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Deuteronomy

I. Preamble: Covenant Mediator. 1:1-5.

Ancient suzerainty treaties began with a preamble in which the speaker, the one who was declaring his lordship and demanding the vassal's allegiance, identified himself. The Deuteronomic preamble identifies the speaker as Moses (v. 1a), but Moses as the earthly, mediatorial representative of the Lord (v. 3b), the heavenly Suzerain and ultimate Sovereign of this covenant.

Deuteronomy 1:1

These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel on this side Jordan in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

These are the words (v. 1a, ASV). With this introductory formula the extra-biblical treaties began. The site of the covenant renewal ceremony to which Deuteronomy witnesses was the Jordan area in the land of Moab (vv. 1a, 5a; cf. Deut 4:44-46). The time was the last month of the fortieth year after the Exodus (v. 3a), when the men of war of that generation had all perished (2:16), the conquest of Trans-Jordan was accomplished (v. 4; 2:24ff.), and the time of Moses' death was at hand. It was especially this last circumstance that occasioned the renewal of the covenant. God secured the continuity of the mediatorial dynasty by requiring of Israel a pledge of obedience of his new appointee, Joshua (cf. 31:3; 34:9), and a new vow of consecration to himself. The ceremony is described as a declaration or exposition of **this law** (v. 5), since the stipulations occupied so central and extensive a place in suzerainty covenants. The location of this assembly is apparently further described in verse 2b. Although the mention of otherwise unknown localities makes interpretation

uncertain, the purpose of the notation in verses 1b,2 seems to be to orient the Moab assembly historically as much as geographically by indicating that it lay at the end of the journey from Horeb via the Arabah wilderness. For Israel, the journey to Canaan by this route proved to be of forty years duration (v. 3), although the original route they followed to Paran was normally only an eleven-day trek (v. 2). At Paran, on the southern border of Canaan, however, Israel had rebelled, refusing to enter the land (Num 12:16ff.), and so that generation was sentenced to die in the wilderness. Now their children had arrived via the Arabah route from "Suph" (presumably the Gulf of Aqabah) for an eastern approach to Canaan through the land of Moab. Both the direction of approach to Canaan and the length of the wanderings spoke of a history of covenant breaking and of postponed inheritance. There is, thus, an interesting contrast between the preamble's look south from Moab into the past of failure and curse and Moses' closing look north from Moab into Israel's future of fulfillment and blessing (Deut 34:1-4).

II. Historical Prologue: Covenant History. 1:6-4:49.

The preamble in the international suzerainty treaties was followed by a historical survey of the relationship of lord and vassal. It was written in an I-thou style, and it sought to establish the historical justification for the lord's continuing reign. Benefits allegedly conferred upon the vassal by the lord were cited, with a view to grounding the vassal's allegiance in a sense of gratitude complementary to the sense of fear which the preamble's awe-inspiring identification of the suzerain was calculated to produce. When treaties were renewed, the historical prologue was

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brought up to date. All these formal features characterize Deut 1:6-4:49.

The historical prologue of the Sinaitic Covenant had referred to the deliverance from Egypt (Ex 20:2b). Deuteronomy begins at the scene of the Sinaitic Covenant and continues the history up to the covenant renewal assembly in Moab, emphasizing the recent Trans-Jordanian victories. When, still later, Joshua again renewed the covenant to Israel, he continued the narrative in his historical prologue through the events of his own leadership of Israel, the conquest and settlement in Caanan (Josh 24:2-13).

A. From Horeb to Hormah. 1:6-2:1.

Deuteronomy 1:6-8

The LORD our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount:

By the end of a year's encampment in the Sinai area, where the covenant was ratified and the Tabernacle established as God's dwelling in Israel, the time had come for the next decisive step in the fulfillment of the promises made to the fathers (vv. 6,8b). The initiative in the advance against the land of promised possession was provided by the Lord's command, **Go in and possess the land** (v. 8; cf. Num 10:11-13). On verse 7b, see Gen 15:18ff.

Deuteronomy 1:9-18

And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone:

With the hour of his death at hand, Moses was concerned to confirm the authority of those who must bear the burden of rule after him. Of primary importance was the

succession of Joshua, to which he would presently refer (Deut 1:38; 3:21,28), but now Moses reminded Israel of the authorization of other judicial officers. For the original account, see (Ex 18:13ff.). 10. **As the stars of heaven.** The very circumstance that gave rise to the need for these judicial assistants to Moses, namely, the multiplication of Abraham's seed, was itself evidence of the Lord's faithfulness in fulfilling his promises (Gen 12:2; 15:5; etc.), and thus afforded encouragement to Israel to advance in faith to take possession of Canaan (cf. Deut 1:7-8). God's faithful mediator, reflecting the goodness of the Lord, prayed for the full realization of all the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (v. 11). 17. **For the judgment is God's.** This reason for righteous administration of justice was at the same time a reminder of the theocratic nature of the Israelite kingdom, a reminder that God was the Lord who was making covenant anew with them that day.

Deuteronomy 1:19-40

And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by

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the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the LORD our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea.

Over against the covenant faithfulness of the Lord (cf. 6-18) there had been the infidelity and disobedience of Israel. The fact that the Lord was renewing his covenant against this background of the vassal's past rebellions further magnified his grace and goodness (cf. introductory comments on II. Historical Prologue). The particular sin of the people of Israel recalled on the eve of their conquest of Canaan was their refusal to advance into Canaan when they were first commanded to do so, some thirty-eight years earlier. For the original account, see Numbers 13; 14.

At that time Israel's approach to Canaan was from the south (Deut 1:19). Moses clearly advised them that Canaan was theirs for the taking (vv. 20,21; cf. 7,8; Gen 15:16); yet when so ordered by the Lord (cf. Num 13:1ff.), he consented to Israel's strategy of reconnaissance before attack (Deut 1:22-25). 26,27a, **Ye rebelled ... And ye murmured.** Israel's response to the report of the spies was one of faithless fear and refusal to advance. 27b. **He hath brought us forth ... to destroy us.** Israel's perversity went to the extreme of interpreting their election as an expression of God's hatred of them; he had delivered them from the Egyptians only that the Canaanites might kill them! 29-33. They could not be dissuaded - **ye did not believe** (v. 32) - from their open revolt against the Lord's covenant program by all Moses' pleas and assurances of God's fatherly and supernatural help, such as they had experienced in Egypt and in the wilderness.

34. The Lord heard ... and was wroth. Their unbelief provoked the divine verdict, sealed by an oath, sentencing them to exile from the homeland which they had refused to enter (v. 35), exile unto death in the wilderness (v. 40). 36-38. **Save Caleb.... Joshua.** In the announcement of judgment there was a manifestation of God's covenant mercy, for not only the godly spies Caleb and Joshua were to be spared to enter Canaan at a later day, but the whole second generation of Israel as well (v. 39).

Therein lay the promise of a gracious new beginning - now being fulfilled in the Deuteronomic covenant renewal. 37. **The Lord was angry with me.** Israel's rebelliousness became the occasion for a failure on Moses' part to fulfill properly his calling as a type of the messianic mediator who is always submissive to the Father's will (cf. Deut 3:26; 4:21; 32:50ff.). That happened at the return to Kadesh after the thirty-eight years of wandering (cf. Num 20:1ff.), but it is mentioned here because its consequence was the exclusion of Moses along with the older generation from Canaan (cf. v. 35). It was this that necessitated the appointment of Joshua as heir to the mediatorial dynasty-Joshua "shall go in thither" (v. 38) - to lead the spared **little ones** (v. 39) into Canaan.

Deut 1:41-2:1. After the people of Israel had capped their revolt against the Lord's will with a presumptuous and disastrous assault on Canaan, in the vain hope of escaping God's verdict against them (1:41-44; cf. Num 14:40ff.), they remained a while in Kadesh (Deut 1:46). Then, as God had commanded (1:40; cf. Num 14:25), they wandered unto their wilderness graves (Deut 2:1a). So the time was spent in the area to the southwest of the Edomites until the fortieth year (2:1b; cf. 2:14-16).

B. Advance to the Arnon. 2:2-23.

Deuteronomy 2:2-8

And the LORD spake unto me, saying,

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Cf. Num 20:14-21. 3b. **Turn you northward.** The divine mandate to advance on Canaan given a generation earlier (cf. Deut 2:14-16) was now repeated. On the route, apparently around the north of Edom and across the way of the Arabah which leads from the Gulf of Aqabah to the Dead Sea, see Num 20:21ff.; 21:1-12; 33:36-44. Uncertainty as to the route arises from our inability to identify many of the sites, but it is not probable that Deut 2:8 or Num 21:4 suggests a southern detour as far as the Gulf of Aqabah as part of a circuit of Mount Seir. 4. **They shall be afraid of you.** Esau's fear of Israel (contrast Gen 32:3ff.) was displayed by his blocking entry into Seir (Num 20:20). 5. **Do not contend with them** (RSV). The struggle for the birthright was long since settled; Canaan was Jacob's. Nevertheless, Esau had his possession, too, in Mount Seir (cf. Gen 36), and Israel was forbidden to contend for it. (See Deut 23:7-8 for the relatively privileged position of the Edomites in Israel's assembly.) When the policy dictated by the Lord was followed, the Edomites refused passage through their land, thus compelling Israel to make a circuit about their borders (v. 8; cf. Num 20:14ff.). The Numbers passage does not say that the Edomites refused to sell provisions to the Israelites once it was clear that Israel was content to go around Edom. Moreover, Deut 2:6 and 29 do not clearly state that Edom did sell provisions to Israel. For even 2:29a possibly refers only to the last clause in verse 28 (cf. 2:29b with 23:3-4). Hence there is no contradiction between Numbers and Deuteronomy on this matter. 7. **Thou hast lacked nothing.** This verse is one more reminder of God's past benevolences bestowed on Israel even during the execution of his judgment of exile (cf., e.g., 32:1).

Deuteronomy 2:9-37

And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land for a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot for a possession.

Israel came into contact next with the descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot, the Moabites and Ammonites (Gen 19:37-38). 9. **Distress not the Moabites.** Though

these groups did not enjoy the Edomites' privilege of entrance into Israel's assembly (Deut 23:3ff.), they too had possessions for which Israel was not to contend (cf. 5,19). Each nation had dispossessed a tall Anakim-like people usually known as Rephaim, but called Emim by the Moabites (vv. 10,11) and Zamzummim by the Ammonites (vv. 20,21; cf. Gen 14:5). The tribe of Anak is mentioned in Egyptian execration texts and the Rephaim in Ugaritic administrative texts. 12. **The Horites ... dwelt in Seir beforetime.** In connection with the territorial acquisitions of each nation, it is noted that similarly the Lord had dispossessed the earlier Horite (i.e., Hurrian) population of Seir in favor of the Edomites (cf. 5b,22). Also, in each case one further comparison is made; respectively, the Lord's bestowal of an inheritance on Israel (v. 12b) and the dispossession of the Avvim by the Capthorim (v. 23). If the notice concerning Israel's inheritance was not appended by some unnamed official, like the one who evidently completed the Deuteronomic document after Moses' death, then it doubtless refers to the conquest of Trans-Jordan.

By all these historical notices the covenant servant Israel was advised that the Lord had a hegemony over the territory about the promised land. In his all-controlling providence he had repeatedly dispossessed great nations - even the Anakim, whose presence in Canaan had frightened Israel into rebellion against the Lord a generation before (cf. Deut 1:28; 2:14-15). And the Lord had done this in behalf of various peoples who enjoyed no such special status of covenant calling as elect Israel enjoyed. With what confidence, therefore, Israel might obey the Lord's summons to **rise up** (v. 13) and cross the mountain torrents of **Zered** and **Arnon** (v. 24), and soon the Jordan (cf. Josh 1:2). See Amos 9:7 for another lesson drawn from such historical data. The Zered marked the southern boundary of Moab, along whose eastern border Israel went, so approaching the frontiers of Ammon, which lay east and north of Moab (Deut 2:18-19; cf. 8b; Num 21:11ff.).

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C. Conquest of Trans-Jordan. 2:24-3:29.

Across the Arnon (Deut 2:24), Moab's northern boundary, Israel would encounter Amorites. Sihon the Amorite ruled from the Arnon to the Jabbok (2:36; cf. Num 21:24), with his capital at Heshbon (Deut 2:26), and Og the Amorite (cf. 3:8) ruled from the Jabbok over northern Gilead and Bashan to Mount Hermon (3:4,8-10; cf. 3:13; 12:5). The Amorites were protected by no such inviolability as the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites. The fact that an offer of peace was made to Sihon (Deut 2:26) indicates that his land in Trans-Jordania (which had earlier belonged to the Moabites and Ammonites; cf. Josh 13:25; 21:26; Judg 11:13) was not a part of Israel's promised land proper (cf. Deut 20:10). But his people, as a people of Canaan, fell under the (*herem*) principle (see on 7:1-5; cf. 2:33-35; 3:6; 7:2,16; 20:14-17).

It was indeed the time when the Amorites should have ripened for judgment, which had been set as the hour for Israel's conquest of Canaan (cf. Gen 15:16). With the spread of these Amorites across the Jordan, there was a corresponding extension of the territory that would fall into Israel's possession by conquest. Therefore, a new divine order met Israel at the Arnon: **Begin to take possession and contend** (v. 24, RSV); and a new divine promise; **This day will I begin to put the dread of thee ... upon the nations** (v. 25). The process of Sihon's fall was much the same as that of the fall of Amenophis II, the Pharaoh of the Exodus. Each was approached with a request to favor the Israelites (vv. 26-29), which he refused, because **the Lord ... hardened his spirit** (v. 30). Each made a hostile advance against Israel (v. 32) and suffered defeat, as the Lord fought for His people (vv. 31,33ff.). (On Deut 2:29, see comments on 2:2-8.) The upper course of the Jabbok to the east ran north and south, separating Sihon's kingdom from the Ammonites (2:37) 36. **The Lord ... delivered all unto us.** In this victory, the beginning of the dispossession of the Amorites, there were demonstrated the irresistible power and absolute authority of the Lord's dominion exercised over and in behalf of Israel. For the original account of the conquest of Sihon, see Num 21:21ff.;

for the conquest of Og, see Num 21:33ff. 3:2. **I will deliver him ... into thy hand.** The advance against Og was also at God's command, accompanied by his promise of success (cf. Deut 2:24-25); and victory was again the gift of the Lord (3:3). 5. **Fortified with high walls** (ASV). The height of the enemy's fortifications was not to arouse fear in the armies of the Lord, nor the size of their king (v. 11; cf. 2:11,20). Deut 3:8-11 summarizes the fruits of Israel's victories at Jahaz (2:32) and Edrei (3:1).

Deuteronomy 3:12-20

And this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer, which is by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I unto the Reubenites and to the Gadites.

It was given to Moses to see both the beginning of the conquest under his leadership and also the distribution of the tribal allotments. For this latter event, see Numbers 32. 12. **This land ... gave I unto the Reubenites and ... Gadites.** The tribes of Reuben and Gad took the initiative in requesting the newly conquered land. But when Moses granted the request, he took account of particular triumphs gained in the north by the Manassite families of Machir, Jair, and Nobah (v. 14; cf. Num 32:39-42). To this half tribe of Manasseh was given the territory of Og, i.e., Gilead north from the Jabbok and Bashan (Deut 3:13,15; cf. Josh 13:29-31). To Reuben and Gad was given Sihon's land from the Jabbok in Gilead south to the Arnon, the tribe of Gad being located north of Reuben, with their boundary just above the Dead Sea. Gad also received the Jordan Valley as far as the Sea of Chinereth (see Deut 3:12,16-17; cf. Josh 13:15-28). 18. **Ye shall pass over armed.** The strict condition laid upon the two and a half tribes inheriting land outside of Canaan was that they must first fulfill their responsible share in the conquest

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of Canaan (Num 32:6-32). Moses' intense concern for this matter emerges again here in the Deuteronomic treaty (vv. 18-20).

Deuteronomy 3:21-29

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.

Except for the covenant renewal ceremony itself, the conquest and distribution of the land beyond Jordan eastward brought Moses' work there to an end. 24. **Thou hast begun to shew ... thy mighty hand.** In these achievements the servant of God had witnessed the earnest of Israel's entrance upon its inheritance. But much as he longed to see the fulfillment of God's promises in Canaan itself - **let me go over** (v. 25) - , he was not permitted to pass over the Jordan but only to look across it (v. 27; cf. Num 27:12ff.; Deut 34:1ff.). **On** 3:26, see 1:37; 4:21-22. Moses' final duty, therefore, was to charge the people to conquer in the name of the Lord (v. 22) and to commission Joshua to lead them in that conquest (vv. 21,28; cf. Num 27:18-23; Deut 1:38; 31:7-8,14,23). The reference to Beth-peor in the identification of the site of these final acts of Moses (Deut 3:29; cf. 4:46) recalls other events that transpired during Israel's encampment there (cf. Num 22-25).

D. Summary of the Covenant. 4:1-49.

The historical prologue closes with exhortation. This is transitional to the following section on the obligations of the covenant relationship. The summons to obedience sounded here is briefly echoed in paragraphs that introduce significant divisions within the stipulations (see Deut 5:1; 6:1; 12:1). Deuteronomy 4 is remarkable in that it embodies, to some extent, all the features which constitute the documentary pattern of ancient suzerainty treaties. Thus, there are: (1) the identification of the author of

the covenant as speaker (vv. 1,2,5,10); (2) references to past historical relations; (3) the presentation of the central demand for pure devotion to the suzerain; (4) appeal to the sanctions of blessing and curse; (5) invocation of witnesses (v. 26); (6) the requirement to transmit the knowledge of the covenant to subsequent generations (vv. 9,10); and (7) allusion to the dynastic issue (vv. 21,22). This mingling of the several leading aspects of covenant institution found here and elsewhere throughout the book is explained by the origin of the material in the free oratory of Moses' farewell. Deuteronomy is not a document prepared in the state office with dispassionate adherence to legal form.

Deuteronomy 4:1

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

Verses **1-8** present a call to wisdom. The statutes that Moses taught Israel were a revelation of the will of God (v. 5). 2. **Ye shall not add ... neither ... diminish ought.** God's laws must not suffer amendment or abridgment through human legislation (cf. Deut 12:32; Rev 22:18ff.). Man's whole obligation is to heed, and to the obedient Israelities was given the promise of life and rich inheritance - **that ye may live, and ... possess the land** (v. 1).

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The fact that, ultimately, piety and prosperity will be united is foreshadowed in the history of the Israelite theocracy, for it symbolizes God's consummate kingdom. Illustrative of this fact was God's recent judgment on Israel for her involvement in the idolatry of the Baal of Peor (v. 3; Num 25:1-9); for those who proved faithful in that temptation were spared the plague of death (Deut 4:4). Understandably, then, obedience to God's law is identified as true wisdom. 7,8. **God so nigh.... statutes ... so righteous.** Obedience is the way to the enjoyment of the supreme blessings of the covenant - the nearness of God in saving power, and the knowledge of true righteousness. This light revealed in Israel has indeed become the light of the Gentiles (v. 6b). In this exposition of the way of the covenant as the way of wisdom, the foundation was laid in the Torah for the Wisdom literature which was afterwards to find its place in the sacred canon.

In verses 9-31 the folly of idolatry is declared. As Moses confronted the new generation with the challenge to reaffirm the allegiance their fathers had pledged at Sinai, he was vividly mindful of the fathers' sin of the golden calf, by which they had violated the covenant almost immediately after it had been sealed (cf. Deut 9:7ff.; Ex 32). He therefore stressed the prohibition contained in the second commandment as he contrasted to the way of wisdom and life (Deut 4:1-8) the way of folly and destruction.

Deuteronomy 4:10-40

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

I will make them hear my words. At Horeb God had revealed to Israel the manner of true worship. That revelation was contained in the covenant which was first orally communicated and then inscribed on the two tables. The preparation of duplicate

documents, one for the suzerain and one for the vassal, was the regular procedure in ratifying suzerainty treaties. The fact that the contents of the tables are called the "ten commandments" as well as "covenant" points to the nature of the covenant as a declaration of God's lordship. 12. **The Lord spake ... out of ... the fire** (see also v. 15). The manner of true worship was also revealed by the very nature of the theophany. For though a voice was heard declaring the words of the covenant, no form of God was seen but only the devouring fire of God's glory. The visible symbols of God's self-revelation thus re-enforced the prohibition of the second commandment.

Israel was to beware of the idolatry of worshiping the work of men's hands - **a graven image** (vv. 16-18,23; cf. Deut 5:8) - but also that of worshiping the work of God's hands, **the host of heaven** (v. 19). The worship of the visible and creaturely was characteristic of the Gentile nations whom God had abandoned to their perverse folly (v. 19b; cf. 29:26; Rom 1:21ff.). 20. **To be ... a people of inheritance.** For Israel to turn aside into idolatry was to prefer the lot of reprobation to her divine election as God's own redeemed and exclusive possession (see also Deut 7:6; 14:2), an exclusive privilege which required an exclusive service and devotion. 23. **Take heed unto yourselves.** Prophetically Moses warned that prolonged enjoyment of the blessings of Canaan, blessings denied even to him (vv. 21,22a), would produce the forgetfulness of old age (v. 25; cf. v. 9). Let the Israelites, therefore, recall that the God to whom they had sworn allegiance at Sinai appeared there as a consuming fire (v. 24). If provoked to jealousy by idolatry, he would visit the covenant curses on such folly. And what greater curse than to abandon the repudiators of divine election to the vanity of the idolatry they preferred and to the community of men of like reprobate mind and destiny? (vv. 27,28; 28:64ff.). 29-31. **Thou shalt find him, if thou seek him.** Nevertheless, God's covenant is one of salvation, and its fulfillment is guaranteed by the oath of God to the patriarchs. Hence, after Israel's folly and judgment God would grant repentance so that beyond the curse of exile

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there might arise the blessings of restoration (cf. 30:1ff.).

Verses 32-40 present evidences of true religion. The identity of the Lord as God alone - **none else beside him**

(v. 35) -, sovereign Creator of heaven and earth, was evidenced by his wondrous self-revelations in theophany and redemptive miracle (vv. 35,39 cf. Ex 10:2). 32. **Ask ... whether there hath been any such thing.** His glorious acts at Horeb and in Egypt were signs without parallel; no idol of the nations ever thus identified itself. If the purpose of Israel's calling was to bring the people to reverent fear (v. 36) and knowledge of the Lord as God

(vv. 35,39), the source of that calling was found in God's free grace (cf. Deut 9:5). 37,38. **Because he loved thy fathers.** Moses traced the deliverance from Egypt and the inheritance of the promised rest (earnest of which was the occupation of Trans-Jordan) to God's sovereign love of the patriarchs, first of all, of Abraham. 39. **The Lord he is God.** Moses further pointed to the totality of past miraculous mercies and the sanction of the covenant's future hope (v. 40) as reasons for conscientious reckoning with the claims of the Lord's exclusive deity.

Deuteronomy 4:41-43

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

As part of the historical prologue of the Deuteronomic treaty, the most recent significant event in God's gracious government of Israel is here cited. In obedience to God's direction (cf. Num 35:1,14), Moses appointed three cities of refuge in Israel's Trans-Jordanian inheritance, one each in the southern, central, and northern sectors (cf. Deut 19:1-13).

Deuteronomy 4:44-49

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

This passage is transitional. As a summary of the Trans-Jordanian conquests (vv. 46b-49 cf. Deut 2:32-36; 3:1-17), it serves as a conclusion to the historical prologue. But it is also immediately introductory to the stipulations (vv. 44-46a). The scene of the covenant ceremony and Moses' farewell is precisely set (cf. 1:3-5; 3:29). 46. **When they came forth out of Egypt** ASV marks the transaction as belonging to the Mosaic era of prolonged journeying from Egypt to the Jordan. The ratifying of this covenant was to be finally concluded in the new era when Israel entered into Canaan under Joshua (cf. 11:29ff.; 27).

III. Stipulations: Covenant Life. 5:1-26:19.

When suzerainty treaties were renewed, the stipulations, which constituted the long and crucial central section of the covenant, were repeated but with modifications, especially such as were necessary to meet the changing situation. So Moses rehearsed and reformulated the requirements promulgated in the Sinaitic Covenant.

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Furthermore, just as treaty stipulations customarily began with the fundamental and general demand for the vassal's absolute allegiance to the suzerain, and then proceeded to various specific requirements, so Moses now confronted Israel with the primary demand for consecration to the Lord (vv. 5-11) and then with the ancillary stipulations of covenant life (vv. 12-26).

A. The Great Commandment. 5:1-11:32.

The covenant's first and great commandment, the requirement of perfect consecration to the Lord, is enunciated in chapters 5-7, and enforced by divine claims and sanctions in chapters 8-11. These subject divisions are not, however, rigid; the exhortative strand is pervasive. Analyzed in somewhat more detail, this section develops the theme of the great commandment as follows: the Lord's existing claims upon Israel (ch. 5); the challenge of God's exclusive lordship over Israel, expressed as a principle (ch. 6) and a program (ch. 7); warnings against the temptation to autonomy, whether in the form of the spirit of self-sufficiency (ch. 8) or of self-righteousness (Deut 9:1-10:11); a call to true allegiance (10:12-11:32).

1) God's Covenant Lordship. 5:1-33.

Deuteronomy 5:1

And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

Verse 1. **Hear ... learn ... keep, and do.** This chapter opens and closes (vv. 32,33) with a charge to follow carefully the divine stipulations of the covenant which was in process of solemnization.

