

# Deuteronomy 04 - Moses Commands Obedience; Warnings About Idolatry; Israel's National Election

## I. First sermon: What God has done for Israel (Deut 1:1—4:40)

### (3) Exhortation to obey the covenant (4:1-40)

(A) Exhortation to obey (4:1-9)

(B) Reminder of the divine manifestation at Sinai (4:10-14)

(C) Warnings against idolatry (4:15-24)

(D) Trans-generational consequences of idolatry and repentance (4:25-31)

(E) Yahweh and Israel's uniqueness (4:32-40)

## II. Second sermon: What Israel must do for God (Deut 4:41—26:19)

### (1) Preparation for the covenant text (4:41-49)

(A) Cities of refuge (4:41-43)

(B) Introduction to the covenant setting (4:44-49)

## Deuteronomy 4

### (3) Exhortation to obey the covenant (4:1-40)

(A) Exhortation to obey (4:1-9)

**1** "Now, Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you will live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

**1** "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

**1** "Now, Israel, listen to the statutes and the ordinances that I'm teaching you to observe so you may live and go in to take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is about to give you.

**1** Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

- "Now, Israel, listen" - introduces the practical conclusions to be drawn from Israel's experience in the wilderness

— Because of the Lord's faithfulness, mercy, and judgment displayed in her recent history, the nation was responsible to obey His decrees and laws unconditionally

- "...statutes" - [NIV = "Decrees"] may refer to permanent rules of conduct, statutory laws which are immutable

- "...judgments" - [NIV = "laws") may refer to case laws, decisions handed down by judges

2 You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, so that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I am commanding you.

2 You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

2 Do not add or subtract a thing to what I'm commanding you. Observe the commands of the LORD your God.

2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

It was crucial that Moses teach Israel this Law, for the motive clause so that you may live and take possession of the land indicates that a full enjoyment of life is based on obeying God's Law. Israel must not add to it and thereby weaken its power, as the Pharisees and later Christian legalists would do. Nor must Israel subtract anything from it to accommodate the willfulness or weakness of human nature.

3 Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you.

3 Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you.

3 You saw with your own eyes what he did in Baal Peor. The LORD your God exterminated from among you every man who followed Baal of Peor.

3 Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baal Peor: for all the men that followed Baal Peor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you.

- Moses referred to the incident at Baal Peor in Moab to illustrate from the Israelites' own history that their very lives depended on obeying God's Law

— At Baal of Peor all the Israelites who entered into spiritual and physical adultery with the Moabite women were either put to death by the sword or died in a plague (24,000 died in the plague)

— On the other hand all who held fast to the Lord lived

— This incident is also mentioned in Num 25:1-9; Ps 106:28-29; Hosea 9:10 (and is key to understanding the letter to Pergamum, Rev 2:12-17)

4 But you who clung to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you.  
4 But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you.  
4 But all of you who are clinging to the LORD your God are alive today.  
4 But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day.

5 "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you are to do these things in the land where you are entering to take possession of it.

5 "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it.

5 See! I taught you the statutes and the ordinances, just as the LORD God commanded. Therefore, observe them when you enter the land you are about to possess.

5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

6 So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

6 So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

6 Observe them carefully, because this will show your wisdom and discernment in the eyes of people who'll listen to all these decrees. Then they'll say: 'Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people.'

6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

- One purpose of the Law was to give the Israelites a full life as they obeyed God (v1-4)

- In v5-8 another purpose of the Law is revealed: to make Israel morally and spiritually unique among all the nations and thereby draw other nations to the Lord

— In contrast with all other nations, Israel was not to be distinguished by her natural resources, wealth, or military might, but by her moral skill and close relationship to God, both of which would come from her obeying her moral constitution

7 For what great nation *is there* that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him?

7 For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him?

7 For what great nation has a god so near like the LORD our God whenever we call on him?

7 For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

8 Or what great nation *is there* that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole Law which I am setting before you today?

8 Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?

