

The Fifth Book of Moses Called DEUTERONOMY

INTRODUCTION

1. Title. The book of Deuteronomy is the fifth and last book of the Pentateuch. It is usually referred to among the Jews by the expression “These words,” the first two words of the book in Hebrew. The English title of the book is from the LXX and means “The Second [or, Repeated] Legislation,” in relation to the book of Exodus, which is sometimes referred to as “The First Legislation.”

2. Authorship. The full weight of traditional testimony is overwhelmingly in favor of Moses as the author of the book of Deuteronomy. As far back as one can trace there is no other name suggested. It is only the modern scholar who has questioned it. Added to this traditional testimony is the authority of Jesus Christ and the apostles (Matt. 19:7, 8, cf. Deut. 24:1; Mark 12:19, cf. Deut. 25:5; John 1:17 and 7:19, cf. Deut. 4:44; John 1:45 and Acts 3:22, cf. Deut. 18:15; Heb. 10:28, cf. Deut. 17:2–7). The age of the book is attested by the type of Hebrew expressions used and by the historical facts and settings portrayed. These and other facts testify to Moses as the author (see PP 503).

3. Historical Setting. By the first day of the 11th month of the 40th year of the Exodus, Israel had encamped at Shittim, opposite Jericho, in the plains of Moab east of the Jordan (Num. 25:1; Deut. 1:1–3). During the two months they remained there (Deut. 1:3; cf. Joshua 3:1, 2, 5, 7; 4:19), preparations were made to occupy Canaan, and, perhaps most important of all, Moses spoke the discourses that constitute the bulk of the book of Deuteronomy.

4. Theme. The book is historical, legislative, and hortatory. It consists chiefly of four orations (or three, according to some authorities), with connective notes. The first oration announces Moses’ deposition from the office of leadership. It begins with historic survey and closes with exhortation to keep the law. The second oration reviews the Decalogue as the basis for the covenant between God and Israel and admonishes Israel to obey; the body of the discourse consists of a recital of the requirements of civil, social, and religious legislation. The third oration is concerned with the ritual of the blessing and the curse. Here Moses rises to heights of oratorical denunciation unsurpassed in literature. The fourth oration again presents, with brief historic survey, an exhortation to keep the law, and explains the covenant in the heart.

In the oratory of Deuteronomy, Moses appeals to his people to order their lives according to the revealed will of God. Obedience means life; disobedience means death. Moses employs historic facts as the groundwork of his exhortation, and reinforces his message by appealing to Israel’s love and gratitude to God and their dignity as God’s chosen people. Aware of the dangers of idolatry and of the substitution of form for the essential spirit of religion, Moses stresses the supremacy of Jehovah and His law, the spiritual nature of His worship and service, and His faithfulness in keeping covenant with Israel and with all nations.

A unique cycle of great oratory, Deuteronomy is the valedictory of a man who loved his people so deeply that he begged to be blotted out of the book of life if their sin could not be forgiven (Ex. 32:32).

The influence of Deuteronomy, and its place in the religious life of the Hebrews—and of Christendom—is great. The re-discovery of the “book of the law” at the time of King Josiah produced one of the greatest religious reformations in history (see 2 Kings 22, 23; 2 Chron. 34, 35; PK 392-406). Deuteronomy became the keystone of Hebrew religious

devotion; every true Hebrew recited one of its chapters daily. Jesus met the temptations of the evil one with three quotations from Deuteronomy (Matt. 4:1–11; see Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13), and, answering the question of the lawyer, gave as the first and great commandment the central sentence of Deuteronomy (Matt. 22:35–38; see Deut. 6:5; 10:12; 30:6). Paul employed the phraseology of Deuteronomy (ch. 30:11–14) to illustrate the idea of righteousness by faith (Rom. 10:6–8).

5. Outline.

- I. Title and Introduction, 1:1–5.
- II. First Oration: Moses' Announcement of Deposition, 1:6 to 4:43.
 - A. Events from Sinai to Canaan, 1:6 to 3:29.
 - B. Admonitions and exhortations to keep the law, 4:1–40.
 - C. Appointment of cities of refuge, 4:41–43.
- III. Second Oration: A Review of the Law, 4:44 to 26:19.
 - A. Introduction, 4:44–49.
 - B. The Decalogue the basis of the covenant, 5:1–33.
 - C. Exhortations to obedience, 6:1 to 11:32.
 - D. The Book of the Covenant, 12:1 to 26:19.
- IV. Third Oration: The Blessing and the Curse, 27:1 to 28:68.
 - A. Introduction, 27:1–13.
 - B. The curses, 27:14–26.
 - C. Blessing and curses, 28:1–68.
- V. Fourth Oration: The Covenant in Moab, 29:1 to 30:20.
 - A. Brief review of events from Egypt to Canaan, 29:1–9.
 - B. Exhortation to keep the law, 29:10–29.
 - C. Promise of mercy, 30:1–10.
 - D. The covenant in the heart, 30:11–20.
- VI. The Responsibilities of Leadership Laid Down, 31:1 to 34:12.
 - A. Moses' appeal to Joshua and to all Israel, 31:1–29.
 - B. Moses' song of victory and parting admonition, 31:30 to 33:29.
 - C. Moses' death, burial, and epitaph, 34:1–12.

CHAPTER 1

1 *Moses' speech in the end of the fortieth year, briefly rehearsing the story 6 of God's promise, 13 of giving them officers, 19 of sending the spies to search the land, 34 of God's anger for their incredulity, 41 and disobedience.*

1. All Israel. There would seem to be difficulty in the voice of Moses being heard by so large a throng. It is possible, therefore, that his words were repeated by appointed leaders stationed among the people.

This side Jordan. That is, the eastern side of the river. It was “beyond the Jordan” (RSV) as viewed from western Palestine. The region is known today as Transjordan.

The wilderness. The vicinity of the eastern side of Jordan adjacent to the wilderness of wandering.

In the plain. That is, the 'Araba of Moab (Num. 22:1). The term 'Araba, here translated “plain,” applies to all the low-lying country of the river Jordan clear down to the Gulf of Aqaba, or to any part of it. The deepest part of this geographical depression is the Dead Sea.

The Red sea. The word “sea” is not in the Hebrew text. When Moses refers to the Red Sea, he uses the word for “sea” (Deut. 1:40). The Heb. *suph*, translated “Red,” literally means “reed” (see on Ex. 10:19). Reference here is probably to a locality east of the Jordan not yet identified.

Between Paran. The place names here given do not appear in the account of the Israelite wanderings (Num. 33). Some have identified Hazeroth with the watering place ‘*ain Khadra*, half way between Sinai and Ezion-geber. Otherwise, nothing is known of the places here mentioned. Laban means “white,” and Dizahab refers to a region “of gold.”

2. The way of mount Seir. That is, by the Mt. Seir road, around the borders of Edom (see on Num. 21:4).

3. The fortieth year. This included the year in which they left Egypt; the second year, in which they left Sinai after a stay of 11 months; plus 38 years of wandering, until after the death of Aaron (Ex. 19:1; Num. 10:11; Deut. 2:14; see p. 187).

The eleventh month. Two months and nine days before crossing the Jordan (cf. Joshua 4:19). The book of Deuteronomy is a record of what occurred during this interval of time.

4. After he had slain. See Num. 21:21 to 22:1. The two kings here mentioned were conquered in the 40th year of the Exodus. Their defeat was one of the last achievements of Israel under the leadership of Moses.

5. Began Moses. Literally, “Moses undertook,” or “Moses took upon himself.” The Hebrew verb form here used suggests inward resolution on the part of Moses.

This law. The word here translated “law” is one that refers to instruction generally, and would apply to any and all instruction coming from God.

6. Spake unto us. See Num. 10:13.

In Horeb. See on Ex. 3:1 and 19:1.

Dwelt long enough. Israel encamped at the foot of Mt. Sinai from the third month of the first year of the Exodus (Ex. 19:1) to the 20th day of the second month of the second year (Num. 10:11). Their sojourn at Sinai was devoted to the organization of Israel as a church and a nation, and to the construction of the tabernacle (see on Ex. 3:1; 13:18).

7. The mount. Not a particular “mount,” but all the “hill country” (RSV) of Palestine, then Amorite territory. It is the same area as that covered by the 12 spies (Num. 13:17–25).

All the places nigh. “All their neighbors” (RSV). The regions adjacent to the hill country of Palestine are next listed.

The plain. Heb. ‘*Arabah*, the depression including the lower Jordan valley (see on Deut. 1:1; see also Deut. 3:17; 2 Kings 25:5), the Dead Sea, and the plain extending southward to the Gulf of Aqaba. The Dead Sea was called “the sea of the plain [‘*Araba*]” (Joshua 3:16; 2 Kings 14:25).

The hills. From the same word as “mount” earlier in the verse, in reference to the hilly uplands of central Palestine.

The vale. Heb. *Shephelah*, a term applied to the foothill country lying between the uplands of central Palestine and the coastal plain, particularly that part of it between Judah and Philistia.

The south. Literally, “the *Negeb*,” the region about Beersheba and Kadesh-barnea.

The sea side. The coastal plains of Philistia, and that of Sharon, to the north of Philistia.

8. I have set the land. Literally, “I have given the land,” that is, placed it at your disposal.

Sware unto. A reference to the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and recorded in Gen. 15:18; 17:7, 8; 28:13. Compare Gen. 9:9; 17:7-10, 19; 35:12; 48:4; Ex. 28:43; Num. 25:13.

9. To bear you. A reference to the advice of Jethro in Ex. 18, and to the appointment of associates to assist Moses in the work of civil administration.

10. Stars of heaven. A reference to the blessing to Abraham (Gen. 22:17) and Jacob (Gen. 26:24). See also Ex. 32:13.

11. Hath promised. See Gen. 12:2; 15:5; 17:5, 6; 18:18; 22:17, 18; etc.

12. Cumbrance. That which wearies one, wears out a person. The word thus translated appears again only in Isa. 1:14, and is there rendered “trouble.” The verb form of the word appears but once (Job 37:11), and is translated “wearieth.”

Burden. A weight to be lifted. The same word is translated “exaction” in Neh. 10:31 and “tribute” in 2 Chron. 17:11.

Strife. Disputes, contentions, controversies (see Gen. 13:7; Deut. 19:17).

13. Take you. Literally, “present ye,” or “choose” you (RSV).

Wise. The word thus translated may refer to skill in technical work (Isa. 3:3; Jer. 10:9), wisdom in administration (Gen. 41:33, 39), shrewd men (2 Sam. 13:3), and educated men (Ex. 7:11).

Understanding. From a noun whose root means “to discern,” “to be intelligent,” “to be discreet,” “to have ability to teach.”

Known. That is, “experienced” (see Ex. 18:21, 25). They were recognized to be men of competence and experience.

14. Ye answered. The verbal acquiescence of the people to the plan of selecting tribal assistants to Moses is here recorded for the first time.

15. Officers. The word thus translated means “scribe,” or “secretary,” and is from the verb “to write.” The noun probably means “writer” or “secretary,” and refers to one in charge of written records. The same usage of the identical root is found in Arabic.

16. Charged. That is, instructed or gave orders to.

The stranger. A reference to the non-Hebrew who became a proselyte. He was to receive equally fair treatment with the Jew. Uprightness and impartiality in decisions were to mark the professional work of the judges.

17. Not respect persons. The poor man was to receive equal treatment with the wealthy or with the man of high position. There was to be no respect of persons (see Ex. 23:2, 5; Lev. 19:15).

Judgment is God’s. Riches, power, position, birth, education—none of these were to influence a judicial decision. The judges of Israel stood in the place of God. They were, in fact, called *’elohim*, literally “gods,” the very word used of God in such texts as Gen. 1:1–31 (see Ex. 7:1). *’Elohim* is applied to judges in Ex. 21:6 and 22:8, 9, in their capacity of speaking for God and giving decisions in His name.

18. At that time. That is, while at Horeb.

19. When we departed. Literally, when we “lifted up,” or “pulled up [the stakes and tent pegs].”

Terrible wilderness. Not only vast but hot, subject to great windstorms that whipped up the sand so as to endanger life, and also infested with various poisonous creatures and wild animals.

By the way of. “On the way to” (RSV).

Kadesh-barnea. Where the Israelites remained for a long time in the Wilderness of Paran, after refusing to enter Canaan (Num. 13:3, 26).

20. Give unto us. The hills of central Palestine were part of the promised inheritance.

21. Fear not. Compare Christ’s use of a similar expression in John 14:27.

22. The land. See Num. 13:17–20.

23. Twelve men. See Num. 13:1–16.

24. They turned. That is, left Kadesh-barnea behind them and went on their way.

Valley of Eshcol. See Num. 13:24. The word translated “Eshcol” means “cluster,” particularly a cluster of grapes. The valley of Eshcol is thought to have been to the north of Hebron, a region noted for its large clusters of luscious grapes.

25. Fruit. See Num. 13:23.

A good land. See Num. 13:27; 14:7.

26. Rebelled. Literally, “were stubbornly rebellious.”

27. Murmured. See Num. 14:1.

Hated us. The children of Israel had become obnoxious to Jehovah because of their idolatry and constant grumbling.

28. The Anakims. See Num. 13:28, 33.

30. Goeth. That is, in the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night (see Ex. 13:21; 32:34; Deut. 31:6, 8).

Fight for you. See Ex. 14:14; 17:8; Joshua 10:14, 42; 23:3, 10.

31. Wilderness. The wilderness of the Red Sea (Ex. 13:18), of Sin (Ex. 16:1), of Sinai (Ex. 19:1, 2), and of Paran (Num. 10:12).

Bare thee. Compare Ex. 19:4; Isa. 46:4; 63:9; Hosea 11:4.

33. Before you. That is, in the cloud (Ex. 13:21, 22; Num. 14:14).

A place. See Num. 10:33.

34. Was wroth. Upon various occasions (Deut. 9:7, 8, 19, 22; Isa. 47:6; 57:16, 17).

35. That good land. So described again and again (Ex. 3:8; Num. 14:7; Deut. 3:25; 4:21; etc.).

36. Caleb. Together with Joshua, the successor of Moses, Caleb was an exception to the curse incurred by the people at Kadesh (Num. 14:24, 30). Eleazar, son and successor of Aaron, also entered Canaan (Joshua 17:4; 24:33).

37. Angry with me. Because of insubordination near Kadesh (Num. 20:2–5).

38. Standeth. That is, as an attentive servant. He was given the promise of entrance to Canaan, along with Caleb (Num. 14:6, 7, 30).

39. Little ones. See Num. 14:31. Their tender age and innocence kept them from being partakers of their parents’ sin.

41. We have sinned. They pretended to repent and do the Lord’s will—after it was too late, and in fear of the penalty visited upon them (Num. 14:40).

Were ready. Literally, “regarded it a light matter,” from a Hebrew verb meaning “to regard as easy,” “to make light of.” The attitude of the people was therefore somewhat different from the impression given by “were ready.” The RSV reads, “thought it easy.”

42. Go not up. Compare Num. 14:41, 42. The whole attitude of the people reflected shallow thought and superficial repentance. The ark of God’s presence could not accompany them (Num. 14:44).

43. Went presumptuously. See Num. 14:42–44. The Hebrew verb means “to boil up,” “to seethe,” “to act insolently.” They arrogantly defied the counsel of God.

44. Chased you, as bees do. An apt figure of speech denoting directness, swiftness, and ferocity of attack. There are calculated risks men may take in dealing with the physical world, and yet win, but it is never safe to defy God.

45. Wept. Their weeping was with tears of mortification and resentment, not of true repentance. “Before the Lord” means at the door of the tabernacle, where they gathered to voice aloud their feelings. Compare the experience noted in Judges 20:23, 26.

46. In Kadesh. From the time of their leaving Kadesh-barnea to their arrival at Mt. Hor, about 38 years elapsed. God designed that they should enter immediately. But weeping in perverse impenitence cannot take the place of obedience, nor of genuine repentance.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-46TM 420

2 PP 376, 387

15 Ed 37; PP 374

16, 17 AA 94; PP 381

22 PP 387

41 PP 392

45 PP 394

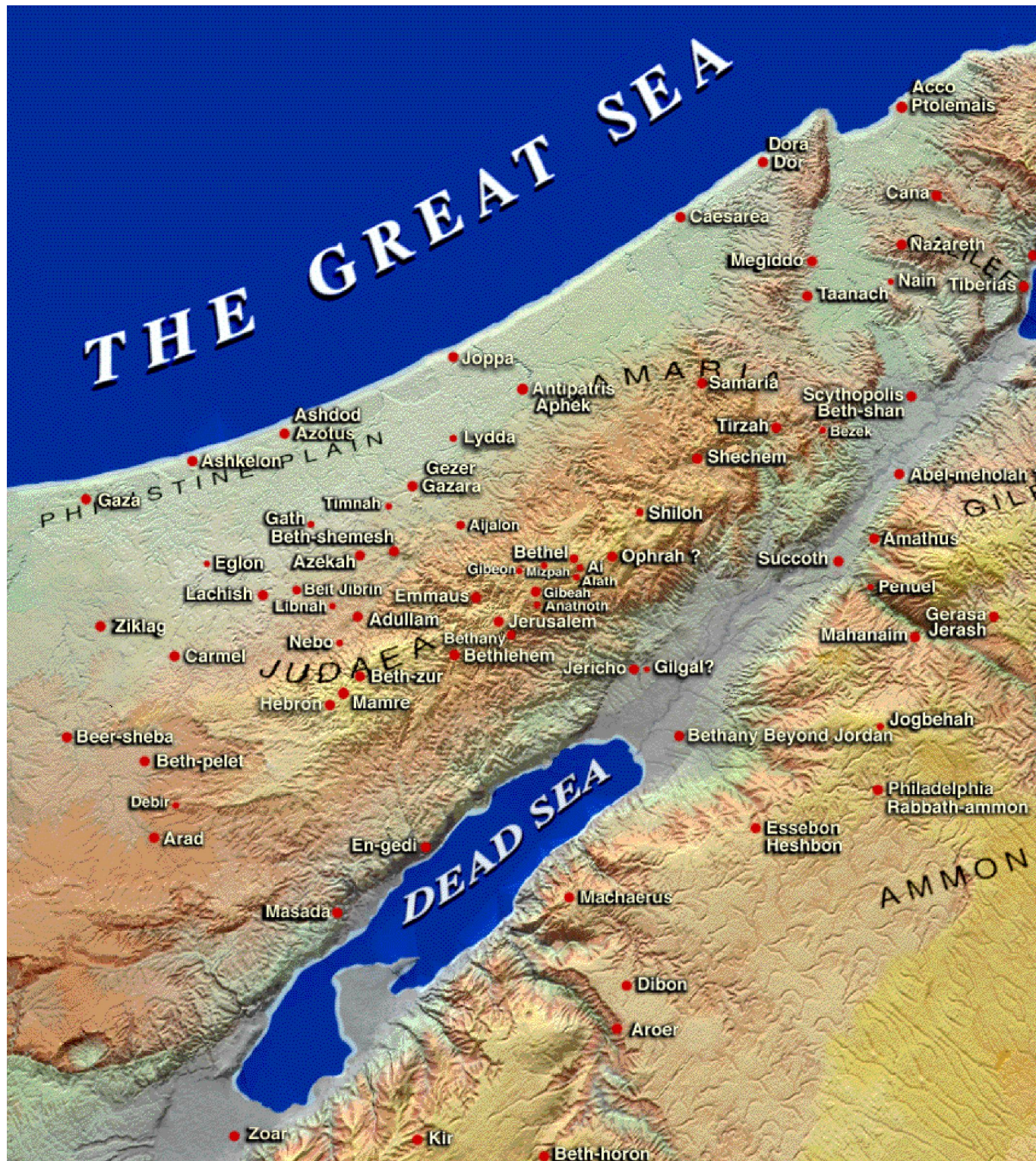
CHAPTER 2

1 *The story is continued, that they were not to meddle with the Edomites, 9 nor with the Moabites, 17 nor with the Ammonites, 24 but Sihon the Amorite was subdued by them.*

Palestine in Biblical Times

1

¹Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Dt 1:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



1. We turned. They now went southward, toward the shore of the Red Sea.

Mount Seir. The hilly country of the Edomites, of which Mt. Seir itself was part (see 1 Kings 9:26; 2 Chron. 8:17).

3. Long enough. Thirty-nine years had passed since the Israelites' departure from Egypt; they spent about 38 years in wandering.

Northward. That is, from Ezion-geber toward Moab and Canaan.

4. Your brethren. The descendants of Esau (Deut. 23:7; Amos 1:11; Obadiah 10, 12; Mal. 1:2).

Take ye good heed. The inhabitants of Edom would be nervous and apprehensive, and might as a result make a sudden attack upon Israel. On the other hand, their awareness of the fear in the hearts of the Edomites might lead Israel to take advantage of that fear and invade the country.

5. Unto Esau. See Joshua 24:4. God deals faithfully even with those outside the covenant relationship. God had promised certain temporal blessings to the descendants of Esau, and would fulfill His word.

6. Buy meat. Literally, "buy food" (see Gen. 41:35, 36, 48; 42:7, 10; 44:1, 25; 47:24). The verb translated "to buy" is of buying grain (Gen. 47:14), whereas the noun from the same root means "corn" (Gen. 42:1, 2, 19, 26; 43:2; 44:2; 47:14; Amos 8:5).

Buy water. Water is a precious commodity in the desert wastes, and may easily become the cause of strife (see Gen. 26:17–22).

7. Thy walking. The care of God applies even to the details of the journey of life (Ps. 1:6).

Forty years. A round number. From the Passover in Egypt to the first Passover in Canaan, at Gilgal (Joshua 4:19; 5:10), was exactly 40 years (see p. 187).

8. Elath. Their direction from Seir had been southward to Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba and Elath, which probably lay close to Ezion-geber on the coast. Then skirting the territory of Edom as they turned and traveled northward, they reached the territory of Moab.

9. Given Ar. The descendants of Lot, like those of Ishmael and Esau, had their inheritance confirmed to them before the seed of Abraham occupied what had been assigned to them. Ar was apparently the chief city of that territory, and gave its name to the entire region (Num. 21:15, 28).

10. Emims. For mention of the people and their city, Shaveh Kiriathaim, see Gen. 14:5 and Joshua 13:19.

12. Horims. The ancient inhabitants of Mt. Seir (Gen. 14:6; 36:20), the Hurrians, whose history, language, and religion have but recently come to light (see p. 138).

13. The brook Zered. Compare Num. 21:12. The modern *Wâdi el-Hesa*, at the southeastern corner of the Dead Sea.

14. The men of war. An expression used to designate men 20 years of age and over (Num. 1:3).

Wasted out. Not one remained (Num. 26:64, 65).

The Lord sware. See Num. 14:28, 29.

18. Pass over. That is, to skirt the border, but without crossing it.

19. Children of Ammon. They were not to trespass upon the territory of the children of Ammon, but to pass through the territory of Sihon the king in Heshbon (see Num. 21:13, 24).

20. Zamzummins. See Gen. 14:5. Beyond the fact that these people were a race of giant stature, and were driven out of their country by the Ammonites, we have no information concerning them.

- 21. Destroyed them.** The Ammonites were used by the Lord to discipline the people.
- 22. The Horims.** See v. 12.
- 23. Avims.** See Joshua 13:3, 4. The original inhabitants of southwest Palestine, dispossessed by the Philistines.
- Caphtorims.** See on Gen. 10:14; also Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7.
- 24. Rise ye up.** See Num. 21:13. The command to cross the Arnon and invade the territory adjacent to the Jordan inhabited by the Amorites.
- Sihon the Amorite.** Sihon had taken this territory from the Moabites, who in turn withdrew to the south of the Arnon.
- 25. The dread.** Compare the promise to Moses (Ex. 15:15, 16), and the experience of Joshua with the Amorites at Gibeon (Joshua 10:11).
- 26. Kedemoth.** See Joshua 13:18; 21:37; 1 Chron. 6:79, where a city of that name is mentioned in the plain of Jordan.
- 27. High way.** A royal highway maintained for the expeditious travel of officials and troops (Num. 20:17; 21:22). Traces of this ancient highway remain today, from the Gulf of Aqaba northward through Transjordan.
- 28. Thou shalt sell.** The Israelites offered every inducement for the granting of a peaceful passage.
- 29. Pass over Jordan.** An assurance to Sihon that they had no intention of settling in his land, since their inheritance lay beyond the Jordan.
- 30. Not let us pass by.** He was suspicious of their sincerity and questioned the reasonableness of their request (see Num. 21:23).
- Hardened his spirit.** That is, allowed Sihon's obstinacy to run its course.
- Made his heart obstinate.** The Hebrew verb thus translated means "to be strong," "to be stout," "to be firm." It is elsewhere translated "strengthen" (Deut. 3:28; Ps. 27:14), "confirm" (Isa. 35:3), "fortify" (Nahum 2:1), "was steadfastly minded" (Ruth 1:18). The Lord would not interfere with the natural operation of Sihon's heart and intents, but would confirm him in it (see on Ex. 4:21). One may use the God-given strength of mind and heart to continue in the wrong or to turn to the right. The Lord does not force a man to the one or to the other, but ever stands ready to cooperate by His Spirit with the man who chooses the good. The same word is translated in Joshua 1:6 as "be ... of a good courage."
- 34. Utterly destroyed.** Literally, "placed under a ban," "set apart." Such an act might be performed only at God's command. The same was done with respect to Jericho.
- 36. Aroer.** An Amorite city on the right bank of the river Arnon, about 13 mi. from the Dead Sea (see Joshua 12:2; 13:16; 2 Kings 10:33). Its modern name is 'Arâ 'ir.
- 37. Jabbok.** See Num. 21:24; Judges 11:22. According to the divine command the territory of the Ammonites was not invaded. Ambition must ever be in harmony with the will of God and not seek to go beyond the limits He has set. Then success in this life will be all blessing. But if one goes beyond God's will to seek more than He permits, success in the venture may well prove to be Dead Sea fruit.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-37PP 433-435

3-6PP 414

4, 5 PP 423

6, 7 PP 424

7 PP 406
9 PP 433
14, 15 PP 406
19 PP 433
24, 25 PP 434
27, 28, 30 PP 433
32-34 PP 435

CHAPTER 3

1 *The story of the conquest of Og king of Bashan.* 11 *The bigness of his bed.* 12 *The distribution of those lands to the two tribes and half.* 23 *Moses' prayer to enter into the land.* 26 *He is permitted to see it.*

1. Turned, and went. See Num. 21:32, 33.

Bashan. Probably from the Hebrew root meaning "to be soft," "to be smooth." The noun as a proper name would mean "smooth," "fertile," which is true of the region from the Yarmuk northward to Hermon. It has few trees, but a rich soil ideal for grain.

2. Fear him not. A repetition of Num. 21:34.

Deliver him. Compare Ex. 23:31; Deut. 7:24; 20:13.

3. Smote him. See Num. 21:35.

4. Argob. See 1 Kings 4:13. The meaning of the Heb. word '*Argob*' is not known. The area is east of the Sea of Galilee in the highland region of southeast Bashan, and included the cities of Karnaim and Ashtaroth.

6. Destroyed. The same word as in ch. 2:34 and meaning, basically, "to devote to," "to dedicate," that is, here, to destruction.

8. The land. The territory allotted to Gad and Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Arnon unto mount Hermon. The southern and northern boundaries of "the land." Hermon, some 9,100 ft. above sea level, dominates the entire region.

9. Sirion. As the borders of several nations met at Mt. Hermon, it was given a name by each border people in their own language. The name Sirion, for Hermon, appears in the Ugaritic literature of northern Syria. For other instances of such differences in names see Gen. 23:2 and 31:47.

10. All the cities. The various types of territory within the conquered country are here mentioned.

Salchah and Edrei. See Joshua 13:11; Num. 21:33.

11. Giants. Literally, "Rephaim," a very ancient people included among those defeated by Chedorlaomer and the kings associated with him (Gen. 14:5). They lived on both sides of the Jordan, and seem to have belonged to an earlier group of inhabitants of the region.

Bedstead. The word thus translated is also given as "couch" (Ps. 6:6; Amos 3:12; 6:4). It may refer also to a sarcophagus, or tomb.

13. Land of giants. Literally, the "land of the Rephaim" (see on v. 11). King Og was the last of the "giants."

14. Jair. His mother was of the tribe of Manasseh, but his father was of the tribe of Judah (see 1 Chron. 2:22). Jair had conquered this territory, which was, accordingly, given to him and his descendants (Num. 32:41).

Geshuri and Maachathi. This was the district between the Yarmuk and Hermon, being the western part of Bashan (see Gen. 22:24; 2 Sam. 15:8; 1 Chron. 19:6).

15. Machir. That portion of Gilead that had not been given to the children of Gad was allotted to the descendants of Machir (Num. 32:40).

16. Half the valley. The stream that flowed through the valley, or wadi, was to form the boundary.

Jabbok. This stream was to be the other boundary of the territory. It was here that Jacob wrestled with the Angel (Gen. 32:22–24).

17. Chinnereth. The Sea of Chinnereth (Joshua 12:3; 13:27). There was also a city of the same name (Joshua 19:35), from which the lake received its name. It was on the northwestern shore of the lake, its ruins now being known as *Tell el-‘Oreimeh*. The Sea of Chinnereth is the NT Sea of Galilee, also called the Lake of Gennesaret, and later known as the Sea of Tiberias.

The salt sea. Known also as the Dead Sea, “the sea of the plain” (Deut. 4:49; 2 Kings 14:25, cf. Gen. 14:3; Num. 34:3, 12).

Under Ashdoth-pisgah eastward. Literally, “under the slopes of Pisgah on the east” (RSV). Mt. Pisgah, with its peak, Nebo, now called *Râs es-Siâghah*, is in the mountains of Abarim, overlooking the Dead Sea from the eastern side (see Num. 27:12; Deut. 34:1–3).

18. I commanded you. A reference to the command given to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh (see Num. 32:20).

Hath given you this land. As they had specifically requested (Num. 32:20–22).

Armed. See Num. 32:17–32.

Before your brethren. The members of the two tribes were to be an advance guard of the army of Israel. Compare the valor of Gad in ch. 33:20.

19. Your wives. See Num. 32:16, 24, 26.

20. Rest. When the Promised Land was occupied, Joshua dismissed the armies of the two and a half tribes to return to their own territory on the other side of Jordan (Joshua 22:4).

21. Thine eyes have seen all. Literally, “thine own eyes, these were the ones seeing all.” Moses’ appeal was to the people to remember the way by which God had led them.

22. The Lord. The last half of the verse reads literally, “Jehovah your God, He is the one fighting for you.” The pronoun “he” is emphatic.

23. I besought. The form of the Hebrew verb suggests the translation, “I was seeking favor of the Lord for myself.” This was when God told Moses that he would not enter the Land of Promise but must die at the border (Num. 27:12, 13).

24. Begun to shew. Moses was eager to witness the end of the conquest of Canaan, as he had its beginning.

Mighty hand. See Joshua 4:24. The hand is a symbol of power, for it is the instrument by which power is exercised. It is translated “dominion” in 1 Chron. 18:3 and 2 Chron. 21:8.

What God is there? Moses knew that other nations believed in a heaven peopled by many gods, but he knew that there was but one God; all others were figments of the imagination.

25. See. In the sense of becoming acquainted with firsthand, that is, by personal experience.

That goodly mountain, and Lebanon. Literally, “this good hill country and Lebanon,” or perhaps better, “this good mountain, even Lebanon.” The name Lebanon,

from the verb “to be white,” means “white (mountain).” The cool, wooded slopes of the mountain and its snow-covered cap looked inviting and desirable in contrast to the desert country. Moses longed to walk in the cool of Lebanon.

26. *Was wroth.* From a word whose root means “to pass over.” The form here used being reflexive, the word means “to exceed the limit,” that is, to be beside oneself in respect to someone or some incident (see Ps. 78:21, 59, 62).

27. *Pisgah.* See on v. 17.

Not go over. Compare Deut. 31:2 and Joshua 1:2, 11.

28. *He shall go over.* The pronoun is emphatic: “He is the one who shall cross over.” By this emphasis Moses knew that the decision was irrevocable.

29. *Beth-peor.* The first word of this compound term means “house.” The second word, “peor,” may be from a root meaning “to be greedy,” “to be open,” “to have eager desire.” In this case the name would mean, “the house of desire.” In this vicinity Moses was buried by God (ch. 34:6).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-11PP 435-437

2 PP 436

4, 5 PP 435

24-27PP 462

25 DA 421; PP 479

26 PP 419, 420; 3T 319

26, 27 SR 166

27 MH 508

CHAPTER 4

1 *An exhortation to obedience.* 41 *Moses appointeth the three cities of refuge on that side Jordan.*

1. *Hearken.* In the sense of “give heed.” The third chapter concluded the review of the journey of Israel from Horeb to the river Jordan, preliminary to crossing it. Chapter 4 consists largely of an exhortation to obedience.

Statutes. That is, the provisions of the civil code regulating conduct, in contrast to the “judgments,” which were concerned with the administration of the “statutes,” particularly with respect to judicial decisions. The word rendered “judgments” is sometimes also translated “right,” in the sense of “justice,” or a “right decision” (Gen. 18:25; Job 34:6, 7; 35:2; Ps. 9:4).

Ye may live. Their fathers had *died* in the wilderness because of disobedience; they were to *live*—if they obeyed God—in the land promised their fathers.

2. *Ye shall not add.* Whatever God does is perfect. To add to it or to subtract from it is to mar or spoil it (Deut. 12:32; Jer. 26:2; Rev. 22:18).

Commandments. From the Hebrew commonly translated “command” or “commandment” (Gen. 26:5; Ex. 15:26; Lev. 4:2; Num. 15:22; Ps. 78:7; etc.).

3. *Because of Baal-peor.* Literally, “in Baal-peor.” For the sin and its results at this place see Num. 25:1–5; Deut. 3:29; Hosea 9:10. Some scholars think that the Baal-peor here mentioned was a god of sexual desire, such as is worshipped so freely by the Lingayats in India today.

4. *Cleave.* This word stands for the closest possible relationship, like that of husband and wife (Gen. 2:24; see also Job 19:20 and Jer. 13:11).

6. Keep therefore and do. To “keep” them is to give assent of mind and heart to them, with intent to order the life accordingly; to “do” them is to carry out the intent of the will. A man must *purpose* to do right before he *does* right. These two exhortations are repeated again and again (chs. 7:12; 16:12; 23:23; 24:8; 26:16; 28:13). It is the practical carrying out of God’s will that He appreciates and values highly.

Your wisdom. The respect of Israel among the nations would be in proportion to their faithfulness in observing the commandments of God. The blessings of God upon His people as they lived in harmony with His requirements would greatly impress the surrounding nations.

8. All this law. Literally, “all this *torah*.” The word *torah* is inclusive of all instruction and doctrine, and comprehends all principles of conduct. Moses suggests the idea of comparing God’s “law,” or principles of conduct, with those of the surrounding nations.

9. Diligently. Constant vigilance is necessary in order that the spiritual life may ever be in tune with God’s revealed will.

Teach them thy sons. Literally, “make them known to thy children” (see Ex. 12:26; 13:8, 14; Joshua 4:21).

10. In Horeb. The memorable occasion when God revealed His holy law. The memory of this occasion was ever to be kept clearly in mind.

Fear me. To “fear” God is to regard Him with profound and reverent respect (Ex. 19:10–13; 20:20) and to have proper regard for His will (Deut. 8:6; Prov. 3:7; Eccl. 12:13; Isa. 11:2, 3; 33:6).

11. Ye came near. See Ex. 19:17.

Burned. That is, the mountain had the appearance of being on fire, like the “burning” bush (Ex. 3:2; cf. Heb. 12:18).

12. The Lord spake. See Ex. 19:20; 20:1, 22.

Midst of the fire. See Ex. 19:18; 24:17; Deut. 4:15, 33, 36; 5:4, 22, 24; 9:10; 10:4.

The voice. Literally, “the sound,” that is, of the words God spoke (see Ex. 19:19; 24:16).

Saw no similitude. Literally, “saw no form.” “Similitude” is rendered “likeness” in Deut. 4:23, 25; 5:8; Ps. 17:15, and “form” in Job 4:16.

13. Covenant. The Hebrew word thus translated may be applied to any agreement or contract. It probably comes from the Hebrew verb “to bind,” “to fetter.” It is used of a treaty or alliance (Gen. 14:13; Ex. 23:32), an agreement (2 Sam. 3:12, 13, 21; Jer. 34:8), and of the marriage vow (Mal. 2:14).

Ten commandments. Literally, “the ten words.” These were later written by God Himself (Ex. 24:12; 34:28; Deut. 10:4).

14. Commanded me. God Himself presented the Ten Commandments, but all the civil and ceremonial laws were given through Moses (Ex. 24:3). This important distinction Moses repeatedly emphasizes (Ex. 20:1, 19; 21:1; 24:3; Deut. 5:22). The book of Deuteronomy is concerned primarily with the civil laws.

15. Similitude. Literally, “form” (see on v. 12). Man is prone to seek to express his concepts of deity in visible, material form. The manifestation of divine glory at Sinai was not to be an excuse for doing so.

16. Corrupt yourselves. See Ex. 20:4. Heathen nations have degraded themselves by depicting deity in forms partly human and partly animal and by making grotesque representations of the human form.

18. Creepeth. The worship of snakes and other lowly creatures is common among millions of people even today.

Fish. The ancient Philistines, Mesopotamians, and possibly the Egyptians included in their pantheon a fish god (see Ex. 20:4).

19. The host of heaven. The worship of the heavenly bodies is a snare into which man has fallen from earliest times. Today such worship is common in many Eastern countries. For a record of this sin among God's people see 2 Kings 17:16; 21:3, 5; 23:4, 5; Jer. 44:18, 19; Eze. 8:16; Zeph. 1:5.

20. The iron furnace. In 1 Kings 8:51 and Jer. 11:4 this figure of speech is used to denote harsh servitude. Isaiah defines the disciplinary experiences under God's hand as a process of refining in a furnace (Isa. 48:10; see also Job 23:10).

People of inheritance. Or, "his own inheritance" (see ch. 32:9).

21. Lord was angry. For the third time Moses speaks of this fact, in an endeavor to impress upon Israel the liabilities involved in opposition to God's will (ch. 1:37; 3:26).

Giveth. Literally, "on the point of giving," or "about to give" (see also chs. 15:4; 25:19; 26:1).

22. I must die. Moses felt keenly his being forbidden entrance to the land of Promise (see Num. 27:12–14).

23. A graven image. The danger of idolatrous practices lay heavily on the heart of Moses (see vs. 16, 25).

24. A consuming fire. Compare Ps. 50:3; Isa. 29:6; 30:27, 30; Amos 5:6; Zeph. 1:18; Heb. 12:29.

A jealous God. God will not tolerate divided affections or halfhearted service (Ex. 20:5).

25. Remained long. Literally, "fallen asleep." The Hebrew word thus used means "to sleep," and may be used figuratively of the dulling spiritual life, or the loss of one's first impressions.

26. Not prolong. They would perish as a nation (see Deut. 5:33; 11:9; 17:20; 22:7; 30:18; 32:47).

27. Scatter you. See Lev. 26:32, 33.

28. Serve gods. This verse is descriptive of the most debasing form of idolatry (see 2 Kings 19:18), (Ps. 115:4; 135:15; Micah 5:13).

29. All thy heart. One's motives must be pure and spiritual (see chs. 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 30:2, 6, 10).

30. Latter days. Literally, "in the afterdays." This expression is frequent in a prophetic sense, pointing to the Messiah and to His second coming and kingdom (see Isa. 2:2; Hosea 3:5; Acts 2:17; Heb. 1:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 John 2:18).

31. Merciful. The root from which the adjective thus translated comes means "to love," "to be inclined toward affection," and in the intensive form, "to have compassion." In the 13 times this adjective is used in the OT, it is always applied to God.

He will not forsake thee. Literally, "He will not let thee sink down." The verb is often translated, "to become feeble," "to become weakened," "to faint."

32. For ask now. It strengthens the believer to recall God's dealings in times past (see LS 196).

33. People hear. This reflects their awe in the presence of God. Sinful man cannot literally see God and live (Ex. 33:20; Judges 13:22).

