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“The Book of Deuteronomy”

by
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About the Author



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THURSDAY, JULY 1
DEUTERONOMY 1:1-5
JOSHUA 1:8-9

“...[B]ut thou shalt meditate
therein day and night...
then thou shalt have good success.”

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY

Deuteronomy is the last of the five books of Moses commonly called the Law. Moses wrote it in the wilderness of Moab just prior to his death. It has greater advantage over the other books as, being the last one, new experiences had taken place. It is a progressive revelation. The epilogue is added to this book in the last chapter recording the death of Moses. This is evidently written by Joshua his successor. Now our study of the book commences.

Deuteronomy was a reminder, a renewal of the covenant, to the new generation of the children of God that they had a responsibility to obey. The title of the book means the second giving of the Law. This stresses that God's words are worth giving attention to. The wilderness wandering of Israel was characterised by disobedience. It was a manifestation of the depravity of the human heart; as such it needs reminding from the Lord. The message of Deuteronomy was given for that purpose. The contents of the book were sermons that Moses preached before he died. He spoke and committed his messages to writing, this fact is given within the book in Deuteronomy 31:24-26: *“And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.”* The Jews refer to the book as “Mishneh Hattorah,” i.e. a repetition of the Law. The name Deuteronomy is derived from Greek. It is not the second law, but it is an adaptation of much of the original law given by God at Mount Sinai. It was a reminder to the new generation that was set to enter and live in the Promised Land to exercise the precepts herein given. The book gives a vast amount of legal details and was addressed to the lay people. Obedience was important as the new generation had to learn from the mistakes of their parents. All these point to the need for the constant study of God's Word.

THOUGHT: My ears must always be attentive to the words of God.

PRAYER: Father, may I never forget the affirmations of Thy Word.

FRIDAY, JULY 2

DEUTERONOMY 1:1-5

MATTHEW 4:4

*“...Man shall not live by bread alone,
but by every word that proceedeth
out of the mouth of God.”*

THE AUTHORSHIP OF DEUTERONOMY

The authorship of any book of the Bible has a bearing on its authenticity and also its inspiration. The authorship of Moses has been attacked by liberal critics. They usually argue that it was written by an unknown writer in the seventh century BC, i.e. about the time of King Josiah, and that Josiah used it to bring about reforms.

The arguments against Mosaic authorship are not valid because there are external and internal evidences that the book is the work of Moses. The following is from *The Open Bible* introductory notes: “The Old Testament attributes Deuteronomy and the rest of the Pentateuch to Moses (see Joshua 1:7; Judges 3:4; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezra 3:2; Nehemiah 1:7; Psalm 103:7; Daniel 9:11; Malachi 4:4). Evidence from Joshua and 1 Samuel indicates that these laws existed in the form of codified written statutes and exerted an influence on the Israelites in Canaan. ... Christ quotes it as God’s Word in turning back Satan’s three temptations (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10) and attributes it directly to Moses (Matthew 19:7-9; Mark 7:10; Luke 20:28; John 5:45-47). Deuteronomy is cited more than eighty times in seventeen of the twenty-seven New Testament books. These citations support the Mosaic authorship (see Acts 3:22; Romans 10:19). ... Deuteronomy includes about forty claims that Moses wrote it. Read Deuteronomy 31:24-26... Deuteronomy fits the time of Moses, not Josiah...”

There are other passages that assert Mosaic authorship. The messages were delivered in the plains of Moab, east of Jericho, across River Jordan. Moses died at Mt Nebo thereafter. The book is not written in chronological order. It covers about one month and was written at the end of the forty-year period in the wilderness. It was written to encourage the people to believe and obey God so as to receive His blessings. The circumstances of its delivery tells that it is no doubt the Word of God written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Let us uphold its credibility.

THOUGHT: All words of Scripture are God’s words, down to the last dot.

PRAYER: Father, may I believe and uphold all Thy words.

SATURDAY, JULY 3
DEUTERONOMY 1:1-5
PSALM 16:5

“The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup...”

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF MOSES AND DEUTERONOMY

As a leader of Israel, Moses also held the office of a prophet. In Deuteronomy 18:15-19, he called himself a prophet and taught that Christ also would be a Prophet. The work of Moses as a prophet speaks for itself and he exercised that office to the fullest. Other prophets that came after him also wrote to convey the words of God to the people. Christ also quoted Moses a number of times in His ministry. When He was tempted by the devil, He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3. When He was asked of the greatest commandment in the Law, He also quoted from this book (Deut 6:3-5). He also told the Jews that Moses wrote about Him (John 5:46). These are prominent among other references to this book of the Law.

The literary background of Moses in Egypt aided him to put together the Law of God in written form. Stephen described him as learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds (Acts 7:22). When God called Moses in Exodus 3, He assured him that He would be with him to fulfil his mission and cast away any doubts.

The contents of the book are not given in the order they happened; they were the words of Moses spoken in public. They were delivered in the plains of Moab, east of Jericho beyond the Jordan River. This was the last stop before Israel crossed into Canaan. It was in the fortieth year after Israel left Egypt. Moses led Israel to slay the kings that occupied that land: Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan. Internal evidence shows that these messages were delivered as they prepared to conquer the Promised Land. The book was written about the year 1405 BC as the new generation was ready to enter the land of Canaan. Moses wrote to encourage the people to believe and obey God in order to receive His blessing. Moses was then an old man, yet his abilities were strong. The hand of the Lord was upon him and he fulfilled his calling to the fullest.

THOUGHT: God gives ability when He assigns a duty.

PRAYER: Father, give me wisdom and strength like Moses.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 4

DEUTERONOMY 1:6-18

PSALM 139:21-24

*"Hear the causes between your brethren
and judge righteously."*

RESPECT NOT FACES IN JUDGMENT!

It is impossible not to make judgments. The moment we open our eyes, we make judgments. Sometimes we even do it by muscle memory. Other times we do so consciously, especially when they are important decisions that impact our lives severely. All judgments we make impact ourselves and others. God never asks us not to make judgments, except for censorious ones that belong to the old man before salvation. But after salvation, the new man is able to make right judgments.

Moses needed help in making judgments as he looked after God's people in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. According to God's will, he appointed able or spiritual men to help him. The book of Deuteronomy was written as the final word to Joshua. Regardless of how spiritually gifted we are, no man can serve the Lord without help. Having godly leaders to assist in the ministry is crucial. Their qualifications are spiritual. *"Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness. ..."* (Exod 18:21a, see also 18:23a). To accomplish these qualities in their ministries, these godly leaders must not respect faces in judgment. There will be loved ones, family and friends in the same congregation. These leaders must judge them fairly, i.e. the same way as they would judge everyone else. They must be bribe-proof. Truth is their middle name. They fear God all the time so that they fear no man.

Nepotism has been the bane of many church ministries. Some pastors think that their local church is like their personal mini-kingdom where they pass the baton to their sons or daughters. Members foolishly allow such sins to continue. Godly leaders know that the judgments they make are the Lord's. Righteous judgments will honour Christ. They will also bless God's people, for they will fear God, and righteousness will prevail. The people are blessed. Christ is honoured when righteous judgments rule.

THOUGHT: Is it possible for a Christian to judge others in the same way that God judges?

PRAYER: Holy Father, keep me from the sin of censorious judgment and help me to judge as Christ would judge, according to Holy Scriptures. In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

MONDAY, JULY 5

DEUTERONOMY 1:6-18

EXODUS 18:24-27

*“So Moses hearkened to
the voice of his father in law,
and did all that he had said.”*

MOSES PROVES TO BE A WORTHY LEADER

Moses recalled God's direction as He led them by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. It was an eleven days' journey from Horeb to the Promised Land. When Israel rebelled, God did not allow that generation to enter Canaan and He punished them with forty years of wilderness wandering. Moses prayed and reasoned with the Lord. Their rebellion was a serious sin, but Moses reasoned that the nations would say that the Lord had to slay His people in the wilderness because He was not able to bring them into the Promised Land. The word of the Lord had to stand. He had to bring them to the land that He had promised. So God let the rebellious generation die, but their children would inherit the land. The Lord promised this land to Abraham and confirmed it to Isaac and Jacob. These were heirs of the covenant. There was more to this than the occupation of Canaan.

Moses expressed his inability to bear the burden alone, for the Lord had multiplied the people as He had promised. He was yet to multiply them again. Thus Moses made rulers for them as advised by Jethro, his father-in-law (Exod 18). Moses told the judges to judge righteously and thus his burden was lightened. Here is also a case of the providence of God and human responsibility. Moses knew all that the Lord had promised and was sure He was going to fulfil them. Nevertheless, that was not a cause for Moses to neglect his duties as a leader. His leadership skills were what the Lord used to bring to pass His purposes. As Christians, we do not ignore our need to live holy lives because God is gracious. In leadership also we do our best to fulfil our duties and follow the set order diligently.

The words of God are timeless truths that always stand. Let us always listen to His words and let them become a constant reminder that as God's children we owe Him our obedience.

THOUGHT: Knowing God's will in leadership and submitting to Him lead to success.

PRAYER: Father, help me to fulfil my part in serving Thee.

TUESDAY, JULY 6

DEUTERONOMY 1:19-29

JOB 34:37

*“For he addeth rebellion
unto his sin... and multiplieth
his words against God.”*

THE OCCUPATION OF CANAAN SUSPENDED

Israel could not directly enter the land of Canaan as was the expectation when they left Egypt. The occupation was suspended because of rebellion. The Lord prevented them and punished them for their sin. He withdrew His support, and they were at the mercy of their enemies. Moses in this sermon was recalling those events of the past forty years as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. The Lord and Moses wished them well, but their will was contrary to God's plan.

The march to Canaan was disrupted not because God did not want them to go, but because Israel developed a negative attitude. Horeb is another name for Mt Sinai, a key location in the Exodus for this was where the Lord had called Moses to go and receive the Ten Commandments. It was also here that Israel rebelled against the Lord in asking Aaron to make for them a golden calf. They faced a severe punishment for that sin. However it was their refusal to enter the land of Canaan that delayed their occupation for forty years.

Moses was now describing their journey through the great and terrible wilderness. They passed by the mountain of the Amorites and came to Kadesh-barnea. The Lord had directed that they go and possess the land that He had given them. Moses also reminded them that the Lord had set the land before them and encouraged them not to fear or be discouraged.

It is easy to condemn Israel for their rebellion, but how often have we too rebelled against our God? The church has a code of conduct for her members and when necessary the elders are mandated to take disciplinary measures against any transgressor. Every open sin is subject to punishment.

THOUGHT: Rebellion is active opposition to authority.

PRAYER: Father, help me to be obedient and to honour Thy authority.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 7
DEUTERONOMY 1:19-29
NUMBERS 13:23-33

*“Let us go up at once,
and possess it; for we are
well able to overcome it..”*

ATTEMPT IS MADE TO OCCUPY THE LAND

The turning point came when Israel asked Moses to send spies to go and search the land of Canaan and bring a report to Moses. This is told in detail in Numbers 13-14. Twelve men were sent on that mission and when they came back they gave their report about the land.

Two among the spies (Joshua and Caleb) urged the people to go quickly and possess the land as the Lord had given them. Ten of them however discouraged the people. They said that the land was indeed good and full of milk and honey, they even brought a huge cluster of grapes from the valley of Eshcol to show them the fruit of the land. However, they said that the cities of that land had very high walls and the people living there were giants, and that Israel would not be able to defeat them.

Moses told them not to be afraid for God would fight for them, he was sure of this because it was the Lord who initiated their departure from Egypt. The Lord also knew that there would be resistance from the Canaanites to prevent Israel from occupying their land. However, God had determined that He would give it to Israel. It would have been easy for them to possess the land as the Lord had guided them. But Israel rebelled against the commandment of the Lord and used their own reasoning to conclude that it was impossible for them to take the land from the Canaanites.

The battles of the Lord are never lost. In his epistle to the Ephesians, Paul exhorts that they ought to take up the whole armour of God that they may overcome the wiles of the devil (Eph 6:11). It was the evil one who created fear and doubt in the hearts of those spies so that they would frighten the whole congregation of Israel.

Sin is in the world today because Adam ate the forbidden fruit, and sin has found habitation in the human soul since then. Faith in God is our victory.

THOUGHT: God will always bring to pass what He has initiated.

PRAYER: Father, help me to always stand on Thy side.

THURSDAY, JULY 8

DEUTERONOMY 1:19-29

ACTS 17:26-28

*“For in him we live, and move,
and have our being...”*

THE OCCUPATION OF THE LAND IS SUSPENDED

The occupation of the land was suspended because of the people's rejection of God's directive. They said that the Lord had brought them out of Egypt to deliver them to the Amorites to destroy them. They developed a rebellious attitude and did not trust the Lord. They also did not listen to Moses.

These are the words that the ten who went to spy the land used to discourage the people: *“Whither shall we go up? our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we; the cities are great and walled up to heaven; and moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakims there”* (Deut 1:28). Israel had to wander in the wilderness for forty years and the rebellious generation died in the wilderness.

They wandered in that terrible wilderness all those years yet they lacked nothing. They had the Lord's protection from the nations around them and those whose lands they had to pass through. In the events that followed the rebellion, Moses was also prevented from entering Canaan. At the end of the book there is a record of his death. The Lord had told him that he would die at Mt Nebo; and Joshua was to be anointed to take his place and lead Israel into Canaan. The Lord always has the final say.

The suspension of the occupation of the Promised Land was a punishment for that generation. An old pastor once challenged the upcoming young pastors to take a leaf out of Joshua and Caleb's book. He added that God never uses a coward. Thus those who are harbouring fear should quit and know that they are not called of God. Real soldiers will fight their battles to the end and win. God who has given the promises will never fail.

THOUGHT: God determines the bounds of my habitation.

PRAYER: Father, keep me trusting in Thee, even in unpromising circumstances.

FRIDAY, JULY 9

DEUTERONOMY 1:30-46

ACTS 17:26-28

“...let him trust in the name of the LORD...”

PUNISHMENT OF ISRAEL FOR UNBELIEF

Israel did not believe the Lord who led them by cloud and fire. The pillars of cloud and fire were a visible testimony of the Lord's presence among them and all their movements were dictated by the pillars' movement. Moses had to assure them repeatedly that the Lord who brought them out of Egypt would lead them to safety. The Lord heard the rebels' words and swore that none of that generation should see the good land. It is sad that their eyes could not see the potential in what the Lord had promised and prepared for them.

Only Caleb and Joshua were able to see the Promised Land because they delighted in the promise of the Lord and encouraged Israel to go and possess the Land. Numbers 14:6-9 (the earlier account) described what Caleb and Joshua did: *“And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes: And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land. If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.”* Their courage spared them from God's punishment and they were rewarded as they entered Canaan.

God has unlimited resources. All that Israel had to do was to look to Him in faith and their journey would have been successful. On top of it, all their needs would have been met. But because of their unbelief, they lost everything. Their punishment was like a jail sentence of forty years, ending with death. While the Lord would bring to pass His promise, He had to show His justice in punishing the sin of rebellion. God is gracious and just. Man cannot live in sin and hope to escape His vengeance.

THOUGHT: The Lord is very particular in His dealings.

PRAYER: Father, give me the courage of Joshua and Caleb.

SATURDAY, JULY 10

DEUTERONOMY 1:30-46

ROMANS 6:11-15

*“Let not sin therefore reign
in your mortal body....”*

GOD WITHDRAWS HIS SUPPORT FOR THE REBELS

Moses' sermon was one loaded with experience. He was winding up his ministry by recalling God's work in his life. He did not disappoint in what he endeavoured to accomplish. There were many setbacks including his own human weaknesses, but God granted him the grace to fulfil the duties of his calling to the best of his ability. He was also an old man, aged a hundred and twenty years, but he was still strong enough to bear that burden of leadership. He was a man who spoke with God face to face and he was a great leader. It is also evident in these sermons that he had a very good memory. He had not forgotten all that the Lord had told him or the experiences they had since they left Egypt. He spoke of these events as if they happened yesterday.

Their children were reckoned innocent although their parents rebelled. Thus, the children were qualified to inherit the land. Israel's belated acknowledgement of sin was not accepted by the Lord. They told Moses that they had sinned and were willing to go and fight according to the commandment of the Lord. They took their weapons and were ready to go. But it was too late. The Lord overruled and told Moses that they should not go up. He told them that if they go on their own their enemies would smite them. They did not listen to the counsel the Lord gave them. They went anyway. They were smitten by the Amorites who chased them as bees. They wept and the Lord would not hear them, and they had to remain in the wilderness. As Moses recalled all this, his audience did not find them strange as they all had experienced it, or had heard about what Moses was telling them. Moses, the leader, had to confirm all these events before he left them.

God has great promises for His children and is faithful to fulfil them. However, open rebellion cannot go unpunished and the Lord has many ways of fulfilling His promises. For His love for His children never fails. Let us love Him too.

THOUGHT: God's love is a formula for eternal joy.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy love lift me up at all times.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 11
DEUTERONOMY 2:1-23
ROMANS 14:19

*“Let us therefore follow after the things
which make for peace...”*

THE JOURNEY FROM KADESH TO MOAB (I)

When the journey of Israel to enter Canaan was suspended, the Lord caused them to wander in the wilderness for a long time. However, He led them in every move until they were ready to enter Canaan. In their journey from Kadesh to Moab they encountered three nations (Edom, Moab and Ammon). God had given to each of these three nations their land. And God directed His children in their journey and told them not to touch any of these nations, nor to disturb their peace, and that if they take anything from them they were to pay for it.

The inhabitants of the land of Edom were the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. This was the first nation that Israel encountered in their journey. They followed the Red Sea and encompassed Mt Seir. The Lord commanded them to turn northward to the land of Esau. Israel was not to meddle with Edom. This means that they were not to touch them in any way, although it was necessary to pass through their land. If they were to take anything from them, then they would have to compensate Edom.

All nations were indeed afraid of Israel because of the miracles associated with their departure from Egypt. Many of them including the Canaanites were aware of what the Lord had done for them. Israel could have easily misused that favour of God towards them. Thus Moses was instructed to warn them against doing what the Lord had not commanded them. The Lord had given Mt Seir to Esau and it was their right to occupy that land. And Israel obeyed God in keeping peace.

THOUGHT: Peace is also prosperity and wealth.

PRAYER: Father, may I always value peace with others.

MONDAY, JULY 12

DEUTERONOMY 2:1-23

ROMANS 13:8

*“...for he that loveth another
hath fulfilled the law.”*

THE JOURNEY FROM KADESH TO MOAB (II)

If Israel was to take anything from the the nations as they passed through their land without paying, then that would have violated the Law of God. The giving of the Law was still fresh in their minds, they must be faithful in keeping it. Moses reminded them that the Lord had led them through the wilderness for forty years and they lacked nothing. God provided food and water that were sufficient for all of them. Moreover, the clothes that they were wearing did not wear off over the years, similarly their shoes. They must therefore look to the Lord for their provisions and were not to steal from anybody. They passed through the land of Esau peacefully. God made them to be at peace with each other. Moses was rehearsing these words to show them how the hand of God had been with them all those years. God had brought them to the edge of the Promised Land.

