

## Chapter Twenty

1) "When you go forth to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army larger than your own, you shall not be afraid of them; for the Lord your God is with you who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. 2) And when you draw near to the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people 3) and shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel, you draw near this day to battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint; do not fear or tremble or be in dread of them; 4) for the Lord your God is he that goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.' 5) Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying, 'What man is there that has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go back to his house lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. 6) And what man is there that has planted a vineyard and has not enjoyed its fruit? Let him go back to his house lest he die in the battle and another man enjoy its fruit. 7) And what man is there that has betrothed a wife and has not taken her? Let him go back to his house lest he die in the battle and another man take her.' 8) And the officers shall speak further to the people and say, 'What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go back to his house lest the heart of his fellows melt as his heart.' 9) And when the officers have made an end of speaking to the people, then commanders shall be appointed at the head of the people. 10) "When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. 11) And if its answer to you is peace and it opens to you, then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labor for you and shall serve you. 12) But if it makes no peace with you but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; 13) and when the Lord your God gives it into your hand you shall put all its males to the sword, 14) but the women and the little ones, the cattle and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourselves; and you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies which the Lord your God has given you. 15) Thus you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you which are not cities of the nations here. 16) But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes, 17) but you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as the Lord your God has commanded; 18) that they may not teach you to do according to all their abominable practices which they have done in the service of their gods and so to sin against the Lord your God. 19) When you besiege a city for a long time making war against it in order to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an axe against them; for you may eat of them, but you shall not cut them down. Are the trees in the field men that they should be besieged by you? 20) Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down that you may build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you until it falls.

Chapter Twenty gets down to the business everyone was anticipating, waging war literally "upon (*hal-*) your enemies," *hal-* suggestive of an especially aggressive stance need when Israel confronts such a formidable array comprised of chariots (etc.). As most would expect, the Lord says that he will be with Israel, reminding them that he had brought them from Egypt. Here this assumes special importance because at that time Israel had been pursued by chariots (cf. Ex 14.23), the most formidable type of weapon as well as at the present. Compared to that experience, the current one of dealing with Canaanite enemies should be of secondary concern. At least that's what the Lord wishes but for the Israelites implementing it is something else. And so everything said in this chapter pertaining to war is in a manner, formulaic and to be reproduced, if you will, on the occasion of a conflict. The constant reminder, drilling the fact that the Lord will rescue Israel from Egypt, is deliberate.

It serves to stress the importance of memory which, in turn, fortifies the people to act in a present crisis.

In absence of a yet to be determined single leader a priest is to exhort the people beginning with the words “Hear, O Israel” [vs.3] reminiscent of 6.4 when the Lord is proclaimed as one Lord. Their collective hearts (*levav*, cf. 9.6) aren’t to be faint, *rakak* fundamentally meaning to be tender. “Do not let your heart be faint because of these two smoldering stumps of firebrands” [Is 7.4]. Added to this is the exhortation not to fear, tremble or be in dread (*yare’*, *chaphaz* and *harats*, 19.20, 16.3 but not noted there and 7.21 respectively). The words “he that goes with you” as pertaining to the Lord differ slightly from vs. 2, “the Lord your God is with you” (i.e., he isn’t going with Israel). Vs. 4 has the priest saying that the Lord will give victory, *yashah* meaning to save or to rescue. “Though the betrothed young woman cried for help there was no one to rescue her” [22.27].

Next it’s time for the officers to speak, the participle *shatar* as in 16.18. Up to this point they were at the forefront of the assembled people listen to the priests. They sound a note of concern for a man who has both built a new house and dedicated it, *chanak* meaning to initiate in the sense of beginning to use. “So the king (Solomon) and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the Lord” [1Kg 8.63]. The same applies to anyone who has planted a vineyard as well as someone newly married. In vs. 8 the officers even make provision for someone who is fearful and faint of heart, *yare’* (cf. vs. 3) and *rak*, the latter also as tender and found next in 28.54: “The man who is the most tender and delicately bred among you will grudge food to his brother.” Obviously a broad range of people is taken into consideration. Some took advantage of the officers’ words, but given Israel’s precarious situation, most if not all were geared up for battle.

Once the officers had finished their exhortation, commanders were appointed to lead the people, the verb *paqad* with the noun *sar*, 5.9 and 1.15 respectively. Nothing is said as to how this was done but most likely both the priests and officers were involved.

Vs. 10 takes a different approach from what we get in Joshua, starting with the destruction of Jericho. That is to say, the Israelites are to offer terms of peace to a Canaanite city, *shalom* (cf. 2.6). The result is to enslave the inhabitants, *mas* also meaning tribute. While not quite the same as slavery, *mas* comes pretty close to it. “Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens” [Ex 1.11]. Chances are memory of this back in Egypt just prior to leaving there played a role in setting such a policy. Should a city not give into the Israelites, they are to kill the male inhabitants and take the women and children as booty, *shalal* being the verb (cf. 13.16 but not noted there). In addition to this, the Israelites are free to eat of this booty; the **RSV** has “enjoy” for this verb.

Perhaps the motive behind this relatively favorable treatment of Canaanite towns and inhabitants is that the Israelites can’t adopt a full scorched earth policy which would deprive them of resources. It would be worse than living off manna and quail as they had done for forty years in the Sinai wilderness, and who wants to go back to that. Now with vs. 15 onward the

apparent difference between what's recounted here and later in Joshua become clearer. The Israelites are to treat with relative mercy cities very far from them, *me'od* (cf. 9.20) being the adverb meaning places that are at the extreme ends of the Canaanite territory. In fact, these cities don't belong to the people with whom the Israelites are dealing with at the moment.

To date the Lord makes a distinction between cities that surrender and those which don't as well as places at a distance set aside as an inheritance or *nachalah* (cf. 19.10). Those places which Israel is to inherit are to meet with no mercy, this complying with the Book of Joshua. The draconian treatment is put in terms of not leaving alive anything with the breath of life, *neshamah* associated with panting. "He (Joshua) left none remaining but utterly destroyed all the breathed as the Lord God of Israel commanded" [Jos 10.40]. Six peoples are to be eliminated in contrast with these same peoples being driven out in 7.1.

Vs. 18 gets to the heart of this relatively short chapter, namely, that the peoples to be annihilated aren't to teach the Israelites their abominable practices. The verb *lamad* suggests here more than teaching...a following in the sense of becoming a disciple. *Tohevah* (cf. 18.12) is associated with idol worship and is the real goal of the scorched earth policy. Interestingly *tohevah* isn't found in the Book of Joshua where you'd think considerable reference would be made. It doesn't appear until 1Kg 14.24 in reference to King Rehoboam, Solomon's song: "They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the Lord drove out before the people of Israel."

#### Numbers = Verses

levav: 3, rakak: 3, harats: 3, yare': 3, chaphaz: 3, yashah: 4, yare': 8, rak: 8, paqad: 9, sar: 9, shalom: 10, mas: 11, me'od: 15, nachalah: 16, neshamah: 16, lamad: 18, tohevah: 18.

### Chapter Twenty-One

*A footnote in the RSV says of Chapters Twenty-One through most of Twenty-Three that this section consists of "miscellaneous laws." Such laws are extended through Chapter Twenty-Five which means that the notations pertinent here are sparser.*

1) "If in the land which the Lord your God gives you to possess any one is found slain, lying in the open country, and it is not known who killed him, 2) then your elders and your judges shall come forth, and they shall measure the distance to the cities which are around him that is slain; 3) and the elders of the city which is nearest to the slain man shall take a heifer which has never been worked and which has not pulled in the yoke. 4) And the elders of that city shall bring the heifer down to a valley with running water which is neither plowed nor sown and shall break the heifer's neck there in the valley. 5) And the priests the sons of Levi shall come forward, for the Lord your God has chosen them to minister to him and to bless in the name of the Lord, and by their word every dispute and every assault shall be settled. 6) And all the elders of that city nearest to the slain man shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley; 7) and

they shall testify, 'Our hands did not shed this blood, neither did our eyes see it shed. 8) Forgive, O Lord, your people Israel, whom you have redeemed and set not the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of your people Israel; but let the guilt of blood be forgiven them.' 9) So you shall purge the guilt of innocent blood from your midst when you do what is right in the sight of the Lord. 10) "When you go forth to war against your enemies, and the Lord your God gives them into your hands, and you take them captive 11) and see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you have desire for her and would take her for yourself as wife, 12) then you shall bring her home to your house, and she shall shave her head and pare her nails. 13) And she shall put off her captive's garb and shall remain in your house and bewail her father and her mother a full month; after that you may go in to her and be her husband, and she shall be your wife. 14) Then, if you have no delight in her, you shall let her go where she will; but you shall not sell her for money, you shall not treat her as a slave since you have humiliated her. 15) "If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other disliked, and they have borne him children, both the loved and the disliked, and if the first-born son is hers that is disliked, 16) then on the day when he assigns his possessions as an inheritance to his sons, he may not treat the son of the loved as the first-born in preference to the son of the disliked who is the first-born, 17) but he shall acknowledge the first-born, the son of the disliked, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the first issue of his strength; the right of the first-born is his. 18) "If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother and, though they chastise him, will not give heed to them, 19) then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city at the gate of the place where he lives, 20) and they shall say to the elders of his city, 'This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.' 21) Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall purge the evil from your midst; and all Israel shall hear and fear. 22) "And if a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, 23) his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is accursed by God; you shall not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.

This chapter begins with a close connection between the victim of an assailant and the land Israel is to possess (*yarash*, cf. 19.1) meaning that an elaborate form of expiation is required which involves the entire community. Nothing is said as to the motive which is secondary to case at hand, the welfare of Israel as a whole be paramount.

More specifically we have elders of the city from which the slain man hailed as well as priests. The overall idea is that violence against one individual is violence against the entire nation as well as the Lord. Great care is taken with respect to measuring distance from the body to the neighboring towns. Again, in the background is close connection between land and blood as with Cain's murder of his brother Abel: "The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground" [Gen 4.11]. This incident took place shortly after their father's expulsion from Eden, so the land at that time was more closely related to that sacred space than later on though the connection between the two is always present.

An offering of a heifer is required, that is, by breaking its neck. Note that the heifer isn't sacrificed which means the shedding of blood which would end up on as well as in the ground.

