammend those plans. This could be what Am. 3:7 is speaking of: "Surely the Lord God does nothing without revealing His secret to His servants the prophets". It's as if He reveals His plans to them so that they can then comment upon them in prayer. And maybe this is why God tells Jeremiah not to pray to Him to change His stated plans against Israel (Jer. 7:16 cp. Jer. 11:14; 14:11; 15:1), and why He asks Moses to 'leave Me alone' and not try to persuade Him to change His mind (Ex. 32:10). He didn't want, in these cases, His stated plans to be interrupted by the appeals of His people to change them. Interestingly, in both these examples, Moses and Jeremiah know God well enough, the relationship is intimate enough, for them to still speak with Him- and change His mind. Those who've prayed to God in cases of terminal illness [and countless other situations] will have sensed this 'battle', this 'struggle' almost, between God and His friends, His covenant people, and the element of 'persuasion' which there is going on both ways in the dialogue between God and ourselves. The simple fact that God really can change- there are over 40 references to His 'repentance' in Scripture- is vital to un-

derstand- for this is the basis of the prayer that changes things, that as it were wrestles with God.

Deu 9:15 So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire-

See on Ex. 32:30. Moses in great humility doesn't mention how he persuaded God through intense intercession not to do this. The "pillar of fire" was only "as it were the appearance of fire" (Num. 9:15) but the record elsewhere speaks of it as "fire", because that's what it looked like to the Israelites. The Scriptures speak of how a pillar of fire was with Israel in the wilderness (Ps. 105:39). But actually when it first appeared, it was described as "*the appearance of fire*" (Num. 9:15). It wasn't fire, it appeared as fire. And yet it's spoken of later simply as "fire". There's no inspired footnote reminding us that, well, actually, it wasn't really fire. Likewise "the mount [of Sinai] burnt with fire" (Dt. 9:15). The mountain didn't catch fire. But that's how it looked to the Israelites from a distance; and so that's how it's described. And this explains the NT language of demons.

And the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands-

They were not therefore that large, and fitted within the ark, which was also not large. They would not have had space on them for all the law, just the ten commandments.

Deu 9:16 I looked and truly-

This implies Moses had such a high view of Israel and hope for them, that he didn't fully believe what God had told him about their apostasy. Admission of past failings was a sign of his spiritual maturity, speaking now on the last day of his life.

You had sinned against Yahweh your God; you had made yourselves a molten calf; you had turned aside quickly out of the way which Yahweh had commanded you-

"Molten" is literally 'covered'. They had presumably made the calf of the common acacia wood, and covered it with gold- just as the tabernacle furniture was to be constructed in a similar way. Again we see that they were mixing Yahweh worship with idolatry.

As explained on Ex. 32:4-6, they were worshipping an idol in the name of Yahweh worship. They had corrupted or turned aside the glory of God into the form of an ox which eats grass (Ps. 106:20). And this is the abiding temptation for us all. The glory of God was visible to them on Sinai at the time. God's glory was in His invisible leading of them through the Angel (Ex. 32:1). But they changed that into the visible and secular. They were not totally rejecting Yahweh, but making an ox / calf similar to one facet of the cherubim. This is classic apostasy, mixing truth with error.

It appears that Israel identified the golden calf with the Egyptian goddess Hathor. "The Egyptian goddess Hathor came in the form of a cow, a woman with a cow's head, or a woman with cows horns and / or cows ears. She bore several other titles including The Golden One and Mistress of Music. She was the patron of love, moth-

erhood, drunkenness, fun, dance and music. The worship of Hathor degenerated into immorality and she is depicted in some scenes and statues as a sensual young woman. Hathor was the protector of travellers from Egypt to various areas including Sinai". So Israel so quickly forgot the lesson so artlessly taught them – that the idols / demons of Egypt were of no power at all, seeing they had all been targetted by the plagues.

The following references to Hathor provide further insight; supporting references are to be found in my book "The Real Devil" section 4-2-3:

Hathor had several forms including, a cow, a women with a cow's head, or a woman with cows horns and or ears.

Hathor was also known as 'The Golden One'

Hathor was the protector of travellers from Egypt to various areas including Sinai

Patron of drunkenness

Hathor had the title 'Mistress of Music'

The worship of Hathor included playing on all kinds of musical instruments together with dancing

The worship of Hathor was for the joy and pleasure of those who took part

Hathor is also the goddess of love

The worship of Hathor degenerated into immorality.

Deu 9:17 I took hold of the two tablets and cast them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes-

Ex. 32:19 adds: "Moses' anger grew hot, and he threw the tablets out of his hands, and broke them be-

neath the mountain". God's anger "burned hot" and so did that of Moses. But Moses asks God not to wax hot in anger (Ex. 32:10,11,19). What are we to make of this? Surely, positively, Moses was totally in tune with the feelings of God. And yet he does himself what he asks God not to do. His anger growing hot was exactly the feeling of God. But unlike God, he immediately broke the symbols of the covenant with Israel. Again, God is revealed as more gracious and patient than man. As Moses had pleaded with Yahweh not to be so angry, so Aaron was to do so with the furiously angry Moses. Aaron in all his weakness therefore becomes as Moses, who was also weak before God's presence.

Deu 9:18 I fell down before Yahweh as at the first, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you sinned, in doing that which was evil in the sight of Yahweh to provoke him to anger-

At the very end of his life, Moses reeled off this great speech of Deuteronomy, knowing full well that he was to die without entering the land. In Dt. 9:18 he says that his prayer of Ex. 32:32 was heard- in that he was not going to enter the land, but they would. Hence his urging of them to go ahead and enter the land- to experience what his self-sacrifice had enabled. In this we see the economy of God, and how He works even through sin. On account of Moses' temporary rashness of speech, he was excluded- and yet by this, his prayer was heard. He was temporarily blotted out of the book, so that they might enter. Moses' fleeting requests to enter the land

must be read as a flagging from the height of devotion he reached, rather like the Lord's request to escape the cross in Gethsemane. But ultimately he did what he intended- he gave his place in the Kingdom / land so that they might enter [although of course he will be in the future Kingdom]. This is why Moses stresses on the last day of his life that he wouldn't enter the land for Israel's sake (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). He saw that his sin had been worked through, and the essential reason for him not entering was because of the offer he had made. It "went ill with him for their sakes" (Ps. 106:32).

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

True prayer is to be "in secret". There should be an appropriate modesty in speaking about it to others. Consider how Moses spent 40 days in intense intercession for Israel, and succeeded in changing God's mind. But he didn't tell them this for about 37 years, until Moses recounted it to the people at the end of his life in Dt. 9:18. We have no idea how many others are praying for us, or how the Lord in Heaven is praying for us as Moses did on Sinai.

Deu 9:19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which Yahweh was angry against you to destroy you. But Yahweh listened to me that time also-

Israel were certainly representative of us. The *degree* of love shown by Moses to Israel is only a shadow of the degree, the kind of love shown by Christ to us, who hopefully are not rejecting him as Israel did. The power of this point just has to be reflected upon. That Moses could love Israel, to the extent of being willing to give his life and salvation for them, is a fine, fine type of the devotion of Christ. There is another oft emphasized aspect of Moses' love for Israel: the power of his mediation for them. We are told that God "hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instill a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that personal repentance is required for forgiveness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find acceptability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel.

Deu 9:20 Yahweh was very angry with Aaron to destroy him, and I prayed for Aaron also at the same time-

This must be given its full weight. Aaron comes over in Ex. 32:22 as more worried about the wrath of Moses his brother than that of God: "Don't let the anger of my lord grow hot". And so it can easily be with us. We can forget God's feelings and worry only about our image with our family and brethren.

We can as it were do the work of the Saviour Himself, if we truly live as in Him. In this spirit, *Moses'* faith in keeping the Passover led to *Israel's* salvation, they left Egypt *by* him (Heb. 3:16; 11:28); and when Aaron deserved death, he was redeemed by Moses' prayer on his behalf. Sodom's destruction was largely due to Abraham's prayer for his deliverance; without this, it would seem Lot was altogether too unprepared and spiritually insensitive to have responded to the Angels' call in his own strength. The Lord spared Aaron because of Moses' intercession for him; and this is perhaps the basis for James' appeal to pray for one another, that we may be healed, knowing that through our prayer and pastoral work for others, we can save a man from his multitude of sins and his soul from death (James 5:20). The very ability we have to do this for each other should register deeply with us. And in response, we should live lives dedicated to the spiritual welfare and salvation of our brethren.

It was only thanks to Moses' intercession for Aaron that Aaron's life was spared at this point. We see here how intercession even for the impenitent can be effective (for Aaron in Ex. 32:24 was impenitent, claiming the calf had jumped out of the fire ready made). This has

huge pastoral implications for our ministry and prayer life, recalling how for the sake of the faith of the friends, the Lord pronounced the paralyzed man forgiven (Mk. 2:5; also James 5:20).

Deu 9:21 I took your sin, the calf which you had made-

"A great sin" (Ex. 32:21) is the phrase used of Jeroboam's golden calf, which was based upon this calf (2 Kings 17:21). Aaron made the calf, but "you made" it. People can be made to sin by others- a sober reminder to watch our behaviour.

The Biblical record highlights the sin of Aaron and the people; the Jewish literature excuses it by blaming it on Satan / "mastema". Time and again, the Jewish apocryphal literature wrongly sought to distance God from doing anything negative in human life. Gen. 22:1 clearly states that it was *God* who put Abraham to the test by asking him to kill his son Isaac; Jubilees retells the story with "Prince Mastema", the Satan figure, telling Abraham to do this (Jub. 17:15-18). Likewise Ex. 4:24 recounts how "the Lord", presumably as an Angel, met Moses and tried to kill him for not circumcising his son; but Jubilees again claims that Mastema / Satan did this (Jub. 48:1-3). Indeed, several times the Hebrew word *mas-tema* ['hostility, enmity'] occurs, it is in the context of urging Israel to see that *they* and their internal desires to sin are the true *mastema*. Hos. 9:7 is an example: "Because your sins are so many and your hostility [*mastema*] so great".

And burnt it with fire and stamped it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust, and I cast its dust into the brook that descended out of the mountain-

They were forced to drink / eat dust, just as Adam had to; for he was dust and had to eat the fruit of the dust in punishment. His sin was the essence of every man's sin, including Israel's at this time. The reference to their being made naked (Ex. 32:25) is another allusion to Adam. Israel had been an unfaithful wife to Yahweh, and so they were punished as the woman tested for adultery was (Num. 5:24). "Grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust" would have been necessary for it to float on the surface on the water, as gold is so heavy.

Deu 9:22 (At Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth Hattaavah you provoked Yahweh to wrath-

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us. Idolatrous Israel never *consciously* tried to provoke Yahweh to anger with their apostasy; the words of the prophets must have seemed to them a gross exaggeration. But this was really how God saw it (2 Chron. 34:25). I have suggested that Deuteronomy was edited, under Divine inspiration, during the exile. This state-

ment has particular relevance to the exiles, who had likewise "provoked Yahweh to wrath" and had therefore been exiled, and were now to return to the land; just as Israel at the end of the 40 year wandering (Ezra 5:12; Zech. 8:14).

Deu 9:23 When Yahweh sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying Go up and possess the land which I have given you, then you rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh your God, and you didn't believe Him, nor listen to His voice-

Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are asking for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7).

Deu 9:24 You have been rebellious against Yahweh from the day that I knew you)-

They were disobedient from the day God knew them, i.e. Passover night. The number of firstborn males after Israel left Egypt was remarkably small (around 20,000, Num. 3:43). Women in most primitive societies have an average of 7 births. this would mean that given

a total population of around 2,800,000 on leaving Egypt (Ex. 12:37), there should have been around 400,000 firstborn males. But instead, there is only a fraction of this number. Why? Did all Israel eat the Passover? Were many in fact slain. My suggestion- and this is well in the category of things you will never know for sure and can only ponder- is that many Hebrew firstborns died on Passover night. Israel were warned that if they did not properly keep the Passover, “the Destroyer” Angel would kill their firstborn (Ex. 12:23). “The Destroyer” is mentioned in 1 Cor. 10:10: “Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the Destroyer” (olothreutes; this is a proper noun in the Greek). Who was the Destroyer? If Scripture interprets Scripture, it was the ‘Destroyer’ Angel of Passover night. In similar vein Heb. 11:28 speaks of “He (the Angel) that destroyed (Gk. olothreuo) the firstborn”. Israel were side-tracked from what should have been the central object of their attention: the blood of the lamb.

Deu 9:25 So I fell down before Yahweh the forty days and forty nights because Yahweh had said He would destroy you-

It is likely that this was the first time Israel knew about this. The intensity of those 40 days intercession, after having spent 40 days also in the mountain just days beforehand, was one of the most amazing and intense spiritual achievements of anyone apart from the Lord Jesus. For Moses succeeded in persuading God to change His mind about destroying His sinful people, even without their repentance. But Moses didn't boast of it nor

tell anyone about it, until the day of his death. We like Israel can live our lives unaware of the intensity of the Lord's mediation for us over specific issues. For the Lord in Heaven with the Father, from which He will return, was represented by Moses with God at the top of Sinai.

Deu 9:26 I prayed to Yahweh and said Lord Yahweh, don't destroy Your people and Your inheritance that You have redeemed through Your greatness, that You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand-

"Corrupted" in :12 is s.w. "destroyed" here. All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew word for "corruption" also means "destruction", for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves.

The might and "greatness" of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Deu 9:27 Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Don't look at the stubbornness of this people, nor at their wickedness, nor their sin-

"Corrupted" or 'destroyed' in :12 is the same word used of the threatened destruction of everyone in Sodom, which Abraham's intercession avoided (s.w. Gen. 18:28,31). That incident surely motivated Moses

to rise up to the same possibility of dialogue with God in order to change His intended purpose. We too are to be motivated by Biblical examples of intercession. God could have given legitimate answers to each of Moses' objections; for there were indeed times when He did not turn from the fierceness of His wrath (Ex. 32:12)-such as Jer. 4:8; 2 Kings 23:26. He intended to fulfil the promises to Abraham, but through Moses. But such is His sensitivity and pure pity that He accepted Moses' pleas.

Deu 9:28 lest the land You brought us out from say, 'Because Yahweh was not able to bring them into the land which He promised to them and because He hated them He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness'-

Caleb and Joshua perceived that Israel were "well able" to overcome the tribes and inherit the land, seeing that the Angel-hornet had gone ahead and prepared the way; and yet due to Israel's disabling of this possibility at the time, it was in some ways so that God Himself was "not able" to give them the inheritance, because *they* judged that *they* were "not able" to take it (Num. 13:30,31; 14:16).

The way Moses pleaded with God to change His mind and not destroy Israel for the sake of what the surrounding nations would say is indeed inspirational to us all. It surely inspired David to pray likewise- for "wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now there God?" (Ps. 115:2). We see here God's sensitivity to how the Gentiles perceive Him, and this has big implications for how we act before them. For we are God's repre-

sentatives, and how we represent Him before the world is so significant to Him. For effectively we are Him in this world, and it is our living example far more than our doctrinal explanations which will convert others to Him.

Deu 9:29 Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, which You brought out by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm-

We are God's portion / inheritance (Dt. 4:20; 9:29; Eph. 1:18), and He is our inheritance (Ps. 16:5,6; 73:26; Lam. 3:22-24; Eph. 1:11 RV); we inherit each other. There is a mutuality between God and His people.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 10

Deu 10:1 At that time Yahweh said to me, Cut two tablets of stone like the first and come up to Me onto the mountain and make an ark of wood-

The tables were the "tables of the covenant", which had been broken by the apostasy with the golden calf. God now assures Moses that the covenant relationship has been restored. This must be read in the context of the previous verses, where Moses has doubted whether his intercession for Israel has in fact "worked". He struggles to believe that God can be that gracious as His word had stated. Just like ourselves. And so just as Aaron had used a chisel to fashion the golden calf, Moses is asked to chisel out two stone tablets, upon which the covenant will be reaffirmed by God. At this time, God asked Moses to also make the ark, into which the tables were to be put. This was to be the sign that His presence was really to abide with His people as promised.

Deu 10:2 I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke, and you shall put them within that ark-

"Which you broke" is emphasized by God. Moses in Ex. 33 had been doubting whether his intercession for Israel had really "worked", even though God assured him that it had. Moses is being reminded that his anger had burned hot just as God's anger had; but it was he and not God who had smashed the symbols of the covenant in

that wrath. The idea is that God is kinder and more patient than man- even than a man as patient and loving as Moses.

"Broke" is s.w. in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 12:3 used of breaking covenant relationship with idols. By doing so, Moses had purposefully sought to break Israel's relationship with Yahweh, despite having earlier prayed for it to be restored. When he saw the apostasy with his own eyes, he wanted God to revert to His 'plan A', to destroy Israel. He realizes in Ex. 33 that he was wrong in this and therefore probes God as to whether indeed His relationship with Israel is indeed intact, despite his having broken the symbols of covenant. And God is assuring him that indeed it is.

Deu 10:3 So I made an ark of acacia wood and cut two tablets of stone like the first, and went up onto the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand-

The acacia bush was all they had in the wilderness. It was hardly suitable for making furniture, being brittle and the sticks very thin and hard to weld together. The root translated "shittim" really means a stick or rod, and is translated "thorns" in Josh. 23:13. It refers to the common thorn bushes found in the scrubland they were passing through in the desert. Thorns were part of the curse in Eden. We shouldn't be surprised at the brittle nature of the folk with whom God works, their difficulty in binding together and resistance to being worked with- this is as it were all God has to work with. Acacia was plentiful in the wilderness, but it is little more than brushwood; a surprising choice of material to be used in

God's dwelling place. But His choice of *us* with all our weakness and dysfunction, the common, weak stuff of the wilderness, is no less surprising. The choice of acacia wood for constructing the tabernacle is one of several points in the whole enterprise where it seems a less than ideal material was chosen, from a construction point of view. This aspect emphasizes that God prefers to work with the soft, weak and broken in order to do His work (as also in Ez. 15:2-5).

Ex. 25:10 "They shall make an ark" becomes "I made an ark" in Moses' autobiography (Dt. 10:3), although apparently Bezaleel made the ark (Ex. 37:1). The people were generous when asked, but were not real workers. Perhaps Moses himself had to make the ark because they didn't get to it. Or maybe his work was counted as theirs, as happens between the Lord Jesus and ourselves.

Deu 10:4 He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which Yahweh spoke to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly, and Yahweh gave them to me-

Although God spoke to Moses alone in the mount, Moses stresses that actually God "spake unto *you* in the mount out of the midst of the fire". The word of God to His scribes really is, to the same gripping, terrifying degree, His direct word to us (Dt. 4:36; 5:45; 10:4). This explains why David repeatedly refers to the miracle at the Red Sea as if this had affected him personally, to the extent that he could ecstatically rejoice because of it.

Deu 10:5 I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets into the ark which I had made, and there they are as Yahweh commanded me-

The ark was not that big, and Moses carried the tablets one in each hand as he descended the mountain. They were therefore quite small, and contained only the ten commandments.

Deu 10:6 (The children of Israel travelled from Beeroth Bene Jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and there he was buried, and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest's office in his place-

"Moserah" means 'place of chastisement / correction'. Aaron and Moses will be in the Kingdom despite their sin, but it needed Aaron's death for them to be corrected. The punishment was therefore their correction, and was not the angry lashing out of an offended Deity. Moses only mentions this place name at the end of his life, indicating how he looked back and perceived that indeed he had been corrected and learned his lesson, even if it cost him his life.

Deu 10:7 From there they travelled to Gudgodah and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks of water-

"A land of brooks of water" is precisely the phrase used of Canaan (Dt. 8:7). They were constantly given foretastes of the Kingdom before entering it, just as we are on our wilderness journey.

Deu 10:8 At that time Yahweh set apart the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of Yahweh, to stand before Yahweh to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day-

Although the Levites had been set apart for Divine service immediately after God's meeting with Israel at Sinai, as outlined in Leviticus and Numbers, it seems that not until Aaron died at the end of the 40 years wandering did they actually in practice begin to serve as intended (Dt. 10:8). It could be that the reason was that the Levites were ever slow to accept their responsibilities. And they generally failed in their calling over Israel's history, climaxing in the priests arranging the murder of God's own Son.

Deu 10:9 Therefore Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers; Yahweh is his inheritance according as Yahweh your God spoke to him.)-

The Levites had no material inheritance because "the sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel... are his inheritance... Yahweh God of Israel was their inheritance" (Josh. 13:14,33; Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9; 18:2). Notice how "Yahweh" is put for what is sacrificed to Him. His very existence is an imperative to sacrifice to Him, despising all material advantage in doing so. Job comments that to make gold our hope and wealth our confidence is to deny "the God that is above" (Job 31:24,28). To trust in material wealth is effectively to proclaim ourselves atheists. We are described as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), so all that was true for the Levites becomes true for us. We are not to seek material inheritance. God will provide for us in ways other than our possessing land and leaving an inheritance to our children. The wonder of serving Him is to more than compensate for this.

Deu 10:10 I stayed on the mountain, as at the first time, forty days and forty nights and Yahweh listened to me that time also; Yahweh would not destroy you-

Israel were certainly representative of us. The *degree* of love shown by Moses to Israel is only a shadow of the degree, the kind of love shown by Christ to us, who hopefully are not rejecting him as Israel did. The power of this point just has to be reflected upon. That Moses could love Israel, to the extent of being willing to give his life and salvation for them, is a fine, fine type of the devotion of Christ. There is another oft emphasized aspect of Moses' love for Israel: the power of his meditation for them. We are told that God "hearkened" to Moses' prayers for them (Dt. 9:19; 10:10). He prayed for them with an intensity they didn't appreciate, he prayed for *and gained* their forgiveness before they had even repented, he pleaded *successfully* for God to relent from His plans to punish them, even before they knew that God had conceived such plans (Ex. 32:10,14; 33:17 etc.). The fact we will, at the end, be forgiven of some sins without specifically repenting of them (as David was in Ps. 19:12) ought to instill a true humility in us. This kind of thing is in some ways a contradiction of God's principles that personal repentance is required for forgiveness, and that our own effort is required if we are to find acceptability with Him. Of course ultimately these things are still true, and were true with respect to Israel.

"Corrupted" in Ex. 32:7 is s.w. "destroyed" here. All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew word for "corruption" also means "de-

struction", for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves.

Deu 10:11 Yahweh said to me Arise, take your journey before the people, and they shall go in and possess the land, which I swore to their fathers to give to them-

It was only through Moses' leadership that they reached Canaan: "The Lord said unto (Moses), Arise (cp. Christ's resurrection), take thy journey before the people (as Christ, the good shepherd, goes *before* the flock, Jn. 10:3), *that* they may go in and possess the land" (Dt. 10:11).

Moses led God's people to the land, the Kingdom, but couldn't himself take them in there- the Law with which he was associated revealed the Kingdom, but it needed Joshua / Jesus to actually bring them into it.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4).

The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

It was God's intention that Moses would go before the people and lead them into the land (Dt. 10:11), but Moses failed, and so it fell to Joshua. But it seems he was nervous, and so God used the ark rather than Joshua personally to 'go before the people' (s.w. Josh. 3:6). All the time we see God setting up potential programs which have to be amended because of human weakness.

The repeated references to the "journeys" of the people in the wilderness had as their basis the description of Abraham taking his journey through the desert to the promised land (Gen. 13:3); the very same two Hebrew words recur in the command to Israel to now 'take their journey' (Dt. 10:11), following in the steps of their father Abraham. As Abraham was commanded to "be perfect" (Gen. 17:1), so Israel were told: "*You* [after the pattern of father Abraham] shall be perfect with the Lord" (Dt. 19:13).

Deu 10:12 Now Israel, what does Yahweh your God require of you, but to fear Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him and to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul-

Alluded to in Mic. 6:8, where walking in God's ways is understood as walking in humility; and 'loving God' is expanded into loving to show justice and mercy. To love [God]" is paralleled with "to love mercy". If we love God, we will be merciful as He is. To know Him in truth is to actively be like Him. We can be tempted to think that we can 'love God' within our own hearts by accepting His existence and reading the Bible. But it has to be more than that; to love God is to love others, to be merciful to the irritating and ungracious (:18). We cannot love God without loving our brethren (1 Jn. 3:17; 4:21). To love God in this way is in the end 'for our own good' (:13). These words are interpreted in Micah 6:8: "*What does Yahweh require of you*, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and *to walk humbly* ['to humble yourself to walk'] with your God?". Walking in God's ways is paralleled with walking in humility, humbling oneself. This, then, is the end result of our obedience to the way of God: a self humbling through regular submission to God's principles, as hour by hour we experience the provocations of our flesh.

Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

Deu 10:13 to keep the commandments of Yahweh and His statutes-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that be-

cause it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Which I command you this day for your good?-

Throughout the Law of Moses, the unity of Israel was emphasized. But that unity was not predicated upon any statement of faith, and the history of Israel has no example of the faithful minority removing themselves from association or "fellowship" with the majority, who clearly were unfaithful in both theology and practice. Moses in his last great speech as recorded in Deuteronomy seems to have purposefully confused his use of "you"

plural [AV "ye"] and "you" singular [AV "thee"] in addressing them; as if to show that they, the many, were also one body (e.g. Dt. 10:12-22; 11:1,2). He as it were zooms in from the collective to the individual, lest any should think that they were just some nameless individual before God, saved or damned only according to their group affiliation.

We note that the sum total of the commandments were intended to reinforce spirituality, obedience led to more obedience. Hence the whole system would lose its potential power if commandments were added or removed from it. But the law was "holy, just and good" because it was not a burden to man, but intended for his "good".

Deu 10:14 Behold, to Yahweh your God belongs heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth, with all that is in it-

God's possession of literally all things, the entire cosmos, is cited here as an encouragement to believe that He could therefore so easily give Israel the promised land. Just as it is not at all difficult for Him to give us His Kingdom. But like Israel, we balk at the promise, as if somehow His ability is somehow limited. The simplest truth is that God loves us and it is His will and pleasure to give us the Kingdom. And seeing He owns all things, to give us a place in His Kingdom is not at all difficult for Him. The choice is only with us.

Deu 10:15 It's just that Yahweh had a delight in your fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all peoples, as it is at this day-

This is a clear statement that love is a choice, not a passing emotion. For the love of God is reflected in His choosing to love His people rather than others. "You did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world" (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel "out of all peoples" (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2).

Deu 10:16 Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked-

Col. 2:12 presents baptism as the equivalent in our day if we wish to enter the new covenant, which is based upon the same promises to Abraham. But there is more to new covenant relationship than simply the ritual of baptism. Circumcision spoke of a cutting off of the flesh in the most private and intimate place. We always read of circumcision as being done to a person. Water baptism enables us to receive the birth of the Spirit, whereby the Lord will work through the Spirit to change our hearts, to cut off our flesh in the most private and personal recesses of human hearts. Col. 2:11 explains: "In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ". Through baptism, we enter the "in Christ" status, and our flesh is as it were cut off, by status we are in Him and not in the flesh. This is repeated in Paul's argument in Romans 1-8, although there he stresses that our flesh still remains; but from God's perspective, it is cut off. It takes faith to believe this- faith in God's operation, that the circumcision operation was really performed by Him (Col. 2:12). Bap-

tism is the means by which we become "in Christ" and in spiritual terms cease to be uncircumcised (Col. 2:13). If Israel took the initiative in attempting to circumcise their hearts (Dt. 10:16; Jer. 4:4), then God would confirm them in this by doing what man cannot do—operating directly upon the human heart to cut off the flesh from it (Dt. 30:6).

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 10:17 For Yahweh your God, He is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty and the awesome, who doesn't respect persons nor take reward-

The argument proceeds in :18,19 to appeal for Israel to show justice and grace to the foreigners and poor. God does this because He doesn't respect persons. And so our likely temptation not to do these things is because we effectively do respect persons. We are more likely to give some help to someone whose person we know and respect, on our own broad social or ethnic level; rather than the mass of poor folks whom we are tempted to refer to as "Them... just them...", as if their low status precludes us from having a duty to relieve them.

Deu 10:18 He executes justice for the fatherless and widow and loves the foreigner, in giving him food and clothing-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances" or "justice", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell

upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 10:19 Therefore love the foreigner, for you were foreigners in the land of Egypt-

One of the most repeated themes of Moses in Deuteronomy is the way he keeps on telling them to "remember" all the great things which God had done for them on their wilderness journey (e.g. Dt. 10:21; 11:3-6), and especially the wonder of how he had redeemed them as children (his audience had been under twenty years old when they went through the Red Sea). Just look up all the times "remember" occurs in Deuteronomy. He really wanted them to overcome the human tendency to forget the greatness of God as manifested earlier in our lives and spiritual experience. Our tendency as the new Israel is just the same- to forget the wonder of baptism, of how God reached out His arm to save us. And the remembrance of our own status in the world, before we were redeemed, is to make us generous to foreigners and oppressed persons in practice.

Deu 10:20 You must fear Yahweh your God; you must serve Him and cling to Him and you shall swear by His name-

The idea of 'cleaving' to God is a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the

word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

The Lord's common Upper Room theme of 'abiding' in Him uses the same word as Moses used in the LXX when exhorting his people to 'cleave unto' God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.

Deu 10:21 He is your praise and He is your God, Who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen-

Fear is always the antithesis of faith. God is often called an "awesome God" (Dt. 7:21; 10:21 etc.). The Hebrew word for "awesome" is that for 'fear' (s.w. Gen. 3:10; 15:1; 18:15 etc.). The idea is that God's people are to be in such fear / awe of Him that they fear / are in awe of nothing else. Hence Dt. 7:21 says that Israel should "not be scared of" their enemies, because their God is "awesome", He is the one to be feared.

Deu 10:22 Your fathers went down into Egypt with seventy persons, and now Yahweh your God has made you as the stars of the sky for multitude-

This was an initial, primary fulfilment of the promises to Abraham; we too have some foretastes of the Kingdom life even now. Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 11

Deu 11:1 Therefore you must love Yahweh your God and keep His instructions, His statutes, His ordinances and His commandments always-

Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his

time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

Throughout the Law of Moses, the unity of Israel was emphasized. But that unity was not predicated upon any statement of faith, and the history of Israel has no example of the faithful minority removing themselves from association or "fellowship" with the majority, who clearly were unfaithful in both theology and practice. Moses in his last great speech as recorded in Deuteronomy seems to have purposefully confused his use of "you" plural [AV "ye"] and "you" singular [AV "thee"] in addressing them; as if to show that they, the many, were also one body (e.g. Dt. 10:12-22; 11:1,2).

Deu 11:2 Know this day - for I don't speak with your children who have not known, and who have not seen the chastisement of Yahweh your God - His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm-

The might of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyp-

tians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched out arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 11:3 His signs and His works, which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land-

It is stressed that Israel were taken out from the "midst of Egypt" (Dt. 4:34; 1 Kings 8:51). The plagues and wonders were done in "the midst of Egypt" (Ex. 3:20; Dt. 11:3). The midst of Egypt appears to be de-

fined in Ps. 135:9; Is. 19:3; Ez. 29:3 as being Pharaoh and his servants. The narrative therefore stresses so much his response to the plagues. God's especial focus had been upon his conversion, and yet he refused. Israel were taken out right from under his nose, from the very heart of Egypt. Ez. 20:8 reveals what is not recorded in the historical record; that because the Israelites were so devoted to Egyptian idolatry still, His thought had been to destroy them "in the midst of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:8). But God's pole of grace overcame the pole of necessary judgment. He tolerated them and saved them, with enthusiasm, by the grace which comes from love- love taken to its ultimate, saving term. The whole narrative speaks as if the Hebrews were all at one place at one time and left "the midst of Egypt" together. Although unrecorded in the historical narrative, this would have meant that they gathered together "in the midst of Egypt" with Moses, who was not in Goshen but in the locality and presence of Pharaoh.

Deu 11:4 and what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and to their chariots; how He made the water of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued after you-

But they were cast into the sea by God (Ex. 15:21). We see here how God confirms people in the desires of their heart, for both good and bad.

And how Yahweh has destroyed them to this day-

Although the pursuit of Israel by the Egyptians was a historical act at a specific time, caused by God's direct action upon the hearts of the Egyptians (Ex. 14:8), the pursuit and their destruction is described as ongoing "to

this day" (Dt. 11:4). God's word and His actions according to that word are somehow alive to this day. This is the unique nature of Biblical history. All the incidents within it speak to us of later generations. And so in Josh. 24:6 and often, Israel are bidden understand their history as speaking directly to them, to perceive God's grace to them in history, and respond now.

We are to understand each victory and achievement of God as somehow ongoing right down to our own day and our own lives and experience. This is what makes the Bible a *living* word for us. This explains why David repeatedly refers to the miracle at the Red Sea as if this had affected him personally, to the extent that he could ecstatically rejoice because of it. Thus Ps. 114:5,6 RV describes the Red Sea as even now fleeing before God's people. And thus because of the records of God's past activities, we should be motivated in our decisions now.

It is in this sense that the punishment for sin is 'everlasting', in that there will be no end to their death. To remain dead for ever is an everlasting punishment. An example of the Bible using this kind of expression is found in Dt. 11:4. This describes God's one-off destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea as an eternal, on-going destruction in that this actual army never again troubled Israel: "He made the waters of the Red sea overflow them... the Lord has destroyed them to this day".

Deu 11:5 and what He did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place-

The reference may be to the manna, which they received until they came to Canaan; or to the leadership of the Angel in the pillar of fire and cloud.

Deu 11:6 and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, and their households and their tents and every living thing that followed them in the midst of all Israel-

We note the Korah isn't mentioned, although he was the ringleader of the rebellion (Jude 11). The point here is that those who followed wicked men were punished. And that remains the abiding lesson. The earth is likened to a monster swallowing up people. A case could be made that the whole record of Israel's rejection from entering the land of Canaan is framed to adduce a reason for this as the fact they chose to believe that the land was inhabited by an evil dragon who would consume them there. This was a slander of the good land, and the whole point was that if they had believed in the power of God, then *whatever* 'adversary' was in the land, in whatever form, was ultimately of no real power (Num. 13:32; 14:36; Dt. 1:25). And yet it was not God's way to specifically tell the people that there was no such dragon lurking in the land of Canaan – instead He worked with them according to their fears, by making the earth literally open and swallow up the apostate amongst them (Num. 16:30) – emphasizing that by doing this, *He* was doing "a new thing", something that had never been done before – for there was no dragon lurking in any land able to swallow up people. And throughout the

prophets it is emphasized that *God* and not any dragon swallowed up people – “The Lord [and not any dragon] was as an enemy; *He* has swallowed up Israel” (Lam. 2:5 and frequently in the prophets). The people of Israel who left Egypt actually failed to inherit Canaan because they believed that it was a land who swallowed up the inhabitants of the land (Num. 13:32), relating this to the presence of giants in the land (Num. 13:33). As Joshua and Caleb pleaded with them, they needed to believe that whatever myths there were going around, God was greater than whatever mythical beast was there. And because they would not believe that, they failed to enter the land, which in type symbolized those who fail to attain that great salvation which God has prepared.

Deu 11:7 Your eyes have seen all the great work of Yahweh which He did-

Because God saved them from Egypt by grace [cp. baptism- 1 Cor. 10:1,2], with they themselves so spiritually weak at the time, still taking idols of Egypt through the Red Sea with them- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 11:7,8). Because God gave them the land of Canaan, a land for which they did not labour, didn't do any 'work' to receive, but were given because "You did a favour unto them" (Ps. 44:3)- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 26:15,16; 29:8,9; Josh. 23:5,6). David said that he loved keeping the law *because* God's testimony to him was so miraculous (Ps. 119:129 Heb.). There is an awesomeness to God's grace in all this. Hence the paradox of Ex. 20:20: "Fear not... that the fear of God may be before your faces". We are not to fear Him, for such

perfect love casts out fear... yet it is exactly because of the wonder of all this that we live life in some fear / awe of misusing and abusing that grace.

Deu 11:8 Therefore you must keep all the commandment which I command you this day, that you may be strong and go in and possess the land where you go over to possess it-

See on Dt. 31:9; Josh. 1:6. Joshua [cp. Jesus] is repeatedly made parallel with Israel [cp. Us]; his victories were theirs; what he achieved is counted to them. In the same way, the people of the Lord Jesus are counted as Him. Joshua was to be strong and possess the land (Josh. 1:6), just as they had been told to do, using the same Hebrew words (Dt. 11:8). Indeed, Israel and Joshua are given parallel charges, to be strong and of good courage to take the land (Dt. 31:6,7). Both Israel and Joshua are given the same charge to keep the words of the covenant, that they might "prosper" (Dt. 29:9; Josh. 1:7).

Deu 11:9 and that you may prolong your days in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give to them and to their seed-

For "prolong your days", see on :21.

A land flowing with milk and honey-

Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 11:10 For the land where you go in to possess it isn't as the land of Egypt that you came out from, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot, as a garden of herbs-

Our separation from this world isn't merely negative. We are separated *from* the world ["come out from"] so that we might be separated *unto* the things of God ["you go in"]. These two ideas are found together in the Hebrew word for 'holiness'.

Egypt had little rainfall, and water was supplied from the flooding of the Nile being distributed by a series of foot pumps. But Canaan would have its own rainfall. The Biblical record is consistently credible. Hence the punishment of Judah was to become like a garden of herbs which had no water (Is. 1:30). Unfaithful Israel entered the land, still clutching the idols of Egypt, and received blessings for obedience. This was by grace alone. But they failed to respond to that grace.

Deu 11:11 but the land you go over to possess is a land of hills and valleys which drinks water of the rain of the sky-

The people were often reminded that they were about to "go over [Jordan] to possess" the land, as if they were on the banks of Jordan almost. But a lack of rain was one of the Law's curses for idol worship (Dt. 11:10-12,17). Elijah's response to Israel's idolatry was to tell them there would be no rain (1 Kings 17:1 cp. 16:32,33). Those reflective upon God's Law would have realized the implied criticism which this carried; the

more unspiritual would have just cursed Elijah for bringing about a devastating drought.

Deu 11:12 a land which Yahweh your God cares for-

Yahweh cared for / sought after the land and Kingdom He had promised Israel (Dt. 11:12). The same word is used of how His people were to seek Him, to care for the things of His Kingdom above all else (Dt. 12:5). There thus develops a mutuality between God and man.

The eyes of Yahweh your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year-

Under Michael's control (see on Dan. 12:1) there are many other Angels ["the eyes of Yahweh"] similarly dedicated to the affairs of the people of Israel. Does the phrase "Yahweh your God" here refer to the Angel which led them through the wilderness? The Angel Michael? Remember Moses was speaking to the people of Israel at this time, and they very much conceived of the "Yahweh your God" in terms of the Angel of the presence going with them. Thus God was promising that His Angels would physically be present in the land and would be especially sensitive to the events there.

The Biblical record seems to very frequently seek to deconstruct popular ideas about sin and evil. One of the most widespread notions was the "evil eye", whereby it was believed that some people had an "evil eye" which could bring distress into the eyes of those upon whom they looked in jealousy or anger. This concept is alive and well in many areas to this day. The idea entered Judaism very strongly after the Babylonian captivity; the Babylonian Talmud is full of references to it. The sage

Rav attributed many illnesses to the evil eye, and the Talmud even claimed that 99 out of 100 people died prematurely from this (Bava Metzia 107b). The Biblical deconstruction of this is through stressing that *God's* eye is all powerful in the destiny of His people (Dt. 11:12; Ps. 33:18); and that "an evil eye" refers to an *internal* attitude of mean spiritedness *within* people- e.g. an "evil eye" is understood as an ungenerous spirit in Dt. 15:9; Mt. 6:23; 20:15; or pure selfishness in Dt. 28:54,56; Prov. 23:6; 28:22. We must remember that the people of Biblical times understood an "evil eye" as an *external* ability to look at someone and bring curses upon them. But the Bible redefines an "evil eye" as a purely *internal* attitude; and cosmic evil, even if it were to exist, need hold no fear for us- seeing the eyes of the only true God are running around the earth *for* us and not against us (2 Chron. 16:9).

Deu 11:13 If you will listen diligently to my commandments which I command you this day, to love Yahweh your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul-

See on Dt. 7:4. As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 13:18; 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to

the word of Christ. Indeed, the well known prophecy that God would raise up a prophet "like unto" Moses to whom Israel would *listen* (Dt. 18:18) is in the context of Israel saying they did not want to hear God's voice directly. Therefore God said that he would raise up Christ, who would be another Moses in the sense that *he too* would speak forth God's word.

Deu 11:14 I will give the rain of your land in its season, the former rain and the latter rain, that you may gather in your grain, your new wine and your oil-

But these blessings were given anyway, despite their disobedience; when they were conditional upon their careful obedience to God's laws (:13; Hos. 6:3). We see here God's grace, and overpowering desire to give His people His Kingdom. And in our low moments of faith in His grace we can remember this. Israel were rebuked for failing to thank God for the former and latter rains, which were given despite their spiritual weakness (Jer. 5:24).

Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. Therefore the pronouns often change (in Deuteronomy especially), showing a confusion between the voice of God and that of Moses. Dt. 7:4 is an example: "They will turn away thy son from following me (this is Moses speaking for God)... so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you". Thus

Moses' comments on God's words are mixed up with the words of God Himself. There are other examples of this in Dt. 7:11; 29:1,10,14,15 ("I" cp. "us"). Consider especially Dt. 11:13,14: "If ye shall diligently hearken unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord... that I will give you the rain of your land... I will send grass in thy fields". The "I" here switches at ease between God and Moses. The Moses/God pronouns are also mixed in Rom. 10:19.

Deu 11:15 I will give grass in your fields for your livestock and you shall eat and be full-

Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

Deu 11:16 Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived and you turn aside, and serve other gods and worship them-

There are so many other examples of Moses showing his recognition of exactly *how* Israel were likely to be tempted (Dt. 6:11-13; 8:11-20; 9:4; 11:16; 12:13,19,23,30; 13:1-4; 14:27; 15:9,18; 17:11,12 ("will"),14,16,17; 21:18; 22:1-4,18; 23:21; 25:8). See on Dt. 7:16. We can take comfort in God's sensitivity to us

in an age unlike any other and apparently with its own unprecedented temptations.

Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

We note the continual emphasis upon the heart. This was unique amongst contemporary religions, which [as today] were all about external appearance rather than the internal transformation of the spirit / mind. The worship of other gods was rightly defined as a self deception deep within the heart.

Deu 11:17 and the anger of Yahweh be kindled against you-

If God's wrath burns hot against people, it means death for them (s.w. Ex. 22:24; Num. 11:1,33; 22:22; 25:3; Dt. 6:15; 31:17). But Moses averted this at the time of Ex. 32:10 by his intercession. He does so because God's wrath had burned hot against him personally (Ex. 4:14 s.w.), but he had been saved from death by grace. And so he reflects this in appealing for he salvation of others, against whom God's wrath burned hot (Ex. 32:10.11). But Moses at the end of his life warns them not to make God's wrath burn hot against them again-

because he will not be around to intercede for them (Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:17).

And He shut up the sky, so that there shall be no rain, and the land shall not yield its fruit and you perish quickly-

Dt. 11:17 had said that God's people would "perish [s.w. "destroy"] quickly from off the good land". But by grace, that didn't happen "quickly" at all. They were finally destroyed from off it (2 Kings 24:2 and often), but God did not bring that about quickly but after much patient pleading through the prophets. This is one of so many examples of where God simply did not punish His people to the extent He said He would; simply because of His grace and love toward them.

From off the good land which Yahweh gives you-

The Hebrew word for "spied out" in Dt. 1:24 also means 'to slander' (s.w. 2 Sam. 19:27; Ps. 15:3). Their slander of the land was in that they misrepresented the strength of the people there, who were in fact fearful of the Israelites. They brought up an evil report of the land (Num. 13:32), characterizing it as not "good" but "evil", as if inhabited by insuperable forces of cosmic evil. They disbelieved God's simple statement that He was bringing them a "good land" (Ex. 3:8). Moses therefore repeatedly calls the land a "good land", denying their wrong idea that the land was inhabited by 'evil spirits' (Dt. 3:25; 4:21,22; 6:18; 8:7; 9:6; 11:17). We see here how belief in 'evil spirits' or 'demons' militated against their faith in God and His eagerness to give His good Kingdom to His people. That continues to be His "good pleasure" (Lk. 12:32) toward us, but like Israel, we are tempted to

disbelieve this and allow our own perceptions and empirical conclusions to lead us away from simple faith in this.

Deu 11:18 Therefore you must lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them for a sign on your hand and they shall be for memorials between your eyes-

As taught in Dt. 6:6, the essence was that "These words which I command you this day shall be on your heart". The heart refers to the mind, the brain, if you will; and we could understand this as meaning that this was to be externally memorialized by binding them between the eyes. This is how orthodox Judaism understands it. But I suggest that the memorial was essentially in the heart, and this is just another way of speaking about the wholeness of internal and external devotion to God's words. Whatever is done externally with the hand, whatever is thought about in our mind between our eyes, is to be dominated by our awareness of God's laws. We fail to read in later scripture any mention of literally making boxes containing God's law and wearing them. The Passover deliverance was likewise to be a "frontlet" (s.w. "memorial") between the eyes and upon the hand (Ex. 13:16); but not in any literal sense. They were to be ever mentally aware of their great salvation, and live accordingly.

Contemporary ideas about Satan, demons etc. are often alluded to in the Pentateuch, and Israel are given the true understanding. Wearing a phylactery wasn't a new concept; the idea "refers to amulets which were

worn in order to protect their wearers against demons". So by giving this command, Israel's God was showing His people that instead of being on the *defensive* against demons, needing good luck charms against them, they should instead replace these by a positive remembrance of God's words in their hearts and actions. Rejoicing in His salvation and constantly remembering it was intended to totally sideline the various false beliefs about demons which were prevalent at the time. It could be argued that God is saying that instead of the literal phylacteries of the pagan Gentile world, they were to have an internal mental awareness of their God.

Deu 11:19 You must teach them to your children, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you rise up-

The latter day repentant remnant will be characterized by talking to each other of spiritual things (Mal. 3:16 cp. Dan. 12:2), especially of the law (Mal. 3:7). But we are to do this now in our day of opportunity, and not be forced to it by tribulation. The priests were the official teachers of Israel, but it was ever God's intention that all Israel should be priests. All under the new covenant are declared priests (1 Pet. 2:5). All Israel were to be teaching each other (Jer. 31:34), especially their children- not leaving it to others, nor over relying upon a priesthood or spiritual eldership to teach their children. This is a myth inadvertently created by the Sunday School movement, excellent and commendable as that movement is- that a child is sent to "Sunday School" and there learns God's ways. The real teaching is done sitting

in the house and walking by the way, and not by specialist teachers. The specific reference to teaching when you lie down and rise up could suggest that God specifically intended His people to teach their children, every morning and every evening. This is the essence of family life in the Lord.

Deu 11:20 Write them on the door posts of your house and on your gates-

Writing God's laws on door posts recalls the daubing of Passover lamb blood on the door posts. Indeed at Passover time, the faithful Israelite would have painted over the laws of Moses with the blood of the Passover lamb. This was looking ahead to how those laws were to be blotted out by the Lord's sacrifice. It was perhaps also to remind them that the blood of the Passover lamb, shed for their salvation, was an imperative to their obedience to God's laws. And again we see contemporary religious ideas deconstructed; for "It was the custom of the ancient Egyptians to inscribe on lintels and door-posts sentences of good omen". Such good luck charms were to be replaced with realistic practical calls for obedience in real life; for this was the basis of Divine blessing, and not good luck charms.

Deu 11:21 that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give them-

Does "prolong your days" mean that long life promised to the obedient Israelite under the Old Covenant? Solomon observed that a just man perished young and "a wicked man who prolongs his life in his

wickedness" (Ecc. 7:15). Ez. 12:22 suggests that faithless Israel cynically observed that "The days are prolonged" and God's prophetic word of condemnation had failed- implying they thought that prolonged days were being experienced by them despite their disobedience. The Hebrew phrase 'to prolong days' is found in Is. 53:10, where it is applied to how Messiah would 'prolong His days' not in this life, but in the resurrection. The repeated promises recorded in Deuteronomy of prolonged days upon the land of Israel would therefore hint at the eternity of the Kingdom rather than this life. Indeed, Dt. 4:40 says they would prolong their days "for ever". For an individual Israelite might be faithful but not prolong his or her days in the land because the whole people were to be carried away captive for their sins and the land given to a Gentile power. The opposite of 'days being prolonged' was 'utter destruction' (:26)- which would then speak of condemnation in the second death. This is one of many examples of where eternal life was possible under the Old Covenant- there were multiple different possibilities and plans God could have worked by. Israel could have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and not killed Him, and so forth. It seems the closer we probe God's word, the more open He is revealed as being.

As the days of the heavens upon the earth-

This is the essence of the New Testament idea of the "Kingdom of Heaven" [not, the Kingdom *in* Heaven] coming upon earth at Christ's return. But it was precluded by Israel's disobedience.

Deu 11:22 For if you will diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love Yahweh your God, to walk in all His ways and to cleave to Him-

The idea of 'cleaving' to God is a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

The Lord's common Upper Room theme of 'abiding' in Him uses the same word as Moses used in the LXX when exhorting his people to 'cleave unto' God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.

"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus.

Deu 11:23 then will Yahweh drive out all these nations from before you and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves-

Dt. 11:23,24 seem to imply that after God had driven out the seven nations which lived in Canaan, He planned- given Israel's obedience- to drive out yet greater nations from before them. I can only take that as meaning that His intention was to drive out the nations who possessed the rest of the land promised to Abraham, right over to the Euphrates. I see here a promise of ultimate victory against Babylon and Assyria, who controlled the Euphrates area. But the very opposite happened- even though potentially, those nations need never have developed and their empires were intended to be Israel's. These potential victories were to be because all the land Israel trod upon [Heb. 'to bend the bow against'], they would receive (Dt. 11:25). But they weren't ambitious enough to go much beyond their farmsteads. We too will be given all we tread upon, all we desire to inherit of God's Kingdom, if we go forward in faith. It's all potentially possible, if we bend our bow with ambition, we will receive are furthestmost dreams and beyond. This line of thought inevitably connects with the incident where Elisha sees the shooting of arrows as a symbol of how far God would give Israel deliverance from Syria (2 Kings 13:17).

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used

for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

The Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resolvable using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to

5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot soldiers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a high-

way and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night.

Deu 11:24 Every place on which the sole of your foot shall tread shall be yours, from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river Euphrates, to the hinder sea shall be your border-

This meant that according to their spiritual ambition, so would be their inheritance of the Kingdom. The temptation for them, as for us, was to consider that once we have our small inheritance, our farmstead and secure land, as it was for them- then we need have no wider vision. For to go onwards from that parochial mentality and tread upon the entire land up to the Euphrates was a vision only worth pursuing if they had a vision of collective inheritance of the Kingdom. To seek to get others there is a call which few really perceive. The entire territory promised to Abraham could've been given to them if they had bothered to go there; but they settled just for the fertile land along the Mediterranean coast. They, like us so often, lacked any sense of spiritual ambition.

Deu 11:25 No man will be able to stand before you. Yahweh your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you on all the land that you will tread on, as He has spoken to you-

The command to subject the animals in Eden [the land promised to Abraham?] corresponds to later commands to subject the tribes living in the land (Gen. 1:28

= Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). The "fear and dread" of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the "fear and dread" which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21;11:25).

Deu 11:26 Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse-

The blessing and curse are defined in Dt. 28, suggesting that all of Deuteronomy was spoken on "this day"-the last day of Moses' life. The implications of "this day" lead me to think that this is the reference, although the blessing and cursings were pronounced on Ebal and Gerizim some time later.

Deu 11:27 the blessing, if you will listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you this day-

We can read this as meaning that the blessings of Dt. 28 were conditional upon obedience. Israel were not obedient, from Sinai onwards, as the prophets lament. But many of those blessings were still experienced by Israel. So we conclude that this was by grace alone, and indeed the idea of Abraham's seed being "blessed" is associated in the New Testament with the blessing of grace. Again we note God's passionate desire to by all means give His people His Kingdom. He wants to do this, it is the good pleasure or will of God to give us the Kingdom. He is not indifferent to our salvation, and wants us desperately to be in His Kingdom, as the parable of the marriage supper also indicates. It concludes with pretty

much anyone willing to say "yes" being ushered in to the marriage supper.

The blessing of Yahweh would come if His commands were obeyed (Dt. 11:27); but in response, He would command that blessing (s.w. Dt. 28:8). His commandments were therefore effectively a commandment of blessing. They were designed for Israel's good and blessing, and not as a test of mindless obedience.

Deu 11:28 and the curse if you will not listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods which you have not previously known-

"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God,

then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh, throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations and heart, as revealed in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

Deu 11:29 When Yahweh your God brings you into the land where you go to possess it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal-

God repeated the promise of blessing to Abraham at Shechem (Gen. 12:6), where later Israel had to choose between blessing and cursing (Dt. 11:29,30)- as if they had to make the choice to appropriate the promised blessing to themselves, or not. And yet the covenant in Gen. 15 was one way, unconditional, from God to us. It's as if *His* part in our salvation is so much greater than our response.

Deu 11:30 Aren't they beyond the Jordan, behind the way of the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the oaks of Moreh?-

Dt. 27:2-8 had commanded that "in the day" Israel passed over Jordan, they were to set up plastered stones with the law written upon them [perhaps just the ten commandments], and put them "in mount Ebal". The location was defined as near Gilgal (Dt. 11:30), where they camped after entering the land. Clearly enough, the ceremony of blessing and cursing ought to have been done immediately they entered the land. But they let secular concerns dominate their spiritual obligation to be thankful as God had asked. For when Joshua fulfilled it in Josh. 8:30, this was not "in the day" that Israel passed over Jordan. They had indeed taken stones with them from the Jordan, but had not used them as intended. They didn't plaster them nor write the law upon them. And so perhaps God ammended His intention- which was initially that they would set those stones up in mount Ebal immediately. Instead, He sent the people against Jericho, and then against Ai. Perhaps an instant conquest of Jericho had been originally intended, so that they could proceed to mount Ebal immediately. For later in Joshua we will read of God giving His people unnaturally speedy progress against their enemies, all in the same day. Or maybe His intention was that firstly they ought to have gone to mount Ebal with the plastered stones, and only then attacked Jericho. But they didn't plaster the stones nor wish to proceed immediately to Ebal. And so He arranged the campaign against Jericho and then Ai. We see how God is so eager to accommodate His programs to the weakness of men.

Deu 11:31 For you are to pass over the Jordan to go in to possess the land which Yahweh your God gives you, and you shall possess it, and dwell therein-

As noted above, possessing the land was conditional upon obedience. But they weren't obedient, but by grace they possessed the land. Their response to that grace was therefore to be that they kept the commandments (:32). Such commandments as we have are likewise to be obeyed not in order to be worthy of the Kingdom, but as a channel through which to express our gratitude for having been given the Kingdom in prospect.

Deu 11:32 You shall observe all the statutes and the ordinances which I set before you this day-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society

of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 12

Deu 12:1 These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall observe to do in the land which Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess all the days that you live on the earth-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 12:2 You must surely destroy all the places in which the nations that you shall dispossess served their

gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree-

Israel were told to "throw down", "break in pieces" and "utterly destroy" the idols and altars of Canaan. There were times during their history when they obeyed this command by purging themselves from their apostasy in this. The Hebrew words used scarcely occur elsewhere, except very frequently in the context of how God "broke down", "threw down" and "destroyed" Israel at the hands of their Babylonian and Assyrian invaders as a result of their not 'breaking down' (etc.) the idols. "Throw down" in Ex. 34:13; Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 is the same word in 2 Chron. 36:19; Jer. 4:26; 31:28; 33:4; 39:8; 52:14; Ez. 16:39; Nah. 1:6. "Cut down" in Dt. 7:5; 12:3; 2 Chron. 31:1 later occurs in Is. 10:33; Jer. 48:25; Lam. 2:3. So Israel faced the choice: either cut down your idols, or you will be cut down in the day of God's judgment. Those who worshipped idols were like unto them. The stone will either fall on us and destroy us, or we must fall on it and become broken men and women (Mt. 21:44). For the man untouched by the concept of living for God's glory, it's a hard choice. God will conquer sin, ultimately. When a man dies, it isn't just a biological, clockwork process. It is God's victory over sin in that individual. Either we must be slain by God; or with His gracious help, we must put sin to death in our members through association with the only One who really did this- and thereby rise to life eternal.

Deu 12:3 and you must break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire. You must cut down the engraved images of their gods-

The Lord's description of the rejected being cut down and thrown into the fire (Mt. 7:19) is surely referring to these words (cp. 7:5), where the idols of the world were to be hewn down and thrown into the fire. The Lord understood that those who worship idols are like unto them (Ps. 115:8; 135:18). Because all idols [of whatever kind] will be destroyed in the last day, all who worship them will have to share their destruction. And yet we can be hewn down by God's word now (Hos. 6:5) rather than wait for God to do it to us by the condemnation process. We must cut off (s.w. hew down) our flesh *now* (Mt. 5:30; 18:8 cp. 7:19).

And destroy their names out of that place-

But when we read the later historical accounts of the place names in the land, we find many cases of names with idolatrous associations not being renamed. Especially we note the prevalence of the "Baal" prefix. They didn't widely obey this.

Deu 12:4 You shall not do so to Yahweh your God-

Verse 3 has just spoken of the need to destroy the names of the idols which were reflected in the place names in Canaan, and instead they were to recognize that Yahweh had placed *His* Name in the land and especially at the sanctuary (:5). God placed *His* Name upon places in order to make them suitable places for sacrifice to be offered to Him (Dt. 12:4-7,21; Jer. 7:12). They were to call upon *His* Name alone, and not allow any-

thing else to tempt them to call upon the name of idols. Commonly enough, the New Testament speaks of baptism as a calling upon the Name of the Lord. This must be understood against its Hebrew background- *qara' beshem Yahweh*, which originally referred to approaching God in sacrifice (Gen. 12:7,8; Ps. 116:4,17). Baptism was thus seen as a sacrificial commitment to Yahweh in solemn covenant.

Deu 12:5 But to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there-

Worldly religion is made as convenient as possible for the worshipper to come and participate in; the shrines of the Canaanite gods were everywhere in the land, whereas Yahweh insisted that there was one specific place to where His people should come to worship Him. This was perhaps partly to inspire national unity within the family of God. The pagan shrines were each different; they had no uniformity between them, as archaeologists have demonstrated. But the one true God has principles of worship and service which don't vary geographically and are consistently the same because truth is truth and in that sense doesn't vary from place to place nor context to context.

To His dwelling place you shall seek, and there you shall come-

The judgment will be the time when God 'requires' of us our behaviour. And yet the Hebrew word is used about our enquiring / searching to God in prayer now (Gen. 25:22; Ex. 18:15; Dt. 4:29; 12:5; 1 Kings 22:5), as well as His 'requiring' / searching of us at the last day

(Dt. 18:19; 23:21; Josh. 22:23; 1 Sam. 20:16; 2 Chron. 24:22; Ez. 3:20; 33:6,8). There is a mutuality between a man and his God.

Yahweh cared for / sought after the land and Kingdom He had promised Israel (Dt. 11:12). The same word is used of how His people were to seek Him, to care for the things of His Kingdom above all else (Dt. 12:5). There thus develops a mutuality between God and man.

Deu 12:6 and bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the wave offering of your hand, your vows, your freewill offerings and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock-

The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Deu 12:7 There you shall eat before Yahweh your God and you shall rejoice in all that you put your hand to,

you and your households, in which Yahweh your God has blessed you-

LXX "And ye shall eat there before the Lord your God, and ye shall rejoice in all the things on which ye shall lay your hand, ye and your houses". The idea may be that what they laid their hands on was the sacrifices which they offered. For that is the context. They were to rejoice in sacrificing their blessings to God. "God loves a cheerful giver" may refer to this (2 Cor. 9:7). And to this day, the only way to "eat and enjoy the good things that you have worked for" (GNB) is by offering them to Yahweh.

Deu 12:8 You shall not do all the things that we do here this day, every man whatever is right in his own eyes-

This may refer to how the Mosaic laws were often intended for obedience once settled in the land. During the 38 years journey, it seems the people were not particularly obedient to God's laws and had just done whatever was right in their own eyes. The lament of Judges is that Israel in the land continued to do what was right in their own eyes (Jud. 17:6; 21:25). The moral anarchy sadly continued. Prov. 21:2 contrasts doing what is right in our own eyes or mental perception, with God judging the hearts / minds. The fact something may appear morally right to us doesn't mean it is. We may know nothing against ourselves in our own conscience, but this doesn't mean we are thereby justified before God (1 Cor. 4:4). There is one thing which will judge us at the end, and that is the word spoken to us (Jn. 12:48)- not our own native sense of right or wrong. Our conscience

will not as it were jump out of us and stand there and judge us in the last day.

Deu 12:9 for you haven't yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which Yahweh your God gives you-

The idea may simply be that in the wilderness, they had not been able to obey all the commandments in the law because they were not yet in the land, "the rest". But there may be a hint here at something deeper. For Joshua didn't in fact lead the people to "the rest" in ultimate terms (Heb. 4:8). That was to be the work of the Lord Jesus. There is a connection between the ark and God's resting place:

- Num. 10:33 "The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them... to search out a resting place"

- 1 Chron. 28:2 "An house of rest for the ark".

However, the real resting place of God's Name is not in the literal ark, but in the hearts of people humble to God's Word. The exiles were told: "Where is the house that you build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest?... to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word" (Is. 66:1,2).

Deu 12:10 But when you go over the Jordan, and dwell in the land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, and He gives you rest from all your enemies around you, so that you dwell in safety-

Several times Moses describes Israel's inheritance of the land as entering "rest", mindful of how God had sworn that they would not enter into that rest, and yet he had pleaded with God to change His mind about that

(Ps. 95:11; Heb. 3:11), even though Israel at the time didn't realize the intensity of pleading and self-sacrifice for them which was going on up in the mountain. Just as we don't appreciate the extent of the Lord's mediation for us, that we might enter the final "rest" (Heb. 4:9).

Deu 12:11 then to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, to cause His name to dwell there, you must bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the wave offering of your hand and all your chosen vows which you vow to Yahweh-

The idea of a central place of worship was perhaps to stop the Israelites just doing their own thing in their local areas when it came to Yahweh worship. His desire for unity amongst His people was reflected in this otherwise strange idea that they were to offer all sacrifices in only one place in the land. No other legal code amongst the nations featured this. But Israel didn't do this, and so it seems that He did accept sacrifice in local sanctuaries; we think of acceptable offerings made in other places, by Gideon, Manoah, David and others. We see reflected here God's willingness to accept less than ideal sacrifices, so desirous is He of relationship with His people.

Deu 12:12 Rejoice before Yahweh your God, you and your sons, your daughters, your male servants, your female servants and the Levite who is within your gates, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you-

We see God's desire that male and female, slave and free, should unite together in the joy which arises from acceptable sacrifice. Again we see this as the basis of being a "cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7), for true joy arise not

from selfish hoarding but from sacrifice and giving as God intended. If there were to be no local sacrifices, then the Levites would have had to take their food from the sacrifices offered at the central sanctuary, and transport it home. This would have required them to be in regular contact with the sanctuary. This whole plan would have been unworkable if Israel at this point had inherited as intended up to the Euphrates river; but God had clearly recalculated their inheritance in accordance with their possibilities and spiritual capacities.

Deu 12:13 Be careful not to offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see-

We can't worship God any way we like, thinking that the fact we accept His existence and even worship Him means that we are somehow free to do it as we think. Israel didn't do this, and so it seems that He did accept sacrifice in local sanctuaries; we think of acceptable offerings made in other places, by Gideon, Manoah, David and others. We see reflected here God's willingness to accept less than ideal sacrifices, so desirous is He of relationship with His people.

Deu 12:14 but in the place which Yahweh shall choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you-

It is hard to discern when exactly God named such a place. David and Solomon were confident that God had chosen Zion, but it's unclear whether this was their own preference which they then claimed was God's choice. At any rate, these words of Moses imply God would choose such a place soon after Israel entered Canaan. But

there is no record of Him doing so, and the sanctuary moved around to various places. Perhaps that was the idea- that God would choose a place and then move it around, choosing another at a later date. Or perhaps this simply didn't happen; because the people showed themselves not sufficiently spiritual, and so He allowed them to just use local shrines. In this case we see the flexibility of God, and His ability to recalculate and downgrade His expectations of His people. We must note that He alone has the prerogative to do so.

Deu 12:15 Notwithstanding, you may kill and eat flesh within all your gates after all the desire of your soul, according to the blessing of Yahweh your God which He has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and the hart-

They were allowed to kill animals for food for their own use, and being ritually unclean was no barrier to eating such meat. The gazelle and hart, GNB "deer or antelope", were given as examples of clean animals which could be eaten, perhaps clarifying the question of whether they could eat animals killed in hunting, who died from arrows at a distance from the hunter, and whose blood could only be poured out some time after killing them.

Deu 12:16 Only you must not eat the blood. Pour it out on the earth as water-

The blood was understood as representing life (:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or

dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves.

Deu 12:17 You may not eat within your gates the tithe of your grain or new wine or oil-

Perhaps this command was addressed specifically to the Levites.

Or the firstborn of your herd or of your flock, nor any of your vows which you vow, nor your freewill offerings, nor the wave offering of your hand-

The Israelites weren't allowed to eat the firstborn, but rather must offer it to God, and the Levites ate part of it. But :18 speaks of them eating these things before Yahweh along with the Levite. So the idea seems to be that the Levites in each local area were to accompany the offerers to the central sanctuary. This was intended to create a strong social bond between the people and the Levites. But sadly this didn't seem to happen.

Deu 12:18 but you must eat them before Yahweh your God in the place which Yahweh your God shall choose, you and your son, your daughter, your male servant and your female servant and the Levite who is within your gates; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God in all that you put your hand on-

Whatever they put their hand on to give to God they were to give with joy; for God *loves* cheerful giving, and hates reluctant or manipulated 'giving' (2 Cor. 9:7). The idea was that all the family were to go to the sanctuary and rejoice together in their giving. See on :17.

Deu 12:19 Take heed to yourself-

Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

That you don't forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land-

The implication is that they would no longer live in the land if they forsook the Levite. But they clearly never really supported the Levites. God's patience with them lasted many centuries. For they were not cast out of the land for a long time.