Deuteronomy 5:2-5

The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

The commitment to which Israel was summoned was to be a renewal of the covenant relationship to the Lord which already obtained. Forty years earlier, at Sinai, God had by covenant ceremony established Israel as his theocratic people (v. 2). That was done in faithfulness to his earlier promises to the patriarchs. 3. **Not ... with our fathers, but with us.** The patriarchal "fathers" (cf. Deut 4:31,37; 7:8,12; 8:18) had died without receiving the promises. But the present generation, with whom the Sinaitic Covenant was established as well as with the older generation that perished in the wilderness (cf. 11:2), was privileged to see the promised kingdom realized. 5. **I stood between the Lord and you.** At Sinai, as now, Moses was the mediator between God and Israel, an office the more needful because of Israel's fear of face-to-face confrontation with the fiery theophany (cf. 4:12). If the reporting role of Moses described here does not refer to revelations given after the promulgation of the Decalogue, then statements found elsewhere to the effect that Israel heard God declare the Decalogue (e.g., 4:12; 19:9; 20:19) would mean that God's voice was audible but his words were indiscernible to Israel. However, verse 5 is more likely proleptic, like 22b.

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Deuteronomy 5:6-22

I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

(Heb. Bible 6-18). From the fact of the Sinaitic Covenant Moses proceeds to its documentary content as inscribed on the duplicate tables (cf. comments on Deut 4:13). While continuing the thought that Israel was already covenantally bound to the Lord, this achieves the additional purpose of incorporating the comprehensive summary of permanent covenant law into the stipulations section of the Deuteronomic renewal document. The Decalogue, being itself not simply a moral code but the text of a covenant, exhibits the treaty pattern as follows: preamble (v. 6a), historical prologue (v. 6b), and stipulations interspersed with curse and blessing formulae (vv. 7-21). 12. **Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it.** Most significant of the variations from the form of the Decalogue as presented in Ex 20:2-17 is the new formulation of the fourth "word" or commandment. The sabbatic cycle of life symbolizes the consummation principle characteristic of divine action. God works, accomplishes his purpose, and, rejoicing, rests. Ex 20:11 refers to the exhibition of the consummation pattern in creation for the original model of the Sabbath. Deut 5:15 refers to the consummation pattern manifested in redemption, where the divine triumph is such as to bring God's elect to their rest also. Most appropriately, therefore, was the Sabbath appointed as a sign of God's covenant with the people he redeemed from the bondage of Egypt to inherit the rest of Canaan (cf. Ex 31:13-17). The New Testament's association of the Sabbath with the Saviour's resurrection triumph, by which his redeemed, with him, attain to eternal rest, corresponds to the Deuteronomic interpretation of the Sabbath in terms of the progress of God's redemptive purpose.

Other notable Deuteronomic variations in the Decalogue are the reversal of the order of **wife** and **house** in the tenth commandment, and the addition there of **his field** (Deut 5:21). The latter is added because Israel was about to enter upon a settled

existence in the land, whereas during the wilderness wanderings such legislation would have been irrelevant. This is a good example of the kind of legislative modification found in ancient secular renewal treaties. 22. **These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly.** The uniqueness of the revelation of the ten "words" is underscored in this verse. That revelation alone was spoken directly by God to all Israel; it alone was written by God.

Deuteronomy 5:23-27

And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders;

(Heb. Bible 20-24). Continuing the account of the covenant-making at Sinai, Moses reminded the people of Israel of their former vow to obey God's voice (cf. Ex 20:18-21). Indeed, such had been their fear of God in the presence of his glory that they desired Moses to receive the further revelations of the divine voice for them - **Go thou near, and hear** (Deut 5:27). Such reluctance to experience the presence of God is a far cry from man's original delight in communion with his Creator in the Garden. And therein is exposed the exceeding cursedness of the curse upon sin. There are, of course, ultimate limits to man's qualifications for the vision of God (cf. Ex 33:20). But even though, within those limits, redemptive grace makes possible the enjoyment of a vision of God, fallen

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man regards the experience as a threat to his life (e.g., Gen 32:30; Judg 6:22-23). In God's holy presence at Sinai, the Israelites were so keenly conscious of their defilement that they feared to venture further with their unique privilege (cf. Deut 4:33). Nevertheless, their fear was godly, for they acknowledged the God who appeared so terribly on the mount as their God, and committed themselves to do his will.

Deuteronomy 5:28-33

And the LORD heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the LORD said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken.

(Heb. Bible 25-30). What more stirring memories could Moses have evoked in anticipation of his concluding exhortation to walk in the way of the Lord and of life (vv. 32,33) than these: (1) God's approbation of Israel's previous vow - **they have well said** (v. 28); (2) his fatherly yearning that when the Sinaitic theophany should have ceased, the reverent devotion it had inspired might continue and thus it **might be well with them, and with their children for ever!** (v. 29) This response of the Lord supplements the record of Ex 20.

In chapter 6 the principle of exclusive devotion to the Lord is enunciated, and with it the corollary prohibition of allegiance to alien deities. Then in chapter 7 the program of conquest is announced for the elimination of foreign gods and their people from the domain of Canaan, the land chosen by the Lord as an earthly type of his eternal and universal kingdom.

2) The Principle of Consecration. 6:1-25.

Deuteronomy 6:1-3

Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

Verse 1-3. The commandments about to be given were the divinely dictated law for the theocratic kingdom as it was soon to be erected in the new paradise land of milk and honey. 3. **That it may be well with thee.** Israel's continued enjoyment of a habitation in God's land, like Adam's continued enjoyment of the original paradise, depended on continued fidelity to the Lord. Certain important distinctions are necessary in making such a comparison. Flawless obedience was the condition of Adam's continuance in the Garden; but Israel's tenure in Canaan was contingent on the maintenance of a measure of religious loyalty, which needed not be comprehensive of all Israel nor perfect even in those who were the true Israel. There was a freedom in God's exercise or restraint of judgment, a freedom originating in the underlying principle of sovereign grace in his rule over Israel. Nevertheless, God did so dispense his judgment that the interests of the typical-symbolical message of Israel's history were preserved. (See further the comments on chs. 27-30).

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Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

4. **The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.** This confession (various translations of which are grammatically possible) seems best understood as equivalent to the declarations of monotheism in Deut 4:35 and 32:39 (cf. 1 Chron 29:1). "For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father ... and one Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 8:5-6). God is unique; deity is confined to him exclusively. To him alone were the people of Israel to submit in religious covenant, and him they were to serve in the totality of their being, with the intensity of love (Deut 6:5). God's demand of this exclusive and intensive devotion to himself Jesus called "the first and great commandment" (Matt 22:37-38; Mark 12:29-30; cf. Luke 10:25-28). It is the heart principle of all the covenant stipulations. 6. **These words ... shall be in thine heart.** The past mercies of God rehearsed in the historical prologue would prompt such love, and the love would reveal itself in reverent obedience to all God's particular commandments (cf. Deut 11:1,22; 19:9; 30:16; John 14:15). These verses are thus the text for all that follows. 7a. **Thou shalt teach them ... unto thy children.** The family character of covenant administration requires that the children be brought under the government of the stipulations (cf. 20ff.). Day and night the godly are to meditate on God's law (vv. 7b-9; cf. Ps 1:2). Moses was not here making ceremonial requirements, but elaborating with concrete figures the demand for a constant focus of concern on the good pleasure of Israel's Lord. 9. **Posts ... gates.** These words reflect architectural custom in the world of Moses' day. For the figurative use of such language, see Ex 13:9,16. A literal practice of the injunctions of Deut 6:8-9 came into vogue among later Jews in the form of the phylacteries worn on the person (cf. Matt 23:5) and the mezuzah affixed over the doorpost.

Deuteronomy 6:10-19

And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

The constant corollary of the demand for loyalty in ancient suzerainty treaties was the prohibition of allegiance to any and all other lords. In Canaan the temptation to idolatry would be fierce, since the claim made for the gods of that region was that they were the bestowers of fertility and abundance in the land. Such is human perversity that Israel, satisfied with the material plenty of a plundered culture, would be inclined to honor the claims of their victims' idols and forget the claims of the Lord who had saved from Egypt and given victory in Canaan (vv. 10-12). 13. **Swear by his name.** Such swearing constituted a renewal of the oath of allegiance which ratified the covenant and invoked God as the deity who avenged perfidy. 14. **Ye shall not go after other gods.** Thus God explicitly forbade entanglement with the gods of Canaan. He would indeed jealously guard the honor of his name (v. 15). 16. **Ye shall not tempt the Lord.** Israel must not, therefore, presume to put God on trial, as at Massah (cf. Ex 17:7), seeking proof of his presence and his power to visit on them the covenant sanctions, whether blessing or curse. Let Israel rather be faithful, and God would faithfully fulfill his good promises (vv. 17-19; cf. v. 10).

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Deuteronomy 6:20-25

And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you?

Seeing generations come and go had lengthened Moses' perspective. His interest was not confined to the present assembly of Israel but took in the long future of God's kingdom (cf. v. 2). 20. **When thy son asketh.** Crucial to the well-being of the theocracy would be the faithful nature of the children in the message of God's redemptive actions and purposes for his people. 24. **For our good always.** In particular, God's giving of the Law furthered the purposes of mercy by revealing the path of righteousness, to follow which would lead to divine favor and blessing. 25. **It shall be our righteousness.** This verse does not present a works principle of salvation. The stress falls on the function of law as disclosing the standard of conduct which is righteous in God's sight, a love for which is prerequisite to beatitude but not the meritorious ground of such a state.

3) The Program of Conquest. 7:1-26.

In the Book of the Covenant produced at Sinai there was promulgated a program of conquest and extermination against the Canaanite people and cultus (cf. Ex 23:20-33; 34:11-16). Thereby the ancient prophecy in which Noah pronounced Canaan accursed and the servant of Shem (Gen 9:25-26; cf. Gen 10:15-18; Ex 23:23) would be fulfilled (see, too, Gen 15:16-21). The hour of divine judgment having come, Moses now charged Israel with the execution of that program. Everybody and everything in Canaan that was consecrated to idols rather than to the service of God must be consecrated to the wrath of God.

Deuteronomy 7:1-5

When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;

Verse 1-5. **Seven nations** (cf. Josh 3:10; 24:11). In such lists elsewhere the number varies from three to ten. The "seven" specified here possibly is a figure for completeness. 2. The Hebrew root (*hrm*), translated **utterly destroy** in the major English versions, means primarily (*devote*) and hence "ban" and "extirpate." The (*herem*) principle comes to full and final manifestation in the judgments of hell.

Some people take offense at God's command to Israel to exterminate the Canaanites, as though it represented sub-Christian ethics. Actually, they are taking offense at the theology and religion of the Bible as a whole. The New Testament, as well as the Old, warns men concerning the realm of the everlasting ban, where the reprobates, devoted to wrath, must magnify the justice of the God whom they have hated. Since the OT theocracy in Canaan was a divinely appointed symbol of the consummate kingdom of God, there is found in connection with it an intrusive anticipation of the ethical pattern that will obtain at the final judgment and beyond.

Moreover, the extermination of the Canaanites and their cultic installations (**destroy their altars ... burn their ...**

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Moreover, the extermination of the Canaanites and their cultic installations (**destroy their altars ... burn their ... images** ; v. 5) was necessary if Israel's calling to positive consecration to God in living service was to be fulfilled. For, because of Israel's frailty, the proximity of the Canaanites would lead to the dissolution of Israel's spiritual distinctiveness (v. 3), to foreign and idolatrous allegiances (v. 4a), and hence to Israel's own destruction (4b). The program of conquest (ch. 7) is thus a consistent application of the principle of consecration (ch. 6; esp. Deut 6:12-15).

Deuteronomy 7:6-16

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 purposes of Israel's election which were to be protected by the elimination of the Canaanites are here elaborated. 6. **Chosen ... to be a special people** . This recalls Ex 19:5-6, the classic formulation of the unique theocratic status for which Israel was chosen. High calling is attended by temptation to boasting (cf. Moses' concern with this problem in chs. 8-10). Therefore, Israel was reminded to glory only in the name of God. 8. **Because the Lord loved you** . In his sovereign love and faithfulness alone was to be found the explanation of Israel's election (Deut 4:37), certainly not in the nation's size. For God chose their father Abraham, being only one, and the family of Jacob, which descended into Egypt as only some seventy souls (7:7; cf. 10:22). It followed from the sovereignty of God's grace that Israel had no claims upon him that might encourage carelessness with respect to his covenant demands and sanctions. 9. **Keepeth covenant ... to a thousand generations** . Alluding to the sanction formulae which are affixed to the second commandment, Moses declared that though unmerited grace would be continued to the thousandth generation (5:10), apostate despisers of grace and holiness would discover that the covenant curses were not idle threats (7:9-11). 12. **The Lord ... shall keep ... covenant** . The faithful might be confident that the covenant blessings were not empty promises (vv. 12-15; cf. Gen 12:2-3; Ex 23:22-31). The God of Israel, the Creator, not Baal, was the bestower of

fertility in field, flock, and family (Deut 7:13-14). 15. **The Lord will take away ... all sickness** . It was the Lord who had subjected man to nature's curse for his sin, and he could therefore deliver the Israelites from Egypt's notorious diseases (e.g., elephantiasis, dysentery, and ophthalmia) just as he had rescued them from Egypt's infamous Pharaoh (v. 15; cf. v. 8; Ex 15:26). Verse 16 summarizes, repeating the command and its purpose.

Deuteronomy 7:17-26

If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them?

Though in respect to the privileges of election the Israelites were tempted to vanity, in the face of the responsibility of their commission they would be tempted to timidity (v. 17; cf. Num 13:31ff.). 18,19a. **Thou shalt not be afraid** . In answer to any such rising fears Moses reminded them of that wondrous experience in Egypt during their youth when by mighty signs their God saved them. He assured them that this same terrible God was still in their midst to war in their behalf against the Canaanite kings (vv. 19b-24). Whom then should they fear? 20. **The hornet** (cf. Ex 23:28; Josh 24:12) is not here a symbol for Pharaoh's power, even though it be so in Egyptian usage. It is, rather, a figure for the terror of God, which, descending on Israel's foes, would produce panic and rout

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(cf. Deut 7:23). The fact that certain species of hornets in Palestine build nests underground and in rock crevices suggests the appropriateness of the figure to the destruction of Canaanites in hiding. Some would translate (*sir` a*) not "hornet" but "discouragement." 22. **Will put out ... by little and little** . Cf. Ex 23:29-30; Judg 2:20-23; 3:1-2. God's gradual dispossessing of the Canaanites, designed for Israel's good, was suspended after Israel's post-Joshuan apostasy, as a chastisement. 24. **Thou shalt destroy their name** . Reassuring promise turns into renewed imperative in verses 24b-26 (cf. v. 5). To appropriate that which had fallen under God's ban would be to forfeit the status of covenant favor and place oneself under the divine anathema (cf. Josh 7).

Chapters 8-11 set forth the truth that absolute allegiance to the Lord (Deut 6:4ff.) meant not only that the Israelites must refrain from simultaneous service to any other god (6:12ff.; 7:1ff.), but also that they might not declare their religious independence. Moses therefore enforced the fundamental obligation of wholesouled devotion to God by warning against the dangers of an autonomous attitude, whether manifested in the spirit of self-sufficiency (ch. 8) or in the spirit of self-righteousness (9:1-10:11). Following the negative warnings, this section concludes with a positive challenge to submit to God's lordship (10:12-11:32).

4) The Law of the Manna. 8:1-20.

The focal point of this chapter is verse 17, with its picture of a future Israel at ease in Canaan, basking in self-congratulation. The recollection of God's providential guidance during the forty years in the wilderness (v. 2ff.) would afford the corrective for such vanity.

Deuteronomy 8:1-6

All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware

unto your fathers.

Verse 1-6. Verse 1 is another introductory summary of the covenant summons and sanctions (see also Deut 4:1; 5:1; 6:1). 2. So far as the surviving generation was concerned, the wilderness wandering was designed as a period of probation - **to prove thee** - (v. 2b; cf. 13:3) and of necessary instruction (v. 3c). It was a fatherly discipline and contributed to their ultimate blessing (v. 5; cf. 16c). 3. **He ... fed thee with manna** . What is meant by God's humbling Israel (v. 2) is illustrated by reference to his extraordinary provision for every need during the forty years (vv. 3,4; cf. 29:5-6), particularly by means of the manna (see Ex 16, esp. v. 4). Humbling consisted of privation and then the provision of the "What-is-it?", the unknown, supernatural bread of heaven, which compelled the people to recognize their dependence on God (cf. Deut 8:16a,b). Modern naturalistic exegesis identifies the Biblical manna with the honey-like excretions of scale insects found in tamarisk thickets in the Sinai area. Whatever substantive role was or was not played by these excretions, the bread of heaven was, none the less, in its nature and manner of provision, clearly a miraculous product. Moreover, a mere change from one normal, palatable food staple to another, no matter how exotic, would neither have humbled Israel nor taught them the truth which the manna did: **Man doth not live by bread only (ASV), but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live** .

God led Israel into a situation in which life was derived and must be daily sought from a heavenly bread, the fruit of a daily creative exercise of the word of God. This was an effective reminder that the creature does not exist as a self-sufficient being, sustained by the fruits of an earth also existing and producing independently of God. He is ultimately and always dependent on the divine word which called him and his world into being. Furthermore, God

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purposed to teach Israel that man's life, unlike a beast's, does not consist solely in a physical vitality which bread, whether earthly or heavenly, might sustain. Hence he provided the bread of heaven in such a way as to require an ethical-religious response to his preceptive word. This response was appropriately focused on the observance of the Sabbath, the sign of man's covenant allegiance as well as the recaller of God's role as Creator. The manna thus taught Israel that only as man stands obediently under his Lord's sovereign word, the ultimate source of life, does he find true and lasting life (cf. Deut 30:20).

Deuteronomy 8:7-20

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;

7a. **A good land** . The recollection of the wilderness lesson was necessary at this point, for God was conducting Israel into a land where the normal products of nature would afford a comparatively luxurious standard of living (vv. 7-10a). 9b. **Whose stones are iron** . In the sandstone substratum of Palestine are copper and iron veins, and ancient mining operations have been discovered where this sandstone outcrops in the Arabah. 11. **Beware that thou forget not** . Though all these natural products were to be gratefully recognized as the gifts of God just as much as the supernatural manna (v. 10bx), luxury and ease would blunt the edge of Israel's awareness of God (vv. 12,13). 14. **Thine heart be lifted up** . Pride would suppress the memory of humbler days of slavery, scorpions, and thirst, days when deliverance and survival required divine intervention by hitherto unknown ways (vv. 15,16). Of such denial of their Lord through self-adulation they must beware. The same truth that had to be learned in the former days of empty stomachs would be the relevant truth in the coming days of full stomachs: the source of man's life is the word of God - **he ... giveth thee power** (17,18a). Israel's beatitude was due solely to God's fidelity to his covenant oath (v. 18b; cf. Gen 15). At the same time the Lord would visit upon covenant-breakers the curses they had invoked. 20. **So shall ye**

perish . Repudiation of election as the Lord's peculiar possession, and identification with the anathematized Canaanites in their idolatrous iniquity, would result in Israel's identification with the heathen in their doom.

5) The Warning of the Broken Tablets. 9:1-10:11.

For Israel to assume that Canaan was a reward for their righteousness (Deut 9:4), would be an even greater contradiction of the realities of the covenant relationship than their boasting that the possession and prosperity of the land were achieved by their might (8:17). The conceit of self-righteousness is an attempt of the sinner lusting after autonomy to free himself from God at that very point where his need of God is most desperate - the need for forgiveness and cleansing. Moses therefore passionately presented the truth that the promises and blessings of the covenant relation were Israel's by virtue of mercy, not of merit.

Deuteronomy 9:1-5

Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven,

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Verse 1-5. The occasion for this admonition was the prospect of Israel's dispossessing a people reputedly invincible in offensive warfare and defended by seemingly impregnable fortifications - **cities great and fortified (ASV) up to heaven** (v. 1). On the Anakim and other impressive people, see Deut 1:28; 4:38; 7:1; Num 13:28. The spearhead of Israel's advance, however, was the One who dwelt in the heavens and made the highest mountains of earth his footstool, who was, moreover, a devouring fire (cf. Deut 4:24; 7:17ff.). 4c. **For my righteousness** . This is the tragic misinterpretation of the conquest events to which Israel would be prone in defiance of all the obvious historic facts and God's explicit warning to the contrary. The explanation of Israel's triumph could lie only in the wickedness of the Canaanites on the one side (vv. 4c,5) and in God's forgiving grace to Israel on the other (9:6-10:11). For the relationship of the iniquity of the inhabitants of Canaan to the fulfillment of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant, see Gen 15:16. Archaeological investigation has revealed the abysmal depths of moral degeneration in Canaanite society and religion in the Mosaic age. The way in which Israel's acquisition of their promised land was bound up with the elimination of the Canaanites exemplifies the principle of redemptive judgment. The salvation of the friends of God necessarily involves their triumph over the friends of Satan. From the viewpoint of the elect, the judgment of the latter is a redemptive judgment (e.g., Rev 19:11ff.; 20:9, where the redemption of the elect is consummated by the doom of the Satanic hordes).

Deut 9:6-10:11. Israel's self-righteous interpretation of the conquest had been contradicted in advance by all Moses' experience with the nation during the forty years past (vv. 7,24). They had repeatedly shown themselves to be a fractious, covenant-breaking people (vv. 6-17,21-24). They had been spared and preserved in covenant relationship to God only through the Lord's merciful renewal of the broken covenant (10:1-11) in response to the importunate mediatorial intercession of Moses (9:18-20,25-29).

Deuteronomy 9:8-29

Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with

you to have destroyed you.

In Horeb ye provoked the Lord . The classic example of Israel's faithlessness occurred at the very time the covenant was being solemnized at Horeb (Deut 9:8ff.; cf. Ex 32). Israel had just sworn allegiance to God and vowed obedience to his commandments (Ex 24). Indeed, it was while the Lord was in the very process of inscribing the treaty on the duplicate stone documents during Moses' first stay of forty days and nights on the mount that Israel broke the covenant by engaging in idolatry. In that hour the wrath of God blazed and Israel was at the brink of destruction - **Let me alone, that I may destroy them** (v. 14; cf. 19a). So far as merit was concerned, therefore, Israel deserved not to inherit the bounties of Canaan but to fall under the ban along with the dispossessed Canaanites. Moses' treatment of the treaty tablets - **I ... brake them before your eyes** (v. 17) - and the golden calf (v. 21) was symbolic of the shattering of the covenant. Such ritual procedure is attested in ancient state treaties in connection with a vassal's violation of his oath. 22. **And at Taberah ... Massah ... Kibroth-hattaavah** . Other instances of Israel's provoking God's wrath preceded and followed the day of assembly at Sinai (Ex 17:2-7; Num 11:1) until their perversity at Kadesh-barnea (Deut 9:23, cf. 1:26ff.; Num 13; 14) brought the verdict of exile unto death upon the older generation.

More than once judgment had been averted through the intercession of Moses. In this aspect of Moses' ministry, more remarkably than in any other, his mediatorship prefigured the antitypical mediatorship of Christ, who also "made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa 53:12). When at Sinai God threatened to blot out Israel and offered to exalt Moses' descendants as a new covenant nation (Deut 9:14; cf. Ex 32:10), Moses faithfully fulfilled his mediatorial office in behalf of Israel rather than grasp at the opportunity to be a second Abraham. In fact, he

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offered himself as a second Isaac on the alter. Moses pleaded that if there must be a blotting out, rather than being made the one exception to the judgment, he might be blotted out as a means of securing forgiveness for the others (Ex 32:32). He "stood before him in the breach to turn away his wrath lest he should destroy them" (Ps 106:23). The intercession referred to in Deut 9:18-19,25-29 (cf. 10:10) was offered during Moses' second forty days on the mount.

Difficulty has been found in the fact that the content of Moses' prayer, Deut 9:26-29, corresponds to that recorded in Ex 32:11-13, for it has been assumed that the latter refers to Moses' first forty days before God. Actually, Ex 32:11-14 is an introductory summation of the following account, which embraces the second period of forty days. The immediate chronological sequence is from Ex 32:10 to 32:15, as is reflected in Deut 9:14-15. The Exodus narrative from Ex 32:30-34:29 possibly all refers to the second forty days and their sequel, not to preceding events; the arrangement, as often in Hebrew narrative (cf. Deut 9 itself), subordinates strict chronological sequence to topical interests. For **at that time also** (9:19; 10:10), *even at that time* would be better, giving (*gam*) its more frequent emphatic sense.

God's particular wrath against Aaron, (v. 20), not mentioned in the Exodus account, is cited here to demonstrate how completely devoid of merit Israel was and how dependent on mercy - even their high priest was a brand plucked from the burning! The same truth is apparent from the grounds of Moses' intercession (vv. 26-29). 27. **Remember ... Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob** . He pleaded for a stay of judgment in spite of Israel's stubborn wickedness (v. 27b) and only on the basis of God's interest in his own name among the nations of the earth. God had from of old declared his sovereign purposes of redemptive judgment and had identified that program with his dealings with Israel and Egypt. 28b. **Not able to bring them into the land** . If now he destroyed Israel, even though he would not thus violate his covenant and though he would still faithfully fulfill his promises to the patriarchs (cf. Deut 9:14), such a procedure would be liable to misunderstanding. The significance of God's mighty revelation of his name in judgment and salvation at the Exodus would be obscured and the fear of him diminished by contempt for what would be misinterpreted as

weakness.

Deuteronomy 10:1-11

At that time the LORD said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first, and come up unto me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood.

The renewal of the covenant after Israel's idolatry at Sinai was, therefore, due solely to divine grace. Part of the ceremony of renewal was the preparation of the two new treaty tablets. See Ex 34:1-4a, which possibly belongs chronologically between Deut 32:29 and 32:30. Similarly, Deut 10:1 a precedes in time 9:18ff. and 9:25ff.. There is further disregard of chronological distinctions within 10:1-5, for the mention of the construction of the ark as the depository for the stone tablets is interwoven with the account of the hewing and engraving of this second set of treaty texts. It was actually after the second period of forty days that Moses had Bezalel construct the ark (Ex 35:30ff.; 36:2; 37:1) and it was, of course, some time later that Moses put the testimony in the ark (Ex 40:20) and then put the ark in the Tabernacle (Ex 40:21).

The condensed, summarizing treatment in Deut 10:1-5 reflects the requirement found in the international suzerainty treaties that the duplicate covenant texts were to be deposited in the sanctuaries of the two covenant parties in order thus to be under the surveillance of the oath deities. In the case of God's covenant with Israel, there was but one sanctuary involved, since God, the covenant Suzerain, was also the God who had his sanctuary in Israel. The purpose of 10:1-5 being to state in a comprehensive and general way that God had mercifully

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reconfirmed the covenant with the rebellious vassals, Moses included the matter of the ark as a familiar and integral element in the standard ratification procedure.

Verses 6 and 7, with which verses 8 and 9 belong materially, constitute a stylistic break. It is uncertain (1) whether this excursus originated as a quotation read from an itinerary in the course of Moses' address, (2) whether he parenthetically inserted it when writing the Book of the Law, or (3) whether someone like the author of Deut 34 added it. 6. **The children of Israel took their journey** . The journey in view is that southward from Kadesh recorded in Num 33:37 (for the particular stations, see Num 33:30-33). **His son ministered in the priest's office** (v. 6c). Verses 6,7 are relevant to the context; for they further enhance the covenant-renewing grace of God by recalling that the Lord re-instituted the priesthood of Aaron of the tribe of Levi and continued it in Aaron's son Eleazer in spite of his anger against the father (Deut 9:20). 8. **The Lord separated ... Levi** . Cf. Ex 28; 29; Num 1:49ff.; 3:9ff.; Deut 4:17ff.; 8:6ff.; Deuteronomy 18:20-24 . This section may also be regarded as an elaboration of the subject of the covenant tables (Deut 10:8; cf. v. 5). The intercession theme is concluded in 10:10-11. 10. **The Lord hearkened unto me** . Cf. 9:18-19. The journey to the promised homeland, of which Israel was so utterly undeserving, was to be resumed because of God's regard for his own name, the name he had taken in oath because he could swear by no higher (10:11; cf. Ex 33:1ff.).

6) A Call to Commitment. 10:12-11:32.

Israel was now confronted with the great decision, the choice between the blessing and the curse (Deut 11:26-32). Moses enforced the call to obedience (10:12ff.; 11:1,8,13,18ff., 32) by focusing the eyes of the people on him who addressed to them his covenant as the righteous Judge of heaven and earth (Deut 10:12-22), whose impartial judgment Israel had in the past seen irresistibly executed in Egypt and in the wilderness (11:1-7) and should in the future find sovereignly exercised over the land and inhabitants of Canaan (11:8-25).

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

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,

12. **And now** introduces the conclusion to a major division of the address (cf. Deut 4:1). **Fear the Lord ... love him** . The basic and comprehensive covenant requirement is here repeated (vv. 12,13,20; cf. 6:5,13,24; 6:8). True fear and true love are complementary and inseparable. They are the response of a true heart to God's majesty and goodness, respectively, and together they are productive of wholehearted service in obedience to all God's good pleasure. 16. **Circumcise ... your heart** . Such genuine devotion can flow only from a heart that has experienced the reality of that qualification which was symbolized in the initiatory sign of the covenant (cf. Deut 30:6; Ex 6:12,30; Lev 26:41; Jer 6:10; 9:25-26). To inspire the fear of the Lord, Moses summoned Israel to behold him as Lord of the cosmos (Deut 10:14), as God above all that be called gods (v. 17a), as righteous Judge (v. 17b), and as Sovereign over history and nature (v. 21). To encourage love toward him, Moses recalled how God had bestowed the privilege of covenant status on Israel's ancestors (v. 15a), fulfilled the patriarchal promises (vv. 15b,21,22), and shown himself a Helper of the helpless (vv. 18,19).

Deuteronomy 11:1-7

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Deuteronomy 11:1-7

Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.

The charge to love the Lord (v. 1) is a connecting refrain in Deut 10:12-11:32. After "And know ye this day" (v. 2), there is a parenthetical remark (see RSV), which notes that the summons to covenantal decision was not addressed to the children born in the wilderness. It was, rather, directed to those who had been born in Egypt and had seen God's great acts of judgment in the past (v. 7). 2. The object of **know ye** is **the discipline** (AV, *chastisement*) **of the Lord your God, his greatness**, etc. (RSV). Israel had been disciplined to reverence the Lord as the Judge with whom they had to do by their experience of his judgement on their enemies (vv. 2-4) and themselves alike (vv. 5,6). They knew, therefore, that his judgment was almighty, so that the mightiest on earth could not prevent it; and it was impartially righteous, so that even his covenant people dared not presume upon their election. 6. **What he did unto Dathan and Abiram**. See Numbers 16, especially verses 31-33. Moses' silence with respect to the rebel Korah was possibly in deference to the surviving Levitical Korahites (Num 26:11).

Deuteronomy 11:8-17

Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it;

From Israel's future, too, Moses adduced motives for obedience. 8,9. **That ye may ... posses the land ... and ... prolong your days**. On the relation of Israel's tenure on the land to her covenant fidelity, see comments on Deut 6:1-3. Unlike Egypt, with its irrigation agriculture, Canaan was clearly dependent for its fruitfulness on the direct

blessing of God (vv. 11,12; cf. 8:7ff.); and in that sphere God's righteous judgment with respect to Israel's conduct would be registered (vv. 13-17). 13,14. **If ye shall hearken ... I will give the rain** . Prosperity would depend on proper weather conditions the year around (cf. 12b), especially important being the timely commencement of the rainy season in the fall and the due extension of the latter rains in the spring. The very state of nature would thus constantly serve as a sensitive barometer of Israel's standing before the Lord. Therefore, Israel must be on guard against the spiritual dangers of material abundance (vv. 14b,15). 16. **Take heed to yourselves** . For bounty can turn into drought, famine, and death at the mere word of the Lord, the impartial, almighty Judge at whose command even the earth opened its mouth to swallow the Israelites Dathan and Abiram (vv. 15-17; cf. 11:6; 6:11-15; 8:11-20).

Deuteronomy 11:18-25

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes.

Since the nations, as well as nature, are under the Lord's absolute control, they are another agency in his

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government of his Israelite vassals. 18. **Lay up these ... words in your heart** . Cf. Deut 6:6-9. Faithfulness from generation to generation would result in the perpetuation of Israel's possession of the promised land **as the days of heaven upon the earth** (v. 21); i.e., as long as the heavens continue above the earth, in short, forever (cf. Ps 72:5,7,17; 89:29). By the same token infidelity must lead to termination of tenure. 22,23. **If ... then** . Success in the stipulated program of conquest (vv. 23-25; cf. Deut 7:1-2,17ff.; 9:1ff.) would depend first and last not on military prowess but on religious commitment. Fulfillment of the great commandment would be blessed with inheritance of the land of promise to its utmost boundaries: from the wilderness of the Sinai peninsula on the south to the Lebanon mountains on the north, and from the Euphrates on the east to the Mediterranean on the west (v. 24; cf. 1:7; 15:18).

Deuteronomy 11:26-32

Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse;

26. **A blessing and a curse** . Here is the sum and conclusion of the whole matter (vv. 26-28). The sovereignty of the Lord, declared in the covenant now renewed unto Israel, could be manifested in either blessing or curse (cf. ch. 28; Deut 30:15-20). Israel must decide which it should be. This twofold prospect and its challenge, which Moses placed before Israel **this day** in Moab, would be set before them again by Joshua on the other side of the Jordan in Canaan, that the nation might be careful to obey God and live (11:29-32). The transition from the Mosaic to the Joshuan leadership was thus to be marked by a two-stage renewal ritual, which would exhibit the continuity of the more ultimate divine leadership. This arrangement was the equivalent of measures taken in vassal treaties by human suzerains to guarantee the dynastic succession on their thrones. See Deut 27 for the more detailed directions concerning the second stage of the ceremony to be conducted on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (cf. Josh 8:30-35).

B. Ancillary Commandments. 12:1-26:19.

Having delineated the inner spirit of theocratic life (chs. 5-11). Moses went on to detail the ordinances and institutions of the theocracy's outward form (chs. 12-26). Chapters Deut 12:1-16:17 are primarily concerned with cultic-ceremonial consecration requirements. Governmental and judicial authority is the subject in 6:18-21:23. The sphere of the mutual relationships of the theocratic citizens is covered by the legislation in 22-25. The stipulations conclude with ritual confessions of the Lord's dominion and a final declaration of covenant ratification (ch. 26).

1) Cultic - Ceremonial Consecration. 12:1-16:17.

The central interest of the laws of this section was to guarantee a thorough-going consecration to the Lord. Governing all the demands for tributary service in tithe (v. 14), first fruits (v. 15), and sacrificial offerings (v. 16) was the law of the central altar, with which this section opens (v. 12). Singleness of devotion to the Lord was safeguarded by the imposition of the severest penalties on all who enticed to or became guilty of apostasy (v. 13).

a) Allegiance to God's Altar. 12:1-32.

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a) Allegiance to God's Altar. 12:1-32.

Deuteronomy 12:1-3

These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

Verse 1-3. **In the land** (v. 1; cf. Deut 6:1). In the prophetic perspective of the following stipulations Israel is viewed as already in possession of her inheritance. **Utterly destroy ... And ... overthrow** (vv. 2,3). This section connects with the preceding by resuming that part of the mandate of conquest which required the obliteration of Canaanite cultic centers and installations (cf. 7:5,25; 23:24; 34:13). The execution of the program of conquest as a whole would bring the tribes into control of idolatrous shrines throughout the land (cf. Isa 1:29; 57:5; 65:7; Jer 2:20; 3:6; 17:2; Ezek 6:13; 18:6ff.; Hos 4:13; 1 Kings 14:23; 2 Kings 16:4; 17:10); and these would present a temptation to religious syncretism (Deut 12:29-30). The Israelites would be in danger of adopting abominations like the fiery votive offering of children (v. 31; cf. 18:10; Lev 18:21; 2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; 23:10; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35). In addition to the punitive purpose of the destruction of Canaanite cultic sites there was, therefore, the preventive design of protecting Israel against ensnarement in the Canaanite cultic rites. The fact that the law of the central sanctuary (Deut 12:4ff.) is thus introduced (vv. 2,3) and concluded (cf. vv. 29-31) by such references to the Canaanite cultus shows that one purpose of the centralization of Israelite worship, too, was to avoid the contamination of the pure worship of the Lord by idolatrous practices.

The centralization requirement must also be understood in terms of Deuteronomy's nature as a suzerainty treaty. Such treaties prohibited the vassal's engaging in any independent diplomacy with a foreign power other than the covenant suzerain. In particular, the vassal must not pay tribute to any other lord. Similarly, all the

requirements and prohibitions of Deut 12 were calculated to secure for the Lord all Israel's tributary sacrifice and offering. Israel must not pay any sacrificial tribute to other gods, for such an impossible attempt to serve two masters would be rebellion against the great commandment of God's covenant.

In the promised land the law of the central altar would involve both the centralization of the special sacrificial festivals (vv. 4-14) and the decentralization of the common family feasts (vv. 15-28).

Deuteronomy 12:4-14

Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.

In contrast to the multiplicity of altars among the Canaanites (v. 4), who sacrificed wherever they pleased (cf. v.

13), Israel was to have one central altar, and that at **the place which the Lord your God shall choose** (v. 5). This oneness of the sanctuary corresponded to the oneness of the divine lordship over Israel (cf. Deut 6:4-5).

Modern higher criticism has erroneously held that the concept of the central altar taught in Deuteronomy (or according to some, only in Deut 12:1-7, which is then regarded as a later interpolation) stands in contradiction to other Biblical legislation (see esp., in the Book of the Covenant, 20:24). The Deuteronomic requirement has therefore been judged to be a later modification of earlier, supposedly more lax practice. The book as a whole has

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been dated in the seventh century B.C. and identified as the law book found in Josiah's day. A more recent approach of critics is to resolve the supposed conflict of codes not by placing them in a chronological sequence across the centuries, but by assigning to each a different geographic-cultic source. Deuteronomy is thought to represent the northern, Levitical outlook, the central sanctuary in view being Shechem. Some critics have even allowed that the centralization law in Deuteronomy might represent a return to an earlier, premonarchical ideal of the amphictyony.

Actually, so far as normative religious practice was concerned, there was nothing essentially new about this law even in Moses' day. In patriarchal times, when a succession of altars was built in the course of the patriarchs' journeyings, there was apparently but one central family altar at any given time. Similarly, in the Sinaitic legislation (Ex 20:24), Israel's place of sacrifice is identified with the central place where God recorded his name (i.e., revealed his glorious nature) by special supernatural theophany, the place of God's visible symbolic dwelling in the midst of his people. The Tabernacle had successively different locations during Israel's wilderness journeyings, but it remained a single sanctuary.

What is new in the Deuteronomic formulation is only the prospect of a stationary location for the sanctuary. Deuteronomy envisages a permanent habitation of God in Israel. 10. **When he giveth you rest.** Even this new circumstance must await the attainment of peace and rest (cf. Heb 4:1ff.), a condition which fully arrived at the OT typical level only in the days of David and Solomon (2 Sam 7:1; 1 Kings 5:4). Only then did God choose out of all the tribes the city of Jerusalem as the site for his house (1 Kings 8:16,44,48; 11:13,32,36; 14:21; 2 Kings 21:7; 23:27), though at the first he had recorded his name temporarily at Shiloh (Jer 7:12; Judg 21:19). Furthermore, the Mosaic law of the central altar, while regulating the prescribed and ordinary sacrificial service of Israel (Deut 12:6-7,11ff.) as it was to be performed periodically at the three principal festivals, also recognized the possibility of revelatory action of God apart from the central altar and allowed for the specially appointed service and altar (cf. 27:5ff). The accent thus falls more heavily on the purity than on the unity of the cultus. Also prominent in Moses' thought of covenant communion with the Lord

was the note of joy - **ye shall rejoice before the Lord** (v. 12; cf. v. 7). Love to God expressed in joyful worship was also to find its corollary in love to the brethren, especially in kindness to those who, like the Levites (v. 12; cf. v. 19), were dependent on the generosity, indeed on the piety, of the congregation (cf. Num 18:21; 35:1ff.).

Contrasting the future arrangements with present practice, Moses declared that even under his leadership the Israelites were doing whatever was right in their own eyes (Deut 12:8; cf. Judg 17:6; 21:25). Here at least this expression is not derogatory but apparently indicates simply that there was no need to reckon as yet with distinctions such as that between sacrificial feasts (Deut 12:4-14) and family feasts (vv. 15-28).

Deuteronomy 12:15-28

Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.

Besides bringing the Israelite tribes into contact with heathen shrines, the inheriting of Canaan would locate the tribal homes at considerable distances from Israel's own central sanctuary (v. 21). If the stipulations of Deut 12:4-14 were to be carried out in that new situation, a distinction had to be made between the slaughtering and eating of animals suitable for a sacrificial feast and those suitable for an ordinary meal; and permission must be granted for the decentralization of the latter. This new provision constituted a modification of the requirements of

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Lev 17:1ff., which governed the Israelites' consumption of flesh while they were a compact camp about the Tabernacle in the wilderness. 15b. **The unclean and the clean may eat of it, as of the gazelle and as of the hart** (RSV; cf. v. 22).

Participation in the family feast was not dependent on ceremonial condition (cf. Lev 7:19ff.), and the kind of meat permissible included that which was proper for sacrifice as well as meat like game (cf. Deut 14:5), which was not sacrificially acceptable.

Attached to this permission were certain restrictions. One is the familiar prohibition of blood - **ye shall not eat the blood** (vv. 16,23ff.; cf. Lev 17:10ff.; Gen 9:4). Pouring the blood upon the ground would be a safeguard against pouring it as a sacrifice on some nearby, illegally remaining Canaanite altar. The centralization, during the wilderness journeyings, of the slaughter of all animals fit for sacrifice was explicitly designed to avoid such temptation (cf. Lev 17:7). 17. **Thou mayest not eat ... the tithe**, etc. Another proviso, or better, a clarification of the permission of verse 15, was the reminder that all holy gifts to the Lord must be taken to the place of the central sanctuary which God should choose (see also vv. 26,27). That is, the permission operated within the positive requirements of verses 4-14 (cf. esp. vv. 6,11). The interspersing of exhortations among the stipulations (e.g., vv. 25,28) is one of the identifying marks of the Deuteronomic legislation as treaty stipulations rather than as a legal code.

Deuteronomy 12:29-32

When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land;

On verses 29-31, see comments on verses 1-3. 32. **Thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it** (Deut 13:1 in Heb. Bible). Repeating essentially 4:2, Moses again declared that the only true standard of ethics and godly service is the revealed will of God - no less, no more.

b) Resistance to Apostasy. 13:1-18.

In the ancient suzerainty treaties it was required of the vassal that he must not connive at evil words spoken against the suzerain, whether they amounted to an affront or to a conspiracy. The vassal must report the insult or the fomenting of revolt. In case of active rebellion, he must undertake military measures against the offenders. Moreover, he must manifest fidelity to his lord in such cases no matter who the rebel might be, whether prince or nearest relative. All of this finds its formal counterpart in Deut 13. Stylistically the chapter is cast in the casuistic form characteristic of ancient law codes but also of some treaty stipulations. Three cases of rebellion against the Lord are dealt with. The first two relate to the instigation stage, the guilty parties being sign-at-tested claimants to revelation (vv. 1-5) and the vassal's nearest relative or companion (vv. 6-11). The third case concerns a city that has been enticed to rebel against the Lord and is guilty of serving idol-lords (vv. 12-18).

Deuteronomy 13:1-5

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,

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Verse 1-5. (Heb. Bible, vv. 2-6). 1. **A prophet, or a dreamer of dreams.** Intimation of the prophetic institution to be established in Israel had already been given. God's self-disclosure to the prophets would be through the media of vision and dream (Num 12:5; cf. Deut 18:15ff.). Even if one with impressive credentials to the effect that he was a channel of revelation (1b,2a) should incite Israel to render allegiance and tribute to other gods (2b; cf. 3b,5b), his counsel must be despised (3a; cf. Gal 1:8-9).

2. **And the sign or the wonder come to pass.** both terms can refer to an event which in itself is either ordinary or extraordinary. Here they apparently refer to a predicted event, not necessarily miraculous, which comes to pass. The fulfillment of the prediction is then claimed as a sign of genuine prophetic vocation and authority. **Saying** (v. 2) is to be taken with **if there arise** (v. 1). Israel's standard of life and worship was God's revelation through Moses, spoken and written; the fundamental demand thereof was exclusive allegiance to the Lord - **walk after the Lord** (v. 4). In order to test Israel's obedience to that paramount stipulation, God would permit the false prophet to arise (v. 3b). And because the latter would counsel Israel to repudiate that demand, the very essence of the covenant (cf. Deut 6:4-5; Ex 20:3), the ultimate penalty was prescribed for him - **that prophet ... shall be put to death** (v. 5). Notice the quotations from the preamble and historical prologue of the covenant tablets (cf. Ex 20:2). The execution of the instigator to defection would "burn out" the evil from the midst of Israel, which, if it remained and spread, would result in the burning out of many in Israel (cf. Deut 13:12ff., esp. v. 16; 17:12; 19:11-13; 21:18-21; 22:21-24; 24:7).

Deuteronomy 13:6-11

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;

(Heb. Bible 7-12). As effective as the wonder-sign of the speaking serpent, with its oracular declarations, in the case of Eve's seduction was the constraint lent to Eve's subsequent temptation of Adam by his affection for her, the wife of his bosom,

beloved as his own soul. 6. **If thy brother ... entice thee secretly.** The subtlety of the temptation in this case contrasts with the public invitation of the false prophet (cf. v. 1ff.) and would make it easy to conceal the dear one's sin and to avoid *the judicial responsibility without detection. But, as in the case of the international treaties, any failure to report "evil words" and expose rebellious plots was a breach of God's covenant. 8. **Neither shall thine eye pity him.** The call of the covenant is to love the Lord our God though it mean to hate parents and brethren, wife and children, and one's own life also (cf. Luke 14:26). Therefore, that one who was dearest to the covenant servant must be as sternly judged as the false prophet if he or she proposed disloyalty to the Lord. 9. **Thou shalt ... kill him .** For the judicial procedure in view, see Deut 17:7. An important benefit of executing the divine sentence would be the monitory impact on Israel, forestalling further apostasy (v. 11; cf. 17:13; 19:20; 21:21).

Deuteronomy 13:12-18

If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,

(Heb. Bible, 13-19). If the stipulations of the preceding verses were not vigorously carried out, the rebellion would

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increase from individual to community proportions, a situation requiring the yet more difficult judicial decision and action prescribed here. 13. **Base fellows** (ASV: RSV) and *children of Belial* (AV) are renderings of an expression variously understood as sons of worthlessness or disorder or wickedness or Sheol. This is how God sees those enticers to idolatry who appear to men as impressive prophets or dearest kin. If the verdict of guilt was reached (v. 14), the sentence must be the infliction of the ban (v. 15ff.; cf. comments on Deut 7:1-5). 15. **Smite the inhabitants of that city** . By embracing the abomination of Canaan, the Israelite city would become an abomination; it would become like Canaanite Jericho and must share its cursed doom by fire and sword. The divine Suzerain, like the human lords in their ancient treaties, imposed regulations concerning the spoil that would fall into the hands of his vassal on a punitive campaign. In the present instance, the less common demand was made that all the spoil be added to the holocaust by which the accursed city would become a whole burnt offering to the praise of God's justice and wrath. 16. **An heap for ever** . Hebrew (*tel*) denotes an abandoned mound produced by the accumulated debris of successive occupations of a site. Israel's experience in the case of Achan *(Josh 7; 8) exemplified both the danger of violating the law of the spoil in Deut 13:16-17a and the faithfulness of the Lord to the promise of verses 17b,18.

c) Filial Obligations. 14:1-15:23.

As the people of the Lord, committed to his service and commissioned to remove from their midst all devotees and shrines of idols (chs. 12; 13), Israel was a distinctive nation. That must be manifested throughout the ceremonial dimension of the nation's life. Whether in connection with death (Deut 14:1-2) or life (vv. 3-21), the ceremonial practice of the Israelites must reflect their peculiar sanctity. Their sacred consecration was also to be displayed in the consecration of the fruit of their life's labor to the Lord their God (vv. 22-29).

Deuteronomy 14:1-2

Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.

Verse 1-2. **Ye are the children of the Lord your God... an holy people.** Here again the Ex 19:5-6 definition

of theocratic nation is echoed (cf. Deut 7:6), enriched now with the concept of sonship (cf. Ex 4:22). In the OT period the emphasis was on Israel as servant rather than as son, because though the nation of Israel was the son and heir, it was to be under governors until the time appointed of the Father (cf. Gal 4:1ff.). **Ye shall not cut yourselves.** The Israelites were not to mutilate themselves as the heathen commonly did in mourning rites (v. 1b; cf. Lev 19:28; 21:5). The reason assigned is that, as the elect and adopted people of God, they held a holy status. And underlying that reason was the fact that their God is Lord of life and Creator of man in his image.

Deuteronomy 14:3-21

Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.

3. **Any abominable thing** . Ceremonial distinctions may at times appear arbitrary. Such is the case with the

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classification of clean and unclean meats in these dietary regulations. For although hygienic explanations are apparent in some instances, they are not apparent in all. But the very arbitrariness of these stipulation made them the better tests of submission to the sovereign word of the Lord and more distinctive badges of consecration to him. It reminded Israel that man must live according to every word of God's mouth (cf. Deut 8:3). It is God's creative word that gives to all things their definition and meaning, and man must interpret all things in imitation of the interpretation God assigns them. In this respect the Mosaic dietary rules resembled the probationary proscription of the fruit of the tree of knowledge in Eden or the arrangements for the provision of the manna in the wilderness.

Verse 4-21. **These ... beasts ... ye shall eat.** This section repeats almost verbally Lev 11:2-23. Deut 14:4b,5 supplements the Levitical formulation and that in a way which reflects the wilderness origin of Deuteronomy. For the habitat of the edible game animals specified was the area of Israel's journeying from Egypt to Canaan, not the wooded hill country of Canaan itself. 21. **Any thing that dieth of itself.** This involves a modification of Lev 17:15. The practice mentioned here in verse 21b (cf. Ex 23:19; 34:26) was prohibited because it was a ceremonial custom of the Canaanites.

Deuteronomy 14:22-29

Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year.

22. **Tithe ... the increase of thy seed.** An annual tithe of the produce of the land was to be offered to the Lord in recognition of the fact that the land was his and that he was the bestower of life and fertility. Because of variants between the Deuteronomic and the earlier tithe stipulations (Lev 27:30-33; Num 18:21-32), the erroneous view was developed by the Jews (and has been accepted by many Christian exegetes) that Deuteronomy prescribes a second tithe and, some would say, even a third tithe (cf.

Deut 14:28ff.; 26:12-15). Deut 14 does not, however, necessarily involve any drastic modification of the earlier tithe law. It specifies only an agricultural tithe, though it mentions the firstlings of flock and herd (v. 23; cf. 12:17; 15:19ff.). But even Numbers 18 does not explicitly mention an animal tithe. Only Lev 27 does so (cf. 2 Chron 31:6). It is possibly taken for granted in both Numbers 18 and Deut 14. According to Num 18:21, "every tithe" (RSV) was given to the Levites. Deut 14 specifies that except in the third and sixth years (and of course the fallow sabbath year also; cf. Ex 23:11), the offerer might use the tithe-presumably, however, only a small part of it-for a communion feast at the sanctuary.

Verse 23-28. **That thou mayest learn to fear the Lord.** The purpose of this section is not so much to give comprehensive statement of the tithe law as to guard tithing procedure from being prostituted to idolatrous ends; that is, to prevent Israel from honoring the Canaanite fertility deities for their harvests. The insistence, therefore, was that all religious ceremony associated with tithing be conducted at the central sanctuary (Deut 12:6,11). It is necessary to take account of this particular purpose of these verses when making comparisons with tithing regulations elsewhere. (On the reason for the permission of vv. 24ff., see 12:21.). 28. **At the end of three years.** The conjunction of this with the sabbatical legislation of 15:1ff. indicates that such triennial years (called in 26:12 "the year of tithing") were the third and sixth years within the sabbatical-Jubilee cycle.

Verse 29. **The stranger ... the fatherless ... the widow.** A minor modification of the agricultural tithe, in keeping with the familiar charitable interest of the Lord in the poor class, which would emerge in the social stratification of life in Canaan, is this inclusion of other dependents along with the Levites in the use of the tithe of the third and sixth years. See Num 18:26-32 for the disposition of these tithes to be made by the Levites.

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Deuteronomy 15:1-23

At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release.

The main thread of the preceding legislation is picked up again in the law of the firstlings in Deut 15:19-23 (cf. 14:23). Meanwhile, verses 1-18 elaborate the subject of love toward needy brethren, which came up in the exposition of tithing procedure (14:27ff.). Specifically, these stipulations deal with the remission of debts (vv. 1-11) and the manumission of bondservants (vv. 12-18). A further element of continuity is found in the sabbatical framework for this program of mercy (cf. 14:28).

Verse 1-11. 1. **At the end of every seven years.** This refers to the sabbatical year which ended each seven-year period within a Jubilee cycle (cf. Deut 14:28). The institution of the year of release was established in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 23:10-11) and expounded in the Levitical instructions (Lev 25:2ff.). 2. **The Lord's release.** Hebrew (*shemitta*), "release," comes from a root meaning (*to let fall*). In Ex 23:11 it is applied to the land in the sense of lying fallow. Hence the year of release is "a sabbath of rest unto the land" (Lev 25:4). Here it is applied to debts in the sense of remission. Many have interpreted this as a one-year moratorium on the creditor's collection of debts. However, the fact that the seventh year of release and the Jubilee year of liberty belonged to one symbolical unit indicates that a permanent cancellation of debts is meant. The crowning Jubilee Sabbath simply carried the principle further to a restoration of personal freedom and a return of real estate. At each level of the sabbatical release was a renewal of the Lord's original deliverance of the covenant people from bondage and a reinstatement of the families in their original inheritance. Agreeably, the Sabbath itself is associated with the Lord's deliverance of his needy, crying people from bondage (cf. Deut 5:14-15). The release of the seventh year was the Lord's, though his mercy was manifested through the philanthropy of his servants. It was designed to refurbish the theocratic symbol of the kingdom of God periodically by a fresh realization of the saving and restoring grace of the Lord which was experienced so abundantly at the beginning of Israel's theocratic life. At the same

time it pointed prophetically to the future redemptive action of God, anticipating the Messianic reign of mercy to the poor and helpless (cf. Ps 72). This consummation prospect is always present in sabbatical symbolism.

4. **But there will be no poor among you** (RSV). The need for such charity, as is parenthetically observed (vv. 4-6), would be obviated by the absence of any poor in Israel, if such faithfulness were always manifested as to warrant the bestowal of the covenant blessings in richest measure. As a matter of fact, however, for want of fidelity in Israel, the poor would always be present (v. 11; Mark 14:7). 9. **Beware** (lest) ... **thine eye be evil against thy poor brother**. Such, indeed, were the sinful propensities of even the covenant people that they must be warned lest this septennial provision of mercy to the poor become an occasion for oppressing them in the intervening periods. The practice of observing a year of release seems to some financially infeasible (which is one reason why some commentators interpret the release as a temporary suspension of debt). But the people of faith were called upon to recognize that within the peculiar conventual arrangements of God with the theocratic nation, obedience to this stipulation was a guarantee of prosperity - **for this thing the Lord ... shall bless thee** (v. 10; cf. Lev 25:20-21). That the Scriptures do not recommend this as a normative policy outside the OT theocratic community of Israel is evident even from the exceptive clause in Deut 15:3a. The **foreigner** (v. 3a) is not, like the "sojourner" or "stranger who is within thy gates," a permanent member of the community, but one temporarily visiting for commercial purposes or the like.

Verse 12-18. 12. **Thou shalt let him go free**. Though septennially structured, this law, unlike Deut 14:28-29 and 15:1-11, does not refer to the regular sabbatical units within a Jubilee cycle but to a seven-year period beginning whenever an individual Hebrew became an indentured servant. This provision for manumission was also contained

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in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 21:2-6), and it finds a counterpart within the Levitical legislation concerning the Jubilee year (Lev 25:39-55; cf. Jer 34:14). **Or an Hebrew woman.** The inclusion of Hebrew women, possibly implicit in Ex 21:2-6 (cf. Ex 21:7-11, which deals with the special case of the concubine-maidservant) becomes explicit here. As in the release of debt, so in the release of the slave, the limits of application were the Israelite brotherhood.

In view of the contrast instituted between the "brother" and the "foreigner" in this context and the identification of the Hebrew servant as a brother (Deut 15:12), the theory which regards the "Hebrew servant" as a "foreign servant" must be judged erroneous. According to that theory, what Ex 21:6 and Deut 15:17 allow for a Hebrew servant, Lev 25:44-46 forbids for an Israelite. But Lev 25 refers to a compulsory, rigorous slavery, while the Hebrew servant passages refer to a voluntary, agreeable service. The stipulation of a Jubilee manumission in Lev 25:40-41 supplements the Hebrew servant's right of seventh-year release as a special boon when the Jubilee arrived before his seventh year of service. 16. **If he say ... I will not go away.** This supplementary right, like that of release in the seventh year, was subject to the servant's further right to voluntary lifelong service of a beloved master (cf. Ex 21:5-6). In the Deuteronomic reformulation of this provision, it becomes more liberal (Deut 15:13-14) and various inducements to obedience are cited (vv. 15,18).

Verse 19-23. The subject of firstlings mentioned in Deut 14:23 (cf. 12:6,17) is now resumed. Earlier legislation on the subject is found in Ex 13:2,11-16; 22:29-30; 34:19-20; Lev 27:26-27; Num 18:15-18. The Deuteronomic treatment is not exhaustive but designed only to clarify the relevance of the law of the central altar (Deut 12) to the administration of the law of firstlings within the anticipated circumstances of the tribes dispersed and exposed to the dangerous influences of local Canaanite shrines. Thus the new formulation refers to a fact not noted in previous legislation, namely, that the offer and his household were to participate in the sacrificial meal accompanying the presentation of firstlings. 20. **Thou shalt eat it before the Lord.** Clearly, that is mentioned here in order to press the requirement that all sacred feasting must take place at the central sanctuary (12:6,17), even though in Canaan

common feasts would be permitted elsewhere (12:15ff.). There is no necessary contradiction between the assignment of the firstlings to the priests and their families (Num 18:15-18) and this sharing of the offer's family in the sacrificial meal. See Deut 14:23-27 for a similar situation with respect to the disposition of the tithes. **Year by year** . Annual offering was substituted by eight-day offering (cf. Ex 22:30) for the same reason that eating of flesh at home was henceforth to be allowed (Deut 12:21). On verse 21a, see Lev 22:19ff.; Deut 17:1. Observe again the concern to show the relevance of the fundamental legislation of Deut 12 to this particular matter of the firstlings (15:22-23; cf. 12:15-16,22ff.).

d) Tributary Pilgrimages. 16:1-17.

Deuteronomy 16:1

Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.

The section which began at Deut 12:1 concludes with commandments concerning the three annual pilgrimages to the central sanctuary; the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread (16:1-8), Weeks (vv. 9-12), and Tabernacles (vv. 13-15). For the earlier legislation, see chiefly Ex 12; Lev 23; Num 28:1 and 29. Our comments here are largely devoted to features peculiar to the Deuteronomic formulation and problems raised thereby. The sabbatical scheme is again present (cf. Deut 14:28-15:18), for the entire religious calendar of feasts was sabbatically

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patterned. Still prominent is the concern with the way in which the contemplated divine choice of a permanent sanctuary site in the midst of an extensive land must modify previous ceremonial practice. Note the repeated use of the formula for the central altar (16:2,6-7,11,15-16). Because Deuteronomy is a covenant-renewal document presupposing earlier covenant stipulations as still valid, except as it expressly modifies them, it condenses and omits much while giving new emphasis to features affected by the introduction of "the place which the Lord shall choose." Recognition of this should have prevented many of the higher critical allegations of contradiction between Deuteronomy and other Pentateuchal legislation. Viewed as a suzerainty treaty, Deut 16:1-17 corresponds to the customary demand that the vassal appear annually before the suzerain with the stipulated tribute. Beginning with verse 18 there is a new section principally concerned with the administration of justice.

The Passover. Deut 16:1-8. 1. **The month of Abib** . See Ex 12:1,6; 34:18. **The passover.** This term is used in these verses as comprehending both the Passover proper and the following seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread (cf. v. 3, nothing that the antecedent of "therewith" is **passover**). Consequently, this Passover sacrifice might be taken for the Passover proper, (v. 2), whereas for the Passover proper, a lamb was prescribed (Ex 12:3ff.). For the sacrifices referred to in Deut 16:2, see the account of the celebration in 2 Chron 30:22ff. and 35:7ff., and note the use there of the term "passover offerings," literally, (*passovers*), for sacrifices from the herd. 3. **The bread of affliction** recalled the oppressive circumstances in the house of bondage, especially Pharaoh's opposition to Israel's departure, which compelled them to make hasty preparations for flight. On verses 3,4a, see Ex 12:15,18-20; 13:3,6-7; 23:15; 34:18; Lev 23:6. On verse 4b, see Ex 12:10; 23:18b; 34:25b; Num 9:12. On verse 8, see Ex 12:16; Lev 23:7-8; Num 28:18,25.

Deuteronomy 16:4-15

And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there anything of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning.

In order to designate more specification the Passover proper, Moses calls it **the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even** . The references to the "passover" immediately after that designation (vv. 5,6) are also evidently to be taken in that narrower sense. 7a. **Roast and eat it** (AV, ASV). The RSV unnecessarily creates a conflict with Ex 12:9 by translating the verb (*bashal*) as "boil." It is only an additional specification like "with water" or "in pots" that definitely gives this Hebrew verb the meaning "boil" (cf. Ex 12:9; 2 Chron 35:13b). When further defined by "with fire," (*bashal*) clearly signifies "roast" (see 2 Chron 35:13a). By itself it is ambiguous. This ambiguity in Deut 16:7 is due to the fact that the manner of preparing the sacrifice for eating had already been established and was not Moses' present concern. He was, rather, emphasizing the point that this feast must take place at the central sanctuary. Only after the observance of the complete feast, both preparation and participation, might the worshipers depart from the sanctuary to their living quarters. 7b. **Unto thy tents** . The ambiguity of this expression (which would here refer to the pilgrims' temporary quarters in the holy city) is also attributable to Moses' overriding interest in the idea of the central altar. Preparation of the sacrifice at the sanctuary was a modification of the observance of the first Passover in Egypt, when the blood was applied to the individual homes in the absence of a centralized cult and altar.

The Feast of Weeks. Deut 16:9-12. On the subject of this section, see the earlier prescriptions in Ex 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:15ff.; Num 28:26ff. 10a. **The feast of weeks** (cf. Ex 34:22) was also called "feast of harvest" (Ex 23:16) and "day of the firstfruits" (Num 28:26). In later times it received the Greek name *Pentecost* because of the way its date was calculated, namely, fifty days from a set starting point (Lev 23:16). That point is here described in general terms as the beginning of the grain harvest (Deut 16:9). There was no need for greater precision because

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the exact date had already been given in Lev 23:10ff. It was the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the day of the offering of the sheaf of the first fruits of the grain harvest. This was the "morrow after the sabbath" (Lev 23:15), for the first day of Unleavened Bread was a day of rest. Following this reckoning, the NT Pentecost event fell on a Saturday. The seven weeks between the Passover and Harvest pilgrimages allowed time for the completion of the grain harvest. 10b. **Freewill offering** (cf. Num 29:39; Lev 23:38). This feast was one of joy - joy in the Lord, who had brought his people unto their fruitful paradise land (Deut 16:10c,11; cf. 12:7,12,18; 16:14-15) - joy in the Lord who had delivered from bondage (v. 12), and thus a joy to be shared with all the poor within the covenant family (v. 11b).

The Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. Deut 16:13-15. Parallel legislation is in Ex 23:16; 34:22; Lev 23:33ff.; Num 29:12ff. 13. **The feast of tabernacles** or (*booths*) (RSV) is also called the "feast of ingathering" (in Exodus). Like the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it lasted a week, i.e., from the fifteenth to the twenty-first of the seventh month. It was followed by an octave sabbath day (Lev 23:36,39). The name Tabernacles reflects the custom of dwelling in booths during the festival, which served as a memorial of life in the wilderness (cf. the use of unleavened bread). The name "Ingathering" indicates that this feast was the culmination of the agricultural year, when vintage as well as grain had been harvested. In the year of release, when there was no harvest, this feast was the occasion for the significant public reading of the text of the covenant (Deut 31:9-13). Once again, the point of the formulation was to enforce the law of the central sanctuary - **the place which the Lord shall choose** (v. 15). Here, too, joy and love are the marks of covenant life and worship (v. 14).

Deuteronomy 16:16-17

Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:

17. Cf. Ex 23:17; 34:23. This concluding summary turns all eyes again to the central sanctuary (v. 16) and brings into relief the character of the pilgrimages as tributary trips to the throne of the God-King (v. 16b). **17. According to the blessing of the Lord.** Cf. 1 Cor 16:2.

2) Judicial-Governmental Righteousness. 16:18-21:23.

This section contains a series of stipulations concerning theocratic government, with primary emphasis on the judiciary. Israel must add to cultic holiness political-judicial righteousness. Between the governmental and the cultic there was a unity of ultimate authority, since the Lord was both God and King in Israel. Consequently, all theocratic institutions, unlike those in the ordinary state, were confessionally religious, and there was an extension of cultic practice beyond the sanctuary into the administration of government. Moreover, because all theocratic law, moral and civil as well as cultic, was comprehended in the covenant stipulations of the Lord which were written in the covenant document, and because that Book of the Law was committed to the priests at the central sanctuary to be guarded and expounded by them, the priesthood possessed the dominant judicial voice (cf. Deut 21:5), at least until the beginning of the monarchy (cf. 17:9-10). In addition to their knowledge of the written law, the priests had access by Urim and Thummim to direct divine verdicts. That would afford to the priests a more ultimate role, even though kings became more prominent in the judicial process. Abroad in the land the oracular

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voice of the divine King enthroned in the sanctuary was increasingly revealed to and through the prophet. But while prophets registered the Lord's unsought judgments upon the vassal people and leadership, the judicial functioning of the priest related to litigation instituted by one Israelite vassal against another or to legal investigations initiated within the Israelite community.

a) Judges and God's Altar. 16:18-17:13.

Deuteronomy 16:18-20

Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

During the wilderness journeyings Moses, the mediator, had been Israel's chief judge, while assistant judges appointed from the tribes handled the ordinary cases (cf. Deut 1:12ff.; 18:13ff.). That arrangement was now modified to meet the new conditions of life in Canaan. 18. **In all thy gates** . The judicial districts there were to be towns rather than tribal-genealogical divisions. The natural leaders of the local council of elders would probably be the judges and assistant officers who are in view here (cf. 19:12). In this introduction to the subject, the emphasis falls, however, not on the organizational structure of the judicatories but on the demand for justice in administering the law of the Lord - **thou shalt not wrest judgment** (vv. 19,20; cf. Ex 23:3,6,8). Even in the codes and epics of Israel's heathen neighbors the virtue of justice in leaders is an often reiterated ideal.

Deut 16:21-17:1. The interlocking of cultic and governmental processes (cf. introductory comments on 16:18-21:23 above) explains the appearance of cultic proscriptions among the judicial regulations. These verses propound in concrete fashion the regulative religious principles found in the first three laws of the Decalogue, which were to characterize judicial procedure. First, the authority of the

Lord alone must be consulted (vv. 21,22; cf. 17:8-10). This is expressed negatively in the prohibition of idolatrous appeal for oracular decision (18:9-14). 21. **Asherah** (RSV; *grove*, AV), the Canaanite goddess, had as one significant epithet, "Asherah of deposits, goddess of oracles" (*Keret*, 201,202). The cultic Asherah and pillar were apparently, then, symbols associated with judicial procedure, specifically, the giving of oracular verdict (cf. Prov 16:10). Such a role was played by images of gods in Egypt, especially in the New Kingdom. Second, the cultic aspect of judicial procedure must be characterized by the same reverence for the Lord's holy name that was required in all Israel's cultic service - **Not sacrifice ... any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish** (Deut 17:1; cf. 15:21; 21:1ff.; Lev 22:17ff.).

Deuteronomy 17:2-7

If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant,

Beginning here, rules of evidence and judgment are presented. The particular case of apostasy which is cited (vv. 2,3) is simply illustrative of cases requiring capital punishment as the verdict. Concrete rather than abstract formulation of principles is a feature of the Deuteronomic legislation. For the stipulations concerned with apostasy as such, see Deut 13 (cf. Ex 22:20). The selection of this particular illustration is appropriate, for it underscores the contextual emphasis on the exclusive lordship of God in the judicial process. 2. **In transgressing his**

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covenant . The prohibition of foreign allegiance is the recurring, basic prohibition of the covenant. 3. **Which I have not commanded** . The first person reminds us that Moses spoke as the mouth of the Lord (cf. Deut 1:3; 7:4). The central point is the demand that justice be safeguarded by a conscientiously thorough investigation (v. 4; cf. 13:14) and insistence on adequate evidence (vv. 6,7; cf. 19:15). A minimum of two witnesses was required (see also Num 35:30), and their confidence in their own testimony was to be evidenced by their assuming the dread responsibility of delivering the first and quite possibly lethal blows in the execution of the condemned (cf. Deut 13:9). This measure also prevented secret accusation in prosecution of private quarrels. 5. **Bring forth ... unto thy gates** . The execution occurred outside the camp (cf. Lev 24:14; Num 15:36; Heb 13:12).

Deuteronomy 17:8-13

If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose;

Moses perpetuated in modified form the system of lower and higher judicatories which had been instituted at Sinai (Ex 18:13ff.). During the wanderings, both Moses, the final arbiter, and the body of judges assisting in less weighty matters held court in the vicinity of the sanctuary. Since, however, the lower courts would henceforth be decentralized and located throughout the towns of Israel (Deut 16:18), it was now specified that the higher tribunal was to continue at the central sanctuary - **the place which ... thy God shall choose** (v. 8) -, a reminder that he who dwelt at the sanctuary was Israel's supreme Judge. This arrangement was designed in the first instance for the premonarchical period, but it could be continued after the rise of a king in Israel (cf. 14ff.; 2 Chron 19:8ff.).

8a. **A matter too hard for thee.** Any variety of case that proved too difficult (lit., (

too wonderful ;) cf. Job 42:3) for the local court would come under the jurisdiction of the court at the central sanctuary (cf. Deut 19:16-18). The latter was not a court of appeal, however. 9. **The priests ... the judge** . The central judicature consisted of a plurality of both priests and judges (19:17), but each of these groups had its individual head, viz., the high priest (cf. 17:12) and a "chief justice." The formulation is not specific enough to determine from this ordinance the exact division of responsibility between priest and judge (cf. 2 Chron 19:11). Apparently verdicts might be announced by either priest or judge (Deut 17:12). 12. **The man that ... will not hearken ... shall die** . Since the decision was in either case delivered by the representative of the Lord, any failure to comply was rebellion against him and rendered the offender liable to the death penalty. Indeed, these representatives of the Lord, as the official agents of his judgment, are denominated (*'elohim*), "gods" (AV, "judges") in Ex 21:6; 22:8,28 (in the latter, note the parallelism with "ruler of thy people"). On Deut 17:13, see 13:11.

b) Kings and God's Covenant. 17:14-20.

Like the law of the stationary sanctuary, this law envisages not the immediate but the more distant future. Though the establishment of a monarchy is presented not as imperative but as permissive, that is sufficient to show that a monarchy as such need not be antithetical to the principle of theocratic government (cf. Gen 17:6,16; 35:11; 49:10). All depended on the kind of monarchy that should emerge. If the king conformed to the spirit of the present provision, ruling under the Lord and by the covenant law, he would actually enrich the OT's symbolic prefiguration of the Messianic reign. It was the indifference of Israel to the religious requisites for a theocratic king that accounted for Samuel's opposition to their request for a king (cf. 1 Sam 8:4ff.). It is noteworthy that in the secular suzerainty treaties, a similar oversight of the vassal's choice of king is exercised.

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The main insistence of this passage, which lays the legal-covenantal foundation for the later monarchy, is that even when dynastic kingship will have replaced charismatic judgeship, the kings, too, must subject their life and reign, particularly their judicial activity, to God's covenant (vv. 18-20). The judicial supremacy belonged to the Lord, whose law was under the guardianship of the priests (v. 18; cf. 11). 15. **Whom the Lord thy God shall choose.** The divine choice of a king to sit on the throne of the Lord (cf. 1 Chron 29:23) was revealed through a prophet (cf. 1 Sam 10:24; 16:12ff.). **One from among thy brethren** . He was to be a fellow covenant servant. In this respect the king would be like his Messianic antitype. The restrictions of verses 16,17 reflect conditions in the royal courts of the nations around Israel. In some of these, the king was a god; in Israel, God was King (cf. Ex 15:18; 19:5-6; Deut 33:5; Judg 8:23). On 16b, see Ex 13:17; 14:13; Deut 28:68. In the wilderness, the Israelites longed for the agricultural produce of Egypt (Num 11:5,18,20; 14:4). Confronted by empires in which horses were a source of economic and military strength, they would lust for the Pharaoh's famed horses and chariots (cf. Isa 30:2; 1 Kings 10:28-29), forgetting the import of their election and deliverance from Egyptian bondage. For the Solomonic violation of these restrictions, see 1 Kings 10:26ff.; 11:1ff. 18. **A copy of this law.** A duplicate copy of the suzerainty treaty was provided for each vassal king. The Lord's copy, here regarded as the original and standard, was deposited at the central sanctuary (Deut 31:9). On verses 19,20, cf. 31:12-13. David manifested the conformity of his spirit to this covenantal law of kingship by his psalmodic response to it (see Ps 1) and by locating his throne site near the central sanctuary at the place which God had chosen.

c) Priests and Prophets. 18:1-22.

Responsibility was laid upon Israel for the support of the priestly ministers of God whose administrative assignments are cited in the preceding and following contexts (vv. 1-8). Then Moses enjoined the elimination of all false oracular claimants, including the false prophet (vv. 9-22). In that connection, he set forth the institution of the true prophets (v. 15ff., rounding out the treatment of theocratic leaders (judge, Deut 16:8; king, 17:14ff.; priest and Levite, 18:1ff.)), which is appropriately

incorporated into this section of legislation dealing with the official administration of righteousness in theocratic life.

Deuteronomy 18:1-8

The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance.

Verse 1-8. 1. **The priests the Levites** . Deuteronomy uses this designation seven times, and seven times simply "priest(s)." **And all the tribe of Levi** . The **and** is interpretive, since in Hebrew the construction is one of simple apposition. This interpretation is grammatically acceptable (cf. Deut 17:1) and consistent with the representation in the rest of the Scriptures, according to which all the priests were descended from Levi but only Aaronite Levites were priests. The RSV translation, that is, *all the tribe of Levi* , foists on Deuteronomy the view that all Levites were priests and thereby creates a conflict between it and the other Biblical legislation. Deuteronomy itself conveys a distinctly different image of each group: the priests are the altar ministers of the central sanctuary, who enjoy a position of supreme honor and authority; the Levites are everywhere functional subordinates and social dependents. Priests and Levites did share the commission of instructing Israel in the Law (33:10a; Lev 10:11; 2 Chron 15:3; 17:8-9; 30:22; 35:3). 1a. **No part nor inheritance** . That is, they would have no unified tribal territory (cf. Deut 10:9; 12:12; 14:27,29). As compact formulations serving the purposes of treaty renewal, the Deuteronomic stipulations assume the validity of the more minute regulations given earlier, unless, of course, they

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expressly modify them. So here, verses 1b,2 allude to legislation like that of Num 18:20ff.; Lev 2:3; 7:6-10,28ff.

Verse 2. The Lord is their inheritance. The Lord chose the Levites as his first-born consecration portion of Israel (v. 5; cf. Num 3:5-13) and then gave himself to them as their portion. The latter was expressed in their participation in Israel's offerings to him. The arrangement was symbolic of the great covenantal truth that the Lord was Israel's God and Israel was the Lord's people.

Verse 3-5. The priest's due. It is a question whether this verse further defines the fire offerings and **inheritance** (e.g., first fruits, tithes) of verses 1,2, or appoints certain additional portions. In the former case, there is a modification of earlier law, for the specific parts here assigned to the priests are not those detailed in Lev 7:29ff. If this is correct, an explanation of the modification of the earlier right shoulder requirement might well be that the right shoulder was the portion given to Canaanite priests-as has been disclosed by the discovery of a pit connected with a Canaanite temple and filled with right shoulder bones. Assuming verse 3 to be supplementary to earlier legislation, some have held that the reference is not to sacrifice but to animals slaughtered at home (cf. the terminology in Deut 12:15,21). Such a provision would prevent the serious diminution of priests' revenue, which would otherwise be the effect of removing this considerable share of butchery from the category of sacrifice. Another and more tenable explanation of 18:3 interpreted as a supplementary provision is that it refers not to the peace offerings proper but to certain other sacred meals eaten at the sanctuary, whether generally festive, or, as the present context might suggest, associated with judicial procedure. In verse 4, the fleece supplements earlier requirements (cf. Num 18:12).

Verse 6-8. If a Levite come from any of thy gates . The priests' cities were near Jerusalem, but those of the Levites were farther afield (see Josh 21). Verses 6-8 guaranteed the rights of all Levites against any restrictive tendencies of vested priestly interests at the central sanctuary. The charity towards the Levites required of

Israel in general was required of the priests too.

Deuteronomy 18:9-22

When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

If Israel desired further revelation of the will of the Lord in addition to that expressly written in the Law of Moses, the means of Urim and Thummim was available to their priests. Beyond that, the initiative in revelation lay with God, who would raise up prophets and speak through them (v. 18). The Israelites must be satisfied with and submissive to that revelation (vv. 15-19). If they deemed Moses and the prophets inadequate, then even a voice from the dead would not help. Allegedly oracular sources, such as flourished among the Canaanites, must be shunned (vv. 9-14). And a presumptuous prophet, speaking as from the Lord, indeed, every false prophet, must be exterminated (vv. 20-22).

Verse 9-14. **Thou shalt not learn to do ... abominations.** All occult superstitions - divination, sorcery, spiritualism (vv. 10,11) - were **abominations** (vv. 9,12) to the Lord and invited the sentence of the ban (cf. comments on Deut 7:1ff.). Pagan magic was identified with pagan religion, and therefore its practice would be rebellion against the demand of the Lord's covenant for Israel's loyalty - **thou shalt be perfect** (v. 13).

Verse 15-19. **A Prophet from the midst of thee ... like unto me.** This figure of the prophet, like certain others

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in the OT (e.g., the seed of the woman, the son of David, the servant of the Lord, the son of man) has both a corporate and an individual significance. The collective sense (i.e., the whole institution of OT prophecy) is clearly required, for the problem of distinguishing true and false prophets is broached in this connection (vv. 20-22), and this "prophet" is presented as the legitimate counterpart to the oracular institutions of Canaan (vv. 9-14). Moreover, within the structure of Deuteronomy, this is the section which deals with the several theocratic offices, and the prophetic office is not elsewhere formally instituted (cf. Luke 11:50-51). At the same time, this passage was interpreted by Jesus and the apostles as pointing to Messiah (see especially Acts 3:22-23; cf. John 5:43; 12:48-49; Matt 17:5). Jesus was the antitypical prophet whom the OT prophetic institution foreshadowed. The prophetic office was a mediatorial function and so, in measure, an extension of the mediatorial office of Moses - **like unto me** (cf. Num 12:6-7). It was given to Israel in response to the request made at Horeb for a mediator of divine revelation (Deut 18:16ff.; cf. 5:23 ff.).

Verse 20-22. **The prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name.** Such a one was a more subtle menace than the Canaanite soothsayer or the Israelite dreamer of dreams, sign-attested, who enticed to other gods (v. 20b; Deut 13:1ff.). And he was to receive the same treatment as these (v. 20c; cf. v. 12; 13:5). Identifying him was more difficult (v. 21), but he would be exposed by the failure of his verifiable predictions (v. 22).

d) Guarantees of Justice. 19:1-21.

Deuteronomy 19:1

When the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the LORD thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses;

The theme of judicial justice is continued with stipulations calculated to secure a fair trial and a true verdict. Asylum was provided for the manslayer lest the wrath of the avenger prevent sober adjudication (vv. 1-13). Tampering with evidence was prohibited (v. 14). Adequate and honest testimony was required (vv. 15-21). These measures served justice by protecting the innocent, but justice was also to be satisfied by the pitiless punishment of the guilty (vv. 11-13,19-21).

Judicial Asylum. Deut 19:1-13. 2,3. **Thou shalt separate three cities.... that every slayer may flee thither.**

The land west of Jordan is in view, for, as stated at the conclusion to the historical prologue (4:41-43), Moses had already appointed the three cities of refuge east of Jordan. Joshua's role in completing this appointment of refuge cities is a mark of the functional and dynastic oneness of Joshua with Moses (cf. Josh 20).

Deuteronomy 19:6-8

Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.

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One function of the kinsman-redeemer was to be the **avenger of the blood** (Gen 4:10ff.). This institution was not necessarily the mark of an ethically primitive society; rather, it was a mark of a less complex and less centralized form of government. Ideally, the **avenger** was to act out of passion for justice. However, because of the possibility of his acting out of mere passion, his office, while continued, was wisely controlled in the new, more highly centralized government of Israel established by Deuteronomy. The control was achieved by exploiting and expanding the institution of asylum early associated with the altar (cf. Gen 4:15; Ex 21:14b).

The germ of this was contained in the Sinaitic Book of the Covenant (Ex 21:12-14), and it was fully expounded in Num 35:9-34. Certain refinements are added in Deut 19 (cf. 3a,8,9 and 12), particularly with reference to Israel's future growth in Canaan. In Numbers, the term "cities of refuge" is applied to these cities which afforded protection to the fleeing manslayer not guilty of premeditated murder (vv. 4,5). Just as the geographical separation of the tribes from the central altar in Canaan required a decentralization of animal slaughter (12:15ff.), so it required a decentralization of asylum. The fact that the cities of refuge were Levitical cities (cf. Josh 20:7ff. and Deut 21:1ff.) indicates, however, that, unlike animal slaying conducted apart from the central altar, the decentralized asylum did not lose its ceremonially sacred character. Note, too, the integration of this provision with the life of the high priest (Num 35:25). The cities of refuge were, then, extensions of the altar as a place of asylum. All this contributes further to the emphasis of this section of laws on the judicial importance of the priesthood and the central altar. Since the altar was the Lord's dwelling place, one can see in these laws of asylum the Deuteronomic equivalent of the extradition stipulations which figure prominently in the international suzerainty treaties.

Deuteronomy 19:9-11

If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add

three cities more for thee, beside these three:

Then shalt thou add three cities more. Moses looked beyond the near future and the selection of the three western cities to a more remote future, when Israelite expansion - in accordance with the divine promise (Deut 1:7; 11:24; 12:20) - would necessitate nine instead of six cities of refuge. There is no historical notice of compliance with this command.

Deuteronomy 19:12-21

Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die.

The elders of his city. These local authorities had the responsibility for innocent blood shed in their vicinity (see also Deut 21:3ff.), and were therefore given a role in satisfying the cry of that blood for justice (cf. v. 13), but without abrogating the ancient right of the individual avenger (12b). The trial itself was conducted before "the congregation" (Num 35:12,24), i.e., publicly, but whether in the locality of the homicide or in the city of refuge is not clear. Josh 20:4 (cf. v. 6) mentions a trial, at least provisional, which was to be held at the latter.

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The Law of Landmarks. Deut 19:14. This verse deals with what was, in effect, a violation of the ninth commandment, as do also verses 16-21. **Thy neighbour's landmark.** The value of boundary marks as evidence in property litigation is apparent. Their inviolability was protected by severe sanctions in the various ancient legal codes, and by curses against molesters inscribed on the landmarks themselves (cf. 27:17). Stones several feet high (*kudurru*), in Akkadian), marked the boundaries of royal grants. The fact that the inheritance of Israel and of each individual Israelite was such a royal grant from their divine King would add to the culpability of any who should tamper with the landmarks that would be established by the earliest generations after the conquest - **they of old time.**

The Law of Witnesses. Deut 19:15-21. 15. **At the mouth of two ... or ... three witnesses.** This verse stipulates as a general principle of administration in criminal cases the law of witness which had earlier been enunciated for capital cases (17:6; 35:30). Deut 19:16-21 deals with the perjured witness, that is, with the violation of the ninth commandment in court (see 5:20; 20:16; 23:1). 16. **A false witness.** He is thus designated in view of the outcome; but from the standpoint of the local judges it is not clear whether he or the defendant is the liar. It is precisely because of this difficulty that the case was to be referred to the central court (cf. Deut 17:8-13). 18. **Diligent inquisition** (cf. 13:14; 17:4). There was to be no resort to ordeal, as in some such cases in the legal practice of Israel's neighbors. 21. **Life for life.** The penalty for perjury, however, was to be set according to the principle of the (*lex talionis*) (Ex 21:23ff.; Lev 24:17ff.), which was almost universally followed. That principle was not a license to vengeance but a guarantee of justice. Note again the pre-eminence of the priest in judgment (Deut 19:17).

e) Judgment of the Nations. 20:1-20.

Theocratic justice must be exercised in the prosecution of war beyond Israel's borders as well as in the administration of criminal law within the land. Here, again, a hegemony of priest and cult appears in the judicial process (v. 2ff.). Just as the cities

of refuge were an extension of the asylum aspect of the altar throughout the land (cf. Deut 19:1ff.), so the consecrated military campaign against the foreign foe was the just and holy judgment of the sanctuary - or better, of the Lord - abroad in the earth (vv. 1b,4,13a). While all Israelite military operations sanctioned by the Lord were theocratic judgments, and the adversary always assumed the character of enemy of God's kingdom, a distinction was made between wars waged against the Canaanite nations and those against nations very far off (v. 15ff.). The programmatic mandate of Deut 7 concentrated on the former; the present stipulations center on the latter. In the extra-biblical suzerainty treaties, too, the vassal's military activities and share of the spoil were carefully regulated and the suzerain promised support if needed.

Deuteronomy 20:1-9

When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Verse 1-9. **The Lord ... is with thee.** The memory of God's almighty exploits in establishing the theocracy, and the assurance of his presence in the midst of his people even as they waged the wars of the Lord were to confirm their faith when they faced superior hosts and military technology. As for horses and chariots, let Israel sing anew

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the Song of the Sea: "The Lord is a man of war ... Pharaoh's chariots and his host hath he cast into the sea ... the horse and the rider hath he thrown into the sea ... the Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Ex 15:3a,4a,21b,18). 2. **The priest shall approach and speak.** In the ancient world, priests and interpreters of omens were regular members of military staffs (cf. Num 10:8-9; 31:6; 1 Sam 7:9ff.). The function of the Israelite priest was not analogous to that of a modern army chaplain. He rather represented the sanctuary in the name of which the Israelite host advanced; he consecrated the battle to the glory of the Lord of hosts and of his covenant kingdom. On verse 4, see Deut 23:14; 1 Sam 14:18; 2 Sam 11:11.

The situation envisaged in verses 5-9 is that of the early days in Canaan before there would be a regular army with foreign mercenaries as an elite corps. 5. **The officers.** The militia of the tribes was to be levied by tribal officers (cf. Deut 1:15). The Assyrian, Shamshi-Adad, in his military correspondence, commands those in charge of the levy: "The chief whose forces are not turned out in full and who leaves one man behind will incur the disfavor of the king" (Mari, I, 6:18ff.). Since, however, in the wars of the Lord, victory came not by the might of Israel's hosts, recruiting was made so free of compulsion that only conscience fortified by faith in the Lord as the Giver of victory (v. 4) compelled enlistment. (For striking historic exemplification of the principle, see Judg 7:2-3).

8. **Lest his brethren's heart faint.** The Homeric epics depict demoralized troops weeping like calves and wailing like children for home. Such behavior in the Israelite army would disgrace the name of the Lord before the heathen. The types of exemption cited in verses 5-7 were evidently not novel in Israel (cf. the Sumerian poem, "Gilgamesh and the Land of the Living," 49ff.; The Ugaritic poem, *Keret*, 101 ff.). Jesus insisted (Luke 14:18ff.) that such excuses as availed for exemption from military service might not prevent a man's responding promptly to His invitation to salvation. (On v. 6, cf. Lev 19:23ff.; on v. 7, cf. Deut 24:5.)

Deuteronomy 20:10-20

When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.

Proclaim peace unto it. Such an offer was expressly forbidden in the conflict with the cities of Canaan (Deut 7:2ff.). The identification of God's kingdom with the earthly kingdom of Israel brought an OT anticipation of the final judgment which is to overtake those who remain outside the redemptive kingdom of Christ. This OT judgment, however, could not be executed universally. For then the age of grace for the Gentiles would have been prematurely terminated, and the promise that Israel should be a blessing to all the nations through the Messiah (Gen 12:3) would have been nullified. Therefore, the typology of final judgment was strictly applied only in warfare against nations within the boundaries claimed by God for his typical kingdom (Deut 20:16-18; cf. 7:2ff.). 15. **The cities ... far ... from thee.** Beyond those boundaries the typology of judgment was tempered by the principles that govern the customary relations of ordinary nations (vv. 10-15), yet not so that the religious significance of the encounter of an ancient nation with God's Kingdom Israel was lost. Consequently, in Israel's offer of peace (v. 10) and in the submission of the Gentile city as a covenant tributary to the Lord (v. 11) there was imaged the saving mission of God's people in this world (cf. Zech 9:7b,10b). The judgment of those who refuse to make their peace with God through Christ was exhibited in the siege, conquest, and punishment of the unsubmissive city (Deut 20:13), even though, as observed above, this did not amount to a strict application of the (*herem*) (ban), nor was it even as severe treatment as was customary in ancient warfare (vv. 14,19,20). 19b. **The tree ... is man's life.** These words, placed in parenthesis in the AV, are obscure; but the AV seems to translate the end of the verse more accurately than the ASV and the RSV.

f) Authority of Sanctuary and Home. 21:1-23.

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f) Authority of Sanctuary and Home. 21:1-23.

This chapter concludes the commandments concerned with governmental authority. Since all such authority is an extension of the authority of the individual family head (see the fifth commandment), these final stipulations on this subject appropriately concern the exercise of authority within the home. There are sanctions imposed to enforce this authority (vv. 18-21), and there are regulations to insure a just exercise of it (vv. 10-17). The opening verses prescribe judicial procedure in cases in which penal justice cannot be satisfied because the identity of the offender is not known (vv. 1-9). The provisions are such as to demonstrate further the orientation of all theocratic government to the sanctuary. Similarly, the closing stipulation insists that cultic-ceremonial law be respected in the administration of criminal law (vv. 22,23). The theocratic altar and the theocratic court were two manifestations of the justice of the theocratic King, the holy One who chose a dwelling place in Israel.

Deuteronomy 21:1

If one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him:

Corporate Community Responsibility. Deut 21:1-9. 2. **Thy elders and thy judges.** The members of the local judiciaries (see 16:18) were to determine which city must bear the responsibility. 3. **The city which is nearest** (ASV). This principle of corporate community responsibility in cases of undetected criminals appears also in the Code of Hammurabi. Laws 23 and 24 of that Code require the nearest city to make restitution in cases of robbery and to compensate with one mina of silver the family of someone slain. **The elders of that city** (cf. 19:12), as the representatives of the whole population, were to conduct the ceremonial execution (3b,4). This ritual was to be under the jurisdiction of **the priests** (5a). 5b. **By their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried** (cf. 17:8,10). Here is a clear affirmation of

the ultimate judicial authority vested in the priesthood. The priests' function in the case at hand was to be purely judicial, for the slaying of the heifer (v. 4b) would be a cultic sacrifice, but a judicial execution. That it was not an altar sacrifice is evident from the mode of execution (cf. Ex 13:13). Since it was only a ceremonial execution, with the heifer regarded as a substitute for the unknown murderer, there was no actual satisfaction of justice.

9. So ... put away the guilt ... from among you. The ritual served to preserve the ceremonial status of those involved as sacramentally qualified covenant members (vv. 8,9). In so doing, it prophetically prefigured (as would an altar sacrifice) the vicarious execution of the Messianic Servant of the Lord for the blood-guiltiness of his people. Not only men, but the blood-stained land participated in the symbolical defilement; and its defilement, too, was, after a figure, purged by the judicial ritual (cf. Num 35:33). In this there was a reminder that perfect righteousness must at last pervade the totality of God's kingdom. Another by-product of this ritual requirement would be the preservation of peace by the elimination of possible misunderstanding that might spark inter-city strife if the kinsman of the slain were rashly to pursue his role of avenger.

Limits of a Husband's Authority. Deut 21:10-14. This first of three stipulations concerned with the authority of the head of the household (cf. vv. 15-21) deals with the limits of the husband's authority over his wife. The case of a captive woman (vv. 10,11; cf. 20:14; contrast 7:3) is used as a case in point for establishing the rights of the wife, perhaps because the principle would obviously apply *a fortiori* in the case of an Israelite wife. On the purificatory acts of verses 12b,13a, which signified removal from captive-slave status, compare Lev 14:8; Num 8:7. On the month's mourning, see Num 20:29 and Deut 34:8. The period would provide for the achieving of inward composure for beginning a new life, as well as for an appropriate expression of filial piety. **14. Thou shalt not sell her.** A wife might not be reduced to slave status, not even the wife who had been raised from slave status. Though the particular illustration of the captive wife is peculiar to Deuteronomy, the same principle is

expressed in the Book of the Covenant, where the case of the Israelite bondmaid is cited (Ex 21:7-11). **Then thou shalt let her go whither she will.** The severance of the marriage relationship is mentioned here only incidentally to the statement of the main principle that a man's authority did not extend to the right of reducing his wife to a slave. The dissolution of the marriage would have to be accomplished according to the laws of divorce in the theocracy (cf. Deut 24:1-4). Not the divorce was mandatory, but the granting of freedom in case the man should determine to divorce his wife according to the permission granted by Moses because of the hardness of their hearts (cf. Matt 19:8).

Limits of a Father's Authority. Deut 21:15-17. This stipulation circumscribed the authority of the father over his sons specifically with respect to the rights of the first-born. The particular illustration involves another situation within the Mosaic economy which was merely tolerated, namely, polygamy. Where polygamy was practiced, the problem cited (v. 15) would have been common (cf. Gen 29:30ff.; 1 Sam 1:4ff.). 17c. **The right of the first-born is his.** The right of primogeniture included a property inheritance share double that of other sons. The principle here enforced is that parental authority is not absolute. A father's mere personal preference did not justify disregard of the divinely sanctioned customary rights of those who were under his parental authority.

Judgment of a Rebellious Son. Deut 21:18-21. If misuse of authority produced tyranny, disrespect for proper authority would produce anarchy, the very contradiction of the covenant order as a manifestation of God's lordship. Parental authority, in particular, had been ordained of God to represent divine authority and to be the cornerstone of all human government and societal order. Therefore, while it was necessary to protect those under the authority of a household head from the arbitrary abuse of his authority (vv. 10-17), it was also necessary to fortify that authority against the spirit of lawlessness in a generation of Belial (v. 20). It is here enforced by the ultimate sanctions of theocratic law (v. 21; Ex 21:15,17; Lev 20:9; Deut 27:16). 18. **Though they chasten him** (ASV). Chastening was to be the limit of the parents' own application of judicial sanctions. Beyond that, the judicial process

must be conducted by the elders at the gate (v. 19), that is, by the local theocratic judicatory (cf. 16:18ff.).

Disposition of a Criminal's Corpse. Deut 21:22-23. The preceding law had proceeded from parental to official judicial authority and had prescribed the death penalty. The present case takes the judicial process a step beyond the execution, to the exposure of the corpse as a monitory, public proclamation of the satisfaction of justice. The principle being exemplified is that all theocratic law administration must operate in the service of covenant religion.

23. He that is hanged is accursed of God. The condemned will have been guilty of offenses declared accursed in the covenant sanctions. As one executed, he would visibly embody the curse of God poured out. And as a human carcass exposed to birds and beasts of prey (cf. 2 Sam 21:10), the man hanged on a tree would be an expression of the ultimate in the curse of God on the fallen race (cf., e.g., Rev 19:17ff.). In this conclusion to the series of stipulations wherein God demands a perfect judicial righteousness and the satisfaction of every claim of justice, if need be through a vicarious sufferer, the New Testament believer is reminded of him who was accursed of God to redeem his people from the law's inexorable curse (Gal 3:13).

3) Sanctity of the Divine Order. 22:1-25:19.

Love for God requires reverence for the divine ordinances at the various levels of creation and in the various spheres of human activity. The covenant servant must respect the sanctity of the orders of nature (Deut 22:5-12), marriage 22:13-30; Heb. Bible 23:1), and the theocratic kingdom (23:1 *Heb. Bible* 23:2 - 25:12). With the partial exception of the natural order, the area in view is that of the mutual relationships of the covenant servants. This whole section, therefore, is bounded by laws which clearly express the basic principle that the same loving regard must be shown for one's neighbor's interests as for one's own (22:1-4; 25:13-16). The extra-biblical suzerainty

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treaties also regulated the relationships of the lord's vassals to one another.

a) The Ordinances of Labor and Marriage. 22:1-30.

Deuteronomy 22:1-4

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother.

Verse 1-4. Similar legislation is found in the Book of the Covenant (Ex 23:4ff.). There, it is in the midst of laws aimed at securing an honest administration of justice. The law of God must be obeyed by a man even in his secret actions which are beyond the detection of God's human agents of law enforcement. Deut 22:1-4 might thus well serve as an appendix to the preceding section on the enforcement of theocratic law. The reminder is provided that God's requirements concerning our relations with our neighbor are truly fulfilled only when we act in a spirit of love that goes beyond merely keeping within the law, to avoid punishment, and positively seeks the welfare of others as though it were our own. This law of love is the essential principle which the following stipulations apply in the particular life situations of the covenant people.

Deuteronomy 22:5-12

The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Man must be mindful that, in all the use he makes of this world, he is God's steward. Various regulations were therefore prescribed for the Israelites which would continually remind them, as they pursued the cultural program of God's kingdom (cf.

Gen 1:28), that the world is the Lord's, for he is its Maker. Man is indeed set as king over the earth, with the whole order of nature under his dominion; but man's rule is a viceregency in the Creator's name. Human authority must therefore be exercised according to the pattern God appoints. It is this fundamental principle which underlies the opening requirement of this section that the distinction between man and woman should not be blurred by the one's appropriating the characteristic articles of the other (Deut 22:5). God created them male and female, with distinctive natures and functions; specifically, in the divinely established order of authority, man is the head of the woman as together they reign over the earth. The Lord created the various "kinds" in the vegetable and animal kingdom (Gen 1:11ff.). Israel was so to treat these "kinds" that they would be preserved in their distinctive natures (Deut 22:6-7,9-11; cf. Lev 19:19). 8. **Bring not blood upon thine house.** Of special significance in the natural order of creation is the lifeblood of man. Carelessness with respect to it shows a want of neighborly love and of respect for God. It therefore incurs guilt before the Creator even when accidents resulting from such carelessness receive no human redress. 12. **Make thee fringes.** Like the other stipulations in this section, the final regulation, which required the appendage of tassels to the outer garment, was designed to provide a special reminder of God's suzerainty over Israel (cf. Num 15:37-41).

Deuteronomy 22:13-30

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Deuteronomy 22:13-30

If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,

The laws of the preceding verses were to regulate the creation ordinance of labor; the laws of this section were designed to govern the creation ordinance of marriage. The sanctity of the divine institution of the family is thus the interest of the present provisions. 13,14. **If any man take a wife ... and bring up an evil name upon her.** The case is that in which a husband brings an allegation of unchastity against his bride, whether falsely (vv. 13-19) or justly (vv. 20,21). In the first instance, the malicious accuser was to suffer corporal punishment (v. 18; cf. Deut 25:1-3), pay compensation to his father-in-law for defaming his house (v. 19a), and retain his wife without ever being permitted to divorce her (v. 19b). In the second case, the guilty bride who had "wrought folly" was to suffer death by stoning before the disgraced house of her father. In societies where such evidence was legally decisive, it was customary after the consummation of the marriage to keep the tokens of the bride's virginity (v. 17). (On the judicial responsibility of the elders, see 19:12; 21:2-6,19-20; 25:7-9. On adultery, punishable by death, see 5:18; Lev 18:20,29; 20:10.)

Verses 23-29 concern the seduction of unmarried girls, whether betrothed (vv. 23-27) or unbetrothed (vv. 28,29). If the girl was betrothed, the apprehended man was to be stoned to death. The same penalty befell the girl if their sexual intercourse occurred in the city (vv. 23,24); but not if the circumstances permitted the reasonable assumption that she had been forced - **there is in (her) no sin worthy of death** (vv. 25-27). The seducer of an unbetrothed virgin was obliged to take her as wife, paying the customary bride price and forfeiting the right of divorce (vv. 28,29). Probably the father's rights mentioned in Ex 22:17 continued to have precedence. On Deut 22:30, see Lev 18:6ff.; 20:11ff.; Deut 27:20ff. This single prohibition represents, as it recalls, the whole list of forbidden degrees of affinity.

The theme of chapters 23-25 is the sanctification of the theocratic kingdom. Israel

must respect the sanctity of the congregation of the Lord as such (Deut 23:1-18; Heb. Bible, 2-19); the sanctity of special classes of God's servants, particularly the needy (23:19 (Heb. Bible, 20) - 24:22); and the sanctity of every citizen of the theocracy as an individual bearer of God's image (25:1-12).

b) The Congregation of the Lord. 23:1-18.

Deuteronomy 23:1-3

He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

The sacredness of the congregation of the Lord was signified by the exclusion from participation in the official theocratic assembly of those disqualified in various ways. The disqualification might be physical (vv. 1,2) or ethnic and historical (vv. 3-8). Excluded were the eunuch (v. 1) and the **bastard** (v. 2) together with his descendants - **even to his tenth generation**, i.e., indefinitely (cf. v. 3). The eunuch's condition was a mutilation of the divinely given nature (cf. Deut 14:1). The bastard was the issue of a repudiation of the divinely appointed ordinance. Possibly the (*mamzer*), translated **bastard**, was, more precisely, one born of an incestuous union (cf. 22:30). Such exclusions from privilege point to the importance in covenant administration of the marriage design of securing a

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godly seed. Nevertheless, even in OT days such physical disability was an obstacle only to external privilege, not to the spiritual realities of salvation. In NT times such disabilities no longer enter into consideration even in the external administration of the church (cf. Isa 56:4-5; Acts 8:27-28). The same is true of the cases of disqualification mentioned in Deut 23:3-8.

Deuteronomy 23:4-8

Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.

Because they met you not with bread and ... water. Although the Ammonites and Moabites were begotten in incest (cf. v. 2; Gen 19:30ff.), the reason assigned for their debarment is that they were unwilling to show hospitality to the people of God on their wilderness journey from Egypt to their homeland (cf. Deut 2:18ff.,29), and even attempted offensive action against Israel - **hired ... Balaam ... to curse thee** (4b; cf. Num 22-25). The divine curse is the portion of those who would curse the covenant people, according to God's promise to Abraham (Gen 12:3). Hence, theocratic Israel might not enter into covenantal alliance with these accursed would-be cursers (Deut 23:6). **7. Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite ... an Egyptian.** In the case of the Edomites and Egyptians exclusion was again the rule because of their past enmity (cf. the Egyptian oppression, Ex 1:8ff., and Edomite opposition, Num 20:18ff.), but it was modified (Deut 23:8; cf. Ex 20:5), in the one case, because of ties of Abrahamic kinship (cf. Gen 36:1ff.) and, in the other, because of hospitality shown to Abraham and Jacob's family when distressed by famine (Gen 12; 42:1-47:31).

Deuteronomy 23:9-13

When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing.

9. Keep thee from every wicked thing. The military camp of Israel engaged in the wars of the Lord was an extension of the theocratic kingdom and must be characterized by that same sanctity which marked the settled community.

Deuteronomy 23:14

For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.

Thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp. In war, as in peace, God was present among his people, and his name must be hallowed. Physical cleanliness was the appropriate symbol of the holiness of the covenant

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relationship. (On vv. 10,11, cf. Lev 15:16).

Deuteronomy 23:15-25

Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee:

These verses present further examples of what might and might not be deemed compatible with sacred membership in the congregation of the Lord. 15. **The servant which is escaped.** This law relates to foreign runaway slaves. On the giving of asylum to the refugee, compare the extradition laws in the secular treaties. 17. **Whore ... sodomite.** These were female and male religious prostitutes, as indicated by the Hebrew terms, which are the feminine and masculine forms of a root meaning "sacred." The law relates to native Israelites devoted to cultic prostitution. The abominable rites of the pagan fertility cults are in view. 18. **The price of a dog.** On **dog**, another name for a male prostitute, see Rev 22:15. One could not satisfy the holy demands of God's covenant by hiding sin under religious hypocrisy. Lest the rules given in Deut 23:3-8 leave the false impression that ethnic considerations were paramount, it was made clear by these two further rules, the one welcoming the foreigner and the other excluding certain Israelites, that mercy and morality were the vital principles of covenant administration.

c) Protection for the Weak. 23:19-24:22.

Respect was to be shown to all those dignified by the status of covenant servant to the Lord. This section of stipulations was designed to guarantee this sanctity of the theocratic citizen by regulations which assured peace, prosperity, and liberty within the covenant commitment to all God's people, but especially to those classes whose welfare was jeopardized by various circumstances. The legislation seems to be arranged in groups corresponding to laws six through ten in the Decalogue, but in a slightly different order, as follows: laws of property (Deut 23:19-25), of family (24:1-

5), of life (24:6-15), of justice (24:16-18), and of charity (24:19-22).

Laws of Property. Deut 23:19-25. 19. **Not lend upon usury to thy brother.** Improverished Israelites were protected from exploitation at the hands of their richer brethren by the prohibition of interest on loans granted to them (cf. Ex 22:25; Lev 25:35ff.; Deut 15:1ff.). Interest might be exacted from foreigners (**a stranger** , v. 20), however, because the loans made to them would not be for the relief of destitution but for business capital to be employed by these traveling merchants for profitable enterprise. 22. **If thou ... forbear to vow.** Beyond the specified tributary demands of the covenant Lord, the property of the vassal was at his own disposal. This right was not intended, however, to discourage the free expression of religious love and gratitude, nor did it provide escape from the obligation of a voluntary vow once made. Reverencing his own holy name, God would not encourage a sense of carelessness or impunity in those who made solemn commitments to him (vv. 21,23; cf. Lev 27; Num 30:2ff.). 24. The law of crops (vv. 24,25) provided such liberty as to satisfy the principle of brotherly hospitality, but prohibited the changing of liberty to license in violation of the property rights of the theocratic citizen.

Deuteronomy 24:1

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When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

Laws of Family. Deut 24:1-5. Divorce as permitted in the Mosaic Law (cf. Lev 21:7,14; 22:13; Num 30:9), because of the hardness of the Israelites' hearts (Matt 19:8; Mark 10:5), endangered the dignity of women within the theocracy. Hence, easy abuse of the permission was forestalled by circumscribing it with technicalities and restrictions (Deut 24:1-4). The RSV is correct in regarding verses 1-4 as one sentence, with 1-3 the condition and 4 the conclusion. The AV is liable to the interpretation that divorce was mandatory in the situation described. Actually, what was mandatory was not divorce, but (if divorce was resorted to) a legal process which included four elements.

(a) There must be a serious cause for the divorce. The exact import of the words **some uncleanness** (v. 1; cf. Deut 23:14) is uncertain. Adultery is not meant, for the law prescribed the death penalty for that (22:13ff.; Lev 20:10; cf. Num 5:11ff.). (b) A writ of separation was to be placed in the woman's hand for her subsequent protection. The preparation of this legal instrument implies the involvement of (c) a public official who might also have to judge of the adequacy of the alleged grounds of divorce. (d) The man must give her a formal dismissal - **send her out of his house** (v. 1). The main point of the present law, however, was that a man might not remarry his wife after he divorced her if she had meanwhile remarried, even though her second husband had divorced her or had died. With respect to the first husband, the remarried divorce was **defiled** (v. 4). Such was the abnormality of this situation, tolerated in OT times but abrogated by our Lord in the interests of the original standard (Matt 19:9; Mark 10:6-9; cf. Gen 2:23-24). 5. **He shall be free at home one year.** Further respect was shown for the sanctity of the family relationship and especially for the welfare of the woman within it by granting a year's exemption from public services to the newly married man, that his bride might be gladdened by his presence.

Laws of Life. Deut 24:6-15. The concern of these stipulations was the life of God's people and things essential to the preservation of their life. Safeguards were afforded to the dignity and peace of the needy, in particular, for the Lord delights to be the Help of the helpless, and would have his people to be of like mind. 7. **Maketh merchandise of him.** Traffic in human life was forbidden under penalty of death (cf. Ex 21:16). Respect for the whole community's life and health demanded careful attention to the divine prescriptions for dealing with the disease of leprosy (Deut 24:8; cf. Lev 13; 14), the seriousness of which was evidenced by Miriam's experience (Deut 24:9; cf. Num 12:10ff.). 10. **When you make your neighbor a loan (RSV).** Though interest on loans to Israelite neighbors was forbidden (Deut 23:19-20), a pledge might be taken as security; but even this was not to be acquired in such a way as to prejudice the dignity, let alone the life, of the debtor. Men were not to be deprived of articles indispensable to life and health. In this category were the millstone (v. 6), the quadrangular mantle used as cover in sleeping (vv. 10-13; cf. Ex 22:26-27), and the day laborer's wages (Deut 24:14-15; cf. Lev 19:13). 15. **Lest he cry against thee unto the Lord.** In the secular suzerainty treaties, too, complaints of one vassal against another were to be adjudicated by the suzerain.

Laws of Justice. Deut 24:16-18. Justice must be dispensed to each Israelite in accordance with truth. 16. **Every man ... for his own sin.** The guilty individual alone was to be punished, and not innocent members of his family (cf. 2 Kings 14:6). There is no contradiction between this and the divine judgment as described in the Decalogue (Deut 5:9; Ex 20:5), for the latter does not say that God afflicts the innocent. Those who share in the visitation of judgment upon the fathers' iniquities are such as share also in the fathers' hatred of God. On the other hand, there is no repudiation of the principle of the corporate responsibility which obtains in certain group situations. 17. **Stranger ... fatherless ... widow.** Even the most helpless classes were to enjoy justice and be guaranteed all their legal rights. On the familiar appeal to the Exodus (v. 18), see 22; Deut 15:15.

Laws of Charity. Deut 24:19-22. The spirit of charity, negatively required in the tenth commandment, was to be

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Laws of Charity. Deut 24:19-22. The spirit of charity, negatively required in the tenth commandment, was to be the governing spirit of theocratic life. Once again the poor were to be the beneficiaries. Cf. Lev 19:9-10; 23:22.

d) Sanctity of the Individual. 25:1-19.

Deuteronomy 25:1-12

If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

Verses 1-12, the final laws on the sanctification of the kingdom (Deut 23:1-25:12), guarded the sanctity of man as individual image-bearer of God. Verses 13-19 conclude the laws of reverence for the natural, family, and theocratic orders (vv. 22-25) as they began (cf. 22:1-4), with the golden rule principle.

Verse 1-12. The just punishment of the guilty was to be so dispensed that his individual human dignity was honored (vv. 1-3). The principle of the sanctity of the individual god-like creature was thus enforced at the point where such respect might most plausibly seem to have been forfeited. Contrary to the sentence division in the AV, the conclusion does not begin until verse 2 (so RSV). Unbecoming public degradation was to be prevented by several precautionary measures. The punishment of the criminal must be preceded by a trial and sentence, and must be personally supervised by the judge. The stripes were to be scrupulously counted - **Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed** (v. 3) - and not applied at random, as to an animal, or with the abandon of anger, unmindful that the judgment was the Lord's. The severity of the scourging was to be proportionate to the gravity of the offense, yet in no case to exceed forty stripes. 4. **Thou shalt not muzzle the ox ...** The positive counterpart to the prohibition of dishonoring a man in spite of his evil works is the requirement that he receive all proper honor for his good works. This

verse, probably a proverbial expression, seems even here to have the force given it by Paul in 1 Cor 9:9 and 1 Tim 5:18.

The covenant servant is an immortal being with a stake, even beyond death and the grave, in that future blessedness of God's kingdom which was promised in the Covenant of Redemption to believers and their seed after them (vv. 5-10). 6. **That his name be not blotted out of Israel** (ASV). Witness was to be borne to this dignity of the servant-son of God by the perpetuation of his name in a covenant seed dwelling in his inheritance within the OT typical kingdom. As an application of this, the Deuteronomic Covenant adopted a form of the widespread practice of levirate marriage, whereby there developed upon the brother of a man who died childless the duty of raising up an heir to the dead by his widow - **the firstborn ... shall succeed in the name of his brother**. This requirement constituted an exception to the prohibition in Lev 18:16; 20:21. For Biblical examples of this or similar practice, see Gen 38 and the Book of Ruth. The levirate duty is limited in Deuteronomy to situations in which brothers shared the same estate (Deut 25:5a), and even then it was not compulsory - **My husband's brother refuseth** (v. 7). Failure to comply, however, betrayed a want of fraternal affection and was publicly stigmatized (vv. 8-10). On the transfer of the sandal for confirming legal transfer of right or property, see Ruth 4:7. In view of the provision of Num 27:4ff., there would be no need for the levirate marriage if the deceased had daughters. Hence the AV seems preferable to the RSV in rendering in Deut 25:5 - **no child** rather than (*no son*). Verses 11,12, also are concerned with the dignity of the individual and indeed precisely with his dignity as God's covenant servant, who in his circumcision bears in his body the sign of the covenant. The reference to the organ of reproduction might account for the immediate conjunction of this prohibition with the law of levirate marriage. That the act forbidden includes contempt for the covenant sign and not just indecency is suggested by the apparent

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similarity in the nature of the punishment and the sign, both involving a mutilation of the body. Weight is added to this interpretation by the fact that apart from this case, only the (*lex talionis*) (19:21) calls for such penal mutilation.

Deuteronomy 25:13-19

Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.

15. **Thou shalt have a perfect and just weight.** Neighbor must be loved as self (vv. 13-16); therefore, business with one's neighbor was not to be conducted with two sets of measuring standards, the large for receiving, the small for dispensing (cf. Amos 8:5). This law somewhat expands Lev 19:35-36, especially by the appended blessings and curses of the covenant. While this law of love sums up the requirements for inter-theocratic relationships dealt with in the immediately preceding sections of stipulations, no repudiation of the mandate of conquest (cf. Deut 7; 20:16-17) is intended (25:17-19). Nor is there any contradiction between the two. For though God requires love of neighbor, those who set themselves to destroy the people of the typical OT theocratic kingdom removed themselves from the neighbor category, just as those doomed with Satan in eternal predition are not the neighbors of the inhabitants of the heavenly theocracy. On the charge to exterminate Amalek, see Ex 17:8-16. Taken together, the laws of love and hate amount to the single requirement to love God, and consequently to love whom he loves and hate whom he hates.

4) Confession of God as Redeemer-King. 26:1-19.

Deuteronomy 26:1

And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein;

The long stipulations division (chs. 5-26) draws to a close with the liturgies for two cultic confessions (vv. 1-11; 12-15) and a declaration of the ratification of the covenant (vv. 16-19).

Deuteronomy 26:3-11

And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us.

The country which the Lord sware ... to give us. The Israelite servants of the Lord were to make continual

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thankful confession that their goodly inheritance in Canaan was the gift of God's redemptive grace in fulfillment of his oath to the patriarchs. They were to confess his continuing lordship and to express their consecration by a tributary offering of the first fruits. On the law of first fruits, see Deut 18:4; Ex 23:19; 34:26; Num 18:12ff. Elements of first-fruit offering are found in connection with each of the annual feasts (Deut 16). For example, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread a sheaf of first fruits was waved (Lev 23:10ff.). Also, the Feast of Weeks was called "the day of firstfruits" (Num 28:26; cf. Ex 23:16; 34:22) and two first-fruit loaves were offered at it (Lev 23:17); and the first fruits of wine could not be offered until the Feast of Tabernacles, when the vintage had ripened. If "all the fruit of the earth" (Deut 26:2) indicates the end of the harvest season, then the Feast of Tabernacles must have been the occasion for the presentation of this basket of first fruits at the central altar. Grammatically, verse 2 can be understood as describing either all the first fruits of the ground or only a token basket thereof. In the case of agricultural first fruits, the amount is nowhere specified. Since first fruits were assigned to the priests (Num 18:13-14), the reference to the sacred feast which the offerer was to enjoy after this ritual - **Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing ... the Lord ... hath given** (v. 11; cf. Deut 12:6-7,11-12,17-18; 16:11,14) - indicates that the basket represented only a token of the first fruits (see comments on 14:22ff.; 15:20), at least if this feast was provisioned out of the first fruits. That, however, is uncertain. The Israelite must confess that the theocratic calling of his people could not be attributed to their might (v. 5ff.; cf. 7:7-8; 8:17-18).

5b. **A wandering Aramean** (AV, *Syrian*) **was my father** (RSV). Hebrew (*'obed*) connotes the ideas of "lost" and "in peril" (cf. AV, (*ready to perish*). The reference is to Jacob. He is called **Aramean** because the patriarchal origins were geographically, though not racially, Aramean, and because Jacob himself sojourned in Aram-naharaim during the period of the birth of his sons, the future tribal fathers of Israel. 7,8. **The Lord heard ... brought us forth.** The commemorative recital of God's redemptive acts in exodus and conquest was Israel's confessional Amen to God's own recital of his favor to the nation in the historical prologue of the covenant. Verse 10b does not describe a new step in the ritual of the first-fruits offering (in contradiction of v. 4); it is, rather, a summarizing conclusion.

Deuteronomy 26:12-15

When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;

The dependence of Israel on the Lord for continuing prosperity was to be expressed in a special triennial service of petition for his favorable attention and blessing. (On the tithing regulations, see the comments on Deut 14:22ff.).

13. Before the Lord thy God. This direction probably refers to the central sanctuary. If so, then the emphasis on the completion of the tithing process (vv. 12,13) suggests that the Feast of Tabernacles was the occasion. This liturgy may have followed immediately upon that of the presentation of the basket of first fruits (vv. 1-11). **15. Look down ... and bless ... Israel.** The avowal of obedience to all the tithing prescriptions (vv. 13,14) as the preliminary to this petition for divine blessing recalls the fact that God declared the latter to be contingent on the former (14:28-29). The worshiper must affirm that his tithe had not been exposed to ceremonial defilement, particularly, the uncleanness associated with mourning for the dead (v. 14; cf. Lev 22:3ff.; Num 19:11ff.; Hos 9:4).

Deuteronomy 26:16-19

This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore

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This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

The central act in the ceremony of covenant ratification was the oath of allegiance which the vassal took to his lord in response to the declaration of the covenant stipulations and sanctions. Israel had taken such an oath after the reading of the Book of the Covenant at Sinai (Ex 24:7), and now Israel must do the same in the plains of Moab, as is reflected in these verses (see also Deut 29:10-15). 16. **Do them with all thine heart.** The Lord demanded covenantal consecration. The people of Israel avowed that they submitted to the Lord as their God, who was to be obeyed according to all his holy will - **to walk in his ways** (v. 17). The Lord graciously acknowledged them as his people (v. 18a) and guaranteed the blessings of the covenant to the faithful (vv. 18b,19; cf. 7:6; 14:2; 19:5-6).

IV. Sanctions: Covenant Ratification. 27:1-30:20.

The fourth standard division in the ancient suzerainty treaties was the curses and blessings, the woe and weal sanctions of the covenant. In Deuteronomy this section is found in chapters 27-30. While Deut 26:16-19 forms a conclusion to the stipulations, it also introduces the element of covenant ratification, the nucleus around which the curses and blessings of these chapters cluster. The ratification of the new covenant which Moses was making with the second generation was to unfold in two stages. That was customary procedure in securing the throne succession to the appointed royal heir. When death was imminent, the suzerain required his vassals to pledge obedience to his son; then, soon after the son's accession, the vassals' commitment was repeated. Similarly, Moses and Joshua formed a dynasty of mediatorial representatives of the Lord's suzerainty over Israel. Hence the succession of Joshua, which symbolized the continuing lordship of Israel's God, was ensured by the oath elicited from Israel before Moses died, and again later by a ratification ceremony after Joshua's accession. The pronouncing of curses and blessings is prominent in each of these ratification rituals.

The sanctions section of Deuteronomy opens with the curses and blessings to be used at the second stage of the ratification (ch. 27), then returns to the immediate situation and the solemn sanctions of the initial stage of ratification (chs. 28-30). When Deuteronomy is considered as the finished legal documentary witness to the covenant, no difficulty need be felt with the position assigned to the directions of chapter 27. On the other hand, the connection between the end of chapter 26 and the beginning of chapter 28 is so smooth as to suggest the possibility that chapter 27 may not have intervened at this precise point in the progress of the ceremony in Moab. Similarly, in the original flow of Moses' oration, Deut 30 might have followed immediately upon the end of chapter 28.

A. Ratification Ceremony in Canaan. 27:1-26.

Moses prescribed the ceremony for the second stage of the covenant renewal, to be conducted in Canaan (vv. 1-8). The re-establishment of the covenant was proclaimed (vv. 9,10). A charge was given concerning the recital of blessings and curses in the later ceremony (vv. 11-26). For the historical performance of what is here prescribed, see Josh 8:30-35. For an anticipation of these instructions among the Deuteronomic stipulations, see Deut 11:26-30.

Deuteronomy 27:1-4

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*And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, **Keep all the commandments which I command you this day.***

Verse 1-4. 1. To promote respect for the appointed authorities, Moses associated with himself in this solemn hour **the elders of Israel** and the priests (cf. v. 9). 2. **Set thee up great stones, and plaister them.** Covenant consecration must be an act of intelligent, informed faith and devotion. Therefore, the content of the covenant was to be published preparatory to its ratification by the people. That was one purpose of writing the covenant on the plastered stones, an Egyptian technique, as is confirmed by the fact that in the historical fulfillment Joshua read this law to the people (Josh 8:34). Comparable were Moses' reading of the Book of the Covenant to Israel at the ratification of the Sinaitic Covenant and the proclamation of the Deuteronomic Covenant in the plains of Moab. The fact that durable stones were selected invites comparison with the two stone tables of the law written by the finger of God and suggests that a further purpose was to provide a symbolic witness to the permanence of the covenant (cf. Deut 31:26; Josh 24:26-27). 3. **All the words of this law.** This refers to the Deuteronomic Covenant, the part, "law," being taken to represent the whole. The ceremonial feast was another recognized symbolic method by which people ratified treaties. That is the significance of the peace offerings and the associated joyous meal (v. 7; cf. Ex 24:11).

The final ratification was to be carried out after Moses' death, when Israel under Joshua was in Canaan (v. 2a). Its setting was to be the impressive one of the adjacent mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, between which lay Shechem (v. 4; cf. vv. 12,13). There is no record of a military effort having been necessary to take that area of Canaan. The essential element of the ceremony would be Israel's self-consecration to the covenant Lord. The burnt offerings (v. 6) symbolized such consecration. To similar effect was the series of self-maledictory oaths (v. cf. 15ff.).

Deuteronomy 27:5-8

And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.

There shalt thou build an altar. For the purpose of the sacrificial offerings, a special altar was to be erected on Ebal. It may be that the mount of cursing was selected because the Mosaic economy, in its distinctive emphasis, was a ministration of death and condemnation (cf. 2 Cor 3:7-9), though, like a schoolmaster, conducting men to the grace of Christ. Or possibly the altar was to be erected on Ebal because the peace of the covenant was to come through the infliction of the curses on the Redeemer-Servant, sacrificed for the sins of God's people. The altar was to be made of unhewn stones, in accordance with the requirement of the Book of the Covenant (Ex 20:25). Clearly the Deuteronomic law of the permanent central altar was not intended to be a repudiation of the altar law of the Book of the Covenant. Nor was the principle of the centralization of the altar so absolutely restrictive that there might not be the special altar for extraordinary occasions (see on Deut 12:4-14).

Deuteronomy 27:9-10

And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel;

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And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God.

In the midst of the instructions concerned with the later stage in the renewal process, a solemn reminder was given that the covenantal engagement had already, on the day of the Deuteronomic proclamation, been entered upon.

Deuteronomy 27:11-26

And Moses charged the people the same day, saying,

Six tribes descending from Jacob's wives Leah and Rachel were to stand on the slopes of the mount of blessing and two of similar descent - the tribe of Reuben, who forfeited the birthright by the sin of incest (Gen 49:4; cf. Deut 27:20), and the tribe of Zebulun, Leah's youngest son - were to join the four tribes descending from the handmaids on the mount of cursing (vv. 12,13). Whether the two sets of tribes were to fulfill their respective roles unto curse and blessing simply by having either curse or blessing formulae directed toward them, or by themselves reciting or at least assenting to one or the other is not stated. In chapter 28 there appear matching sets of six blessings (vv. 3-6) and six curses (vv. 16-19); it seems difficult to dissociate these from the present two sets of six tribes. Joshua apparently read Deut 28 before all the assembly of Israel as part of the entire renewal treaty (cf. Josh 8:34-35).

The ark of the covenant and the Levitical priests were to be stationed between Ebal and Gerizim (Deut 27:14; cf. Josh 8:33). They must lead Israel in the oath of ratification, consisting in a series of twelve self-maledictions (Deut 27:15-26). The repeated **Cursed be** identifies the covenant-breaker's fate with that of the serpent (cf. Gen 3:14). The **Amen** response was the customary formula of assent (cf. Num 5:22; 1 Kings 1:36; Neh 5:13; 8:6; Ps 72:19). The fact that only curses and not blessings are given in this passage indicates that this is not the detailed account of the curse and

blessing proclamation by the two pairs of six tribes mentioned in Deut 27:12-13. A similar indication is the fact that verses 15-26 were to be addressed to and receive response from all the Israelites (v.

14). This section rather describes a separate feature of the covenant ceremony, the actual oath, which characteristically took the form of provisional self-maledictions, but not benedictions. In contrast to the curses in chapter 28, the several members of this series differ not in variety of curse but in kind of sin. The area of transgression covered is that of secret sins likely to escape human detection and punishment (note esp. 27:15,24; cf. Job 31:24ff.) and, therefore, peculiarly the judicial province of God as divine Witness to the oath. Those are imprecated who secretly violate God's demands for respect to himself (v. 15), to rightful authority (v. 16), to truth (vv. 17-19), to family (vv. 20-23), to human life (vv. 24,25), and, in sum, to God's covenant (v. 26).

B. Proclamation of the Sanctions. 28:1-68.

Returning to the first stage of the ceremony of covenant renewal, Moses pronounced its sanctions. In the corresponding section of the Sinaitic Book of the Covenant (Ex 23:20-33), the blessings predominated. Now, the forty years' history of Israelite apostasy having intervened, Moses' emphasis falls heavily on the curses; thus, blessings (Deut 28:1-14) and curses (vv. 15-68). This emphasis was anticipated in the promises and threats of a similar section in Leviticus (ch. 26), written after Israel's earliest rebellion against the Sinaitic Covenant. The

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remarkable preview in Deut 28-30 of Israel's history, especially of the faroff exile, has been a major stumbling-block to the recognition of the Mosaic origin of this document by naturalistic higher criticism.

1) Blessings. 28:1-14 (cf. 7:12ff.; 11:13ff.; 22ff.).

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

Verse 1-14. **If thou shalt hearken diligently.** Although Israel's inheritance and continued enjoyment of the promises was not a matter of legal merit, there was a connection between the nation's corporate piety and her prosperity. For the OT theocratic kingdom prefigured the consummate kingdom of God, in which righteousness and glory are to be united. Accordingly, to keep the message of the typical-prophetic picture clear, God allowed the Israelites to enjoy the blessings of the typical kingdom only as they, and especially their official representatives, exhibited an appropriate measure of the righteousness of the kingdom. Since any righteousness that Israel possessed was a gift of grace from the God of her salvation, the principle which informs Deut 28 has no affinities with a religion of works-salvation (see on 6:1-3). Verses 3-6 present six blessings which are paralleled by six curses in 16-19. (On the apparent use of these at the later ceremony in Canaan, see comments on 27:12-13.) The blessings depict a comprehensive fullness of beatitude. The paired opposites, for example, express totality (cf. vv. 3,6). What was concisely presented in liturgical formulae in the six beatitudes is elaborated in verses 7-14. The arrangement of the blessings is chiasmic: thus, foreign relations (vv. 7 and 12b,13); domestic affairs (vv. 8 and 11,12a); and in the center position, relationship to the Lord (vv. 9,10).

If Israel would obey the Lord, she would come out on top in every military and commercial encounter with other nations. Within the kingdom there would be abundance of the earth's goodness. Canaan would truly be a paradise flowing with milk and honey. Of primary import, Israel would prosper in her relationship to her covenant Lord. That is the secret of all beatitude, for his favor is life. From the manifest tokens of God's favor to Israel, all the earth would recognize that **the name of the Lord is called upon thee** (v. 10). That is, it would be clear that God's covenant was established with Israel and that he, the Suzerain, was Israel's Owner and Defender (cf. Isa 63:19; Jer 7:10-11; 15:16). Once and again the prerequisite covenant loyalty is recalled (Deut 28:9b,13b,14).

2) Curses. 28:15-68.

Banishment from the promised inheritance was the extreme of malediction. It signified the loss of God's special presence and favor, loss of the appointed sacramental access to him on his holy hill of Zion, and loss of status as the people of God's kingdom. In this long section of curses, therefore, siege and exile repeatedly appear as the climax of woe. There is a series of parallel pictures of the disastrous future looming before this nation so prone to unfaithfulness (vv. 20-26,27-37,38-48,49-57,58-68). The first three and the last of these pictures culminate in the doom of conquest by the enemy, with its dreadful sequel (vv. 25,26; 36,37; 48; 63-68); the fourth is completely devoted to that accursed event (vv. 49-57). This extended description of particular evils follows an introductory, ritualistic formulation of the covenant's curse sanctions (vv. 15-19).

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Deuteronomy 28:15-19

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

Verse 15 corresponds to verses 1,2, and 16-19 are the counterpart to 3-6. The vengeance of the covenant (cf. Lev 26:25) would overtake the oath-violating people even within the asylum of their inherited paradise land. Without holiness no man can abide where God reveals his glorious presence, and there is no respect of persons with him.

Deuteronomy 28:20-26

The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me.

20. Thou hast forsaken me. Such was the essence of Israel's sin - violation of the first commandment of the covenant. **The Lord shall send.** It was the right and duty of the forsaken Lord himself, the One to whom and by whom Israel swore the covenant oath, to avenge the oath. Whatever the human or earthly origin of the several curses, the Lord was their ultimate Author. **Until thou be destroyed** (cf. vv. 24,45,51,61). It is repeatedly stated here that the final issue of the various types of curses - epidemic (vv. 21,22a), drought (vv. 22b-24), and war (vv. 25,26) - would be nothing short of Israel's destruction (vv. 20-22,24,26). **24. The rain of thy land powder and dust.** The sirocco would fill the air with sand and dust. Verse 25 is the reversal of verse 7 (cf. Lev 26:17). **26. Thy carcase ... meat unto all fowls ... and ... beasts.** The curse principle is essentially the prostration of man under the sub-human realms over which God appointed him in the beginning as king. Hence, the Scripture

depicts the doom of rebel mankind as an eschatological feast in which slain men are devoured by birds and beasts (cf. Ps 79:2; Ezek 39:4,17ff.; Rev 19:17-18).

Deuteronomy 28:27-37

The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.

Vexation and frustration characterize the curses of this section. Observe the references in almost every verse either to the utter impotence of the Israelites to cope with their afflictions or to their helplessness in the face of oppression. God created man as one who, entering into the program of His kingdom, might rejoice to follow the divine sabbatic pattern of labor crowned with the joy and satisfaction of consummation. But accursed Israel's undertakings in the areas of marriage and labor would be rewarded always and only with failure. Instead of

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attaining to the sabbath joy of accomplishment, the people of Israel would be driven mad with the vanity and frustration of their exertions (vv. 28,34). The contents of verses 27-35 are chiastically arranged: (a) incurable disease (v. 27); (b) madness (v. 28); (c) continual oppression (v. 29); (d) frustration (vv. 30-32); (c) continual oppression (v. 33); (b) madness (v. 34); (a) incurable disease (v. 35). The similarities to the calamities of Job are noteworthy.

The section ends (vv. 36,37) with the curse of conquest by a foreign nation - **which neither thou nor thy fathers have known** - which was anticipated in verses 32,33. God would afflict the apostates by abandoning them to their own reprobate mind and worship of idols (v. 36; cf. v. 64; Deut 4:27). In idolatry man substitutes subservience to creatures beneath him for self-consecration to the Suzerain above him. In so doing man seals his own helplessness in sin; for, cutting himself off from the Lord-Protector, the Rock who delights to deliver the helpless, he looks in vain to a covenant lord weaker than himself. The essential nature of the curse principle once more finds expression in this worship rendered by man to the sub-human over which the Creator made him king.

37. **Thou shalt become ... a byword.** Israel, heir of the promise that all nations would be blessed in her, would become proverbially identified with cursedness by all peoples.

Deuteronomy 28:38-48

Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather but little in; for the locust shall consume it.

The curses of Deut 28:38-42 are the opposite of the blessings of verses 8,11ff. 38,39. **The locust.... worms.** The crop pests, another sector of man's erstwhile total dominion (cf. Gen 1:26), in effect would make the Israelites their servants, who must labor to feed them. On Deut 28:41, see verse 32. 43. **Thou shalt come down very low.** Here the beatitude of

verses 12b,13 is reversed. In verses 45-48 there is a summation of the preceding threats of curse, both as to cause (cf. v. 20) and as to result. The cause would be Israel's breaking of the covenant oath; the result would be that Israel would suffer the full vengeance of the covenant to the extremity of exile's devastation. 46b. **And upon thy seed for ever.** If this threat means more than that the climatic OT exile-judgment of Israel would serve as a perpetual sign of God's covenant vengeance, if a perpetual divine cursing of Israel is predicted, then Moses here warns of that which Paul declares to have become a fixed decree (1 Thess 2:16). The punishment (Deut 28:48) was to fit the crime (v. 47). Israel's curse-yoke (v. 48) would amount to a return to the status from which God had called her in covenant love (cf. Lev 26:13). Though Moses does not at this point detract from the impressiveness of these curses by any qualifications, elsewhere he proclaims the triumph of covenant grace through the restoration of an elect, repentant remnant (Deut 4:29ff.; 30:1ff.).

Deuteronomy 28:49-57

The LORD shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand;

What had constituted the climax in each of the preceding series is the exclusive subject of this fourth prophetic picture of Israel, overtaken by the covenant curse. With unsparing vividness Moses exposes the appalling distress and degradation to which this people, once the head of the nations, would be reduced when caught in the curse of

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siege. 49. **A nation ... from far ... as swift as the eagle flieth.** The barbarian invader from afar, descending on Israel like a vulture on its prey, would be unpitied in its rapacity (vv. 50,51). But the inhumanity of the enemy warrior would pale beside that of even the tenderest Israelite mother, turned cannibalistic in the horror of the siege (vv. 52-57; cf. Lev 26:29; Lam 4:1-10). 51-53. **The fruit of thy land... the fruit of thine own body.** The passage contrasts the natural appetite of the barbarian and the unnatural lust of the Israelites. There would be no refuge from the siege anywhere in the land (vv. 52a,c,55,57) for those who had put their trust in human defenses rather than in God, their true Refuge. Old Testament history witnessed successive executions of this curse, and it was finally exhausted in the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 AD.

Deuteronomy 28:58-68

*If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, **THE LORD THY GOD**;*

58. **If thou wilt not observe ... this law.** In this closing paragraph Moses harks back to the conditional form with which the pronouncing of the curses began (cf. v. 15), for in the day of assembly in Moab the decision between the curses and the blessings was still to be made by Israel. To avoid the curses the people of Israel must obey the stipulations of this covenant document out of true reverence for the Lord who had revealed his glory and fearful works in saving them from Egypt. 62,63. **Ye shall be left few in number.... and ... be plucked from off the land.** Disobedience would bring loss of the blessings promised in the Abrahamic Covenant, namely, the multiplication of the people and the possession of a homeland. In place of the blessings would be every possible extraordinary and persistent affliction (vv. 59-61). 64. **The Lord shall scatter thee among all people.** Prophetically following the besieged and conquered people into their exile (vv. 64-67), Moses catches with a few strokes all the pathos of unbelieving, homeless Israel down through the centuries - once the people of God, but become in their exile like unto the heathen, without Christ, having no hope, without God in the world (Eph

2:12). By repudiating their election and covenant calling, in virtue of which they had been delivered from Egyptian slavery to become God's theocratic sons, the people of Israel were doomed to fall back into a worse Egyptian bondage (v. 68), into bondage to Satan and sin, death and Hell.

C. Summons to the Covenant Oath. 29:1-29.

In a direct, personal appeal to the generation standing before him, Moses confronted them with the central purpose of the ceremony of this great day (vv. 10-15) This central demand for the oath of allegiance, which reflects the over-all pattern of the suzerainty treaty, is preceded by a reminder of the Lord's past works of salvation (vv. 2-9) and followed by a warning that the curses of the covenant would be visited on an unfaithful nation throughout their generations (vv. 16-29).

Deuteronomy 29:1

These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

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Verse 1. (Heb. Bible 28:69). Though some, following the Hebrew arrangement, regard this as a subscription, and it would indeed be an accurate description of what preceded, it is probably to be understood as a superscription. On the relation of verses 1 and 2, compare the similar sequence from Deut 4:45 to 5:1. There is essential continuity in God's Covenant of Redemption from Genesis through Revelation. Nevertheless, the successive administrations of that Covenant, as it is repeatedly renewed by divine grace, are to be distinguished. The covenant made in Moab renewed the one made at Sinai, which renewed the covenant God made with Abraham, which renewed the covenant He made with Adam (cf. Gen 3:15; Deut 5:2-3).

Deuteronomy 29:2-9

And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land;

The mercy and the miracle of the deliverance from Egypt and the passage through the wilderness should have opened the eyes of this generation to the supreme wisdom of giving themselves in wholehearted love to so great and gracious a Lord. (On vv. 5,6, see Deut 8:2ff.; on vv. 7,8, see 2:30ff.; 3:1ff.) 4. **Not given ... an heart to perceive.** But the simplest spiritual knowledge is beyond the perception of man the sinner unless the Spirit of God grants him understanding as a sovereign gift of grace. This people, so signally favored as to have lived forty years in the atmosphere of supernatural providence, lacked that necessary gift (cf. 9:7,24). 9. **Keep ... the words of this covenant.** The responsibility for this spiritual dullness was Israel's, and by this reproof the people were incited to a better response to their Lord. The imperceptible way in which the appeal of Moses becomes the direct appeal of the Lord (v. 5ff.; cf. 7:4; 11:15; 17:3; 28:20) evidences the reality of the supernatural revelation which came through Moses, God's mediator.

Deuteronomy 29:10-15

Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel,

The central act of covenant ratification and its significance are here declared. The terms of verses 10,11 indicate the solemnly formal nature of the assembly and stress the fact that the entire covenant community was present for participation in the oath. Women and children, non-Israelites (cf. Ex 12:38; Num 10:29; 11:4), and servants (Deut 29:11c; cf. Josh 9:21) were included. 12. **Enter into ... covenant of the Lord** (RSV). The Hebrew phrase, found only here, means literally, (*pass over into*), or (*pass through*). According to the latter translation, the expression might derive from a ceremony of oath-taking like that in Gen 15:17-18. The equating of the Lord's covenant with his oath (Deut 29:12) is a significant index to the nature of the covenant as an instrument of God's rule whereby he secures the commitment of a people to his service. 13. **That he may establish thee.** This verse is to the same effect, but it shows, too, that God's establishment of covenant relationship with man is not a humiliating subjugation but an act of redemptive favor. It fulfills the promise and oath in which the children of God have found hope and consolation (cf. Heb 6:17-18). 15b. **And also with him that is not here with us this day.** This means that there was to be genealogical continuity to the covenant. Such is the case not because salvation is

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an inalienable family heirloom but because God is faithful to his promise to extend his covenant mercies to the thousandth generation of those who love him and because covenant administration respects parental authority (vv. 14,15). Accordingly, the covenant with its sacramental sign of consecration is administered to believers together with their children.

Deuteronomy 29:16-29

(For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by;

For (v. 16) and **lest** (v. 18) both assume some antecedent though. The idea to be supplied is probably that of the call to faithful allegiance which was presented in the preceding section. Thus: (Remember, O Israel, that the Lord is your God), **for** , as you well know, the temptation to idolatry comes to you from all the surrounding nations - **ye have seen their abominations** (vv. 16,17). (Remember), **lest** idolatry take root among you and you reap a bitter, poisonous harvest (v. 18; cf. Heb 12:15). The danger figuratively depicted in verse 18b is developed in verses 19-28-the root in verses 19-21 and the bitter fruit in verses 22-28. 19b. **To the sweeping away of moist and dry alike** (RSV). The reference of this proverbial phrase is to plants; watered and thirsty plants means all plants. It continues the figure of verse 18b, warning again that if idolatry took hold in Israel, its ultimate issue must be deadly, indeed must be the ruin of the entire people. This thought is resumed in Deut 29:22ff. As for the individual who would hypocritically mouth the selfmaledictory oath of the covenant (v. 19b), the Lord would not hold him guiltless for having taken his name in vain. Though the individual might think himself hidden in the assembled host of Israel and suppose his hypocrisy concealed within his own heart, the Lord, the avenging divine Witness of the oath, would single him out and mercilessly pour on him all the curses he had idly invoked. On verse 20b, see Rev 22:18-19. Abruptly changing his standpoint to the future (Deut 29:22) beyond the desolation of the theocracy and the Exile (v. 28), which he had before threatened in the covenant curses, Moses again traced the cause of Israel's fall to her having forsaken the

covenant by transferring her allegiance to idol god-kings (vv. 25-28).

24. Wherefore hath the Lord done thus ...? He used the device of a dramatic dialogue of Israelites and foreigners standing amid the charred ruins of the theocratic land, a former paradise turned, like the cities of the plain, into a barren waste by the fury of God's judgment (v. 23). **29. Those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever.** Attention to the Lord's revealed demand for consecration is the life business of his servants (cf. Deut 30:11ff.), not lusting after knowledge of divine mysteries (cf. Gen 3:5).

D. Ultimate Restoration. 30:1-10.

Beyond the curse of exile opened the prospect of restoration (vv. 1-10; cf. Deut 4:29-31; Lev 26:40-45). The redemptive program is not to be frustrated by the fall of those who were of Israel yet were not faithful Israelites. An obedient remnant together with the remnant of the Gentiles will be restored to the covenant Lord in his glorious kingdom. Of this ultimate restoration, the OT return from Babylonian exile was typical. The one vast complex of typical and antitypical restoration is embraced in this prophetic blessing of Moses. The section of the treaty concerned with covenant ratification (Deut 27-30) closes with the call for decision, in which Moses reminded the people of Israel that they could not plead ignorance of God's demands (vv. 11-14) and warned them that the

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alternatives set before them in the covenant curses and blessings were those of life and death (vv. 15-20).

Deuteronomy 30:1-10

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

Verse 1-10. In Deut 28:64ff. Moses portrayed the hopelessness of unbelieving Israelites in their dispersion among the nations. 1. **When all these things are come upon thee.** Here he looked beyond the Exile, indeed beyond all the curse and blessing described hitherto in these covenant sanctions, and extended to his people the hope of restoration, the hope of a new covenant. 2. **Shalt return unto the Lord.** The way into this new beatitude would be the way of a renewed and true consecration to the Lord against whom Israel had rebelled (cf. v. 10). 6-8. The origin of that repentance and heart-love for the Lord would be in a divine work of qualification - **the Lord ... will circumcise thine heart.** What had been externally symbolized in circumcision, the OT sacrament of consecration, would be spiritually actualized by the power of God (cf. 10:16; Jer 31:33ff.; 32:39ff.; Ezek 11:19; 36:26-27).

As the development of this theme in the prophets shows, the renewal and restoration which Moses foretold is that accomplished by Christ in the New Covenant. The prophecy is not narrowly concerned with ethnic Jews but with the covenant community, here concretely denoted in its OT identity as Israel. Within the sphere of the New Covenant, however, the wall of ethnic distinctions disappears. Accordingly, the Old Testament figure used here of exiled Israelites being regathered to the Lord in Jerusalem (Deut 30:3b,4; cf. Deut 28:64) finds its chief fulfillment in the universal NT gathering of sinners out of the human race, exiled from Paradise, back to the Lord Christ enthroned in the heavenly Jerusalem. 3a. **Turn thy captivity** (AV), *or turn thy turning*, refers to a radical change of condition. 9. **The Lord ... will make thee**

plenteous in every work. Along with the spiritual gifts of regeneration, conversion, and sanctification by which the rebels are transformed into faithful servants, the Messiah will give them a new world of prosperity and peace as their inheritance (vv. 3a,5,9; cf. 28:4,62). The restored theocratic kingdom in Canaan is used as a typical figure for the anti-typical reality, the eternal kingdom of God in the renewed universe. That will be secured by a divine judgment, for while the people of God are to inherit the earth, their enemies will be plagued with every curse (v. 7). The Messianic salvation is, thus, a new exodus and conquest, a renewal of the covenant mediated through Moses and Joshua, first at Sinai and afterwards in Moab and at Ebal and Gerizim.

E. Radical Decision. 30:11-20.

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

The Lord did not require of Israel something incomprehensible or unattainable (v. 11). Israel's duty was not hidden at some inaccessible height (v. 12) or beyond some insuperable barrier (v. 13). Note Paul's similar use of these proverbial questions in Rom 10:5-6. 14. **The word is very nigh unto thee.** There are the secret,

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incomprehensible things which belong to God (cf. Deut 29:29a; Ps 131:1), but the covenant demand is one of the revealed things given to God's people to be obeyed (cf. Deut 29:29b; 6:6-7; 11:18-19; 31:19). As Job affirmed, exhaustive knowledge is the possession of God alone, but to man God assigns, as his portion of wisdom, the fear of the Lord, which is the way of the covenant (Job 28, esp. v. 28).

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

Moses concluded his setting forth of the covenant blessings and curses with an appeal of memorable simplicity and sublimity. He reminded Israel that in her experience as a kingdom, blessing and obedience would be inseparable, as would also rebellion and the curse (vv. 16-18). 15. **Life and good ... death and evil.** The issue was as clear and radical as life and death (cf. 19b). To love the Lord, obey him, and remain loyal to him - that was their life (v. 20; cf. Deut 6:1-5). 19. **I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day** (ASV; RSV). One of the standard divisions in the secular suzerainty treaties was that containing the invocation of the gods of the Lord and vassal as the divine witnesses of the covenant oath. It is significant that the Deuteronomic treaty contains at least a rhetorical parallel to that feature (cf. 4:26; 31:28; 32:1). The Lord was, of course, the divine Witness as well as the Suzerain of this covenant. Over and over again Moses traced the work of salvation which God was accomplishing through him to the promises sworn unto Abraham (v. 20c).

V. Dynastic Disposition: Covenant Continuity. 31:1-34:12.

This final section of the covenant document has as its unifying theme the perpetuation of the covenant relationship. Of special importance is the subject of the royal succession, which is also prominent in the extra-biblical suzerainty treaties (cf. above, the introduction to IV. Sanctions). This succession is provided for by the appointment and commissioning of Joshua as dynastic heir to Moses in the office of mediatorial representative of the Lord (ch. 31). The testamentary assignment of

kingdom inheritance to the several tribes of Israel (ch. 33) reckons with the status of all God's people as royal heirs. Included also are two other standard elements in the international treaties. One is the invocation of covenant witnesses, here represented chiefly by the Song of Witness (ch. 32). The other is the directions for the disposition of the treaty document after the ceremony (Deut 31:9-13). By way of notarizing the document, an account of the death of Moses is affixed at the end (ch. 34).

A. Final Arrangements. 31:1-29.

A series of charges was given by Moses, all concerned with carrying on the covenant and its program: to all the people (vv. 1-6), to Joshua (vv. 7,8), and to the priests (vv. 9-13). Then in a theophanic revelation at the sanctuary (vv. 14,15), the Lord instructed Moses concerning a Song of Witness for future Israel (vv. 16-22), and also commissioned Joshua to his imminent command (v. 23). Finally, Moses again commanded the priests concerning the disposition of the documentary witness to the covenant and concerning the assembling of the people to hear the Song of Witness (vv. 24-29).

Deuteronomy 31:1-6

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Deuteronomy 31:1-6

And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel.

Verse 1-6. On Moses' age (v. 2a), see Ex 7:7; Deut 29:5. 2b. **I can no more go out and come in.** Through Moses was still competent in terms of individual daily life (cf. 34:7), he had lost the stamina necessary to shepherd the whole flock of Israel and in particular to lead the campaign of conquest lying before the nation (cf. Num 27:16ff.). On Deut 31:2c, see 3:23ff.; 4:21-22; Num 20:12. The Lord, with Joshua as his new mediatorial representative, would continue and complete in Canaan the conquest already successfully begun under Moses in Trans-Jordan (vv. 3-6). With such leadership assured, Israel must execute the mandate of conquest (cf. Deut 7:1ff.) with strength and courage (v. 6; cf. vv. 7,23; 20:3-4; 31:7,23; Josh 1:6ff.).

Deuteronomy 31:7-8

And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

At the command of God Joshua had already been ordained by Moses before Eleazar and the congregation as the new leader of Israel (Num 27:18-23; Deut 1:38). 8. **The Lord ... will be with thee.** Repeating the promise of the divine presence (cf. Josh 5:13ff.) just made to all the people (Deut 31:3-6), Moses publicly charged Joshua to complete the mission of conducting Israel into its inheritance.

Deuteronomy 31:9-13

And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which

bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and unto all the elders of Israel.

Moses assigned the priests and elders the duty of regularly republishing the law of the covenant. The effect of this was to associate the priests and elders with Joshua in the responsibility of rule and in the esteem of Israel. More important, all the covenant people, together with all human authorities in the covenant community, were placed under the lordship of the Giver of the law. 9a. **Moses wrote this law.** This is a clear statement of obvious import for higher critical investigations (cf. v. 24). Though the writing is mentioned at this juncture, it is probable that the official covenant document, or at least the main part of it, had been prepared earlier. The delivery of the law to the priests and elders referred to here (9b), if it is to be distinguished from that mentioned in verses 24ff., may have been simply a symbolic transfer of the responsibility of enforcing the covenant law as described in verses 10-13.

In the suzerainty treaties of the nations, directions were included for reading them to the vassal people at regular intervals, from once to thrice annually. 11. **Thou shalt read this law before all Israel.** In Israel there was to be a constant proclamation of the will of the Lord through the service of the cult and in time through the ministry of prophets. Parents, too, were charged with the faithful instruction of the covenant children in the commandments of

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the Lord (see e.g., Deut 6:7,20ff.). Hence the septennial reading of the Law to Israel (v. 10) at the Feast of Tabernacles (cf. 16:13ff.) in the year of release (cf. 15:1ff.) was intended not as the sole means of teaching the people of Israel their covenantal obligations but as an especially impressive reminder, at this time of sabbatical renewal and consummation, of the need for an ever fresh self-consecration by the servants of the Lord if they would enjoy full covenant blessing.

Deuteronomy 31:14-23

And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation.

Joshua, like Moses (cf. Ex 3:1-4:17), was personally commissioned by the Lord himself. This was the chief and stated purpose for the summoning of Moses and Joshua into the presence of the heavenly Suzerain, who then spoke with them face to face as a man speaks to his friend (Deut 31:14-15; cf. Ex 33:9,11; Num 12:5). The words of the divine revelation (Deut 31:23) were simply a direct statement of the charge - **Be strong** - and promise - **I will be with thee** - given mediately through Moses (vv. 7,8) and a confirmation of Joshua's public ordination (Num 27:18-23).

On this occasion the Lord also confirmed Moses' dark prophecies of Israel's future infidelity and God's wrath against them - **this people will ... forsake me, and break my covenant** (v. 16ff.). In particular, the Lord directed Moses to teach Israel a song that would be a witness for Him against them when they broke the covenant (v. 19ff.). Israel's lusting after idol-gods, her spiritual whoredom (v. 16; cf. Ex 34:15-16), because of the abominable rites of the Canaanite fertility cult which would ensnare her, would involve carnal prostitution as well. The inclination to ignore the Lord would be most evident when the people of Israel would become secure and prosperous in their land (Deut 31:20; cf. 6:10ff.; 8:12ff.; 32:15). 17. **I will forsake**

them. Such would be the inevitable consequence of Israel's forsaking the Lord. Without God's protection the nation would fall victim to many evils and so be made painfully aware that **our God is not among us** (v. 17b). Lest the Israelites should then recall the divine promise not to forsake them (cf. v. 6) and impute unrighteousness to him, God appointed for them the Song of Witness, which places the promised blessings and the threatened curse in their proper perspective within the covenant. This song would proclaim the perfect righteousness of God and convict the Israelites of the justice of their afflictions (cf. 32:4-5). It was only because of the pure grace of God that Israel might even enter the land of promise, for the Lord was fully aware of the pride and rebellion in their hearts before he led them across the Jordan, 31:21b. Verse 22 anticipates 31:30-32:47.

Deuteronomy 31:24-29

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,

As a complementary covenant witness along with the song, the treaty document was to be preserved **by the side of the ark of the covenant** (v. 26; cf. 9ff.). This requirement and the similar disposition of the two Sinaitic tables

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accorded with contemporary practice (see comments on Deut 10:1-11). Possibly it was one of the priests into whose hands the Deuteronomic treaty was now entrusted (v. 25) who affixed the record of Moses' death, or indeed everything from this point to the end. This official may have had some further but minor part in bringing the rest of the document into its final form. 27. **Ye have been rebellious ... how much more after my death?** The foreknowledge of God just revealed to Moses (cf. v. 21) was now the foreknowledge of Moses. In these instructions to the priests, all the treaty witnesses are brought together. The Song of Witness about to be recited to assembled Israel included at the same time an invocation of heaven and earth as witnesses (v. 28). The force of the witness was primarily against the people of Israel in view of their foreseen provocations (v. 29).

B. The Song of Witness. 31:30-32:47.

Deuteronomy 31:30

And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.

According to Moses' directions (v. 28), Israel was assembled, and Moses, together with Joshua (Deut 32:34), the old and new representatives of the Lord, proclaimed the song (Deut 32).

In its general structure this poetic song follows the pattern of the Deuteronomic treaty. After the invocation to the witnesses to give ear (vv. 1-3), the Suzerain is identified in preamble-like fashion as God of truth and as Israel's Father (vv. 4-6). Then the historical prologue of the treaty finds its counterpart in a recital of the special favor shown to Israel by the Lord hitherto (vv. 7-14). Next, the treaty stipulations are reflected upon in the condemnation of Israel's rebellion against the Lord in favor of new gods (vv. 15-18). The consequence of this covenant breaking is the heaping of the curses upon them (vv. 19-25). Yet, as is also asserted in the

blessing and curse section of the treaty, beyond the final curse lies the prospect of covenant renewal accomplished through a redemptive judgment in which God will avenge his servants upon their enemies; such is the closing theme of the song (vv. 26-43).

a) Invocation. 32:1-3.

Deuteronomy 32:1-6

Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

The address to heaven and earth must be understood as a summons to them to be witnesses of the covenant, since Moses had just stated that precisely that was the purpose of assembling Israel to hear the song (cf. Deut 31:28). 2. The way of the covenant and the way of wisdom are united here as Moses identifies this song as **my doctrine** (AV), or, (*my teaching*) (RSV), a word common in the Wisdom literature. The song presents true wisdom because its theme is the fear of the Lord, great God of Israel (v. 3).

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b) Preamble. 32:4-6.

The song is a theodicy (cf. comments on Deut 31:19ff.). 4. With that in view, the identification of the Lord is in terms of his perfect justice. **The Rock.** This epithet contemplates God as the reliable refuge of his people (cf. vv. 15,18,30). The Hebrew (*sur*), as thus used of God, may derive from a root meaning "mountain" (cf. Ugaritic (*gwr*)). In contrast to God's righteousness stands the perversity of the Israelites, these "sons of God" (cf. Deut 32:6,18ff.; 14:1; Ex 4:22ff.) who were actually (*his not-sons*) (Deut 32:5a, lit.; cf. "not-god" (v. 21) and "not-people" (v. 21)). This introduces the main burden of the song, namely, that Israel's sin provided a completely adequate explanation of all the evil that would overtake them. 6. **O foolish people and unwise.** In keeping with the wisdom motif, sin is regarded as foolishness (cf. vv. 28,29). **Is not he your father, who created you?** (RSV) The reference is to the Lord's forming Israel into the theocratic people by election and redemptive calling out of Egypt.

c) Historical Prologue. 32:7-14.

Deuteronomy 32:7-14

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.

Remember the days of old. So begins the historical prologue section of the song. The fact that verse 8 refers to divine providence as far back as the events of Gen 10 and 11 explains the historical perspective of Deut 32:7. 8. **He set the bounds ... according to the number ... of Israel.** As Paul teaches that Christ rules over all things for the benefit of his church, so Moses affirms that the Lord took special interest in the geographical needs of Abraham's numerous seed in his providential government of all nations (cf. Gen 10:32), for Israel was his elect people (Deut 32:9; cf. 7:6; 10:15). According to a reading supported by the LXX and the Qumran

fragments, "sons of God" would replace **children of Israel**. Those who prefer this reading appeal to the mythical tradition that El, head of the Canaanite pantheon, had seventy sons, and to the fact that there are seventy nations mentioned in Gen 10; and they conclude that this numerical correspondence is referred to in Deut 32:8. Similarly, Jewish commentators, following the Masoretic text, saw a correspondence of the seventy nations of Gen 10 to the seventy Israelites of Gen 46:27.

Having arranged for Israel's inheritance in Canaan from the days of old, the Lord was, in the days of Moses, conducting them into the possession of its rich goodness (Deut 32:10-14). 10. **He found him**. The Lord, coming to seek and to save that which was lost, found homeless Israel helpless in the desert. **As the apple of his eye**. He cherished his people as jealously as does a man that which is most precious to him, or as an eagle cherishes its young (v. 11). The figure might be interpreted of the deliverance from Egypt as well as of the guidance of Canaan. 12b. **There was no foreign god with him** (ASV, RSV). Since the Lord was Israel's sole benefactor, their subsequent shift of allegiance to foreign gods (v. 15ff.) was manifestly without excuse. 13a. **He made him ride on the high places of the earth**. In the Lord's strength Israel advanced in majestic triumph through Trans-Jordan (cf. 2:31ff.) and over mountainous Canaan to feast on all the choicest offerings of field and flock (vv. 13b,14).

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d) Record of Rebellion. 32:15-18.

As their Suzerain, the Lord demanded, primarily, perfect and exclusive loyalty. Like an unruly beast, Israel, fattened in rich pasture, refused to submit.

Deuteronomy 32:15-22

But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

Jeshurun , *the upright* , is here used reproachfully. In their arrogant contempt for the Rock of their salvation, the people of Israel paid their sacrificial tribute to phantom no-gods. 17a. *They sacrificed to demons which were no gods* (RSV), from whom they had received nothing and of whom hitherto they had never even heard. So unspeakable was their ingratitude, that they preferred such new god-kings to the Rock who had shown to them the love of both father (v. 18a) and mother (v. 18b).

e) Curses on the Covenant-Breakers. 32:19-25.

In the Sinaitic Covenant attached to the stipulation forbidding rival image-gods, was the warning: "I the Lord your God am a jealous God" (Deut 5:9; Ex 20:5). God responds to unfaithfulness in the covenant relationship with something akin to the fiery conjugal zeal of a man whose spouse has been unfaithful (Deut 32:21, cf. v. 16). The law prescribed death for the adulteress. The covenant curses threatened Israel with extinction if she played the harlot with the no-gods of Canaan (cf. 31:16ff.). From the fire of divine jealousy there is no escape; it burns unto **the depths of Sheol** (32:22, RSV), the place of the dead. 19,20. **He abhorred them.... And he said, I will hide my face.** Applying the (*lex talionis*) principle, God would reject Israel and remove his protection from them. He would incite jealousy in Israel by means of a no-

people (v. 21; cf. Eph 2:12). That is, he would grant to a people that had not known his covenant favor to triumph over his **children in whom is no faithfulness** (v. 20b, ASV and RSV).

Deuteronomy 32:23-43

I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them.

I will heap evils upon them (ASV). In verses 23-25 the covenant curses, especially pestilence, famine, and the sword, the terrors which come with the climactic curse of siege and exile, are threatened (cf. ch. 28). Therein would lie the triumph of the no-people. As a result of siege, Israel would be removed from God's kingdom and become herself a no-people (cf. Hos 1:9). In the further unfolding of redemptive revelation God was to promise a renewal of his mercy whereby the no-people would become again "my people" (cf. Hos 1:10; 2:23). And Paul has

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interpreted that as fulfilled in the coming of Gentiles as well as Jews into the New Covenant in Christ Jesus (Rom 9:25-26). In that connection Paul also gives a turn to the idea of Israel's jealousy at the favor shown by God to the Gentiles (Rom 11:11ff.; cf. Deut 10:19). The Mosaic Song of Witness itself anticipates the redemptive mercy and blessing that lie beyond the predicted cursing of Israel (see Deut 32:26-43).

f) Blessings Through Redemptive Judgment. 32:26-43.

Attention is now focused upon the enemy nation which would mercilessly smite both infant and hoary head. 27. **Our hand is high.** Lest the enemy misinterpret its victory over Israel and withhold from the Lord the honor due Him (cf. Isa 10:5ff.), He would limit the enemy's slaughter of Israel (Deut 32:26). From the viewpoint of the covenant curses, this would be a stay of God's vengeance against Israel. The preservation of a remnant from annihilation is thus rooted in God's jealousy for his own glory. At the same time, the ultimate vindication of his people, which the preservation of a remnant provides for, arises from God's compassion for them (v. 36). 29a. **If they were wise, they would understand this** (RSV). The foolish enemy should have known that their easy victory over Israel, the covenant protectorate of the Suzerain of heaven and earth, must be due to his displeasure with Israel (vv. 19ff.,30). Verse 31 is a parenthetical interjection of Moses, enforcing the cogency of 32:30 by eliminating the possibility that the enemy's god had wrought victory for him. On verse 31b, see Ex 14:25; Num 23:1 and 24; Josh 2:9-10; 1 Sam 4:8; 5:7ff.; Dan 4:34ff. 29b. Furthermore, if the enemy were wise, **they would discern their latter end** (RSV). This theme is continued in verse 32ff. Their arrogance would turn to trembling if they realized that the God of Israel, who had judged even his own people in fiery wrath, would certainly judge them also with strict justice (v. 34) for their depravity and cruelty (vv. 32,33). The greatest evil of the enemy nation would be that it was at enmity with the people of God. For though in this it would be the rod of God's anger against Israel, its own motives and purposes would be quite different (cf. 27b; Isa 10:7ff.). 35,36a. Hence God's judgment of the enemy would be an act of **vengeance** and vindication in behalf of **his people ... his servants.** So the song returns skillfully to its main theme of Israel and the covenant sanctions, and intimates

that ultimate blessing will follow the penultimate curse.

For NT quotation of Deut 32:35-36, see Rom 12:19 and Heb 10:30. 36b. **Their power is gone.** Only when his people would be as helpless as when first he found them (v. 10) would God intervene in redemptive judgment. Forgiveness, however, was to be granted only as they were confronted with their sin (vv. 37,38) and so were led to godly sorrow and repentance and to trust in the Lord as their true and only Rock. 39. **I kill, and I make alive.** Promising to come in judgment as the Saviour of his servants, the Lord identifies himself as God alone and absolutely sovereign (cf. v. 12; Deut 4:35,39; 5:6a; Isa 43:11-13). 40. **I lift up my hand to heaven.** As the Lord added oath to promise in the Abrahamic Covenant, so also he did in this New Covenant, swearing by himself, for there is no other (cf. Isa 45:22-23; Heb 6:13), that his judgment would be terrible against those who hate him (Deut 32:41-42; cf. v. 35; Isa 63:1ff.). In verse 42, the third clause completes the first; the fourth, the second. 43. The song concludes with the prospect of jubilation over the judgment of God which involves both retribution upon the enemy and expiation of all guilt within the kingdom of God. Since the **nations** universally are called upon to participate in the joy of God's salvation, the horizon of this hope is clearly the Messianic age, when all the nations of the earth will find blessing in the seed of Abraham.

Deuteronomy 32:44-47

And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun.

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The commissioning of Joshua and the instructions concerning the Song of Witness were joined in the special revelation at the sanctuary (Deut 31:14-23), and significantly Joshua was associated with Moses in proclaiming the song to Israel (32:44). Moses sealed the recital with a final appeal to the covenant community to cultivate in its successive generations fidelity to the covenant, which in its summarization in the song was a witness for God to Israel (v. 46). The conclusion to the sanctions (30:15ff.) is echoed in the warning that this was a question of Israel's very life (32:47).

C. Moses' Testament. 32:48-33:29.

Deuteronomy 32:48-52

And the LORD spake unto Moses that selfsame day, saying,

Cf. Deut 3:27; Num 27:12-14. 48. **That selfsame day.** It was toward the close of the day of the renewal ceremony (cf. Deut 1:3-5; 27:11; 31:22) that Moses ascended **this mountain of the Abarim, mount Nebo** (49a, RSV), there to die. On Aaron's death on Mount Hor, see 10:6; Num 20:22ff.; Deuteronomy 33:37-38 . 51. **Because ye trespassed.** On the sin which disqualified Moses for entrance into Canaan, see Deut 1:37; 3:26; 4:21; Num 20:10ff.; 27:14. The performance of this command is described in Deut 34:1ff.

In the ancient Near East, a dying father's final blessings spoken to his sons were an irrevocable legal testament, accepted as decisive evidence in court disputes. In the case of the Biblical patriarchs, the authority and potency of their last blessings derived from the Spirit of prophecy in them, speaking in the testamentary form (cf. the cases of Isaac, Gen 27, and Jacob, Gen 49). As spiritual and theocratic father of the twelve tribes, Moses pronounced his blessings on them just before he ascended the mount to die (Deut 33:1), and thus his words constitute his testament. In so far as Deuteronomy was a dynastic guarantee, Joshua as Moses' successor was the heir of

the covenant. It was also true, however, that all the Israelites were God's adopted sons, and thus heirs of the blessings of His kingdom which were being dispensed through His servant Moses. It is impossible simply to equate the covenantal and testamentary forms without a drastic impoverishment and distortion of the covenant concept. But to the extent that the blessings promised in God's redemptive covenant are not inheritable apart from the promisor's death, that covenant does include as one of its features the testamentary principle.

Moses' poetic testament contains three parts: (a) an introduction, describing the glory of the Lord as he declared his kingship in the giving of his theocratic covenant to Jeshurun (vv. 2-5); (b) the blessings of the tribes, these being in the form of prayers, doxologies, imperatives, and predictions (vv. 6-25); and (c) a conclusion, extolling God, the majestic Protector of Jeshurun (vv. 26-29). (For a useful study of textual problems in this chapter and a new translation see F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, "The Blessing of Moses," JBL 67 (1948), 191-210.)

1) Introduction. 33:2-5.

Deuteronomy 33:1

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Deuteronomy 33:1

And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

The appearing of the Lord as King of Kings to proclaim his covenant was in radiant, sunrise-like glory over the eastern mountains of the Sinai peninsula (v. 2a; cf. the similar poetic descriptions of the desert theophany in Judg 5:4ff.; Ps 68:7ff.,17ff.; Hab 3:2ff.). 2b. In attendance upon the King at his advent was a heavenly host of **holy ones** (ASV and RSV; cf. Ps 68:17; Zech 14:5; Acts 7:53; Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2). Probably nearer than the AV to the true sense of verses 2d,3 is the translation by Cross and Freedman: *At his right hand proceeded the mighty ones, yea, the guardians of the peoples. All the holy ones are at thy hand, they prostrate themselves at thy feet, they carry out thy decisions*. As the Lord's earthly representative, Moses gave God's covenant with its kingdom promises to Israel (v. 4), and by the covenant ceremony the Lord's theocratic kingship over Israel was ratified (v. 5).

2) The Blessings of the Tribes. 33:6-25.

Moses first blessed the sons of Jacob's wives, then the sons of the handmaids. Though Jacob announced first-born Reuben's loss of the rights of primogeniture, both he and Moses began their testaments with him (cf. Gen 49:3-4).

6. Let Reuben live. Moses prayed that Reuben might not suffer tribal extinction. **7. Bring him unto his people.** The blessing for royal Judah (Leah's fourth son) is, in effect, the prayer that Jacob's prophetic blessing on him might be fulfilled (cf. Gen 49:9-12), that Judah might be enabled to accomplish the kingly task of conquering the adversaries and thence return to his people to receive their obedience. In the testament of Jacob, Simeon and Levi (second and third sons of Leah) were rebuked and scattered in Israel (Gen 49:5-7). Historically, Simeon was early absorbed by Judah (cf. Josh 19:2ff.). Moses omitted Simeon from the separate blessings (the number twelve being then obtained by the division of the Joseph tribe). But he

invested Levi's distribution throughout Israel (cf. Josh 21:1-40) with a new significance. 9b. **They have ... kept thy covenant.** Levi had displayed the devotion to the Lord requisite for the priestly office in the testing at Sinai (Ex 32:26-29). On the events at Massah and Meribah (Deut 33:8b), the beginning and end of God's trial of Israel (cf. 8:2ff.), see Ex 17:1-7; Num 20:1-13; Deut 6:16; 9:22; 32:51. Upon this tribe was conferred the honor of the priesthood in the family of Aaron, with its privileges of receiving special divine revelation (33:8a), teaching the covenant law (v. 10a), and officiating at the altar (v. 10b). Levi's blessing fittingly closes with the prayer that his priestly ministry in behalf of the covenant people may prove efficacious (v. 11).

Having dealt with royal and priestly tribes, Moses turned to Benjamin (younger son of Rachel). 12c. **He shall dwell between his shoulders.** To Benjamin was allotted Jerusalem on the border of Judah, site of the Lord's sanctuary and throne (cf. Gen 49:27; Josh 15:8; 18:16). The use of the term "shoulder" in the latter passages (RSV) to denote Jerusalem's elevated situation supports the view that the Lord is the subject of **dwell. On the beloved of the Lord**, see Jer 11:15; Ps 60:5. Adjoining Benjamin in the blessing (Deut 33:13-17) and in territorial inheritance was Joseph (Rachel's older son). The double portion, the right of the first-born forfeited by Reuben, had been given to Joseph (Gen 48:22) in that his two sons enjoyed separate tribal status. Moses now confirmed the pre-eminence which Jacob gave Ephraim over Manasseh (Deut 33:17; cf. Gen 48:14ff.). Again like Jacob, Moses blessed Joseph with military power and abundance of the choicest gifts of the earth (cf. Gen 49:22-26). 16. The source of all Joseph's prowess and prosperity was in the **favor of him that dwelt in the bush** (RSV; cf. Ex 3:2ff.). A slight change in the text would substitute "Sinai" for **bush**. Zebulun and Issachar (sixth and fifth sons respectively of Leah) are here united in their blessing (Deut 33:18-19; cf. Gen 49:13-15). Their special portion was to be the treasures of the sea, secured apparently by trade with those laboring in and along the Mediterranean and the Sea of Chinnereth. Their inheritances were near but not on these waters (cf., however, Gen 49:13). 19a. **They shall call the people unto the mountain.** This seems to indicate that their commercial successes would be

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shall call the people unto the mountain. This seems to indicate that their commercial successes would be thankfully acknowledged in true worship.

The tribe of Gad (first son of Leah's handmaid Zilpah) had chosen a **commander's portion** (v. 21a, RSV) as their inheritance in Trans-Jordan, the first fruits of the conquest (vv. 20,21a). Then they faithfully joined their brethren in the conflict for their portions in Canaan (v. 21b). Like Shem's blessing (Gen 9:26), Gad's is couched in doxology (cf. Gen 49:19). In energetic strength the tribe of Dan (elder son of Rachel's handmaid Bilhah) was to be like the lions of Bashan (Deut 33:22; cf. Gen 49:17). It was to the area of Bashan that an expedition of Danites migrated from their earlier territory on the southern coast (Judg 18). The Lord's favor on Naphtali (Bilhah's younger son) was to be shown in the remarkable fertility and beauty of his inheritance, especially its southern portion on the shores of Chinnereth (Deut 33:23; cf. Gen 49:21). 24a. **Blessed above sons be Asher** (RSV). This tribe of Zilpah's younger son was situated on Israel's northwest border, a fertile land adjoining Naphtali (v. 24b; cf. Gen 49:20); 25. **As thy days ... thy strength.** Moses' prayer was that Asher's protection might be constantly strong.

3) Conclusion. 33:26-29.

Deuteronomy 33:26-29

There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.

There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun (RSV). As in the introduction (vv. 2-5), Moses here extols the true Giver of the blessings of this testament. The establishment of the covenant was celebrated in the introduction, but here the Lord is praised as Israel's Defender and Benefactor in the subsequent conquest (v. 27) and settlement in the paradise land (v. 28). On verse 26b, see Ps 18:10; 68:33. On 27a, see the Mosaic Ps 90:1-2. 29. **Who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord.** The uniqueness

of Israel's beatitude arises from the uniqueness of Israel's Saviour-Lord (cf. v. 26a). **Your enemies shall come fawning to you** (RSV). All must acknowledge Israel's supremacy.

D. Dynastic Succession. 34:1-12.

A testament is of force only after the death of the testator. So the Deuteronomic Covenant in its testamentary aspect (cf. comments introd. to ch. 33) would not become operative until after the death of Moses. Only then would Joshua succeed to the role of vicegerent of God over Israel, and only then under the leadership of Joshua could the tribes, according to the declarations of the Lord, enter into their inheritance in Canaan. It was, therefore, appropriate that the Deuteronomic treaty should close with the record of Moses' death, which in effect notarizes the treaty. That the testamentary significance of Moses' death is in view is evidenced by the accompanying attention given to the land of Israel's inheritance and to Joshua's accession to the royal mediatorship of the covenant. Verses 1-8 record Moses' death and verses 9-12, Joshua's succession to Moses. The account resumes the narrative of Deut 32:48-52.

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Deuteronomy 34:1-8

And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan,

Verse 1-8. 1a. **Moses went up ... unto mount Nebo** (ASV). Moses walked alone the ascent of no return, away from the promised land to the top of the mountain ridge on the west of the plains of Moab, opposite Jericho, to Mount Nebo. The panorama of Israel's sworn inheritance is described as it appeared looking first towards the northeast, thence westward and south, back to the plain stretching between Jericho and Moses. 2. The **Western Sea** (RSV); i.e., the Mediterranean, lying beyond the hills of Judah, is not naturally visible from Nebo. 4b. **Thou shalt not go over thither**. Cf. Deut 1:37; 3:26; 4:21-22; 32:52. Though not now able to enter the land, Moses beheld its northern mountain peaks, on one of which he, with Elijah, was afterwards to stand and speak with the Mediator of the New Covenant concerning the exodus he must accomplish at Jerusalem before he might cross over into the heavenly inheritance (cf. Matt 17:3; Mark 9:4; Luke 9:30-31). It was necessary for Jesus to die before entering his rest, because he was the true Mediator who came to reconcile his sinful people unto God; Moses must die without entering the typical rest because as the OT mediator he had by official transgression disqualified himself for completing the mission which prefigured that of the sinless Son of God. Unlike Moses, who after his death was succeeded by Joshua (Deut 33:9), the Messianic Mediator would succeed himself after his death because it was not possible that death should hold him. 7. **Nor his natural force abated**. Moses, though 120 years of age (cf. 31:2; 7:7), did not expire of old age, but by the command of God, who by His sovereign word creates and destroys (Deut 34:5). On the location of Moses' burial (v. 6), see 3:29; 4:46. On its sequel, see Jude 9.

Deuteronomy 34:9-12

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

9a. **Full of the spirit of wisdom.** Joshua had been ordained as the dynastic heir by the bestowal of the charismatic gifts of this dynasty, pre-eminently the gift of governmental wisdom (cf. Num 27:18ff.; Deut 31). 9b. **Israel hearkened unto him.** True to their oath of obedience to the Lord's will, sworn in the Deuteronomic ceremony (cf. 26:17; 29:12), Israel assented to the accession of Joshua. 10. **Whom the Lord knew face to face.** Though successor to Moses, Joshua was not his equal. With Moses God conversed directly (Ex 33:11; Num 12:8), but Joshua must discover the will of God through priestly mediation (Num 27:21). By the signs of victory over Jordan's waters and Canaan's hosts, Joshua was attested as the successor of Moses, who had triumphed over Pharaoh's hosts and the waters of the sea. But none was like Moses in the fullness of his revelation of the Lord's redemptive might (Deut 34:11-12).

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