Vs. 5 speaks of the Levitical priests who play a critical role in determining the outcome of any dispute and assault, murder obviously included. While important, their primary role is to bless in the Lord's name after which comes this role of judging. Without this taking precedence, any judicial function is bound to be weakened. *Ryv* and *negah* are the nouns for dispute and assault, 1.12 and 17.8 respectively. As for those living near the slain man's city, the elders will wash their hands over the heifer which is mentioned in vs. 4. This is performed in order to prove their innocence or more accurately, that they don't know the murderer. Anyone who failed to do this without giving his reason would fall under suspicion, possibly as an accomplice.

Vs. 8 continues the corporate theme, if you will, of the entire nation of Israel requiring forgiveness. Tied in with the murder of one person is the redemption of the people, *kaphar* essentially meaning to cover over. "Deliver us and forgive our sins for your name's sake" [Ps 70.7]! Every step is to be taken in order to remove innocent blood which had been shed be set in the midst of Israel, *qerev* meaning its very center (cf. 19.10). As noted several times earlier, this is reminiscent of Cain who committed the first murder. Since the slaying at hand takes place in Canaan, the last thing Israel needs is to wander about it as Cain had done. And so the nation requires purging of guilt, *bahar* (cf. 19.19) from its center or *qerev*.

Vss. 10-14 deal with the humane treatment of a beautiful woman captured in war and who may be taken as a wife. While this is admirable, it runs the risk of introducing elements of Canaanite worship of their divinities into Israel. A quote pertaining to King Solomon quoted in Chapter Seventeen bears this out and which unfortunately will become a general theme running throughout the Book of Joshua: "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].

Vss. 15-17 pertain to a man with two wives, one liked and the other not, the verbal roots being *'ahav* and *sane'* (loved and hated, 19.9 and 19.11 respectively) which is reminiscent of Abram's two wives, Sarai and Hagar who may represent the *'ahav* and *sane'* at hand (cf. Chapter 16 of Genesis). There also comes to mind Isaac and Esau with regard to the this pair of opposites. However, vs. 17 of Deuteronomy says that the first born will receive what's right regardless of his character, that the father will acknowledge this, *nakar* (cf. 16.19) meaning to show no partiality, not an easy thing to do in light of the Isaac/Esau saga so embedded in Israel's religious heritage. Not only that, this disliked son will receive a double portion or double inheritance. While it's not recorded, this indeed sets up a strife within a given family that will have repercussions well beyond it and thus affect the nation of Israel as a whole.

Vss. 18-21 continue one tangent of the just mentioned theme, that is, how to handle a son who is stubborn and rebellious, *sarar* and *marah* (cf. 9.24), the former occurring next in vs. 29. "Let not the rebellious exalt themselves" [Ps 66.7]. Characteristic of this son is his inability to heed his parents, *shamah* (cf. 19.20) being equivalent to obeying them, something Israel would be guilty of in the future. If both parents can't discipline their son,

they are to bring him to the city elders, and if they fail, the drastic measure of stoning him comes next. This is a second instance of purging or *bahar* with respect to the very center or *qerev* of Israel (cf. vs. 9). Vs. 21 concludes this familial incident of disobedience with the words "and all Israel shall hear and fear," that is, they all will engage in *shamah*.

The last few verses of Chapter Twenty-One concern the execution of a person. That is, to say, the body can't be left exposed on a tree throughout the night which would result in defiling the land, another incident which evokes the Cain and Abel story quoted earlier. More specifically, leaving the body exposed all night would remove Israel's inheritance or *nachalah* (cf.. 20.16).

#### Numbers = Verses

yarash: 1, ryv: 5, negah: 5, kaphar: 8, qerev: 8, bahar: 9, qerev: 9, 'ahav: 15, sane': 15, nakar: 17, sarar: 18, marah: 18, shamah: 18, bahar: 18, qerev: 18, shamah: 21, nachalah: 23.

### Chapter Twenty-Two

1) "You shall not see your brother's ox or his sheep go astray and withhold your help from them; you shall take them back to your brother. 2) And if he is not near you or if you do not know him, you shall bring it home to your house, and it shall be with you until your brother seeks it; then you shall restore it to him. 3) And so you shall do with his ass; so you shall do with his garment; so you shall do with any lost thing of your brother's which he loses and you find; you may not withhold your help. 4) You shall not see your brother's ass or his ox fallen down by the way and withhold your help from them; you shall help him to lift them up again. 5) "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man nor shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord your God. 6) "If you chance to come upon a bird's nest in any tree or on the ground with young ones or eggs and the mother sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, you shall not take the mother with the young; 7) you shall let the mother go, but the young you may take to yourself; that it may go well with you, and that you may live long. 8) "When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof that you may not bring the guilt of blood upon your house if any one fall from it. 9) "You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds of seed, lest the whole yield be forfeited to the sanctuary, the crop which you have sown and the yield of the vineyard. 10) You shall not plow with an ox and an ass together. 11) You shall not wear a mingled stuff, wool and linen together. 12) "You shall make yourself tassels on the four corners of your cloak with which you cover yourself. 13) "If any man takes a wife and goes in to her and then spurns her, 14) and charges her with shameful conduct and brings an evil name upon her saying, 'I took this woman, and when I came near her, I did not find in her the tokens of virginity,' 15) then the father of the young woman and her mother shall take and bring out the tokens of her virginity to the elders of the city in the gate; 16) and the father of the young woman shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man to wife, and he spurns her; 17) and lo, he has made shameful charges against her, saying, "I did not find in your daughter the tokens of virginity." And yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the garment before the elders of the city. 18) Then the elders of that city shall take the man and whip him; 19) and they shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman because he has brought



an evil name upon a virgin of Israel; and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days. 20) But if the thing is true, that the tokens of virginity were not found in the young woman, 21) then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones because she has wrought folly in Israel by playing the harlot in her father's house; so you shall purge the evil from the midst of you. 22) "If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman and the woman; so you shall purge the evil from Israel. 23) "If there is a betrothed virgin, and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, 24) then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry for help though she was in the city and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife; so you shall purge the evil from the midst of you. 25) "But if in the open country a man meets a young woman who is betrothed, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. 26) But to the young woman you shall do nothing; in the young woman there is no offense punishable by death, for this case is like that of a man attacking and murdering his neighbor; 27) because he came upon her in the open country, and though the betrothed young woman cried for help there was no one to rescue her. 28) "If a man meets a virgin who is not betrothed and seizes her and lies with her, and they are found, 29) then the man who lay with her shall give to the father of the young woman fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has violated her; he may not put her away all his days. 30) "A man shall not take his father's wife nor shall he uncover her who is his father's.

Chapters Twenty-Two through Twenty-Five contain a barrage of laws which may be outlined as follows, coming to a total of sixteen in this chapter:

- 1) Stray ox or sheep gone astray and literally not to hide oneself from them, *halam* also meaning to cover over and found in vs. 3.
- 2) The same courtesy pertains to an ass, garment or anything lost. Here as in the previous verse "brother" is noted to show the close connection between all members of Israel. As in vs. 1, *halam* is found here as well.
- 3) One is permitted to take the young birds of a mother but not the mother. This apparently small gesture will allow things to go well with the person involved. In other words, it will have larger ramifications.
- 4) No parapet is allowed in constructing one's house in case someone falls from there.
- 5) No sowing of two kinds seed is permitted in one's vineyard so as to violate the different types of yield from there.
- 6) An ox and ass cannot draw a plow together.
- 7) One can't wear clothes made of both wool and line.
- 8) One can't make tassels on the four corners of your cloak.
- 9) If a man marries a woman who turns out not to be a virgin, her parents are to bring the matter to the elders.
- 10) The elders have the right to whip the man who makes such a claim.
- 11) If the woman proves to be wrong, the elders shall hand her over to be stoned.
- 12) Both a man and woman caught lying together shall die.
- 13) If a betrothed virgin and man lay together, both are to be stoned.

14) If a man in the open country (as opposed to a city) meets a woman who is betrothed and lays with her, only he is to be stoned.

15) If a man meets a virgin who isn't betrothed and lays with her against her will, the man will pay her father a fine yet both can be married. Also the man can't dismiss his wife.

16) No one can take his father's wife nor uncover his father's skirt (literally).

Numbers = Verses

halam: 1, halam: 4.

## Chapter Twenty-Three

1) "He whose testicles are crushed or whose male member is cut off shall not enter the assembly of the Lord. 2) "No bastard shall enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none of his descendants shall enter the assembly of the Lord. 3) "No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the assembly of the Lord; even to the tenth generation none belonging to them shall enter the assembly of the Lord forever; 4) because they did not meet you with bread and with water on the way, when you came forth out of Egypt, and because they hired against you Balaam the son of Beor from Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse you. 5) Nevertheless the Lord your God would not hearken to Balaam; but the Lord your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the Lord your God loved you. 6) You shall not seek their peace or their prosperity all your days forever. 7) "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not abhor an Egyptian because you were a sojourner in his land. 8) The children of the third generation that are born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord. 9) "When you go forth against your enemies and are in camp, then you shall keep yourself from every evil thing. 10) "If there is among you any man who is not clean by reason of what chances to him by night, then he shall go outside the camp, he shall not come within the camp; 11) but when evening comes on, he shall bathe himself in water, and when the sun is down, he may come within the camp. 12) "You shall have a place outside the camp and you shall go out to it; 13) and you shall have a stick with your weapons; and when you sit down outside, you shall dig a hole with it and turn back and cover up your excrement. 14) Because the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp to save you and to give up your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy, that he may not see anything indecent among you and turn away from you. 15) "You shall not give up to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you; 16) he shall dwell with you, in your midst, in the place which he shall choose within one of your towns where it pleases him best; you shall not oppress him. 17) "There shall be no cult prostitute of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a cult prostitute of the sons of Israel. 18) You shall not bring the hire of a harlot, or the wages of a dog into the house of the Lord your God in payment for any vow; for both of these are an abomination to the Lord your God. 19) "You shall not lend upon interest to your brother, interest on money, interest on victuals, interest on anything that is lent for interest. 20) To a foreigner you may lend upon interest, but to your brother you shall not lend upon interest; that the Lord your God may bless you in all that you undertake in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. 21) "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, you shall not be slack to pay it; for the Lord your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin in you. 22) But if you refrain from vowing, it shall be no sin in you. 23) You shall be careful to perform what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth. 24) "When you go into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes,



as many as you wish, but you shall not put any in your vessel. 25) When you go into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing grain.