Deu 12:20 When Yahweh your God enlarges your border, as He has promised you, and you say I want to eat meat, because your soul desires to eat meat, you may eat meat, after all the desire of your soul-

Vegetarianism is a matter of personal choice, but it certainly isn't commanded by God- indeed, quite the opposite (1 Tim. 4:3). If Israel had been obedient, then "the Lord your God shall enlarge thy border" (Dt. 12:20). Thus "blessed be He that enlarges Gad" (Dt. 33:20). Who knows the height and depth, length and breadth of what could have been for God's people? And the same is true for us today. According to Israel's perception of the land, so it was defined for them.

Deu 12:21 If the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to put His name there is too far from you, then you shall kill of your herd and of your flock which Yahweh has given you, as I have commanded you; you may eat within your gates, after all the desire of your soul-

They were always allowed to kill animals and eat their meat for personal use (:15). So the killing of animals here seems to refer to the possibility of offering the sacrifices in their own "gates", but only once the land was enlarged. We never read of the land being enlarged, indeed their territory was progressively "cut short" (2 Kings 10:32) after Solomon's time and frequently in the time of the Judges, immediately after their entry into the land. There was never any signal from God that He had now enlarged the land (:20) and therefore this change of the law was allowed. We note that the law of Moses was flexible and open to change. That it should later be abrogated is therefore no surprise. The argument that each Mosaic law was eternal is therefore lacking in careful attention to the text of the law itself.

Deu 12:22 As the gazelle and the hart is eaten, so you shall eat of it; the unclean and the clean may eat of it alike-

As explained on :21, the context appears to be here about eating the sacrificed animals at the time when the land had been enlarged, and such animals didn't have to be sacrificed at the sanctuary. So we note that unclean offerers could eat of the sacrifices in this case. It was not allowed for unclean offerers to eat peace offerings (Lev. 7:20), nor could Levites or priests approach to the sacrifices whilst unclean (Lev. 22:3). But there is no state-

ment that the offerer had to be clean, indeed Dt. 12:22 says that some sacrifices could be eaten by the offerer whilst unclean. We see here God's willingness to by all means accept the offerer of sacrifice.

Deu 12:23 Only be sure that you don't eat the blood, for the blood is the life; you shall not eat the life with the flesh-

"The life with the flesh" effectively means "the blood with the flesh", i.e. the blood must be drained out of the meat. One practical consequence of this was that obedience would have meant social separation from the Canaanites; for none of them observed these positions on blood, indeed eating blood or meat with much blood in it was a delicacy.

Deu 12:24 You must not eat it; pour it out on the earth as water-

We note the triple, laboured emphasis upon not eating blood in :23-25. The blood was understood as representing life (:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves.

Deu 12:25 You must not eat it, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, when you do that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh-

The Lord Jesus specifically alluded to the major Jewish principle of not eating blood- when He taught that unless His blood was drunk, then they had no life in

them. This alludes to another reason for not eating blood, given in Lev. 17:11: "I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life". The blood looked ahead to the blood which God would give which would make atonement. The blood of animals couldn't take away sins (Heb. 10:4). So the blood only 'made atonement' because it pointed forward to that of the Lord Jesus. The whole structure of the laws about blood required some blood of atonement which had to be shed in future, a blood sacrifice of a representative human who was not an animal. That blood was to be given to God, and not to man. Hence the stress upon not eating blood.

Deu 12:26 Only your holy things which you have and your vows, you shall take and go to the place which Yahweh shall choose-

The situation in view is hard to imagine; whether this speaks of when the borders were enlarged, or whether this specifically applies to the priests. The Rabbis like to think that this refers to an Israelite outside the land.

Deu 12:27 and you shall offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of Yahweh your God. The blood of your sacrifices must be poured out on the altar of Yahweh your God, and you shall eat the flesh-

For the situation in view, see on :26. It's unclear whether "the flesh" refers to the meat, or to the literal skin of the animal. The blood of hunted animals was to be covered with dust (Lev. 17:13), as if buried in death.

So the idea may have been that it drained from the altar onto the dust upon which the altar stood. Or it may be that the altar represented God's facility to accept the offering of life.

Deu 12:28 Observe and hear all these words which I command you-

Moses really wanted Israel's well-being, he saw so clearly how obedience would result in blessing (e.g. Dt. 6:3; 12:28). This is a major theme of Moses in Deuteronomy. There was therefore a real sense of pleading behind his frequent appeal for Israel to "hear" or obey God's words. "*Hear*, O Israel" in Deuteronomy must have had a real passion behind it in his voice, uncorrupted as it was by old age. He didn't rattle it off as some kind of Sunday School proof. At least four times Moses interrupts the flow of his speech with this appeal: "*Hear* ['be obedient'], O Israel" (Dt. 5:1; 6:3,4; 9:1; 20:3). And a glance through a concordance shows how often in Deuteronomy Moses pleads with them to hear God's voice. So he was back to his favourite theme: Hear the word, love the word, make it your life. For in this is your salvation. And the Lord Jesus (e.g. in passages like Jn. 6) makes just the same urgent appeal.

That it may go well with you and with your children after you forever-

Things 'going well / good' with Israel is the language of the Kingdom of God in Dt. 8:16 "to do you good / well at your latter end". It is associated with days being prolonged (Dt. 22:7) and the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Dt. 30:5), and Israel and the children

somehow existing "forever" (Dt. 12:28). So I deduce in the wish "that it may go well with you" a hint towards the eternal establishment of God's Kingdom based around Israel, what Paul terms "the hope of Israel".

When you do that which is good and right in the eyes of Yahweh your God-

Israel had been told by Moses that their doing what was "good and right" was required for them to possess the land (Dt. 6:18; 12:28). The Gibeonites use the same phrase in appealing for Joshua to do what was "good and right" (Josh. 9:25) in not slaying them but accepting them into covenant relationship with Yahweh. The people generally didn't want to do this (Josh. 9:26). It seems God's providence used Joshua's initial unwisdom in order to give Joshua a chance to do what was "good and right", so that Israel could indeed possess Canaan. We marvel at how God works through human unwisdom and dysfunction, in order to achieve His final purpose of giving His people His Kingdom.

Dt. 12:28 AV "Observe and hear all these words... that it may go well with thee... when thou doest that which is good and right", is as if to say 'When you are obedient, you will be even more obedient.' "You shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall even live in them" (Lev. 18:5) seems to mean that if we seriously try to be obedient, then obedience becomes a way of daily life, and the individual acts of obedience are not so difficult. This was undoubtedly the Lord's source of victory over the flesh. He lived a life that was in harmony with an atmosphere of obedience.

Deu 12:29 When Yahweh your God cuts off the nations from before you, where you go in to dispossess them, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 12:30 take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods saying, How do these nations serve their gods? I will do likewise-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 12:31 You must not do so to Yahweh your God, for every abomination to Yahweh, which He hates, have they done to their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they burn in the fire to their gods-

The sacrifice of children to idols was clearly felt by God to be a particularly great abomination. Israel's children were His- in that they were to be raised for Him and to live lives devoted to Him. If we do not raise our children as dedicated for Him [whether or not they accept that path is of course their choice], then we have effectively done what we would most recoil at- to offer our children to the gods of wealth, career and secular success.

Deu 12:32 Whatever I command you, you must observe to do. You must not add to it, nor take away from it-

As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 13:18; 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ. Indeed, the well known prophecy that God would raise up a prophet "like unto" Moses to whom Israel would *listen* (Dt. 18:18) is in the context of Israel saying they did not want to hear God's voice directly. Therefore God said that he would raise up Christ, who would be another Moses in the sense that *he too* would speak forth God's word.

Pharaoh had insisted that nothing should be "diminished" from the quota of bricks he had set (Ex. 5:11), and the same word is later used of how Israel were not to "diminish" ["take away"] from obeying Yahweh's com-

mandments (Dt. 4:2; 12:32). They were being reminded that they had changed masters when they crossed the Red Sea, just as Paul says happens when we are baptized (Rom. 6). And the Red Sea crossing represented baptism into Jesus (1 Cor. 10:1,2). Like us, Israel were not radically free to do as they pleased. What happened was that they changed masters; hence the appeal to Pharaoh to let God's people go, that they may serve Him rather than Pharaoh. We too will only find ultimate freedom through this servitude to God's ways, and will finally emerge into the radical liberty of the children of God in the Kingdom age (Rom. 8:21).

The Divine intention was that perfect obedience to the law of Moses would lead to a perfect character, which is what we see in the Lord Jesus. The laws were intended to confirm and strengthen the way of obedience. To reduce or expand the corpus of commandments was therefore to take away this self reinforcing nature of the law.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 13

Deu 13:1 If there should arise in the midst of you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder-

"If" could as well be translated "when". Paul seems to allude here: "Of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things" (Acts 20:30). Jeremiah feared God had deceived *him* (Jer. 20:7)- showing he knew such a thing was possible. Dt. 13:1-3 warns Israel not to believe prophets whose prophecies came true although they taught false doctrines, because they may have been raised up to test their obedience. God deceived Israel by telling them about the peace which would come on Jerusalem in the future Kingdom; they didn't consider the other prophecies *which were given at the same time* concerning their imminent judgment, and therefore they thought that God was pleased with them and was about to establish the Messianic Kingdom; when actually the very opposite was about to happen (Jer. 4:10). This is why the Bible is confusing to those who aren't humble to God's word.

Deu 13:2 and the sign or the wonder comes to pass of which he spoke to you saying, Let us go after other gods (which you have not previously known) and let us serve them-

The idea is that 'if the miracle appears to happen'. But that is not stated- the argument assumes, for a moment,

that the alleged miracle actually happened. The idea is that the false prophet would do fake miracles in order to back up his appeal to serve other gods. Yahweh often makes the point that the signs and wonders He did for His people were far greater than anything ever seen upon earth. Likewise, the sheer magnitude of the Lord's miracles of themselves showed that all belief in demons as sources of power was utterly inappropriate. But the New Testament record assumes, for a moment, that demons had some power. Even though in reality they have no existence. And so here, for a moment, for the sake of argument, it is assumed that the alleged wonders were genuine and not fake.

We observe in this passage how empirical evidence isn't necessarily the basis for faith. Even if it apparently exists in the form of fulfilled prophecy, so it apparently can for others who teach falsely. The classic Biblical explanation of faith is in Hebrews 11:1-3: "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, the evidence about invisible things... By faith we understand that the ages have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen has not been made out of things which appear". Putting meaning into words, this at first blush is circular reasoning. Faith is the evidence. But on what evidence are we to believe? Faith is the evidence. The Hebrew writer was no simplistic fool. He [or she] was surely aware that this is apparently circular reasoning. Faith is the evidence. So, faith is not evidence-based. You believe on the basis of faith. The same kind of apparently circular reasoning is found often in the Bible. Once you are on the look out for it.

Take 1 Jn. 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may... believe on the name of the Son of God".

Deu 13:3 you must not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams, for Yahweh your God proves you-

The reasoning here is helpful with respect to the claims made by some to perform supernatural feats. Even if it seems they might have done so, that isn't a good enough reason to believe them; our loyalty to the one true God must not be swayed by apparently impressive deeds or predictions by those who don't believe in Him.

To know whether you love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul-

Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh. 23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which

our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 13:4 You must walk after Yahweh your God and fear Him and keep His commandments and obey His voice-

"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following

after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God, then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh, throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations and heart, as revealed in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

And you must serve Him and cleave to Him-

The idea of 'cleaving' to God is a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm

breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

The Lord's common Upper Room theme of 'abiding' in Him uses the same word as Moses used in the LXX when exhorting his people to 'cleave unto' God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.

"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus.

Deu 13:5 That prophet or that dreamer of dreams must be put to death, because he has spoken rebellion against Yahweh your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to draw you aside out of the way which Yahweh your God commanded you to walk in. So you must put away the evil from the midst of you-

Moses' frequent references to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt show the colossal difference there is between us and this world as a result of our Red Sea baptism into Christ (13:5; 15:15; 16:12; 1 Cor. 10:1,2); as our Lord in His time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which He was redeeming us from this present evil world (Gal. 1:4).

Deu 13:6 If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom or your friend, who is as your own soul, entices you secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which you have not known, you nor your fathers-

Moses speaks as if he assumed that surely Israel would love their neighbour as themselves: "Thy brother...or thy friend, which is as thine own soul" almost unconsciously reveals the depth of Moses' positive faith in their obedience, even though on the other hand he clearly understood their future apostasy. So often family loyalties deflect a person from their loyalty to the one true God. The same has always been the case. Our spiritual family should ultimately be more meaningful to us than our natural family; that at least is the ideal, although all families have their dysfunctions, including our spiritual family.

Despite omitting some of the Law's commands in his speech, there are other commands which Moses really emphasizes and repeats within his speech; e.g. the need to destroy idols and false teachers, and to provide cities of refuge to cater for the sins they would commit without intending to (Dt. 7:5; 12:3, 23-25; 13:6-14 = 17:2-7). This surely reflects our Lord's attitude to us; it is his desire that we recognize our sinfulness, our likelihood of failure, our need to separate from things which will lead us away from Him. And yet the Christian community is increasingly blind to this. Moses' frequent references to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt show the same spirit (Dt. 13:5; 15:15;

16:12); as our Lord in his time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which he was redeeming us from this present evil world.

Deu 13:7 of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near to you or far off from you, from the one end of the land to the other end of the land-

In Josh. 12:1,7 we meet “the kings of the earth”, i.e. of the land, and this must surely be the basis of how we are to understand the references to “the kings of the earth” in Revelation. Dt. 13:7 defines “the peoples which are round about you” [Israel] as being “from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth” (RV). Those peoples which bordered with the Israelites were “the earth” / *eretz*.

Deu 13:8 you must not consent to him nor listen to him. Neither shall your eye pity him, neither shall you spare, neither shall you conceal him-

These words are quoted in Jer. 13:14 of how God would not pity nor spare an apostate Israel. They were being asked to adopt His perspective.

Deu 13:9 but you must surely kill him. Your hand shall be first on him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people-

There is stress upon close family members were to be the first to slay apostate members whose apostacy they had reported (Dt. 13:9; 17:7). They were being taught that they had to love God far more than family, and the Lord Jesus continued this teaching (Mt. 10:37).

Deu 13:10 You must stone him to death with stones because he has sought to draw you away from Yahweh your

God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage-

The use of stoning (Dt. 13:10; 17:5; 21:21; 22:21,24) was to show their connection with the death of the apostate. It was to also make them realize that any attempt to deny the saving work of God in bringing them out of Egypt, or attempt to reverse it by returning them to bondage, was worthy of death (Dt. 13:10). We note that false teaching, enticing others to sin, is seen as the most serious kind of sin. The New Testament teaching about church discipline takes a similar approach; moral weakness of individuals was tolerated, although criticized; but those teaching such behaviour were condemned. Stoning resulted in the covering of the body with the dust of the earth, as if recognizing that the death being brought about was also to be the fate of all under the curse in Eden.

Deu 13:11 All Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall not do any more such wickedness as this is in the midst of you-

The group involvement was intended to teach others that such apostacy from Yahweh was unacceptable. We recall a similar judgment of Ananias and Sapphira in the New Testament, which lead to "fear" within the church- and then straight after that we have a notice that the church yet again experienced a growth spurt.

Deu 13:12 If you hear concerning one of your cities which Yahweh your God gives you to dwell there saying-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of

God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 13:13 Certain bad men have gone out from the midst of you and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying Let us go and serve other gods, which you have not known-

As discussed on :10, the worst level of sin is when people turn others away from God to idolatry. The gods "which you have not known" means effectively 'With whom you cannot have relationship'. For this is the Hebrew idea of 'knowing'. The idea is not that anything new must be wrong just because they are new. Yahweh was characterized above all as the God who thirsts for personal relationship with His people.

Deu 13:14 then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently. Behold, if it is true and certain that such abomination is done in the midst of you-

Allegations of misbehaviour or wrong teaching within the family of God must be taken seriously and not pushed under the carpet. But they aren't to be acted upon without a very careful investigation, during which the love which believes and hopes all things is paramount. This passage cannot be used as a reason to divide from those who have a slightly different Biblical inter-

pretation of something than we do, whilst believing in and worshipping the same Lord. The situation envisaged is if someone were seeking to draw Yahweh's people away to a totally different god (:13).

Deu 13:15 you must surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly and all that is therein and its livestock, with the edge of the sword-

Striking a city with the edge of the sword and completely destroying all life within it was what Israel did to the cities of Canaan (Josh. 10:32 etc.). But the phrase is that of Dt. 13:15, about what should be done to an apostate Israelite city who turned to idolatry. This explains why the account of Joshua's campaigns list cities like Libnah and Lachish, against which the Assyrians "encamped" and fought against them (2 Chron. 32:1; Is. 37:8 = Josh. 10:31). Israel were judging the Canaanite cities for their idolatry; the fact they committed the same meant that they were more than hypocritical. They had done that which they had judged. And they thereby become a warning for us.

Deu 13:16 You shall gather all its spoil into the midst of its street and shall burn with fire the city and all its spoil, everything, to Yahweh your God, and it shall be a heap forever. It shall not be built again-

The absolute destruction of everything in the apostate city meant that there was no possibility of personal gain for those judging it. This meant that the motivation in considering an accusation of apostacy would be treat-

ed without any temptation to consider personal benefit if the city were indeed judged apostate.

Deu 13:17 Nothing of the devoted thing must cling to your hand, that Yahweh may turn from the fierceness of His anger and show you mercy and have compassion on you-

Those who wanted to devote themselves to other gods ended up devoted to Yahweh in destruction. There is a powerful logic to devotion. The reasoning seems to be that the false teaching of the city would have spread, and all Israel would have been affected by it- and so God's fierce anger would have come upon them. It is therefore foolish to assume that wrong teaching will not spread; it is attractive by its nature. There is a strong teaching throughout the Bible about shutting down false teaching, whilst having an open attitude to sinners and misbelievers and those who misunderstand within the congregation.

And multiply you, as He has sworn to your fathers-

The entire promises to Abraham and the fathers depended for their realization upon human obedience: "Hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the Lord your God shall keep with you the covenant and the mercy which He swore unto your fathers" (Dt. 7:12). That covenant was initially given in terms which omitted direct reference to any conditions for fulfilment. But it would be 'kept' by God if His people 'kept' His ways. The promises that God would multiply the seed of Abraham were conditional also; *if* Israel separated themselves from the peoples of the land, *then* He

would “multiply you, as He has sworn unto your fathers” (Dt. 13:17).

Deu 13:18 when you listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep all His commandments which I command you this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh your God-

On one hand, the promises to Abraham and the fathers depended for their realization upon human obedience; even though on the other hand, the covenant of Gen. 15 appears to be a unilateral expression of God's grace and assurance to His people. “If you listen to these ordinances and keep and do them, Yahweh your God will keep with you the covenant and the loving kindness which He swore to your fathers” (Dt. 7:12). That covenant was initially given in terms which omitted direct reference to any conditions for fulfilment. But it would be ‘kept’ by God if His people ‘kept’ His ways. The promises that God would multiply the seed of Abraham were conditional also; *if* Israel separated themselves from the peoples of the land and were obedient, *then* He would “multiply you, as He has sworn unto your fathers” (Dt. 13:17,18). The strength of God's grace also makes some of His promises ‘conditional’ in a different sense; thus He had promised Reuben and Manasseh that they could return to their possessions only when the others had possessed the land (Dt. 3:20). This condition never happened- yet they were allowed to return. And our very salvation from death and the consequences of sin is in a sense another example of this kind of thing.

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

14

Deu 14:1 You are the children of Yahweh your God. You must not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead-

Whilst there is nothing morally wrong with cutting the skin, the idea was that Israel weren't to even appear associated with pagan rituals for the dead. We likewise should naturally not want to even appear like worshippers of any other god (of whatever kind) when Yahweh is our only God. RSV "sons of God" is a phrase used concerning men, especially those who know the true God (Dt. 14:1 (R.S.V.); Hos. 1:10; Lk. 3:38; Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1), and doesn't have to refer to Angels. However the idea may be that "not cut yourselves" refers to not cutting hair; for to shave the head was a sign of mourning. The hair was understood as a person's glory; and this was to be given to the living God and not to the memory of dead men.

The prohibition of doing things "for the dead" doesn't simply refer to not memorializing the dead. Rather was the belief that the living could enter into some kind of covenant with the deceased, who were deemed to be still alive. But the Israelites were to accept death as unconsciousness, and not to accord any power to the supposed spirits of the dead.

Deu 14:2 For you are a holy people to Yahweh your God, and Yahweh has chosen you to be a people for His own possession above all peoples who are on the face of the earth-

We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept His commandments, *then* they would be His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His “peculiar treasure” by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that “the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people [s.w.]... *that* thou shouldest keep all his commandments” (Dt. 26:18). See what’s happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

“You did not choose me, but I chose you... out of the world” (Jn. 15:16,19) corresponds to the oft repeated theme of Moses that God has chosen Israel “out of all peoples” (Dt. 7:6 RVmg.), by grace (Dt. 4:37; 10:15; 14:2).

Deu 14:3 You must not eat any abominable thing-

The word "abominable" has connections with idolatry. The reasons for defining certain animals as clear and others as unclean may be connected to the way in which the unclean animals were used in idol worship, especially by the Egyptians. There is a clear connection between unclean animals and idols in Is. 66:17; Ez. 8:10. There is nothing unclean of itself (Rom. 14:14), every creature is "good" and was made "very good" (1 Tim. 4:4); the differentiations were purely for teaching purposes, and therefore at the Lord's death the differences were collapsed. The unclean animals were only "unclean to you" (Lev. 11:6). Peter struggled to accept this, but was taught that the unclean animals had been intended to represent the Gentiles, the surrounding nations whom Israel were to differ from (:2)- and now they were to be accepted on an equal footing to the Jews, the supposedly "clean" animals. Again we see the temporary nature of the law of Moses; the animals were not of themselves unclean originally, nor were they after the Lord's death.

Deu 14:4 These are the animals which you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat-

"You may eat" [contrasted with "you may *not* eat"] invites us to see this as an echo of the commandment in Eden; God said that they "may eat" of all in Eden, apart from one tree (Gen. 2:16). The implication is that Israel was Eden, and the lesson of Adam and Eve was applicable in every human situation. Failure to make the division between clean and unclean was what led them into sin; they assumed that the unclean could in fact at times be dabbled with and participated in. The division into

clean and unclean animals was not because some were intrinsically unclean; for there is nothing unclean of itself, "all things indeed are pure" (Rom. 14:14,20), every creature is "good" and was made "very good" (1 Tim. 4:4). Hence the creatures were only unclean "*unto you*" (see on :10). Neither was the reasoning primarily for hygienic reasons; for otherwise, why would the Lord have repeated these laws by declaring all food clean? In any case, some of the "clean" animals such as the goat are well known for the hygiene problems which easily arise from eating them. Goats are in many ways more unhygienic than pigs. The difference between clean and unclean is seen as applying to the separation between the people of God and those not of God, historically articulated in the division between Hebrews and Gentiles which was removed in the Lord's death. Thus Lev. 20:23-25 explained the need to "put difference between clean and unclean beasts" as being because "I have separated you from other peoples". The idea was not that some animals were intrinsically clean and others likewise not clean; for that would have implied that God's people were intrinsically clean and the Gentile world somehow unclean by nature. The difference was not that, for all are sinners and none are unclean of themselves by reason of being human; rather the difference is that God's people, like the "clean" animals, were chosen / set apart by God, for no particular reason, but purely because of the grace of His sovereign choice. In allusion to this, Isaiah laments that "we are *all* as one who is unclean [w. for "unclean" animals], and all our righteousness is as a polluted garment:

and we all fade as a leaf" (Is. 64:6). The difference was in God's sovereign choice, as it was with the choice of some animals to be clean and others unclean. This was the point of the division of the animals; it seems somewhat disproportionate to try to teach the need to 'chew' our spiritual food by arranging for this continual division between clean [cud chewing] and unclean animals. Rather was there something more fundamental being taught—that the essential division is between those whom God chose by grace, and those He didn't. And this was to elicit in the believer a habit of dividing between clean and unclean in his own heart and life. All human thought and living was to reflect that division in moral terms between the light and the darkness.

So by taking away these technical distinctions between clean and unclean foods, the Lord was showing that they had been mere teaching mechanisms and were not ultimately meaningful of themselves. For the separation between clean and unclean was to be made within the human heart, and not in terms of physical separation from unclean persons. The comment that the Lord Jesus "made all foods clean" is made in the context of the record of His teaching that evil comes from the human heart, and not from anything external (Mk. 7:19). If our inner heart is clean, then we cannot be made unclean by external contact with the unclean. Lk 11:41 says as much: "But give for alms those things which are within, and behold, all things are clean to you". All things are therefore pure / clean to those with a clean heart; and all things are unclean to those whose internal worldview

is unclean and defiled (Tit. 1:15). And the conscience can be cleansed, made clean, by the work of the spirit of Christ (Heb. 9:9,14; Ez. 36:25 cp. "create in me a clean heart", Ps. 51:10); we are washed by the greatest Priest, and the difference between clean and unclean is simply that some have accepted this cleansing and others haven't ("you are clean; but not all", Jn. 13:10). This has huge and far reaching implications; for so much religion, including the bylaws of the denominations of Christendom, is based around the perceived need to separate from unclean persons. The Lord Jesus lived out this teaching by eating with / breaking His bread with whores and gamblers, the most visibly sinful people. Yet He was personally "separate from sinners"; and that separation was therefore in His heart (Heb. 7:26). This was and is a brave new world for those who had grown up in a society where guilt came by association, and external image was everything. But modern society is no different. It was this internal separation which the clean / unclean distinction intended to teach. Obedience to the laws was a kind of practice of it in physical terms in everyday life. By having to "put a difference between clean and unclean" in daily life (Lev. 11:47), discerning between them (Ez. 22:26), they were taught the need to do this in their hearts. This is why spiritually mature people like the Lord Jesus and Paul had a very distinct internal separation between clean and unclean within them. They discerned good and evil clearly. Thus the account of the Lord's internal temptations in the wilderness sound as if the unclean thoughts of temptation were totally distinct

from Him; and Paul in Rom. 7 speaks of how "I myself" serve God, and his fleshly mind was somehow separate to the real Paul.

Deu 14:5 the hart and the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope, and the chamois-

Comparing the lists of clean and unclean animals in Lev. 11 and Dt. 14, we see the Deuteronomy list tends to be more specific. This is understandable; for the people were now going to enter the land, and there would be specific questions about specific animals.

Deu 14:6 Every animal that has a split hoof-

Lev. 11:3 adds more detail: "Whatever parts the hoof, and is cloven-footed". The sense of the Hebrew is "Whatever parts the hoof, and completely divides it". Some animals part the hoof but don't completely divide it to the end, such as the camel. The lesson would be that there must be clear division between clean and unclean, good and bad, and that division must not be begun and not finished. The line dividing good from evil must run to the end through every part of our lives.

And chews the cud among the animals, you may eat-

The Hebrew means to bring the food up again, to ruminate. The animals which ruminated had at least two stomachs, and processed their food at length. Perhaps this was to represent ruminating upon God's word, rather than eating whatever is presented to us, as it is in this age of instant [apparent] information. Being cloven-footed perhaps speaks of being sure footed and walking stably in life. To chew the cud (ruminate on God's word) but not walk the talk (not having a cloven foot) still

makes us unclean. However, it may be that there is little significance in the chewing of the cud of itself, because doing so didn't make the animal unclean of itself- it was just an exercise for Israel to teach them the concept of discernment, self control and obedience to God even when this meant practical inconvenience for them.

Deu 14:7 Nevertheless these you must not eat of those that chew the cud or of those which have a split hoof: the camel, the hare and the rabbit. Because they chew the cud but don't have a split hoof, they are unclean to you-

Some animals part the hoof but don't completely divide it to the end (see on :6), such as the camel, which has a kind of ball at the back of their foot which means the hoof is not completely divided. The lesson would be that there must be clear division between clean and unclean, good and bad, and that division must not be begun and not finished. The line dividing good from evil must run to the end through every part of our lives.

The hare was apparently thought to be avoided by demons ["jinns"] and so was worshipped; hare bones or skulls were used as good luck charms, and still are among some Arab tribes. So the reason for having nothing to do with hares was religious rather than because hares are somehow more intrinsically unclean than other animals.

As with the language of demons in the New Testament, the Bible here speaks of things as they appear. For hares and rock badgers do chew the cud, but their munching movements, the lower jaw moving backward and forward, suggest they are chewers of the cud- but in fact they don't.

Deu 14:8 The pig, because it has a split hoof but doesn't chew the cud, is unclean to you-

Appearing to make a differentiation in our walk, our external life, is no good unless internally we are chewing the cud, masticating our food, ruminating upon God's word on a constant basis (:6). Many people appear to have made a division between themselves and society but this is no evidence that they are spiritual. Spirituality is about constant rumination on the things we are fed spiritually, rather than filling the mind with garbage and biting food in chunks.

Of their flesh you shall not eat and their carcasses you shall not touch-

The basis of the command to us in our age to "touch not the unclean thing" by being separate from sinful things (2 Cor. 6:17).

Deu 14:9 These you may eat of all that are in the waters: whatever has fins and scales may you eat-

All fish have fins and scales, it's just that some aren't evident. We see here how the Bible is written in places from the viewpoint of humans, and according to their understanding of things, even if that understanding is false. And this is why we find mental illness attributed to "demons" in the New Testament, even though demons don't exist.

Deu 14:10 Whatever doesn't have fins and scales you must not eat; it is unclean to you-

The parable of the drag net pictures fishermen sitting down with their catch, throwing away the "bad" fish. These would've been the unclean sea creatures, e.g. crabs,

which had got caught up in the net. This represented the 'sitting' of the final judgment at the last day (Mt. 13:48,49). We are to make that same division between good and bad in the choices we make today. Possibly the lack of fins and scales suggests a lack of visible guiding principles in life, living with no sense of clear direction towards the Kingdom.

We note the continual stress that these animals were "unclean unto you" (:7,8,10). There is nothing unclean of itself (see on :4); the animals were only clean or unclean "unto you", in that these laws were a practical exercises in the practice of 'making a separation' between clean and unclean. But the essence of that separation was to be in the human heart. When these laws failed to have the effect of teaching this, they were removed by the Lord Jesus.

Deu 14:11 Of all clean birds you may eat-

LXX makes this a command: "Ye shall eat every clean bird". The reference may specifically be to the birds used in the ritual of the cleansing of the leper; as if this was the only time a bird may be eaten. For the basis upon which clean and unclean animals were divided [chewing the cud, cloven hooves] doesn't apply to birds. It could be that birds were not to be eaten, apart from those sanctified or "made clean" by the rituals which used birds.

Deu 14:12 But these are the ones you must not eat: the eagle, the vulture and the osprey-

These birds all hunt and eat other unclean animals, and many of them were totems of the idols believed in by the nations. Again the idea was to teach God's people the need to keep away from association with things which resembled sin, which would put ideas in the mind which tended towards sin rather than righteousness. This principle is so relevant today in connection with what we watch or read, for by presenting ourselves continually with sinful associations we are the more likely to ourselves fall into sin.

Deu 14:13 the red kite, the falcon and the kite after its kind-

It is common in primitive societies for tribes and individuals to have totems, an animal or plant which they are associated with. This practice is common today in central Africa. Seeing there are no animals unclean of themselves, as the New Testament makes clear, one reason for the specific designation of some animals as "unclean" may be because they were associated with local tribes or individuals who were to be treated as unclean. The meaning of some of the names of the designated "unclean" animals are suggestive of individuals.

Deu 14:14 every raven after its kind-

We note how Elijah was later to be made to depend upon food brought to him by unclean ravens (1 Kings 17:4-6). This was all part of God's program to educate him against exclusivity. God told Elijah that He had commanded unclean ravens to feed him; and thus He reminded Elijah of a basic fact, that God speaks to even unclean animals (Gen. 1:22)- and they obey him. The

ravens not only obeyed Yahweh in going to Elijah, but in not eating the food they were carrying. Elijah likely considered that the fact God spoke to him meant that he must therefore have some automatic superiority over others. But not so. It's the same with us. We can consider that because we have heard God's true voice, we thereby are justified before Him. But He speaks to and uses all, clean and unclean.

Deu 14:15 the ostrich, the owl, the seagull and the hawk after its kind-

The reference to seagulls shows that these laws were intended for Israel in the land, rather than whilst in the wilderness. We continually note the flexible nature of God's law given through Moses.

Deu 14:16 the little owl, the great owl and the horned owl-

The extensive stress upon not eating owls of any kind was because the local tribes considered that owls were the most human-like of all birds. They were therefore worshipped and considered as mediators between the gods and man. There was to be no even going near these birds, because association is the basis of so much downward sliding in spiritual terms.

Deu 14:17 the pelican, the vulture and the cormorant-

Some of the birds forbidden as unclean were thought to be good luck symbols, and their carcasses were used as medicines or potions used in idol worship. The vulture and pelican were amongst these. The take away lesson is that we are to avoid all associations with that which is pagan and anti-God.

Deu 14:18 the stork and the heron after its kind and the hoopoe and the bat-

These animals, the bat especially, were associated with tombs and the dead. They were thought to carry messages to the dead, and to facilitate the passage of the supposed "immortal soul" - a false teaching which the Bible knows nothing of. Is. 7 speaks of the chirping and muttering of the dead, alluding to the sounds made by these animals. Quite simply, Israel were to have nothing to do with these wrong ideas and the animals associated with them. The "hoopoe" is better "lapwing", known as 'the doctor bird' and clearly associated with pagan beliefs about healing.

Deu 14:19 All winged creeping things are unclean to you; they shall not be eaten-

The idea may be that they had the potential to fly, but often preferred to crawl on earth. Refusing to use spiritual potential was seen as a bad thing, and Israel didn't need even the unconscious association with anything which resembled that. This is why so much which passes for entertainment would be better not viewed nor listened to by Christians; there is nothing unclean in itself, but the subliminal associations are what drag us down.

Deu 14:20 Of all clean birds you may eat-

See on :11. But "birds" is not the same Hebrew word as in :11. The idea in the immediate context is "Of all clean winged things you may eat".

Deu 14:21 You must not eat of anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the foreigner living among you who is within your gates, that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner, for you are a holy people to Yahweh your God-

Ex. 22:31 says they were to throw such food to the dogs and not eat it. Perhaps "dogs" meant Gentiles. This command wasn't only for hygienic reasons. God wished to encourage His people to have a healthy work ethic, not taking short cuts, but eating animals they had raised themselves for that purpose. We live in a society where laziness and trying to live for free has become almost an art form. We cannot ultimately get around the curse, that we shall eat only as a result of the sweat of our own labour. We have to accept our humanity and our fallen condition, looking for the lifting of the curse in God's future Kingdom.

We note that whilst on the wilderness journey, the people were allowed to eat such carcasses although they would be unclean until evening (Lev. 17:15). We recall how they complained at the boredom of the manna, and longed for meat. It's as if God cut them some slack in allowing them to eat such carcasses, although it would make them unclean. But once settled in the land, they were not to do so at all. God's concession to human weakness is a constant theme in His dealings with man. But we are not to presume upon it, and if we love God we will seek to rise up higher levels rather than having a spirit of minimalism in our relationship with Him.

You must not boil a young goat in its mother's milk-

This was likely a pagan ritual which Israel weren't to follow. It may also be that God's sensitivity to the feelings of animals is coming out here; and He wishes us to live lives regulated by sensitivity to all of creation. See on Dt. 20:19. The laws in the "Book of the Covenant" abruptly end with this, as if it summed up the spirit of all the others (Ex. 23:19; 34:26). Kid goats were thought to be most tasty when boiled in their mother's milk. It seems that God considered this narcissistic and absolutely over indulgent, and without thought to the feelings of the mother goat; even though goats (rather than sheep) are at times a symbol of sinners and the unclean. The Mosaic law sought to inculcate a culture of kindness and extreme sensitivity to all, even animals. Read like this, it is similar to the prohibitions of killing on the same a cow and a calf, or a ewe and her lamb (Lev. 22:28). It is likely that this was also related to a pagan fertility ritual, performed at harvest time (which is the immediate context of the prohibition); and God didn't want His people to even remotely be associated with that. For He alone was the source of all fertility.

Deu 14:22 You must surely tithe all the increase of your seed which comes forth from the field year by year-

The Levites had their own land on which to grow crops, and the seed was to come from these tithes. It was Israel's refusal to support the Levites which left them without teachers of God's law, and resulted in the Levites having no time to study that law.

Deu 14:23 You shall eat before Yahweh your God, in the place which He shall choose to cause His name to dwell

there, the tithe of your grain, of your new wine and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock, that you may learn to respect Yahweh your God always-

LXX "the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to have his name called there", that is, the place which Yahweh chose as the place where men would call upon His Name in worship. And again we note that the commandments were not random tests of obedience; the process of taking time out of life to go that place and eat the tithes there, presumably as part of a peace offering, was "that you may learn". God's law is not a chain, a burdensome leash restraining human behaviour; but rather inculcates a self reinforcing upward spiral of spirituality and closeness to Him.

Deu 14:24 If the way is too long for you, so that when Yahweh your God shall bless you, you are not able to carry it because the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to set His name there is too far from you-

The blessing which would result in their being too far from the sanctuary is defined in Dt. 12:20 as being "When Yahweh your God enlarges your border". We never read of the land being enlarged, indeed their territory was progressively "cut short" (2 Kings 10:32) after Solomon's time and frequently in the time of the Judges, immediately after their entry into the land. There was never any signal from God that He had now enlarged the land and therefore this change of the law was allowed. If Israel had been obedient, then "the Lord your God shall enlarge thy border" (Dt. 12:20). Thus "blessed be He that enlarges Gad" (Dt. 33:20). Who knows the height

and depth, length and breadth of what could have been for God's people? And the same is true for us today. According to Israel's perception of the land, so it was defined for them.

Deu 14:25 then you must turn it into money and take the money in your hand and go to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose-

The law given in Dt. 12:20-22 about what was to happen when the land was enlarged doesn't feature this provision. We note that the law of Moses was flexible and open to change. That it should later be abrogated is therefore no surprise. The argument that each Mosaic law was eternal is therefore lacking in careful attention to the text of the law itself.

Deu 14:26 and you may spend the money on whatever your soul desires, cattle or sheep, wine or strong drink, or whatever your soul asks of you, and you may eat there before Yahweh your God, and rejoice, you and your household-

There was to be joy in giving to God rather than any sense of resentment; and the families ("your household") were to have this explained to them so that even the children learnt to rejoice in giving rather than being selfish. Again we see God's emphasis on the need for giving to be done cheerfully; He simply *loves* cheerful giving (2 Cor. 9:7).

Deu 14:27 The Levite who is within your gates you must not forsake, for he has no portion or inheritance with you-

God's ideal was that the Levites would live from the tithes given by Israel (Dt. 14:27); but He foresaw that this ideal level wouldn't be reached by them, therefore the Levites were given land on which to grow their own crops for survival. However, it must be noted that by opting to make use of God's concessions to human weakness, real spirituality became harder to achieve. Thus it was harder to accept Yahweh as King if they had a human king demanding their allegiance.

Deu 14:28 At the end of every three years you must bring forth all the tithe of your increase in the same year and store it within your gates-

There were three separate tithes commanded under the Law of Moses. Yet the tithing churches have simply said: 'There's something about tithing in the Old Testament. So, hey, give us 10% of your money!'. The first was the Levitical tithe of 10% on 100% of the produce for the first six years and was destined for the Levites and priests (see too Dt. 12:19). The second tithe was the Festival tithe of 10% on the 90% remaining produce after the Levitical tithe. This tithe had to be eaten in the presence of the Lord and was collected on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th years only. The third tithe was the tithe of the poor to be collected on the 3rd and 6th years only (Dt. 14:22-29; 26:12-15; Am. 4:4-5). No tithe was collected on the 7th year or Sabbatical year. The farmers were to let the land rest in that year. The tithe consisted of fruit, grain, wine and later animals that are treated as produce from the land. It never consisted of money. Tithes were

conducted annually and were based upon one's produce increase for the year. This just isn't talking about putting paper money or cheques on an offering plate each week as demanded by the tithing churches.

Deu 14:29 and the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the foreigner living among you and the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates, shall come and shall eat and be satisfied, that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do-

The early church began by having all things common, in imitation of how the priests had "like portions to eat" (Dt. 18:8). Notice the stress on the equality of the priests and the studied irrelevance of their personal wealth (1 Chron. 24:31; 25:8; 26:12). The Law was geared around the assumption that the priests would be so caught up in Yahweh's work that they would never be rich (consider Dt. 14:29), and the wonder of doing His work would compensate for their lack of physical possessions (Num. 18:23). Yet the early church couldn't sustain the intensity of their initial realization of these things.

We came into this world with nothing and can carry nothing out. In Isaiah's image we are as ragged prisoners in dark cells awaiting death, but set free by the light of the Gospel. We are all, in a sense, 'fatherless' and 'widows'. This is why Israel were given specific instruction to take care of such (Dt. 14:29) for in so doing they were to recognize their own needs. Realizing this, knowing it deep within the fiber of our beings, we ought to be able

to respond with the simple abandonment and “uncomplicated totality” of the desperate.

Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 15

Deu 15:1 At the end of every seven years you must make a release-

Lk. 6:35 has the year of release in mind, in the idea of lending without expecting anything back. The end of a 'seven' period suggests the end of the creation week. We are to live in the spirit of the Kingdom now, in our attitudes to others.

Deu 15:2 This is the method of the release: every creditor shall release that which he has lent to his neighbour. He must not demand it of his neighbour and his brother because Yahweh's release has been proclaimed-

The Hebrew for "proclaimed" means 'to call out, to announce', and the idea of proclaiming release / forgiveness [s.w.] of legitimate debt is the idea alluded to in the great commission- we are to call out, to announce to the world, the radical forgiveness of debt.

The final release was in the death of Christ releasing us from all our sins, which are likened to debts in the New Testament. We are therefore not to "demand" recompense for sin from others because of the great release proclaimed. Jesus foresaw the difficulty of doing this, and urges us to pray constantly that we forgive or release our debtors (Mt. 6:12). The year of release was proclaimed on the day of atonement, in the same way as the cross has initiated a time of release from sin. The idea of 'proclaiming' this release or forgiveness is behind the

language Luke uses to record the great commission, to proclaim this wonderful news to absolutely everybody—that their debt is cancelled.

Because God released, men were to release. God's release / forgiveness and ours are related. We are to forgive because He forgives, and there seems a suggestion in Mt. 16:19; 18:18 that what we bind and unloose is somehow confirmed by God in Heaven—our forgiveness or lack thereof becomes His. The very fact that *Yahweh* has released others means that we likewise ought to live in a spirit of releasing others from their debts to us: "The creditor shall release that which he hath lent... *because* the Lord's release hath been proclaimed" (Dt. 15:2 RV).

"Demand" or AV "exact" is s.w. to be a taskmaster, used of the Egyptians treating Israel like this (Ex. 3:7; 5:6,10,13,14). Unforgiveness and even demanding of others what we legitimately could, is effectively treating God's people as the Egyptians did. Our experience of deliverance from Egypt should mean that we will never likewise afflict others, but show them the same deliverance by grace which we experienced. The word is more usually translated "oppressor". For a creditor to demand repayment hardly seems like 'oppression', but God's view of our debt to Him, and the depth of His release of us, is such that He considers we have no right to demand back *any* debt. Indeed, to do so is seen by Him as oppression and abuse. In secular life, this seems a foolish and weak position; only those who have personally felt the depth of their own debt to God and gracious release will be motivated to release others. The sense of true re-

lease from debt should be so great to us that we simply would never think of demanding back debt from others, in whatever form. The Lord taught the same in the parable of the two debtors; the forgiven man failed to dwell upon the wonder of His release, and therefore demanding debts back from his brother.

The outlook of those who felt their salvation (the penny) was less by grace than the others became bitter: "Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" (Mt. 20:15). In saying this, the Lord was referring back to Dt. 15:9, which warned Israel not to have an evil eye towards their poverty stricken brother (cp. the unwanted labourer) who asked for a loan near the time of the year of release, when all debts were cancelled. In the year of release, Israel were "to remit every private debt... and not *demand* it of thy brother" (Dt. 15:2 LXX). This is behind Mt. 18:28, where Christ speaks of the man who demands repayment from his brother. The Lord is implying: You should live in the spirit of the year of release all the time, giving without expecting.

Deu 15:3 Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother you must release-

It is perhaps not the foreigner who lived with Israel who is in view, but the foreigner to whom Israel would lend if they were blessed for obedience (:6; Dt. 28:12). Just as God assumed He would enlarge their territory in line with their hoped for obedience (Dt. 14:24), so He legislated in hope that they would be obedient and be accordingly blessed. But His positive attitude was one of hope, for every indication was that this idol-carrying

community would not be obedient. We see here therefore His positive spirit in hoping for their obedience and blessing. And to this day, He seeks to save and bless. This Divine hope that He would bless His people for their obedience is continued in :4.

Deu 15:4 However there shall be no poor among you, for Yahweh will surely bless you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it-

See on :3. Moses knew that there would always be poor people in the land, even though if the Law was properly kept this would not be the case (:4,11). Having reminded them that if they were obedient, "there shall be no poor among you; for Yahweh will surely bless you", Moses goes on to comment that "the poor will never cease out of the land"- and he gives the legislation cognizant of this (:4,11). Moses realized by the time of Deuteronomy that they wouldn't make it to the blessings which were potentially possible. And yet he speaks so positively of how they would inherit the Kingdom. God recognizes that His people won't totally make it spiritually nor receive all the blessings they could, and yet this doesn't mean they won't be saved. This is a comfort for us in our spiritual incompleteness; and it also means that we shouldn't expect the community of God's people to be perfect. Even God doesn't expect that, and the very structure of His own law foresaw that.

"Save when there shall be no poor..." (AV) could be interpreted as meaning that Israelites could press for the restoration of debts when and if there were no poor within Israel. The implication could also be that by de-

manding the return of debts, the poor were driven into deeper poverty.

The spirit of not demanding debts and writing them off every seven years would not lead to poverty. And that is why people demand the return of debts- they fear they will become poor otherwise. Here we have a totally counter-instinctive command- to not demand debts to be repaid because there should be no fear of poverty amongst those who are the blessed of the Lord. We may lose the extra we lent- but not descend into poverty. That assurance should be enough.

Deu 15:5 if only you diligently listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe to do all this commandment which I command you this day-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; ; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1;

28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 15:6 For Yahweh your God will bless you, as He promised you, and you will lend to many nations but you shall not borrow; and you will rule over many nations but they shall not rule over you-

We see God's utter grace in that this blessing has often come true of Israel, despite their *disobedience*. For Israel would lend to others only if they were blessed for obedience (Dt. 28:12). We see here the Divine eagerness for blessing upon His people, and His earnest hope for

their loyalty to Him- although every evidence was that they were disloyal, as they still had with them the idols of Egypt.

Deu 15:7 If a poor man, one of your brothers, is with you within any of your gates in your land which Yahweh your God gives you, you must not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother-

Verse 4 has just predicted that if Israel were obedient, there would be no poor person. But as so often in Deuteronomy, there is the realistic acceptance that Israel will not be obedient, and an appropriate mechanism from God in dealing with even that situation. The context suggests therefore that the poor man was poor because of poor decisions and disobedience to God's word- but still there was to be generosity to him, without arguing that his poverty was his own fault. For we have all been saved by utter grace from the eternal consequence of our sins, and each sin was avoidable...

Deu 15:8 but you must surely open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, that which he lacks-

The same word is in Ps. 34:9 "there is no *want* to them that fear the Lord". Again, the point is that his need was perhaps due to his own poor behaviour. The same word is used in Proverbs to describe the need or want that comes to the lazy and unspiritual (Prov. 14:23; 21:5; 24:34). But still that need is to be responded to, as Proverbs also makes clear- the needy are to be helped. "He that gives to the poor [s.w.] shall not lack" (Prov. 28:27). That Proverb would appear a comment upon Dt. 15:8-10.

Deu 15:9 Beware that there is not a wicked thought in your heart saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand, and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing and he cries to Yahweh against you, it is sin to you-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

The Hebrew for 'thought' really means 'word'- the idea is to ensure that you don't have a self-talk that says...

that because the year of release was coming up soon, therefore you would not lend your brother anything, knowing that you had to forgive him the debt in the year of release. Here we have the OT equivalent of the New Testament 'devil'. We *can* control our self-talk, but we must be aware that it takes place. Moses is basically saying: 'Beware of your own self talk; see how you speak to yourself in unfinished sentences like "The year of release is at hand..."', resulting in you 'finishing the sentence' by unkind deeds'.

The Biblical record seems to very frequently seek to deconstruct popular ideas about sin and evil. One of the most widespread notions was the "evil eye", whereby it was believed that some people had an "evil eye" which could bring distress into the eyes of those upon whom they looked in jealousy or anger. This concept is alive and well in many areas to this day. The idea entered Judaism very strongly after the Babylonian captivity; the Babylonian Talmud is full of references to it. The sage Rav attributed many illnesses to the evil eye, and the Talmud even claimed that 99 out of 100 people died prematurely from this (Bava Metzia 107b). The Biblical deconstruction of this is through stressing that *God's* eye is all powerful in the destiny of His people (Dt. 11:12; Ps. 33:18); and that "an evil eye" refers to an *internal* attitude of mean spiritedness *within* people- e.g. an "evil eye" is understood as an ungenerous spirit in Dt. 15:9; Mt. 6:23; 20:15; or pure selfishness in Dt. 28:54,56; Prov. 23:6; 28:22. We must remember that the people of Biblical times understood an "evil eye" as an *external* ability

to look at someone and bring curses upon them. But the Bible redefines an "evil eye" as a purely *internal* attitude; and cosmic evil, even if it were to exist, need hold no fear for us- seeing the eyes of the only true God are running around the earth *for* us and not against us (2 Chron. 16:9).

Speaking in the context of serving *either* God *or* mammon, the Lord uttered some difficult words: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth... the light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness... how great is that darkness!" (Mt. 6:19-22). All this is in the context of not being materialistic. The Lord is drawing on the OT usage of "an evil eye"- and consistently, this idiom means someone who is selfishly materialistic (Prov. 22:9; 23:7; 28:22; Dt. 15:9). The NIV renders some of these idioms as "stingy" or "mean". A single eye refers to a generous spirit (1 Chron. 29:17 LXX), and a related Greek word occurs in 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11,13 with the sense of "generous". So surely the Lord is saying that our attitude to wealth controls our whole spirituality. Whether we have a mean or generous spirit will affect our whole life- an evil [stingy] eye means our whole body is full of darkness. Just let this sink in. If we are materialistic, our whole life will be filled with darkness, whatever our external pretensions may be, and there is a definite link to be made here with the "darkness" of rejection.

To not lend to one's poor brother will be counted to us as sin; a classic example of a sin of omission.

Deu 15:10 You must surely give to him, and your heart must not be grieved when you give to him, because for this Yahweh your God will bless you in all your work-

The Hebrew for "be grieved" is usually translated 'evil'. To feel mean towards helping someone who is in a fault of their own making [according to the rest of Old Covenant teaching about 'need' and 'poverty'] is a great evil, but we will only perceive that if we perceive our own poverty before God and His grace toward us- see :15.

And in all that you put your hand to-

Note the connection with the usage of 'hand' in :8. If you open your hand wide, then whatever you put your hand to will be blessed. There is here the implication of an upward spiral- if we open our hand to others, in not demanding of them that which we could and being generous to the need [not only financial] of our poor brother, then the work of our hand will be blessed yet more.

Deu 15:11 For the poor will never cease out of the land, therefore I command you, saying, You must surely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and to your poor, in your land-

They are "your" poor and "your" needy. Their issues and needs are *yours*. There's amazing psychological penetration here into the thought processes we have when we encounter need and poverty, in whatever sense. We so easily assume that firstly, it is 'their fault', and secondly, that someone else will respond- perhaps God directly. But the needs and poverty are *ours*. These two reasons are likely the most common reasons for our lack of response to others' need.

Dt. 15:7 foresaw that when confronted by the poor, there would be a tendency to “harden your heart and close your hand to your poor brother”; there was no mechanism suggested for determining his genuineness, but rather a command to respond. Indeed Israel were warned not to have “a thought in your wicked heart” and devise how not to be generous to the poor (Dt. 15:9); they were to “open your hand wide” to the poor who approached them (Dt. 15:11). Lest we think this was merely for Old Testament times- these verses are applied to us, by way of allusion, in 1 Jn. 3:17: “But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and *closes his heart* against him, how does the love of God abide in him?”. In Hebrew thought, “the hand” referred to power and ability. No matter how materially poor, we each have a “hand”- even if it's not a financial one. And we are to “open” it- the Hebrew word carrying the idea of unloosing, as in untying a sack. It's as if we're all tied and twisted up inside ourselves, and it's this which stops us responding. The most extrovert of persons is like this too- for to reach out to assist another's poverty involves our opening of ourselves and releasing the potential to help which we've each been given. And that is totally independent of our personality type. We are all Christ's servants, and we've each been given talents to trade. It's one of capitalism's worst myths that if you have no money, you're no use to anyone.

Deu 15:12 If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you and serves you six years, then in the seventh year you must let him go free from you-

The language of letting the servant go free, sending him away, but not letting him go empty but giving him of your good things- is all the language of the Egyptians sending the Israelites out of Egypt, but not "empty". And this is made explicit in :15. We are to treat others as we were treated by God when He redeemed us from Egypt. There are times and contexts in which we are effectively Egypt to others, having power over them- the power to forgive, for example.

Slaves could be bought out of slavery by others or by themselves somehow raising the required amount. Often they went into slavery in order to pay a debt. But six years was the maximum they could serve- that was enough to pay any debt. They could not be then forced to still pay some debt. This total freedom from debt may look forward to the intended "rest" of the Kingdom at the end of the 6 days / 6000 years of Biblical human history.

These commands repeat those of Ex. 21:2-8, which were the *mishpat* with which the law of Moses opened. The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed

to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 15:13 When you let him go free from you, you must not let him go empty-

The same word for "empty-handed" is used of how Israel didn't leave slavery in Egypt empty-handed (Ex. 3:21); and of how Jacob likewise did not return to his land from his slavery "empty-handed" but wealthy (Gen. 31:42). Constantly they were bidden see how they were being dealt with as their God had previously treated their fathers. And they were to remember this by not sending any slave away from them "empty-handed". Always they were to live life under the deep impression of how they had been redeemed themselves, and were to reflect that grace to others in every context and situation of their lives. And the new Israel likewise.

Deu 15:14 You must furnish him generously out of your flock, out of your threshing floor and out of your wine-press; as Yahweh your God has blessed you, you shall give to him-

As noted on :13, this abundant provision was to reflect the huge wealth they had on leaving Israel, laden down with jewels.

Deu 15:15 You must remember that you were a bond-servant in the land of Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you, therefore I command you this today-

Moses' frequent references in Deuteronomy to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from Egypt shows his concern that they were slipping back to Egypt / the world in their hearts (Dt. 13:5; 15:15; 16:12); as our Lord in his time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which he was redeeming us from this present evil world. See on :13.

One of the most repeated themes of Moses in Deuteronomy is the way he keeps on telling them to "remember" all the great things which God had done for them on their wilderness journey, and especially the wonder of how He had redeemed them as children (his audience had been under twenty years old when they went through the Red Sea). Moses really wanted them to overcome the human tendency to forget the greatness of God as manifested earlier in our lives and spiritual experience. Our tendency as the new Israel is just the same- to forget the wonder of baptism, of how God reached out His arm to save us.

Deu 15:16 If he tells you I will not go out from you because he loves you and your house, because he is well with you-

Ex. 21:5 says: "But if the servant shall plainly say, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children. I will not go out free'. The servant could retain his wife and children if he devoted himself to his master's house for the rest of his life. The situation was set up in order to make the

servant pay a price for his wife and children. He made a free choice to marry whilst a servant; and he was to make that choice aware of the huge long term price he was going to have to pay for it. That was in order to help him understand the long term commitment required from a man in marrying and having children. It was a resignation of his personal freedom (Ex. 21:5), and the man had to knowingly make that choice. We can deduce that the marriage was completely his choice; if it were forced upon him by the master, then this would be the kind of personal manipulation and robbing of personal freedom which the law of Moses outlaws. And that is the take away lesson from this- all the more relevant in our age of casual relationships, married men refusing to resign personal freedom and fathering of children without taking personal responsibility.

The Lord's crucifixion was likened to His ear (His hearing of the master's word) being nailed to an upright piece of wood (cp. the cross; Ex. 21:6 = Ps. 40:6-8 = Heb. 10:5-12). That was the sign of His total dedication to the house of Yahweh, but it was motivated by His love for us, and commitment to entering an eternal relationship with us His family. His relationship with us is described as "I and the children whom God has given me" (Heb. 2:13). This would allude to this situation, where the servant was 'given' a wife and thence children by the master, God (Ex. 21:4). The children were given to Him by God, the master, because He plainly declared His love for us, His wife and children. And that plain declaration was surely on the cross.

Deu 15:17 then you shall take an awl and thrust it through his ear to the door, and he shall be your servant forever. Also to your female servant you shall do likewise-

The servant was saying that he was now permanently attached to the household, symbolized by his ear being physically attached to it. The ear was chosen because this was a symbol of obedience to the master's word. R.E. Clements notes that this alludes to the ancient pagan practice whereby "a household god would have been kept by the threshold of a house to guard it" (R.E. Clements, *Exodus* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1972) p. 133). Moses is attacking this idea- by saying that God, Israel's God, is the One there- and not the household gods which those around Israel believed were there. See on Ex. 12:7.

This custom is alluded to in Ps. 40:6, and applied to Christ in Heb. 10:5-10. For love of us, the wife whom He was given by God His "master" (:16), Christ chose to stay in the Father's house for ever. The nailing of the ear to a piece of wood is understood in Hebrews 10 as prophetic of Christ's nailing to the cross. The ear represented obedient listening to the Master's word. Christ on the cross was ultimately obedient to God's word- for our sakes. That we are seen as His wife should inspire us to the utmost faithfulness and support of His cause in this world.

The question is whether this apparently lifelong commitment was undone by the provisions for the release of slaves at the year of Jubilee. The nature of the language used here would suggest that the freedom of the

year of Jubilee didn't apply in this case. So we again see how the law of Moses, like any legal code, had internal contradictions, and times when one law must take precedence over another. These features of the law of Moses were in order to elicit thoughtful obedience to it, rather than blind obedience of a perfectly consistent legal code. For the law was to inculcate thoughtful relationships, both with God and man.

Deu 15:18 It must not seem hard to you-

We continually notice the extreme attention paid by God to mental attitudes. No other legal code has ever featured anything like this. It is a reflection of the degree to which God judges the heart, and mental attitudes are supremely important to Him.

When you let him go free from you, for he was worth double the hire of a hireling; he has served you six years; and Yahweh your God will bless you in all that you do-

The phrase "let go" is often used of how God let Israel go from Egypt, overruling how the wicked Pharaoh refused to let the people go. The term is used later in the Mosaic legislation; the way Israel had been "let go" from Egypt was to determine how they "let go" others from slavery (Dt. 15:12,13,18); their own experience of redemption was to influence how they released others. Just as ours should. The letting go of the scapegoat into the wilderness was likewise to remind them of how they had been let go from Egypt into the wilderness without being slain for their sins- all by grace (Lev. 14:7,53; 16:10,21,22,26).

Deu 15:19 All the firstborn males that are born of your herd and of your flock you must sanctify to Yahweh your God; you must do no work with the firstborn of your herd, nor shear the firstborn of your flock-

It was God's initial intention that all the firstborn males should be sanctified to His service, from whatever tribe (Ex. 13:2). But this plan didn't work, and so He called one tribe (Levi) to be His sanctified priests. And they also didn't really do their ministry, and so under the new covenant, all are priests. But the command to still give the firstborn of their animals was a reminder of God's ideal intentions. Ex. 13:2 also implied that the sacrificial animals would be provided by the firstborn of every animal. But this plan also didn't work.

Deu 15:20 You must eat it before Yahweh your God year by year in the place which Yahweh shall choose, you and your household-

The idea was that every family in Israel came up at least once per year to the sanctuary. The firstborn animals were to be kept and then brought up to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was intended to be a point of national focus, and this reflects God's great interest in unity amongst His people. But God never stated that He had chosen a place in Israel, at least not [arguably] until the time of David. Israel were simply not responsive enough to enable all His intended plans to come about, and therefore so much of the law was not possible of complete fulfilment as intended.

Deu 15:21 If it has any blemish, is lame or blind or has any defect whatever, you must not sacrifice it to Yahweh your God-

A person who feels they are somehow a nice guy and worthy of invitation will be the one who tends to consider others as unworthy of invitation to the Kingdom. He or she who perceives their own desperation will eagerly invite even those they consider to be in the very pits of human society. The lame, blind etc. were not allowed to serve God under the law (Lev. 21:18), nor be offered as sacrifices (Dt. 15:21), nor come within the holy city (2 Sam. 5:6-8). The Lord purposefully healed multitudes of lame and blind (Mt. 15:30), and allowed them to come to Him in the temple (Mt. 21:14). His acted out message was clearly that those who were despised as unfit for God's service were now being welcomed by Him into that service. The lame and blind were despised because they couldn't work. They had to rely on the grace of others. Here again is a crucial teaching: those called are those who can't do the works, but depend upon grace.

Deu 15:22 You must eat it within your gates. The unclean and the clean shall eat it alike, as the gazelle and as the hart-

They were allowed to kill animals for food for their own use, and being ritually unclean was no barrier to eating such meat. The gazelle and hart, GNB "deer or antelope", were given as examples of clean animals which could be eaten, perhaps clarifying the question of whether they could eat animals killed in hunting, who died from arrows at a distance from the hunter, and

whose blood could only be poured out some time after killing them.

Deu 15:23 Only you must not eat its blood. You must pour it out on the ground as water-

The blood was understood as representing life (:23; Lev. 17:11). We are not to take life to ourselves; not merely in that we aren't to murder, but we also aren't to assume that our lives, or any life, is in fact ours to use or dominate for ourselves. Our lives and those of others are God's, and we cannot take any life to ourselves.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 16

Deu 16:1 Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to Yahweh your God, for in the month of Abib Yahweh your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night-

Israel both kept Passover and went through the Red Sea at night. Indeed, it is stressed six times in Ex. 12 that it was "night", and hence Dt. 16:1 reminds them to carefully keep the Passover (i.e. at night), "for... your God brought you forth out of Egypt by night". Other latter day prophecies speak of the events of the second coming being at "night": Lot left Sodom in the very early hours of the morning; and it was "at midnight (that) there was a cry made" informing the virgins of their Lord's return (Mt. 25:6).

Deu 16:2 You must sacrifice the Passover to Yahweh your God from the flock and the herd, in the place which Yahweh shall choose to cause His name to dwell there-

This seems to imply that now, in the 'second law' Moses was giving in Deuteronomy, the Passover sacrifice didn't necessarily have to be a lamb, and it could be boiled not just roasted (:7). See on Dt. 20:14. So eager is God for our fellowship that He is prepared to make concessions to our human situations; and we should have that spirit in dealing with others.

The softness of Moses, the earnestness of his desire for their obedience, his eagerness to work with them in their humanity, is shown by the concessions to human

weakness which he makes in Deuteronomy (with God's confirmation, of course). When they attacked a foreign city, OK, Moses says, you can take the women for yourselves- even though this is contrary to the spirit of earlier commands (Dt. 20:14; 21:11). Likewise with the provisions for having a human king (Dt. 17:17) and divorce (Dt. 24:1-4). He knew the hardness of Israel's hearts, their likelihood to give way to temptation, and so he made concessions contrary to the principles behind other parts of the Law (Mt. 19:8). And Dt. 16:2 seems to imply that now, the Passover sacrifice didn't necessarily have to be a lamb, it could be any animal from the flock or herd, and it could be boiled not just roasted (see on :7).

Deu 16:3 You must eat no leavened bread with it. You must eat unleavened bread with it seven days, the bread of affliction, for you came forth out of the land of Egypt in haste, that you may remember the day when you came forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of your life-

"Therefore let us keep the feast (the breaking of bread, the new Passover), not with old leaven... of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8). This is echoing Moses' command to keep the Passover feast without leaven (Ex. 12:15; Dt. 16:3). Paul saw himself as Moses in trying to save a generally unresponsive and ungrateful Israel.

Similarly in Dt. 16:3 the unleavened bread is called the "bread of affliction", whilst in 1 Cor. 5:8 it is called the "unleavened bread of sincerity and Truth", as if being sincere and true and not having malice and bitterness in

our hearts is a result of much mental affliction and exercising of the mind.

Passover was intended as a personal looking back to their beginnings, both as a nation and individually . It was to remind them of the day they came out of Egypt, all their lives (Dt. 16:3). This was written in the 40th year of their wanderings, as they were about to enter Canaan. Those who had literally come out of Egypt were largely dead; this verse is a general command to Jews of all generations. So God wanted them to see that in a sense they personally came out of Egypt at that time, even though they were not then born. So with us, while we were yet sinners, before we were born, Christ died for us. On the cross all God's people were as it were taken out of Egypt, in prospect delivered from sin.

Deu 16:4 No yeast shall be seen with you in all your borders seven days, neither shall any of the flesh, which you sacrifice the first day at evening, remain all night until the morning-

Our open approach to table fellowship doesn't mean we can't tell right from wrong. Light has no fellowship with darkness. However, our responsibility for working this out in practice is very personal. Each individual Israelite had to ensure that there was no leaven in his or her immediate area on Passover night. "Your borders" is 'you' singular. The Israelite could only be responsible for their local area / home. We must not slip into a mindset which is endlessly concerned with the supposed weaknesses of others next door.

Deu 16:5 You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which Yahweh your God gives you-

The first Passover was kept in their homes; but the commandments given about the first Passover were not applicable to the Passover generally. For now it is solemnly stressed that the Passover is not to be kept in homes as it was the first time it was kept, but only at the sanctuary (:6). Likewise the command to not eat the first Passover with Gentiles is often misused by "closed table" advocates; but they overlook the clear difference with the later Passover regulations, where Gentiles were welcome to eat it.

Deu 16:6 but at the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell in, there you must sacrifice the Passover at evening, at the going down of the sun, at the time that you came forth out of Egypt-

Although the first Passover differed in some ways from the later feast (see on :5), it was to be slain in the evening, as the first Passover lamb was (Ex. 12:6). But Israel left Egypt some hours later, at night. But here the slaying of the sacrifice and Israel's 'going forth' from Egypt are equated. And this looks ahead to the effect of the death of the Lord Jesus as the Passover lamb. We thereby were freed from Egypt, and should in response to His sacrifice move on out of this world, which is represented by Egypt .