34. Assayed. That is, "ventured" or "attempted."

Temptations. Literally, "trials." There is no thought here of leading into sin but rather of trying experiences.

Signs. See Ex. 4:9; 7:9, 10.

Wonders. A reference to the plagues of Egypt (Ex. 7:3; 11:9, 10).

War. The defeat of the Egyptians at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:14; 15:3).

A mighty hand. See Deut. 3:24; 9:29; also Ex. 6:6; 7:5.

36. His great fire. A reference to the glory of God (see on Deut. 4:11, 24).

37. He chose their seed. See Gen. 12:7; 13:15, 16; 22:17, 18; Ex. 32:13.

38. Drive out. Literally, "dispossessed," as it is translated in Num. 32:39.

Greater and mightier. So much so that at the report of the spies Israel became fearful and rebelled against God (Num. 13:28–31).

39. None else. See Isa. 44:8; Acts 4:12.

40. Prolong thy days. See chs. 5:16; 6:2; 11:9. Here closes Moses' first oration.

41. Severed three cities. Literally, "caused three cities to be separated," that is, the cities of refuge. The same word, translated "separated," is used of the setting apart of the tribe of Levi to carry the sacred furniture of the tabernacle (ch. 10:8). Ezekiel 42:20 speaks of a "separation between the sanctuary and the profane place."

Sun rising. That is, "to the east," meaning east of the Jordan, in the territory occupied by the two and a half tribes.

42. These cities. See ch. 19:1–13 for the laws respecting the cities of refuge.

43. Bezer. From a word meaning "fortress" or "enclosure." The word is translated "defence" in Job 22:25. The site is possibly *Umm el-Ammad*.

Ramoth. The word thus translated is from a root meaning "coral." Ramoth played an important role in the later history of the kings of Israel (see 1 Kings 4:7, 13; 22:1–40; 2 Kings 8:28, 29). Now called *Tell Rāmîth*, this site lies 25 mi. east of the Jordan as the crow flies.

Golan. Probably from a word meaning "circle." It is usually identified with the modern village *Sahem el-Jōlân*, 18 mi. east of the Sea of Chinnereth.

44. The law. The *torah*, meaning God's instructions in general, inclusive of the Ten Commandments.

Set before. Literally, "to place," "to lay," here with the idea of placing the law before their eyes (see Ex. 19:7, where it is rendered "laid").

45. The testimonies. The Hebrew word thus translated is used 60 times in the OT, almost without exception of the Ten Commandments.

46. Smote. In the 40th year of the Exodus (Num. 21:24; 33:38; see Israel's Campaign East of the Jordan).

47. On this side Jordan. See Joshua 1:15; 12:1.

48. Mount Sion. Not Mt. Zion in Jerusalem, but either another name for Sirion, the Sidonian name for Mt. Hermon, or the name of one of its peaks (Deut. 3:8, 9, 12; Ps. 29:6).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-49FE 508
1-6PK 294
5, 6 PP 464
5-8COL 289; MM 26; SR 150; 6T 12
5-9CT 428; FE 393, 478
5-10TM 140
6 DA 28; Ed 40, 174, 229; GC 230; PK 30, 83, 500; PP 605
7, 8 PP 465
9 PK 294
10 PP 465
13 TM 140
15, 16, 19 PK 295
20 PP 465
23 PK 295
23, 24 PP 466
24 DA 600; EW 102; 3T 238, 248; 4T 370; 8T 266
26 PP 466
26-28PK 295
29 PK 569
29-31PK 629
30, 31 PK 334
32-35PP 463
39, 40 FE 508

CHAPTER 5

1 *The covenant in Horeb.* 6 *The ten commandments.* 22 *At the people's request Moses receiveth the law from God.*

1. ***The statutes and judgments.*** The same Hebrew words as given in ch. 4:1.

2. ***Made a covenant.*** See Ex. 19:5-8; 24:3-8.

3. ***Our fathers.*** That is, our forefathers, referring to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the 12 patriarchs. The agreements between God and the "fathers" were personal in nature. At Sinai, for the first time in history, God entered into an agreement with an entire nation. He was to be their King, and they His people.

4. ***Face to face.*** They were in His immediate presence, yet "saw no similitude" (Deut. 4:12; see also Ex. 20:22).

5. ***Between the Lord and you.*** Moses was the mediator between God and Israel (Ex. 19:10-12, 17, 21; Gal. 3:19).

8. ***Any graven image.*** Human conceptions of form cannot be applied to God. It belittles God to represent Him by any outward form (John 4:24). Material representations of God can give only a distorted and imperfect concept of His majesty and infinite character, and therefore depreciate God. The only earthly image that can even remotely resemble God is the human character transformed into the divine likeness (Gen. 1:26, 27; John 3:3; Rom. 8:29; 2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 3:10).

10. ***Them that love me.*** Only those that *love* God can possibly *obey* Him. Obedience that does not come from the heart is nothing more than a legalistic attempt at self-righteousness, by which a man seeks to commend himself to God. In the sight of heaven

such is not obedience at all. Without the spirit of obedience, the letter, the outward form, is worthless. But he who loves God supremely will find his greatest delight in cooperating with Him.

11. *In vain.* Literally, “to vanity,” meaning falsely, hypocritically, or in a thoughtless, common manner. Man’s attitude toward God is to be marked with reverence, and this is to be reflected in words and deeds.

12. *The sabbath day.* See on Ex. 20:8–11. The fourth commandment has a natural basis reaching back to creation (Gen. 2:1–3); it also has a moral basis in the Creator-creature relationship. The primary purpose of the Sabbath as an institution is to safeguard that relationship. As physical health calls for a day of rest each week, so spiritual health requires the Sabbath for exercising the mind and heart in quest of God, that we may “feel after him, and find him” (Acts 17:27).

15. *Thou wast a servant.* Every act of God on our behalf constitutes a reason why we should “remember,” that is, to reflect upon, acknowledge, and appreciate this love and beneficent care. It is God’s purpose that on the Sabbath day whatever interferes with the direct and personal fellowship between the creature and his Creator should be laid aside. The Sabbath is a day on which it is our happy privilege to become better acquainted with our Father in heaven, whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3). To know God is to love Him (see 1 John 4:8), to honor Him, and to appreciate the evidences of His paternal goodness (Rom. 1:21).

Their deliverance from Egypt constituted an additional reason why the Israelites should reverence the Sabbath, yet the very words of the fourth commandment itself point back to the origin of the Sabbath at creation (Ex. 20:8–11) as the reason for the command here to “keep the sabbath day to sanctify it.” It should be remembered that the form in which God spoke the Ten Commandments upon Sinai is that given in Ex. 20, not in Deut. 5. As its name implies, the book of Deuteronomy is a recapitulation of the various laws transmitted to Israel at Sinai, with additional explanations given by Moses in an attempt to impress the people with the importance of observing faithfully all that they had been commanded to do. If mention of the deliverance from Egypt in connection with the fourth commandment be taken as limiting its observance, in principle, to those who were thus delivered—literal Israelites—then the principles of the Ten Commandments as a whole belong to the Jews only, for both here (Deut. 5:6) and in Ex. 20:2 God presented His law as based on the fact that He had brought them forth from the land of Egypt.

As literal Israel was delivered from the bondage of Egypt, so God’s people today have been set free from the bondage of sin (Rom. 6:16–18). The Sabbath thus becomes for the Christian a memorial not only of creation but of the re-creation of the image of God in his own heart and mind (see on Deut. 5:8). The Sabbath is thus a “sign” of sanctification (Eze. 20:12)—of redemption as well as of creation.

16. *Honour.* Compare the instruction of the apostle Paul in Eph. 6:1–3 (see also Ex. 20:12). Only the child who learns to honor and respect the authority of his parents will learn to honor and reverence God.

22. *Assembly.* The word thus translated refers to the gathering together of people or of their chosen representatives. It is often translated “congregation” (Lev. 4:14, 21), and “company” (Eze. 23:46, 47).

Two tables of stone. Also referred to as the “tables of the covenant” (ch. 9:9, 11, 15) and the “two tables of testimony” (Ex. 31:18; 32:15; 34:29).

25. *Why should we die?* The people had been duly impressed by the majesty of God, and realized that, as sinners, they could not even live in His presence. Consciousness of sin made them fear for their lives. The wicked will eventually choose to die rather than to live in the presence of God (Rev. 6:15–17).

28. *They have well said.* Their profound awe at the manifestation of divine power and glory was the very attitude of mind and heart God desired to produce in them. It is only when a man becomes humble in God's sight, when he realizes his utter sinfulness and helplessness in contrast to God's righteousness and omnipotence, that God can work in him and with him.

29. *Such an heart.* Or, "such a frame of mind." The life is but a projection of the thoughts of the "heart," or mind; as a man thinks, so is he (Prov. 23:7). God is not so much concerned with the outward acts as He is with the motives that prompt the acts. If a man purposes in his "heart" to cooperate with God—"if there be first a willing mind" (2 Cor. 8:12)—the life will be transformed accordingly (Rom. 12:2). Heart obedience is the only true obedience; it alone is acceptable to God.

30. *Get you.* A command given in recognition of their request to be released from the presence of God. Moses was henceforth to be the go-between (v. 5).

32. *Not turn aside.* Those who enter into the covenant relationship are expected to serve Him with an undivided heart, and not to "turn aside" to follow their own inclinations (see chs. 17:11, 20; 28:14).

33. *Prolong your days.* The blessing of God is conditional upon obedience to His precepts, not by His arbitrary decree, but because cooperation with eternal principles naturally tends to "prolong" life. Furthermore, occupation of the Promised Land was conditional upon their continued loyalty. Their right to Canaan was based exclusively on the provisions of the covenant. Should they violate its requirements, they would forfeit their right to that land.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-33PP 305-309; TM 135

12 PK 182

CHAPTER 6

1 *The end of the law is obedience, 3 An exhortation thereto.*

1. *Commandments.* The same Hebrew words in the same order as in ch. 5:31.

2. *Fear the Lord.* The Hebrew word "to fear" means "to stand in awe of," "to reverence," "to honor" (see on ch. 4:10).

3. *Increase mightily.* Compare the promise of God to the patriarchs (Gen. 12:2; 17:6; 22:17, 18).

4. *The Lord our God is one Lord.* Literally, "Jehovah our God, Jehovah [is] One." In striking contrast to the nations about them, who were polytheists, the Hebrews believed in one true God. This profession of faith has been the watchword of the Hebrew race for more than 3,000 years (see Mark 12:29). The apostle Paul states the same truth as a tenet of Christianity (1 Cor. 8:4–6; Eph. 4:4–6).

Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, the oldest extant Hebrew manuscript of any part of the OT was the Nash Papyrus, of the 1st century B.C., which contains the Decalogue and Deut. 6:4, 5.

5. *Love.* The Hebrew word here translated "love" is a general term that also suggests the ideas "desire," "affection," "inclination," the more intimate cleaving of soul to soul.

The believer's relation to God is based on love (1 John 4:19), and love is the fundamental principle of His law (Mark 12:29, 30). To love perfectly is to obey wholeheartedly (John 14:15; 15:10).

Thine heart. Christianity calls for all that a man is and has—his mind, his affections, and his capacity for action (1 Thess. 5:23). The word here translated “heart” generally refers to the affections, feelings, desires, and will. It is the source of action and the center of thought and feeling (see Ex. 31:6; 36:2; 2 Chron. 9:23; Eccl. 2:23). The word translated “soul” denotes the animating principle in man, the life, but includes also his bodily appetites and desires (see Num. 21:5). It is rendered “appetite” in Prov. 23:2; Eccl. 6:7.

The word translated “might” is from a verb meaning “to increase.” The noun, as here, means “abundance,” and may refer to the things that have accrued to a man in this life.

6. In thine heart. Literally, “upon thine heart” (see ch. 11:18).

7. Teach. The word here translated “teach” means “to whet,” “to sharpen” (see Deut. 32:41; Ps. 64:3; 140:3; Isa. 5:28). This call, then, is for clear, incisive teaching. Parents have weighty responsibility to instruct their children in matters of duty and destiny, day by day.

8. Bind them. The Jews later took these words literally, wearing phylacteries upon the head and the inside of the left arm (see on Ex. 13:9).

9. On thy gates. It is a custom today in some Eastern countries to inscribe words of desired blessing and promise over doorways. Moslems and Hindus do it, as do the Chinese, particularly at the New Year season.

12. Beware. Verses 10–12 stood as a warning to Israel when they entered a land in which all the good things of life were abundantly supplied. They were not to become so engrossed with their new possessions as to forget their duties to God. With the increase of material goods there is ever the tendency to “forget the Lord,” by whose power these things are secured (ch. 8:18).

The house of bondage. Literally, “the house of slaves.” Here their former place of abode, Egypt, is referred to as a “house.”

13. Swear. That is, to bind oneself by an oath. The word thus translated is from the same root as the numeral seven. The implication is that when a man “swears” he binds himself seven times, meaning that he assumes an obligation from which nothing can set him free.

14. Other gods. This injunction is closely connected with v. 13: they were not even to mention the names of other gods (Ex. 23:13; Joshua 23:7; Jer. 5:7).

15. A jealous God. See Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24. The root of the word translated “jealous” means “to become intensely colored in the face,” that is, from deep emotions such as love, zeal, or anger. By His very nature God cannot be otherwise; how could He share the affections of His people with other gods (2 Cor. 6:14–17)? Light and darkness cannot exist together; to harbor darkness in the soul one must exclude the light.

16. Tempt. Literally, “test,” “try,” “prove.” Here it does not have the modern concept of enticing to sin. The same word is used of God's “proving” or “testing” men, to develop their character and to strengthen their faith and loyalty to Him (see Gen. 22:1; Ex. 20:20; Deut. 8:2, 16; Dan. 1:14). The English word *probation* is from the same Latin root as the word *prove*. A period of probation is a period of testing or proving. At Massah, Israel reversed the process and defiantly put God to the test (Ex. 17:2, 7). When Satan

challenged Christ to jump down from the cornice of the Temple, Christ quoted from Deut. 6:16 (Matt. 4:7). For Christ to have acceded to the suggestion would have demonstrated presumption rather than faith. Presumption is the counterfeit of faith.

18. *Well with thee.* Loyally discharged duties make it possible for God to bestow additional blessings. Again and again Moses emphasized the necessity of unswerving loyalty to Jehovah.

19. *All thine enemies.* That is, all who opposed their occupation of the Land of Promise. By their persistent refusal to honor the true God they had made themselves His enemies, and thus the enemies of His chosen people.

20. *Thy son asketh thee.* See Ex. 13:14. It was ever God's mind that parents should assume the first responsibility of instructing children in their responsibilities to God.

23. *He brought us out.* Their miraculous deliverance from literal slavery was ever to be remembered as an evidence of the power of God and His claims upon them. Deliverance from Egypt implies also deliverance from sin (see Rom. 6:12–23; 8:21).

24. *For our good.* All that God requires of us is for our own good. The restrictions He places upon us are our protection against spiritual dangers that may not be apparent. A shepherd does not erect a fold about his sheep to prevent them from having a good time with the wolves, but rather that he "might preserve" them "alive."

Preserve us alive. That is, both as a nation and as individuals.

25. *Our righteousness.* Literally, "righteousness shall be [credited] to us." The idea is that compliance with God's revealed will, in the strength He imparts to us (Rom. 8:3, 4; Gal. 2:20), is acceptable in His sight as if the "righteousness" were our own. A man is justified by faith alone (Rom. 5:1), but "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 PK 296

4, 5 PP 305, 373

4-65T 328

4-9TM 140

5 COL 261

5-8CSW 46

6, 7 Ed 40, 187; ML 30

6-9MH 283

7 AH 324; CT 110, 181; Ed 185; Ev 499; Te 70; 1T 156, 390; 2T 398, 700

7-9COL 24; PP 468; 5T 328

8 DA 612; 4T 449

10-12PP 465

12 PK 181

13 Te 278

17 CD 402

20, 21 MH 283

20-25PP 468; 5T 330

24 DA 288; FE 414; MH 283

24, 25 CH 20, 24, 109, 231; ML 162; 8T 199

CHAPTER 7

1 *All communion with the nations is forbidden, 4 for fear of idolatry, 6 for the holiness of the people, 9 for the nature of God in his mercy and justice, 17 for the assuredness of victory which God will give over them.*

1. Many nations. The Hittites are mentioned many times in the Scriptures (see on Gen. 10:15).

Girgashites. A Canaanite tribe of western Palestine (see Gen. 10:16; Joshua 24:11).

Amorites. See on Gen. 10:16. This numerous and widespread people is often mentioned in Scripture (Gen. 14:7, 13; 15:16, 21; 48:22; etc.) Their name appear in 18 books of the OT.

The Perizzites. A people of the central portion of western Palestine (see on Gen. 13:7).

Hivites. See on Gen. 10:17. Little is known of them.

Jebusites. See on Gen. 10:16. This people held the hill-fort Jebus, also called Jerusalem, or Salem (Joshua 15:63; 18:28; Judges 1:21; 2 Sam. 5:6, 8). The name Jerusalem is attested in Egyptian records of the 19th century B.C.

2. No covenant. See Ex. 23:32; 34:12. It was not God's purpose that Israel should forever remain isolated from other nations. But until they had learned to trust and serve Him with a perfect heart, association with idolaters was fraught with danger. God intended the Hebrew people to be a light to the world, but so long as they were prone to absorb the darkness of others it was best for them to remain apart. With this danger past, Israel would be in a position to bear witness of the true God to the heathen nations about them (see Ex. 24:12; Num. 33:52).

3. Marriages with them. Intimate association with idolaters as in the home would affect not only the individual but the nation (see Ex. 34:15, 16). Solomon violated this principle, with untold personal and national loss as a result (1 Kings 11:1). There is no happiness or safety in making alliances with those who neither love nor serve God (1 Cor. 6:14–17). The tragic experiences of Esau (Gen. 26:34, 35), Samson (Judges 14:1), and others are eloquent in their witness favoring the admonition to remain separate.

4. Turn away. A man's love for his wife, an idolater, would usually if not always turn his heart from God. This was a distinct danger against which Joshua warned (Joshua 23:11–13).

5. Their groves. These *'asherim* were probably carved wooden pillars, consecrated to Asherah, a Canaanite goddess (see Deut. 16:21; Judges 6:25–30).

Burn. For a similar command see Num. 33:52. See also the zeal of David in respect to the images of the Philistines (1 Chron. 14:12).

6. An holy people. See Lev. 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:7, 26. Holiness to Jehovah was to be the very constitution and norm of conduct of the people. The primary meaning of the word translated "holy" is that of physical separateness. It then developed the idea of "consecration" or "dedication." A "holy" people was a "separate" people, separate, that is, from the customs of the nations about them and dedicated exclusively to the service of God (see 1 Peter 2:9).

A special people. Literally, "a people of special possession." The word translated "special" is from a root meaning "to acquire property." The noun form here used means "private property," "a possession."

7. More in number. Compare the promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:1, 2). Even 200 years after the promise was given there were but 70 males in the chosen branch of his family (Gen. 46:26, 27).

8. The Lord loved you. Literally, “Jehovah, who is the lover of you.” God’s love may be compared to that of a parent for his children.

A mighty hand. The “mighty hand” of Jehovah is the hand of divine power, used to deliver His people and to strengthen them to fulfill their true destiny. This is seen in the development of Abraham’s seed into a mighty nation. God’s people went down into Egypt a family of 70, yet in due time the Lord made them “as the stars of heaven for multitude” (Deut. 10:22).

9. The faithful God. The word translated “faithful” is a participial form of the verb *’aman*, from which, through the Greek, comes our word “amen.” The Hebrew verb means “to stay,” “to support,” “to be firm,” so stressing the idea of utter dependability.

Mercy. From *chesed*, a word without any exact English equivalent. It reflects the concepts of ardent love, earnest desire, selfless kindness, grace, favor, and mercy. It represents the summit of unselfishness in either God or man. The RSV renders the term by “steadfast love.”

Thousand generations. Equivalent in meaning to the expression “forever.” Reference is to the multitudes throughout history who enter the covenant relationship.

10. Repayeth them. Not in spite but as the One who rewards every man according to his just deserts (Eccl. 11:9; Rom. 2:6–11; Rev. 22:12). God is supremely just and patient, but His mercy (see on v. 9) toward any individual is limited by the welfare of all. Sin has wages, and he who has earned may expect to receive payment in full. Those who obstinately spurn His mercy (v. 9) will eventually and inevitably experience His wrath.

11. Keep the commandments. Literally, “keep the command,” perhaps in reference to the Decalogue as a whole, or to any one of its precepts applicable under the circumstances.

12. If ye hearken. The word translated “if” is actually a noun meaning “consequence.” It is usually used as an adverb meaning “as a consequence of,” “because of.” Accordingly, the translation here would be, not “if,” but, “as a consequence of,” pointing to the rewards for heeding the precepts of the Lord.

13. Bless thee. These rich promises are a reiteration of those made to their forefathers (Gen. 15:5; 22:17; 28:14; Lev. 26:4, 5; Jer. 31:12).

14. Barren. See Ex. 23:26. Fertility was considered the greatest of earthly blessings, as barrenness was the greatest curse.

15. The evil diseases of Egypt. In the Scriptures the most loathsome diseases are spoken of as being identified with Egypt (Ex. 15:26; Deut. 28:27, 35). Had Israel cooperated with the principles of healthful living given them by God, “feebleness and disease would have been unknown among them” (PP 378). They would have become models of health and physical stamina, and of increased mental and moral strength.

16. A snare. Literally, “a bait,” from the verb root, “to lay a bait.” In Amos 3:5 the word translated “snare” is entirely different from the one used here, and the word there translated “gin” is the one here rendered “snare.”

18. Not be afraid. The new generation was to avoid the spirit of fear exhibited by their fathers, as the result of which they perished in the wilderness (Num. 14:35). Fear, the opposite of faith, is unable to cooperate with God. This accounts for the fact that God

could not lead the former generation into the land it might otherwise have been their privilege to enjoy (Heb. 3:12, 19).

19. Temptations. Literally, “tests” or “trials” but never in the Bible “temptations,” in the sense of allurements to evil. The reference here is to the evidences of divine power by which God sought to lead Pharaoh to release His people. By these God presented the king with convincing evidence that He was God, thus confronting him with a test that required him to choose between cooperation with God’s will or opposition to it.

20. The hornet. Probably used in a figurative sense (see on Ex. 23:28; see also Joshua 24:12).

21. God is among you. Compare the question of Moses before the rock in Horeb (Ex. 17:6, 7).

22. Little and little. That is, as they were prepared to occupy it (Ex. 23:29). If the land were permitted to revert to a wilderness, the difficulty facing the people of Israel would thereby be greatly increased.

23. Deliver them. Compare the variant expression of the same thought in Ex. 23:27.

24. Deliver their kings. Joshua lists 31 kings subdued during the conquest of Canaan (Joshua 12:7–24).

25. Silver or gold. Metals used to overlay wooden idols and ornaments adorning them (see Isa. 30:22). These would only become a snare to Israel (Joshua 7:21, 22), and were not of permanent value anyway.

26. A cursed thing. That is, devoted to destruction. To touch or harbor that which was destined for destruction was to suffer the same fate. Compare God’s message to Ahab (1 Kings 20:42).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-26TM 141, 420
2 PK 570; PP 492
2-4PK 568
3 PP 369; 4T 508; 5T 363
3, 4 5T 328
4 4T 508; 5T 363
6 COL 288; MM 26; PK 18; TM 420; 5T 363; 6T 12
6, 7 1T 283
6-8TM 141; 2T 109; 5T 328
6-11FE 413
6-146T 222
7-9PP 464
9 COL 288; PP 118
9, 10 5T 363; 9T 251
11 TM 141
11-15COL 288
14 MH 283
15 DA 824; MH 114
26 MH 280

CHAPTER 8

An exhortation to obedience in regard of God’s dealing with them.

1. All the commandments. Literally, “each commandment,” perhaps stressing each one individually (see on ch. 7:11).

2. Remember all the way. The evidences of God’s leading are both so many and so remarkable that the humble child of God need never lose confidence or become despondent. It is by forgetting the many things God has done for us that we take our first steps away from Him into the far country of forgetfulness (Rom. 1:21; LS 196).

3. By bread only. It was from this statement of Moses that Jesus quoted in response to Satan’s first temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4).

4. Thy raiment waxed not old. A miraculous intervention by God (see Deut. 29:5; Neh. 9:21). Apparently they were without means of providing sufficient clothing themselves; otherwise God would not have taken unusual steps to satisfy their requirements. God provided food, drink, protection, and other things when they could not help themselves.

Swell. The word thus translated appears elsewhere only in Neh. 9:21, and its meaning is rather obscure. It could perhaps mean “to blister.” The noun from the same root, however, is translated “dough” (Ex. 12:34, 39; Jer. 7:18; Hosea 7:4), no doubt because it swells as a result of the fermentation of yeast.

5. Chasteneth thee. The discipline of God is always educational, never merely to inflict suffering and distress (Heb. 12:5–11; Rev. 3:19). The Greek verb translated “prove” or “proved” in 2 Cor. 8:8; 1 Tim. 3:10, almost invariably implies testing done in order to place approval upon what is so tested. Thus it is with the chastening of God (Job 23:10; Jer. 9:7).

6. Walk in his ways. Rather than in ways of our own choosing (see Ex. 18:20; 1 Kings 3:14).

7. A good land. Modern Palestine is quite unlike this description. It is likely that centuries of using the land carelessly and denuding it of the heavy stands of timber, that controlled water and erosion, depleted its fertility. Contemporary Egyptian descriptions of the land offer a far more attractive picture than it presents today.

8. Wheat, and barley. The basic grain crops.

Fig trees, and pomegranates. Together with the olive tree, these were the principal fruit trees of ancient Palestine.

9. Whose stones are iron. Iron was found in the mountainous country south of the Dead Sea. Iron is exported from this region today. During the time of the judges the Philistines held a monopoly over the fabrication of iron (1 Sam. 13:19–22). Their iron probably came from Asia Minor. It was only in the time of David, when the power of the Philistines was broken, that iron came into common use in Israel.

Brass. Rather, “copper” or “bronze,” an alloy of copper and tin. Brass, an alloy of copper and zinc, was unknown in ancient times. Copper was mined in the Wadi Arabah, between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba. Copper artifacts were found at Ezion-geber, Solomon’s port at the head of that gulf, from which sailed “ships of Tarshish,” or “refinery ships” (see on 1 Kings 10:22).

²Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Dt 2:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

10. Bless the Lord thy God. Gratitude should be expressed as well as felt. Without gratitude man is little better than a dumb brute. True nobility of soul begins with appreciation for the blessings of Heaven and the kindnesses of our fellow men (Ps. 103:2).

11. Forget not. Compare ch. 6:12.

12. Goodly houses. Material possessions often lead to undue concern with the things of this world. The Christian is to make God first, and trust Him for the needs of life (Matt. 6:33). Too often we are prone to make these “things” first and hope that in some way heaven will be “added” to us.

13. All that thou hast. Wealth is not of itself evil. It is the human tendency, however, to become engrossed in attempts to accumulate it and to hold on to it for personal pleasure, and forget God in the process. It was when Abram and Lot became wealthy that strife arose between them (Gen. 13:6, 7). It is when Christians become “rich, and increased with goods” and feel content therewith that they wax poor in things of more permanent worth (Rev. 3:17). It is often “the poor of this world” who prove to be “rich in faith” (James 2:5).

14. Lifted up. That is, in pride that wealth and prosperity are due to one’s own efforts (see v. 18). Note the counsel given as to the duties of a king (ch. 17:20), and compare Hosea 13:6.

15. Terrible Wilderness. See on ch. 1:19.

Fiery serpents. See on Num. 21:6.

Scorpions. A common nuisance in the desert country south of Judah, and less so elsewhere in Palestine. Some eight varieties exist there, the largest being some 8 in. in length. Scorpion bites can be extremely painful.

Drought. Literally, “thirsty ground” (see Ps. 107:33; Isa. 35:7).

Flint. The same occurs also in Deut. 32:13 and Ps. 114:8. As used in the Bible “flint” may refer to any hard rock. Some knives were made of flint (Joshua 5:2). Figuratively, flint stands for loyalty and devotion to duty (Isa. 50:7).

16. At thy latter end. That is, “in the end,” referring here to Israel’s settlement in the Promised Land. It simply draws a contrast between the painful lessons of the 40 years of wandering compared with the peace and security of Canaan (see Heb. 12:11). The expression here has no reference to the end of the world.

17. My power. Man is prone to take the credit for his good estate and to boast of being a self-made person.

18. Giveth thee power. All that we are and all that we have are from God. Consciousness of this fact keeps a man humble and enables him to view the things of time in their true perspective.

19. If thou do at all forget. Literally, “if forgetting thou shalt forget,” a typically Hebrew idiom similar to “thou shalt surely die” (see on Gen. 2:17) and “thou mayest freely eat” (see on Gen. 2:16). This idiomatic expression is used for emphasis.

I testify. Literally, “I affirm to you this day.” In the day of judgment they could not claim that God had not warned them (chs. 30:19; 32:46).

20. Not be obedient. Literally, “not hear.” The word translated “be obedient” means to hear and act accordingly (ch. 7:12).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 Ed 39; 5T 49
 2, 3 DA 121; PP 407
 3 CH 371; CSW 27; DA 386; Ed 171; MB 83; 6T 347
 4 PP 429
 5 Ed 39; PP 407
 7, 8 PP 128
 7-9PP 465
 11-14COL 291
 15 COL 287; PP 428
 17 COL 52, 291; 1T 562
 17, 18 1T 536; 2T 652
 18 AA 75; COL 351; CS 47, 138, 148; Ed 138; MH 212; PP 525; 3T 549; 5T 481; 6T 452;
 WM 15
 19 PK 296
 19, 20 COL 291

CHAPTER 9

Moses dissuadeth them from the opinion of their own righteousness, by rehearsing their several rebellions.

1. This day. The appointed time for the possession of Canaan was at hand. Israel was to prepare to pass over in the immediate future. The death of Moses and a month of mourning for him were to come before the actual crossing of the Jordan.

2. People. See Num. 13:28, 32.

Anakims. Literally, “the long-necked ones.” They appear to have descended from Anak. Arba, founder of Hebron (Joshua 14:15; 15:13), was a chief of the Anakim. They were scattered over the hill country of Judah (see Num. 13:22, 28, 33).

Children of Anak. After the Israelite conquest none of the Anakim remained in Judah, but a small remnant survived in Philistia (Joshua 11:22; 2 Sam. 21:16; 1 Chron. 20:4). It is thought that Goliath was a descendant of the Anakim (Num. 13:33; Joshua 11:22; 1 Sam. 17:4).

3. He shall destroy. The pronoun “he” is emphatic; “he which goeth over before thee,” “he shall destroy them,” and “he shall bring them down.” The conquest of Canaan was to be achieved by *His* power—“so shalt thou [Israel] drive them out.” The glory would be His, not theirs (see Joshua 3:1–11; 11:21–23).

4. My righteousness. Their evil conduct since leaving Egypt made it evident that they were not being given the land of Canaan because they deserved it (vs. 7–27).

Wickedness. When Abraham sojourned in Canaan “the iniquity of the Amorites” was “not yet full” (Gen. 15:16). During their 215 years in Canaan, Abraham and his descendants bore a faithful witness to the true God, so that the inhabitants of the land might have an opportunity to amend their ways. It was not until the nations of Canaan had irretrievably sinned away their day of grace that God dispossessed them of their land (see Lev. 18:24–28; 1 Kings 14:23, 24; 21:26).

5. Drive them out. God had originally allotted Canaan to the Amorites and other tribes Israel found there (Deut. 32:8; Acts 17:26), but they forfeited their right to it by their evil ways. Should Israel imitate the ways of these nations they too would be driven out. This eventually happened (see Ex. 34:24; Deut. 4:38; 11:23; Joshua 23:5, 9).

6. Stiffnecked. The word translated “stiff” is from a root meaning “to be hard,” “to be heavy,” and thus figuratively “to be obstinate,” “to be stubborn.” A “stiff” neck is a neck that has been hardened (2 Kings 17:14; Neh. 9:16, 17, 29; Prov. 29:1). The same word is used of the “hardening” of Pharaoh’s heart (Ex. 7:3). God pleads with His people not to “harden” their hearts (Ps. 95:8). This, however, they often did (Ex. 32:9; 33:3, 5; 34:9; see on Ex. 4:21).

7. Rebellious. On the least imaginary provocation they were up in arms against God, so much so that Moses called them “rebels” (Num. 20:10).

8. Also in Horeb. The rebellion at Mt. Sinai was most reprehensible in view of the impressive evidences God had recently accorded them (Ex. 32:7, 8). They rebelled in His very presence.

9. I was gone up. See Ex. 24:18; 34:28.

Eat bread nor drink water. Exodus does not mention fasting in connection with Moses’ first 40 days and nights on Sinai, but does mention it in relation to the second ascent (Ex. 34:28). Fasting often accompanied periods devoted to meditation on sacred themes, for it tends to clarify spiritual vision.

10. Tables of stone. See also Ex. 31:18; 32:15, 16.

Day of the assembly. A reference to the notable occasion on which Israel assembled to hear God proclaim His holy law (chs. 10:4; 18:16).

14. Destroy them. Israel’s intentional departure from God’s revealed will left them without excuse before Him, and they no longer deserved His forbearance. Deliberate, premeditated sin may bring the day of probation to a sudden close. There must be a new start, a genuine reformation to avert the hour of judgment (see Ex. 32:10).

16. Molten calf. See Ex. 32:19.

Turned aside. Only a few weeks earlier the people had been commanded not to make graven images (Ex. 20:4) and had promised to obey (Ex. 24:3).

Break them. The broken tables of stone typified the broken law and the broken covenant (Ex. 32:19). God severed relations with Israel, and the covenant, which had been ratified a month earlier, became null and void. It was only upon the intercession of Moses that Israel was readmitted to divine favor, and that on a conditional and probationary basis (Ex. 32:10–14, 32–34).

18. I fell down. In intercession on behalf of the people. In Oriental lands even today prostration is the posture of complete submission.

As at the first. That is, as during the first 40 days and nights. This was the morning after he had broken up the golden calf (Ex. 32:30–32).

Your sins. Three times prior to this there had been major disobedience on the part of Israel—at Marah (Ex. 15:23), in the Wilderness of Sin (Ex. 16:2, 3), and at Massah (Ex. 17:2–7).

20. Aaron. Aaron considered Moses too severe with people, and thought it better to be more conciliatory, and to meet their wishes in part. But such compromising with sin was ruinous. Little wonder that God was ready to destroy him; his guilt was greater than that of the people. Why God did not do so is not stated. The fact that he was permitted to live and to become high priest testifies to the mercy and long-suffering of God.

21. Your sin. Or, “sinful thing” (RSV), the obvious idea (see Isa. 31:7).

Burnt it. As recorded in Ex. 32:20. The calf had presumably come forth from the fire (v. 24), and was therefore appropriately consigned to the flames once more.

The brook. That is, the stream that flowed from the rock in Horeb, which Moses had struck with his staff (Ex. 17:6), and which constituted their water supply.

22. Taberah. See Num. 11:1–3.

Massah. See Ex. 17:2–7.

Kibroth-hattaavah. See Num. 11:4–34.

23. Kadesh-barnea. See Num. 13 and 14.

27. Remember thy servants. An appeal to the covenant promises as a reason for not yet rejecting Israel, in spite of their perversity (see Ex. 32:13).

28. Not able. See on Ex. 32:12.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 PP 487

7-293T 319

10 PP 314

18 PP 329; 3T 319

20 PP 323

21 PP 313, 320

24 3T 319

CHAPTER 10

1 *God's mercy in restoring the two tables, 6 in continuing the priesthood, 8 in separating the tribe of Levi, 10 in hearkening unto Moses'suit for the people. 12 An exhortation unto obedience.*

1. At that time. That is, the 40 days and nights of intercession spoken of in ch. 9, which followed this command (Ex. 34:1, 2, 28).

Hew thee. The first stone tables were provided by God (Ex. 24:12), the second by Moses.

Make thee an ark. This command was given during the first period of 40 days (Ex. 25:10). Some Jewish commentators have maintained that there were two arks, one to go before the people in their warfare and another to remain in the tabernacle, but of this there is no evidence whatever. The ark here referred to can be no other than *the* ark, for now, 38 years later, the tables were still where Moses first placed them (v. 5).

2. I will write. The law of God is ineffective until we individually permit Him to write it anew on “fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Cor. 3:3; see also Rom. 8:3, 4). It is only when the world beholds the reflection of the law written upon our hearts that it is instructed and edified. As the tables of stone were inscribed by God, and witnessed to His character and will, so the church bears the inscription wrought by the Holy Spirit, set forth for all men to read (2 Cor. 3:2). Such a life is a monument to God's grace, a memorial of His power operating in the lives of men.

3. Shittim wood. Literally, “planks of shittim.” This was probably a species of thorny acacia abundant in the vicinity of Sinai.

4. The ten commandments. Literally, “the ten words,” as in Ex. 20:1; 34:28; Deut. 4:13. The word thus translated and used in this sense means a “precept” or an “edict” (Esther 1:19). It is also used of a “sentence” or “saying” of a wise man (Eccl. 1:1; etc.), and of an “oracle” or “word” of God (Num. 23:5, 16; Jer. 1:4, 11; etc.). Its use with respect to the Ten Commandments identifies them as a divine revelation and is a remainder of the fact that God spoke them in the hearing of all Israel (Deut. 4:13).

The day of the assembly. See on ch. 9:10.

5. Came down. That is, at the close of the 40 days and nights (Ex. 34:28, 29; cf. Ex. 32:15 and Deut. 9:15).

The ark. Made by Bezaleel under the direction of Moses (Ex. 37:1; see on Deut. 10:1). The ark was placed in the tabernacle, upon its completion, with the two tables of stone in it in harmony with God's instructions (Ex. 40:20, 21).

There they be. They were still in the ark several centuries later (1 Kings 8:1, 9), during Solomon's reign. There is no record that they were ever removed from the ark. They are there today (PK 453), and "will be presented before the world as the standard of righteousness" (EGW in RH Jan. 28, 1909, p. 8).

6. The children of Jaakan. Bene-jaakan in Num. 33:32.

7. From thence. That is, from Bene-jaakan (Num. 33:32).

Gudgodah. This is Hor-hagidgad, literally, "the mount of the troop" (see Num. 33:32).

Jotbath. Jotbath of Num. 33:34.

Rivers of waters. Here the water was abundant, a fact that no doubt accentuated the lack of it at Kadesh soon after (see Num. 20:3, 4). Jotbath is possibly to be identified with *et-Taba*, about 22 mi. north of 'Aqaba.

8. At that time. That is, at Sinai (see vs. 5, 10). Reference is to Moses' return to camp following his second sojourn of 40 days in the mountain.

Separated. The form of the Hebrew verb here used indicates a solemn act of dedication to the service of God. In a similar way Israel was "separated" from among other nations (Lev. 20:24), and the Levites from among the tribes of Israel (Num. 16:9), thereby making them peculiarly Jehovah's (Num. 8:14). The Levites had separated themselves from the other tribes in response to Moses' call to take a stand for God in the midst of apostasy (Ex. 32:26–29). In character they were separate from their brethren, by virtue of their own choice; now, by virtue of God's choice, they are separated to His service.

To bear the ark. This sacred duty was assigned to the Kohathites, as the camp was moved from one site to another (Num. 3:27, 31).

Stand before the Lord. This is a phrase that denotes consecrated devotion to the Lord's service, in public ministry. They ministered to God as court officials did before a king. The priests were responsible to God. It is used also of the prophets as ministers of God (1 Kings 17:1; 18:15). It is used also of the attendance of Gehazi upon the prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5:25).

To minister unto him. The Levites were to serve the priests as their assistants (Num. 3:6), and to take general care of the tabernacle (Deut. 10:8). The name "Levite" came to designate the non-Aaronic members of the priestly tribe. The sons of Aaron are not technically "Levites." The Levites were consecrated to the duties of the sanctuary service, other than those of worship and sacrifice.

Bless in his name. See Num. 6:23–27, where this expression is used of praising God and blessing the people with uplifted hands. This was a solemn duty performed by priests (Lev. 9:22) as the closing act of the morning and evening service and at other times. On momentous occasions the kings also blessed the people (2 Sam. 6:18). Moses speaks of it again in Deut. 21:5.