Please note that 22.30 is 23.1 in the Hebrew text. The list of laws in this chapter are as follows, coming to a total of thirteen:

- 1) Damaged testicles will prevent a man from entering the Lord's assembly or *qahal* (cf. 18.16). *Qahal* is mentioned four times in this chapter: 1,2,3 and 8.
- 2) A bastard is prevented from entered the *qahal*, up to the tenth generation.
- 3) No Ammonite or Moabite shall enter the *qahal*, this being forever by reason of not belonging to the nation of Israel. Mention of Balaam is found in Chaps 21 and 22 of Numbers. Despite this, the Lord intervened, having turned a curse into a blessing, *qelalah* > *berakah* (cf. 11.26 for both). Divine love is responsible for effecting this, the verb *'ahav* being used (cf. 21.15).
- 4) One isn't to seek peace (*shalom*: cf. 20.10) or prosperity with both the Ammonites or Moabites.
- 5) One isn't to abhor a Moabite because he is a brother, *tahav* being the verb (cf. 7.26). However, it's permitted with regard to an Egyptian by reason of Israel having sojourned there, the noun *ger* (cf. 16.11) suggesting living as an alien and therefore essentially hostile. However, this isn't permanent, lasting up to the third generation. Chances for the leniency is that Egypt had hosted Israel for some four hundred years.
- 6) When engaged in a battle, the people are to remain from every evil.
- 7) A man who finds himself unclean or not *tahor* (cf. 12.15) during the night, will leave the camp and during evening will wash himself and return to the midst (*tok*, cf. 11.3) of the camp which, of course, is the nation of Israel. Mention of camp suggests Israel on the verge of entering Canaan where it will settle down permanently.
- 8) Because God walks in the camp's midst (*qerev*, cf. 21.18), not in its periphery, it must be holy or *qadosh* (cf. 14.2) meaning to be set apart. From this *qerev* the Lord must not see anything indecent among the people, *hervah* implying nakedness. "When a man takes a wife...he has found some indecency in her" [24.1]. This idea of the Lord walking *qerev* the camp is reminiscent of him...his voice...walking in the garden of Eden (cf. Gen 3.8).
- 9) A slave who had fled his master is to be received *qerev* the people and is free to chose a place to live on his own.
- 10) There's no place for cult prostitute or *qedeshah*, this word being related to *qadosh* or holy as in vs. 14, the idea being that such prostitutes are set apart for religious purposes. *Qedeshah* has four other biblical references, one of which is Gen 38.21: "Where is the harlot who was at Enaim by the wayside?"
- 11) Interest on money or anything that has been loaned is forbidden to one's brother but is acceptable in the case of a foreigner or *nakry* (cf. 17.15). The context is again put in terms of Israel on the verge of entering Canaan. Before this, however, the foreigner is put in a vulnerable situation so as to preclude him later of taking advantage once Israel is within Canaan.
- 12) Making a vow (*nadar*, cf. 12.11) requires diligence, not being slack or *'achar*, this

verb suggesting being behind in fulfilment or *shalam*, both verbs found in 7.10. Nothing is said as to the nature of this vow although it could involve making votive offerings.

13) A person may eat produce from his neighbor's vineyard or standing grain but not harvest it.

#### Numbers = Verses

qahal (noun): 1, qahal (noun): 2, qahal (noun): 3, qelalah: 5, berakah: 5, 'ahav: 5, ger: 7, tahav: 7, ger: 8, qahal (noun): 8, tahor: 10, tok: 10, qerev: 14, qadosh: 14, hervah: 14, qerev: 15, qedeshah: 17, nakry: 20, nadar: 21, 'achar: 21 shalam: 21.

### Chapter Twenty-Four

1) "When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, 2) and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, 3) and the latter husband dislikes her and writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her to be his wife, 4) then her former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring guilt upon the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance. 5) "When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, to be happy with his wife whom he has taken. 6) "No man shall take a mill or an upper millstone in pledge; for he would be taking a life in pledge. 7) "If a man is found stealing one of his brethren, the people of Israel, and if he treats him as a slave or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from the midst of you. 8) "Take heed in an attack of leprosy to be very careful to do according to all that the Levitical priests shall direct you; as I commanded them so you shall be careful to do. 9) Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam on the way as you came forth out of Egypt. 10) "When you make your neighbor a loan of any sort, you shall not go into his house to fetch his pledge. 11) You shall stand outside, and the man to whom you make the loan shall bring the pledge out to you. 12) And if he is a poor man, you shall not sleep in his pledge; 13) when the sun goes down, you shall restore to him the pledge that he may sleep in his cloak and bless you; and it shall be righteousness to you before the Lord your God. 14) "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy whether he is one of your brethren or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns; 15) you shall give him his hire on the day he earns it before the sun goes down (for he is poor, and sets his heart upon it); lest he cry against you to the Lord, and it be sin in you. 16) "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children nor shall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man shall be put to death for his own sin. 17) "You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless or take a widow's garment in pledge; 18) but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. 19) "When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow; that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20) When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow. 21) When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean

it afterward; it shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow. 22) You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.

The list of laws and commands continues in this chapter as follows, coming to a total of ten:

1) The issue of indecency or *hervah davar* in a new wife, the former being found in 23.14 but here with *davar* as a thing or matter which contrasts with not finding favor or *chen*, the first appearance of this word being in Gen 6.8: “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.” There’s the issue of an abomination or *tohevah* (cf. 20.18), that is, the dismissal of a wife after she has been defiled, this involving her former husband. The important matter regarding marital issues is not to bring guilt upon the land, *chata’* (cf. 9.16) being the verb usually associated with sin. The land, of course, is Canaan which is Israel’s inheritance or *nachalah* (cf. 21.23). And so issues of marriage are related closely to Israel’s “marriage” to its inheritance or more accurately, its re-inheritance or re-possession.

2) A newly married man cannot join the army for a year; the same applies to involvement in a business or *davar*. Something similar is said in 20.7.

3) Taking a mill or upper millstone in pledge is forbidden, *chaval* being a verb which suggests being bound by something. It’s found next in vs. 17.

4) Stealing a fellow Israelite is forbidden and punishable by death which purges (*bahar*; cf. 21.18) evil from the nation’s midst or *qerev* (cf. 23.15).

5) The necessity to follow directives by the Levitical priests when it comes to leprosy. The example of Moses’ sister Miram is given who “spoke (along with Aaron) against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married” [Num 12.1].

6) When making a loan to a neighbor, one shouldn’t enter his house to get a pledge. With regard to someone who is poor, his pledge is to be restored by sunset, this being an example of righteousness or *tsedaqah* (cf. 6.25).

7) No oppression of a hired servant is allowed whether an Israelite or a sojourner among Israelites. If this happens and he cries out to the Lord, it will be sin upon the person doing it, *cheta’* (cf. 23.22 but not noted there).

8) Every man will be put to death for his personal sin or *cheta’*.

9) No perversion (the verb *chata’*, cf. vs. 4) of justice to the sojourner, fatherless nor to take a widow’s garment in pledge. Remembrance of having been a slave in Egypt will prevent this. This is noted several times throughout Deuteronomy, reminding Israel that she is more a less a freed or redeemed slave.

10) Any sheaf left in a field at harvest is to be left there for the sojourner, fatherless and widow. The same applies with regard to olive trees and a vineyard. Chapter Twenty-Four ends with a second reminder of Israel having been a slave in Egypt.

#### Numbers =Verses

*hervah*: 1, *chen*: 1, *tohevah*: 4, *chata’*: 4, *nachalah*: 4, *chaval*: 6, *bahar*: 7, *qerev*: 7, *tsedaqah*: 13, *cheta’*: 15, *cheta’*: 16, *chata’*: 17.

## Chapter Twenty-Five

1) "If there is a dispute between men, and they come into court, and the judges decide between them, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty, 2) then if the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence with a number of stripes in proportion to his offense. 3) Forty stripes may be given him but not more; lest, if one should go on to beat him with more stripes than these, your brother be degraded in your sight. 4) "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain. 5) "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead shall not be married outside the family to a stranger; her husband's brother shall go in to her, and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. 6) And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his brother who is dead that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. 7) And if the man does not wish to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to perpetuate his brother's name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband's brother to me.' 8) Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him: and if he persists, saying, 'I do not wish to take her;' 9) then his brother's wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot, and spit in his face; and she shall answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother's house.' 10) And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, The house of him that had his sandal pulled off. 11) "When men fight with one another, and the wife of the one draws near to rescue her husband from the hand of him who is beating him, and puts out her hand and seizes him by the private parts, 12) then you shall cut off her hand; your eye shall have no pity. 13) "You shall not have in your bag two kinds of weights, a large and a small. 14) You shall not have in your house two kinds of measures, a large and a small. 15) A full and just weight you shall have, a full and just measure you shall have; that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you. 16) For all who do such things, all who act dishonestly, are an abomination to the Lord your God. 17) "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt, 18) how he attacked you on the way, when you were faint and weary and cut off at your rear all who lagged behind you; and he did not fear God. 19) Therefore when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies round about, in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget.

This is the final list of assorted laws, etc., outlined and which begins with Chapter Twenty-Two. Here the total comes to six:

1) A man found guilty after a trial is subject to be beaten according to the number of his offenses which amounts to forty stripes. If he receives more, the person responsible will be despised in the sight of everyone, the verb being *qalah* meaning to despise or to be a light thing. "Cursed be he who dishonors his father or his mother" [27.16].

2) An ox cannot be muzzled while treading grain.

3) If one of two brothers dies (they living together), the widow will be the wife of the other brother. That is to say, no marriage is permitted outside the family as to a stranger, *zur* also meaning an enemy and is a participle as in 32.16: "They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods."

4) The first son born of this woman will take the dead man's name so as to perpetuate his name in Israel, this being important in the newly acquired (re-acquired) land

of Canaan.