As for the Moabites, they were the children of Lot, the nephew of Abraham. It was now about six hundred years since Abraham lived in that land and the blood relationship among them was still very close. God had given the land of Moab to Ar, a kinsman of Abraham. Despite that close association with the patriarch, these people did not share the faith of Abraham. Their punishment was reserved for another time. Israel was commanded also not to touch the Moabites but to pass through their land in peace as was the case with the Edomites. The land was far from the route that Israel would have taken if they had chosen to go directly into Canaan. God however directed them through this land. The Lord was dealing with Israel thus because they had not trusted God to bring them directly to the land of Canaan.

THOUGHT: Following God step by step brings me to His destination.

PRAYER: Father, may I learn to walk with Thee to the journey's end that Thou hast planned for me.

TUESDAY, JULY 13

DEUTERONOMY 2:1-23

ROMANS 12:15-18

*“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you,
live peaceably with all men.”*

THE JOURNEY FROM KADESH TO MOAB (III)

The following description of the physical features of Moab gives us an idea of the hardships Israel endured in passing through that land. “Moab was the district East of the Dead Sea, extending from a point some distance North of it to its southern end. The eastern boundary was indefinite, being the border of the desert which is irregular. The length of the territory was about 50 miles and the average width about 30. It is a high tableland, averaging some 3,000 feet above the level of the Mediterranean and 4,300 feet above that of the Dead Sea. The aspect of the land, as one looks at it from the western side of the Dead Sea, is that of a range of mountains with a very precipitous frontage, but the elevation of this ridge above the interior is very slight. Deep chasms lead down from the tableland to the Dead Sea shore, the principal one being the gorge of the river Arnon, which is about 1,700 feet deep and 2 or more miles in width at the level of the tableland, but very narrow at the bottom and with exceedingly precipitous banks” (ISBE). The Lord gave it to the descendants of Lot.

Israel was directed to the brook Zered and their journey had lasted for thirty-eight years from Kadesh. That delay was occasioned by the rebellion of Israel so that the sinful generation had to die. Moses told them that the Lord was against them and had to destroy them. This was to ensure that sin was not allowed to take root and such rebellion should not be repeated. In the wilderness wandering, God provided for them. The mention of the brook Zered shows that their camp had water from this brook. There is no indication of any dispute with the local inhabitants of the land suggesting that there was sufficient water for all. Israel here showed their obedience to the words of Moses. The Lord continued to feed them with manna. He also provided comfort for them even in those hostile conditions. What their everyday life in their camps was like can only be left to our imagination. They could have been either listening to Moses speak to them or attending to everyday necessary duties. Since the Lord was leading them, life certainly was not boring.

THOUGHT: God’s faithfulness is great and never fails.

PRAYER: Father, may I keep my trust focused on Thee only.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 14
DEUTERONOMY 2:1-23
PROVERBS 3:5-7

*“In all thy ways acknowledge him,
and he shall direct thy paths.”*

THE JOURNEY FROM KADESH TO MOAB (IV)

The command to Israel concerning the Ammonites was the same. The Ammonites were another clan of the children of Lot. Israel was expressly commanded not to distress them nor meddle with them. The Lord would not give them the land of Ammon for possession; it was given to those children of Lot. This land also belonged to the giants which the Ammonites called Zamzummims. They are described as great, many and tall as the Anakims, but the Lord destroyed them before the face of the Ammonites and gave the land to them. God's authority to deal with people as such is by His own discretion and eternal plan. Moses spoke knowing that the settlement of people is the work of God as it is He who sets the boundaries. Paul stressed this in Athens when he spoke to the Greeks. *“And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation”* (Acts 17:26). God reigns in the kingdom of man.

Moses also revisited the settlement of the children of Esau in Mt Seir. He also destroyed the former inhabitants of the land known as the Horims and gave the land to Esau. Moses told of these happenings to the children of Israel because they were getting ready to occupy the land of Canaan. Canaan would not come without effort for there were people dwelling in that land then. Israel had to fight and remove them from the land. But this was the fear that the ten spies had, thus the present generation should not be afraid of the Canaanites. Rather, they must remember that the Lord had given them the land.

Every step of the children of Israel was directed by the Lord. When they left Egypt, they were going to Canaan. God specifically directed them not to touch these other nations except the Canaanites. He is the one who appointed their habitation as all other nations. May we yield to Him that He will also direct our paths.

THOUGHT: God has appointed palces of habitation for everyone.

PRAYER: Father, may I find peace in Thee where I live.

THURSDAY, JULY 15
DEUTERONOMY 2:24-37
JOSHUA 2:8-14

“...I know that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us...”

THE CONQUEST OF SIHON, KING OF HESHBON (I)

The nations of the land that Israel passed through were peaceful, and they treated Israel well. Now, they came to Sihon the king of Heshbon in the territory beyond Jordan. This king was very hostile towards Israel. The Lord hardened Sihon's heart. Sihon resisted the advancement of Israel and rejected the terms of peace that Moses had offered him through his messengers. Sihon fought and God delivered him and his cities into the hand of Moses. The text records the sequence of events as Moses rehearsed them in the ears of Israel.

The Lord delivered Sihon king of Heshbon to Israel. This means that though Sihon was a king and had an organised army, his ability to fight was weakened supernaturally. As such Israel had an easy time in fighting and defeating him. The Lord commanded Israel to continue their journey and to pass over river Arnon because He had delivered to them Sihon the Amorite. God had determined already that Israel would occupy the land of this king. And Israel was to go ahead and possess it, they were to go to war with Sihon and their victory was sure.

The Lord told them how He would give them this victory. He said, *“This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee”* (Deut 2:25). The truth of these words was later confirmed by Rahab when Joshua sent two spies to Jericho. She told them that there has been great fear for Israel since the time they left Egypt. They were all aware that the Lord had given the land of Canaan to them. They were informed of all the miracles that God had shown. Israel had the upper hand over their enemies. Sihon and other kings were too hardened to swallow their pride and to surrender to Israel. This meant that Israel had to wage war against them and subsequently exterminate them and possess their land. The Lord did to Sihon as He did to Pharaoh as Israel left Egypt. Moses had that experience for assurance.

THOUGHT: God is an invisible power in battle.

PRAYER: Father, may I fight Thy battles with courage knowing that Thou art present with me.

FRIDAY, JULY 16

DEUTERONOMY 2:24-37

JEREMIAH 16:14-18

*“...The LORD liveth, that
brought up the children of Israel
out of the land of Egypt.”*

THE CONQUEST OF SIHON, KING OF HESHBON (II)

Moses sends messengers to Sihon: Moses, desiring peaceful means, sent messengers to Sihon to seek terms for their co-existence. But the king of Heshbon would not agree. If he had agreed to the peaceful approach, confrontation would have been avoided and they would live in peace with one another. Moses had requested that they pass through the king's land by the highway only. But the king did not trust Moses. Moses offered them the same terms as he had offered the other nations. Israel was prepared to pay for anything they might use on their way through the host nation.

Moses said, *“Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet; (As the children of Esau which dwell in Seir, and the Moabites which dwell in Ar, did unto me;) until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the LORD our God giveth us”* (Deut 2:28-29). But Sihon turned down that offer and did not anticipate that he would be at a disadvantage against Israel. He was not ignorant of God's deeds with the other nations and His miracles before the Egyptians. Nevertheless, Sihon acted as any king would: he stood in defence of his nation to the very end, trusting no one.

This may be worthwhile in some circumstances, but in this case it was God who ordered the battle and there was no chance that Sihon could win against the house of Jacob. It was proper and right for Moses to offer the terms of peace, but the king of Heshbon refused. Thus, his destruction had to come. Moses said that God hardened Sihon's spirit and made his heart stubborn that He might deliver Sihon to the hand of Israel. The Canaanites and these other nations were destined for destruction, not merely because the Lord wanted to create room for Israel. These people had rejected God and had to be punished for their ungodliness. Even Israel had to be sent into captivity many years later because of their rejection of God. The Lord restored Judah afterwards because He had a purpose.

THOUGHT: God orders the destiny of people and nations.

PRAYER: Father, grant me understanding of Thy will in all situations.

SATURDAY, JULY 17
DEUTERONOMY 2:24-37
PROVERBS 14:32-34

*“Righteousness exalteth a nation:
but sin is a reproach to any people.”*

THE CONQUEST OF SIHON, KING OF HESHBON (III)

Sihon chose to confront and fight Israel: Sihon would not let Israel pass through his land, and Israel was ready to fight. The outcome of the battle was already determined and Sihon's nation was exterminated. The battle was fought in a place called Jahaz. It is God who puts nations in place and He also determines their boundaries. Moses and Israel knew this principle and thus were confident in battle.

Church history has examples of nations being preserved and even prospered because the people feared the Lord. The advent of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century challenged many nations. Back then there was no separation of church and state, and the kings interfered greatly in the affairs of the church. Some supported the Reformation and others were against it and persecuted the Protestants. Those nations that supported the Lord's course were greatly blessed and became pioneers of successful global missionary activity.

Recent history, however, bears a different testimony. Liberalism and the rejection of God have taken root in many nations. General populations have in a big way rejected the Lord. There are groups and movements that advocate questionable ethics and unbiblical practices. Educational institutions promote the theory of evolution, thus rejecting God's creation work. The end of these nations is inevitable. At the time of writing, the coronavirus is a threat to global health. God is speaking!

The God of Moses is the same God we worship today. He will always bring to pass His punitive will. He will even use war to punish those who disobey Him. The rejection of the peaceful approach that Moses offered led the Lord to punish this king of Heshbon. There was more to the confrontational approach of Sihon, thus God ensured the fall of Sihon.

THOUGHT: *“The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.”* (Prov 21:1)

PRAYER: Father, give me heavenly wisdom to know Thy will.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 18
DEUTERONOMY 2:24-37
ROMANS 1:18-20

*“For the wrath of God is revealed
from heaven against all ungodliness
and unrighteousness of men...”*

THE CONQUEST OF SIHON, KING OF HESHBON (IV)

Israel destroyed Sihon and all his cities: God delivered Sihon, his sons and all his people into the hand of Israel. Their cities were taken and all their people were utterly destroyed and none remained. Israel took their cattle as spoil, i.e. the prize of war. They destroyed all the cities from Aroer to Arnon, and none was too strong for Israel.

The security of the cities in those days depended on the strength of their walls, and the strength of skilled soldiers who manned those walls. However, as in any war, there is always a strategy to defeat the enemy. Israel won the battle not because they were stronger than the men of Heshbon, but because God aided them with wisdom and they overcame their enemy. When God stretches out His hand, great cities and fortification fall like a house of cards. This was the case for those cities of Heshbon. The Lord had specifically earmarked only the cities of Sihon for destruction at this point and gave express command to that effect. He told Israel not to come to the land of Ammon and the river Jabbok and also to every land that God forbid. Moses reminded Israel of this victory because he was going to leave them soon, and Joshua was to take over the leadership. They still had a task ahead of them to capture the land of Canaan and the battles would be similar to those that they fought. Their hearts had to be prepared for that task.

Throughout Bible history there are stories of great nations that have come and gone because they did not honour God. In the current episode, it was the land of Heshbon's turn to go. It was the same later for Israel, when they transgressed the law of God and worshipped idols. They were delivered into the hands of other nations. God is the King of nations and He raises kings and puts down others. His direction for Israel was sure. In building God's kingdom, victory is sure as Christ fights for His own. Come to Christ and you are a victor. The work of witnessing for Christ is every believer's duty. God will use even your weakness to bring someone to salvation. Are you ready to fight for the Lord?

THOUGHT: Believers in Christ are members of the everlasting Kingdom of God.

PRAYER: Father, may I ever be assured that Jesus is mine.

MONDAY, JULY 19

DEUTERONOMY 3:1-17

2 CORINTHIANS 6:4-7

*“By the word of truth, by the power of God,
by the armour of righteousness
on the right hand and on the left...”*

ISRAEL CONQUERS OG, KING OF BASHAN

Israel's conquest of Og, king of Bashan, was very similar to that of Sihon, king of Heshbon. Moses was rehearsing again in the ears of Israel how the battle went and described the extent of the land that the Lord gave Israel. This was the land of Og, king of Bashan. Like Sihon, this king also resisted Israel. The Lord delivered all the people and land into the hand of Israel as He had promised. This is Moses' narrative of those events.

The new territory given to Israel: After capturing Heshbon and her cities, the next target for Israel was Bashan. The king of this land was aware of what Israel had done to his neighbours; nevertheless, they did not readily surrender. They resisted Israel. They went against Israel with full force, but that was how the Lord delivered them to Israel. God encouraged Moses not to fear them for He would deliver them to his hand. Og did not know the Lord and he depended on his own strength. Israel had already rehearsed the strategy in the conquest of Sihon and the pattern would be the same. When the battle began, the Lord delivered Og and all his people into the hands of Israel. They took all the sixty cities of Bashan, walled and unwalled towns in the region of Argob the territory of the king of Bashan. Moses said that they utterly destroyed them and exterminated all her inhabitants.

When Moses was narrating these past events, Israel had already seen how the battle went. However, they had not secured the land that God had promised them. It was not an easy task before them; and Moses was not going to lead them as the Lord had told him that he would die in the land of Moab. Joshua had been chosen as the new leader. At that time only two tribes of Israel and half the tribe of Manasseh had claimed their inheritance. The rest of the tribes were to have their land in Canaan. Moses used these past successes, and how God helped them, to strengthen their hearts to face the Canaanites without fear before they went into the battlefield.

THOUGHT: When God is the Commander in war, victory is assured.

PRAYER: Father, may I remember Thy presence in every spiritual warfare.

TUESDAY, JULY 20

DEUTERONOMY 3:1-17

ISAIAH 11:14-16

*“...they shall lay their hand upon Edom
and Moab; and the children of
Ammon shall obey them.”*

THE STRENGTH OF THE CAPTURED CITIES

Security in ancient times depended on the strength of the city walls. They were built so high that it was not easy for an invading army to scale them. Watch towers were also put at certain intervals and soldiers manned them round the clock. The gates were kept secure and locked as the night set in. Some were small and some were very big.

Israel felt threatened by the high walls in the land of Bashan, but Moses told them that the Lord had delivered their enemy into their hands and they needed not to fear. They were able to capture sixty cities, this was no mean feat from man's point of view. However, Moses and Israel knew that they would not have succeeded without the hand of God.

Israel utterly destroyed them and all their inhabitants. They took the cattle and other valuables as the prize of war. This was again with the permission of God. In some instances, when they had to fight, there were express instructions given to them not to take anything. When such a command was given, then they were not to take anything. This was the case in the capture of Jericho under Joshua. Later in the history of Israel, King Saul was commanded to destroy all the Amalekites and every living thing. He failed to obey the command and reserved the fat animals. This caused Saul to lose his throne. Israel was a nation under God and carried out her day-to-day activities under the direction of the Heavenly King. If they paid attention to what God said, they would be united in their approach to the battle. Moses rehearsed all these in the ears of Israel to remind them of God's hand among them.

The strength of the walls was not a problem to them. What they were supposed to do was told to them, they just had to obey God's direction. The people that fought this battle belonged to the new generation. They were children when their fathers refused to occupy Canaan forty years earlier. Here, Moses was still in command, and they won.

THOUGHT: God's promises never expire.

PRAYER: Lord, let me ever hold to Thy promises and not fail Thee.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 21
DEUTERONOMY 3:1-17
1 SAMUEL 17:38-54

“Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts...”

THE NEW LAND AND HER PEOPLE

The newly acquired land was Heshbon and Bashan, and in this God gave the bounds of the place that Israel had to occupy. Moses was describing these places that they had taken. He said, *“And we took at that time out of the hand of the two kings of the Amorites the land that was on this side Jordan, from the river of Arnon unto mount Hermon; (Which Hermon the Sidonians call Sirion; and the Amorites call it Shenir;) All the cities of the plain, and all Gilead, and all Bashan, unto Salchah and Edrei, cities of the kingdom of Og in Bashan”* (Deut 3:8-10). This land was to the east of Jordan River, the northernmost boundary was Mt Hermon. This mountain is also the source of River Jordan. It is a strategic location to this day. Modern Israel annexed this territory known as the Golan Heights so that they could retain the use of the waters of Jordan. The land of Canaan, including this eastern region, is mostly desert, though it is described as a land flowing with milk and honey. When compared to other lands, it cannot be described as the best land. Its wealth and output are because of the hand of God. One should not underestimate what God can do. He has all the needed resources for any task. God gave Israel food even when there was no hope.

The people who occupied that region earlier were men of huge stature, i.e. giants. In those days, physical strength was a useful asset to those who were thus endowed. Og, the king of Bashan was said to be one of the remnants of those giants. When Moses and Israel fought against him, he was confident that he would win. His huge physique is described by the size of his bed. It was made of iron, and it was nine cubits long and four cubits wide and one-and-a-half feet high. That implies he was about nine to twelve feet tall. Anyone of such height is considered abnormal. Regardless of the confidence of Og in his size, the Lord delivered him into the hands of Israel.

THOUGHT: Any obstacle that seems insurmountable becomes easy to overcome when it is the Lord who orders the journey.

PRAYER: Father, teach me to look up to Thee only for help and protection.

THURSDAY, JULY 22
DEUTERONOMY 3:1-17
JOSHUA 4:11-14

*“About forty thousand
prepared for war passed over
before the LORD unto battle...”*

THE ALLOCATION OF THE NEW LAND

The land of Gilead was given to Reuben and Gad. These were whole tribes that had requested for Moses to give them that land. Moses did not grant their request immediately. God first had to agree to their request, and secondly Moses charged them to swear that they were going to fight with their brothers until all of them have secured their portion in the Land of Canaan. These two tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh were offered that portion east of Jordan. They kept their promise and cooperated with Joshua after the death of Moses until all the tribes of Israel were settled in the Promised Land. Moses gave the tribe of Manasseh the houses of Jair and Machir as the portion allocated to the tribe. The borders of the Reubenites and Gadites are also described.

All the details may seem to be of no significance, but the assertion of every truth comes with witnesses. The names of people, places and events are all witnesses to the truthfulness of the words of God. Such multiple witnesses cannot be denied. The Lord was now beginning to settle Israel in the land that He had promised. Moses was careful to allocate as the Lord directed. The repeat of the events that took place in Heshbon confirms the truthfulness of His promises. Their victory in war was a confirmation that the Lord had given them that land.