9. Hath no part. Inasmuch as the Levites were "separated" to sacred service (v. 8) they could not earn a living by engaging in the more common pursuits. For this reason

they were assigned no tribal territory, except for certain cities scattered throughout the other tribes (Num. 18:20; Joshua 13:14, 33; 18:7).

His inheritance. The meaning of this expression is found in ch. 2–4. The tribe of Levi was to receive a share in the sacred offerings brought to Jehovah by the congregation.

11. Arise, take thy journey. Literally, “rise, break camp.” The word here translated “journey” appears also in Num. 10:2. It is used, as well, of breaking or prying whole stones loose in a stone quarry (1 Kings 6:7).

12. God require of thee. This is similar to Micah 6:8. The word translated “require” also means “to desire,” “to request.” The name “Saul” is from the same root, and means “requested,” “desired.”

To fear. Literally, “to reverence,” “to have a pious regard for.” Here reverence is required as a basic principle in the heart of God’s child. A right attitude toward God is the foundation of true religion (see on ch. 6:2).

To walk. See on ch. 8:6. This is a daily walk with God in the power of the Holy Spirit, in pursuit of a perfect character (see Gen. 5:22). The apostle Paul states the same truth in different words (Rom. 6:17, 18, 22).

To love. Where there is true love of God in the heart, a man will not weakly yield himself to temptation (see Gen. 39:9; Deut. 13:4; 1 Kings 8:23, 48; John 15:10).

13. The commandments. From the usual word for “commandments.” The verb root means “to set up,” “to establish.” The principles of the Decalogue are based on the character of God, and thus firmly established. Keeping the commandments is said by Solomon to be “the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13, 14), because they express love toward God and one’s fellow men (Matt. 22:36–40).

14. The heaven. That is, the atmospheric heavens.

Heaven of heavens. A reference to the dwelling place of God (see 1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 68:32, 33; 148:1–4). The apostle Paul spoke of “the third heaven” (2 Cor. 12:2) and of Christ ascending “far above all heavens” (Eph. 4:10).

The earth. Men should seek to live a life of praise to Jehovah as do the inhabitants of heaven (see Ps. 19:1–6).

15. To love them. See ch. 7:6, 7.

16. Be no more stiffnecked. Literally, “not will ye harden your neck any more.” The apostle Paul expresses the same principle in similar terms for the believer today (Rom. 2:29). An uncircumcised heart is impervious to the appeal of the Holy Spirit. The circumcised heart is one that loves God (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 4:4). An uncircumcised heart is lifted up in pride (Lev. 26:41; see also Jer. 9:25; Eze. 44:7, 9). The same expression is used of the ear (Jer. 6:10) and of the lips (Ex. 6:12, 30).

This figurative expression may come from work bullocks, that sometimes withdraw their shoulders and neck from the yoke in an endeavor to back away from the load (see Neh. 9:29; Zech 7:11). Compare the words in Stephen’s presentation to the Jews (Acts 7:51).

17. God of gods. Note the exhortation of the psalmist (Ps. 136:2, 3), and the words of the king of Babylon to Daniel (Dan. 2:47). When Christ removes His priestly attire and assumes His royal garments, at the close of probation, He assumes a similar title, “King of kings, and Lord of lords” (Rev. 19:16, cf. 17:14).

A great God. Nehemiah uses similar language (Neh. 9:32).

Mighty. From a word denoting a great hero, a mighty warrior (Judges 11:1). It is also applied to the lion as the mightiest among beasts (Prov. 30:30). The superlative used in Deut. 10:14 of God's dwelling place is similar to this expression for God.

Regardeth not persons. This statement reads, literally, "not does he lift up faces, and not does he take a bribe." Jehovah will always deal justly. Sacrifices and gifts do not influence Him to condone willful wickedness (see Ex. 23:8; Lev. 19:15). Note the words of the apostle Peter in his contact with Cornelius, who, like Peter, had received a vision (Acts 10:34, 35).

18. Doth execute. Throughout history, justice has been notoriously slow and uncertain in the East, but Jehovah is not only impartial but also swift to act. In Ex. 22:21, 22 God enjoins His people to act with absolute impartiality toward the "stranger" and the helpless.

19. Stranger. From a noun derived from the verb "to sojourn," "to tarry," "to abide." A better translation would be "sojourner." The term refers to aliens as temporary residents or as permanent settlers (see Gen. 12:10; 19:9; 47:4; Isa 52:4).

20. Cleave. From a verb expressive of the strongest possible attachment, or clinging to anything. It is used of a man and wife becoming one flesh (Gen. 2:24), and of disease within the bodily tissues (Deut. 28:21, 60).

21. Thy praise. Compare the words in Jer. 17:14 used in connection with healing.

22. As the stars of heaven. Such an increase in population could have been due only to the blessing of God. Moses here echoes the promise to Abraham (Gen. 15:5; cf. Ex. 12:37; Num. 26:51, 62).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 MH 508
6 PP 427
8 Ed 148; 1T 650
9 DA 433; Ed 149
12, 13 FE 477; PK 326
17-19DA 500
17-21FE 477

CHAPTER 11

1 *An exhortation to obedience, 2 by their own experience of God's great works, 8 by promise of God's great blessings, 16 and by threatenings. 18 A careful study is required in God's words. 26 The blessing and curse is set before them.*

1. Love the Lord. Love is the principle on which all worship and service to God are to be based. Love for God makes the carrying out of His requirements a joy. God's mercy and bountiful blessings, if truly appreciated, inspire a love for Him in man's heart. True love to God is the reaction of the human heart to His abounding love.

Alway. Literally, "all the days." Obedience to God must be continuous and not intermittent. A love that vacillates is generally centered on self rather than focused upon Christ.

2. Know ye this day. They had witnessed the mighty power of God in action, and knew something of the boundless resources that were available to them from Jehovah.

Arm. The arm is the symbol of power, and is often used of military forces (Dan. 11:15, 22, 31). Similarly, an army is the strong "arm" of a nation. The "arm of the Lord" is the symbol of His power (see Isa. 52:10; 53:1).

3. Miracles. Literally, “signs” (cf. ch. 4:34). The evidences of divine power that accompanied their deliverance from Egypt ever inspired later generations of Israel, and were often made the theme of song and inspired literature.

5. This place. They were now in the plains of Moab, near Shittim, and opposite the city of Jericho (Num. 25:1; Deut. 1:31).

6. Dathan and Abiram. Outstanding examples of rebellion against God (see Num. 16).

7. Your eyes have seen. Literally, “your eyes are the seers” (see ch. 3:21).

Great acts. In connection with their deliverance from Egypt and their journey to Canaan (see Judges 2:7).

8. All the commandments. Literally, “every commandment,” the singular number stressing perfect obedience as a principle of conduct.

Be strong. In the sense of “girding up oneself” for action, or “holding on tenaciously.” Our strength as Christians lies in love overflowing in obedience to the revealed will of God. Only the obedient can be strong, for God can never give strength to those who deliberately transgress His law.

9. Milk and honey. Compare Ex. 3:8; Deut. 6:3. Milk represents not only the choicest material blessings of earthly Canaan but also the rich blessing of salvation through Christ (Isa. 55:1). The sweetness of honey is compared to the sweetness of God’s law (Ps. 19:10) and all of His revealed will (Eze. 3:3; Rev. 10:9, 10).

10. Wateredst. A figure of speech to denote the contrivances used to lift water from the Nile and its tributary canals, which involved hard labor. But the Promised Land was watered by copious rainfall that never failed so long as Israel was faithful to God (see 1 Kings 8:35; 17:1; 18:17, 18).

As a garden of herbs. The laborious methods of irrigation practiced in Egypt were applicable only to a narrow strip of land adjoining the Nile, whereas the rain of Canaan would make the countryside of Palestine a fruitful field.

11. A land of hills. Not a flat plain like Egypt, which it was possible to irrigate by a system of canals. Palestine could be watered adequately and made fruitful only by the good rains from heaven, and the descent of these rains was assured to the extent that the people were faithful to Jehovah.

Careth for. Literally, “inquireth after,” meaning “to search,” “to investigate.” It is used of searching for lost sheep (Deut. 22:2; Eze. 34:6–8), and of God searching the hearts of men (1 Chron. 28:9).

The eyes of the Lord. A figure of speech representing the unceasing care of God exercised on behalf of His faithful ones (Ps. 33:18; 34:15).

13. Serve him. That is to obey Him. To be acceptable, man’s service to God must flow from love in the heart of man, not from an attempt to acquire righteousness by legal compliance with His requirements (see on ch. 10:12).

14. The first rain. This was the autumn rain, which fell at the time of planting the winter crops, to sprout the seed and give it a good start before the cold of winter set in. It fell in the eighth month, our late autumn (see Ezra 10:9, 13). In a land dependent on rain the seed would not sprout unless the rain fell in its season (Lev. 26:4).

The latter rain. This fell in the spring before the harvest, during our months of March and early April, and brought the crop to full maturity (see Jer. 5:24; Joel 2:23). In his reply to the false charges of Eliphaz, Job speaks figuratively of the importance of the

latter rain (Job 29:23). Solomon uses it as an illustration of favors bestowed by a king (Prov. 16:15), and Hosea, of revival and reformation (Hosea 6:2, 3). The tragedy that resulted from a failure of the latter rain is described by Jeremiah in his first message to the backslidden church of his day (Jer. 3:3; cf. Amos 4:7; see on Joel 2:23).

15. Grass. The same word may also mean vegetables for man's use (Gen. 3:18), as well as grass for cattle, as here (Ps. 106:20; Jer. 14:6).

Thou mayest eat. Healthy, well-fed cattle meant an abundance of food for man as well, and prosperity in general (Lev. 25:19; cf. Joel 1:10–20).

16. Take heed. An abundance of the things of this life, as promised in the preceding verses, may lead the overconfident person to become faithless toward the great Giver of these gifts (see Deut. 6:14; 8:19; Hosea 2:5, 8; 1 Cor. 10:12).

Be not deceived. Often a false sense of values so blinds the hearts of men (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 1:21, 22) that they go vainly in pursuit of things that are only of transient value (Eccl. 1:13, 14; 2:1–11; Matt. 6:28–34; John 6:27–29). It is well to remember that it was a distorted sense of values that led Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit. It was when she “saw” something that was not so that she yielded (Gen. 3:6).

17. Shut up. The very opposite of what Jehovah wished to do for His people (Deut. 28:12, 23). Compare a similar expression in Lev. 26:19. The failure of the rains was to be a reminder of sin that must be repented of (1 Kings 8:35).

Perish quickly. Disobedience was to be followed by natural calamities intended to lead the people back to God (Joshua 23:16; Amos 4:6–9).

18. Frontlets. The word thus translated is from a root meaning “to bind,” “to surround.” The noun is found only here and in Ex. 13:16; Deut. 6:8. Taking the admonition literally, the Jews bound a phylactery to the forehead, thinking thus to commend themselves to God (see on Ex. 13:9).

19. Teach them. An admonition often repeated to parents (chs. 4:10; 6:7). Rashi, the Jewish commentator, interprets these words to mean that a parent, from the time that a child can speak, shall instruct him in the Hebrew language and in the Torah.

20. Write them. Otherwise their iniquity would be “written with a pen of iron” (Jer. 17:1).

21. Your days. Compare chs. 4:40; 6:2; 11:9.

As the days of heaven. “As long as the heavens are above the earth” (RSV; cf. Matt. 5:18). The eternity of the heavens was a fixed belief among the Jews, and therefore these words became to them a promise of the enduring nature of their inheritance (see Ps. 72:5, 7, 17; 89:29; cf. Job 14:12).

22. Diligently keep. See v. 13 and ch. 10:20.

To cleave unto him. The idea of clinging closely is a figure of affection and loyalty (Ruth 1:14). If we choose to cleave to God nothing can snatch us from His grasp (John 10:28).

23. Drive out. A promise oft repeated (Ex. 23:27; Deut. 7:23). But like all other promises it was contingent upon their obedience to His commands. Had God continued to bless them irrespective of their conduct, they would have become fully confirmed in their evil ways. Thus they would not have been witness to the desirability of cooperating with the true God—which was His purpose in bestowing all these blessings upon them.

Greater nations. Compare chs. 7:1; 9:1. They were the “fewest of all people” (ch. 7:7), but “there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few” (1 Sam. 14:6; cf. Judges 7:2–7).

24. The wilderness. That is, the Wilderness of Zin, lying to the south of Palestine.

Lebanon. The northern boundary.

Euphrates. The northeastern boundary. Compare the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 15:18).

The uttermost sea. Literally, the “hinder” or “western” sea. The word translated “uttermost” is from a root meaning “what is behind,” that is, behind the speaker. In giving directions the Hebrews in Canaan thought of themselves as facing east, and thus the Mediterranean was “behind” them (see Deut. 34:2; Joel 2:20; Zech. 14:8; see on Ex. 3:1). The Mediterranean Sea is called the great sea in Num. 34:6.

25. Fear of you. See the promise of God at Mt. Sinai (Ex. 23:27), and repeated prior to the fall of Jericho (Joshua 2:9, 24).

26. A blessing and a curse. Implying man’s free will and power of choice. God commands, but man is free to choose whether he will obey (see Joshua 24:15; cf. Jer. 18:7–10).

27. A blessing. See ch. 28:2–6 for a detailed statement of what was included in this blessing.

28. A curse. Compare with ch. 28:15–68.

Other gods. See ch. 6:14. Only the God of heaven can bless His people (chs. 7:9; 8:3). The children of Israel were repeatedly warned of the dangers of idolatry (chs. 4:3, 15, 16, 23; 6:4, 14; 7:4, 5, 25; 8:19; 9:12; 10:20; etc.).

29. Brought thee. Compare Deut. 6:10; 7:1; Ex. 13:5, 11.

Mount Gerizim. On the south side of the rich valley in which Shechem is situated, with Mt. Ebal on the north. Gerizim is fertile, and Ebal somewhat barren. Some commentators have seen in this fact the reason for the selection of the one as being appropriate for “blessing” and the other for a “curse.”

30. The other side. That is, on the west side of Jordan in the land of Canaan (see ch. 3:20, 25).

Sun goeth down. A person standing on the east side of Jordan, across from Jericho, may see the sun set in the vicinity of the mountains Gerizim and Ebal, some 40 mi. away.

Gilgal. The name thus translated may come from the verb “to roll.” It means a “wheel” or a “circle.” Some have thought that it may apply to a circle of stones connected with heathen worship. Gilgal near Jericho, here mentioned, was so named because the “reproach of Egypt” was “rolled” from the people at this place (Joshua 5:9–12).

Plains of Moreh. Literally, “beside the terebinths of Moreh” (see on Gen. 13:18; 18:1).

31. Ye shall pass over. Moses expresses certainty concerning their occupation of the Land of Promise. The participle here used has the force of “ye are on the point of passing over.”

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

7, 8 SR 171

10-12PP 465

10-17PK 135

13-218T 81

18, 19 FE 141; PK 136; 3T 565
18-21CSW 45; PP 503
19 PP 504
20 PK 464
22-25Ed 48; PP 544, 716
26-28FE 508; 3T 81
27, 28 MB 9
29 PP 499

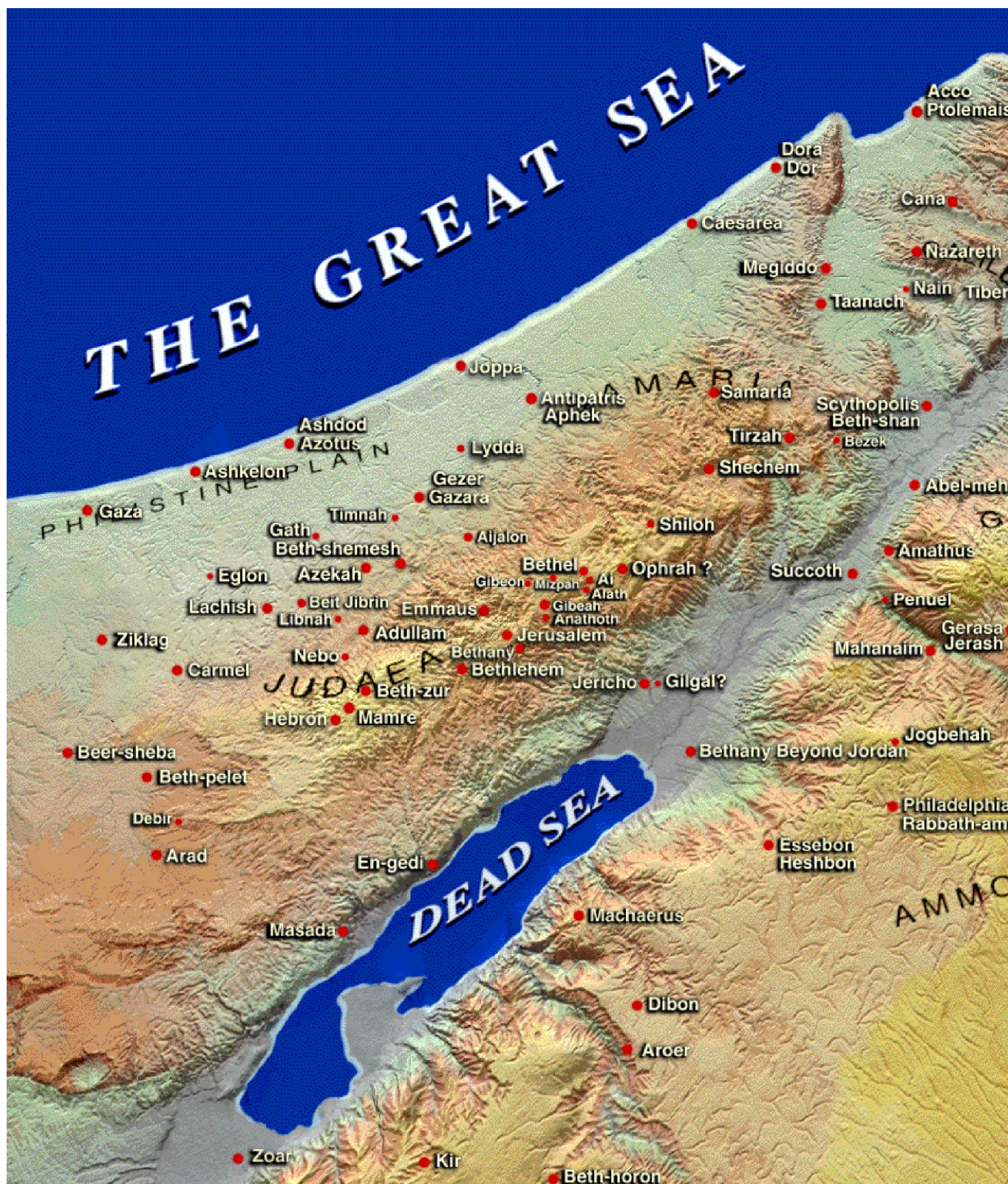
CHAPTER 12

1 *Monuments of idolatry are to be destroyed.* 5 *The place of God's service is to be kept.* 15, 23 *Blood is forbidden.* 17, 20, 26 *Holy things must be eaten in the holy place.* 19 *The Levite is not to be forsaken.* 29 *Idolatry is not to be enquired after.*

Palestine in Biblical Times

3

³Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Dt 8:3). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.



1. These are the statutes. Chapters 12:1 to 26:19 have been called The Book of the Covenant. The proneness of the people to forget the requirements of God necessitated a reiteration of His will (see ch. 6:1).

2. Every green tree. Literally, “every tree of luxuriant foliage.” The word translated “green” is from the verb “to grow luxuriant.” Mountains, hills, and groves are favorite places today among heathen nations for the establishing of an idol and its sanctuary (see 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4; Isa. 57:5; 65:7; Jer. 2:20; 3:13; Eze. 18:6, 11, 15; 22:9). Immorality under the guise of religion generally accompanied such worship.

3. Overthrow their altars. This was absolutely necessary if idolatry was to be uprooted (see Lev. 26:1; Deut. 7:5).

Pillars. The word translated “pillar” refers to a single stone. Altars were built of one or more stones; the “pillar” was a single stone and usually an object of worship. The same word is translated “image” or “images” in Ex. 23:24; 34:13; Lev. 26:1; Deut. 7:5; 16:22; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 3:2; 10:26, 27; Hosea 3:4.

4. Not do so. Such altars, groves, and sacred pillars were not to be employed in the worship of Jehovah. Yet later in their history the children of Israel disobeyed God’s specific command (2 Kings 17:10, 11; Eze. 20:28; Hosea 4:13).

5. Put his name. That is, where He would abide personally—in the Temple. The name Jehovah was sacred, and was not to be exhibited in unworthy places (see Ex. 20:24). Where the name of God is, is a place of refuge (Ps. 48:3; 76:1). The psalms are particularly rich in their references to the sacred name (Ps. 5:11; 29:2; 33:21; 72:17, 19; etc.) Compare the promise of Malachi to the remnant church (Mal. 4:2).

His habitation. The sanctuary in Shiloh and later the Temple in Jerusalem (see 2 Sam. 7:13; 1 Kings 3:2; 8:17-19, 44, 48; Isa. 18:7; Jer. 3:17). In other instances the reference may be to the Holy Land.

6. Burnt offerings. Frequently mentioned together with “sacrifices,” as they were the most common of all sacrifices (Ex. 10:25; 18:12; Joshua 22:26, 28).

Tithes. See ch. 14:22, 23.

Heave offerings. This is a reference to the “firstfruits,” of corn, wine, oil, and other products of the earth brought in person (Num. 18:11, 12; Deut. 18:4; 26:4, 10). The worshiper had raised it by his own labor and gathered it by his own hand.

Freewill offerings. These were special offerings brought in performance of a vow, or as thank offerings for particular blessings (see Lev. 7:16; 22:18, 21; 23:38; Num. 15:3; 29:39).

Firstlings. See Ex. 13:2, 12; 22:29; 34:19; Num. 18:15-17.

7. Ye shall eat. That is, the sacrificial feasts (see Ex. 18:12).

Before the Lord. The priests ate within the precincts of the sanctuary (Num. 18:10), but the people might eat only near the tabernacle, and in that respect in God’s presence (Ex. 18:12; 24:11; Deut. 27:6, 7).

Ye shall rejoice. To “rejoice” before the Lord is an endless theme in the Scriptures (Lev. 23:40; Deut. 16:11, 14; 27:7; Ps. 32:11; 97:12). God in return rejoices over His people (Zeph. 3:14-17).

8. Whatsoever is right. That is, with regard to the sacrificial requirements just referred to. It should always be kept in mind that many of the directives given by Moses to Israel in the wilderness could not be fully carried out until they became a settled community.

In his own eyes. That is, conscientiously, according to the law (see ch. 13:18).

9. *The rest.* “Resting place” would perhaps be better (see also 1 Kings 8:56; Ps. 95:11). The name Noah is derived from the same root. There are many beautiful promises of rest in the OT: rest in God’s presence (Ex. 33:14), rest from sorrow (Isa. 14:3), and deliverance from foes (Isa. 14:5–7).

10. *When he giveth.* Jewish commentators apply this to the glorious reign of David (2 Sam. 7:1).

11. *Shall ye bring.* The Lord commanded sacrifices and offerings to be brought to Him, not because of any inherent virtue in the gifts themselves, but as object lessons by which the people might learn the way of salvation. Without sincerity of heart on the part of the believer, his offering was not acceptable to God (1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11; Jer. 7:22–24).

All your choice vows. Literally, “all the choice of your vows”—all their offerings in payment of vows. The sacrificial animals they selected were to be physically perfect, with no defect whatever.

12. *The Levite.* The tribe of Levi was consecrated to God’s holy service, and consequently had no part in the usual vocations by which men make a living. The Levite had no land (ch. 10:9), and therefore received his support from the congregation (chs. 14:27; 16:11, 14; 18:1–8; 26:11).

13. *In every place.* A beautiful location was not to beguile them. Many such places had no doubt previously been occupied by idolatrous shrines (see Eze. 20:27–29).

14. *The place.* This injunction has been stated repeatedly (vs. 5, 6, 11) as an emphatic warning and protection against idolatrous worship. Only as God designated a place would their services there offered be acceptable.

15. *Kill and eat.* This is a modification of the law in effect during the wilderness wanderings, which prohibited the slaughter of animals for food except at the door of the tabernacle (Lev. 17:3, 4). The new law applied to residence in Canaan.

According to the blessing. The reference here is to a common meal. Apparently the hunting of deer was no more uncommon then than today. Because this meal was not a sacrificial one, ceremonial cleanliness was not insisted upon as in the case of a sacrificial meal (Deut. 12:22; Lev. 7:20).

16. *The blood.* In harmony with strict provisions in effect ever since man was permitted to eat flesh, after the Flood (see on Gen. 9:4–6).

Pour it. The blood of the sacrificial victim was sprinkled upon the altar. Similarly, the blood of an animal slaughtered for food was not to be eaten, but poured on the ground.

17. *Thy gates.* That is, privately, in their own homes. This is a reiteration of v. 7 concerning the sacrificial meal, in order that there might be no confusion as to the permission granted in v. 15.

The tithe. This cannot be the first tithe, which was used exclusively for the support of the Levites (Num. 18:24). The tithe the people were permitted to eat, though only in the vicinity of the sanctuary and not in their own homes, was a second tithe. Details of this second tithe are given in Deut. 14:22–29.

The firstlings. See ch. 15:19, 20. The male firstlings of flocks and herds were expressly the property of the Lord (Ex. 13:2, 12, 15; Num. 18:15–18) and belonged to the priests’ portion. This offering might never be eaten by the common people. It may be that

the firstlings here referred to were female. They were to be shared by the people and the priests, in the Lord's presence.

Thy vows. These too belonged to Jehovah (Lev. 27:28) and were for the priests (Num. 18:14), when vowed exclusively to Jehovah. Other offerings vowed were eaten in solemn feasts together with the priests, and might be shared with widows, orphans, and the poor.

Heave offering. The first fruits of corn, wine, and oil were also the portion of the priests (Num. 18:12).

19. The Levite. This divine caution against the neglect of those in sacred office is repeated in ch. 14:27. This was necessary because no legal procedures were taken to enforce payment of the tithe. The Levites could be reduced to precarious straits should the people become careless and withhold a faithful tithe. The apostle Paul applies this principle of faithful tithing to the Christian ministry (1 Cor. 9:13, 14).

20. Thy border. In harmony with the promise of Gen. 15:18 (see also Deut. 1:21; 19:8; cf. Ex. 34:24).

21. Too far. During the wanderings in the wilderness the sanctuary was near to the people; therefore all flesh was eaten in the presence of God (Lev. 17:3, 4). With the enlargement of the borders of the nation it would be a difficult and expensive journey for many to appear at one place, no matter where it was appointed. The distance to a central place of worship would for most of the people be too far away for reasonable convenience.

Thy gates. The people might eat of their flocks and herds at home. An elaboration of vs. 15 and 16, and a modification of the strict injunction against so doing while they were in the wilderness.

22. Roebuck. This and the "hart" were not considered sacrificial offerings (v. 15).

The unclean and the clean. Proximity to the altar made the locality holy, and only Levitically clean people might approach the site. When the people ate at their own homes the person who was not Levitically clean might also participate.

23. Be sure. The injunction against blood is most emphatic, and reads literally, "Become thou strong in thy not eating the blood."

The blood is the life. See on Gen. 9:4; see also Lev. 17:11, 14; 1 Sam. 14:32–35.

25. Go well. A promise frequently made (chs. 4:40; 5:29; 6:18). Undoubtedly both physical and spiritual welfare are included.

26. Thy holy things. A general statement including sacrifices (Ex. 28:38; Lev. 22:2, 3; Num. 18:8) and tithes (Lev. 27:30), and such special offerings as a person might wish to make. This is a reiteration that ceremonial sacrifices must be made at the altar.

27. Upon the altar. See v. 6.

Poured out. The blood in these cases was holy, unlike the blood of the animals slaughtered at home, which was poured out upon the ground.

Eat the flesh. That is, after the priests and Levites had received their allotted portions.

28. It may go well. See on v. 25.

Good and right. See ch. 6:18. Upon cooperation with the expressed will of the Lord depended their future happiness as a people and as individuals.

29. Cut off the nations. See Deut. 19:1; Joshua 23:4.

30. Take heed. All manner of temptations would present themselves in the new homeland.

Be not snared. It was a common belief among ancient peoples that it was fatal to neglect the worship of the gods of the particular locality in which a person might find himself (see 2 Kings 17:26). This accounts for the stress God laid upon not worshipping the gods of the country they were about to enter. Such worship was the root of the depravity of the heathen inhabitants about to be driven out or destroyed (Deut. 7:16, 25).

31. Not do so. The rites and ceremonies of idolatry were not to be taken over by God's people and used in His worship.

Their sons. See Lev. 18:21; 20:2; 2 Kings 17:31; Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35. The sacrifice of children by ancient heathen peoples is well authenticated. Isolated cases have even been known of the practice in modern times.

32. What thing soever. This is v. ch. 1 of 13 in the Hebrew text. The admonition applies with equal force to both ch. 12 and ch. 13.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

7 SC 108
8 PP 634
16 AA 191
19 Ed 149
28 PP 634

CHAPTER 13

1 *Enticers to idolatry, 6 how near soever unto thee, 9 are to be stoned to death. 12 Idolatrous cities are not to be spared.*

1. If there arise. Preferably, "when there arises."

A prophet. Literally, a "spokesman" or "speaker." The word thus translated is from a root meaning "to utter a low voice," "to announce," "to pass on information."

A dreamer. The Hebrew words here used refer to ordinary dreams (Isa. 29:8; Ps. 126:1), to inspired dreams, as those of Jacob (Gen. 28:12), of Joseph (Gen. 37:5–10), of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:1–3), and of false prophets, as here (Jer. 23:25).

Sign. From *'oth*, meaning a "sign," "token," given, or a "miracle" performed, to attest an inspired message and to encourage those who witness it to cooperate faithfully with the divine will.

Wonder. Literally, a "symbol," "sign," "portent," or "symbolic act," sent in token of some future event. This refers to a special display of power by a true prophet (Ex. 7:3; 11:9; Ps. 105:5), or by a false prophet, as here.

3. Shalt not hearken. The fulfillment of the "sign" or "wonder" is not to be accepted alone as proof of a prophet's claims. His message must be in harmony with previously revealed truth (Isa. 8:19, 20). The Jewish people were prone to seek signs, even in Christ's day (John 6:30), and for this Christ reproved them (Matt. 12:38–45). The apostle Paul also commented on men's tendency to seek signs (1 Cor. 1:22).

God proveth you. Literally, "God is the one testing you" (see ch. 8:2, 16).

Love the Lord. God demands of His people sincere, undivided love (Deut. 6:5; 30:20; Joshua 22:5; 23:11; Ps. 31:23; Isa. 56:6). Obedience that does not spring from love is without value in God's sight.

4. Ye shall walk. This is the basic duty absolutely binding upon each believer (Deut. 6:13; 10:20; 11:13, 22; Eccl. 12:13, 14; Micah 6:8). The Hebrew word order is most emphatic. It would read literally, "after Jehovah your God shall ye walk," meaning after

Him and not after anyone else. Fellowship with God is often spoken of as a “walk” (Gen. 5:24).

His commandments. These consist of love expressed in attitudes and actions toward God and man (Lev. 19:18; Deut. 6:5; 10:12; Micah 6:8), as Christ later explained (Matt. 5:43–45; 19:16–22; 22:36–40; see also 1 John 4:6–12).

5. Put to death. See 2 Kings 10:19–27 and 11:18 for examples of drastic action in cases of idolatry.

Turn you away. Or, “taught rebellion” (RSV). The Hebrew noun here translated “turn ... away” is given as “revolt” in Isa. 1:5; 59:13, “revolted” in Isa. 31:6, and “rebellion” in Jer. 28:16; 29:32.

Put the evil away. Literally, “burn out the evil” (see Num. 11:3; Isa. 10:17; Jer. 4:4; 7:20; 21:12; etc.).

6. If thy brother. Moses notes here the influence of close relatives on spiritual life (see Matt. 10:37; Luke 14:26).

The wife. The one nearest to a man, for they are one flesh (Gen. 2:24). This suggests the care that should be exercised in the choice of a life partner. In times of crisis, particularly during the final chapters of the great controversy between good and evil, it may not be possible to trust even the closest relatives if they do not hold to the faith (Micah 7:5–7; Matt. 10:21).

7. Gods of the people. Today these gods are materialism, wealth, popularity, politics, sports, fashions, amusements, etc.

8. Pity. When eternal destinies are at stake stern measures must be taken. The surgeon’s knife may be painful, yet it may be the only way to save other lives (ch. 7:16; 19:13, 21; 25:12).

9. Thine hand. The witness to the crime, the accuser, must take active part in meting out the punishment. The purpose of this provision was to curtail false accusations based on private grudges or quarrels. A person would hesitate to lead out in the execution of one whom he knew to be innocent.

10. Stone him. See Deut. 17:5; 21:21; 22:21, 24; Joshua 7:25. Literally, “pelt him.” Since Palestine is a stony country, a plentiful supply would always be at hand.

11. Hear, and fear. The severe measures outlined in the preceding verses were designed to protect the church from idolatry (see chs. 17:13; 19:20; 21:21). God would have men understand the heinous nature of idolatry.

12. Thy cities. As in modern times, cities then no doubt tended to become hotbeds of crime and spiritual declension.

13. Children of Belial. Literally, “sons of Belial,” that is, “sons of evil,” “children of wickedness.” The same word, “Belial,” is given in ch. 15:9 as “wicked,” and in 2 Sam. 22:5 and Ps. 18:4 as “ungodly men,” in Job 34:18 and Nahum 1:11 as “wicked,” and in Ps. 41:8 as “evil.”

Gone out. That is, severed themselves from association with God’s people, perhaps with the purpose of setting up a new organization (1 John 2:19). Those who leave the church, thinking to work in opposition to it, would do well to remember that apart from Christ they can have no spiritual life and can accomplish nothing for the kingdom (John 15:4, 5).

Have withdrawn. Rather, “have drawn away” (RSV), that is, made strong efforts to seduce others. The same word is translated “thrust” in vs. 5 and 10, suggesting intense effort.

14. Enquire. Literally, “search,” “investigate,” with the idea of demanding an answer (chs. 17:4; 19:18). It is used in Hosea 10:12 of seeking God.

Make search. Used of intensive and minute investigation (Judges 18:2; Ps. 139:1; Prov. 25:2; Jer. 31:37).

Certain. Literally, “substantiated,” “verified,” “established”—after due investigation (see ch. 17:4).

Abomination. Used of idolatrous practices. For examples see Deut. 17:4; 18:9; 20:18; Jer. 32:35.

15. The edge of the sword. Literally, “the mouth of the sword.” The sword is pictured as having an insatiable mouth (2 Sam. 2:26; 11:25).

16. The street. Literally, “the open place,” that is, the city square, plaza, or market place. This was usually situated near the gate of the city (Neh. 8:1, 3, 16; 2 Chron. 32:6), and was used for public gatherings (2 Chron. 29:4; Ezra 10:9).

Every whit. Translated as “whole burnt sacrifice” in ch. 33:10 and “whole burnt offering” in Ps. 51:19. It denoted a sacrifice that might not be redeemed by exchange or other form of substitute payment (see Lev. 27:31).

An heap for ever. A desolate landmark of God’s abhorrence of apostasy and idolatry (see Joshua 7:26; 8:28).

17. The cursed thing. The church today needs to watch that she be not soiled with various types of idolatry, of which covetousness is an example (Col. 3:5; 2 Cor. 9:5).

Fierceness. Literally, “heat,” from the verb “to burn” (see Ex. 22:24). It also appears as “be hot” (Judges 6:39; 10:7).

18. Hearken. A recurring theme in Deuteronomy. It stresses that there is no neutrality in God’s army (Matt. 12:30). The church today needs to pray constantly for divine power to maintain absolute loyalty. Note the apostle Peter’s exhortation for these last days (2 Peter 3:17, 18), Jude’s words of caution (Jude 17–25), and the message of Christ Himself on the Mount of Olives (Matt. 24:11–13).

CHAPTER 14

1 *God’s children are not to disfigure themselves in mourning.* 3 *What may, and what may not be eaten,* 4 *of beasts,* 9 *of fishes,* 11 *of fowls.* 21 *That which dieth of itself may not be eaten.* 22 *Tithes of divine service.* 23 *Tithes and firstlings of rejoicing before the Lord.* 28 *The third year’s tithe of alms and charity.*

1. Children of the Lord. This truth God had earlier made known to Pharaoh (Ex. 4:22, 23). This is an intimately close relationship that brings with it weighty responsibilities (see Isa. 1:2; 63:8, 16; 64:8; Jer. 3:14, 19, 22; 4:22; Hosea 11:1–4; Mal. 2:10).

Cut yourselves. Compare the custom of the worshipers of Baal (1 Kings 18:28). This custom is attested also in the north Canaanite texts from Ras Shamra, the ancient Ugarit, where even the highest god, *’El*, gashed himself as a sign of grief and sorrow. See also Jer. 16:6 on gashing one’s body in grief for the dead, and Jer. 41:45; 47:5 for the same demonstration at a time of a public calamity. In some parts of the world today people cut and gash themselves in grief on various occasions.

Baldness. Compare Lev. 21:5 for similar language concerning shaving the head in token of mourning (see Jer. 16:6; Eze. 7:18; Micah 1:16). The custom of shaving, cutting, or tearing the hair in mourning has come down even to modern times in some parts of the world.

2. An holy people. Repeated from ch. 7:6, by way of explanation as to why Israel should destroy the monuments of idolatry they would find in the land. Here the appeal is different, being that of the dignity of a child of God.

A peculiar people. Literally, “a people of possession.” The Hebrew word translated “peculiar” is the noun “possession,” “valued property,” from the verb “to acquire property.” This noun is elsewhere translated “peculiar treasure” (Ex. 19:5; Ps. 135:4; Eccl. 2:8; Mal. 3:17, margin). The KJV rendering “peculiar” has sometimes been misunderstood as meaning “queer.” In the time of the translators of the KJV a man who fished “in a peculiar river” (Shakespeare) was trespassing on *private* property. Even yet the primary meaning of “peculiar” is “belonging especially or exclusively to an individual,” although it now refers primarily to his “peculiar” or “distinctive” characteristics rather than to his private possessions. Accordingly, it now means “different,” “odd,” “queer.” But this, its common usage today, is colloquial.

Nations. Literally, “peoples,” suggesting the commonwealth of Israel and its institutions, in contrast with other organized states and their institutions.

3. Any abominable thing. See Lev. 11:2–23 for details. This refers to things “abominable” for sanitary, health, and other reasons. Compare the statements of the apostle Paul in 1 Tim. 4:4; Rom. 14:14. Christian principle must regulate eating and drinking.

4. The beasts. The first animals mentioned are those that were commonly offered as sacrifices (see Lev. 1:2, 5, 10).

5. The hart. The animals of this verse were not offered in sacrifice.

6. Parteth the hoof. For a more detailed explanation of vs. 6–8 see Lev. 11:3–8.

9. Fins and scales. See Lev. 11:9–12.

11. All clean birds. Such as the dove, the partridge, and the quail, and presumably others (cf. Lev. 11:13–19).

12. The eagle. The list here given is almost identical with that of Lev. 11:13–23.

13. The vulture. Note the kinds spoken of in Lev. 11:14. The bald-headed vulture is common in the East.

14. Every raven. See Lev. 11:15. The same Hebrew word as for the bird Noah released from the ark (Gen. 8:7), and as fed the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:4, 6). The word is from the root “to be black.”

19. Every creeping thing. See Lev. 11:20. Literally, “every swarming thing,” in reference to various flying insects, not birds.

20. Fowls. Literally, “things that fly.” This is not a repetition of v. 11, which deals with birds, but refers to clean insects, such as some species of locusts, considered a delicacy in parts of the Orient even today (see Lev. 11:21, 22).