Deu 16:7 You must roast and eat it in the place which Yahweh your God shall choose; and you shall turn in the morning and go to your tents-

See on :2. Israel were told specifically that the Passover lamb must be roasted and not boiled (Ex. 12:9 uses two distinct words for 'boiled' and 'roasted'). But the word used in Ex. 12:9 for "boiled" is that used in Dt. 16:7 of how the Passover could be boiled, although many Bible versions misleadingly translate the word there as "roast". The translators need not have feared such contradiction. For it is the contradiction of grace. Moses in Dt. 16:2,7 was allowing a less strict observation of the Passover than originally intended, typical of the way Deuteronomy, 'the second law', seems to make concessions to Israel's weaknesses. Or it could be that here we have another example of where the Passover regulations given in Exodus were specific only to that time at the exodus. Thus a foreigner was not allowed to eat of that sacrifice, but foreigners were welcome to eat of the Passover later.

At the first Passover, which they were re-living, they left Egypt at night and in the morning went into the promised land. They were to imagine their homes as in a sense the promised land; there the principles of the Kingdom were to be upheld so that the home became a small imitation of the Kingdom. That principle applies to us too.

Ex. 12:10 implies they spent the whole night eating the meal as zealously as possible, because the aim was not to have any left by the morning. So we must make the maximum possible use of the spiritual help and forgiveness given in Christ, before the morning of His coming is here and it is too late to gain help. Dt. 16:7 also indi-

cates the whole night was spent eating: "Thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the lord shall chose; and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents" . On this first occasion, they literally left Egypt that same night. The sense of urgency and intensity is hard to miss, yet so difficult to replicate in our own experience.

Deu 16:8 For six days you must eat unleavened bread. On the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to Yahweh your God; you shall do no work-

The leaven or yeast in our context is to be understood as the leaven of malice and wickedness (1 Cor. 5:8). The search for leaven at the time of the Passover would therefore look ahead to our self examination at the breaking of bread. The equivalent legislation in Ex. 12:15,16; 13:7,8 stresses that they were to have no leaven in their homes. But now in the maturity of Deuteronomy, Moses stresses "you shall do no work". To be technically obedient to regulations about yeast was easier than to learn the lesson of salvation by grace rather than works.

"Solemn assembly" is LXX *ekklesia*. This is the word rendered "church" in the New Testament. We could reason from this therefore that "church" specifically refers to a gathering of God's people. At that time and during those moments, they are a church. When the entire community of believers is referred to as "church", this is how God views them- as if they are all gathered together at a gathering or convocation before Him. The word in its Biblical usage therefore doesn't refer to what we might call a denomination or fellowship.

Deu 16:9 You must count for yourselves seven weeks: from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain you shall begin to number seven weeks-

These are the 50 days of Lev. 23:16, which led to the Greek term "Pentecost". The putting of the sickle to the barley harvest was therefore at Passover (Ex. 9:31). The wheat harvest was seven weeks after this. The Lord's death at Passover was as the barley harvest, and we recall that barley was the food of the poor. He died on 13 / 14 Nissan, and resurrected on 16/17 Nissan, which was when the 50 days to Pentecost began to be counted from; for that was the time when the sickle was put to the grain and the firstfruits harvested (Lev. 23:15). But at the feast of Pentecost 50 days later, there were the baptisms of 3000 people. This was as it were the wheat harvest, of which the Lord's resurrection was a foretaste and firstfruit (1 Cor. 15:20,23). That great multitude represented all who would afterwards believe, and be finally harvested at the last day.

Deu 16:10 You must keep the feast of weeks to Yahweh your God with a tribute of a freewill offering, which you shall give according as Yahweh your God blesses you-

The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos. 14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other

legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

Deu 16:11 You shall rejoice before Yahweh your God, you, your son, your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your gates and the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, who are among you, in the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there-

The idea was that every family in Israel came up at least once per year to the sanctuary. The firstborn animals were to be kept and then brought up to the sanctuary. The sanctuary was intended to be a point of national focus, and this reflects God's great interest in unity amongst His people. But God never stated that He had chosen a place in Israel, at least not [arguably] until the time of David. Israel were simply not responsive enough to enable all His intended plans to come about, and therefore so much of the law was not possible of complete fulfilment as intended.

Deu 16:12 You must remember that you were a bond-servant in Egypt, and you shall observe and do these statutes-

Moses' frequent references in Deuteronomy to the way in which the Exodus had separated Israel from

Egypt shows his concern that they were slipping back to Egypt / the world in their hearts (Dt. 13:5; 15:15; 16:12); as our Lord in his time of dying was so strongly aware of the way in which he was redeeming us from this present evil world. We too are to ever remember our status before baptism, which was our equivalent to the Red Sea crossing.

Deu 16:13 You must keep the feast of tents seven days after you have gathered in from your threshing floor and from your winepress-

There are connections between the various sections of Revelation and the Jewish feasts. Here's a summary:

Revelation 5 Passover Rev. 5:6,9 = Ex. 12:13

Revelation 7 Tabernacles Rev. 7:9,15,16 RV = Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Zech. 14:16-20

Revelation 8,9 Day Of Atonement Lev. 16:31; more detailed links in Harry Whittaker, *Revelation: A Biblical Approach* pp. 104,105.

Revelation 11 Dedication & Purim The Torah readings for these feasts were Num. 7 and Zech. 2- 4 about the dedication of the temple; Rev. 11:10 = Esther 9:19,22. The period from Tabernacles to Purim is exactly 5 months- as mentioned in Rev. 9:5

Revelation 12 Pentecost & Passover The Jews traditionally ask: "On this Sabbath, shall I reap?"

Revelation 14 Tabernacles

Revelation 15 + 16 Atonement & Passover Lev. 16; Ps. 118 the Hallel Psalm

Revelation 19 Passover Ps. 113,114 Passover Psalms

Revelation 21,22 Tabernacles

Laying out the material chronologically, we have:

Chapter 5: Passover

6 months

Chapter 7: Tabernacles

Chapters 8 & 9: Atonement and Tabernacles

1 year

Chapter 11: Dedication 5 months (Rev 9:5)

Chapter 11: Purim

Chapter 12: Passover and Pentecost

Chapter 14: Tabernacles

1 year

Chapter 15: Atonement

Chapter 16 & 19: Passover

Chapter 21 & 22: Tabernacles

1 year

The conclusion would therefore be that we have in the book of Revelation a literal account of the three and a half years tribulation, with the Jewish feasts being the key marker points. And it would appear there will be an especial period of five months tribulation as described between Revelation chapters 9 and 11.

Deu 16:14 and you shall rejoice in your feast, you, your son and your daughter, your male servant, your female servant and the Levite, the foreigner, the fatherless and the widow, who are within your gates-

The feasts were intended as a time of fellowship between male and female, bond and free, and Jew and Gentile (Gal. 3:27-29). They looked ahead to the spirit of the breaking of bread meeting. We note that the feasts were

open to children and to the foreigner; there was an open table policy.

Deu 16:15 You must keep a feast to Yahweh your God seven days in the place which Yahweh shall choose. Because Yahweh your God will bless you in all your increase and in all the work of your hands, you shall be altogether joyful-

See on Ps. 90:3. Moses was this confident of them, that God would give them the blessings for obedience, just as Paul was confident of the obedience of the Corinthians despite it seeming humanly unlikely (2 Cor. 10:6). It's far easier to have a negative attitude about people than a positive one; but God's grace and imputing of righteousness to us personally should help us be positive about others.

Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is constantly thinking of Israel in the land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation.

Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. "The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands", even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Moses sounds as if his prayer of Ps. 90:17 has been answered: "Let the grace of the Lord our God be upon us; establish the work of our hands for us; yes, establish the work of our hands". God was willing to hearken to Moses as he prayed so, so earnestly, He was willing to change His expressed purpose in respect to destroying Israel (perhaps Ps. 90 is the transcript of this prayer- Ps. 90:3 in Hebrew asks God not to destroy the children of men, and to repent concerning His servants in:13-17). It should also be noted that Moses as a type of Christ was not the High Priest. He mediated for Israel on a voluntary basis; not because he was under any duty to offer up their prayers. Indeed, they didn't make any prayers for him to offer up. He pleaded with God for them on his own initiative, rather than being asked by them to do so. And this is the basis of Christ's mediation for us; he pleads for us even when we know not what to pray for, even when we don't realize the need to beseech the Father. Moses' mediation, not so much Aaron's offerings, are the prototype which the New Testament uses to explain the Lord's present work. In the Apocryphal As-

sumption of Moses (1:14), Moses is made to say of God: "He designed and devised me and he prepared me before the foundation of the world, that I should be the mediator". These words are alluded to in a number of NT passages. Clearly we are intended to see Moses' mediation as typical of the Lord's. His freewill mediation was the basis of Israel's salvation (Hos. 12:13). Likewise the intensity of his prayers and the supremacy of his willingness to sacrifice himself for them was tragically unknown to them at the time. It's almost sad that these things have to be typical of the Lord's preservation and redemption of us his thick-skinned and unknowing people.

Deu 16:16 Three times in a year must all your males appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, in the feast of weeks and in the feast of tents-

"Appear" translates a Hebrew word elsewhere translated approve, discern, gaze upon, take heed, look upon oneself, perceive, shew oneself. His very presence before the Lord would have this effect: he would be revealed openly to God, and he would see himself as he was. This was the intention; and yet Yahweh went on to warn them not to appear before Him "empty", vainly, 'to no effect'. Behold the intense relevance to our appearing before the Lord at our Passover: we can *so easily* present ourselves there 'to no effect', when the intention is that we should be manifesting ourselves to ourselves and to God. The familiar order of service, the well known hymns, the presence of familiar and often family

faces...these factors (not wrong in themselves) all encourage us to 'appear' there to no effect.

They must not appear before Yahweh empty-

"Empty" may mean that they were to not attend without bringing a sacrifice, with empty hands. But "empty" is s.w. "without cause", "in vain". Attendance at the feasts was not to be mere ritual, appearing before Yahweh for no purpose. The meaning of the feasts was to be allowed to have the spiritual results intended. And this is a challenge to all whose Christian lives involve regular attendance at meetings. We can so easily slip into a rut of ritual observance, just going through motions "without cause".

Material giving to the Lord's cause was associated with the breaking of bread in the early church (Acts 2:42-46; 1 Cor. 16:1,2), after the pattern of how every male was not to appear empty before Yahweh (Heb. 'to appear for no cause') at the Jewish feasts (Dt. 16:16). We cannot celebrate His grace / giving to us without response.

Deu 16:17 every man shall give as he is able-

The Mosaic Law countered the idea that only the rich can be generous. They all had to tithe. And it's possible to argue that they had to give around 27%, not just 10% (10% to the Levites, 10% of the rest to support the feasts; and 10% of the rest for the poor). The purification after childbirth and the cleansing of the leper allowed a lower grade of offering to be made by the very poor- to underline that *no one* is exempted from giving to the Lord, no matter how poor they are. Consider the

emphasis: "Every man shall give *as he is able*... he shall offer *even such as he is able to get*... then the disciples (consciously motivated by these principles?) *every man according to his ability*, determined to send relief... let *every one of you* lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (Dt. 16:17; Lev. 14:30,31; Acts 11:29; 1 Cor. 16:2). God reckons a man's generosity according to what he has; if there is the desire to give, a generous spirit, then this is seen as generosity. This is exemplified by the Lord's high estimation of the widow's giving. The amount was not as important as the spirit behind it. "The Lord blesseth a cheerful giver, and will supply the deficiency of his works" (Prov. 22:8 LXX; although not in the Hebrew text, this passage is quoted in the NT as inspired).

According to the blessing of Yahweh your God which He has given you-

Notice the past tense. Moses often speaks of the "blessing" which God would give them for obedience; but he here speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it. The blessings of the Kingdom were already obtained for us on the cross. It's for us to as it were claim them.

Despite being fully aware of how weak Israel were, Moses often speaks of the "blessing" which God would give them for obedience; he even speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it: "Every man shall give as he is able (once he is settled in the land), according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he

hath given thee" (Dt. 16:17). Moses speaks with confidence of how God would grant them the blessing of the land and victory over their enemies, even though these things were conditional upon their obedience (Dt. 19:1; 20:13), and even though Moses clearly knew that most of them would disobey. The conclusion from this is that Moses thought so much of that minority who would obey his covenant, who would grasp the spirit of his life and the speech he was now making. And our Lord likewise- in his feelings for us, we trust.

The Mosaic command to give, every man according to the blessing with which God had blessed him (Dt. 16:17), is purposely similar in phrasing to the command to eat of the Passover lamb, every man according to his need; and to partake of the manna (cp. the Lord Jesus), every man according to his need (Ex. 12:4; 16:6,16). According to the desperation of our need, so we partake of Christ; and in response, according to our blessing, we give, in response to the grace of His giving.

Deu 16:18 You shall make judges and officers in all your gates which Yahweh your God gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment-

This was specifically obeyed in 2 Chron. 19:7, because the previous system had been open to "respect of persons" and bribes. This was in distinction to how the judgment was done as in most primitive societies, by the heads of families. But that was bound to be open to "respect of persons" and bribes. Therefore nepotism was to be outlawed by the appointment of a judiciary.

Deu 16:19 You must not twist justice, you must not respect persons, neither must you take a bribe; for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and perverts the words of the righteous-

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 16:20 You must follow that which is altogether just-

Heb. "justice, justice". In the days before underlining or italic print, emphasis was achieved by repeating a word twice- e.g. "Justice, justice" (Dt. 16:20); "Comfort, comfort" (Is. 40:1). It has been pointed out that only one of the ten commandments is repeated twice: "You shall

not covet". This sober emphasis upon not coveting was surely a reflection of how God perceived the huge danger of His people seeking to 'possess' things as theirs.

That you may live, and inherit the land which Yahweh your God gives you-

The Pharisees had the "key of knowledge" that enabled men to reach the Kingdom (Lk. 11:52); but they took it away from men, and thus stopped them entering (Mt. 23:13). Likewise if the elders / judges of Israel had been wise, the entire people would have entered the land.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess / inherit". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they

were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 16:21 You must not plant for yourselves an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of Yahweh your God, which you shall make for yourselves-

Moses adds a whole series of apparently 'minor' commands which were designed to make obedience easier to the others already given. Thus he tells them in Deuteronomy not to plant a grove of trees near the altar of God - because he knew this would provoke the possibility of mixing Yahweh worship with that of the surrounding world (Dt. 16:21). There was to be no possibility of worshipping idols in the name of Yahweh worship; there was not even to be the possibility of some subliminal suggestion of it arising from having a grove of trees near an altar. Likewise he commands any future king not to send God's people to Egypt to buy horses because he could see that this would tempt them to go back to Egypt permanently (Dt. 17:16). There are many other example of this kind of thing (Dt. 14:24; 15:18; 17:17-19; 18:9; 20:7,8). The point is that Moses had thought long and hard about the ways in which Israel would be tempted to sin, and his words and innermost desire were devoted to helping them overcome. Glorious ditto for the Lord Jesus.

We note that Gideon's father had the Asherah grove by the altar (Jud. 16:25). This was studied disobedience

to Dt. 16:21: "You must not plant for yourselves an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of Yahweh your God, which you shall make for yourselves". His repentance, apparently overnight, is therefore the more remarkable. We also see how Yahweh worship had become mixed with pagan worship. "The altar" in view was that of Yahweh, but it had become the altar of Baal because of the mixing of truth and error, of Yahweh and pagan worship. This worship of the flesh in the appearance of Yahweh worship is in fact our abiding temptation, as it was for Israel. They never abrogated Yahweh worship, but worshipped idols in the name of Yahweh worship. We, e.g., may gossip in the name of "truth" or "love"; purchase luxury items or property in the name of worshipping God or serving Him.

Deu 16:22 Neither shall you set yourself up a pillar, which Yahweh your God hates-

Again, there was not even to be the possibility of some subliminal suggestion toward idol worship. The setting up of pillars as memorials was done even by Jacob, but clearly there was a hint of idolatry in them, and now they were forbidden. We likewise need to avoid all subliminal suggestions toward sin from our lives.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 17

Deu 17:1 You must not sacrifice to Yahweh your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish or anything imperfect, for that is an abomination to Yahweh your God-

This looked ahead to the unblemished character of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:7). The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

Deu 17:2 If there is found in the midst of you, within any of your gates which Yahweh your God gives you, a man or woman who does that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh your God in transgressing His covenant-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of

God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 17:3 and has gone and served other gods and worshipped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the army of the sky, which I have not commanded-

Moses told Israel this when they had carried the star of Remphan and the tabernacle of Moloch through the wilderness, and had taken the idols of Egypt with them (Ez. 20:7,8). Joshua had to appeal to that generation to put away their idols. We see here how Moses was talking on one level, but the people were completely on another.

Deu 17:4 and it is told you and you have heard of it, then you must inquire diligently-

Reports of wrong doing cannot all, therefore, be shrugged off as gossip which we don't want to hear. That can be a lazy response. The far harder response is to do as asked here, to "inquire diligently" and establish facts.

Behold, if it is true and certain that such abomination is done in Israel-

Moses knew that such idolatry was ongoing in Israel as he spoke. But it is left an open question as to why he did nothing further than lament it at the end of Deuteronomy. Perhaps he reflected God's great enthusi-

asm for Israel at this time, for He did not behold iniquity in Jacob (Num. 23:21), and presents Himself in Jeremiah as having fallen totally in love with Israel in the wilderness, wishing not to see their unfaithfulness.

Deu 17:5 then you must bring forth that man or that woman who has done this evil thing to your gates, even the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death with stones-

The use of stoning (Dt. 13:10; 17:5; 21:21; 22:21,24) was to show their connection with the death of the apostate. It was to also make them realize that any attempt to deny the saving work of God in bringing them out of Egypt, or attempt to reverse it by returning them to bondage, was worthy of death (Dt. 13:10). We note that false teaching, enticing others to sin, is seen as the most serious kind of sin. The New Testament teaching about church discipline takes a similar approach; moral weakness of individuals was tolerated, although criticized; but those teaching such behaviour were condemned. Stoning resulted in the covering of the body with the dust of the earth, as if recognizing that the death being brought about was also to be the fate of all under the curse in Eden.

Deu 17:6 At the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he who is to die be put to death. At the mouth of one witness he must not be put to death-

Insisting on more than one witness before accepting the truth of an allegation meant that gossip and slander were limited; and Jesus applies this principle to dealing with disputes within His church (Mt. 18:16). Although

His teaching about not condemning our brethren meant that He didn't advocate as it were 'putting to death', but rather stern rebuke and damage limitation. Those who served other gods had to die on the testimony of two or three witnesses. This idea is twice alluded to in the New Testament in the context of making the decision to cease fellowship with someone (Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). The implication is that death under the Old Covenant pointed forward to first century church discipline under the New Covenant. But we must note that the reason for this was serving other gods and wilful departing from covenant relationship with the Lord- not minor reasons.

Deu 17:7 The hand of the witnesses must be first on him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you-

There is stress upon close family members were to be the first to slay apostate members whose apostacy they had reported (Dt. 13:9; 17:7). They were being taught that they had to love God far more than family, and the Lord Jesus continued this teaching (Mt. 10:37).

Deu 17:8 If there arises a matter too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within your gates, then go up to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose-

Judging between "blood and blood" may refer to judging whether between murder and manslaughter. The sanctuary was intended to be a point of national focus, and this reflects God's great interest in unity amongst His people. But God never stated that He had

chosen a place in Israel, at least not [arguably] until the time of David. Israel were simply not responsive enough to enable all His intended plans to come about, and therefore so much of the law was not possible of complete fulfilment as intended.

Deu 17:9 and come to the priests the Levites and to the judge who shall be in those days and ask. They shall show you the sentence of judgment-

David and Solomon appear to have concentrated all judgment in themselves, setting themselves up effectively as both king and priest, for the "judge" was to be a priest. Jehoshaphat reformed this by placing the power of judgment in the hands of a group of Levites, priests and heads of families as the higher court in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 19:5-8). But still Jehoshaphat didn't appoint a singular senior judge, as required in Dt. 17:9. We note from Dt. 19:17 that this singular priestly supreme judge is called "Yahweh", because he was to be Yahweh's supreme representative when it came to judgment. But it seems even the best kings of Judah preferred to keep that office in their own power.

Deu 17:10 You must do according to the sentence which they shall show you from that place which Yahweh shall choose, and you must observe to do according to all that they shall teach you-

LXX "And thou shalt act according to the thing which they shall report to thee out of the place which the Lord thy God shall choose, and thou shalt observe to do all whatsoever shall have been by law appointed to thee". The idea may be that their judgment was based up-

on God's law, but they would ask Him for wisdom as to how to interpret it, and they in turn would "report" that in making judgments. And yet it seems that the priesthood failed to be just judges, as the prophets very often lament the corrupt judiciary in the same context as complaining of a corrupt priesthood. They didn't judge according to God's revealed word, nor seek His guidance; but judged according to their own vested interests. Just as we can today.

Deu 17:11 according to the law which they shall teach you and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, that you shall do. You must not turn aside from the sentence which they shall show you-

The system of judges proposed by Jethro didn't really work, because Moses again felt the burden was too great for him (see on Num. 11:11), and so the 70 Spirit filled elders were appointed (Num. 11:16). But this too didn't really work; because in Dt. 17:11; 21:5 we seem to read of the priests effectively being the judges, under the direct control of Moses and Aaron. The simple truth was that there was hardly a wise man amongst them.

To the right hand or to the left-

The wall of water on their right hand and left when they crossed the Red Sea is twice emphasized (Ex. 14:22,29). It is alluded to later, when they are urged to not depart from God's way, not to the right hand nor left (Dt. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14). We passed through the Red Sea when we were baptized (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were set upon a path which is walled up to keep us within it. And we are to remain in that path upon which we were set.

To turn aside from it would be as foolish as Israel turning away from their path and trying to walk into the walls of water.

Deu 17:12 The man who does presumptuously in not listening to the priest who stands to minister there before Yahweh your God, or to the judge, that man shall die, and you must put away the evil from Israel-

"The evil one" in the Old Testament was always "the evil man in Israel" (Dt. 17:12; 19:19; 22:21–24 cp. 1 Cor. 5:13) – never a superhuman being, not any personal, superhuman Satan.

Deu 17:13 All the people shall hear and fear and do no more presumptuously-

David however did act presumptuously, and yet lived- by grace. 2 Sam. 12:9 says that he "despised the word of Yahweh". Indeed, David "despised the commandment (word) of the Lord... you despised me" (2 Sam. 12:9,10). David learnt that his attitude to God's word was his attitude to God- for the word of God, in that sense, was and is God. The fact that he is condemned for having "despised the commandment of the Lord" in his sin with Bathsheba indicates that David knew all along what God's will really was. The fact that the flesh took over does not in any way mitigate his responsibility in this. This is a direct quote from the Law's definition of the sin of presumption: "The soul that does anything presumptuously... because he has despised the word of the Lord... that soul shall utterly be cut off" (Num. 15:30,31). Knowing David's emotional nature and also the fact that he did not completely turn

away from God afterwards, we would have expected a quicker repentance if it had been a passing sin of passion. It would therefore seem reasonable to assume that the sin was of presumption rather than passion. In his prosperity he had said "I shall never be moved" and he was determined that he couldn't be (Ps. 30:6). Hearing those words from Nathan must have struck real fear into David- he was being incriminated for the supreme sin of presumption, for which there was no provision of sacrifice or repentance. It is a mark of his faith and knowledge of God as the God of love, that He is willing to go on to confess his sin, in the hope of forgiveness. "You desire not sacrifice; else would I give it" (Ps. 51:16) was spoken by David more concerning this sin of presumption for which there was no sacrifice prescribed, rather than about the actual sin of adultery. However, we must not get the impression that David was a hard, callous man. Everything we know about him points to him be a big hearted, warm softie. David's sin with Bathsheba was in that sense out of character. Yet such is the stranglehold of sin that even he was forced to act with such uncharacteristic callousness and indifference to both God and man in order to try to cover his sin.

Deu 17:14 When you have come to the land which Yahweh your God gives you and shall possess it, and dwell therein and say, I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me-

Moses often reminds them that he knows they will turn away from the Covenant he had given them (e.g. Dt. 30:1; 31:29). Here he shows that he knew that one

day they would want a king, even though God was their king. He had such sensitivity to their weakness and likely failures, and in some areas he makes concessions to them.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 17:15 you must surely set him king over yourselves whom Yahweh your God shall choose; one from

among your brothers you shall set king over you. You may not put a foreigner over you, who is not your brother-

It was God's wish that Israel would not have a human king; hence His sorrow when they did (1 Sam. 10:19-21). Yet in the Law, God foresaw that they would want a human king, and so He gave commandments concerning how he should behave (Dt. 17:14,15). These passages speak of how Israel would choose to set a King over themselves, and would do so. Yet God worked through this system of human kings; hence the Queen of Sheba speaks of how *God* had set Solomon over Israel as King, and how he was king on God's behalf (2 Chron. 9:8). Israel set a king over themselves; but God worked with this, so that in a sense He set the King over them.

Deu 17:16 Only he must not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, so that he may multiply horses, because Yahweh has said to you, You shall not go back that way again-

See on Dt. 16:21. Moses commands any future king not to send God's people to Egypt to buy horses because he could see that this would tempt them to go back to Egypt permanently. There are many other example of this kind of thing (Dt. 14:24; 15:18; 17:17-19; 18:9; 20:7,8). The point is that Moses had thought long and hard about the ways in which Israel would be tempted to sin, and his words and innermost desire were devoted to helping them overcome. Glorious ditto for the Lord Jesus whom he typified (Dt. 18:18). Note that the king was warned not to get horses for himself from Egypt because the very act of sending Israelites back into Egypt

might tempt them to return there; we are to be sensitive to the spiritual effect our actions may have upon others.

Israel were told three times that Saul would have many chariots (1 Sam. 8:11,12). If they were spiritually aware, they would have realized that by multiplying horses and chariots, he was going to be a King who ruled in studied disobedience to the Mosaic Law (Dt. 17:16-21). They were given the spiritual potential to grasp this. But they were already hard bitten in their rebellion, and this potential spiritual help went unheeded (although God still gave it to them potentially, even at a time when it seemed pointless. He is so ever willing to coax His people back!).

The degree to which God wanted Israel to conceive of Him in terms of Angels is shown by carefully considering the command for Israel not to have chariots (Dt. 17:16 cp. Is. 2:7). As this form of transport became increasingly popular, it must have seemed as crazy as Christians being told not to possess motor cars. There must have therefore been a highly significant teaching behind it. Was the purpose of it to make Israel look to the Angel-cherubim chariots of God? The word for 'cherubim' carries the idea of a chariot; the notion of horsemen corresponds with the Angel horse riders of Zechariah and Revelation.

Ex. 14:13 could appear to be prophecy: "The Egyptians... you shall see them again no more for ever". But it is understood as a command not to return to Egypt in Dt. 17:16- and because of Israel turning back to Egypt in their hearts, they would be taken there again (Dt.

28:68). So we must be prepared to accept that what may appear to be prophecy is in fact commandment, which we have the freewill to obey or disobey. Ez. 43:7 likewise is more command than prediction: "The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name" (RV). It isn't saying 'this is a prophecy that they will not do this' - for they did. Rather is it a plea, a command, that they are not to do this any more.

Moses adds a whole series of apparently 'minor' commands which were designed to make obedience easier to the others already given. Thus he tells them in Deuteronomy not to plant a grove of trees near the altar of God - because he knew this would provoke the possibility of mixing Yahweh worship with that of the surrounding world (Dt. 16:21). Likewise he commands any future king not to send God's people to Egypt to buy horses because he could see that this would tempt them to go back to Egypt permanently (Dt. 17:16). There are many other examples of this kind of thing (Dt. 14:24; 15:18; 17:17-19; 18:9; 20:7,8). The point is that Moses had thought long and hard about the ways in which Israel would be tempted to sin, and his words and innermost desire were devoted to helping them overcome. Glorious ditto for the Lord Jesus.

Deu 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, so that his heart will not turn away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold-

See on Dt. 20:14. This has strong relevance to Solomon. He did multiply silver, gold, horses and wives; his heart *was* turned away (:16,17 = 2 Chron. 9:20). Yet

this passage says that if he studied the Law all his life, this would *not* happen, and also his heart would not be "lifted up above his brethren" (:20). Solomon's whipping of the people and sense of spiritual and material superiority (2 Chron. 10:11; Ecc. 1:16; 2:7,9) shows how his heart *was* lifted up. Yet Solomon knew the Law, despite his explicit disobedience to the commands concerning wives, horses etc. But his knowledge of the word didn't bring forth the true humility which it was intended to. Solomon *assumed* he wasn't proud; he *assumed* God's word was having its intended effect upon him, when it wasn't. Such spiritual assumption is a temptation for every child of God. God's intention that the king of Israel should personally copy out all the commandments of the Law was "to the end that his heart will not *be raised up* above his brothers" - i.e. reflecting upon the many requirements of the Law would've convicted the King of his own failure to have been fully obedient, and therefore his heart would be humbled. And soon after this statement, we are hearing Moses reminding Israel that Messiah, the prophet like unto Moses, was to *be raised up* (Dt. 18:18). Human failure, and recognition of it, prepares us to accept Christ.

They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, know-

ing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and failure. We wonder why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He rejoiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

Deu 17:18 When he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he must write for himself a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests, the Levites-

LXX "And when he shall be established in his government, then shall he write for himself this repetition of the law into a book by the hands of the priests the Levites". 'Writing for himself by the hands of the priests' could mean that as the kings were illiterate, the priests were to guide their hands in copying out the law. Perhaps "this law" refers specifically to the laws in this section warning the king. Solomon must have copied out these laws, and yet right from the time he wrote them out, he specifically disobeyed them all. Solomon was a classic example of where knowledge of God's law alone will not save anyone, unless it enters into the heart.

Deu 17:19 It shall be with him and he must read from it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to fear Yahweh his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 17:20 Thus his heart will not be raised up above his brothers, and he will not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, so that he may prolong

his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel-

The victory of the Lord Jesus is described as Him 'prolonging his days' (Is. 53:10), in allusion back to the way Dt. 17:20 teaches that the King of Israel must study the word all the days of his life, with the result that he would "prolong his days". The almost unbelievable victory of the man Christ Jesus against every aspect of the flesh was due to His saturation with the spirit of God's word.

God's intention that the king of Israel should personally copy out all the commandments of the Law was so that "his heart be not lifted up above his brethren" (Dt. 17:20)- i.e. reflecting upon the many requirements of the Law would've convicted the King of his own failure to have been fully obedient, and therefore his heart would be humbled. And soon after this statement, we are hearing Moses reminding Israel that Messiah, the prophet like unto Moses, was to be raised up (Dt. 18:18). Human failure, and recognition of it, prepares us to accept Christ. To this end, God worked through Israel's weakness, time and again. He even used it as a path towards His provision of Messiah. God wanted to speak to them directly, but in their weakness they asked that He not do this. Instead of giving up with them, as a Father whose children say they don't want to hear His voice... instead God goes on to tell Moses: "They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren [a prophecy applied to Christ in the New Testament]... and

he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him”
(Dt. 18:17,18).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 18

Deu 18:1 The priests the Levites, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they will eat the offerings of Yahweh made by fire as their inheritance-

There is a word play here, for "eat" is s.w. "burn up", used of fire consuming sacrifice; and "the offerings of Yahweh made by fire" is an attempt to translate just two words in Hebrew, "Yahweh's fire". The Levites' consumption of the food offered was accepted by Yahweh as if the fire of the altar had burnt it up. They were therefore as it were associated with the altar, Yahweh's representatives.

The Levites had no land nor great material wealth to leave to their children; but they had this unique relationship with God to pass on. Jeremiah in depression, having lost all he had, concludes that God is his portion (Lam. 3:24), clearly alluding to this verse. Even if materially we lose all we have- our relationship with God is our true portion and inheritance, which we will eternally receive in the Kingdom. The writers of the Psalms, some of whom like David weren't Levites, could use the same Hebrew word to describe how God was their "portion" and inheritance (Ps. 16:5; 73:26; 119:57; 142:5). This should be our self-perception, whether or not we leave any material inheritance to anyone or not. Not for us the obsession with building up ownership of property, under the excuse we want to leave something to our children. Our service of God and His people is our inheri-

tance, which we shall eternally receive back at the resurrection and the time of the Kingdom of God on earth. The priests and Levites were provided with enough to eat, but no great wealth. So it should be for all full time servants in God's house. By contrast, the priests of the surrounding tribes were generally more wealthy than the other people, and owned land, which was seen as especially holy (see Gen. 47:22).

Deu 18:2 They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; Yahweh is their inheritance, as He has spoken to them-

The Levites had no material inheritance because "the sacrifices of Yahweh the God of Israel... are his inheritance... Yahweh God of Israel was their inheritance" (Josh. 13:14,33; Num. 18:20; Dt. 10:9; 18:2). Notice how "Yahweh" is put for what is sacrificed to Him. His very existence is an imperative to sacrifice to Him, despising all material advantage in doing so. Job comments that to make gold our hope and wealth our confidence is to deny "the God that is above" (Job 31:24,28). To trust in material wealth is effectively to proclaim ourselves atheists. We are described as the new priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5), so all that was true for the Levites becomes true for us. We are not to seek material inheritance. God will provide for us in ways other than our possessing land and leaving an inheritance to our children. The wonder of serving Him is to more than compensate for this.

Deu 18:3 This shall be the priest's due from the people, from those who offer a sacrifice, whether ox or sheep. They

shall give to the priest the shoulder, the two cheeks and the stomach-

The idea is "the front leg, the two jaw-bones, and the rough stomach of ruminants, in which the digestion is completed". These were thought to be the best parts of an animal; and remember that a leg and the breast of the offering were also to be given to the priest if it was a peace offering (Lev. 7:32; Num. 18:11).

Deu 18:4 The first fruits of your grain, your new wine and your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep you shall give him-

There is no mention in Num. 18:12,13 of the first fleece being given to the priests. But it is mentioned here in Dt. 18:4, and is an example of where Deuteronomy, 'the second law', is in places more demanding and in others more understanding.

Deu 18:5 For Yahweh your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand to minister in the name of Yahweh, him and his sons forever-

The original intention was that all Israel should be a nation of priests, but God continually seems to recalculate His plans according to His people's responsiveness (Ex. 19:5,6). And so the Levites were chosen, and special material provision was arranged for them; although there are continually hints that all Israel were to live in the spirit of priesthood. And under the new covenant, we are all the priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). God is likewise

open to such ammendment and recalculation of intention in the way that He works with us as individuals.

Deu 18:6 If a Levite comes from any of your gates out of all Israel, where he lives as a foreigner, and comes with all the desire of his soul to the place which Yahweh shall choose-

God encourages us to make special devotions to Him. Thus the Levites could choose to leave their areas in the provinces and go and serve at the sanctuary. We must ask what special devotion we could make in response to His grace. The structure of the law of Moses seemed to almost encourage the idea of serving God on different levels. After much study of it, the Rabbis concluded that there was within it "a distinction between holy and holy just as much as there is between holy and profane". The Levites could choose to go and serve at Jerusalem [or wherever the sanctuary was], and therefore sell their possession of land which they had in the local area (Dt. 18:6-8). By doing this, a number of principles were broken, in order that the highest level- serving Yahweh in the temple- might be achieved.

Deu 18:7 then he shall minister in the name of Yahweh his God as all his brothers the Levites do, who stand there before Yahweh-

There was to be always the possibility for Levites from the provinces to come and live at the sanctuary and serve "before Yahweh", i.e. before the ark of His presence. The Levites lived in the provinces as "foreigners" (:6). This is the language of Abraham and his seed living as foreigners. They were therefore to consider the sanctuary

as their home, and being away from it meant living as it were in another land. The appeal to us to live as foreigners and pilgrims is therefore partly based upon this; for we are all the spiritual priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5).

Deu 18:8 They shall have similar portions to eat, besides that which comes from his father's inheritance-

The word for "share" in 1 Sam. 30:24 is that used here in Dt. 18:8, where the Levites were to have the same "portions" or "share". All David's men were to have the same "share". His language choice was setting up his men to see themselves as a new priesthood. The sale of a family inheritance may not refer to property, for the Levites were not to hold property. This however may be one of many tacit acceptances in Deuteronomy that things would not be as they ought to be; perhaps the idea is that if a man repented of how his father had held property, then he was to sell it, and could then move to the live permanently near the sanctuary.

The early church began by having all things common, in imitation of how the priests had "like portions to eat" (Dt. 18:8). Notice the stress on the equality of the priests and the studied irrelevance of their personal wealth (1 Chron. 24:31; 25:8; 26:12). We also have an example of Barnabas selling his illegally held property and giving it to the church, which may be what is in view here with the reference to the Levite selling his father's inheritance and moving to live near the sanctuary. The Law was geared around the assumption that the priests would be so caught up in Yahweh's work that they would never be rich (consider Dt. 14:29), and the

wonder of doing His work would compensate for their lack of physical possessions (Num. 18:23). Yet the early church couldn't sustain the intensity of their initial realization of these things.

Deu 18:9 When you have come into the land which Yahweh your God gives you, you must not learn to do according to the abominations of those nations-

The Canaanites were to be driven out of the land for doing these abominations (:12). The reality is that the Canaanites were not driven out for those abominations, because Israel didn't drive them out. And yet it was because of their abominations that Israel were supposed to drive them out (:10,12). We can conclude that Israel didn't dispossess the Canaanites because they didn't hate their abominations but rather participated in them.

Deu 18:10 There must not be found with you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, one who uses divination, one who practices sorcery or an enchanter, a sorcerer-

Acts 7:43 says that they carried the tabernacle of Moloch with them through the wilderness, and Moloch was associated with child sacrifice. Moses is therefore telling them that they were not to worship Moloch once in the land. It all seems an incredibly 'soft' approach to them, rather than challenging them about their idolatry. Perhaps it reflected God's great enthusiasm for Israel at this time, for He did not behold iniquity in Jacob (Num. 23:21), and presents Himself in Jeremiah as having fallen totally in love with Israel in the wilderness, wishing not to see their unfaithfulness.

Deu 18:11 a charmer, a consulter with a familiar spirit, a wizard or a necromancer-

These people were thought to be able to tell and control the future, and to bring about healing and blessing. Yet these were all the roles of Yahweh. He had predicted a blessed future for Israel, conditional upon their obedience. But they wanted to seek to bypass this by trying to influence their future and blessing through other means. By seeking to these people they were effectively denying their relationship with God, through attempting to merely bypass Yahweh. The huge stress upon Yahweh as the source of a blessed future meant that all these classes of wizards were therefore at best redundant; and to use them was to effectively resign from relationship with Yahweh. And we must consider how we too may be tempted to effectively bypass God, seeking blessing and a [supposedly] assured future by secular means.

Deu 18:12 For whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh, and because of these abominations Yahweh your God drives them out from before you-

See on :10. "Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inher-

itance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 18:13 You should be without blame before Yahweh your God-

The repeated references to the "journeys" of the people in the wilderness had as their basis the description of Abraham taking his journey through the desert to the promised land (Gen. 13:3); the very same two Hebrew words recur in the command to Israel to now 'take their journey' (Dt. 10:11), following in the steps of their father Abraham. As Abraham was commanded to "be perfect" (Gen. 17:1), so Israel were told: "*You* [after the pattern of father Abraham] shall be perfect with the Lord" (Dt. 19:13). The offering of sacrifices "without blemish" uses a word which is used about Abraham and Noah being "without blemish" (AV "perfect") before God (Gen. 6:9; 17:1). Although the word is used about the sacrifices, it is really more appropriate to persons- "you shall

be perfect with Yahweh your God" (Dt. 18:13), "serve Him in sincerity (s.w. "without blemish")" (Josh. 24:14). The idea, therefore, was that the offerer was invited to see the animal as representative of himself. Our lives too are to be as "living sacrifices" (Rom. 12:1). And yet in practical terms, no animal is without blemish. They were to give the best they could, and God would count it as without blemish; as He does with us. David frequently uses the term in the Psalms about himself and the "upright", even though he was far from unblemished in moral terms.

"Without blame" is the term used multiple times in the law of Moses about the state of sacrificial animals. But it is never used in Deuteronomy. Perhaps this reflects Moses' maturer understanding that no animal actually is without blemish. God recognizes that we will not attain perfection in this life, but we are to do our best towards it; and His love imputes righteousness to us, counting us as unblemished because of our status in Christ. For only Christ was the sacrifice totally without moral blemish (1 Pet. 1:19).

Deu 18:14 For these nations that you shall dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery and to diviners; but as for you, Yahweh your God has not allowed you to do so-

See on :10. The fact those nations were dispossessed was surely evidence that their various magicians were powerless. Yet Israel wanted to trust those same powerless people, just as they would later worship the gods of the nations who defeated them.

Deu 18:15 Yahweh your God will raise up to you a prophet like me, from the midst of you, of your brothers. You are to listen to him-

The promise of a future prophet (who was to be Messiah) is in the context of the prohibition upon using those who claimed to foretell the future, and bring blessing and healing. Trying to achieve future blessing through them was a way of bypassing Yahweh, who had clearly offered a blessed future predicated upon obedience to the covenant. But a blessed future, that of the Kingdom of God, was to be possible through this prophet who was yet to be raised up. Possibly Joshua or some other figure could have fulfilled this prophecy, but the potential wasn't realized. And therefore it was reapplied and rescheduled to the Lord Jesus.

Deu 18:16 This is according to all that you desired of Yahweh your God in Horeb in the day of the assembly saying, Let me not hear again the voice of Yahweh my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, so that I do not die-

The tragedy was that to hear the personal voice of their God was intended to build their faith, and was the most wonderful empirical, experiential evidence that He was real (Dt. 4:32,33). But faced with it, they hurriedly turned away. And this is true in essence of so many people. Israel complained that no other nation had ever been asked to hear the voice of their God in a personal way; they feared that hearing this voice meant their condemnation (Dt. 5:26). But God meant it so positively; the fact they had heard God's voice was a sign of His

amazing grace (Dt. 4:32,33). Yet Israel turned the display of that grace into a reason to fear condemnation. They were far happier not being confronted by such radical grace, and the personal engagement of God with them. And so they desperately sought to use mere religion to shield them from this, asking Moses to go through with this engagement with God and then give them a few rules to obey, which didn't too deeply interrupt their lives. This is the abiding tendency of men of all ages; to flee from grace to the structures of mere religion.

It had been God's intention that they came nearer to Him and heard Him directly. But they wanted mere religion to stand between Him and them, they shied away from personal encounter with Him, and wanted Moses to speak with God and relay to them His will. But God positively interpreted their words as a request for Messiah, the word made flesh, and would answer them in the provision of the Lord Jesus (see on :18). But this would be more than a prophet; He would effectively engage them with Yahweh, as His supreme manifestation, although having human nature. And they would need to respond deeply to that engagement.

Deu 18:17 Yahweh said to me, They have well said that which they have spoken-

God's intention that the king of Israel should personally copy out all the commandments of the Law was so that "his heart be not lifted up above his brethren" (Dt. 17:20)- i.e. reflecting upon the many requirements of the Law would've convicted the King of his own fail-

ure to have been fully obedient, and therefore his heart would be humbled. And soon after this statement, we are hearing Moses reminding Israel that Messiah, the prophet like unto Moses, was to be raised up (Dt. 18:18). Human failure, and recognition of it, prepares us to accept Christ. To this end, God worked through Israel's weakness, time and again. He even used it as a path towards His provision of Messiah. God wanted to speak to them directly, but in their weakness they asked that He not do this. Instead of giving up with them, as a Father whose children say they don't want to hear His voice... instead God goes on to tell Moses: "They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren [a prophecy applied to Christ in the New Testament]... and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Dt. 18:17,18).

Deu 18:18 I will raise them up a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put My words in his mouth and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him-

The Messianic prophecy of Dt. 18:18 had a potential Messianic and primary fulfillment in Joshua: "I will raise them up [God 'rose up' Joshua- s.w. Josh. 1:2; 7:10,13; 8:1,3] a prophet from among their brethren, like unto you [Joshua's life was framed to be like that of Moses- e.g. he too was told to remove his shoe when on holy ground, also held his hands up whilst Israel fought their enemies]; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him [Joshua is constantly presented as telling Israel what

God commanded him- Josh. 4:8,10,17; 6:10; 8:8: “according to the commandment of the Lord shall ye do. See, I have commanded you”; Josh. 8:27]. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him”. The ‘likeness’ between Moses and the prophet like unto him was in that the prophet would also speak God’s words in a similar way. Josh. 11:15 therefore significantly comments: “As the Lord commanded Moses his servant, so did Moses command Joshua: and so did Joshua; he left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses”. Joshua was a potential Messiah.

By the time he uttered Deuteronomy, Moses would probably have been the oldest person any of the congregation had ever known. Many of the earlier generation had been cut down in the wilderness. He was nearly twice the age of Joshua. He had dominated their lives from birth, had stuck with them, with their fathers and even grandparents. Just as the Lord Jesus is to be the central figure in the new Israel. Moses was also a representative of his people, just as the Lord Jesus is in a sense ‘Israel’- the suffering servant refers to both Israel and their Messiah. Moses was “adopted by an imperial parent, punished for his rashness, sentenced to wander forty years in the wilderness, forgiven, restored, hand-selected for an impossible task, accompanied by the overwhelming presence of God at every step...”, just as his beloved people. In the same way as Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, so Christ was of the new. Christ was the prophet like unto Moses (Dt. 18:18). Moses was the

shepherd of the flock of Israel, leading them on God's behalf through the wilderness towards the promised land (Is. 63:12), as Christ leads us after baptism to the Kingdom.

Moses' persecution by Pharaoh enabled him to enter into the feelings of Israel in the slave camps; and as they fled from Pharaoh towards the Red Sea, Moses would have recalled his own flight from Pharaoh to Midian. The whole epistle to the Hebrews is shot through with allusions to Moses. "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren" (Heb. 2:17) is alluding to Dt. 18:18: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren like unto thee (Moses)". The brethren of Christ are here paralleled with Moses; as if Moses really is representative of not only natural Israel, but spiritual too- as well as Moses being a type of Christ. For this reason he is such a clear pattern for us, and we are invited so often to identify ourselves with him by copying his example. Moses was made like his brethren through his similar experiences, as Christ was progressively made like us by his life of temptation.

The miracle of the loaves and fishes made men see the similarity between Christ and Moses, whom they perceived to have provided the manna (Jn. 6:32). Therefore they thought that Jesus must be the prophet like Moses, of whom Moses wrote (Jn. 6:14). But Jesus said that He was greater than Moses, because Moses' bread only gave them temporal life, whereas if a man ate of Him, he would live for ever; His words would give spiritual life which was part of that "eternal life" of the Fa-

ther (Jn. 6:49,50). The Jews thought that the prophet like Moses of Dt. 18:18 was a prophet equal or inferior to Moses. John's Gospel records how Christ was showing that the prophet would be greater than Moses. Martha understood that when she said that "the Christ... which should come into the world" (i.e. the prophet of Dt. 18:18) was "the Son of God", and therefore Jesus of Nazareth (Jn. 11:27).

"The prophet" (Jn. 7:40,52 RV) is clearly a reference to "the prophet" like Moses, i.e. Messiah. There are many other allusions by John's record to the Dt. 18:18 passage: "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I command him". References to the Son only speaking what the Father commanded Him are to be found in Jn. 4:25; 8:28; 12:49.

Christ was the prophet like unto Moses (Acts 3:22). Moses was the shepherd of the flock of Israel, leading them on God's behalf through the wilderness towards the promised land (Is. 63:12), as Christ leads us after baptism to the Kingdom. It was only through Moses' leadership that they reached Canaan (10:11). As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and Dt. 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ.

Deu 18:19 Whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him-

As Moses very intensely manifested God to the people, so he foreshadowed the supreme manifestation of the Father in the Son. The commands of Moses were those of God (Dt. 7:11; 11:13,18; and 12:32 concerning Moses' words is quoted in Rev. 22:18,19 concerning God's words); his voice was God's voice (Dt. 13:18; 15:5; 28:1), as with Christ. Israel were to show their love of God by keeping Moses' commands (Dt. 11:13); as the new Israel do in their response to the word of Christ. Indeed, the well known prophecy that God would raise up a prophet "like unto" Moses to whom Israel would *listen* (Dt. 18:18) is in the context of Israel saying they did not want to hear God's voice directly. Therefore God said that he would raise up Christ, who would be another Moses in the sense that *he too* would speak forth God's word.

Deu 18:20 But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in My name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or who shall speak in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die-

Falsification of Yahweh's word, speaking falsely in His Name, was the ultimate taking of His Name in vain. Especially when they spoke the supposed words of "other gods" as if Yahweh's words. In illiterate society, the words of the prophets were absolutely vital in order for the people to hear God's words. If they were falsified, then so many people would suffer. And making others stumble out of God's way is seen as the worst kind of sin. This is

the sin of false teaching; the sin is not that of genuinely misunderstanding Biblical theology, but of teaching others that sin is righteousness.

Yahweh repeatedly forbid His people to mention the name of other gods. In the Ancient Near East, all conflict between peoples and nations was seen as conflict between gods. The role of prophets or priests on either side was to bring curses upon the other gods. And so they repeated the names of the other gods in incantations supposed to bring curses upon those gods. This however is forbidden to God's people. They instead were to focus upon the Name of their God Yahweh. And we see in this a pattern for ourselves; to focus upon the ultimate truth and truths of the one true God, and not be caught up in wishing cursing upon those who believe otherwise. To focus upon the positive, which is the source of all victory, rather than going on the defensive against other views by cursing them.

Deu 18:21 If you say in your heart, How shall we know the word which Yahweh has not spoken?-

Again, Moses seems to foresee how badly things would go with Israel. He has just warned of the false prophet who speaks falsely in the Name of Yahweh. And he seems to accept this is going to happen, and so he now gives a way of testing whether words claiming to be Yahweh's are true or not. Moses also perceives that this question will be raised in the heart of the thoughtful, faithful ones.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of

heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 18:22 When a prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh, if the thing doesn't follow or happen, that is the thing which Yahweh has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you shall not be afraid of him-

This is why the prophecies of Christ and of the last days all had some limited fulfilment in the lifetimes of the prophets who gave the prophecies. If the prophet failed to produce such signs, then "you shall not be afraid of him". But the commandment about false prophets in

:20 was that they must be killed. Moses seems to foresee a situation where there would be false prophets, and the thoughtful, faithful few would ponder the truth of their words in their hearts (not openly; :21), and would not be able to have the false prophets executed. But, they were not personally to fear their words.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 19

Deu 19:1 When Yahweh your God shall cut off the nations whose land Yahweh your God gives you, and you succeed them and dwell in their cities and in their houses-

"Succeed" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Despite being fully aware of how weak Israel were, Moses often speaks of the " blessing" which God would give them for obedience; he even speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it: "Every man shall give as he is able (once he is settled in the land), according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He *has* given you" (Dt. 16:17). Moses speaks with confidence of how God would grant them the blessing of the land and victory over their enemies, even though these things were conditional upon their obedience (Dt. 19:1; 20:13), and even though Moses clearly knew that most of them would disobey. The conclusion from this is that Moses thought so much of that minority who would obey his covenant, who would grasp the spirit of his life and the speech he was now making. And our Lord likewise- in His feelings for us.

Deu 19:2 you must set apart three cities for you in the midst of your land, which Yahweh your God gives you to possess-

The person who committed something worthy of death but didn't as it were willfully do it represents each of us. The language of the city of refuge therefore becomes applicable to Christ, our refuge from the results of our sin (Heb. 6:18).

Deu 19:3 You shall prepare the way, and divide the borders of your land which Yahweh your God causes you to inherit, into three parts, that any manslayer may flee there-

John the Baptist's ideas of fleeing wrath and preparing a way are surely based upon the Law's command in Dt. 19:3 that a way or road should be prepared to the city of refuge (symbolic of Christ- Heb. 6:18), along which the person under the death sentence for manslaughter could flee for refuge. John was preparing that way or road to Christ, and urging ordinary people to flee along it. They didn't like to think they were under a death sentence for murder. They were just ordinary folk like the soldiers who grumbled about their wages, and the publicans who were a bit less than honest at work. But they had to flee.

The command to prepare a way along which to flee to the cities of refuge (Dt. 19:3) is expressed with the very same words used about God through the Angels preparing a way for Israel to flee along, out of Egypt to the promised land (Ex. 23:20). This was obviously done purely at God's initiative. But now, Israel were asked to do the same- to prepare a way for their and others' salvation. When we reflect upon our own way of escape from this world, it's clear enough that it was by grace. By God's sole initiative we came into contact with the Gospel, or were born into such a family at such a time as enabled us to hear it. Our response to that grace must be like Israel's- to prepare a way for others to flee, when they like us find themselves in a situation that is spiritually against them, although not of their conscious choice.

Deu 19:4 This is the case of the manslayer that shall flee there and live. Whoever kills his neighbour unawares and didn't hate him in time past-

We are all in the position of the man who unintentionally committed manslaughter and must therefore die. We are under sentence of death by reason of being human, as well as for our actual sins. The avenger of blood could be seen as God, for it is He alone who has the right to execute judgment for sin. And we must note that the word *ga'al* translated "avenger" is also that translated "redeemer" or 'ransomer'. The cities of refuge are therefore understood in Heb. 6:18 as looking ahead to refuge in the Lord Jesus: "Who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us". The allusion is to how the person who found they had committed a sin worthy of death, yet without as it were wishing to have done so, could flee to a city of refuge and be saved there by the death of the high priest. The curse upon Levi was that the members of this tribe were to be scattered in Israel (Gen. 49:7). However, this resulted in the cities of the Levites being scattered throughout the land, thus providing accessible cities of refuge to all who wished to escape the consequences of sin. Those cities were evidently symbolic of the refuge we have in Christ. Again and again, the curses and consequences of human sin are used by the Father to mediate blessing. It is the sure hope before us which is our refuge. "Hope", *elpis*, is a confident knowledge of a future reality, rather than a hoping for the best. We should be confident in our salvation. The 'guilty' person was made free totally through the death of the High Priest, clearly looking forward to the significance of the death of the Lord Jesus.

Deu 19:5 as when a man goes into the forest with his neighbour to chop wood, and his hand fetches a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the handle and hits his neighbour so that he dies; he shall flee to one of these cities and live-

A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

Deu 19:6 lest the avenger of blood pursue the manslayer while his heart is hot and overtake him because the way is long, and strike him mortally, whereas he was not worthy of death because he didn't hate him in time past-

We note that hatred of a neighbour was to be the reason for death. John appears to have this in mind when

he reasons that hatred of our brother is effectively a living death sentence (1 Jn. 2:11; 4:20). It was to be that "whoever hates his brother is a murderer", not a manslaughterer (1 Jn. 3:15). And that hatred can be in someone's heart, even if they have not killed the object of their hatred. This is the principle which is taught here.

But Israel were not to avenge (Lev. 19:18). But they *could* avenge, and provisions were made for their human desire to do so in some cases (see too Num. 35:12). These provisions must also be seen as a modification of the command not to murder. The highest level was *not* to avenge; but for the harshness of men's hearts, a concession was made *in some cases*, and on *God's* prerogative. *We* have no right to assume that prerogative. Rather than continually make use of God's many concessions to human weakness, we should seek to live on a higher level.

Deu 19:7 Therefore I command you, saying, You must set apart three cities for yourselves-

The emphasis was very much upon *them* making the cities of refuge, and defining the paths which led to them from all settlements in the land (Dt. 19:3): "I command you, saying, You must set apart three cities for yourselves" (Dt. 19:7). Yet the record in Joshua 18-20 shows that Israel didn't do this, because they didn't even capture all the cities which were to be cities of refuge.

Deu 19:8 If Yahweh your God enlarges your border as He has sworn to your fathers, and gives you all the land which He promised to give to your fathers-

If Israel had been obedient, then "the Lord your God shall enlarge thy border" (Dt. 12:20). Thus "blessed be

He that enlarges Gad" (Dt. 33:20). Who knows the height and depth, length and breadth of what could have been for God's people? And the same is true for us today. According to Israel's perception of the land, so it was defined for them. God was clearly willing to still work with Israel even if He redefined the promised land to a scaled down version of what had been promised to Abraham. He is ever open to recalculation of His intentions in order to by all means remain in relationship with His wayward people.

Deu 19:9 if you keep all this commandment to do what I command you this day, to love Yahweh your God and walk always in His ways, then you shall add three cities more for yourselves besides these three-

Those cities of refuge could have been increased in number, thereby making salvation that much 'easier' or accessible; but there is no evidence Israel availed themselves of this. Israel would be provided with more cities of refuge if they were obedient; the way of escape from sin would become easier, as it does for us the more we are obedient to God's principles.

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord

your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

Deu 19:10 so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, and so guilt for blood be upon you-

If Israel were indifferent to preparing the way for others' salvation, then innocent blood would be shed and they would be responsible for it (Dt. 19:10). This is powerful stuff. Indifference to providing others with a way of escape from their sin and death means we are actually guilty of their lack of salvation. And yet we tend to think that committed sin is all we have to worry about / avoid. The lesson here, however, bites far more caustically and insistently into our comfort zone. If we are indifferent to marking out the way of escape for others, their blood will be upon our heads. Our chief excuses for not witnessing enthusiastically basically amount to laziness, indifference, not getting our act together because

we don't see we have to... when actually, there is an intense urgency about our task.

Deu 19:11 But if any man hates his neighbour, and lies in wait for him and rises up against him and strikes him mortally so that he dies, and he flees into one of these cities-

There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them.

Deu 19:12 then the elders of his city must send and bring him from there, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood that he may die-

The slayer of innocent blood was to be slain without pity: "you shall put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with you" (Dt. 19:13). But David seems to have stepped up to a higher level when he told the woman of Tekoah that he would protect her son from revenge murder, after he had slain another man (2 Sam. 14:8-10). The woman pointed out that if her son was slain, the inheritance would be lost in her husband's name. Here was a case where two principles seemed to be at variance: the need to slay the guilty, and the need to preserve the inheritance. The higher level was to forgive the slayer of innocent blood, even though the Law categorically stated that he should be slain.

Deu 19:13 Your eye shall not pity him, but you must put away the innocent blood from Israel-

We would rather expect that guilty blood must be put away. AV has "the guilt of innocent blood", LXX "so shalt thou purge innocent blood". The idea was that the guilt for innocent blood must be purged by blood. The Lord's blood was the ultimate innocent blood, and so Israel were being prepared to accept that blood was to be shed for His blood. And thus it happened (Mt. 27:25; Acts 5:28).

That it may go well with you-

Things 'going well / good' with Israel is the language of the Kingdom of God in Dt. 8:16 "to do you good / well at your latter end". It is associated with days being prolonged (Dt. 22:7) and the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Dt. 30:5), and Israel and the children somehow existing "forever" (Dt. 12:28). So I deduce in the wish "that it may go well with you" a hint towards the eternal establishment of God's Kingdom based around Israel, what Paul terms "the hope of Israel".

Deu 19:14 You must not remove your neighbour's landmark, which those of old time have set, in your inheritance which you shall inherit, in the land that Yahweh your God gives you to possess it-

The law of Moses reasons as if each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our

very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units. This was "The inheritance of fathers", "your possession" (Lev. 25:27,28; Num. 36:7,8). God had given specific inheritances to His people, that this was not to be sold or traded. The division by lot in Josh. 15:1 presumably meant that the tribal areas were defined and then distributed by lot. And then within those areas, each family was given a specific inheritance.

Deu 19:15 One witness must not rise up against a man for any iniquity or for any sin that he commits. At the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses shall a matter be established-

Insisting on more than one witness before accepting the truth of an allegation meant that gossip and slander were limited; and Jesus applies this principle to dealing with disputes within His church (Mt. 18:16). Although His teaching about not condemning our brethren meant that He didn't advocate as it were 'putting to death', but rather stern rebuke and damage limitation. Those who served other gods had to die on the testimony of two or three witnesses. This idea is twice alluded to in the New Testament in the context of making the decision to cease fellowship with someone (Mt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). The implication is that death under the Old Covenant pointed forward to first century church discipline under the New Covenant. But we must note that the reason for this was serving other gods and wilful departing from

covenant relationship with the Lord- not minor reasons. And yet the Lord appears to go a step beyond this; for I detect in Mt. 18:16 a reference to this law, but He goes on to suggest that the higher level in interpersonal offences is not to apply this but to simply forgive.

Deu 19:16 If an unrighteous witness rises up against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing-

We have just read in :15 that the testimony of one man was not to be accepted. So this foresees a case when more than one man makes false testimony. What is in view here is a supporting witness who lives, and this will then result in the two individuals accusing each other coming "before Yahweh" (:17). In other words, the testimony of one man plus one supporting witness still wasn't enough. In this case, the matter must come before Yahweh (:17). There is here a strong sense of "innocent until proven guilty", and an awareness that a supporting witness might also be telling untruth.

Deu 19:17 then both the men in the controversy shall stand before Yahweh, before the priests and the judges who shall be in those days-

David and Solomon appear to have concentrated all judgment in themselves, setting themselves up effectively as both king and priest, for the "judge" was to be a priest. Jehoshaphat reformed this by placing the power of judgment in the hands of a group of Levites, priests and heads of families as the higher court in Jerusalem (2 Chron. 19:5-8). But still Jehoshaphat didn't appoint a singular senior judge, as required in Dt. 17:9. We note from Dt. 19:17 that this singular priestly supreme judge

is called "Yahweh", because he was to be Yahweh's supreme representative when it came to judgment. But it seems even the best kings of Judah preferred to keep that office in their own power.

Proverbs stresses that the man who loves wisdom will be able to judge wisely (Prov. 2:9; 31:9). Yet it was the priests who were the judges of Israel (Dt. 19:17), they were the ones to whom hard cases were brought. Yet Proverbs implies all could act as priests. "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable (a word elsewhere used concerning the priests' service, Dt. 21:5) than (the offering of) sacrifice" (Prov. 21:5). Loving wisdom would give the ordinary Israelite a crown on his head (Prov. 4:9), alluding to the High Priestly crown (Ex. 29:6; Zech. 6:11).

Deu 19:18 The judges shall make diligent inquisition, and if the witness is a false witness and has testified falsely against his brother-

I suggested on :16 that the case in view is when a false witness even has a false supporting witness. The "diligent inquisition" therefore required that one witness plus a supporting witness was not to enough to support a conviction. Further investigation and gathering of evidence was required. Again we note a strong sense of "innocent until proven guilty", and an awareness that a supporting witness might also be telling untruth.

Deu 19:19 then you must do to him as he had thought to do to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from the midst of you-

"The evil one" in the Old Testament was always "the evil man in Israel" (Dt. 17:12; 19:19; 22:21–24 cp. 1 Cor. 5:13) – never a superhuman being, not any personal, superhuman Satan. The evil was to be put away by judgment appropriate to what the false accuser had intended to be done to the falsely accused. As innocent blood was to be purged by guilty blood (:13). But for us, all such judgment has been met in the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus. Therefore the "eye for an eye" judgment of :21 is now to be replaced by our forgiveness of our slanderers, rather than seeking judgment and justice upon them.

Deu 19:20 Those who remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil in the midst of you-

There is repeated emphasis that false accusation is an "evil" which must be removed. Pastoral leadership must take very seriously the practice of false accusation in church communities. And yet churches divide over and over because of this very issue of false accusation which isn't dealt with. The "eye for an eye" judgment hits home hard in this context- for typically the false accusation within churches is with a view to getting the falsely accused removed from the church. And on this basis, removal from the body of Christ is the judgment for those who do such things. Although it is not for us to seek to see that done; it is for us to forgive (see on :19).

Deu 19:21 Your eyes must not pity; life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot-

See on :19. When the Lord Jesus gave His commandments as an elaboration of Moses' Law, that Law was still in force. He didn't say 'When I'm dead, this is how you should behave...'. He was showing us a higher level; but in the interim period until the Law was taken out of the way, He was opening up the *choice* of taking that higher level, even though making use of the concessions which Moses offered would not have been a sin during that period. Thus He spoke of not insisting on "an eye for an eye"; even though in certain cases the Law did allow for this. He was saying: 'You can keep Moses' Law, and take an eye for an eye. But there is a higher level: to simply forgive'.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 20

Deu 20:1 When you go forth to battle against your enemies and see horses, chariots and a people more than you, you must not be afraid of them-

The implication is that Israel would repeatedly be the smaller force in their battles. But this must be squared with Ex. 12:37. Hebrew word translated as "thousand" can mean a family, or some other administrative division. Many of the 'number problems' in the Hebrew Bible are only really resolvable using this approach. And that may be in view in the census of Israel taken in Num. 1, and in the statement that six hundred 'thousands' of footmen left Egypt (Ex. 12:37). The census of Num. 1 gives figures such as those in Num. 1:21 for Reuben, which could be rendered: "forty six families ['thousands'] and five hundred (men)". Although a "hundred" might also refer to an administrative division. The total in Num. 1 would then be 598 families with a total of 5550 men. The sum given in the second census in Num. 26 comes out as roughly the same, with 596 families amounting to 5730 men. On this basis, the total population (including women and children) would be anything between 20,000 to 40,000. This would enable us to make better sense of the statements that Israel were the smallest numerically of all the surrounding peoples (Dt. 7:1,7; 11:23; 20:1). If we insist upon taking "thousand" literally in Ex. 12:37, then 600,000 male foot sol-

diers would imply a total population of between two and six million. The population density would have been intense, and far greater than that of many modern nations. Estimates of global population at the time suggest it was only about 40 million, and the population of Egypt was a maximum of three million (probably far less). If the Israelites were smaller than the other nations, and they numbered say 5 million, then the total population of the seven peoples of Canaan would have been at least 40 million. The territory of Canaan could not have supported such numbers. Only 70 Israelites came into Egypt with Jacob. Expansion over 430 years to several million is not realistic. This approach helps us better understand how all the men of war marched around Jericho (Josh. 6:3). If there were literally 600,000 men then the city would have had to be many kilometers in circumference for them all to march around it seven times in one day. Archaeological evidence from Jericho simply doesn't support the idea of such a vast city. If Israel numbered say 5 million people, and recall there was also a "mixed multitude" with them, then if they marched 10 abreast this would require a column stretching around 1000 kilometers. Their promises to Edom and the Amorites to march only along a highway and not spill over it (Num. 20:17; 21:22) is unrealistic if they had such huge numbers. A figure of 600 family units leaving Egypt is more realistic; otherwise we start to wonder how ever all the Israelites, millions of them, came to be in one place at one time on Passover night.