5) If the brother of the deceased mentioned in #1 refuses to take the woman in question, the case will be brought before the elders at the city gate meaning it will be decided in full view of the entire population. If he persists, the widow has the right to spit in his face, pull off his sandal and call his house according to this incident. A parallel incident may be found in Chapter Four of Ruth, for example, vs. 7: "Now this was the custom in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one drew off his sandal and gave it to the other, and this was the manner of attesting in Israel."

5) If a wife intervenes to break up a fight where her husband is involved and grabs his opponent by the genitalis, her hand shall be cut off. I.e., no pity will be shown to her, *chus* (cf. 19.21).

5) Two kinds of weights (large and small) are forbidden. This is in the context of having one's life prolonged in the land the Lord is about to give Israel. The idea seems to be the prevention of any unjust transaction before entering Canaan and thus to forestall corruption there. Such action is considered an abomination or *tohevah* (cf. 24.4).

6) Israel is to keep in mind the incident when Amalek assaulted Israel as recounted in Ex 17.8-15 and is to eliminate any remembrance of him, *machah* (cf. 9.14). The basic reason for this is that Amalek did not fear God. And so Chapter Twenty-Five concludes with the warning not to forget.

Numbers = Verses

qalah: 3, zur: 5, chus: 12, tohevah: 16, machah: 19.

## Chapter Twenty-Six

1) "When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it, 2) you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground which you harvest from your land that the Lord your God gives you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place which the Lord your God will choose to make his name to dwell there. 3) And you shall go to the priest who is in office at that time and say to him, 'I declare this day to the Lord your God that I have come into the land which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.' 4) Then the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God. 5) "And you shall make response before the Lord your God, 'A wandering Aramean was my father; and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty and populous. 6) And the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us and laid upon us hard bondage. 7) Then we cried to the Lord the God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil and our oppression; 8) and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; 9) and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. 10) And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O Lord, have given me.' And you shall set it down before the Lord your God and worship before the Lord your God; 11) and you shall rejoice in all the good which the Lord your God has given to you and to your

house, you and the Levite and the sojourner who is among you. 12) "When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within your towns and be filled, 13) then you shall say before the Lord your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow according to all your commandment which you have commanded me; I have not transgressed any of your commandments, neither have I forgotten them; 14) I have not eaten of the tithe while I was mourning or removed any of it while I was unclean or offered any of it to the dead; I have obeyed the voice of the Lord my God, I have done according to all that you have commanded me. 15) Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground which you have given us, as you swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey.' 16) "This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances; you shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. 17) You have declared this day concerning the Lord that he is your God, and that you will walk in his ways and keep his statutes and his commandments and his ordinances and will obey his voice; 18) and the Lord has declared this day concerning you that you are a people for his own possession as he has promised you, and that you are to keep all his commandments 19) that he will set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honor, and that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God as he has spoken."

This new chapter begins with the familiar refrain of Israel entering the land of its inheritance (*nachalah*, cf. 24.4) or as noted several times thus far, its re-inheritance or even better, possession of its original inheritance. *Yarash* as to take possession similarly means to inherit (cf. 21.1). Even the verb *yashav* (cf. 19.1) for "live" is similar to *nachalah* and *yarash*, meaning to sit down in the permanent sense.

Once settled in Canaan, the Israelites are to take the first or *re'shyth* (cf. 18.4) from every crop and plant of the land which starts with Cain who in a short time will kill his brother: "In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of fruit of the ground" [Gen 4.3]. Vs. 1 speaks of land or *'erts* whereas vs. 2 had *'adamah* for ground; the former can apply to a nation whereas the latter pertains more to the physical earth. In other words, *'adamah* is found within *'erets*, not the other way around.

The *re'shyth* just mentioned is to be put into a basket or *tene'* after which it will be brought to the place or *maqom* (cf. 18.6) which the Lord will point out. That is to say, just one basket, this word having three other references, all of which are in Deuteronomy, the next being in vs. 4. The idea is that a person is to fill this basket (the size isn't given but presumably quite large requiring more than one to carry). All the while the Lord is looking on after which he makes known the *maqom* which will come to light once the basket is filled and done with the right intent. One hint, however: the *maqom* is where the Lord will make his name dwell, three words sounding the same: *shakan*, *shem* and *sham*. So if the divine name is involved, that most likely means a temple which is a lead into vs. 3.

The *maqom* above turns out to be a temple though that's not specified, a priest being the one who will receive the basket in vs. 3 after which he will set it down before the altar,



*nuach* (cf. 12.10) being the verb which implies coming to rest. Such *nuach* corresponds with the *shakan* of vs. 2 where the divine name is to rest. As for the priest, the person with his *re'shyth* is to say that he has come to the land sworn by the Lord. Here the identity between one person with the offering and the nation of Israel merger if not physically then in a more important collective fashion. Also the *re'shyth* is from land, the *'erets* of Canaan itself. And so this emphasis upon a place, settling and resting can apply to Israel finally living permanently in the land of their inheritance.

In vs. 5 after this coming to rest, if you will, the person who brought the *re'shyth* is to make a proclamation meaning it is formulaic by nature and made before an assembly of sorts, this continuing through most of vs. 10. The proclamation starts off in a somewhat self-deprecatory fashion, that is, recalling Jacob who wandered throughout Canaan before going to Egypt at his son Joseph's invitation. The verb for wandering is *'avad* which actually means to perish, so the text reads literally "an Aramean who is perishing"...perishing in his frustration of not being able to settle down permanently and in his old age, moving to Egypt. In many ways Jacob was perishing upon hearing of Joseph's demise, thinking all t he while that he was dead. As for *'avad*, cf. 32.28: "For they are a nation void of counsel."

Vs. 6 says that the not-mentioned Jacob sojourned in Egypt; nothing being said of his twelve sons, the verb *gur* (cf. 1.16) which implies being a stranger which he and his family will remain no matter how long the time span in that land turns out to be. Given the area-wide famine at the time, the prospect was attractive, Jacob being aware of it before he knew about Joseph. Besides, Jacob figured why not go to Egypt? It was pretty much equivalent to a matter of survival, the future of Israel for all intensive purposes being put on hold. While in that second foreign land—the first being Canaan which was such to Jacob because of his wanderings there making it just as foreign to him—the people prospered for four hundred years though this time span isn't specified. As for the harsh treatment in vs. 6, virtually a condition of slavery, it seemed to result from the unnamed pharaoh from whose bondage Moses led out Israel. Thus the suffering seems to be confined to the last stages of Israel's sojourn in Egypt. If things were that bad, the Israelites would have dispersed elsewhere on their own.

Paralleling the account in the Book of Exodus, the profession of faith, if you will, continues by saying that the Lord heard Israel's voice after which he saw her dire situation put in terms of affliction, toil and oppression (*hony*, *hamal* and *lachats*). The first is found last in 16.3. For the second, cf. Gen 41.51: "For God has made me forget all my hardship and all my father's house." For the third, cf. Ex 3.9: "I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress them." Countering these we have in vs. 7 and into vs. 8 the next the Lord's mighty hand, outstretched arm, great terror, signs and wonders or *mora'*, *'oth* and *mopheth* (11.25, 13.1 and 13.1 respectively).

Vs. 9 makes a distinction between place and land, *maqom* (cf. vs. 2) and *'erets* (cf. vs. 3), the two being pretty much identical although the former can apply to the unnamed temple or place of sacrifice at hand. As for *'erets*, it flows with milk and honey first described by the

Lord himself in Ex 3.8 just before he revealed himself to Moses. As for these two forms of nourishment, they stand in contrast to the quails and manna during forty years of wandering in the Sinai wilderness.

The formulaic or liturgical proclamation concludes in vs. 10 with the individual Israelite saying publically that he is about to lay before the altar the gift of *re'shyth* (cf. vs. 2) or first fruits. Since this intimates the beginning of harvest, there must be plenty of people, if not the entire nation, coming to the temple to perform the required rites. In fact, they may be doing it in groups to move the process along. This gesture concludes with an act of worship which isn't specified followed by rejoicing or *samach* ( cf. 16.15) in the bounty they had harvested. It includes two parts of Israel's society singled out by reason of having no share in the land, that is, the Levite and sojourner (*ger*, cf. 23.8). The former class is much better off by reason of being central to the performance of liturgical rites whereas the latter is pretty much a step above being an indentured servant.

Part two, as it were, of the liturgical rite just outlined continues, perhaps in a different part of the temple or outside it. What's said next depends upon having paid of tithes or *mahaser* found in 14.28 but not mentioned there. It's to be given to four types of people characterized by a certain alienation from Israelite society, that is, by not sharing directly in its inheritance of the land: Levite, sojourner, fatherless and widow. While the second two find their situation the result of natural circumstances, the first two are not. However, all four essentially are the same before the Lord which seems to be the basis of forming a unique bond or fellowship.

Vss. 13-15 form the second part of the liturgical rite or public ceremony beginning with a statement that the Israelite has removed the sacred portion from his house, *qodesh* (cf. 12.26 but not noted there) apparently being temporary storage of the *re'shyth* of first fruit offering. So once this is brought to the temple, some or most of it is given to the four categories of people mentioned in vs. 12 or to those who might be described as outcasts or bordering upon it. The Israelite proclaiming this publically says that he hasn't eaten such *qodesh* with special emphasis that he hasn't been used it as a funerary offering, the exact opposite of what *re'shyth* means, the beginning and not end of life. Having this *qodesh* within one's house must have been a constant temptation not just for the person bringing it to the temple but for his family members. If someone took it, a penalty must have been imposed although it isn't specified. Perhaps banishing the guilty person from the household would be in order which would reduce him to an outcast.

The so-called second part of the ritual proclamation concludes with a blessing by the person involved, that is, before the entire congregation. If there is a group of such people (and most likely such was the case), it would be as a representative from his own village, etc. The suppliant asks the Lord to look down upon his people followed immediately by the ground or *'adamah*, source of the *re'shyth* just presented. The verb *shaqaph* intimates almost a casual looking out or down from a window as in 2Sam 6.16: "As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King

David leaping and dancing before the Lord.”