It was logical that the Lord would give both sides of Jordan to Israel so that they would have enough water for their use. There is no indication that Israel ever supported their agricultural productivity by irrigation in the days of Moses and Joshua. However, the waters of Jordan served an important purpose in their settlement. Today, irrigation is the life line of the nation. They utilize the waters of Jordan to the fullest. The food produced is enough to feed the nation and they even have more for export. It is a land flowing with milk and honey because God gave them wisdom to utilise the land. Food security is more desired than military security.

THOUGHT: God is always on the throne. Come to Him for salvation.

PRAYER: Father, bless my dwelling place that I may not lack anything.

FRIDAY, JULY 23

DEUTERONOMY 3:18-29

1 PETER 3:8-9

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”

MOSES PREPARES ISRAEL TO ENTER CANAAN

When the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh had possessed the land east of Jordan, Israel was now set to enter Canaan under the leadership of Joshua. Moses desired to go, but the Lord reaffirmed His earlier assertion that Moses would not enter Canaan. Moses praised the greatness of God as He manifested His sovereignty. Joshua was thus set to succeed Moses and he was well suited for the job. Now was the preparation for that transition.

Moses called for unity of all Israel and commanded the three tribes to aid in the acquisition of the land God had promised them. Earlier when they requested to be given the land that was taken from the kings of the Amorites, Moses had strictly charged them and made them swear that they were going to remain one with the rest of their brethren. They were to wage war together until they possessed their inheritance. He was speaking with the awareness of that agreement. Moses had led them for forty years and they had maintained their unity. This was how they were able to succeed in every task they sought to accomplish. The settlement of all Israel in the Promised Land was the chief aim and it was the reason they left Egypt. If this was not sustained, they would fall prey to their enemies. Moses was conscious of this fact and he reminded Israel that this was the key to their survival.

The land to the east of Jordan that they had possessed was considered safe, thus the three tribes that were given the land would live in peace. Moses instructed them to leave their wives and cattle and to cross over Jordan to fight with their brethren until they were all settled. Then they could return to the land that He had given to them. He said that the Lord would give rest to their brethren. The action of Israel in waging war to possess the land is an answer to those “quick-fix” preachers of today. It is true that any achievement that man can make is from the Lord, but let him do his part.

THOUGHT: Unity of believers is a testimony of Christian love.

PRAYER: Father, may I always cooperate with my brethren in service for Thee.

SATURDAY, JULY 24

DEUTERONOMY 3:18-29

EPHESIANS 4:7-11

*“But unto every one of us is given
grace according to the measure
of the gift of Christ.”*

MOSES PREPARED JOSHUA

Israel was required to do everything within their power to ensure that they fulfilled the directives of the Lord. It was the desire of Moses to see to it that they complied with what the Lord had commanded.

Any leader greatly fears the consequences of a new leader's mistakes. Moses thus used the opportunity to command Joshua as to what he should do in the land of Canaan. Fear of other people can grip the heart of anyone. This is especially so in the hearts of leaders because there are many challenges. This was the predicament that Moses had as he prepared to hand over the leadership to Joshua. These are the words of Moses: *“And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. Ye shall not fear them: for the LORD your God he shall fight for you”* (Deut 3:21-22).

Everyone is afraid in battle, but courage with God will bring home the desired victory. Joshua was up to the task as God was the One who had assigned it to him. God specifically told Moses that He would fight for them, but they also knew that their task was not easy. Their enemies were armed and had the upper hand over Israel. They had fortified cities and were familiar with the terrain. Their army also may have been better trained. This was what concerned Moses and Joshua, but the promised assurance from the Lord kept them going. Moses had to bring up all these things to ensure that there would be a smooth transition from his leadership to that of Joshua.

Besides the two leaders, all the people were also worried about their future. Moses knew that he had to keep their morale very high and he did all he could to fulfil his part as a leader.

THOUGHT: Leadership is a gift from the Lord.

PRAYER: Father, may I fulfil my duties to Thee faithfully.

LORD'S DAY, JULY 25
DEUTERONOMY 3:18-29
EXODUS 17:8-16

*“So Joshua did as Moses had said to him,
and fought with Amalek...”*

JOSHUA WAS READY AS MOSES MADE HIS EXIT

Joshua's background spoke for itself, he was not appointed overnight as a leader. In his ministry as a servant of Moses, he was loyal both to the Lord and to Moses. When Moses had gone up to Mt Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments, Joshua waited for him at the foot of the mount and he was not part of those that made and worshipped the golden calf. Also when he and the other eleven were sent to spy on the land of Canaan, he was one of the two that brought a good report to the people about the land. He was willing to go and possess the land immediately, but the other ten spies discouraged the people. Joshua had leadership qualities that were well tested and he was up to the task. This is a pattern for the preparation and appointment of any leader.

Moses laboured to ensure that the transition to the new leader was smooth. He was said to be a man that spoke with God face to face, thus prayer was second nature to him as he always consulted the Lord. Deuteronomy 3:24 was his last recorded prayer: *“O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might?”* Here, he acknowledged the sovereignty of God and His greatness, so that in all things the creatures are to be submissive. God is the ruler of all His creation in the whole universe. Moses also manifested his human weakness in this prayer where he asked to go over and see the Promised Land that is beyond Jordan. He knew that the Lord had told him he would not set foot in Canaan, but he still prayed.

It is to be understood that any favour that the Lord bestows upon the creature is by His grace alone. When the Lord Jesus taught His disciples to pray, one of the elements of that prayer is that the will of the Lord may be done. Nothing more can be added to this request.

THOUGHT: Every leader must be courageous and upright.

PRAYER: Father, set leaders in the church that are worthy.

MONDAY, JULY 26

DEUTERONOMY 3:18-29

JOHN 17:24-26

*“...I will that they also,
whom thou hast given me,
be with me where I am...”*

MOSES WAS NOT ALLOWED TO ENTER CANAAN

In Scripture, there is the revealed will of God and also the hidden will of God. Here, God had revealed His will to Moses, but Moses still thought that the Lord might change His mind. That prohibition to enter Canaan was declared to Moses earlier after he had smitten the rock that water might come out. He did this because he was angry since the children of Israel were always murmuring against him. However, the Lord's command to Moses was to speak to the rock. In this, Moses disobeyed the Lord and he was denied that privilege of leading Israel into Canaan.

The Lord was wroth with Moses for the sake of Israel. The Lord did not answer Moses on this matter. He told him in verse 26: *“Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.”* This was a strong rebuke. Moses understood the message clearly and did what the Lord had told him to do. He was told to go to Pisgah, the summit of Mt Nebo and there he would only view the land from a distance. It was here also that Moses subsequently died. Though nobody knows where he was buried, this was his final earthly abode. The Lord prepared him for that departure and told him to charge Joshua to cause the people to inherit the land. He was going to bring to pass what Moses already knew. As they waited to enter the land, Israel abode in the valley over against Beth-peor. This little detail may seem insignificant, but such little assertions are important in authenticating the truthfulness of the words of God. It was not an imaginary event, it was something that really happened, in a real place.

God is always true to His words. He was now leading Israel to the last stop before possessing Canaan. He spoke to Moses and was true to His earlier promise. He prepared Joshua for the occupation of Canaan with expressed instructions: Obey God and see His faithfulness.

THOUGHT: When God speaks once, man must hear Him twice.

PRAYER: Father, give me a discerning mind to know Thy will.

TUESDAY, JULY 27

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-24

2 PETER 1:19-21

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed...”

ISRAEL HAD SUPERIOR LAWS FROM GOD

The laws that God gave to Israel were the heart of their relationship. He caused Moses to write them. They were superior laws that no other nation had. It was read to the ears of Israel; they learned it and taught it to their children. The first of these was the acknowledging and worshipping of the true God only. These laws were given and they spelled out a covenant relationship between the Lord and Israel. Moses here stressed the need to hearken to these laws.

The nation was exhorted to listen and obey the law of God and live in peace. The purpose of every law is to guide the people in their daily conduct and to relate to God and people. When Israel was in Egypt, they were governed by that nation and did not have the freedom to exercise any other law. The Bible is silent about their way of worship, but at least they knew the true God through the testimony of Jacob their father and also Joseph. Some might have been influenced by the idolatry of Egypt, but their knowledge of God united them as they left Egypt. The giving of the Law at Mt Sinai was a clear revelation to them. Moses taught them diligently and they knew what God required of them.

As the law was given in written form it was easy to refer to it whenever necessary and it was not subject to any alteration. They were expressly commanded that it should remain unchanged. These are the exact words that Moses told Israel, *“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”* (Deut 4:2). The two tables of stone which were given to Moses were written by the finger of God. This expression is added to say that those writings were entirely authentic. There is much in the Law that was written by the hand of Moses but that does not make any difference because all holy men who wrote the Scriptures were guided by the Holy Spirit. They are to be held in great reverence.

THOUGHT: All Scripture originates from the Most High God.

PRAYER: Father, keep me close to Thee in the reading of Thy Word.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 28
DEUTERONOMY 4:1-24
PSALM 12:6-7

*“Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,
thou shalt preserve them from
this generation for ever.”*

THE LAW CANNOT BE ALTERED OR ADDED TO

The Law, with all other parts of Scriptures, were written by the hand of man. God revealed them and they have equal authority. The Lord has promised to preserve His words down through all generations. The command not to add or diminish forbids anyone from touching the words of God with the intent to alter or add. The observation of this command is God's way of preserving His words. In the last chapter of the Bible, the same words are repeated (Rev 22:18). Moses as the first writer of Scripture made this command very clear so that the words of God may not be lost.

In recent church history, there has been much debate about the accuracy of the available manuscripts of Scripture. This has caused many to subject the written words of God to the scrutiny of man-made science. However, the human mind cannot fathom the workings of God in this matter. God alone has the power to preserve and we must accept it by faith.

The nation of Israel was not to forget but to teach the future generations. They heard the voice of God in Horeb (this is another name for Sinai), they learned the words of the Lord and they were commanded to teach His words. The Lord came in a burning mountain and spoke declaring His covenant to Israel. The Ten Commandments were written on two tables of stone. These were like teaching aids for Moses so that he might also write what the Lord told him.

Those tables remained for a long time in the ark of the covenant. As long as they were there, they were a testimony to the nation that they were subject to the Law of God. These were lost or destroyed when the first temple was burned by the Babylonians. Though the physical tables were lost, the words were not lost as there are copies. God preserves His words in the way He sees fit. Unlike human laws, the words of God do not require an update. It is complete.

THOUGHT: God's revealed will in Scripture is the basis for future judgment.

PRAYER: Father, may I always stand to defend Thy written Word.

THURSDAY, JULY 29
DEUTERONOMY 4:1-24
PSALM 25:4-5

*“Lead me in thy truth, and teach me:
for thou art the God of my salvation...”*

ISRAEL LEARNED AND TAUGHT THE LAW

Moses stressed the importance of teaching the words of God so that none would remain ignorant of what He required of them. Learning and teaching require time that is deliberately set aside for that purpose.

Israel had witnessed the destruction of Baalpeor, but they lived because they obeyed God. Moses taught the Law as God commanded him; Israel was to keep His Word and be wise. The laws that God gave were superior to those of other nations. Law scholars today view the Mosaic Law as part of a big body of law that is on par with those of other ancient nations. However, they do not realise that these laws of God have not been subjected to any amendments as is the case with other laws. They are indeed superior laws. The giving of these laws naturally led to the formation of schools in the synagogue and special education for priests who had to teach these laws. Today, the Sunday school and all other Bible classes are meant to teach and instruct believers in the words of God.

Israel was to worship God alone. In the introductory lessons in theology, it is noted that people of all nations have some form of worship. Of course most of them worship idols and hold to some superstition. Regardless of the abominable nature of idolatry, it serves as evidence of the knowledge of the existence of God. Some of the moral standards of these heathen nations are agreeable to the law of God. The words of God are to be used to correct the errors that come with ignorance. God commanded Moses to teach the people to obey the commandments. God did not appear to them in any physical form, thus there is no similitude of the Almighty known to man. Thus they are not to make any images to represent God. They are not to worship the sun, moon or stars. The violation of this command is equivalent to the denial of the existence of God. They learned these truths from the law of God.

THOUGHT: No creature of God can be an object of worship.

PRAYER: Father, help me to be a good teacher of Thy Word.

FRIDAY, JULY 30

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-24

GENESIS 12:1-3

*“And I will bless them that bless thee...
and in thee shall all families
of the earth be blessed.”*

ISRAEL HAS A COVENANTAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The covenant with Israel was first made with Abraham. God called him out of Ur of the Chaldees and told him to go to a land that He would show him. When he eventually arrived in Canaan, the Lord told him that he and his descendants would inherit that land. The time that Israel dwelt in Egypt to the time that they departed under Moses was four hundred years. When God visited and freed them from the bondage of Egypt, they were destined to a land that was promised to them many years before. God brought them out of Egypt and made them a people of inheritance. God is always particular in His precepts.

Everyone must obey what He commands. He was angry with Moses for Israel's sake, and Moses reminded them of that mistake that he made that led to him being barred from entering Canaan. He had to die in the land of Moab. Moses reminded the nation to take heed and not forget the covenant. They were not to turn to other gods but to worship the Lord only. He summed up by saying that God is a consuming fire. He must be feared.

In subsequent years of Israel's history, the nation turned to idolatry and ignored the commandments of God. They followed their kings and committed this abomination. The Lord was angry and He uprooted the nation from their own land and sent them to exile in a foreign land. There they suffered death and slavery. The rejection of God comes with great pain. It is thus imperative for God's people today to flee idolatry.

The main point that Moses stressed in this speech is the importance of obeying the statutes and judgments as enshrined in the Law of God. This would lead to true worship and the nation would prosper and live in peace. The heritage of Canaan is a figure of the heavenly heritage. Obey Christ now and you will have that eternal heritage.

THOUGHT: Every covenant is confirmed by an oath.

PRAYER: Father, help me to keep my promise to serve Thee to the end.

SATURDAY, JULY 31

DEUTERONOMY 4:25-49

JEREMIAH 16:11-13

*“Then shalt thou say unto them,
Because your fathers have
forsaken me, saith the LORD...”*

GOD’S COVENANT FORBIDS IDOLATRY

The Law of God and the covenant that He made with Israel was foremost in the mind of Moses. He repeated the need to keep away from idols. God spoke to them like no other nation since the creation of the world. God’s love for Israel made them His people and when they obeyed Him, they had the blessing of long life. Moses also laid the foundation of law and order in the new settlement.

Moses stressed that Israel was expressly commanded to keep away from idols. Those of their children who would turn to idolatry would provoke the Lord to anger. Idolatry is seen as the most abominable sin because it amounts to the denial of the existence of the true God. Regardless of the grave nature of this sin, it was widely practised then, and even today. The Lord knew that it was easy for the children of Israel to turn and follow the example of other nations and sin against God. He did not cease to warn them of the danger of that transgression.

The ultimate punishment for that transgression would be the scattering of the people among other nations. They would become strangers again as they were in Egypt. In addition, they would find themselves compelled to serve gods of wood and stone that neither could see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. The point that Moses was stressing here is that these idols have no life in themselves. They remain stone and wood, i.e. non-living objects. Anyone following these idols demonstrate the depth of their folly. However, the degeneration to this abominable practice is predictable when people are deprived of the truth.

Moses’ speech was prophetic. He could foresee that regardless of the consolidation of the covenant with the nation, they were not free from the temptation to draw back to idolatry. The experience in the wilderness revealed the general attitude that made the people reject God and follow idols.

THOUGHT: Idolatry may be in the mind of man.

PRAYER: Father, may I never yield to idol worship.

*“What is man, that thou art mindful
of him? and the son of man,
that thou visitest him?”*

GOD REVEALED HIMSELF TO ISRAEL IN SPEECH

All was not lost for Israel. If they sought the Lord from their heart, they would find Him. This is a demonstration of the grace of God, for He does not desire that they die in their sins but that they should be saved. The offer that the Lord gave should comfort them that they needed not to lose hope. When they found themselves deported to a foreign land, they could still be reconciled with the Lord.

The pronouncements that Moses made known to Israel were predictive. This is confirmed by the subsequent history of the nation. When Solomon built the temple, he made a long prayer at the dedication of that house (2 Chron 6). He made reference to the same words that Moses had mentioned and prayed that the people may be spared in times of such calamity. Moses asserted the grace of God when he said, *“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; (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”* (Deut 4:30-31). God revealed His grace to Moses who communicated to Israel His message so that they would be persuaded to follow the Lord faithfully. He gave them hope and they were comforted.

God had previously spoken to individuals, but now he spoke to a nation. This was in line with His covenant which was first revealed to Abraham. Moses was recalling how the Lord spoke to them at Sinai. It was a privilege that was part of His covenant that He communed with them in this direct manner. Moses also spoke with great conviction as he knew that those would be his last words to Israel. He wanted them to know that they were a special people before the Lord and that they must listen to His voice and obey.

THOUGHT: Keeping God's words is man's duty.

PRAYER: Father, may I accept Thy will as revealed in Thy Word.

MONDAY, AUGUST 2
DEUTERONOMY 4:25-49
EXODUS 3:1-10

*“And the LORD said, I have surely
seen the affliction of my people
which are in Egypt...”*

GOD MAGNIFIED THE NATION OF ISRAEL

Moses also told Israel that the Lord took them out of the midst of another nation by His great power. When Jacob and family went to Egypt they were only seventy-five people. After four hundred years they had grown to a nation of nearly two million. This numerical increase was part of their magnification. It would have been so easy for the nation to be assimilated into Egyptian society, but God prevented this. When the Lord wanted to take them out of Egypt, they were a distinct people.

Moses himself was brought up in the household of the king of Egypt. The number of the children of Israel had grown and the Egyptians made them slaves because they were strangers in Egypt. The children of Israel were desirous of freedom, but they did not know what to do and where to go. At the time when Moses was born, the Egyptians had begun to worry about their number, and the king made a law to kill all the Hebrew male infants. This brought more suffering to them. As an adult, Moses fled to Midian. When he had been there for forty years, the Lord called him to return to Egypt to liberate the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. The whole episode of the Exodus was the work of the Lord.

God's release of the children of Israel from their bondage in Egypt was their magnification. As Moses was making this speech before them, the Lord had already defeated the two kings of the Amorites and had given the Land to Israel. Moses told them that the Lord drove out the nations that were greater and mightier than they. In verse 39, Moses told them what they must learn from what the Lord had done for them: *“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.”* Later the prophets also used the same expression that there is no God besides the Lord. This was often repeated because Israel was prone to be tempted to go back to idolatry.

THOUGHT: God spoke from heaven making Israel a special people.