21. Dieth of itself. Literally, “any carcass,” that is, of an animal that dies of itself, from disease or otherwise. This prohibition is a repetition of Lev. 11:39, 40 (see also Lev. 17:15). The Hebrew word comes from the verb “to sink down,” “to languish,” “to droop and fade.” Examples are: “Wear away” (Ex. 18:18), “wither” (Ps. 37:2), “falleth off” (Isa. 34:4), “make thee vile” (Nahum 3:6).

The stranger. An uncircumcised foreigner who did not practice idolatry and was therefore permitted to live among the Hebrews. “Strangers” were not obliged to practice all Levitical and ceremonial regulations.

An alien. That is, the transient foreigner, one who had not settled permanently among the Hebrews but was passing through for trade or for some other reason.

An holy people. Literally, “a people of holiness.” Their separateness, their consecrated status, was ever to be before Israel as their standard of life. The word “holy” is also used of the character of Jehovah, and of the tabernacle, its instruments, and sacrifices (see Lev. 11:44, 45).

Seethe a kid. For an explanation of this idolatrous custom see on Ex. 23:19 (see also Ex. 34:26).

22. Tithe. The prophet Samuel mentioned tithe paying for the support of a king when Israel clamored for a personal ruler over them (1 Sam. 8:15). Jehovah as supreme Lord of the earth commanded that tithes be paid for the support of His workers. It is generally conceded that the tithe spoken of in these verses is the second tithe, which was to be consumed as a holy feast before the Lord, at the tabernacle. This second tithe is also spoken of in Deut. 14:28 and 26:12–15. The second tithe was distinct from the first tithe, which was devoted exclusively to the support of priests and Levites (Num. 18:21, 26).

The field. The word translated “field” has various meanings, such as “open country,” “pastureland,” “cultivated ground,” “private property,” “city land.” Here it is used in the sense of cultivated land.

23. Eat before the Lord. Compare ch. 12:5–7. It was the second tithe that was to be eaten before the Lord. This was to be done for two years; then in the third (and thus also the sixth) year the arrangements of v. 28 were to apply. The seventh year was sabbatical, in which the land lay uncultivated. No tithe was exacted, for there was no harvest.

In the place. The people would go up to the place chosen by God for religious services and feasts. They would eat together as families, in fellowship before the Lord. Such occasions were designed to promote religious life. Numerous lessons would be stressed, such as conscientious giving for religious and practical purposes, charity to the needy (see on Lev. 7:15), and sacred fellowship before the Lord, the strengthening of family ties, etc.

Tithe of thy corn. This could not refer to the first tithe paid to the Levites, inasmuch as the common people were not eligible to partake of it, but only the priests. Unfaithfulness in tithing the increase could lead to the loss of an entire crop, through the withholding of God’s blessing (Hosea 2:8, 9).

The firstlings. See ch. 12:6. The law of firstlings is given in ch. 15:19–23. Here it is mentioned almost incidentally.

Learn to fear. Conscientious compliance with these divine requirements would impress the worshiper with the fear of the Lord, and would encourage steadfastness in communion with Him. “The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom” (Job 28:28). “In thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple” (Ps. 5:7). “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (Prov. 8:13). “The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life” (Prov. 14:27). “The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom” (Prov. 15:33). “The fear of the Lord tendeth to life” (Prov. 19:23).

24. Too long. If a family lived far from the sanctuary, or if the roads were difficult, so that the tithe in kind could be taken along only with great difficulty, then the provisions

of the following verses were to apply. Here was a practical plan to enable the worshipers to reach the sanctuary expeditiously and without the loss of perishable goods.

25. Turn it into money. Because money is easier to carry than produce.

Bind up. Literally, “besiege,” “lay siege to.” For examples of this, see Isa. 29:3; Jer. 21:4; 37:5. The money was to be bound up in some way and fastened to the wrist or arm.

26. Lusteth after. Better, “desireth.” The same Hebrew word is also translated “desired” or “desireth” (Job 23:13; Ps. 132:13, 14; Isa. 26:9; Micah 7:1). The necessity of supplying worshippers who had come from a distance with the various articles required for the feast led eventually to the setting up of a market in the Temple area in Jerusalem. Such a situation a worldly-minded priesthood would soon corrupt and make a source of personal gain (see Jer. 6:13; 23:11).

Strong drink. The “wine” and “strong drink” here referred to were both fermented. In times past God often “winked” at gross “ignorance” responsible for practices He could never approve. But eventually the time comes when, on each point, God “commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). Then those who persist in their practices in spite of counsel and warning, no longer have a “cloke for their sin” (John 15:22). Prior to that time “they had not had sin” and God did not hold them wholly accountable, even though their deeds were far short of the ideal. His long-suffering is extended to all who “know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Like Paul, who persecuted the church “ignorantly in unbelief,” they may obtain mercy (1 Tim. 1:13).

In olden times God suffered the Israelites to have slaves, but protected the slaves against injustice (Ex. 21:16, 20). Even in the Christian church slavery was not immediately abolished, but masters were instructed to deal kindly with their slaves (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1).

In a similar way, God never approved of the practice of divorce or the keeping of a plurality of wives. “From the beginning it was not so” (Matt. 19:8). But, for a time, God suffered it, and gave instructions designed to safeguard the rights of women, to mitigate the suffering that resulted from these practices, and to protect the marriage relationship from grosser abuse (Ex. 21:7–11; Deut. 21:10–17). Whereas on the one hand God did not forbid Abraham, for instance, to take a second wife, Hagar, on the other hand He did not protect him from the evils that resulted from such a course of action.

God gave Moses laws designed, not directly to abolish polygamy, but to discourage it (Lev. 18:18; Deut. 17:17), to restrict divorce (Deut. 22:19, 29; 24:1), and to elevate the standard of married life (Ex. 20:14, 17; Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). Christ made it clear that the OT provisions for a plurality of wives and for divorce were not ideal, but, rather a temporary expedient God suffered to be “because of the hardness of your hearts” (Matt. 19:4–8). Christ pointed to God’s ideal for Christian homes (Matt. 19:9), which has ever been monogamy (Matt. 19:4–6; 1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6). The Christian need not be in doubt as to God’s will in these matters, and is therefore without even the limited excuse men had in OT times.

Thus it was with “wine” and “strong drink.” Neither was strictly prohibited, except to those engaged in religious duties, and perhaps also in the administration of justice (Lev. 10:9; Prov. 31:4, 5). The evils of “wine” and “strong drink” were clearly pointed out, the people counseled to refrain from them (Prov. 20:1; 23:29–33), and a curse pronounced upon those who should entice others to overindulgence in drink (Hab. 2:15). But Paul sets before us the ideal by declaring, “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do,

do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31), and warns that God will destroy those who defile their bodies (1 Cor. 3:16, 17). Intoxicants “defile the temple of God,” and their use cannot be considered a means of glorifying Him (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; 10:31). Paul abandoned the use of everything harmful to the body (1 Cor. 9:27). There is no excuse today for the argument that there is nothing intrinsically wrong in the use of intoxicants, on the basis that God once permitted them. As already noted, He also once permitted such practices as slavery and polygamy. The Bible warns that “drunkards” will not “inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:10).

Desireth. From a different Hebrew verb than “lusteth.” “Desireth” is from a word meaning “to request,” “to ask.”

Eat there. A sacred feast for the entire family “before the Lord,” that is, before the sanctuary.

Thine household. This would include not only the immediate members of the family but also servants (ch. 12:18).

27. The Levite. The Levites, without territory of their own (ch. 12:12), lived in cities of their own, scattered throughout the various tribes, and were to be invited to these sacred feasts (ch. 12:18).

28. The same year. That is, the third year.

Within thy gates. Or, “within your towns” (RSV).

29. The stranger. The “stranger,” like the Levite, was landless. The fatherless and widows also merited special consideration (see chs. 16:11, 14; 24:17, 19; 26:12). The first tithe was strictly for the support of the priests and Levites. The second tithe provided either for a sacred family feast before the Lord or for a table provided by Jehovah for orphans, for the poor, and for “strangers” within the land. Levites were eligible to partake of all such feasts. The provisions among Israel for the needy encouraged the practice of true religion. The apostle James expressed the same principle for the Christian church (James 1:27).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

2 GC 46; LS 350; MM 329; PK 568; 1T 282; 3T 172

8 MH 313

23, 29 PP 530

29 COL 220

CHAPTER 15

1 *The seventh year a year of release for the poor. 7 It must be no let of lending or giving.*

12 *An Hebrew servant, 16 except he will not depart, must in the seventh year go forth free and well furnished. 19 All firstling males of the cattle are to be sanctified unto the Lord.*

1. Every seven years. That is, in the seventh year, as in v. 12 (see Deut. 31:10; Jer. 34:14). The command of this verse is an extension of Ex. 21:2; Lev. 25:3.

Make a release. Literally, “thou shalt make a remission.” The word translated “release” means a temporary remitting, from the root “to let drop,” “to detach.” It is used in speaking of the land, “But the seventh year thou shalt let it rest,” that is, be released from cultivation and allowed to lie fallow (Ex. 23:11); and in referring to Jezebel’s being thrown down by her eunuchs (2 Kings 9:33). This “release” refers to a manumission from debt, from slavery, and also to a rest for the land from cultivation.

2. Manner of the release. Literally, “matter of the release.” See ch. 19:4, where the same word is translated “case.”

Every creditor that lendeth. Literally, “every master of the loan of his hand,” meaning, “every owner of what his hand lent to some other person.” This is the law to govern the creditor in each seventh year, in respect to poor people unable to repay their loans.

Neighbour. The word also means “friend,” “companion,” “associate.” The verb form means “to associate with.”

Not exact it. The same root in the Arabic has the meaning “to drive vehemently.” Evidently the meaning is that no pressure was to be exerted to recover the debt (see on Ex. 22:25).

Of his brother. Not a blood brother, but a fellow Israelite, so stressing the bonds of fellow feeling and national brotherhood of the Israelites (see chs. 17:15; 19:18, 19; 22:1–4; 23:20, 21; 25:3).

The Lord’s release. That is to say, in honor of Jehovah, to whom the creditor owes all his wealth and well-being, and who has commanded so beneficent a law for the good of the general body of the people.

3. Of a foreigner. That is, an alien who was not a proselyte to the Jewish faith, nor a permanent resident, but merely a temporary sojourner for trading or other purposes. Such a person was not obligated to obey the laws of the seventh year; therefore there was no need to put aside a creditor’s claim upon him (see Lev. 25:1–7, 20–22).

4. Save when there shall be. Literally, “howbeit that not shall there be” (see on v. 11). The word translated “poor” in this verse means one subject to abuse or oppression, one not in a position to defend himself (see Amos 2:6; 5:12).

Greatly bless thee. Faithfulness to God’s directives would mean divine blessings that would eliminate abject poverty, though not necessarily equalize the distribution of wealth. Compare the condition of the early believers of the Christian community (Acts 4:33, 34).

An inheritance. See ch. 4:21.

5. Carefully hearken. Particularly in the matter of compassion upon the poor and needy. Faithfulness in carrying out the expressed will of God would bring His blessing upon them.

These commandments. Literally, “this commandment” (cf. chs. 5:31; 8:1).

6. Blesseth thee. The Hebrew verb form is historical, “hath blessed thee,” emphasizing the surety of the promise if Israel should obey (see v. 14; ch. 12:7). The promised blessing is so certain that Moses speaks of it as already accomplished.

Lend. The form of the verb here translated “lend,” means “to give a pledge”; the causative form, as here, means “to cause [others] to give pledges.” This is a promise of material and financial prosperity. They would have been “the head, and not the tail” (ch. 28:13). Had Israel, by compliance with God’s wise requirements, become fit representatives of Him, they would have become the leading commercial and political power of antiquity.

Not borrow. Literally, “not give a pledge.” Obedience to God’s instructions would prevent their enslavement to any nation, for to be in debt is to run the risk of being enslaved (Prov. 22:7).

Reign over. Compare ch. 28:1.

7. A poor man. Literally, “a needy one.” Poverty always seems to exist (Deut. 15:11; Matt. 26:11); yet much can be done to reduce it and to alleviate the suffering that accompanies it. So long as there is a diversity of talents among men there will always be some in need of help. Members of the church could do much more for those less fortunate about them, and yet not do less by way of public evangelism.

Thy gates. Or, “your towns” (RSV; see ch. 12:12).

Shut thine hand. The verb here translated “shut” also means “to withdraw.” It is as if a man placed his hands in his pockets, or behind his back, refusing to extend them forward in a gesture of generosity. In 1 John 3:17 the apostle John comments literally, “whoever may possess the means of life of this world, and should see his brother having need, and should shut up his bowels from him, how abides the love of God in that one?” The anticipated answer is that divine love cannot abide in the heart of such a person.

8. Open thine hand wide. A word picture of a bountiful spirit. The Hebrew form is emphatic, “opening thou shalt open thy hand to him.” Compare the words of Christ (Matt. 5:42; Luke 6:30–34). One of the hardest lessons for many to learn is that selfishness is self-defeating.

Sufficient for his need. Enough is to be lent to meet the emergency. The genuine case requires compassion (Matt. 18:33).

9. Eye be evil. An “evil,” or selfish, “eye” affects the entire character (Deut. 28:54, 56; see also Prov. 23:6).

Cry. Compare Ex. 22:22, 23.

Sin unto thee. Literally, “sin in thee” (see chs. 23:22; 24:15).

10. Not be grieved. Literally, “not be evil.” The same verb is translated “sad” (1 Sam. 1:8, RSV), “evil” (Deut. 28:54, 56), and “ill” (Job 20:26). The apostle Paul spoke of the same attitude of mind in 2 Cor. 9:7, saying literally, “Each according as he purposes in his heart, not out of annoyance, or of necessity.”

All. The Lord takes note of all that a man does; nothing goes unrewarded. There is to be an “abounding,” or, as Paul says, literally, “an overtopping” in all we do for God (2 Cor. 8:7, 9).

11. Never cease. This is referred to by Christ in Matt. 26:11. The need for generosity and Christian charity will never cease. James speaks of the poor as the ones God has chosen for Himself (James 2:5). The needy poor have a claim on those who are not poor; and the assistance they require should be given ungrudgingly, and not with a spirit of regret. The seeming contradiction here with v. 4 is due to the fact that v. 4 looks forward to the *result* of cooperating with the plan here set forth (see on v. 4). But the time would never come when there would be no opportunity to assist their fellow men.

Open thine hand wide. Literally, “opening, thou shalt open thine hand,” the Hebrew form of emphasis. The noun form of the word thus translated means “the doorway” of a tent (Gen. 18:1, 2, 10), of a private house (Ex. 12:22), of the tabernacle (Ex. 38:8), and of a king’s house (2 Sam. 11:9). To “open thine hand wide” thus implies a sharing of the good things of one’s home.

12. If thy brother. Compare Ex. 21:2–6; Jer. 34:9–14. A man could make himself a slave, or be made one by court order. In any case the Israelite slaves were to be well treated by their brethren; and if not redeemed earlier, were set free in the seventh year. See Ex. 21:20, 26, 27; Lev. 25:39, for restrictions on the master’s treatment of slaves.

The seventh year. The sabbatical year affected all walks of life (Lev. 25:2). But the seventh year, that saw the slave's release, should not be confused with the years that find their completion in the sabbatical year. The year of the slave's release followed six years of servitude, and might or might not coincide with the sabbatical year. Slavery was an institution of the social order of the times. But God ordained laws to protect slaves as children of God, as brethren in the religious community, and as citizens in a social order which had as its goal, free men.

13. Empty. That is, "empty-handed." The root of the word translated "empty" often means "in vain" (Lev. 26:16, 20). Here it refers to effort put forth that brought no profit. To send a freed slave away without sufficient means to make a new start as an independent, free member of society, would be to make a vain gesture. He would likely fall back into slavery again. See the promise of God to the faithful (Isa. 65:23; cf. Gen. 31:42; Ex. 3:21).

14. Furnish him liberally. Literally, "furnishing a necklace thou shalt furnish him a necklace." The word translated "furnish" is used of "the chains that were about their camels' necks" (Judges 8:26). The natives of the East still place ornamental chains on their cattle. See the same word for "chain" in Prov. 1:9; S. of Sol. 4:9; Ps. 73:6. The Hebrew master was commanded to "adorn," or equip, a slave as he felt his master's service.

God hath blessed thee. Compare chs. 7:13; 12:15; 16:17. In proportion to God's blessing upon him, the master was to exercise liberality toward the slave now set free.

15. A bondman. A forceful argument from experience, the strongest possible motive for generosity (see Deut. 16:12; 24:18, 22; cf. Matt. 10:8; Matt. 18:23–35). The Biblical laws pertaining to servitude not only lightened the lot of the slave but eventually led to his freedom. No Israelite was to be kept in permanent slavery. These rules included the following provisions: (1) The Hebrew slave could not be forced to serve longer than six years, and was to be released in the seventh year. (2) Harsh treatment by the owner was strictly frowned upon (Lev. 25:39–43). (3) If, in a fit of temper, the owner inflicted serious bodily injury on the person of the slave, such a slave was to receive his freedom (Ex. 21:26). (4) Unreasonably severe punishment meted out to a slave would subject the owner to legal penalties (Ex. 21:20, 21). (5) During servitude, the terms of service were to be so liberally administered that it would be possible for the slave to acquire property or sufficient means to redeem himself (Lev. 25:49). The operation of these principles would tend steadily to eliminate the unfair and unfortunate lot of the slave. In fact, the lot of the Hebrew "slave" would hardly be recognizable as slavery by the nations round about Israel.

16. I will not go away. Here is the case of a man who became so attached to his master that he preferred to remain (see on Ex. 21:5). When a man thus declined to become free, he *voluntarily* chose perpetual servitude. This provision, if carried out in conformity to the rules laid down by God (see on v. 15), might prove a blessing to individuals incapable of administering their own affairs. They thus placed themselves permanently under the protection of one who could administer their affairs for them, and who had proved his kindly care of his slaves. The same considerate provisions that had applied to temporary servitude were to be continued.

He loveth thee. Generous and considerate treatment had won the man's heart. In servitude he had found a measure of freedom sufficient to satisfy him. The motive behind his desire to remain was love.

17. Take an aul. For details, see Ex. 21:1–6. By this symbol the man was bound forever as an obedient servant to the household of his master.

For ever. That is, as long as the man should live (see on Ex. 21:6).

Thy maidservant. This seems to contradict Ex. 21:7, "She shall not go out as the menservants do." But it is not stated here that she should not go out at all, but rather that she should not be released on the same basis as the menservants. The conditions for her release are given in Ex. 21:8–11; cf. Jer. 34:9.

18. Not seem hard. A reference to vs. 13, 14.

Worth. A hired laborer would cost twice as much as a slave.

Bless thee. God is ever ready to bestow rich blessings upon men, but He can do so only for those who appreciate His love enough to love and obey Him (1 John 4:19; John 14:15; 15:10). Should God do otherwise, and bless those who do not serve Him, He would be encouraging them to continue in disobedience.

19. Firstling males. The law was established at the Exodus from Egypt that all first-born males of both man and beast belonged to Jehovah (see on Ex. 13:12–15; Num. 18:15–18).

Sanctify unto the Lord. This does not contradict Lev. 27:26, "The Lord's firstling, no man shall sanctify it." The meaning here is that the owner shall recognize the firstling as Jehovah's property, and must under no circumstances use it for any other purpose. Lev. 27:26 means that no man shall take what the Lord already considers as His—the firstling—and present it in payment of a personal vow.

Do no work. The male firstlings were sanctified to Jehovah. They were not to be put to ordinary secular labor, even though they might remain temporarily in a man's possession. The firstling females were not dedicated to the Lord as were the males. They might be offered as peace offerings, with the offerer partaking of them in a sacrificial meal and giving a portion also to the priests. This is in harmony with the principle of the second tithe (ch. 14:23).

Nor shear. A firstling sheep was not to be shorn, for it was dedicated to a holy use. God has claim on the first of all we possess: our life, our affections, our physical, mental, and spiritual powers, our service, our property.

20. Year by year. At the three great annual festive occasions, when all adult males were to appear before the Lord at Jerusalem. Peace offerings and sacrificial feasts were always celebrated at these occasions.

Thy household. Compare chs. 12:6, 7, 17, 18, 26; 14:23. The Levite and the stranger were to be asked to share in these sacred feasts.

21. Any blemish. The blemishes are enumerated in Lev. 22:21–24 (see Deut. 17:1).

Lame. This blemish is not mentioned in Lev. 22:21–24, but Mal. 1:8 mentions the offering of a lame animal as "evil."

Not sacrifice it. It was not acceptable as a dedicated animal.

22. Within thy gates. It was partaken of at home as an ordinary meal. Nearby Levites, strangers, and the needy probably shared the meal.

The unclean. Ceremonial purity was not required, as when a sacrificial animal was eaten before the Lord, for this was common food and not a sanctified offering (see ch. 12:15, 20).

23. The blood. Compare Deut. 12:16, 23, 24 see on Gen. 9:4.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1, 2 PP 532

6 MH 187

6-9PP 533

7, 8 MB 111; MH 186; PK 647

7-116T 270

10 MH 187

11 MH 186; PK 647; PP 533; 8T 134; WM 17

12-14PP 532

21 CH 69; 1T 115, 195, 221; 3T 546

CHAPTER 16

1 *The feast of the passover, 9 of weeks, 13 of tabernacles.* 16 *Every male must offer, as he is able, at these three feasts.* 18 *Of judges and justice.* 21 *Groves and images are forbidden.*

1. The month of Abib. Literally, “the month of the young ears of grain” (Ex. 9:31; Lev. 2:14). This Jewish month, later called Nisan, began between late March and late April. Abib was appointed by God the first month of the ecclesiastical Israelite year (Ex. 12:2; cf. 13:4; 34:18).

The passover. Of the three commanded annual feasts the Passover was the first (Ex. 23:14–17). It was kept in Abib, or Nisan, for that was the month in which God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt. For seven days the people ate unleavened bread, as upon their hurried departure from Egypt (see on Ex. 12:34). No leaven was to remain in their houses, nor any of the Passover lamb after the first night. After the Passover animal had been eaten, the people returned to their tents. For six days they ate unleavened bread, and held a convocation on the seventh day, which was observed as a sabbath (see also Ex. 12:1–28).

By night. It was early morning (PP 281) when the children of Israel actually left Egypt (Ex. 12:29–34). The command to prepare for instant departure, and Pharaoh’s demand that they go immediately, were given the night before (Ex. 12:11, 12, 31–33).

2. Sacrifice the passover. The Passover sacrificial animal was to be either a lamb or a kid of the goats (Ex. 12:5). Note that Ex. 12:3–6 prescribes a male animal of the first year, either a lamb or a kid, to be consumed at one meal. Later, a lamb was invariably chosen as the victim, rather than a goat.

The place. The sanctuary of the Lord was the place at which they were to slay the Passover, a command reiterated again and again (ch. 16:2, 6, 7; cf. vs. 11, 15, 16 for the other feasts).

3. No leavened bread. Leavened bread was prohibited with any meal offering (see on Lev. 2:1), inasmuch as leaven represents fermentation and decay, and hence corruption.

Seven days. See Ex. 12:15, 18–20; 13:6, 7; 23:15; Lev. 23:6.

Affliction. The word thus translated is from a root meaning “to be bowed down,” “to be frustrated.” The reference here is to the servitude of Israel in Egypt (Ex. 3:7; 4:31).

In haste. The expression thus translated is from a word meaning “to be alarmed,” “to be in trepidation.” The corresponding Arabic verb means “to hasten,” “to urge,” “to incite.” The meaning here is that Israel hurried away in great alarm. Compare the same root rendered as “tremble” (ch. 20:3). Compare Ex. 12:11, 34, 39, where it is stated that Israel did not take time to put leaven in their dough (see Isa. 52:12).

Remember the day. See Deut. 4:9; Ex. 13:8.

4. All night. See Ex. 12:10; 34:25; Num. 9:12 (cf. Ex. 23:18).

5. Mayest not sacrifice. In the future the sacrifice might not be made in any private home or place, but only at the place appointed by Jehovah (see ch. 12:5, 11). The first Passover was eaten in the homes of the people in Egypt, on the eve of their flight. There was then no sanctuary, no holy place of assembly, to which they could gather.

6. At even. That is, between the two evenings (see on Ex. 12:6). The evening sacrifice having been offered, the Passover victim was slain.

The season. Literally, “the appointed time” or “the place of meeting.” Compare “in the time appointed” (Ex. 23:15); “in the time of” (Ex. 34:18); “at a time appointed” (Joshua 8:14). The reference in this instance is to the appointed hour, namely, that of the Exodus from Egypt.

7. Roast and eat it. See on Ex. 12:8, 9. The verb here translated “roast” is given twice as “bake” (Num. 11:8; 2 Sam. 13:8) and twice as “roast” (Deut. 16:7; 2 Chron. 35:13), but in all other instances of cooking is translated “boil,” “seethe,” “sodden.” Apparently, its root meaning was “to ripen,” as in “the harvest is ripe” (Joel 3:13) and “ripe grapes” (Gen. 40:10). Inasmuch as in all cases the idea is that of ripening or bringing to the point of full preparation, by heat, “roast” may be more appropriate here. Compare the expression “roast with fire” (Ex. 12:9) and the later account of a Passover that contrasts the roasted lamb with the other offerings, which were boiled (2 Chron. 35:13).

Tents. Here meaning, “homes.” This custom remained even after Israel no longer wandered about, but had become a settled nation in Palestine, with permanent homes (see Judges 7:8; 2 Sam. 19:8; 1 Kings 12:16). They were to remain overnight in the place where they ate the Passover. In the morning those who had joined with other households in the paschal lamb might return to their own homes (see on Ex. 12:4).

8. On the seventh. The feast lasted for seven days, as did the eating of unleavened bread (Ex. 12:15; Ex. 13:6; Lev. 23:6; Num. 28:17). The statement here made must mean that after unleavened bread had been eaten for six days, the children of Israel were to hold a “solemn assembly,” while continuing to eat unleavened bread.

A solemn assembly. The word thus translated is from a verb meaning “to restrain,” “to enclose,” “to shut up,” especially for religious purposes (see Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35; 2 Chron. 7:9; Neh. 8:18, with reference to the Feast of Tabernacles; cf. Amos 5:21).

Do no work. That is, they were to perform no ordinary labor (Num. 28:25; cf. “work” in 2 Kings 22:5, 9).

9. Seven weeks. See Lev. 23:15. This expression gives the name “feast of weeks” to this festival (see on Deut. 16:10). By the Jews of the Dispersion it was later called “Pentecost” (Acts 2:1).

Begin to number. These seven weeks began at the time of the barley harvest (see Joshua 3:15; 5:10; see also Lev. 23:15).

10. Feast. From *chag*, a word that means more than “festival.” It includes the idea of a religious pilgrimage, and is, in fact, derived from a verb meaning “to make a

pilgrimage,” “to take a journey to an object of reverence.” The Arabic *haj* describes the sacred pilgrimage of the Moslem to Mecca.

Feast of weeks. The names “feast of harvest” and “day of the firstfruits” are also given to this festival (see Ex. 23:16; 34:22; Num. 28:26).

A tribute. The word thus translated occurs nowhere else in the OT. The equivalent Aramaic word means “sufficiency.” The idea may be of an offering proportionate to a man’s station and means in life. The derivation of the word is obscure.

Blessed. See on v. 17.

11. Rejoice. A generous spirit was to be shown toward those in need (chs. 12:7, 12, 18; 14:29). This would bring joy to him who gave and to him who received.

12. Bondman. See on ch. 15:15.

13. Feast of tabernacles. The last annual Jewish feast. All males were commanded to be present each year (see v. 16). The word “tabernacles” is translated from the word for “booths” (Gen. 33:17; Lev. 23:42, 43; Neh. 8:14–17; Jonah 4:5). The verb means “to weave together,” “to cover.” The derived noun is, then, a “covering” or “booth” of branches woven and interlaced to form a temporary yet adequate cover. The Feast of Tabernacles was observed at the close of the harvest, when the grain and the grapes of the vineyard had been gathered and processed.

14. Rejoice. The end of the vintage season would be a happy time (see Isa. 16:10). The wheat harvest had been gathered about four months earlier; the vintage came in September or October.

15. A solemn feast. Note the various offerings commanded for this period (Num. 29:12–35). An eighth day is spoken of in Lev. 23:36; Num. 29:35.

16. Three times. See on Ex. 23:14–17; see also Ex. 34:18, 22, 23. Note that Ex. 34:24 adds the promise that the Lord would keep their lands inviolate during the absence of the people from their homes. The expression “before the Lord” reads literally, “at the face of Jehovah,” meaning access to His presence. Note the same expression used of a face-to-face meeting with royalty (2 Sam. 3:13; 14:28, 32, 2 Kings 25:19; Esther 1:14). The psalmist speaks of the ecstasy of the believer at beholding the face of God (Ps. 17:15).

Empty. That is, “empty-handed” (RSV). The people should appear in the presence of Jehovah with such gifts as were worthy of the blessings received in their harvests (see Ex. 23:15; 34:20). See on v. 10.

17. Give as he is able. Literally, “according to the gifts of his hand.” Though he should give liberally, according to the blessings received, he should not give to the extent of impoverishing himself and creating hardship for his family.

18. Make thee. Literally, “appoint for thyself.” Compare the appointment by Moses of judges to settle disputes among the people (Ex. 18:21–26; Deut. 1:12–18).

In all thy gates. Or, “in all your towns” (RSV). This refers to the appointment of local judges. Judicial procedure was later augmented by the appointment of the priests as a court of final appeal (ch. 17:8, 9).

Just judgment. Literally, “judgments of righteousness” (see ch. 1:16).

19. Not wrest judgment. See Ex. 23:6, 8 (cf. Deut. 24:17; 27:19; 1 Sam. 8:3; Isa. 10:1, 2).

Not respect persons. Literally, “not recognize faces” (see Ex. 23:1–3; Lev. 19:15; Ps. 82:1–5).

A gift. Specifically, a bribe (see Ex. 23:8; 1 Sam. 8:3; Job 15:34; Ps. 26:10).

20. Altogether just. Literally, “righteousness,” a characteristic Hebrew form of stating the point emphatically.

Follow. That is, as if in pursuit of it (Gen. 35:5; Lev. 26:7; 2 Sam. 2:19).

21. A grove. Heb. *’asherim*. The word is used more than 30 times in the OT and is consistently rendered “groves” in the KJV. The word is always used in connection with idols (see on Ex. 34:13). It should be translated “sacred trees” or “wooden poles.” These were dedicated to the pagan goddess Asherah, while the stone pillars were objects of worship dedicated to Baal.

22. Any image. Literally, “a pillar.” Such “pillars” were set up by the heathen as objects of worship (see Gen. 28:18). The same word appears in Ex. 23:24; 34:13; Lev. 26:1; etc. These “pillars” were usually of stone, and were devoted to idolatrous worship, especially to Baal. In many instances they were connected with the depravity of phallic worship. In contrast, a pillar was set up by Jacob as a memorial of God’s visitation to him (Gen. 28:18, 22; 31:13; 35:14).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

11-14PP 530

16, 17 3T 395

17 CS 73

CHAPTER 17

1 *The things sacrificed must be sound.* 2 *Idolaters must be slain.* 8 *Hard controversies are to be determined by the priests and judges.* 12 *The contemner of that determination must die.* 14 *The election,* 16 *and duty of a king.*

1. Blemish. An imperfect sacrifice would not properly typify Christ (see 1 Peter 1:19). The law regarding the perfection required in sacrificial animals is given in detail in Lev. 22:17–25. See also Mal. 1:7–12, where the prophet complains of imperfect sacrifices being offered, with the connivance of a corrupt priesthood. Anything less than the best is unworthy of being placed in God’s service. God is entitled to man’s best; and to withhold it is to show contempt for Him. It is presumptuous to offer God that which is of little value, or which costs us little or nothing.

Any evilfavouredness. Literally, “anything evil.” This explains the preceding sentence, referring to disease or illness in an animal.

3. Host of heaven. The primary, and in many ways the worst, form of idolatry was the worship of the heavenly bodies (see Deut. 4:19; Job 31:26, 27).

Not commanded. Rather, “forbidden” (RSV).

4. The thing certain. Church discipline must be based on certainties, not on rumors. Hearsay should not be accepted as evidence. If one presumes to make an accusation, he should be required to provide proof in substantiation of it before action is taken (see on v. 6).

5. Thy gates. See ch. 16:18. For “gates,” meaning the structure of the entrance into the city. Here, in rooms built for the purpose, elders, judges, and the king sat officially (see on Gen. 19:1).

Stone them. See Lev. 24:14; Num. 15:36; Deut. 22:24; Acts 7:58, 59.

6. Witnesses. A person was not to be condemned on the testimony of a lone witness (Num. 35:30), lest spite or the desire for revenge should influence a decision.

7. The hands. See ch. 13:9. This places a grave responsibility upon the witnesses. The sin of bloodguiltiness would rest upon one who bore false witness, for he would

become the chief executioner. This law tended to foster truthfulness among witnesses, and care in the making of accusations.

8. Too hard. That is, for the local courts that were to be established in all their cities (ch. 16:18). The Hebrew reads, literally, “too wonderful,” “surpassing,” or “unusual.” The same word appears in 2 Sam. 1:26; Ps. 118:23; Prov. 30:18; Micah 7:15. The reference is to some point of law that was not clear to the local judges.

Between blood and blood. That is, the shedding of blood that resulted in death—was it accidental? premeditated? a willful murder? (see Ex. 21:12–14). The decision in such a case would determine whether or not the accused would be admitted to a city of refuge.

Plea and plea. A reference to civil suits, involving personal property, debts, and matters of personal loss and injury.

Matters of controversy. Cases that could not be settled in the lower courts, and therefore would be transferred to the Levitical courts.

9. The priests. Compare chs. 19:17; 21:5. The king (2 Sam. 14:13; 15:2) or some person appointed by him (2 Sam. 15:3) might act as judge. The priests were the custodians of the law (Mal. 2:7), and the king and his appointees were the executors of it.

10. According to the sentence. Literally, “according to the mouth [command] of the word” (as in Gen. 45:21).

They. That is, the judges.

11. According to the sentence of the law. Literally, “upon the mouth of the divine directive,” “mouth” again meaning “command,” as in v. 10. The word translated “law” means divine directives (“instructions,” RSV), in this case in respect to decisions made on civil cases up for trial (see ch. 33:10).

Not decline. Literally, “not turn aside” (Ex. 32:8; Judges 2:17; Prov. 13:14).

12. Do presumptuously. The root of the word thus translated means “to boil up,” “to seethe,” to act rebelliously, and the derived Hebrew noun, as here, “insolence,” “pride,” “presumptuousness” (see Deut. 18:22; 1 Sam. 17:28; Jer. 49:16).

13. Shall hear, and fear. The procedure outlined was intended to teach the people proper respect for duly established authority. This in turn would inculcate due regard for divine authority and for the directives given through selected channels.

14. A king. The true leader, or commander of the people, was Christ (Isa. 55:1, 4). The time came in the experience of Israel when they felt it imperative to have an earthly king like the surrounding heathen nations (1 Sam. 8:5; 12:12). But God was their true King, under the theocracy (Ps. 5:2; 10:16; 29:10; 44:4; 68:24; Zeph. 3:15).

15. God shall choose. The choice of a king over God’s people was not to be left to the pleasure of the people. See the words of the prophet Samuel to Saul (1 Sam. 10:1, 19, 22, 24). The mind of the Lord is seen in David’s words respecting his successor (1 Chron. 28:5; 29:1).

Among thy brethren. The man to be chosen must be a Hebrew. The people might possibly wish a foreigner to rule over them.

16. Not multiply horse. Solomon did not heed this command (1 Kings 4:26). Dependence upon cavalry indicated a lack of faith in the power of God to keep His people. This usually accompanied a lapse into rebellion and sin (see Isa. 2:6–8; Amos 4:10).

Return to Egypt. Egypt was recognized as a source of supply for horses (1 Kings 10:28, 29). The command means that agents were not to be sent to Egypt to buy horses.

Here again Solomon greatly sinned. As a matter of fact, the topography of Palestine, being mountainous, did not lend itself readily to the movement of large bodies of horsemen. Therefore to build up a large force of cavalry would mean alliances with outlying nations and reflect a desire to conquer adjacent territories. The spiritual destiny of Israel would be lost in the desire for worldly conquest.

17. Multiply wives. David transgressed this command (2 Sam. 5:13), but Solomon much more so (1 Kings 11:3). Many marital alliances entered into by the latter were apparently motivated by political interests (1 Kings 11:1, 3).

Silver and gold. Wealth is not of itself evil. It can, however, prove a snare when it takes the place of God in a man's heart and life. The private and public life of the king was limited by definite conditions. The things for which the king was to be outstanding are given in the following verses.

18. Write him a copy. Literally, "write himself a duplicate." One great distinction that was to mark the ruler of Israel was his singlehearted devotion to the divine precepts (see Joshua 8:32). Making such a "copy" would demonstrate his faith in the inspired Word, and his determination to be guided by it. This would strengthen the people's confidence that their earthly king was humbly in submission to the King of kings.

19. He shall read. Study of and meditation upon God's Word were to characterize the monarch (see Joshua 1:8; Ps. 1:2; 119:1, 2, 9, 15, 16, 36).

Fear. Literally, "tremble," not in the sense of terror, but of awe and reverence. This represents supreme and profound respect. Compare with Deut. 4:10; 6:2; 14:23; 28:58; Ps. 61:5; 86:11; Isa. 59:19; Mal. 3:16; 4:2.

20. Not lifted up. See ch. 8:2, 14. A man needs the grace of God to avoid becoming high-minded. It is not easy for a king or other leader to think of himself as the servant of his people.

Prolong his days. See ch. 4:26, 40. Only a truly converted man could order his life according to the obligations outlined for a monarch in this chapter. Guided by the divine instructions recorded in the book of the law, he would become a pattern to his people, a living transcript of God's will for men.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

16, 17 PK 56

17-20PK 52

CHAPTER 18

1 *The Lord in the priests' and Levites' inheritance.* 3 *The priest's due.* 6 *The Levite's portion.* 9 *The abominations of the nations are to be avoided.* 15 *Christ the Prophet is to be heard.* 20 *The presumptuous prophet is to die.*

1. All the tribe of Levi. Better, "that is, the tribe of Levi."

No ... inheritance. Previously stated in Num. 18:20 and Deut. 10:9. Jewish commentators refer this to priests who could serve in the sacred office, and to those of the tribe of Levi who could not serve because of physical defects. Though they might not serve, they too had part in the sustenance provided for the priesthood.

The offerings. The burnt offerings belonged to Jehovah, and were not included in the inheritance of the priests. But a share in all other offerings was theirs (Num. 18:9-11, 18, 19).

His inheritance. That is, the inheritance of Jehovah, in whose presence Moses was speaking, and who had reserved certain sacrificial animals for Himself (see Num. 18:8, 9, 12–15).

Their inheritance. The Lord was the “inheritance” of the entire tribe of Levi (see Num. 18:20; Joshua 13:14, 33; 18:7; Eze. 44:28). From the “inheritance”; apportioned to the other tribes each family was to provide for its temporal needs. Levi had no such “inheritance”; instead, the Lord Himself would provide for them.

3. A sacrifice. Specifically, a peace offering (Lev. 17:5, 8; Num. 15:3).

The shoulder. Mentioned together with the breast in Lev. 7:32–34.

Two cheeks, and the maw. Not mentioned previously, and so presumably added at this time. The “maw” is the rough stomach of ruminants, in which the digestive process is completed. The parts given here are in addition to the wave breast and heave leg of the peace offering spoken of in Lev. 7:14, 15, 23, 30, 31; Num. 18:11; cf. 1 Sam. 2:12–17.

4. The fleece. This is the only instance in which the fleece is mentioned as part of the “inheritance” of the Levites.

5. Out of all thy tribes. See Deut. 21:5; 1 Sam. 2:28.

6. If a Levite come. The priests and Levites received 48 cities in Israel (Num. 35:7). Many would live at a distance from the sanctuary, but whenever they came they were to be granted the privilege of ministering according to their assigned family duty. The priesthood had not as yet been divided into courses (see 1 Chron. 23:6; 24:1; 2 Chron. 8:14).

Come. That is, intending to minister in the sanctuary.

The place. The sanctuary, His dwelling place (see ch. 12:5).