8 And what great nation has all the decrees and righteous ordinances like all this teaching that I'm giving you today?

8 And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

- If Israel would obey the Law, she would be the envy of all nations

- They would see her as:

— Being wise and understanding

— Having a God who is near her

— Possessing righteous decrees and laws

9 "Only be careful for yourself and watch over your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

9 "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

9 Only guard yourselves carefully so you won't forget the things that you saw and let them slip from your mind for the rest of your life. Tell them to your children and to your grandchildren.

9 Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

- The solemn admonition to be careful and to watch implies that the Israelites constantly faced the danger of falling into a sin which would have brought them to the brink of annihilation as a nation

- That sin was idolatry (v15-31)

- The nation could become idolatrous in two related ways:

(1) The depravity of the human mind is so great that the great deeds of God for His people (e.g., the Exodus and giving of the Law at Horeb) might slip from their hearts if

they did not constantly remind themselves of God's mighty works.

(2) Through laziness or apathy, parents might fail to teach them to their children and thus their children would become idolaters.

Deuteronomy lays great stress not on the priests or other religious leaders, but **on the parents as the ones responsible for their children's spiritual education**. God trusts His great events of revelation, such as His giving the Law at Sinai, to faithful stewards who must never forget them and who must pass them on to their children ("not forgetting" is another emphasis).

(B) Reminder of the divine manifestation at Sinai (4:10-14)

10 *Remember* the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may have them hear My words so that they may learn to fear Me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

10 *Remember* the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'

10 The day you stood in the presence of the LORD your God in Horeb, the LORD told me, 'Gather the people before me so they may hear my words, learn to revere me the whole time that they live in the land, and teach them to their children.'"

10 Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

11 You came forward and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire to the heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud, and thick gloom.

11 You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the *very* heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom.

11 "When you approached and stood at the foot of the mountain—a mountain that was blazing with fire at its core while the sky was covered with thick, dark clouds—

**11** And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

- The experience at Horeb was designed to produce a fear of God in the hearts of the people so that a covenant between them and the Lord could be possible

- In the OT, the fear of God is more than awe or reverence though it includes both

— Fearing God is becoming so acutely aware of His moral purity and omnipotence that one is genuinely afraid to disobey Him

— Fearing God also includes responding to Him in worship, service, trust, obedience, and commitment

That day on Horeb, God's omnipotence was displayed in the fire black clouds deep darkness, and the voice of God that thundered from the heavens. His moral purity was displayed in His Ten Commandments, called His covenant.

12 Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—*there was* only a voice.

12 Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form—only a voice.

12 the LORD your God spoke from the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but you saw no form; there was only a voice.

12 And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice.

13 So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, *that is*, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

13 So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, *that is*, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

13 He declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to observe—the Ten Commandments that he wrote on two stone tablets.

13 And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

14 The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, so that you would perform them in the land where you are going over to take possession of it.

14 The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it.

14 The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you to observe the statutes and ordinances in the land after you cross over to take possession of it.

14 And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.

(C) Warnings against idolatry (4:15-24)

**15** "So be very careful yourselves, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire,

**15** "So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire,

**15** "Therefore, for your own sake, be very careful, since you did not see any form on the day that the LORD your God spoke to you in Horeb from the midst of the fire.

**15** Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:

- From this experience the Israelites should have learned to fear God as a Person who is spiritual (no form; Cf. v15; there was only a voice) and as a Person who is transcendent

- This latter point was pressed home by the fact that He commanded the Israelites to follow His commandments, decrees, and laws (which Moses would teach them, v1,14)

- The giving of the Law that day thus taught the nation that their God was a spiritual Person who could not be manipulated but instead imposed His moral will on them

- They brought away no images of God from Horeb on that day; God gave only two stone tablets (probably each tablet was complete with all Ten Commandments, in keeping with ancient Near Eastern practice to have duplicates of such covenant documents)

- Thus in contrast with all the religions, the Word of Israel's God became the foundation of their religion

**16** so that you do not act corruptly and make a carved image for yourselves in the form of any figure, a representation of male or female,

**16** so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

**16** Be careful! Otherwise, you will be destroyed when you make carved images for yourself —all sorts of images in the form of man, woman,

**16** Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

**17** a representation of any animal that is on the earth, a representation of any winged bird that flies in the sky,

**17** the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky,

**17** any animal on earth, any winged bird that flies in the sky,

**17** The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,

**18** a representation of anything that crawls on the ground, or a representation of any fish that is in the water below the earth.

