

Deuteronomy 31

Verses 1 - 8

So Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. ² And he said to them, “I am 120 years old today; I am no longer able to go out and come in, and the Lord has told me, ‘You shall not cross this Jordan.’ ³ It is the Lord your God who is going to cross ahead of you; He Himself will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who is going to cross ahead of you, just as the Lord has spoken. ⁴ And the Lord will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them. ⁵ The Lord will turn them over to you, and you will do to them in accordance with all the commandments which I have commanded you. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or in dread of them, for the Lord your God is the One who is going with you. He will not desert you or abandon you.” ⁷ Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you will go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you will give it to them as an inheritance. ⁸ And the Lord is the one who is going ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not desert you or abandon you. Do not fear and do not be dismayed.”

² And he said to them, “I am 120 years old today; I am no longer able to go out and come in

When Moses said that he was no longer able to "go in and out", he meant in the role as a military leader of Israel.

The 120 years of Moses' life consisted of three 40 year segments:

40 years in the courts of Pharaoh, 40 years in Midian with Jethro and 40 years leading Israel in the wilderness.

³ It is the Lord your God who is going to cross ahead of you; He Himself will destroy these nations before you

Just to be clear the men of Israel had to go to war against the people of Canaan which included putting them to death but God provided numerous miracles to ensure the victory went to the Israelites.

⁷ Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you will go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you will give it to them as an inheritance.

Joshua had already proved himself as a military leader when he won a victory over the Amalekites shortly after the Exodus.

See Exodus 17:8-13

Verses 9 - 13

⁹ So Moses wrote this Law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. ¹⁰ Then Moses commanded them, saying, “At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of the release of debts, at the Feast of Booths, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this Law before all Israel so that they hear *it*. ¹² Assemble the people, the men, the women, the children, and the stranger who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the Lord your God, and be careful to follow all the words of this Law. ¹³ And their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.”

⁹ So Moses wrote this Law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel.

A number of commentators have written that “This Law” refers to the Pentateuch, the first 5 books of the bible. However, the Book of Genesis is a historical account detailing how Israel became a nation while the next four books focus on the Law which spelled out the terms of the covenant between God & Israel. This included the moral and social laws, the offerings and priesthood, and the tabernacle and holy days.

At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of the release of debts, at the Feast of Booths, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this Law before all Israel so that they hear *it*.

The timing for reading the Law came at the intersection of two important events.

1. At the end of every seven years (The Sabbatical year) loans to fellow Israelites were forgiven at that time.

See Deut. 15:1-2

“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release of debts. ² And this is the regulation for the release of debts: every creditor is to forgive what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not require it of his neighbor and his brother, because the Lord’s release has been proclaimed.

2. At the Feast of Booths (The final feast of the religious year)

See chart 3105

Jewish Feasts						
Feast	Scripture	Date Observed	Roman Calendar	Sabbath	Offerings	Commemorates
Passover	Lev. 23:05	Nisan 14 At twilight	March/April	No	Numbers 28:16-24	Oldest son saved from death
Festival of Unleavened Bread	Lev. 23:6-8	Nisan 15-21	March/April	Day 1 & 7 Spec Sabbath	Numbers 28:16-24	The hasty flight from Egypt
Offering the First Fruits	Lev. 23:9-14	After the Sabbath	March/April	No	Numbers 28:16-24	Beginning of the barley harvest
Feast Of Weeks (Pentecost)	Lev. 23:15-22	50 days after F.F.	May/June	Special Sabbath	Numbers 28:26-31	beginning of the wheat harvest.
Festival of Trumpets	Lev. 23:23-25	Tishri 1	September	Special Sabbath	Numbers 29:1-6	Civil New Year
Day of Atonement	Lev. 23:26-32	Tishri 10	Sept/Oct	Sabbath	Numbers 29:7-11	Forgiveness of sin for the nation
Tabernacles Temp. Shelters	Lev. 23:33-34	Tishri 15-22	Sept/Oct	Day 1 & 8 Spec Sabbath	Numbers 29:12-38	Wilderness End of harvest

You shall read this Law before all Israel so that they hear *it*.

There is no substitute for hearing the word of God as it had been written down.

See Luke 4:1-13

And their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess.”

This would insure that the law was being passed on in an accurate manor.

Kids pick up a lot from their parents but how many parents can quote the word as precisely as it is written in the text.