PRAYER: Father, speak to us today through Thy written Word.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 3
DEUTERONOMY 4:25-49
PSALM 119:97-104

*“O how love I thy law!
it is my meditation all the day”*

GOD’S LAW IS A SOURCE OF ORDER AND PEACE

When the nation of Israel remained faithful to the Lord, they had the blessing of long life. The command to obey father and mother began with obeying the heavenly Father Himself. The promise to Israel for keeping it was long life. That command is a moral precept that remains in force in all generations.

Moses was also a civil leader as was Joshua who succeeded him. There was need to put in place laws to govern civil order and peace in the nation. The Lord commanded Moses to set aside three cities of refuge on each side of the Jordan. The land that was already claimed required three cities. The purpose of these cities was for people who may have killed a neighbour unintentionally. They could run to these cities for protection until their matter was settled by the judges.

Moses set the law of God before the people and everyone was to understand it and abide by its dictates. Earlier he had declared that the laws that God had given them were superior to the laws of all other nations. The children of Israel were to live in harmony with one another. The laws that God gave them would guide them in that direction. Also the territory of Israel’s jurisdiction was spelled out in verse 46 to 49. This is the land that God had given them and the law is effective within their boundaries. God is particular in every aspect of His declarations.

God gave the Law, and its requirements always stand. Man is subject to God’s law and is to remain obedient to it continually. In so doing he will live a life that is useful for the Lord. The promulgation of the Law was a means of pointing to the way of salvation. Though man has broken God’s law, the provision of forgiveness manifests the grace of God. God loves all people and He gave Jesus to save them from their sins. Do you believe in Jesus?

THOUGHT: God’s Law is perfect and is the basis of all good laws.

PRAYER: Father, may I find the blessing of salvation through Thy Law.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 4
DEUTERONOMY 5:1-21
MARK 10:17-22

*“...sell whatsoever thou hast,
and give to the poor, and thou
shalt have treasure in heaven...”*

THE REPEAT OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The Lord Jesus Christ summarised the Ten Commandments into two: love for God and love for one's neighbour. Here Moses repeated the commandments which had been given to him at Mt Sinai when all Israel heard the voice of the Lord. Recorded in this book is the second giving of the Law and the commandments are repeated to remind Israel that they must obey at all times. These are the contents of the Law as Moses presented to Israel again.

Moses called the attention of Israel to hear the statutes and judgments. Everything in the Law of God falls within the requirements and prohibitions of each command. These would guide the believers in seeking to conform to God's revealed will. It was God's desire for Israel that they would keep these statutes.

The Law of God is also a guide to the arbitrators in dealing with cases of transgression. The Lord declared the giving of this Law as a covenant. This is to say that it was an eternal and binding agreement that cannot be changed. This covenant applies to the living at all times. The Lord delivered His Law in the form of a speech as well as in the written form on tables of stone. Writing makes a permanent record that cannot be changed. This was God's way of preserving His words and making it known to the descendants of the original recipients so that they would know and do His will.

The Lord talked to Israel face to face in the midst of the fire. They could hear the voice of the Lord, and they could see the fire but not His face. Yet the voice was real and His presence was undisputable. Moses was confirming the revelation to those who were ready to enter the Promised Land.

THOUGHT: It is needful to remember my obligation to God and man.
PRAYER: Father, may Thy words ever be written in my heart.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 5
DEUTERONOMY 5:1-21
GALATIANS 5:14

*“For all the law is fulfilled
in one word, even in this;
Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”*

THE TWO TABLES OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (I)

The Ten Commandments were given in two tables of stone and divided into two logical sections. The keeping of the first to the fourth commandments in the first table shows the love for God. The keeping of the commandments in the second table shows the love for one's neighbour.

The commandments in the first table as recorded in Deuteronomy:

- I. *I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. Thou shalt have none other gods before me.*
- II. *Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.*
- III. *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.*
- IV. *Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.*

THOUGHT: It is worth hiding the Ten Commandments in my heart.

PRAYER: Father, may my love for Thee be without hypocrisy.

*“Thy word is very pure:
therefore thy servant loveth it.”*

THE TWO TABLES OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (II)

The Catechism gives a clear exposition of these commands. When we love God we will not worship other gods or represent Him with images nor will we take His name in vain. We will also keep His day holy. (The Lord's Day is the Christian's day of rest, i.e. Sabbath. Since the resurrection of Jesus, the Christian's Sabbath is the first day of the week.) Only works of piety, necessity and mercy may be done on the Lord's Day.

The second table of the Commandments:
These are the commands as they appear herein:

- V. *Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.*
- VI. *Thou shalt not kill.*
- VII. *Neither shalt thou commit adultery.*
- VIII. *Neither shalt thou steal.*
- IX. *Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.*
- X. *Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.*

The prohibitions of these commands are also requirements to do what is implied. Honour to parents is showing love for them. Not killing also implies the requirement of preserving our neighbour's life and also the sustaining of the sanctity of our neighbour. We will also respect his property and speak the truth at all times. The breaking of the last command is a sin of the heart and one needs to be watchful.

THOUGHT: Covetousness is the mother of all sins.

PRAYER: Father, may I keep my heart clean in obedience to Thy commandments.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 7
DEUTERONOMY 5:1-21
PSALM 119:105-112

*“My soul is continually in my hand:
yet do I not forget thy law.”*

THE REPEAT OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The repetition of anything in Scripture is meant to confirm its importance. The whole Law of God hangs on the Ten Commandments.

Moses called these commandments to Israel's remembrance because they were given to govern their everyday life. Every individual has to be conscious of that requirement at all times. Thus this would not be the last time that they would hear about the commandments.

The Law of God was the backbone of the nation of Israel and it was upheld in this transitional period. In the text, Moses was giving a farewell speech and he passed on the sceptre of leadership to Joshua. These are the words that the Lord told Joshua when he commenced his work as a leader of Israel, *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest”* (Josh 1:8-9). Joshua succeeded by obeying these instructions.

When David was king, he magnified the Law of God, as reflected in his psalms. Solomon built and dedicated the temple in conformity with the Law of God. As it was a requirement for every king to have a copy of the book of the Law, all the good kings adhered to this command. Jehoshaphat sent the Levites to teach the Law in Judah. Hezekiah and Josiah brought revival to the nation because they turned to the Law of God that the other kings neglected. When Nehemiah completed building the walls of Jerusalem, he convened a congregation and had Ezra to bring the book of the Law. It was read and explained to the people. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus Himself commented on the Law and gave sense to its application. The Ten Commandments comprise the moral law and they are still valid today for Christians to obey.

THOUGHT: I live and worship God as He guides me.

PRAYER: Father, may Thy commands be a light to my path.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 8
DEUTERONOMY 5:22-33
MATTHEW 22:34-40

*“On these two commandments
hang all the law and the prophets.”*

THE GIVING OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

When the Lord had delivered the written tables of the Commandments, Moses reminded the people of the events of that time. He confirmed that it was the hand of the Lord that had been manifested. The people also accepted these laws because they heard the voice of the Lord. They requested Moses to mediate between them and the Lord, and God also accepted their proposal. He further gave an exposition of the Law to Moses. God's laws stand for ever.

The manner of the giving of the Law: The Lord spoke to all the assembly of Israel on the mount. The presence of the Lord was represented by fire, cloud and darkness. The people heard the Lord as He spoke in a great voice and added more. The words of the Lord are given only once, this is because God is perfect in all that He does and cannot deny Himself. The laws, statutes and judgments that He delivered to Israel were never and have never been subjected to any alteration. They were delivered once and they always stand.

The Scriptures are commonly referred to as the Word of God. The Lord Himself was the first writer of Scripture as He delivered the two written tables written by His own finger. He told Moses to write other things that were necessary to complete the Law.

In Exodus 24:12, it is said that He delivered the two tables of stone to Moses. These tables were to remain in the sacred Ark of the Covenant for years during the times of Israel's prosperity under God's leadership. The Word of God was given both in writing and in speech, and it remains true to this day. Do you believe it?

THOUGHT: The words of God are perfect and eternal.

PRAYER: Father, may my obedience of Thy words be to my blessing.

MONDAY, AUGUST 9
DEUTERONOMY 5:22-33
JOHN 12:27-31

*“Then came there a voice from heaven,
saying, I have both glorified it,
and will glorify it again.”*

THE REACTION OF THE PEOPLE TO THE LAW

The heads of the tribes and elders came to Moses because they had heard the voice of the Lord with their own ears. They had no doubt as to the source of that voice. They believed the words of the Lord and were willing to submit. They told Moses that the Lord had showed them His glory and greatness and they heard His voice out of the midst of the fire. They saw that God was able to talk with man and he could still live. But they were afraid that they would die if they should hear the voice of the Lord again.

God spoke once and Moses heard Him twice. In child's language, it may be said that a man hears twice because he has two ears. However, the main point is that God's Word must be given undivided attention. These elders of Israel knew that was what God required of them. If anything was not clear to them then they would ask Moses. They acknowledged that the revelation was a special message to them and they would pay full attention. The presence of the Lord among them and that manifestation was a fearful experience. In the New Testament when the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, a voice came twice from heaven confirming that Christ was indeed the Son of God. His disciples who were with Him heard that voice and they too had no doubt as to the source of that communication. When God speaks, man hears and understands Him well.

The request of the people to Moses: They asked Moses to be a mediator between them and God and they also promised to obey the Lord. This is their plea in verse 27, *“Go thou near, and hear all that the LORD our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that the LORD our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it.”* Moses reminded them that the Lord then heard their words and approved of their proposal that Moses should mediate between them and the Lord.

THOUGHT: God speaks from heaven to confirm His words.

PRAYER: Father, may I hear Thy voice at all times.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 10

DEUTERONOMY 5:22-33

EXODUS 20:18-23

*“Go thou near, and hear all that the
LORD our God shall say: and
speak thou unto us all...”*

GOD DOTH TALK WITH MAN

Deism teaches that God exists but He left mankind to fend for himself without His divine intervention and communication. How wrong and evil this doctrine is to erase the loving God from man's life. The truth is that God has never stopped communicating with man. If God were to stop speaking with man, man would be doomed to die in sin and justly cast into the abyss of everlasting torment.

Thank God that He continues to speak with man. He speaks with man “at sundry times and in divers manners ... by the prophets” (Heb 1:1). This is how God describes His communication with His people in Old Testament times. But in Deuteronomy 5 (cf. Exod 20), God talked to man from Mt Sinai and gave man the Decalogue. Man heard His awesome thundering voice for the first and last time. He feared God when he heard Him. He was right to fear Him! But it was not meant to drive him from God but toward Him. For the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. This is the first reason for God talking to man. Man needs to know Christ as Lord and Saviour to return to God. God gave man the Ten Commandments to help him realize that he has sinned against God and only Christ can save him from the wrath of God. God doth talk with man today too, but through His Holy Word.

The second reason is that God lives. God is not dead. Do not make Him into the dead idols that see not, with ears that hear not and mouths that speak not. Since God is alive He sees, hears, and speaks. Man will be comforted even as Israel was comforted as they left Egypt on their way to the Promised Land. It was a journey of trouble and difficulties but the living God was with them all the way. This is also true for man today. God comforts, assures, encourages, and protects when we are hurt and feel down. God admonishes when we stray. God hears our cry when we pray. God provides our every need when we are ostracised. God remains faithful when we are unfaithful. This is all true only for those who believe that God doth talk with man.

THOUGHT: Do I hear God's voice when I read the Word of God or when God's Word is preached?

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, open my ears that I may hear.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 11
DEUTERONOMY 5:22-33
JOHN 5:39-47

*“...there is one that accuseth you,
even Moses, in whom ye trust.”*

MORE INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO MOSES

The application of God's law in civil affairs does justice to the aggrieved parties. It was earlier observed that the laws of God were superior and no other nation had laws such as these.

Moses remained in the mount and the Lord gave him more commandments, statutes and judgments. As he dismissed the people, this is what the Lord told him, *“But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it”* (Deut 5:31). He reminded them that it was their duty to do and observe all that the Lord had commanded them. They should not turn to the right hand or to the left. This expression spells out the manner of observing God's Law. It requires complete obedience.

Again when the Lord commissioned Joshua to lead Israel after the death of Moses, He used the same expression. Joshua was to keep all the words of God's Law and must neither turn to the right hand or to the left. The most important thing after receiving the Law is obedience to it. This cannot be over emphasized. Israel was required to walk in all the ways of the Lord. The promise that is attached to obeying the commandments is long life; this is similar to that of the fifth commandment, to honour father and mother. The first parent is God Himself. All rebels will have their lives cut short.

Regardless of time, the Law of God stands for ever. Let us study well and understand it. The Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfil the whole Law. He affirmed that Moses wrote about Him and if the Jews believed Moses, they should also believe in Jesus. When we follow Christ, we have eternal life.

THOUGHT: God's Law is timeless, and it is always true.

PRAYER: Father, may I tremble with fear at my transgression of Thy Law.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 12
DEUTERONOMY 6:1-15
PSALM 105:38-45

*“That they might observe his statutes,
and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.”*

OBEDIENCE AND SERVICE TO THE LORD

The whole Law of God falls within the orbit of the two tables of stone that the Lord wrote with His own finger. They are the Ten Commandments divided into two parts. In the text, Moses expounded on these commandments and exhorted on how they should be communicated to the target audience. They are applicable to the immediate recipients and also to the people of all nations and all generations.

Moses' regard for God's revelation: God revealed His commandments, statutes and judgments. These expressions are near synonyms and each expresses an aspect of the application of the Law of God. Moses was saying that these commands were all sufficient in guiding God's people in every aspect of their lives. The Lord commanded that they were to obey these commandments in the land they were going to possess. The obedience to the Law of God would lead them to relate well one to another and live in harmony in all their dwellings. They would live in peace and be satisfied as they followed the Lord. He commanded them to fear and to keep His statutes.

The presence of sin in the human race and the depravity that it brought is an obstacle that God's people have to face. Without the fear of God, there would be no hope for creating an obedient nation. Moses and Israel had the first-hand experience during their journey from Egypt. The man of God had to confront rebels many times. The most surprising was the making of the golden calf as an object of worship. The confrontation and the consequences of that rebellion was something that Israel were to regret for a long time. Having had that experience, Moses made a passionate appeal to the nation to listen to and keep the words of the Lord.

THOUGHT: God anointed His servants to declare His words.

PRAYER: Father, may I always uphold the principles set forth in Thy Word.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 13
DEUTERONOMY 6:1-15
HEBREWS 9:19-22

*“This is the blood of the testament
which God hath enjoined unto you.”*

THE LORD ALONE IS THE GREAT ONE

These are the words of Moses to Israel, *“Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey”* (Deut 6:3).

The successive generations were to keep the commandments and live as per the promise of God. While the Lord promised them long life on earth, the greatest blessing is eternal life that comes after earthly suffering and death. Death comes because of sin, but eternal life comes through Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God who gave His life a ransom so that many can be saved from sin and have eternal life. This is the gospel that is preached today: Jesus has paid the price for that redemption. Moses was preaching the same gospel even though the details of it were obscure. The Promised Land which to Israel was the physical Canaan was the best thing that the nation could hope for because they did not have an earthly home then. Thus the promise of a place flowing with milk and honey was the best thing they hoped to receive. This was a type of heaven which all the children of God look forward to inheriting as they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The expression of the first commandment is that there is only One God. In it the Lord forbids the worship of other gods beside Him. Israel was to continue to worship the only one and true God and no other. Moses revisited the commandment when He said that the Lord our God is one Lord. Everyone has to acknowledge this as an eternal truth. This is the passage that Jesus quoted when a lawyer asked Him as to the greatest commandment in the Law. He cited verse 5 as a sequel to the belief in One God. It says, *“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”*

THOUGHT: There is a longing for eternal life in following the Lord.

PRAYER: Lord, let my joy rest in hope of eternal life.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 14
DEUTERONOMY 6:1-15
PSALM 119:9-16

*“I will meditate in thy precepts,
and have respect unto thy ways.”*

GOD’S MESSAGE NEEDS THE WISEST COMMUNICATION

As indicated earlier, the love for God is the sum of the first table of the Ten Commandments. Thus the statement in verse 5 is rich in expressing the extent of man’s duty to God. In addition to this, the words of God also are to remain in the hearts of His children. When the Lord gave the leadership of Israel to Joshua, He told him that the words of the Law shall not depart out of his mouth, but he should meditate on them day and night. The Psalms, particularly the psalms of David, stress the importance of keeping the words of God in our heart. All who fear the Lord have always strove to keep the words of God in their hearts. Memorising the Bible is part of Bible classes today, especially in the Sunday school. Keeping the words of God in the heart will keep one from transgressing them.

Formal education is a way of life today. It has become part of everyday occupation everywhere. Teachers are trained well in communicating their lessons to the learners. Children are taught according to their ability in each age group to ensure that the learner is able to advance to the next level every year.

In the days of Moses, there was no such education, but the knowledge of communicating information was there. Moses instructed Israel to teach the words of God to their children diligently. That was informal education. They were to talk to their children when they sit in the house, when they walk on the way, when they lie down and when they rise up. This was a duty primarily directed at the parents. A child growing in his fear of the Lord is a result of the parents’ diligence. In addition to verbal instruction, Moses also recommended that they bind God’s Word for a sign on their hands and as frontlets between their eyes. They were also to write them on the posts of their houses and on the gates, serving as teaching aids to the children. These recommendations were effective means of communicating the words of God to the children. In this, Moses demonstrated a highly developed educational skill that is still in use today.

THOUGHT: God’s Law speaks to the heart.
PRAYER: Father, may I ever learn Thy Word, and teach others too.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 15

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-15

HEBREWS 10:22-24

*“Let us hold fast the profession
of our faith without wavering;
(for he is faithful that promised).”*

THE BLESSINGS THAT COME WITH OBEDIENCE

Like his master Jesus Christ, Moses was well skilled in communication. The adoption of these skills today and diligent use would no doubt yield good results. Wise communication of the words of God is the work of the Holy Spirit. Blessings come with obedience.

God would bring Israel to the Promised Land which had great and goodly cities. Having a home and decent living is everyone's desire. The majority of the people that Moses addressed had grown up in tents and had no permanent abode. The thought of inheriting what God had promised them was beyond their imagination. In addition, they would have houses and wells of water, vineyards and other fruit trees. These were not empty promises, they were sure promises.

The land of Canaan and the regions around it are basically desert, but even today Israel has made it a land flowing with milk and honey. Israel is a tiny nation but produces enough food to feed themselves and to export much of it too. This is part of the blessings that the Lord had promised them in those ancient days.

Moses told the people not to forget the Lord who redeemed them, referring to the redemption from Egypt. This was also a picture of eternal redemption that promises the heritage of an eternal place for the saints. This is the promise that Christ made to His disciples and to all who believe in Him. Thus Moses reminded them to fear the Lord and serve Him only.

These words of Moses were of great importance to the children of Israel. They needed constant reminders and foresight so that their labours would be blessed and their sojourn in the land meaningful.