The remaining verses (16-19) of Chapter Twenty-Six may be taken as ritual response to what had just been described, the offering of *re'shyth* being put in terms of statutes and ordinances or *choq* and *mishpat*, both together in 12.1. They are to be kept (*shamar*) with one's entire heart and soul or *levav* and *nephesh* (cf. 19.6 for both), these being prefaced with the preposition *b-*, literally as “in heart” and “in soul.” This inward keeping or *shamar* is countered by an outward remembrance the suppliant has declared publically that the Lord is his God or more accurately, that he does it “this day” which is special from all others. A promise for the future is involved with the suppliant promising to obey the Lord's voice rendered as listen or *shamah* (cf. 21.21; it rhymes with *shamar*) “in his voice” or *qol* (cf. 15.5).

Vs. 18 mentions again “this day” where the Lord makes good his promises toward the suppliant, thereby cementing the relationship between the two as well as the land as inheritance. The promise consists of two parts, the first pertaining not just to the person at hand but to the people as whole, he and the nation being considered as one. That is to say, he/Israel is the Lord's own possession or *segulah* (cf. 14.2) which applies to property or wealth usually of a private nature. This is ratified by use of the verb *davar* (‘promised’) compared with the more general *amar* opening vs. 18 (‘declared’). Being *segulah* is dependent upon the second part of the promise, *shamar* (cf. vs. 16) or keeping the Lord's commandments.

As a result of the *shamar* in vs. 18, in vs. 19 the Lord will exalt Israel above all other nations in praise, fame and honor or *tehilah*, *shem* (more fundamentally as name) and *tiph'arah*. The first two are found in 10.21 and 26.2 respectively whereas the third is the only occasion in Deuteronomy and means an ornament with which to be adorned. “And I put a ring on your nose and earrings in your ears and a beautiful crown upon your head” [Ezk 16.12]. The end result is to be a people holy or *qadosh* ( cf. 23.14) to (*l-*) the Lord.

#### Numbers = Verses

nachalah: 1, 'erets: 1, yarash: 1, yashav: re'shyth: 2, maqom: 2, tene': 2, shakan: 2, 'erets: 3, nuach: 4, 'avad: 5, gur: 5, mora': 8, 'oth: 8, mopheth: 8, maqom: 9, 'erets: 9, re'shyth: 10, samach: 11, ger: 11, mahaser: 12, qodesh: 13, shaqaph: 15, shamar: 16, choq: 16, mishpat: 16, levav: 16, nephesh: 16, shamah: 17, qol: 17, segulah: 18, shamar: 18, tehilah: 19, shem: 19, tiph'arah: 19, qadosh: 19.

### Chapter Twenty-Seven

1) Now Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, "Keep all the commandment which I command you this day. 2) And on the day you pass over the Jordan to the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall set up large stone and plaster them with plaster; 3) and you shall write upon them all the words of this law when you pass over to enter the land which the

Lord your God gives you, a land flowing with milk and honey as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you. 4) And when you have passed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones concerning which I command you this day on Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster. 5) And there you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones; you shall lift up no iron tool upon them. 6) You shall build an altar to the Lord your God of unhewn stones; and you shall offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God; 7) and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God. 8) And you shall write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly." 9) And Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, "Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the Lord your God. 10) You shall therefore obey the voice of the Lord your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day." 11) And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, 12) "When you have passed over the Jordan, these shall stand upon Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. 13) And these shall stand upon Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali. 14) And the Levites shall declare to all the men of Israel with a loud voice: 15) "'Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten image, an abomination to the Lord, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman and sets it up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.' 16) "'Cursed be he who dishonors his father or his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 17) "'Cursed be he who removes his neighbor's landmark.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 18) "'Cursed be he who misleads a blind man on the road.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 19) "'Cursed be he who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 20) "'Cursed be he who lies with his father's wife because he has uncovered her who is his father's.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 21) "'Cursed be he who lies with any kind of beast.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 22) "'Cursed be he who lies with his sister whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 23) "'Cursed be he who lies with his mother-in-law.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 24) "'Cursed be he who slays his neighbor in secret.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 25) "'Cursed be he who takes a bribe to slay an innocent person.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' 26) "'Cursed be he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'

A footnote in the **RSV** says that "this chapter stands independently and interrupts Moses' address (chapters 5-26 and chapter 28)." Such is why the conjunctive *v-* as "now" is significant. It brings to a close a lengthy list of laws, regulations etc., governing life for the Israelites. Moses speaks more directly, that is, commands -> keep (*yatsa'* -> *shamar*, 3.28, 26.18 respectively) the commandments (*mitsvah*, cf. 19,9). *Yatsa'* is used a second time with respect to "this day," not some other time in the future, a *kairos*-like event which doesn't depend upon the amount of commandments given nor the time frame involved.

It's natural to draw parallels with this chapter and the passage across the Jordan recounted in Joshua. Any similarities or differences are omitted here in preference to considering the text at hand.

As for the phrase "this day," a variation appears in vs. 2 as "the day" with respect to crossing the Jordan. At this juncture the people didn't have direct knowledge that Moses would not be leading them, but could somehow feel it, that his end was near. This feel for each other shows the intimacy between him and the people that had developed over forty years of

wandering in the Sinai wilderness. Moses bids the people to set up large stones and plaster them, *syd* as to cover with lime. In addition to vs. 2, *syd* has two other biblical references, Is 33.12 and Am 2.1, the former being cited here: "And the peoples will be as if burned to lime." In other words, such stones will stand out in the desert sunlight, even at night by the moon and stars, by reason of their brightness.

In vs. 3 all the words of the law...the *davar* of the *torah*...are to be inscribed upon the plastered stones. There must have been quite a few of these stones arranged in some pattern so as one could start with the first and make way to the last, following each *davar* of the *torah*. Such *davar* are to comprise the new way to the tree of life blocked by the angel with the flaming sword which turned every which-way (cf. Gen 3.24). This new way in is to be characterized by flowing with milk and honey (cf. 6.3).

Once Israel has passed over the Jordan as one man, the people are to erect the plastered stones, another reference to "on this day" which in vs. 4 pertains to Mount Ebal or Mount Gerizim which overlooks Shechem. Compare with 11.29: "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." As for Ebal, an altar of stones is to be erected there untouched by iron tools. That is to say, the stones are not to be hewn as noted in vs. 6 which literally read "whole stones," *shalem* being the adjective (cf. 25.15 but not noted there). Upon them two types of offerings are to be made: burned or *holah* (cf. 21.5 but not noted there) and those of peace or *shelem* which, like *shalem*, derives from the verbal root *shalom* and is the only use of this term in Deuteronomy. "These you shall offer to the Lord at your appointed feasts...and your peace offerings" [Num 29.39].

Once the two types of offerings are made, the people are to eat the food sacrificed there, not anywhere else. This area must be fairly circumscribed so as to create a unity between the sacrifices and people before spreading out further into the land of Canaan. A sign of solidarity is that the people are to rejoice or *samach* (cf. 26.11) in that confined space. Vs. 8 follows directly after this (the conjunctive *v-* as 'and') with the people writing the *davar* of the *torah*, something bidden to do in vs. 3 and here as "very plainly" which is rendered by two verbs, *ba'ar* and *yataw* (cf. 19.18). The first verb has two other biblical references, 1.5 and Hab 2.2, the former not being noted but the latter cited here: "Write the vision; make it plain upon tablets so he may run who reads it."

Vs. 9 has the Levites joining in with Moses, perhaps after they officiated with the offerings just mentioned and bid Israel...the entire nation...to keep quiet and listen. The first verb is *sakath*, the only reference in the Bible followed by *shamah* (cf. 26.17). The context is the fifth reference to "this (or 'the') day" in Chapter Twenty-Seven where the sacrifice of both burning and peace offerings have made Israel his own people. They had been such beforehand, of course, but the context of "this day," the sacrifice and Israel's entry into Canaan solidify it. Then in vs. 10 "this day" appears again as to Israel obeying the Lord's voice, of *shamah* his *qol* (vs. 9 and 26.10 respectively) which is prefaced with the preposition *b-*, "in his voice."



In vss. 11-12 Moses has six of Israel's tribes ('the same day') standing upon Mount Gerizim to bless (*barak*, cf. 12.7) the people, these being descended from Jacob both by Leah and Rachel (cf. Gen 35.23-24). This site became sacred to the Samaritans and is mentioned by the woman at the well speaking with Jesus: "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" [Jn 4.20]. Surely Jesus thought of this as he spoke with the woman, that he was there to bless her, not to curse her as with Ebal mentioned next.

On the other hand, in vs. 13 Moses has the other six tribes of Israel stand upon Mount Ebal for the curse or *qelalah* (cf. 23.5). Once this battle line, if you will, is drawn up, the Levites in vs. 14 begin to utter to the entire nation of Israel a whole series of curses running through the end of the chapter. These may be outlined as follows, each verse beginning with *'arar* which connotes detesting compared with holding in light esteem as with *qelalah*. Note that in response, liturgical-like, the people are to respond with "Amen:"

Vs. 15: graven image or molten image, *pesel* and *masekah* 7.25 and 9.16 respectively. Both are an abomination to the Lord, *tohevah* (cf. 25.16) and are fashioned by a craftsman or *charash* which often applies to an engraver or carpenter. "He has filled them with ability to do every sort of work done by an craftsman" [Ex 35.35]. The craftsman at hand is in collusion with the person asking for his work which is why the graven or molten image is set up in secret, *seter* (cf. 13.6).

Vs. 16: dishonoring one's parents, *qalah* (cf. 25.3) or treating them lightly.

Vs. 17: removing a neighbor's landmark or *gevul* (cf. 19.14), most likely a property boundary.

Vs. 18: misleading a blind man, *shagah* also as to wander and to deceive. "With him are strength and wisdom; the deceived and the deceiver are his" [Job 12.16].

Vs. 19: perverts justice, *natah* and *mishpat* as in 16.19.

Vs. 20: lies with the wife of one's mother because, as the text reads literally, "he has uncovered his father's skirt" or *kanaph* used as in 22.30.

Vs. 21: lies with a beast.

Vs. 22: lies with one's sister.

Vs. 23: lies with one's mother-in-law.

Vs. 24: kills one's neighbor in secret, *seter* (cf. vs. 15).

Vs. 25: takes a bribe (*shochad*, cf. 16.19) to kill someone who is innocent.

Vs. 26: doesn't confirm the law's words by carrying them out, *davar* and *torah* (cf. vs. 8).