Verses 14 - 18

¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, and I will commission him.” So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting. ¹⁵ And the Lord appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the entrance of the tent. ¹⁶ The Lord said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the prostitute with the foreign gods of the land into the midst of which they are going, and they will abandon Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. ¹⁷ Then My anger will be kindled against them on that day, and I will abandon them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will find them; so they will say on that day, ‘Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have found us?’ ¹⁸ But I will assuredly hide My face on that day because of all the evil that they will have done, for they will have turned away to other gods.

¹⁴ Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, and I will commission him.” So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting.

Joshua had already been commissioned several months ago.

See Numbers 27:15-23

But now that Moses was about to die, God repeats the ceremony as a way of reminding the people that Joshua is the one chosen by Him to lead Israel into the Promised Land.

This was important because Moses was still in the spotlight, giving this long history lesson and repeating the law to the people one more time before they would enter.

¹⁶ The Lord said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the prostitute with the foreign gods of the land into the midst of which they are going, and they will abandon Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.

This had to be somewhat discouraging for Moses to hear after leading Israel for 40 years but God needed Moses to warn the people of Israel one last time.

This would be done by writing a song for the people to sing.

Verses 19 - 30

¹⁹ “Now then, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it on their lips, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel. ²⁰ For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they eat and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant. ²¹ Then it will come about, when many evils and troubles find them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the mouth of their descendants); for I know their inclination which they are developing today, before I bring them into the land which I swore.” ²² So Moses wrote down this song on the same day, and taught it to the sons of Israel. ²³ Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, “Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you.” ²⁴ It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this Law in a book until they were complete, ²⁵ that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, ²⁶ “Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, so that it may remain there as a witness against you. ²⁷ For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, as long as I have been alive with you *until* today, you have been rebellious against the Lord; how much more, then, after my death? ²⁸ Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against them. ²⁹ For I know that after my death you will behave very corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will confront you in the latter days, because you will do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands.” ³⁰ Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete:

²⁰ For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they eat and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant.

During the time of Joshua the people were faithful.

See Joshua 24:31

But shortly after his generation passed away the people quickly turned to following pagan gods.

²¹ Then it will come about, when many evils and troubles find them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the mouth of their descendants); for I know their inclination which they are developing today, before I bring them into the land which I swore.”

This verse starts by talking about a future generation but then suddenly turns to indict the current generation.

We just mentioned in the previous verse that during the time of Joshua the people were faithful but here it seems to imply that they were already considering, or making plans, to worship other gods.

It's not unusual for people to do the right thing when a strong leader is in charge but that does not necessarily indicate the condition of their heart. It appears that their hearts were not as committed to God as their actions indicated.

²⁴ It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this Law in a book until they were complete, ²⁵ that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, ²⁶ “Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, so that it may remain there as a witness against you.

Moses instructs the Levites to place the Book of the Law beside the Ark (not inside).

This copy of the Law was separate from the copy that was given to the priests and elders to read during the Feast of Booths. See verse 9

It is also interesting that he says this book, not books.

It is possible that this book included just the laws found in Exodus thru Deut. (No history). Also, much of the law in Deut. was a repeat of the law in Exodus.

²⁷ For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, as long as I have been alive with you *until* today, you have been rebellious against the Lord; how much more, then, after my death?

Moses says that the people were rebellious while he was alive so how much worse will it be once he is gone.

²⁸ Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against them. ²⁹ For I know that after my death **you will behave very corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and **evil will confront you in the latter days**, because you will do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands.”**

Moses uses the pronoun “you” meaning the elders and officers at the time of Joshua.

Moses seems to indicate that they will behave corruptly and that evil will confront them in the latter days. But as we have seen, Joshua says that this generation was faithful.

Perhaps Moses misunderstood what God had told him in verse 16.

¹⁶ The Lord said to Moses, “Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the prostitute with the foreign gods of the land into the midst of which they are going, and they will abandon Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.

God did not give Moses a time frame of when this would happen. It seems likely that Moses took this to mean immediately when in fact it was a prediction of an event in the not too distant future.

We have been told that the prophets struggled to understand the time frame of future events that had been predicted by God.

See 1 Peter 1:10

¹⁰ As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that *would come to you* made careful searches and inquiries, ¹¹ seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

³⁰ Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete:

This song is recorded in the next chapter.