18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth.

18 any creeping thing on the ground, or any fish in the sea.

18 The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth:

- Moses spelled out one of the implications contained in the experience at Horeb. Since the Israelites saw no form (Cf. v12) of God on that day they were never to attempt to represent Him with any form

- The religions of the ancient Near East worshiped idols in the shapes of various creatures mentioned in v16-18

- Israel was never to limit God because it would call His transcendence into question and it would make them corrupt (Cf. v25)

The worship of astral deities was also common in the ancient Near East. The sun was worshiped as the god Re or Aten in Egypt, and in the new land to which the Israelites were going astral worship was also common. (i.e. the city of Jericho [*Bet Yerah*] was dedicated to the worship of the moon god.) The Israelites were not to let themselves be enticed (v19) into the worship of the luminaries (Cf. 17:2-5) which God has provided for all the nations under heaven.

19 And *be careful* not to raise your eyes to heaven and look at the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the heavenly lights, and *allow yourself* to be drawn away and worship them and serve them, *things* which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

19 And *beware* not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

19 Do not gaze toward the heavens and observe the sun, the moon, the stars—the entire array of the sky—with the intent to worship and serve what the LORD your God gave every nation.

19 And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

20 But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people of His own possession, as today.

20 But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.

20 For the LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace—out of Egypt—to be the people of his inheritance, as you are today.

20 But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

- Another reason Israel was to denounce all forms of idolatry is that she was taken out of Egypt, an idolatrous land where the images of dozens of false gods were worshiped

- The fact that Israel was taken out of Egypt is mentioned about 20x in Deuteronomy

- In slavery to Egypt, Israel's condition was like being in an iron-smelting furnace

— But now Israel was God's inheritance, that is, His own unique possession (Cf. 9:26,29; Ps 28:9; 33:12; 68:9; 78:62,71; 79:1; 94:14; Joel 2:17; 3:2; Micah 7:14,18)

**21** "Now the LORD was angry with me on your account, and He swore that I would not cross the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

**21** "Now the LORD was angry with me on your account, and swore that I would not cross the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

21 "But the LORD was angry with me because of you. So he swore that I'll never cross the Jordan River to enter the good land that the LORD your God is about to give you as an inheritance.

21 Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance:

22 For I am going to die in this land; I am not crossing the Jordan, but you are going to cross, and you will take possession of this good land.

22 For I will die in this land, I shall not cross the Jordan, but you shall cross and take possession of this good land.

22 I'm going to die in this land and I won't cross the Jordan River, but you're about to cross over to possess that good land.

22 But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land.

- Though Moses knew he would not enter the Promised Land (the good land; Cf. 1:25), he still desired it

- So again he mentioned God's displeasure with him, and reminded the Israelites that he would not be there to enforce the prohibition against idolatry; However, the Lord would enforce the command

23 So be careful yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything *against* which the LORD your God has commanded you.

23 So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything *against* which the LORD your God has commanded you.

23 Be careful! Otherwise, you will forget the covenant of the LORD your God, who established that covenant with you. Don't make carved images of any likeness in violation of everything that you were commanded by the LORD your God.

23 Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee.

24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

24 Indeed, the LORD your God is a consuming fire. He is a jealous God."

24 For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

- Like a consuming fire (4:24) He would purify what is precious (just as fire purifies precious metals) and destroy what is worthless

- As a jealous God (Cf. 5:9; 32:16,21) He will not allow another to have the honor that is due Him alone (Is 42:8; 48:11)

- Therefore Israel needed to be extremely careful to remember the covenant (Cf. Deut 4:9)

#### (D) Trans-generational consequences of idolatry and repentance (4:25-31)

As the nation of Israel sat perched on the banks of the Jordan River, before she ever set one foot upon the Promised Land, the Lord gave an outline of her entire history.

Deuteronomy is a road map for where history is headed before the trip got underway.