#### Numbers = Verses

yatsa': 1, shamar: 1, mitsvah: 1, syd: 2, torah: 3, shalem: 6, holah: 6, shelem: 7, samach: 7, torah: 8, ba'ar: 8, yatah: 8, skath: 9, shamah: 9, shamah: 10, qol: 10, barak: 12, qelalah: 13, 'arar: 15, pesel: 15, masekah: 15, tohevah: 15, seter: 15, qalah: 16, gevul: 17, shagah: 18, natah: 19, mishpat: 19, kanaph: 20, seter: 24, shochad: 25, torah: 26.



## Chapter Twenty-Eight

1) "And if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments which I command you this day, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. 2) And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. 3) Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. 4) Blessed shall be the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground and the fruit of your beasts, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock. 5) Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading-trough. 6) Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. 7) "The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. 8) The Lord will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you undertake; and he will bless you in the land which the Lord your God gives you. 9) The Lord will establish you as a people holy to himself as he has sworn to you if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God and walk in his ways. 10) And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of you. 11) And the Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your body and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground within the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give you. 12) The Lord will open to you his good treasury the heavens to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. 13) And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; and you shall tend upward only and not downward; if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day, being careful to do them, 14) and if you do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them. 15) "But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. 16) Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. 17) Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading-trough. 18) Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock. 19) Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. 20) "The Lord will send upon you curses, confusion and frustration in all that you undertake to do until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your doings because you have forsaken me. 21) The Lord will make the pestilence cleave to you until he has consumed you off the land which you are entering to take possession of it. 22) The Lord will smite you with consumption and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat and with drought and with blasting and with mildew; they shall pursue you until you perish. 23) And the heavens over your head shall be brass, and the earth under you shall be iron. 24) The Lord will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down upon you until you are destroyed. 25) "The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them; and you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. 26) And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air, and for the beasts of the earth; and there shall be no one to frighten them away. 27) The Lord will smite you with the boils of Egypt and with the ulcers and the scurvy and the itch of which you cannot be healed. 28) The Lord will smite you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind; 29) and you shall grope at noonday as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways; and you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you. 30) You shall betroth a wife, and another man

shall lie with her; you shall build a house, and you shall not dwell in it; you shall plant a vineyard, and you shall not use the fruit of it. 31) Your ox shall be slain before your eyes, and you shall not eat of it; your ass shall be violently taken away before your face and shall not be restored to you; your sheep shall be given to your enemies, and there shall be no one to help you. 32) Your sons and your daughters shall be given to another people while your eyes look on and fail with longing for them all the day; and it shall not be in the power of your hand to prevent it. 33) A nation which you have not known shall eat up the fruit of your ground and of all your labors; and you shall be only oppressed and crushed continually; 34) so that you shall be driven mad by the sight which your eyes shall see. 35) The Lord will smite you on the knees and on the legs with grievous boils of which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head. 36) "The Lord will bring you and your king whom you set over you to a nation that neither you nor your fathers have known; and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone. 37) And you shall become a horror, a proverb and a byword among all the peoples where the Lord will lead you away. 38) You shall carry much seed into the field, and shall gather little in; for the locust shall consume it. 39) You shall plant vineyards and dress them, but you shall neither drink of the wine nor gather the grapes; for the worm shall eat them. 40) You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olives shall drop off. 41) You shall beget sons and daughters, but they shall not be yours; for they shall go into captivity. 42) All your trees and the fruit of your ground the locust shall possess. 43) The sojourner who is among you shall mount above you higher and higher; and you shall come down lower and lower. 44) He shall lend to you, and you shall not lend to him; he shall be the head, and you shall be the tail. 45) All these curses shall come upon you and pursue you and overtake you, till you are destroyed because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which he commanded you. 46) They shall be upon you as a sign and a wonder and upon your descendants forever. 47) "Because you did not serve the Lord your God with joyfulness and gladness of heart, by reason of the abundance of all things, 48) therefore you shall serve your enemies whom the Lord will send against you, in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and in want of all things; and he will put a yoke of iron upon your neck, until he has destroyed you. 49) The Lord will bring a nation against you from afar, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flies, a nation whose language you do not understand, 50) a nation of stern countenance who shall not regard the person of the old or show favor to the young 51) and shall eat the offspring of your cattle and the fruit of your ground until you are destroyed; who also shall not leave you grain, wine or oil, the increase of your cattle or the young of your flock until they have caused you to perish. 52) They shall besiege you in all your towns until your high and fortified walls in which you trusted come down throughout all your land; and they shall besiege you in all your towns throughout all your land which the Lord your God has given you. 53) And you shall eat the offspring of your own body, the flesh of your sons and daughters, whom the Lord your God has given you in the siege and in the distress with which your enemies shall distress you. 54) The man who is the most tender and delicately bred among you will grudge food to his brother, to the wife of his bosom and to the last of the children who remain to him; 55) so that he will not give to any of them any of the flesh of his children whom he is eating because he has nothing left him in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in all your towns. 56) The most tender and delicately bred woman among you who would not venture to set the sole of her foot upon the ground because she is so delicate and tender, will grudge to the husband of her bosom, to her son and to her daughter, 57) her afterbirth that comes out from between her feet and her children whom she bears because she will eat them secretly, for want of all things, in the siege and in the distress with which your enemy shall distress you in your towns. 58) "If you are not careful to do all the words of this law which are written in

this book that you may fear this glorious and awful name, the Lord your God, 59) then the Lord will bring on you and your offspring extraordinary afflictions, afflictions severe and lasting and sicknesses grievous and lasting. 60) And he will bring upon you again all the diseases of Egypt which you were afraid of; and they shall cleave to you. 61) Every sickness also and every affliction which is not recorded in the book of this law the Lord will bring upon you until you are destroyed. 62) Whereas you were as the stars of heaven for multitude, you shall be left few in number; because you did not obey the voice of the Lord your God. 63) And as the Lord took delight in doing you good and multiplying you, so the Lord will take delight in bringing ruin upon you and destroying you; and you shall be plucked off the land which you are entering to take possession of it. 64) And the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other; and there you shall serve other gods, of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. 65) And among these nations you shall find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of your foot; but the Lord will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul; 66) your life shall hang in doubt before you; night and day you shall be in dread and have no assurance of your life. 67) In the morning you shall say, 'Would it were evening!' and at evening you shall say, 'Would it were morning!' because of the dread which your heart shall fear, and the sights which your eyes shall see. 68) And the Lord will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey which I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no man will buy you."

This longest chapter in Deuteronomy begins with the conjunctive *v-* as “and” to show the close connection between the opening words of the previous chapter with the current one. That is to say, the former begins with the familiar keeping or *shamar* of divine commandments (here in vs. 1 as well, ‘be careful’). However, the verse at hand has *shamah* or hear as obey (cf. vss. 27.1 and 10 respectively). The pair *shamar/shamah* comes with a reward, that is, the Lord will set (the common verb *natan* or to give is used, cf. 15.10) Israel on high, that is, above all the nations. The adjective is *helyon* found in 26.19 but not used there, the two being similar. Quite often *helyon* is used in reference to the Lord such as Most High God, etc. Note the *hal-* of *helyon* along with the preposition *hal* or “on the nations”...a double “on,” if you will. *Goy* and *‘erets* or nations and earth are the exact opposite of this double *hal*.

Vs. 2 launches off with a series of blessings that will come upon (*hal* again) Israel, that is, as recounted through vs. 6, *baruk* being the form of the verb *barak* (cf. 27.12) and noun *berakah* (cf. 23.5). In addition to this *hal* associated with blessing we have them overtaking Israel which thus far is being addressed as the singular “you,” that is, not the plural suggesting Israel as one unit or one person. The verb at hand is *nasag* which means to reach, attain (cf. 19.6 but not noted there) and is followed by a conditional sentence, that Israel obey or *shamah* the Lord’s voice, *qol* (vs.1 and 27.10 respectively). While all this sounds fine, the Lord knows things won’t turn out accordingly. Israel feels the same, but it’s too deep down to admit it which unfortunately later will be acted out later on with a whole series of tragic consequences.

Vs. 3 carries the *barak* of vs. 2 into two general places of Israel’s life, that is, within Canaan, cities and fields. Many of the former are fortified against hostile native peoples, and the

latter are the source of food and need to be protected as well.

Vs. 4 mentions fruit or *pery* (cf. 26.10 but not noted there) which also applies to results of one's labor, the three being very much earthy as body, ground and beasts. Similar to *pery* is *sheger* pertaining to flocks or what comes forth as from the womb and has one other biblical reference, Ex 13.12: "You shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb."

Vs. 5 has *barak* pertaining to basket and kneading trough, in other words, bread-making.

Vs. 6 has the last *barak* concerning you/Israel as both coming in and going out. This can be tied in with the *barak* of vs. 2, cities and fields, the need to pass between them.

Vs. 7 speaks of Israel's enemies which will rise literally "upon (*hal-*) you," *qum* being the verb or better, the Lord will give (*natan*, cf. 15.10) them to do such. Once they do, they will be struck down, *nagaph* (cf. 1.42) as they come out in one way (*derek*, cf. 11.28) and flee in seven ways (*derek*). Right after this promise in vs. 8 the Lord will command a blessing (*berakah*, cf. vs. 2) upon Israel's barns as well as her enterprises, literally as "in every sending of hand." Barns imply harvest and ultimately harvest implies freedom for crops to grow minus harassment from any Canaanite threat.

In vs. 9 the Lord will establish Israel as holy or *qadosh* to himself, the verb *qum* being used which is exactly opposite to *qum* in vs. 7, this, however, being contingent upon the keeping or *shamar* (cf. vs. 1) of his commandments.

Vss. 10-14 begin with the conjunctive *v-* translated in its most familiar form, "and" to show the rapid-fire nature of blessings the Lord is ready to bestow upon Israel:

Vs. 10: Once all the peoples—most likely those within the general boundaries of Canaan—see that Israel is set apart by the Lord and bear his name, they will be afraid.

Vs. 11: A promises prosperity for Israel, *yatar* meaning to go beyond measure. "The Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand" [30.9]. Such *yatar* is threefold as in the verse just cited: fruit or *pery* (cf. vs. 4) of body, cattle and ground or *'adamah* (cf. 11.21) on the *'adamah* which the Lord had sworn to Israel's fathers.