For Yahweh your God is with you, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt-

The great works of Yahweh which He showed at the time of their exodus from Egypt (cp. the world) and baptism at the Red Sea were in essence repeated throughout their wilderness journey (Dt. 7:19). Therefore whenever they faced discouragement and an apparent blockage to their way, they were to remember how God had redeemed them at their baptism, and to realize that in fact His work was still ongoing with them (Dt. 20:1). He told them in the desert that He was "Yahweh that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt" (Lev. 11:45). Therefore the overcoming of Edom, Moab and the Canaanite tribes is described in language lifted from the Red Sea record (e.g. Ex. 15:15-17). Throughout their history, Israel were reminded that what God had done for them in their Red Sea deliverance He was continuing to do, and therefore all their enemies would likewise perish if they remained God's people (e.g. Is. 43:16).

Deuteronomy speaks time and again of how Israel's Red Sea baptism [cp. ours] was to be the basis for their daily living; the fact they had been redeemed from the world by 'baptism' was to inspire them in every aspect of spiritual endeavour. Because they had been brought out of Egypt, *therefore* they were to keep the Sabbath, not worship idols, be obedient, witness to the surrounding nations, disfellowship false teachers who would take them back to Egypt, and especially, it was to motivate them to the faith that they could overcome all obstacles in their path to the promised land (Dt. 20:1). For those

raised Christian, this sense of deliverance from the world and entering the body of Christ through baptism must be hard. But it is nonetheless true for you as it is for the hardest living worldling.

Deu 20:2 When you draw near to the battle, the priest shall approach and speak to the people-

He foresaw how they would see horses and chariots and get frightened; such was Moses' sensitivity to his people. There is a parallel between the people drawing near to battle, and the priest drawing near to the people. As their fears approached, so the comfort of God was to approach them.

Deu 20:3 and tell them, Hear, Israel, you draw near this day to battle against your enemies; don't let your heart faint; don't be afraid or tremble, neither be scared of them-

The Lord applies these words to us (Jn. 14:1,2). Fear is always the antithesis of faith. God is often called an "awesome God" (Dt. 7:21 etc.). The Hebrew word for "awesome" is that for 'fear' (s.w. Gen. 3:10; 15:1; 18:15 etc.). The idea is that God's people are to be in such fear / awe of Him that they fear / are in awe of nothing else. Hence Dt. 7:21 says that Israel should "not be scared of" their enemies, because their God is "awesome", He is the one to be feared.

Deu 20:4 for Yahweh your God goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This

appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 20:5 The officers must speak to the people saying, Any man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it, let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it-

Dt. 20:5-7 commanded that in time of battle, those who had just recently married, bought a new house or planted a new vineyard- should not go to the battle. But these are the very kind of reasons which the Lord Jesus alludes to in Lk. 14 as the reasons given by some for not going and working for Him. This connection not only shows that He is in a sense far more demanding than the Old Covenant was. But what the Old Covenant considered a legitimate excuse for not going to battle- He does not. And even appears to condemn those who take such ways out. Truly He is a demanding Lord. All must be for Him, and any earlier ways of legitimizing or making respectable anything less than total commitment to Him must be rejected. In this He was indeed the demanding Lord- although He had and has every right to be.

Deu 20:6 Any man who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten its fruit, let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat its fruit-

The Lord likened His preachers to men reaping a harvest. He speaks of how they fulfilled the proverb that one sows and another reaps (Jn. 4:37,38). Yet this 'proverb' has no direct Biblical source. What we *do* find in the Old Testament is the repeated idea that if someone sows but another reaps, this is a sign that they are suffering God's judgment for their sins (Dt. 20:6; 28:30; Job 31:8; Mic. 6:15). But the Lord turns around the 'proverb' concerning Israel's condemnation; He makes it apply to the way that the preacher / reaper who doesn't sow is the one who harvests others in converting them to Him. Surely His implication was that His preacher-reapers were those who had known condemnation for their sins, but on that basis were His humbled harvesters in the mission field.

Deu 20:7 Any man who has pledged to be married to a wife and has not taken her, let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man take her-

Often the parables of the Lord Jesus warn that those who think He will understand their weakness, those who are too familiar with His softer side. The parable of the great supper records men explaining to Christ why they can't *immediately* respond to Him, although they want to when it's more convenient: "I have bought a piece of ground, *and must needs* go and see it... I have married a wife, therefore *I* cannot come" (Lk. 14:18-20). The implication is that they assumed that the servant calling them to the wedding (i.e. Christ) would understand that their excuses were quite reasonable; the man who pleaded marriage as his excuse would have been al-

luding to the Law's provision to have time off from the Lord's duties on account of marriage (Dt. 20:7; 24:5). All these reasons were assumed to be quite reasonable, and the men sound as if they were confident that *of course* Christ would understand. But His demands are in fact higher than those made under the old covenant.

Deu 20:8 The officers shall speak further to the people and say, Any man who is fearful and fainthearted, let him go and return to his house, lest his brother's heart melt as his heart-

Mental attitudes spread so easily. Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word

"love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 20:9 When the officers have made an end of speaking to the people, they shall appoint captains of armies at the head of the people-

The implication from :2,3 could be that this was to be done last minute, as the troops approached the enemy, when those who were fearful had returned home. The captains were therefore not to be a standing office, as in most armies, but were appointed at the last minute for each specific battle. In all Israel's Biblical victories, the military strategies were always in absolute defiance of secular military wisdom. For the victory was to be solely credited to God.

Deu 20:10 When you draw near to a city to fight against it, proclaim peace to it-

Is. 9:6 states that the Lord Jesus personally is "called" or "proclaimed" as peace. This is the same Hebrew word as in Dt. 20:10- Israel were to "proclaim peace" to cities they attacked, demanding either their submission or destruction. And yet *we* are the ones who "proclaim [the] peace" of Christ to men (Is. 52:7). Insofar as we represent Him in our witness, our hearers are faced with a radical choice- to submit to Him or eternally perish. It's easy to forget that this is how God sees it, as we witness to people. We're so used to the rejection of our message that we perhaps fail to see the eternal importance of the choice we lay before people; and this should impart

a verve and urgency of appeal to our preaching, rather than an indifferent inviting of people to meetings, discussion, etc.

But the Israelites did this to the few remaining Benjamites *after* they had massacred most of them (Jud 21:13 s.w.). This was typical of how Israel at this time were taking fragments of God's law and applying them, but absolutely out of context. Whilst they disregarded the majority of the Law, both in letter and spirit. And we see this in the wider Christian movement. Bits and pieces of Divine principle are used in a misplaced way, when the majority of God's revelation and will is ignored.

Deu 20:11 If it makes you an answer of peace and opens to you, then all the people who are found therein shall become tributary to you and shall serve you-

Although :15 implies this legislation was only relevant to nations "far" from Israel, I discuss on Josh. 7 how that even Jericho was given the opportunity to repent and enter covenant peace with Yahweh. The conquest of Canaan was therefore only so bloody because they had refused these offers of peace. The agreement with the Gibeonites in Josh. 9 could then be read as acceptable within the spirit of this teaching here.

Deu 20:12 If it will make no peace with you but wishes to make war against you, then you shall besiege it-

Again we must observe that the conquest of Canaan was so bloody because the Canaanites therefore wished to make way with Israel; although this legislation applies to nations "far" from Israel (:15).

Deu 20:13 When Yahweh your God delivers it into your hand, you must strike every male of it with the edge of the sword-

"When..." suggests that victory was absolutely assured. Despite being fully aware of how weak Israel were, Moses often speaks of the "blessing" which God would give them for obedience; he even speaks of the future blessing of obedience in the prophetic perfect, so confident was he that they would receive it: "Every man shall give as he is able (once he is settled in the land), according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He *has* given you" (Dt. 16:17). Moses speaks with confidence of how God would grant them the blessing of the land and victory over their enemies, even though these things were conditional upon their obedience (Dt. 19:1; 20:13), and even though Moses clearly knew that most of them would disobey. The conclusion from this is that Moses thought so much of that minority who would obey his covenant, who would grasp the spirit of his life and the speech he was now making. And our Lord likewise- in His feelings for us.

Deu 20:14 but the women and the little ones, the livestock and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take for a prey to yourself, and you shall eat the spoil of your enemies, which Yahweh your God has given you-

The softness of Moses, the earnestness of his desire for their obedience, his eagerness to work with them in their humanity, is shown by the concessions to human weakness which he makes in Deuteronomy (with God's confirmation, of course). When they attacked a foreign

city, OK, Moses says, you can take the women for yourselves- even though this is contrary to the spirit of earlier commands (Dt. 20:14; 21:11). Likewise with the provisions for having a human king (Dt. 17:17) and divorce (24:1-4). He knew the hardness of Israel's hearts, their likelihood to give way to temptation, and so he made concessions contrary to the principles behind other parts of the Law (Mt. 19:8). And Dt. 16:2 seems to imply that now, the Passover sacrifice didn't necessarily have to be a lamb, and it could be boiled not just roasted (:7).

God told Israel to totally destroy the spoil from the cities they attacked. But when they failed to do this with Jericho, God told them that with Ai, the next city on the agenda, they were allowed to keep the spoil (Josh. 8:2); even though Dt. 20:14-16 said that this was how they should treat their distant enemies, but *not* cities like Ai which were part of their inheritance. This was an undoubted concession to human weakness. The same concession to human weakness applied to other cities apart from Ai; it became a general policy that "all the spoil of these cities... the children of Israel took for a prey unto themselves"; and yet following straight on from this we are told that Joshua "left nothing undone of all that the Lord commanded Moses" (Josh. 11:14,15). God accepted those concessions to human weakness, this living on a lower level, as total obedience. The grace of all this is marvellous.

Deu 20:15 Thus you must do to all the cities which are very far off from you, which are not of the cities of nearby nations-

Nations "far off" surely still referred to nations within the land promised to Abraham. God had spoken of the time when He would "enlarge" the land up to that limit (Ex. 34:24; Dt. 12:20; 19:8). He presumably envisaged a 'stage two' of the conquest of that territory, but stage two was to be more lenient. The assumption was that all idolatry would be stamped out from Canaan, and Israel would be totally faithful to Yahweh. But this didn't happen, and so the planned "stage two" never happened. We see how God sets up potentials in great detail, but they may never happen because they depend upon human freewill. The fact that in one sense He knows the future... reflects His utter integrity in His dealings. He sets up potentials in great detail, even if He foresees that they will not be realized. The detailed descriptions of the temple to be built by the exiles in Ez. 40-48 is another example; this never happened as planned and as detailed, and never will do- for Israel would not. And the same is true in countless human lives.

Deu 20:16 But of the cities of these peoples that Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, you must save alive nothing that breathes-

See on :15. The destruction of all the breathes suggests a new creation. As the flood destroyed all that breathed within the *eretz* promised to Abraham, so Israel were to do in Canaan.

Deu 20:17 you must utterly destroy them: the Hittite, the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite, as Yahweh your God has commanded you-

Rahab was aware of what Israel had done to their enemies on their way to Jericho- and she appears to allude to Moses' commands to destroy utterly and not make covenant with the peoples of the land (Dt. 2:32-37; 7:1-5; 20:16-18). When she says that she was aware that God had "given you the land" (Josh. 2:9), she uses the same two Hebrew words used repeatedly in Deuteronomy regarding God's promise to give Israel the land of the Canaanites. "Your terror is fallen upon us" is likewise an allusion to Ex. 15:16; 23:27 [the same Hebrew word for "terror" is used by Rahab]. Rahab speaks of how her people are "fainting" in fear- quoting Ex. 15:15 about how the inhabitants of Canaan would "faint" (AV "melt away") because of Israel. Knowing all this, she has the ambition to request the impossible- that she would be the exception, that with her a covenant would be made. When she says that "we have heard" about the Exodus (Josh. 2:10), she may be referring to the prophecy of Ex. 15:14: "The people shall hear and be afraid". In this case, her emphasis would have been upon the word "have"- 'yes, we have heard indeed, as Moses sung, and yes, we are afraid'. Seeking God's face is actually to strive for the unachievable in this life; but it's what we are to do. Spiritual ambition of the type Rahab had lifts us far above the mire of mediocrity which there is in all human life under the sun.

Deu 20:18 so that they do not teach you to do after all their abominations, which they have done to their gods; so would you sin against Yahweh your God-

The total destruction of the Canaanites was because they would present a temptation to the Israelites which God foreknew they would not be able to handle. We see His sensitivity to the spiritual limits of everyone, and that is so to this day, leading up to the wonderful promise of 1 Cor. 10:13 that we will never be tested beyond our capability. This is a comfort when passing through apparently overwhelming tests and temptations. As discussed on :15, God envisaged a 'stage two' of the conquest of the territory promised to Abraham, but stage two was to be more lenient, allowing the conquered people to live. The assumption was that all idolatry would be stamped out from Canaan, and Israel would be totally faithful to Yahweh before they embarked upon this second stage. And therefore absolutely all remnants of Canaanites and their culture must be destroyed.

Deu 20:19 When you besiege a city a long time in making war against it to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them, for you may eat of them, and you shall not cut them down. Is the tree of the field a man, that it should be besieged by you?-

The Law of Moses sought to inculcate a culture of care and sensitivity to others, and this spirit was fulfilled ultimately in the life and death of the Lord. The continued stress on not cooking a kid in its mothers milk was surely to teach sensitivity to the feelings of the mother

goat- to encourage the Israelite to feel for others, even if they are animals, and seek to enter something of their feelings. And the sensitivity and thoughtfulness of God extends even to His plant creation; a tree was to be considered for who and what it was, and not treated as an enemy. And how much *more* sensitive is the Father to humankind!

Deu 20:20 Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you shall destroy; cut them down. And you shall build bulwarks against the city that makes war with you until it falls-

The implication may be that the bulwarks should be built from non fruit bearing trees, presumably those more evidently under the curse of Eden than others. Whatever the precise intention, clearly the soldiers were to be restrained from creating wanton havoc. There was to be a restraint of blood lust and a desire to destroy which can become obsessive in wartime. For the whole military operation, as any human enterprise, was to be of God and not man.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 21

Deu 21:1 If anyone is found slain in the land which Yahweh your God gives you to possess, lying in the field and it isn't known who has struck him-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 21:2 then your elders and your judges must come forth and measure to the cities which are around him who is slain-

We note that the judges were to be involved in the physical work of measuring. Any in a decision making position need to get their hands dirty with the actual cases they are dealing with, understanding the situation on the ground. Through this process, the judges would have seen the body, or at least its location, and become very familiar with the territory around it.

Deu 21:3 The elders of the city which is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer of the herd, which hasn't been worked with and which has not drawn the yoke-

The Lord's crucifixion "near to the city" (Jn. 19:20) connected with Jerusalem thereby being guilty of His blood (Dt. 21:3). Heifers were used for work (Jud. 14:18; Hos. 10:11; Jer. 50:11), so this was a heifer especially reared for use in such sacrificial rituals.

Deu 21:4 and the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer to a valley with running water, which is neither ploughed nor sown, and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley-

The idea was that the flowing water in the river would as it were bear away the guilt of the sin. But although the Bible teaches that there is no immortal soul nor conscious survival of death, such wrong ideas were likely clearly in the thoughts of pagan Israel. There was an idea that departed spirits congregated in dry places

(Lk. 11:24) but feared water, just as ghosts in the old England were thought to never cross bridges. And so the association of this flowing water with the corpse and heifer's blood, the symbol of the man's life, was in part a concession to their weakness of faith and understanding. The idea was that he was now carried away and was not there any more.

Deu 21:5 The priests the sons of Levi must come near, for them Yahweh your God has chosen to minister to Him and to bless in the name of Yahweh, and according to their word shall every controversy be decided-

The system of judges proposed by Jethro didn't really work, because Moses again felt the burden was too great for him (see on Num. 11:11), and so the 70 Spirit filled elders were appointed (Num. 11:16). But this too didn't really work; because in Dt. 17:11; 21:5 we seem to read of the priests effectively being the judges, under the direct control of Moses and Aaron. The simple truth was that there was hardly a wise man amongst them.

Although the Levites had been set apart for Divine service immediately after God's meeting with Israel at Sinai, as outlined in Leviticus and Numbers, it seems that not until Aaron died at the end of the 40 years wandering did they actually in practice begin to serve as intended (Dt. 10:8). It could be that the reason was that the Levites were ever slow to accept their responsibilities. And they generally failed in their calling over Israel's history, climaxing in the priests arranging the murder of God's own Son.

Proverbs stresses that the man who loves wisdom will be able to judge wisely (Prov. 2:9; 31:9). Yet it was the priests who were the judges of Israel (Dt. 19:17), they were the ones to whom hard cases were brought. Yet Proverbs implies all could act as priests. "To do justice and judgment is more acceptable (a word elsewhere used concerning the priests' service, Dt. 21:5) than (the offering of) sacrifice" (Prov. 21:5). Loving wisdom would give the ordinary Israelite a crown on his head (Prov. 4:9), alluding to the High Priestly crown (Ex. 29:6; Zech. 6:11).

Deu 21:6 All the elders of that city who are nearest to the slain man must wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley-

Washing hands was a protestation of innocence (Ps. 26:6; Mt. 27:24). The comment that "the guilt of blood shall be forgiven them" (:8) seems to suggest that they were somehow guilty until they protested their innocence. This runs quite contrary to the spirit of 'innocent until proven guilty' which we have observed elsewhere in the law of Moses. But the idea seems to be that clearly a sin had been committed, which the community had collective guilt and responsibility for. But God was eager to forgive this, and from then on, the community need no longer worry about any lingering sense of guilt or curse, of the kind which primitive communities tended to have. So this procedure was in some ways a concession to the weakness of Israel in having these pagan ideas and fears of guilt for unresolved murder.

Deu 21:7 and they shall say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it-

GNB "We did not murder this one, and we do not know who did it".

Deu 21:8 Forgive, Yahweh, your people Israel whom You have redeemed, and don't allow innocent blood to be among Your people Israel. The guilt of blood shall be forgiven them-

See on :6. The red heifer is called a sin offering (Num. 19:9), but we note that here it was not burnt neither was it offered upon an altar. It seems to look ahead specifically to the work of the Lord Jesus. As defined in more detail in Num. 19, the ashes of the red heifer purified the impure / unclean, but defiled the clean. This is an intentional paradox, and is meant to highlight how the Lord's work can only benefit those who recognize their uncleanness. He is a doctor, and cannot heal those who consider they need no doctor.

Deu 21:9 So you shall put away the innocent blood from the midst of you, when you do that which is right in the eyes of Yahweh-

We must read in an ellipsis here: "put away [the guilt of] innocent blood". We could read this as meaning that the community was guilty for having allowed a culture to develop in which murder happened. This is not the same as guilt by association, but the idea is that all of a society is responsible in some way if murder is committed. This sounds strange to the individualistic mindset of many modern people, but was appropriate to the collective mindset of people of the time. And indeed it

seems God does recognize this as real guilt which needed some cleansing. Hence the guilt would be put away when and if they did what was right as a community; the ritual of itself would not cleanse, but it worked together, as it were, with a community which followed the culture of kindness inculcated by the law of Moses.

Deu 21:10 When you go forth to battle against your enemies and Yahweh your God delivers them into your hands and you carry them away captive-

This presumably refers to the conquest of lands "far" from Israel, in the rest of the land promised to Abraham, beyond the borders of Canaan. For here it is envisaged that captives would be taken. Whereas the legislation of Dt. 20:15,19 was to the effect that this would only happen in the areas "far" from Canaan, and all within Canaan was to be destroyed. God had spoken of the time when He would "enlarge" the land up to that limit (Ex. 34:24; Dt. 12:20; 19:8). He presumably envisaged a 'stage two' of the conquest of that territory, but stage two was to be more lenient. The assumption was that all idolatry would be stamped out from Canaan, and Israel would be totally faithful to Yahweh. But this didn't happen, and so the planned "stage two" never happened. We see how God sets up potentials in great detail, but they may never happen because they depend upon human freewill. This is discussed more on Dt. 20:15,19.

Just as all the animals and everything in the *eretz* promised to Abraham was 'delivered into the hands' of Noah (s.w. Gen. 9:2), so the nations of that *eretz* were delivered into the hands of Israel (s.w. Ex. 6:8; 23:31; Dt.

2:24; 3:2,3; 7:24; 21:10; Josh. 2:24; Jud. 1:2). Tragically, like Adam in Eden [perhaps the same *eretz* promised to Abraham] and Noah in the new, cleansed *eretz*, Israel didn't realize this potential. What was delivered into the hand of Joshua (Josh. 2:24) actually wasn't delivered into their hand, because they disbelieved (Jud. 2:23); and this looks ahead to the disbelief of so many in the work of the Lord Jesus, who has indeed conquered the Kingdom for us. They considered the promise of the nations being delivered into their hand as somehow open to question, and only a possibility and not at all certain (Jud. 8:7; Num. 21:2 cp. Num. 21:34). Some like Jephthah (s.w. Jud. 11:32; 12:3), Ehud (Jud. 3:10,28), Deborah (Jud. 4:14), Gideon (Jud. 7:15) did, for a brief historical moment; but as individuals, and their victories were not followed up on. Instead they were dominated by the territory. And so instead, they were delivered into the hands of their enemies within the *eretz* (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Jud. 13:1).

Deu 21:11 and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you have a desire to her and would take her to you as a wife-

Throughout the Old Covenant there is the repeated stress that Israel were not to marry Gentiles. This was so far from the Biblical ideal of marriage. But then there is a concession to their likely weakness in Dt. 21:11-15: If they saw a beautiful woman among their enemies whom they liked, they had to put her through certain rituals, and then they could marry her. See on Dt. 20:14. The legislation in :11-14 is unique amongst the surrounding

nations, where women were seen as objects of booty and were treated with far less sensitivity than this and usually raped in this situation. Likewise the law of :18-21 teaches equal reverence for *both* parents and not just the father.

Deu 21:12 then you shall bring her home to your house. She must shave her head and pare her nails-

The only provision for marrying a Gentile involved her going through a process of separation from her parents, reconciling herself to the fact she would never see them again, and making her realize that because she was outside the covenant, she was to be treated like a leper or defiled person (Dt. 21:11,12 = Num. 6:9; Lev. 14:9). Only once she had learnt this lesson could she enter into covenant with God's people and be married. The woman was to remove all her cosmetic beauty, so that she were married for who she was as a person and not because of any surface level attraction.

Deu 21:13 and put off the clothing of her captivity and remain in your house and bewail her father and her mother a full month. After that you shall go in to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife-

This was so radically different to the surrounding ideas of victory and spoil, whereby women were grabbed as trophies and slept with immediately as a sign of dominance. The value and meaning of the human person is powerfully reflected throughout the Mosaic law.

Deu 21:14 If you have no delight in her, then you must let her go where she will, but you must not sell her at all

for money. Since you have humbled her, you must not deal with her as a slave-

Again, as noted on :13, this breathes the need for deep respect of the personhood of the woman. This was quite contrary to surrounding ideas of taking spoil, where the whole idea was to "humble" those conquered. "Humbled her" is the word used of how the Egyptians had afflicted the Hebrews (Ex. 1:11,12). Repeatedly, Israel were taught that they were to remember the state they had been in prior to their redemption from affliction; and redeem others from their affliction on that basis, and never to afflict people as Egypt had done to them. All this is an abiding principle for us. True redemption of others has to be rooted in an awareness of our own affliction. This is particularly necessary for those who were as it were schooled into Christ by reason of their upbringing.

Deu 21:15 If a man has two wives, the one beloved and the other hated, and they have borne him children, both the beloved and the hated, and if the firstborn son be hers who was hated-

This legislation was only operable if the man recognized that he hated [possibly meaning 'to love less'] one of his wives. Husbands would likely claim that this was not the case. The law of Moses is unique amongst legal codes in that it judges the attitudes of the heart, and legislation such as this requires total internal honesty in order to function.

Deu 21:16 then in the day that he causes his sons to inherit that which he has, he must not make the son of the

beloved the firstborn before the son of the hated, who is the firstborn-

This implies that a father could "cause his sons to inherit" before his death, and we see this reflected in the parable of the prodigal son in Lk. 15. We marvel at the internal corroboration within the Biblical record. But in :18-20 we then notice another allusion to this section of scripture by the Lord in His parable. We wonder whether the two sons of the parable refer to the two sons envisaged here, the first male children born by each of his two wives. And again we can no more than wonder whether there is some reference to Jacob and Esau, Jacob being beloved by God whereas Esau was hated or loved less (Rom. 9:13). One point of the parable's allusions to this section is to show that God, the Father, doesn't keep His own law because His grace and passionate love takes Him beyond mere legalism.

Deu 21:17 He shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the hated, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his-

This means that in a situation where there were two sons, the younger son's share was one third. In the parable of the prodigal son, the younger son is given *half* – such was the Father's love for him. This element of unreality in the parable is to signpost the amazing level of love the Father has for us; even when He knows that we will waste what He gives, still He gives, and gives generously.

At the very end, Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons as the firstborn is seen as an act of faith (Gen. 48:5; Heb. 11:21). Yet on another level, Jacob was taking the blessings away from the firstborn who was the son of the wife he disliked, and giving those blessings to the son of his favourite wife, who was not the firstborn. This was quite contrary to the will of God as expressed in Dt. 21:17. At best we can say that God allowed one principle to be broken to keep another (although what other?). At worst, Jacob was simply showing rank favouritism, and yet at the same time he foresaw in faith the Messianic suggestions in Joseph's experience, and therefore made Joseph's sons the firstborn. God saw the good in Jacob at this time, and counted this to him, and recognized and worked with Joseph's decision to make "the son of the hated" the firstborn (1 Chron. 5:1), even though this may have been contrary to God's highest intentions.

Deu 21:18 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father nor the voice of his mother and, though they chasten him, will not listen to them-

We are left to imagine in what tone of voice Moses said that. Israel had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh through disbelief, and therefore couldn't enter Canaan (Dt. 1:26; 9:7,23,24; 31:27; Num. 27:4); they were as the rebellious son who rebelled against his father's commandment (s.w. Dt. 21:18,20). For he himself had rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh and because of this was also barred from entering Canaan (Num. 20:24; 27:14). One reason for this was

that he had called the Israelites "rebels" (Num. 20:10), and no sooner had he done so, than he himself rebelled against Yahweh's commandment just like them, but in a different way. I will explain on :21 that the judgment of stoning implied false teaching. The terms "stubborn" and "rebellious" are associated with idolatry, and so it seems to me that the disobedience was more than simple disobedience to domestic commands, but rather an intentional, conscious desire to teach idolatry and rebel against the covenant.

Deu 21:19 then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him and bring him out to the elders of his city and to the gate of his town-

See on :20. "Then shall..." need not be read as absolute command; for the parable of the prodigal son features the Father running beyond the gate of the town in order to escort his wayward son home, rather than allowing him to fall into the hands of the elders of the city as he passed through the gates. We cannot just disregard Divine commandment, but it is also so that the way of grace is above legalism and literalism.

Deu 21:20 They shall tell the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard-

This is exactly how the prodigal son is described. And we have noted many points of contact between that parable and this section of the law. One point of the parable's allusions to this section is to show that God, the Father, doesn't keep His own law because His grace and passionate love takes Him beyond mere legalism.

For instead of reporting the son to the elders and having him stoned, the Father showers him with grace and acceptance. The older brother is presented as the one who wished to follow this law to the letter, and he thereby remains outside the Father's fellowship- by his own choice.

Deu 21:21 All the men of his city must stone him to death with stones. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you, and all Israel shall hear and fear-

The use of stoning (Dt. 13:10; 17:5; 21:21; 22:21,24) was to show their connection with the death of the apostate. It was to also make them realize that any attempt to deny the saving work of God in bringing them out of Egypt, or attempt to reverse it by returning them to bondage, was worthy of death (Dt. 13:10). We note that false teaching, enticing others to sin, is seen as the most serious kind of sin. I suggest therefore that the rebellious son in view was more than simply disobedient to his father's voice. As noted on :18, the rebellion in view may well have been in rebelling against the covenant and enticing others to worship other gods. The New Testament teaching about church discipline takes a similar approach; moral weakness of individuals was tolerated, although criticized; but those teaching such behaviour were condemned. Stoning resulted in the covering of the body with the dust of the earth, as if recognizing that the death being brought about was also to be the fate of all under the curse in Eden.

Deu 21:22 If a man has committed a sin worthy of death and is put to death and you hang him on a tree-

These words (and :23) have been misunderstood as meaning that the Lord as a living being was under one of the Law's curses of condemnation, and "worthy of death". This cannot be. It must be remembered that crucifixion was a Roman, not Jewish method. The Deuteronomy passage was not written with reference to crucifixion, but rather to the custom of displaying the already dead body of a sinner on a pole as a witness and warning (cp. the display of Saul's body). Sin brought the curse; and so every sinful person who died for their sin was bearing the curse of God. They were to be buried quickly as a sign of God taking no pleasure in the death of the wicked. The Lord died the death of a sinner; He bore our sins, and therefore our curse (Gal. 3:13,14). Every condemned sinner whose body had been displayed had been a type of the sinless Son of God. He was exhibited there for one or two hours (until Joseph got the permission to take the body), totally, totally united with sinful man. And then, because God had no pleasure in this condemnation of sin, the body was taken and buried.

Deu 21:23 his body must not remain all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him the same day (for cursed of God is he who is hanged on a tree), so that you don't defile your land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance-

The Jews "slew (Jesus) and hanged (him) on a tree" (Acts 5:30). There seems to be a distinction here; as if the 'slaying' was an ongoing process in His ministry, crowned by the final hanging on the tree. Paul speaks similarly in Galatians; as if the body was already dead

when it was lifted up on the tree; for he quotes the Mosaic law regarding the body of a dead criminal being displayed on a tree as if it was descriptive of the Lord's death (Gal. 3:13 cp. Dt. 21:23).

An interesting point comes out of the Greek text of Lk. 23:39: "One of the criminals who were *suspended* reviled him" (Diaglott). Ancient paintings show the thieves tied by cords to the crosses, not nailed as was Christ. *Hanging* on a tree became an idiom for crucifixion, even if nails were actually used (Dt. 21:23 cp. Gal. 3:13; Acts 5:30; 10:39). If this were so, we see the development of a theme: that the whole ingenuity of man was pitted against the Father and Son. Christ was nailed, not tied; the tomb was sealed and guarded; the legal process was manipulated; the Lord was flogged as well as crucified.

We see here that one dimension of crucifixion on a tree was public shame and public instruction. These were all aspects of the Lord's death. Dt. 21:23 had commanded this taking down bodies of criminals from the tree where they were exhibited, by evening; even condemned criminals were to be shown some respect. For after dark wild animals and birds would have eaten them. We see here reflected how God truly takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. We need not unduly fear condemnation, for God doesn't want to condemn people.

These words have been misunderstood as meaning that the Lord Jesus as a living being was under one of the Law's curses of condemnation. This cannot be. Crucifixion was a Roman, not Jewish method. The Deuterono-

my passage was not written with reference to crucifixion, but rather to the custom of displaying the already dead body of a sinner on a pole as a witness and warning. Sin brought the curse; and so every sinful person who died for their sin was bearing the curse of God. They were to be buried quickly, as a sign of God taking no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Jesus died the death of a sinner; He bore our sins, and therefore our curse (Gal. 3:13,14). Every condemned sinner whose body had been displayed had been a type of the sinless Son of God. He was exhibited there for a few hours, totally united with sinful man. And then, because God had no pleasure in this condemnation of sin, the body was taken and buried.

Luke saw a link between the Lord's death and His whole life when he says that they had been "eyewitnesses" of the Lord's ministry, using the Greek word for autopsy- Luke saw his record of the Lord's life as being an autopsy of His death (Lk. 1:2). Perhaps this idea explains why Paul likens the Lord on the cross to the body of the criminal lifted up *after* death, not in order to lead to death (Gal. 3:13; Dt. 21:23)- as if he understood the Lord to have been effectively dead unto sin at the time the body was lifted up on the cross. He was there the propitiation for our sins, and yet He is that now, each time we sin (1 Jn. 2:1; 4:10). Paul speaks similarly in Galatians; as if the body was already dead when it was lifted up on the tree; for he quotes the Mosaic law regarding the body of a dead criminal being displayed on a tree as if it was descriptive of the Lord's death (Gal. 3:13 cp. Dt.

21:23). The veil symbolized the flesh of the Lord; and yet in it was woven scarlet, a symbol of His blood and sacrifice (Ex. 27:16), which permeated His mortal life. The lesson is that the cross is a daily way of life.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

22

Deu 22:1 You must not see your brother's ox or his sheep go astray and hide yourself from them; you must surely bring them again to your brother-

This penetrates psychologically to the very core of our inaction and frequent sins of omission- we hide the need we encounter from ourselves. We pretend we have not seen. Prov. 28:27 uses the same word: "He that gives to the poor shall not lack: but he that hides his eyes shall have many a curse" (as in Is. 58:7- "Deal your bread to the hungry.... hide not your eyes"). This theme of sins of omission is continued throughout the chapter in :8 and in connection with the woman who did not cry out when raped, for fear of social consequence, being punished with the same punishment as the rapist.

Deu 22:2 If your brother isn't near to you, or if you don't know him, then you shall bring it home to your house and it shall be with you until your brother seeks after it, and you shall restore it to him-

One theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: here, coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick an-

imal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of his people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations, so superbly typifies that of Jesus.

Deu 22:3 So you must do with his donkey and with his garment and with every lost thing of your brother's, which he has lost and you have found; you must not keep it to yourself-

LXX "thou shalt not have power to overlook", as in :4 "hide yourself from them". The idea is that they were not to pretend they didn't notice that the lost item actually belonged to someone else. Time and again, the Mosaic law addresses issues of the heart. Here, self deception is specifically targetted. No other legal code pays so much attention to the heart; for Yahweh alone can judge human hearts and attitudes.

Deu 22:4 You must not see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen down by the way and hide yourself from them; you shall surely help him to lift them up again-

"Hide yourself" as in :3 addresses directly the self deception of the human heart, pretending that we've not seen nor understood a situation. The Bible gives us helpful insight into human psychology and assists us in the

practical business of being spiritually minded- for this is of critical importance to God. We see a situation that requires us to act in the way of love, and yet the 'devil' of our own mind tempts us to think that we didn't in fact understand correctly. Spirituality is about who we are when nobody's watching, and the situation here envisages encountering a situation which only we know about.

Deu 22:5 A woman must not wear men's clothing neither should a man put on women's clothing, for whoever does these things is an abomination to Yahweh your God-

The reference is to some form of sexual perversion. Perhaps this section is not simply random commandments thrown together. Maybe the theme which connects the commandments here is self deception [discussed on :3,4], persuading ourselves of another narrative which is untrue; for that is the root of much sexual perversion.

Deu 22:6 If a bird's nest happens to be before you in the way, in any tree or on the ground, with young ones or eggs and the hen sitting on the young or on the eggs, you must not take the hen with the young-

As in :4, this envisages a situation encountered privately. The law of Moses legislates so often about cases which were intensely private, where there would be no witnesses. This is because this unique legal code is a contract between God [who is witness to all things] and His people. Who we are when nobody else is watching is the essence of true spirituality.

A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

Deu 22:7 You must surely let the hen go, but the young you may take to yourself, that it may be well with you and that you may prolong your days-

The bird could only be taken if it was devoted to its young and was willing to die with them, rather than flying away. Such loyalty was to be noticed and respected. This is how to 'do life' in a spiritual way- perceive the good even in the natural creation and learn from it.

Things 'going well / good' with Israel is the language of the Kingdom of God in Dt. 8:16 "to do you good / well at your latter end". It is associated with days being

prolonged (Dt. 22:7) and the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Dt. 30:5), and Israel and the children somehow existing "forever" (Dt. 12:28). So I deduce in the wish "that it may go well with you" a hint towards the eternal establishment of God's Kingdom based around Israel, what Paul terms "the hope of Israel".

Deu 22:8 When you build a new house you must make a battlement for your roof, so that you don't bring blood on your house if anyone falls from there-

There is a big principle here. We are responsible for the fall of others, to death or spiritually, if we do not take adequate care for them. That is a principle which alone can drive our entire life's work.

Deu 22:9 You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole fruit be forfeited, the seed which you have sown, and the increase of the vineyard-

"Forfeited" is AV "defiled". The idea of the Hebrew is sanctification. The whole fruit was to be dedicated in this case- maybe to destruction, maybe to the priests. The commandments about not inappropriately mixing things are sandwiched between commandments about avoiding sexual perversion and inappropriate bonding, such as adultery, sex with a father's wife (:30), and the perversion of :5, which is also about inappropriate mixture of sexual behaviours. The idea of these commands about not mixing seed and animals may be as it were a fence around these laws. The fear was that this was going to be a subliminal temptation towards sin. Rather like the command not to plant trees near an altar of Yahweh,

lest this lead to the subliminal temptation to worship the trees like an Asherah grove.

Deu 22:10 You shall not plough with an ox and a donkey together-

This is the basis for the command not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cot. 6:14). As discussed on :9, there was nothing intrinsically sinful with such ploughing, although it would likely have been painful and frustrating for both parties. But it was a warning against inappropriate bonding. The donkey was an unclean animal, and the ox was clean. Clearly the lesson to be learned was that clean and unclean were not to be mixed, under the excuse of needing to work together in order to get a job done.

Deu 22:11 You shall not wear mixed stuff, wool and linen together-

Again, as discussed on :9,10, there is nothing intrinsically sinful about this. Rather the idea was that in daily life, there was to be the lesson of separation and avoidance of inappropriate bonding. Just as the ox and donkey of :10 were clean and unclean which should not be mixed, it could be argued that "linen" came from Egypt (1 Kings 10:28; Prov. 7:16; Ez. 27:7), whilst wool was the classic produce of Israel. "Mixed stuff" translates a word which appears to be of Egyptian origin.

Deu 22:12 You shall make yourselves fringes on the four borders of your garment with which you cover yourself-

Each Israelite was to emulate the High Priest, who had such clothing. Daily reminders of spirituality are vi-

tal in the daily round of life; these fringes or tassles were to remind them to be obedient (Num. 15:37-41). It is therefore significant that the sick woman of Mt. 9:20 took hold of the fringes of the Lord's garment, perhaps showing some appreciation of the fact that He alone was totally obedient.

Deu 22:13 If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and hates her-

The clear implication is that sex was to follow marriage and not to happen beforehand (also :14). The hatred he feels is either because he doesn't find her a virgin (:14), or because having broken through the taboo and psychological barrier of intercourse, his previous love for her turns to hatred, as in 2 Sam. 13:15, where intercourse made "love" turn to hatred, and he then wanted to slander her as an immoral woman in order to annul the marriage. This is a commonly experienced situation. And the Mosaic law addresses it. LXX "and dwell with her, and hate her" seems to begin this legislation with the hint that the man is likely the guilty one, getting angry with his wife after the honeymoon period is over, as is often observed in marriages. This taking the woman's side is never seen in other legislation of the time.

Deu 22:14 and accuses her of shameful things and brings up an evil name on her and says, I took this woman and when I came near to her I didn't find in her the tokens of virginity-

The argument is weak, because if the token of virginity was a cloth (:17), then he would have been given this when they married. For him to sleep with her with-

out seeing it, and then later demand it, would be strange. And no cloth is absolute guarantee of virginity. However the idea may be that the breaking of the hymen was supposed to cause bleeding which then stained the bed sheet, and the husband then gave this stained sheet to the parents (:15). If this didn't happen, the man assumed his wife was not a virgin. The bed sheet was unstained. But there was no evidence that was the sheet they had slept together on. And not every woman bleeds when she first has intercourse; and there is the possibility of menstrual bleeding too. The hymen is a fragile tissue with limited blood supply to it, and it can break for many reasons. In any case, it would surely be unreasonable to assume that a broken hymen meant a woman was a whore (:21). I conclude therefore that there must be implied in :20 a far wider examination of the situation, before the woman was declared a whore. Perhaps we are intended to discern that the "cloth" argument is suspect, and therefore the man is likely lying and seeking an excuse to end the marriage because he failed to truly love the woman; see on :13.

Deu 22:15 then shall the father of the young woman and her mother take and bring forth the tokens of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city in the gate-

GNB "the young woman's parents are to take the blood-stained wedding sheet that proves she was a virgin". This suggests it was the custom to give the sheet to the parents of the girl. But I have discussed on :13 that not every woman bleeds the first time she has sex. It's possible that the whole legislation is being given, in

order to suggest the conclusion: "This is all so hard to prove, the way ahead is only love and forgiveness".

Deu 22:16 The young woman's father shall tell the elders, I gave my daughter to this man to wife and he hates her-

An accusation that the woman was a whore was a slander of her father and her family. And so often this happens- an individual dislikes another, and the slander raised against them makes social life impossible for the family. All because of the dysfunction of one individual against another.

Deu 22:17 and behold, he has accused her of shameful things saying, 'I didn't find in your daughter the tokens of virginity', and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. They shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city-

I have discussed on :13 that the idea of a literal bed sheet from their first night sleeping together was hardly evidence of virginity. And it was hardly upon that basis that she could be judged to have been a whore (:21). I am not generally in favour of metaphorical or symbolic interpretations, but the Jewish rabbis are understandably insistent that to spread a cloth before people as evidence is an idiom for declaring the full facts of a case. Whilst a literal bed sheet may have been used, it was symbolic of far more. And that seems to me the only explanation that makes sense here. See on :20.

Deu 22:18 The elders of that city must take the man and chastise him-

Chastise can mean to literally beat, or to sternly reprove with words.

Deu 22:19 and they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman-

Dowry was apparently considered to be 50 shekels (:29), so the man was being treated as a thief, who must restore twice the value he had stolen (Ex. 22:8). He had sought to 'steal back' the dowry by claiming the woman was not a virgin.

Because he has brought up an evil name on a virgin of Israel, and she shall be his wife; he may not divorce her all his days-

This reflects the seriousness with which God views slander. It was to be paid to the father- for slander hurts not only the victim but also their family. Prov. 17:4 has a piercing analysis of gossip: "A wicked doer gives heed to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a lying tongue". It's the wicked who listen to gossip. It's liars who pay attention to lies. By listening to gossip, we show what sort of a person we are. Those with an interest in lies or gossip end up lying and gossiping themselves. Both gossiping and listening to it are both therefore part of a serious downward spiral of behaviour; and they are related to each other. This is how serious this matter is. The seriousness of it was reflected in how the Law of Moses stipulated a huge penalty if a man sullied the name of his wife by falsely accusing her- he had to pay 100 shekels of silver, twice the bride price (Dt. 22:19,29). This was a heavy fine, double that for raping a virgin (:29).

The ruling that he could never divorce her reveals how the Law of Moses operated on different levels. Divorce was only permitted for unfaithfulness, which was punishable by death. But this command suggests that divorce was permitted in practice for lesser issues.

Divorce was clearly possible under the Mosaic system. If a man's wife committed adultery he could have her killed; *or* he could put her through the trial of jealousy of Num. 5, with the result that she would become barren; or he could divorce her (Dt. 22:19; 24:1 RV; Lev. 21:14; 22:13). Within a Law that was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), unsurpassed in its righteousness (Dt. 4:8; and let us not overlook these estimations), there were these different levels of response possible. But there was a higher level: he could simply forgive her. This was what God did with His fickle Israel, time and again (Hos. 3:1-3). And so the Israelite faced with an unfaithful wife could respond on at least four levels. This view would explain how divorce seems outlawed in passages like Dt. 22:19,29, and yet there are other parts of the OT which seem to imply that it was permitted. It should be noted that there were some concessions to weakness under the Law which the Lord was not so willing to make to His followers (e.g., outside the marriage context, Dt. 20:5-8 cp. Lk. 9:59-62; 14:18,19). He ever held before us the Biblical ideal of marriage. It was as if God gave these laws, intending purposefully that the way of grace was to be beyond them.

Deu 22:20 But if this thing is true, that the tokens of virginity were not found in the young woman-

I have argued on :14 that the evidence of the "cloth" alone is suspect. The presence or absence of blood on the bed sheet the couple first slept on was no evidence that the woman was a whore (:21) and worthy of death. Therefore I think much hinges upon these words "If this thing be true". It must imply that a major investigation was made, as to why she appeared not to be a virgin when she married her husband. The punishment of a whore in :21 was only to be given if this had been established beyond doubt, far beyond the bed sheet evidence.

Deu 22:21 then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house and the men of her city must stone her to death with stones, because she has done folly in Israel, to play the prostitute in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from the midst of you-

The use of stoning (Dt. 13:10; 17:5; 21:21; 22:21,24) was to show their connection with the death of the apostate. It was to also make them realize that any attempt to deny the saving work of God in bringing them out of Egypt, or attempt to reverse it by returning them to bondage, was worthy of death (Dt. 13:10). To act as a prostitute was to lead others into sin. We note that false teaching, enticing others to sin, is seen as the most serious kind of sin. The New Testament teaching about church discipline takes a similar approach; moral weakness of individuals was tolerated, although criticized; but those teaching such behaviour were condemned. Stoning resulted in the covering of the body with the dust of the earth, as if recognizing that the

death being brought about was also to be the fate of all under the curse in Eden.

LXX "turning her father's house into a harlot's" suggests that the "shameful things" she stood accused of (:17) were more than having slept with another village boy years previously. The accusation was that she was in fact a prostitute, hence the severe judgment, and the explanation on :17,20 that there was a major investigation made of the woman, far beyond the dubious evidence of a bed sheet with blood on it.

Deu 22:22 If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then they must both of them die, the man who lay with the woman and the woman. So you shall put away the evil from Israel-

There are various ways prescribed for dealing with adultery under the Law of Moses. This was one of them. The trial of jealousy (Num. 5) was another. Or the adulterous woman could be divorced. But the higher option, as practiced by Yahweh through Hosea, was to forgive and "play on". "They must... you shall..." were therefore all phrases open to interpretation. The very existence of different levels of response to God's principles of itself inspires us to reach up to the highest levels. For who can be a minimalist before the grace and love of God. Or we could argue that the stress is upon if the couple were "found lying" together, and therefore the public nature of the discovery required a stronger response. But the Lord dealt with such a case, and taught that although this command was true, the problem is that none are without sin, and therefore no man should in honest con-

science seek to obey this commandment. His view of morality and ethics was far above mere literalistic, legalistic obedience to commandments. He seems to reason as if this commandment was inserted into the law to elicit in honest men an awareness that they could not in good conscience obey it.

Deu 22:23 If there is a young woman who is a virgin pledged to be married to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her-

As an example of unconscious allusion, consider Lk. 1:27: "A virgin betrothed to a man". This is right out of Dt. 22:23 LXX "If there be a virgin betrothed to a man...". The context is quite different, but the wording is the same. And in many other cases, Luke picks up phraseology from the LXX apparently without attention to the context. He saw the whole of the OT as having its fulfilment in the story of Jesus.

Deu 22:24 then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you must stone them to death with stones; the woman, because she didn't cry, being in the city, and the man, because he has humbled his neighbour's wife-

Rape is rarely a case of a man picking upon a random female victim. Usually there is an element of manipulation in forms other than physical forcing. But the woman in the case was to be condemned because she all the same didn't cry out and thus avoid penetration. She valued her image in society more than her marriage.

So you shall put away the evil from among you-

"The evil one" in the Old Testament was always "the evil man in Israel" (Dt. 17:12; 19:19; 22:21-24 cp. 1

Cor. 5:13) – never a superhuman being, not any personal, superhuman Satan.

Deu 22:25 But if the man finds the woman who is pledged to be married in the field, and the man forces her and lies with her, then the man only who lay with her must die-

This gives the woman the benefit of the doubt, assuming she would have cried out, unlike the woman of :24. This giving the benefit of the doubt is to be part of our generally positive outlook upon people and the cases we encounter in life.

Deu 22:26 but to the woman you shall do nothing; there is in the woman no sin worthy of death. For as when a man rises against his neighbour and kills him, even so is this matter-

The phrase "found her in the field" in :27 leads us to assume that the similarity is being drawn with a murdered body being found in a field. There was no evidence she hadn't called out, so she was not to be condemned without evidence.

Deu 22:27 for when he found her in the field, the betrothed woman cried and there was none to save her-

The assumption is that she cried. There was no investigation as to whether she had cried out or not. The law here is very protective to women and assuming their innocence, in stark contrast to the legal codes of the surrounding nations.

Deu 22:28 If a man finds a woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and lays hold on her and lies with her and they are found-

There is no mention of her crying out, so we can assume that this may not refer to rape but rather a boyfriend / girlfriend situation where they were "found" or discovered, possibly through her falling pregnant. This is why the judgment was that they must marry (:29), which would be inappropriate if the man in view was a random rapist. The equivalent in Ex. 22:16 is "If a man entices a virgin who isn't pledged to be married". The fault in this case is placed more with the man. The law here is again very protective to women and assuming their innocence, in stark contrast to the legal codes of the surrounding nations.

Deu 22:29 then the man who lay with her must give to the woman's father fifty shekels of silver and she shall be his wife, because he has humbled her; he may not put her away all his days-

Divorce was allowed for adultery, so the implication is that if she committed adultery, then divorce was not to be an option. It was as if having wronged her, the man was to exercise maximum forgiveness to her if she were to wrong him. The tendency for the woman to 'hit back' at her husband in later life is here well understood by God, and leniency would have to be shown to her by the husband.

Deu 22:30 A man must not take his father's wife, and shall not uncover his father's skirt-

These laws teach that nakedness should only be uncovered before your wife or husband. Uncovering nakedness is an idiom for the sexual act. The allusion is to Adam and Eve having their nakedness uncovered; we

have to accept the situation we are in as a result of the curse, rather than having sexual relations with who we like, as if uncovering nakedness is nothing shameful. Our hope is for the curse put on us in Eden to be lifted at Christ's return; we can't lift it in this life, as our own ever insistent mortality reminds us.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 23

Deu 23:1 He who is wounded in the testicles, or has his privy member cut off, must not enter into the assembly of Yahweh-

Perhaps the point is that all those who are the Lord's people must recognize their ability to procreate for Him, in the bringing forth of yet others in their Lord's image. Males who could not procreate were barred from the congregation, possibly in prototype of how spiritual procreation was to be a vital characteristic of the future Israel. To bring forth spiritual children in the course of our life before God is expected of us. Israel were seen by the Lord as the tree by the roadside (Mt. 21:19), whose fruit should have been for all that passed by (Dt. 23:24). But because there was not even the glimmer of this kind of giving of fruit, they were condemned by the Lord.

Deu 23:2 An illegitimate person must not enter into the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation shall none of his enter into the assembly of Yahweh-

According to Talmudic writings like *Yebamot* 78b, Dt. 23:2 was interpreted as meaning that a fatherless man wasn't allowed to enter the temple or marry a true Israelite. The reference to Jesus as "son of Mary" (Mk. 6:3) rather than "son of Joseph" is, apparently, very unusual. It reflects the Lord's lack of social identity in first century Israel; He had no father's house to belong to. In passing, the jibe in Mt. 27:64 "the last deception shall be

worse than the first” is likely a reference to Mary and Jesus claiming that He was the result of a virgin birth- this, as far as the Jews were concerned, was the “first deception”.

Deu 23:3 An Ammonite or a Moabite must not enter into the assembly of Yahweh; even to the tenth generation shall none belonging to them enter into the assembly of Yahweh forever-

This would have applied to Ruth, but so many of these laws of Moses had exceptions to them. It was as if God gave these laws, intending purposefully that the way of grace was to be beyond them. See on Dt. 22:19.

Deu 23:4 This is because they didn't meet you with bread and water in the way, when you came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you-

Dt. 2:29 says that the Edomites and Moabites sold Israel food and water as they passed through. But Dt. 23:3,4 says that the Moabites didn't do this and were cursed because of it. Perhaps a few Moabites did do so, but Moab generally didn't. But see note on Dt. 2:29.

Deu 23:5 Nevertheless Yahweh your God wouldn't listen to Balaam, but Yahweh your God turned the curse into a blessing to you, because Yahweh your God loved you-

Yahweh did not behold iniquity in His people at this time (Num. 23:21). His love was shown in imputing righteousness to them; and as Paul explains in Rom. 1-8, the love of God is articulated through doing this to us too. Dt. 23:5 LXX speaks of Balaam's plural curses being turned into plural blessings, because God refused to lis-

ten to Balaam. We learn from this that Balaam wanted to curse Israel [for he so loved the money being offered for doing so], indeed he perhaps began to utter curses, but the Spirit of God overpowered him and made him utter blessings instead. We learn from this that the Spirit of God working upon a person is no guarantee of their personal acceptance with Him. And we marvel at how the love of money drove Balaam to attempt to do what he was clearly not intended to, i.e. to curse Israel. Maybe his unexpressed desires were read by God as a prayer, and to that prayer "Yahweh your God wouldn't listen" (Dt. 23:5). Prayer is therefore not just in the form of spoken words; for then the more verbally articulate would be, as it were, better at prayer. God reads situations and unspoken desires as prayers. For this is what prayer "in the spirit" is all about.

Deu 23:6 You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever-

And yet we read of how Boaz sought the peace and prosperity of Ruth, whom the record seven times stresses was a Moabitess. Clearly the value and meaning of the individual person was so great to God that exceptions could be made to such blanket policy positions. The simple take away is that God values the individual human person to a very great extent.

Deu 23:7 You must not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother-

The brotherhood between Jacob and Esau [who is Edom] is so often recalled in the later Biblical records. This may be to remind Israel that they were no better

than Edom; or to remind them of the need for reconciliation to be attempted.

You must not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as a foreigner in his land-

The Egyptians later abused the Israelites, but initially they were their saviours, in human terms, and were extremely generous to them. This commandment was therefore asking them to look back in history and see the past as a glass half full rather than half empty. This is a lesson which needs to be learned. For so many look back in their personal history and see only the abuse and the bad years, rather than appreciating the wider sweep of that history.

Deu 23:8 The children of the third generation who are born to them may enter into the assembly of Yahweh-

This may have been a form of God punishing people to the third generation (Ex. 20:5). This command is presumably time limited, referring to a specific starting point. Perhaps in view are members of the "mixed multitude" which went with Israel out of Egypt, and which would have been addressed at this point.

Deu 23:9 When you go forth to camp against your enemies, you must keep yourselves from every evil thing-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment.

And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 23:10 If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of that which happens to him by night, he must go outside the camp. He shall not come within the camp-

We must be aware that starting in :9, we have here commands specifically relevant to Israel's military; "the camp" is the "camp against your enemies" of :9, referring to "camp" in a specifically military sense. The idea could appear to be that if a man needed to defecate, then he was to do so outside of the camp of soldiers. Having latrines outside the camp would have ensured hygiene

within the "camp". But it seems that defecating is what is in view in :12. Therefore this specifically night time reason for uncleanness must refer to an involuntary emission of semen. Hence the reference to what "happens to him at night". Nobody apart from the soldier knew what had happened. Many of the Mosaic commands invited obedience from men on a very personal and intimate level; for nobody else apart from the soldier would have known whether or not this had happened. This was all designed to inculcate very personal obedience to and relationship with God. See on Ps. 119:55,56.

Deu 23:11 but when evening comes on he must bathe in water, and when the sun is down he shall come within the camp-

To have soldiers needing to remain ritually unclean outside the main camp of soldiers was not perhaps seen as the most effective use of soldiers in a conflict situation, where every man was required. But they were taught thereby that victory was not going to come in their own strength, but through obedience to God's ways. We likewise are tempted to think that careful obedience to God's commands will hinder our material progress in life. But the opposite is in fact true, and this commandment taught that.

Deu 23:12 You must have a place also outside the camp where you shall go to relieve yourself-

This unclean place "outside the camp" is alluded to in Heb. 13:12,13: "Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered outside of the gate. Let us therefore go to him outside the camp, bear-

ing his reproach". The place of crucifixion is likened to the place of "reproach", outside the camp, just as Jesus died outside the city walls of Jerusalem in an unclean place, Golgotha. His death was the climax of a life lived in careful attention to the most intimate requirements of God's laws, as discussed on :10. And we are to unashamedly "go forth" to Him there.

Deu 23:13 and you must have a trowel among your weapons, and when you relieve yourself you must dig with it and turn back and cover that which comes from you-

A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

There is a clear similarity with a dog coverings its own excrement. The idea may be that in going to war, Israel were to remember that they were but unclean dogs, accepted by grace. Humility, rather than psyching up of soldiers in bravado, was what was required for victory.

Deu 23:14 for Yahweh your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy so that He may not see an unclean thing in you and turn away from you-

In prospect all Israel's battles with the inhabitants of Canaan had been won by the Angels, and it was for them to live in a suitable way and to display enough faith to enable them to make use of these victories. For it was Yahweh through the Angel who walked in the midst of the camp. They were warned that if the camp were impure, Yahweh would turn (Heb.) "from following after you". This recalls how the Angel [who was perhaps dwelling over the ark in the shekinah glory] "went behind" [s.w. "followed"] at the exodus (Ex. 14:19), and "followed them" at the crossing of Jordan and conquest of Jericho (Josh. 6:8 s.w.). The word is also used in Dt. 23:14, where Israel are warned that if they are unclean, then Yahweh will no longer follow them. They of course were bidden follow Him, but He is also presented as following them. And thus God's people hear His voice behind them, urging them to choose the right path (s.w. Is. 30:21); for He is not only their vanguard, but also their rear guard following them (Is. 52:12; 58:8). This indicates not only the mutuality between God and His peo-

ple; but the sense that we are both following and being followed by Him, as it were sandwiched by His presence.

Deu 23:15 You must not deliver to his master a servant who has escaped from his master to you-

This was to remind them how they were escaped slaves. God wanted them to continually remember the way He had saved them (see too :7), and His law was designed to repeatedly prod their conscience about this in daily life. He wants us to live today in constant awareness of our salvation.

Deu 23:16 He shall dwell with you, in the midst of you in the place which he shall choose within one of your gates, where it pleases him best. You must not oppress him-

There was no mechanism, therefore, for the master to regain a slave who ran away. Unlike most legal codes, the law was on the side of the slave and not of the owner. The master therefore needed to treat slaves well, so that they didn't want to run away. And if they did, he had no legal mechanism to get them back.

Deu 23:17 There must be no prostitute of the daughters of Israel. Neither should there be a sodomite of the sons of Israel-

The implication is that the "Sodomite" refers here to a male prostitute, and the "prostitute" of the first half of the verse refers to a female prostitute. This is confirmed in :18.

Deu 23:18 You must not bring the hire of a prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of Yahweh your God for any vow, for both of these are an abomination to Yahweh your God-

Prostitution was forbidden under the Law (:17), but this is another tacit recognition made by Moses that such failure would still occur. We see here how Moses forbade something and then went on to give legislation recognizing that it would still occur.

Deu 23:19 You must not lend on interest to your brother, interest of money, of food or of anything that is lent-

Lending was therefore to be seen as an opportunity to help your brother rather than to benefit from him; indeed to lend without interest meant that effectively you were giving your brother something in his time of need.

Deu 23:20 To a foreigner you may lend on interest, but to your brother you shall not lend on interest, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all that you put your hand to in the land where you go in to possess it-

The Lord Jesus in His parable told the rejected man that he should at least have given His money to others on usury (Mt. 25:27). He may have meant that the man should at least have done *something* even if he broke the letter of the law; or He may have meant that if the man had at least shared the Gospel with the Gentiles and got some fruit for Christ, all his other lack of achievement would've been overlooked. The judgment is for the education of those judged. He will shew them how they should have given their talent, the basic Gospel, to others, and therefore gained some interest.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and

the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 23:21 When you make a vow to Yahweh your God you must not be slack to pay it, for Yahweh your God will surely require it of you and it would be sin upon you-

This was to guard against the temptation to make a vow which was publically impressive before men, but then not to pay it. Any attempt to garner kudos for our spiritual devotion is absolutely wrong; such spiritual pride is the worst. God would therefore "require it" and severely judge those who did this (Dt. 23:21). Not being slack to pay a vow (Dt. 23:21) fits in with a wider Bibli-

cal theme of being quick in responding to God. It comes to full term in the New Testament accounts of immediate baptisms straight after people had grasped the basic message of the Gospel. "Yes straight away" is what God really seeks from His children. Israel were not to delay in offering their firstfruits to God (Ex. 22:29), lest their intentions weren't translated into practice. The disciples immediately left the ship, simply put their nets down and followed (Mt. 4:20,22); Matthew left his opened books and queue of clients in the tax office and walked out never to return (Lk. 5:17,18 implies).

Deu 23:22 But if you forbear to vow, that will be no sin upon you-

"Sin" is often used to effectively mean "punishment for sin", as here. And this is another great Biblical theme, that sin is of itself its own punishment. This is why those condemned at the last day are effectively self condemned, and indeed judgment day is in this sense right now. For as sin is committed, so is the judgment for that sin, in God's eyes. But repentance and Divine grace can change that judgment.

Deu 23:23 That which has gone out of your lips you must observe and do, according as you have vowed to Yahweh your God, as a freewill offering which you have promised with your mouth-

See on :21. The Hebrew word here for "freewill" carries the idea of spontaneity. This is the clear implication of its usage in places like Ex. 35:27; 36:3; Jud. 5:2,9; 1 Chron. 29:5,9; 2 Chron. 35:8; Ps. 54:6. There is a strong sense of immediate emotion attached to the word (Hos.

14:4). And there was a major emphasis in the law of Moses upon freewill offerings (Lev. 7:16; 22:18,21,23; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39; Dt. 12:6,17; 16:10; 23:23). The other legal codes of the nations around Israel were all about rituals; whereas Yahweh's law encouraged spontaneous giving as part of the way of Yahweh. For He is not a God of rituals, but of relationship. The way of the Spirit is the same today; spontaneous, emotional, personal response to God's grace, responding to Him on our own initiative and in our own way, in addition to obeying His specific requirements.

The fact that God's word is true means that we also ought to be truthful- for we should speak "as oracles of God". Moses surely intended a connection between his words recorded in Dt. 8:3 and Dt. 23:23- for they are the only times he uses a particular Hebrew word translated "proceed" or 'go out', within the same speech uttered the same day: "By every word that *proceeds* out of the mouth of the Lord does man live... that which *goes forth* [s.w. "proceeds"] out of *your* lips / mouth you shall keep and perform". The influence of continually hearing *God's* word should be that *our* words are likewise truthful and trustworthy. The fact that the Bible as God's word is true has implications for our own truthfulness. *Pistos* is listed as a fruit of the spirit in Gal. 5; but the idea it can carry is not so much of faith in the sense of belief, but of faithfulness, loyalty, reliability, utter dependability. If this is how God's words are to us, then this is how we and our words should be to others.

Deu 23:24 When you come into your neighbour's vineyard you may eat your fill of grapes at your own pleasure, but you must not put any in your vessel-

Israel were seen by the Lord as the tree by the roadside (Mt. 21:19), whose fruit should have been for all that passed by (Dt. 23:24). But because there was not even the glimmer of this kind of giving of fruit, they were condemned by the Lord. The command here and in :25 follows straight on from the command to honour the vows we make. Perhaps the sense is that we are not to fulfil our vows by taking grapes or grain from our brother. The abiding principle is that we are not to sacrifice that which costs us nothing (2 Sam. 24:24). Sacrifice means being left "minus" in absolute terms, and not seeking to do so at the effective expense of others.

Deu 23:25 When you come into your neighbour's standing grain you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not move a sickle to your neighbour's standing grain-

Boaz allowed foreigners to glean immediately behind his reapers, and then was personally generous in giving Ruth sacks of barley. He understood this law as a springboard into a culture of far more extensive grace, rather than a chain which limits human behaviour, to be tolerated and obeyed with reluctance. See on Dt. 25:7.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 24

Deu 24:1 When a man takes a wife and marries her, if she finds no favour in his eyes because he has found some unseemly thing in her, he shall write her a bill of divorce and give it into her hand and send her out of his house-

Divorce was clearly possible under the Mosaic system. If a man's wife committed adultery he could have her killed; *or* he could put her through the trial of jealousy of Num. 5, with the result that she would become barren; or he could divorce her (Dt. 22:19; 24:1 RV; Lev. 21:14; 22:13). Within a Law that was holy, just and good (Rom. 7:12), unsurpassed in its righteousness (Dt. 4:8; and let us not overlook these estimations), there were these different levels of response possible. But there was a higher level: he could simply forgive her. This was what God did with His fickle Israel, time and again (Hos. 3:1-3). And so the Israelite faced with an unfaithful wife could respond on at least four levels. This view would explain how divorce seems outlawed in passages like Dt. 22:19,29, and yet there are other parts of the OT which seem to imply that it was permitted. It should be noted that there were some concessions to weakness under the Law which the Lord was not so willing to make to His followers (e.g., outside the marriage context, Dt. 20:5-8 cp. Lk. 9:59-62; 14:18,19). He ever held before us the Biblical ideal of marriage.

Deu 24:2 When she has departed out of his house she may go and be another man's wife-

The Lord Himself spoke of how the Law's attitude to divorce was a concession because of the hardness of men's hearts. Dt. 24:1-4 allows divorce if a man "found some uncleanness" in his wife. This, the Lord comments, was a concession for the hardness of their hearts. But the passage moves on to say: "When a man hath taken *new* wife, he shall not go out to war...but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife" (:5). Taking a *new* wife seems a strange way to describe taking a first wife. It would seem that Yahweh through Moses is making a gracious concession to a man taking a second wife according to the concession laid down in the previous verses.

Deu 24:3 If the latter husband hates her and writes her a bill of divorce and gives it to her and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband who took her to be his wife dies-

This seems to imply that divorce was even possible if a husband simply 'hated' his wife. Or we may assume that the divorce had to be because of unfaithfulness on her part (:1), and yet to divorce her for this was in fact read by God as 'hating' her. For the standard He sought to inculcate (see on :1) was forgiveness of the unfaithful wife, motivated in love for her- which was just how He treated Israel.

Deu 24:4 her former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife after she is defiled, for that is abomination before Yahweh. You shall not cause the land

to sin, which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance-

The prophets describe God divorcing Israel for her infidelity and yet still asking her to return to Him. He chose this metaphor to reflect the level of His desperate love for His people- that He would do what His own law declared to be abomination to Him. That same kind of love is what He has for us today. It is God's earnest desire to save repentant sinners. He will even bend His own laws to enable this. Consider how within His own law, it was an abomination for a man to re-marry the woman he had divorced. Yet this notwithstanding, God abases Himself in asking worthless Israel to re-marry Him (Dt. 24:4 cp. Jer. 3:1). Yahweh Himself had stated in His own law that to divorce a wife and then re-marry her after she had been "defiled" was an act of abomination to Him, and would defile the land. And yet in full knowledge of this, and with conscious allusion to it, Yahweh begs His defiled, divorced wife Israel to return to Him (Jer. 4:1), even though the land was defiled by her (Jer. 3:9; 16:18). Here we see the utter self-abnegation of Yahweh, God of Israel, that He might save His people.