Disclosure of an event called the Tribulation (v30) is included by God as part of the original itinerary. While different segments of the historical journey have been updated with more details being added along the way, not a single adjustment from the earlier course has ever been made. Part of that journey includes the Tribulation.

**25** "When you father children and *have* grandchildren, and you grow old in the land, and you act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger,

**25** "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger,

**25** "After you've borne children and grandchildren, have been there for a long time in the land, have become so corrupted that you make images of any form, and have done evil in the eyes of the LORD your God, you will provoke him to anger.

**25** When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger:

- After the Israelites had been in the land a long time and had become secure they might forget the Lord and their need to trust Him alone

- They would then be easily seduced into idolatrous worship, which would corrupt them (Cf. v15-16) and provoke God's anger

**26** I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today, that you will certainly perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to take possession of it. You will not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed.

**26** I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed.

**26** Heaven and earth will testify against what has occurred today: you'll surely and swiftly be destroyed from the land that you are about to possess by crossing the Jordan River. You won't live long in it, because you'll certainly be exterminated.

**26** I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

**27** The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you.

**27** The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you.

**27** Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among the nations, and you'll be fewer in number in the nations where the LORD your God will drive you.

**27** And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

- Moses invoked heaven and earth as witnesses because of their permanence and unchanging character in contrast with the fickleness of human hearts

- This certain judgment would take two forms, a dispersion among the nations with a great loss of life (v27) and a giving over to idolatry (v28)

- This prophecy was fulfilled in the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivities, but its greatest fulfillment came in the dispersion of Israel after she rejected Jesus Christ

28 There you will serve gods, the work of human hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear, nor eat nor smell *anything*.

28 There you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.

28 There you'll serve gods made by human hands, serving trees and stones that cannot see, hear, eat, nor smell.

28 And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

29 But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.

29 But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.

29 If from there you will seek the LORD your God, then you will find him if you seek him with all your heart and soul.

29 But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

- Moses repeatedly stressed the need for wholehearted devotion to the Lord by the words "with all your heart and with all your soul" (see Deut 4:29; 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 26:16; 30:6,10)

30 When you are in **distress** and all these things happen to you, in the **latterdays** you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

30 When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice.

30 In your distress, when all these things happen to you in days to come and you return to the LORD your God, then you will hear his voice.

30 When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

- "...distress" - [KJV = tribulation]; even as early as Deuteronomy, God outlines a future plan for Israel that includes a period commonly called "the tribulation"

— The prediction that Israel's restoration to God would come at the end of the "tribulation" is also found in Jer 30:7-24; Dan 7:24-27; Zech 14:2,20-21

- "...latter days" - may refer to any time after the initial dispersions, but the ultimate reference is to the time when the Lord Jesus will return to earth to establish His 1,000-year kingdom (Rev 20:4)

— At that time a repentant Israel will finally seek the Lord

31 For the LORD your God is a **compassionate** God; He will not abandon you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

31 For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

31 For God is compassionate. The LORD your God won't fail you. He won't destroy you or forget the covenant that he confirmed with your ancestors."

31 (For the LORD thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.

- Israel's final return to her Savior will be due not to any goodness of their human hearts, but rather to her merciful God.

- "...compassionate" - *rahòum*, refers to the tender compassion of a mother toward her helpless infant

- So even if Israel forgets her God He will not abandon His morally helpless children because He has the tender compassion of a mother and because He made an inviolable covenant with Abraham and confirmed it to Isaac and Jacob by oath (mentioned 16x in Deut)

- Since God will not forget His covenant, neither should Israel (v23)

(E) Yahweh and Israel's uniqueness (4:32-40)

**32** "Indeed, ask now about the earlier days that were before your time, since the day that God created mankind on the earth, and *inquire* from one end of the heavens to the other. Has *anything* been done like this great thing, or has *anything* been heard like it?

**32** "Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and *inquire* from one end of the heavens to the other. Has *anything* been done like this great thing, or has *anything* been heard like it?

**32** "Indeed, ask from one end of the heavens to the other about days of old, before your time, when God created mankind on the earth. Did we ever have anything as great as this, or ever hear of anything like it?