Vs. 12: A lengthy verse, the first part not beginning with a conjunctive but one found in the second part. It pertains to rain as a treasury or *'otsar* which also means a storehouse. "Is not this laid up in store with me, sealed up in my treasuries [32.34]? The second half of this verse switches to Israel lending but never borrowing.

Vs. 13: The Lord makes Israel the head or *r'osh* (cf. 21.12 but not noted there) as opposed to the tail equivalent here to *lemahalal* and *lematah*, upward and downward, both found in 2Kg 19.30: "And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward." This, again, is conditional upon that familiar *shamah/shamar* or hearing and keeping the Lord's commandments.

Vs. 14: A conditional sentence continuing from the previous verse, that is, not turning aside or *sur* (cf. 17.20) from any of the *davar* of the Lord. This involves primarily not serving

other gods which, as history would prove otherwise, turned out to be the case.

While the first fourteen verses of Chapter Twenty-Eight speak in glowing terms of what's in store for Israel provided she abide by the frequently mentioned divine commands, etc., the remaining fifty-three verses or to the end of this chapter contain a whole slew of threats as to what will happen if Israel fail to keep these commandments. Some of it is rough going and perhaps incomprehensible to the people at this stage. Obviously the Lord knows ahead of time that Israel will fail in her *shamah/shamar* or hearing/keeping. Yet by listing all the possible consequences the Lord hopes he'll cajole his people into following him. With this in mind, these remaining verses are presented, that is, the threats in various forms which are hanging over Israel;

Vs. 15: *Shamah/shamar* introduces these curses, *shamah* with "voice" reading literally, "(not) hear in (*b-*) the voice or *qol*" (cf. vs. 2) of the Lord. Failure results in curses overtaking Israel, *qelalah* and *nasag*, 27.13 and vs. 3 respectively. Not just that but the possibility of *nasag*, of overwhelming the people.

Vs. 16: This verse gets down to business, *'arar* (cf. 27.15) or cursed whether one is in the city or field, that is, in contrast to vs. 3.

Vs. 17: *'Arar* with respect to basket and kneading trough, this in contrast to vs. 5.  
vs.

Vs. 18: *'Arar* with regard to fruit or *pery* (cf. vs. 11) of one's body, ground cattle and flock, that is, in contrast to vs. 4.

Vs. 19: *'Arar* with regard to going in and going out, this in contrast to vs. 6.

Vs. 20: The Lord will send literally in (*b-*) the people curses, confusion and frustration, all three beginning with the letter "m." The first is *me'erah* which has four other biblical references, one of which is Prov 3.33: "The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the abode of the righteous." The second is *mehumah* as in 7.23 but not noted there. The third is *mighereth*, this being the only use in the Bible. All three will be operative until Israel perishes and does so quickly, that is, for having forsaken the Lord, *hazav* (cf. 12.19).

Vs. 21: Pestilence or *dever*, the only occurrence in Deuteronomy and from the same verbal root as *davar*. "He did not spare them from death but gave their lives over to the plague." In the verse at hand, this *dever* (almost a punishment for not *shamah* or obeying the divine *davar*) will cling to Israel, *davaq* (cf. 13.17). It will consume (*kalah*, cf. vs. 32) the people from upon the land (*'adamah*, cf. vs. 11) even in the very act of entering to possess it.

Vs. 22: The Lord will smite (*nakah*, cf. 13.15) Israel with seven plagues which will pursue her until she has perished, *radaph* and *'avad* (19.6 and 26.5 respectively).

Vs. 23: Heavens above will be brass and the earth (*'erets*, cf. 26.9) below will be iron. Mention of head with respect to heavens intimates the pressing down of this heavy metal, crushing Israel into the ground.

Vs. 24: Rain will be as powder and dust until Israel is destroyed, *shamad* (cf. 9.20).

Vs. 25: This verse can be read in reference to vs. 7. Also Israel will become a horror not just to the Canaanites but to every kingdom on earth, *zahvah* having five other biblical references one of which is Ezk 23.46: "Bring up a host against them and make them an



object of terror and a spoil.”

Vs. 26: “Your dead body” referring to Israel as a whole and exposed to the birds of the air.

Vs. 27: Israel being smitten (*nakah*, cf. vs. 22) with boils, etc., which refer back to the “evil diseases of Egypt which you knew” in 7.15.

Vs. 28: Smitten (*nakah*, cf. vs. 27) with madness and confusion of mind (among other things): *shigahon* and *timahon*. The first has two other biblical references, 2Kg 9.20 and Zec 14.4, whereas the latter has one which is Zec 12.4: “On that day I will strike very horse with panic and its rider with madness. But upon the house of Judah I will open my eyes when I strike very horse of the peoples with blindness.” The verse at hand has *levav* or heat for “mind.”

Vs. 29: Groping during the day as a blind person which offers the opportunity for Israel to be robbed without anyone helping her. Also her way won’t prosper, *tsalach*. “For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success” [Jos 1.8].

Vs. 20: Another man will steal one’s wife; the same applies with usurping a house and vineyard.

Vs. 31: One’s livestock will be slain and no one will be there to help, *yashah* (cf. 21.4).

Vs. 32: Sons and daughters will be given to another people while Israel can only look on, all the while longing for them, *kalah* (cf. vs. 21).

Vs. 33: A nation Israel doesn’t know will eat its fruit and then crush and oppress her, *hashaq* and *ratsats*. The former is found in 24.14 but not noted there. As for the latter, cf. Num 35.27: “And the avenger of blood slays the manslayer; he shall not be guilty of blood.”

Vs. 34: Driven mad by what Israel shall see, this not being specified, *shagah* has six other biblical references, one being 1Sam 21.15: “Do I lack madmen that you have brought me this fellow to play the madman in my presence?”

Vs. 35: The Lord will smite (*nakah*, cf. vs. 28) Israel with boils.

Vs. 36: The Lord will bring Israel and the king they will choose later to an unknown nation thus implying being besieged by the Babylonians and gone into exile. In that place of exile Israel will worship gods of wood and stone. However, this is some time from the current one or when Israel is about to enter Canaan.

Vs. 37: While being led into exile, Israel will become a horror, proverb and byword or *shamah*, *mashal* and *shenynah*. The first also means astonishment as well as desolation. “Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has wrought desolations in the earth” [Ps 46.8]. The second and third appear in 1Kg 9.7: “And Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples.”

Vs. 38: Locusts will consume what is in the fields.

Vs. 39: The worm will eat the fruit of Israel’s vineyards.

Vs. 40: Olives will fall from their trees not giving oil.

Vs. 41: Children which are born will go into captivity, again most likely Babylon.

Vs. 42: The locust will eat up the fruit of trees and the ground (cf. vs. 38).

Vs. 43: The sojourner (*ger*, cf. 26.11) will rise higher and Israel will come down lower.

Vs. 44: The sojourner (*ger*, cf. vs. 43) will loan and thus be the head with Israel as the tail.

Vs. 45: The curses or *qelalah* (cf. vs. 15) pronounced thus far will come upon Israel,



pursue and overtake her to destruction, *radaph*, *nasag* and *shamad* (cf. vss. 22, 15 and 24 respectively). The reason? Israel failed to obey the Lord's voice (*qol*, vs. 15) and to keep his commandments, *shamah/shamar* (cf. vs. 15).

Vs. 46: The curses of vs. 45 will be upon Israel (*b-* or 'in you') as a sign and wonder, *'oth* and *mopheth* (cf. 26.8 for both).

Vs. 47: Abundance (*rov*, cf. 10.22 but not noted there) of material goods (literally, 'from all') prevented the Israelites from having joyfulness and gladness of heart or *simchah* and *tuv* (cf. 6.11 but not noted there). A reference for the former is Num 10.10: "On the day of your gladness also...you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings."

Vs. 48: Failure to serve (*havad*, cf. 13.6) the Lord mentioned in vs. 48 will result in *havad* of Israel's enemies, this continuing until she is destroyed, *shamad* ( cf. vs.45). In other words the service of divine *havad* will be changed into the servitude of *havad*.

Vs. 49: The Lord will bring an unidentified nation from the east like an eagle against Israel and characterized by a language Israel doesn't know.

Vs. 50: This unidentified nation will have a stern countenance, *haz* meaning strong as well as fierce. "Yet the people who dwell in the land are strong" [Num 13.28]. It won't regard the old nor favor the young, the former reading literally as "lifting faces to the old." *Chanan* is the verb for favor (cf. 7.2).

Vs. 51: Two words signifying Israel's fate, *shamad* and *'avad*, destroyed and perish (cf. vss. 48 and 22 respectively).

Vs. 52: Vs. 49 speaks of a singular nation from the east whereas the verse at hand has this same nation in the plural which will besiege Israel in all its towns, *tsarar*. "And I will bring distress on them that they may feel it" [Jer 10.18].

Vs. 53: The Israelites will eat their own children as a result of the siege and distress, *matsoq* found next in vs. 57.

Vs. 54: The man described as being tender and delicately bred won't share food with wife and children as well as brother. *Hanog* and *rak* are the adjectives at hand, the former having two other biblical references, vs. 56 and Is 47.1 while the later is found last in 20.8.

Vs. 55: The man who is tender and delicately bred won't give as food his children to anyone else because of the distress (*matsoq*, cf. vs. 53) of the siege.

Vs. 56: The woman also described as *rak* and *hanog* (cf. vs. 54) will literally be evil eye to her husband.

Vs. 57: The reason why the husband of vs. 56 will have an evil eye is that his wife will eat the after-birth after having given birth to a child as a result of the distress (*matsoq*, cf. vs. 53) of the siege.

Vs. 58: NB: this verse continues into the next as one sentence. If Israel isn't careful or *shamar* to do the law's words, the *davar* of *torah*, which result in fear of the Lord's name as glorious and awful (*kaved* and *yare'*, cf. 5.16 and 20.8 respectively),

Vs. 59: the Lord will inflict Israel with afflictions or *makah* (cf. 25.3 but not noted there) also meaning plague or slaughter. This as well as sickness will be severe and lasting, *gadol* (cf. 5.22 but not noted there) and *'aman* (cf. 7.9).