7. Minister. That is, be in attendance at the altar and perform other duties of the sanctuary. Though a Levite from another part of the country, he was to be received and permitted to participate in the priestly duties, equally with the resident Levites.

8. Like portions. He was to share equally in all dues received.

His patrimony. What was his of the gifts that the people brought he might keep wholly for himself. The priests were free to buy and sell property (1 Kings 2:26; Jer. 32:7, 8). Upon inheriting his father’s estate, a son would be under no obligation to share it with other priests at Jerusalem (see Lev. 25:33).

9. The abominations. An oft-repeated injunction (see on ch. 13:14).

10. Maketh his son. Rather, “burns his son” (RSV). See Lev. 18:21; 20:2–5. This was one of the abominations referred to in Deut. 12:31. In later years it was widely practiced in Israel (2 Kings 16:3; 21:6; Jer. 32:35). The worship of Moloch first produced illegitimate children, and then slew them—both acts were considered most pleasing to him. From early times fire was worshipped and honored by heathen peoples as a god. Fire worship survives in Persia today.

Useth divination. Literally, “the diviner practicing divinations.” Apparently used in connection with the fire ceremony (2 Chron. 33:6; Eze. 20:31). This is thought to have been done by drawing lots consisting of headless arrows (see Eze. 21:21).

An observer of times. Literally, “an observer of the clouds.” The “observer of times” may therefore have been one who made predictions based on a study of clouds (see also Lev. 19:26; 2 Kings 21:6; 2 Chron. 33:6).

Enchanter. Literally, “whisperer” or “hisser,” from a root meaning “to hiss.” The derived noun form, meaning “serpent,” is used 31 times in the OT (Gen. 3:1; Micah 7:17; etc.). This is, perhaps, a reference to the practices of spiritualism.

Witch. See 2 Chron. 33:6. Another noun from the same root is “witchcraft” (see 2 Kings 9:22; Micah 5:12; Nahum 3:4).

11. Or a charmer. Literally, “a tier of knots,” referring to the wearing of magic cords and knots as spells against evil. Such a custom is common in the East today. The word translated “or” should be “even,” making “charmer” explain the last word of v. 10.

A consuler. Literally, “one who inquires of an *’ob*,” a “medium” (RSV). An *’ob* is the skin of a sheep or a goat usually used as a water bottle by men who supply villagers with water from a well or a spring (see on Lev. 19:31). The reference here may be to the hollow sound produced by such a dry skin, and so refer to the whispering, chirping, and muttering of a familiar spirit that has gained control of “the consuler” or medium. It may involve the practice of ventriloquism, anciently practiced by a depraved priesthood to deceive people. For the use of this word in reference to a skin bottle see Job 32:19. In Ugaritic literature recently recovered at Ras Shamra (see p. 128) the word *’ob* specifically means “departed spirit.”

Wizard. Literally, “a knower,” from the verb “to know.” Here it refers to those who claimed to have wisdom from other than human sources.

Necromancer. Literally, “a consuler with the dead.” There appears to be little if any difference between a “necromancer” and a “consuler with familiar spirits.”

13. Perfect. The same Hebrew word is here translated in various ways. The verb means “to be complete,” “to be finished.” The adjective, also used here, is rendered variously as “without blemish” (Ex. 12:5), “complete” (Lev. 23:15), “without spot” (Num. 19:2), “sincerely” (Judges 9:16), “upright” (2 Sam. 22:24), “undefiled” (Ps. 119:1).

14. Times. The word thus translated is from a root meaning “to practice soothsaying.” The original meaning of the noun may refer to the hum of insects, the rustle of leaves, as in the related Arabic root. In that case the word would here refer to those who claimed to be able to interpret the various mysterious sounds of nature, and commune with the nonhuman world.

Diviners. See on v. 10.

Suffered. Literally, “given,” “granted.” Such practices as those here spoken of were not in harmony with God’s will.

15. A Prophet. “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning,” that through them we “might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). But we should not forget that though “these things” were “written for our admonition,” they also “happened unto them for ensamples” (1 Cor. 10:11). Many prophetic statements, historical incidents, and types that clearly pointed forward to the Messiah had also a more immediate meaning for those who heard and witnessed them. Prophetic messages addressed to the people of Israel were borne with respect to the historical circumstances that called them forth and were ordained of God to meet the needs of His people at the time they were given.

Predictions of the OT prophets may be divided into the following four categories:

1. Those that grew out of and were related only to the immediate historical situation or to events soon to occur. Such were Jeremiah’s acted prophecy of the wooden and iron yokes (ch. 28), his symbolic purchase of a field near Anathoth (ch. 32), and his

prediction of the death of the false prophet Hananiah (ch. 28:15–17). Similarly, Ezekiel laid symbolic siege to a tile in the market place of *Tel-abib* (chs. 4 and 5), Amos denounced Israel's neighbor nations (chs. 1 and 2), and Nahum predicted the fall of Nineveh (chs. 2 and 3).

2. Those that pointed forward manifestly and exclusively to events related to the coming of the Messiah, such as the prophetic statements of Isa. 9:6, 7; 40:3–5; 53; 61:1–3; Dan. 9; Zech. 9:9; 13:1, 6, 7.

3. Those prophecies of the book of Daniel that deal primarily with historical events of the remote future, that is, with the Christian Era and the time of the end, as specifically stated in the prophecies themselves (Dan. 2:44; 7:27; 8:14; 10:14; 11:40; 12:4).

4. Those that have a dual application—first, to a local, historical situation; second, to the Messiah and to His kingdom. It is the prophecies of this fourth category that are most likely to be misunderstood and thus misapplied. Often this is because of a failure to realize that certain prophecies *do* have a dual aspect.

The Scriptures abound with illustrations of prophecies having dual application. The promise to Abraham of a “seed” (Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 22:18) clearly pointed forward to Christ (Matt. 1:1; Gal. 3:16), but met also a real and true fulfillment in the birth of Isaac (Gen. 13:16; 15:4, 5, 13; 17:7, 16, 19–21; 18:10; 21:1, 3). In fact, the earlier fulfillment in Isaac was a type of, and preparatory to, the ultimate fulfillment in Christ. A similar promise made to David was manifestly a prophecy concerning Christ (2 Sam 7:12, 13; Matt. 1:1; Acts 2:30), yet it applied also to the birth of Solomon (1 Kings 8:20). When Moses was about to lay down his duties as leader, and the people wondered who would take his place, he made the inspired prediction, “God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me” (Deut. 18:15). The context makes evident that this promise had an immediate application to the prophetic leadership of Israel in the years following the death of Moses (Deut. 18:18; cf. Ex. 20:19; Deut. 5:25–27; see also Num. 27:18–23; Deut. 34:9, 10; Hosea 12:10, 13), yet Inspiration declares that “there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses” (Deut. 34:10; cf. Num. 12:6–8). Christ alone could fully meet the conditions set forth in Moses' prediction (see John 1:21; 6:14; 7:40).

In a similar way the paschal lamb stood first for the literal, historical deliverance of Israel from Egypt, and later for the spiritual deliverance of all God's people from sin through the Messiah (1 Cor. 5:7). The rock smitten in the wilderness provided literal water for a thirsty people, and accordingly became a type of the Rock, Christ Jesus, who would offer the water of life freely to all men (John 4:10; 7:37; 1 Cor. 10:4). In like manner, the manna that fell from heaven provided bread to satisfy the hunger of Israel, but Jesus declared long afterward that He was “the true bread from heaven” (John 6:31). The high priest Joshua was crowned with literal crowns, in prophetic anticipation of the coronation of Christ as priest and king (Zech. 6:9–13; 9:9).

Referring to the deliverance of Israel from bondage, Hosea spoke of God calling His “son out of Egypt” (Hosea 11:1), yet Matthew sees in the words of Hosea a prophecy of Christ (Matt. 2:15). Jeremiah's reference to “Rahel weeping for her children” (Jer. 31:10, 11, 15, 16, 20) originally applied to the Babylonian captivity, as the context clearly reveals, but the evangelist finds it prophetic of Herod's slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:18). Isaiah vividly portrayed the spiritual state of Israel in his day (Isa. 6:9, 10; 29:13), but Christ declared these words prophetic of His generation (Matt

13:14, 15; 15:7–9), saying, “Well did Esaias prophesy of you.” Paul’s exegesis of historical incidents and prophetic statements recorded in the OT conforms to the pattern set by Christ and the evangelists. In fact, he interprets many passages in such a way as might not always be evident from the OT alone (see Acts 13:32, 33; 2 Cor. 8:15; Gal. 3:13, 16; 4:22–31; 1 Tim. 5:17, 18; Heb. 1:5–8; 10:5). The NT writers thus constantly unfold, explain, and interpret the prophetic statements of the OT.

These, and numerous other illustrations that might be given, make evident that Scriptural statements later seen to be prophetic of Christ were often full of literal and more immediate meaning to the people who first heard them and witnessed the events described. Their dim vision may, indeed, have confined the inspired statements to their own day. But later, holy prophets guided by inspiration saw in those very statements further prophetic meaning (Luke 24:25–27, 32; John 16:13; 1 Peter 1:10–12). It was often only when Christ or the Holy Spirit “opened . . . their understanding” that men of Christian times began to “understand the [OT] scriptures” in their fullness (Luke 24:45). Previously, like their unbelieving countrymen, they overlooked many prophecies that point to the first advent, and misapplied others that refer exclusively to the second (DA 30, 777).

It is apparent, furthermore, that certain OT prophecies pointing forward to the coming of the Messiah and to the establishment of His kingdom apply in part to the first advent, and in part to the second. Thus, in His first sermon at Nazareth, Christ quoted Isa. 61:1–3 as being fulfilled “this day” (Luke 4:16–21), yet significantly omitted reference to “the day of vengeance of our God” (Isa. 61:2—for the simple reason that the “day of vengeance” comes only with the second advent. Elijah’s appointed ministry of turning the hearts of Israel to their heavenly Father (1 Kings 18:36–40) is used by later prophets as a type of the work of John the Baptist (Isa. 40:3; Mal. 3:1; 4:5, 6; John 1:23; Matt. 11:9–17; 17:10–13; Mark 9:11–13; Luke 7:24–27). But the prediction of Elijah’s appearance “before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5) is also to be fulfilled again in our time (3T 62). At Pentecost, Peter pointed to Joel 2:28–32 as being fulfilled that day (Acts 2:16–21); but Joel’s words are to find a second fulfillment in our day (EW 142; AA 54, 55). Similarly, certain of the predictions of Matt. 24 pointed forward both to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and to the end of time (DA 628; GC 22, 25).

The question naturally arises: How can we know when a particular historical incident may rightly be viewed as having a counterpart in a later event, or a prophetic statement as having a dual application? The answer is: When an *inspired writer* makes such an application of it. To go beyond that which is clearly set forth by Inspiration is to enter the realm of personal opinion. In an age when every wind of doctrine is blowing, it is well to make certain that our understanding of Scripture rests upon a firm and plain “Thus saith the Lord” (see Deut. 29:29; Isa. 50:11; Jer. 2:13; Matt. 7:24–28; 1 Cor. 2:4, 5, 12, 13; Eph. 4:14; Col. 2:2–4, 8; 2 Peter 1:16; Rev. 22:18). The safe rule in Biblical interpretation is to compare scripture with scripture. In no other way can we be secure against the fanciful, even grotesque, explanations that some have given to OT prophecies.

Though only the local and immediate application may have been understood at the time the prophecy was originally given, yet in the foreknowledge of God provision was also made for the complete and ultimate application to Christ, or to the signs foretelling His second advent, or to the establishment of His kingdom. The fact that the prophets

themselves may not have been aware that their inspired utterances had, at times, a dual application in no way impairs the validity of such an application. Rather, it testifies to the more than human wisdom that inspired the utterance. Abraham was not the only one of whom Christ could have said that he saw “my day: ... and was glad” (John 8:56), for the prophets themselves often gave diligent study to their own messages, the better to understand the Messianic import of which they themselves may at first have been but dimly aware (1 Peter 1:10–12).

The force of a prophecy regarding Christ is in no way weakened because the prophet’s words apply first to a more immediate historical situation. Often the first and more immediate fulfillment serves not only to confirm and to clarify the second but may even be requisite to it. When a NT writer applies the statement of an OT prophet to NT or subsequent times, to deny the validity of such an application is to deny the inspiration of the NT writer. But when the context of an OT statement makes evident that it applies also to an immediate historical situation, to deny this application would be to violate a primary rule of interpretation; namely, that an examination of context and historical setting is fundamental to a correct understanding of any passage.

Believing both OT and NT writers to be fully inspired, we must, to be consistent, believe that certain prophecies have a dual application. Old Testament promises made originally to literal Israel are to be fulfilled, in principle at least, to spiritual Israel. And as literal Israel looked forward to a “rest” in the earthly Canaan, but failed to enter in, it is our privilege to look forward in hope and faith to an eternal rest in the heavenly Canaan (Heb. 4:8–11; see also Matt. 25:34).

The word translated “prophet” is from the verb “to tell,” “to announce.” The prediction of future events is hardly the major duty of the prophetic office. The prophet’s primary duty is to speak, for God, words of counsel, warning, and reproof. The word “prophet” is from the Gr. *prophetes*, “to speak in behalf of,” that is, in behalf of someone else. This is the Bible conception of a prophet. He is a spokesman for God.

16. In Horeb. See Ex. 20:19; Deut. 5:25–29. It was in pursuance of that original request that the present promise was made.

17. Well spoken. See ch. 5:25, 28. God appreciated the sentiments expressed by the people, of willingness to hear His counsel, and did not speak to them again as on Mt. Sinai.

18. A Prophet. See on v. 15. Christ was the true prophet “that should come into the world” (John 6:14).

He shall speak. Christ alluded to this prophecy when He said, “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works” (John 14:10; cf. John 16:13, 14; 5:45, 46).

19. Speak in my name. The true function of a prophet is to reveal the will of God. This aspect of the work of a prophet was most perfectly exemplified by Christ (John 12:47–50; cf. John 8:28, 42, 47; Heb. 12:25, 26).

20. Presume to speak. To pretend to speak the words of God when in reality a man but speaks for himself, God considers a most heinous crime (Jer. 14:14, 15; 23:16, 21–27, 30–33; Jer. 28:15–17; Eze. 12:24; 13:1–3).

21. How shall we know? The proof of a prophet’s credentials lies, in part, in the fulfillment of his predictions. Note how this was found true of Samuel (1 Sam. 3:18–21).

The Jews had a tendency to rely on signs and wonders (John 2:18); 1 Cor. 1:22), and against this the Lord warned them (Deut. 13:1, 2).

22. Follow not. This would be conclusive evidence that the “prophet” was not sent by God (see Jer. 28:9).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4 AA 337

5 AA 336

12 PP 689

15 DA 190; PP 480

15, 18 AA 222; PK 684

CHAPTER 19

1 *The cities of refuge.* 4 *The privilege thereof for the manslayer.* 14 *The landmark is not to be removed.* 15 *Two witnesses at the least.* 16 *The punishment of a false witness.*

1. When. See ch. 12:29.

Dwellest. The matters to be discussed would apply particularly to the situation in Palestine itself, once Israel had settled within the land of God’s choice. What follows applies to a settled order of social life (see ch. 6:10).

Separate three cities. God had previously so commanded Moses (Num. 35:14, 15). The three on the west side of Jordan were appointed by Joshua after the conquest (Joshua 20). The three on the east of Jordan had already been designated by Moses, namely, Bezer, Ramoth Gilead, and Golan (Deut. 4:41–43).

In the midst. Not in the precise geographical center, but distributed so as to make them accessible to all who needed them. The cities of refuge point fearful hearts to security in Jesus Christ.

3. A way. Literally, “the way,” that is, “the road.” Access to the cities of refuge was to be made easy. The road was to be clearly marked and kept in good repair (PP 515), for men’s lives were at stake. Thus it should be with the “way” to our refuge in Jesus Christ—so plain that none need err therein (see Isa. 35:8).

The coasts. That is, “the area” (RSV). Each city of refuge would then serve as the convenient center for the district in which it was situated, and no place would be unduly remote from a city of refuge. Equal arrangements were to be made for all parts of the country.

Flee thither. The devout Christian will certainly think of the sinner’s privilege of fleeing to Christ. As the gates of the cities of refuge were never to be closed to one who sought entrance, so Christ never refuses one who comes to Him contrite and repentant (Ps. 51:17; Isa. 57:15).

4. Ignorantly. That is, “unintentionally,” literally, “without knowledge” (Deut. 4:42; Joshua 20:3, 5).

Hated not. The man responsible had acted unintentionally (see Num. 35:23). To require the life of such an unintentional slayer would be to shed innocent blood.

5. The wood. Probably hillside thickets. According to Egyptian records Canaan was heavily wooded during patriarchal times. This is a case of unpremeditated homicide (see Num. 35:22). The man was engaged in a lawful pursuit, and the death of his companion was altogether accidental.

Fetcheth a stroke. “Swings the axe” (RSV).

The helve. Some think this means that the ax flew off from the tree, since the word for tree is the same as the one here translated “helve.” But it is perhaps better to understand it as given in the KJV, that the axhead flew off the handle as the man was in the process of cutting down a tree.

Live. Compare Joshua 20:1–4 for additional details. This is a vivid symbolic word picture of the security the sinner may find in Christ Jesus. The bloodstained person is cleansed in Jesus (1 John 1:7). There is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1); for, “being justified by faith,” they have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1).

6. The avenger. From the same word translated “kinsman” (see on Ruth 2:20), and “redeemer” (Job 19:25; Ps. 19:14; 78:35; Isa. 41:14; 43:14; 54:5).

The way is long. The same concern over the length and inconvenience of the road had been shown by God in relation to duties at the central altar (chs. 12:21; 14:24).

7. Wherefore. It was to prevent an unfortunate situation like that mentioned in the previous verses that the three cities were established in different parts of the country.

8. Enlarge. See Gen. 15:18; Ex. 23:31; Deut. 1:7.

9. If thou shalt keep. The fulfillment of the promises of enlargement was dependent on obedience (ch. 11:22–24). Compare the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 15:18).

Three cities more. That would be nine in all, as three on each side of the Jordan had already been stipulated (v. 2; ch. 4:41–43). There is, however, no record of the additional three ever having been designated in the afterhistory of the nation.

10. Innocent. Compare Deut. 21:8; Jer. 7:6. The word thus translated is from a verb root meaning “to be clean,” “to be free.” Inherent in it is the idea of being free from obligations resulting from guilt.

Blood be upon thee. Compare 2 Sam. 16:8; Hosea 12:14. The innocent blood upon them would be that of the manslayer who had killed a man accidentally, and then could not find a place of refuge before he himself was slain.

11. Hate his neighbour. For details see Num. 35:16–24. Hatred in the heart of man causes him to “lie in wait,” then “rise up” at the opportune moment, and “smite ... mortally” his neighbor whom he detests (see Ex. 21:14).

12. The elders. Those properly appointed and authorized were to act in this important matter. Compare ch. 21:2, 4, 6, 19, for examples of elders legally appointed. For elders of these cities see Joshua 20:1–6.

Deliver him. If found guilty of premeditated murder he was to be handed over to the avenger of blood; otherwise, he was to receive protection (Num. 35:12, 24, 25).

13. Not pity. See on v. 21.

Put away. Literally, “consume” or “burn away,” indicating complete removal.

14. Not remove. Literally, “move back,” that is, so as to enlarge one’s own piece of property, and leave one’s neighbor correspondingly less. From ancient times landmarks were considered inviolate. A curse was pronounced on the one who surreptitiously moved them (Deut. 27:17; see also Job 24:2; Prov. 22:28; 23:10; Hosea 5:10).

They of old time. Or, “the former ones.” Not referring to generations of past time reaching into antiquity, but to those who originally divided the land and marked out the boundaries.

15. One witness. A man could not be condemned on the testimony of one witness, in either a civil or a criminal charge (cf. Deut. 17:6; Num. 35:30).

16. False witness. A false witness was to be punished (v. 19).

17. Before the Lord. A difficult case could be brought to a higher court at the door of the sanctuary of the Lord, where the parties would be in the presence of Jehovah (ch. 17:8–12).

18. False witness. Perjury is a most heinous crime, yet many do not hesitate to lie even under oath. One who thus publicly violates truth sins against himself, his enemy, and God.

19. As he had thought. A false witness would have to suffer the penalty he thought to inflict upon the accused (see Deut. 19:21; cf. Ex. 23:1; Ps. 35:11). This is the law of just retribution.

20. Commit no more. This law was bound to restrain selfishness and tended to bring in a higher sense of public duty and morality (see chs. 13:11; 17:13).

21. Not pity. This advice is spoken to the judges, lest they be tempted to be more lenient than strict justice required.

Life shall go. For further details, see Ex. 21:23–25; Lev. 24:19, 20. A conspiracy to give false testimony and thereby bring an innocent man into jeopardy is unforgivable, for it represents potential murder in the heart of the false witness (see Matt. 5:22). The pit that he dug for his innocent neighbor was to be his own grave.

CHAPTER 20

1 The priest's exhortation to encourage the people to battle. 5 The officers' proclamation who are to be dismissed from the war. 10 How to use the cities that accept or refuse the proclamation of peace. 16 What cities must be devoted. 19 Trees of man's meat must not be destroyed in the siege.

1. Horses, and chariots. The Canaanites had large numbers of chariots (Joshua 11:4; Judges 4:3). The army of Israel was composed of infantrymen; they never lost their fear of armed chariots (Joshua 17:16; Judges 1:19; 1 Sam. 13:5, 6). Not until David's time did they have chariots of their own (2 Sam. 8:4).

Be not afraid. Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt; He would be with them in the vicissitudes of battle that lay ahead (Ps. 20:6–8).

God is with thee. For the same promise under other circumstances see chs. 1:30, 42; 7:21. Compare the message of Isaiah to Ahaz in his conflict with Rezin and Pekah (Isa. 7:4–14; 8:8, 10).

2. The priest shall approach. See Num. 31:6; 2 Chron. 13:12. For the ark being taken to the field of battle, see 1 Sam. 4:4, 5 (cf. 2 Sam. 11:11), and a sacrifice being offered to God for victory in battle, see 1 Sam. 7:9; cf. 1 Sam. 13:9–13.

3. Faint. Better, “be soft,” “be tender,” “be weak.” For other uses of the word translated “faint” see 2 Kings 22:19; Ps. 55:21; Isa. 1:6.

4. The Lord your God. Compare the confidence of David (1 Sam. 17:45; Ps. 20:7). Sacrifices were often offered to God at the opening of a campaign in order to invoke His presence. In the last great struggle preliminary to the second coming of Christ, Jehovah is represented as being present in person to do battle (see Isa. 13:6–14; Joel 3:9–21; Rev. 16:14–16; 19:11–16).

5. Officers. The same word here translated “officers” is found in Ex. 5:6, 10, 14, 15, 19; Num. 11:16; Deut. 1:15; 16:18; Joshua 1:10; etc., and as “overseer” in Prov. 6:7. These men were civil magistrates, for the army of Israel was not a body of professional soldiers.

Dedicated. The verb thus translated is used of the dedication of an altar (Num. 7:10) and of the sanctuary (1 Kings 8:63; 2 Chron. 7:5), but here of a private house.

Not yet eaten. The owner could not lawfully eat the fruit of the vineyard for the first three years after planting (Lev. 19:23; etc.). In the fourth year he was to carry the fruit to Jerusalem and eat it there as a thank offering (Lev. 19:24). But from the fifth year, inclusive, the fruit was his (Lev. 19:25).

Betrothed a wife. This exemption was an act of consideration so that the man might not die without having children to perpetuate his name and interests. This exemption lasted one year (ch. 24:5). The three exemptions noted in vs. 5–7 could not fail to have a beneficial effect on the economy of the nation. They were an important alleviation of the insecurity and utterly disturbing effects of war upon the entire life of a people.

8. Fearful and fainthearted. It was felt necessary to protect the army from the infectious spirit of cowardice. It is equally necessary to maintain a high level of courage in the Christian warfare. Victories are gained by discipline, courage, devotion to duty, and a spirit of self-sacrifice (Luke 14:26, 27; Gal. 6:9).

9. Captains. Referring to officers in command of companies of thousands, hundreds, or fifties (see Num. 31:14, 48; 1 Sam. 8:12; 22:7; 2 Sam. 18:1). The singular number, captain of a “host,” is used to designate the commander in chief of the entire army (Gen. 21:22; 2 Sam. 2:8; 1 Kings 16:16).

10. Proclaim peace. Meaning terms of surrender. See offers of negotiation made by Ben-hadad of Syria to Ahab, king of Israel (1 Kings 20:1–6), and by the representative of the king of Assyria to Hezekiah, king of Judah (2 Kings 18:17–37).

11. Tributaries. The word thus translated is a collective noun indicating a body of forced laborers (see RSV). King Solomon placed such a levy upon the people, some 30,000 in all (1 Kings 5:13), to be sent to Lebanon (1 Kings 5:14; cf. 1 Kings 9:15, 20, 21; 12:18; 2 Chron. 10:18). In Isa. 31:8 the same word is translated “discomfited.”

12. No peace. A rejection of the offer of peace was regarded as a declaration of war, and hostilities began.

13. Smite every male. The rejection of the offer of peace was the expression of a determination to continue the worship of idols, with all its attendant immoralities. The moral rottenness and total depravity of the inhabitants of idolatrous cities made their destruction inevitable if they refused to accept God and turn their backs upon idolatry.

14. Spoil. Precious metals, cloth, stocks of food, and all manner of household goods (see ch. 2:35).

16. Cities. Referring specifically to the cities of Canaan. No peace offer was to be made to them; God had previously given strict injunctions as to sparing any of them (Ex. 23:31–33; 34:11–16). Every precaution was taken to protect Israel from the degrading forms of idolatry practiced by the Canaanites. On the abominations of these people, see Lev. 18:24–28; 20:23.

17. Utterly destroy. Literally, “dedicate,” that is, to destruction.

Hittites. Compare Deut. 7:1 and Joshua 24:11, where seven nations are enumerated, not six. Here, the Gergashites are omitted.

Commanded thee. See ch. 7:2; cf. the instructions recorded in Ex. 23:31–33.

18. Abominations. This points to the supreme reason for the severe measures taken. Great wickedness coupled with the rejection of mercy demanded judgment (see chs. 7:26;

12:31). When “the iniquity of the Amorites” was full, judgment came (see Gen. 15:16; 1 Kings 21:26).

19. The trees. The fruit trees would give refreshment and sustenance. They could not be grown in a day.

The tree of the field. The word “life” is not in the Hebrew text. Compare 1 Sam. 16:20, which reads literally, an “ass of bread,” meaning an ass loaded with bread. Similarly, fruit trees are spoken of as being for the support of men. The RSV reads, “Are the trees in the field men that they should be besieged by you?”

20. For meat. Literally, “for food.”

Bulwarks. Literally, “siege-works” (RSV). The reference is to various of ramparts, trenches, etc., built to aid in the subjugation of a city. The same word is translated “fenced” (2 Chron. 8:5); “for defence” (2 Chron. 11:5); “fortress” (Jer. 10:17); “fortified” (Micah 7:12); “the tower” (Hab. 2:1; cf. 2 Chron. 26:15; 2 Sam. 20:15).

Be subdued. Literally, “come down” (see Deut. 28:52; Isa. 32:19).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5-8PP 548

16 PP 492

17 COL 253 18-21

18-214T 204, 455

CHAPTER 21

1 *The expiation of an uncertain murder.* 10 *The usage of a captive taken to wife.* 15 *The firstborn is not to be disinherited upon private affection.* 18 *A stubborn son is to be stoned to death.* 22 *The malefactor must not hang all night on a tree.*

1. Found slain. For a similar expression in respect to other circumstances, see chs. 17:2; 24:7. God has always emphasized the sacredness of human life and of personal rights (see on Gen. 9:5, 6).

2. Elders. Presumably the elders and judges of the villages in the vicinity of the place where the body was found chs. 16:18; 19:12).

3. Next unto. The elders of the city nearest to the body would be held responsible for the performance of the necessary last rites. It may have been presumed that the slayer was a person from the immediate vicinity.

Heifer. The age is not given, though Jewish commentators give two years as the age required. In other circumstances a heifer of three years is specified (Gen. 15:9).

Wrought with. That is, not been worked as a draft animal (see Num. 19:2).

4. Rough valley. Literally, “a valley of never-failing water.” The emphasis in the verse here is on the constant flowing water, and not the size or the condition of the surface.

Eared. Better, “plowed,” referring to an uncultivated spot (see on Gen. 45:6).

Strike off. Literally, “break.” Commentators have seen in the heifer a substitute for the murderer. There is a certain ritualistic element, in that the animal is young and has not been used in common labor.

5. Priests. See chs. 17:9; 18:1. The priests of the nearest Levitical city would be present to see that the requirements were carried out in harmony with what had been commanded, for “by their word,” literally, “upon their mouth,” all such cases were to be settled. The authority of the Levites was far reaching. They had a voice in every

important decision. In this case their presence gave validity to the placing of the burden of the murder on the district in which the body was found.

6. Wash their hands. Taking water from the brook of the valley, they thus protested their innocence and that of the city they represented. Compare the words of the psalmist (Ps. 26:6; 73:13), and the action of Pilate at the trial of Christ (Matt. 27:24).

Over the heifer. If the heifer represented the unknown slayer, as seems to have been the case, then this act was symbolic of the placing of the guilt upon him.

Beheaded. Literally, “whose neck was broken” (see on v. 4).

7. Shall answer. In a ceremonial sense (ch. 27:14). They made a solemn declaration, in keeping with the authority of their holy office.

8. Be merciful. The word thus translated probably means “to cover.” The RSV has “forgive.” The same root in Arabic means “to cover,” “to hide.” The usual translation is “make an atonement” (Ex. 30:10; Lev. 4:20, 26, 31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13, 18; etc.). The noun from the same root is translated “mercy seat” (Ex. 25:17–22). The idea is that a covering, for protection.

Redeemed. Literally, “purchased,” “paid the price for.” It is sometimes translated “deliver” (Job 33:28; Ps. 55:18; 69:18; 78:42; 119:134), and “rescue” (1 Sam. 14:45).

Lay not. Literally, “do not permit to remain.” It may possibly be implied that the people of the vicinity were held guilty, in part, perhaps because they had not made the roads leading to their city as safe as they should have been.

So shalt thou put away. The Hebrew is emphatic: “and thou, shalt burn out,” meaning to “utterly root out,” or “consume.”

10. Taken them captive. Inasmuch as the Canaanites were to be wiped out, it is possible that the reference here is a general one referring to future conflicts with the surrounding nations (see on ch. 20:13, 14, 16).

11. A beautiful woman. Nothing is said as to whether she was married, but if all the males were slain (ch. 20:13), she would be either unmarried or a widow.

12. To thine house. Literally, “to the midst of thy household,” certainly a more honorable procedure than to keep her secretly elsewhere.

Shave her head. Probably in mourning; or for purification, as some commentators think. Some widows in the East are said to perform a similar type of ritual at the end of a year of mourning for their deceased husbands.

13. In thine house. She was to be withdrawn from public gaze, and remain in retirement for one month (see Gen. 38:11).

A full month. Compare with the period of mourning for Aaron and Moses (Num. 20:29; Deut. 34:8). This would give her time to adjust herself to her new environment.

Wife. It is apparent that God intended to discourage illicit relations, and to encourage lawful marriage. Even a captive woman was not to be made the plaything of a man’s passions, but if willing to live in harmony with God’s people, she was to be given an honorable status.

14. Whither she will. Literally, “according to her soul,” that is, wherever she desired. She was to be free to determine her own future, as mistress of her own person.

Not sell her. Compare the status of the married Hebrew slave whom the husband wished to divorce (Ex. 21:8).

Not make merchandise. Literally, “not deal tyrannically,” that is, to force her to become a slave.

15. *The hated.* The word “hated” in such cases implies sexual aversion toward (2 Sam. 13:15). This was the case with Jacob and Leah (see Gen. 29:16, 30, 31). It is not unlikely that in such case the husband’s affection for the children of the favored wife would be very much more marked.

16. *Sons to inherit.* Note that only sons are spoken of, not daughters, for the latter were not entitled to a double portion. Jewish tradition is that only sons born before the death of the father were so privileged. A posthumous son was not entitled to a double portion.

He may not make. This is equivalent to the modern execution of a will (see Gen. 24:36; 25:5).

17. *Acknowledge.* Despite his personal feelings and predilections.

Double portion. Literally, “the mouth of two,” that is, two portions. If a man had five sons the inheritance would be divided into six portions, the eldest son receiving two (see Gen. 48:22; 2 Kings 2:9).

The beginning. That is, the first fruits of his strength (see Gen. 49:1–3; also (Ps. 78:51; 105:36).

18. *Stubborn and rebellious.* “Stubborn” is from a verb meaning “to be rebellious,” “resentful,” “sullen.” Jewish commentators generally refer this to sons who manifested sullen resentment toward God’s requirements and refused to carry them out. “Rebellious” the Jews applied to one who did the things he was forbidden to do, particularly in relation to parents (see Ps. 78:8; Jer. 5:23).

Or ... of his mother. Both parents were to be equally honored; both were to be dutifully obeyed.

Chastened. That is, “disciplined,” “corrected,” “admonished,” often referring to corporal punishment (see Deut. 8:5; Prov. 19:18; 29:17).

19. *Lay hold.* Literally, “to hold with firmness,” as a sword (Eze. 30:21).

Elders. See on chs. 16:18; 19:12.

The gate. See on Gen. 19:1.

20. *Stubborn.* See on v. 18.

Glutton. See the same expression in Prov. 23:20–22. “Glutton” is better translated, “wastrel,” “riotous eater.” This word implies the idea of being unreasonably lavish, of squandering one’s health and wealth.

21. *Men of his city.* The young man was incorrigible, yet the carrying out of so severe a penalty was not left to the father’s judgment; it was the solemn responsibility of the men of the city (see chs. 13:10; 17:5; 22:24). To discipline with severity was within the province of the parent (Prov. 19:18), but not the carrying out of the death penalty. For other crimes that merited the death penalty, see Ex. 21:15, 17; Lev. 20:2, 27; cf. Joshua 7:25.

Put evil away. See on ch. 19:20.

22. *Hang him.* Hanging is not infrequently recorded in the Bible (Gen. 40:22; 2 Sam. 21:12; Esther 7:10; 9:14). Jewish commentators maintain that the accused was put to death, and then the dead body hanged on a tree.

23. *Not remain all night.* See Joshua 8:29; 10:27.

Accursed. The root translated “accursed” means also to be “despicable,” “contemptible,” “dishonored.” Compare the argument of the apostle Paul in Gal. 3:10–14.

Land be not defiled. The land was conceived of as being defiled by the exposure of the bodies of criminals who had suffered the extreme penalty. The criminal who was hanged was thought of as being under God's ban, and his body was not to remain in the public gaze. Jesus was condemned by His own people as one of the worst of criminals, and as under Jehovah's curse (Matt. 27:43; cf. Isa. 53:4).

CHAPTER 22

1 *Of humanity toward brethren.* 5 *The sex is to be distinguished by apparel.* 6 *The dam is not to be taken with her young ones.* 8 *The house must have battlement.* 9 *Confusion is to be avoided.* 12 *Fringes upon the vesture.* 13 *The punishment of him that slandereth his wife.* 20, 22 *Of adultery,* 25 *of rape,* 28 *and of fornication.* 30 *Incest.*

1. Thy brother's ox. Responsibility for the welfare of a friend or neighbor was strictly enjoined, and extended even to one's enemies (Ex. 23:4). The KJV translation, "go astray," is inadequate to the thought of the Hebrew word, which means "being driven away." The same word is also rendered "forcing" (Deut. 20:19), "driven out" (Deut. 30:4), "drawn away" (Deut. 30:17), "driven quite" (Job 6:13). If the cattle in this instance had merely been going astray, to bring them back would have been nothing more than a matter of time and effort. But the text suggests also that in some instances they were being driven off by thieves. In such cases there was an element of personal risk, possibly involving in some instances the loss of life.

Hide thyself. Compare Isa. 58:7.

Bring them again. It was not enough to inform the owner, but effort was to be put forth to restore his property. Compare the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–35).

2. Bring it. This might involve the care of wounded animals, and certainly their shelter and feeding, until the one holding the cattle would be able to locate the rightful owner.

3. All lost thing. The same law as in v. 1, 2 was applicable to anything a man might find. The basic principle of love for one's neighbor included an interest in whatever affected him. Compare the teaching of Jesus on this point (Matt. 5:42–48).

4. Hide thyself. That is, slip away before he should be observed in the vicinity of the animals in distress (see Luke 10:31, 32).

Surely help. Compare Ex. 23:4, 5.

5. Not wear. This probably refers to the heathen custom—quite common in some lands today—of a simulated change of sex for immoral purposes, men wearing women's clothes, aping their manners, and offering their bodies for immoral purposes. The word here translated "that which pertaineth" is used of many articles other than clothing, such as "jewels" (Gen. 24:53), "weapons" (Gen. 27:3), "stuff" (Gen. 31:37), "armour" (1 Sam. 14:1, 6), "bag" (1 Sam. 17:40), "furniture" (Nahum 2:9). God made man male and female, and the distinction thus ordained is to be honored and obeyed. The desire to minimize this distinction grows from low ideals and contributes to immorality.

6. The dam with the young. Or, "the mother with the young." Presumably, the reference here is to any clean bird that may be eaten. God is considerate of the feeling and lives of His lesser creatures (Matt. 10:29; Luke 12:6), and is pleased and honored when we are also (see on Lev. 22:27). Taking the lives of any of God's creatures in sport, or annoying them, or disturbing them unnecessarily, is unworthy of a Christian and is displeasing to God.

7. Let the dam go. This would protect the species, ensuring the preservation of bird life. Modern game laws generally reflect the principle here set forth.

8. A battlement. The flat roof of a house was to have a low parapet to protect an unwary person from falling to the street below. The roof was often used as a place for the drying of various grains and fruits, for children, and for relaxation in the cool of the evening (see Joshua 2:6; 2 Sam. 11:2; 18:24; Neh. 8:16; Matt. 10:27; Acts 10:9).

9. Divers seeds. A similar injunction had been given with respect to their fields (Lev. 19:19). This law was probably given to ensure the preservation of seed quality. Inferior varieties could easily result from crossbreeding, and against these God sought to protect His people. Scientific, selective crossbreeding was unknown.

Be defiled. Literally, “be holy,” “be sacred,” “be hallowed,” “be consecrated” (Ex. 29:21, 37; 1 Sam. 21:5; 2 Chron. 26:18; 31:6; Ezra 3:5). This term was applied to the priests and Levites, the sacrifices, the altar, to God’s person, the church, etc. Of the 589 times this word and its derivative noun form appear in the OT, this is the only instance where it is translated “be defiled.” The translators apparently misunderstood the meaning. The meaning here is that the product of the vineyard would become “holy,” that is, “forfeited to the sanctuary” (RSV). It was not to be used by the owner, and might neither be sold nor given away. He was not to benefit from it in any way.

10. An ox and an ass. The ox was a “clean” animal, and the ass “unclean.” However, this charge was probably a humane one, inasmuch as in size and strength the animals are unequal. In the East today camels and asses are sometimes yoked together.

11. Woollen and linen. See on Lev. 19:19; see also Eze. 44:17, 19; Rev. 19:8.

12. Fringes. More exactly, “tassels.” The Hebrew word thus translated is used but once more in the OT (1 Kings 7:17, “wreaths”). It is from the verb “to become great,” “to twist,” and is not the same word as that rendered “fringes” in Num. 15:37–41.

The four quarters. Or, “the four corners” (RSV; cf. Num. 15:38, “borders,” the same word in Hebrew). The “vesture,” from the verb “to cover,” was probably a rectangular outer garment resembling a cloak, still worn by the peasants of Palestine. The poor used it for a cover at night. Anciently, the Jews wore “tassels” openly on their outer garment. As this readily identified them in times of persecution, they transferred the tassels to the inner garment. Later they adopted the custom of wearing the tassels, or twisted cords, only on the small mantle worn at prayers. The dress of God’s people was to be distinctive. They were not to follow the fashions of the people among whom they lived.