The promise of long life is not simply in the flesh but it is eternal, through Jesus Christ. Come to Christ, and you will live (Rom 5:18).

THOUGHT: God's promises are as good as fulfilled.

PRAYER: Father, may I ever see Thy promises as sure.

MONDAY, AUGUST 16

DEUTERONOMY 6:16-25

PSALM 24:1-6

*“This is the generation of them that seek him,
that seek thy face...”*

A CALL TO ISRAEL TO REMAIN FAITHFUL

Moses assured Israel that God was faithful and that He would fulfil what He had promised them. This assurance should stir their heart to follow the Lord. Moses reminded them of God's deliverance from Egypt so that they might teach it to their children.

Israel was told not to tempt the Lord their God. They were to recognise that God is all powerful and is able to do all things. Moses recalled the incident in the wilderness at Massah as recorded in Exodus 17:2-7. They had chided Moses and told him to give them water. Then Moses protested and told them not to tempt the Lord. In other words, the murmuring of Israel against Moses was actually against God. They were almost at the point of stoning Moses. He cried to the Lord and asked what he should do to them. God is the Creator and there is nothing that He cannot do. He told Moses to take with him the elders of Israel and go to the people. He was also told to take with him the rod that he had used in Egypt to smite the sea. God told him to smite the rock with it and water would come out of it and the people and their animals would have water to drink.

Moses did as he was commanded in the sight of the elders of Israel. He called the name of the place Massah and Meribah meaning proving and chiding. Israel knew that the Lord was able to do all those things, but they were impatient and insisted on their demands. Moses used that earlier experience to warn them not to repeat that old error. God forbids man to tempt Him. When the devil tempted Jesus, He quoted the same command that forbids tempting the Lord (Matt 4:7).

Moses told Israel to keep the commandments of the Lord diligently.

THOUGHT: Faithfulness is the key to conformity with God's will.

PRAYER: Father, may I ever strive to be faithful to Thee.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 17

DEUTERONOMY 6:16-25

HEBREWS 11:6

*“...he is a rewarder of them
that diligently seek him.”*

DILIGENT OBEDIENCE REQUIRED OF ISRAEL

The expressions “*testimonies*” and “*statutes*” (Deut 6:17) that Moses used referred to the same laws but highlighted the different aspects of their application. Diligent obedience means there has to be efforts to adhere to what the Lord has commanded. The work of a soldier illustrates the need of diligence. In his story “I Escaped From the Boers,” Winston Churchill explained that it was the carelessness of the sentries that facilitated his escape from prison. He saw them looking in the opposite direction, talking and lighting a cigarette. At that point, he jumped off the wall and escaped. It was not that the soldiers were not willing to fulfil their duty but that they were not diligent.

In keeping the commandments of the Lord, the enemy should not be allowed to take advantage of any negligence on the part of God’s people. Moses had a long experience with the children of Israel and he knew their weaknesses and it was easy for them to be negligent and go against the Lord. All of them were not immune to rebellion. Aaron yielded to the demands of Israel and made the golden calf. He and Miriam also were not afraid to speak against Moses. Ten of the twelve spies discouraged the people from entering Canaan. These and other incidents of rebellion were fresh in Moses’ mind and thus he warned Israel to be diligent to keep the commandments in their totality. This tells each one of us who wishes to follow the Lord that strong temptation is always there to cause one to disobey. Thus the warning of Moses is always needed.

God said that He would be with them if they would do that which was right and good. Moses repeated his instruction to Israel to do that which was right and good before the Lord. The disposition to do right and good is guided by the Law of God.

THOUGHT: Diligence is the measure of my love for God.

PRAYER: Father, grant me the grace to diligently serve Thee.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 18

DEUTERONOMY 6:16-25

TITUS 1:10-16

*“Not giving heed to Jewish fables,
and commandments of men,
that turn from the truth.”*

ISRAEL NEEDED TO BE CONVERTED

The influence of Egypt was not entirely removed from the minds of Israel. Israel's moral standards evidently were not conformed to the Law of God. The ways of Egypt were man-centred and sinful, and were easier to follow than to follow the Lord. In the New Testament, Paul mentioned that the Cretians were people who were known for telling lies. He warned Titus against yielding to their influence, but to fulfil his duty in preaching the gospel of Christ. Israel could only be persuaded to do that which was right and good when they were resolved to obey the Lord. God would then fulfil His promises to them when they remained faithful. The Lord promised to give them victory over their enemies. As Moses was speaking, they already had victory over the two kings of the Amorites and had taken their land. That land was given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh. They had not entered Canaan, but Joshua was the designated leader to bring them to Canaan. The book of Joshua tells of the fulfilment of that promise.

God's hand upon the nation was a testimony to future generations. Their sons would ask questions about God and about His statutes, testimonies and judgments which the Lord commanded Israel. These were different from the laws of other nations, and the Lord declared them to be superior to any other law. The obligation to obey was needed for all Israel. The ignorant children might not see the logic of keeping these commands and that was why they had to be taught. Moses told them to tell of their background as slaves in Egypt. The Lord brought them with a mighty hand out of that land. He made them a distinct nation and was giving them a land. The Lord declared the boundaries of their sovereign state. That separation of Israel was not an easy task. Nothing could persuade Pharaoh to let Israel depart except the hand of God. He showed signs and wonders and inflicted a great sore upon Pharaoh and all his household. Egypt was smitten with ten plagues. The tenth one made the king yield because all the first-born died in every home, including the son of the king who was heir to the throne.

THOUGHT: Spiritual eyes come by conversion.

PRAYER: Father, may I cherish the desire to follow Thee always.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 19
DEUTERONOMY 6:16-25
GENESIS 12:1-7

*“Get thee out of thy country...
unto a land that I will shew thee.”*

ISRAEL IS DELIVERED

There was great weeping and mourning the night of the last plague in Egypt. Thus they hurriedly allowed Israel to depart. This story of the Lord's deliverance must be told to future generations. The details as recorded in Exodus must be told. God indeed wrought great miracles to punish Egypt. This is to be told to demonstrate the power of God and His glorious majesty. Truly, He is an all-powerful God.

God brought them out and directed them to the Promised Land. The promise was not fulfilled at the time they were departing from Egypt. The Lord made the promise first to Abraham many years before. He was told to leave the land of Ur of the Chaldees and to go to a land that the Lord would show him. In Genesis 12:7, the Lord told Abraham that He would give the land of Canaan to his seed. It took centuries before this was fulfilled. Israel grew as a nation in Egypt for four hundred years and then the time to fulfil the promise arrived. As Moses was speaking, the nation was all set to occupy that land. They were assured of peace and stability when they obeyed the Lord. The righteousness of Israel depended on how they kept the Law of God. Their manner of life was directed by the Law of God. They had laws that directed their worship, though most of it was ceremonial, they still represented a picture of their redemption through the Messiah. He has now come and has fulfilled the whole law. There were moral laws that showed the good and the evil. There were also laws that governed their everyday life and dealings with one another in a just way. The Law of God was their life in the Promised Land.

The Lord laid down guidelines for Israel. The words of Moses had been repeated in the forty years that Moses was with them. Obedience stands out as a requirement in their relationship. Jesus taught that if we love Him we will keep His commandments (John 14:15). This is salvation.

THOUGHT: God's promises will remain through the ages.

PRAYER: Father, may I learn to be faithful as Thou art faithful.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 20

DEUTERONOMY 7:1-14

ROMANS 6:11-14

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.”

THE COMMANDS IN THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN

Israel was now set to enter Canaan. Moses commanded them to be ready for that heritage. He told them what God would do for them and guided Israel on how to respond and what to abstain from doing. The Lord was set to guide them and Moses gave them the assurance of success as they obeyed the Lord.

In reference to Canaan, the Lord said that He would bring them to conquer a land of seven nations. The names of these nations are listed in the text. In this, Moses was assuring Israel that all would be well with them as they prepared to occupy the land that the Lord had promised them. He told them that the Lord would deliver them into their hands and they would destroy them. They were not to make any covenant with them or show mercy to them. God’s instructions would save them from the danger of making a wrong move in dealing with their enemies. In subsequent conquest of Canaan, Israel understood what the Lord meant when He gave them those commands.

Joshua was tricked into making a covenant with the Gibeonites and that wrong move had long-term consequences for Israel. In addition, Israel was forbidden to intermarry with the Canaanites. The reason for that prohibition is thus given in verse 4: *“For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.”* People of other nations did not know the true God, and they had a very strong devotion to their idols.

When God’s people turn to these meaningless superstitions, they in effect deny the true God. The relationship in marriage easily turns the heart of the believer to have things common with the unbelieving partner, and this destroys the believer’s relationship with God. What a great tragedy for Israel when their sons and daughters denied the God who had saved them.

THOUGHT: Take time to be holy.

PRAYER: Father, may I obey Thy commandments without question.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 21
DEUTERONOMY 7:1-14
PHILIPPIANS 4:13-19

*“But my God shall supply all
your need according to his
riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*

GOD’S FAITHFULNESS IS AN ASSURING ATTRIBUTE

In his speech, Moses asserted many truths about God. Note his statement in verse 9: *“Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.”* Knowing God is the first lesson in theology.

Moses identified faithfulness as one of God’s attributes. This may also be called the veracity of God. In *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, Berkhof defines it as: “that perfection of God in virtue of which He is true in His inner being, in His revelation, and in His relation to His people. He is the true God over against the idols, knows things as they really are, and is faithful in the fulfilment of His promises.” This is the veracity of God.

This truth was known to Moses and he experienced it in all the years that the Lord dealt with him. He was bold in proclaiming this because he was very sure and he expected Israel to respond positively. He applied this truth to them in verse 11: *“Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.”*

In matters of particular seriousness, humans are required to take an oath so that they remain true to what they pledged to do. This applies mainly to those who hold public office. However, many are found guilty of breaking their oath. Man is sinful but God is holy. Humans swear in His name, but He swears by Himself. His faithfulness ever stands.

He promised to prosper Israel in multiplying the population, and providing for their everyday necessities of food and shelter and livestock. These are the things that the world desires to have and in many cases they are short of what they need. God’s promise to Israel was that they were going to have enough. Moses told them that they were to be blessed above all people. God is faithful to all His promises.

THOUGHT: God’s resources can never be exhausted.

PRAYER: Father, may I remember always that Thou art able to do all things.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 22
DEUTERONOMY 7:15-26
PHILIPPIANS 1:27-28

*“Only let your conversation be as it
becometh the gospel of Christ...”*

ISRAEL IS REQUIRED TO FULFIL HER PART

The eternal destiny of Israel would be misery if they allowed themselves to be overtaken by sin and depart from the Lord. In the subsequent years of their history, Solomon the king would be overtaken by the temptation to marry foreign women. He yielded and took to himself one thousand women. The Scripture says that these women turned his heart away from the Lord. The nation paid dearly for that transgression. When Moses gave these warnings, he told Israel that the anger of the Lord would be kindled against them and He would destroy them. They must obey the Lord and live.

They were commanded to destroy all their idols and altars with fire. When people practise false religions without restraint, they will be led to self-destruction. Most satanic cults involve human sacrifice, deceit, murder and every kind of gross misconduct. Recently, a man in Kenya murdered his entire family (a wife and three children) and then killed himself. There are many other such stories. The command to Israel to keep away from idolatry and to destroy every appearance of it in the land of Canaan was because of all the evils associated with it. God had chosen Israel to demonstrate His glorious majesty. Moses said this of them in verse 6: *“For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.”* The coming of Christ also gives the same privilege to people of all nations who believe in Him. This fulfils the promise of the Lord to Abraham that the people of all nations would be blessed in him. Peter referred to all believers and said the same words that Moses used to refer to Israel. This is the blessedness of coming to Christ today. The apostle said, *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light”* (1 Pet 2:9). As the Lord loved Israel and chose them by grace only, the same love is extended to all who believe in the Son of God.

THOUGHT: God has done His part, it is man's duty to do his.

PRAYER: Father, may I ever strive to fulfil my responsibility.

MONDAY, AUGUST 23

DEUTERONOMY 7:15-26

EPHESIANS 2:4-10

“But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.”

HOW GOD WOULD BLESS ISRAEL

Salvation is God's offer to people of all nations, and this is the gospel that Christ commanded His disciples to preach to all nations. God is faithful to fulfil His oath.

In the context of Israel as they entered Canaan, He would punish their enemies, at the same time He required them to keep His commandments. In this, God promised to keep His covenant and mercy which He swore to their fathers. He would also prosper and protect them from sickness. Enemies, an uncertain future and sickness are everyday worries of life. God knew that regardless of all that He had done for Israel, they were still concerned about these things and thus He did not cease to assure them.

God told them to be confident because He would deliver the nations to Israel. He constantly reminded them to be separate in every aspect of life. He told them not to fear for they had seen what God was able to do when He brought them out of Egypt with His mighty hand. God used various ways to destroy the enemies of Israel. In this instance, He said that He would send hornets to help destroy them. These stinging insects would render their enemies ineffective in battle against Israel. Their kings also would be delivered and their names removed. Their idols would also be removed for God detested and abhorred them.

The main message here is the assurance of victory for Israel. God has shown His love for them and would remove and destroy their enemies the Canaanites. Israel was to take heed to all His commands. God is always gracious and would save all who come to Him. Though the Lord had given special grace to the nation, they were still human and were subject to temptation and sin. Moses knew this as he had led them for forty years. That is why he spoke thus to them to warn them of the dangers they would face.

THOUGHT: God understands human weakness and is gracious. He gives His warning at the right moment.

PRAYER: Father, help me to see evil afar off and flee.

*“He hath given meat unto them
that fear him: he will ever
be mindful of his covenant.”*

THE CAUSE OF BLESSINGS TO ISRAEL

Moses did not cease to remind Israel of the need to obey the Lord and keep His commandments. He reminded them of all the blessings they saw in the wilderness. As a covenant-keeping God, He was going to bring them to a land with plenty of desirable resources. He exhorted them to remember the Lord always.

Keeping the commandments of the Lord is the cause of blessings; and this included their multiplication in the land. This is the promise that the Lord repeated to this nation, and it was their expectation that the Lord would grant them that desire. Keeping the commandments of the Lord also ensured the continuation of the nation and prosperity. Their faith was in God whose hand had led them in the wilderness. Moses told them to remember how the Lord led them for forty years and the purpose of their calling. They had to leave a land of idols and superstitions and go to a land where they would worship the true God and have sovereignty.

The wilderness journey was humbling to them as God fed them with manna from heaven. God led them to a point where they were helpless; they had no water to drink or food to eat. They had murmured against Moses and blamed him for bringing them to the wilderness to kill them. Moses cried to the Lord in that situation and the Lord provided water and food in a miraculous way. Throughout all those years of wandering, God provided for their physical needs. They should have been content and should have trusted the Lord. However, they reacted negatively and Moses had to remind them of the goodness of the Lord towards them. They were highly privileged, yet they did not recognise the favour of the Lord in working wonders among them.

THOUGHT: God is a trusted refuge to His people whenever they need Him.

PRAYER: Father, may I always understand that Thou art everything to me.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 25

DEUTERONOMY 8:1-10

PROVERBS 30:8-9

*“...give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with food convenient for me.”*

THE LORD BECAME THE SHEPHERD OF ISRAEL

Though Israel was expecting to enter the land of Canaan and would be able to produce their own food, God led them otherwise. Moses said that God humbled them so that they might know that man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes out of the mouth of the Lord. Jesus quoted these same words in Matthew 4:4 when the devil tempted Him. He answered him through the Scriptures because God's truth is eternal.

Moses also cited the fact that their clothes and shoes never wore out throughout the forty years. This was another example of how God was meeting their bodily needs. When the Lord Jesus Christ again told His disciples not to worry about what they were going to eat or put on, He pointed to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field as examples of God's provision. Jesus told this to them as a promise, but in the case of Israel they were witnesses of direct provisions from heaven. Trusting God and knowing the truth of His words is far better than relying on so-called good luck or following superstitious practices. Moses was well informed about all these things and he wanted Israel to follow the Lord and worship Him in truth.

Shortage of food and water is a perennial problem in many nations and God showed that He has power over these things and could supply sufficiently for Israel. God is able to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory, this is a truth stated by the Apostle Paul (Phil 4:19).

God chastised them as a man would chastise his son. This is painful for the person who receives it. However, it is a positive act because it is intended to bring correction in the life of the son. Shepherding the flock can be a challenging task. Not every move may be comfortable, but it is all meant for the good of the sheep.

THOUGHT: God's resources are beyond what I think and He gives to the needy as He pleases.

PRAYER: Father, may I not worry but seek what I need from Thee.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 26
DEUTERONOMY 8:11-20
PSALM 23

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

THE RESPONSE OF ISRAEL TO GOD’S BLESSING

When David said that the Lord was his shepherd and that he would lack nothing, he knew how the Lord cared for his nation through the generations, and more so during the Exodus. Jesus says that His sheep hears His voice and they will follow Him and find pasture (John 10:27). Keeping the commandments of the Lord is hearing His voice. This is God’s imperative to Israel and they are to walk in His ways.

The Promised Land had all the good qualities that Israel desired. The Lord told them that He would bring them to a land endowed with the resources that they required. It is a land of seven fruits that were listed. Moses conveyed this message from the Lord: *“For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey”* (Deut 8:7-8). Israel could desire no better land than this. It is described as a land of plenty with no shortage of bread and there was nothing lacking in it. There were also iron and brass mines in its hills. It was a land rich in natural resources and the food crops did well in it. All these were blessings from the Lord who is the Shepherd of Israel. He is truly the Good Shepherd.

Moses asked them to give thanks to God for the provision and to obey Him in all things. This is a logical reaction to the goodness of the Lord from the people who had seen first-hand the wonders of the Lord. Moses also knew that when the Lord had blessed Israel and they were full, they would be tempted to attribute their prosperity to themselves; and they would forget the Lord. Moses warned them: *“Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God...”* (Deut 8:12-14).

THOUGHT: *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...”* (Ps 23:6)

PRAYER: Father, help me to cherish my position before Thee.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 27
DEUTERONOMY 8:11-20
2 CHRONICLES 29:1-11

*“And he did that which was right
in the sight of the LORD us...”*

PROSPECT FOR ISRAEL AS GOD LED THEM

Moses repeatedly used the word “*remember*” because he knew how easy it is to slip into sin and carnality. God brought them out of many dangers. He fed them and humbled them. He did good to them to the very end. Moses wanted them to live on a high spiritual plane so that they may relate well with the Lord. He would then continue to bless them and make Himself known in the nations.