Deu 24:5 When a man takes a new wife he shall not go into the army, neither must he be assigned any business. He shall be free at home for one year and shall please his wife whom he has taken-

See on :2. Often the parables of the Lord Jesus warn that those who think He will understand their weakness, those who are too familiar with His softer side. The parable of the great supper records men explaining to Christ

why they can't *immediately* respond to Him, although they want to when it's more convenient: "I have bought a piece of ground, *and must needs* go and see it... I have married a wife, therefore *I* cannot come" (Lk. 14:18-20). The implication is that they assumed that the servant calling them to the wedding (i.e. Christ) would understand that their excuses were quite reasonable; the man who pleaded marriage as his excuse would have been alluding to the Law's provision to have time off from the Lord's duties on account of marriage (Dt. 20:7). All these reasons were assumed to be quite reasonable, and the men sound as if they were confident that *of course* Christ would understand. But His demands are in fact higher than those made under the old covenant.

To say that marriage means that we can't respond so enthusiastically to the call of the Gospel is an irrelevant excuse, in the eyes of the Lord (Lk. 14:26). Those who said it evidently thought that the Lord would understand and appreciate that their marriage was important, and so they couldn't respond as He was asking. But Christ didn't appreciate their way of thinking as they thought He would (Lk. 14:20,26). Christ was referring back to the way that under the Law, a man was legitimately excused from fighting the Lord's battles if he had recently married (Dt. 24:5). The Lord is teaching that He realizes that His followers will be inclined to think that the OT attitude to marriage was His. 'But,' He effectively continued, 'that isn't the case. I don't think that marriage is any excuse at all for not responding to me with all your soul. I'm asking you to take up my cross,

to follow my example, to hate ['love less'] wife and relations and houses etc. And that's that, I'm not ameliorating the standard I put before you' (although He later allowed Paul to do this). Quite clearly, the call of Christ is to give ourselves to Him at the expense of human relationships. Of course this doesn't mean that one can quit family life or take their responsibilities less seriously because they feel called to do the Lord's work; His work is to be found in family life, too.

Deu 24:6 No man may take the mill or the upper mill-stone as pledge, for he takes a life in pledge-

Moses does not repeat every single commandment in the Law. Rather are there several themes of Moses in Deuteronomy presented. His choice of which ones he does repeat indicates his feelings towards Israel. His sensitivity towards the weakest and poorest of Israel comes out in this. He was reaching the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who said that the weakest of his brethren represented him (Mt. 25:40 Gk.). Thus Moses stresses how they were not to go into the house of a poor man to take back his pledge (Dt. 24:10); Moses could enter into the sense of shame and embarrassment of the poor man when a richer man enters his home. The Law in Exodus 22:26 did not stipulate that the house of the poor man should not be entered; by making this point in his farewell speech, Moses was showing his sensitivity, his ability now to enter into the feelings of the poorest of God's people. Indeed, the whole passage in Deuteronomy (24:6-17) about pledges is quite an expansion upon what the Law actually said in Ex. 22. And this from a man who could

have been the king of Egypt, who could have had the world.

Deu 24:7 If a man is found stealing any of his brothers of the children of Israel, and he deals with him as a slave or sells him, then that thief must die. So you shall put away the evil from among you-

To deal with another person as a slave or chattel, to not treat a person as a person, was seen even under Mosaic Law as meriting the death penalty- for it was as if a person had been killed by treating them like that (Dt. 24:7 RVmg.).

Deu 24:8 Take heed that in the plague of leprosy you observe diligently to do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you. As I commanded them, so you shall observe to do-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19;

19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

Deu 24:9 Remember what Yahweh your God did to Miriam by the way as you came forth out of Egypt-

The reference may be to how she was shut out of the camp for seven days. This would have been inconvenient in domestic terms, especially if the leprosy victim was a woman who was a mother and wife, expected to do all the domestic chores. Moses foresaw how tempting it would be for men to quietly ignore the need to put a leprous woman outside their camp for seven days. So we see

how at the end of the wilderness journey, Moses was so sensitive to the likely weaknesses of his people; and he in this was a type of the Lord Jesus.

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 24:10 When you lend your neighbour any kind of loan, you must not go into his house to get his pledge-

Moses in Deuteronomy, the 'second law', does not repeat every single commandment in the Law. Rather are there several themes of Moses presented in Deuteronomy. His choice of which ones he does repeat indicates his feelings towards Israel. His sensitivity towards the weakest and poorest of Israel comes out in this, and is a sign of his maturity. He was reaching the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who said that the weakest of His brethren represented Him (Mt. 25:40). Moses for all his wealthy background and high status amongst Israel could enter into the sense of shame and embarrassment of the poor man when a richer man enters his home. The Law in Ex. 22:26 did not stipulate that the house of the poor man should not be entered; by making this point in his

farewell speech, Moses was showing his sensitivity, his ability now to enter into the feelings of the poorest of God's people. He typified in this the sensitivity of God's son to our spiritual poverty. In some things we all have some advantage over others; some 'wealth' which they don't have; for even the wealthiest person has some area of spiritual poverty in their lives. We are not to shame them, but to be sensitive to how they might feel if that poverty is exposed before us.

Deu 24:11 You shall stand outside and the man to whom you lent shall bring the pledge outside to you-

The poor are often ashamed when the more wealthy enter their homes and see their poverty. We see here the extreme sensitivity of God to the poor, and to human feelings. He who is apparently so far away, is in fact so near in understanding us.

Deu 24:12 If he is a poor man you must not sleep with his pledge-

Like many Mosaic laws, this was open to interpretation within the conscience of the lender. He had to judge whether the person was "poor" or not. Clearly these laws were often not intended as literalistic demands for a yes / no kind of obedience; but rather were a springboard towards a greater understanding of the human person, and finally to a culture of love, sensitivity and kindness.

Deu 24:13 you must surely restore to him the pledge when the sun goes down so that he may sleep in his garment and bless you, and it shall be righteousness to you before Yahweh your God-

The Lord's high value of persons is reflected in how He taught His followers to not resist evil. A poor man had only two garments- an outer one, and an inner one (Dt. 24:10-13). Underneath that, he was naked. Yet the Lord taught that if you had your outer garment unjustly taken from you, then offer your abuser your undercloth. Offer him, in all seriousness, to take it off you, and leave you standing next to him arrystarkus. This would have turned the table. The abuser would be the one left ashamed, as he surely wouldn't do this. And thus the *dignity of the abused person was left intact at the end*. This was the Lord's desire. Likewise, Roman soldiers were allowed to impress a Jew to carry their pack for a mile, but they were liable to punishment if they made him carry it two miles. To offer to carry it the second mile would almost always be turned down by the abusive soldier. And again, at the end of the exchange, he would be the one humiliated, and the Lord's follower, even though abused, would remain with head up and dignity intact. See on :6.

Deu 24:14 You must not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is of your brothers or of the foreigners who are in your land within your gates-

The oppression in view is things like not paying him his hire every day (Dt. 24:14,15; Lev. 19:13). The ethnic background of the man was irrelevant; he was to be treated as a person and not in any way abused because of his weak economic position. "Oppress" is the same word translated "deceive"; to not oppress others through deceiving them would elicit the heaviest judgment from

God, when the person realized the deception and cried to God because of it (Dt. 24:15). Deceiving / oppressing a neighbour was a sin against Yahweh (Lev. 6:2 s.w.), because He has a special interest in the poor. And His law reflects that.

Deu 24:15 Each day you must give him his hire. The sun must not go down on it for he is poor and sets his heart on it, lest he cry against you to Yahweh and it be sin to you-

This is one of many examples of the utter inversion of values to be found in the sphere of God's dealings with men: The rich are to almost fear the landless poor labourer, in case he feels hard done by and prays to God against the rich. The power, in ultimate and spiritual terms, is with the poor- and the balance of power is against the wealthy. James 5:4 specifically alludes to this command, and says that the cry of those we have been insensitive to will enter the ears of Yahweh of Hosts, a title typically associated with His active judgment. The cries of those we hurt are effectively a calling out to Yahweh of Hosts to enter into judgment with us. Whilst we may not have hired labourers, there are many ways in which we can make our less privileged brethren cry out in pain to God; particularly through refusing them fellowship at the Lord's table.

Deu 24:16 The fathers must not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers. Every man shall be put to death for his own sin-

It must be remembered that although in some ways *all* Israel were guilty for the sins of some of them (e.g. Daniel and Ezra describe themselves as guilty members

of a guilty nation), this 'guilt by association' could not be 'escaped' by leaving Israel, the covenant people. And neither did God ever hold any individual Israelite personally guilty of the sin of another Israelite (Dt. 24:16 etc.). Ultimately, God will not destroy the righteous with the wicked (Gen. 18:24), although the righteous in Israel sometimes suffered *the effect* of the nation's wickedness (cp. our suffering the *effect* of Adam's sin without being personally guilty of it).

Deu 24:17 You must not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, nor take a widow's clothing in pledge-

God again reveals His especial interest in the foreigner, orphan and widow. This should be reflected in our perspectives too.

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "justice" or "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them and reflect that justice to others. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law be-

gins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 24:18 but you must remember that you were a bondservant in Egypt and Yahweh your God redeemed you from there, therefore I command you to do this-

One of the most repeated themes of Moses in Deuteronomy is the way he keeps on telling them to "remember" all the great things which God had done for them on their wilderness journey, and especially the wonder of how He had redeemed them as children (his audience had been under twenty years old when they went through the Red Sea). Moses really wanted them to overcome the human tendency to forget the greatness of God as manifested earlier in our lives and spiritual experience. Our tendency as the new Israel is just the same- to forget the wonder of baptism, of how God reached out His arm to save us. The deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We need to "remember" how weak and vulnerable we were before we were brought out of Egypt / the world. The grace of our personal redemption is to never stop impressing us. And it will give rise to care for the vulnerable in practice as well as spiritually.

Deu 24:19 When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the

widow, so that Yahweh your God may bless you in all the work of your hands-

A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses, his eager imagination of his people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations... so superbly typifies that of our Lord.

Dt. 24:19 doesn't make allowing gleaning a binding law upon landowners. The text simply states that "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow". By allowing gleaners to come and pick up dropped grain, Boaz's grace was going far beyond the letter of the law. This was taking that law way beyond what it said, in a spirit of grace. This would account for the hint in Ruth

2:22 that not every landowner allowed such gleaning in their fields. Likewise he extrapolates from the law of Levirate marriage to marry Ruth. So we see that the law of Moses was not a chain, a leash binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; for Israel is God's partner, not His dog. But rather was it designed as a springboard towards a culture of grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice.

Deu 24:20 When you beat your olive tree do not go over the boughs again. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow-

The essence of this was that they were not to seek maximum personal wealth. That of course is the exact opposite of the spirit of our age, and is absolutely counter instinctive. The power to overcome this basic instinct towards maximizing personal wealth can only come from an awareness of the grace we have received, and a subsequent conscience toward others because of that.

Deu 24:21 When you harvest your vineyard do not glean it afterwards yourselves. It shall be for the foreigner, for the fatherless and for the widow-

The idea is that the gleaning happened after harvesting had finished. We see how Boaz took the spirit of these gleaning laws far beyond their letter. He allowed gleaners to follow immediately behind the harvesters, and gave extra grain to Ruth. Again I feel the need to labour the point; that the law of Moses was not a chain, binding and tethering man to reluctant obedience; but rather was designed as a springboard towards a culture of

grace, kindness and taking initiatives of grace in practice.

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Deu 24:22 You shall remember that you were a bond-servant in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this thing-

Lev. 25:38 reasons that because of Israel's experience of the Red Sea redemption, therefore they were to have a generous spirit to their brother. Because the Egyptians were hard taskmasters, and Israel had been graciously saved from them, *therefore* they were not to be hard on each other (Lev. 25:40). If the oppressed [as Israel were oppressed] cry out unto you [as Israel cried out for their affliction], you must hear them, otherwise God will hear them and punish you, as if you are the Egyptian taskmaster (Ex. 22:24-27). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is shot through with direct and indirect reference to the Red Sea experience. It was as if this was to be the motivator for their obedience and upholding of the culture of kindness which the Law sought to engender (Lev.23, 24; Dt. 17:7; 24:19-24). And our experience of redemption from this world ought to have the same effect.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 25

Deu 25:1 If there is a controversy between men, and they come to judgment and the judges judge them, then they must justify the righteous and condemn the wicked-

This coming to judgment suggests the two men walk together to the place of judgment. This was clearly in the Lord's mind when He spoke of such a scenario, and urged that instead of allowing the case to come to the judges, by all means the spiritual person will make peace with his brother. The implication is that we should not assume that because we are innocent, therefore we will find justice. Rather should we seek to make peace with our brother, even if we think we are in the right.

Deu 25:2 If the wicked man is worthy to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence according to his wickedness, by number-

"His presence" may refer to "the righteous" who took "the wicked" to court. Or it may refer to the judge. Even if someone is so seriously astray that they require discipline, remember that the judges of Israel had to have the person they judged worthy of stripes lay down before their presence [or that of the injured party] and be beaten in their presence. The principle being taught was that we should be fully aware of the pain and implications of the judgment we inflict upon others. Those who practice exclusion of others through closed communion need to see the tears they are causing, the ruptured marriages,

the little children left without a daddy or mummy, the cancer, the stress, the tears every night for life... and unflinchingly look at all that and give a string of Bible verses which says that this is how believers in Christ should treat other believers in Christ.

Deu 25:3 Forty stripes he may give him. He must not exceed this number. If he should beat him with many more than forty stripes, then your brother may seem vile to you-

There's a tendency in us to be harsh in punishing others for their sin. This is psychologically explainable by our conscience for our own sins, and subconsciously realizing we deserve punishment; we then eagerly transfer this guilt and need for punishment onto others. Instead we are to confess our sins and believe that the final judgment for our sin was in Christ upon the cross; and if we believe this to the point of really feeling it, we will never punish anyone more than required, indeed we will be gracious to them as God has been to us.

We should never be abusive, in any form, to or about anyone, even if it is sure that they will never know or feel our abuse. The Law also taught that a man must not be over punished, or else, if you did this, you considered him "light" (Dt. 25:3 Heb.). The weight of persons, the immense meaning attached to them, is not accepted by us if our judgment of them is too harsh or severe. Even a criminal was not to be overly punished, "lest your brother be degraded in *your* sight" (Dt. 25:3)- he was still to be treated as a person, and nothing should be done to him which would make the punishers think too lowly of that person.

Deu 25:4 You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the grain-

Moses' sensitivity is shown by the introduction in Deuteronomy [the 'second law'] of expansions upon existing commandments; e.g. "You shall not muzzle the ox when he treads out the corn". This is quoted by Paul as being actually part of the Law (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18), showing that Moses was so attune with the mind of God that these practical extensions which his sensitivity led him to command Israel were indeed the inspired commandments of God.

In 1 Cor. 9:9 Paul likens himself to a lowly ox treading out corn, and being allowed to eat a bit of it. The argument seems to be that this commandment was not given because God cares for oxen, but for the sake of teaching us a principle. But often Paul uses a grammatical device whereby he argues 'Not [so much] A, but B'. Such a device is common in several other languages. God is clearly not insensitive to animals, as so many cases in the Old Testament demonstrate. So surely we are to read this as meaning that this command about not muzzling the ox was not primarily for the sake of the oxen, but even more importantly for the sake of teaching us a lesson. The treading out of corn connects with the metaphor of judgment day in Mt. 3:12, where we read that the "floor", literally 'the treading place' will be winnowed by the Lord Jesus in judgment. The fruit of Paul's labours for Corinth would be tested by the winnowing of what he had trodden out. He saw his work as preparing them for judgment, making them true grain, separat-

ing them from the husks. We note the immediate context here in Dt. 15:1-3 is of judgment.

The command is also quoted about providing sustenance for church teachers (1 Tim. 5:18). The word for "muzzle" means literally to render speechless. The idea may be that if an elder was not paid, then they would not have time to prepare their talks for the congregation. The Old Testament contains examples of where the Levites failed to teach the people because the tithes for supporting them were not paid. The stress may be on the word "when" in "when he treads out the corn"; the elder must do this if he is to be fed. The treading out of the corn represents the labour in the word which is required before teaching it to the church congregation (see on 1 Tim. 5:17). The corn represents God's word and the treading out the processing of it. And yet in this figure, the ox [cp. the elder] eats some of the corn he processes. This has been a theme of Paul in advising Timothy- that the very process of spiritually feeding others leads to the spiritual benefit of the feeder (see on 1 Tim. 4:6 *Nourished up*).

Deu 25:5 If brothers dwell together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead should not be married outside to a stranger. Her husband's brother should go in to her and take her to him as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her-

This tacitly allowed polygamy. Here we have an example where one principle [the one man: one woman ideal of Eden] is in conflict with another [to build up the family name of your childless brother]. God could

have arranged ethics in a simpler manner; but He has allowed and in this case encouraged the development of such conflicts in order that we think and reason things through, and make whatever decision we do consciously and from our own desire rather than merely in mindless submission to a commandment.

Deu 25:6 The firstborn whom she bears shall succeed in the name of his brother who is dead, so that his name is not blotted out of Israel-

Not only does all this show a concession to human weakness and human inability to live up to the Biblical ideal of marriage; but it should be observed that seeing that most adult men in such societies were married, obeying this command probably involved polygamy. One principle was broken in order to keep another, more important one (in this case "that his name be not put out of Israel").

Deu 25:7 If the man doesn't want to take his brother's wife, then she shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, My husband's brother refuses to raise up to his brother a name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me-

Naomi apparently had only produced two sickly sons who survived to adulthood, and they had both prematurely died; and she felt herself to be barren. There was no legal requirement for a widow to marry the younger brother of a deceased husband, but it could be argued that any future children of Naomi had a duty to marry their late brother's wife and have children by her in his name. But that would be a very strict reading of

the Mosaic legislation in this case, if not simply a wrong interpretation of the Levirate law. For the simple intention of the Levirate law was that if a man died, his brother was to marry his widow and have children by her. And it only applied to "brothers dwelling together". But Naomi has clearly thought it through; for all her apparent weakness and even apostasy as noted so far, she was aware of God's laws. Despite having nobody to teach her there in Moab and no written scripture with her [she was surely illiterate anyway], she remembered the Mosaic law and thought through its implications. However her very strict interpretation of them in this case may suggest she is seeking every reason to discourage the young women to follow her back to Israel. And this makes Ruth's decision the more commendable. But they were to be surprised by the grace of Boaz. For he had no obligation to marry Ruth, neither did the anonymous kinsman. Boaz understood this law as a springboard into a culture of far more extensive grace, rather than a chain which limits human behaviour, to be tolerated and obeyed with reluctance. See on Dt. 23:25.

Deu 25:8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he stands and says, I don't want to take her-

This was nearly always from economic reasons. Most men were married and had children already, and to take another wife and have more children would have been crippling for many. The children would have to have an inheritance in their own names (:6), but that inheritance would have to come from this man who married the

widow. So his own inheritance would be reduced, and also that of his existing children. This is why the anonymous relative of Ruth 4:6 didn't want to spoil his own inheritance. And yet he remains anonymous- his name was the name cut off from Israel, whereas the name of Boaz continued, and he became an ancestor of the Lord Jesus.

Land at that time was organized according to strips of land within a field, rather than owning a field. Even wealthy Boaz only owned part of the field (Ruth 2:3). Strip farming was very inefficient; upon death, land was split up between the children, and then when they died, the land was split up even further. The anonymous man didn't want to have any more children because it would mean that what he was leaving as an inheritance would be even more reduced and divided. But because of that, he remains anonymous. He was concerned about what would happen over the next generation or so. By contrast, Boaz wasn't worried about splitting up yet further the inheritance which he was leaving- and because of that, he left an inheritance which was recorded and stretched right down to the Lord Jesus.

It seems to me that the nameless relative in Ruth 4 was like so many people today. He was interested in getting a bit more land to add to his stack; but he didn't really care for the redemption of his brother, and pulled out of the whole thing once he learnt he would have to marry another wife and have more children. He said he couldn't do this because he would spoil [AV] or endanger [NIV] his inheritance. We know that at this time, strip farming was being practiced- whereby a field was

split up into parts, each of which belonged to a different person (Ruth 2:3). By having more children, the man would have to split up his land into yet more parts so that each son had his strips. And the son he had by Ruth would be counted as Mahlon's son, in the spirit of the levirate marriage laws. And so his bit of land would then be separate from the land strips the man was intending to give to his existing children. Ultimately this could lead to the man's total inheritance becoming almost worthless if it was just split into tiny strips because he had too many children.

I like how the NIV has the man speaking of 'endangering' his inheritance. He was like so many people- he had say a 20 year horizon, genuinely concerned about what was best for his children in the short term, rather than thinking about his responsibility to his brother. He saw 'danger' in doing that. It could be argued that the 50 year Jubilee law meant that the land boundaries returned to how they originally were after 50 years... so perhaps [although it's hard to work out how the Jubilee law worked in practice] he was worrying about something which only had meaning for the next few decades [if that]. He wasn't a bad man; just one who was fearful and wouldn't look beyond the next 20 years or so. And I suggest the genealogy at the end of Ruth 4 comments upon this- that man is anonymous, his name never went down in history, whereas Boaz who loved his brother and didn't focus solely on his own immediate family went on to be the ancestor of both David and the Lord Jesus Himself.

Deu 25:9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders and loose his shoe from off his foot, spit in his face, and say, So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house-

Such selfish thinking (see on :8) was worthy of the maximum level of contempt. God's whole work for us His people is about building up a house for His Name (s.w. 2 Sam. 7:5). Building up others in faith, that might be a part of that house, is to be a focus which eclipses all temporary material advantage. It means we allow career and personal materialism to be subsumed beneath our passion to build up our brethren. This is where these ancient principles have constant contemporary relevance in the multitude of life decisions we face.

"As one occupied land by treading on it, the shoe became the symbol of taking possession (Ps. 60:8; 108:9); when a man renounced property to another, he drew off and gave him his shoe. So among the ancient Germans the taking off of the shoe was a symbol for giving up property and heritable rights, and with the delivery of the shoe or the throwing of it away goods were conveyed to another". In this case the man was effectively losing a potential inheritance.

Deu 25:10 His name shall be called in Israel, The house of him who had his shoe untied'-

The person in view preferred temporal advantage materially rather than worrying about his long term name in Israel. This is true of so many today, and the anonymous relative of Ruth's remained anonymous in

the historical record, whereas Boaz's name will be eternally remembered as an ancestor of the Lord Jesus.

Deu 25:11 When men strive together one with another-

This appears to connect with the situation in :5, where brothers lived together in peace. It seems these various laws are legal rulings given by Divine inspiration to Moses, from actual cases which arose during the wilderness journeyings. However, the striving together may e a reference to a legal struggle. See on :12.

And the wife of the one draws near to deliver her husband out of the hand of him who strikes him, and puts forth her hand and takes him by the private parts-

The principle from this is that each person has a weakness, an exposed point in their lives or character, which we are aware of. We are not to use that to unfair advantage- because if we were touched in that way, we likewise could not endure. And God saves His weak people and has historically been angry with those who do such things (:18).

A theme of Deuteronomy is the way in which Moses visualizes commonplace daily incidents which he could foresee occurring in Israel's daily life: the man cutting down the tree and the axe head flying off and hitting someone; finding a dead body in a lonely field; coming across a stray animal on the way home from work; a man with two wives treating one as his favourite; seeing your neighbour struggling to lift up his sick animal; coming across a bird's nest and being tempted to take the mature bird as well as the chicks home for supper; being

tempted not to bother building a battlement around the flat roof of your new house; the temptation to take a bag with you and fill it up with your neighbour's grapes; the need to have weapons which could be used for covering excrement (Dt. 19:5; 21:1,15; 22:1,2,4,6,8; 23:13,24,25; 24:5,6,10,15,19; 25:11,13). The sensitivity of Moses was just fantastic! His eager imagination of His people in daily life, his understanding of their everyday temptations so superbly typifies that of our Lord!

Deu 25:12 then you shall cut off her hand, your eye shall have no pity-

The striving together of :11 could refer to a legal struggle, which resulted in a striking or beating. The woman's attempt to stop this was therefore effectively her argument with God and His decreed justice; hence the punishment. There is also the teaching here that we should never exploit the obvious weakness of another; and a reminder that all men are very vulnerable and have weak points. See on :18.

Deu 25:13 You must not have in your bag different weights, a great and a small-

Deceitful traders still use balancing weights (Heb. "stones") of different weights, the lighter to sell with, the heavier to buy with. But the reference to the bag suggests that this command strikes at the forethought before the action. Don't go to market having prepared such weights in your bag. Any human legal code would focus just upon the act of using deceitful weights, whereas God foresees the planning and thought process behind the act of sin.

Deu 25:14 You must not have in your house different measures, a great and a small-

To avoid temptation it's best to not even possess things which we may be tempted to misuse. See on :13. The act of deceiving at the market was analyzed by God as beginning in the home, and it was there and to that thought that the Divine law struck. Even possessing such "different measures" was a temptation to misuse them, and we take the lesson that we are to remove sources of temptation.

Deu 25:15 You shall have a perfect and just weight. You shall have a perfect and just measure, that your days may be long in the land which Yahweh your God gives you-

The repeated promises recorded in Deuteronomy of prolonged days upon the land of Israel would therefore hint at the eternity of the Kingdom rather than this life. Obedience to the law could not give life of itself, but an Israel obedient to the covenant would have been given a Messiah who could have enabled this. And having integrity in apparently minor matters like just weights was one of the issues God looked at, for he who is faithful in the small things is faithful in all. Indeed, Dt. 4:40 says they would prolong their days "for ever". For an individual Israelite might be faithful but not prolong his or her days in the land because the whole people were to be carried away captive for their sins and the land given to a Gentile power. The opposite of 'days being prolonged' was 'utter destruction' (Dt. 4:26)- which would then speak of condemnation in the second death. This is one of many examples of where eternal life was possi-

ble under the Old Covenant- there were multiple different possibilities and plans God could have worked by. Israel could have accepted the Lord Jesus as their Messiah and not killed Him, and so forth. It seems the closer we probe God's word, the more open He is revealed as being.

Deu 25:16 For all who do such things, all who do unrighteously, are an abomination to Yahweh your God-

The 'doing' in view is not deceiving customers in the marketplace but the forethought which preceded it- having unjust weights and measures in your bag when you set out to market, or even having them in your home. The Lord Jesus rightly interpreted this teaching as meaning that the thought is counted as the action, the doing. See on :13,14. These forethoughts, planning deceit in order to gain a petty amount of material advantage, were seen by Yahweh as "abomination", the word for idol worship. And such things are our temptation constantly.

Deu 25:17 Remember what Amalek did to you by the way as you came forth out of Egypt-

In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. We are to learn from history, not as a merely fascinating exercise. But the Bible is history, and yet it is

a living word to us. Israel were supposed to reason back from the actions of Amalek towards them, and therefore not exploit the weakness of others in unjust weights, or by a woman exploiting the male weakness of her husband's enemy (:12).

Deu 25:18 how he met you by the way and struck the hindmost of you, all who were feeble behind you, when you were faint and weary, and he didn't fear God-

This explained why the woman of :12 was to be punished for taking a man from behind by his sensitive, private parts. We note the analogy makes a man's reproductive organs his "feeble" part, when it was the boast of men in those times.

Deu 25:19 Therefore when Yahweh your God has given you rest from all your enemies all around in the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take posses-

sion of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

You must blot out the memory of Amalek from under the sky. Do not forget-

Yahweh's Name, by contrast, was to be an eternal memory (Ex. 3:15). He was to be remembered for how He had articulated His Name in how He had historically acted in saving the patriarchs, and He would be remembered for how He was going to act to save His people from Egypt. What was to be memorialized was therefore His actions, rather than simply the letters YHWH. It was His wonderful works which were to be remembered [Ps. 111:4, s.w. "My memorial"]. By contrast, the sinful works and persons of the wicked would not be remembered / memorialized, be they Amalek (s.w. Ex. 17:14; Dt. 25:19), or God's apostate people (s.w. Dt. 32:26).

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

26

Deu 26:1 When you come into the land which Yahweh your God gives you for an inheritance, and possess it and dwell in it-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 26:2 take of the first of all the fruit of the ground which you bring in from your land that Yahweh your God gives you, and put it in a basket and go to the place which Yahweh your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there-

It was therefore not impossible for God to accept non-blood sacrifices (Num. 15:17-21; 18:12,13; Dt. 26:1-4). Cain, the epitome of 'the devil' (Jn. 8:44), was characterized by the attitude that he was not his brother's keeper (Gen. 4:9). But the Lord Jesus perhaps offered a commentary on the incident when he said that our offering can only be accepted if we are first reconciled to our brother (Mt. 5:24). Cain's insistent lack of responsibility for his brother was the real sin, and therefore his sacrifice wasn't accepted by God. He wanted to serve God his own way, disregard his brother, justify his disagreement with him... to be a private person. But this was the basis of his rejection.

Deu 26:3 You shall come to the priest who will be in those days and tell him, I declare this day to Yahweh your God that I have come to the land which Yahweh swore to our fathers to give us-

There is both a collective and personal dimension to salvation. We are saved in the body of Christ, as Israel were saved in the body of Moses (1 Cor. 10:1,2). But each individual was to respond to this by personally visiting the sanctuary and declaring that the promises to Abraham were to him personally. And had been ful-

filled. There is no evidence Israel ever did this. Whilst church membership and attendance is all good, the problem with membership of a denomination can lead to this vital individual dimension of salvation being overlooked. When it is of the essence.

Deu 26:4 The priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of Yahweh your God-

The cameraman of Divine inspiration is as it were zoomed in upon the individual setting down the basket out of his hand. This was to be a highly significant act; and yet there is no record Israel ever did so.

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relationship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 26:5 You shall answer and say before Yahweh your God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father and he went down into Egypt and lived there, few in number, and he became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous-

The reference is to Gen. 20:13. Abraham's comment that God caused him to go astray from his father's house would likely have been understood by those who first heard it as a negative reference to God- for the word

"gone astray" is used of a lost sheep (Jer. 50:6; Ez. 34:4,16; Ps. 119:176); and it was understood that "A bad shepherd causes a sheep to go astray from the flock because he is careless". Perhaps God recognized Abraham's failure by instructing His people to confess every year that "An Aramean gone astray was my father" (Dt. 26:5). I take this to be a reference to Abraham more than Jacob; for it seems that the people of Aram migrated to Ur, and that Abraham having settled in Padan Aram, Abraham could also for that reason be called an Aramean. So Israel were asked to remember that their forefather Abraham had gone astray both literally and spiritually; and thus Abraham's God was a God of grace, and was thereby their God too.

Israel were to recognize that their Arab brethren were in fact their cousins, and Abraham and Jacob their ancestors were at times no more than starving, desperate, homeless, wandering Arabs. That they had been given a fruitful land was therefore a great grace to them.

The closer we look at the Pentateuch, the more we see the huge emphasis placed by Moses upon deconstructing the wrong views about Satan and presenting Yahweh as omnipotent, and the ultimate source of both good and evil in the lives of His people. Thus in the prayer of the first fruits recorded in Dt. 26:5-11 we have the Hebrew verb "to give" repeated seven times. The first and last three usages of it refer to what God has 'given' to Israel; but the centerpiece reference is to Israel being '*given* hard bondage' in Egypt (Dt. 26:6). Thus Yahweh is presented as the ultimate giver- of both good and evil.

Deu 26:6 The Egyptians behaved badly with us, afflicted us and laid on us hard bondage-

Literally, 'gave us hard bondage'. The closer we look at the Pentateuch, the more we see the huge emphasis placed by Moses upon deconstructing the wrong views about Satan and presenting Yahweh as omnipotent, and the ultimate source of both good and evil in the lives of His people. Thus in the prayer of the first fruits recorded in Dt. 26:5-11 we have the Hebrew verb "to give" repeated seven times. The first and last three usages of it refer to what God has 'given' to Israel; but the centerpiece reference is to Israel being 'given hard bondage' in Egypt (Dt. 26:6). Thus Yahweh is presented as the ultimate giver- of both good and evil.

Deu 26:7 and we cried to Yahweh, the God of our fathers and Yahweh heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression-

The individual Israelite was to perceive his absolute connection with God's historical deliverance of His people from Egypt. And to be appropriately awed by all the grace shown in that. In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. We are to learn from history, not as a merely fascinating exercise. But the Bible is history, and yet it is a living word to us. Israel were sup-

posed to reason back from the actions of Egypt towards them, and their weakness spiritually at that time. And to respond personally to that grace.

Deu 26:8 and Yahweh brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm and with great terror, with signs and wonders-

The might of Yahweh's hand was shown through His grace in as it were forcing Israel out of Egypt, when they actually wanted to remain there and He wished to destroy them (Ez. 20:8). They were idolatrous and had told Moses to leave them alone and let them serve the Egyptians. Yahweh's strength therefore refers to the power of His grace in continuing His program with them.

Moses was to stretch forth his hand to cause the waters of the Red Sea to part and return, not his rod; because he was manifesting the hand of Yahweh which was to deliver Israel (s.w. Ex. 7:5). The repeated references to the stretched our arm or hand of Yahweh to save His people invite us to recall this incident, and to perceive that Yahweh's hand had been manifest through the hand of Moses (Dt. 4:34; 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; 26:8). That stretched out, saving arm and hand of Yahweh was and is stretched out still, to save His people (1 Kings 8:42; Ez. 20:34; Dan. 9:15 "as at this day") and bring about a new creation in human lives (Is. 45:12). For the deliverance through the Red Sea is intended to be experienced by all God's people, and is now seen through His saving grace at baptism (1 Cor. 10:1,2). What happened there was but the beginning of the work of God's outstretched arm (Dt. 3:24). Yet the stretched out arm / hand of God is

also a figure for His judgment (1 Chron. 21:16; Is. 9:12; 10:4). His hand is at work in our lives- either to our condemnation or our salvation. And it is for us therefore to humble ourselves beneath that mighty hand (1 Pet. 5:6).

Deu 26:9 and He has brought us into this place and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey-

Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 26:10 Now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground which You, Yahweh, have given me. You shall set it down before Yahweh your God, and worship before Yahweh your God-

Again we lament that there was no record of their ever doing this. It was a redemption which went largely unappreciated by them. As noted on :4, the language is zoomed in upon the individual setting down the produce out of the basket in his hand.

Deu 26:11 You shall rejoice in all the good which Yahweh your God has given to you and to your house; you and the Levite and the foreigner who is in the midst of you-

So often, the Mosaic law associates rejoicing with giving, for truly it is more blessed or happy to give than to receive. The Lord's teaching about this was clearly reflective of this major Mosaic theme (Acts 20:35).

Deu 26:12 When you have made an end of tithing all your increase in the third year, which is the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the foreigner, to the fatherless and to the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled-

Israel were given manna in the wilderness, and they ate it and were full (Ex. 16:8,12). But they were promised that in the promised land of the Kingdom, they would likewise eat and be full, again from blessing given by God (s.w. Dt. 8:10; 11:15; 14:29; 26:12; 31:20). After our Red Sea baptism, we are now in the wilderness; but by feeding on the manna, the word of God in the Lord Jesus, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom experience. But the curse for disobedience was that they would eat and not be full / satisfied (Lev. 26:26).

LXX "And when thou shalt have completed all the tithings of thy fruits in the third year, thou shalt give the second tenth to the Levite, and stranger, and fatherless, and widow; and they shall eat it in thy cities, and be merry". The stranger / foreigner may refer to those of the "mixed multitude" which were with them, or to those Canaanites who had accepted the message of Yahweh's Kingdom.

There were three separate tithes commanded under the Law of Moses. Yet the tithing churches have simply said: 'There's something about tithing in the Old Testament. So, hey, give us 10% of your money!'. The first was the Levitical tithe of 10% on 100% of the produce for the first six years and was destined for the Levites and priests (see too Dt. 12:19). The second tithe was the Fes-

tival tithe of 10% on the 90% remaining produce after the Levitical tithe. This tithe had to be eaten in the presence of the Lord and was collected on the 1st, 2nd, 4th, and 5th years only. The third tithe was the tithe of the poor to be collected on the 3rd and 6th years only (Dt. 14:22-29; 26:12-15; Am. 4:4-5). No tithe was collected on the 7th year or Sabbatical year. The farmers were to let the land rest in that year. The tithe consisted of fruit, grain, wine and later animals that are treated as produce from the land. It never consisted of money. Tithes were conducted annually and were based upon one's produce increase for the year. This just isn't talking about putting paper money or cheques on an offering plate each week as demanded by the tithing churches.

Deu 26:13 You shall say before Yahweh your God, I have put away the holy things out of my house and have given them to the Levite and to the foreigner, to the fatherless and to the widow, according to all Your commandment which You have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of Your commandments, neither have I forgotten them-

So often the Mosaic law was designed to elicit introspection, and to convict of sin. For who could truly say "I have not transgressed any of Your commandments". These very words are placed by the Lord Jesus in the mouth of the hypocritical elder brother. and it is he who remains outside of the Father's fellowship, whereas the disobedient younger son is the one finally accepted. Likewise in the parable of the two sons, the one who

says he will be totally obedient actually isn't. The whole structure of the law was to lead the spiritually minded Israelite to a conviction of sin, and a longing for a way to permanently resolve this. And that was to ultimately be in the Lord Jesus.

Deu 26:14 I have not eaten of it in mourning, neither have I put away any of it while unclean, nor given any of it for the dead. I have listened to the voice of Yahweh my God. I have done according to all that You have commanded me-

See on :13; these protestations of total obedience would have elicited a sense of sin and self examination in all spiritually minded people. GNB "I have not given any of it as an offering for the dead" suggests that there was in Israel the existence of false understandings of the death state. Yet still God loved His people and accepted them in covenant with Him.

Deu 26:15 Look down from Your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Your people Israel-

The "holy habitation" alludes to the most holy place, which is here presented as a figure of "heaven", just as Heb. 9:24 makes clear The temple and ark are sometimes referred to as the heavens (2 Sam. 15:25 cp. 1 Kings 8:30; Ps. 20:2,6; 11:4; Heb. 7:26). The church is the new temple, and is therefore at times referred to as the heavenlies in the New Testament.

And the ground which You have given us, as You swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey-

The land was only potentially one flowing with milk and honey; it required God's blessing upon the ground. And that blessing was predicated upon Israel's obedi-

ence, as Dt. 28 makes clear. And so it is with the promise of the Kingdom of God to us. It is not without any conditions, although the word of promise is absolutely certain.

Deu 26:16 This day Yahweh your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore keep and do them-

Because God saved them from Egypt by grace [cp. baptism- 1 Cor. 10:1,2], with they themselves so spiritually weak at the time, still taking idols of Egypt through the Red Sea with them- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 11:7,8). Because God gave them the land of Canaan, a land for which they did not labour, didn't do any 'work' to receive, but were given because "You did a favour unto them" (Ps. 44:3)- *therefore* they were to keep the law (Dt. 26:15,16; 29:8,9; Josh. 23:5,6). David said that he loved keeping the law *because* God's testimony to him was so miraculous (Ps. 119:129 Heb.). There is an awesomeness to God's grace in all this. Hence the paradox of Ex. 20:20: "Fear not... that the fear of God may be before your faces". We are not to fear Him, for such perfect love casts out fear... yet it is exactly because of the wonder of all this that we live life in some fear / awe of misusing and abusing that grace.

With all your heart and with all your soul-

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared

to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 26:17 You have undertaken Yahweh this day to be your God and that you will walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances and listen to His voice-

See on :16. The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws

are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

A covenant is a two way thing. This tie that binds applies to God too (:18); hence the wonderful, oft-repeated idea of His *chesed*, His covenant faithfulness to us His people. He likewise carries a kind of responsibility to us. The entry of Israel into covenant with God was a pattern of what we undertake at baptism. And afterwards there is a wonderful mutuality between God and man within that covenant.

Deu 26:18 And Yahweh has undertaken to you this day that you shall be a people for His own possession, as He has promised you, in order that you should keep all His commandments-

We are to live out in practice what we have been made in status by our gracious Father. The very fact He counts us as in Christ, as the spotless bride of His Son, must be both felt and lived up to by us. The way He counts us like this is a wonderful motivation to rise up to it all. Consider how God told Israel that *if* they kept

His commandments, *then* they would be His “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5). This conditional promise is then referred to by Moses as having been fulfilled- Israel became His “peculiar treasure” by status even though they did *not* keep His commandments (Dt. 7:6; 14:2 s.w.; Ps. 135:4). Moses concludes by saying that “the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people [s.w.]... *that* thou shouldest keep all his commandments” (Dt. 26:18). See what’s happening here. God said that *if* they were obedient, *then* they would be His special people. Yet He counted them as His special people even though they were not obedient. And He did this so that they would be so touched by this grace that they *would* be obedient.

The word so often used for “keeping” / “diligently observing” Yahweh’s commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in (“take heed to yourself”, Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. “beware”]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 [“beware”]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 [“keep yourself”]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1;

28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

The Hebrew can mean "Today Yahweh has obtained your agreement". We see His efforts to win Israel and His joy that they gave even half hearted assent to the covenant.

Deu 26:19 so as to make you high above all nations that He has made, in praise, in name and in honour, and that you might be a holy people to Yahweh your God, as He has spoken-

The allusion is to the glory and beauty (s.w. "honour") of the priestly garments, which were all holy to Yahweh (Ex. 28:2). The idea is not that the clothes should be beautiful and glorious; they were "for" the manifestation of the glory and beauty of God's saving ways, once their significance was perceived. The naked flesh of man was to be covered over with a glory and beauty which was to come from God, looking forward to the idea of imputed righteousness which Paul explains in Romans. Glory and beauty were to be the features of all Israel in their role as priests / teachers of the Gentile world. Again we see repeated the ideal intention that all

Israel were to be a nation of priests, and not just resign the work of witness to the priestly tribe.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 27

Deu 27:1 Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about

avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 27:2 On the day when you pass over the Jordan to the land which Yahweh your God gives you, you must set up great stones and plaster them with plaster-

Dt. 27:2-8 commanded that "in the day" Israel passed over Jordan, they were to set up plastered stones with the law written upon them [perhaps just the ten commandments], and put them "in mount Ebal". But when Joshua fulfilled it in Josh. 8:30, this was not "in the day" that Israel passed over Jordan. They had indeed taken stones with them from the Jordan, but had not used them as intended. They didn't plaster them nor write the law upon them. And so perhaps God amended His intention- which was initially that they would set those stones up in mount Ebal immediately. Instead, He sent the people against Jericho, and then against Ai. Perhaps an instant conquest of Jericho had been originally intended, so that they could proceed to mount Ebal immediately. For later in Joshua we will read of God giving His people unnaturally speedy progress against their enemies, all in the same day. Or maybe His intention was that firstly they ought to have gone to mount Ebal with the plastered stones, and only then attacked Jericho. But they didn't plaster the stones nor wish to proceed immediately to Ebal. And so He arranged the campaign against Jericho and then Ai. We see how God is so eager to accommodate His programs to the weakness of men.

Deu 27:3 and write on them all the words of this law, when you have passed over, that you may go in to the land which Yahweh your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as Yahweh, the God of your fathers has promised you-

Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 27:4 When you have passed over the Jordan, I command you this day that you shall set up these stones, in Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster-

The word "commandments" occurs 43 times in Deuteronomy, and only 19 times in the other three records; "remember" occurs 16 times compared to 8 times in the other three. And yet Moses commanded Israel specifically to engrave the law on tables of plaster, not stone, knowing that they would soon be washed away; thus he wished to teach Israel [or try to] the temporary nature of the Law (Dt. 27:4-8). Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing *love* of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law.

Deu 27:5 There you shall build an altar to Yahweh your God, an altar of stones. You shall lift up no iron on them-

Ex. 20:25 says that the use of any tool upon an altar would defile it (also see Dt. 27:5). This is how strongly God despises chic externality, and wants us to offer to Him as we are, uncut stones. He wants us, as we are, and not covered by cosmetics. In this we see the deep unspirituality of the altars in the temple, as designed by David and Solomon. I have suggested that although Solomon claims all this was commanded by God, in fact that was merely His assumption. Solomon attempted to get around this law by ensuring that the stones were cut away from the temple construction site (1 Kings 6:7). But this surely was breaking the spirit of the law.

Deu 27:6 You shall build the altar of Yahweh your God of uncut stones and you shall offer burnt offerings thereon to Yahweh your God-

God wants us to serve Him in simplicity without trying to make our altars externally beautiful as if to impress a human eye. Israel had lived generations in Egypt, and had taken the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea (Ez. 20:7,8). The Egyptian altars were all of hewed stones, with images of their gods engraved upon them. Perhaps the insistence that "cut stones" must not be used was in order to strengthen them against the temptation to engrave images upon the sides of the altar, as they had seen in Egypt. We see how God's laws are designed not as a burden, but to ease our overall obedience to His ways

Deu 27:7 You shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there and you shall rejoice before Yahweh your God-

Eating upon a heap of unhewn stones was understood as a sign of having made a covenant on mutually agreed terms and being at peace with each other (Gen. 31:46,47). Our eating before God at the breaking of bread meeting is something similar. Again we note how the Mosaic law associates rejoicing with giving, for truly it is more blessed or happy to give than to receive. The Lord's teaching about this was clearly reflective of this major Mosaic theme (Acts 20:35).

Deu 27:8 You must write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly-

"All the words" may be used as in Ex. 15:22, and might refer just to Dt. 26:16-19. "Plainly" is literally 'dug' or 'engraved'. As the old covenant was engraved upon stones, both on the tables of the covenant and here again, so Paul draws the contrast with how under the new covenant, God's law is engraved or dug in to our heart: "written... with the Spirit of the living God. Not in tablets of stone, but in tablets that are hearts of flesh" (2 Cor. 3:3; Rom. 2:15). There is implied here a direct working of God upon the human heart, in order to dig in or engrave His law there, just as He will do to latter day Israel when they too enter the new covenant (Jer. 31:33). He instills His word and ways into the hearts or minds of His people. This is all part of blessing under the new covenant, the gift of the holy Spirit within our human spirit or mind.

Deu 27:9 Moses and the priests and Levites spoke to all Israel, saying, Keep silence and listen, Israel-

"Keep silence" is AV "take heed". Paul warned the new Israel that after his death ("after my departing", Acts 20:29) there would be serious apostasy. This is the spirit of his very last words, in 2 Tim. 4. it is exactly the spirit of Moses' farewell speech throughout the book of Deuteronomy, and throughout his final song (Dt. 32) and Dt. 31:29: "After my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves". Paul's "Take heed therefore unto yourselves" (Acts 20:28) is quoted from many places in Deuteronomy (e.g. Dt. 2:4; 4:9,15,23; 11:16; 12:13,19,30; 24:8; 27:9).

This day you have become the people of Yahweh your God-

At this time, God saw no iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). He fulfilled His promise at Sinai that if they were obedient, He would make them His people; and He did, counting them as obedient. Yet the events of the intervening forty years hardly sound like Israel being obedient; He "suffered their manners" forty years (Ps. 95:10; Acts 13:18). And yet at the end of that period, they were counted as having been sufficiently obedient to be made God's people (Ex. 19:5 cp. Dt. 27:9).

Deu 27:10 You must therefore obey the voice of Yahweh your God and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you this day-

As noted on :9, they were to become God's people if they were obedient (Ex. 19:5). They had been disobedient, but still they were counted as His people (:9). But the response to such grace was that they should therefore be obedient- not in order to gain God's acceptance as

His people, for He had already given them that, by grace. But instead their obedience was to be a sign of their gratitude for that grace. And so the commandments given them were a channel, an opportunity, through which to express gratitude for God's salvation by grace rather than legal obedience.

Deu 27:11 Moses commanded the people the same day saying-

"The same day... this day" runs as a refrain throughout Deuteronomy. Although "I tell you this day" can be read as merely a way of making a solemn statement, verses like this ["the same day"] suggest we would be justified in reading them literally. Thus Deuteronomy would be a transcript of Moses' final address to Israel on the last day of his life.

Deu 27:12 These shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people when you have passed over the Jordan: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin-

Josh. 8:33 says that "All Israel, their elders and officers and their judges, stood on both sides of the ark before the priests the Levites who carried the ark of Yahweh's covenant". So we can assume that the ark remained in the very narrow valley between the two mountains, with Israel as it were like the wings of the cherubim on both sides of it. Ezekiel's visions likewise use the cherubim to represent Israel. The departure and return of the cherubim spoke of Israel with their representative Angels leaving and then returning to the land and temple.

We note that generally the sons of Rachel and Leah said "Amen" to the blessings, whilst the cursed Reuben

and the sons of the concubines said "Amen" to the curses (:13).

Deu 27:13 These shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali-

Reuben had been the firstborn but had been demoted from that for sleeping with his father's wife, which was one of the curses (:20). This was a reminder to the people that their own honoured ancestors had done the very things they were now cursing (see on :18,22). They were a people who stood before God blessed by grace, rather than because of their obedience.

Deu 27:14 The Levites shall answer and tell all the men of Israel with a loud voice-

The Levites were in the narrow valley in between the two mountains (see on :12). They would turn to Ebal and pronounce the curses, and the tribes standing there would shout "Amen". Just as they had turned to Gerazim and pronounced the blessings, and the tribes there had shouted "Amen".

Deu 27:15 'Cursed is the man who makes an engraved or molten image, an abomination to Yahweh, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and secretly sets it up'. All the people shall answer and say 'Amen'

The list of sins which follow in :15-25 are all matters of the heart or things which are not seen by others. The people were confirming their acceptance of the fact that God sees and knows all things, and there really would be a judgment for them.

Deu 27:16 'Cursed is he who dishonours his father or his mother'. All the people shall say 'Amen'

As noted on :15,23, the context here is of things done in the heart, or unperceived by others. This "dishonour" of parents may therefore refer to hidden mental attitudes and curses of parents, which [unrepented of] we will be held culpable for in the last day.

Deu 27:17 'Cursed is he who removes his neighbour's landmark'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-

This again was likely to be done secretly, bit by bit grabbing small parcels of extra land from your neighbour. Why this was so abhorrent was because each family of Israel had a specific inheritance which was not to be sold or moved outside the family. Hence the sin of Ahab in obtaining Naboth's vineyard. It would seem that there was some unrecorded list made of each family and which land they were to be given. This looks forward to our very personal and unique inheritance in God's Kingdom, possibly based around spiritual family units. This was "The inheritance of fathers", "your possession" (Lev. 25:27,28; Num. 36:7,8). God had given specific inheritances to His people, that this was not to be sold or traded. The division by lot in Josh. 15:1 presumably meant that the tribal areas were defined and then distributed by lot. And then within those areas, each family was given a specific inheritance. So to try to remove another's inheritance was tantamount to removing the inheritance of another in God's Kingdom. Anything which edges another out of their eternal inheritance is abhorrent to God. It is reflected in the Lord's condemnation of any who make their brother stumble from the path to the Kingdom.

Deu 27:18 'Cursed is he who makes the blind wander out of the way'. All the people shall say 'Amen'

It was Aaron, their revered leader, who had made Israel wander "out of the way" through the golden calf apostasy (Ex. 32:8). Likewise :22 is a clear reference to the wrong behaviour of Abraham. The people surely could not have repeated these words without thinking of Aaron. It was intended, therefore, as a reminder to them of how their very standing with God was by grace alone; and they were not from any wonderful spiritual pedigree, but instead were God's people by grace through faith.

Deu 27:19 'Cursed is he who deprives the foreigner, fatherless and widow of justice'. All the people shall say 'Amen'

This is in the context of a list of things which were done in secret and would not be judged by men. So the lack of justice in view would mean having a biased, discriminatory attitude, deep within the heart, unseen by men. And this is so easy for us all to slip in to. When our own experience before baptism was like Israel's in Egypt. We were foreigners, the excluded and marginal, who were saved by grace. And this is to affect our mental attitudes to others like that.

Deu 27:20 'Cursed is he who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's skirt'. All the people shall say 'Amen'

Nakedness should only be uncovered before your wife or husband. Uncovering nakedness is an idiom for the sexual act. The allusion is to Adam and Eve having

their nakedness uncovered; we have to accept the situation we are in as a result of the curse, rather than having sexual relations with who we like, as if uncovering nakedness is nothing shameful. Our hope is for the curse put on us in Eden to be lifted at Christ's return; we can't lift it in this life, as our own ever insistent mortality reminds us. See on :13.

Deu 27:21 'Cursed is he who lies with any kind of animal'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-

Such was God's desire to teach that we are made in His image, and must not act as animals, bringing ourselves down to their level as if we are equal only to them. So the message for us is that we are to respect ourselves as made in God's image, and not act on a purely animal level.

Deu 27:22 'Cursed is he who lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-

This is phrased in such language as to allude to the way that Abraham says of Sarah his wife: "She is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife" (Gen. 20:12). The people surely could not have repeated these words without thinking of their forefather Abraham, whose children they were, originating from a legally cursed relationship. It was intended, therefore, as a reminder to them of how their very standing with God was by grace alone; and they were not from any wonderful spiritual pedigree, but instead were God's people by grace through faith. See on :18.

Deu 27:23 'Cursed is he who lies with his mother-in-law.' All the people shall say 'Amen'

The implication seems to be, 'And doesn't get caught doing so'. For this kind of inappropriate bonding would have been done in secret. So many of these curses are for sins committed which would never be found out by man, such as taking a bribe (:25). The idea of the curses therefore is that Israel were recognizing that who we are when nobody is watching is significant to God, because He does watch and judge, all the time. And He is therefore invited to "curse" our secret sins, at the last day. No other legal code was like this- criminalizing things which were unseen and would never be discovered by anyone else. Because God is the judge of all, and sees all things and will judge them in His own time.

Deu 27:24 'Cursed is he who strikes his neighbour in secret.' All the people shall say 'Amen'

This may refer to a man striking his neighbour in his "secrets", i.e. his most vulnerable part, the testicles. In which case we deduce the principle that inappropriate exploitation of another's weakness is as it were a mortal sin. Or the idea may be that if you strike a person secretly with no witness, even though you will not be judged for it by men, you will be by God, and are pronounced "cursed". But the meaning may simply be "in secret". See on :23.

Deu 27:25 'Cursed is he who takes a bribe to kill an innocent person.' All the people shall say 'Amen'

The idea of a bribe suggests that this doesn't refer to a contract killer, but to someone taking a bribe to make a

false legal statement. But indirect consequence of wrong action is here understood as having performed the action, of murder in this case. For the death penalty would come because of the false statement which was made in return for a bribe. And this is an abiding principle.

Deu 27:26 'Cursed is he who doesn't confirm the words of this law to do them'. All the people shall say 'Amen'-

When the people ratified their covenant with Yahweh [cp. the breaking of bread], they had to confirm their agreement that they would be cursed for disobedience to it; and "cursed is who doesn't confirm the words...". They couldn't opt out of bringing this curse upon themselves for disobedience- if they did, they were cursed. Israel were told that *because* they were the people of God, in covenant with Him, *therefore* they *had* to be obedient. If they were disobedient, they would be cursed. And if they backed out of being God's people, they were also cursed (Dt. 27:9,19,26). There was no way back: total devotion to obedience. God would either rejoice over them to bless them, or rejoice over them to curse them (Dt. 28:63). He isn't passive; His energy will be expended upon us one way or the other. There are only two types of builder, the wise and the foolish; two types of tree, yielding either good or bad fruit.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 28

Deu 28:1 If you will listen diligently to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe all His commandments which I command you this day, Yahweh your God will set you on high above all the nations of the earth-

"The earth" specifically and initially refers to the territory promised to Abraham; see on :10. The long list of blessings in Dt. 28 were given by God perhaps knowing at the start that they would never be realized- "It shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord" (Dt. 28:1). God gave such detailed blessings for obedience even though they would never be realized by Israel. Likewise He gave such detailed plans for the temple in Ez. 40-48- even though the envisaged, possible scenario never came about because Israel chose to be disobedient.

Deu 28:2 All these blessings shall come on you and be with you, if you will listen to the voice of Yahweh your God-

Like Paul in his time of dying, Moses in Deuteronomy saw the importance of obedience, the harder side of God; yet he also saw in real depth the surpassing love of God, and the grace that was to come, beyond Law. This appreciation reflected Moses' mature grasp of the Name / characteristics of God. He uses the name "Yahweh" in Deuteronomy over 530 times, often with some possessive adjective, e.g. "Yahweh thy God" [AV- i.e. you singular], or "Yahweh our God". He saw the personal relation-

ship between a man and his God. Jacob reached a like realization at his peak.

Deu 28:3 You shall be blessed in the city and you shall be blessed in the field-

The love of God for Israel isn't just something in the past. You may have noticed how the blessings for Israel's obedience are actually in a strange way somehow still given to them even in their disobedience. The blessings of many children and general prosperity have somehow been fulfilled to the Jewish people; they have somehow prospered "in all that thou settest thine hand unto...and all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord... and the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods...and thou shalt lend unto many nations...thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath" (Dt. 28:3-13). This has all come true for the Jewish people in their unbelief, from the Jewish taxi driver in Vilnius who somehow makes more than the other guys, to the Jewish bankers of New York- and all achieved despite every man's hand against them. Here we see the grace and love of God for Israel. And thus finally He shall give them the valley of Achor, symbol of their shameful disobedience, for a door of hope. The ineffable love of God for Israel continues. And we, as God's children, should show forth that same love, expressed supremely in seeking to turn them to Messiah.

Deuteronomy 28:4 You shall be blessed in the fruit of your body, the fruit of your ground, the fruit of your animals, the increase of your livestock and the young of your flock-

The curses of Dt. 28:4,18 involved cursing coming upon descendants of sinful people; perhaps in that their fathers influenced them to do wrong. Thus the salvation of men can be affected by a third party not preaching to them or not teaching them correct doctrine. Herein lies the crying need to 'defend the Faith'. Speaking of how he had suffered to defend purity of understanding of the Gospel, Paul reflected: "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10). *Their* salvation was dependent upon *his* enduring.

Deu 28:5 Your basket and your kneading trough shall be blessed-

LXX "Blessed shall be thy barns, and thy stores" certainly seems to be in the Lord's mind in His parable of the man who had to build larger barns. He so often alludes to Mosaic commandments and statements and places a very different spin upon them. In this case, His point was that one may receive blessing in this life, which might look like blessing for obedience to the covenant-when in fact, it was a result of your own hard work, and you are not in fact with the Father at all, and will die condemned by Him.

Deu 28:6 You shall be blessed when you come in and you shall be blessed when you go out-

Within the Pentateuch, the idea of blessing creation paves the way for God promising to "bless" the children of Abraham, and the blessings upon them with which Deuteronomy concludes (see too Lev. 9:22; Num. 6:22-24). The pagan creation stories sometimes spoke of

the things created by the gods then blessing *them*. The Sumerians recorded that at 'creation', "The whole universe, the people in unison, to Enlil in one tongue gave praise". But the true God, the God of all grace, not only creates His people and other creatures, but then blesses *them*! And the spirit of that grace should be seen in all our relationships. The Sumerian and Babylonian myths speak of people being created in order to serve the gods, "to bear the yoke of the gods" (S.G.F.Brandon), to relieve them in their everyday work. But the Genesis creation has God creating man and giving him great freedom, and blessing him.

Deu 28:7 Yahweh will cause your enemies who rise up against you-

LXX "thine enemies that withstand thee", another hint that the bloody conquest of Canaan was only bloody because the nations withstood Yahweh's people, rather than like Rahab and the Gibeonites, seeking covenant relationship with Him.

To be struck before you. They will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways-

The fleeing of the Egyptians from Israel in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27) was to be repeated in all Israel's conflicts with their enemies; every time, the essence of the Red Sea deliverance [which was by grace alone, as Israel then were so weak spiritually] was to be repeated throughout the history of God's people (Num. 10:35; Dt. 28:7).

Deu 28:8 Yahweh will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to; He will bless you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you-

See on :5. The blessing of Yahweh would come if His commands were obeyed (Dt. 11:27); but in response, He would command that blessing (s.w. Dt. 28:8). His commandments were therefore effectively a commandment of blessing. They were designed for Israel's good and blessing, and not as a test of mindless obedience.

Deu 28:9 Yahweh will establish you for a holy people to Himself as He has sworn to you, if you will keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and walk in His ways-

Moses urges the peoples' faithfulness so that Yahweh might "establish His covenant" with them (Dt. 8:18; 28:9; 29:13); and yet we note that despite their disobedience, He still "established" the covenant with them, by grace alone (Dt. 9:5).

Deu 28:10 All the peoples of the land-

The reference of the "land" is to the *eretz* promised to Abraham. God would set Israel on high above all nations of the land (28:1). Only those round about Israel would see this, not the whole planet. "The nations" therefore refer to those in the land. In this same context they are warned that if they are *not* obedient, then they would be taken into all kingdoms of the earth (v. 25). And this is what happened- they were taken into captivity in Babylon, Assyria and their empires within the 'earth' / land. They were invaded by a nation from the end of the earth (28:49), which Habakkuk defines as

Babylon, a nation at the extremity of the land / earth promised to Abraham.

Will see that you are called by the name of Yahweh and they will be afraid of you-

Whatever carried the name of a person was seen as his property. If a city was conquered, it bore the name of the conqueror (2 Sam. 12:28); the names of owners were on their property (Ps. 49:12). So to bear God's Name is to recognize His complete ownership and even conquest of us. And yet there's a significant twist to all this in Is. 43:1: "I have called you by *your* name, because you are mine". It seems like a slip- we expect God to say that He has called us by *His* Name, because we are His. But no- He wishes us to bear both His Name and our own name, He doesn't wish to subsume us beneath His ownership and manifestation to the point that we are not significant as persons.

"Proclaim the Name" (Ex. 33:19; 34:5) is the same phrase used about 'calling upon the Name' (e.g. Dt. 28:10). The calling out / proclamation of Yahweh's Name, in the Gospel and ultimately in the declaration of the Name on the cross (Jn. 17:26), elicits a desire to call that Name upon us, which we initially do through baptism into that Name. And like Moses, we in turn proclaim the Name to others (Dt. 32:3 s.w.).

Deu 28:11 Yahweh will make you prosperous in the fruit of your body and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give you-

The blessings of Dt. 28 were conditional upon obedience. Israel were not obedient, from Sinai onwards, as the prophets lament. But many of those blessings were still experienced by Israel. So we conclude that this was by grace alone, and indeed the idea of Abraham's seed being "blessed" is associated in the New Testament with the blessing of grace. Again we note God's passionate desire to by all means give His people His Kingdom. He wants to do this, it is the good pleasure or will of God to give us the Kingdom. He is not indifferent to our salvation, and wants us desperately to be in His Kingdom, as the parable of the marriage supper also indicates. It concludes with pretty much anyone willing to say "yes" being ushered in to the marriage supper.

Deu 28:12 Yahweh will open to you His good treasure in the sky, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations and you shall not borrow-

The returned exiles didn't have God's treasure 'opened' to them because of their disobedience (s.w. Mal. 3:10); and yet their very return was a blessing for apparent obedience. We therefore see how God gave them blessings they didn't deserve, whilst also cursing them for their disobedience. He by all means yearned to give them blessing and salvation, and thereby imputed to them a righteousness which they simply didn't have. That same passion, expressed in these same ways, is now articulated to Israel after the Spirit.

Money lending worldwide has been a feature of Jewish existence over the centuries, and yet this is here pre-

dicted as happening only if they were obedient. They have been disobedient, and yet it's as if God loves to advertise His grace to the world by still blessing the disobedient. But I suggest that the context is simply that "The Lord shall open unto you *His* good treasure, the heaven to give the rain of your land... and *you* shall lend unto many nations". If God opens His treasure to us, we should open our treasures to others, even lending with a spirit of generosity, motivated by our experience of His generosity to *us*. Because Yahweh had redeemed Israel, they were not to be petty materialists, cheating others out of a few grams or centimeters in trading. The wealth and largeness of God's work for them should lead them to shun such petty desire for self-betterment. God gives to all men with a single eye (James 1:5 Gk.); and in response, we too must be single eyed in our giving (Mt. 6:22 s.w.- this is one of James; many allusions to the sermon on the mount). The Jews' experience of redemption from Haman *quite naturally* resulted in them giving gifts both to each other and to the poor around them (Es. 9:22).

Having stated that the Canaanite tribes would only be cast out if Israel were obedient, Moses goes on to enthuse that those tribes would indeed be cast out- so positive was he about Israel's obedience (Dt. 6:18,19; 7:1). And yet on the other hand he realistically was aware of their future failures. He said those positive words genuinely, because he simply loved Israel, and had the hope for them which love carries with it. Throughout his speech, Moses is constantly thinking of Israel in the

land; he keeps on telling them how to behave when they are there, encouraging them to be strong so that they will go into the land. I estimate that about 25% of the verses in Moses' speech speak about this. Israel's future inheritance of the Kingdom absolutely filled Moses' mind as he faced up to his own death. And remember that his speech was the outpouring of 40 years meditation. Their salvation, them in the Kingdom, totally filled his heart. And likewise with the Lord Jesus. Psalms 22 and 69 shows how his thoughts on the cross, especially as he approached the point of death, were centred around our salvation. And Moses was so positive about them. "The Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands", even though these blessings were conditional upon their obedience. Moses was this confident of them (Dt. 16:15 cp. 28:1,4,12).

Deu 28:13 Yahweh will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only be above and you shall not be beneath, if you will listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you this day, to observe and to do-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are in-

deed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 28:14 and do not turn aside-

Israel had been commanded to "not depart" from the way of Yahweh's commandments (Dt. 28:14; Josh. 1:7), but the frequent lament of the historical records is that they did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam. The Bible, especially in Proverbs, constantly reduces human moral choice to that between two ways of life and being. We constantly wish to argue that "it's not so simple" because there are grey areas. But the 'grey area' argument is what leads us so often into sin, into following the "way" of sin.

From any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left-

The wall of water on their right hand and left when they crossed the Red Sea is twice emphasized (Ex. 14:22,29). It is alluded to later, when they are urged to not depart from God's way, not to the right hand nor left (Dt. 5:32; 17:11,20; 28:14). We passed through the Red Sea when we were baptized (1 Cor. 10:1,2). We were set upon a path which is walled up to keep us within it. And we are to remain in that path upon which we were set. To turn aside from it would be as foolish as Israel turning away from their path and trying to walk into the walls of water.