**32** For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?

33 Has *any* people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard *it*, and survived?

33 Has *any* people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard *it*, and survived?

33 Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the middle of a fire just as you did, and survived it?

33 Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?

- Having spoken of the future ("latter days," v30), Moses then spoke of the former days—from Creation to Sinai.

- Israel had had a totally unique experience of her God

— No other nation could claim to have heard the voice of God speaking out of fire

— No other nation could point to a God who had created it by redeeming it from a stronger nation

34 Or has a god ventured to go to take for himself a nation from within *another* nation by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, just as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

34 Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within *another* nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

34 Or has any god ever taken for himself one nation out from another nation with testings, signs, wonders, wars, awesome power, and magnificent, terrifying deeds as the LORD your God did in Egypt before your eyes?

34 Or hath God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

- Furthermore, the true origin of this historical redemption was not open to various explanations

- The voice of God, the miraculous signs and wonders (Cf. 6:22; 7:19; 26:8; 29:3), great and awesome deeds (e.g., the plagues, the pillar of fire, the parting of the Red Sea, manna), and other phenomena made it clear that it was God who redeemed the Israelites

- And He did so in a show of power and strength—by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm (Cf. 5:15; 7:19; 11:2; Ps 136:12; Ezek 20:33-34)

35 You were shown *these things* so that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him.

35 To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him.

35 "You have been shown this in order to know that 'the LORD is God' and there is no one like him.

35 Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the LORD he is God; there is none else beside him.

36 Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.

36 Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.

36 You have been made to hear his voice from heaven so you may be instructed. And he showed you his great fire here on earth, and you heard his voice from the middle of that fire.

36 Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee: and upon earth he shewed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire.

- The purpose of this miraculous deliverance was to enable the Israelites to know, not simply by their intellect but in their experience, that the Lord is God alone
- The experience of hearing from heaven, His awesome voice and on earth seeing His great fire (at Sinai, Ex 19:16-20) was not primarily aimed at instructing their minds, but rather at the discipline of their moral nature
- It was meant to instill a spirit of submission and to quell the natural inclination of the human heart to arrogance
- The experience of His voice and the fire, then, was designed to give them more than the content of His commandments
- It was designed to make them fear to disobey those commandments

37 Because He loved your fathers, He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power,

37 Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power,

37 Moreover, he loved your ancestors, chose their descendants after them, and brought you out of Egypt, accompanied by his presence and great power,

37 And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;

- Speaks of Israel's national election by God (Cf. Deut 7:6-8; 10:15-16)

### **Israel's National Election**

In dealing with the concept of election, a distinction must be made between individual election and national election. The former is soteriological and results in the salvation of an individual. This type of election extends to both Jewish and Gentile individuals. Any person

who has ever believed, whether Jew or Gentile, is the object of God's individual election. However, the concern of Israelology is national election, because only Israel is called an elect nation.

National election guarantees neither the eternal nor the physical salvation of every individual within the nation. What national election does guarantee is that God's purpose(s) in choosing the nation will be accomplished and that the elect nation will always survive as a distinct entity. It guarantees the physical salvation of the nation and, in the case of Israel, even a national salvation. The national election of Israel is the basis of Israel's status as the Chosen People.

While God chose Israel because of His love, Israel's election had a reason and purpose:

- (1) Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation (Ex 19:6).
- (2) Israel was to receive God's revelation and record it. For this reason, Israel received the Law of Moses (Deut 4:5-8; 6:6-9; Rom 3:1-2).
- (3) Israel was to propagate the doctrine of the one God (Is 43:10-12).
- (4) Israel was to produce the Messiah (Rom 9:5; Heb 2:16-17; 7:13-14).

38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in *and* to give you their land as an inheritance, as *it is* today.

38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in *and* to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today.

38 in order to drive out nations that are stronger and more powerful than you, to bring you into this land, and to give you their land as an inheritance, as it is today.

38 To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.

- The reason the Lord had taken such care to give Israel this extensive moral education was that He had loved their forefathers and had promised in a covenant to love their descendants

- Because of that love He delivered them from Egypt (Cf. v20), a nation stronger than Israel

- And He would drive out from Canaan nations stronger than Israel. Also He would give that land to Israel as her inheritance.