Moses again warned Israel not to take credit for themselves for it was the Lord who had promised to give them a good land endowed with natural resources. This would make them wealthy. In this, they ought to remember the Lord who keeps the covenant and gives them wealth. If they forget the Lord, they would perish. In the subsequent history of Israel, God allowed them to have kings. Their leadership dealt much with civil affairs. Those who were proud were spiritually destitute and led the nation to apostasy. David, Hezekiah and Josiah stood out as kings who uplifted the nation spiritually. Others like Manasseh and the kings of the divided kingdom led the nation to idolatry. Moses had told them that when they rejected the Lord they would be like the nations that the Lord had destroyed before them. In a word, the Lord wanted them to obey Him without any reservation. He warned them: “*As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God*” (Deut 8:20).

Moses narrated the many blessings of the Lord to Israel. Keeping God’s commandments and remembering His past blessings gave assurance of a good future to come. The eternal heavenly home is the hope of all God’s people. Do you have a place in this blessed destiny?

THOUGHT: “When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!”

PRAYER: Father, help me to see great prospect in my eternal home.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 28
DEUTERONOMY 9:1-8
PSALM 36:1-5

*“Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens;
and thy faithfulness
reacheth unto the clouds.”*

PREPARING TO ENTER CANAAN

During the Exodus, Israel was reputed for their rebellion (rather than obedience) against the Lord. Moses saw all that was done and when he prepared Israel to enter Canaan, he reminded them of their past transgressions. He wanted them to learn from their mistakes so that they would not repeat them. He reminded them of the great occasion when God gave His law on the tables of stone, written with His finger. The Lord was so close to Israel. He corrected them when they went astray. That characteristic of Israel meant that Moses had to warn them against further rebellion whenever he spoke. There was always a manifestation of human depravity.

The preparation to enter Canaan involved a number of difficulties. Israel was going to pass through River Jordan to possess the great land. The nations occupying the land were greater than Israel and their cities were great and had very high walls. The people living there were also great and tall, they were known as the Anakims. Their gigantic stature gave them superiority in military combat.

By human estimation, it was impossible for Israel to fight and defeat the Canaanites. Moses was aware of that disadvantage and he assured Israel that God would be with them. He would go over before them as a consuming fire and would destroy their enemies. Israel would witness their enemies' fall as God fought for His people and would drive their enemies out of their land. That would happen so quickly and victory would come to them as the Lord had told them. The Lord had many ways of defeating the Canaanites. Earlier He told them that He would send hornets to go before them and immobilise their enemies. As they came out of Egypt the Lord had used, among other things, dark clouds on the side of the Egyptians. In these ways, the Lord delivered Israel from their enemies and gave them victory. It was now time to bring to pass what God had promised to Israel and they needed courage. There was every assurance they would overcome. How sure are you of winning your spiritual battles?

THOUGHT: God can never be defeated.

PRAYER: Father, help me to know that there is always victory in Thee.

LORD'S DAY, AUGUST 29

DEUTERONOMY 9:1-8

PSALM 92:1-6

*“For thou, LORD, hast made me glad
through thy work: I will triumph
in the works of thy hands.”*

GOD'S PURPOSE IN DRIVING OUT THE CANAANITES

The Lord specifically told Israel that it was not on the basis of their righteousness that He favoured them against the Canaanites. The wickedness of the Canaanites was the reason that the Lord had to destroy them. All along they were idol worshippers and they denied the true God. Their moral conduct was also so base that some of the things they did cannot be uttered. They also made for themselves images and pictures that represented their deities, and others depicted their lifestyle. Israel was told to destroy them including their handiworks.

Israel is also described as a stiff-necked people. The rebellion of Israel throughout their journey in the wilderness was still very fresh in the mind of Moses. He made them to understand that God was not giving them that good land to possess because of any merit on their part. God intended to perform the word that He swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the covenant that He would give that land to their descendants. He also reminded them of how they provoked the Lord to anger in the wilderness. They had no basis to demand any favour from the Lord. These are the words of Moses to them: *“Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD”* (Deut 9:7).

Moses also reminded them of their rebellion in Horeb (another name for Mt Sinai), when Moses had gone to receive the Law from the hand of God. The events of that time are narrated in Exodus 32. The people saw that Moses delayed in coming down from the mountain (he was there forty days and forty nights), and they quickly forgot the Lord and put their hope in imaginary gods.

THOUGHT: Without the grace of God, what can man do?

PRAYER: Father, keep me close to Thee lest I forget Thy mercies.

MONDAY, AUGUST 30
DEUTERONOMY 9:9-15
EPHESIANS 6:10-18

*“Put on the whole armour of God,
that ye may be able to stand
against the wiles of the devil.”*

THE GREATEST ACT OF SACRILEGE

Israel followed the way of the Egyptians and asked Aaron to make for them an image of a calf in gold. Aaron also was not able to resist the temptation to comply with the demands of the people. He told them to break the earrings in their ears and give them to him. They did as he told them and he took his graving tools and made a golden calf.

The calf was to represent the gods that brought them out of the land of Egypt. It was the greatest act of sacrilege that a man of Aaron's stature could make. This was why Moses said they provoked the Lord to wrath. They invented a form of worship and offered sacrifices to the idol. It was at a time when Moses had gone up the mountain and the Lord was giving the Law to Israel. Instead of becoming a time of rejoicing, it was a time of great confrontation. Moses himself was so angry that he broke the two tables of stone on which the Lord had written His Law. Confusion reigned and the Lord threatened to destroy all the idolaters. Moses interceded for them and they were spared from utter destruction. The episode of the golden calf is a warning to everyone that none of us is immune to temptation. One has to learn to resist temptation before it comes. The Scripture teaches that God's people are to put on the whole armour of God (Eph 6:10-18).

Moses abode in the mountain all those forty days to receive the Law of God. He did not eat or drink during that time. His fasting expressed the solemnity of that occasion and thus the Lord sustained him all those days. Nothing else was more important than God's Law. The text says, *“And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly. And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the LORD gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant”* (Deut 9:10-11).

THOUGHT: The devil is always plotting to deter my faith.

PRAYER: Father, keep me fully armed at all times.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 31
DEUTERONOMY 9:9-15
JOHN 17:15-19

*“Sanctify them through thy truth:
thy word is truth.”*

THE LORD SAW THE WORK OF SIN IN ISRAEL

The tables of stone were such important items that Israel for a long time revered them. The original pair was replaced after Moses broke them in a rage of anger at the golden calf episode. The tables of stone were probably lost many years later when the king of Babylon burned the temple at Jerusalem. They were kept in the Ark of the Covenant and were greatly valued. By then His words had been preserved by other means. If all these items were found today, no doubt people would make them idols. Perhaps this is why God allowed their disappearance. Jesus authenticated the copied words of Scripture when He read them as authoritative documents in the synagogues many times. The Apostles also used them as the very words of God. The Law of God, as it is written, is always superior.

While Moses was still in the mountain, the Lord told him to go down quickly because the people had corrupted themselves. He saw that they had turned so fast and had forgotten the Lord and made for themselves a molten image. Even those who repented later saw their own folly in sinning against God while He watched over them. The Lord saw them as stiff-necked people. When the heart cannot be persuaded to change or to obey, then the law will have to be enforced. The Lord had to punish Israel for their sin. Those who resisted the chastisement had to be destroyed. The Lord was determined to destroy them and to blot out their name. At the intercession of Moses, the Lord deferred His punishment, but eventually all had to pay for their transgressions. Moses came down from the mount with the two tables of the covenant as the mount burned with fire. God oversaw the safe delivery of the Law.

Satan was involved in the events leading up to the entrance of sin in the human race. He never ceases to undermine the good work of God's servants. Aaron became an instrument of satanic deception. The giving of the Law was a great event, but the rebellion of Israel stands out in contrast to that glorious occasion.

THOUGHT: Follow the Lord and overcome the devil.

PRAYER: Father, protect me this day from yielding to sin.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

DEUTERONOMY 9:16-25

MATTHEW 15:19-20

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness...”

THE SINFULNESS OF SIN AND CONFUSION

The victory of Israel over Egypt was displeasing to the evil one and thus he instigated Israel to sin against the Lord. Aaron and all Israel turned against the Lord in the absence of Moses. God's grace is the only hope of overcoming sin. Though Israel was perpetually inclined to sin, Moses interceded for them. He knew that God was always ready to hear their prayers. This is the message of the text.

Israel made and worshipped a golden calf in the absence of Moses and sinned greatly against the Lord. It was a devastating step for that nation that had seen all the miracles of the Lord and His hand in providing daily food. There was absolutely no reason for them to turn against the Lord and imagine that a man-made object could assist them. It was foolishness of the highest order. Moses had gone to the mountain to seek their welfare and here they were creating their own downfall by denying the Lord that had redeemed them from bondage. They sinned and turned against the Lord.

The sin of Israel also brought confusion. The people demanded that Aaron should make an idol for them. He yielded to their demands without waiting longer for Moses to come back. Moses came and found the people having corrupted themselves as the Lord had told him. Moses did not expect what he saw, thus he was so angry that he cast down the two tables of stone on which the Lord had written the Law. It was symbolic of how the people had broken God's law.

Moses knew that he had to bring the matter to the Lord first. He fell down before the Lord and fasted forty days. Moses was afraid of the Lord's anger and retribution. Israel had provoked the Lord to wrath in that rebellion. He knew that God's vengeance for that sin would be very painful and at the same time he did not know what to do next but to pray for God's mercy to forgive their sins.

THOUGHT: Sin's stain is an abomination to the Lord.

PRAYER: Father, may I deliberately keep my distance from all sin.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 2
DEUTERONOMY 9:16-25
PROVERBS 24:8-9

“The thought of foolishness is sin...”

GOD’S LOVINGKINDNESS WAS THE ONLY HOPE

Only God could exercise His lovingkindness and show the way forward. Moses said that the Lord hearkened to his prayer and saved Israel from destruction. Aaron who became the ring leader of the rebellion was also in for destruction. This was going to be a great disaster and Moses prayed for Aaron also. It was also necessary to get rid of that idol very quickly. Moses told them how he destroyed the idol: *“And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount”* (Deut 9:21). It was a painful exercise trying to put things right but Moses knew that he had to act. He stood alone against the multitude. He did not only stand alone, he also sought to bear the burden of the people. There might have been a few who agreed with him but were afraid of the multitude. Joshua (who later became the successor of Moses) was not among those who made the idol but his position was insignificant in the midst of the great multitude. Nevertheless, Moses was determined to overcome that tragic event.

Israel also sinned in Taberah, Massah and Kibrothhattaavah. Moses was here referring to another rebellion during the Exodus which is recorded in Numbers 11:1-4. The people had complained and it displeased the Lord and His anger was kindled and fire came and burned those who were at the uttermost part of the camp. They cried unto Moses. When Moses prayed, the fire was quenched. Because of that fire, the place was called Taberah, meaning a burning. Massah and Meribah, named together, mean testing and strife. This refers to the time when Israel did not have water and they contended with Moses. In this testing, God told Moses to smite a rock and the water came out, and the people quenched their thirst. Kibrothhattaavah means graves of lust. God’s lovingkindness also saved the day. This was a comfort to Moses.

THOUGHT: Wise thoughts yield the fruit of the Spirit.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee that Thy grace is our assurance.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 3
DEUTERONOMY 9:16-25
GALATIANS 3:1-5

*“Have ye suffered so many things
in vain? if it be yet in vain.”*

THE LORD DOES NOT ENTERTAIN SIN

There is a reference again to an incident in Numbers 11:32-33: *“And the people stood up all that day, and all that night, and all the next day, and they gathered the quails: he that gathered least gathered ten homers: and they spread them all abroad for themselves round about the camp. And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere it was chewed, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague.”* That place was given a name because the people that had lusted for flesh were buried there.

Moses also recalled other incidences of Israel’s rebellion while they were in the wilderness. He mentioned next their sin in Kadesh-barnea in refusing to go and occupy the land of Canaan. They rebelled against the Lord and did not hearken to His voice. They did not obey His commandment and believed Him not. This episode is recorded in Numbers 13 where the Lord had told Moses to send men to go and spy on the land of Canaan. Then Moses had chosen twelve men, one from every tribe of Israel. Moses then instructed them on what they were to do and to bring the information he needed.

The spies went and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehob, this was from the south to the north of the land. They came to Hebron one of the cities of the south near where Abraham and family were buried. They then came to the brook of Eshcol and there they cut a branch of one cluster of grapes and carried it between two men upon a rod. They also brought pomegranates and figs. They returned, bearing those fruits, to Moses after forty days. They affirmed that the land truly flowed with milk and honey and showed the fruit. However, their refusal to go and occupy that land became a turning point in the Exodus. They had to pay for that sin with forty years of their life. God does not overlook any rebellion against Him.

THOUGHT: The wiles of the devil are many.
PRAYER: Father, grant me the grace to always discern good from evil.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 4
DEUTERONOMY 9:26-29
JOHN 17:15-19

*“Sanctify them through thy truth:
thy word is truth.”*

SIN HAS FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES

The rebellion of Israel in refusing to enter Canaan had long-term implications. They doubted their ability to occupy the land. This was the report of the majority of the spies: *“Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the south: and the Hittites, and the Jebusites, and the Amorites, dwell in the mountains: and the Canaanites dwell by the sea, and by the coast of Jordan”* (Num 13:28-29). Joshua and Caleb, two of the spies, countered their fear and affirmed that the Lord would give them the land. Nevertheless, the opinion of the majority prevailed. They even desired to choose a captain to lead them back to Egypt. Israel was perpetually rebellious. This particular rebellion was the turning point in the whole narrative of the Exodus. The Lord again said He was going to destroy them.

Moses turned to the Lord for he knew that He is always ready to hear prayers and forgive. He interceded for the nation. Moses saw them as the people of God redeemed through His greatness. He asked the Lord to remember His covenant with their fathers and to forgive their sin. He reasoned that the nations would ridicule the Lord for failure if He would destroy Israel. These were God’s people and inheritance which He brought out by His mighty power. On these bases Moses prayed for forgiveness and reconciliation with the Lord. He took courage and interceded for Israel. Sin is destructive, but when God’s people pray, He is ready to hear their prayers. Overcome sin by submitting to the Lord.

THOUGHT: My sin can have adverse effects on others.

PRAYER: Father, help me to always obey Thee.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 5

DEUTERONOMY 10:1-11

PSALM 51:16-19

*“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit:
a broken and a contrite heart...”*

THE RESTORATION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

In the aftermath of the golden calf incident, a time of revival came to Israel. Moses played a greater role in restoring order as God manifested His grace towards them. The tables of the Law were restored and the duties of the priests were put in place. The greatness of God was declared in bringing Israel thus far. The nation was revived spiritually. Moses thus was rehearsing all those past events to the ears of Israel as they prepared to cross the Jordan.

The Lord commanded Moses to make two tables like the first ones that he had broken. He told him also to make an ark; this would be an important piece of furniture in the tabernacle, the tent of worship. The Lord was going to write on the tables the same words that were on the first tables that Moses had broken. The restoration of the words of God is always the first step in any spiritual revival. The people have to know what God requires of them. In the case of Israel at this instance, they broke the second and the third commandment in making an image and bowing to it and also took the name of the Lord in vain. It was necessary for them to have that Law written with the finger of God for them to know what was required of them. Moses made the tables as he was commanded and went up the mount and the Lord wrote again the Ten Commandments. He brought them down and placed them in the ark that he had made. They remained there for a testimony for generations. Moses did not cease to teach all the commandments of the Lord and constantly reminded Israel of the consequences of disobedience.

The words of God were to guide their lives as they settled in the land of Canaan. Those who feared the Lord in their hearts were greatly revived and lived to glorify Him. The restoration of the words of God is also restoration of spiritual life.

THOUGHT: God alone can restore His words perfectly.

PRAYER: Father, may I ever keep Thy precepts diligently.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 6
DEUTERONOMY 10:1-11
2 CHRONICLES 34:18-28

“...our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.”

THE LAW WAS AN INSTRUMENT OF REVIVAL

Revival occurred in Israel at the time of good kings. Bad kings ignored or were negligent of the Law of God. God-fearing kings sought the Lord with all their hearts and caused the words of God to be read to the people. They used their authority to implement what was written in the Law and brought great revival in the nation (2 Chron 29, 34). In the case of Josiah, the book was found in the debris, a sign of neglect. When the book of the Law was read before him, the boy king was filled with the Holy Spirit and he instituted great reforms in the nation and all the people feared and served the Lord.

However, Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, did not like the words of Jeremiah the prophet that Baruch had read to him. He was so angry that he cut the scroll and burned it. The Lord told Jeremiah to tell Baruch to take another scroll and write the same words that were in the first one. He was to add more curses because of that rebellion. The tragedy that befell Israel illustrates how easily people forget the Lord. Judah was taken captive after this; and upon their restoration after seventy years, the book of the Law of God was their guide. In church history, the Protestant Reformation succeeded because of the return to the Word of God.

When Aaron died, Eleazer his son succeeded him as priest. The Law of God prescribed the way in which Israel was to worship God. Since Christ had not come then, the ministry of the priests was necessary to guide Israel in the worship of God. The ceremonial law in all its aspects was a picture of the redemptive work of Christ. Until Christ's coming, the Law served as a teacher of the good things to come. It is called a schoolmaster in the old English and the Greek term *“paidagogos”* refers to a teacher of small children who uses visual aids to teach. This was the purpose of the Law and a priest was needed to fulfil its requirements.

THOUGHT: God is the Author of spiritual revival.

PRAYER: Father, I am a sinner saved by grace, grant that I stand by Thy Word faithfully.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 7
DEUTERONOMY 10:1-11
HEBREWS 7:22-28

“By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.”

THE MINISTRY OF THE PRIESTS

Aaron was the first person to hold the office of a priest. At the time of Moses' speech, Aaron had already died. Since the work had to continue, Aaron's son was ordained as priest. The Lord made a law that all priests must be from the house of Levi and of the line of Aaron. As priests, they were not to have any inheritance, but would serve their brethren.

This is the commandment of the Lord concerning the house of Levi: *“At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister unto him, and to bless in his name, unto this day. Wherefore Levi hath no part nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, according as the LORD thy God promised him”* (Deut 10:8-9). The Levites were scattered among their brethren. Joshua was commanded to give them cities within the settlement of all the tribes of Israel. The tribe of Levi was not given a specific inheritance because the Lord was their heritage. The Lord made all the provisions that were necessary for the Levites' welfare.

Moses stayed in the mount forty days to pray for the nation. This was a time of close communion with God. Moses had taken the same amount of time when the Law was first delivered to him. Moses did not tell what he did continuously at that time, but prayer and getting instructions from the Lord formed the basic activity. He said that the Lord hearkened to him and He would not destroy Israel. This was his priestly service to the nation.

Moses did not say if he had time to sleep or if he had a tent to stay in or if he stayed in the open. One thing he did mention was that he did not eat or drink at all. Being in the presence of the Lord in such a manner was a miraculous time for him. After he came down from the mount, the Lord commanded them to go and make their journey to Canaan.