To go after other gods to serve them-

"Go after" is a phrase Moses frequently uses in his last speech in Deuteronomy, but not elsewhere. It means literally to follow or walk after. He warns against going after other gods (Dt. 4:3; 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2; 28:14), and urges following / walking behind / going after Yahweh alone (Dt. 13:4). I suggest he was reflecting upon how by following after Yahweh in the Angel, the people had been brought out of Egypt, through the wilderness and to the promised kingdom. Caleb had faithfully followed / walked after Yahweh, and so entered the land. The phrase is used of the people following after the ark to enter Canaan (Josh. 3:3; 6:9). Following after idols led them just to pointless wandering in circles. And so it is in human life today. Following idols leads to pointless wandering, whereas following Yahweh has a specific destination in view- possession of the Kingdom. Elijah uses the phrase when telling Israel they could either follow after Baal, or Yahweh; and if Yahweh is God,

then we are to follow Him (1 Kings 18:21). We cannot follow two directions. But Israel followed after (s.w.) vanity and thereby became vain (2 Kings 17:15). They carried the tabernacle of Moloch and also of Yahweh, throughout the wilderness journey (Acts 7:). Following after Baal is paralleled with following / walking after the imagination of their own evil heart (s.w. Jer. 3:17; 9:14; 13:10), walking after their own spirit rather than God's (Ez. 13:3 s.w.) and their own covetousness (s.w. Ez. 33:31). To walk / live just according to the word of our own imaginations is our great temptation. But we are to instead follow God's imaginations and heart, as revealed in His word (Ez. 20:16 s.w.). This is where our acceptance of the word of God as indeed His word... has endless implications.

Deu 28:15 But if you will not listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command you this day, all these curses shall come on you and consume you-

Israel did not obey / hearken to the voice of Yahweh, and He did not hearken to their voice in prayer (Dt. 1:45; 9:23; 28:15; Josh. 5:6; Jud. 2:20; 6:10 cp. Dt. 8:20 s.w.). 2 Kings 18:12 states this specifically. God hearkened to Joshua's voice in prayer (Josh. 10:14) because Joshua hearkened to His voice. It was to be the same with Saul. He didn't hearken to God's voice (1 Sam. 15:19) and God didn't hearken to Saul's voice in prayer in his final desperation at the end of his life (1 Sam. 28:18). If God's word abides in us, then our prayer is powerful, we have whatever we ask, because we are ask-

ing for things according to His will expressed in His word (Jn. 15:7).

Deu 28:16 You shall be cursed in the city and you shall be cursed in the field-

A faithless and disobedient Israel were apparently blessed and not cursed in the city and in the field since their reestablishment of Israel in 1948. But this is therefore of itself a sign of God's absolute grace to them, given no doubt in the hope that it would lead them to repentance concerning the Lord Jesus (Rom. 2:4).

Deu 28:17 Your basket and your kneading trough shall be cursed-

The material prosperity of Israel, particularly the fertility of the land, was to be cursed if they disobeyed God (Dt. 28:16-18). If this has a latter-day application, it follows that Israel must first have returned to their land in the last days and become agriculturally prosperous before it can happen. This is exactly the position today.

Deu 28:18 The fruit of your body, the fruit of your ground, the increase of your livestock and the young of your flock shall be cursed-

LXX specifically mentions oxen for "livestock" and sheep for "flock". Hab. 3:17 seems to allude to this picture, but the faithful writer rejoices that despite the experience of the curses for disobedience on a national level, he can personally look forward to a relationship with God. So even at the height of the curses, there was always the possibility for individuals to have a relationship with God, even if they shared the effect of others' sins.

Deu 28:19 You shall be cursed when you come in and you shall be cursed when you go out-

There is a most interesting connection between the curses for disobedience and the time of the judges in the words of Azariah to Asa. He reminded Asa of the problems of weak leadership in that period, and encouraged Asa to learn the lesson from it, as a ruler of Israel. He describes Israel at that time as being "for a long season... without the true God, and without a teaching priest (cp. 1 Sam. 3:1, Hebrew), and without law" (2 Chron. 15:3). This is quoted in Hos. 3:4,5 concerning Israel's state before their final repentance. Azariah continued: "In those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in (an idiom for the rulers), but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants" (2 Chron. 15:5). This is definitely alluding to Dt. 28:19,20: "Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in... and goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee... vexation" (same word in 2 Chron. 15:5). "Nation was destroyed of nation" (2 Chron. 15:6) must be alluded to in Lk. 21:10 concerning the situation in latter-day Israel. And 2 Chron. 15:7 = 1 Cor. 15:58 - a certain latter-day application.

Deu 28:20 Yahweh will send on you cursing, confusion and rebuke in all that you put your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly-

The connections between the record of Job's experience of depression and those curses upon Israel gives us a cameo of latter-day Jewry's position. This 'confusion of mind' (Dt. 28:20, Hebrew), "madness... and astonishment of heart" (Dt. 28:28) will, not surprisingly, result

in a complete collapse of leadership within Israel (Dt. 28:19), resulting in them fleeing a disorganized seven ways before their enemies (Dt. 28:25). There is a sharp contrast between this and Israel's present nonchalance. During their latter day tribulation, Israel will experience "faintness in their hearts", intense "terror" (Lev. 26:16), which would be enough to kill them (Dt. 32:25). This extraordinary level of paranoia will be modelled upon that of Jacob as he faced Esau - representing Israel's confrontation with their neighbours and brethren in the last days (Jer. 30:5,7). This state of fear will result in many Jews going to live in Jerusalem, as happened during the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions (Jer. 35:11). Ezekiel had prophesied of this time: "Terrors (an intensive plural - i.e. 'the one great terror') by reason of the sword shall be upon my people" (Ez. 21:12). Likewise our Lord spoke of "fearful sights" being seen in latter-day Israel (Lk. 21:11). This fear will be absolute paranoia: "I will make you a terror to yourself" (Jer. 20:4) because of latter day Babylon's invasion; "ye shall flee when none pursueth you... I will send a faintness into their hearts... the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them" (Lev. 26:17,36). "I will bring the land into *desolation*" (Lev. 26:32) uses a Hebrew word which can imply stupefaction by fear. This paranoia will be associated with a manic depression which will have its roots in a chronically bad conscience towards God, going back thousands of years to their national childhood: "I will... cause sorrow of heart... they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity... and also in the iniquity of their fathers shall they pine away"

(Lev. 26:16,39). Note how the *land* will be brought into this mental desolation. Frequently the land of Israel is paralleled with the people (e.g. Jer.19:14 cp. 26:17). The intense desolation of Jewry will be reflected physically in the state of their land. And the resolution of this psychological torment will only be through repentance and acceptance of the Saviour Messiah whom they crucified.

Because of the evil of your doings by which you have forsaken Him-

Jud. 2:13 says that the people did forsake Yahweh. But instead of these judgments, we are to read that although God punished them, He raised up saviours to save them from the judgments; and this looks forward to His grace in the Lord Jesus, 'Yah's salvation'.

Deu 28:21 Yahweh will make the pestilence cleave to you until He has consumed you from off the land-

The "pestilence" which was the plague upon Egypt (Ex. 9:3) was to come upon a hard hearted Israel (s.w. Lev. 26:25; Num. 14:12; Dt. 28:21; Jer. 21:6). The plagues upon Egypt form the basis for the vials and seals of Revelation, which speak of judgment to come upon the land of Israel. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

Into which you now go in to possess it-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings be-

ing "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 28:22 Yahweh will strike you with consumption, with fever, with inflammation and with fiery heat; with the sword, with blight and with mildew, and they shall pursue you until you perish-

The curses to come upon Israel as a result of the latter day invasions are described in terms which are extremely apposite to modern warfare. The plagues to come upon Israel as a result of the invasions are almost impossible to identify with anything presently known:

"a consumption... a fever... an inflammation... an extreme burning... blasting... the burning ague that shall consume the eyes" (Dt. 28:22; Lev. 26:16) all seems to echo the language of nuclear fall-out. "They shall be burnt... and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction" (Dt. 32:24) is similar. The release of complex chemical weapons, as well as nuclear detonation, would explain why rainfall patterns will be interrupted during this latter day tribulation (Dt. 28:23). The fall-out from such weapons would create the murderous rain of dust upon the land which Dt. 28:24 speaks of: "The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed". It is twice emphasized that those in the land would suffer blindness (Dt. 28:28,29), which may also be related to such nuclear or chemical fallout. This has not yet happened; the context invites us to read this as literal rather than figurative. We know that the latter day invaders who attack Jerusalem will both fight each other and have their eyes rot in their sockets (Zech. 14:12), the implication being that they use their weaponry against each other as well as against Israel. Their earlier use of these weapons would account for this blindness coming upon Israel, and again we see the principle that what the attackers do to Israel will be inflicted upon them.

Deu 28:23 Your sky that is over your head shall be brass and the earth that is under you shall be iron-

This may well be the result of latter day chemical or nuclear weapons; see on :22. And yet the initial applica-

tion was surely to the hardness of the earth reflecting the hot, rainless skies above them.

Deu 28:24 Yahweh will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from the sky shall it come down on you until you are destroyed-

This has not yet been fulfilled; maybe because God in His grace has not punished His people according to all their sins. Or it could be that it has yet to be fulfilled in the final tribulation to come upon Israel. Nuclear fall-out would fulfil these words- and likewise those of Is. 29:6, describing the invasion of latter day Babylon / Assyria, which have yet to be accurately fulfilled. See on :22.

Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 promised a curse to come upon the land [of Eden / Israel] for their failure within it, just as happened to Adam and Eve; and of course ultimately they were driven out of the land just as Israel's very first parents had been. As the *eretz* / earth / land was initially "without form and void", so the same term is used of the land of Israel after the people had been driven out of it (Jer. 4:23). As thorns and thistles came up in the land [and those plants are unknown in some parts of the planet], so they did again when Israel were driven from their land (Gen. 3:18; Hos. 10:8). As Adam was punished by returning to dust, so Israel would be destroyed by dust (Dt. 28:24). As Adam and Eve failed to "subdue" the garden of Eden (Gen. 1:28), so Israel failed to fully "subdue" [s.w.] the tribes of the land (Num. 32:22). They subdued a few local to them; but they never really rose

up to the reality of being able to have the whole land area promised to Abraham subjected to them.

Deu 28:25 Yahweh will cause you to be struck before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them but shall flee seven ways before them-

The fleeing of the Egyptians from Israel in the midst of the Red Sea (Ex. 14:25,27) was a case of fleeing when none pursued them. This was the judgment upon Israel (Lev. 26:17,36; Dt. 28:25), which was to arise because in their hearts they had returned to Egypt (the world) and were therefore to be judged as Egypt, "condemned with the world" they had loved (1 Cor. 11:32).

And you shall be tossed back and forth among all the kingdoms of the earth-

The idea is of a sieve, which was tossed back and forth until the grain was left and all the lighter chaff had fallen to the earth. The idea is that Israel's wandering amongst the nations, and especially their latter day scattering and wandering amongst the kingdoms of the earth / land promised to Abraham, would result in the appearance of a faithful seed. But the very same phrase "tossed back and forth (s.w. "removed") among all the kingdoms of the earth" is used repeatedly of what was to happen at the time of the Babylonian exile (Jer. 15:4; 24:9; 29:18; 34:17). But the judgments associated with this in :23,24,26 etc. didn't fully happen. We can therefore conclude that indeed, God didn't carry out His side of the covenant curses for disobedience.

Deu 28:26 Your dead body shall be food to all birds of the sky and to the animals of the earth-

The events of AD70 were a detailed initial fulfilment of some parts of these prophecies. But they were only a foretaste of the tragedies of Israel's latter day cursing. Our Lord's quotation of Dt. 28:26 in Mt. 24:28 ("your carcasses shall be meat unto the fowls of the air") is confirmation of this. "None to frighten them away" recalls the events of the covenant with Abraham in Gen. 15. The end result of all this will be Israel returning to that covenant, accepting the new covenant which is based upon the promises to Abraham.

These "beasts of the earth / land" (Dt. 28:26) must refer to the nations within the earth / land promised to Abraham. But they were not destroyed in this way at the time of the Babylonian judgment for Israel's breaking covenant (see on :25). Nor were they struck with the medical conditions of the following verses. God's amelioration of the curses may have been in response to Jeremiah's Lamentations and prayers of other faithful men at the time (e.g. Ezekiel).

And there shall be none to frighten them away- Jer. 7:33 applies this to the exile in Babylon: "The dead bodies of this people shall be food for the birds of the sky and for the animals of the earth; and none shall frighten them away". But clearly these curses were greatly ameliorated at that time; the exiles were not destroyed, many Jews remained in the land, and the exiles became popular and wealthy, as the book of Esther testifies.

Deu 28:27 Yahweh will strike you with the boil of Egypt-

Apostate Israel were to be punished with the judgments of Egypt, and this was the plague on Egypt of Ex. 9:9. It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

And with the tumours, the scurvy and the itch, from which you cannot be healed-

Nuclear fallout would fulfil these words- see on :22. But the previous judgments upon Israel for breaking the covenant didn't seem to feature these elements of medical judgment upon them. We will remark so often that they were punished less than their iniquities deserved, for by grace God remembered mercy in His wrath.

Deu 28:28 Yahweh will strike you with madness, blindness and astonishment of heart-

Dt. 28:14–28,59–61 predicted that mental disease would be one of the punishments for worshipping other gods/demons. This explains the association of demons with mental illness in the New Testament. But let it be noted that the language of demons is associated with illness, not sin. We do not read of Christ casting out demons of envy, murder etc. It must also be noted that the Bible speaks of people *having* a demon/disease, rather than saying that demons *caused* the disease. It is significant that the Greek version of the Old Testament (the Septuagint) used the word *daimonion* for "idol";

this is the word translated "demon" in the New Testament.

Deu 28:29 You shall grope at noonday, as the blind gropes in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. You shall be only oppressed and robbed always-

Nuclear fallout would fulfil these words- see on :22. The darkness that came down at the crucifixion would have recalled Jer. 33:19-21- when day and night no longer follow their normal sequence, God is breaking His covenant. Israel's condemnation would be that "even at midday you will grope like a blind man in the dark" (Dt. 28:29). And yet the Lord would have known that He was suffering for Israel, treated as an apostate Israel, and thus He was the more inspired to pray for their ultimate forgiveness and salvation, seeing He had borne their condemnation. The Lord suffered "for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due" (Is. 53:8 RVmg.). There are therefore elements of the crucifixion sufferings of Jesus in every suffering of natural Israel.

And there shall be none to save you-

This was not the case at the time of the restoration, for Yahweh insisted that He was the One "to save you" (Is. 43:11,12; 45:21). Yet there was no repentance in the exiles; the covenant remained broken, and yet God acted to them as if it were still functional- and Israel were receiving blessing for obedience. This is all the stuff of radical grace and desire to force through a relationship. God says He Himself saved Israel seeing there "was none to save you" (Is. 59:16; 63:5). These passages ultimately

look ahead to God's saving work in the Lord Jesus, 'Yah's salvation'; a work likewise of grace.

Deu 28:30 You will betroth a wife and another man shall lie with her. You will build a house and not dwell therein-

Again we observe that these judgments were ameliorated. For Jeremiah urges the exiles to build houses in exile and dwell in them. Even though they were still impenitent, they were given the blessings of obedience.

You will plant a vineyard and not use its fruit-

The Lord likened His preachers to men reaping a harvest. He speaks of how they fulfilled the proverb that one sows and another reaps (Jn. 4:37,38). Yet this 'proverb' has no direct Biblical source. What we *do* find in the Old Testament is the repeated idea that if someone sows but another reaps, this is a sign that they are suffering God's judgment for their sins (Dt. 20:6; 28:30; Job 31:8; Mic. 6:15). But the Lord turns around the 'proverb' concerning Israel's condemnation; He makes it apply to the way that the preacher / reaper who doesn't sow is the one who harvests others in converting them to Him. Surely His implication was that His preacher-reapers were those who had known condemnation for their sins, but on that basis were His humbled harvesters in the mission field.

Deu 28:31 Your ox will be slain before your eyes and you shall not eat of it. Your donkey will be violently taken away from before your face and shall not be restored to you. Your sheep will be given to your enemies and you will have none to save you-

"I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle" (Lev. 26:22 cp. Dt. 28:31) speaks of the "beasts of the earth / land" (Dt. 28:26), who refer to the nations within the earth / land promised to Abraham. The use of cattle raiding language in Ez. 38:12 would then lead us to equate that latter day invasion with the final fulfilment of the curses upon Israel here.

Deu 28:32 Your sons and your daughters will be given to another people and your eyes will look and fail with longing for them all day long; and there shall be no power in your hand-

God said that the sign of His condemnation and rejection of Israel was that He would give their sons and daughters to be married to Gentiles (Dt. 28:32). To willingly marry a Gentile was therefore to proclaim oneself as rejected from the Israel of God. The Lord Jesus had read these words and engaged with them; for He uses the picture of eyes failing with longing for the return of exiled children and applies it to the Father longing for the return of the prodigal son. That son clearly spoke of Israel in exile.

Deu 28:33 The fruit of your ground and all your labours shall a nation which you don't know eat up-

This was clearly fulfilled at the time of the Babylonian invasion (Jer. 5:17), but this only looked forward to the even greater fulfilment in the curses of the last days. It is repeatedly stressed that God's people would suffer at the hands of a nation they didn't know (Jer. 14:18; 15:14; 17:4; 22:28). They did "know" the Babylonians,

and had worshipped their gods. So "know" is used in the Hebraic sense of 'having a relationship with'. The idea may be that they would receive no mercy from those they were not in any relationship with.

And you will be only oppressed and crushed always-

This was exactly what God's people did to each other, oppressing and crushing their weaker brethren (s.w. Am. 4:1). By doing so, they were living out their condemnation.

Deu 28:34 so that you will be mad because of the sight your eyes shall see-

This again speaks of the deep psychological trauma of God's people. See on :28. The deep distress would be at the sight of themselves covered in boils (:35).

Deu 28:35 Yahweh will strike you in the knees and in the legs with a sore boil of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head-

This language is applied to Job (Job 2:7). He was clearly representative of Israel suffering the curses for disobedience. But he was a righteous man, and was saved in the end. He pointed forward to how the perfect Lord Jesus suffered the curses for Israel's sins, as their total representative.

Deu 28:36 Yahweh will bring you and your king whom you will set over you-

This makes these curses have specific reference to the Babylonian rather than Roman invasion. The latter day application may require Israel to put their trust in some charismatic leader.

To a nation that you have not known, you nor your fathers, and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone-

Israel and Judah are strongly rebuked by the prophets for their choice to do this, and are begged to cease doing so. But their freewill choice to sin was in fact a result of being cursed by God; they were led into sin, as it were, by God confirming them in the downward spiral they had chosen to be part of. In this case, if they didn't want to be cursed, then they simply had to stop living out the curse in their lives.

The reference to Israel serving the gods of the nations to whom they are carried captive, gods which their ancestors abhorred, may refer to some accepting Islam in the last days. Indeed, Dt. 31:29 suggests that in the latter (Heb. end) times, Israel will specifically "do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands". This is the language commonly used concerning Israel's worship of the idols of the surrounding lands; if they are to specifically do this in the time of the end, it would seem reasonable to guess that this may refer to an acceptance of Islam.

Deu 28:37 You will become an astonishment, a proverb and a byword among all the peoples where Yahweh shall lead you away-

But this was in order for a witness to be made to those nations. Hence LXX "And thou shalt be there for a wonder, and a parable". The tragedy of Israel's curses for disobedience is even now to be understood as an appeal to the Gentile world to take God seriously and repent. This was fulfilled at the Babylonian exile (s.w. Jer. 24:9);

but there is no clear record of Judah and their land becoming a proverb and byword. Again we sense that these curses were ameliorated by grace.

Deu 28:38 You will carry much seed out into the field and gather little in, for the locust shall consume it-

The locust was a plague brought upon Egypt. The judgments upon the land of Israel in the last days are described in Revelation, and they are full of allusion to the plagues upon Egypt. The locust is a figure of Judah's latter day judgments (Joel 1:4). It is a theme with God that His apostate people are "condemned with the world" (1 Cor. 11:32). If their hearts are really with Egypt / the world, then they will share the judgments of this world. The time for separation is now, just as the Egyptians had to identify with Israel if they wished to escape the plagues.

This is the situation experienced at the time of the restoration, and is alluded to by Haggai in Hag. 1:9. The restoration was supposed to happen when they were obedient. But they received the curses for disobedience at the time of the restoration because they were disobedient- their harvests resulted in "little", they were plagued etc. We conclude therefore that the restoration was a blessing for obedience which was given when they were not in fact obedient. And we see in this God's grace.

Deu 28:39 You will plant vineyards and dress them but you shall neither drink of the wine nor harvest them, for the worm shall eat them-

Just as the locust of :38 is alluded to in Joel 1:4, so Joel 1:4-7 also alludes to the "worm" which destroys

vines- and they are used as a symbol of Judah's latter day invaders. Maimonides in "A guide for the perplexed" makes a big issue about these worms of vine weevils. He claims that the various false gods and witches which Israel tended to worship and trust in all offered agricultural prosperity, and specifically offered protection from the dreaded vine weevils. The point is therefore made that all those gods and incantations would be revealed to Israel as powerless to turn away the curse for disobedience to the covenant.

Deu 28:40 You will have olive trees throughout all your borders but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil, for your olives shall drop off-

See on :39. The picture here is of labour in vain, so it was all a psychological punishment.

Deu 28:41 You will father sons and daughters but they shall not be yours, for they will go into captivity-

It has been observed that the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings have certain similarities. For example, they all quote the Deuteronomy version of Israel's earlier history, leading to the suggestion that Deuteronomy was the first of the collection, a kind of introductory background history. The curses listed in Dt. 28 are all especially relevant to the situation in Judah before the Babylonian invasion, and a number of the curses are alluded to in Lamentations as being descriptive of the situation after the final destruction of Jerusalem. Some of the curses can have little other application, e.g. Dt. 28:41 speaks of begetting children, "but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivi-

ty". Other relevant passages are Dt. 28:36 (a king taken captive), 49,50,52. These "former prophets" (Deuteronomy - 2 Kings) appear to have been edited during the exile as history which spoke to the concerns and needs of the exiled people of God. This combined history speaks mainly of the southern Kingdom, which was the group who went to captivity in Babylon; and it explains why this captivity was justified, as well as giving many examples of where repentance could bring about a restoration (1 Kings 8:46-53 is specific). This history addresses the questions which concerned the captives- does God abandon His people for ever? Are Israel entirely to blame for what happened? Is there hope of restoration after receiving Divine judgment and breaching His covenant? Can God have a relationship with His people without a temple? To what extent will God always honour the promises to Abraham and David? Should other gods also be worshipped? Reading these books from this perspective reveals how incident after incident was especially selected by the inspired editors in Babylon in order to guide God's people there.

Deu 28:42 All your trees and the fruit of your ground shall the locust possess-

Joel's likening of the latter day invader to locusts (Joel 1:4) is perhaps based upon the prophecy that "locusts shall consume (the land)... the fruit of thy land shall the locust possess" (Dt. 28:38,42 A.V. mg.). 'Possess' invites us to see the locusts as representative of a group of invaders. See on :43.

Deu 28:43 The foreigner who is in the midst of you shall mount up above you higher and higher-

This surely begs for an application to the Arab inhabitants of the [so called] Occupied Territories, who will no doubt join in with the 'locust' invasions, dominating the Jews as the Philistines did.

And you shall come down lower and lower-

Flesh must be humbled- either we do it now, we humble ourselves that we may be exalted in due time; or it will have to be done to us through the terror of rejection. Time and again 'bringing low' or 'humiliation' is the result of condemnation (Dt. 28:43; 2 Chron. 28:19; Job 40:12; Ps. 106:43).

Deu 28:44 He will lend to you and you shall not lend to him; he will be the head and you shall be the tail-

This has not had widespread fulfilment, but it must do in the latter day desolation of Israel- which presumably must last for a period of time for this to come true. There are various indications of a literal 1260 days, 42 months, three and a half year period of tribulation in the last days.

Deu 28:45 All these curses will come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed-

As if the curses are to be equated with the invaders.

Because you didn't listen to the voice of Yahweh your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you-

This began with God's first invitation to Israel to hear His voice. But they didn't want to and shied away, asking Moses to go and hear God's voice and relay it to

them. This refusal to listen to His literal voice is being alluded to, and compared to their refusal to obey His voice / word. If they had been open to personal engagement with Yahweh their God, hearing His word spoken to them personally rather than retreating into mere religion and thereby placing God at a distance from them, then they would have been personally obedient to that voice.

Deu 28:46 and they shall be to you and your seed a sign and a wonder forever-

"Forever" here is clearly not used with the sense of literal eternity. Indeed there is no word for that in ancient Hebrew; *olahm* means really 'time out of mind'.

Deu 28:47 Because you didn't serve Yahweh your God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart because of the abundance of all things-

So often, the Mosaic law associates rejoicing with giving and sacrificing, for truly it is more blessed or happy to give than to receive. The Lord's teaching about this was clearly reflective of this major Mosaic theme (Acts 20:35). But Israel sacrificed grudgingly, without joy. And this was of supreme significance to God as a reason for their condemnation.

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which

our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Israel would be rejected and cursed if they didn't serve God "with gladness". Service to God must be done with joy; if we lose the rejoicing of our hope, we lose the hope itself (Heb. 3:6). Joy is therefore a vital characteristic of God's true people.

Deu 28:48 therefore you shall serve your enemies whom Yahweh shall send against you, in hunger, in thirst, in nakedness and in want of all things-

This is so relevant to the Lord's sufferings on the cross, when He bore Israel's condemnation. The whole of Romans 6 plays on the idea that we are slaves to sin, and through entering Christ, we become slaves of righteousness. Total freedom to do what *we* personally want is not possible. We are slaves, we can't serve two masters. So

why not serve Christ rather than the Biblical devil? Likewise Moses offered Israel the choice of bondservice to either Yahweh or their enemies (Dt. 28:47,48). And Mic. 2:3 likewise reminds Israel that they will be under the yoke of judgment if they reject Yahweh's yoke. The Lord spoke of His servants having a light yoke (Mt. 11:30). The Bible minded among His hearers would have thought back to the threatened punishment of an iron yoke for the disobedient (Dt. 28:48). 'It's a yoke either way', they would have concluded. But the Lord's yoke *even in this life* is light, and has promise of the life which is to come! The logic of taking it, with the restrictions it inevitably implies (for it is a yoke), is simply overpowering.

And He will put a yoke of iron on your neck until He has destroyed you-

Moses offered Israel the choice of bondservice to either Yahweh or their enemies. The whole of Romans 6 plays on this idea. We are slaves to sin, and through entering Christ by baptism, we become slaves of righteousness. Total freedom to do what *we* personally want is not possible. We are slaves, we can't serve two masters. So why not serve Christ rather than the Biblical devil? Jesus spoke of His servants having a light yoke (Mt. 11:30). The Bible minded among His hearers would have thought back to the threatened punishment of an iron yoke for the disobedient (:48). 'It's a yoke either way', they would have concluded. But the Lord's yoke *even in this life* is light, and has promise of the life which is to

come! The logic of taking it, with the restrictions it inevitably implies (for it is a yoke), is simply overpowering.

But this is the language of slave labour camps, working the Jews until they drop dead. This is one of a number of word pictures among the curses which recall the scenes of Nazi death camps. But even they were nothing to the scenes which tragically are yet to come in the last days.

Deu 28:49 Yahweh will bring a nation against you from far, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flies; a nation whose language you will not understand-

As explained on :10, the "earth" refers to the land promised to Abraham. They were invaded by a nation from the end of the earth, which Habakkuk defines as Babylon, a nation at the extremity of the land / earth promised to Abraham. Rome is not here in view. The latter day application is likewise to the nations within the land promised to Abraham, and not to "Rome".

Deu 28:50 a nation of fierce face who will not respect the person of the old nor show favour to the young-

Moses not only repeats all the curses of Lev. 26 to them, but he adds even more, under inspiration (Dt. 28:50-57). Presumably the Angel had explained in one of their conversations how Israel would suffer even greater punishment than what He had outlined in Lev. 26. Notice in passing that Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 are not strictly parallel. And in some ways, Moses became more demanding, whilst at the same time emphasizing grace and love.

Deu 28:51 It will eat the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your ground until you are destroyed. It will not leave you grain, new wine or oil, the increase of your livestock or the young of your flock, until it has caused you to perish-

Moses not only repeats all the curses of Lev. 26 to them, but he adds even more, under inspiration. Presumably the Angel had explained in one of their conversations how Israel would suffer even greater punishment than that outlined in Lev. 26. Notice that Lev. 26 and Dt. 28 are not strictly parallel. Moses in his spiritual maturity urged Israel to be the more fully aware of the nature and reality of Divine punishment for human sin; his increased focus upon grace and salvation didn't mean that he increasingly ignored the harder side of God- but rather the opposite was the case.

Deu 28:52 It will besiege you in all your gates until your high and fortified walls come down in which you trusted, throughout all your land. It will besiege you in all your gates throughout all your land which Yahweh your God has given you-

Their trust in "high and fenced walls" (Dt. 28:52) would have its latter-day equivalent in Israel's trust in its military deterrents and defences. The reference to the land Yahweh gave them would then refer to the events of 1948, in the latter day context. "High" is the word for "haughty" or proud, and modern Israel's pride in their defences will be brought down.

Deu 28:53 You shall eat the fruit of your own body, the flesh of your sons and of your daughters, whom Yahweh

your God has given you, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you-

The plural "enemies" suggests that the siege in view would not be by one enemy but by a confederacy of them. And this is exactly the latter day prophetic scenario during Israel's final time of curing.

Deu 28:54 The man who is tender among you and very delicate, his eye shall be evil toward his brother and toward the wife of his heart and toward the remnant of his children whom he has remaining-

The Biblical record seems to very frequently seek to deconstruct popular ideas about sin and evil. One of the most widespread notions was the "evil eye", whereby it was believed that some people had an "evil eye" which could bring distress into the eyes of those upon whom they looked in jealousy or anger. This concept is alive and well in many areas to this day. The idea entered Judaism very strongly after the Babylonian captivity; the Babylonian Talmud is full of references to it. The sage Rav attributed many illnesses to the evil eye, and the Talmud even claimed that 99 out of 100 people died prematurely from this (Bava Metzia 107b). The Biblical deconstruction of this is through stressing that *God's* eye is all powerful in the destiny of His people (Dt. 11:12; Ps. 33:18); and that "an evil eye" refers to an *internal* attitude of mean spiritedness *within* people- e.g. an "evil eye" is understood as an ungenerous spirit in Dt. 15:9; Mt. 6:23; 20:15; or pure selfishness in Dt. 28:54,56; Prov. 23:6; 28:22. We must remember that the people of Biblical times understood an "evil eye" as an *external* ability

to look at someone and bring curses upon them. But the Bible redefines an "evil eye" as a purely *internal* attitude; and cosmic evil, even if it were to exist, need hold no fear for us- seeing the eyes of the only true God are running around the earth *for* us and not against us (2 Chron. 16:9).

Deu 28:55 so that he will not give to any of them of the flesh of his children whom he shall eat, because he has nothing left in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your gates-

This clearly had a fulfilment at the time of 2 Kings 6:28,29. But all these incipient fulfillments only looked ahead to the greater one in the last days.

Deu 28:56 The tender and delicate woman among you, who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye will be evil toward the husband of her heart and toward her son and her daughter-

The curses repeatedly stress the psychological torment. The sensitive woman would become desensitized by the desperation, so that her "eye will be evil". Her husband was the man "of her heart", but her eye or heart / mind will become "evil" toward him, and likewise toward her own children. The mental torment of those judged by God will be the main component of their judgment. "Weeping and gnashing of teeth" speaks of this; for to behold the future they had missed, to perceive how easily they could have been there, will be an unbearable psychological trauma. All the dramatic fig-

urative descriptions of condemnation are an attempt to portray this.

Deu 28:57 and toward her young one who comes out from between her feet and her children whom she shall bear; for she will eat them secretly, for want of all things in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your gates-

This clearly had some application to the situation in AD70, but that whole scenario was but a foretaste of the situation in the last days. Most especially is Babylon called "the enemy": Ps. 78:61; Jer. 6:25; 15:11; 18:17; 31:16 and an impressive 11 times in Lamentations. 'Babylon' has specific latter-day application to the neighbouring enemies of Israel.

Deu 28:58 If you will not observe all the words of this law that are written in this book, that you may fear this glorious and fearful name, YAHWEH YOUR GOD-

For all Moses' desire for Israel's obedience, there are some subtle differences in his attitude to law and obedience between Deuteronomy, and the law earlier given. Thus in Leviticus 26 it was stressed that obedience would bring blessing; whilst Dt. 28:58 says that obedience results in fearing the fearful Name of Yahweh and His glory. Fear shouldn't lead to obedience; but obedience leads a man to *know and fear his God and His Name*. This is blessing enough. The Hebrew *yare* means both fear / dread, and also reverence / worship. Knowing the enveloping mercy of God should lead to a real fear of a God so gracious (Ps. 5:7). However, obedience to God's commands would lead to a fear of Yahweh's glo-

rious and fearful name (Dt. 28:58); not the other way round, whereby fear of God leads to obedience. God's character is not just partly severe, partly gracious. His grace and His judgment of sin are wonderfully interconnected within His character.

Like Jacob and Job, Moses came to a fine appreciation of Yahweh's Name at his latter end, perceiving that the wonder of relationship with God far eclipses any material blessing we may receive from Him in this life. To respect or fear the Name doesn't mean to remember that God's Name is 'Yahweh'. It refers to his character (Ex. 34:4-6). The Lord Jesus fed off the majesty of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4)- this was how inspirational He found the things of the Name. To fear the Name of Yahweh involved practical obedience to "all the words of this law". Meditation and sustained reflection upon the characteristics of God as epitomized and memorialized in His Name will of itself lead to a conforming of personality to that same Name. If we declare that Name to others, they too have the chance to be transformed by it- thus Moses comments that "I will proclaim the name of Yahweh; you, ascribe greatness to our God" (Dt. 32:3).

All the commands of Moses' law were in order to teach Israel to appreciate and respect the character and name of Yahweh (Dt. 28:58) - therefore all this commands were a manifestation of the fundamental personality of the Father. Ditto for the words of Jesus, who was the prophet who would speak God's word as Moses spoke it (Dt. 18:15-18). Because Jesus would speak God's word as Moses did, the words of Moses should be

studied as much as the words of Jesus - as Jesus himself said (Jn. 5:47). Yet do we *love* the Law of Moses as David did? Or do we not incline to be spiritually lazy, to be influenced by the (so called) New Testament Christianity of the apostate religious world around us? It is only by truly entering into the spirit of Moses' words that we can really understand our Lord - he said this himself. And yet we would rather read Jesus' words than those of Moses, because we can't be bothered to make *the effort to understand the spirit of our Lord as it is revealed there*. And therefore we complain (if we are honest) of a lack of sense that we are having a real relationship with the Lord Jesus.

The Lord Jesus fed off the majesty of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4)- this was how inspirational He found the things of the Name. To fear the Name of Yahweh was to "observe to do all the words of this law" (Dt. 28:58). Meditation and sustained reflection upon the characteristics of God as epitomized and memorialized in His Name will of itself lead to a conformation of personality to that same Name. If we declare that Name to others, they too have the chance to be transformed by it- thus Moses comments: "Because *I* will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe *ye* greatness unto our God" (Dt. 32:3).

Deu 28:59 then Yahweh will make your plagues terrible and the plagues of your seed, great plagues and of long continuance, and severe sicknesses and of long continuance-

"Then..." could suggest that when suffering the curses for disobedience, they would then be offered the opportunity for repentance. But if they refused this, then the

plagues would not be of 'short continuance' as was potentially possible, but would last "long" (Dt. 28:59), or made seven times heavier (Lev. 26:21). The medical aspects of these plagues were apparently not fulfilled to the extent implied here and in :60; and that is typical of how in wrath, God remembered mercy. For although the covenant was broken, the curses they had agreed to bear for this were somehow ameliorated in practice. And despite their lack of obedience, the blessings for obedience did have partial fulfilment (e.g. the multiplication of their numbers, :63 cp. Dt. 1:10; 10:22; 26:5). And even further, God still sought ongoing relationship with them on the basis of the covenant He had made with Abraham and his seed; those promises became the basis of His offer of a new covenant to Israel.

Deu 28:60 He will bring on you again all the diseases of Egypt which you feared, and they shall cling to you-

Sickness is from God and not a personal Satan. "*The Lord will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt*" (Dt. 28:60); "an evil spirit *from the Lord* troubled [Saul]" (1 Sam. 16:14); "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I the Lord?" (Ex. 4:11).

Legion's desire to see his mental disease return to the herds of swine probably stemmed from a need to know that his affliction had been cured in a rather permanent sort of way. And the Lord went along with this. The idea of transference of disease from one to another was a common Semitic perception, and it's an idea used by God. And thus God went along with the peoples' idea of

disease transference, and the result is recorded in terms of demons [which was how they understood illness] going from one person to another. Likewise the leprosy of Naaman clave to Gehazi (2 Kings 5:27). God threatened to make the diseases of the inhabitants of Canaan and Egypt to cleave to Israel if they were disobedient (Dt. 28:21,60). Here too, as with Legion, there is Divine accommodation to the ideas of disease transference which people had at the time.

Deu 28:61 Also Yahweh will bring on you every sickness and every plague which is not written in the book of this law, until you are destroyed-

"Destroyed" is the word for "utterly destroyed", and is used of how God would utterly destroy Israel if they were disobedient to the covenant (Dt. 4:26). God had used the word to speak of how He would totally destroy Israel and make a new nation from Moses (s.w. Dt. 9:19,25; Ps. 106:23), but Moses changed God's mind about that. But these later usages of the word are saying that this was going to happen, if Israel were disobedient. And they were, but it didn't happen. Individuals were 'utterly destroyed', but the word is used in Am. 9:8 of how "I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob". This was all by pure grace. Just as the wages of sin is death for each of us, but by grace we are saved from that.

Deu 28:62 You will be left few in number-

This is hard to convincingly apply to any previous persecution, if it refers to numbers of Jews worldwide. However, it may refer specifically to the Jewish population of the land of Israel. There must therefore be a

world-wide persecution of Jews for this to come about, or a total overrunning of the land of Israel, just as radical Islam dreams of. The tide of history is turning against the West, and this opens up the prospect of America and Britain also persecuting Jews.

Whereas you were as the stars of the sky for multitude, because you didn't listen to the voice of Yahweh your God-

Passages like Dt. 7:1 confidently proclaim that "When the Lord your God shall bring you into the land... and shall pluck off / cast out many nations...". Yet this casting out was dependent upon Israel doing this work; if they did it, God was eager to work mightily with them. But the reality is that they didn't drive out all the nations. This doesn't falsify Scripture; rather does it indicate the positive hope of God that His people will work with Him to make His potentially true prophecies turn into reality. Even the promises to Abraham were to some extent conditional- Israel would no longer be "as the stars of heaven for multitude; because you would not obey the voice of the Lord" (Dt. 28:62). Hence the fulfillment of those promises was dependent to some extent upon the obedience of the promised seed.

Deu 28:63 As Yahweh rejoiced over you to do you good and to multiply you, so Yahweh will rejoice over you to cause you to perish and to destroy you-

Israel were told that *because* they were the people of God, in covenant with Him, *therefore* they *had* to be obedient. If they were disobedient, they would be cursed. And if they backed out of being God's people, they were also cursed (Dt. 27:9,19,26). There was no way

back: total devotion to obedience. God would either rejoice over them to bless them, or rejoice over them to curse them (Dt. 28:63). He isn't passive; His energy will be expended upon us one way or the other. There are only two types of builder, the wise and the foolish; two types of tree, yielding either good or bad fruit.

In Esther's time, a decree was made to "destroy...and cause to perish" the Jews throughout the provinces of Persia / Babylon (Esther 3:13; 7:4). This phrase uses the two Hebrew words which we find together three times in the list of curses to be brought upon a disobedient Israel (Dt. 28:20,51,63). There evidently is a connection. And yet by her wonderful self-sacrificial mediation, Esther brought about the deferment and even annulment of those justifiable curses. God's prophetic word was again changed- due to a mediator, who of course pointed both backwards to Moses, and forwards to the Lord Jesus.

They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, knowing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and failure. We wonder why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He re-

joiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

You will be plucked from off the land where you go in to possess it-

Abraham was promised that his seed would have Yahweh as their personal God, and would eternally inherit the land. In a sense, the promises that the seed *would* inherit the land, and that God *would be* their God were fulfilled straight after God said them. He became Isaac's God (Gen. 31:42,53 refer to this), the God of Abraham's son. Time and again God reminds Israel that He *is* their God. And that land in a sense *was* given to the Jewish fathers (Gen. 15:18; Dt. 28:63; 30:5 NIV; Josh. 1:2-9; 21:43; 1 Kings 4:20,21). David could praise God simply because He was "my God" (Ps. 118:28)- an allusion back to the Abrahamic promise. Of course, the *main* fulfillment of this promise will be in the Kingdom; but in principle, the promise has *already* been fulfilled to Abraham's seed- i.e., us!

Deu 28:64 Yahweh will scatter you among all peoples, from the one end of the earth to the other end of the earth, and there you shall serve other gods which you have not known - you nor your fathers - gods of wood and stone-

This refers to the "earth" in the sense of the land promised to Abraham; see on :10. The implication is that Jews now within the state of Israel will be scattered throughout that area in the last days. And yet the Baby-

lonian exile left many of the people in the land; again, the curses were not carried out to the extent called for by these terms of the covenant. The poor of the people, which was the majority, remained there. Babylonian policy was to deport the leadership and establish puppet rulers over the impoverished masses. The idea here is that the calling of Abraham out of idolatrous Ur would be reversed; they would return to those ends of the land, and serve idols there.

Deu 28:65 Among these nations you shall find no ease and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot. Yahweh will give you there a trembling heart and failing of eyes and pining of soul-

This is in line with the state of psychological breakdown described and discussed on :20. We note how God can give people attitudes of heart; and positively, His Holy Spirit works directly upon the human spirit. God brought Israel out of Egypt in order to "cause him to rest" (Jer. 31:20), s.w. "ease" here. But Israel didn't "find" that promised ease / rest, the Kingdom was prepared and made possible, but they refused it. And so any life without the Kingdom is but an aimless wandering. And yet the book of Esther presents the Jews as wealthy and popular in exile; again we see how these curses were not totally carried out.

Deu 28:66 and your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear night and day and shall have no assurance of your life-

This is one of a number of word pictures among the curses which recall the scenes of Nazi death camps. But

even they were nothing to the scenes which tragically are yet to come in the last days. "Assurance" is the word for faith; their lives would have no faith / stability (s.w. Dt. 9:23; Num. 20:12 etc.), as they had lived their lives without faith.

Deu 28:67 In the morning you will say, I wish it were evening! and at evening you will say, I wish it were morning! for the fear of your heart which you shall fear and for the sight of your eyes which you shall see-

There are links between Job and Deuteronomy 28, connecting Job with a faithless Israel:

"Thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness" (Dt. 28:29) = "They (the wicked; although the friends are getting at Job when they speak of them) meet with darkness in the daytime and grope in the noonday as in the night" (Job 5:14).

"The blind" (Dt. 28:29) = Job had fits of blindness (Job 22:10,11)

"The Lord shall smite thee in the knees and in the legs with a sore botch from the sole of thy foot unto the top of thy head" (Dt. 28:35) = "Boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown" (Job 2:7). These were inflicted by the satan, but by "The Lord" in Dt.28. In practice, "the Lord" was the wilderness Angel; which is one of several indications that Job's satan was an Angel.

"An astonishment" (Dt. 28:37) = "Mark me (Job) and be astonished" (Job 21:5;17:8).

"and a byword, among all nations" (Dt. 28:37) = "A byword of the people" (Job 17:6;30:9).

"In the morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning" (Dt. 28:67) = "When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro until the dawning" (Job 7:4).

All the Jews' blessings from God were to be taken away and their children cursed: "Thou shalt beget sons and daughters but thou shalt not enjoy them" (Dt. 28:41) = "Cattle... flocks of thy sheep", ditto for Job.

"The Lord shall bring a nation against thee (Dt. 28:49) = The Sabeans/ Chaldeans- forerunners of the Babylonians and Assyrians who punished Israel.

Deu 28:68 Yahweh will bring you into Egypt again with ships by the way of which I said to you, You shall see it no more again, and there you shall sell yourselves to your enemies for bondservants and for bondmaids, and no man will buy you-

As noted on previous curses, here we have the climactic curse never actually fulfilled to the extent implied here- i.e. a reversal of God's entire salvation plan in bringing Israel out of Egypt in the first place. It didn't much happen at the time of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions, which are presented in the prophets of the fulfilment of the curses for breaking the covenant. It is a case of God in wrath remembering mercy, taking pity upon His children simply because they are His children. Hosea records how God threatened to return them to Egypt, and yet in that same prophecy says that they will not return there. Just as Hosea didn't finally punish Gomer as her whoredom deserved, neither did God

punish His people to the extent He speaks of here. Simply because He loves them.

Other Bible prophecies speak of a great re-gathering of a repentant Israel from dispersion around the return of Christ. It's been tempting to apply this to Jewish emigration to Israel post 1948, but many of the prophecies in their context require that this return is part of a spiritual restoration. Dt. 28:68 speaks of Israel being punished by being taken into Egypt in ships- and it's hard to find a very significant fulfilment of that prophecy to date. Such scattering of the Jews throughout the *eretz*, the territory of the land promised to Abraham, would fulfil the patterns set by Babylon, Assyria, Persia and Rome in their dominations of Israel. Such scattering is possible and likely, seeing that it is a requirement of the Hadith about jihad against Israel: "Fight against those who disbelieve in Allah. Make a holy war... When you meet your enemies... invite them to three courses of action. If they respond to any one of these, you also accept it and withhold yourself from doing them any harm. Invite them to (accept) Islam; if they respond to you, accept it from them and desist from fighting against them. Then invite them to migrate from their lands to the land of Muhairs... If they refuse to accept Islam, demand from them the Jizya. If they agree to pay, accept it from them and hold off your hands. If they refuse to pay the tax, seek Allah's help and fight them" (The Hadith, Book 19.4294, about Jihad). This paying of tax is likely to involve accepting the seal / mark of the beast, without which there can be no trading. "The land of Muhairs"

refers to the lands of origin of the Moslem fighters; *muhair* means 'origin' in Arabic. This means that a mass deportation of Jews to other parts of the land promised to Abraham, the lands of origin of their enemies, is very much what the jihadists envisage. These concepts are particularly applied to the Jews, in Hadith 19.4363: "(Let us) go to the Jews... The Messenger of Allah (may peace be upon him) stood up and called out to them (saying): O ye assembly of Jews, accept Islam (and) you will be safe... He said to them (the same words) the third time (and on getting the same reply) he added: You should know that the earth belongs to Allah and His Apostle, and I wish that I should expel you from this land... and they may have to go away leaving everything behind".

At the time of Israel's repentance, God will "break the bands of your yoke" (Ez. 34:27), using the language of their suffering in Egypt (Lev. 26:13). If they are literally delivered from Egypt, this would fit nicely. The language of Ez. 20:34,35 recalls that of Ez. 20:10: "I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness...I will bring you out from the people... and I will bring you into the wilderness of the people". Thus Israel's leaving the physical persecution of Egypt and being brought into the spiritual testing of the wilderness, will have its counterpart in the Jews being led out of the lands of their Arab captors, to be spiritually refined in "the wilderness of the people". "*There* will I plead with you", suggests that this "wilderness" is a specific country. There is good reason to think that this will

be literal Egypt. Is. 19:18-25 indicates that there will be repentant Jews in latter-day Egypt. "The wilderness of the people... the wilderness of the land of Egypt" (Ez. 20:35,35) will be the place of Israel's final latter-day refining. Thus Israel are brought out from their captivity in Arab lands, figurative 'Egypt', into *literal* Egypt, which will be the figurative 'wilderness' of spiritual testing.

Ex. 14:13 could appear to be prophecy: "The Egyptians... you shall see them again no more for ever". But it is understood as a command not to return to Egypt in Dt. 17:16- and because of Israel turning back to Egypt in their hearts, they would be taken there again (Dt. 28:68). So we must be prepared to accept that what may appear to be prophecy is in fact commandment, which we have the freewill to obey or disobey. Hence they would not go back there; and yet, God says, they will go back there.

Ez. 43:7 likewise is more command than prediction: "The house of Israel shall no more defile my holy name" (RV). It isn't saying 'this is a prophecy that they will not do this'- for they did. Rather is it a plea, a command, that they are not to do this any more. So God's promise that Israel would never again see Egypt was therefore conditional, and thus capable of being broken; although those conditions aren't mentioned when He makes the promise in Dt. 17:16; Ex. 14:13.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 29

Deu 29:1 These are the words of the covenant which Yahweh commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb-

This additional repetition of the covenant was because by grace, God wished to reaffirm the covenant even though Israel had broken their part of it- see on :13 and :23. The covenant on Sinai (Ex. 19:20) was reaffirmed in the plains of Moab (Dt. 29:1) and on Joshua's death (Josh. 24:25), and was to be reaffirmed every seven years (Dt. 31:9-11,25,26). It is this reaffirmation of covenant relationship which we make in the breaking of bread service.

Deu 29:2 Moses called all Israel and said to them, You have seen all that Yahweh did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land;-As in Dt. 4:34 and Dt. 7:19 they had not literally seen these things- the audience by the end of Deuteronomy included those who had been born during the 40 years wandering. But historical events in God's word are as if we were there, hence David can rejoice as if he personally was delivered at the Red Sea.

Deu 29:3 the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and those great wonders-

The individual Israelite was to perceive his absolute connection with God's historical deliverance of His peo-

ple from Egypt. And to be appropriately awed by all the grace shown in that. In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. We are to learn from history, not as a merely fascinating exercise. But the Bible is history, and yet it is a living word to us. Israel were supposed to reason back from the actions of Egypt towards them, and their weakness spiritually at that time. And to respond personally to that grace.

Deu 29:4 But Yahweh has not given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear, to this day-

In :2 we are told "you have seen" , but they didn't spiritually 'see' what they saw with their physical eyes. God confirms people in the psychological attitudes they adopt.

Deu 29:5 I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not grown old on you and your shoes have not grown old on your feet-

The observation that their "clothes didn't grow old, and their feet didn't swell" is made in the context of lamenting that "Yet Yahweh has not given you a heart to perceive nor eyes to see nor ears to hear" (Dt. 29:4). They refused to perceive His great and daily grace to them as witnessed in His daily provision of food and clothing, just as we can fail to perceive it today. Regular prayers

of thanksgiving before food are a good way of guarding against this human tendency to not perceive such grace. The returned exiles likewise had been miraculously provided for by the decrees of the Persian kings, but refused to perceive the grace of all that provision (Neh. 9:21).

We must remember that the 40 years wandering were punishment for sin, it was the experience of condemnation, and serves as the basis for later Biblical pictures of the rejected. Unable to enter the Kingdom they so wanted to enter, wandering until they died. But Moses in Deuteronomy perceives that even for those condemned people, Yahweh provided and they "lacked nothing" by His grace. Dt. 8 says He ensured their clothes didn't wear out and their feet didn't swell. He ensured the condemned had comfortable footwear. How staggeringly gracious is that. We see something of God's essence here- that He cares even for the condemned. Such a far cry from the classical picture of "hell".

Deu 29:6 You have not eaten bread neither have you drunk wine or strong drink, that you may know that I am Yahweh your God-

The whole process of Nazariteship was to encourage the normal Israelite to have the ambition to rise up to the spirit of the High Priest himself; the restrictions governing Nazariteship were a purposeful echo of those regarding the High Priest. The way God describes Himself as depriving Israel of "wine or strong drink" (Dt. 29:6) throughout the wilderness journey is Nazarite language: as if in all their weakness and profligacy, God still sought to inspire them to rise up to the heights.

Deu 29:7 When we came to this place-

Moses was standing with the people near the battlefield where they had won a victory which was intended as a foretaste of how they would conquer Canaan.

Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle and we struck them-

The Divine intention was that the victory over Sihon would put fear into the hearts of all the other tribes (Dt. 2:25). But it was God's ideal intention that Sihon would have accepted the message of peace (Dt. 2:26)- perhaps implying peace with God, as "peace" often means in the Bible. We see here the complexity of God's workings with men. Little surprise, therefore, that at times we fail to perceive what God is doing in our lives. Things appear to be left hanging, or events lack apparent meaning, or things could have various possible outcomes, some of which are quite contradictory when compared against each other. This offering of peace before fighting was to be typical of Israel's approach (Dt. 20:10).

Deu 29:8 and we took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of the Manassites-

To take and give land for an inheritance whilst still on the East side of Jordan was a foretaste of what was possible for them when they entered the land West of Jordan. The same terms are used about what Israel were to do with the rest of the land- although their fear of the Canaanite tribes suggests they didn't learn the lesson. It was a foretaste of the Kingdom... and our wilderness walk is designed, especially towards the end of it, to have

similar foretastes encouraging us that really this is what we will experience.

Deu 29:9 Keep therefore the words of this covenant and do them, so that you may prosper in all that you do-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

See on Josh. 1:6. Joshua [cp. Jesus] is repeatedly made parallel with Israel [cp. Us]; his victories were theirs; what he achieved is counted to them. In the same way, the people of the Lord Jesus are counted as Him. Joshua was to be strong and possess the land (Josh. 1:6), just as they had been told to do, using the same Hebrew words (Dt. 11:8). Indeed, Israel and Joshua are given parallel charges, to be strong and of good courage to take the land (Dt. 31:6,7). Both Israel and Joshua are given the same charge to keep the words of the covenant, that they might "prosper" (Dt. 29:9; Josh. 1:7).

Deu 29:10 You stand this day, all of you, before Yahweh your God: your heads, your tribes, your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel-

Moses on that last day of his life addressed the whole assembly of Israel; and yet he so often speaks in the singular ("thee" rather than "ye" in the KJV), as if to emphasize that the laws and covenant he was giving them was to them *personally*. This is made clear in :10,12: "You (plural) stand this day, all of you, before Yahweh... that you (singular) may enter into covenant with Yahweh". That covenant was made anew by God to each generation and individual. We cannot hide within a family or a church. We are individually responsible to God and will personally be saved. In the same spirit, Moses points out that Yahweh is the only God that can be personally *known*; all the idols could not be known personally (:26). No fewer than 137 times in Scripture we read the phrase "my God". This was used in a public, unashamed

way by many of God's children (it was a particular favourite of Nehemiah, David and Paul).

Deu 29:11 your little ones, your wives and the foreigner who is in the midst of your camps, from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water-

Verses 10-13 is a very long sentence; from now until the end of his speech in Deuteronomy, Moses uses (in the Hebrew text) very long sentences, at times with unclear syntax- as if he was getting increasingly intense and excited as he speaks of the utter realities to which we stand personally related by our covenant with God.

Deu 29:12 You wish to enter into covenant with Yahweh your God and into His oath, which Yahweh your God makes with you this day-

For Israel in covenant with God, absolutely nothing- not sex, menstruation, the content of clothing fabric, diet- could fall outside the scope of their covenant relationship. And so in principle it is with us under the new covenant. Such a relationship also precludes the worship of *any* other God. The covenant we have entered has constant and binding claims upon our loyalty; and it also speaks of God's constant and passionate commitment to us.

Deu 29:13 that He may establish you this day to Himself for a people and that He may be to you a God, as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob-

The promise that Israel would be God's people and He would be their God was conditional upon their obedience- that was the deal made with them nearly 40 years

previously (Ex. 19:5,6). They had not kept their side of it- but by grace, God still wanted to fulfill His side of it. Israel would be 'established' as God's people "unto Himself" only if they were obedient (Dt. 28:9)- the point of the covenant proclaimed in chapter 29 is that despite their disobedience, God was still going to establish them as His people. This was the grace that only comes from a deep love and desire for the beloved. Moses urges the peoples' faithfulness so that Yahweh might "establish His covenant" with them (Dt. 8:18; 28:9; 29:13); and we note that despite their disobedience, He still "established" the covenant with them, by grace alone (Dt. 9:5).

Deu 29:14 Not only with you do I make this covenant and this oath-

Moses is one of greatest types of the Lord Jesus, in whom the Father was supremely manifested. Because of this, it is fitting that we should see a very high level of God manifestation in Moses. Indeed it seems that God was manifest in Moses to a greater degree than in any other Old Testament character. Therefore the pronouns often change (in Deuteronomy especially), showing a confusion between the voice of God and that of Moses. Dt. 7:4 is an example: "They will turn away thy son from following me (this is Moses speaking for God)... so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you". Thus Moses' comments on God's words are mixed up with the words of God Himself. There are other examples of this in Dt. 7:11; 29:1,10,14,15 ("I" cp. "us"). Consider especially Dt. 11:13,14: "If ye shall diligently hearken unto my commandments which I command you this day,

to love the Lord... that I will give you the rain of your land... I will send grass in thy fields". The "I" here switches at ease between God and Moses. The Moses/God pronouns are also mixed in Rom. 10:19.

Deu 29:15 but with him who stands here with us this day before Yahweh our God and also with him who is not here with us this day-

"Not only with you... but with him..." requires us to read in an ellipsis here; clearly the idea is that what God had done at Sinai wasn't *only* between Him and the people there at that time, *not so much* with the first hearers as with the later ones, with all His subsequent people. In our Bible study we must be aware that we are reading translations of languages which often rely on understanding the idiom for their real meaning to be delivered to us the readers. In Hebrew especially, we often have to read in an ellipsis; and this verse is a parade example.

Deu 29:16 For you know how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed-

The argument is that when living in Egypt and passing through the nations on the wilderness journey, they had "seen" idols (:17) and were now warned not to worship them (:18). And yet Ez. 20:7,8 is clear that they carried the idols of Egypt with them through the wilderness; they carried the tabernacles of both Yahweh and Moloch, the standards of their tribes and also the star or Remphan (Acts 7:43). Yahweh and Moses surely knew this, so the language here is very soft indeed. This overly positive view of Israel is in line with the way God says He

fell in love with Israel in the desert, and did not count iniquity to them nor see perverseness in Jacob (Num. 23:21). His positive view of us in Christ is even greater.

Deu 29:17 and you have seen their abominations and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them-

See on :16. Israel passed through the nations at close enough range to see their idols. We should not therefore envisage the 38 year wilderness journey as being through endless tracts of uninhabited desert.

Deu 29:18 This covenant is made lest there should be among you man or woman, family or tribe-

Covenant relationship brings a natural desire to live within the atmosphere of God's spirituality. For Israel in covenant with God, absolutely nothing- not sex, menstruation, the content of clothing fabric, diet- could fall outside the scope of their covenant relationship. And so in principle it is with us under the new covenant. Such a relationship also precludes the worship of *any* other God. Moses said that God had made a covenant with every member of Israel "lest there should be among you..." any who turn away from God and influence others. The height of the demand, the extent of the implication of being in covenant with God, ought to preclude the possibility of worshipping anything else. The covenant we have entered has constant and binding claims upon our loyalty.

Whose heart turns away this day from Yahweh our God, to go to serve the gods of those nations; lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood-

Applied in Heb. 12:15 to those within the church who discourage others from total commitment to God. Those who don't totally commit to Him will poison others by their attitude and cause them to fall away from God's grace; and we must be keenly aware of this, because there are such people around- so says Heb. 12:15. The idea however seems to be that the root is the thought in the heart of :18, and if that was their thought as they entered covenant with Yahweh, then it would give rise to a bitter plant.

Deu 29:19 who, when he hears the words of this curse blesses himself in his heart saying I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart- The context is of the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, listed in the previous chapter. God here addresses the deepest psychology of the sinner. He hears the words of cursing for disobedience, but in his heart, says that the blessings for obedience will apply to him, even if he sins in his heart. And this is the assumption made by sinners- 'the condemnation stuff won't happen to me'.

To destroy the moist with the dry-

This may refer to the mentality that the moist [the blessed righteous] will likely be destroyed anyway with the dry [unspiritual] majority, so seeing Israel generally are astray, there was no point in being righteous. This totally fails to see individual standing before God and thinks instead only of membership in a collective sense of God's people. "To add drunkenness to thirst" (AV) could however mean that the reasoning went that sin [getting drunk] was only anyway a natural meeting of

basic human needs [to drink and slake thirst]. Whatever, this is an indication that God knows the mind games played by the 'devil' of our own sin-inclined hearts. See on :29.

The "peace and safety" cry within the latter day ecclesia (1 Thess. 5:3) is part of an extended set of allusions back to the parables of Mt. 24 and 25, concerning the apostate, drunken servant who thinks everything is fine-but it then suddenly destroyed by his Lord's coming. This kind of believer had been foreseen by Moses in Dt. 29:19; the type who hears the curses for disobedience, but blesses (forgives) himself in his heart, "saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst" (AV).

Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which

306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 29:20 Yahweh will not pardon him, but then the anger of Yahweh and His jealousy will smoke against that man, and all the curse that is written in this book shall lie on him, and Yahweh will blot out his name from under the sky-

Yahweh's refusal to pardon will only be at the last day, so these events may be intended as only coming fully true at judgment day.

Deu 29:21 Yahweh will separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that is written in this book of the law-

The ministering of judgement on the unworthy will no doubt be supervised by an (the?) Angel of evil, in the same way that it appears an Angel of evil ministered the curses of the Law: "The Lord shall separate (Hebrew: sever) him (the disobedient man) out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the words of the covenant" (Dt. 29:21)- just as He did to Achan. In the same way the Angels "sever the wicked from among the just" (Mt. 13:49) at the judgement. The picture of the rejected severed from among God's people is fairly common in the pictures of condemnation- the people of God shall see the naked shame of the rejected (Rev. 16:15). Willful sep-

aration from God's people in this life, either by thinking them worthy of our rejection or through disinterest in them, is therefore living out the picture of condemnation.

Deu 29:22 The generation to come, your children who shall rise up after you and the foreigner who will come from a distant land, shall see the plagues of the land and the sicknesses with which Yahweh has made it sick-

The curses for disobedience outlined in Dt. 28 and 29 never came totally true; hence the prophecy that disobedient Israel would be poor and unsuccessful in business during their dispersion never really came true, and instead God had blessed them through His grace. The whole land of Israel was to become "brimstone and salt and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom..." (Dt. 29:22-25). It's no good even reasoning that this will come true in the future; these were to be the punishments that would come when Israel broke covenant and went into dispersion. They've been in this position for many centuries, but still the full extent of the prophesied cursing hasn't come about. And yet God keeps His word; and yet His grace is such that He can chose not to keep some of the punishments. This is a paradox of grace, beyond our human explanation in trite, logical, expositional terms. This to my mind is the real explanation of why the prophecy that in the day Adam ate of the fruit, he would die... never came true, in that sense.

Deu 29:23 The whole land is sulphur, salt and burning, that it is not sown nor giving produce and no grass

grows therein, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which Yahweh overthrew in His anger and in his wrath-

Israel were disobedient, but still this promised judgment didn't come. This chapter is full of grace; for Israel was never made as Sodom although this was commonly threatened. Although they acted worse than Sodom (Ez. 16:48; Jer. 7:16). It was due to the faithful remnant that God did not judge Judah as Sodom even though their rulers were in fact rulers of Sodom (Is. 1:9,10). They were Sodom, disobedient Israel were to be judged as Sodom (Dt. 29:23), but were not judged as Sodom because of a remnant- who themselves were preserved by God's grace. We see grace all through this. Although Rev. 18 and many of the prophets seem to foresee a Sodom-like destruction coming upon latter day Israel.

Deu 29:24 They and all the nations shall say, Why has Yahweh done thus to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean?-

There is no particular example of this oft repeated curse coming true, apart from in Lam. 2:15, which appears to be spoken by Jeremiah in deep grief, and does not include the words predicted here and in :25. The actual destruction of Jerusalem and Judah was not as extensive as threatened; either God took pity, or there was a modicum of intercession or repentance which ameliorated the extent of the judgment. And that would explain why neither in the Bible nor other history is there any record of this happening.

Deu 29:25 Then men shall say, Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them forth out of the land of Egypt-

See on :24. The idea was that the destroyed land would be a silent witness to the power of Yahweh, and how this God who kept covenant was now as it were 'free' as His earlier people had betrayed Him and left Him without a people. The deserted city and ruined temple (1 Kings 9:8,9; Jer. 22:8,9) would therefore have been an invitation to observers to seek this Yahweh, and enquire whether they could enter a new covenant with Him, seeing His previous covenant with His people had been broken and He was now, as it were, unattached.

Jud. 2:13 says that the people did forsake Yahweh. But instead of these judgments, we are to read that although God punished them, He raised up saviours to save them from the judgments; and this looks forward to His grace in the Lord Jesus, 'Yah's salvation'.

Deu 29:26 and went and served other gods and worshipped them, gods that they didn't know and that He had not given to them-

Moses points out that Yahweh is the only God that can be personally *known*; all the idols could not be known personally (Dt. 29:26). No fewer than 137 times in Scripture we read the phrase "my God". This was used in a public, unashamed way by many of God's children (it was a particular favourite of Nehemiah, David and Paul).

Deu 29:27 Therefore the anger of Yahweh was kindled against this land, to bring on it all the curse that is written in this book-

See on :25,26. The fact is, not all the curses were brought upon the land. But the allusions to the language of :22,23 in the book of Revelation suggests that it will come true in the last days, and will be the prelude to the conversion of a Gentile remnant at the time of the Lord's return and establishment of His Kingdom on earth.

Deu 29:28 and Yahweh rooted them out of their land in anger in wrath and in great indignation and cast them into another land, as at this day-

As Israel were "cast" out of their land and into another country (Dt. 29:28) so the rejected are cast out of God's presence. Zedekiah fled, was overtaken, wept (Ez. 7:27), judgment was given upon him (Jer. 52:9), he was punished in the presence of the king (Jer. 52:10), cast into prison (Jer. 52:11 cp. Mt. 5:25).

Deu 29:29 The secret things belong to Yahweh our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law-

This could be translated as meaning that the secret things of God have been revealed unto God's children. Or it could mean that the things which have been revealed are the Law and Covenant made with Israel then, but they should not think that this was all there was to God. There was more, the "secret things", which had not then been opened to them. And those things were the things of Christ and the new covenant- 1 Cor. 2:9,10 ap-

pears to allude here by saying that "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. But God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" .