13. Hate her. That is, find that he dislikes her. Apparently he had married the woman, not with any real love for her, but primarily from his physical attraction to her. Physical attraction is a most precarious basis upon which to establish a home. Unity of spirit is the only sure and abiding bond between husband and wife.

14. Occasions of speech. Literally, “lay wanton charges.” It is only a mean and selfish man who will falsely accuse his wife and ruin her reputation simply to secure the “legal” right to cast her off. Such a man should be publicly chastised (v. 18). Compare Num. 14:36, 37; Deut. 19:18, 19 on God’s attitude toward a lying report.

Not a maid. The word translated “maid” is the true term for a virgin in the absolute sense. The verse reads literally, “and not did I find in respect to her virginity.” For the same noun see vs. 15, 17, 20 (see also Lev. 21:13; etc.).

15. Tokens. From ancient times the evidence of a young woman’s virginity was treasured as proof of her unsullied youth. Immediately upon the consummation of the

marriage this physical evidence (see on v. 17) was shown to the immediate relatives, who could then be called upon as material witnesses of her virginity.

In the gate. See on Gen. 19:1.

16. The damsel's father. The mother apparently did not take an active part in the public defense, but her presence there is proof of her close interest in the case.

17. The cloth. The word translated "cloth" is the common one for "wrapper" or "mantle," a large square cloth, usually of linen, worn as an outer garment by both men and women (used in 5; cf. Gen. 35:2; Ex. 22:26; 2 Sam. 12:20; Ruth 3:3), and used as a covering in sleep (Ex. 22:27).

18. The elders. That is, formal inquiry having been made with the presentation of the evidences, deliberation by the elders brought a decision.

Chastise. The condemned received 40 stripes by men appointed to administer the punishment (ch. 25:3). Josephus (*Antiquities* iv. 8. 23) says the man received 39 stripes.

19. Amerce him. "Fine him" (RSV). The fine imposed was double that which the groom usually contracted to give the bride. The word translated "amerce" also means "punish," that is, punishment by the payment of a fine (Ex. 21:22).

Not put her away. Such an arrangement could hardly make for happy married life in the modern sense. The husband wanted to be rid of his wife, but was forced to retain her against his will. But the procedure did justify the wife and re-establish her character in the eyes of the public.

21. The door. She had disgraced her father's house, therefore was to be punished at his door.

Stone her. Compare ch. 21:21.

Folly in Israel. The word translated "folly" is difficult to express in English. It is also rendered "vile" (Judges 19:24), and "villany" (Isa. 32:6; Jer. 29:23). It includes the ideas of disgrace, wantonness, utter senselessness.

22. Both of them die. The manner of death is not stated. Jewish tradition is that all such were strangled, but they may have been stoned, as in v. 24 (see Eze. 16:38, 40; 23:45, 47). See also the NT incident (John 8:5, 7), of a woman presumably betrothed.

23. Betrothed. This case is treated as if it were literally adultery, inasmuch as the girl was pledged to her "husband" and regarded as a married woman. Compare the case of Joseph and Mary, whose marriage ceremony had not yet taken place, but only their betrothal, yet she was spoken of as his "wife" (Matt. 1:20, 24). The Western "engagement" falls short of the solemnity and binding character of the Eastern betrothal (see 2 Sam. 3:14).

25. In the field. It was presumed that the girl was forced to submit; she was given the benefit of the doubt. There were no people near to whom she could appeal for help (v. 27), and her innocence was assumed if investigation proved nothing to the contrary (see 2 Sam. 13:11).

27. Found her. Perhaps tending the flock, or gathering herbs, or drawing water. She was presumably upon legitimate business, and overpowered.

28. Not betrothed. In this case the girl was not regarded as a wife, for there had been no betrothal ceremony, with its exchange of solemn promises and the payment of a sum of money.

They be found. Witnesses may have come upon them; or they may have confessed, in order to force the issue—owing to the opposition of their parents to their marriage.

30. His father's wife. Compare Lev. 18:8; 20:11; see Eze. 22:10.

His father's skirt. The passage reads, literally, “and not shall he remove the fold of the garment of his father.” This refers to the Oriental custom in which a newly married man spreads a fold of his long, skirtlike outer robe over his wife, to signify that she is his property, and that he alone has power over her person (Ruth 3:9–14; 4:10; Eze 16:8).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4 WM 48

5 1T 421, 457, 459

4

CHAPTER 23

1 *Who may or may not enter into the congregation. 9 Uncleaness to be avoided in the host. 15 Of the fugitive servant. 17 Of filthiness. 18 Of abominable sacrifices. 19 Of usury. 21 Of vows. 24 Of trespasses.*

1. He that is wounded. The intentional mutilation of the male organs in devotion to a god by some “holy men” survived into modern times. This custom prevailed among various ancient peoples as a part of their religion (see Lev. 21:20).

Not enter. To emphasize God’s abhorrence of the mutilation of the human body. The same prohibition, applied to certain foreigners, evidently meant exclusion from the sanctuary, where the congregation worshiped (Neh. 13:1, 7; Lam. 1:10), but not exclusion from salvation, or God’s spiritual house (see Isa. 56:3, 5). Later, in God’s spiritual community of Christian believers, a eunuch was highly honored by a special messenger sent from God (Acts 8:27–40). Eunuchs were employed in the service of the kings of Israel and Judah (2 Kings 9:32; Jer. 29:2).

2. A bastard. The root of the word thus translated is uncertain. Rabbinical tradition applies this term not to anyone born out of wedlock, but limits it to one born of incest, or else takes it to mean a non-Israelite, or a stranger of unknown ancestry. Purity of family and spiritual life has always been a matter of supreme moment to God. On exclusion from the congregation, see on vs. 1, 3.

3. Ammonite or Moabite. Tobiah, an Ammonite, was excluded from the Temple on the strength of this text (see Neh. 2:10; 13:1–8).

4. Met you not. The unfriendly attitude of Ammon and Moab added much to the difficulties of the children of Israel. Both were akin to Israel, but did not even show them the common courtesies due to strangers, much less those due to kinsmen (Gen. 14:18; 18:2; 19:1, 2). God had already ordered the Israelites not to distress the Ammonites (Deut. 2:19). The seeming contradiction between the statement here made, that the Moabites did *not* meet Israel with provisions, and that of ch. 2:29 that they *did* do so, is more apparent than real. The words of ch. 23:4 imply only that the Moabites did not *willingly* offer them food in a friendly spirit—not that they did not sell food to the Israelites in return for money.

Hired against thee Balaam. This was the work of the Moabites assisted by the Midianites (Num. 22:4–7). Christ taught that the merciless person will not inherit the

⁴Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Dt 12:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

kingdom (Matt. 25:41–46). Enmity manifested toward the church is regarded as hostility toward Christ Himself (Acts 9:4, 5).

5. *God would not hearken.* The prophet was eager to curse Israel, but Jehovah put words into his mouth that he could not refrain from uttering (see Num. 22). It was impossible for a wicked prophet to thrust aside God's blessings and inflict curses upon His people. The curses of Balaam were turned into blessings (Num. 23, 24). Other examples of God's protecting care are recorded of Joseph (Gen. 39:1–3; 41:39–45), Mordecai and the Jewish people (Esther 6 to 10), the young man Daniel and his three companions (Dan. 3:16–30; 6:1, 2), and many others.

6. *Seek their peace.* This refers to fraternizing with their heathen neighbors (see Ezra 9:12). Israel was to remain entirely separate from these people, so far as common association for social purposes was concerned. The experience at Baal-peor had demonstrated the tragic results of such association (see Num. 25:1–9). This warning was particularly appropriate in view of the fact that the Moabites were their close neighbors, and there would no doubt be many occasions for free and intimate association.

7. *An Edomite.* There was a permanent state of hostility between the neighboring kingdoms of Israel and Edom (Num. 20:18–21; see on 2 Sam. 8:13).

An Egyptian. It was not to be forgotten that Israel had found refuge in Egypt for many years, and had prospered in the land despite enforced hardships.

8. *Third generation.* For 200 years Israel had found a home in Egypt. They had enjoyed protection and sustenance in a time of terrible famine. Later came persecution. Yet God would not have His people see only the evil side of a nation's character, and dwell only on it. In the third generation the descendants of an Edomite or an Egyptian were allowed all the privileges of God's people, upon being circumcised. There was probably considerable intercourse between the two countries, in trade and culture.

9. *From every wicked thing.* Strictness in respect to physical cleanliness and purity of life is here admonished. As an army on the march, a large body of men cut off from normal social relations has many temptations to lower standards of conduct. The condition of Israel before God was much more important than her military preparations for meeting the enemy. God could not consistently lead a faithless, unclean people to victory.

10. *Uncleanness.* See Lev. 15:16. As a matter of fact, God required that Israel's military forces be free from moral pollution, ceremonial pollution, and natural physical pollution. Jehovah was in the midst of the camp to lead them to victory. He would not tolerate the lowered standards that are all too frequently an accompaniment of military life.

11. *Evening.* He would not regain his cleanness until the close of the day.

12. *Whither thou shalt go.* Decency and respect for the conventions of life were to be observed. Sanitary rules were to be enforced, not only in deference to fineness of feeling but to protect the health of the army.

13. *A paddle.* A sharp instrument of various uses. It was used as a pin, or tent peg (Ex. 27:19; Judges 4:21, 22), a tool used in weaving (Judges 16:13, 14); a stake, figuratively used of protection under God's hand (Isa. 33:20). The RSV reads, "a stick with your weapons."

14. *God walketh.* So making the camp holy ground. The ark was in the camp as a token of Jehovah's presence (see Num. 10:33–36). The form of the verb "to walk" here

used suggests walking up and down in the camp (see Gen. 3:8; 13:17; 2 Sam. 7:6, 7). Compare the statement of the apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 6:16 to 7:1, who may have had this verse in mind at the time he wrote.

No unclean thing. Literally, “any nakedness of anything,” commonly meaning indecent exposure. The same word occurs in Gen. 9:22, 23; Ex. 28:42; Lev. 18:6, 7; etc.

Turn away. Compare Jer. 32:40. Nothing shameful, unclean, indecent, should be allowed to go unchecked, or God would not remain in the camp—meaning that He would allow them to be defeated by their enemies. An unclean church cannot be victorious in the controversy between Christ and Satan, for Heaven’s blessing awaits only those who trust and obey Him without reserve.

16. Dwell with thee. In the city that appealed to him (chs. 15:7; 16:5; 17:2; 18:6).

Not oppress him. The spirit of the law of Moses was opposed to slavery. Rather, a spirit of kindness was enjoined (Lev. 19:33, 34).

17. No whore. The language of this verse is general, yet the chief reference seems to be to religious prostitution. The words translated “whore” and “sodomite” both come from the same Hebrew root, which means “sanctified” or “holy,” as applied to the sanctuary (Ex. 26:33, 34), to the holy garments (Ex. 28:2, 4), to the altar (Ex. 29:37), etc. The RSV reads, “cult prostitute.” Temple prostitution has ever been a common feature of idolatry. Such a practice has survived into modern times in some portions of the East. The woman was known as a female servant of the god. Prostitution of the body is an abomination to God, in any case, but to consecrate prostitution as a part of religion is a most abhorrent degradation. See references to prostitution in connection with religion, in 1 Kings 14:23, 24; 15:12; 2 Kings 23:7; Jer. 3:2.

18. The hire. The word for “hire” is commonly used of the payment to a woman either for common prostitution or for that connected with temple worship (Hosea 9:1; Micah 1:7).

The price of a dog. The word “price” is not from the same root as “hire.” It is the “price” or “payment” that the “dog” receives. The word “dog” is here used to designate the person mentioned in v. 17 as a “sodomite.” It is a contemptuous term in Hebrew (1 Sam. 17:43; 2 Sam. 16:9; Isa. 56:10). Compare the apostle John’s description of those who may not enter the eternal kingdom (Rev. 22:15). In Eastern countries dogs roam about half wild, hungry, and unclean (1 Kings 14:11). They are a symbol of uncleanness and of outcasts.

19. Usury. See on Ex. 22:25. This injunction does not refer to ordinary business, trade, or commerce; but was part of the poor law of the land of Israel, and designed only for the benefit of those in actual distress (see on Ex. 22:25; see also Lev. 25:35, 36; cf. Neh. 5:2-5, 10-12).

20. A stranger. A non-Jew, whether a resident in Israel or not. A foreigner who had become a proselyte was to be treated as a brother (Lev. 19:33, 34).

21. Vow a vow. That is, a solemn vow to Jehovah, an obligation not to be treated lightly. For examples see Gen. 28:20; Num. 21:2; Judges 11:30; 1 Sam. 1:11; 2 Sam. 15:7; cf. Num. 30:2-16. The primary meaning of the Hebrew word is “to dedicate.”

Slack. From the usual Hebrew word meaning “to delay,” “to tarry,” “to remain behind.” Nothing is said here in respect to the place where payment was to be made; that information is given in ch. 12:5, 6, 11, 18, 26. For the blessedness of paying one’s vows see Ps. 22:25; 50:14; 56:12, 13; 61:8; 65:1; 66:13.

22. Forbear. It is not obligatory to make vows to Jehovah. What is obligatory is the carrying out of a vow after it has been made. Such a violation is sin in the sight of God. To make a vow to God is to assume a sacred obligation. To withdraw from that obligation is to injure one's spiritual life (see Lev. 27; Num. 30).

23. Out of thy lips. There was no compulsion. The vow was freely made, and must be carried out accordingly.

24. Eat grapes. The primary reference here is to workmen in a vineyard and to travelers passing by and in need of refreshment. It is common practice in the East today for a man to take a stick of sugar cane from a field in passing from one village to another (see Matt. 12:1–9).

At thine own pleasure. Literally, "according to thy soul." The word usually translated "soul," here means "appetite" (see Ps. 107:9; Prov. 13:25; Isa. 58:11).

In thy vessel. Those passing by might eat to satisfy present hunger. But to carry any away would be to abuse a privilege designed as a blessing to the traveler.

25. Move a sickle. Compare Mark 2:23. Legitimate hunger should be satisfied; to take more would be theft. This provision was in harmony with the second "great commandment" of love to one's neighbor, and was an acknowledgment that the harvest was from God.

The owner would not miss the small quantity of grain or fruit thus taken from his field or orchard, yet it would suffice the immediate hunger of the one passing by. The owner could not properly feel that he had been wronged, nor could the stranger, if poor, come to feel that society was not interested in his needs.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

3-6PK 670

7, 8 PP 375

10, 11, 14 CH 62, 81, 101

14 Ed 38; MH 280; ML 129; PP 375; 6T 170

15, 16 PP 532

19 PK 647

19, 20 1T 535

21-234T 471

24, 25 DA 284

CHAPTER 24

1 *Of divorce.* 5 *A new married man goeth not to war.* 6, 10 *Of pledges.* 7 *Of manstealers.* 8 *Of leprosy.* 14 *The hire is to be given.* 16 *Of justice.* 19 *Of charity.*

1. Uncleaness. Literally, "nakedness," and figuratively, as here, "shame" or "dishonor." Her offense could not have been adultery, for that was punishable by death (Deut. 22:22; cf. Matt. 19:9). It was simply some behavior the husband considered improper or disgraceful. The Jews understood this Mosaic precept to mean that a man might divorce his wife for almost any reason (Matt. 19:3, 7). Christ explained, however, that it was not God's will for divorce to be thus easily obtained (Matt. 19:4–6), and that this provision had been made only because of the "hardness" of their hearts (Matt. 19:8).

A bill of divorcement. Literally, "a note of separation."

Give it. This was to be done formally, perhaps before witnesses, in order that it might be legally valid and incontestable.

Send her out. Another formal act. Presumably the husband was under obligation to send her forth provided with at least the necessary means to reach her father's house in safety (see Gen. 21:14; cf. Deut. 15:13).

2. She may go. Her formal departure was a public announcement of the fact that she was no longer the man's wife and was, therefore, free to remarry. The "note of separation," or "note of cutting," completely dissolved the marriage.

4. She is defiled. Consummation of marriage with a second husband made her unclean to her first husband. For him ever to take her again would be to commit adultery. She was unlawful to him (see Jer. 3:1).

Cause the land to sin. That is, by permitting moral depravity. Although God tolerated some things of which He certainly could not approve (see on Deut. 14:26), there were limits beyond which man might not transgress. The "land" is often personified, as though it felt and acted (see Lev. 18:25; Isa. 24:5).

Today some individuals refer to Deut. 24:1–4 as a basis for what they are pleased to consider "Christian divorce." In reality, these verses open to our view the home life of the Jew, in which the taking of a wife was regarded as the acquiring of a piece of property. The husband's authority over his wife was almost absolute. The purpose of the law here announced was to better the lot of Hebrew women. This law, far from establishing a low moral standard, or approving of one, represented a far higher standard than the cruel customs of the time recognized. The law guaranteed a divorced woman certain rights, and actually protected her from being considered as an adulteress and an outcast. She left her first husband's home a free woman and a respected member of society, eligible to contract an honorable marriage. The writ of divorce stated that her first husband no longer had any legal claim upon her and that she was in no way obligated to him—she was free to become another man's wife. Upon marrying again she did not become guilty of adultery, and the rights of her first husband were not infringed upon.

The Mosaic divorce law was instituted, not to annul the ideals of marriage as instituted by God at creation, but because of the "hardness" of men's hearts (Matt. 19:8). The cast-off, unattached woman's lot was a deplorable one. The bill of divorce alleviated her unfortunate lot. This law simply recognized the prevailing situation and sought to improve it. This was a law of permission, not one of command. These precise restrictions were designed to eliminate the easy divorce procedure the Hebrews had apparently learned in their association with heathen peoples.

It was against the concept of the wife as property that Christ spoke so emphatically (Matt. 5:27–32; 19:3–9). It had brought great misery and injustice to Jewish womanhood. The school of Hillel, which provided the popular Jewish religious philosophy of the time of Christ, interpreted the expression translated "some uncleanness" (Deut. 24:1) as meaning anything that may have become displeasing to the husband. The stricter, less popular Shammai school defined the "uncleanness" as some proved act of immodesty or adultery. In Christ's time the Hillel school allowed divorce for such trivialities as the exposure of a woman's arm in public, the burning of a husband's meal, or when the husband found another woman more attractive. Of this lax attitude Josephus writes, "He that desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatsoever (and many such causes happen among men), let him in writing give assurance that he never will use her again as his wife any more, for by these means she may be at liberty to marry another husband,

although before this bill of divorce be given, she is not to be permitted so to do” (*Antiquities* iv. 8. 23).

The law of Deut. 24:1–4 did not *institute* divorce, but *tolerated* it in view of the imperfections of human nature and the low moral concepts of God’s people at that time. To know God’s mind concerning marriage one must not camp at Deut. 24:1–4, but journey back to Gen. 1:27 and 2:24, even as Jesus did (Matt. 5:27–32; 19:3–9). The written counsel of Moses for the people of his day is to be interpreted against the background of his day, not of ours, and ever with the divine ideal in view. Christ lifted men’s eyes once more to that divine ideal ordained in Eden. That first marriage provides the pattern God would have His people follow today.

5. *A new wife.* That is, if he is “newly married” (RSV; see ch. 20:5–8).

Go out to war. See ch. 20:7. It is to the advantage of the state to enact such measures as will honor and exalt marriage. This law provided time for the firm establishment of the home. Even more important, from the Hebrew point of view, it made more certain an heir to perpetuate the family name and to inherit the family land.

Business. Literally, “service,” as the Hebrew word is often translated (Num. 4:23, 30, 35, 39, 43; 8:24). This refers to any public service that would take him away from home.

6. *Nether or the upper millstone.* Literally, “both millstones or the part of one.” The word translated “upper millstone” may refer to one stone, or to a piece of the mill (Judges 9:53; 2 Sam. 11:21).

A man’s life. That is, by taking from him something essential to the preparation of his food, and thus endangering the health of his family. For centuries the poor of the East have lived on the verge of starvation, and a seemingly little thing such as this might prove tragic.

7. *Stealing.* See Ex. 21:16. Kidnaping a man to make a slave of him was a crime punishable by death. A man’s personal freedom is precious in God’s sight. Slavery is an inexcusable sin against God and against society, as well as against the slave. Yet slavery has existed in some form or other in Eastern lands from time immemorial. The laws of God gave Israel were designed to eliminate slavery, in time. Slavery violates every human right and decency.

8. *Leprosy.* This was the worst form of ceremonial uncleanness, and therefore the most careful precautions were taken in respect to it. Two lengthy chapters in Leviticus (chs. 13 and 14) list the symptoms in great detail. The “plague,” literally, “the stroke.” The same Hebrew word is used in chs. 17:8; 21:5.

9. *Miriam.* See Num. 12. Miriam was one of three prominent leaders of Israel (Micah 6:4). Yet she was suddenly smitten with the dreadful disease leprosy, and driven from the camp of Israel for seven days (Num. 12:14). Neither her outstanding position nor her personal relation to Moses protected her from it. The poorest and most miserable leper was treated no more harshly than a leper from some wealthy or officially prominent family. There was a tendency among the Jews to view all cases of leprosy as divine judgments, but it is not reasonable to take such a view of all such instances (Luke 13:1–6). Leprosy is a type of sin. The spiritual leper, whose very soul is diseased, can find no cure for his malady outside of Jesus Christ.

10. *Into his house.* A legal provision for the protection of the poor. His home and its contents would be of small material value, and would consist of only the barest of necessities. Such a family would probably own nothing more than their clothes, a few

pots, and a primitive grinding mill, in addition, perhaps, to house and land. Yet such a home was to be respected and to remain inviolate. It had little to offer as security for a loan (see Ex. 22:26, 27), but it was not to be abused as something of little consequence. The owner would come to the door and display what he could offer as security. The lender was not to enter the home to pick and choose what he wished to take.

11. *Thou shalt stand abroad.* Literally, “outside thou shalt stand.” God has erected a fence around the poor and humble. The property rights of the needy are as dear to God as are those of the wealthy and socially prominent. Compare the parable of Matt. 18:23–35. God expects the Christian to manifest considerateness in dealing with his brethren.

12. *His pledge.* His outer cloak may have been the only worth-while thing the poor man had to offer as his “pledge.” To offer clothing as security was not uncommon (Deut. 24:17; Job 22:6; Prov. 20:16; 27:13; Amos 2:8). This pledge was not to be held overnight (Ex. 22:25, 26). The outer garment was used for many purposes (Ex. 12:34; Judges 8:25). On the requirement of restoring a poor man’s pledge see Eze. 18:7, 12; 33:15.

13. *Righteousness.* The faith of Abraham was reckoned to his account before God as righteousness. The manifestation of mercy to the poor and needy is equally pleasing to God (Matt. 25:34–36). Men are the objects of God’s tender love and mercy, and He would have us look upon our fellow men in the same way. The Hebrew word for “righteousness” appears in both masculine and feminine forms. The later prophets of Israel used the feminine form, as Moses does here, with reference to sympathetic attention to the poor and needy. They were dependent on God (Ps. 10:14; 72:12), who ever reminded His people that their obligation to Him included solicitous care for these needy ones (cf. 1 Sam. 2:8). But at the same time they were not to do their “alms,” literally, “righteousness,” before men (Matt. 6:1). They were to be righteous before the Lord.

14. *Oppress.* Literally, “defraud.” The same Hebrew word is used in Lev. 19:13; 1 Sam. 12:3, 4; Lev. 6:2, 4.

An hired servant. See Lev. 19:13; Jer. 22:13; Mal. 3:5; James 5:4.

Strangers. No difference was to be made between the natural Jew and the proselyte (Lev. 19:34).

His hire. Punctuality in the payment of wages is as positive a divine requirement as Sabbath observance or tithing. It is not an act of benevolence, but of justice. Compare the parable on laborers in the vineyard (Matt. 20:1, 2, 8).

Setteth his heart. Literally, “lifteth up his soul.” He lived, as it were, from hand to mouth, and had no reserve.

16. *Every man.* It was not unusual among the heathen to condemn an entire family for the crime of one member (see Dan. 6:24). But God would have the transgressor himself bear the full penalty of his crime (2 Kings 14:6; Eze. 18:10–24). The Scriptures draw a clear line of distinction between a penalty inflicted for a wrong act, as here (see also Rom. 6:23), and the natural results of such an act (Ex. 20:5).

Pervert the judgment. See Ex. 22:22–24.

A widow’s raiment. Compare Job 24:3. Justice is not to be denied even the most helpless. The stranger, the widow, the orphan, and the helpless are to enjoy the full protection of the law (see Matt. 18:28–35).

18. *Thou wast a bondman.* Compare Lev. 19:33, 34. The oppressor who has himself experienced the bitterness of oppression is doubly culpable.

19. Thine harvest. God ordained numerous laws for easing the lot of the needy (Lev. 19:9, 10; 23:22). The landless were given the privilege of gleaning the fields, the vineyards, and the olive groves. The landowner could well spare the gleanings, and thereby bring happiness to the poor, relieve their need, and at the same time warm his own heart (see Prov. 11:24).

20. Olive tree. From season to season the harvesttime in particular would remind men of the value and beauty of a compassionate spirit. The existence of the poor among us provides an opportunity for cultivating the spirit of generosity. He who remains callous of heart at harvesttime, when he gathers in the bountiful gifts of nature, may scarcely be expected to exercise generosity at other times.

22. Remember. See v. 18; ch. 15:15. Our own difficult and disappointing experiences in life should make us sympathetic toward others who may at a later time be suffering as we once did.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5 AH 216
10-12MH 187
10-13MB 111
14, 15 PP 532
17 MH 187
19-21MH 186
19-22PP 531

CHAPTER 25

1 *Stripes must not exceed forty.* 4 *The ox is not to be muzzled.* 5 *Of raising seed unto a brother.* 11 *Of the immodest woman.* 13 *Of unjust weights.* 17 *The memory of Amalek is to be blotted out.*

1. Controversy. A dispute leading to litigation, as is plain from what follows. The word thus translated is from the root “to agitate,” “to quarrel noisily,” “to shout” (see Gen. 26:22; Job 9:3; Prov. 25:9). The noun form, as used here, appears also in Gen. 13:7; Job 31:13.

Unto judgment. “Into court” (RSV), the place of judgment (1 Kings 7:7; Isa. 28:6). The word “judgment” also refers to the process or procedure of justice in the courts (Job 14:3; Eccl. 11:9; 12:14). Finally, it is used of the decision or “judgment” handed down by a judge after hearing a case (Mal. 2:17).

Justify the righteous. Literally, “cause to be righteous the righteous one.” The one falsely accused was to be exonerated and acquitted. The word here translated “righteous” is also used of the righteousness of the justified sinner before God. Here it is used in the legal sense of pronouncing a man not guilty (see Ex. 22:9; 2 Sam. 15:4; Ps. 94:21; Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:23). Courts were established by God’s own direction.

Condemn the wicked. The words here translated “condemn” and “wicked” are from the same root. Literally, the expression would read, “to cause to be regulated the abnormal [unregulated] ones.” The related Arabic root means “to be loose” (of the limbs), and therefore “ill regulated” or “out of joint.” An endeavor was to be made to rehabilitate and regulate, rather than to punish in the sense of vengeance.

2. Before his face. That is, in open court, before the witnesses and the judges. He was made to lie down, and given the number of blows prescribed by the judge. Corporal punishment was usually administered by a stick (2 Sam. 7:14), though sometimes with

thorn branches (Judges 8:7, 16), and sometimes with scourges or whips (1 Kings 12:11, 14). “Scorpions” were leather strips tied in hard knots containing sharp pieces of wood or metal.

3. *Forty stripes.* Compare the experience of Paul (2 Cor. 11:24). Later the Jews fixed the number at 39, lest inadvertently more than 40 should be given.

Vile. Unduly severe punishment would lead to resentment and the feeling that the man had been unjustly treated. One stroke beyond 40 would be considered unjust. When the punishment was inflicted in the synagogue, it was the custom to read such passages as Deut. 28:58, 59 during the flogging, and in the presence of witnesses.

4. *The ox.* From ancient times it was the custom to use oxen for treading out grain. In India today it is the usual thing to muzzle the animals. The treading out of the grain is often painful to the feet of the oxen, and it is not unusual for them to go lame as a result, especially if overworked at the task. This Mosaic precept not only protected the “ox” from cruel treatment but was designed to inculcate tenderheartedness—a trait that was not common among the heathen. Note the sentiments expressed in Prov. 12:10 on this very point. The apostle Paul referred to Deut. 25:4 as evidence that the ministry should receive a proper and adequate wage, in harmony with the sacred dignity of their office (see 1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18; cf. Matt. 10:10). Faithful service, whether of men or of animals, deserves generous recognition.

5. *The duty of an husband’s brother.* The purpose of such a marriage was to provide a successor to the deceased (see on Gen. 38:8; Matt. 22:25). The first son born to such a union, commonly called a levirate marriage, was to become the heir of the deceased brother, in order to perpetuate his name and estate. A brother who refused to carry out this duty was held in public disgrace. This custom was common among many ancient nations, with variations, and survived into modern times among descendants of some of the earlier peoples of India. The best-known Biblical example of the operation of the principle of levirate marriage is that of Ruth the Moabitess (Ruth 1:22; 2:1 to 4:17).

6. *His name.* Compare Num. 27:4; Ruth 4:5. Men in all ages have valued perpetuation of the family name. This remains true in Oriental countries today, where no greater calamity can come to a man than to die without a male heir.

7. *The elders.* On the authority of the elders at the gate, see Deut. 21:19; 22:15; Ruth 4:1. The law did not require the brother to marry the widow if he felt that he could not love her. But in case he refused to marry her, she could enter a formal complaint against him.

8. *The elders.* The “elders” were the responsible city leaders to deal with him. They were no doubt fully acquainted with his circumstances and in a position to secure further information about the case. The “elders,” literally “elderly men,” were held in great respect, and exercised considerable authority.

9. *Loose his shoe.* Literally, his “sandal.” Jewish tradition indicates the shoe of the right foot. The deed here described was regarded as an act of indignity, inasmuch as failure to comply with the levirate law (see on v. 5) was looked upon as a mark of selfishness (see Ruth 4:6). The placing of the shod foot on property proclaimed either one’s contempt for it or one’s rightful ownership over it (Ps. 60:8; 108:9). Accordingly, the removal of the man’s shoe by his brother’s widow proclaimed the man’s unworthiness. He refused to do what was rightfully to be expected of him. Compare S. of Sol. 7:1 for the figure of the sandaled foot as a picture of beauty and desirableness. To go

unshod was looked upon as degrading (2 Sam. 15:30; Isa. 20:2, 4) or as a token of humility (Ex. 3:5; Joshua 5:15).

In his face. Jewish commentators usually interpret this as spitting on the ground “before his face.” This seems reasonable, because the preposition is not “upon,” but “by” or “before” (Deut. 11:25; Joshua 10:8). Spitting before the face was thought to be humiliating (Num. 12:14). This verb appears three times in the Hebrew Bible.

So shall it be done. The only exceptions were the high priest, who was not subject to the levirate law (Lev. 21:13, 14), brothers living at a distance, and the aged.

11. Strive together. In Ex. 21:22 is recorded the case of men quarreling, and the compensation to be given to a pregnant woman injured as a result of a fight between the men. In this case, legal protection is afforded the man. Some commentators have suggested that this refers to the widow of vs. 5–10 taking hold of her brother-in-law to force him into marriage with her. If such be the application, this law would forbid the woman passing beyond the bounds of decency. However, the context makes it clear that this was a personal quarrel in which the wife of one of the men endeavored to help her husband. The word here translated “strive” might better be translated “wrestle.” It is rendered variously in Ex. 2:13; 21:22; Lev. 24:10; 2 Sam. 14:6.

12. Cut off her hand. This was not to be done by the man she grasped, for he would be incapacitated, perhaps permanently injured. He would bring his complaint before the judges. This law is derived from the principle stated in Ex. 21:24. Some Jewish commentators reject the idea that this was to be taken literally. The rabbis later changed the sentence to one of heavy fine.

13. Divers weights. “Two kinds of weights” (RSV), a lighter weight used in selling and a larger one in purchasing. Literally, “a stone and a stone, large and small.” Ancient Hebrew weights were usually made of stone. Amos 8:5 indicates that this particular type of dishonesty was not uncommon among the Jews. Note the statement about different weights in Prov. 20:23, as an “abomination” to Jehovah, whereas just weights are approved by the Lord (Prov. 16:11). The prophet Micah makes a similar statement on God’s displeasure with unjust weights (Micah 6:11). God designs that among His people principles of justice and equity shall prevail. Those who serve God will not cheat their fellow men (see 1 John 4:20).

15. Perfect and just weight. See Lev. 19:35, 36. The tendency to indulge the temptation to make easy profits is not always easily eliminated in business dealings. We speak of honesty as being the best policy. Yet the policy followed by some businessmen is as cruel as that of tooth and claw in the jungle. It must be admitted that such dealings have often brought men enormous riches, and even high repute in society. Yet without honesty there can never be peace of mind and a clear conscience before God.

17. Amalek. The reference here is to the hostility of the Amalekites toward Israel on their journey from Egypt (Ex. 17:8–16). It is true that at the time of the writing of the book of Deuteronomy the Amalekites were no longer a threat to Israel. Yet Jehovah did not forget the injury they had done to His people.

18. Smote the hindmost. Reflecting cowardice and cruelty (see Ex. 17:8–13).

He feared not God. This was the reason for his evil conduct. Indifference to right principles can scarcely provide a solid foundation upon which to build kindness and love for one’s neighbors.

19. Blot out. The Lord is a God of love and righteousness. The command to wipe out the Amalekites as a nation was first addressed to Joshua (Ex. 17:14), but the actual work of judgment upon this people, which had filled up its cup of iniquity, was carried out in stages. Barak and Gideon (Judges 5:14; 6:3; 7:12), Saul and Samuel (1 Sam. 15:1–9), and David (1 Sam. 27:8, 9; 30:1, 17), all participated in executing the decree against them. Finally came the children of Simeon, who completed the task (1 Chron. 4:42, 43).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

4 GW 450; TM 253, 347, 493
13, 14 MH 188
13-16CS 77
13-18TM 371
14-167T 179
17-19PP 299; 2T 108; 5T 245
19 PP 628; TM 372

CHAPTER 26

1 *The confession of him that offereth the basket of firstfruits.* 12 *The prayer of him that giveth his third year's tithes.* 16 *The covenant between God and the people.*

1. Come in. That is, settled in the Holy Land. This form of expression has already been used a number of times (ch. 17:14).

2. The first. On the law of first fruits see Num. 18:12; Deut. 18:4.

Unto the place. A portion of the first ripe fruits was to be taken in a basket, brought to the sanctuary, and given to the priest on duty.

3. Thou shalt go. That is, at the time of the three great feasts (Ex. 23:14–16). In later times the worshipers were to bring their offerings to the Temple in Jerusalem for these feasts, praising God in His sanctuary. With confession of sin and grateful prayer they were to acknowledge God's goodness in bringing them out of Egyptian bondage into the Promised Land.

4. Before the altar. The priest waved the basket and placed it before the Lord, in acknowledgment of Jehovah's ownership of the land. This ceremony was to be one of joy in God, as the Giver of harvest, peace, and prosperity. The principle of returning to God a portion of the blessings received from Him is one stated by the apostle Paul for Christians to emulate (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:7–9).

5. A Syrian ready to perish. Literally, "a wandering Aramean" (RSV). This is a reference to the humble origin of the nation, to Rebekah and Leah, who were from Padan-aram (Gen. 25:20), and to Jacob, who spent a number of years there (Gen. 29 to 31). Laban, Jacob's uncle, was designated as "the Syrian," literally "the Aramean" (Gen. 25:20; 28:5, 6; 31:20, 24). The expression translated "ready to perish" was used animals that strayed and became lost (Deut. 22:3; 1 Sam. 9:3, 20), and also of men lost (Ps. 119:176) and in danger of perishing (Job 6:18). The nomadic origin of Israel is the point to which Moses refers here.

Down into Egypt. See Gen. 46:26; 47:4 for the journey to Egypt and for their fewness in number at that time.

A nation. See Ex. 1:7, 9, 12, 20. Jacob is pictured as a Syrian or Aramean, in part because of his long residence in northern Mesopotamia, whence Abraham had come to Canaan (Gen. 11:31). From this small beginning emerged a great nation. The presentation of the first fruits commemorated the deliverance of the first-born from Egypt.

6. Afflicted us. The blessing of God that cause them to increase so rapidly, became also the reason for severe persecution by the Egyptians (Ex. 1:9–14; cf. Num. 20:15).

7. The Lord heard. See Ex. 2:23–25; 3:7–9; 4:31; Num. 20:16.

8. Brought us forth. See chs. 4:34; 7:19; 16:3.

9. This place. See ch. 1:1, 5.

Milk and honey. See on Ex. 3:8; see also Deut. 6:3.

10. Set it. That is, give it to the priest, who would present it to the Lord (v. 4).

Worship. The acknowledgement of God's gracious mercies is a vital part of worship. Jehovah is a covenant-keeping God who faithfully carries out His promises. His people can scarcely do less than express their appreciation for His faithfulness. Literally, "bow down," that is, prostrate thyself (Gen. 37:10; Ex. 11:8; Lev. 26:1; Isa. 60:14).

11. Rejoice. There was to be feasting and rejoicing at the time of offering the first fruits. Not only the immediate family but Levites, neighbors, and strangers might be invited to share in the bounties of heaven (mentioned in chs. 12:6, 7; 16:10–12).

12. The third year. In the third year a "tithe" was to be given to the local poor (see on ch. 14:28, 29), in addition to that always paid to the Levites. God did not forget the less fortunate, nor should His people do so.

They may eat. The legalist or moralist might speak of the poor as suffering on account of their own shortcomings. It is true, of course, that not all are as careful, energetic, or diligent as they might be. But if they are in need they are not to be passed by on that account. God deliberately placed the Levites in a position of dependence on their brethren, as a challenge to the liberality of Israel.

13. I have brought. Such a confession of duty fulfilled was to be a yearly privilege. The poor, with the Levite, were to be provided for. The offerer affirmed that God's claims on him had been fully met, that the "tithe" had been dutifully paid as designated by God, to be applied in harmony with His instructions. As long as the "tithe" remained in a private home, that home was in debt to God. He could not bless that family until the debt had been discharged in full.

14. My mourning. Probably in connection with ceremonial uncleanness for the dead (see Lev. 7:20; 21:1; cf. Hosea 9:4). Various circumstances might produce uncleanness, and thereby "mourning," rendering it impossible for that person to appear before God with rejoicing. Not only would the person involved be ceremonially unclean, but the consecrated things themselves would become unclean if he partook of them while in his "unclean" state (see on Deut. 14:23–26).

For any unclean use. Or, "while I was unclean" (RSV). He would not deliberately put the "tithe" to an "unclean" use.

For the dead. Or, "to the dead" (RSV). From ancient times the heathen believed that the dead could be made happy by gifts of food and other things of which they might be in need. It is noteworthy that the Hebrew religion not only made no provision for such rites, but, as here, specifically excluded them. In heathen lands the custom of placing food at the grave of the deceased as a gift to his "spirit" (see Tobit 4:17; Eccles. 30:18) is still practiced, as in India and China.

Perhaps the expenses incident to a funeral were heavy, and the temptation to use part of the "tithe" in meeting these expenses would in all probability not be uncommon.

15. Look down. A plea for God's gracious regard. It is, as well, a devout acknowledgement of the exalted position of God, far above all human habitation, and of

the fact that all blessings are from Him. Compare the words of David before the congregation (1 Chron. 29:11–13). See also 2 Chron. 30:27; Isa. 63:15; Jer. 25:30; Zech. 2:13.

Bless. The word thus translated means “to kneel.” One derived noun means “knee,” and another, “a blessing.” The expression “bless God” presents the picture of worship to God on bended knee.

As thou swarest. A grateful acknowledgement of God’s unswerving loyalty to His covenant and faithfulness to all His promises. Not only is Jehovah able to fulfill His promises, but it is impossible that He could ever fall short of perfection in carrying them out (see v. 3, also chs. 1:8; 6:3).