THOUGHT: The Lord takes notice of how we serve Him and how we minister to our brethren.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee that Jesus is our Great High Priest.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8
DEUTERONOMY 10:12-22
ECCLESIASTES 12:9-14

*“Fear God, and keep his commandments:
for this is the whole duty of man.”*

THE GREATNESS OF GOD AND THE WAY FORWARD

Israel had an obligation to the Lord. One thing that Moses did not neglect to stress was the necessity of Israel to obey the Lord. He repeated this also here: *“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?”* (Deut 10:12-13). This was an obligation of absolute necessity if they wanted to maintain a good relationship with God where He would bless them as He had promised. Keeping the commandments of the Lord had to be their song.

Moses declared that the entire universe belongs to the Lord. He is the Creator of all things and He chose Israel to be His people. He said that He had delight in their fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them. That was the status of Israel because of the greatness of God. Israel was prone to rebelling against the Lord and being stiffnecked. Thus Moses told them to circumcise the foreskin of their hearts, that is to say they had to completely change their attitude and follow the Lord without any reservations. God is great and just to all as He is Lord of lords and King of kings. He is the Defender of the underprivileged and stands for their welfare. Israel was also told to love strangers as they were also strangers in Egypt. They were to repay the kindness that was shown to them. Moses asked Israel to give praise to God and for all the great things that He had done. God multiplied Israel so that they were now a great multitude, although Jacob’s family was just seventy people when they went to Egypt. Now it was a whole nation.

God is gracious as He is able to restore His wayward children to His fold. His written Word is always a testimony for Him. It will always stand. God’s children are to look up to Him for instruction and for salvation, and are to give Him all the glory. Salvation is of the Lord.

THOUGHT: The way forward for the faithful is to glorify God.

PRAYER: Father, may I keep my whole duty to Thee.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

DEUTERONOMY 11:1-17

ACTS 7:37-39

“This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina...”

EXPERIENCE IS A TEACHER

The miracles and wonders that the Lord did from the beginning of the Exodus were very instructive. Moses punctuated his speech with an appeal to obey the Lord and to keep His commandments. The majority of his audience did not experience all those wonders since most of them were not yet born when they came out of Egypt. The wonders of the Lord among them were an assurance of their victory and blessings as they prepared to occupy the Promised Land.

Loving and keeping God's commandments came first. Moses was speaking to a number of those who had not seen the wonders of the Lord as they came out of Egypt. However all of them were familiar with all those events as they had been told and retold.

While they were still in Egypt, God visited that nation with ten grievous plagues. The Egyptian magicians tried to imitate them to some extent. At last they admitted that it was the finger of God. The ten plagues were wonders that no one could repeat. These occurrences are well documented in Exodus 7-12: the first being the changing of water into blood, the second was a flood of frogs everywhere. The Egyptian magicians tried to repeat these two and convinced the king that he could resist. In the third one, every particle of dust in Egypt became lice and even attacked the magicians. That was when they acknowledged that it was from God. Then the plagues of flies and grievous murrain upon domestic animals followed. Then there were boils upon humans, and hail and locusts that destroyed all the crops. Pitch darkness was plague number nine. After each of these, the king of Egypt hesitated to let the children of Israel leave Egypt. The people had urged him to let them go, but each time he would make a promise and then turn back on his word. The final one was a very painful one that touched every home in Egypt. The Lord told Moses that all the firstborn among the Egyptians would die. When it came, it broke Pharaoh's will and he allowed Israel to leave.

THOUGHT: Experience is an effective teaching aid.

PRAYER: Father, help me to believe Thy word by faith.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 10
DEUTERONOMY 11:1-17
EPHESIANS 4:17-22

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man...”

**“STAND STILL AND SEE
THE SALVATION OF THE LORD”**

The Israelites were told to kill a Passover lamb and put the blood upon the door-posts of their houses; and when the angel of death came, he would spare the first-born of the Israelites. When the time came, it happened as the Lord had said. There was death of the first-born in Egypt of both humans and animals. There was not a home without a death, from the first-born of Pharaoh (i.e. the first in line to the throne) to the least of the citizens. All agreed immediately that Israel had to leave quickly. Such miracles have never happened again. Moses repeated this narrative to the younger generation.

Crossing the Red Sea was the next obstacle for Israel as they left Egypt. As they headed towards the sea, the Egyptians chased after them. They were greatly frightened, but Moses comforted them telling them to wait and see the salvation of the Lord. The Lord put a dark cloud between Israel and the Egyptian army. The Lord also parted the waters of the sea so that Israel could walk on dry land. When the Egyptians followed into the sea, they were drowned as the Lord made the water to return to its place. Israel was freed from the Egyptians, but that was not the end of their tribulations. There were those who rebelled against the Lord in the wilderness journey. Dathan, Korah and Abiram disobeyed Moses and attacked him verbally. At Moses' request the Lord opened the earth and swallowed them alive with all that they had including their tents and animals. After that there were many other wonders that Israel experienced.

Moses stressed the importance of keeping the commandments of the Lord as Israel went to possess the land. The main promise for obeying the Lord was that they would live many days in the land flowing with milk and honey. This was the way the Lord chose to describe the land of Canaan. These are the delicious ingredients in food; there were also other fruits of the Land that were listed elsewhere in this book. It is the same promise given in the fifth commandment to children who obey their parents. God is Parent number one.

THOUGHT: God's resources never run short. Ask and receive.

PRAYER: Father, help me to always trust Thee, even in the midst of fear.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

DEUTERONOMY 11:1-17

ISAIAH 62:1-5

*“... thy land Beulah:
for the LORD delighteth in thee,
and thy land shall be married.”*

LIVING IN A GOOD LAND AND OBEYING THE LORD

The land of Canaan was different from the land of Egypt in terms of landscape. Canaan was described as a land of hills and valleys that drinks the water of rain from heaven. Egypt, on the other hand, was a plain and was irrigated by the waters of the Nile for agriculture. This was the environment that Israel was used to, but now they were headed to a different land. Moses described the Lord's care thus: *“A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year”* (Deut 11:12). A commentator added, “It was a land which Jehovah inquired after, i.e. for which He cared (as in Prov 31:13; Job 3:4); His eyes were always directed towards it from the beginning of the year to the end; a land, therefore, which was dependent upon God, and in this dependence upon God peculiarly adapted to Israel, which was to live entirely to its God, and upon His grace alone” (Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament).

This is a story that is more than three thousand years old, and the climatic conditions in Israel have changed since then. The agriculture sector now depends on the waters of River Jordan to irrigate the land and produce crops. She is still a land flowing with milk and honey to this day. She is a tiny nation, but is able to feed herself, with extra for export. Moses took into account all the things that the Lord had done to Israel, and he used these as object lessons for them. He was confident that all that the Lord had said to them was sure to be fulfilled.

It is important for people to live in a land where there are sufficient resources to sustain human life. When European powers colonised many countries in Africa in the twentieth century, land was a bone of contention as the indigenous people sought independence. In addition to human interest, wild animals also are naturally led to inhabit places where they will find food and protection. Good land is God's gift.

THOUGHT: Godly wisdom turns a barren land into a fruitful Canaan.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for the sufficiency of food in our lands.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 12

DEUTERONOMY 11:1-17

PSALM 33:12-22

*“Our soul waiteth for the LORD:
he is our help and our shield.”*

BLESSINGS OF THE GOOD LAND

Israel was looking forward to settle in the land that God had promised them. They had great expectations. Moses told them what God had promised so that their physical life in that land would be comfortable.

Though irrigation has in recent years become a means of watering fields, a large percentage of farmers are dependent on rain to produce crops in the fields and grass for domestic animals. This is natural and in many cases the farmers know the seasonal changes well, and plant their crops at the right time.

God promised to give Israel rain and fruitful land and also grass in the fields. Moses explained that their spiritual health went hand in hand with their physical welfare. He told Israel to keep their hearts and keep away from other gods.

Moses was ever cautious especially after Israel easily turned to false gods when he went to meet with God in Mt Sinai. All of them small and great were easily misled into idolatry. He warned them that the Lord's wrath would be kindled against them and He would shut heaven and withhold the rain. The land would not yield any fruits, consequently famine would follow and the people would perish. In that ancient context, the people lived on subsistence farming. Import of food was minimal and few crops could be preserved for future use. There were no food-stores to buy food from. Israel's only hope was God. Even today many unbelievers at least acknowledge that only the God in heaven can give rain. Drought is also seen as a curse.

The recurring factor in the text is the keeping of the commandments of the Lord. Moses was saying that despite all the things that they had seen and experienced, the key factor was that they obeyed God. This was going to determine their comfort in the Promised Land, or misery should they neglect to follow the Lord.

If we love God, we will keep His commandments.

THOUGHT: God is the Creator and the Ruler of the universe

PRAYER: *“Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee”* (Ps 33:22).

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 13
DEUTERONOMY 11:18-32
DANIEL 3:13-18

“...our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us...”

DILIGENTLY KEEPING THE COMMANDMENTS

The resources of the Lord cannot be exhausted and are not limited by human effort. He is God the Almighty. What He says He will do. He will do it perfectly. Moses told Israel to diligently keep the commandments of the Lord. He stressed this necessity in his speech to warn that the ordinary mind-set was to just hear and forget. He told them to make the deliberate effort to obey the Lord.

It had to be clear to all that they were to be truly committed to following and obeying the Lord as He had commanded them. Israel was going to settle in Canaan as a theocracy, with no human-appointed king as other nations had. They were going to have a spiritual leader and God would be their King. They were commanded to love the Lord and to walk in His ways, cleaving to Him. This describes the diligence required of them. The Lord would drive out nations mightier than they from the land of Canaan. Earlier the ten spies had discouraged Israel from going into Canaan. It was true that the inhabitants of that land were stronger, they had fortified cities, and physically they were of greater stature than the children of God. Superficially, Israel could not defeat them. However, the Lord promised to be with them and to fight for them. All they needed was to trust Him and diligently keep His commandments.

God would ensure that Israel could possess the land. Moses assured them with these words: *“Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be”* (Deut 11:23-24). This assurance was their confidence and an incentive for them to stand on the Lord’s side.

THOUGHT: God’s generous hand is always there for His obedient children.

PRAYER: Father, give me a heart that will diligently obey Thy statutes.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14
DEUTERONOMY 11:18-32
MATTHEW 5:1-12

*“Blessed are they which do hunger
and thirst after righteousness:
for they shall be filled.”*

A BLESSING AND A CURSE

Blessings and curses are rewards and punishments as a result of one's relationship with God. Their application comes as God determines. A nation would be blessed when they walked in His statutes; and would be cursed when they turned away from Him. Liberalism does not believe in this. To them all things belong in the physical realm. Here, Moses continued to assure Israel what the Lord was able to do for them: *“There shall no man be able to stand before you: for the LORD your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he hath said unto you”* (Deut 11:25).

Moses had sufficient experience in this regard and thus assured Israel more and more that the Lord would do as He had said. Moses himself was not going to enter that land, but he prepared Israel well for the habitation of that land. The occupation of Canaan was later fulfilled under Joshua. When they started off, the Lord confirmed His presence with them by a miracle just as He did when they left Egypt. The whole Exodus was a miracle. The daily provision of manna and meat was a constant reminder that God was with them. The pillar of cloud and fire was a clear manifestation of God's presence. Even their clothes and shoes did not wear off during the forty years they travelled in the wilderness. There was no natural water source for them, but the Lord provided water for them. They had all their basic necessities provided for, and they lacked nothing, only their depraved nature blinded them from seeing the abundant blessings of the Lord.

God set before them a blessing and a curse. This was how Moses declared it: *“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day...”* (Deut 11:26-28).

THOUGHT: The LORD God blesses His own.

PRAYER: Father, may I seek Thy blessings by my obedience.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

DEUTERONOMY 11:18-32

ROMANS 8:1-8

*“For what the law could not do,
in that it was weak through the flesh...”*

THE OBSERVATION OF THE LAW

The commandments of the Lord required that Israel keep the moral Law and serve the Lord God alone. They were also required to live in harmony with one another in the bond of mutual love. They were to obey their rulers and maintain law and order in the whole nation. The other duty was to wage any war to defend the land that the Lord had given them. This would ensure unity and continued support from the Lord. Specific laws to that effect were given and Moses put everything in writing.

In addition, there were also laws pertaining to the worship of God: the ceremonial law. Priests were appointed to carry out all that was necessary to fulfil the directives of the Lord. There were annual feasts where all Israel had to come together in one place to celebrate. Then there was the daily offerings and terms of atonement for sin, maintaining the sanctity of worship in keeping oneself clean. The priests would prescribe the terms for cleansing and atonement. This was largely figurative of the coming Messiah, the anointed Son of God who would take away all sins. This part was thus fulfilled when Christ came and the ceremonial Law was then abrogated. It ceased to be a way of life for God's people once Christ came and fulfilled that part of the law. Believers in Christ have no more obligations to that form of worship.

However, going back to the occupation of the Promised Land by Israel, the children of God had the immediate duty of obeying those laws diligently. A curse, in the form of divine punishment, hung before them if they disobeyed. When a people are wholly given to sin against God, they can be deprived of the common blessings that God bestows on all people. These include rain, sunshine and good health. It cannot be disputed that the coming of pestilences that have never been known before, like Covid-19 or Ebola, are not accidentals. God is still able to visit wayward people with such curses. The need to obey is ever valid.

THOUGHT: God is in control even in times of pestilences.

PRAYER: Father, bless my nation with the fear of Thee.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16

DEUTERONOMY 11:18-32

PSALM 32:1-4

“Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.”

WORSHIPPING OTHER GODS BRINGS A CURSE

God abhors unbelief and the rejection of His authority. This comes in the form of idolatry and going after other gods. This was a common sin in Israel and since all other nations worshipped these false gods, it was easy to accept it as the norm. Moses had known the depth of that transgression and that was why he kept warning Israel against violating God’s law in this regard. It is also appropriate that the First Commandment forbids allegiance to other gods. The most important thing is given the first attention: *“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”* (Exod 20:3).

The Lord’s pronouncement was clear. Blessing was to be upon Mt Gerizim and curse upon Mt Ebal. These two mountains faced each other near Gilgal in the land of Canaan. The mention of these two places also gave strength to the word of Moses that God was going to give them the land of Canaan. These were real places and they authenticate the accuracy of Scripture. The Word of God is never wrong. Israel was then ready to cross the Jordan River, possess the land and dwell there. The command that stood out as Moses repeatedly affirmed was that they were to observe all the statutes and judgments which Moses placed before them. A blessing or a curse: which do you choose?

Every pronouncement that Moses made was meant to assure Israel and to prepare them for the habitation of the new land. God had to be their guide and Moses placed the Law (in written form, with the seal of God) before them. They had the obligation to obey God and thus live in peace. That was their blessing. A curse would come, with misery, if they did not obey. All things were sure as the Lord never fails.

THOUGHT: God’s direction is sure to bring me to the right destination. I only have to follow Him.

PRAYER: Father, I owe my allegiance to Thee only.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 17
DEUTERONOMY 12:1-18
2 KINGS 21:10-15

*“And I will forsake the remnant
of mine inheritance, and deliver
them into the hand of their enemies...”*

THE WORSHIP OF GOD IN THE NEW LAND

The Lord gave instructions on how and where Israel was to worship Him in the new land. Moses had written all these and placed them before God's people. Keeping in touch with God and obeying His commandments had to be the order of everyday life. God requires sanctity in worship.

God gave them statutes and judgments to observe in the land so that they may keep the sanctity of worship. Order could only come when they had specific laws to guide them. The Lord had declared the laws that He gave to Israel as superior and no nation had such laws as Israel had. Although modern lawyers deem God's Law to be inferior, they have not observed that man-made laws are always subjected to change while the divine Law has remained the same since they were written. There was no way in which Moses could take up his leadership position without specific laws to guide him. This applied too to the leaders that came after him. The people had to have knowledge of these statutes so that they could obey and bring harmony and holiness to their dwellings. The worship of God also had to follow the specifications given by the Lord.

The people of the land that Israel was going to occupy were ignorant of the true God and did not worship Him. They were idolaters. Israel was commanded to destroy utterly all places of idol worship. These were in the nations that the Lord was going to drive away from the land of Canaan. The expression of that destruction shows that God did not want Israel to be entangled with the local people's false religions and sin against Him. They were told to overthrow the altars, burn the groves, hew down the images of the gods and destroy their names out of that place. Any appearance of the false religions of the Canaanites was to be removed entirely.

Today, idolatry is still a common practice among many of the world's religions. Keep away.

THOUGHT: Idolatry is blind superstition.

PRAYER: Father, may I always walk worthy of Thee in worship.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

DEUTERONOMY 12:1-18

1 KINGS 14:7-10

“Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house of Jeroboam...”

THE COMMAND TO DESTROY IDOLS

When idol worshippers repent and accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour, it is always the duty of a pastor and other church officers to collect and destroy all their idols. In the days of the Reformation, the Church of Rome had many idols (they still do today); and the reformers had to destroy them. “Iconoclasm” is the term used to refer to that overthrow of the images of false religions.

The Israelites were the pioneers of iconoclasm. They were commanded to serve the Lord their God only. This is taught in the first and the second commandment in the Law. Israel lived in the land for a long time and did as they were commanded. Though there were isolated cases of idolatry, it was not prominent until the division of the kingdom. Jeroboam who became king of the northern kingdom was the one who formally introduced idolatry to Israel. He set up golden calves in Bethel and Dan and urged Israel to offer sacrifices to them. He ignored the words of Moses and their implications. The language which the Lord used through Moses to command the destruction of idols was the same language that He used in commanding the punishment of those who transgressed His Law. The consequence of Israel’s idolatry after many generations was exile to Assyria and they never returned to their land again. Idolatry is the rejection of God.

Only the God of Israel is to be worshipped. Israel was to go and seek God in the place that He appointed. The Lord then did not identify the place, but when Joshua had divided the land, it was at Shechem that they pitched the tabernacle. It was moved from place to place, but eventually David made Jerusalem the capital city. Solomon built the temple and made a great feast at the dedication. Jerusalem to this day is the centre of worship and all Israel gather in this place for their appointed annual feasts. When Jesus was born, it was in this city that He fulfilled much of His ministry.

THOUGHT: God’s punishment follows the sin of idolatry.

PRAYER: Father, may I put away any appearance of idolatry.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 19

DEUTERONOMY 12:1-18

MATTHEW 21:12-17

*“My house shall be called the house of prayer;
but ye have made it a den of thieves.”*

THE PLACE OF WORSHIP IN THE NEW LAND

The place that God had chosen through the servants whom He had appointed became the place of worship. The Ark of the Covenant and all other furniture of the tabernacle that were specified by God formed the sanctuary of worship. All Israel would come to worship where the tabernacle was pitched until the temple was built.