The immediate context of the "secret things" is :19, where they refer to the secret thought that one could continue in sin, and just be treated by God as He was going to treat the nation of Israel. But the warning here would be that God indeed does know the secret things of hearts, and will judge people on an individual and not a collective basis. And this is indeed how the New Testament speaks of God's individual judgment of the secret things of human hearts (Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 4:5; 14:25). Therefore the lesson is that the revealed things of God's law 'belonged to' Israel for them to keep individually.

"Forever" doesn't require us to think that the Mosaic law and covenant was eternal. The Sabbath is described as a perpetual, eternal ordinance between God and His people (Ex. 31:16). Yet in the New Testament we read that the Old Covenant has been done away; and the Old Covenant clearly included the ten commandments (Dt. 4:13), one of which was concerning the Sabbath. For this reason the New Testament is at pains to explain that Sabbath keeping is not now required of God's people (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 14:1-3). Indeed, the whole Law of Moses is described as an everlasting covenant (Is. 24:5; Dt. 29:29), but it has now been done away (Heb. 8:13). The feasts of Passover and Atonement were to be "an everlasting statute unto you" (Lev. 16:34; Ex. 12:14); but

now the Mosaic feasts have been done away in Christ (Col. 2:14-17; 1 Cor. 5:7). The Levitical priesthood was “the covenant of an everlasting priesthood” (Ex. 40:15; Num. 25:13), but “the priesthood being changed (by Christ’s work), there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Heb. 7:12). There was an “everlasting covenant” between God and Israel to display the shewbread in the Holy Place (Lev. 24:8). This “everlasting covenant” evidently ended when the Mosaic Law was dismantled. But the same phrase “everlasting covenant” is used in 2 Samuel 23:5 concerning how Christ will reign on David’s throne for literal eternity in the Kingdom. In what sense, then, is God using the word *olahm*, which is translated “eternal”, “perpetual”, “everlasting” in the Old Testament? James Strong defines *olahm* as literally meaning “the finishing point, time out of mind, i.e. practically eternity”. It was God’s purpose that the Law of Moses and the associated Sabbath law were to continue for many centuries. To the early Israelite, this meant a finishing point so far ahead that he couldn’t grapple with it; therefore he was told that the Law would last for ever in the sense of “practically eternity”. For all of us, the spectre of ultimate infinity is impossible to intellectually grapple with. We may glibly talk about God’s eternity and timelessness, about the wonder of eternal life. But when we pause to really come to terms with these things, we lack the intellectual tools and linguistic paradigms to cope with it. Therefore there is no Hebrew or Greek word used in the Bible text to speak of absolute infinity. We know that death has been conquered for those

in Christ, therefore we have the hope of immortal life in his Kingdom. But God speaks about eternity very much from a human viewpoint.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 30

Deu 30:1 When all these things have come on you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where Yahweh your God has driven you-

We're wrong to think that God passionlessly waits for us to repent or pray to Him, and then He will forgive or act for us. He loves us, simply so; and with all love's manipulation of circumstances, seeks to pour out His love upon us. Thus repentance itself is a gift which God gives and is not totally upon human initiative (Dt. 4:29-31; 30:1-10; 1 Kings 8:58).

Moses by the end of his life had a great sensitivity to the likely failures of Israel, and in this he points forward to the Lord Jesus. He often reminds them that he knows that they will turn away from the Covenant he had given them (e.g. Dt. 30:1; 31:29). He knew that one day they would want a king, even though God was their king (Dt. 17:14). He knew that there would always be poor people in the land, even though if the Law was properly kept this would not be the case (Dt. 15:4mg, 11). He knew they would accidentally commit murder and would need a way of escape; therefore he twice repeats and explains the law concerning the cities of refuge (Dt. 4:42; 19:5). These being a symbol of the future Messiah (Heb. 6:18), this emphasis would suggest that like Paul and Jacob, the mind of Moses in his time of spiritual

maturity was firmly fixed on the Lord Jesus Christ. He foresaw how they would see horses and chariots and get frightened (Dt. 20:1-4).

Deu 30:2 and return to Yahweh your God and obey His voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul-

This point of return of repentance is when all the curses of Dt. 29 have come upon Israel (:1). But as noted on Dt. 29:23, the level of curse stated there has never come upon Israel: "The whole land is sulphur, salt and burning, that it is not sown nor giving produce and no grass grows therein, like the overthrow of Sodom". It waits to be fulfilled therefore in the last days, and so this 'returning' ultimately speaks of the latter day repentance of a minority in Israel once the tribulation comes upon the land. Revelation gives more details of all this.

Deu 30:3 then Yahweh your God will turn your captivity and have compassion on you. He will return and gather you from all the peoples where Yahweh your God has scattered you-

God's attempt to regather Judah from captivity *before* they had repented therefore indicates His grace, operating at times beyond the conditions which He has stated in His own word. LXX "the Lord shall heal thine iniquities, and shall pity thee, and shall again gather you..." suggests that there will be a psychological action of God upon the hearts of Israel, healing their sin (:6). This will be as a result of accepting the new covenant which we now accept at baptism, when the law is written

on our hearts, and God's Spirit transforms our spirit / heart (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16). See on :14. "Shall *again* gather you" suggests that the restoration from Babylon will be repeated in the last days.

Dt. 30:1-5 is clear that when Israel returned to Yahweh in repentance whilst in captivity, He would gather them back to their land. Hence the word play with *shub*, meaning both to repent, and to return. But the servant in Is. 49 is tasked with gathering Israel to Yahweh and returning them to their land. As if His work was to bring them to repentance and gather them almost in spite of their lack of repentance. And this is indeed the work of the Lord Jesus on human hearts today. It is the Lord's death that does this, according to John's allusions to this servant prophecy; He lifted up is the point and impetus of gathering together. The cross elicits repentance and return to God. Whilst there must still be freewill response, the cross is a far more powerful impetus to repentance than simply offering to gather God's people once they repent.

Deu 30:4 If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of the heavens, from there will Yahweh your God gather you, and from there He will bring you back-

Time and again in the context of the restoration it is emphasized that God would return to His people if they returned to Him (Zech. 1:3; Mal. 3:7). And they didn't return to Him- most chose not to return to the land, and those who did for the most part did not return to their God in their hearts. The whole basis of Israel's covenant relationship with God was that if they were exiled from

the land for their sins, they must repent and *then* God would return to them (Dt. 30:1-10). Yet God graciously states to the exiles: "I am returned unto you" (Zech. 1:16; 8:3). Here was grace indeed. Passages like Ez. 36:24-31 therefore speak as if God's grace to the exiles was effectively a new covenant- which has in essence been extended to us. Having stated the conditionality of His 'returning' to His people, and recognizing they hadn't fulfilled their part of the conditions- God all the same returns to them, such was and is His almost desperate desire for relationship with His beloved people. This is a lesson for us in our relationships with others- to continue our acceptance and 'return' to them, even if they don't fulfill their part of the deal. For this, day by day, is how our God deals not only with us but with His weak and wayward people as a whole.

Deu 30:5 Yahweh your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it, and He will do you good and multiply you above your fathers-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if

we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Abraham was promised that his seed would have Yahweh as their personal God, and would eternally inherit the land. In a sense, the promises that the seed *would* inherit the land, and that God *would be* their God were fulfilled straight after God said them. He became Isaac's God (Gen. 31:42,53 refer to this), the God of Abraham's son. Time and again God reminds Israel that He *is* their God. And that land in a sense *was* given to the Jewish fathers (Gen. 15:18; Dt. 28:63; 30:5 NIV; Josh. 1:2-9; 21:43; 1 Kings 4:20,21). David could praise God simply because He was "my God" (Ps. 118:28)- an allusion back to the Abrahamic promise. Of course, the *main* fulfillment of this promise will be in the Kingdom; but in principle, the promise has *already* been fulfilled to Abraham's seed- i.e., us!

They had left Egypt with great riches of silver and gold, and this is "your silver and gold" which was to

be multiplied even more (Dt. 8:13). The multiplication of Abraham's seed promised to him clearly meant not simply numerical multiplication, but material multiplication too. That is the sense too in Lev. 26:9; Dt. 30:5. We wonder why God gave them all this blessing, knowing that it would lead to such spiritual temptation and failure. We wonder why He gives so many of His people today the same huge blessings, however unappreciated they are. One simple answer is that it is because He loves us with all the love of a father for his children; He rejoiced to multiply them (Dt. 28:63). The king of Israel was warned in the same words not to multiply silver and gold lest his heart turn away (Dt. 17:17). The idea may be that we are to leave God to multiply our silver and gold if He wishes, and not set our heart to doing so.

Things 'going well / good' with Israel is the language of the Kingdom of God in Dt. 8:16 "to do you good / well at your latter end". It is associated with days being prolonged (Dt. 22:7) and the fulfilment of the promises to Abraham (Dt. 30:5), and Israel and the children somehow existing "forever" (Dt. 12:28). So I deduce in the wish "that it may go well with you" a hint towards the eternal establishment of God's Kingdom based around Israel, what Paul terms "the hope of Israel".

Deu 30:6 Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your seed-

If Israel took the initiative in attempting to circumcise their hearts (Dt. 10:16; Jer. 4:4), then God would confirm them in this by doing what man cannot do—operating directly upon the human heart to cut off the

flesh from it (Dt. 30:6). Col. 2:12 presents baptism as the equivalent in our day if we wish to enter the new covenant, which is based upon the same promises to Abraham. But there is more to new covenant relationship than simply the ritual of baptism. Circumcision spoke of a cutting off of the flesh in the most private and intimate place. We always read of circumcision as being done to a person. Water baptism enables us to receive the birth of the Spirit, whereby the Lord will work through the Spirit to change our hearts, to cut off our flesh in the most private and personal recesses of human hearts. Col. 2:11 explains: "In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ". Through baptism, we enter the "in Christ" status, and our flesh is as it were cut off, by status we are in Him and not in the flesh. This is repeated in Paul's argument in Romans 1-8, although there he stresses that our flesh still remains; but from God's perspective, it is cut off. It takes faith to believe this- faith in God's operation, that the circumcision operation was really performed by Him (Col. 2:12). Baptism is the means by which we become "in Christ" and in spiritual terms cease to be uncircumcised (Col. 2:13).

There will be a psychological action of God upon the hearts of Israel, healing their sin (see on :3). This will be as a result of accepting the new covenant which we now accept at baptism, when the law is written on our hearts, and God's Spirit transforms our spirit / heart (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16).

To love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live-

Some time, read through the book of Deuteronomy in one or two sessions. You'll see many themes of Moses in Deuteronomy. It really shows how Moses felt towards Israel, and how the Lord Jesus feels towards us, and especially how he felt towards us just before his death. For this is what the whole book prefigures. "Love" and the idea of love occurs far more in Deuteronomy than in the other books of the Law. "Fear the Lord your God" of Ex. 9:30; Lev. 19:14,32; 25:17 becomes "love the Lord your God" in Deuteronomy (Dt. 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1; 19:9; 30:6,16,20). There are 23 references to not hating in Deuteronomy, compared to only 5 in Ex. - Num.; Moses saw the danger of bitterness and lack of love. He saw these things as the spiritual cancer they are, in his time of maturity he warned his beloved people against them. His mind was full of them. The LXX uses the word *ekklesia* eight times in Deuteronomy, but not once in Moses' other words (Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; 23:1,2,3,8; 32:1). Responsibility for the whole family God had redeemed was a mark of Moses; maturity at the end of his life, at the time of Deuteronomy. It is observable that both as a community and as individuals, this will be a sign of our maturity too.

"Love the Lord your God with *all* your heart, and with *all* your soul, and with *all* your might". Time and again, Moses in his final hours used these words, as he pleaded on that last day of his life for Israel to grasp the nettle, to take on board the idea of loving God, of giv-

ing our all (Dt. 6:5; 10:12; 11:13,22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6 ; an impressive seven-fold emphasis). I can almost hear his voice cracking as he stressed the word "all". Having pleaded six times for them to love God with *all* their soul and *all* their might, Moses then makes the point that if they enter the Kingdom, there they will be *made by God* to love Him then with all their soul and might (Dt. 30:6). The logic is over-powering. In the Kingdom, our very nature, every fiber of our being, will be bent towards love of God. If this will be our eternal destiny, isn't it logical that we at least aspire to it now?

Deu 30:7 Yahweh your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you and persecuted you-

The curses upon Israel will then come upon their haters. This is exactly the message of the book of Revelation, once we accept the book speaks of the latter day events to come upon the earth / land of Israel. The seals, vials and trumpets are all rather similar in their imagery and effect- because the judgments which come upon latter day Israel [the seals] then come upon their abusers within the land promised to Abraham- after the repentance of a Jewish remnant, which is presented in the visions of the 144,000. What the beast coalition did to Israel is done to her- a major theme of Revelation.

Deu 30:8 You shall return and obey the voice of Yahweh and do all His commandments which I command you this day-

The Hebrew word for 'hear' is also translated 'obey' (Gen. 22:18; Ex. 19:5; Dt. 30:8,20; Ps. 95:7). We can

hear God's word and not obey it. But if we really hear it as we are intended to, we will obey it. If we truly believe God's word to be His voice personally speaking to us, then we will by the very fact of hearing, obey. The message itself, if heard properly and not just on a surface level, will compel action. We can delight to know God's laws and pray daily to Him, when at the same time we are forsaking Him and His laws; if we are truly obedient, then we will delight in God's law (Is. 58:2 cp. 14). We have a tendency to have a love of and delight in God's law only on the surface. John especially often uses 'hearing' to mean 'believing' (e.g. Jn. 10:4,26,27). And yet the Jews 'heard' but didn't believe. We must, we really must ask ourselves: whether we merely hear, or hear and believe. For we can hear, but not really hear.

Deu 30:9 Yahweh your God will make you plenteous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, for good. Yahweh will again rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your fathers-

I have explained above that the scenario here envisaged is when the curses of Dt. 29 have come upon Israel, which they have not yet done. This is yet to come, and as a result, a remnant of Israel will repent and their curses will come upon their latter day abusers. The description here of material blessing then applies to the situation when a restored Israel become the basis of the Kingdom of God upon earth. Yahweh rejoicing over His people is the prophetic picture of that time (Is. 62:5; Zeph. 3:17).

Deu 30:10 if you will obey the voice of Yahweh your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if you turn to Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul-

I have explained above on :9 and elsewhere that the ultimate fulfilment of this is when Israel repent in the last days. But the scenario could have happened earlier, in which case the repentance would have been shown by obeying the Mosaic law. But that law and covenant has now been abrogated, so it is the essence and not the letter of these things which will come true in the last days.

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way.

Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 30:11 For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off-

Moses assures them that full obedience to his Law is possible (even if finally nobody achieved it). It was "not grievous" (LXX), and the LXX is quoted and applied to us in 1 Jn. 5:3. It was Judaism and legalism which made obedience to the law "grievous" (Mt. 23:4), and again this LXX passage was alluded to by the Lord in saying that. The individual commandments of the law of Moses were designed to reinforce each other and to make obedience relatively easy. Hence NET Bible: "This commandment I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it too remote". It wasn't as if they had to climb up to Heaven or go down beneath the sea, they had to simply from the heart obey it as a way of life and thinking. In Rom. 10:6-9 Paul quotes this passage, having observed that in practice nobody has actually succeeded in fully keeping the Law. He says that the going up to Heaven was done by Christ at His ascension, and going beneath the sea and returning by Christ at His resurrection; and so what remains is not to keep the Mosaic law but to believe in the word of Christ; and the

“life” promised here (:15) will be *eternal* life for those in Christ. See on :12.

Deu 30:12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven and bring it back down to us and make us hear it, that we may do it?-

Paul comments that truly Israel have already heard the essence of the Gospel we preach, in that “the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach” (Rom. 10:8). He quotes here from Dt. 30:12: “For this command [to be obedient- or, as Paul interprets it, the word of the Gospel]... is it not far from thee [cp. how God is “not far” from anybody, Acts 17:27]. It is not in heaven above, that thou shouldest say, Who will ascend for us into heaven, and bring it to us, that we may *hear and do it*” (Dt. 30:12 LXX). As noted on :11, obedience is presented as not difficult; and this perhaps became true when the command to keep the old covenant was reinterpreted as keeping the new covenant, through faith in Jesus. God wants to save us; so conformity to His conditions [faith in Jesus] are not difficult.

As Moses spoke these words on the last day of his life, he was at the foot of Nebo, which he ascended for his final meeting with God. He is surely alluding to the way in which he had ‘ascended to heaven’ before in ascending to God on Sinai, fulfilling Israel’s wish that he should bring God’s word to them rather than God Himself speak with them. He had returned bringing God’s

word to them, to which they had agreed they would “hear and do”. Earlier, in Dt. 5:27, Moses had reminded the people how they had said: “Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will *hear it, and do it*”. Now he is telling them that actually the word he had brought to them needn’t have been brought to them as in essence it was within their hearts. It is for exactly this reason that Paul could reason elsewhere in Romans that the Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the Law, although they don’t know the letter of the Law. And the same principle is found in 1 Thess. 4:9: “As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves [i.e. from within yourselves?] are taught of God to love one another”. This is rather like how the Gentiles were not ‘written unto’ and yet they knew from their conscience the essential spirit of the Mosaic Law.

Deu 30:13 Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go down into the deeps for us and bring it up to us-

The depths or abyss may refer as in Rom. 10:7 to the lands beyond Israel. The beast that comes out of the abyss comes out of the sea (Rev. 11:7; 13:1). It seems that the geographical area referred to is that just outside the *eretz / land promised to Abraham, the sea on the border of the land, as it were. Iran, Egypt or Turkey would fit this. Israel had no need to go outside to the Gentile world in order to find relationship with God.*

And make us hear it, that we may do it?-

LXX "make it audible to us, and we will do it?". The allusion is how Israel had shied away from hearing God's personal voice, and had asked Moses to go and hear that voice and tell it to them, "that we may do it". But what was in view was a new covenant, where the word would not be spoken collectively through a mediator, but directly to the heart (:14).

Deu 30:14 But the word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it-

The idea is that God's word spoke directly to the hearers. His revelation to His individual people needed no group of professionals to interpret it, because it spoke directly to the human heart.

What was hinted at was a new covenant, where after repentance, God would put His word into their hearts (see on :3,6). And therefore these words are quoted by Paul in the New Testament about the experience of believers today. Acceptance of the new covenant means the receipt of the Holy Spirit, and God placing His word in our hearts, writing His law in our hearts as promised (Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10; 10:16).

Paul therefore defines the word here as "That is, the word of faith, which we preach". The word of the simple Gospel- that if you believe in Christ you shall be saved- was enabled by the Lord's resurrection and shall come to full term in His descent from Heaven at the last day (Rom. 10:6,7). "The word of faith" can simply mean that the basic content of God's word is an appeal for faith in His Son. But it is thereby also true that the word of the Gospel leads to faith. The Lord foresaw in Jn. 17:20

that there would be those who would believe on Him “through their word” (i.e. the word taught by the disciples). Our word of preaching can bring others to faith. Our preaching leads to faith being created in the hearers. “The word of faith, which we preach” (Rom. 10:8) is the word (Gospel) that leads to faith; and a man cannot believe without hearing the Gospel, and he will not hear it unless it is preached by a preacher. Paul summarizes by saying that faith comes by hearing [the Gospel] and hearing by [the preaching of] the word of God (Rom. 10:8,14,17). Paul’s point is that whoever believes will be saved (Rom. 9:33)- and therefore, we must preach to all, so that they might take advantage of this blessed opportunity. In his repetitious manner, Paul builds up the argument in this letter:

- Even under the law, Israel could believe God’s word as preached by Moses and have righteousness imputed to them (Rom. 10:5-8)

- We preach, in essence, the very same word (Rom. 10:9,10)

- Isaiah said the same: that belief of his preaching would result in justification (Rom. 10:11)

- We preach the same. Whoever believes in the Lord’s saving Name by baptism will be saved (Rom. 10:12,13)

- Therefore preach the word, for without your doing this, people can never believe it and therefore be saved (Rom. 10:14,15)

- Israel had heard the word of the cross preached in the past, so just hearing the preacher will not automati-

cally result in faith (Rom. 10:16-21). Both preacher and hearer must be aware of this. Therefore there was a need for the preachers to turn to another wider audience, i.e. the Gentiles.

Deu 30:15 Behold, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil-

As with Israel, the ways of life and death are set before us (Dt. 30:15-20; Jer. 21:8). Moses, on the day of his death and at his final spiritual maturity, realized that this was the ultimate choice. His appeal to *therefore* chose life is painfully evident in its logic. We are either on the road to the Kingdom, or to eternal death; from God's perspective. We may not see the issues of life that clearly; we may not see our direction as clearly as God does.

Deu 30:16 I command you this day to love Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments, His statutes and His ordinances, that you may live and multiply, and that Yahweh your God may bless you in the land where you go in to possess it-

"If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15,21,23; 15:10) reflects a major identical theme in Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,22; 13:3,4; 19:9; 30:16. Moses at the end of his life, when he spoke Deuteronomy, was very much the image of the future Lord Jesus.

God is His word (Jn. 1:1); to love God is to love His word. If we love Christ, we will keep His words (Jn. 14:15,21; 15:10). This is evidently alluding to the many Old Testament passages which say that Israel's love for God would be shown through their keeping of His commands (Ex. 20:6; Dt. 5:10; 7:9; 11:1,13,22; 30:16; Josh.

22:5). Israel were also told that God's commands were all related to showing love (Dt. 11:13; 19:9). So there is a logical circuit here: We love God by keeping His commands, the essence of which is love of people, therefore His commands are fundamentally about love. Thus love is the fulfilling of the law of God; both under the Old and New covenants (Rom. 13:10).

The Hebrew *mishpat*, "ordinances", has a wide range of meaning. The idea is of judgment, as if God and His Angels gave these laws as their considered judgment after considering the human condition, and Israel were to abide by them. But the word also the idea of a right or privilege; and that is how we should see God's laws. They are only felt as a burden because of human hardness of neck towards God's ways. His laws are not of themselves burdensome, but rather a privilege and blessing. The law was indeed "holy, just and good" (Rom. 7:12), designed to inculcate a holy, just and good life (Tit. 1:8), a way in which a man should "walk" in daily life (Lev. 18:4), a culture of kindness and grace to others which reflected God's grace to man. If we dwell upon the idea of "rights" carried within the word *mishpat*, we note that the law begins in Ex. 21:1,2 (also Dt. 15:12-18) with the rights of a slave- those considered to have no rights in the society of that day. The "rights" to be afforded by us to others are the essence of God's rightness / justice.

Deu 30:17 But if your heart turns away and you will not hear, but shall be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them-

The heart that *turns away* from God by free choice then becomes *drawn away* by other forces. Time and again, Moses speaks of the state of their heart. He warns them against allowing a bad state of heart to develop, he speaks often of how apostasy starts in the heart. Moses makes a total of 49 references to the heart / mind of Israel in Deuteronomy, compared to only 13 in the whole of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. This indicates the paramount importance which our Lord attaches to the state of our mind. This was perhaps his greatest wish as He faced death; that we should develop a spiritual mind and thereby manifest the Father and come to salvation. Moses likewise saw the state of our mind as the key to spiritual success. But do we share this perspective? Do we guard our minds against the media and influence of a mind-corrupting world? It's been observed that the phrase "The God of [somebody]", or similar, occurs 614 times in the Old Testament, of which 306 are in Deuteronomy. Our very personal relationship with God was therefore something else which Moses came to grasp in his spiritual maturity. Statistical analysis of the word "love" in the Pentateuch likewise reveals that "love" was a great theme of Moses at the end of his life (Moses uses it 16 times in Deuteronomy, and only four times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers).

Deu 30:18 I declare to you this day, that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land, where you pass over the Jordan to go in to possess it-

Moses pleaded with them to see that "this day... this day... this day" he set before them life and death, forgive-

ness or salvation (Dt. 30:15-19). The Lord Jesus had His mind on this when He told the thief with the same emphasis that "this day" He could tell them that he would be saved, not condemned (Lk. 23:46). He felt like Moses, but greater than Moses, in that He not only set before men the choice, but could grant them the salvation they sought. The fact Israel did prolong their days for some centuries in the land, despite their disobedience, is therefore a reflection of God's great patience with them.

Deu 30:19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, that you may live, you and your seed-

Finely aware of the seriousness of our relationship with God, Moses pleads with Israel to "choose life", not with the passivity which may appear from our armchair reading of passages like Dt. 30:19. I wonder if he wasn't screaming this to them, breaking down in the climax of logic and passion which resulted in that appeal. Yet he knew that the majority of Israel would not choose life. When he appeals to them to choose obedience he is therefore thinking of the minority who would respond. Yet he knew that the majority of Israel would not choose life. When he appeals to them to choose obedience he is therefore thinking of the minority who would respond. Our Lord Jesus, with his knowledge of human nature, must have sensed that so many of those called into his new covenant would also turn away; He must have known that only a minority of Israel would choose the

life which He offered. Yet like Moses He doubtless concentrated his thoughts on the minority who would respond. Moses spoke Deuteronomy without notes. It was no set piece address. All these things were in his heart; their proneness to failure, the coming of judgment for sin, his knowledge of their future apostasy. Enter into the *passion* of it all. The man who was willing to give his eternal life for them, about to die for the sake of their provocation- singing a final song to them, giving a final speech, which showed that he knew perfectly well that they would turn away from what he was trying to do for them, and therefore the majority of them would not be saved.

"Blessing" is parallel with "life", and eternal life may ultimately be in view in Moses' mind. The connection between blessing and forgiveness / salvation is widespread throughout Scripture: Dt. 33:23; Ps. 5:12 (blessing = grace) Dt. 30:19; Ps. 3:8; 24:5; 28:9; 133:3 (= salvation); Ex. 12:32; 32:29; Num. 24:1; 2 Sam. 21:3; Ps. 67:1 (cp. context); Lk. 6:28; Acts 3:26; Rom. 4:7,8; 1 Cor. 10:16; Gal. 3:14 (= forgiveness).

Deu 30:20 Love Yahweh your God, to obey His voice and to cling to Him; for He is your life and the length of your days, that you may dwell in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give them-

Yahweh was to be loved with all the heart, soul and mind (Dt. 6:5). This is understood by Joshua as meaning that those who loved Yahweh would not "mix with" and intermarry with the nations and accept their gods (Josh.

23:11,12,16). "Love" for God was not therefore a feeling; Joshua said that they must "take good heed therefore to yourselves, that you love Yahweh" (Josh. 23:11). This is the love of conscious direction of the mind, the love which is a choice rather than an emotion.

"Cling" is "cleave". The idea of 'cleaving' to God is a big theme of Moses in Deuteronomy (Dt. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:4,17; 28:21,60; 30:20); the only other time Moses uses the word in his writings is in Gen. 2:24, concerning a man cleaving to his wife. Moses seems to have been suggesting to Israel that their covenant relationship with God meant they were *marrying God*. This was a real paradigm breaker. We may be used to such things. But against the theological background of the time, not to say the generally low level of spirituality among Israel, this was a shocking idea. It reflected the heights to which Moses had risen.

The Lord's common Upper Room theme of 'abiding' in Him uses the same word as Moses used in the LXX when exhorting his people to 'cleave unto' God (Dt. 10:20; 11:22). This abiding involved loving God and keeping His commandments- all ideas which occur together in Dt. 13:4; 30:20.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 31

Deu 31:1 Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel-

LXX "And Moses finished speaking all these words".

Deu 31:2 I am one hundred and twenty years old this day-

He died on his birthday. His life so clearly splits up into three periods of 40 years; the 40 years leading sheep around Sinai clearly prepared him for 40 years leading Israel. We too can look back on life and see how clearly God had arranged things.

I can no more go out and come in, and Yahweh has said to me, 'You shall not go over this Jordan'-

See on Dt. 31:9. We note that he makes no reference to the reason why he couldn't enter the land. He makes his age an excuse for not entering the land, but we read later that his natural strength was not at all abated. Even in his great spiritual maturity, even Moses maybe found it hard to accept personal sin and consequences for it.

Deu 31:3 Yahweh your God, He will go over before you. He will destroy these nations from before you and you shall dispossess them. Joshua shall go over before you, as Yahweh has spoken-

See on Dt. 1:36. Moses recalled how God had said to him "The LORD thy God He will go over before thee", and then said to Joshua "be strong and of a good courage, fear not nor be afraid of them: for the LORD *thy* God (the same Angel called 'the LORD thy God' in relation

to Moses), He it is that doth go with thee; He will not fail thee nor forsake thee" (Dt. 31:3,6,7). These words are quoted in Heb. 13:5, and it is good to note the original Angelic context in which the words were used: "Be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I (the Angel) will never leave thee nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord (i. e. the Angel) is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me". Later on we see that Joshua did conceive of God in terms of the Angel- he took Moses' exhortation.

At Moses' death, the positive thrust of his closing exhortation was his conviction that the Angel of His presence which had been with them so far would continue to be so, to enable them to enter the land. This alone shows the great part that the Angel played in Moses' life. "The Lord thy God, He will go over before thee. . . and Joshua shall go over before thee. . . and Joshua shall go over before thee (showing Moses' belief that Joshua would work with the Angel- cp. Ps. 91, where Moses commends Joshua for keeping close to the Angel in the tabernacle). . . Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God (the Angel God of Israel), He it is that doth go with thee, He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Dt. 31:3-6).

Deu 31:4 Yahweh will do to them as He did to Sihon and to Og, the kings of the Amorites and to their land, whom He destroyed-

The victories over Sihon and Og were intended as foretastes and assurances of the Kingdom, and we have the same in our lives.

Deu 31:5 Yahweh will deliver them up before you and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you-

The truth was that they were not obedient to the commandments. Their entry to the land was predicated upon their obedience, but they were disobedient. So they entered the land by grace, and that experience was intended to elicit their obedience. Divine commandment is likewise for us a way or channel to express our gratitude for salvation by grace rather than a requirement in order to attain salvation by our works.

Deu 31:6 Be strong and courageous, don't be afraid nor be scared of them, for Yahweh your God, He it is who goes with you. He will not fail you nor forsake you-

See on 31:17; Josh. 1:6. Dt. 4:31 and 31:6,8 say that despite the sins Israel may commit, their Angel-God "will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant... He will not fail thee". But then Dt. 31:17 says that because the people would disobey Him, God "will forsake them... and they shall be devoured... and I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought". We have seen that in the Pentateuch, especially in God's dealings with Israel on their journey, God is to be conceived of as an Angel; which would explain the apparent fickleness shown here.

Deu 31:7 Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which Yahweh has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall cause them to inherit it-

"Cause them to inherit it" could imply that their inheritance was still conditional. For the inheritance was predicated upon their obedience, and they were disobedient. So they would only enter it thanks to Joshua / Jesus.

Deu 31:8 It is Yahweh who goes before you. He will be with you. He will not fail you neither forsake you. Don't be afraid neither be dismayed-

Note that the promise of Moses that God would not fail nor forsake Joshua, but would be with him (Dt. 31:8) was similar to the very promise given to Moses which he had earlier doubted (Ex. 3:12; 4:12,15). Such exhortation is so much the stronger from someone who has themselves doubted and then come to believe.

Deu 31:9 Moses wrote this law and delivered it to the priests the sons of Levi, who bore the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh, and to all the elders of Israel-

The word of his God was in his heart, as he stood there before Israel, that people whom he loved, those for whom he wished to make atonement with his own life, even his eternal life. " Yea, he loved the people" is the Spirit's comment (Dt. 33:3- the " he" in the context seems to be Moses). It could only be the Spirit which would write so concisely. " Yea, he loved the people....they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words" . This is God's comment on that last meeting between Moses and Israel. And then he pours out his heart to them, he reels off what we have as the book of Deuteronomy (it takes about four hours to read it through loud), writes a copy of the Law (31:9; notice

how Dt. 24 was *written* by Moses, Mk. 10:5), sings a Song to that silent multitude (surely with a lump in his throat, especially at points like 32:15), and then he turns and climbs the mountain to see the land and meet his death. The fact it all happened on his birthday just adds to the pathos of it all (Dt. 31:2). The huge amount of work which he did on that last day of his life looks forward to the Lord's huge achievement in the day of his death. No wonder Yahweh describes that day of Moses' death with an intensive plural: "The days (i.e. the one great time / day) approach (s.w. "at hand", "made ready") that thou must die" (Dt. 31:14). It seems that he said much of the book in one day; hence his repeated mention of the phrase "this day" throughout the book. The people were often reminded that they were about to "go over [Jordan] to possess" the land (Dt. 11:8,11 RV), as if they were on the banks of Jordan almost. In reality that speech of Deuteronomy was the outpouring of his heart, pleading with Israel to be faithful to the covenant, encouraging them to be aware of their weakness, encouraging them to go forward and inherit the Kingdom. Not only do we have a powerful type of the Lord Jesus in all this; Israel assembled before him really do represent us. Dt.32:36 ("the Lord shall judge his people") is quoted in Heb. 10:20 as relevant to all of us.

Deu 31:10 Moses commanded them saying, At the end of every seven years, in the set time of the year of release, in the feast of tents-

LXX "After seven years" may suggest this refers to a special ceremony to be performed seven years after they

had entered Canaan, when all the land was intended to be subdued before them.

Deu 31:11 when all Israel has come to appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He shall choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing-

We note the frequent references to Yahweh choosing a specific geographical location for the sanctuary. This apparently was not fulfilled, for the ark moved around a lot. This was a tacit reflection of Israel's disobedience, and of how the inheritance of the Kingdom was to be reinterpreted and rescheduled until the last days.

Deu 31:12 Assemble the people, men, women and the little ones and your foreigner who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn to fear Yahweh your God and observe to do all the words of this law-

All Israel were envisaged as attending this ceremony; but as noted on :11, it never happened. The "foreigner" could refer to the members of the "mixed multitude" amongst them, or may reflect Yahweh's hope that some like Rahab and the Gibeonites would accept covenant relationship with Yahweh rather than having to be destroyed.

Deu 31:13 and that their children, who have not known, may hear and learn to fear Yahweh your God as long as you live in the land where you go over the Jordan to possess it-

The idea is that fearing Yahweh would lead to their living long in the land. But they didn't fear Yahweh. The fact Israel did prolong their days for some centuries in

the land, despite their disobedience, is therefore a reflection of God's great patience with them.

Deu 31:14 Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, your life will end shortly. Call Joshua and present yourselves in the Tent of Meeting, so that I may commission him. Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the Tent of Meeting-

See on Dt. 31:9. Yahweh said that He would give Joshua a charge; but Moses gave Joshua the charge (Dt. 31:14,23). God was so strongly manifested in Moses.

Deu 31:15 Yahweh appeared in the Tent in a pillar of cloud. The pillar of cloud stood over the door of the Tent-

LXX "And the Lord descended in a cloud", as if the theophany of Sinai was now repeated. The Angel in the pillar of cloud shone forth.

Deu 31:16 Yahweh said to Moses, Behold, you shall lay down to sleep with your fathers, and this people shall rise up and play the prostitute after the strange gods of the land where they go to be among them, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them-

See on Dt. 34:6. A few hours before the death of Moses, he had been telling Israel: "While I am yet alive with you this day (for a few more hours), ye have been rebellious against Yahweh; and how much more after my death?" (Dt. 31:27). Earlier that same day the Angel had told him: "Thou shalt *lie down* (mg.) with thy fathers (cp. the Angel lying him down in the grave)... and this people will *rise up* (i.e. immediately after his death), and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land" (Dt. 31:16). No wonder this was ringing in Moses' ears

as he came to his death. Yet he triumphed in the fact that a minority would not give way. *His very last words* were a confident exaltation that ultimately Israel would overcome their temptations, the influence and idols of the surrounding world. But he knew that the majority of them would spiritually fall because of these things. Therefore he was looking forward to the minority in Israel who would gloriously overcome, who would come to the Kingdom, the land of corn and wine, when the heavens would drop dew. This is clearly the language of Ps. 72 and Isaiah about the future Kingdom. Moses met death with the vision of the faithful minority in the Kingdom, in the promised land, having overcome all their besetting temptations. And the Lord Jesus died with exactly that same vision (Ps. 22:22-31; 69: 30-36).

Deu 31:17 Then My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and I will hide My face from them and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall come on them, so that they will say in that day, 'Haven't these evils come on us because our God is not among us?'

This was envisaged as happening in the next generation (:16). But the tragedy was that for all their sufferings, Israel generally didn't come to this realization, and will only fully do so in the last days. So we see here God's desperate hope for them, a hope which was a reflection of His love.

Deu 31:18 I will surely hide My face in that day for all the evil which they have done, in that they have turned to other gods-

These words were spoken by the Angel in the pillar of cloud whose face was now shining forth (:15). The idea practically may be that the shekinah glory would no longer be seen in the tabernacle.

Deu 31:19 Now therefore write this song for yourselves and teach it to the children of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the children of Israel-

In illiterate society, songs were the usual way to remember beliefs and history and keep them alive. It was God's intention that His people would sing this to themselves, ever reminding themselves of His grace and purpose with them, and of their likelihood to waste it all by falling away.

The Songs of Moses at the Red Sea and at his death were sung by a stuttering man (Ex. 4:10). This shows for all time how God works through those who apparently are unsuited for His work.

Deu 31:20 For when I have brought them into the land which I swore to their fathers, flowing with milk and honey, and they have eaten and filled themselves and grown fat, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise Me and break My covenant-

They carried the idols and tabernacle of false gods with them through the wilderness (Ez. 20:7,8; Acts 7:43). So it was grace indeed to speak in terms of their future apostacy and acceptance of other gods. Israel came to describe the Egypt they had been called out from as the land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 16:12), and denied that the Kingdom was in fact like

that. And so we have the same tendency to be deceived into thinking that the kingdoms of this world, the world around us, is effectively the Kingdom of God, the only thing worth striving after.

Deu 31:21 When many evils and troubles have come on them, this song shall testify before them as a witness, for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed; for I know their imagination which they plan this day, before I have brought them into the land which I swore-

Seeing they had the idols already with them (Ez. 20:7,8; Acts 7:43), it was clear that they intended to use them in Canaan. God knew their hearts, and realized this was "their imagination". Constantly we see God's focus upon the state of the heart.

Deu 31:22 So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the children of Israel-

We note the continual emphasis upon "the same day" and "this day..." throughout Deuteronomy. A fair case could be made that all this happened on the last day of Moses' life; an intense final day of a very busy life.

Deu 31:23 He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you-

"I will be with you" surely refers to God, but Moses at the end of his life was totally identified with God, and spoke personally on His behalf.

Deu 31:24 When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book-

Ex. 40:33 is perhaps the clearest basis for the words of Jn. 17:4. This describes how Moses "reared up" the tabernacle, representing us (2 Cor. 6:16); "So Moses finished the work" God had given him to do. Dt. 31:24 likewise speaks of Moses finishing the work. The Hebrew for "reared up" is also used in the context of resurrection and glorification / exaltation. As our Lord sensed His final, ultimate achievement of the Father's glory in His own character, He could look ahead to our resurrection and glorification. He adopted God's timeless perspective, and died with the vision of our certain glorification in the Kingdom. This fits in with the way Psalms 22 and 69 (which evidently portray the thoughts of our dying Lord) conclude with visions of Christ's "seed" being glorified in the Kingdom. There are a number of passages which also speak of the temple (also representative of the ecclesia) being a *work* which was *finished* (e.g. 2 Chron. 5:1). In His moment of agonized triumph as He died, the Lord Jesus saw us as if we were perfect.

"It is finished" has some connection with the Lord loving His people "to the very end" (Jn. 13:1- *eis telos*). To the end or completion of what? Surely the Lord held in mind Moses' last speech before he died. Then, "Moses had finished writing all the words of this Law in a book, even to the very end (*LXX eis telos*)" (Dt. 31:24). It was Moses' law which was finished / completed when the Lord finally died. Again we marvel at the Lord's intellectual consciousness even in His death throes. The fact He had completed the Law was upmost in His mind. This

alone should underline the importance of never going back to reliance upon that Law, be it in Sabbath keeping or general legalism of attitude.

Deu 31:25 he commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of Yahweh saying-

Presumably to the Kohathites (Num. 4:4,5) who carried the ark; but only the priests could touch it, so perhaps they are in view here, as the ark had to be touched in order to fix the scroll of the law to the side of it (:26). The priests often carried the ark (Josh. 3:3; 4:9,10; 6:6,12; 8:33; 1 Kings 8:3).

Deu 31:26 Take this book of the law and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh your God, that it may be there for a witness against you-

This may have been the book of the law which was found in Jeremiah's time, having become detached from the ark.

Deu 31:27 For I know your rebellion and your stiff neck; even while I am alive with you this day you have been rebellious against Yahweh, and how much more after my death?-

Although the people were "stiff-necked", refusing to bow their necks in obedience, and thereby liable to destruction if God was amongst them (Ex. 32:9; 33:3,15), God was willing to give this stiff-necked people a place in God's Kingdom (Dt. 9:6). And so although God had said that He would not go in the midst of a stiff-necked people, yet Moses asks Him to do so (Ex. 34:9)- for He senses God's desire to save them by grace despite their hardened disobedience.

Deu 31:28 Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth to witness against them-

It was specifically Moses' song which called heaven and earth to witness (Dt. 32:1). Perhaps the idea was that "earth" was witness in that a copy of the law or the song was to be placed by the ark; and God in heaven was witness too.

Deu 31:29 For I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you, and evil will happen to you in the latter days, because you will do that which is evil in the sight of Yahweh, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands-

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

Deu 31:30 Moses spoke in the ears of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were finished-

The implication would be that the song was Divinely inspired, it came to him and he spoke or sung it to them until the revelation had finished.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 32

Deu 32:1 Give ear, you heavens, and I will speak. Let the earth hear the words of my mouth-

The echoes of Deuteronomy in the Lord's goodbye speeches shouldn't be missed; for Moses at this time truly was a superb type of the Lord Jesus. Deuteronomy concludes with two songs of Moses, one addressed to the Father (Dt. 32), and the other to his people (Dt. 33). It is apparent that the Lord's final prayer in Jn. 17 is divisible into the same two divisions- prayer to the Father, and concern for His people. It has been observed that the prayer of Jn. 17 is also almost like a hymn- divided into seven strophes of eight lines each. It would appear to be John's equivalent to the record in Mk. 14:26 of a hymn being sung at the end of the Last Supper.

The lives of both Moses and the Lord ended with a farewell discourse and prayer. Not only do the words of the Lord consciously allude to Moses' words in Deuteronomy, but John's comments do likewise. John's comment that "Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world..." (Jn. 13:1) is without any doubt referring to the well known [at the time he was writing] Jerusalem Targum on Dt. 32: "And when the last end of Moses the prophet was at hand, that he should be gathered from the world..."

Significantly, the Pentateuch begins with the account of the creation of "heaven and earth" and con-

cludes with Moses appealing to the “heavens and earth” of Israel (Dt. 32:1; 33:28). This is not to say that Genesis 1 and 2 *only* recount the creation of Israel; but it was probably understood by early readers and hearers as God’s account of the creation of the land on which Israel found themselves living. For an observer on the earth / land of Israel, the impression is given that the whole of creation came into existence on account of Israel. The stars etc. came into existence to give light on the earth / land of Israel; just as in the new creation, all things likewise “are” for *our* sakes, even if the rest of the world benefits too.

Let’s remember that under inspiration, Moses wrote Genesis, presumably during the 40 years wandering. He therefore wrote it in a context- of explaining things to Israel as they stumbled through that wilderness, wondering who they were, where they came from, where they were headed. This explains why there are so many links within the Pentateuch- e.g. the Spirit “flutters” over the waters in Gen. 1:2, just as God like an eagle [a symbol of the Spirit] “flutters” over Israel in bringing about their creation as a nation (Dt. 32:1). The point is that what God did at creation, He can do at any time. As He made the waters “swarm” in Gen. 1:20, so He made the waters of the Nile “swarm” with frogs (Ex. 7:28) in order to save His people from a no-hope, chaotic, disordered, hopeless situation. The command to subject the animals in Eden [the land promised to Abraham?] corresponds to later commands to subject the tribes living in the land (Gen. 1:28 = Num. 32:22,29; Josh. 18:1). The “fear and

dread" of humans which fell on the animals after the flood is clearly linkable with the "fear and dread" which was to come upon the inhabitants of Canaan due to the Israelites (Gen. 9:2 = Dt. 1:21; 3:8; 11:25).

These words are described as a song which Moses sung (:44; Dt. 31:30). The Songs of Moses at the Red Sea and at his death were sung by a stuttering man (Ex. 4:10). This shows for all time how God works through those who apparently are unsuited for His work.

Deu 32:2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall condense as the dew, as the small rain on the tender grass, as the showers on the herb-

This reads in LXX as a commandment to accept the teaching of Moses in this song: "Let my speech be looked for as the rain, and my words come down as dew".

Deu 32:3 For I will proclaim the name of Yahweh. Ascribe greatness to our God-

See on 1 Cor. 10:4; Jn. 17:8. Moses is asking them to glorify God as he had done, inviting them to make his life path that of every Israelite: "For *I* have called on the name of the Lord: assign *ye* greatness to our God" (LXX). Yet Israel came to glorify Moses as a person, as religious people do, without seeing the reality of this invitation to be like Moses personally. Paul grasped this, and says that we each with unveiled face have seen a greater glory than Moses saw; thus inviting us to be like Moses but to see even far greater glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

"Proclaim the Name" (Ex. 33:19; 34:5) is the same phrase used about 'calling upon the Name' (e.g. Dt. 28:10). The calling out / proclamation of Yahweh's

Name, in the Gospel and ultimately in the declaration of the Name on the cross (Jn. 17:26), elicits a desire to call that Name upon us, which we initially do through baptism into that Name. And like Moses, we in turn proclaim the Name to others (Dt. 32:3 s.w.).

"I have proclaimed the name of the Lord" (Dt. 32:3 LXX) was surely in Christ's mind in His goodbye prayer of Jn. 17:26; and those words are in the context of Moses' song, which roundly exposed Israel's future apostasy. The character, the fundamental personality of God, is declared through appreciating human weakness and apostasy. Christ's words of Jn. 17:26 were likewise in the context of revealing apostasy and future weakness. Thus through recognition of sin we come to know God; this is the fundamental message of Ezekiel and other prophets. Through knowing our own sinfulness we know the righteousness of God, and vice versa. Thus properly beholding the righteousness of God as displayed on the cross ought to convict us of our sinfulness, as it did the people who saw it in real life (they "smote upon their breasts" in repentance, cp. Lk. 18:13). As Christ declared God's Name just before His death (Jn. 17:26), so did Moses (Dt. 32:3 LXX). Moses saw at the end of his life that there was no third way: it was either complete dedication and salvation, or rebellion and condemnation. See on Dt. 28:58.

The Lord told the Father that He had given the disciples His words, "and they have received them" (Jn. 17:8). This is evident allusion to the editorial comment in Dt. 33:3 about how all Israel received God's words

through Moses. Likewise "I manifested Your name... they have kept Your word" (Jn. 17:6,26) = "I will proclaim the name of the Lord... they have observed thy word" (Dt. 32:3; 33:9). One marvels at the way the Lord's mind linked together so much Scripture in the artless, seamless way in which He did.

The Lord Jesus fed off the majesty of the Name of Yahweh (Mic. 5:4)- this was how inspirational He found the things of the Name. To fear the Name of Yahweh was to "observe to do all the words of this law" (Dt. 28:58). Meditation and sustained reflection upon the characteristics of God as epitomized and memorialized in His Name will of itself lead to a conformation of personality to that same Name. If we declare that Name to others, they too have the chance to be transformed by it- thus Moses comments: "Because *I* will publish the name of the Lord, ascribe *ye* greatness unto our God" (Dt. 32:3).

We in our turn are to manifest God's Name by outgoing witness; so many of the Psalms were written in order to do just that. Moses 'proclaimed the name of Yahweh' (Dt. 32:3 RV)- just as the Angel had proclaimed the Name to Moses in Ex. 34. In perceiving God's Name we are seeing something which cannot be kept to ourselves; God's personality of itself bids us proclaim it. And Moses goes on in the same verse to urge Israel to do as he was doing: "Ascribe *ye* greatness unto our God".

Deu 32:4 the Rock; His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice; a God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He-

The Lord's final address to His people before His death was based upon these last words of Moses. "Holy Father... righteous Father" (Jn. 17:11,25) was a form of address which the Lord had in a sense lifted from Moses when he addresses God as "righteous and holy" (Dt. 32:4 LXX).

Deu 32:5 They have dealt corruptly with Him; they are not His children any more because of their blemish. They are a perverse and crooked generation-

Moses is saying that his prophesy that they would "corrupt themselves" would indeed come true (Dt. 31:29). Dt. 4:16 says that this corruption with or of Yahweh would be through idolatry and making images. It is man who is made in the form / image / likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Our emphasis must be upon replicating God's thinking in ourselves, making ourselves after His image and likeness. Rather than seeking to worship a physical image of Him in the form of an idol or animal. To do so is to corrupt both Him and the humanity which He intends to be in His image and likeness.

AV "Their spot is not the spot of His children" effectively refers to this corruption of Yahweh's image. But there is specific allusion to the marks which idolaters placed on their bodies and foreheads; given specific latter day significance in Rev. 20:4.

This description of Israel is quoted about the world in Phil. 2:15. If God's people worship this world's idols, then they are counted by God as the world. "Corrupted" is s.w. "destroyed" or "perish". All judgment is finally self inflicted. Sin is its own judgment; hence the Hebrew

word for "corruption" also means "destruction", for moral corruption is its own destruction. God Himself does judge, but always prefers men to judge themselves. Apostate Israel are spoken of as the pagan world; and therefore at the day of judgment the rejected of the new Israel will be condemned along with the world (1 Cor. 11:32); assigned their portion "with the unbelievers" (Lk. 12:46).

Deu 32:6 Do you thus repay Yahweh, foolish people and unwise? Isn't He your father who has bought you? He has created you and established you-

The appeal is to their salvation history- Israel's redemption [being "bought"] from Egypt (Ex. 15:16), their establishment in the land and creation as a nation at Sinai. So often, their experience of these things is alluded to in the law as a basis and reason for their loyalty to Yahweh's laws, and living in a culture of grace and kindness to others- given their own experience of grace. We too must never forget our own spiritual path and redemption by God's hand, active throughout our lives. Such personal reflection upon our life's path is therefore necessary if we are to continue to be awed by His grace to us.

Deu 32:7 Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father and he will show you, your elders and they will tell you-

In our world, human history is generally felt to be bunk, irrelevant to this generation, of merely passing cultural fascination to the hurrying man of modern society. And in some ways, that may indeed be a legitimate take

on secular history. But Biblical history is to be seen quite otherwise by God's people. It is a living word spoken to us, and the salvation acts which are there recorded happened to us. We are to learn from history, not as a merely fascinating exercise. But the Bible is history, and yet it is a living word to us. Israel were supposed to reason back from the actions of Egypt towards them, and their weakness spiritually at that time. And to respond personally to that grace.

Deu 32:8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel-

See on Dan. 10:20,21; Ex. 24:9-11. A total of 70 bulls were offered at the feast of ingathering. Rev. 5:9 presents us with the picture of men and women redeemed from *every* kindred [tribe / clan], tongue [glossa-language], people [a group of people not necessarily of the same ethnicity] and nation [*ethnos*- ethnic group, lit. 'those of the same customs']. This means that, e.g., not only redeemed 'Yugoslavs' will stand before the throne in the end; but Macedonians, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrans, Bosnians... every ethnic group, with every custom, will have representatives who will have believed the Truth and been saved. This idea is confirmed by considering how 70 bullocks had to be sacrificed at the feast of ingathering (Num. 29), prophetic as it was of the final ingathering of the redeemed. But 70 is the number of all Gentile nations found in Gen. 10. And it is written: "When he separated the sons of Adam, he set

the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel” (Dt. 32:8). A total of 70 went down with Jacob into Egypt; and thus 70 seems an appropriate number to connect with the entire Gentile world. My point is, representatives of *all* of them will be finally ingathered. It could be that this conversion of all men occurs during the final tribulation (Rev. 14:6); but it seems to me that the context demands that people from every nation etc. are already redeemed in Christ and await His return.

The Canaanite explanation of the family of the gods was that it contained a total of 70 gods – Ugaritic Tablet II AB 6.46 speaks of the “seventy sons of Asherah”. This is re-focused by the record of Genesis 10 – which speaks of 70 nations of men. Likewise Gen. 46:27 and Ex. 1:5 speak of the 70 sons of Jacob – and Dt. 32:8 says that the number of the Gentile nations was fixed “according to the number of the sons of God” or, “Israel” (according to some texts). The belief in the 70 gods of the Canaanite pantheon is therefore re-focused down to earth – where there were 70 sons of Jacob, 70 nations in the world around Israel, and Dt. 32:8 may imply that each is cared for by a guardian Angel in Heaven.

According to Dt. 32:8,9 LXX, humanity has been divided up “according to the number of the angels of God”; each nation has its Angelic representative in Heaven. These representative, all righteous Angels are spoken of as being ‘punished’ in the sense that their charges on earth are punished. Note the parallelism in Is. 24:21,22:

“Yahweh will punish
The host of heaven in heaven
And on earth the kings of the earth”.

This doesn't mean that the representative Angels are themselves sinners; but they are identified in the court of Heaven with those on earth whom they represent. We think of Angels representing nations in Daniel and Zechariah.

Deu 32:9 For Yahweh's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance-

We are His inheritance, and we are His. An inheritance was of major significance to the Semitic mind. We see here how we are all things to Him, and He is to be all things to us, and no mere passing religious hobby. Israel were to be God's inheritance if they were obedient (Ex. 19:5). They weren't, but His love was such that He still took them as His inheritance.

Deu 32:10 He found him in a desert land, in the waste howling wilderness. He embraced him, He cared for him-

God's search for man is a repeated theme of the prophets. “Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, I saw your fathers” (Hos. 9:10). “He found him in a desert land... He encircled him, He cared for him, He kept him as the apple of his eye” (Dt. 32:10). “I said, Here am I, here am I... I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people... I called, no one answered” (Is. 50:2; 65:1,2; 66:4). “I have found David my servant” (Ps. 89:20). So it's not us as it were reaching out to God; He is fervently reaching out to us, and we have to come to realize that. We

don't so much as find God, as realize that He already is earnestly with us. Every man and woman is somehow a life "bound in the bundle of living in the care of the Lord" (2 Sam. 25:29). We come to realize that before we were formed in the womb, God knew us (Jer. 1:5). God hunts for us like a lion, Job came to realize; and in this "You show yourself wonderful to me" (Job 10:16). And we are searching for God. God is not indifferent to our searching for Him. Those awestruck moments of wonder, of radical amazement, are where God finds us at the time we are searching for Him. Both sides are seeking each other; and in those moments, they meet. As a Jewish poet put it: "And going out to meet thee / I found thee coming toward me". In those moments, heaven and earth kiss each other. There is a click, a flash, between Almighty God and us- as we stand at a bus stop, turn left into Acacia Avenue, lay there on our bed meditating.

He kept him as the apple of His eye-

One of the most sensitive spots on the body. Anyone who even comes near God's people stimulates a natural response from God, so sensitive is He to our pain in this life. We are the apple of God's eye (Ps. 17:8; Dt. 32:10), and His word must be as the apple of our eye (Prov. 7:2). We dwell in God, and His word dwells in us (Jn. 15).

Deu 32:11 As an eagle that stirs up her nest and flutters over her young, He spread abroad his wings. He took them, He carried them on His feathers-

The way that Israel were intended to be a missionary nation is brought out very beautifully by the way that God speaks of carrying Israel on eagles' wings out of

Egypt (Dt. 32:11). Apparently, the eagle throws one of its young into the air and catches it, bearing it on its wings, until it learns to fly freely, and then the others learn from this how to fly. If this is the right track of interpretation, then we are left with the conclusion that it was God's intention that all the Gentile world were intended to be God's ultimate children, and that they would learn from the example of Israel. But Israel failed to fly as God intended, and thus they were not the intended example for others. Note in passing how God's intention is that we should fly freely- not merely be His initiative-less servants for the sake of it.

Moses is depressed by Israel complaining at how boring the manna was. He doubts God's earlier promises to him: "Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight (God said he had, in Ex.33:17)...have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto them, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers (not "our" - notice the uncharacteristic separation between Moses and Israel). Whence should I give flesh unto all this people...if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in the sight (as God had earlier promised him that he had)" (Num. 11:12). God was the father and conceiver of Israel, the one who would carry them to the land (Ex. 19:4; 33:15; Dt. 32:11,12; Hos. 11:1); it is as if Moses is saying: They're your children, you look after them, don't dump them on me. Al-

though compare this with his earlier love for them, willing to sacrifice himself for them. God then says that He will provide more food for Israel. But Moses almost mocks God: "Shall the flocks and herds be slain for them, to suffice them?". And the Angel angrily replied: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not". If he had faith, Moses surely would have realized that if God could provide manna, he could provide any food. Moses seems to have suffered from fits of depression and also high spirituality.

Deu 32:12 Yahweh alone led him, there was no foreign god with Him-

Although there was no pagan god with Yahweh at the time of the exodus, there was with Israel- for they took the idols of Egypt with them through the Red Sea, carrying the tabernacle of Moloch with them for guidance as well as Yahweh's (Acts 7:43), just as we are tempted to take the world with us through the waters of baptism rather than seeing it as cut off from us (Ez. 20:7,8).

Right at their birth by the Red Sea, the Almighty records that "the people feared Yahweh, and believed Yahweh, and His servant Moses" (Ex. 14:23). No mention is made of the Egyptian idols they were still cuddling (we don't directly learn about them until Ez. 20). Nor do we learn that this "belief" of theirs lasted a mere three days; nor of the fact that they rejected Moses, and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. "There was no strange god" with Israel on their journey (Dt. 32:12

AV); but there were (Am. 5:26). The reconciliation is that God counted as Israel as devoted solely to Him.

The degree to which righteousness is imputed to us is hard to feel. Dt. 32:12 states that there was no strange God with Israel- but Ez. 20 says they took the idols of Egypt with them. God counted wayward Israel as righteous; at that time, as Balaam said, God did not see iniquity in Israel, nor behold the perversity that was in Jacob. Paul speaks of the fruits of righteousness, the same Greek word translated "justification" (Phil. 1:11). Justification by faith brings forth fruits of righteousness. When the disciples argued about who should be the greatest, the Lord replied that "it is not so among you: whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister" (Mk. 10:43 R.V.). He expected them to live up to the righteousness which He imputed to them.

Deu 32:13 He made him ride in victory on the high places of the earth and fed him with the increase of the field. He caused him to suck honey out of the rock, oil out of the flinty rock-

See on Ps. 81:16. The promised land was to flow with milk and honey to those who kept covenant. And yet Saul later precluded the people from experiencing the blessings of the covenant by petty legalism and a desire for personal control. The people were obedient to his word, but then totally disobeyed Yahweh's command about not eating blood as a result of it (1 Sam. 14:25,33). Tragically, Israel went back to those very "high places" to worship the local idols, as the prophets so often lament.

Deu 32:14 butter of the herd and milk of the flock with fat of lambs, rams of the breed of Bashan and goats, with the finest of the wheat. Of the blood of the grape you drank wine-

Such agricultural abundance is all the stuff of the blessings for obedience. They were disobedient, but still God blessed them with the blessings for obedience- in the hope that such grace would elicit obedience and faithfulness to Him. But tragically it didn't. The very opposite (:15).

Deu 32:15 But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked. You have grown fat. You have become covered with flesh. Then he forsook God who made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation-

See on Dt. 31:9. Moses in Deuteronomy so many times warns that Israel would become unfaithful to God once they became prosperous. This is a major theme with him. Any request for material prosperity must be made knowing that really this is not for the best spiritually. And God must struggle with those requests as a parent does with a request for something which they want to give, because they love their child, but know that it will almost certainly be misused. It's no surprise therefore that the majority of God's people have been poor- it is the poor who respond to the Gospel (Mt. 11:5), and the wealthy are a minority amongst us (1 Cor. 1:26).

"Jeshurun" means 'the upright one'. But they were never upright, and were rebellious from the day Moses knew them. But this is how they were seen by God when He fell in love with the people in the wilderness, not see-

ing iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21). "Lightly esteemed" is s.w. "disgrace".

Deu 32:16 They moved Him to jealousy with strange gods, they provoked Him to anger with abominations-

God can be grieved [s.w. 'provoke to anger']. He has emotions, and His potential foreknowledge doesn't mean that these feelings are not legitimate. They are presented as occurring in human time, as responses to human behaviour. This is the degree to which He has accommodated Himself to human time-space limits, in order to fully enter relationship and experience with us. As He can limit His omnipotence, so God can limit His omniscience, in order to feel and respond along with us.

Deu 32:17 They sacrificed to demons, not God, to gods that they didn't know, to new gods that came up recently, which your fathers didn't fear-

Demons are associated with idols, and they are not the gods which they are believed to be (:21; 1 Cor. 10:20). The language of demon possession we meet in the Gospel records is therefore the language of the day to describe healing of illnesses attributed to demons; but demons have no real existence because there is only one God.

Dale Martin in an article points out that there are six different Hebrew words which are all translated 'daimon' in the Septuagint Greek version of the Old Testament, and this is the term which the New Testament uses for 'demons'. He concludes: "Ancient Jews used *daimonion* to translate five or six different Hebrew words. In the ancient Near Eastern context, those words referred to dif-

ferent kinds of beings ... What they have in common, nonetheless, is that they all were thought of as gods – in fact, as the gods other people falsely worship: the gods of the nations... we find no equation of fallen angels with Greek *daimons*" (pp. 662, 670). As an example, the Hebrew 'sedim' translated "demons" in Dt. 32:17 and Ps. 106:37 is defined by Martin as follows: "In the ancient Near Eastern context, the word sedim is related to the Assyrian sidu, which referred to the great bull statues in front of the Assyrian palaces, sometimes depicted with wings. According to some modern commentators, the word *adon* originally meant simply "lord" and served as a divine title like "Baal" or "Adonai". It could, therefore, be taken to refer to ancient gods of Canaan and other surrounding people, who could have viewed them as good powers or gods". The connection between demons and idols is quite clear, both from context and linguistic analysis.

Deu 32:18 Of the Rock who became your father you are unmindful, and have forgotten God who gave you birth-

See on Gen. 49:24. As discussed on :7, their problem was that they refused to accept the historical perspective on their lives. They were not awed by the way God had brought them by grace to their present location. Like spoilt children, they came to presume upon special grace as the norm, and failed to see the wonder of it. We note that we have here an example of where God likens Himself to a woman, something unusual in the religious thinking of the times.

Deu 32:19 Yahweh saw and abhorred, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters-

Scripture repeatedly speaks as if God notices things and is then hurt by what He sees (Jonah 3:10; Gen. 29:31; Ex. 3:4; Dt. 32:19; Ez. 23:13; Is. 59:15 cp. Lk. 7:13). If He knew in advance what they were going to do, this language is hard for me to understand. But God is therefore hurt and 'surprised' at sin- He saw Israel as the firstripe grapes, but they were worshipping Baal even then (Hos. 9:9). Thus God can allow Himself to feel an element of surprise- and this was a shock to Jeremiah, who queried: "Why are You like a man who is caught by surprise...?" (Jer. 14:9).

Deu 32:20 He said, I will hide My face from them. I will see what their end shall be, for they are a very perverse generation-

God Himself knows the end from the beginning and need fear no man; but His Angels do not have ultimate knowledge or strength, and therefore such language is more suited to them. This 'language of limitation' may refer to the Angels rather than God personally. He *can* see all things, and yet in the time of Israel's apostasy He hides His face from them (Mic. 3:4 cp. Dt. 32:19,20). He enters fully into our humanity by as it were limiting His omniscience and omnipotence in order to relate with us in real time.

Children in whom is no loyalty-

"Loyalty" is the word for "faith" or "trust". Such trust in the Father should have come naturally, but from babyhood they revolted against Him. *Pistis*, one of the NT

words for 'faith' is used here in the LXX, and is translated in the LXX as both 'faith' (e.g. Dt. 32:20; Prov. 12:22) and 'truth' (Prov. 12:17; 14:22; Jer. 5:1). Indeed, another word used in the LXX is 119 times translated 'truth' and 26 times 'faith'. There *is* a connection between true knowledge of the Gospel and faith. And this faith is the basis for our works. We don't just learn the propositions of the one faith before baptism, and forget them. The triumphant spiritual life *lives them out*.

Deu 32:21 They have moved Me to jealousy with that which is not God. They have provoked Me to anger with their vanities-

We read of God being slow to anger (Ex. 34:6), at others, of Him not restraining His anger, or restraining it (Ps. 78:38; Is. 48:9; Lam. 2:8; Ez. 20:22), and holding His peace (Is. 57:11; Ps. 50:21), and being provoked to anger by the bad behaviour of His covenant people (Dt. 32:21; Ps. 78:58; Is. 65:3; Jer. 8:19). God clearly has emotions of a kind which are not unrelated to the emotions we experience, as beings made in His image. But those emotions involve a time factor in order to be emotions. We read of the anger of God "for a moment" (Ps. 30:5; Is. 54:7,8), and of His wrath coming and going, leaving Him "calm" and no longer angry (Ez. 16:42). When we sin, we provoke God to anger- i.e. at a point in time, God sees our sin, and becomes angry. This is attested many times in Scripture. But it's meaningless if God is somehow outside of our time and emotions.

I will move them to jealousy with those who are not a people, I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation-

This is interpreted in the New Testament as referring to the conversion of the Gentiles (Rom. 10:19; 1 Pet. 2:10). It was intended to provoke them firstly to jealousy, but then to accepting the same God of Israel which the Gentiles had accepted. Paul sees the Jewish anger at Gentile conversion to Christ as a reflection of their jealousy. If Gentiles became followers of some idol cult, the Jews would have been indifferent. But their jealousy was provoked by Israel accepting Jesus of Nazareth as God's Son and Saviour. This jealousy was and is surely a reflection of a bad conscience, just as subconsciously Joseph's brothers knew that Joseph was not dead but alive, and standing before them. It was Israel's 'knowledge' of the Gospel they had heard which is related by Paul to their anger and jealousy. And we see the same today in many who exhibit anger and jealousy over the faith of others. This is a function of their 'knowledge' which they are in denial of.

Deu 32:22 For a fire is kindled in My anger, which burns to the lowest Sheol. It devours the earth with its increase, and sets the foundations of the mountains on fire-

Gilgamesh and the pagan myths presented whole groups of gods as responsible for and presiding over death and the underworld, and another, separate, pantheon of gods as involved in creation. The Biblical emphasis upon one God is significant and unusual; it is Yahweh who sends man back to the dust from which He created him, and the same Yahweh who is in total control of *sheol* [the grave or underworld], and in a sense even present there (Dt. 32:22; Job 26:6; Ps. 139:7,8;

Prov. 15:11; Am. 9:2). The same God is in control of the earth, as taught here by God through Moses. The state of the dead is defined in Genesis as a return to dust, and later Scripture emphasizes that this means unconsciousness, for the righteous merely a sleep in hope of bodily resurrection. This was radically different to the ideas espoused by the peoples amongst whom Israel travelled and lived.