16. Statutes. The various words used in this text comprehend all the requirements God made of His people, in respect to not only religious duties but also civil and social. Moses refers to their stay “in the valley over against Beth-peor” (ch. 3:29), where he presented to the people all the laws that had been revealed to him in Horeb. Here begins a solemn charge to all the people. It is a reminder that they had entered into covenant relation with God, that in so doing they had assumed the most solemn obligations. And on His part Jehovah promised to bless them.

Keep and do them. Their part in the solemn covenant. This is a call to sincerity of life with respect to the covenant relationship (see chs. 4:6; 7:12).

17. Thou hast avouched. In Hebrew the statement thus introduced is most emphatic: “Thou hast this day caused Jehovah to proclaim that He is to thee thy God.” This was accomplished by Israel listening to the recitation of all the requirements of the covenant, and acknowledging their own obligation to abide by them.

18. The Lord hath avouched. This parallels the emphatic expression of v. 17. It reads, literally, “Jehovah hath this day caused thee to say that thou art to Him a people of possession,” that is, His own private possession.

Peculiar people. See on Ex. 19:5; 1 Peter 2:9. The same Hebrew word here translated “peculiar” appears also in Ex. 19:5; Deut. 7:6. In 1 Chron. 29:3 the word is translated “own proper good”; and in Mal. 3:17, “jewels.”

Promised. Both parties assumed obligations. The covenant was mutual, and the promise, as at Sinai, was conditional Ex. 19:5–8; 24:3, 7.

19. High. See Deut. 28:1 and on Gen. 17:1. The adjective here translated “high” is one of the names of God (see Gen. 14:18–20, 22; Num. 24:16; Deut. 32:8; 2 Sam. 22:14; Ps. 9:2; Isa. 14:14). In the divine purpose the name of the Most High is placed upon God’s people (Num. 6:27).

Honour. The word thus translated is from the verb “to beautify,” “to glorify.” The derived noun means “turban,” “headdress,” originally, an “ornament.” For other instances of the translation of the same word see Isa. 46:13; 62:3. Note the inward significance of this as expressed by Christ (John 17:10), and its application as touching the church today, as commented on by the apostle Peter (1 Peter 2:9, 10).

Thus closes the so-called Book of the Covenant, and with it, Moses’ second oration.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

5 PP 526

8 6T 9

8-11PP 526

11 MH 281

12 PP 530
17-19PK 18; 6T 222
18, 19 MH 283
19 DA 28; Ed 40

CHAPTER 27

1 *The people are commanded to write the law upon stones, 5 and to build an altar of whole stones. 11 The tribes divided on Gerizim and Ebal. 14 The curses pronounced on mount Ebal.*

1. With the elders. For the first time in Deuteronomy the elders join Moses in exhorting the people. The reason for this is not given (see ch. 31:9), but may have been that the death of Moses would place a greater responsibility upon them as leaders.

All the commandments. Probably inclusive of all the instructions God had revealed to Moses.

2. Stones. Jewish commentators say that there were three sets of stones erected, one in the midst of Jordan itself (Joshua 4:9), another at Gilgal (Joshua 4:20), and a third on Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27:4). Others think that 12 pillars in all were erected, as when Moses ratified the covenant between Jehovah and Israel (Ex. 24:4). Nothing is said as to the size or number of these stones, except that they were sufficiently large to provide space for writing on them the Ten Commandments and the laws given through Moses.

Plaster them. In many nations it was the custom to engrave the wording in the stone itself; here, an Egyptian process was followed. A coat of well-ground lime, which would set nearly as hard as modern cement, was plastered over the stones. This coating would present a smooth, hard surface for the pigmented lettering. Such inscriptions, however, were not permanent for sooner or later the plaster would crack and fall away. With this type of work the Israelites must have become familiar in Egypt, and some were no doubt expert in it. The verb translated “to plaster” is found only in vs. 2 and 4 of this chapter. The noun form, “plaster,” also appears only here, and as “lime” in Isa. 33:12 and Amos 2:1.

3. This law. Probably the actual legislation, not the blessings and curses later enumerated in vs. 14–26 (see PP 500). The word here translated “law” is *torah*, a general term for all sacred instruction, and not confined to the Decalogue. Here it refers specifically to the will of God as revealed to Moses.

This was to be written legibly, and conspicuously set up in a central location, a perpetual reminder of the covenant between God and Israel (see Joshua 8:30–35). Today we have God’s revealed will in our homes, but Israel had no such privilege as this. Accordingly, the very stones of the countryside were to proclaim it for all men to read, lest they forget.

4. Ebal. See ch. 11:29. The Samaritan Pentateuch here substitutes “Mount Gerizim,” the sacred mountain of the Samaritans. As elsewhere, the translators altered the words of Moses to correspond with their beliefs. Mt. Ebal is about 18 mi. from the nearest ford across the Jordan, and about 30 mi. from Gilgal, where Israel would be camped.

5. Altar. The dedication of a new altar would be the occasion of sacrifices and a renewal of the covenant with God.

Any iron tool. See on Ex. 20:25. This word is used of iron to be worked up into tools, and of various metal implements and utensils (Gen. 4:22; 1 Chron. 22:3, 16; 29:2, 7) See also Prov. 27:17; Eccl. 10:10; Isa. 10:34; Amos 1:3.

6. Whole stones. There was to be no cutting, shaping, or polishing of the stones, lest attempts to decorate them should result in forms that might become objects of worship. According to Jewish commentators, these stones were taken from the bed of the Jordan. Such altars of rough stone were built upon various special occasions, as by Gideon and Manoah (Judges 6:24, 26; 13:19), Samuel (1 Sam. 7:17), Saul (1 Sam. 14:35), and David (2 Sam. 24:25). Compare Moses' 12 pillars, erected when Israel originally entered into the covenant relationship at Horeb (Ex. 24:4). Later Elijah took 12 stones and built an altar as part of his endeavor to bring Israel back into covenant relation with God (1 Kings 18:31, 32).

Burnt offerings. The word thus translated is from the verb root “to go up,” “to ascend.” The noun, used here, refers to an offering wholly consumed on the altar (see on Lev. 1:3), in contrast with other offerings, only portions of which were other offerings, only portions of which were placed upon the altar. Only the hide and such portions as could not be washed clean did not come to the altar. This offering symbolized the uplifting of the soul in worship.

If the offering was a beast, it had to be a male without blemish (Lev. 1:3, 10; 22:18, 19); if a fowl, a turtledove or a young pigeon (Lev. 1:14). The young pigeon was usually offered by the poor (see Lev. 5:7; 12:8), and a lamb by persons who could afford it (Lev. 12:6; Num. 6:14) and by the nation (Lev. 23:12). This offering denoted the complete surrender of the offerer, fully dedicated to the Lord (see Ex. 24:5–7).

Peace offerings. Offerings of thanks expressed appreciation for salvation, for health, and for deliverance. The safe crossing of the Jordan and entrance into the promised inheritance would provide good cause for rejoicing.

The law written upon the stones would be both a reminder of duty and a witness to transgression. The offerings would testify to mercy, grace, and forgiveness of sin—to the fact that full provision had been made for the sinner's repentance. They bore witness, as well, to renewed consecration. The peace offerings were reminiscent of the love, mercy, and grace with which God meets the repentant one. At the altar of unhewn stones, God and man met. Here reconciliation was effected. Here a new life was begun.

Rejoice. The repentant soul would realize that the peace offering was a banquet of joy and happiness. Fellowship with God had been restored, and at the sacred feast God and man communed together. Unity and peace prevailed between Jehovah and His people.

8. Very plainly. Literally, “making it distinct, doing it well.”

9. This day. That is, the day of Moses' final address to the people. As they entered upon their inheritance God confirmed the covenant made with their fathers (see ch. 26:18). The entrance into the Land of Promise became an appropriate occasion for a restatement of the provisions of the covenant. God was about to fulfill His covenant promise—the gift of Canaan—and Israel could not afford to forget their promise to obey Him, lest they forfeit the land of inheritance. It is probable that the “elders” (v. 1) were stationed at strategic points throughout the camp to relay the words of Moses to the vast throng. This renewal of the covenant seems to have almost equaled in impressiveness the ratification of the covenant at Sinai. At Sinai most of the adults who now took part in this ceremony of rededication had either been children, or were not yet born.

10. Obey. The children of Israel were entering upon solemn and weighty responsibilities. Fellowship with God always entails heavy obligations. Such is the “holy calling” of the Christian (1 Peter 2:1–9).

11. Charged. The verb thus translated is in the emphatic form and means that Moses commanded the people most earnestly, even vehemently. The blessings and the curses were to be repeated in ritual form.

12. Mount Gerizim. The mountain south of Shechem.

13. Mount Ebal. This mountain lies north of Shechem, opposite Gerizim, with a narrow valley in between. The two mountains thus formed a large natural amphitheater, of sufficient size to accommodate the vast throng. The speakers were to stand in the center, in the valley; the tribes were to assemble on the slopes of the two mountains. Six of the tribes descended from Leah and Rachel were to respond to the blessings. The tribes by whom response was to be made to the curses for disobedience, were the descendants of Zilpah and Bilhah, together with those of Leah's youngest son, Zebulun, and of Reuben, who forfeited his birthright because of his sin against his father (Gen. 35:22; 49:4).

14. The Levites. Their voices could be heard by all the assembled multitude. By the reading of the law and the response of the people God and His people entered anew into a solemn covenant that held blessings for obedience and penalties for disobedience. The impressive occasion would not soon be forgotten.

Here was a foretaste of Christianity: the guilt (James 2:10) that comes with the broken law (Rom. 1:32); the assent that God's requirements are just and good (Rom. 7:12-14); the redemption from the curse of the law (Gal. 3:13), with the inability of the law to lay hands upon the man in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1); the final victory and the Promised Land (Rev. 15:2; 21:1-7).

15. Image. See Ex. 20:4, 23; 34:17; cf. Jer. 10:3-5; Hosea 8:6; 13:2; also Isa. 40:19; 41:7; 44:10-20.

Secret place. It is strange how men delude themselves into thinking they can hide anything from God (see Deut. 13:6; Job 31:27).

16. Setteth light by. Literally, "dishonors." The penalty of death was upon idolaters and upon those who cursed their parents (Ex. 21:17; Lev. 20:9).

18. The blind. On the misleading of the blind, see Lev. 19:14.

24. Smiteth. A curse on murder (Ex. 20:13; 21:12; Lev. 24:17), even undetected and therefore unpunished murder.

25. Reward to slay. The taking of a bribe for murder (see Ex. 23:7, 8; Deut. 16:19; Eze. 22:12). Perhaps this charge is also addressed to judges who might be bribed in connection with a murder case.

26. Confirmeth not. Literally, "to cause to stand," therefore "to establish," "to cause to endure," "to make binding," "to carry out." The same form of the verb is also rendered "establish" (Deut. 28:9; Gen. 17:21; Ps. 78:5); "perform" (1 Kings 8:20; 2 Chron. 6:10); "uphold" (Job 4:4).

In Gal. 3:10 the apostle Paul quotes from this verse.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

15 5T 318

17-193T 517

26 PP 372

CHAPTER 28

1 *The blessings for obedience.* 15 *The curses for disobedience.*

1. Harken diligently. Literally, “hearkening thou shalt hearken” (see also ch. 7:12). This is an invitation to very serious consideration (see Ex. 23:22). After giving the instructions for the ceremony of cursing and blessing, for use on a future occasion, Moses returns in this chapter to repeat with some amplification the rewards and promises for obedience and disobedience.

Moses was now approaching the close of his life. He was again constrained to place more fully before his people the alternatives of obedience and disobedience. Moses knew that the course he was placing before Israel was educative and disciplinary. The law was the foundation of their education as a people (Gal. 3:17, 24). By his opening words, “If thou shalt hearken diligently,” he notified them that their eternal destiny was in their own hands. God’s hands are yet tied by man’s choice; He has no alternative but to reward a man in harmony with his conduct (Matt. 6:33).

High. See on ch. 26:19.

2. Blessings. Like the showers upon the land, rich blessings would fall upon the obedient.

3. In the city. This verse constitutes a summary statement of all that follows. The activities enumerated in the following verses cover the whole of Israel’s life, private and national.

4. Thy body. Preferably, “thy womb” (as in Gen. 30:2; Deut. 7:13; etc.). A promise of no untimely births or miscarriages, and of success in rearing healthy children (see Deut. 28:11).

Thy ground. That is, of all cultivated crops, and therefore a promise of adequate and seasonable rains and the kind of weather necessary to ensure abundant crops (see Deut. 7:13; 30:9; also Ex. 23:26).

Thy cattle. Translated from the usual word for larger animals, such as camels and cattle (Ex. 9:25; 12:12; Ps. 135:8; Jer. 50:3). It is from the verb “to be dumb in speech,” “to be tongue-tied.”

Thy kine. The word translated “kine” is from the verb “to learn.” The same root in Arabic means “to cleave to,” “to become familiar with.” The noun, as here, means “trained,” “docile,” and “tame,” and is used of domestic animals trained in farm labor and man’s service in general.

The flocks. Perhaps better understood to mean the females of the sheep and the goats, the ewes. The word translated “sheep” includes various small animals such as sheep and goats. Here, then, is a blessing upon the females, that they may bear in season and produce healthy stock.

5. Basket. Jewish commentators refer this to the vessels in which bread and fruit were kept. It refers to the daily food supplies of the children of Israel, the promise being that they would not lack their daily needs.

Store. Jewish commentators apply this to the kneading trough, in which was kept that part of the food not yet ready for use. This promise assures Israel there will be no lack, but always something in store for use. Compare the widow’s vessel of oil (2 Kings 4:6).

6. Comest in. The expressions of v. 6 apply to all the activities of life (see Deut. 31:2; 2 Sam. 3:25; Ps. 121:8; Isa. 37:28).

7. Thine enemies. Compare Ex. 34:24.

Seven ways. As their enemies advanced upon them in tight formation, rank upon rank of fighting men, as was the custom, they would be scattered as if they were an unorganized mob (see Judges 7:21, 22 on the Midianites, and 2 Kings 7:7 on the Syrians).

8. Storehouses. This verse is comprehensive of all activities connected with earning a living. Compare Prov. 3:10 for “storehouses” or barns, and Deut. 12:7 for the daily round of activity.

9. Holy. This does not refer to holiness as an abstract idea, but to Israel as being set apart to be God’s people, and so acknowledged before all nations (see on ch. 26:18, 19).

If. Compare Deut. 7:12; Ex. 19:5. The blessings of God are conditional, dependent upon Israel’s obedience to His just requirements. Moses held up before them their eternal destiny, as Christ later did (Matt. 6:33).

10. Called by the name of the Lord. Literally, “that the name of Jehovah is applied over thee,” meaning that Israel would be recognized as God’s property (see on chs. 14:2; 26:18). Thus God’s name is applied to the city of Jerusalem (Jer. 25:29). All men would know Jehovah’s relation to His people (Isa. 61:9).

11. Plenteous. All material blessings are included. Literally, “make thee to have a surplus” (see Deut. 30:9; 2 Kings 4:43, 44).

12. His good treasure. The statement reads literally, “Jehovah shall open for thee His treasury” (see Joshua 6:19, 24; Ps. 33:7, “storehouses”; Jer. 50:25, “armoury”).

Lend unto many. Compare ch. 15:6. The ability to lend implies abundance.

13. The head. A promise of future leadership (see Isa. 9:14; 19:15). The contrast is stated in Deut. 28:43, 44.

15. Not hearken. The word translated “hearken” includes more than simply hearing; it implies obedience as well. This is well illustrated by the words of Daniel, “hearken and do” (Dan. 9:19).

16. Cursed. Compare this with v. 3. The blessings for obedience would exceed human imagination. But the penalties for disobedience would be equally impressive.

20. Perish quickly. Compare the expressions of Ps. 39:11, “consume away like a moth,” and Zeph. 1:18, “a speedy riddance of all them.”

21. The pestilence. See Lev. 26:25 for the threatened pestilence. On one occasion 70,000 men died (2 Sam. 24:15; see also Jer. 14:12; 21:6, 7, 9; Eze. 5:12; 6:11, 12; Amos 4:10).

22. Smite thee. The various visitations given in this verse are difficult to define. To seek to identify them with modern diseases is to indulge in speculation. It is generally conceded that the first four mentioned pertain to human beings, and the last three to crops. It is thought that the word translated “sword,” *ch-r-b*, as originally written by Moses, should have been vocalized by the Masoretes as *choreb*, “drought,” rather than as *chereb*, “sword.” The word “drought” harmonizes better with the context.

23. Brass. The “heavens,” ordinarily thought of as a source of moisture, would, under the curse of God, provide no more water than could be expected from brass (see Lev. 26:19; Jer. 14:1–10).

Iron. Without moisture, the earth would be baked so hard that the primitive tools of the time could not cultivate it. The people would perish for lack of food.

24. Powder and dust. The great desert on the eastern frontier of Palestine was a ready arsenal for these weapons of God. From the desert blew the fearful dust storm known as the sirocco.

25. Flee seven ways. They would march against their enemies as a compact, well-organized army, fully equipped, but they would be defeated and flee like an unorganized, leaderless mob.

Be removed. Literally, “be for a horror.” The word thus translated does not include the idea of “dispersion,” as in the LXX. Its root means “to tremble,” “to quake,” “to fear” (Eccl. 12:3; Dan. 5:19; 6:26). If the Hebrews remained disobedient, they were to become a fearful example of poverty, disease, and suffering to all non-Jews (see 2 Chron. 29:8; Isa. 28:19).

26. Thy carcass. A threat repeated in Jer. 7:33 (see Jer. 15:3; 16:4; 19:7; 34:20). The Jews were particularly sensitive with respect to their dead lying unburied. Such exposure was regarded as the utmost in punishment (see Jer. 22:19; 36:30; cf. Ps. 79:2, 3).

Fray them. Literally, “frighten them away,” that is, the beasts and birds of prey that would devour their dead bodies.

27. Botch. Or “boil.” The word thus translated is from a root meaning “to be hot,” “to be inflamed” (see Deut. 28:35; Ex. 9:9–11; Lev. 13:18–23; 2 Kings 20:7; Job 2:7; Isa. 38:21). Skin diseases of various kinds have always been common in the Orient.

Emerods. Literally, “swellings,” usually understood to refer to hemorrhoidal swellings in the anus. Some have suggested “tumors” (see 1 Sam. 5:6, 9, 12).

28. Blindness. Though physical blindness is common enough in the East, it is generally conceded that here the true application is to a lack of good sense in government policies, resulting in ruin to the nation (see Zech. 12:4; cf. Isa. 13:8; 29:9–12, 18; Jer. 4:9; 25:16, 18; Zeph. 1:17).

29. Save thee. That is, from foreign enemies. Compare the failure of Egypt to deliver them (Jer. 37:7; 46:17).

30. A wife. The “husband” would lose his wife even before the marriage could be consummated. This was accounted as a most grievous curse, as conversely marriage was esteemed a great blessing.

Lie with. The word thus translated means “to ravish,” “to violate” (see Isa. 13:16; Zech. 14:2). It refers to violence such as might be expected of soldiers drunk with victory.

31. Thine ox. Domestic animals would be helpless to do anything in their own defense (see Isa. 1:7).

None to rescue. Literally, “no savior for you” (see Deut. 28:29).

33. The fruit. Compare the promise of Isa. 65:21–25.

34. Thou shalt be mad. That is, driven to despair, realizing the futility of attempting to do anything to relieve the situation.

35. A sore botch. See v. 27.

36. Serve other gods. A state of complete apostasy. The nation would be abandoned by Jehovah, its king taken into exile with his people, and the people themselves ignominiously worshipping the idols professed by the nation by whom they had been taken captive (see Jer. 9:15, 16; 16:13).

37. An astonishment. It would be almost beyond comprehension that a nation once so favored by God, should fall so low as Israel fell (see 1 Kings 9:7–9; Jer. 18:15–17; 19:8).

A proverb. When the heathen wished to express contempt for a person, they would do so by calling him a Jew.

38. But little. A word picture of famine. For a fulfillment of this preceding the captivity in Babylon see Jer. 14:1–6.

The locust. Or “grasshoppers,” as in Judges 6:5; 7:12; Job 39:20; etc.

39. Worms. Presumably pests that would devour their grapevines.

40. Not anoint. Compare Micah 6:15 for similar language. On the Oriental custom of anointing the body with olive oil, see 2 Sam. 12:20; 14:2; 2 Chron. 28:15.

42. Locust. Translated from a different word from that used in v. 38, but a variety of locust.

Consume. Literally, “to take possession of,” “to inherit,” “to dispossess,” and so used more than 200 times in the OT. The locusts would completely take over the land and leave it a wilderness.

43. Above thee. Compare ch. 10:19. There is nothing more galling to a nation than to have foreigners in the country prospering at the expense of a poverty-stricken native population.

44. The tail. The very antithesis of God’s purpose in establishing His covenant with His people (vs. 12, 13).

45. Thou hearkenedst not. The curses of God were to follow progressively one upon another until Israel was brought to utter ruin. The reason for all this was their disregard of the terms of the covenant they had voluntarily entered into with God. They had taken solemn oath before Him to be loyal to His expressed will. Their utter repudiation of God and His covenant brought about a complete reversal of the purpose of God for them. In proportion to the possible exaltation of Israel before all nations, so would their degradation be.

46. For a wonder. Compare ch. 4:34. The Jews were to be looked upon as peculiarly under God’s displeasure, as bearing the marks of His punitive hand. This was to continue forever—as their prosperity would have, had they been faithful.

48. A yoke of iron. Compare Jer. 28:12–14 for a fulfillment of this prophecy.

Destroyed. Literally, “exterminated,” “annihilated” (see Eze. 14:9; Amos 2:9; 9:8; Micah 5:14; Haggai 2:22).

49. A nation. Commentators have applied this prophecy to various nations—usually to Assyria (Isa. 10:5) and Babylon (Jer. 5:15). Others insist upon the Romans, pointing to the eagle of the Roman standards. Jewish commentators speak of the attack of the Roman forces led by Vespasian and Titus, who captured Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

As the eagle flieth. Literally, “as the vulture swoopeth down.” Compare a similar figure in Job 9:26; 39:27–29; Matt. 24:28. The swift swoop of the vulture down from the sky to its prey is noted in Hosea 8:1, and is likened to the attacks of the ancient Assyrian armies and of the forces of the Chaldeans (Jer. 48:40; 49:22; Hab. 1:8).

Not understand. See Jer. 5:15. The same expression is used by the prophet Isaiah in speaking of the Assyrians (Isa. 28:11; 33:19). Many Christian, and the majority of Jewish commentators see these words fulfilled in the Roman armies. The Assyrian and Chaldean peoples spoke languages closely related to the language of the Hebrews. The Latin tongue was entirely strange to the Jews, in that it was different from theirs, and in that they had had no contact with the Romans.

50. Of fierce countenance. Literally, “of inflexible countenance,” from the verb root “to be strong,” “to be mighty,” “to be formidable.” The same word is used in Dan. 8:23 of the Roman power. This word is translated “fierce” (Gen. 49:7), “strong” (Num. 13:28), “mighty” (Ps. 59:3), “roughly” (Prov. 18:23), “greedy” (Isa. 56:11).

Not regard. Compare the Chaldeans (2 Chron. 36:17; Lam. 5:6–12) and the Medes (Isa. 13:18).

51. Be destroyed. The fulfillment of the various curses upon a disobedient people teaches us that God does not forever refrain from inflicting the judgment that sin demands. It is no comfort to remember that one’s deplorable condition is the result of his own willful ways.

52. Besiege thee. A word picture of the flight of the people to their walled towns and cities, with the countryside, where the food of the nation is produced, deserted.

Walls come down. Even their last strongholds were to be reduced, leaving them without refuge. Starvation, due to the fields lying waste, would contribute to the fall of the fenced cities (see Jer. 5:17).

53. Thine own body. Better, “of thy womb.” For a similar dreadful curse see Lev. 26:29; Jer. 19:9; Eze. 5:10. This was fulfilled in the siege of Samaria by the Syrians (2 Kings 6:26–29), in the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Lam. 2:20; 4:10), and again at the siege of Jerusalem by Titus.

54. Eye shall be evil. This may refer to a man watching and begrudging every morsel he may see in the possession of other members of his house, and to evil designs against his own kin.

55. Nothing left. A description of the most terrible famine conditions imaginable. The gnawing pain of want can sweep away all traces of delicacy and culture.

56. Delicate woman. A description of women who have been taught and been brought up to observe and practice all the graces of conduct associated with gentle breeding and culture.

57. Her young one. Literally, “her afterbirth.” The mother would be so distracted with hunger that she would eat the afterbirth, and then the child she gave birth to (see on v. 53).

58. This book. This probably refers not only to the book of Deuteronomy but also to the torah (see chs. 17:19; 27:3, 8; 29:29; 31:12; 32:46).

Fearful name. The name is often used of the person and the person’s character and reputation (see Jer. 14:7, 21; Eze. 20:9, 14; Ps. 25:11; 31:3; Isa. 48:9; 66:5).

59. Wonderful. Better, “extraordinary,” or “difficult to understand.” It was in their severity and duration that the plagues were exceptional (see Isa. 29:14).

60. Diseases. Compare Deut. 7:15; and by contrast, Ex. 15:26.

61. This law. For instances of this expression see Deut. 29:21; Joshua 1:8.

63. Destroy you. Compare the opposite emotion expressed of God in Hosea 11:8; also Jer. 32:41.

64. Scatter thee. Compare Lev. 26:33; Deut. 4:27; Jer. 9:16.

65. No ease. Literally, “no rest” (see Jer. 31:2; 50:34).

Failing of eyes. Due to weariness resulting from looking for deliverance that failed to come (see Job 11:20; 17:5; Ps. 119:123).

Sorrow of mind. Literally, “pining away of soul.”

66. Hang in doubt. Literally, “hung up for thee in front,” that is, like something hanging on a thread that is in constant danger of breaking.

67. Fear. The word translated “fear” involves dread, awe, terror, and trembling. Job had such an experience as depicted here (see Job 7:2–4; cf. Prov. 28:1).

68. Into Egypt. No more fearful punishment could have been inflicted than a forced return to the land of slavery from which God had delivered them.

Ships. Probably engaged in the slave traffic (see Eze. 27:13; Joel 3:6; Amos 1:9). Here ends Moses’ third oration.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-68PP 466-467

1 PP 466

1-14SR 171

2-6MH 284

2-131T 609; 2T 574

3-8PP 466

8-13MH 284

9-136T 351

10 DA 28; Ed 40; MH 404

12 PK 134

15 PK 136; PP 466

20 Ed 143

23, 24 PK 136

32 Ed 143

37 PP 466; 3T 200

49-53PP 467

56, 57 GC 32; PP 467

64 EW 75, 213

64-67PK 569; PP 466

65-67DA 223

CHAPTER 29

1 *Moses exhorteth them to obedience, by the memory of the works they have seen. 10 All are presented before the Lord to enter into his covenant. 18 The great wrath on him that flattereth himself in his wickedness. 29 Secret things belong unto God.*

1. These are the words. In the Hebrew this is ch. 28:69. The text, however, may be applied as well to what follows.

In the land of Moab. Israel was still encamped at the same spot mentioned in ch. 1:5.

The covenant. Not another covenant in addition to that made at Sinai, but rather a reaffirmation of it. At Sinai the covenant had been set forth and ratified by blood (see Ex. 24).

3. Temptations. Better, “tests” (see chs. 4:34; 7:19), that is, trying experiences through which God ordained that they should develop character.

Thine eyes have seen. Compare ch. 10:21. The natural, physical sight may be excellent, and the spiritual discernment almost negligible. Spiritual sight is a gift from God; without this gift, a man is dull of understanding (Eze. 20:49; Ps. 106:7).

4. Heart to perceive. Otherwise, the senses would have been attuned to perceive God’s will, and the will devoted to carrying it out. The man who senses the need of

spiritual discernment and seeks it will receive it (see Ps. 25:9, 12, 14; 119:18). Compare the contrast Jesus Christ drew between the Jews and His disciples (see Matt. 13:10–17; see also John 7:17). The mind of the unregenerate does not have the capacity to appreciate and understand spiritual values. But when a man turns sincerely to God, his spiritual eyesight will be restored (see John 6:45; 1 Cor. 2:12–16; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:17).

6. Bread. Compare ch. 8:3. Aside from such purchases as they were able to make from the people of the surrounding countryside, the Israelites were absolutely dependent upon God, who constantly exercised miraculous power in their behalf. They neither sowed nor reaped, and therefore received no harvest.

9. Prosper. Literally, “show oneself attentive to,” “act circumspectly,” “manifest prudence.” It refers more to wise management, to showing oneself skillful in all one’s personal affairs (see Deut. 32:29; Joshua 1:8; Ps. 101:2; Dan. 12:3).

10. Captains. Literally, “heads.”

Elders. Probably the 70 elders spoken of in Num. 11:16 and the judges (see Deut. 19:12, 18; 21:2, 4, 6; 25:8).

Officers. The civil officers, who executed the sentences passed down by the judges (see ch. 16:18).

11. Stranger. Referring principally to the Egyptians who came out of Egypt with them (see chs. 5:14; 24:14; 31:12).

Hewer of thy wood. Perhaps better, “the gatherer of thy firewood,” in harmony with the use of the same root in Arabic.

12. His oath. The first occurrence of the word thus translated, in Deuteronomy. It is used in the sense of a covenant sealed with an oath, with the suggestion of curses upon failure to abide by the terms of the covenant. See this same Hebrew word in Num. 5:21.

15. Not here. The covenant was to include all future generations.

16. Land of Egypt. They were fully acquainted by personal experience with life in Egypt, with all its idolatry and attendant immorality.

The nations. Referring to the Amalekites, Edomites, Midianites, Ammonites, and Moabites.

17. Their abominations. Better, “their detestable things,” that is, all things pertaining to heathen worship and customs.

18. Gall. The word translated “gall” appears as “venom” in ch. 32:33, “poison” in Job 20:16, and “hemlock” in Hosea 10:14. The word translated “wormwood” is similarly translated in all other texts except Amos 6:12, where it is given as “hemlock.” These terms are suggestive of the bitter consequences of idolatry.

19. Bless himself. That is, seek to convince himself through a process of rationalization that none of the curses would fall upon him, but that he would enjoy the good things of life.

The imagination. Better, “the stubbornness.”

To add drunkenness to thirst. Literally, “to the intent to sweep away the drenched with the dry.” This was probably a proverbial expression implying the destruction of many who had been wrongly influenced by others.

20. His name. That is, the man himself. He and his posterity were to be utterly destroyed (see chs. 7:24; 9:14; 25:19).

22. *Shall say.* That is, the statement of v. 24. Future generations of the people of the land, and also visitors, would remark in astonishment about the calamities that God visited upon the rebellious people.

23. *Sodom, and Gomorrah.* Symbols of destruction resulting from great wickedness (see Gen. 18:20; 19:24, 25; cf. Job 18:15; for contrast, see Isa. 61:11).

25. *Forsaken the covenant.* See 1 Kings 19:10, 14; Jer. 22:9. For hundreds of years the land of Palestine has been spread before all men as a witness to the curse of God. Much of the country has long been a barren wilderness. This came upon the land because of the apostasy of the Jewish nation in forsaking the covenant. Men are often puzzled that a land so forbidding as Palestine is today could ever have been described as “flowing with milk and honey” (Ex. 3:8; etc.; see on Gen. 12:6).

27. *The anger.* Compare Jer. 21:5; 32:37. The word translated “anger” is sometimes rendered “nostrils” (see Gen. 2:7; Ex. 15:8; Num. 11:20; 2 Sam. 22:9, 16; Job 4:9; 27:3; Ps. 18:8; etc.). It often implies quick breathing through the nose as an indication of emotion.

28. *Rooted them out.* Literally, “plucked them out.” The eventual loss of Canaan was not the result of a set of circumstances that merely happened. They were “plucked out” by God Himself.

29. *The secret things.* Many commentators, including Jewish, have applied these words to secret sins, known only to God, as in Ps. 19:12. The parallel expression, however, “those things which are revealed,” that is, “unto us,” implies that the “secret things” are things God has not seen fit to reveal. Man cannot fathom the inner counsels of the Almighty. They are His. The things He has revealed, of law and life, are ours to contemplate. In the Scriptures we have the revealed will of God; it is all ours.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

19-22Te 52

29 CT 248; DA 234; Ed 171; Ev 627; FE 335; GC 324; MH 429; PP 113; SC 113; 5T 701; 8T 279

CHAPTER 30

1 *Great mercies promised unto the repentant.* 11 *The commandment is manifest.* 15 *Death and life are set before them.*

1. *Call them to mind.* Literally, “bring them back to thy heart.” Note the same expression in 1 Kings 8:47. It would be necessary for them to meditate upon the causes of their exile and their relation to Jehovah as a preliminary to their restoration to God’s favor (see Lev. 26:40; Deut. 4:29, 30).

2. *Return.* There must also be a turning away from sin and a return to the worship of Jehovah (see Neh. 1:8, 9). Sincerity would be reflected in obedience.

3. *Turn thy captivity.* Compare Ps. 14:7; 85:1–3; 126:1, 4; Eze. 16:53. It is not a deliverance from physical captivity that is most important, but rather deliverance from captivity to sin (see Ps. 41:4; Jer. 3:22; 17:14; Hosea 14:4; Matt. 13:15).

4. *The outmost parts of heaven.* The prophet Nehemiah refers to the promise of this verse (Neh. 1:8, 9). For a similar expression see Deut. 4:32; Ps. 19:4; Isa. 13:5. Jehovah would not cast off His people; as individuals He has never rejected them. Dispersion was to be their punishment. Divine chastisement always has a particular objective. When that effect is brought about, God turns to His child with offers of, and help to accomplish, restoration (see Job 23:10; Hosea 6:1–3; Heb. 12:11).

5. Do thee good. See Jer. 32:42, 43 for the way in which the Lord proposed to fulfill this promise.

6. Will circumcise thine heart. Compare Lev. 26:41; Jer. 31:33. To circumcise the heart means to quicken one's spiritual perception and make tender one's conscience.

7. Upon thine enemies. Genuine repentance reverses the curse that follows waywardness. There is no separation between God and the sinner so wide and deep that it cannot be closed up immediately, upon the sinner's turning again to God. The joy of God is complete when a man turns to Him, for then the blessings of heaven can be poured out. It is the persistent sinner who must suffer the full curse of sin.

8. Return. To retrace one's steps, as from a journey. It is often used figuratively of turning to God in humble repentance (see Isa. 10:21; 19:22; Jer. 4:1; 15:19; 18:11; Eze. 18:23; etc.).

9. Make thee plenteous. When a man loves God and obeys His will (see John 14:15), because he takes delight in God's requirements (see 1 John 5:3), then it is that the divine principles become enshrined in his heart (see Ps. 40:8). This allows God to invigorate the soul and life of that man, and add material blessings (see Deut. 28:63; Jer. 32:41; Matt. 6:33).

10. The law. From *torah*, which refers to God's revealed will in general. The Jews also applied it to the Pentateuch, and even to the entire OT.

11. It is not hidden. Literally, "not is it too hard," that is, not too difficult to understand (see Gen. 18:14; Deut. 17:8; Jer. 32:17, 27; etc.).

12. Who shall go? It is possible that vs. 12 and 13 quote a proverbial saying. The meaning is that one is not required to undertake some superhuman task, to make a long, laborious journey, or seek to climb up into heaven in order to understand God's will for man. God has clearly revealed His mind to Israel, through His prophet Moses. His righteous requirements have been written down; man is fully informed. Compare the argument of the apostle Paul (Rom. 10:5–13).

14. Nigh unto thee. Moses had not only declared God's will by word of mouth but had also put it in writing. Compare the defense of Paul (Acts 20:26, 27; Phil. 1:8).

20. He is thy life. Better, "that is thy life," that is, to love God. To have one's life inspired and directed by the love of God is to inherit eternal life. The possibilities of life for every man are ultimately reduced to two. One is to love God with all one's powers. The end result is life in all its fullness, ultimately merging into immortality. The alternative is a disregard of God's good pleasure, with one's life devoted to the things of this earth. A life spent persistently in such a way leads to eternal death. These alternatives challenge every man and woman born into the world. Here ends Moses' fourth oration.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

15 GC 544

16-18SR 171

19 PK 393

19, 20 PP 467

CHAPTER 31

1 *Moses encourageth the people.* 7 *He encourageth Joshua.* 9 *He delivereth the law unto the priests to read it in the seventh year to the people.* 14 *God giveth a charge to Joshua,* 19 *and a song to testify against the people.* 24 *Moses delivereth the book of the law to the Levites to keep.* 28 *He maketh a protestation to the elders.*

1. Moses went. Jewish commentators take these words to mean that Moses here concluded his exhortations to the people gathered before him. Then he went from tribe to tribe to give the news of his approaching death, and to exhort the people to uphold and support Joshua, his successor.

2. This day. He evidently knew that his work was almost finished. He died soon after this (ch. 34:7). When Moses stood before Pharaoh he was 80 years old (Ex. 7:7). Since then the 40 years of the desert wanderings had passed.

No more go. He appeared to be strong and vigorous (see Deut. 34:7; Joshua 14:11).

3. Before thee. Compare Deut. 9:3; Ex. 23:23. The ark and the presence of God would go before them (see Joshua 3:5, 11).

4. Sihon. See chs. 2:32 to 3:8; 29:7.

5. Give them up. See chs. 7:23; 9:3.

All the commandments. That is, the various injunctions that God had given for the destruction of the “groves,” idols, and altars of the heathen (see chs. 7:2-5, 25; 12:1-3).

6. Be strong. A call to the people to exercise faith.

Fear not. The same injunction had been given to their fathers (see chs. 1:21, 29; 3:2, 22; 7:17, 18, 21), but the older generation had been faithless (see ch. 1:28-32).

Go with thee. This promise had been given before (see ch. 20:4).

Not fail ... thee. See the promise made to Joshua after the death of Moses (Joshua 1:5). The apostle Paul applies this experience to the Christian church (see Heb. 13:5).

Moses had lived a long and eventful life. He had served God and His people unselfishly and tirelessly. On earth he could never be greater than he was at that moment; yet God had more in store for him, in the heavenly Canaan. Compare the experience of Paul (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

7. Joshua. The new leader by God’s appointment (see Num. 27:18-21). Joshua means “the salvation of Jehovah.” He is first mentioned in Ex. 17:9. Like Moses, he had received an appropriate preparation for his work. He had been associated with Moses in the giving of the law, in battle, and in leadership. Like the 12 apostles selected by Christ, he was given special training in experience and association.

8. Will not fail. From the common verb, “to leave destitute” (see Gen. 24:27; Ps. 16:10).

9. This law. From *torah*, a term inclusive of all the revealed will of God. Nehemiah refers to Ex. 13:2, 12; 23:19, and speaks of what is “written in the law” (Neh. 10:35, 36). Josiah carried out the injunctions of Lev. 19:30; 20:6, 27, and said he was doing “the words of the law” (2 Kings 23:24). Hezekiah gave command to carry out the charges of Num. 28 and 29, “written in the law” (2 Chron. 31:3).

Bare the ark. See Deut. 10:8; Joshua 3:3, 6; 6:6; 1 Kings 8:3, 4.

10. Year of release. The word translated “release” is from a form of the verb *shamat*, “to throw down.” In Ex. 23:11 it is rendered “rest.” The reference here is to the sabbatical year, when the land was to “rest” and when there was release from debt (see Deut. 15:1-10). The “release” of a man who had sold himself into servitude came after six full years of service (see Deut. 15:12); for him, the “seventh year” did not necessarily coincide with the sabbatical year, the “year of release.” The reading year of the law came at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, which began on the 15th of Tishri. The sabbatical year evidently began, like the 50th year, the year of jubilee, in Tishri. The year of jubilee

officially opened with the blowing of trumpets at the close of the Day of Atonement, on the 10th of Tishri (see Lev. 25:9).

11. Read this law. The law was also read on other occasions (see Joshua 8:34; 2 Kings 23:2; Neh. 8:1–3). A reverential reading of the Word of God is a stabilizing factor in any man's life. It is a good thing to hear what the Lord says to His saints (see Ps. 85:8). The Levites were commanded to teach the Scriptures to the people (see Deut. 33:10; Lev. 10:11; Mal. 2:7).