The priests ministered and the people brought their sacrifices, offerings, tithes, freewill offerings, first fruits and everything that they were commanded to bring. They were to receive all these and offer what was to be offered for sacrifices and the others would be used for their needs. Israel was told to eat and rejoice in all the blessings of the Lord. When there is no lack of food and other basic necessities then there is joy and thanksgiving to God for His favour. Moses warned that they were not to do every man that which was right in his own eyes. For then there would be lawlessness and confusion. This happened in the days of the judges and brought great sufferings to the nation. The Lord thus forewarned them to be obedient. As Moses spoke, they had not come to rest or to the inheritance promised to them. However, they were looking forward to that promise and that they would dwell in safety. This came to the fore in the reign of Solomon when there was no war and the borders of Israel had expanded to their greatest. Idolatry was outlawed, and they worshipped God only.

Moses anticipated that Israel may be tempted to neglect the place that God would choose and invent their own way of worship. If that happened, they would turn away from the Lord and go back to idolatry. There was a need for the nation to be united in serving God so that there would be a uniformed obedience to the commands of the Lord in relation to worship. Families would gather and rejoice before the Lord and the Levite that lived among them would be included in the family. God's worship required order and decency.

THOUGHT: A place of worship is a holy place worthy of our reverence for God is there.

PRAYER: Father, may I give Thy house the honour it deserves.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 20
DEUTERONOMY 12:1-18
1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-26

*“For the earth is the Lord’s,
and the fulness thereof.”*

THE SANCTITY OF WORSHIP IN MEALS

The Levites had no inheritance because they were chosen to minister in spiritual matters, thus they were scattered among all the tribes of Israel. Every family had to ensure that they lived in harmony and rejoiced with the Levite. They were forbidden to offer sacrifices in any place apart from the place that the Lord had chosen for them. This was to ensure that they all adhered to the specification of the Law in their service. Unity in serving the Lord even till today is most important so that false worship may not develop.

Apart from sacrifices, Israel was permitted to kill and eat flesh within their gates as they desired when the Lord had blessed them. Whatever animal they killed, they were not permitted to eat blood. (This is one prohibition that is upheld in the New Testament for Gentile believers to observe, see Acts 15:20, 29.) Israel was also forbidden to eat within their gates what was legally to be given to the Lord. When they did not observe these laws, it was a transgression of the Law and they would be defiled. The Levitical laws gave other specifications on observing the commands of the Lord. Israel was thus prepared to live in the Land of Canaan and to observe all that God commanded them.

The worship that Israel offered was largely ceremonial and figurative of God’s plan of redemption in Christ. Since Christ came, this form of worship was laid aside, but obedience to God always stands. We now worship in spirit and in truth as Jesus told the Samaritan woman. This dialogue gives the answer, *“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father... God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:20-24).

THOUGHT: God appoints what we eat each day.

PRAYER: Father, may I give Thee honour even in my eating habits.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21
DEUTERONOMY 12:19-32
1 TIMOTHY 6:3-8

*“And having food and raiment
let us be therewith content.”*

ISRAEL COMMANDED TO SUPPORT THE LEVITES

As Israel was set to enter the land of Canaan, they anticipated prosperity that the Lord had promised them. They were thus commanded not to take this for granted, but to perform all the commandments of the Lord. They were to maintain physical sanctity in their prosperity and to be cautious not to be ensnared by idolatry. They were to uphold the words of God to the letter. Moses put all these words in their ears.

They were commanded not to forsake the Levites. These were the spiritual ministers of the nation for they were chosen to aid the priesthood. When the inheritance of the land was distributed to the tribes of Israel, the Levites were to be given cities within the dwellings of all their brethren. This was to make it convenient for them to render the needed service to the children of Israel. They also needed basic requirements and comfort in everyday life. It was thus the duty of all people to provide according to the proportion commanded in God's Law.

Spiritual ministry was important to the nation because it was God who led them to the land and provided them with all that they needed. Their service for the Lord thus had to take top priority. Other spiritual leaders in the nation were prophets and in the New Testament church there were pastors. Spiritual ministry does not cease until Christ comes again. And it is always the duty of believers to provide for their needs and other requirements for the ministry.

When the Lord prospered Israel, they were told to kill and eat flesh as they desired within their gates. Some animals were clean and some unclean ceremonially. The unclean animals were not used in ceremonial occasions.

THOUGHT: Contentment is the secret of success in Christian ministry.

PRAYER: Father, may our spiritual ministers be contented.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

DEUTERONOMY 12:19-32

1 CHRONICLES 16:27-31

*“Give unto the LORD the glory
due unto his name...”*

THE WORSHIP OF ISRAEL AND PROSPERITY

The celebration of the feast of the Passover was specific about the kind of animals that were to be offered. It was a lamb or a kid of one year and without blemish. Each family was to kill one during the feast. All meat had to be eaten roasted, not boiled. Whatever was left until morning was burned. When they had to kill for ordinary food at home, the ceremonial elements or requirements were not necessary, except that they were not to eat the meat with blood. The Mosaic command is thus explained by commentators: “Game when procured in the wilderness had not been required to be brought to the door of the tabernacle. The people were now to be as free in the killing of domestic cattle as of wild animals. The permission to hunt and use venison for food was doubtless a great boon to the Israelites, not only in the wilderness, but on their settlement in Canaan, as the mountainous ranges of Lebanon, Carmel, and Gilead, on which deer abounded in vast numbers, would thus furnish them with a plentiful and luxuriant repast” (J.F. and Brown Commentary).

The life that Israel looked forward to then was a life of prosperity where all their basic needs would be met. It was going to be a change from what they were used to in the wilderness. In the new land they were going to have their own property, and till their own land and keep their own animals. The instructions given to them were meant to assist them to live comfortable and happy lives. It is always true that God supplies all our needs according to His riches in glory through Christ Jesus.

The eating of meat with blood was strictly forbidden to Israel. This was repeated time and time again to Israel. They were told to pour the blood out as water. The prohibition was seen as ceremonial, but it has also been shown that there are health reasons for it as well. The Lord wanted Israel to be both spiritually and physically healthy.

THOUGHT: Everyone who seeks the Lord in worship will find Him.

PRAYER: Father, may I always prepare my heart to worship Thee.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

DEUTERONOMY 12:19-32

ACTS 3:17-21

*“Repent ye therefore, and be converted,
that your sins may be blotted out...”*

DOING RIGHT BEFORE THE LORD

Moses told Israel to do that which was right before the Lord: *“Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD”* (Deut 12:25). Doing right means everything that God had commanded was to be observed. Moses taught as if he was teaching young children: the lesson is repeated several times so that it remains in their memory. His concern also was that when Israel entered the land of Canaan he would not be with them. He was always concerned that they would be carried away in their desire to be like the other nations, and forget the Lord. Thus he pleaded with them to do that which was right before God.

The holy things which they had and their vows were to be taken to where God would choose. While they journeyed in the wilderness, the Tabernacle was in the middle of their camp and they were all together within the camp. However, when they settled in the Promised Land, one might live a distance away from where the place of worship would be. They would then have to travel to the place that God would choose for them. Burnt offerings, flesh and blood were to be offered in the altar of the Lord. The design of the Tabernacle included this altar and the priests were there to offer the offerings brought by the people.

The flesh that was to be eaten was to be eaten there according to the prescription that the Law gave. Moses again reminded them of their duty: *“Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God”* (Deut 12:28). He did not cease to ask them to obey the words of the Lord.

THOUGHT: Moses preached Christ as the Way, the Truth and the Life and those who believed were saved.

PRAYER: Father, teach me the Truth in all Scripture.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24
DEUTERONOMY 12:19-32
REVELATION 22:18-19

*“And if any man
shall take away from the words
of the book of this prophecy...”*

KEEPING THE WORDS OF GOD IN PROSPERITY

The promises that God gave to Israel gave them an upper hand over the other nations. The Lord was going to cut off the Canaanites and give Israel their land. Israel would have fields to till and thus have their food, and also to graze their livestock. They were also going to have cities they did not build. Thus they anticipated prosperity.

Israel was warned not to be snared to follow the idolatry of the nations that God would drive away. To follow idolatry would be a great abomination because the religion of those nations included human sacrifice. One cannot kill a human being like he would kill a chicken. God made man in His own image and no one has the authority to take away life except where His law allows. They are to do that which God commands and not to add to or subtract from it. These are the same words that the Lord used to conclude the last book of the Bible. He forbade anyone to add or subtract from the book of prophecy. Only God's Word is final and speaks with singular authority. The command is to keep His Word diligently. The teachings of Christ and the Apostles also follow the same pattern. God's children must hear and obey the words of God.

Public opinions are not always in agreement with God's Law. Conforming to public opinions is always a source of temptation. Prosperity may lead one to be tempted to rely on self and to forsake dependence on God. Moses understood that this was the vicious circle of sinful humanity. He had experienced this in his leadership of Israel. He gave these warnings to prepare them for the many things that they were about to face. The heart is deceitful, but God gives grace to overcome. Moses knew by experience how easily people could turn away from following the Lord. Thus, he charged them accordingly. Submit to the Lord Jesus Christ and He will give you victory over the world.

THOUGHT: As salvation is by grace through faith, God gives sufficiently to everyone who asks.

PRAYER: Father, may I prosper as I keep Thy words.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

DEUTERONOMY 13:1-5

MARK 13:22-23

*“But take ye heed: behold,
I have foretold you all things.”*

COMMANDS AGAINST FALSE PROPHECY

Moses anticipated that false prophets would arise from among the people of Israel and would seek to turn Israel away from the Lord as did happen in the golden calf incident. He had the command from the Lord that false prophets and dreamers must be rejected and punished. This was to keep the holiness of the nation so that they would serve the Lord only. Drastic action against false prophets was necessary as a warning to the whole nation. False prophets and dreamers are always anti-God.

The possibility of a false prophet or a dreamer arising in Israel was real. It had happened before during the wilderness journey and the possibility of this happening again was not a far-fetched idea. The Lord saw it necessary to have a clear command regarding the needed response to such transgression. The identifying mark of the false prophets and dreamers was that they would persuade Israel to serve other gods that Israel had not known.

The idea of worship comes from God's general revelation of Himself to man. However, without the revelation from Scripture, the worship of false gods easily comes in. This inward revelation is stated by the apostle in Romans 1:19-20: *“Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.”* And he spoke of the reason for idolatry in verse 21: *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”* Let us be watchful.

THOUGHT: All false prophets come in the camouflage of truth representing themselves as being sent from God.

PRAYER: Father, help me to be able to discern truth and falsehood.

LORD'S DAY, SEPTEMBER 26

DEUTERONOMY 13:6-8

GALATIANS 6:1-6

*“Let him that is taught in the word
communicate unto him that teacheth...”*

THE REJECTION OF GOD IS A GREAT SIN

Moses warned Israel that yielding to Satan's deception would lead to the great sin of rejecting God. They had known God through the Exodus experience; they saw the great works of His extraordinary providence. Moses wrote to command Israel not to hear a prophet or a dreamer who would mislead them to deny the Lord.

God would prove them in this matter to see if they were able to keep the greatest commandment to love Him with all their heart and all their soul. He said in Deuteronomy 13:4, *“Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.”* The prophet or the dreamer who misled them would be punished. To reject God and to lead others to worship false gods are such great sins that they deserve the death penalty. The Lord said that in carrying out that punishment for the offender, Israel would put evil away from them.

In the days of Moses, the judicial authority was vested on him as a leader of Israel. Joshua, his successor, also had the same powers. When there was sufficient evidence, the offender could be given the death penalty that he deserved. When the Lord separated the offices of leadership in Israel, the punishment of offenders was delegated to the civil government, the office of the king. The priests carried out spiritual matters. The law of punishing the false prophets was applicable when Israel was a nation under God. In the New Testament dispensation, the law that prescribes the death penalty belongs to the civil government. The spiritual ministry belongs to the elders and pastors.

The resistance of temptation has to come from within oneself. The people who would persuade Israel to worship false gods would not be strangers, but they would come from among them. Moses mentioned brother, wife or friend as possible guides to falsehood. If these would try to persuade them to worship other gods, they must not consent.

THOUGHT: “Yield not to temptation for yielding is sin, Each victory will help you some others to win.” (H. R. Palmer)

PRAYER: Father, may I ever defend Thy faithful words.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

DEUTERONOMY 13:9-11

JOSHUA 7:15-26

“...because he hath transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he hath wrought folly....”

THE RESPONSE TO FALSE PROPHECY

In the Mosaic Law, the response to false prophets was decisive as it is stated in Deuteronomy 13:8, *“Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him.”* Moses repeated that such should be put to death by stoning. The punishment stressed the magnitude of the offence. Naturally, people have strong feelings for their family members who are facing any calamity. When they die, the family will weep and mourn for them. This is an expression of the strong bond among family members. However, their rejection of God was a great offence, and they deserved no pity in the Law. Moses mentioned family members and how they should be treated. Nobody could get away with any transgression of God’s Law. This was also meant to deter others from committing the same offence. Sin had to be put away from among God’s people.

In the days of Joshua, shortly after Israel entered the land of Canaan, one offender faced such public execution. Achan had violated the commandment of the Lord when they captured the city of Jericho. He coveted a valuable Babylonian garment and he took it and hid it in his tent. This was a great sin and the whole nation was defiled. When they attempted to take the second city Ai, they were defeated. Joshua had to make an inquiry in this regard. The Lord led him and he traced the offence to that act of Achan. Thus, Achan, and all that he had, were stoned to death and burned (Josh 7:19-26). This was to be a lesson for all Israel and none was to repeat the same offence. The wages of sin is death. Obey God and live.

Moses also anticipated that when Israel settled in the Promised Land, whole cities could be misled to worship other gods. The children of Belial would tempt the inhabitants of their cities. They would ask them to serve other gods which they have not known. The children of God must reject such proposal to sin against God.

THOUGHT: False prophets are always there to pervert the truth of God. Growth in the faith helps the believer to overcome such temptation.

PRAYER: Father, may I always be able to discern truth from error.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 28
DEUTERONOMY 13:12-18
ISAIAH 65:1-5

“I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people...”

GOD’S MIND ON REBELLION

The fate of the rebellious cities revealed God’s mind. Moses gave instructions on dealing with these rebellious cities. The responsible persons in Israel would inquire and make diligent search. This means that any judgment was not to be made hurriedly but sufficient inquiry was to be made to bring about true justice. When the truth was established that the abominable offence had been committed, the prescribed punishment would then be meted upon the whole city. The inhabitants were to be slain with the edge of the sword. Everything they had would be burned and such cities were not to be rebuilt.

The kings of the divided kingdom of Israel were worshippers of idols, their capital city of Samaria was subsequently destroyed by the Assyrians and it was never rebuilt again. In an earlier example, God Himself destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their gross sins.

Israel was commanded not to take the cursed thing in their hand, so that the fierceness and anger of the Lord might turn away from them. God will have mercy and compassion and He will multiply Israel as He had promised. They were to hearken to God’s voice and keep His commandments. The instructions given here stressed the need to keep the first commandment to the letter: *“I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me”* (Exod 20:2-3). All the commandments of the Lord were given with finality and thus the whole nation had to keep it. Moses drilled it into the ears of Israel so that they would not forget. None should forget his obligation to God.

False prophets and dreamers are always there, but God’s people have a guide from His Word. The rejection of God and the worship of other gods are a great abomination. These are the worst of all sins and the prescribed punishment is a just one. Believe in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will have eternal life.

THOUGHT: Rebellion is a sin that brings confusion. It must not characterise the child of God.

PRAYER: Father, keep me from any form of rebellion.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

DEUTERONOMY 13:12-18

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-10

*“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly,
that in the latter times some shall
depart from the faith...”*

VIGILANCE AGAINST FALSE PROPHETS TODAY

During the time of Moses, Israel was an infant nation separated from Egypt by God for His glory. God was particular about Israel's keeping of His commandments. Deuteronomy, as the second giving of the Law, was meant to stress the importance of the Law. Israel regarded the Law as an absolute revelation and was not ready for another revelation. God's progressive revelation however tells otherwise.

The fulfilment of prophecies contained in Deuteronomy also showed that God's revelation was progressive. The New Testament declares the Law to be the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. That is to say much of the Law, mainly the ceremonial part, acted as pictures that pointed to Christ. The subject in Deuteronomy 13 has to do with false prophets. This was also one of the dangers that the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles warned against. False prophets are present in every generation. Holding to the true doctrines of Scripture helps the believer to deal with falsehood whenever it appears.

Vigilance against false prophets is a moral responsibility for every Christian today. The warning in Deuteronomy 13:13-14 compares well with the words of Paul to the Galatians in Galatians 1:6-7. Paul said, *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.”* All false prophets in all ages pervert the gospel and preach another. In Matthew 7:15-16, the Lord Jesus gave a test of false prophets: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?”* Pastors are in the forefront in combating this deception. Paul made reference to this trend severally in his epistles, and he said that teaching true doctrines will keep His children from being deceived by false prophets.

THOUGHT: Falsehood perpetuated by self-made prophets will die.

PRAYER: Father, may I always remember and teach Thy true doctrines.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30

DEUTERONOMY 13

DEUTERONOMY 10:12-13

*“...and to serve the LORD thy God
with all thy heart and with all thy soul...”*

KEEPING ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS

The Hebrew title of Deuteronomy is *Haddebarim* which literally means “*the words*,” taken from the opening phrase in Deuteronomy 1:1. In these words, Moses laid emphasis on the words that he had already told Israel. He had to confirm the same words. He spoke and had them written for the benefit of future generations. The book completes the five books of Moses and is commonly referred to by the Jews as *Mishneh Hattorah*, meaning repetition of the Law. It is also called the “Book of Remembrance.”

As Part One of our devotional reading on Deuteronomy transits to Part Two, it is worth remembering the words of the key verses in this book in which Moses said to Israel, “*And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?*” (Deut 10:12-13). This need was foremost in the mind of Moses: to keep the nation in one accord and in the path of righteousness. When they were upright before God, then the Lord would be pleased and He would also fulfil all His promises to the nation.

All the messages of Moses stressed the need of keeping the Lord’s commandments. He expounded the Decalogue as the sum of all the commandments. It is also the same in the New Testament where there are commands and prohibitions. Moses illustrated this by recalling the rebellions of Israel and reminding them of the mercy of God. The requirement to observe the ceremonial Law then was also needful because it symbolised the redemptive work of Christ. Moses himself occupied the office of prophet as has already been observed. He spoke of the coming of Christ and the need to obey Him. As we move into Part Two, we will learn more from the rest of the book of Deuteronomy.

THOUGHT: Keeping the commandments of God is the key duty of every believer.

PRAYER: Father, please help me live faithfully and obediently.