Deu 32:23 I will heap evils on them. I will spend my arrows on them-

These arrows are alluded to with reference to the Babylonian desolation (Lam. 3:13; Ez. 5:16). "Evil arrows" were thought to be cast by displeased gods; but here Yahweh insists that there is no supernatural evil, and He is going to be the one who fires such arrows. His omnipotence meant that there was no place left for any understanding of "evil" as coming from some cosmic evil being, such as the "satan" of modern theology.

Deu 32:24 They shall be wasted with hunger and devoured with burning heat and bitter destruction-

The curses to come upon Israel as a result of the latter day invasions are described in terms which are extremely apposite to modern warfare. The plagues to come upon Israel as a result of the invasions are almost impossible to identify with anything presently known: "a consumption... a fever... an inflammation... an extreme burning... blasting... the burning ague that shall consume the eyes" (Dt. 28:22; Lev. 26:16) all seems to echo the language of nuclear fall-out. "They shall be burnt... and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruc-

tion" (Dt. 32:24) is similar. The release of complex chemical weapons, as well as nuclear detonation, would explain why rainfall patterns will be interrupted during this latter day tribulation (Dt. 28:23). The fall-out from such weapons would create the murderous rain of dust upon the land which Dt. 28:24 speaks of: "The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed". It is twice emphasized that those in the land would suffer blindness (Dt. 28:28,29), which may also be related to such nuclear or chemical fallout. This has not yet happened; the context invites us to read this as literal rather than figurative. We know that the latter day invaders who attack Jerusalem will both fight each other and have their eyes rot in their sockets (Zech. 14:12), the implication being that they use their weaponry against each other as well as against Israel. Their earlier use of these weapons would account for this blindness coming upon Israel, and again we see the principle that what the attackers do to Israel will be inflicted upon them.

I will send the teeth of animals on them and the poison of crawling things of the dust-

The whole record of Adam and Eve in Eden is alluded to multiple times in Moses' law. As they were given a command not to eat, so Israel were asked not to eat certain things. As there was a snake who was there in the 'land' of Eden, so there was the equivalent amongst Israel- the false teachers, the tribes who remained, etc., the "serpents of the dust" (Dt. 32:24- an evident allusion to the language of the snake in Eden).

1 Kings 22:22 gives an insight into the workings of the court of Heaven, with an Angel told: "Go out and do so". This describes the Angels being sent out from the court of Heaven to do God's word. So when we read of God sending lions (2 Kings 17:25,26), sending wild beasts and famine (Lev. 26:22; Ez. 5:17; Dt. 32:24), sending locusts (Joel 2:25), it would seem that Angels are sent forth from God's throne in order to command animals to obey God's word. And moreover, He sends an evil spirit between men (Jud. 9:23) and stubborn hearts are also sent from God (Ps. 81:13). The same Angels who are sent to control the animals can also therefore work to give men certain attitudes of mind.

Deu 32:25 Outside, the sword shall bereave and inside, terror shall be on both young man and virgin, the nursing infant with the grey-haired man-

During their latter day tribulation, Israel will experience intense "terror" (Lev. 26:16), which would be enough to kill them (Dt. 32:25). This extraordinary level of paranoia will be modelled upon that of Jacob as he faced Esau - representing Israel's confrontation with the Arabs in the last days (Jer. 30:5,7). This state of fear will result in many Jews going to live in Jerusalem, as happened during the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions (Jer. 35:11). Ezekiel had prophesied of this time: "Terrors (an intensive plural - i.e. 'the one great terror') by reason of the sword shall be upon my people" (Ez. 21:12). Likewise our Lord spoke of "fearful sights" being seen in latter-day Israel (Lk. 21:11). This fear will be absolute paranoia: "I will make you a terror to yourself"

(Jer. 20:4) because of latter day Babylon's invasion; "ye shall flee when none pursueth you... I will send a faintness into their hearts... the sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them" (Lev. 26:17,36). "I will bring the land into *desolation*" (Lev. 26:32) uses a Hebrew word which can imply stupefaction by fear. This paranoia will be associated with a manic depression which will have its roots in a chronically bad conscience towards God, going back thousands of years to their national childhood: "I will... cause sorrow of heart... they that are left of you shall pine away in their iniquity... and also in the iniquity of their fathers shall they pine away" (Lev. 26:16,39). Note how the *land* will be brought into this mental desolation. Frequently the land of Israel is paralleled with the people (e.g. Jer.19:14 cp. 26:17). The intense desolation of Jewry will be reflected physically in the state of their land. And the resolution of this psychological torment will only be through repentance and acceptance of the Saviour Messiah whom they crucified.

Deu 32:26 I said I would scatter them afar, I would make their memory to cease from among men-

But by grace, God never did this; He preserved their name / memory. Yahweh's Name, by contrast, was to be an eternal memory (Ex. 3:15). He was to be remembered for how He had articulated His Name in how He had historically acted in saving the patriarchs, and He would be remembered for how He was going to act to save His people from Egypt. What was to be memorialized was therefore His actions, rather than simply the letters YH-WH. It was His wonderful works which were to be re-

membered [Ps. 111:4, s.w. "My memorial"]. By contrast, the sinful works and persons of the wicked would not be remembered / memorialized, be they Amalek (s.w. Ex. 17:14; Dt. 25:19), or God's apostate people (s.w. Dt. 32:26).

Deu 32:27 but I feared the provocation of the enemy, lest their adversaries should judge wrongly, lest they should say, 'Our hand is exalted, Yahweh has not done all this'-

But this was the argument used by Moses when God had threatened to destroy Israel and make of him a great nation instead. Now we see God as it were persuaded by Moses' argument, and adopting it as His own. We see here His remarkable humility and openness to influence by our prayers and reasoning before Him.

Deu 32:28 For they are a nation without wisdom; there is no understanding in them-

This could continue the quotation of the enemies in :27, but it seems to lead on rather to :29- their lack of understanding refers to their refusal to understand that one could have chased a thousand (:30). Wisdom and understanding is therefore effectively referring to faith, trust that the promises of God will be indeed fulfilled. Any wisdom or understanding that doesn't lead to this is useless. This is the fallacy of academic Bible study. It was and is the mistake of Judaism.

Deu 32:29 Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!-

Faith is all about realizing that action and attitudes now will affect our eternal future. The way of the flesh is to just live for the present- and not consider the future,

let alone the final end of all things at the day of judgment. In allusion to this verse, the same phrase is used of how Daniel understood the latter end of Israel (Dan. 10:14), and how the final generation of repentant Israelites will "consider" at their "latter end" after they have experienced the wrath of God (Jer. 23:20; 30:24). But they were to consider the "latter end" of things in this life, and not wait until condemnation at the last day before perceiving the ultimate truth of life and death. And we can do the same.

Deu 32:30 How one could have chased a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight, had not their Rock sold them and Yahweh delivered them up!-

Verses 30-33 could refer to Israel, who "could have chased a thousand...", or to her enemies. Thus GNB "They fail to see why they were defeated; they cannot understand what happened. Why were a thousand defeated by one, and ten thousand by only two? The LORD, their God, had abandoned them; their mighty God had given them up. Their enemies know that their own gods are weak, not mighty like Israel's God. Their enemies, corrupt as Sodom and Gomorrah, are like vines that bear bitter and poisonous grapes..."

Deu 32:31 For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges-

The idea may be that the Gentiles tacitly recognized that Yahweh was superior to their gods / rock. Or the lament may be that the Gentiles, like Israel, failed to perceive ultimate realities with the understanding of faith:

"For their gods are not as our God, but our enemies are void of understanding" (LXX).

Deu 32:32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, of the fields of Gomorrah. Their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter-

GNB takes this as referring to Israel's enemies, but it could as well refer to Israel. For Moses has just stated that Israel are spiritually as Sodom and will be treated like Sodom (see on Dt. 29:23). The idea would be that they were presently sowing seeds of attitudes which would come to fruition in the grapes of judgment.

Deu 32:33 Their wine is the poison of serpents, the deadly venom of asps-

Again, we could with GNB read this as referring to Israel's enemies, but it could as well refer to Israel. The grapes and wine of blessing could have their awful counterpart in the grapes of Divine wrath.

Deu 32:34 Isn't this laid up in store with Me, sealed up among My treasures?-

The reference is to the judgment of the last day (:35), which will be like being given a cup of bitter wine to drink (:32,33). God giving people wine to drink is a double symbol- either of condemnation [as here], or of blessing. It is why the communion service is a cause for self-examination, for we must ask ourselves whether we are drinking His cup to our eternal blessing or condemnation.

Deu 32:35 Vengeance is Mine and punishment, at the time when their foot slides; for the day of their calamity is

at hand. The things that are to come on them shall make haste-

We must remember that "Vengeance is *mine* [not ours, not the state's], and requital" (Dt. 32:35), and God will take that vengeance at the last day and not necessarily in this life (Is. 63:4). In another sense, that taking of vengeance, that requital, was worked out by God on the cross. There the Lord Jesus was clothed with the 'garments of vengeance' (Is. 59:17); the day of the crucifixion was "the day of vengeance" (Is. 63:4). This is one reason why God doesn't operate a tit-for-tat requital of our sins upon our heads- because He dealt with sin and His vengeance for it in the cross, not by any other way. Hence David calls Yahweh the "God of revenge", the one *alone* to whom vengeance belongs (Ps. 94:1,3). Our response to all this is to believe that truly vengeance is God and therefore we will *not* avenge ourselves (Rom. 12:19). I take this to apply to all the micro-level 'takings of vengeance' which we so easily do in our words, body language, attitudes etc., in response to the hurt received from others. The cross alone enables us to break the cycle. All the sins, all the grudges that called for revenge or "vengeance", were to be placed upon the scapegoat, and it was released into the desert (Lev. 16:10). They could watch it scampering away into the bush. This is how we are to understand the placing of human sin- yes, the sins committed against you this day by others- upon the Lord as He hung on the cross.

As Moses addressed the people at that point, these things were "at hand" and "make haste". There are several

times when God warns that generation that they will not last many days in the land if they are disobedient. The scenario of judgment is implied to be coming upon that generation. But it didn't. God hung on with Israel for centuries. It was like the kind of relationship which we have often observed in life- one party passionately loves the other, but the other doesn't respond is constantly unfaithful to that love, of which they are completely not deserving. It's a Hosea and Gomer situation. And this is God's love for Israel. But just as such relationships usually come to an end at some point, even it takes decades, so in the end, Israel walked out of it with God and slew His own Son.

Deu 32:36 For Yahweh will judge His people and have compassion on His servants when He sees that their power is gone, that there is none remaining, shut up or left at large-

See on Dt. 31:9. Israel assembled before Moses really do represent us, for this is quoted in Heb. 10:20 as relevant to all of us coming before judgment. But our verse goes on to say that at this very time of judgment, He will have compassion upon His people. Which is a comforting thought to take with us to the judgment seat of Christ.

"For the Lord shall judge His people" is quoted in Heb. 10:20 concerning the judgement seat. But the context here is wonderful. Israel are hopeless sinners under judgment, and God on the basis of pure pity for them, rather than their obedience, relents of judgment. And His judgment of them is paralleled with His having

compassion upon them. I don't wish to imply that convicted sinners are just waved through into the Kingdom because God feels sorry for people in the misery of their gnashing of teeth. But all the same, we must give the argument here its full wonderful weight. God's judgment is His compassion. And He will show that compassion on the basis of pure pity rather than obedience.

Deu 32:37 He will say, Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge-

Yahweh was the rock of Israel, but it seems just as they sacrificed to Yahweh so they did to idols (:38); as they called Him their rock and refuge, so they did the idols. This verse explains the pity and compassion God will show to His condemned people (:37). He will look back, from that point of final judgment, to how all their lovers and gods had not helped them. And this only elicits His final compassion to them rather than solely His wrath.

Deu 32:38 which ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you! Let them be your protection-

They offered the best of their sacrifices, the fat, to their idols. They are bidden now call upon all the things they have previously trusted in, be it missile systems or religion, and finally realize that in Yahweh and His Son alone can be their salvation. Those things are now effectively dead, and will not "rise up" in resurrection; for Yahweh alone is the God of resurrection. "Protection" is s.w. "hiding place". It is Messiah, the Lord Jesus, who will

be Israel's latter day "covert [s.w.] from the tempest" of the invaders (Is. 32:2). See on :43.

Deu 32:39 See now that I, even I, am He. There is no god with Me. I kill and I make alive. I wound and I heal. There is no one who can deliver out of My hand-

The force of "See now" is that this is God speaking to Israel in their latter day condemnation (:36 = Heb. 10:20), giving them the one last desperate chance which a remnant will accept. They are bidden accept Yahweh for the "I am" which He uniquely is, and finally quit idolatry and all other gods for all time. They are to recognize that He has slain them and can alone make alive; and Ez. 37 speaks of Israel's national death and resurrection.

Deu 32:40 For I lift up My hand to heaven and say, as surely as I live forever-

This is God's final oath that finally, judgment will not be further delayed and is about to fall (:41).

Deu 32:41 if I whet My glittering sword and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to My adversaries and will punish those who hate Me-

LXX "I will sharpen my sword like lightning". As explained above, these things will come to full term in the very last days, when finally judgment will no longer be endlessly delayed, but Yahweh's sword will fall in judgment, He will take hold upon judgment and fulfil it.

Deu 32:42 I will make My arrows drunk with blood. My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the head of the leaders of the enemy-

This devouring of the flesh of the slain enemies of Israel is specifically applied to the last days in Rev.

19:18,21. "The head" is Hebrew *rosh* and may refer to the latter day *rosh* which invades Israel and is destroyed in Ez. 38. The destruction of *rosh* in Ez. 39 is described in similar terms as used here.

Deu 32:43 Rejoice, you nations, with His people, for He will avenge the blood of His servants. He will take vengeance on His adversaries and will make expiation for His land, for His people-

LXX "Rejoice, ye heavens, with him, and let all the angels of God worship him; rejoice ye Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God strengthen themselves in him". These words are interpreted in the New Testament as referring to the Lord Jesus being worshipped by the Angels when He is brought into the world at His second coming (Heb. 1:6); and the Gentiles rejoicing with Israel in Jesus as Christ (Rom. 15:10). The Messiah Jesus is in view as the final salvation for Israel (see on :38). But salvation in Him will be predicated upon Israel's final repentance and turning to Him whom they once slew.

Deu 32:44 Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun-

This exactly corresponds to the command "write ye", you plural (Dt. 31:9). Joshua was to assist Moses in doing this and he did so. We marvel at the internal correspondence within the Biblical record, which to me is the most powerful evidence of its Divine inspiration.

Deu 32:45 When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel-

Moses, perhaps on the very last day of his life, assembled all Israel by their tribes, and with a voice no doubt

cracking with emotion, *pleaded* with them to understand that *there's nothing like the God of Israel and His Truth*, and it must therefore be at the very centre, at the very core, of a man's soul: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun...who is like unto thee, O people saved by Yahweh... Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day... for it is not a vain thing for you; *because it is your life*" (Dt. 33:27,28; 32:46,47). "The love of Christ constrains us".

Deu 32:46 he said to them, Set your heart to all the words which I testify to you this day, which you must command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law-

The word so often used for "keeping" / "diligently observing" Yahweh's commandments is from the word meaning a thorn hedge; the idea originally was to hedge in. Taking this too literally led Judaism to all their endless fences around the law, i.e. forbidding this or that because it might lead to doing that or this, which in turn would then lead to breaking an actual commandment. And those various fences become elevated to the level of commandments. But this is not the idea. We are indeed to hedge ourselves in ("take heed to yourself", Dt. 11:16; 12:13,19,30,32 s.w.), so that we may keep / hedge ourselves in to keep the commandments of God (Lev. 18:4,5,26,30; 19:19,37; 20:8,22; 22:9,31; 25:18; 26:3; Num. 28:2; Dt. 7:11,12; 8:1,11 [s.w. "beware"]; 10:13; 11:1,8,22,32; 12:1; 13:4,18; 15:5,9 ["beware"]; 17:19; 19:9; 23:9 ["keep yourself"]; 24:8; 26:16-18; 27:1; 28:1,9,13; 29:9; 30:10,16; 31:12; 32:46). And without

falling into the legalism of Judaism, self discipline does require a degree of fencing ourselves in to the one way. Thus the man struggling with alcoholism avoids the supermarket where alcohol is pushed in front of the eyes of the shoppers; the married woman struggling with attraction to another man makes little laws for herself about avoiding his company. And if we do this, then the Lord will "keep" us, will hedge us in to keeping His way (s.w. Num. 6:24).

Deu 32:47 For it is no vain thing for you, because it is your life-

Enter into the *passion* of it all. The man who was willing to give his eternal life for them, about to die for the sake of their provocation- singing a final song to them, giving a final speech, which showed that he knew perfectly well that they would turn away from what he was trying to do for them, and therefore the majority of them would not be saved. As he came to the end of his speech, he seems to have sensed they didn't grasp the reality of it all: "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Dt. 32:47); and thus his speech rises to a crescendo of intensity of pleading with them, after the pattern of the Lord.

The idea of not taking Yahweh's Name "in vain", 'vanity' (Ex. 20:7), is often associated with idolatry. Israel never formerly rejected Yahweh, and never became atheists. They mixed Yahweh worship with idolatry on the basis that they claimed that they worshipped Yahweh through worshipping the idols. This is what emboldened them to later place idols in Yahweh's temple. They were

taking Yahweh's Name as a form of vanity, "in vain", a kind of idol. Thus their relationship with Yahweh was not to be a "vain thing" (Dt. 32:47).

And through this you shall prolong your days in the land, where you go over the Jordan to possess it-

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take possession of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 32:48 Yahweh spoke to Moses that same day saying-

We note the continual emphasis upon "the same day" and "this day..." throughout Deuteronomy. A fair case could be made that all this happened on the last day of Moses' life; an intense final day of a very busy life.

Deu 32:49 Go up into this mountain of Abarim, to Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab that is opposite Jericho, and see the land of Canaan which I give to the children of Israel for a possession-

Moses seeing the Kingdom but being unable to enter it, nor himself lead God's people into it, points forward to how the law of Moses gave a vision of the Kingdom, but was unable to bring us into it. That required the work of Joshua / Jesus. "Abarim" means 'the regions beyond'. Moses and his law gave an insight into the Kingdom, the region beyond him. For the culture of grace and kindness, centered around the sacrificed future Messiah, the Lord Jesus, was the outcome of the law. But it was unattainable by weak men.

Deu 32:50 Die on the mountain and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people-

Moses being gathered to his people by an Angel (Dt. 32:50) may also refer to his spirit / Angel returning to where the guardian Angels of his ancestors were. This solves the considerable difficulty of his ancestors being physically dead and decayed, and being buried in a different place from where Moses died. LXX "be added to thy people" suggests God keeps a record of all Israel. The command to die suggests Moses was being asked to be

willingly complicit with the idea of his death, just as Isaac was, and as the Lord Jesus was.

In those hours as Moses stood there saying those words of Deuteronomy, and then as he sung that song of Moses to them of Dt. 32, I think we see Moses at his finest. His voice would have been that of a young man, and yet with all the passion of meaning of his 120 years. And then he blesses those assembled tribes, the *love* of that man for Israel flowing out, with that same wondrous voice. "Yea, he *loved* the people". And then, no doubt with a lump in his throat, swallowing back the tears, he turned and walked away, up that mountain, higher and higher, with the blue mountains of Moab shimmering in the distance. "That selfsame day" Moses spoke Deuteronomy, God commanded him: "Get thee up into this mountain... and behold the land... and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people" (Dt. 32:50). Like the Lord Jesus, he received a commandment to die (Jn. 10:18; 14:31), and yet he presumably did not know how to consciously fulfil it according to his own actions. He climbed the mountain alone, that same day he spoke Deuteronomy. Presumably he spoke Deuteronomy in the morning, sung the song of Moses, and then "that selfsame day" died. It would have taken him time to climb the mountain, to be met at the top by the Angel, who then showed him the land, kissed him (see later) and buried him. Presumably he died late in the day, watching the sun setting over the promised land- perhaps at the same hour Jesus died. The pathos of the scene is wondrous, the Song of Moses as it were

can be heard still echoing. Yet in the sadness of it all, we see prefigured the death of Christ for us. It was for their sakes that Moses didn't enter the land, remember. That is the emphasis the Spirit gives. As he climbed, for it would have taken a while, perhaps he thought back to those years in Egypt, the struggle of his soul in those years. You may think I'm being over emotional, but it seems to me as he climbed he would have thought back to his dear mum to whom he owed his relationship with God, the mother he'd doubtless disowned for forty years, admitting that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He would have reflected how at age 40 he was honest with himself, how he told the world who his real mother was (probably, tragically enough, after her death, sad that her son seemed to have rejected her for the pleasures of Egypt), how he had refused to be called any longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I mean, if we had say 24 hours to live, and we were told to go for a walk before we died, I guess we'd think back to our childhood for at least a moment, wouldn't we. And he was a man, just like you and me, with all a man's feelings, all a man's memories, all a man's humanity. I believe, although I can't prove it, that he wept all the way to the top, climbing farther and farther away from the people he loved, knowing that the majority simply didn't understand him and what he had suffered for them. And perhaps as he sung the song of Moses, he thought back to those weak years in Midian, to Zipporah, to the arguments with her, to the pain of the divorce, to the Ethiopian woman, to the long lonely days with the animals. And then to the wonder of the

Red Sea, to the nervousness of meeting the Angel, to the joy of that communion in another mountain. He knew that Angel well, they spoke face to face as men who are friends speak to each other (Ex. 33:11).

Deu 32:51 because you trespassed against Me in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah of Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because you didn't sanctify Me in the midst of the children of Israel-

Moses truly was made spiritually strong out of weakness. His faith fluctuated, until at last he came to a spiritual height at the end of his life. We have seen something of the intensity and passion of his love for Israel, to the point where he was willing to give his physical and eternal life for Israel's salvation. In a sense, his desire was heard. Because of the sin of a moment, caused by the provocation of the people he loved, God decreed that he could not enter the land of promise. For their sakes he was barred from the land; this is the emphasis of the Spirit (Dt. 1:37; 3:26; 4:21); and Ps. 106:32,33 says that Moses was provoked to sin because Israel angered God, and that therefore "it went ill with Moses for their sakes". Truly, God works through sinful man to achieve His glory. Ez. 20:38 says that the rebels in the wilderness "shall not enter into the land", with reference to how when Moses called the people "rebels" and beat the rock, he was disallowed entry into the land. Because he called them rebels, i.e. unworthy of entry to the Kingdom, he also was treated as a rebel. If we condemn others, we likewise will be condemned. On another level, he was simply barred for disobedience; and on yet another

er, his prayer to the effect that he didn't want to be in the land if his people weren't going to be there was being answered; and on yet another and higher level, his offer to be blotted out of the book of inheritance for Israel's sake was also being heard. Thus God works within the same incident in so many ways! Thus Moses says that he must die "Because ye [plural] trespassed against me" (Dt. 32:51 AV). This all helps explain why Christ had to die, apart from the fact that he was mortal. He died the death of a sinner for our salvation, he felt all the emotions of the rejected, the full weight of God's curse; for "cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" in crucifixion (Gal. 3:13). Moses was a superb and accurate type of the Lord Jesus. Therefore Moses in his time of dying must grant us insight into the death of our Lord, the prophet like him (Dt. 18:18). See on :3.

Deu 32:52 For you shall see the land before you, but you shall not go there into the land which I give the children of Israel-

This is laboured by God so many times. Moses had carefully omitted the reason why he could not enter the land when explaining it to Israel. He was now reminded of it; for God wanted him to die not in denial of his sin, but fully recognizing it. And He works likewise in our lives, leading us to a crescendo of humility by the time we die.

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER

33

Deu 33:1 This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death-

"Man of God" refers to a prophet (1 Sam. 9:6; 1 Kings 12:22; 13:14 etc.). What Moses now says is presented as reported speech directly inspired by God, presumably written down by Joshua after Moses' death.

Deu 33:2 He said, Yahweh came from Sinai and rose from Seir to them-

Most Rabbis are insistent that the Hebrew for "came from Sinai" effectively means "came down upon", referring to God's manifestation upon Sinai. The idea of John Thomas was that this verse refers to a 'march of the rainbowed Angel', the saved believers, from the judgment seat in Sinai, from whence they march to destroy various European nations in Israel. There are multiple problems with this view, not least that Moses here is recalling an incident in the past, when Yahweh "came" upon or from Sinai. Surely the theophany on Sinai is in view, perhaps the idea being that the Angels who 'came down' then continued to march with Israel through the wilderness. "Rose from Seir" uses the word for the rising of the sun; therefore He "shone forth" from Paran. It was as if the sun was arising on a new day; but Israel turned away from entering the Kingdom, even though it was made possible for them.

He shone forth from Mount Paran-

The significance of this is in that this was from where the 12 spies set out from in their faithless exploration of Canaan (Num. 13:3,26). They failed to walk in step with the Spirit. There were ten thousands of Angels going with them in glory in order to give them the Kingdom, but they were faithless and turned back.

He came with ten thousands of holy ones. At His right hand was a fiery law for them-

Deborah alludes to this verse in saying that she has experienced the same in the victory over Sisera (Jud. 5:4,5). She feels as if she sees and feels "this Sinai" shaking, as if Deborah felt herself back there standing before Sinai witnessing the great theophany there, in that she has seen it before her eyes, as it were, in what God has now done in giving her victory against Sisera. This is the power of Biblical history. There is a living word which continues to speak to us; the historical victories of God are replicated, in essence, in our own experiences.

Dt. 33:2,3 RVmg. bring out the solidarity between the Angels and Israel by describing them both as thousands of saints / holy ones. It would appear that all the people of Israel had a guardian Angel- this seems to be implied by Ex. 7:4 "(I will) bring forth Mine armies (of Angels), and My people the children of Israel", implying that there were two armies leaving Egypt- one of Angels, another of their charges. Thus we read in Ex. 12:41 "it came to pass that *all* the hosts of the LORD (a phrase often used about the Angels- but here concerning the Israelites too) went out from the land of Egypt". In the same way as the Angels were especially Israel's guardians

in guiding them out of Egypt, it may be that the Angels minister in a guardian capacity to us especially in leading us out of the world to baptism (cp. the Red Sea). Heb. 1:14 offers tentative support in that the Angels are said to "minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation". At baptism we become heirs of salvation (Rom. 4:13; Gal. 3:27-29)- those who "shall be heirs" are those as yet outside the promises of salvation. Confirmation of all this is provided by a careful reading of Dt. 33:2,3. This describes God coming "unto them" (Israel) "with ten thousands of saints"- i.e. Angels- and giving them "a fiery Law". The next verse records: "Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy Hand (Angelic language)... every one shall receive of Thy words". Here the saints appear to be the people, thus showing that God's love to Israel was shown by each of them having an Angel (thousands of saints for thousands of people), who individually taught them the word of God, albeit all at the same time. The Angels in the court of Heaven are watching us, almost with baited breath. We are made a theatre unto the Angels, as if they are in the audience as we act out our lives (1 Cor. 4:9 RVmg.).

Deu 33:3 Yes, He loved the people-

LXX "And he spared his people" could refer to God's sparing of the people after they declined to enter the Kingdom (see on :2), or the reference may be to how Moses spared the people through the love of his intercession and self sacrifice. This simple clause is one of the few which state so baldly the sublime truth- that God loves His people. But we could also read this as a paren-

thesis, added by the Divine inspiration of the editor of Deuteronomy, simply stating that Moses loved the people.

The word of his God was in Moses' heart, as he stood there before Israel, that people whom he loved, those for whom he wished to make atonement with his own life, even his eternal life. "Yes, he loved the people" is the Spirit's comment (Dt. 33:3- the "he" in the context seems to be Moses). It could only be the Spirit which would write so concisely. "Yea, he loved the people... they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words". And then he pours out his heart to them, he reels off what we have as the book of Deuteronomy, written at the end point of the spiritual growth of Moses. But in reality that was the outpouring of his heart, pleading with Israel to be faithful to the covenant, encouraging them to be aware of their weakness, encouraging them to go forward and inherit the Kingdom. In those hours as he stood there saying those words, and then he sung that song to them of Dt. 32, I think we see Moses at his finest. And then he blesses those assembled tribes, the *love* of that man for Israel flowing out, and then, no doubt with a lump in his throat, swallowing back the tears, he turned and walked away, up that mountain, higher and higher, with the blue mountains of Moab shimmering in the distance. Even before that, surely his voice had faltered, even broken down, when he spoke to them of the tragedy of their future apostasy, of how the gentle and sensitive woman among them would eat her own children. And how the days would come when they would awake in the morn-

ing and say 'Would God it were evening'. As he foresaw in essence the horrors of the Nazi camps, and of so much else... he could only have said those words with tears and passion. For "he loved the people". If ever there was an understatement...

The pathos of the scene is wondrous. Yet in the sadness of it all, we see a type, more than a type, a superb image, of the death of Christ for us. It was for their sakes that Moses didn't enter the land, remember. That is the emphasis the Spirit gives. As he climbed, for it would have taken a while, perhaps he thought back to those years in Egypt, the struggle of his soul in those years. You may think I'm being over emotional, but it seems to me as he climbed he would have thought back to his dear mum to whom he owed his relationship with God, the mother he'd doubtless disowned for forty years, claiming that he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter; until at age 40 he was honest with himself, he told the world who his real mother was, he refused to be called any longer the son of Pharaoh's daughter. I mean, if we had say 24 hours to live, and we were told to go for a walk before we died, I guess we'd think back to our childhood for at least a moment, wouldn't we. And he was a man, just like any of us.

And perhaps he thought back to those weak years in Midian, to Zipporah, to the long lonely days with the animals. And then to the wonder of the Red Sea, to the nervousness of meeting the Angel, to the joy of that communion in another mountain. He knew that Angel well, they spoke face to face as men who are friends speak to each other (Ex. 33:11). How fitting that at the

top, he met that Angel again. The same love, the same open-faced friendship would have been there. The Angel showed him the Kingdom, opening his eyes to see to the very boundaries of the land. And then he buried him, laying him in the grave in hope of better days, when Christ would come and raise his people, when God's people would at last be obedient. What an end. Out of weakness, such weakness, he was made strong. His temperamental faith, with its flashes of devotion, turned into a solid rock, a real ongoing relationship with a loving Father. *Every one* of his human relationships had failed: with his brother and sister, with his wife, with his people. But finally that lonely man found his rest in Yahweh, Israel's God, he came to know Him as his friend and saviour. No wonder he is held up, by way of allusion throughout the New Testament, as our example.

All His saints are in Your hand. They sat down at Your feet; each receives Your words-

LXX "all his sanctified ones are under thy hands; and they are under thee; and he received of his words". This initially speaks of how Moses received God's words and shared them with Israel, who were placed in his hand. But it all looks forward to the Lord Jesus. The Lord told the Father that He had given the disciples His words, "and they have received them" (Jn. 17:8). This is evident allusion to the editorial comment in Dt. 33:3 about how all Israel received God's words through Moses. Likewise "I manifested Your name... they have kept Your word" (Jn. 17:6,26) = "I will proclaim the name of the Lord... they have observed thy word" (Dt.

32:3; 33:9). One marvels at the way the Lord's mind linked together so much Scripture in the artless, seamless way in which He did.

Deu 33:4 Moses commanded us a law, an inheritance for the assembly of Jacob-

It might help if we try to visualize the practical benefits of keeping the laws. "In keeping of them is great reward", David commented (Ps. 19:11). Moses likewise: "The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes... *for our good always*" (Dt. 6:24)- not for their irritation, or as a pointless test of obedience. Perhaps this is why the giving of the Law is described as an expression of God's *love* for Israel (Dt. 33:2-4). It was the loving marriage contract between God and Israel. We must see the keeping of the law by the faithful Israelite as being done within a certain spiritual atmosphere. It would have been impossible to keep all those laws from a series of deliberate acts of the will. The truly obedient Israelite would have developed a way of life and thinking, a culture of kindness to others, which achieved obedience to them. This was surely how Jesus was able to perfectly fulfil the Law. "If a man do (the commands) he shall even live in them" (Lev. 18:5) seems to refer to this atmosphere of obedience.

Deu 33:5 He was king in Jeshurun when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together-

God imputed righteousness to Israel at this time, seeing them as Jeshurun, the upright one, not perceiving iniquity in Israel (Num. 23:21); because He so loved them. He fell in love with them in the desert. LXX "And he shall be prince with the beloved one, when the

princes of the people are gathered together with the tribes of Israel". The thought in this case would be looking ahead to Messiah as the beloved one.

Deu 33:6 Let Reuben live, and not die, nor let his men be few-

Reuben was the firstborn but was demoted because of his sin. But he is mentioned here in first place. The request for him not to die, and to not have few descendants, may be a statement to the effect that Moses wished that the effect of all curses for disobedience would finally be removed. And that only will come true in the Kingdom of God when the Lord Jesus returns.

At this point we would expect Simeon to be blessed, but he is apparently omitted. Although the Alexandrian LXX renders the last part of this verse as "Let Simeon be very numerous". At the census taken when they left Egypt, Simeon numbered 59,300, but only 22,000 at the census taken at the end of the wanderings. So Moses may therefore be wishing that Simeon would stop declining and grow. But we note that there are at least 24 lists of the 12 sons of Jacob / tribes of Israel. And they each slightly differ. The names are in different orders, and some are omitted- e.g. Levi is sometimes omitted, or the two sons of Joseph are sometimes listed, and sometimes not. Simeon and Levi were cursed because of how they had treated the Hivites (Gen. 49:5-7). Levi had no allocation of land, and Simeon's small portion was carved out of that of Judah (Josh. 19:1-9). Yet Levi were somehow justified because they had not allowed their cursed state to stop them serving Yahweh (Dt. 33:8-11), where-

as Simeon perhaps wallowed in his curse and didn't seek to rise above it.

Deu 33:7 This is for Judah. He said Hear, Yahweh, the voice of Judah-

The implication was that Judah would be an intercessor with God who would be heard as Moses had been. And clearly the reference ultimately was to the Lord Jesus.

Bring him in to his people-

This could be read as a desire for the coming of this Messianic intercessor from the tribe of Judah.

With his hands he contended for himself-

The idea is as in AV that his hands would be made strong, just as the hand of Joseph's were (Gen. 49:24- another type of Christ).

You shall be a help against his adversaries-

The Messianic intercessor descendant of Judah was clearly to be strengthened for his task by Yahweh, just as happened with the Lord Jesus (Ps. 80:17).

Deu 33:8 Of Levi he said-

Again we note that this is reported speech, written up under inspiration presumably by Joshua.

Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove at the waters of Meribah-

LXX "whom they tempted in the temptation; they reviled him at the water of strife". It was this provocation which led Aaron to sin by striking the rock rather than speaking to it. Yet despite that sin, the Urim and Thummim remained on Aaron. They were the two stones on

the breastplate which flashed out yes / no responses to prayers and questions.

"Holy one" is 'consecrated one'. The Levites were consecrated in God's eyes by their zeal (motivated by the word) to rid Israel of apostasy; this is what constituted them Yahweh's "holy (sanctified) one" (Dt. 33:8,9). The Lord alludes to this: "Sanctify them through (i.e. through obedience to) Your word" (Jn. 17:17), as the Levites were sanctified (1 Chron. 23:13 Heb.). Through His allusions to this, the Lord Jesus was telling the disciples not to be frightened to stand alone from the community they knew and respected.

But the allusion may be to the waters of Massah and Meribah in Ex. 17. We learn from Dt. 33:8-11 that in some way at this time, some of the tribe of Levi showed themselves faithful to God, whilst others didn't, and the faithful Levites opposed the unfaithful ones- although this isn't here recorded. This kind of faithfulness was shown again at the time of the golden calf, and therefore the system of the firstborn being priests was changed so that the tribe of Levi became the source of the priests. Priesthood was therefore given on the basis of qualification, and Levi's behaviour at this point was one of those qualifications: "Of Levi he said, Your Thummim and your Urim are with your holy one [the faithful Levites] whom You proved at Massah, with whom You strove [the unfaithful Levites] at the waters of Meribah; who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your

word and keep Your covenant. They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law. They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering on Your altar".

Deu 33:9 who said of his father and of his mother, 'I have not seen him'. Neither did he acknowledge his brothers, nor did he know his own children; for they have observed Your word and keep Your covenant-

The loyal Levites were asked to kill their own brothers and neighbours in their tribal encampment area (Ex. 32:27). The 3000 may have been the apostate amongst the tribe of Levi (Ex. 32:28). So we are wrong to think that all the Levites were loyal to Moses and spurned the golden calf. Indeed it could be that those slain were the unfaithful amongst the tribe of Levi.

"The men which You gave me out of the (Jewish) world... they have kept Your word" (Jn. 17:6) compares with the faithful Levites being "given" to Aaron / the priesthood out of Israel (Num. 3:9; 8:19; 18:6); at the time of the golden calf they "observed Your word, and kept Your covenant" (Dt. 33:9), as did the disciples. The relationship between Moses and the Levites was therefore that between Christ and the disciples- a sense of thankfulness that at least a minority were faithful. See on Jn. 17:6; Jn. 17:17.

These words are alluded to by the Lord Jesus in explaining why He felt closer to those who listened to His word than to His natural family (Mk. 3:21,31-35; Mt. 12:46-50). He read these same words that we do. To feel this closely to those who are, like us, God's spiritual chil-

dren, can seem an impossible challenge at times; especially in family-based societies where life is one endless social club.

Deu 33:10 They shall teach Jacob Your ordinances, and Israel Your law-

"They shall..." was a command more than a predictive prophecy. Much which appears to be prophecy, such as the passage about the rebuilding of the temple at the restoration in Ez. 40-48, is command more than prediction. For the priesthood failed to teach Israel as here envisioned. See on :11.

They shall put incense before You and whole burnt offering on Your altar-

LXX "they shall place incense in the time of thy wrath continually upon thine altar". The idea, as in :7, is that just as Moses and Aaron had saved Israel by their intercession, so the future descendant of Judah and Levi would do so. And the ultimate fulfilment is in the Lord Jesus.

Revelation describes Angels rushing in response to human prayers, vials of judgment being poured out on earth as a result of the incense of prayer accumulating...this is the power of prayer. If prayer is like incense, we must give Dt. 33:10 RVmg. its full weight- that incense would come up "in your nostrils". This is how intimately we are invited to see our prayers being received by God; this is the power of prayer. The golden vials full of prayers of Rev. 5:8 become the vials of judgments which are poured out on the land in Rev. 8:5- so close is the

connection between the events that mould history, and the incense of prayer.

Deu 33:11 Yahweh, bless his substance-

This request for material blessing was in the light of the fact they had no land inheritance, and lived on their share of the gifts given to Yahweh. So the fulfilment of this blessing was dependent upon Israel's obedience. See on :10.

Accept the work of his hands-

That work was intercession for Israel; see on :10.

Strike through the hips of those who rise up against him, of those who hate him, so that they will not rise again-

The reference may be to the rising up against the established priesthood of Num. 16. But the permanent, final crushing of those who rise up against Levi surely refers to the final latter day destruction of all opposition to the ultimate priest and intercessor, the Lord Jesus. The language is used about opposition to Him (Ps. 69:24).

Deu 33:12 Of Benjamin he said, The beloved of Yahweh shall dwell in safety by Him. He covers him all the day long-

The reference is clearly to the presence of Yahweh dwelling between the cherubim over the ark. The temple was to be built in Benjamin's territory in Jerusalem. But David, a man of Judah, often appropriates this language to himself. For the Psalms speak of him as being covered by the wings of the cherubim, as if he were located on the mercy seat or lid of the ark where the blood of atonement was scattered every year, covered by the wings of God's cherubic care. "The beloved of Yahweh" was

Solomon, so there may be a hint here of the potential possible for Solomon. But he failed, and so the prophecy and potential came fully true in the Lord Jesus. I noted on :5 that the LXX there speaks of Messiah as the beloved of Yahweh, so this may be the reference here too.

He dwells between His shoulders-

This could mean that Yahweh dwelt between the shoulders of Benjamin, just as the breastplate of glory was between the shoulders of the high priest. It would be another indication that the special presence of God in the tabernacle and with the high priest was in essence and spirit possible for all God's people. This came to full term when the veil was torn down at the Lord's death, and Paul argues that all of us can like the high priest enter into the holiest with the Lord's blood of atonement.

Deu 33:13 Of Joseph he said, His land is blessed by Yahweh for the precious things of the heavens, for the dew, for the deep that couches beneath-

Ephraim and Manasseh demanded more land at the time of Josh. 17:14, but their argument was weak because they had been given ample land, but they refused to drive out the Canaanites or clear the forests in it (Josh 17:15). They claimed they deserved it because they had been "blessed". By saying this they were twisting scriptures which speak of their blessing (Gen. 48:20; 49:25,26; Dt. 33:13-17), and therefore demanding more territory which was easier to live in. But the promised "blessing" didn't require they be given more land, and the other tribes were also "blessed". This is typical of how

people take one verse here or there to justify their own secular claims.

The blessing of dew was withdrawn during the three and a half years of Elijah's ministry, as he pleaded with Israel to repent. And so it will happen in the latter day Elijah ministry. Only when Israel repent will these blessings be realized again. God "will not be unto the residue (remnant) of this people as in the former days... the heavens shall (now) give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things" (Zech. 8:10-12). The dew will come upon the whole land, because only this righteous remnant of Israel will be left alive. We note that dew represents teaching in Dt. 32:2, and the repentance of Israel and restoration of blessing will be due to their response to the teaching of the Elijah ministry.

Deu 33:14 for the precious things of the fruits of the sun, for the precious things of the growth of the moons-

An allusion to the idea that on each new moon, a different type of fruit tree begins to ripen its fruit. This seems to me an example of where wrong scientific understandings are used without correction. But perhaps Rev. 22:2 is the final fulfilment, when the forest of trees of life will bring forth fruits every month, i.e. at the monthly new moons.

Deu 33:15 for the chief things of the ancient mountains, for the precious things of the everlasting hills-

LXX "from the top of the ancient mountains, and from the top of the everlasting hills". The idea of abundant fruit (:14) on the very top of huge mountains is

the language of the establishment of the Kingdom (Ps. 72:16).

Deu 33:16 for the precious things of the earth and its fullness, the good will of Him who was manifested in the bush. Let this come on the head of Joseph-

LXX "let the things pleasing to him that dwelt in the bush come on the head of Joseph". The will of the God who appeared to Moses in the burning bush was clearly the salvation of Israel. And that salvation would be associated with abundant fertility of the land in physical terms.

On the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers-

Just as Levi was separate from his brethren and commended for it (:9), so with Joseph. "Separated" is the word for Nazirite. He was literally 'Nazirited', consecrated, from among his brothers; this could be a reference to how he was the family priest, wearing the coat of many colours; and how he was clearly consecrated by God as well to be the family's saviour. Joseph's separation from his brethren, by their choice, was what separated him unto the things of God. And in so many lives, separation from the community of brethren, by their choice rather than pushing off in a huff from them, is what brings a person to special service toward God. And enables them to thereby save their brethren. Job would be a classic example, coming to full term in the Lord Jesus (Heb. 7:26), who was separated from and by sinners that He might save sinners. See on :24.

Deu 33:17 The firstborn of his herd, majesty is his. His horns are the horns of the wild ox; with them he shall push all the peoples to the ends of the land-

The idea may be that God would have potentially enabled Ephraim and Manasseh to do the bulk of the work in driving out the tribes. But half of Manasseh wanted to remain beyond Jordan, and there is no evidence they lived up to this potential at the time of the conquest. Just as so many are given the potential power to inherit the Kingdom, but refuse to use it. Moses 'prophesied' that Ephraim would "push the people [Gentile inhabitants of the land] together to the ends of the earth / land" (Dt. 33:17). And yet Hos. 7:8 cp. Ps. 106:34-36 criticize Ephraim for *failing* to push the people out of the land. Moses' prophecies about the tribes sound like predictions; but they were actually commands which those tribes had the freewill to obey or not.

They are the ten thousands of Ephraim; they are the thousands of Manasseh-

See on Gen. 48:5. The way Jacob insisted on blessing Ephraim as the firstborn seems to show some kind of favouritism and a desire to see his grandson living out his own experience, i.e. the younger son who fought his way up and received the blessings as opposed to the rightful heir. Ephraim becomes a code-name for apostate Israel throughout the prophets. And yet God accepted Jacob's preferential blessing of Ephraim and repeated this in Dt. 33:17. Jacob foresaw how Simeon and Levi would be especially responsible for 'houghing the ox' (Gen. 49:6 RV), or bullock (Concordant Version), i.e. Christ (Dt.

33:17 RV), the bullock of the sin offering (Heb. 13:11-13). Gen. 49:6 can also be rendered, with evident Messianic reference, 'murdering the prince' (Gen. 49:6 Adam Clarke's Translation).

Deu 33:18 Of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out-

The idea was that Zebulun would be blessed in her voyages by sea, in line with the blessing of Gen 49:13 "Zebulun will dwell at the haven of the sea. He will be for a haven of ships. His border will be on Sidon". But this didn't happen. Zebulun was to dwell along the sea coast (LXX), where ships unload [a "haven"], "beside the sea" (GNB), until Sidon. But this wasn't the case. The canton of Zebulun even in Ezekiel's prophecy of the restored Kingdom was to be nowhere near Sidon, and Zebulun never had a border unto Sidon. According to Josephus (Ant. 19:10,16), Zebulun was never even bounded by the sea, being cut off by Asher. So again we see a case of a potential Kingdom blessing which was never realized. And this must be the great tragedy for God, to see so much potential wasted in so many lives. What joy for Him when we at least seek to fulfil those potentials He has given us.

And Issachar, in your tents-

Issachar was to have prosperous harvests so that they rejoiced in their homes ["tents", Dt. 16:7]. The contrast is with how Zebulun were intended to "go out" in trading and be blessed, and Issachar likewise in their more localized activities.

Deu 33:19 They shall call the peoples to the mountain. There they will offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they shall draw out the abundance of the seas, the hidden treasures of the sand-

The idea is that they would invite the Gentiles to the mountain of God's inheritance, His Kingdom established in the land (Ex. 15:17). And the grateful Gentiles would bring their offerings and gifts to the land in response. Hence LXX "for the wealth of the sea shall suckle thee, and so shall the marts of them that dwell by the sea-coast". This is all the language of the restored Kingdom of God in Israel (Is. 60:5,6,16; 66:11,12). The nations of the world were imagined as arriving at the sea ports in their territory. But instead, Israel retreated into mere religion rather than spirituality, and were not a light to the Gentile world as intended. Indeed instead of restoring the Kingdom as intended in those Isaiah passages, they instead became elitist and xenophobic towards Gentiles. And so the new Israel must learn from this.

The calling of 10000 men of Naphtali and Zebulon to Mount Tabor by Barak and Deborah surely was some fulfilment of the otherwise enigmatic Dt. 33:19: "They shall call the peoples to the mountain. There they will offer sacrifices of righteousness, for they shall draw out the abundance of the seas". This prophecy has as context "the ten thousands of Ephraim; they are the thousands of Manasseh" (Dt. 33:17). The impression is given there that they would offer sacrifice there on "the mountain" and share the spoil of "the seas" [nations], and possibly

this happened as Deborah sung the song of Jud. 5. The people of Ephraim and Manasseh are first in the list mentioned in Jud. 5 as those who supported the thousands of Zebulon and Naphtali, and who assembled to the mountain of Tabor. Asher and Dan are criticized in Jud. 5 for not assembling to Tabor because they were too concerned with their business in their ports on the coast. But Dt. 33:19 LXX promises blessing to Zebulon and Naphtali from the coast: "For the wealth of the sea shall suckle thee, and so shall the marts of them that dwell by the sea-coast".

Deu 33:20 Of Gad he said, He who enlarges Gad is blessed-

If Israel had been obedient, their borders could have been enlarged (Dt. 12:2). It seems God would have done this especially for Gad, even for the sake of one faithful man. Yet there's no evidence it ever happened; another potential set up which was left unfulfilled because of the chronic lack of vision and satisfied-with-what-I-have attitude of God's people. Who knows the height and depth, length and breadth of what could have been for God's people? And the same is true for us today. According to Israel's perception of the land, so it was defined for them.

He dwells as a lioness and tears the arm, yes the crown of the head-

LXX "as a lion he rested, having broken the arm and the ruler". The reference may specifically be to the destruction of the latter day invader of Israel, with Gad

identified with the latter day lion of Judah, Messiah Jesus (Gen. 49:9).

Deu 33:21 He provided the first part for himself, for there was the lawgiver's portion reserved. He came with the heads of the people. He executed the righteousness of Yahweh, His ordinances with Israel-

LXX "And he saw his first-fruits, that there the land of the princes gathered with the chiefs of the people was divided; the Lord wrought righteousness, and his judgment with Israel". The reference may be to how Gad was apparently the leader of the "heads of the people" of Gad, Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh who wanted to take their inheritance east of Jordan (Num. 32:2,6,25). The idea therefore was that they were told by Moses to see the inheritance they were allowed east of Jordan as merely a firstfruit of greater inheritance. Just as we are invited to receive firstfruit of inheritance of the Kingdom through the gift and experience of the Holy Spirit. But as with so many today, the first fruit was treated as the full experience, with no spiritual ambition to inherit more. "He executed the righteousness of Yahweh, His ordinances with Israel" would then be a very positive take on how the men of Gad apparently obeyed the agreement to go over Jordan and help their brethren inherit the Kingdom.

Deu 33:22 Of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's cub that leaps out of Bashan-

The reference may specifically be to the destruction of the latter day invader of Israel, with Dan identified with the latter day lion cub of Judah, Messiah Jesus

(Gen. 49:9). Bashan simply refers to the fact it was an area known for lions (Song 4:8). Or perhaps there will be some specific latter day fulfilment of this in the area of Bashan. There may have been a potential initial fulfilment in Samson who was from Dan.

Deu 33:23 Of Naphtali he said, Naphtali, satisfied with favour, full of the blessing of Yahweh, possess the west and the south-

Blessing is here associated with favour, or grace. The connection between blessing and forgiveness / salvation is widespread throughout Scripture: Dt. 33:23; Ps. 5:12 (blessing = grace) Dt. 30:19; Ps. 3:8; 24:5; 28:9; 133:3 (= salvation); Ex. 12:32; 32:29; Num. 24:1; 2 Sam. 21:3; Ps. 67:1 (cp. context); Lk. 6:28; Acts 3:26; Rom. 4:7,8; 1 Cor. 10:16; Gal. 3:14 (= forgiveness). So it seems Moses had in view the day when Naphtali would have spiritual blessings.

"Drive out" is s.w. "possess". We must note the difference between the Canaanite peoples and their kings being "struck" and their land "taken" by Joshua-Jesus; and the people of Israel permanently taking possession. This is the difference between the Lord's victory on the cross, and our taking possession of the Kingdom. Even though that possession has been "given" to us. The word used for "possession" is literally 'an inheritance'. The allusion is to the people, like us, being the seed of Abraham. The Kingdom was and is our possession, our inheritance- if we walk in the steps of Abraham. But it is one thing to be the seed of Abraham, another to take possession of the inheritance; and Israel generally did not take posses-

sion of all the land (Josh. 11:23 13:1; 16:10; 18:3; 23:4). The language of inheritance / possession is applied to us in the New Testament (Eph. 1:11,14; Col. 3:24; Acts 20:32; 26:18; 1 Pet. 1:4 etc.). Israel were promised: "You shall possess it" (Dt. 30:5; 33:23). This was more of a command than a prophecy, for sadly they were "given" the land but did not "possess" it. They were constantly encouraged in the wilderness that they were on the path to possessing the land (Dt. 30:16,18; 31:3,13; 32:47), but when they got there they didn't possess it fully.

Deu 33:24 Of Asher he said, May Asher be blessed with children. Let him be acceptable to his brothers; let him dip his foot in oil-

These blessings look ahead to a day when Joseph would no longer be separate from his brothers (:16) and Asher would no longer be despised by his brothers. One great joy of the Kingdom will be the ultimate reconciliation between brethren. The blessing of oil doesn't refer to the discovery of crude oil in Israel, but refers to agricultural blessing of olive oil as in Job 29:6; Gen. 49:20.

Deu 33:25 Your bars shall be iron and brass-

LXX "His sandal shall be iron and brass". The sandal or foot spoke of inheritance, so this may be a wish that Asher have iron and brass within their territorial inheritance (Dt. 8:9).

As your days, so your strength will be-

The idea is as the Vulgate "let thine old age be as thy youth", wishing the blessing of Moses upon Asher. Again we see Moses set up as a realistic pattern to be fol-

lowed, rather than to be as it were worshipped as an unapproachable icon, as Judaism effectively came to do.

Deu 33:26 There is none like God, Jeshurun-

The appeal is to realize that their God is incomparable with any other god or idol.

Who rides on the heavens for your help, in His excellence on the skies-

Through it all we sense the great love of Yahweh, manifest in that Angel, for His servant. And this all typifies the tenderness of God for Jesus in his time of dying. As we think of the Angel lowering the body of Moses, with his arms around and underneath him, it seems no accident that the last words of Moses spoke of this very thing: "There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency in the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee... Israel then shall dwell in safety alone (language of the future Kingdom, Ez. 29:26; 34:25): the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by Yahweh... thine enemies shall be subdued unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places", i.e. their idols (Dt. 33:26-29 AV). Surely these Moses' last words could not have been said without his voice cracking with emotion.

Deu 33:27 The eternal God is your dwelling place-

LXX "And the rule of God shall protect thee". This looks ahead to the Kingdom, when the rule of God will be openly upon earth.

Underneath are the everlasting arms. He thrusts out the enemy from before you and said 'Destroy!'-

LXX "Perish!". And yet although the Canaanites were thrust out by God from before them, they refused to accept this potential power to inherit the Kingdom. Just as so many do today.

Deu 33:28 Israel shall dwell in safety alone-

LXX "Israel shall dwell in confidence alone on the land of Jacob". They would not share the land with other tribes, they alone would be there, and the other tribes would become part of Israel. In Ps. 4:8 David spoke of how God alone "makes me dwell in safety alone". The very same Hebrew words occur in Dt. 33:28 – Israel will "dwell in safety alone" in the Kingdom. David felt that even in the midst of hardship, this time of Kingdom blessing had come for him internally, in the peace of his own mind. Likewise in our lives the essence of the Kingdom can come. We live the eternal life now.

The fountain of Jacob in a land of grain and new wine. Yes, His heavens drop down dew-

Paul evidently disapproved of Jacob's attitude in falsely obtaining the physical blessing from Isaac (Rom. 12:20 surely alludes to it); but his evil deception of his father was used by God to grant him the physical blessing (Gen. 27:28 is confirmed by God in Dt. 33:28), even though at the time he was dressed like a goat, connecting himself with fallen Adam and the rejected at the day

of judgment; "Deceiving and being deceived" certainly rings bells with Jacob (2 Tim. 3:13).

The passage in :26-29 speaks of God's dramatic intervention to permanently save Israel from their enemies in the last days, and associates this with the heavens dropping dew upon the land. Seeing this is a normal thing to happen, the implication must be that during the time of their enemies' domination the dew had not come. See on :13.

Deu 33:29 You are happy, Israel. Who is like you, a people saved by Yahweh, the shield of your help, the sword of your excellence!-

LXX "and his sword is thy boast". Israel would finally come to a point where they boasted not in their own strength [unlike today] but in Yahweh's saving work for them in giving them the Kingdom.

Your enemies shall submit themselves to you; you shall tread on their high places-

LXX "Upon their neck". But "high places" would be a reference to the idolatrous "high places", which the prophets lament were a spiritual snare to Israel. Moses' final wish and knowledge was that ultimately, Israel would quit with idolatry and be Yahweh's alone. Seeing that he had predicted their spiritual failures, Moses perhaps had his eye on the day when finally God's people shall conquer all their temptations, even if only a minority of those with whom God works actually get there in the end, all the same, a minority will, and they will be God's true Israel.

Moses' books were helping the wilderness generation to see where they were coming from historically. Passages like Gen. 12:6 now take on special relevance: "The Canaanites were then in the land". Moses was saying this as his people were about to enter a Canaan likewise occupied by Canaanites. He was bidding the people see their connection with their father Abraham, who then lived with Canaanites also in the same land. Gen. 15:1 introduces us to Abraham as a man who had God as his "shield"; and Dt. 33:29 concludes the Pentateuch by saying that Israel as a nation should be happy because *they* have Yahweh as their "shield".

DEUTERONOMY CHAPTER 34

Deu 34:1 Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, opposite from Jericho. Yahweh showed him all the land of Gilead to Dan-

This presumably required supernatural vision, it was a vision of the Kingdom. This vision may not have just been literal, because in Dt. 33 the blessings of Moses imply his foresight also of their future experiences in that land, especially in the last days. It was from "Abarim" (Dt. 32:49). Moses seeing the Kingdom but being unable to enter it, nor himself lead God's people into it, points forward to how the law of Moses gave a vision of the Kingdom, but was unable to bring us into it. That required the work of Joshua / Jesus. "Abarim" means 'the regions beyond'. Moses and his law gave an insight into the Kingdom, the region beyond him. For the culture of grace and kindness, centered around the sacrificed future Messiah, the Lord Jesus, was the outcome of the law. But it was unattainable by weak men.

Deu 34:2 and all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah to the hinder sea-

The idea is that he saw the western boundary, having seen the northern boundary in :1. The renowned Hebrew commentator Rashi claims "to the hinder sea" should be "unto the last day". As noted on :1, I suggest that the vision was not only geographical, but also of

how things would be in the land over time, especially in the last days, as explained on Dt. 33.

Deu 34:3 and the South and the Plain of the valley of Jericho the city of palm trees to Zoar-

If indeed (see on :1,2) Moses saw not only geographically but also over time, he would have seen the events around Jericho as the walls fell, and seen things like the casting of the temple items in 1 Kings 7:46- which was done in the plain of the valley of Jericho. The LXX puts this description in terms of the promises made to Abraham which will be alluded to in :4: "from the River of Egypt unto the Great River, the River Euphrates, and unto the Western Sea".

Deu 34:4 Yahweh said to him, This is the land which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, saying 'I will give it to your seed'. I have caused you to see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there-

Moses' final experience was to view the land just as Abraham did, looking to all points of the compass and then receiving the promise that he would one day, not immediately, eternally inherit it (Gen. 13:14,15). So Moses was comforted that he was indeed a seed of Abraham.

Deu 34:5 So Moses the servant of Yahweh died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of Yahweh-

Moses died "by the mouth of the Lord (Heb.). "By the mouth of the Lord" can imply a kiss; as if the Angel kissed Moses, and this resulted in his death. Remember, the Angel was Moses *friend* (Ex. 33:11). It was a reversal of how the Angel created Adam and breathed into his

nose the Spirit; now the Angel kisses Moses and takes it away. And then he buried him, laying him in the grave in hope of better days, when Christ would come and raise his people, when God's people would at last be obedient. What an end. Moses seems to have foreseen this when he said that "We bring our years to an end with a sigh", a final outbreathing (Ps. 90:9 RVmg.). And then the Angel built a sepulchre. Just picture that Angel perhaps digging, yes *digging* the grave, building the sepulchre of the rocks laying around in that cleft in the mountain. In the context of Moses leading Israel, we are told: "As a beast goeth down into the valley (tired at the end of a day, led there to drink by a loving owner), the Spirit (Angel) of the Lord caused him to rest" (Is. 63:14). Moses was buried by the Angel in a valley in the mountain (Dt. 34:6). The Hebrew translated "rest" means both to physically lay down and to comfort. So we have the picture of the Angel comforting Moses with the hope of resurrection, kissing him goodnight as it were, and then laying him down in the grave. The softness of God at the death of Moses, the gentleness, prefigured above all the gentleness, in a sense, of the Father with His Son at the cross; and His gentleness with each of us in our time of dying. Let's remember this idea. For short of the second coming, we're all mortal. There's something wondrous about the death of Moses. It's as if God took Moses' funeral and said in truth 'This is the best man I've yet known,' as a man might say at the funeral of his best friend.

Deu 34:6 He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth Peor, but no man knows of his tomb to this day-

This was the very place where they camped after being rejected from entering the land (Dt. 3:29). In his death, Moses was completely identified with his sinful people, as was the Lord Jesus. For those association with Him, sin itself is thereby no longer a barrier between God and man. Is. 63:14 says that the Spirit [the Angel] caused Moses to rest as a man leads his animal to water in a valley. The way the Angel buried Moses is very touching. "According to the word of Yahweh" (:5) can bear the translation "By the kiss of Yahweh", as if the Angel with whom Moses was used to speaking face to face, as a man speaks with his friend, kissed him and as it were reversed the kiss of life, took his breath / spirit away, and laid him down to rest there on the mountain, then carried the body down to the valley and buried him there, to rest until the resurrection. The softness, respect and gentleness of God with His beloved in their time of dying comes over very strongly here.

An alternative reconstruction of the death of Moses is possible. Rabbinical commentators claim that "he buried him" (Dt. 34:6) is reflexive; it means that Moses buried himself. For confirmation of this, see S.R.Hirsch, *The Pentateuch*, Vol. 5 p.685 (New York: Judaica Press, 1971). It is the same Hebrew construction as in Lev. 22:16 and Num. 6:13. In this case, the description of Christ as 'making his own grave' (Is. 53:9) could be read as an allusion to the death of Moses. Therefore the pat-

tern of events was perhaps something like this: The Angel showed Moses the land; Moses, in the presence of the Angel, dug his own grave and lowered himself into it, as a conscious act of the will, in obedience to God's command (as the prototype of the Lord Jesus). The prophesy that Moses would *lie down* in death takes on a literal sense in this case (Dt. 31:16). Then the Angel kissed him, and he died. The Angel then built up the sepulchre over his body. Personally I feel this was what happened, but I am cautious to strongly push ideas which rely on a fine point of Hebrew grammar.

Deu 34:7 Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his youth abated-

Moses was one of those old people who still had a 'young' attitude to life; not for him the cynicism which comes with old age; hence Deuteronomy is at times optimistic about people with what could be seen as an almost naive youthful optimism. One wonders whether he was therefore right to accept Jethro's advice that he needed to arrange helpers lest he wear out (Ex. 18:18), seeing that God had kept him so physically strong, and continued to do so. Strong defines those Hebrew words as meaning that his newness, his youth, had not been chased away (NEV "abated") by the years, as happens to most men. He had all the energy, intellectually and physically, of a 21 year old, yet with all the sadness and knowledge of God of his 120 years. All the times we read he "rose up early" to commune with God demonstrate

his energy, his enthusiasm for the word of the God of Israel (Ex. 8:20; 9:13; 24:4; 34:4).

Moses accepted Jethro's advice on the basis that he will "surely wear away" (Ex. 18:18); even though his natural strength never abated (Dt. 34:7), and God surely would not have asked him to do the impossible. Jethro at this time seems to have seen Yahweh as only one of many gods; he was a pagan priest. He prophesied that if Moses followed his advice, "all this people shall go to their place in peace" - which they didn't. Num. 10:31 suggests Moses saw Jethro's knowledge of the desert as better than the Angelic "eyes" of Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3) who were going ahead of the camp to find a resting place (Num. 10:33 cp. Ex. 33:14 cp. Is. 63:9). It seems Moses recognized his error on the last day of his life, when he admits Yahweh, not Jethro's wisdom, had led them (Dt. 1:33). Likewise Paul in his final communication comments on the way that Mark with whom he had once quarrelled was profitable to him (2 Tim. 4:11).

Deu 34:8 The children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended-

Dt. 9:1 records Moses' assumption that Israel would enter Canaan on the day that he died: "You are to pass over the Jordan this day". But they did not pass over that day because they mourned for Moses 30 days. It is possible that Moses felt so despised by them that he assumed there would be no period of mourning for him.

Deu 34:9 Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him, and the

children of Israel listened to him and did as Yahweh commanded Moses-

We must compare this with Num. 27:18: "Yahweh said to Moses, Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him". Because Joshua had the Spirit, Moses was told to lay his hand on him. Yet Dt. 34:9 says that Moses laid his hand on him so that Joshua might receive the Spirit. Here we see the upward spiral of spirituality at work- those who are of the Spirit are made more spiritual.

Deu 34:10 There has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face-

Messiah was the prophet promised "like unto" Moses (Dt. 18:15,18; Acts 3:22). This may therefore be a note to the effect that the Messiah had not yet arisen at the time of writing. Gideon was bidden rise up to the example of Moses- for there were many similarities between his call by the Angel, and the Angelic calling which Moses received at the burning bush. Thus Gideon was called to follow the Angel in faith, "because Ehyeh is with you" (Jud. 6:16)- a direct quotation from the Angelic manifestation to Moses in Ex. 3:12. And yet he responds: "Alas! For I have seen Yahweh's envoy face to face!" (Jud. 6:22). Gideon knew full well that Moses had seen the Angel "face to face" (Dt. 34:10). Gideon's fear is therefore rooted in a sense that "No! I'm simply *not* Moses!". And it's the same with us. We can read of all these reasons to believe that Moses is really our pattern, and respond that "No! This ain't me...". But there, in the

record of Gideon and his success, lies our challenge to rise up to the spirit of Moses.

Deu 34:11 in all the signs and the wonders which Yahweh sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land-

Of all the miracles God has worked, those involved with the salvation of Israel from Egypt are repeatedly presented as the greatest ever done, and thereby Moses becomes the most spectacular Old Testament channel for the work of God's Spirit. And this reflects the personal wonder of the way God brought each of us out from the world onto the path to His Kingdom. For those raised Christian, this is so hard to perceive adequately enough.

Deu 34:12 and in all the mighty hand and in all the great terror, which Moses worked in the sight of all Israel-

The idea is that the hand of Moses did these things, hence GNB "the great and terrifying things that Moses did in the sight of all Israel". But the "great terror" was done by the mighty hand of Yahweh (Dt. 4:34; 26:8). The final accolade for Moses was that his hand was hand in hand with God's, he was a willing partner in the salvation of God's people. The same phrase "great terror" is used in Jer. 32:20,21, but the point is made that this was an ongoing work "unto this day". This is the power of event in Biblical history. Those events are no mere past actions that are completed. God's word becomes a living word, as we perceive that the same hand which worked in those historical events is bringing about the essence of those events in our own lives.



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