39 Therefore know today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

39 Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

39 "May you acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in the heavens above and over the earth below—there is no other God.

39 Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

40 So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, so **that it may go well for you** and for your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

40 So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

40 May you observe his statutes and keep his commands that I'm giving you today, so that life may go well for you and for your descendants after you. That way, you'll live a long life in the land that the LORD your God is about to give you permanently."

40 Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

- In light of such electing grace and such unique revelation the Israelites were to acknowledge that the Lord is God alone (cf. v35) and to keep His decrees and commands  
- Only in doing these two things would the Israelites find prosperity and long life in the land (Cf. 5:33; 6:2)

- "...that it may go well for you" - occurs 8x in this book, undoubtedly to emphasize this motive for obedience (4:40; 5:16; 6:3,18; 12:25,28; 19:13; 22:7)

- The idea that righteousness lengthens life and sin shortens it is common in the OT (Prov 3:1-2,16; 10:27)

## II. Second sermon: What Israel must do for God (Deut 4:41—26:19)

### (1) Preparation for the covenant text (4:41-49)

#### (A) Cities of refuge (4:41-43)

**41** Then Moses set apart three cities across the Jordan to the east,

**41** Then Moses set apart three cities across the Jordan to the east,

**41** Then Moses designated three cities on the east side of the Jordan,

**41** Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;

42 for one to flee there who unintentionally killed his neighbor, without having hatred for him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live:

42 that a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live:

42 where a person who accidentally killed someone could flee, if he killed his neighbor without having enmity toward him in the past. He may flee to one of these cities and live:

42 That the slayer might flee thither, which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that fleeing unto one of these cities he might live:

43 Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

43 Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, and Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.

43 Bezer in the desert plain for the descendants of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead for the descendants of Gad, and Golan in Bashan for the descendants of Manasseh.

43 Namely, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites.

- This may be an editorial note placed here between the first and second addresses because at that time Moses had designated these three cities east of the Jordan as cities of refuge

— They were Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan

#### (B) Introduction to the covenant setting (4:44-49)

**44** Now this is the Law which Moses set before the sons of Israel;

**44** Now this is the law which Moses set before the sons of Israel;

**44** This is the Law that Moses reviewed in the presence of the Israelis.

**44** And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel:

45 these are the testimonies and the statutes, and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, when they came out of Egypt,

45 these are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, when they came out from Egypt,

45 These are the instructions, decrees, and ordinances that Moses declared to the Israelis when they came out of Egypt.

45 These are the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt,

- Moses set before the people God's instruction (*Torah*, the word rendered Law, means "instruction") in how to walk with Him

- If the Israelites were to prosper individually and nationally they had to obey the stipulations of the covenant expressed in the form of decrees and laws

— These were originally given three months after the Israelites came out of Egypt (Cf. Ex 20:1-17,21-23)

- Thus Deuteronomy is not a new covenant but the renewal of a covenant previously made; it was repeated east of the Jordan River near Beth Peor

46 across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived in Heshbon, whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out of Egypt.

46 across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out from Egypt.

46 He did this east of the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, in the land of Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and whom Moses and the Israelis defeated after leaving Egypt.

46 On this side Jordan, in the valley over against Bethpeor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel smote, after they were come forth out of Egypt:

47 And they took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who *were* across the Jordan to the east,

47 They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, *who were* across the Jordan to the east,

47 So they took possession of his land, as well as the land of King Og of Bashan. Both Amorite kings lived east of the Jordan—

47 And they possessed his land, and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, which were on this side Jordan toward the sunrising;

48 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion (that is, Hermon),

48 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion (that is, Hermon),

48 from Aroer on the edge of the Wadi Arnon as far as Mount Sirion, which is also called Hermon,

48 From Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon, even unto mount Sion, which is Hermon,

49 with all the Arabah across the Jordan to the east, even as far as the sea of the Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.

49 with all the Arabah across the Jordan to the east, even as far as the sea of the Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.

49 and all the Arabah east of the Jordan as far as the Dead Sea below the slopes of Pisgah.

49 And all the plain on this side Jordan eastward, even unto the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah.