

Chapter Eight

1) "All the commandment which I command you this day you shall be careful to do that you may live and multiply and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers. 2) And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. 3) And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. 4) Your clothing did not wear out upon you, and your foot did not swell these forty years. 5) Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you. 6) So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. 7) For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills, 8) a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, 9) a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity in which you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10) And you shall eat and be full, and you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land he has given you. 11) "Take heed lest you forget the Lord your God, by not keeping his commandments and his ordinances and his statutes which I command you this day: 12) lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built goodly houses and live in them, 13) and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, 14) then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, 15) who led you through the great and terrible wilderness with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, 16) who fed you in the wilderness with manna which your fathers did not know that he might humble you and test you to do you good in the end. 17) Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' 18) You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth; that he may confirm his covenant which he swore to your fathers as at this day. 19) And if you forget the Lord your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you this day that you shall surely perish. 20) Like the nations that the Lord makes to perish before you, so shall you perish because you would not obey the voice of the Lord your God.

"All the commandment" (*mitsvah*) is singular as in 7.11 with regard to "this day," a phrase which occurs last in 7.11 and three times within Chapter Eight. Thus "this day" is akin to a *kairos* event, not necessarily one belonging to the twenty-four hour cycle. Its significance lays in the fact that the Lord is speaking...*davar*...to Israel which suspends perception of space and time. In fact, his *davar* is greater than space and time. Within "this day" so much is crammed or concentrated for Israel to absorb, and it's done with specific mention before entering Canaan to possess (*yarash*, 7.17) it.

Closely associated with *mitsvah*/"this day" is remembrance (*zakar*, cf. 7.18) of the way which the Lord had led Israel throughout the Sinai wilderness for forty years, *derek* (cf. 5.33) having as its center point Mount Horeb. To that place *derek* has led from Egypt. From there the *derek* takes on greater significance and comes to fulfillment at the border of Canaan or by the Jordan River. This *derek* both to and from Horeb was an occasion for the Lord to

both humiliate and test Israel, *hanah* and *nasah*, 5.20 and 6.16 respectively. Both have in mind Israel's collective heart of *levav* (cf. 7.17) with regard to keeping the Lord's commandments, *shamar* (cf. 7.12) again being used. This verse leaves us up in the air insofar as we don't know what the Lord found there but can surmise it was less than desirable. Still, the Lord has in mind the nation as a whole in the midst of which remain a few faithful Israelites.

Vs. 3 has another instance of *hanah* (cf. vs. 2) or humbling Israel, which implies the ever present potential faithlessness of the people. The Lord hearkens back to the incident of manna in the desert (Exodus, Chapter Sixteen) which seems more important than the quails even though they are richer in protein. Here the words about not living on manna alone are cited which Jesus uses to rebuke the devil in the temptation to change stones into bread: "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" [Mt 4.4]. In the verse at hand we have "everything" (*kal-*) coming from the Lord's mouth whereas with Jesus we have word or *rhema*. This noun pertains to that which has been uttered or any sound which has a precise meaning whereas *logos* is broader or more inclusive: discourse, the act of speaking or faculty of speech.

One aspect of the *kal-* is that the people did not lack clothing (vs. 4) or more accurately, it didn't wear out implying perpetual renewal of garments throughout forty years in the Sinai wilderness. Also their feet didn't swell meaning that they had their sandals renewed as well, perhaps not unlike the appearance of manna which continued each day to provide food; as for the quails, they came at evening (cf. Ex 16.13). Failure to recognize this is indicative of trouble ahead, of Israel not putting trust in the Lord.

The heart or *levav* is found three verses later into which Israel as a whole is to look or to know (*yadah*, cf. 4.39), here in the sense of dealing with something familiar, that is, disciplining a son, *yasar* (cf. 4.36) which involves instruction. Vs. 6 continues this *yasar*, if you will, by the conjunctive *v-* as "so" by another instance of *shamar* or keeping with regard to the divine commandments, *mitsvah* (cf. vs. 1). Here *shamar* involves walking and fearing, the former concerning divine ways (*derek*, cf. vs. 2).

Vs. 7 speaks of Canaan in terms of water, that is, brooks, fountains and springs, important in a desert environment after which vs. 8 lists seven types of vegetables and fruits followed in vs. 9 by minerals found in the earth.

What had been listed contrasts dramatically with the barren existence Israel had experienced in Sinai for forty years. Yet during this time the people's attention was trained against forgetting his commandments, statutes and ordinances (*mitsvah*, *mishpat* and *choq* (vs. 6, 7.12 and 7.11 respectively), all within the familiar time frame of "this day" (cf. vs. 1). These begin an extended sentence continuing through vs. 16 which begins with two conjunctives *v-* (vss. 13 and 14) translated as "when and then." The first deals with multiplication (*ravah*, cf. 7.13) of silver and gold plus everything in Israel's possession. This *ravah* results (i.e., the 'then') in the lifting up of Israel's heart (*levav*, cf. vs. 5) which

represents taking credit where none is due. In this false exultation the people forget the Lord taking them from the house of bondage (cf. 7.8) which could be interpreted otherwise as the people taking credit for this deliverance minus divine intervention.

The rest of the extended sentence begun in vs. 11, that is, vs. 15 and 16, remind Israel of what the Lord had done on her behalf during the forty years in Sinai. It ends with a statement of intent which is to humble and test the people, *hanah* and *nasah* as in vs. 2.

In vs. 17 the Lord cautions Israel about the self-exultation described in vs. 14 although the Hebrew text lacks the verb “beware” used in the **RSV**. Again, reference is made to Israel’s collective heart (*levav*, cf. vs. 14) about human power and might, *choach* and *hetsem*. The former is noted last in 4.37 while the latter has two other biblical references, Job 30.21 and Ps 139.15. The second reference runs as follows: “My frame was not hidden from you.” In the verse at hand both pertain to *chayl* (cf. 3.18) or wealth which also means strength or force. To counter this, the Lord reminds Israel in vs. 18 that it is he who gives *choach* to obtain *chayl*, the verb *hasah* (to do) being used. The end, radically different from self-aggrandizement, is to confirm the Lord’s covenant, *qum* being the verb which fundamentally means to rise. “That he may confirm the word which the Lord swore to your fathers” [9.5]. Again, we have mention of “this day ” (cf. vs. 11).

Chapter Eight concludes with a solemn warning about forgetting the Lord and going after other gods, *hod* (cf. 4.26 but not noted there) being used with the preposition *b-* reading literally, “in you,” this preposition standing in for the adverb. The *b-* of vs. 19 has its counterpoint in vs. 20 in reference to the Lord’s voice (*qol*, cf. 5.28), that is, “in the voice of the Lord.” This is with regard to the importance of listening, failure of which results in death, *’avad* (cf. 7.24) being used.

Numbers = Verses

mitsvah: 1, yarash: 1, zakar: 2, derek: 2, hanah: 2, nasah: 2, levav: 2, shamar: 2, levav: 5, yadah: 5, yasar: 5, shamar: 6, mitsvah: 6, derek: 6, mitsvah: 11, mishpat: 11, choq: 11, ravah: 13, levav: 14, rum: 14, hanah: 16, nasah: 16, levav: 17, choach: 17, hetsem: 17, chayl: 17, choach: 18, chayl: 18, hasah: 18, qum: 18, hod: 19, qol: 20, ’avad: 20.

Chapter Nine

1) "Hear, O Israel; you are to pass over the Jordan this day, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves, cities great and fortified up to heaven, 2) a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim whom you know and of whom you have heard it said, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?' 3) Know therefore this day that he who goes over before you as a devouring fire is the Lord your God; he will destroy them and subdue them before you; so you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly as the Lord has promised you. 4) "Do not say in your heart after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land'; whereas it is because of the wickedness of

these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you. 5) Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land; but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. 6) "Know therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness; for you are a stubborn people. 7) Remember and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place you have been rebellious against the Lord. 8) Even at Horeb you provoked the Lord to wrath, and the Lord was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you. 9) When I went up the mountain to receive the tables of stone, the tables of the covenant which the Lord made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water. 10) And the Lord gave me the two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them were all the words which the Lord had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. 11) And at the end of forty days and forty nights the Lord gave me the two tables of stone, the tables of the covenant. 12) Then the Lord said to me, 'Arise, go down quickly from here; for your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made themselves a molten image.' 13) "Furthermore the Lord said to me, 'I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stubborn people; 14) let me alone that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.' 15) So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire; and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands. 16) And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the Lord your God; you had made yourselves a molten calf; you had turned aside quickly from the way which the Lord had commanded you. 17) So I took hold of the two tables and cast them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. 18) Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water because of all the sin which you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger. 19) For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure which the Lord bore against you so that he was ready to destroy you. But the Lord hearkened to me that time also. 20) And the Lord was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him; and I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. 21) Then I took the sinful thing, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust; and I threw the dust of it into the brook that descended out of the mountain. 22) "At Taberah also, and at Massah and at Kibroth-hatta'avah, you provoked the Lord to wrath. 23) And when the Lord sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, 'Go up and take possession of the land which I have given you,' then you rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God and did not believe him or obey his voice. 24) You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. 25) "So I lay prostrate before the Lord for these forty days and forty nights because the Lord had said he would destroy you. 26) And I prayed to the Lord, 'O Lord God, destroy not your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. 27) Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; do not regard the stubbornness of this people or their wickedness or their sin, 28) lest the land from which brought us say, "Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to slay them in the wilderness." 29) For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm.'

Although the command to hear (*shamah*, cf. 7.12) begins this chapter and more specifically carries through vs. 3, its echo resounds to the very last verse. The Lord is bidding the people to *shamah* through Moses who while gazing out upon those assembled before him, could feel that many, if not most, would fail to pay attention. The hearing at hand is of special important—one of two instances of “this day” in Chapter Nine—in that Israel is on the verge of crossing the Jordan River into Canaan. There Israel is to dispossess nations far greater than they, *yarash* being the verb which as noted in 7.17 means the opposite of its usual sense to inherit. Thus it can be said that Israel is to un-inherit the people dwelling in Canaan having in mind that they had once lived there before coming to Egypt at Joseph’s invitation. Mention of cities reaching up to (literally, ‘in,’ *b-*) heaven is intended to re-enforce the *shamah* beginning this new chapter; in other words, Israel isn’t to slide into forgetfulness.

Another spin-off of *shamah* is mention of the Anakim mentioned early towards the beginning of Deuteronomy (cf. 1.28), As for these people, earlier inhabitants of Canaan, the spies in Num 13.33 compared themselves to them as grasshoppers. A rhetorical question is put forth here, about no one able to resist the Anakim, *yatsav* meaning to take a stand. It’s mentioned in 7.24 but not noted there. Compare the height insinuated with regard to these people, cities “fortified up to heaven,” they being appropriate for such places.

Vs. 3 contains the second reference to “this day” where the Lord presents himself as a devouring fire, a fire which eats or better, consumes (*’akal* (cf. 7.16). It both destroys and subdues all before Israel, *shamad* (cf. 7.23) and *kanah*, the latter meaning to bring low or bend the knee as in Ps 81.14: “I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes.” Note that the Lord does this in preparation for Israel to drive them out and as well as to have them perish quickly: the first is another example of an alternate use of *yarash* and the second is *’avad* (cf. vs. 1 and 8.20 respectively). This is possible only because of the Lord’s promise which is rendered by him having spoken or *davar*.

Vs. 4 is not unlike 8.17 where the Lord forbids the people to take credit for any future victory, *levav* being the noun for heart in which this presumption comes to birth. It centers around self-righteousness or *tsdaqah* (cf. vs. 5) over thinking that they, not the Lord, are responsible for the expulsion of the people in Canaan, *hadaph* being the verb as found in 6.19 but not noted there. The real reason for driving out these people is their wickedness or *rishhah*, this noun found in the next verse.

Vs. 5 pretty much repeats the contents of vs. 4 in order to drive home the fact that the Lord is in charge, not Israel, and least of all, the inhabitants of Canaan or anyone else who may opposed his designs. Everything is directed to the end that the Lord confirm (*qum*, cf. 8.18) the *davar* sworn to the three patriarchs of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This third patriarch is responsible, albeit unwittingly at the time, of going to Egypt at Joseph’s invitation along with his other sons, the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel. And so hearing his name is special for the Israelites since they had departed Egypt just one generation ago. As far as Abraham goes, the original patriarch, he was promised Canaan way back in Gen 12.1: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” At the

present Israel is not unlike Abraham. Although familiar with living as nomads in the Sinai, they knew all along this wasn't their fate, that they were on the threshold of entering someplace new yet strangely familiar, familiar from stories they had heard passed down generation after generation.

Vs. 6 begins with the conjunctive *v-* but isn't translated, continuing as it does with Moses speaking for the Lord. It shows the close connection between what the Lord has just communicated to his people and its continuance. The Lord makes sure that Israel realize (*yadah*, to know; cf. 8.5) their possession of Canaan isn't due to their righteousness or *tsdaqah* (cf. vs. 4). Unfortunately it's nullified by their stubbornness which reads literally as stiff neck, *qasheh* being the adjective found next in vs. 13. This charge colored with some disgust is first used in Ex 32.9: "I have seen this people and behold, it is a stiff-necked people." To counter such hardness in vs. 7 the Lord urges the need to remember and don't forget, the two being essentially the same but put differently for emphasis. They concern how Israel had provoked the Lord, *qatsaph* (cf. 1.34) meaning to break or break out. If this weren't a bad enough reminder, Israel had been rebellious literally from the first day Israel left Egypt and lasted, more or less with the exception of a few bright spots, until the people came to where they are now. *Marah* (cf. 1.42) is the verb which works hand-in-hand with *qatsaph*. It's used with the preposition *him-*, literally, "with the Lord. The time span of forty years isn't mentioned but certainly specified.

The conjunctive *v-* introducing vs. 8 translates as "even" with respect to Israel's attitude at Mount Horeb, the very place where Moses encountered God and received the Torah. It's almost as though the people completely ignored the Lord from the day they stepped onto the shore of the Red Sea opposite Egypt all the way to the border of Canaan...one continuous attitude of rebellion and ignorance of what had transpired in the Sinai wilderness. At Horeb, this most sacred place, Israel had provoked the Lord, *qatsaph* being used as it is in the previous verse relative to the wilderness. It's as though this second *qatsaph* is an intensification as well as greater insult to the Lord as he is appearing on the mountain. There the Lord is on the verge of destroying (*shamad*, cf. vs. 3) the people through his wrath, *'aph* (cf. 6.15 implying the breathing out of furious wind from his nostrils.

Moses states in vs. 9 that he ascended Horeb to receive the tables of the covenant or *beryth* (cf. 7.9) and remained there for forty days and nights, the latter suggestive of this extended period of time which obviously differs from conventional calendar days. During this time Moses fasted from both food and water. Even if these were regular forty days and nights, it was possible because he was immune to the passage of time and hence awareness of space. What's so important about this *beryth* are the words (*davar*) of the Lord which he had spoken (*davar*). Thus the *davar* which had been uttered to now starting with the first verse of Deuteronomy (*'eleh hadbarym*, 'these [are] the words') are carved into stone and hence made visible for the first time. What separates the oral *davar* from the written *davar* is that they emerged from the midst of fire and more specifically, on the day of the assembly or *qahal* (cf. 5.22). It is within the context of this gathering of the entire nation of Israel that

the *davar* became visible, so no one could claim later that only a privileged few had seen them.

In vs. 11 Moses specified the time when the Lord gave him the tablets, at the end of being on Horeb forty days and forty nights which seemed like an instant to him. Immediately afterwards the Lord rushed him off down the mountain with the command *qum* (cf. vs. 5) as arise because as sadly but entirely not unexpected the people acted reverted to their old ways. If Moses weren't bidden to arise, he would have lingered on the mountain and therefore neglect his responsibility toward Israel. Right away it was obvious as to what was going on without the Lord telling him, that the people have acted in a corrupt fashion, *shachath* (cf. 4.25) also meaning to destroy. A certain trace of scorn by the Lord lays in the words when he calls Israel *your* people which *you* have brought from Egypt. In other words, they belong to Moses, not the Lord, so responsibility rests with him.

Vs. 12 contains a second use of the adverb *maher* (quickly), that is, Israel having turned aside (*sur*, cf. 5.32) from the way or *derek* (cf. 9.6) especially designed for them, preferring the dead-end of making a molten image, *masekah* which is found next in vs. 16. Here *masekah* isn't identified as the image of a calf, perhaps because Moses is too angry and embarrassed to recall that incident.

The conjunctive *v-* of vs. 13 continues the fast-paced action recounted so far and is translated as "furthermore." The Lord exclaims that he has seen this people which is followed by *hineh* or behold, a expression of astonishment. This sentiment is very different from the Lord's words to Moses in Ex 3.7: "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt." Perhaps he's saying to himself that Israel would have been better off under trying circumstances, but never would he communicate this to Moses. The phrase "stiff (*qasheh*) neck" is found again as in vs. 6. Like someone who has suffered an affront, he exclaims to Moses that he be left alone (*raphah*, cf. 4.31) for two purposes: *shamad* (cf. vs. 8) and *machah*, the latter as in 25.19: "You shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." Then in vs. 14 the Lord says that he'll make a nation greater than the one he's dealing with now, perhaps referring to Mose who will be forced to start from scratch.

Upon hearing the astonishing words about the very real possibility that the Lord will blot out Israel and start anew, in vs. 15 Moses turns aside before coming down from Horeb, *panah* (cf. 3.1) being the verb for compared with the one of *sur* in vs. 12 which is more a departing. In other words, *panah* intimates a quick spin around, not necessarily the sense of departing, though that's included. It was as though Moses were too astonished at having heard these words. So as he did his *panah* and was descending, the mountain was afire although he didn't dare look back. However, he hoped this dramatic sight would sufficiently frighten the people before he arrived in the camp.

Once Moses had reached the base of Mount Horeb, he looked and beheld (*hineh*) just as the Lord had done in vs. 13. He was unable to do this twofold gesture both on Horeb as well as when he was coming down simply because the fire behind him was too intense. He came

across the people having sinned (*chata'*, cf. 1.41 but not noted there) against the Lord, the preposition *l-* rendering this literally and more directly as “to the Lord.” The words “(made) themselves” or *lakem* shows the consequence of this sin—*l-* the Lord—for it too uses the same preposition which reads literally as “to you.” And the making involved obviously is the molten (*masekah*: cf. vs. 12) calf. This double *l-*, if you will, which involved sinning “to” the Lord and making “to” themselves the calf demonstrates not just the people had turned aside but did so with astonishing rapidity. The verbs is *sur* along with the adverb *maher* (cf. vs. 12 for both) with regard *derek* (cf. vs. 12 for all three).

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 17 translates as “so,” showing Moses’ immediate response to the golden calf as he grasped the two tablets, *taphas* being the verb as in 21.19: “Then his father and his mother shall take hold of him.” In the verse at hand *taphas* is a sudden response of shock, horror and anger which happens a mere second before Moses dashes the tables to the ground. *Shavar* is the verb to break along with the preposition *l-* which reads literally as “to your eyes” or right smack before you...almost on you.

After the dramatic shattering of the two tablets which contained the essence of the Torah, everyone expected Moses to let all hell break loose. Instead he lay prostrate on the ground for a period of forty days and forty night which he had done recently on Mount Horeb (cf. vs. 9). However, this was a long, drawn-out affair, not at all as being with the Lord. The same goes for the fast he undertook. This time Moses was doing it for the people who had committed evil (*rah*, cf. 4.25) which, in turn, provoked the Lord’s wrath, *kahas*, cf. 4.25) also meaning to displease.

And so with good reason Moses is afraid, *yagar* being the verb in vs. 19 which has six other biblical references compared with the more common *yare'*, one of them being 28.60: “And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt which you were afraid of. Such fear manifested by Moses has two objects: the Lord’s anger and hot displeasure, *'aph* (cf. vs. 8, that sense of breathing out fierceness) and *chemah* or fury, both found in 29.23: “Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and wrath.” Both the Lord bore against Israel, *qatsaph* (cf. vs. 7) or literally “on (*hal-*) Israel,” making *'aph* and *chemah* all the more terrible as destruction, the verb *shamad* (cf. vs. 14) being used. Yet by way of a dig towards those he’s addressing, Moses concludes that the Lord was willing yet again to listen to him.

Vs. 20 also begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “also,” intended to include Aaron as the chief culprit in the golden calf incident. The Lord was not just angry with him (*'anaph*: cf. 4.21 but not noted there and *b-*, literally ‘in him’) but excessively so, *me'od* being the adverb (cf. 6.5). To prevent the Lord from destroying (*shamad*: cf. vs. 19) Aaron, Moses prayed for him, *palal* connoting intercession and found next in vs. 26. Note that Moses does this “at the same time.” Nothing is said earlier about such *palal* though it’s inferred as in vs. 19 with regard to the people. Immediately after this intercession—we have no new as to how it went—Moses burned the golden calf and ground it into dust, calling it a sinful thing or *chata'th*, the only use of this noun in the Bible. Even though Moses pulverized it and threw

it into a stream, still its presence lingered among the people. Also the remains of the dust clung to Moses' garments and skin some time afterward despite a thorough wash as possible.

Vs. 22 mentions three places referred to earlier in Exodus and Numbers, the most well known being Massah noted in 6.16. All were scenes of provocation, *qatsaph* (cf. vs. 19). The same unfortunate situation carries over in vs. 23 when the Lord sends Israel from Kadesh-barnea, that is, made all the worse because the people are going to possess (*yarash*, cf. vs. 3) the land. The fact that the Lord had given it to them makes the situation all the more difficult and gives pause to wonder why the Lord has been putting up with this rebellious (*marah*, cf. 1.43) attitude for so long with not the slightest intent of change.

At this stage apparently only Moses (Aaron was disgraced by reason of the golden calf) was the one who held everything together. Again he lay prostrate before the Lord, *naphal* (cf. vs. 18 but not noted there) meaning to fall, feeling as though the weight of Mount Horeb itself were crushing him. However, given the hard-heartedness of Israel, *naphal* suggests that Moses simply fell flat on his face, having collapsed on the ground because he could do nothing more. And this lasted forty days and forty nights. Even if this were a literal span of time the people hardly would take notice, stepping over him nonchalantly as they went about their business. That's how hard-hearted they had become. During this extended time Moses prayed (*palal*, cf. vs. 20) directly to the Lord not to destroy the people, *shachat* (cf. 4.31). This verb means to lay waste as well as to act wickedly compared with the more common *shamad*, and used in the previous verse, connoting extermination as well as annihilation.

Moses' *palal* or intercession begins in vs. 26 and continues to the end of this chapter. He begs the Lord not to destroy Israel (*shachat*) because he has redeemed her, *padah* meaning to loose or set free. "Forgive, O Lord, your people Israel whom you have redeemed" [21.8]. In the verse at hand, this is done literally in (*b-*) the Lord's greatness, referring to when Israel came from Egypt. In vs. 27 Moses appeals to remembrance of the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and contrasts them with Israel's stubbornness, wickedness and sin (*qeshy*: only use of the word, *reshah* and *chata'th*: cf. vs. 21) which he begs not to regard or *panah* noted in vs. 15 as to turn. Here *panah* implies a sudden movement, a full turn of the body, if you will, toward the object of regard, that is, away from the patriarchs.

Vs. 28 is a continuation of vs. 27, the two forming an extended sentence where Moses speaks in an almost cunning fashion, if you will, that the land from which the Lord brought Israel mock both that people and the Lord himself for having failed in his promise. At the same time there's still time to save face or for the Lord not to be put to shame by Egypt, the super-power of its day, as well as by other peoples. Moses concludes (cf. vs. 29) with the retort, if you will, that Israel is both the Lord's people and heritage or *nachalah* (cf. 4.39). So while all this is going on—Moses interceding with the Lord—there remains the very real possibility that the Lord may be tempted to give up on the entire enterprise, swallow his pride and let Egypt mock him.

Numbers = Verses

shamah: 1, yarash: 1, yatsav: 2, 'akal: 3, shamad: 3, kanah: 3, yarash: 3, 'avad: 3, levav: 4, tsdaqah: 4, hadaph: 4, rishhah: 4, qum: 5, yadah: 6, tsdaqah: 6, qasheh: 6, qatsaph: 7, marah: 7, shamad: 8, 'aph: 8, beryth: 9, qahal (noun): 10, qum: 12, maher: 12, sur: 12, derek: 12, masekah: 12, hineh: 13, qasheh: 13, raphah: 14, shamad: 14, machah: 14, panah: 15, hineh: 16, chata': 16, masekah: 16, sur: 16, maher: 16, derek: 16, taphas: 17, shavar: 17, rah: kahas: 18, 18, yagar: 19, 'aph: 19, chemah: 19, qatsaph: 19, shamad: 19, 'anaph: 20, me'od: 20, shamad: 20, palal: 20, chata'th: 21, qatsaph: 22, yarash: 23, marah: 24, naphal: 25, palal: 26, shachat: 26, padah: 26, panah: 27, qeshy: 27, reshah: 27, chata'th: 27, nachalah: 29.

Chapter Ten

1) "At that time the Lord said to me, 'Hew two tables of stone like the first and come up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood. 2) And I will write on the tables the words that were on the first tables which you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.' 3) So I made an ark of acacia wood and hewed two tables of stone like the first and went up the mountain with the two tables in my hand. 4) And he wrote on the tables as at the first writing, the ten commandments which the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them to me. 5) Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they are as the Lord commanded me. 6) (The people of Israel journeyed from Be-eroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried; and his son Eleazar ministered as priest in his stead. 7) From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land with brooks of water. 8) At that time the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister to him and to bless in his name, to this day. 9) Therefore Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers; the Lord is his inheritance as the Lord your God said to him.) 10) "I stayed on the mountain, as at the first time, forty days and forty nights, and the Lord hearkened to me that time also; the Lord was unwilling to destroy you. 11) And the Lord said to me, 'Arise, go on your journey at the head of the people that they may go in and possess the land, which I swore to their fathers to give them.' 12) "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul 13) and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I command you this day for your good? 14) Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it; 15) yet the Lord set his heart in love upon your fathers and chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples as at this day. 16) Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. 17) For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of Lords, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God who is not partial and takes no bribe. 18) He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. 19) Love the sojourner therefore; for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. 20) You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve him and cleave to him, and by his name you shall swear. 21) He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and

terrible things which your eyes have seen. 22) Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the Lord your God has made you as the stars of heaven for multitude.

The opening words of this new chapter, “at that time” (cf. vs. 8), show that the Lord is eager to replace the original tables as quickly as possible and get on with the task at hand. The verb *pasal* is used for hew instead of *karath* (to cut) from which the noun covenant is derived. Actually *pasal* is the root for *pesel*, a graven image and hence an abomination (cf. 7.25). It has five biblical references, one of which is in 10.3, and based upon Ex 34.1: “But two tables of stone like the first.” Note that in both instances Moses does the work, not the Lord, as in Ex 24.12 which contains the verb *katav* as here (cf. 9.10 but not noted there). Thus *pasal* is an image, if you will, of *katav* which makes more sense when applied to a *pesel*, an image formed by humans. It imitates what God had formed and hence is an imitation...bordering upon an usurpation...of his creative power.

Vs. 2 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as “and” preceded by the last two verses which has the same rendered as “and” and “so.” These are followed by vs. 5 which has the conjunctive as “then.” They’re mentioned here to show the close connection between the Lord and Moses within the context of the latter hewing the tables and the former writing upon them.

In vs. 3 Moses is to do his *pasal* of the ark or *‘aron* comprised of acacia wood. This container also applies to a coffin and as to be expected, is frequently mentioned in Chapter Ten. After all, it was on Horeb that the Lord bade Moses to fashion the *‘aron* (cf. Ex 25.10). Acacia wood is the material *shitah* being black in color not unlike ebony and must have had a certain gleam about it as well as a mysterious quality. Besides, it’s only found here in Deuteronomy though frequently mentioned in Exodus.

Once Moses ascends Horeb (cf. vs. 4), the Lord will write or *karath*...cut...not *pasal* or hew...the words (*davar*). As a footnote in the **RSV** points out, these aren’t commandments as found in that text but belong to what is called here “the first writing.” While in the camp, Moses hewed the two blank tables which must have roused considerable curiosity among the people. Also they were ashamed, this second set reminding them of how they had worshiped the golden calf made of gold in their possession. It’s easy to picture Moses chipping away, deliberately so, in the eyes of everyone. Chances are for posterity Moses chose the hardest rock he could find so if urged to smash them, they wouldn’t break. Afterwards he spent considerable time polishing them so the *davar* would stand out more than the first copy. As he was ascending Horeb, Moses couldn’t help but wonder if the Lord would duplicate exactly his earlier *davar* or modify them after the golden calf incident. Only on the top of Horeb would that become known. As for Moses speaking with the Lord, he couldn’t do this in the camp because the people would discover quickly just how strong is their rebellious attitude and perish on the spot.

The last conjunctive *v-* as “then” in vs. 5 concludes the sequence begun in vs. 2 with Moses having turned, (*panah* as in 9.15). Bound up with this turning is his descent from Horeb

after which he put the tables in the shiny *'aron* or ark. Moses says that he had made it along with hewing the tables. However, now with the divine *davar* inscribed on them, no longer could he claim to have made them. The final words of vs. 5 “There they are” add a certain human touch as if to say that I, Moses, went through all this trouble. Now you Israelites have the new tables both as a condemnation and as a witness that you be faithful to the divine covenant.

The **RSV** has vss. 6-9 in parentheses the observation that they are an editorial insertion and parallel Num 33.30-38. Vs. 6 states that Aaron had died with Eleazar succeeding him as priest. This is significant in light of the need of Moses to have the two tables duplicated. It was Aaron who was directly responsible for fashioning the golden calf and thus set in motion this business about the tables. Also mention of Eleazar as successor of his father’s priestly role serves to push this unfortunate incident further into the background, thereby reducing further embarrassing memories.

Vs. 7 mentions a land with brooks of water, an important insertion within the context of Israel’s journey through an arid or semi-arid land. Chances are the people lingered there for some time to re-coop and reflect on recent events, sobered by what they had gone through.

Vs. 8 has the phrase “at that time” as in vs. 1, a *kairos* event, if you will, when the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi, *badal* (cf. 4.41) also meaning to shut out and thus make exclusive for a given end. It pertains to the tribe of Levi which fits in with the breaking of the tables and golden calf. It was this tribe that showed allegiance to Moses and set about the gruesome but necessary task of slaying fellow Israelites who succumbed to worship of the calf: “and the sons of Levi did according to the word (*davar*) of Moses” [Ex 32.28].

By reason of their *badal*, the Levites are to carry out four functions: 1) to bear the ark of the covenant, 2) to stand before the Lord, 3) to minister to him and 4) to bless him. *Sharath* is the verb to minister and connotes waiting upon. “The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there...that man shall die” [17.12]. *Barak* is the verb to bless noted last in 7.14 and is to be done in the name of the Lord. The words “to this day” mean more than temporal duration but connote continuation of liturgical worship as ministered by the Levites. Because of this honor where the Levites live off alms, etc, they lack a share in Israel’s inheritance or *nachalah* (cf. 9.29. Instead, the Lord is their *nachalah* as stated in Num 18.20:”I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel.” Here the boon of *cheleq* (portion) is added which also can mean lot. Also, while the Levites may experience a certain destitution as they await the *nachalah* from the Lord, nevertheless it remains among the people as the Numbers verse indicates.

In vs. 10 Moses brings to mind his stay on Mount Horeb the length of forty days and forty nights, the verb *hamad* (cf. 5.31) implying that he stood or abided there without moving. Such *hamad* made Moses impervious to the passage of time whether it was an actual forty days and forty nights or such time more or less as a *kairos* event. “That time” is the third occurrence in Chapter Ten, the other two being vss. 1 and 8. The benefit of this *hamad* by

Moses is that the Lord was disinclined to destroy the people, *shachath* (cf. 4.25). The text uses *shachath* with the singular second person “you” which can be taken as Moses along with the people, the two being one and the same.

After Moses informed the people about his stay on Mount Horeb in vs. 11 the Lord told him to arise or *qum* (cf. 9.12) which can be taken as an order to get going as soon as possible. Such quickness is also intimated by the conjunctive *v-* (and), connecting what’s recounted in the previous verse in contrast to the one at hand. The Lord confirms Moses’ role as leader saying he’s to return to being at the head of the people, *liphney* also as “before.” Once so positioned, the people with Moses at their head will possess (*yarash*, cf. 9.23) the land though in actuality that task fell to Joshua. The Lord knew this, of course, but for the sake of Israel’s survival he couldn’t let either the people or Moses know even though chances are everyone could intimate what was going on. The basis for this *yarash* isn’t the current generation of Israel but the Lord keeping true to his oath sworn to their fathers. Although such wording has occurred earlier, still it hasn’t sunken into the collective mind of the people. Though linked, they and their fathers are separate by reason of obedience to the Lord. It seems the Lord is speaking thus for future generations to look back and see this distinction.

Vs. 12 has the conjunctive *v-* coupled with *hatah* (‘and now’) beginning what amounts to a rhetorical question. It’s intended to draw attention away from Moses to the people where he spells out five requirements, *sha’al* being the verb which also means to request or demand. However, here it borders on politeness, a new tactic the Lord adopts when dealing with such a stiff neck people. “Or a charmer or a medium (*sha’al*) or a wizard or a necromancer” [18.11]. The five requirements are as follows, the last being in vs. 13. In that verse are the words “for your good” or literally “to good to you,” *l-* being prefaced to both words. The five run as follows:

- 1) Fear or *yare’* (cf. 6.2) the Lord.
- 2) Walk or the common *halak* (cf. 8.6 but not noted there) with regard not just to ways (*derek*, cf. 9.16) but to them all. This analogy is something the Israelites can identify readily with by reason of their advancement...their *derek*...toward Canaan.
- 3) Love or *’ahav* (cf. 7.13).
- 4) Serve or *havad* (cf. 5.9), the verb connoting slavery and to be done with the heart and soul (*levav* and *nephesh*, cf. 9.4 and 6.5 respectively), both modified by *kal-* or whole, entire.
- 5) Keep (*shamar*, cf. 7.12) with regard to commandments and statutes (*mitsvah* and *choq* cf. 8.11 for both).

Vs. 14 shifts attention to the Lord’s broader concern for Israel to whom belong heaven, the heaven of heavens and the earth. The verse begins with *hen* or behold in order to get Israel’s attention and is more along the lines of “surely, indeed,” similar to *hineh* as in 9.16. Heaven is directly above, the dome of the sky, whereas the second is above that where the Lord dwells and out of range of human perception.

In contrast to this all-encompassing domain which contains everything that exists, the Lord in vs. 15 (it begins with *raq* or 'yet' for emphasis in contrast to the hugeness just mentioned) turned his attention to Israel's fathers. The verb is *chashaq* (cf. 7.7) meaning to cleave or to join together, "heart" being part of this verb as translated here. It's used with the infinitive of *'ahav* (cf. vs. 12) or love, that being prefaced with the preposition *l-*, literally as "to love." Such clinging is stressed further by the preposition *b-*, literally as "in your fathers." In order not to shame the people, despite being stiff-necked, the Lord adds that this love (with the prepositions *l-* and *b-*, if you will) also applies to them. The phrase "as at this day" serves to bridge the time between Israel's fathers and the current generation as well as all those in between.

Vs. 16 speaks of circumcision or *harlah*, sign of the very first covenant with Abraham: "You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you" [Gen 17.11]. Certainly the Israelites continued this covenant relationship down the ages, but here circumcision pertains to their hearts (*levav*, cf. vs. 13). This will take away their stubbornness or *qashah* (cf. 2.30), a verb meaning to be hard of which the foreskin around the heart is a symbol. The reason for circumcision is given in the next verse (17), that the Lord is God of gods and Lord of lords. These titles are meant to distinguish him not so much from local Canaanite deities but to make sure Israel understands such is his nature, given their tendency to worship local deities. Also the Lord isn't partial nor takes bribes: the first translates literally as "lifting faces" and the second with *shochad* as the noun which also means a gift or reward. "And you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous" [16.19].

Both vs. 18 and 19 deal with relationships, just as important as all that has been said, the first pertaining to those Israelites who are most vulnerable, the fatherless and the widow. At the end of vs. 18 and into vs. 19 the Lord speaks of the sojourner or *ger* (cf. 5.14) as if he were more important. Not only is this based upon traditional hospitality in the desert but more precisely because Israel had been a *ger* in Egypt. So despite four hundred years of relative prosperity and safety after Joseph bade his family to come there, Israel is considered a *ger*. Furthermore the sojourner is to be shown love (*'ahav*), something not mentioned with regard to the fatherless and widow.

Right after speaking in rather noticeable fashion of love for the sojourner the Lord bids Israel to fear (*yare'*) him simply because he is terrible (*yare'*, cf. vs. 17). It's necessary to say this, given the persistent hard-heartedness Israel has manifested to date which unfortunately has the prospect of continuing well into the future. The counterpart to *yare'* is *davaq* or cleaving to the Lord or literally "in (*b-*) him," this verb also meaning to glue. "And you shall him and cleave to him" [13.4]. Such closeness to the Lord results in swearing (*shavah*, cf. 6.10) by his name, literally as "in (*b-*) his name." Thus here we have two instances of "in."

In vs. 21 the Lord is Israel's praise or *tehilah* by reason of the people having seen great and terrible things, *yare'* again being mentioned. "He will set you high above all nations that he has made in praise and in fame and in honor" 26.19]. Reference is to what Israel has seen, most likely hearkening back a generation or two since her departure from Egypt as well as the dramatic events at Mount Horeb and elsewhere within the Sinai wilderness. And that covers a span of some forty years.

Chapter Ten concludes with another calling to mind of Israel's migration into Egypt (i.e., they being sojourners there as noted in vs. 19). Here we have remembrance of the original seventy who went at Joseph's invitation in reference to the twelve brothers and hence future tribes mentioned in Ex 1-5. However, that concludes quickly with Joseph's death, setting the stage for Israel's eventual departure from Egypt. Even then as vs. 22 says Israel had multiplied greatly. "But the descendants of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly; they multiplied and grew exceedingly strong so that the land was filled with them" [Ex 1.6].

Numbers = Verses

pasal: 1, katav: 1, 'aron: 1, pasal: 3, 'aron: 3, shitah: 3, karath: 4, panah: 5, 'aron: 5, badal: 8, sharath: 8, barak: 8, cheleq: 9, nachalah: 9, hamad: 10, shachath: 10, qum: 11, yarash: 11, sha'al: 12, yare': 12, halak: 12, derek: 12, 'ahav: 12, havad: 12, shamar: 13, levav: 13, nephesh: 13, shamar: 13, mitsvah: 13, choq: 13, chashaq: 15, 'ahav: 14, harlah: 16, levav: 16, qashah: 16, shochad: 17, ger: 18, 'ahav: 18, yare': 20, shavah: 20, tehilah: 21, yare': 21.

Chapter Eleven

1) "You shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his ordinances and his commandments always. 2) And consider this day (since I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen it), consider the discipline of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm, 3) his signs and his deeds which he did in Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land; 4) and what he did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord has destroyed them to this day; 5) and what he did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place; 6) and what he did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, son of Reuben; how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up with their households, their tents and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel; 7) for your eyes have seen all the great work of the Lord which he did. 8) "You shall therefore keep all the commandment which I command you this day that you may be strong and go in and take possession of the land which you are going over to possess 9) and that you may live long in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10) For the land which you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your feet like a garden of vegetables; 11) but the land which you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys which drinks water by the rain from heaven, 12) a land which the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the

year. 13) "And if you will obey my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, 14) he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. 15) And he will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be full. 16) Take heed lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, 17) and the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and he shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no fruit, and you perish quickly off the good land which the Lord gives you. 18) "You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. 19) And you shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. 20) And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and upon your gates, 21) that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them as long as the heavens are above the earth. 22) For if you will be careful to do all this commandment which I command you to do, loving the Lord your God, walking in all his ways and cleaving to him, 23) then the Lord will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourselves. 24) Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; your territory shall be from the wilderness and Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea. 25) No man shall be able to stand against you; the Lord your God will lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that you shall tread, as he promised you. 26) "Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse: 27) the blessing if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day 28) and the curse if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God but turn aside from the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods which you have not known. 29) And when the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to take possession of it, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. 30) Are they not beyond the Jordan, west of the road, toward the going down of the sun, in the land of the Canaanites who live in the Arabah, over against Gilgal, beside the oak of Moreh? 31) For you are to pass over the Jordan to go in to take possession of the land which the Lord your God gives you; and when you possess it and live in it, 32) you shall be careful to do all the statutes and the ordinances which I set before you this day.

The conjunctive *v-* shows a seamless connection between the last chapter and the one at hand, that is, keeping in mind Israel's deliverance from Egypt as noted in vs. 22. *'Ahav* (cf. 10.18) or love is the command leading off Chapter Eleven. It's with respect to the Lord who is not distinct from the keeping (*shamar*: cf. 10.13) of his charge, statutes, ordinances and commands (*mishmereth*, *choq*, *mishpat* and *mitsvah*). The first is obviously derived from *shamar*, the only reference in Deuteronomy. "Even when the cloud continued over the tabernacle many days the people of Israel kept the charge of the Lord and did not set out" [Num 9.19] The other three objects of *shamar* are found together in 8.11; all four are kept literally "all the days."

Vs. 2 begins an extended sentence running all the way through vs. 7. It contains the phrase "this day," *hayom* literally as "the day" and is the first of eight occurrences in Chapter Eleven, the others being vss. 4, 8, 13, 26, 27, 28 and 32. NB: vs. 4 is the only one reading "this day" whereas the others read literally "the day," This immediate present is of utmost

importance which is why the verb *yadah* (cf. 9.6) or consider, knowledge in the intimate sense in used.

The **RSV** of vs. 2 has in parentheses the Lord speaking through Moses not to the current generation's children because they have neither known or seen (*yadah* and *ra'ah*, vs. 1 and 5.24 respectively) "it," that is, "the day." Note the direct speech, "your children" who are present with the older generation of Israelites. Such a statement is telling in that it reveals basically two generations assembled together: those who came from Egypt and the other two which were born in the Sinai wilderness at various times throughout Israel's forty years. Perhaps those who had been born after the departure from Egypt and encounter with the Lord at Mount Horeb were too young to have had first hand experience of his intervention. Their consideration or their *yadah* as distinct from their elders in many ways is more important. They must pay close attention to what their parents' generation is in the process of teaching or passing on because they will be responsible for the sustained memory of all that has happened to date. Most important and enduring of them all, of course, is the Torah.

Vs. 3 contains the second instance of "consider" or *yadah*, with respect to the current generation having full knowledge of past events. The Lord wishes them to have the intimate knowledge associated with *yadah* which contains the following elements:

Vs. 2: Discipline or as a footnote to the **RSV** has it, instruction or *musar* which is often applicable to children. That can apply to the children referred to in vs. 2, i.e., the parentheses. "Hear, O sons, a father's instruction" [Prov 4.1]. Greatness or *godel* (cf. 5.24), mighty (*chazaq*, cf. 7.19) hand, outstretched arm (*natah*, cf. 7.19).

Vs. 3: Signs (*'oth*) and deeds (*mahaseh*: cf. 4.28 but not noted there) as pertaining to Egypt and pharaoh as well as his land or *'erets*. Here Egypt and land are distinguished, perhaps the latter as under pharaoh's direct ownership and control. Both signs and deeds are done literally "in the midst of" Egypt, *betok* meaning in its very center.

Vs. 4: The Egyptian army, horses and chariots are mentioned separately. "The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst (*tok*, with the preposition *'el-* instead of *b-* as in *betok*) of the sea, all pharaoh's horses, his chariots and his horsemen" [Ex 14.23]. The verse at hand mentions water overflowing the Egyptian force as well as destroying it, *'avad* (cf. 9.3). It has the second mention of the phrase "to this day" (i.e., not 'the day' as with the other references to the phrase) implying that what had happened then continues into the present, namely, that the same fate awaits Israel's present and future foes.

Vs. 5: "To this place" (*maqom*: cf. 9.7 but not noted there) parallels "to this day."

Vs. 6: The earth swallowing up Dathan and Abiram. "The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan and covered the company of Abiram" [Ps 106.14]. In the verse at hand, this happened in the midst or very center of Israel, *qerev* (cf. 7.21) prefaced with the preposition *b-* (in).

Vs. 7: Great work (*mahaseh*, cf. vs. 3) which the Lord had done, *hasah* (cf. 8.18) being the verbal root of this noun.

As with vs. 1, vs. 8 has the conjunctive *v-* translated as therefore showing the close connection of what is recounted in the above six verses to the Lord bidding Israel to keep (*shamar*, cf. vs. 1) his commandment or *mitsvah* commanded (*tsavah*, cf. 10.13 but not noted there), the latter being the verbal root of the former. By way of note, *tsavah* occurs some seventy-nine times in Deuteronomy and here is within the context of “this day” (literally, ‘the day’), the third use of this phrase. As for *shamar*, it has three parts, if you will: *chazaq* (cf. vs 2), *bo’* and *yarash* (cf. 10.11) or be strong, enter and possess in the sense of inherit. The importance of *yarash* is brought out by the further words “which you are going over to possess.”

Vs. 9 continues from the previous verse with the conjunctive *v-* and makes the connection between *shamar* and a long life the Lord had sworn to give to Israel’s fathers. Here we have a land flowing with milk and honey, not like Egypt where the Israelites had to sow their own seed which produced vegetables. Although these vegetables are a better diet than milk and honey, the image is reminiscent of Eden where everything was provided in contrast to life outside it. The first pertains to inside Eden and the second, outside: “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden” [Gen 3.16]. “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground” [Gen 3.19].

The Lord continues to describe Canaan, the land of *yarash*, in the sense of inheritance as noted several time earlier. In vs. 10 it’s described as hilly and has plenty of rain. Even more importantly, vs. 11 calls it a land directly under God’s care, *darash* (cf. 4.29) being the verb which means to seek; it connotes a rubbing as well as treading. When the Israelites hear that the Lord is going do this, naturally they are excited. Vs. 12 specifies how such *darash* is to be done, the Lord having his eyes upon the land. He does this in a temporal way, if you will, from the beginning to the end of a given year. That means the Israelites are to cultivate a sense of being watched unceasingly by the Lord under which their stiff necked mood begins to chafe with disastrous consequences.

Vs. 13 begins with *shamah* or obey (i.e., listen; cf. 9.1), a refinement, if you will, of *shamar*, the two sounding similar. It is in reference to the fourth use of the phrase “this day” (literally, ‘the day’). Actually it seems easy, to love (*’ahav*, cf. vs. 1) the Lord with one’s heart and soul, *levav* and *nephesh* both found together last in 10.13. Despite the apparent easiness of *shamah* (and the implied *shamar*), Israel’s inherent stiff necked attitude is bound to get in the way. However, if the Israelites follow through with *shamar*, vs. 14 says that the Lord will provide rain, specifying early and later rain, *yoreh* (mid October to mid December) and *malqosh* (March and April). The former has one other biblical reference in Jer 5.24 which contains the latter as well: “They do not say in their hearts, ‘Let us fear the Lord our God who gives the rain in its season, the autumn rain and the spring rain.’” The timing of both rainfalls more or less are equivalent to the Lord’s eyes upon the land from the beginning to the end of a given year noted in the last paragraph. The same providential action summed up by *darash* in vs. 12 (cares for) if found with regard to providing for Israel’s cattle.

The *shamar* of vs. 16 as take heed pertains to Israel's potential for being deceived, *patah* also meaning to spread out, to persuade. More specifically, such deception is located in the hearts of the people, *levav* (cf. vs. 13). "And my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand" [Job 31.27]. This *patah* plays out in three ways, all pretty much the same: *sur*, *havad* and *shatach* or turn aside, serve and worship (9.16, 10.12 and 5.9 respectively).

Vs. 17 is a continuation of the previous verse where the Lord holds out the threat of kindling his anger, *'aph* and *charah* being found together in 6.15. Both are directed literally "in (*b-*) you." As noted earlier, *'aph* refers to the nose and hence the Lord breathing forth flames which results in drying up the rains just mentioned. No small wonder that Israel will perish (*'avad*, cf. vs. 4) immediately from the land, bearing the brunt of this *'aph*.

Vs. 18 has the conjunctive *v-* as therefore (cf. vs. 8) which continues the Lord's care for Israel in a more appealing tone of voice. That is to say, the people are to lay up (*sum*, cf. 4.44) or to set the Lord's words (*davar*) literally upon (*hal-*) their hearts and souls, the familiar *levav* and *nephesh* (cf. vs. 13 for both). These are interior to a person. Next comes an exterior gesture, if you will, with the binding (*qashar*, cf. 6.8) of divine *davar* as a sign or *'oth* (cf. vs. 3) which means that which is invisible or uttered becomes visible upon the hand. The noun is singular and doesn't specify whether it's left or right. In addition to this the *davar* are to be frontlets (*totaphoth*, cf. 6.8) between the eyes, that is, scrolls with excerpts from the Torah. In other words, the *davar*...divine speech...now become a third eye. Thus divine speech is to be transformed to perceive that which is invisible.

The conjunctive *v-* beginning vs. 19 is appropriate in that it sets the stage to shift the inward and outward position of the divine *davar* of vs. 18 to one's children. That is to say, the parents informed by the *davar* on the hand and between the eyes will do the teaching or *lamad* (cf. 5.31) to their children. In this way the next generation will be taught by *davar* as action (the hand) and by *davar* as sight (the frontlets).

In vs. 18 we have the *davar* between the eyes, *beyn* being the preposition which is similar to the singular *ben* for child. With this coincidence in mind, the parents simply have to look upon their children with that third eye thereby effecting a *beyn* to their *ben*. As for *lamad*, it's five-fold which covers virtually every aspect of life: walking, sitting, walking, laying down and rising.

Vs. 20 says that the *davar* also are to be written on doorposts or *mezuzah* (cf. 6.9) and gates for the purpose of multiplying the days of those present and their children. In vs. 21 it is to be done in (*hal-*, on) the land the Lord swore to Israel's fathers. So if the entrances to homes of the Israelites have this presence of the divine *davar*, it will ward off any influence by Canaanite divinities, that is, by speaking (*davar*) directly to them.

Vs. 21 involves a time span, namely, as long as the heavens are above (*hal-*) the earth intimating that should the Israelites fail to follow through on this matter, the heavens will

come crashing down. The first *hal-* is with respect to the land or *'adamah* (cf. vs. 9 but not noted there) whereas the second *hal-* is with respect to the earth or *'erets* (cf. vs. 3). The former pertains to the ground as well as land and the latter more to a country. Both instances of *hal-* depend upon the one with respect to writing the divine *davar hal-* one's doorposts and gates.

Vs. 21 is a conditional sentence which continues into the next verse which hopefully will produce the intended result, that is, the "then" beginning vs. 22. And so a lot depends upon the "if" involved as intimated by the verb *shamar* (cf. vs. 16) which occurs twice reading literally "to observe you are observing." The *shamar* at hand involves the following three concerning Israel's relationship with the Lord: loving, walking and cleaving (*'hav*, *halak* and *davaq* or vs. 13, 10.12 and 30.22 respectively). As for the "then" which is the conjunctive *v-* introducing vs. 23, we have the Lord who first will take action followed by Israel who will dispossess these nations. The same verb *yarash* (cf. vs. 8) is used here in two different senses but as two halves of the same coin, something that's impossible to convey in translation.

Vs. 24 speaks of *maqom* or place as marked out by the walking of the Israelites, *darak* (cf. 1.36 but not noted there) being the verb and root for *derek* (way), implying a trampling or pressing. This treading must be planned...laid out in a pattern...but not in the conventional way. It has to take into consideration the boundaries laid out by the noun *gevul* (cf. 3.17 but not noted there), territory acquired as the result of *darak* which eventually becomes the fulness of *maqom*. Such an area is situated between the wilderness and Lebanon, the River, the Euphrates and western sea or the *gevul* set later by King David. In other words, under the guidance of Moses, Israel intuited this future expansion and planned accordingly.

Once this plan is understood, no one will be able to resist the Israelites, *yatsav* (cf. 9.2) meaning to resist. It will come about by direct divine intervention resulting from Israel's treading or *darak*. In other words, fear and dread of the Israelites will be imparted, *pachad* and *mora'* (cf. 2.25 and 4.34 respectively).

Vs. 26 begins with behold, not the expected *hen* or *hineh* but with the verb *ra'ah*, to see (cf. vs. 2) and does so with a specific time in mind, the fifth occurrence of the phrase "this day" (literally, 'the day'). The seeing consists in the Lord setting before (*natan*, to give; cf. 4.8) Israel the choice between a blessing and a curse, *berakah* and *qelalah*. The former is found next in vs. 27 and the latter in vs. 28. Vs. 27 equates *berakah* with obedience or hearing (*shamah*, cf. vs. 13) to God's commandment which has a specific location, if you will, "this day" (literally, 'the day') being the sixth occurrence of the phrase.

Vs. 28 equates *qelalah* or the curse with not hearing. It has two parts, if you will: turning aside (*sur*, cf. vs. 16) from the way or *derek* (cf. 10.12) and here that means the treading or *darak* of vs. 25. Also vs. 28 has the seventh instance of the phrase "this day" (literally, 'the day'). The second part consists in going after gods the Israelites hadn't known, *yadah*

implying intimacy (cf. vs. 2). Once such *yadah* has taken root, even on the surface, it will next to impossible to eradicate.

The blessing and curse are to be kept in store and are to be set (*natan*) respectively on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (cf. vs. 29). Note that it's the same word as in vs. 26 ('set before you...a blessing and a curse'). This setting is more along the lines of each mount being fixed in Israel's memory every time the people pass them by than a physical monument of some sort. A footnote in the **RSV** says that Chapters Twenty-Seven and Twenty-Eight detail both, so we'll leave it for then.

Vs. 30 is a rhetorical question with regard to the situation of Gerizim and Ebal as a preparation for the Lord to inform Israel as to where it will be going: passing over the Jordan with Joshua though that's not stated here and taking possession (*yarash*, cf. vs. 23) of it as noted in vs. 32. As for Gerizim, this is the first mention of it in the Bible. Ebal is found way back in Gen 36.23 for the first time, so no small wonder for insertion of this rhetorical question before moving into a new chapter.

The eighth and final reference to the phrase "this day" or literally "the day" is found at the very end of Chapter Twelve relative to Israel being careful (*shamar*, cf. vs. 22) with regard to the doing (*hasah*, cf. vs. 7) of both statutes and ordinances (*choq* and *mishpat*, both with respect to vs. 1). The echo of all eight phrases relative to "day" are bound to resonate through the next chapter and well beyond.

Numbers = Verses

'ahav: 1, shamar: mishmereth: 1, 1, choq: 1, mishpat: 1, mitsvah: 1, yadah: 1, yadah: 2, ra'ah: 2, musar: 2, godel: 2, chazaq: 2, natah: 2, 'oth: 3, mahaseh: 3, 'erets: 3, 'avad: 4, maqom: 5, qerev: 6, hasah: 7, shamar: 8, mitsvah: 8, tsavah: 8, chazaq: 8, bo': 8, yarash: 8, darash: 12, shamah: 13, 'ahav: 13, levav: 13, nephesh: 13, yoreh: 14, malqosh: 14, shamar: 16, patah: 16, levav: 16, sur: 16, havad: 16, shatach: 16, 'aph: 17, charah: 17, 'avad: 17, sum: 18, levav: 18, nephesh: 18, 'oth: 18, qashar: 18, totaphoth: 18, lamad: 19, mezuzah: 20, 'adamah: 21, 'erets: 21, shamar: 22, 'ahav: 22, halak: 22, davaq: 22, yarash: 23, maqom: 24, darak: 24, gevul: 24, yatsav: 25, darak: 25, pachad: 25, mora': 25, ra'ah: 26, natan: 26, berakah: 26, qelalah: 26, shamah: 27, sur: 28, derek: 28, yadah: 28, natan: 29 yarash: 32, shamar: 32, hasah: 32, choq: 32, mishpat: 32.

Chapter Twelve

1) "These are the statutes and ordinances which you shall be careful to do in the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers has given you to possess all the days that you live upon the earth.
2) You shall surely destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess served their gods upon the high mountains and upon the hills and under every green tree; 3) you shall tear down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and burn their Asherim with fire; you shall hew

down the graven images of their gods and destroy their name out of that place. 4) You shall not do so to the Lord your God. 5) But you shall seek the place which the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there; there you shall go, 6) and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the offering that you present, your votive offerings, your freewill offerings and the firstlings of your herd and of your flock; 7) and there you shall eat before the Lord your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake in which the Lord your God has blessed you. 8) You shall not do according to all that we are doing here this day, every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes; 9) for you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you. 10) But when you go over the Jordan and live in the land which the Lord your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about so that you live in safety, 11) then to the place which the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there, there you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the offering that you present and all your votive offerings which you vow to the Lord. 12) And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your sons and your daughters, your menservants and your maidservants and the Levite that is within your towns since he has no portion or inheritance with you. 13) Take heed that you do not offer your burnt offerings at every place that you see; 14) but at the place which the Lord will choose in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I am commanding you. 15) "However, you may slaughter and eat flesh within any of your towns as much as you desire according to the blessing of the Lord your God which he has given you; the unclean and the clean may eat of it as of the gazelle and as of the hart. 16) Only you shall not eat the blood; you shall pour it out upon the earth like water. 17) You may not eat within your towns the tithe of your grain or of your wine or of your oil or the firstlings of your herd or of your flock or any of your votive offerings which you vow or your freewill offerings or the offering that you present; 18) but you shall eat them before the Lord your God in the place which the Lord your God will choose, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant and the Levite who is within your towns; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God in all that you undertake. 19) Take heed that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land. 20) "When the Lord your God enlarges your territory as he has promised you, and you say, 'I will eat flesh,' because you crave flesh, you may eat as much flesh as you desire. 21) If the place which the Lord your God will choose to put his name there is too far from you, then you may kill any of your herd or your flock which the Lord has given you as I have commanded you; and you may eat within your towns as much as you desire. 22) Just as the gazelle or the hart is eaten, so you may eat of it; the unclean and the clean alike may eat of it. 23) Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh. 24) You shall not eat it; you shall pour it out upon the earth like water. 25) You shall not eat it; that all may go well with you and with your children after you when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord. 26) But the holy things which are due from you and your votive offerings, you shall take, and you shall go to the place which the Lord will choose 27) and offer your burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, on the altar of the Lord your God; the blood of your sacrifices shall be poured out on the altar of the Lord your God, but the flesh you may eat. 28) Be careful to heed all these words which I command you that it may go well with you and with your children after you for ever, when you do what is good and right in the sight of the Lord your God. 29) "When the Lord your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, 30) take heed that you be not ensnared to follow them after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods?—that I

also may do likewise.' 31) You shall not do so to the Lord your God; for every abominable thing which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods. 32) "Everything that I command you you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to it or take from it.

This new chapter begins with the Lord presenting statutes and ordinances or *choq* and *mishpat* (cf. 11.1 for both), something by now quite familiar to the Israelites. In the case at hand they pertain to what essentially is a program of extermination instigated by the Lord. As is often the case, the verb *shamar* (to be careful) is used and found last in 11.22. Vs. 1 also contains a promise that the people will abide in the land of their inheritance for the rest of their lives. At the moment they may believe that with sincerity, but the Lord isn't so sure, knowing their stiff-necked attitude which makes them vulnerable to the worship of alien gods. That's why in vs. 2 he says that Israel is not only to destroy places (*maqom*, cf. 11.24) of worship but to wipe them off the face of the earth which is conveyed by double use of the verb *'avad* (cf. 11.17). If they can do this at the beginning of their occupation, chances are success will follow. Again the verb *yarash* is used in its opposite sense, to dispossess the inhabitants of Canaan as in 11.21. In other words, their dispossession becomes Israel's possession. The locations or *maqom* are both on the heights as well as under every green tree. The former are common whereas the latter are less so because of the arid conditions. Possible something of an oasis is inferred, an ideal gathering spot for worship.

Vs. 3 continues with this vigorous program of destruction of local divinities. Should that be accomplished, the native inhabitants will collapse and Israel will be able to take over their land easily. The five verbs relative to this all-out program in vs. 3 are *natats* or tear down (cf. 7.5 also with respect to altars), *shavar* or dash in pieces (cf. 9.17), *saraph* or burn (cf. 7.5), *gadah* or hew down (cf. 7.12 but not noted there) and *'avad* or destroy (cf. vs. 2). Of the five the last is most thorough, the singular being used to represent the collective menagerie of these divinities. "Out of that place" has a barely disguised air of disgust, referring to the *maqom* vs. 2 or the spots held as holy by the Canaanites. Right after this which amounts to a demolition of every sacred place comes the brief vs. 4 which says that the five actions just outlined aren't to be applied to the Lord. It sounds a bit strange but thrown out there deliberately because of the oft-mentioned stubbornness of Israel.

Provided Israel is faithful to what the Lord had just bidden them, vs. 5 says that Israel needs to seek (*darash*, cf. 11.12 and connotes frequenting a place) the place or *maqom* for him to reside. Note the definite article is used as if to separate it from the plural *maqom* of vs. 2, the one at hand referring to the land of promise. This *maqom* is to be sought...frequented, if you will...not with regard to any physical object in the land but from Israel's tribes. From one of these twelve tribes the people are to both put the Lord's name and habitation in Canaan. After that, Israel is to go, although they are already present within that *maqom* which lies within their very selves. No small wonder they had difficulty grasping what the Lord was communicating to them.

Vss. 6 and 7 flow from the previous one as an extended sentence, vs. 6 now speaking of sacrifices to be brought there (*shamah*) or to that *maqom*. In other words, sacrifices and the rest as are described in vs. 6 are concrete ways Israel can come to grips with their new situation. By offering them eventually and hopefully they will realize the *maqom* of which the Lord speaks as coming from within themselves. Putting the whole enterprise like this makes the situation look rather tenuous, that the chances of success are minimal unaided by the Lord.

Vs. 7 begins with the conjunctive ν -, “and there” referring to the *maqom* at hand. Within that “there” the Israelites are to eat before the Lord, most likely in reference to their sacrifices, yet this brings up the image found in Ex 24.11: “And he (the Lord) did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people in Israel; they beheld God and ate and drank.” Obviously this is a cause for rejoicing (*samach*, cf. vs. 12) in what they are to undertake. It reads literally as “in every sending (the common verb *shalach*) of your hand.” Such rejoicing is concomitant with the Lord’s blessing (*barak*, cf. 10.8).

Vs. 8 makes a distinction concerning what the Israelites are doing “this day,” a phrase noted often as at the very end of the last chapter which in the present instance has negative overtones. In “this day” each person is doing what’s right to him, *yashar* being the adjective and suggestive of being one’s own arbiter. Vs. 9 is part of the sentence begun in the previous verse and speaks of the fact that the people haven’t yet entered the land of promise which is their rest and possession, *menuchah* and *nachalah* (cf. 10.9). The former also applies to a habitation. “The ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them three days’ journey to seek out a resting place for them.” Both will be achieved once Israel crosses the Jordan River, the land they will inherit, *nachal* being the verb suggestive of occupying a place or object (cf. 1.38) compared with the more frequent *yarash* intimating inheritance. Such occupation is equivalent to rest which the Lord will give, *nuach* (cf. 3.20) being the verb. It will be from Israel’s enemies who are literally all around, *savyv* suggestive of an encirclement and found last in 6.14 but not noted there. Despite this, the Lord will ensure that Israel lives in safety, *betach* also meaning trust. “The beloved of the Lord, he dwells in safety by him” [33.12].

Vs. 11 continues the extended sentence begun in vs. 8 and running through vs. 11 with the conjunctive ν - translated as “then.” Reference is made to *maqom* or place which harkens back to that noun concerning it as situated in (or from) Israel’s twelve tribes (cf. vs. 5). Here *maqom* is affiliated with the divine name which will dwell there. Note the similar sound of the three words: *shakan*, *shem* and *sham* (dwell, name and there). As for *shakan*, it can be taken as similar to *nuach* of vs. 9. With the close identity between *maqom* and *shem*...place with name...to there Israel is to bring everything the Lord commanded them. That consists of sacrificial offerings and tithes which the people had vowed or *nadar* (cf. vs. 17). Interestingly neither the Torah nor the ark of the covenant are mentioned.

Vs. 12 begins a new sentence with the conjunctive ν - after the extended one comprising vss. 8-11. Several categories of people are to rejoice (*samach*, cf. vs. 7): children, men servants, maid servants and notably Levites who lack both portion and inheritance among the

Israelites, that is, *cheleq* and *nachalah* (cf. 10.9 for both). The phrase “with you” serves to heighten both the sense of isolation and uniqueness of this priestly class, meaning that the *samach* by the Levites differs from their fellow Israelites; they’re destined to occupy an in between land, if you will, between Israel and the Lord himself. Note that *shahar* is the noun for town which actually means gate and thus suggests that places inhabited by the Israelites were pretty much fortified against Canaanite attack. It occurs next as such in vs. 15.

Vs. 13 has the familiar verb *shamar* (cf. vs. 1) or to take heed which reads literally “take heed to you,” *lekah* suggesting a vigilance more watchful than usual concerning not just burnt offerings but those offered in every place (*maqom*, cf. vs. 11) the people see. That means the Israelites may be tempted to perform these sacrifices upon the altars devoted to Canaanite divinities. Instead, vs. 14 has the Lord pick out a *maqom*, that is, not a physical place but one of the twelve tribes. This verse has “there” twice in a row indicating that one of the tribes will be a vehicle, not a regular *maqom*, for offering sacrifices, admittedly a difficult notion Israel had to grapple with. Also the eleven tribes not chosen might become jealous of this privilege which means that the *maqom* may be rotated according to a given schedule.

Vss. 15 through 19 detail regulations with regard to burnt offerings. For example, in vs. 15 the Lord gives permission to slaughter animals for sacrifices within any of Israel’s towns which means those places they had taken by force. No limit is imposed, but it will be as the text reads literally, “in all desire of your soul (*nephesh*, cf. 11.18).” Both those who are clean as well as those who are not may eat of it, *tahor* and *tame’* (cf. vs. 22 for both). The most important qualification is that any blood which is believed to contain life must be poured upon the earth. Implied is that this blood belonging to sacrificed animals is responsible for replenishing growth from the this earth.

Vs. 18 restates the command to eat before the Lord as in vs. 7 but with the specification that it be done in a *maqom* or place which the Lord will choose. Again, keep in mind the *maqom* as one of Israel’s tribes as noted in vs. 14. This section concludes with vs. 19 reminding Israel not to forsake (*hazav* or to abandon) the Levite who, after all, is responsible for making the offerings at hand. “And you shall not forsake the Levite who is within your towns” [14.27].

Vs. 20 jumps ahead a little in that once Israel is in Canaan the Lord will enlarge her territory, *rachav* meaning to make wide even though many of the natives continue to reside there and are bound to put up a stiff resistance. In other words, *rachav* is opposite the *savyv* of vs. 10 (‘enemies round about’). “And if the Lord your God enlarges your border” [19.8]. Along with this broadening of territory is the freedom the Israelites have to eat flesh if they so desire. This stands in contrast with the many years of manna and quails in the Sinai desert and thus is reasonable in light of that unvarying diet.

In vss. 21 and 22 the Lord takes into consideration the distance the Israelites may have to travel to offer sacrifices. More than distance is involved, namely, the constant threat from Canaanites waiting to pounce upon them. Vs. 21 speaks of the *maqom* once again as being distant but can be identified with one of the twelve tribes (cf. vs. 14). In other words, the

maqom may be the territory occupied by the particular tribe so designated. The alternative to not traveling there is for the people to eat as much flesh as they desire or from the sacrifices just offered. All this the Lord intends not to restrict the people but that it may go well with them as noted in vs. 25, *tov* (cf. 5.33 but not noted there). This doesn't apply to the current generation but will have positive ramifications in the future ('your children') provided the former does right, *yasar* being the adjective (cf. 8.5). The same cautionary note with regard to *tov* is found in vs. 28 concerning *shamar* (cf. vs. 13) or be careful only in addition to "your children" the promises of "forever" is added. The condition, however, is to do good and what's right, the adjective *tov* along with *yasar* again.

In vs. 29 the Lord will cut off nations before Israel, *karath* (cf. 10.4) being the same verb used as when making...cutting...a covenant. Such cutting off is equivalent to Israel dispossessing them, *yarash* (cf. 11.32) being used which as noted several times earlier, also means to possess. Directly on the heels of this cutting/dispossessing the Lord issues a warning or another *shamar* (cf. vs. 28) with respect to Israel succumbing to follow the nations. *Naqash* has four other biblical references, one of which is Ps 9.16: "The wicked are snared in the work of their own hands." Interestingly such ensnarement takes place after the Lord destroys the nations. Even though they are no longer present, memory of them haunts the land, especially worship of their gods against which Israel is not to inquire or *darash* (cf. vs. 5). Israel is forbidden to ask how the Canaanites had worshiped their gods, such inquiry being dangerous with the potential to do the same. Just the fact of raising the question doesn't portend well for the future as history will reveal.

Vs. 31 states the real reason why the Lord is so adamant against Israel being influenced by Canaanite gods even if the native population had been destroyed as vs. 30 states. These people had committed acts of abomination or *tohevah* (cf. 7.26) which consisted in offering their own children as sacrifices. Memories of this are bound to linger in former sacred places, etc. With this in mind, Chapter Twelve concludes in vs. 32 (in the Hebrew text it's 31.1) with the Lord saying yet again that Israel be careful or *shamar* (cf. vs. 30) with everything he commanded. *Davar* is the noun essentially meaning word as expression and concurs with the frequent *shamar* and other related verbs. The Lord allows neither addition nor subtraction to his *davar*. It is to remain just as it is which is more difficult to practice because it involves that continuous *shamar* which here means listening constantly for the Lord to speak or *davar*.

Numbers = Verses

choq: 1, mishpat: 1, shamar: 1, maqom: 2, 'avad: 2, natats: 3, shavar: 3, saraph: 3, gadah: 3, 'avad: 3, maqom: 3, darash: 5, maqom: 5, samach: 7, shalach: 7, barak: 7, yashar: 8, menuchah: 9, nachalah: 9, nuach: 10, savyv, 10: betach: 10, maqom: 11, shakan: 11, nadar: 11, samach: 12, shahar: 12, cheleq: 12, nachalah: 12, shamar: 13, maqom: 13, maqom: 14, nephesh: 15, tahor: 15, tame': 15, maqom: 18, hazav: 19, maqom: 21, tov: 25, yasar: 25, tov: 28, shamar: 28, tov (adjective): 28, yasar: 28, karath: 29, yarash: 29, shamar: 30, naqash: 30, darash: 30, tohevah: 31, shamar:

Chapter Thirteen

1) "If a prophet arises among you or a dreamer of dreams and gives you a sign or a wonder, 2) and the sign or wonder which he tells you comes to pass, and if he says, 'Let us go after other gods' which you have not known, 'and let us serve them,' 3) you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or to that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4) You shall walk after the Lord your God and fear him and keep his commandments and obey his voice, and you shall serve him and cleave to him. 5) But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death because he has taught rebellion against the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to make you leave the way in which the Lord your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from the midst of you. 6) "If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife of your bosom or your friend who is as your own soul, entices you secretly saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' which neither you nor your fathers have known, 7) some of the gods of the peoples that are round about you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, 8) you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him; 9) but you shall kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death and afterwards the hand of all the people. 10) You shall stone him to death with stones because he sought to draw you away from the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 11) And all Israel shall hear and fear and never again do any such wickedness as this among you. 12) "If you hear in one of your cities which the Lord your God gives you to dwell there, 13) that certain base fellows have gone out among you and have drawn away the inhabitants of the city saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' which you have not known, 14) then you shall inquire and make search and ask diligently; and behold, if it be true and certain that such an abominable thing has been done among you, 15) you shall surely put the inhabitants of that city to the sword, destroying it utterly, all who are in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword. 16) You shall gather all its spoil into the midst of its open square and burn the city and all its spoil with fire as a whole burnt offering to the Lord your God; it shall be a heap for ever, it shall not be built again. 17) None of the devoted things shall cleave to your hand; that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger and show you mercy and have compassion on you and multiply you as he swore to your fathers, 18) if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, keeping all his commandments which I command you this day and doing what is right in the sight of the Lord your God.

The Hebrew text of this new chapter begins as vs. 32 of the last chapter. The verse numbering here is in accord with the **RSV** translation.

Chapter Thirteen continues a series of warnings which run throughout, beginning with two types of persons Israel must be careful of: prophet and dreamer or *navy'* and *chalam* (participle), both found next in vs. 3. Note that the latter is associated with dreams...“dreamer of dreams”...whereas the former is not associated with prophecies. At this stage a prophet isn't familiar among the Israelites, this being the first time it's mentioned in

Deuteronomy. As for *navy'*, thus far it's found only on four occasions in the Bible. The same holds true for a dreamer although the verb is more numerous than *navy'* which implies it may be more familiar among the people, dreams being relatively commonplace as communications from the Lord.

In the verse at hand you get the feeling that the Lord is not only concerned about the people following both prophet and dreamer but detect a tinge of jealousy toward those who might rival him. They arise or *qum* (cf. 10.11) from the very midst of Israel (*qerev*, cf. 11.6) or more directly arise from the *qerev* of "you." The way this is put is bound to provoke the Lord, especially its directness from the people to whom he's most devoted. The prophet and dreamer manifest their supposed gift through the giving of a sign or wonder, *'oth* and *mopheth*, both being found together in 7.19. Vs. 2 communicates the two by speaking or *davar* which reflects that jealousy by the Lord, for they can imitate the way he communicates. The first *davar* out of their mouths reveals a clear threat to the Lord, that is, by encouraging the people to serve other gods which they hadn't known (*yadah*, cf. 11.28) before this point.

Vs. 3 brings to an end an extended sentence begun in vs. 1, another sign that the Lord is riled by all this. He commands Israel not to listen to the *davar* of the prophets and dreamers who, according to vs. 1, hadn't arisen yet. The Lord seems a bit flustered here when he commands Israel to basically shut up and not pay attention to anyone behaving as a prophet or dreamer. Some may be tempted along this line, thinking they could take advantage of a perceived divine weakness. However, memory of these words will haunt Israel when some from among...*qerev*...them will set themselves up as a prophet or dreamer and woo the people away from the Lord.

The second part of vs. 3 continues with the Lord saying that he is testing the people, *nasah* (cf. 8.16) which also means to tempt. He wants to see if they love him with their whole heart and soul (*levav* and *nephesh*, vs. 18), the preposition *b-* (in) as "in your whole heart and in your whole soul." Thus their love or *'ahav* will be in competition with the prophet and dreamer, again, not from without but from within or *qerev* themselves, *qerev* being equivalent to *levav* and *nephesh*.

In vs. 4 the preposition "after" with regard to Israel following and fearing (*yare'*, cf. 10.21) the Lord is synonymous with two verbs which sound similar, *shamar* and *shamah* or keeping and obeying (cf. 12.32 and 11.27) his commands and voice. Compare the use of "after" here with the Siren song by the prophet and dreamer in vs. 2, "after other gods." Vs. 4 also speaks of the necessity of serving and cleaving to the Lord, *havad* and *davaq* (cf. 11.16 and aa.22), the latter having the preposition *b-*, literally as "cleaving in him."

The Lord gets very serious about the prophet and dreamer, that is, he will put them to death, vs. 5 beginning with the conjunctive *v-* as "but" and continuing for a considerable length. The reason for this penalty? Both have taught (the verb *davar*) rebellion or *sarah* against him, this verb meaning a turning away from or withdrawal. "If a malicious witness

risers against any man to accuse him of wrongdoing” [19.16]. The Lord takes this occasion to remind Israel that it was he who led Israel from Egypt, another way of saying that he had redeemed them from bondage, *padah* (cf. 9.26).

The second sentence comprising vs. 5 has the Lord bidding the people to purge the evil (*rah*, cf. 9.18) in their midst, *bahar* suggestive of consuming with fire (17.7 repeats the same sentence). Note the use of *qerev* or the midst from which both prophet and dreamer had arisen.

Vss. 6 through nine form one extended sentence. The Lord starts off by getting personal, that is, he speaks of one’s most immediate relations, two of which can be singled out: 1) the wife of one’s bosom, *cheq* implying great intimacy. “The man who is the most tender and delicately bred among you will grudge food...to the wife of his bosom” [28.54]. 2) Friend of one’s soul (*nepshesh*, cf. vs. 3) or the closest non-family member there is and not far removed from the wife of one’s *cheq* just mentioned. All—and the total relationships in vs. 6 amount to six—have the potential of enticing one in secret, *seter* being a noun which reads here as “to say in secret.” “Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten image...and sets it up in secret” [27.15]. What’s uttered or better, whispered, is that the person being addressed to come with them not so much as to worship other gods but to serve (*havad*, cf. vs. 4) them, this verb suggesting that they will be slaves to these alien divinities. Such gods were unknown to the fathers of the current generation, the Lord implying the three great patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Vs. 7 describes some...not all..of the gods the Lord is warning about which belong to people (he doesn’t specify which tribes, etc.) encircling Israel. To him it doesn’t matter whether they are close or far off, even at the ends of the earth. Just the mere mention of these alien gods is enough to get the Lord on a roll. Anyone caught in violation of the prohibition to worship Canaanite gods is to be scorned utterly. Vs. 8 says that any of the six relationships of vs. 6 are to be treated as follows, all in the negative: yield, listen, pity, spare and conceal (*’hav*: cf. vs. 3, *shamah*: cf. vs.4, *chus*: cf. 7.16 but not noted there, *chamal* and *kasah*: cf. 22.12). The alternative? Vs. 9 says that such persons, despite their close relationship, are to be killed.

The person being addressed is to take immediate action followed by and accompanied with all the people meaning that the entire nation of Israel is to join in on the action. The method of execution is stoning because the guilty person attempted to draw one away from the Lord, *nadaq* as found in vs. 10. Surely a later generation will reflect back on these words when Joshua had Achan stoned after the capture of Jericho (cf. Josh 7.10+). The “great heap of stones that remains to this day” [vs. 26] pales in comparison to the recollection of these words in Deuteronomy.

The added familiar reference to the Lord in vs. 10 as having brought Israel from Egypt is a constant reminder to Israel as being put in place. Presumably after the stoning of the apostate in vs. 9 with the entire nation, such wickedness (*rah*, cf. vs. 5) never will be found

in (*qerev*, cf. vs. 5) her. This, of course, is reference to the *qerev* of vs. 1 from which both the prophet and dreamer had originated and which again is found in vs. 5.

Vs. 12 commences a drawn-out sentence through vs. 15. It begins by speaking of “your cities” which means those places the Israelites had managed to wrest from the Canaanites. Nevertheless, their situation remains tenuous since the countryside hasn’t come under Israelite control. However, a threat just as serious exists from within the Israelite community. It arises from “certain base fellows” as vs. 13 puts it which reads literally as “sons of wickedness,” *belyhal* referring to what’s unprofitable and vile. “Take heed lest there be a base thought in your heart” [15.9]. Apparently these are people entranced by local divinities, go out and practice them and return with the intent of subverting their own people. They may not be doing this deliberately, to undermine the enterprise of taking over Canaan with conscious intent, but as unwitting agents of the local population to cause subversion from within.

The remedy to this threat is threefold as vs. 14 puts it: inquire, search and ask diligently or *darash* (cf. 12.30), *chaqar* and *sha’al* (cf. 10.12) with *yatav* (cf. 5.29). *Chaqar* means to search out in the sense of to perform an investigation. “O Lord, you have searched me and known me” [Ps 138.1]! *Sha’al* coupled with *yatav* reads literally “ask to do good.” All three culminate in a behold or *hineh* (cf. 9.16) which cushions against the possibility of a shock. That is to say, such a person or persons may be found within Israel’s cities, they being called an abominable thing or *tohevah* (cf. 12.31) which has the air of something unclean or downright filthy. The suspect identified as a base fellow is depersonalized so as to deal with him better, that is, by making him into an object the people can dispose of him more readily. What makes the situation worse is that such a *tohevah* is *qerev* “you” or in your very midst (cf. vs. 11).

Upon discovery of the base fellow, a ruthless plan of extermination is to be set in place. Not just he but everyone in the city in which he’s found is to be treated ruthlessly. Behind this is the idea not so much of collaboration but guilt by association, and that such guilt can be transmitted. Vs. 15 sums it up well with two uses of the verb *nakah* rendered something like “utterly smite” as it is in 7.2. Once done...as if this weren’t enough...everything within the city is to be destroyed utterly, *charam*. Thrown in are the cattle singled out for mention because they are a chief means of livelihood; the phrase “edge of the sword” adds to the thoroughness of the task at hand.

The next step is to gather all the spoil in the center of the town square and burn it along with the city as a burnt offering to the Lord. No attempt at building on the same site is to be attempted. There is no need to post a warning against this, if you will. Each Israelite knew about it and will pass on to their children as a warning. However, the Canaanites were looking on from afar and already were hatching plans to undo what the Israelites had wrought. It may take a while, but as history shows, Israel succumbed quickly to worship of alien gods. There was no need for any base fellow, if you will. The attraction became simply too strong to ignore.

In vs. 17 the Lord says that no trace of the devoted things or *cherem* (cf. 7.26) are to remain with the Israelites, the verb *davaq* (cf. vs. 4) as clinging being quite vivid and destined to be a stark reminder later on to the Israelites when they've become seduced by worship of local divinities. Also in this verse are the words *charon* and *rachamym*, fierceness and mercy, the former is associated with the Lord's *'aph* (cf. 11.17) or anger which as noted earlier, refers to the nostrils from which the Lord breathes anger. "That the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel" [Num 25.4]. As for *rachamym*, it's in the plural to show the unending nature of divine mercy which emanates not from the Lord's nostrils but from his bowels, this noun being related to the verbal root for it. "Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love" [Ps 25.6].

Chapter Thirteen concludes with condition that Israel must listen to the Lord and keep his commandments, both dependent upon what he had communicated above. Note that the phrase "this day" is used here in vs. 18, the last time being 12.8. As for the Israelites, "this day" is a perpetual reminder which unfortunately only a handful will recall in the future. Nevertheless, it will suffice for the continuance of Israel's existence.

Numbers = Verses

navy': 1, chalam: 1, qum: 1, qerev: 1, 'oth: 1, mopheth: 1, yadah: 2, nasah: 3, levav: 3, nephesh: 3, 'ahav: 3, shamar: 4, yare': 4, shamah: shamah: 4, 4, havad: 4, davaq: 4, sarah: 5, padah: 5, bahar: 5, rah: 5, qerev: 5, cheq: 6, nephesh: 6, seter: 6, havad: 6, 'ahav: 8, shamah: 8, chus: 8, chamal: 8, and kasah: 8, nadaq: 10, rah: 11, qerev: 11, belyhal: 13, darash: 14, chaqar: 14, sha'al: 14, yata: 14, hineh: 14, tohevah: 14, qerev: 14, nakah: 15, charam: 15, cherem: 17, davaq: 17, charon: 17, rachamym: 17, 'aph: 17.

Chapter Fourteen

1) "You are the sons of the Lord your God; you shall not cut yourselves or make any baldness on your foreheads for the dead. 2) For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his own possession out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth. 3) "You shall not eat any abominable thing. 4) These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, 5) the hart, the gazelle, the roebuck, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain-sheep. 6) Every animal that parts the hoof and has the hoof cloven in two and chews the cud among the animals you may eat. 7) Yet of those that chew the cud or have the hoof cloven you shall not eat these: the camel, the hare and the rock badger because they chew the cud but do not part the hoof are unclean for you. 8) And the swine because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch. 9) "Of all that are in the waters you may eat these: whatever has fins and scales you may eat. 10) And whatever does not have fins and scales you shall not eat; it is unclean for you. 11) "You may eat all clean birds. 12) But these are the ones which you shall not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the osprey, 13) the buzzard, the kite after their kinds; 14) every raven after its kind; 15) the ostrich, the nighthawk, the sea gull, the hawk after their

kinds; 16) the little owl and the great owl, the water hen 17) and the pelican, the carrion vulture and the cormorant, 18) the stork, the heron after their kinds; the hoopoe and the bat. 19) And all winged insects are unclean for you; they shall not be eaten. 20) All clean winged things you may eat. 21) "You shall not eat anything that dies of itself; you may give it to the alien who is within your towns that he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner; for you are a people holy to the Lord your God. "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk. 22) "You shall tithe all the yield of your seed which comes forth from the field year by year. 23) And before the Lord your God in the place which he will choose to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine and of your oil and the firstlings of your herd and flock; that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always. 24) And if the way is too long for you so that you are not able to bring the tithe when the Lord your God blesses you because the place is too far from you, which the Lord your God chooses to set his name there, 25) then you shall turn it into money and bind up the money in your hand and go to the place which the Lord your God chooses, 26) and spend the money for whatever you desire, oxen, or sheep or wine or strong drink whatever your appetite craves; and you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household. 27) And you shall not forsake the Levite who is within your towns, for he has no portion or inheritance with you. 28) "At the end of every three years you shall bring forth all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns; 29) and the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you and the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.

The notations belonging to this chapter are concise because the bulk of it (vss. 3-21) deal with regulations pertaining to food as derived from various animals. It starts off with the Lord telling his people that they are his sons which is put literally as "you are sons to the Lord your God." The preposition *l-* (to) implies a direct relationship which here is tied in with the type of animals the people are to consume. Being addressed in a familiar manner hopefully will allow the Israelites to follow through on their part as well as other matters.

Vs. 1 deals with shaving one's forehead, a practice of mourners in Canaan. If the Israelites fall for this, they're one step closer to adopting their religious practices.

In vs. 2 the Lord says that Israel is holy or *qadosh* (cf. 7.6) to the Lord, a second instance of the preposition *l-* with that implied direct relationship where *qadosh* is to be taken literally, as being set apart (from the Canaanites). Two more uses of the preposition *l-* apply to Israel as the Lord's possession, literally as "to him" and "to people." The noun *segulah* (cf. 7.6) pertains to property or wealth usually of a private nature where the concept of *qadosh* is implied by Israel being set apart from everyone else on the earth.

With this sonship and apartness in mind, the Lord launches into the extended "menu" of living animals, both permitted and not permitted. Right away the Israelites are prohibited to consume anything that's abominable or *tohevah*, a word which intimates contamination. Even if a small portion of such food is allowed, right away it will spread and infect everyone else. The list running through vs. 21 is extensive and objectively not a bad choice. In vs. 21 the Lord says that anything that dies of itself can be given to the alien within one of Israel's towns. Such places have been mentioned several times thus far suggesting that Israel had

taken over certain population centers while not yet having subdued the outlying areas. Although the Lord had ordered the virtual extermination of Canaanites, it seems that some have remained, perhaps those who were poor and insignificant. Such persons may have contributed to Israel later in her history formulating the concept of a remnant, those left behind an invasion who remained faithful to the Lord. Here in vs. 21 the Lord reminds Israel of its *qadosh*-ness /- or to the Lord.

Vss. 22 through 29 or the rest of Chapter Fourteen deal with tithing, vs. 23 the Lord determining the place or *maqom* (cf. 12.21) to have his name dwell, *shakan* (cf. 12.11) meaning to lay down and take up residence. In other words, the permanency of this divine residence...the divine name...is a place to eat the tithe which is attached to what the Israelites raise and produce. *Hasar* is the word for tithe, a verb meaning to give a tenth, tenth being the sum of one's produce, etc., there being six other biblical references, the first being Gen 28.22: "And of all that you give me I (Jacob) will give the tenth to you." The purpose of this is that the people may learn to fear the Lord (*lamad* and *yare'*, cf. 11.19 and 13.4 respectively).

Both vs. 24 and the one before it are similar to 12.21 as to making provision for the distance of the *maqom* in which such eating is to be done. More than distance is involved, however. There remains the danger of attacks by Canaanites who'd discover quickly the reason why the Israelites were on the road, an opportunity to seize valuable booty.

In vs. 27 the Lord again has the people make provision for the Levite (cf. 12.12) who, despite his priestly function, is pretty much an orphan among his own people lacking both portion and inheritance, *cheleq* and *nachalah*, being found in 12.12. In vs. 29 the Levite is mentioned again along with the sojourner, fatherless and widow suggesting again his awkward role both as priest and semi-outcast, if you will.

Numbers = Verses

qadosh: 2, segulah: 2, tohevah: 3, maqom: 23, hasar: 23, lamad: 24, yare': 24, cheleq: 27, nachalah: 27.

Chapter Fifteen

1) "At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. 2) And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the Lord's release has been proclaimed. 3) Of a foreigner you may exact it; but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release. 4) But there will be no poor among you (for the Lord will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance to possess), 5) if only you will obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all this commandment which I command you this day. 6) For the Lord your God will bless you as he promised you, and you shall lend to many nations but you shall not borrow; and you shall rule over many nations, but they shall not rule over you. 7) "If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives

you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, 8) but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. 9) Take heed lest there be a base thought in your heart, and you say, 'The seventh year, the year of release is near,' and your eye be hostile to your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and it be sin in you. 10) You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him; because for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. 11) For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land. 12) "If your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. 13) And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed; 14) you shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your wine press; as the Lord your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. 15) You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today. 16) But if he says to you, 'I will not go out from you' because he loves you and your household since he fares well with you, 17) then you shall take an awl, and thrust it through his ear into the door, and he shall be your bondman for ever. And to your bondwoman you shall do likewise. 18) It shall not seem hard to you when you let him go free from you; for at half the cost of a hired servant he has served you six years. So the Lord your God will bless you in all that you do. 19) "All the firstling males that are born of your herd and flock you shall consecrate to the Lord your God; you shall do no work with the firstling of your herd nor shear the firstling of your flock. 20) You shall eat it, you and your household, before the Lord your God year by year at the place which the Lord will choose. 21) But if it has any blemish, if it is lame or blind or has any serious blemish whatever, you shall not sacrifice it to the Lord your God. 22) You shall eat it within your towns; the unclean and the clean alike may eat it as though it were a gazelle or a hart. 23) Only you shall not eat its blood; you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

Vss. 1-11 deal with the so-called year of release which happens every seven years or more precisely, focus is upon the end of this period of time, *qets* being the noun which also means an extremity (cf. 9.11 but not noted there). *Shemitah* means a remission as in the jubilee year and occurs four other times in Deuteronomy as in the next verse. A *shemitah* has a manner in which it's carried out, *davar* being the noun which as noted often means word as expression. So this verse can be taken as giving a mode of expression, of how a creditor is to "speak" such a release concerning what he has lent. Vs. 2 says that such a release as in a given seven year period has been proclaimed, *qara'* (cf. 5.1) meaning a crying out. Most likely this *qara'* is done by someone like a town crier or by a number of messengers going from town to town just before the end of the year. People would expect him to appear pretty much on time, so it was a major social event with religious overtones.

Vs. 3 speaks of a foreigner or *nakry* being an adjective found last in 14.21 but not noted there and again in 17.15: "You may not put a foreigner over you who is not your brother." While it's forbidden to exact a release on an Israelite, it's another story with others who have some form of association with that nation. What that consists of isn't spelled out but most likely it involves people sympathetic to Israel's cause. Also there must have been some remnants within Canaan, descendants of the original twelve tribes, who through the four hundred years of Israel being in Egypt kept memory of patriarchal days alive. Of course this is

speculation but may have some truth to it. *Nagas* is the verb used here and in the previous verse which means to oppress or cause distress. “For the people were hard pressed” [1Sam 13.6]. Clearly this was a sore point among such foreigners knowing that when a year of release approached, they would find no relief. Their lot seemed a lengthy period of slavery and could only hope for the relative nearness of the jubilee year which happens once in fifty years or pretty much every generation.

Vs. 4 says that no Israelite is to be poor, *’evyon* implying someone who is wretched or oppressed, this noun occurring next in vs. 7. The phrase “in you” intimates a certain directness or immediacy compared with the foreigner who is not in you, if you will. A blessing from the Lord in the land the Israelites are to possess will preclude that. In the meanwhile, the foreigners are looking on with some dread as what might happen when Israel does enter Canaan. However, what precludes being an *’evyon* is dependent upon the people obeying the Lord, *shamah* (cf. 13.8) meaning to listen. The element of obeying is stressed by double use of this verb plus the preposition *b-* prefaced to *qol* (voice, cf. 8.20), reading awkwardly but literally as “if to listen you are listening in the voice.” In addition to this *shamah shamah* is the need to be careful (*shamar*, cf. 13.4) doing the Lord’s commandment, *mitsvah* (cf. 11.8). To top it all off, the Lord says that he’s speaking with the people to fulfil it today, not tomorrow.

Vs. 6 speaks of a blessing built on the verses of this chapter so far, that is, Israel will extend its ability to lend to many nations but will be free from the obligation to borrow. *Havat* is the verb to borrow and connotes an exchange which could include bartering. This word occurs in the next verse and with the exception of one reference from Joel (2.7), all are from Deuteronomy. In the same breath, if you will, the Lord says that Israel will rule over many nations but will not be ruled over by them. *Mashal* is the verb not found elsewhere in this book. Thus borrowing and lending are tied in with ruling. As noted a number of times to date, Israel will succumb quickly to the worship of alien gods and lend herself to them, never being to get out of debt to them.

’Evyon or a poor person is noted in vs. 4 specified as “one of your brethren” to distinguish him from any foreigner associated with Israel. Such a person is specified further by being in one of Israel’s town and within the land the Lord has given Israel. This suggests that while Israel controls many towns, large swaths outside them remain in Canaanite control. Surely the Canaanites have their own people in their midst, but judging by the tone of this verse, pretty much they were neglected and on their own. As for the Israelites, they aren’t to harden their hearts (*levav* (cf. 13.3), *’amats* (cf. 2.30 but not noted there) also meaning to make strong. Once the heart is shut or as *’amats* implies, slammed closed, it’s equivalent to keeping one’s hand firmly shut. Instead, the hand is to be kept open, the heart is to be such as intimated. The verb for this in vs. 7 is *qaphats* also as to contract or to gather. “Kings shall shut their mouths” [Is 52.15].

Vs. 8 contains a double use of the three verbs which conveys the importance of the situation, *patach* and *havat* (to open, to borrow, the latter as in vs. 6 and *chasar*, cf. 2.7).

They read literally as “to open you shall open,” “to lend you shall lend” and “lack of him which he is lacking to him.” Such generosity is vital for Israel’s survival in Canaan since everyone must be taken care of and be united against a common threat of annihilation or of being driven out.

Vs. 9 has the familiar *shamar* (cf. vs. 5) or taking heed with the added *leka*, literally as “to you” showing that the Lord wants full attention. The subject matter here is having a base heart, a *levav* which is *belyhal* (cf. vss. 7 and 13.13 respectively) or one which is vile and despicable, something to be avoided. The noun *davar* or word as expression is inserted making the text read literally as “word with heart decadence.” It turns out that the *davar* present in one’s heart is a desire get the year of release over and done with so as to avoid showing mercy to a fellow Israelite in need. This hostility is put in terms of one’s eye being evil, *rahaḥ* being a verb and found next in 26.6: “And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us and laid upon us hard bondage.” Yet the *‘evyon* or poor person has recourse, that is, he can cry (*qara’*, cf. vs. 1) to the Lord asking him to make the person afflicting him be (literally) as sin in himself.

Vs. 10 contains another example of a double use of a verb, *natan* as to give rendered literally as “to give you shall give to him.” *Natan* is used also with the verb *yarah*, to displease, to be grievous and here with the negative. “The man who is the most tender and delicately bred among you will grudge food to his brother” [28.54]. *Levav* (cf. vs. 9) or heart is associated with *yarah* making the affair (*davar* as word, matter at hand) more intimate. Associated with this double *natan*, if you will, is the immediate blessing which the Lord will bestow. As for the *‘evyon* (cf. vs. 7) or poor person, always he will remain, *chadal* meaning (not) to leave off or cease. “But if you refrain from vowing, it shall be no sin in you” [23.22]. Such words are reminiscent of Mt 26.11: “For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me.” Vs. 11 adds to *‘evyon* the *hany’* or need, the latter similar to the former but with the added attribute of being meek or mild. “And if he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in his pledge” [24.12]. Nothing is said, however, if this group always being in the land as is the case of the *‘evyon*.

A number of times to date in Chapter Fifteen the idea of brother is mentioned, but in vs. 12 it’s associated with a Hebrew man or Hebrew woman sold as a slave. This seems to pertain a Hebrew in possession of the Canaanites who sell him or her back to the Israelites. Still, this slave is required to serve his or her native master for a period of six years after which comes freedom which is in accord with the opening words of this chapter. A package liberally furnished, if you will, is offered to this person upon completion of service. This is rendered by another double use of a verb, *hanaq* meaning to adorn with a necklace and has two other biblical references, one of which is in vs. 14 and the other in Ps 73.6: “Therefore pride is their necklace; violence covers them as a garment.” While doing this, the Lord bids that remembrance of Israel’s former state of slavery in Egypt be kept in mind. This remembrance makes the two parties involved as one, and if ever forgotten, will be a serious internal rift threatening to destabilize the entire nation.

Despite the certain prospect of freedom, the Hebrew man or woman may decide against being set free in the seventh year. After all, this person found servitude more or less nominal by reason of blood ties and by living in the land of Canaan. If set free after relative safety, he or she would have to go it alone in an alien environment. In sum, the “slave” has come to love (*’ahav*, cf. 13.8) his “captors,” parentheses deliberate. In such an instance—and it may have been quite frequent—this person will become a bondman or bondwoman forever, *heved* and *’amah*, both found next together in 16.11. The gesture effecting this is striking: the servant’s ear pinned to the door by an awl which makes him or her literally nailed down and unable to move.

As for the person releasing anyone in servitude, the Lord says it won’t seem hard, literally as “in your eyes.” However, in actuality it must have been a difficult split if the *heved* or *’amah* say they’ve come to love their masters. Chances are both parties remained in close contact, more or less as an extended family.

The remaining verses of Chapter Fifteen (19-23) have to do with the firstling males belonging to herds and flocks, that is, giving them respect by reason of having been first born. Behind this seems to be a fear that others yet to be born might not make survive, so to treat those who have survived birth and the first year or so is a good omen that thier offspring will continue

Numbers = Verses

qets: 1, shemitah: 1, qara’: 2, nakry: 3, nagas: 3, ’evyon: 4, shamah: 5, qol: 5, shamar: 5, mitsvah: 5, havat: 6, mashal: 6, ’evyon: 7, ’amats: 7, levav: 7, qaphats: 7, patach: 8, havat: 8, chasar: 8, shamar: 9, levav: 9, belyhal: 9, qara’: 9, natan: 10, levav: 10, ’evyon: 11, chadal: 11, hany’: 11, hanq: 14, ’ahav: 16, heved: 17, ’amah: 17.

Chapter Sixteen

1) "Observe the month of Abib and keep the Passover to the Lord your God; for in the month of Abib the Lord your God brought you out of Egypt by night. 2) And you shall offer the Passover sacrifice to the Lord your God, from the flock or the herd, at the place which the Lord will choose to make his name dwell there. 3) You shall eat no leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in hurried flight—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt. 4) No leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory for seven days; nor shall any of the flesh which you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain all night until morning. 5) You may not offer the Passover sacrifice within any of your towns which the Lord your God gives you; 6) but at the place which the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell in it, there you shall offer the Passover sacrifice in the evening at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt. 7) And you shall boil it and eat it at the place which the Lord your God will choose; and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. 8) For six days you shall eat unleavened bread; and on the seventh day there shall be a solemn assembly to the Lord your God; you shall do no

work on it. 9) "You shall count seven weeks; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you first put the sickle to the standing grain. 10) Then you shall keep the feast of weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the Lord your God blesses you; 11) and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow who are among you, at the place which the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. 12) You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes. 13) "You shall keep the feast of booths seven days when you make your ingathering from your threshing floor and your wine press; 14) you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow who are within your towns. 15) For seven days you shall keep the feast to the Lord your God at the place which the Lord will choose; because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands so that you will be altogether joyful. 16) "Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God at the place which he will choose: at the feast of unleavened bread, at the feast of weeks and at the feast of booths. They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed; 17) every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which he has given you. 18) "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns which the Lord your God gives you according to your tribes; and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment. 19) You shall not pervert justice; you shall not show partiality; and you shall not take a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous. 20) Justice and only justice you shall follow, that you may live and inherit the land which the Lord your God gives you. 21) "You shall not plant any tree as an Asherah beside the altar of the Lord your God which you shall make. 22) And you shall not set up a pillar which the Lord your God hates.

A lot of what this chapter touches upon is found in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers to which a footnote in the **RSV** refers: Ex 23.14-15, 34.18.24, Lev chap. 23 and Num chaps 28-29).

This new chapter starts off with the familiar *shamar* or observe in the sense of to guard with regard to the month of Abib. It commences the ecclesiastical year around the beginning of spring and thus has importance by reason of the observance of religious holidays. In other words, the entire month is subject to this *shamar* in which we find the central feast of Passover which is to be kept, the common verb *hasah* (to do, cf. 11.32) being used, not *shamar*. Regardless of which day Passover falls in a given year, it starts off by sanctifying the entire month and then spreads out to do the same with regard to the year. It is within the month of Abib that the Lord had delivered Israel which here is specified as having been done by night. Lack of a precise date for Passover in Abib and mention of night add to the mystery of this most important of all festivals.

The offering for Passover isn't specified in vs. 2 except by the general terms flock and herd implying sheep or cattle. When the Israelites make the selection, they have no knowledge yet where the offering will be made, so they were doing this pretty much in the dark and according to what Moses informed them (He was just as in the dark as well but couldn't let the people know). *Maqom* (cf. 14.23) is the noun for place which most Israelites would assume would not be in Egypt, having gotten word of Moses pleading with pharaoh to leave the country precisely to offer sacrifice. The first time this is mentioned is Ex 3.18, words

from the Lord to Moses and then to pharaoh: “And now, we pray you, let us go a three days’ journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice to the Lord our God.” As for the precise location, nobody knows, not even Moses, except that it wasn’t far off, a three day journey...close enough yet far away enough from Egypt. Yet the Lord will make his name dwell in that *maqom*. Since a three days trek is close by, many were wondering why the Lord would pick it, that is, so close to what had become their enemy, Egypt. Besides, many Israelites were familiar with the area after having lived in a kind of exile for four hundred years. This only served to puzzle them all the more. Note the similarity of sounds of the three words *shakan* (cf. 12.11), *shem* and *sham* (dwell, name and there) all being pretty much equivalent with each other.

In vs. 3 the Lord gives instructions as to offering the Passover sacrifice, that is, refrain from eating leavened bread with it. This observance is to continue for a period of seven days, the time span having its root in the six days of creation plus the day of sabbath rest recounted in Genesis. Such unleavened bread is called the bread of affliction or *hony* found next in 26.7. “I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt” [Ex 3.17]. In actuality this *hony* is under the present pharaoh; apparently the Israelites had prospered under succeeding pharaohs ever since their patriarch Joseph brought his father and brothers to Egypt.

Vs. 3 continues with the reason for eating unleavened bread, that the people had to leave (vacate is more like it) Egypt in hurried flight or *chipazon*, this verse having two other references, Ex 12.11 and Is 52.12, the former being cited here: “And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord’s Passover.” Certainly rumors must have been flying among the Israelites during this hasty preparation, not having full knowledge of the reason for their departure. Despite having been oppressed, many have learned to cope with it, confident that a new pharaoh would restore the old order of things. Vs. 3 continues by a juxtaposition of “day:” all the days of one’s life plus the day of departure, the two being as one, remembrance of which is to be handed to future generations.

During the sacred period of seven days the Israelites are to banish leaven from their midst which reads literally in vs. 4 as “in all your boundary,” *gevu* (cf. 11.24). Apparently the seven days are to be observed once the people reach the yet undisclosed *maqom* or place of sacrifice, not including the originally intended three day march there. If *gevu* is taken as a boundary, it suggests a kind of defensive perimeter the Israelites will set up. Also any offering sacrificed there at evening cannot remain throughout the night. Once consumed by the people, it will protect them during the nighttime hours.

Vs. 5 broadens out the practice of observing the Passover, taking into consideration the presence of Israel within Canaan. The people can’t offer sacrifice in any town of their own choice but are to await the Lord’s choice of *maqom* (cf. vs. 2) or where he will have his name dwell as mentioned in vs. 2. Although no specific place is given (Mount Horeb obviously comes to mind), there seems to be an allusion to the future temple at Jerusalem which assume the role of Horeb. Then there’s the danger of the Canaanites invading the towns

newly occupied by the Israelites. They'd take advantage of the people assembled for the Passover to make an invasion and wipe them out.

As for the sacrifice itself, vs. 5 continues by saying it is to be offered at sunset or the threshold of a new day, *mohed* being the word which means a set time as well as an assembly. Thus time and place are one. "At the end of every seven years, at the set time of the year of release" [31.10]. Sunset was the *mohed* of the Passover sacrifice whereas the people left Egypt some time after midnight: "At midnight the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt" [Ex 12.29].

Vs. 7 speaks of the sacrifice as being boiled, not burned. Again the Lord will choose the place of *maqom* where this is to take place with the assumption that nothing shall be left throughout the night. On the morrow the people are to return to their tents. In vs. 8 the people are to eat unleavened bread for six days in comparison with the seven days in vs. 3, this in anticipation of "day eight" as it's put when the people will form a solemn assembly, *hatsereth*. This noun derives from a verb meaning to restrain or shut up perhaps intimating it's importance such as the Passover compared with other words for gatherings. In fact, there are only a handful of biblical references to it as well as a cognate, *hatsarah*. Thus the literal translation of *hatsereth* in the verse at hand is "day of restraint" which is marked by the absence of work, *mela'kah* more as something prescribed. It's found last in 5.14 but not noted there.

Vs. 9 takes the number seven as applied earlier to eating no leavened bread and expands it to seven weeks or the length of the grain harvest. Vs. 10 begins with the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" applied to the feast of seven weeks, not so much as to its keeping but literally as to its doing, the verb *hasah* (cf. vs. 1) being used. *Chag* (cf. vs. 13) is the noun for festival, often associated with a pilgrimage as well as sacrifice and here is with *shevuah* or weeks. This word is of the same root as the number seven which as noted in 1.8 means to swear an oath. Central to the feast is the tribute of free will offering, *misah* as the former (the only use of this word in the Bible) and *nedavah* which intimates readiness of mind (cf. vs 6 but not noted there).

The *nedavah* or free will offering suggests a natural joy at wanting to give in return for a favor bestowed spoken of in vs. 11 as *samach* (cf. 12.12) before the Lord which is rendered literally as "to (*L-*) the Lord." A whole range of people are to be included such as the Levite (cf. 12.12) who is a kind of orphan-in-residence, not having any share in Israel's inheritance as well as the sojourner (*ger*, cf. 10.18), these two having more in common than blood-related persons. This rejoicing is to be in the place or *maqom* (cf. vs. 7) or the Lord's choosing for his name.

This section concludes with the familiar reminder that Israel had been a slave in Egypt, impetus enough to both keep and do (*shamar* and *hasah*, cf. vss. 1 and 10 respectively) what the Lord has just enjoined.

Vs. 13 speaks of another *chag* (cf. vs. 10) or feast, that of booths or *sukah*, a cot of leaves and branches which are interwoven to form a temporary shelter. “At the end of every seven years, at the set time of the year of release, at the feast of booths” [31.10]. It too is associated with the number seven, that is, to be kept (*hasah* or to do, cf. vs. 12) when the produce from both the threshing floor and wine press are brought in. Such chores are done out in the fields and require constant maintenance, hence the necessity of living in booths nearby. Just as in vs. 11, a whole range of people are to rejoice (*samach*, cf. vs. 11), again, including the Levite and sojourner. There as here all these groups of people reside within Israel’s towns meaning they pretty much all knew each other.

Vs. 15 continues with the feast of booths to be kept for seven sabbaths which (i.e., the *maqom*, cf. vs. 11) and to be chosen by the Lord. Emphasis upon divine choice is important. If it were up to the Israelites, they might be tempted, albeit with good intent, to borrow some Canaanite places of worship which quickly would make them succumb to their alien gods. The choice of *maqom* left to God will ensure his blessing of produce and work, making the people joyful, *samach* mentioned again.

Vs. 16 again mentions the *maqom* or place of the Lord’s choosing, this time concerning males gathering three times a year for three feasts or *chag* (cf. vs. 13): unleavened bread, weeks and booths. They are not to come empty-handed or *reyqam* which also means without a cause (cf. 15.13 but not noted there) but in accord with the Lord’s blessing given to each. That means at each *chag* held every four months the men are to appear with some manifest gift which has nothing to do with competition among them as to who would bring the best blessing. Perhaps a Levite was present to decide the quality of each gift.

Vs. 18 gets right down to a vital matter, self-governance of Israel, which takes the form of appointing judges and officers, *shaphat* (cf. 1.16) and *shatar*, both being participles. *Shaphat* is mentioned in Deuteronomy for the first time in 1.16 to assist Moses in governing the people. The latter is a magistrate, most likely directly under the authority of the former and is found in 1.15 but not noted there.

Vs. 19 forbids three things directed to “you” which while referring to the judges and offices, includes all the people: 1) perversion of justice, *natah* (cf. 11.2) meaning to turn aside, 2) showing no partiality which uses two words, *nakar panyim*, rendered literally as “not recognize faces” as found in 1.17 and 3) not to take a bribe or *shochad* (cf. 10.17). A *shochad* is singled out as the worst of the three because it blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts justice, *salaph* being the verb which means to overturn or send headlong. This has five other biblical references, one being Ex 23.8: “For a bribe blinds the officials and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.”

In vs. 20 the idea of justice or *tsedeq* is found twice, as if through Moses the Lord is ramming this critical value into the heads of the Israelites and is first mentioned in 1.16 but not noted there. While the **RSV** has the verb “follow,” *radaph* (cf. 1.44) is more vivid, to run

after as to overtake, inheritance of the land promised by the Lord being dependent upon that pursuit.

Chapter Sixteen concludes with mention of what appear to be pilgrimage festivals...nothing specific...but with the caveat of not planting trees as an Asherah next to the Lord's altar. This hearkens back to 7.5: "But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and hew down their Asherim and burn their graven images with fire." The same applies to erecting a pillar or *matsevah* also mentioned in 7.5 which is worse since the Lord hates it.

Numbers = Verses

shamar: 1, hasah: 1, maqom: 2, shakan: 2, chipazon: 3, hony: 3, gevil: 4, maqom: 6, mohed: 6, maqom: 7, hatsereh: 8, mela'kah: 8, hasah: 10, chag: 10, shevuah: 10, misah: 10, nedavah: 10, samach: 11, ger: 11, maqom: 11, shamar: 12, hasah: 12, chag: 13, sukah: 13, hasah: 13, samach: 14, maqom: 14, samach: 15, maqom: 16, chag: 16, reyqam: 16, shaphat: 18, shatar: 18, natah: 19, nakar: 19, shochad: 19, salaph: 19, tsedeq: 20, radaph: 20, matsevah: 22.

Chapter Seventeen

1) "You shall not sacrifice to the Lord your God an ox or a sheep in which is a blemish, any defect whatever; for that is an abomination to the Lord your God. 2) "If there is found among you within any of your towns which the Lord your God gives you a man or woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, in transgressing his covenant, 3) and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them or the sun or the moon or any of the host of heaven which I have forbidden, 4) and it is told you and you hear of it; then you shall inquire diligently, and if it is true and certain that such an abominable thing has been done in Israel, 5) then you shall bring forth to your gates that man or woman who has done this evil thing, and also you shall stone that man or woman to death with stones. 6) On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses he that is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. 7) The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from the midst of you. 8) "If any case arises requiring decision between one kind of homicide and another, one kind of legal right and another or one kind of assault and another, any case within your towns which is too difficult for you, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the Lord your God will choose, 9) and coming to the Levitical priests and to the judge who is in office in those days, you shall consult them, and they shall declare to you the decision. 10) Then you shall do according to what they declare to you from that place which the Lord will choose; and you shall be careful to do according to all that they direct you; 11) according to the instructions which they give you and according to the decision which they pronounce to you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the verdict which they declare to you either to the right hand or to the left. 12) The man who acts presumptuously, by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord your God or the judge, that man shall die; so you shall purge the evil from Israel. 13) And all the people shall hear and fear and not act presumptuously again. 14) "When you come to the land which the Lord your God gives you, and you possess it and dwell in it and then say, 'I will set a

king over me like all the nations that are round about me'; 15) you may indeed set as king over you him whom the Lord your God will choose. One from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not put a foreigner over you who is not your brother. 16) Only he must not multiply horses for himself or cause the people to return to Egypt in order to multiply horses since the Lord has said to you, 'You shall never return that way again.' 17) And he shall not multiply wives for himself lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply for himself silver and gold. 18) "And when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself in a book a copy of this law from that which is in the charge of the Levitical priests; 19) and it shall be with him, and he shall read in it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God by keeping all the words of this law and these statutes and doing them; 20) that his heart may not be lifted up above his brethren, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment either to the right hand or to the left; so that he may continue long in his kingdom, he and his children, in Israel.

The opening verse of this new chapter deals with sacrifice proper to the Lord after which the text moves directly to the worship of heavenly bodies. *Mum* (cf. 15.1 but not noted there) is the noun for blemish which also refers to a spot (can pertain to small pox). Along with this *mum* in vs. 1 is a defect rendered as *kol davar*, literally "all bad (*rah*, cf. 13.11) thing (word)." Both are equated with an abomination or *tohevah* (cf. 14.3) associated with the worship of idols. Note lack of the preposition *-* or "to" with regard to the Lord; it's as though *tohevah* and the Lord are juxtaposed...uncomfortably close...for a contrast of opposites: "abomination Lord."

Vs. 2 begins an extended sentence running through vs. 5. *Qerev* (among you; cf. 13.14) is suggestive of that which is interior or smack in the middle of the people as well as the towns in which they are residing. Thus it carries over the notion of *tohevah* into another context. Towns stand in contrast to any Israelites living in the countryside where practices connected with such *tohevah* are less detectable and more readily associated with Canaanite influence. The connection of these towns with the Lord—vs. 2 says he gives them—makes the abomination all the more intolerable. Being associated with *tohevah* is evil in the Lord's sight, *rah* as *kol davar* in the previous verse. Here *rah* equals transgression of the Lord's covenant, *havar* (cf. 3.26) being the common verb to cross. Such crossing is more to the point in this situation; it's a crossing from worship of the Lord over to idols.

Vs. 3 is a continuation of what was just said, getting more specific and consisting of three parts: gone, served and worshiped (*shatach*) which parallel 11.16: "turn aside and serve other gods and worship them." The verse at hand includes the sun, moon and host of heaven which is reminiscent of 4.19: "And beware lest you lift up your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and worship them and serve them, things which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven." While these luminaries are tempting to worship by reason of their grandeur, the Lord is situated above them, if you will, as in 4.29: "the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath."

Vs. 4 reiterates this prohibition, that is, that Israel has heard of it. This leads to an obligation to search out the source and reason for such an abomination. They are to search diligently,

the verbs *darash* and *yataw* used together as in 13.14 reading literally as “you inquire to do good.” Obviously everyone was on edge against false accusations, this being a good time to make them. The process is reminiscent of the search for Achan described in Jos 7.16-19 starting from the tribe of Judah and working down to individual families. Once the individual person is identified, everyone is to bring him or her (in this situation both a man and woman are referred to) to the city gate that they may be stoned to death for having done such an evil thing, a *davar* which is *rah* (cf. vs. 2).

Despite the harshness of this sentence, the guilty person can't be stoned on the testimony of one witness, *hed* (cf. 5.20 but not noted there), but two or three are required. This is put literally as “on the mouth of” (two or three witnesses). Such persons have the right to pick up the first stone followed by the people. The result? The evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 5) will be removed, *bahar* meaning to be consumed by fire as found in 13.5 and used with *qerev* (cf. vs. 2) or from the midst of the people, the very center of their lives.

Vss. 8 and 9 form an extended sentence with regard to a decision concerning the following: homicide, legal right and assault. Such matters may be too difficult to solve, *pala'* being the verb also meaning to distinguish as well as to be wonderful. The general idea seems to be that something can't be seen clearly...distinguished...at the moment. “Then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions” [28.59]. Such are the cases for judgment put in terms of a *davar* (word as expression) along with *mishpat* (cf. 12.1). As for a homicide, it's rendered literally as blood, legal right as *dyn* and assault as *negah* which also means a plague. As for *dyn*, cf. Ps 9.4: “For you have maintained my just cause.” As for *negah*, cf. 21.5: “and by their word every dispute and every assault shall be settled.” Such matters require going up to the place or *maqom* (cf. 16.16) of the Lord's choosing. This divine choice is mentioned frequently not so much as to keep the people in suspense but that they may recognize who's ultimately in charge. The verb *halah* for go up suggests a high place such as a sanctuary or mountain and later is associated with going up to Jerusalem.

Once the *maqom* is revealed—and how this is done both here and elsewhere isn't made clear but suggested—the people will consult the Levites and the judges. In vs. 9 the people are to consult both, *darash* (cf. vs. 4) meaning to frequent a place which is followed by a decision, *mishpat* (cf. vs. 8) or judgment. They are to follow the results or *davar* noted in vs. 10 meaning that the *davar* spoken there will echo out from the *maqom* noted again in vs. 10. Thus we have a close connection between speaking as expression and a place chosen by the Lord. Care (*shamar*, cf. 16.12) is demanded in order to ensure full compliance.

Vs. 10 has the words *hal-py* or “according to” with regard to doing the *davar* mentioned above whereas vs. 11 has the same twice; in addition to the *davar/maqom* just described, vs. 11 spells it out further. That is, the people are to follow instructions given by the Levites and judges which is rendered literally as “on the bidding of the law which they will direct you.” The noun is *torah* and is derived from the verb at hand, *yarah* which also means to cast, to teach. “Take heed in an attack of leprosy to be very careful to do according to all that the

Levitical priests shall direct you” [24.8]. The second instance in vs. 11 has just *hal* but is translated the same and concerns the decision or *mishpat* (cf. vs. 9) handed down to the people. With this in mind, Israel isn’t to turn aside or *sur* (cf. 11.28) from the result again rendered by *davar*. That means they aren’t to veer off to the left nor to the right but are to allow the divinely inspired *davar* lead them straight ahead.

Vs. 12 speaks of the consequences of not obeying either the priest or judge, *shamah* (cf. 15.5) being the verb as to listen. That means acting in a presumptuous way which is rendered literally as “is doing in arrogance” or *zadon* also meaning a swelling pride. “The prophet has spoken it presumptuously” [18.22]. The consequences are severe, just as severe as committing an abomination described in vs. 5, stoning to death. However, it has a broader effect, of purging evil (*rah*) from the entire nation of Israel, *bahar*, both words found in vs. 7. To top this off, vs. 13 confirms what was just said, namely, that the people shall both hear and fear without acting presumptuously, *shamah* as hearing noted in the previous verse as obeying. On the surface, mention of priest and judge suggests a distinction between what is sacred and what is not. The Israelites lacked such a distinction, so anything associated with the Levitical priests may pertain to technical matters of sacrifice and worship whereas a judge deals with things juridical where religious significance, although important, is secondary.

Vs. 14 touches upon a desire the Israelites had ever since they left Egypt but were precluded from fulfilling it due to the leadership of Moses. That is to say, always they wanted a king over them since every nation they encountered, notably four hundred years of living in Egypt under a pharaoh, had a monarchy in one form or another. As for Egypt, pharaoh was the closest a human ruler could come to being a god on earth. Israel’s desire for a king comes to fruition once having settled down in Canaan. After all, they were surrounded by hostile neighbors and wished for a unified stand against them simply for self preservation. Compare this with the Lord’s strong reaction and taken as a personal affront as recounted in 1Sam 8.7: “For they have not rejected you (Samuel), but they have rejected me from being king over them.” Perhaps at the time of choosing Saul the Lord had regrets for initiating the idea of a king in Deuteronomy but couldn’t resist Israel’s desire for one. Even the succession of outstanding judges such as Deborah and Gideon didn’t fit their demands.

Vs. 15 has Moses concurring with the people’s wish, hoping all the while that anyone they choose would follow in his footsteps. He lays down the condition that the Lord must make the choice or one from among themselves, *qerev* as from their midst, certainly not someone from outside, that is, a foreigner (*nakry*, cf. 15.3). At once Moses lays down the condition that this king-to-be must not let the people return to Egypt nor obtain horses there. Horses would be attached to chariots and thus form the core of an army. In other words, no alliances are to be made despite the strong temptation to return to what had been Israel’s home for so many generations. Vs. 16 has the further prohibition that any king over Israel must not multiply wives which would turn his heart away, *sur* and *levav* being used (cf. vs. 11 and 15.10 respectively). There comes to mind the later example of King Solomon: “You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn

away your heart after their gods” [1Kg 11.2]. In both instances a king’s marriage to foreign wives equals the people’s marriage to foreign gods resulting in apostasy from which it would be almost impossible to extricate themselves. Vs. 15 adds the danger of silver and gold; while this is a temptation, it’s secondary to being seduced by foreign women.

Vs. 18 speaks of the king as already established after which he will write a copy of the law or *torah* (cf. vs. 11), that is, he will make a copy of it. Given the Jewish devotion to *torah*, chance are he will do this himself, not a scribe. The act of writing is more than just making a copy but a means by which the king will absorb what is central to Israel’s heritage. As for the law, it’s kept by the Levites, mention of whom has been made as more or less orphans but at the same time essential to Israel’s worship. As for the king, he is to keep with him at all times a copy of the *torah* and as vs. 19 says in a direct way, read in it, *qara’* (cf. 15.9) with the preposition *b-*, the verb essentially meaning to call out. Such *qara’* isn’t to be done from time to time but throughout the life of the king with the intent of learning (*lamad*, cf. 14.24)) to fear the Lord which is equivalent to keeping or *shamar* (cf. vs. 10) the *davar* of the *torah*.

Vs. 20 brings to conclusion Chapter Seventeen by saying that the person chosen to be king must not raise his heart above his fellow Israelites nor turn aside (*levav* and *sur* again as in 15.5), from the singular, not plural, commandment or *mitsvah* (cf. 15.5) so he and his children may continue a long time in Israel or literally “in the midst (*qerev*, cf. vs. 15) of Israel.” Implied here are male heirs who would succeed the first king of Israel. As for the singular *mitsvah*, it parallels and most likely refers to the equally singular *torah*.

Numbers = Verses

mum: 1, rah: 1, tohevah: 1, qerev: 2, rah: 2, havar: 2, shatach: 3, darash: 4, yataw: 4, rah: 5, hed: 6, rah: 7, bahar: 7, qerev: 7, pala’: 8, mishpat: 8, dyn: 8, negah: 8, maqom: 8, darash: 9, mishpat: 9, maqom: 10, shamar: 10, torah: 11, yarah: 11, mishpat: 11, sur: 11, shamah: 12, rah: 12, bahar: 12, shamah: 13, qerev: 15, nakry: 15, sur: 17, levav: 17, torah: 18, qara’: 19, lamad: 19, shamar: 19, 20: levav: 20, sur: 20, mitsvah: 20, qerev: 20.

Chapter Eighteen

1) "The Levitical priests, that is, all the tribe of Levi, shall have no portion or inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings by fire to the Lord and his rightful dues. 2) They shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the Lord is their inheritance as he promised them. 3) And this shall be the priests' due from the people, from those offering a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep: they shall give to the priest the shoulder and the two cheeks and the stomach. 4) The first fruits of your grain, of your wine and of your oil, and the first of the fleece of your sheep, you shall give him. 5) For the Lord your God has chosen him out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for ever. 6) "And if a Levite comes from any of your towns out of all Israel where he lives—and he may come when he desires—to the place which the Lord will choose, 7) then he may minister in the name of the Lord his God like all his fellow-Levites who stand to

minister there before the Lord. 8) They shall have equal portions to eat besides what he receives from the sale of his patrimony. 9) "When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. 10) There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer, 11) or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. 12) For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abominable practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you. 13) You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. 14) For these nations, which you are about to dispossess, give heed to soothsayers and to diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not allowed you so to do. 15) "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren—him you shall heed—16) just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more lest I die.' 17) And the Lord said to me, 'They have rightly said all that they have spoken. 18) I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19) And whoever will not give heed to my words which he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. 20) But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name which I have not commanded him to speak or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.' 21) And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?'—22) when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word which the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously, you need not be afraid of him.

This chapter deals with the Levitical priests first mentioned as such in 17.9 who have neither portion nor inheritance in Israel, *cheleq* and *nachalah*, this found in the same context, 14.27. The verse at hand speaks not just of the priestly order but the entire tribe of Levi, pretty much left out in the cold as far as a future bound up with the land goes. Such identity is important for Israel, especially as when moving into Canaan, its original homeland. It's as though the Levites were strangers-at-home or strangers among their own brethren. Those among whom they lived must have thought this a rather odd situation and treated them almost as orphans and perhaps on occasion with contempt. Yet if they were not present among the Israelites, something very important would be lacking even apart from their clerical status. Vs. 1 offers two compensations, as it were. The Levites can eat burnt offerings as well as live off their rightful duties, the latter rendered literally as "his allotment they shall eat," *nachalah* being mentioned a second time.

Nachalah or inheritance is found also in vs. 2, that is, as among their brethren, *qerev* (cf. 17.20) implying in the center or in the midst of. Here it's "with brethren" whereas in vs. 1 it's "with Israel." In other words, the Lord is the *nachalah* of the Levites as he had promised, the verb *davar* being used. Vss. 3 speaks of compensations, if you will, in terms of the priests due or *mishpat* (cf. 17.11) which fundamentally means judgment or a sentence. They consist of parts of offerings as well as first fruits of what is grown, *re'shyth* which also means beginning as in 11.12 but not noted there. In reality, then, the Levites are living off what their fellow Israelites give them which at times must have been disconcerting. Vs. 5 sums up the Levites' role, namely, to stand as well as to minister, *hamad* and *sharath* (cf. 10.10 and 10.8 respectively), the latter connoting a waiting upon, both pertain to liturgical functions,

especially making sacrifices. Not only is the current generation of Levites to do this but their “sons forever.” Thus a Levite has the additional obligation to inform his son of his essentially land-less status, that there’s no hope for him as well as for his own children to share in Israel’s possession of the land, that is, Canaan.

Vs. 6 speaks of a traveling Levite, if you will, which seems common, given that he isn’t tied down to the land. That’s one advantage he has over his fellow Israelites, a privilege he can put at the service of others or abuse it. Note that the verse speaks of all towns belonging to Israel, not necessarily those outlying areas where as noted already, Canaanite influence is strongest. *Shahar* is the word for town (cf. 12.12) which fundamentally means gate, thereby implying that such towns were fortified against any assaults by the Canaanites. As for the Levite, he is not unlike a preacher moving from town to town and can go to the place or *maqom* (cf. 17.10) of his desire. This divine choice is found frequently in Deuteronomy. As for the Levites, the context for determining it most likely was when performing a sacrifice. The RSV of vs. 8 reads “besides what he receives from the sale of his patrimony” along with a footnote about this as “obscure.”

Vss. 1 through 8 speak of the Levitical priests who are bound up with liturgical practices in accord with the divine law. Vs. 9 brings in a familiar note of caution, that Israel is to avoid abominable practices or *tohevah* (cf. 17.1) or more specifically, that they are not to learn (*lamad*, cf. 17.19) how to do them. This means that before entering Canaan Israel was pretty much free of such *tohevah*, while living under the watchful eye of Moses. Now that they’re about to be let loose among an alien population, their susceptibility to local divinities is all the more apparent. Actually *lamad* is an understatement. The Israelites see what the Canaanites are doing and go-for-it with little or no reflection since they are attracted automatically to them. A particular horror to these *tohevah* is the burning of one’s child as noted in vs. 10; included are those who practices divinization, *qasam* being found next in vs. 14. Vss. 1 through 8 include seven other types of persons who practice magic and who are to be avoided at all costs and who may fall under the label of *qasam*.

Vs. 12 speaks of an abomination or *tohevah* (cf. vs. 9) to the Lord, this noun and the proper name for Lord being juxtaposed, no preposition as “to (-) the Lord” just as in 17.1 to show how contrary are the two. At the same time this verse should come as a relief to the Israelites because the Lord is driving out (*yarash*, cf. 12.29) such *tohevah*, not the people who practice them or more precisely, the eight types of practitioners mentioned in vss. 10-11. They will simply wither away or so it’s hoped.

In contrast to all this, vs. 13 says succinctly and directly that Israel is to be blameless or *tamym* or perfect, literally “with the Lord.” “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice” [32.4]. Such is the warning which the Lord presents to Israel on the threshold of dispossessing the nation, *yarash* being used as in vs. 12 (driving out). The danger at hand is paying attention (*shamah* as to hear) to soothsayers and diviners who are singled out as the most lethal from among the others in vss. 10-11. Just the fact of warning the people makes

them both fearful as well as attracted, a struggle destined to continue into future generations.

In vs. 15 Moses gives just about the best hope for Israel's future, that is, he will raise up (*qum*) a prophet or *navy'* from among the people, *qerev* (cf. vs. 2) implying the very center of the nation. Not only will this prophet come from that center but will fulfil his mission there. Compare this with 13.1 where a prophet "arises among you." Here the preposition *b-* or in is used compared with the preposition *m-* or from, both with *qerev*. False prophets arise *in* the people, if you will, whereas a true prophet arises *from* the people. Those who are true are gifted with the ability to see things in a transcendent fashion, not bound to more immediate needs and desires. Added to this prophet arising from the people is the distinct possibility that one will arise from a fellow Israelite, not an outsider. The latter Moses compares to himself, a point of reference with which everyone is familiar. Such a person the people will obey, *shamah* (cf. 17.13) being the verb with the preposition *el-*, literally "to him" they will give this obeisance.

In vs. 16 Moses has the people recall...almost forces them to do so...the incident at Mount Horeb when they desired (*sha'al* means to ask, cf. 13.14) neither to hear his voice nor see the fire, so fearful that it would lead to death. The desire not to hear or *shamah* intimates the wilful desire not to obey or *shamah* though both then and now the Israelites didn't realize it.

Two things stand out in vs. 16: Israel is presented as a one person, "lest I die." Also that occasion happened "on the day of the assembly" or *qalah* (cf. 9.10), a specific time not unlike a *kairos* event when Israel perceived itself as one person as just noted. The Lord concurs automatically, vs. 17 beginning with the conjunctive *v-*, "and" leading to his response. He tells Moses that the people have spoken rightly, *yatav* (cf. 17.4) meaning in essence to do anything good. Then the Lord continues to say in the next verse (18) that he'll concur with the content in vs. 15 or will give Israel a prophet, the notion of *qum* or rising up not unlike a plant blossoming from within or *qerev*. What distinguishes this prophet from the false one in 13.1 is that the Lord will put his *davar* in his mouth so he may *davar* to the people. Such an action borders upon the physical and is intended to be taken as such.

The conjunctive beginning vs. 19 shows the close connection between the one beginning vs. 17, that is, the immediacy and importance of what's going on right now. *Shamah* or heed equals what which the prophet is speaking, *davar*, failure of which results in the Lord requiring or *darash* (cf. 17.9) of him. This verb fundamentally means to tread or trample, so with this in mind, the Lord will pound on whomever does not come through. The preposition *min* is used backing up the action of *darash*, that is, "from you."

Vs. 20 continues to speak of the prophet who here is not unlike the one mentioned in 13.1, that is to say, one who presumes to speak in the Lord's name, the verb *davar* with the noun *davar*. However, it's colored by *zud* (cf. 1.43 but not noted there) or to presume which also means to deal proudly. Worse than this *davar* of presumption is to do so in the name of other gods where *zud* isn't used. Actually there's no need to introduced *zud* here; the act of

following through on it is sufficiently evil and is destined to lead to the prophet's death. How this will come about isn't specified, perhaps by stoning as the preferred means of execution.

All this can be a source of confusion for the people, and the Lord is fully aware of it. That's why in vs. 21 he is mindful of those pondering in their hearts (*levav*, cf. 17.20), legitimately so, how to know (*yadah*, cf. 13.2) whether the *davar* the Lord, not the prophet (though he's presumed to be the agent), has not spoken. The answer is straight-forward. However, it supposes that the prophet's motive isn't known publically but will be soon enough when the *davar* comes to pass or not. If the latter, it reveals his presumption or *zadon* (cf. 17.12). Such pride doesn't require drastic measures; he's simply not to be an object of fear which isolates the false prophet and a fate just as bad as death.

Numbers = Verses

cheleq: 1, nachalah: 1, nachalah: 2, qerev: 2, mishpat: 3, re'shyth: 4, hamad: 5, sharath: 5, maqom: 6, shahar: 6, tohevah: 9, lamad: 9, qasam: 10, qasam: 10, yarash: 12, tohevah: 12, tamym: 13, yarash: 14, qum: 15, navy': 15, qerev: 15, shamah: 15, sha'al: 16, shamah: 16, qahal (noun): 16, yataw: 17, qum: 18, qerev: 18, shamah: 19, zud: 20, levav: 21, levav: 21, yadah: 21, zadon.

Chapter Nineteen

1) "When the Lord your God cuts off the nations whose land the Lord your God gives you, and you dispossess them and dwell in their cities and in their houses, 2) you shall set apart three cities for you in the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess. 3) You shall prepare the roads and divide into three parts the area of the land which the Lord your God gives you as a possession so that any manslayer can flee to them. 4) "This is the provision for the manslayer who by fleeing there may save his life. If any one kills his neighbor unintentionally without having been at enmity with him in time past—5) as when a man goes into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and his hand swings the axe to cut down a tree, and the head slips from the handle and strikes his neighbor so that he dies—he may flee to one of these cities and save his life; 6) lest the avenger of blood in hot anger pursue the manslayer and overtake him because the way is long and wound him mortally though the man did not deserve to die since he was not at enmity with his neighbor in time past. 7) Therefore I command you, You shall set apart three cities. 8) And if the Lord your God enlarges your border as he has sworn to your fathers and gives you all the land which he promised to give to your fathers—9) provided you are careful to keep all this commandment, which I command you this day, by loving the Lord your God and by walking ever in his ways -- then you shall add three other cities to these three, 10) lest innocent blood be shed in your land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, and so the guilt of bloodshed be upon you. 11) "But if any man hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him and attacks him and wounds him mortally so that he dies, and the man flees into one of these cities, 12) then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him from there and hand him over to the avenger of blood, so that he may die. 13) Your eye shall not pity him, but you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from Israel so that it may be well with you. 14)

"In the inheritance which you will hold in the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess, you shall not remove your neighbor's landmark which the men of old have set. 15) "A single witness shall not prevail against a man for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed; only on the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be sustained. 16) If a malicious witness rises against any man to accuse him of wrongdoing, 17) then both parties to the dispute shall appear before the Lord, before the priests and the judges who are in office in those days; 18) the judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, 19) then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother; so you shall purge the evil from the midst of you. 20) And the rest shall hear and fear and shall never again commit any such evil among you. 21) Your eye shall not pity; it shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

“When” signifies a time in the future, a theme that runs throughout Deuteronomy pretty much geared to prepare Israel for entering and possessing Canaan. It has been associated with a threat here and a caution there, all in all to make sure the people remember what the Lord had transmitted to them during their forty years of wandering in Sinai, this based, of course, upon their miraculous departure from Egypt. Prior to that memory had been kept alive since Joseph was in charge of Egypt, which, in turn, kept the people alive.

In the verse at hand the people hear the following three things they will accomplish:

- 1) Cut off nations (*karath*, cf. 12.29) which implies isolating them.
- 2) Dispossess these nations (*yarash*, cf. 18.14) once they've been cut off.
- 3) Dwelling in their cities and houses (*yashav*, cf. 17.14 but not noted there). The third and final task includes houses in addition to cities indicative more of a thorough displacement of native inhabitants, if you will. Once so dispossessed no long will they have any connection with the place in which they had lived for so long.

Right away vs. 2 speaks of setting aside (*badal*, cf. 10.8) three cities within the land of Canaan, most likely at the people's discretion as they move in so they may fortify them and use as bases of operation. Then vs. 3 and 4 has both roads and three areas of the land divided up as places of refuge for anyone who has committed murder or perhaps not as extreme as that, what we'd call manslaughter today. Such words which continue into the next few verses must have disturbed those listening to them. It assumes that Israel is going to have quite a lot of internal difficulties once the invasion of Canaan gets under way where the distinction between friend and foe may be blurred. That means some Israelites will go over to the Canaanite side which was more frequent than anticipated by reason of exposure to their divinities. As for the word manslayer used here, it's the participle *ratsach* (cf. 5.17).

Vs. 4 speaks of the provision of the manslayer, *davar* being used which is not unlike a charter or guideline spoken to all the people. Chances are when the Israelites heard this, they thought of Cain who exclaimed after having slain his brother Abel, "I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will slay me" [Gen 4.14]. The benefit which any manslayer has over Cain, if you will, is that he will have refuge within the bounds of the newly settled or better, resettled Canaan. Vss.4 and 5 spell out what's involved, that is,

a manslayer as someone who kills a person unintentionally (literally as ‘without knowledge,’ *dahath*; cf. 4.42) or an accident as when cutting wood. The latter case may be more difficult to prove innocence if no one else is around as a witness.

Vs. 6 continues with provision for the unintentional manslayer or when someone seeks vengeance put in terms of the verb *radaph* (cf. 16.20) meaning to pursue vigorously as well as to persecute. The participle *ga'al* meaning to redeem qualifies *radaph*, making it more specific, and is found next in vs. 12. This, however, doesn't detract from the single-mindedness of the pursuer which is rendered literally as “furious to his heart” (*levav*, cf. 18.21), *yacham* being the verb meaning to be hot. “Again, if two lie together, they are warm; but how can one be warm alone” [Eccl 4.11]? Such fury results in killing the man pursued or more directly, “smites his soul” (*nephes*, cf. 13.6) even if he didn't deserve death which reads literally “there is no judgment (*mishpat*, cf. 18.3) of death.”

Vs. 7 brings up again the three cities of refuge for the manslayer but conditioned by the fact that Israel has expanded its borders (*gevul*, cf. 16.4) as the Lord had promised. It infers what is said in 11.24: “Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; your territory shall be from the wilderness and Lebanon and from the River, the river Euphrates, to the western sea.” However, such expansion is contingent upon the familiar *shamar* (cf. 17.19) or keeping the singular commandment or *mitsvah*. As noted in 7.11 it's given “this day” which suggests the immediacy of a *kairos* event. *Shamar* is to be translated into action. That is to say, it is equivalent to loving (*ahav*, cf. 15.16) the Lord and walking in his ways.

Should the people follow through on this, the three cities will be added to their territory which could be in jeopardy if innocent blood is shed. Again, this hearkens back to the Cain and Abel story where blood and land mingle. “The voice of your brother's (Abel) blood is crying to me from the ground” [Gen 4.10]. Because of this, Cain must wander the earth...the ground...never being able to fully escape the blood of his brother underneath, almost haunting him. Such could be the fate of Israel as a nation, returning to their wanderings in the Sinai wilderness.

Vs. 10 speaks of guilt which is put literally as “and shall be upon you blood” which rubs directly against Canaan as Israel's inheritance, *nachalah* (cf. 18.2). Note too that such blood, if shed, would be not just in “your land” but in the *qerev* (cf. 18.18) or very center of it.

Vss. 11-13 pertain to the person responsible for murder put in terms of outright hatred, *sane'* (cf. 5.9), made all the more direct by the preposition *l*, literally as “to his neighbor.” The attack resembles an animal pouncing upon its prey, *arav* connoting ambush and *qum* (cf. 18.18) or to arise immediately upon this prey. For the former, cf. Ps 59.3: “For lo, they lie in wait for my life; fierce men band themselves against me.” Once this murder has been committed, the guilty person naturally thinks that one of the cities of refuge will offer him shelter which may have formed part of the motive to begin with. However, the elders of those cities will put him to death but before that, hand him over to the avenger of blood who, in light of vs. 6, is the person after him. Instead of pity (*chus*, cf. 13.8), this person will

be purged, *bahar* (cf. 17.12). Failure to do this invariably will cause problems, that is, it won't go well (the adjective *tov* or good) with the entire nation until the matter is taken care of.

Vs. 14 speaks of a neighbor's landmark or *gevul* (cf. vs. 8) erected literally by "the first" or *ri'shon* found last in 4.32 and connotes those who are not only first but at the head which could apply to being founder of the nation of Israel. In other words, it could refer all the way back to the patriarchs during whose time any markers might remain during Israel's four hundred year absence from the land while they were in Egypt. Memory of them had been preserved and most likely was fairly accurate due to the importance of Canaan as promised by God to Abraham. As for the importance of *gevul* in general, cf. 27.17: "Cursed be he who removes his neighbor's landmark."

The remaining verses of Chapter Nineteen, that is, vss. 15 through 21, deal with determining the guilt or innocence of persons involving a crime. Importance is put upon multiple witnesses (*hed*, cf. 17.6) instead of one prevailing, *qum* (cf. vs. 11) used again connoting that this witness will arise against the accused. So instead of a single *qum*, if you will, a multiple *qum* is required as noted in vs. 15, the noun for charge being the familiar *davar* which suggests anything spoken against this accused. Yet if a hostile witness (*chamas* means violence as well as oppression) stands up or *qum*, the dispute heads off to the Lord. That is to say, the priests and judges will inquire diligently which reads literally "seek to do good," *darash* and *yatav* being the verbs, 17.9 and 18.7 respectively.

The whole idea behind these proceedings is to eliminate (*bahar*, cf. vs. 13) evil not just from Israel but from her *qerev* (cf. vs. 10) or very center. Such is the lesson intended for everyone, to hear and to fear, *shamah* and *yare'*, 18.19 and 14.24 respectively. Chapter Nineteen concludes with the ruthless balance of eye for eye, etc., to be carried out without any demonstration of pity, *chus*. Such draconian measures are put in place deliberately because Israel is engaged in a struggle for survival as she attempts to settle and reclaim her ancient heritage of the land of Canaan.

Numbers = Verses

karath: 1, yarash: 1, yashav: 1, badal: 2, ratsach: 3, dahath: 4, radaph: 6, ga'al: 6, levav: 6, nephesh: 6, mishpat: 6, gevul: 8, shamar: 9, mitsvah: 9, 'ahav: 9, nachalah: 10, qerev: 10, sane': 11, 'arav: 11, qum: 11, ga'al: 12, chus: 13, bahar: 13, gevul: 14, ri'shon: 14, hed: 15, qum: 15, darash: 18, yatav: 18, bahar: 19, qerev: 19, shamah: 20, yare': 20, chus: 21.