12. Hear. The sequence is hear, learn, fear the Lord, observe the law (see chs. 4:10; 14:23; 17:19).

13. Their children. One of the outstanding privileges accorded the Jews was the committal to them of the Word of God (see Rom. 3:1, 2). The plan of redemption, the wonders of the future kingdom—all are recorded in His Word. It is folly for children to be allowed to grow up in ignorance of the Word. The Scriptures were written to be read and meditated upon. Their wisdom is to be the heritage of our children. To fail to give proper religious training to the young is to fail in a primary duty.

14. Present yourselves. Literally, "take your stand" (see Ex. 33:7).

A charge. Compare ch. 3:28, where Moses was commanded to charge Joshua. Joshua's leadership was to entail great responsibilities.

Presented themselves. Literally, "took their stand." Presumably they stood in the court facing the door of the tabernacle, over which the glory of God would appear.

15. The Lord appeared. On special occasions the pillar of cloud that rested upon the tabernacle (see Num. 9:15, 18) would move to the door of the tabernacle. Here, Jehovah's glory shone through it (see Ex. 33:9, 10; 40:35).

16. Behold. Meaning, "pay attention." What follows is most important.

Sleep. See the same expression for death in 2 Sam. 7:12; 1 Kings 2:10; 11:43.

This people. A sad picture of the future history of God's people.

Whoring. See on Ex. 34:15. There were certain tendencies already manifest that indicated the future conduct of the nation (see Judges 2:7–17). The psalmist has recorded a sad chapter in Israel's history (see Ps. 106:34–39). They were told not to fear the heathen gods (Judges 6:10), and knew well their duty to the true God (Ex. 20:3).

Break my covenant. By the worship of other gods (see Ex. 20:22, 23; 23:32, 33; Deut. 5:3, 4; 6:3, 4). In entering into the covenant relationship they had agreed to recognize the Lord as God, and to love and serve Him only.

17. My anger. So in Judges 2:14 at their first apostasy after crossing the Jordan.

Hide my face. This means a withdrawal of God's protecting hand (see Deut. 32:20; Isa. 8:17; 64:7; Eze. 7:22; 39:23).

God is not among us. See Jer. 14:9; Micah 3:11; cf. Isa. 12:6; Zeph. 3:15, 17.

19. This song. See 32:1. The Israelites would learn to sing the song, and thereby hand it down from generation to generation. It would thus ever remain vivid in their memories, and bind them to the lofty principles for which Moses stood.

21. Imagination. The word here translated "imagination" is from a verb root meaning "to devise in one's mind," "to devise," "to establish," "to form." The derived noun form is used of an impulse of the mind, a device, a purpose. The plannings, inclinations, and designs already in the heart of many were open to God (see 1 Chron. 28:9; and Ps. 103:14, "frame").

23. Good courage. The Lord repeated this to Joshua after the death of Moses (see Joshua 1:6, 7, 9; cf. 10:25).

25. The Levites. See 1 Kings 8:3. It was their assigned privilege and duty to approach the ark when commanded to do so.

26. In the side. See 1 Kings 8:9; 2 Chron. 5:10; cf. Deut. 29:21; 30:10. Jewish commentators are divided in their views respecting these words. Some maintain the written scroll was placed inside the ark with the two tables of stone, others, that it was placed in a compartment formed at the right side of the ark by a projecting board. The definite statement that “there was nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put therein at Horeb” (2 Chron. 5:10) confirms the latter suggestion. The RSV reads, “by the side of the ark” (Deut. 31:26). The principles inscribed upon the two tables of stone were of such a nature as to place them in a class by themselves. The Decalogue was supreme; the “book” containing “the words of this law” (Deut. 31:24) was an amplification and application of its principles to the economy of Israel.

27. Stiff neck. The word translated “stiff” also has the meaning of “hard,” “serve,” “difficult,” “stubborn” (see Jer. 7:26; 17:23; 19:15). The people were set in their ways, and it was difficult if not impossible for them to change.

28. To record. See chs. 4:26; 30:19; 32:1.

29. Latter days. This same expression occurs for the first time in Gen. 49:1, where it is translated “last days” (see Num. 24:14; Deut. 4:30). This expression is used with considerable latitude in the OT. Generally it refers simply to the future.

30. Moses spake. Joshua was associated with him in this (see ch. 32:44). Moses, the great legislator, was about to lay down his burdens. A younger man, a soldier, was to take up the task of leading Israel in the conquest of Palestine. Jehovah had strengthened Moses; He would also go before Joshua.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

6 PK 393

8 PK 576

9 PP 311; SR 171

10-13 PP 503

12, 13 PK 465

23 PP 470

24 PP 312, 365; SR 149

26 SR 172

5

CHAPTER 32

1 *Moses' song, which setteth forth God's mercy and vengeance. 46 He exhorteth them to set their hearts upon it. 48 God sendeth him up to mount Nebo, to see the land, and die.*

1. Ye heavens. Moses opens his song by calling upon men and angels to give ear to the words the Holy Spirit has put in his mouth. These are to be witnesses (see on ch. 31:28) to the majesty and power of God. Compare the psalmist (Ps. 50:4), Isaiah (Isa.

⁵Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Dt 23:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

1:2; 34:1), and Micah (Micah 1:2). This is reminiscent of the song of Moses at the Red Sea (Ex. 15).

2. My doctrine. Literally, “my taking,” from the verb “to take.” The idea is that of receiving in order to pass on to others. The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth of how he had delivered over to them the instruction he had received from God (see 1 Cor. 11:2). Paul even used language similar to that of Moses (see 1 Cor. 11:23).

As the rain. A symbol of refreshment (see Job 29:23; Ps. 72:6).

Speech. Also translated as “word” (see Deut. 33:9; 2 Sam. 22:31; Ps. 12:6) and as “commandment” (see Ps. 147:15).

As the dew. The word translated “dew” is from the verb root “to be moist,” “to rain fine rain,” that is, mist. The dew is a symbol of gentle, refreshing speech, as here, of unity among brethren (see Ps. 133:3), of royal favor (see Prov. 19:12), and of God’s tender mercies to His people (see Hosea 14:5).

Tender herb. Literally, “grass,” as in Gen. 1:11, 12; 2 Sam. 23:4.

Grass. From the usual word for vegetation, particularly vegetables suitable for human use (see Gen. 1:11, 12, 29, 30; 3:18; 9:3).

3. I will publish. His song was to be of God’s goodness, of His gracious kindnesses to men (see Ex. 34:6).

4. Rock. This occurs some 30 times in the OT as a descriptive title for Christ, King and Leader of the Hebrew theocracy. Here is the first instance of its use in reference to Jehovah (see also vs. 15, 18, 30, 31). Compare Hannah’s use of it in 1 Sam. 2:2; David’s in Ps. 18:2, 31, 46; 19:14 (where “my strength” is literally “my rock”); 28:1; 62:2, 7; and many others. The final instance of its use in the OT is in Hab. 1:12, where “O mighty God” literally reads, “O Rock.”

The solid rock, the towering mountain, the range of hills, are suggestive of many of God’s attributes. His eternity is thought of in terms of the eternal hills (see Ps. 90:2). The impregnability of the castle with its towers on the mountaintop is a symbol of the unassailable defense of God, and of His care for His children (see Ps. 18:2; Dan. 2:35). The Lord is also depicted under the same figure as a safe dwelling place, a shelter and a shade (see Ps. 90:1; Isa. 32:2), and again, as the foundation upon which the church rests (Matt. 16:18; 1 Cor. 3:11), and upon which the individual Christian is to build his house of faith (Matt. 7:24).

Jehovah is the only true Rock. The mountains are a symbol of His unswerving faithfulness, His changeless character, and His loyalty to the church and to its individual members. The word “rock” is never applied to men.

Perfect. God never leaves His work unfinished or imperfect. He will carry through the plan of salvation to its perfect end.

Judgment. Rather, “justice” (RSV; cf. Isa. 61:8). All of God’s dealings are consistent with His righteous nature. His decisions are irreproachable, and His ways with all created beings are without fault. He is indeed “a God of judgment” (Isa. 30:18).

Truth. The word “truth” here does not refer to true doctrine, that is, to a body of beliefs. Rather it refers to “faithfulness” as a principle. He is a God who is true to Himself, who acts in harmony with His own divine attributes. The word is from the verb “to be sure,” “to be firm.”

Without iniquity. It is impossible for Jehovah to do wrong, to deceive anyone, to have any ethical or moral defects. He is Himself His own standard of conduct, and the standard for all created beings.

5. Corrupted themselves. The Hebrew text is obscure. A literal rendering of the first two expressions would probably be, “corruption is not his; his children, theirs is the blemish.” It seems that a contrast between God and His people is intended, between His perfection and their imperfection.

Perverse. The word thus translated is from a root meaning “to twist.” Applied to the heart, lips, mouth, or ways, it denotes crookedness and the pursuit of devious methods in order to achieve questionable objectives. Using this verb root Isaiah says, “They have made them crooked paths” (Isa. 59:8; see also (Prov. 2:15). The English word “perverse” is not adequate to the Hebrew sense; “perverted” is closer, for the Hebrew term includes the idea of making everything crooked that should be straight, a “twisting” of things.

Crooked. The second adjective, here rendered “crooked,” emphasizes the meaning of the first one. It occurs only this once in the Bible, and may be rendered “tortuous.” The root appears in 2 Sam. 22:27 as “unsavoury,” and in Ps. 18:26 as “froward.”

It is certain that Moses here describes this generation as crooked, unruly, intractable. Christ’s description of His generation is comparable (see Matt. 16:4; 17:17), as also Paul’s comments (see 1 Thess. 2:15; 2 Thess. 3:2).

6. Requite the Lord. The Hebrew word order is emphatic: “Is it Jehovah ye reward thus?” A reprimand for the senseless way they dealt with Jehovah.

Foolish. From *nabal*, denoting their senseless obstinacy in ignoring the goodness of God.

Unwise. Lacking discernment, discrimination, wisdom.

Thy father. Israel was Jehovah’s child by adoption (see Eze. 16:6).

Established thee. In reference to their growth, orderly development, and progress under God’s hand.

7. The days of old. An admonition to go back as far in their history as they could and to recount all the instances of deliverance from danger (see Isa. 63:11).

Elders. Men of experience and age who have preserved the knowledge of God’s providences. Such men were their sources of historical information. It was an age when books were scarce in any form, and information was handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation.

8. Divided. See Gen. 10:5, 25, 32. The sense is that of apportioning to each of the nations its inheritance (see Acts 17:26).

Separated the sons of Adam. Better, “in his separating the children of men” (see on Gen. 1:26; 3:17; see also Gen. 11:8, 9), inasmuch as the separation into nations came after Babel.

Set the bounds. Many Jewish commentators take this to mean that Jehovah guarded the growth and spread of the nations, in order that there might be sufficient room for a numerous Israel. The statement of Moses may refer to the fact that God has guided the destinies of the nations with respect to His own people, that through them all men might come to a knowledge of Him (see Acts 17:26, 27).

9. Portion. Literally, “share,” “possession,” “part.” Compare “mine inheritance” (Ps. 16:5); also the counterpart idea, that God is our “portion” or possession (see Ps. 119:57; 142:5; Lam. 3:24).

10. In a desert. As if Israel had been an unwanted infant cast out to die, and Jehovah had so found him (see Jer. 2:2; Eze. 16:5, 6; Hosea 9:11).

Led him about. Literally, “surrounded him about.” That is, God encircled Israel with protection and infinite mercies (see Ps. 32:10). Thus He always protects His people (see Ps. 34:7).

Instructed him. Taught him, as a father would his child (see Ex. 20:1, 2; 34:1, 10).

The apple of his eye. Literally, “the pupil of his eye.” The expression thus translated is from the same root as the word for “man,” and may refer, as some think, to the image reflected in the eye. The eye is perhaps the most sensitive organ of the body, and one that a man unconsciously protects more carefully than any other. God regards His people with equal care (see Isa. 49:15).

11. As an eagle. This is a further development of the simile given in Ex. 19:4. It suggests God’s gentle leading and protection (see Deut. 1:31; Hosea 11:3).

Beareth them. This word picture suggests the loving care of Jehovah for His people, particularly during their wayward conduct in the wilderness (see Acts 13:18). God’s care and His acts of discipline are always for the purpose of developing character (see Heb. 12:11; Rev. 3:19). He designs that men should become aware of the possibilities inherent in sonship with God.

12. The Lord alone. The help of other gods was pure imagination. In contrast, the power of Jehovah was all-sufficient (see Ps. 81:10; Hosea 13:4).

13. On the high places. A figure of speech suggestive of the triumphant leading of God (see Amos 4:13). Compare the promise applicable today to the remnant church (see Isa. 58:13, 14).

The increase. Due to the beneficent care of God and the blessing He would add to their labors, and lives of obedience (see Matt. 6:33).

Honey out of the rock. An allusion to the many wild bees to be found in the rocky crevices of Palestine. Honey is used to illustrate divine teachings (see Prov. 24:13, 14), also as a figure of the righteous judgments of God (see Ps. 19:9–11), and His Word (see Ps. 119:103). Here, its primary reference is to the natural bounties of Canaan.

Oil out of the flinty rock. Nothing good would be lacking. Oil, or “fatness,” is a symbol of prosperity and luxury (see Eze. 16:13, 19).

14. Butter. Better, “curdled milk,” not the modern butter. This was a symbol of abundance (see Job 20:17; cf. Gen. 18:8; Judges 5:25; 2 Sam. 17:29).

Milk of sheep. Better, “milk of the flock,” referring more particularly to the milk of goats. The word translated “sheep” is the usual one for a flock of either sheep or goats.

Fat of lambs. Perhaps better, “fat of rams,” inasmuch as the noun here is masculine.

Bashan. Famous for its pastures (see Num. 32:1–5).

Kidneys of wheat. Or, “kernels of wheat,” denoting an unusually fine crop.

Blood of the grape. Compare Gen. 49:11.

15. Jeshurun. A poetical name for Israel (see Deut. 33:5, 26; Isa. 44:2). It is derived from the verb “to be straight,” “to be upright,” and is applied to Israel as “the upright one.” It is probably used here in reproach, of an apostate Israel that would fall far short of God’s ideal for His people.

Waxed fat. When Israel became prosperous they rebelled against Him who had given them prosperity (see Jer. 5:28; Hosea 2:8; 4:16).

Lightly esteemed. Or, “scoffed at.” Literally, “treated as a fool.” For this same verb, see “hast done foolishly” (Prov. 30:32), “make thee vile” (Nahum 3:6), “dishonoureth” (Micah 7:6). And the adjective of the same root: “foolish” (Deut. 32:6, 21), “fool” (Ps. 14:1; 53:1; Prov. 17:7, 21; 30:22; Jer. 17:11), “foolish prophets” (Eze. 13:3).

16. Provoked him. By idolatrous abominations Israel, like an unfaithful wife, provoked the Lord their God to jealousy (Ex. 34:14; Isa. 54:5).

17. Sacrificed unto devils. Compare 1 Cor. 10:19, 20. The supreme abomination of heathen worship was the sacrifice of children to demons (see Ps. 106:37). A sinful course seems to proceed by almost imperceptible stages. The first step may not be a positive act of lawlessness but rather a negative sin, the omission of some positive requirement. One step leads to another, until there may result a complete reversal of one’s former conduct. Yet it seems almost beyond belief that God’s chosen people could have worshiped devils and offered their own sons and daughters as sacrificial offerings. To stray from God’s path may lead to the most fearful alternatives, as it did for Israel.

Came newly up. Or, “lately arrived.” Compare Isaiah’s graphic description (Isa. 44:15; see also Judges 5:8).

Fearred not. The Hebrew verb expresses dread, horror, as, for example, “be horribly afraid” (Jer. 2:12; Eze. 32:10).

18. Rock. See on v. 4.

Forgotten God. They would be completely absorbed in idolatry.

That formed thee. See Ex. 19:5, 6; cf. Jer. 2:27; the apostle Paul’s teaching (1 Cor. 4:15; Philemon 10; Gal. 4:19).

19. Abhorred. Literally, “spurned,” or “despised.” For other instances of this verb see Prov. 1:30; 5:12; 15:5; Lam. 2:6.

20. Hide my face. He would leave them to their own devices (see ch. 31:17, 18).

Froward. That is, addicted to the perversion and evasion of truth and right conduct.

No faith. They would prove completely untrustworthy. They could not be relied upon.

21. Jealousy. See v. 16.

Not God. Or, “a no-god.” The idols they worshiped represented gods that did not exist. There were no gods working in and through the idols.

Not a people. Literally, “a no-people.”

A foolish nation. A further description of the “no-people” in the preceding sentence.

Many Jewish commentators refer this to the first destruction of the Temple by the Chaldeans, quoting: “Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not” (Isa. 23:13; cf. Hab. 1:5, 6). The commentators maintain that the Chaldeans had no national status of any moment until God raised them up to punish Israel. But this argument is historically invalid. The apostle Paul applies Deut. 32:21 to the taking of the gospel to the Gentiles, upon the refusal of the Jewish nation to accept the Messiah (see Rom. 10:19; cf. 1 Thess. 2:15, 16). See also the words of Christ in Matt. 21:43, 44.

22. Fire. A symbol of great calamities (see Eze. 30:8) or a flaring up of anger (see Jer. 15:14; 17:4). “Hell” is a figure of destruction (see Prov. 15:11; Ps. 86:13).

The lowest hell. Literally, “the depths of Sheol” (RSV), that is, of the “grave.” A figurative expression denoting total extinction.

The mountains. Jewish commentators speak of Jerusalem as established upon and encompassed by mountains (see Ps. 125:2), and refer to the invasion by Nebuchadnezzar as fulfilling, in part, this prediction (see 2 Kings 25:1–7).

23. Spend mine arrows. A figure of speech referring to God’s judgments (see Ps. 7:12, 13; 38:2; 91:5; Lam. 3:12, 13; Eze. 5:16).

24. Burnt with hunger. Literally, “the wastings of hunger.” The verb root means “to suck out,” and the adjective, as here, means “sucked out” or “empty” from hunger.

Burning heat. Literally, “the firebolt.” Compare the following verses having the same Hebrew word: Ps. 78:48, “hot thunderbolts”; S. of Sol. 8:6, “coals”; Hab. 3:5, “burning coals”; Ps. 76:3, “arrows.”

Serpents. Or, “creeping things.” The word here translated “serpents” is from the root “to crawl,” “to creep.” In Micah 7:17 the same word is translated “worms.”

25. The sword. This verse portrays warfare as the climax of evils. It would spare neither age nor sex, and no place could afford safety from its effects (see Jer. 9:19–22; Lam. 1:20; Eze. 7:15).

26. Scatter them into corners. Literally, “cleave them to pieces.” The Hebrew reading is not clear. Some commentators suggest, “I will blow them away,” that is, utterly disperse them.

27. I feared. Not that Jehovah experiences fear as men do. He often speaks in language adapted to human understanding (see Num. 14:13–16; Ex. 32:12).

Behave. That is, fail to recognize the true facts of the case.

Our hand is high. Boasting that they were victorious over Israel solely on account of their own superiority, failing to realize that Jehovah had granted them the victory (see Isa. 10:5–11; Hab. 1:15, 16).

28. Void of counsel. The word here translated “void” is from the verb “to perish,” “to destroy,” “to be lost,” and is so translated in practically every instance of the some 200 times the verb is found in the OT. It can be rendered “perishing of counsel.” That is, they were following thoroughly bad counsel given by false shepherds, and were perishing as a result (see Jer. 18:18). For other texts using this root, see Lev. 26:38; Joshua 23:16; 2 Kings 9:8; Esther 4:16; Job 18:17; etc. The precise form used here is also translated as “perish” (Deut. 26:5; Job 4:11; 29:13; 31:19), “broken” (Ps. 31:12), and “lost” (1 Sam. 9:20; Ps. 119:176).

29. Their latter end. The KJV has omitted the preposition “to,” as in the original: “they would discern clear through to their latter end.”

30. Sold them. This verse depicts a complete reversal of their fortunes, due to their having forsaken Jehovah (see Lev. 26:8, 17, 36, 37; Deut. 28:25).

Shut them up. See the same verb, here translated “shut up,” rendered as “delivered” (1 Sam. 24:18), “given up” (Lam. 2:7), “deliver up” (Amos 6:8).

31. Their rock. The heathen nations trusted their gods for victory and success. But when they witnessed the power of Jehovah they were forced to acknowledge His infinite superiority to their gods (see Ex. 14:25; Num. 23, 24; Joshua 2:9; 1 Sam. 5:7). On the Rock of Israel, see on Deut. 32:4.

32. Vine. The heathen nations are here regarded as offshoots of the noxious plant Sodom and Gomorrah. Their stock was evil; therefore their fruit was poisonous (see Jer. 2:21). Israel was also compared to a vine (see Isa. 5:2, 7; Hosea 10:1).

33. Dragons. The word thus translated is from the root “to stretch out,” “to extend.” The literal meaning of the derived noun is “the extended ones,” in reference to body length. Elsewhere it appears as “whales” (Gen. 1:21), “serpent” (Ex. 7:9, 10, 12), “sea monsters” (Lam. 4:3).

Asps. Generally supposed to be related to the cobra. The same word is also given as “adder” (Ps. 58:4; 91:13).

35. Vengeance, and recompense. As the Creator and Lord of the universe Jehovah is its judge. Compare the apostle Paul’s use of this expression (Rom. 12:19; Heb. 10:30).

Their calamity. Compare the warnings concerning Chaldean Babylon (Isa. 47:7–10; 51:6, 8), and the application to spiritual Babylon (Rev. 18:8, 10, 17).

36. Judge his people. That is, vindicate His people and defend them before their enemies (see Jer. 50:34). See also Rachel’s experience (Gen. 30:6), the psalmist’s prayer (Ps. 54:1), and the prophecy of King Lemuel (Prov. 31:9).

Repent himself. Turn His hand from His people to smite their enemies, by whom He has chastised them—for example, Babylon (see Jer. 50:23; 51:24). For God’s “repenting,” see on Num. 23:19.

Their power is gone. Literally, “their hand is exhausted.” The hand is a symbol of power and the ability to carry through a project (see Isa. 28:2; cf. Ps. 76:5; 78:42).

37. Rock. Ironically used of false gods (see v. 31).

38. Let them rise. See Isa. 46:1, 2, 7; cf. 1 Kings 18:27.

39. I, even I. Note the repeated pronoun, and compare Hosea 5:14; Isa. 43:11, 25; 51:12.

40. Lift up my hand. The sign of a solemn vow. Compare the experience of Abraham (Gen. 14:22), and that of the children of Israel on entering Canaan (Ex. 6:8; Neh. 9:15). Compare the solemn oath of the angel of Rev. 10:5.

41. Mine enemies. Jehovah is often depicted in poetic imagery as a warrior, combating the enemies of His people (see Ex. 15:3; Isa. 14:13). To oppose God’s people is to set oneself up as an enemy of God and to fight against Him.

42. Arrows. Figurative of great slaughter (see Isa. 34:5, 6; 66:16). Compare the words of Christ respecting scenes connected with His second coming (Matt. 24:36–44; Mark 13:35–37), and the prophecy of Peter (2 Peter 3:10).

43. Merciful. God’s mercy upon His land and his people. These words will meet their complete fulfillment in relation to the saved in the new earth (see Rev. 21:1–7). The apostle Paul quotes this verse to show that the Gentiles must partake of the salvation made available by Christ (see Rom. 15:10).

44. He, and Hoshea. A repetition of Deut. 31:30, except that Hoshea, that is, Joshua (see Num. 13:8, 16) is mentioned as the colaborer of Moses (see Deut. 31:3, 7, 14, 23).

46. Set your hearts. Compare God’s exhortation to Ezekiel (Eze. 40:4).

Your children. This instruction concerning the training of the children had already been given a number of times (see chs. 4:10; 6:7; 11:19).

47. Not a vain thing. The service of God never goes without its reward (see ch. 30:20).

49. Abarim. Abarim is understood to refer to a mountain range, of which one peak is Nebo. Instruction in respect to his death had been given Moses previously (see on Num. 27:12).

Behold the land. Moses was given the privilege of viewing the Promised Land with his natural sight. Beyond that, he saw, in vision, scenes from the history of God's people down through the ages to the final consummation of all things (see PP 472-477).

50. Gathered unto thy people. See on Num. 20:24. Moses was obedient unto death, and his death was precious to God. In some respects he was a type of Christ. God raised him from his lonely resting place to dwell in the heavenly Canaan, and sent him to encourage Christ at His transfiguration (see Mark 9:2-4). Such a reward came to him as a faithful servant in his Lord's house (see Heb. 3:5).

As Aaron. See Num. 20:24-28; 33:38.

51. Ye trespassed. See Num. 27:14.

Sanctified me not. "Did not revere me as holy" (RSV). See Num. 20:12; 27:14.

52. Not go thither. Moses earnestly desired the privilege of entering the Holy Land, but was denied it (see Deut. 1:37; 3:25, 27; cf. Heb. 11:13).

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1-4PK 394
2 MH 157; MYP 227; 3T 448; 5T 422
4 DA 413, 414, 769; PP 43
7 5T 585
7-10PK 394
9, 10 COL 166
9-118T 275
9-12COL 287; PK 17
10 PP 407
10, 12 Ed 33, 39
11 TM 255
11, 12 PP 469; 8T 150
15 PP 413
15-21PK 395
16-221T 280, 364
23, 24 PK 395
26-301T 365
28-31PK 395
30 TM 277
34, 35 PK 396
35-371T 368
39 TM 23
46 MH 114
47 Ed 174; PK 500
49, 50 PP 470
50-52SR 166

CHAPTER 33

1 *The majesty of God.* 6 *The blessings of the twelve tribes.* 26 *The excellency of Israel.*

1. The blessing. Compare Gen. 49:1.

Before his death. See Deut. 32:49; compare Isaac (Gen. 27:7), Jacob (Gen. 50:16), David (1 Chron. 22:5).

2. From Sinai. The divine glory manifested on the occasion of the promulgation of the law (Ex. 19, 20) is pictured here as being reflected brilliantly from the peaks and slopes of the neighboring hills.

With ten thousands of saints. Literally, “from myriads of holy ones,” that is, from His dwelling place in heaven with its countless holy beings, where He sits enthroned in glory (see 1 Kings 22:19; Job 1:6; Ps. 89:7; Dan. 7:10). The preposition “with” is not an accurate rendition of the Hebrew. The picture is one of the celestial regions, where heavenly creatures await God’s pleasure (see Gen. 28:12; 32:2, 3; Ps. 103:21).

A fiery law. Compare Ex. 19:16, 18. Perhaps a clearer translation would be, “at his right was a burning fire for them,” suggesting the presence of the heavenly creatures (see Gal. 3:19).

3. Loved the people. The people were His children (see Ex. 4:22; 19:4).

All his saints. That is, the people of Israel, the holy nation (see Ex. 19:6; Deut. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19).

Sat down. In a state of expectancy, awaiting the proclamation of God’s will.

Receive of thy words. The reference here would be to all that God revealed to them through Moses.

4. Commanded us a law. In using the pronoun “us” Moses identifies himself with his people.

5. King in Jeshurun. By the authority of, and under the hand of, God. During his lifetime Moses was prophet, priest, king, judge, and lawgiver to Israel. To be sure, in a strict sense, none but Jehovah was their King (see Ex. 15:18; Ps. 47:6, 7). Jeshurun is a poetic name for Israel.

6. Reuben. The second “not” in this verse was supplied by the translators, and is not in the Hebrew. An implied reference to his sin with Bilhah (Gen. 35:22). Reuben was the first-born (Gen. 49:3), but never attained to great national importance. Rather, this tribe dwindled constantly in numbers. Jacob had declared prophetically that he would not excel; Moses here assures the Reubenites that they will not entirely disappear from among Israel.

7. Judah. The meaning of the name is, perhaps, “praised” or “object of praise.” He was the son of Jacob and Leah; the meaning of his name is based on the words of his mother at the time of his birth (see Gen. 29:35). His father predicted his brethren would praise him (see Gen. 49:8). On the tribe of Judah, see Joshua 14:6; 1 Kings 12:20; 2 Kings 17:18; Ps. 78:68.

8. Levi. Next to Joseph, this tribe is mentioned most often in the books of Moses. In Jacob’s blessing, Simeon and Levi are joined together. Here Moses does not mention Simeon, inasmuch as Jacob had foretold that he would be scattered among his brethren (see Gen. 49:7).

Thummim. The tribe of Levi was to retain the high honor of spiritual leadership.

10. Incense. To offer incense was the special privilege of the priests (see Num. 16:6-10, 40; 1 Sam. 2:28).

11. Substance. The same Hebrew word is translated “wealth” in ch. 8:17, 18.

Accept. Recognize and appreciate his ministry.

Smite. The Levites were vested with civil as well as religious duties (see ch. 17:8-12). To rise up against them was to become an enemy of the state.

12. Benjamin. The child of his father’s old age, whom he loved.

Dwell between his shoulders. That is, to be carried on His back, or protected. God would protect Benjamin. Some commentators refer these words to the ridges of the territory of Benjamin (see Joshua 15:8; 18:13), and speak of Jerusalem as being in his territory.

13. Joseph. Here are reference to the blessing pronounced on Joseph (see Gen. 49:22–26). A rich soil is predicted, which would in turn ensure a high standard of living. The land allotted his descendants was well watered. Various crops of choice grains and fruit thrived there. His cattle were to be vigorous and healthy. His military strength was to be great.

16. The good will. The “good will” of God has filled this earth with seemingly inexhaustible riches, indications of His love for man. There is a sense in which this divine “good will” is over all (see Matt. 5:45). But in a special sense, however, God’s “good will” is over His chosen representatives on earth (see Gal. 3:26).

In the bush. These words refer to the presence of God at the burning bush (see Ex. 3:2, 4).

17. Ephraim. Jacob raised Ephraim to the position and rank of the firstborn (see Gen. 48:18, 19); therefore “ten thousands” are predicted for him, but only “thousands” for Manasseh.

18. Zebulun. Zebulun is here pictured as a maritime people. This is also reflected in the prophecy of Jacob (see Gen. 49:13). Many distinguished warriors arose from this tribe (see Judges 5:18; 1 Chron. 12:33).

Zebulun and Issachar were associated with Judah in the leading division in the wilderness (see Num. 2:5–7). As the last two sons of Leah, Moses here treats them together. Zebulun was the younger of the two, but is placed first, in harmony with Gen. 49:13.

19. Sacrifices. Their conduct and worship would be in harmony with God’s directives, and therefore pleasing to Him (see Ps. 4).

20. Gad. A warlike tribe that grew in numbers and in strength (see 1 Chron. 5:18–20; 12:8; cf. Gen. 49:19).

Lion. See 1 Chron. 12:8 for 11 Gadites “whose faces were like the faces of lions.”

21. The first part. The first territory conquered was divided by Moses between Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh (see Num. 32:1, 2, 33).

His judgments. The Gadites fulfilled their promise to cross over the Jordan and do their part in the conquest of Canaan, until the whole country was subdued (Num. 32:21, 22, 29).

22. Dan. Jacob compared him to a serpent, or an adder (see Gen. 49:17). He is here spoken of as a “lion’s whelp,” as was Judah (see Gen. 49:9; cf. Judges 18:25–31).

23. Naphtali. For the territory of Naphtali, see Joshua 19:32–39.

Satisfied with favour. Compare Ps. 145:16, for the blessings of God for His children.

West. Literally, “sea.” This could scarcely be the Mediterranean Sea, but rather the Sea of Chinnereth (ch. 3:17), that is, the Sea of Galilee.

25. Shoes. The word here translated “shoes” does not occur elsewhere in the OT. It is better translated “bars,” as is evident from Neh. 3:3, where a similar form is used. It is derived from the verb “to bolt,” “to shut fast.” The meaning here is perhaps that of impregnability, referring to Asher’s fortresses and homes. See Ps. 107:16; Isa. 45:2,

where “iron” and “brass” are mentioned together with gates and bars. These materials are not generally mentioned in connection with shoes.

26. *Rideth upon the heaven.* A figure of speech to describe universal supremacy (see Ps. 18:8, 9; 68:33-35).

27. *Thy refuge.* See Ps. 90:1. A better translation would be “dwelling place.” See Deut. 26:15 for the same Hebrew word.

28. *Dwell in safety.* Jewish commentators apply these words to the reign of Solomon (see 1 Kings 4:25; cf. Jer. 23:6).

The fountain of Jacob. Generally taken to be a reference to the unfailing stream of descendants of the patriarch Jacob (see Isa. 48:1; cf. Ps. 68:26).

Liars. The surrounding people would approach Israel under the guise of friendship and humility in order to court their favor. The Hebrew root verb suggests fawning, cringing submission (see Ps. 18:44; 66:3; 81:14).

Tread upon. Be triumphant over their enemies (Amos 4:13; Micah 1:3). None would be able to stand before them.

The final verses of this chapter are an encouragement to have faith in God. He is supreme. He greatly blesses His faithful children, giving them security, peace, and an abundance of the good things of life. Finally, He will give them an eternal inheritance. God’s children should ever be of good courage.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 SR 172

2, 3 MB 75; PP 304

13-16PP 475

25 CT 258; FE 264; MB 50; ML 51; MYP 98; SC 131; 4T 278; 5T 200

25-29MH 285

26-29PP 471

27 AH 204; CH 362; EW 88; GW 265; MB 148; ML 316; 1T 617; 4T 328, 538; 8T 131

27-298T 270

CHAPTER 34

1 *Moses from mount Nebo vieweth the land.* 5 *He dieth there.* 6 *His burial.* 7 *His age.* 8 *Thirty days’ mourning for him.* 9 *Joshua succeedeth him.* 10 *The praise of Moses.*

1. *Went up.* God had so commanded him (see ch. 32:49).

Moab. The final station before entering Canaan (see Num. 33:48–50), the place from which God had issued directives (see Num. 35:1; 36:13), and from which Moses delivered to Israel the words of the book of Deuteronomy (see Deut. 1:5).

Nebo. See on ch. 32:49. There was a city of the same name (see Num. 32:38; Isa. 15:2) in the immediate vicinity.

Pisgah. The northern part of the Abarim range (see on Num. 27:12).

Shewed him. God had already promised Moses that he would be permitted to view the land of Canaan, though not to set foot on it (Num. 27:12; Deut. 3:27).

2. *All Naphtali.* The Lord gave Moses a view of the northern parts of the country, where Mt. Hermon and the hills of Naphtali can be seen in the distance, the central portions where Ephraim and Manasseh located, and the southern part wherein Judah settled.

The utmost sea. Some commentators refer this to the Salt Sea (see Num. 34:3), or Dead Sea, on the eastern border of Judah. It is better to understand it as the Mediterranean, hidden behind the hills of Judah.

3. South. The *Negeb* (see on Gen. 12:9; 13:1).

The plain. All the Jordan valley; in particular, the extremely beautiful plain of Jericho, through which the Jordan flows (see on Gen. 13:10). The word here translated “plain,” literally, “round” or “oval,” refers to the circular basin of the Jordan, particularly to that portion of it where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea. This same word is used of a round loaf of bread (see Ex. 29:23; Judges 8:5; 1 Sam. 10:3; 1 Chron. 16:3).

City of palm trees. The countryside adjacent to the city of Jericho has always been famous for its palms and its tropical climate (see Judges 1:16; 3:13; 2 Chron. 28:15). It made an ideal winter resort.

Zoar. Probably at the south end of the Dead Sea (see on Gen. 14:3, 10; 19:22, 24).

4. This is the land. See Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; Ex. 33:1. Moses saw it in all its beauty; for this he had prayed, and God heard him (see Deut. 3:23–29).

5. The servant. See Joshua 1:2, 7, where Jehovah calls Moses His servant. The apostle Paul says Moses “was faithful in all his house, as a servant” (Heb. 3:5). The word translated “servant” in the book of Hebrews is *therapon*. Our English words *therapeutics*, *therapy*, are derived from it. The term denotes sympathetic, faithful ministry, as of a physician at the bedside of a sick person. The untiring, loving, and tender solicitude of Moses for his people is placed on record to his credit and to the glory of God. It is interesting to note that the modern Greek word for “physician” is *therapon*.

According to the word of the Lord. Literally, “at the mouth of Jehovah” (see Num. 27:12–14).

6. Beth-peor. Literally, “the house of Peor.” This valley was in the land of Sihon, king of the Amorites (Deut. 4:46), but was in the possession of Israel at this time, and included in the inheritance of Reuben (Joshua 13:20). It was named after a heathen god called Peor, and his temple (Joshua 22:17).

Sepulchre. Only Jehovah knew the exact spot where death came to Moses. The devil would have been highly pleased to continue to hold Moses in the bonds of death (see Jude 9), and to that end resisted Christ. But Moses was raised up and taken to heaven (see Mark 9:2–4).

7. Natural force. Literally, “freshness,” “vigor.” Accordingly, the statement would read, “his freshness had not departed.” It can mean nothing less than that his physical powers were as fresh and vigorous at that point as they had ever been.

This is the closing scene of a truly great life. As far as physical companionship is concerned, Moses was alone in the death scene. But he died in the arms of God; that was sufficient (cf. Ps. 23:4). Death is not a pleasant prospect, but if it comes when one’s spirit is in intimate communion with the Spirit of God, there is no fear. Even though one must die in solitude, away from human help and sympathy, if he can die in the presence of God, that is a gracious end, full of hope.

8. Weeping and mourning. Upon the death of their peerless leader the people could not but feel a great void in the life of the nation. With what interest Moses must have followed the varying fortunes of Israel as he viewed them from heaven.

9. Joshua. This comparatively young leader was filled with the spirit of wisdom at the laying on of the hands of Moses. This “spirit of wisdom” included skill in both civil administration and military leadership. He had previously proved strong in faith, in courage, and in unswerving devotion to duty.

10. Face to face. A figure of speech to describe intimate association, friendship shared. Compare the experiences of Jacob (Gen. 32:30) and Gideon (Judges 6:22). No other human being ever had a closer association with Jehovah. He is justly known as the world’s greatest emancipator and lawgiver. He has influenced history throughout all succeeding time. A strong personality to begin with, Moses had a fellowship with God that greatly developed and strengthened his character.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON CHAPTER 34

Inspiration has not revealed the authorship of the closing verses of Deuteronomy. Some commentators have held that Moses wrote this portion of the book prior to his death, but others have felt that Joshua or some other unnamed writer added it later, as a postscript to the Pentateuch. Either view is fully in harmony with the way in which the Holy Spirit has operated upon other occasions. However, certain expressions in vs. 6–12 seem best understood as implying that Joshua was the author:

1. The words “no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day” (v. 6) reflect interest on the part of those who survived Moses, regarding the place of burial. There is more reason to think that this statement was written by another person after his death, by inspiration, of course, than that it was written by Moses himself prior to that event.

2. The words of v. 9, attesting the authority of Joshua and his ability as a leader, seem to be more a simple historical account of the transition of leadership, than a prediction concerning it. In Moses’ description of the future experiences of the twelve tribes (ch. 33), he speaks in clearly prophetic language (vs. 10, 12, 19, etc.); here, the language is that of a simple historical account.

3. The words, “There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses” (v. 10), seem more appropriate as a eulogy by Joshua or some other person than by Moses himself.

The Pauline authorship of the book of Romans is unquestioned, yet the scribe who wrote for Paul felt free to add a greeting of his own, addressed to friends at Rome (Rom. 16:22–24). The presence of this postscript in no way alters the fact that the book is the work of Paul rather than of “Tertius, who wrote this epistle” (v. 22), nor does it in any way affect the quality of its inspiration. The Holy Spirit could guide Tertius as well as He could guide Paul. In the same way, the Holy Spirit might as easily have guided Joshua in writing the closing verses of Deuteronomy as He had Moses in writing the preceding portion of the book, or as He later guided Joshua in writing the book that bears his name.

ELLEN G. WHITE COMMENTS

1 PP 471

1-4PP 472

1-7SR 172; 1T 659

5 EW 164; 4T 156

5, 6 PP 477

6 AH 477

7 PP 463

8 PP 481

9 4T 156
10 Ed 64; MH 475
10-12PP 478
6

⁶Nichol, F. D. (1978). *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary : The Holy Bible with exegetical and expository comment*. Commentary Reference Series (Dt 32:1). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.