Vs. 60: Diseases of Egypt will afflict Israel, *madveh* having one other biblical reference, 7.15 but not noted there.

Vs. 61: Those sicknesses and afflictions not recorded in *torah* (cf. vs. 58) will last until Israel is destroyed, *shamad* (cf. vs. 51).

Vs. 62: Instead of being like the stars of heaven, a few will be left because Israel failed to *shamah* the Lord's voice or *qol* (vss. 37 and 45 respectively). This verse can be read in contrast to the promise to Abram in Gen 15.5: "Look toward heaven and number the stars if you are able to number them...so shall your descendants be."

Vs. 63: In place of the delight the Lord had taken in Israel, she will be plucked from the land destined for possession. The two verbs of contrast are *sus* and *nasach*. The former is found next in 30.9 and the latter has three other reference, one of which is Ps 52.5: "But God will break you down forever; he will snatch and tear you from your tent; he will uproot you from the land of the living."

Vs. 64: Scattering (*puts*, cf. 4.27) throughout the peoples will result in Israel serving their gods which were unknown to her fathers.

Vs. 65: In place of ease and rest or *ragah* and *manuach* (Prov 12.19 Is 51.4 and Ps 116.7), Israel will get the opposite, her heart (*lev*: cf. 4.29, *levav* being the other form more frequently used in Deuteronomy) trembling (*ragaz*) and her soul (*nephesh*, cf. 26.16) languishing (*de'avon*). The references for the first pair: "Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment." "Return, O my soul, to your rest." As for the second pair, they are the only references in the Bible.

Vs. 66: The life of Israel is to hang in doubt, having no assurance as to her life, *talah* being the verb, "doubt" not in the Hebrew (cf. 21.23 but not mentioned there).

Vs. 67: Dread in the heart (*pachad* and *levav*, cf. 11.25 and vs 28 respectively) affect awareness of the passage of time.

Vs. 68: The Lord will bring Israel back to Egypt in ships, and to preclude this, Israel will sell herself to her enemies. However, no one will purchase her.

#### Numbers = Verses

shamar: 1, shamah: 1, helyon: 1, barak: 2, berakah: 2, nasag: 3, shamah: 2, qol: 2, barak: 3, barak: 4, pery: 4, barak: 5, barak: 6, qum: 7, natan: 7, derek: 7, berakah: 8, qum: 9, shamar: 9, yatar: 11, pery: 11, 'adamah: 11, 'otsar: 12, ro'sh: 13, lemahalah: 13, lematah: 13, shamah: 13, shamar: 13, sur: 14, shamah: 15, shamar: 15, qol: 15, qelalah: 15, nasag: 15, 'arar: 16, 'arar: 17, 'arar: 18, pery: 18, 'arar: 19, me'erah: 20, mehumah: 20, mighereth: 20, hazav: 20, dever: 21, davaq: 21, kalah: 21, 'adamah: 21, nakah: 22, radaph: 22, 'avad: 22, 'erets: 23, shamad: 24, zahvah: 25, nakah: 27, nakah: 28, shigahon: 28, timahon: vs. 28, tsalach: 28, levav: 28, yashah: 31, kalah: 31, hashaq: 33, ratsats: 33, shagah: 34, nakah: 35, shamah (-heh): 37, mashal: 37, shenynah: 37, ger: 43, ger: 44, qelalah: 45, radaph: 45, nasag: 45, shamad: 45, qol: 45, shamah: 45, shamar: 45, 'oth: 46, mopheth: 46, rov: 47, havad: 48, shamad: 48, haz: 50, chanan: 50, tsarar: 52, matsoq: 53, hanoq: 54, rak: 54, matsoq: 55, rak: 56, hanoq: 56, matsoq: 57, shamar: 58, torah: 58, kavad: 58, yare': 58, makah: 59, gadol: 59, 'aman: 59, madveh: 60, torah: 61, shamad: 61, shamah: 62, qol: 62, sus: 63, nasach: 63, puts: 64, ragah: 65, manuach: 65, lev: 65, ragaz: 65, nephesh: 65, de'avon: 65, talah: 66, pachad: 67, levav: 67.

## Chapter Twenty-Nine

1) These are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab besides the covenant which he had made with them at Horeb. 2) And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, 3) the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders; 4) but to this day the Lord has not given you a mind to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. 5) I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have not worn out upon you, and your sandals have not worn off your feet; 6) you have not eaten bread, and you have not drunk wine or strong drink; that you may know that I am the Lord your God. 7) And when you came to this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out against us to battle, but we defeated them; 8) we took their land and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. 9) Therefore be careful to do the words of this covenant that you may prosper in all that you do. 10) "You stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; the heads of your tribes, your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, 11) your little ones, your wife, and the sojourner who is in your camp, both he who hews your wood and he who draws your water, 12) that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the Lord your God which the Lord your God makes with you this day; 13) that he may establish you this day as his people, and that he may be your God as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. 14) Nor is it with you only that I make this sworn covenant 15) but with him who is not here with us this day as well as with him who stands here with us this day before the Lord our God. 16) "You know how we dwelt in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed; 17) and you have seen their detestable things, their idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold which were among them. 18) Beware lest there be among you a man or woman or family or tribe whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations; lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, 19) one who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart saying, 'I shall be safe though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.' This would lead to the sweeping away of moist and dry alike. 20) The Lord would not pardon him, but rather the anger of the Lord and his jealousy would smoke against that man, and the curses written in this book would settle upon him, and the Lord would blot out his name from under heaven. 21) And the Lord would single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity, in accordance with all the curses of the covenant written in this book of the law. 22) And the generation to come, your children who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a far land would say when they see the afflictions of that land and the sicknesses with which the Lord has made it sick—23) the whole land brimstone and salt and a burnt-out waste, unsown and growing nothing, where no grass can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim which the Lord overthrew in his anger and wrath—24) yea, all the nations would say, 'Why has the Lord done thus to this land? What means the heat of this great anger?' 25) Then men would say, 'It is because they forsook the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt 26) and went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they had not known and whom he had not allotted to them; 27) therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, bringing upon it all the curses written in this book; 28) and the Lord uprooted them from their land in anger and fury and great wrath and cast them into another land as at this day.' 29) "The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that

we may do all the words of this law.

NB: Vs. 1 in the **RSV** is 28.69 in the Hebrew. The **RSV** numbering is followed here.

This new chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* which isn't translated but shows the close connection between the blessings and multiple curses just delineated and Moses' third address. Vs. 1 is a straight-forward statement putting the previous several chapters in terms of *davar* or a covenant (*beryth*, cf. 9.9) commanded by the Lord to Moses at Mount Horeb. *Karath* (cf. 19.1) is the verb at hand meaning to cut, the root for *beryth*...cutting a cut, if you will.

The **RSV** has the phrase "this day" occurring eight times in Chapter Twenty-Nine beginning in vs. 4. However, the pronoun "this" occurs in the Hebrew twice, vss. 4 and 28. The remaining occurrences are rendered literally as "the day," namely vss. 10, 12, 13, 15 (twice) and 18.

Moses is fully aware of Israel's propensity to apostasy, the result of not obeying the Lord, the reason for his reminding the people of their experience in Egypt prior to their departure. If he could drill this into them convincingly, things will go well for them in Canaan. However, given his experience in the Sinai desert, notably the calf which Aaron fashioned and worshiped by the people, this would become an unfortunate template for the future. In vs. 2 Moses stresses the point by the phrase "before your eyes" with regard to the Lord's action against pharaoh put in terms as signs and wonders in vs. 3, *'oth* and *mopheth* (cf. 28.46). Then he cuts to the quick, that the Lord hadn't given Israel a mind to understand as well as to see, *lev* coupled with *yadah* (cf. 28.65 and 18.21 respectively). In sum, the Lord reached a point where he couldn't go further in his mercy so had to leave them to their own devices.

The Lord continues his lament which also is a kind of chastisement not for now nor for earlier incidents but for the future. Not only has he led Israel for forty years but provided for her physical needs, right down to having sandals, etc. After recounting the successful encounter with Sihon of Heshbon, in vs. 9 the Lord bids Israel to the now very familiar *shamar* (cf. 28.58) with regards to his *davar* situated in terms of the covenant (*beryth*, cf. vs. 1). If Israel manages to pull this off, then she will prosper or literally "do wisely," *sakal* which also means to behold or to be prudent. "If they were wise, they would understand this, they would discern their latter end" [32.29]!

Vs. 10 speaks of "this day" (literally, 'the day') when the entire nation of Israel is standing before the Lord, *natsav* meaning to set or put in place more or less permanently which here intimates being continually before the Lord. "He fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God" [32.8]. Not only is Israel summoned for this *natsav*, women, children, sojourners and others are to come.

Vss. 12 and 13 spells out the reason for such a solemn assembly, namely, 1) that Israel enter a covenant which is sworn to the Lord. *'Alah* is the noun meaning both a curse and an oath

(cf. vs. 14); the verb *havar* (cf. 17.2) is used, generally as to pass over, and is done “(this) the day.” 2) that the Lord establish (*qum*, cf. 28.9; more as to rise; compare with *natsav*) Israel as his people, again, “(this) the day.” The Lord would do this precisely in the same manner he had entered a covenant with the three chief patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to whom he swore, *shavah* (cf. 10.20). The covenant (*’alah*) at hand in vs. 14 is unique insofar as it seems to be the only one made with those present but those who are not, again “(this) the day.” Such words can refer to those who are not yet born but who will be, that is, in the land of Canaan.

Moses uses both the first person plural and second person plural in vs. 16 in reference to Israel’s departure from Egypt, that is, how “we” passed through the midst (*qerev*, cf. 24.7) of nations through which “you” have passed. Reference is to the tribes or *goy* as nations or people other than Israelites (cf. 28.65 but not noted there). Moses isn’t so much concerned about these *goy* being a threat regarding what he calls detestable things or *shiqush*, this being the first mention of the term thus far in the Bible. They are such despite being made of precious metal, silver and gold. “These have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations” [Is 66.3].

In vs. 18 Israel is to beware of these abominations although the Hebrew lacks this word, expressing it by *pen-yesh* or “least there is.” Moses rails against such a person who succumbs to them in the next-to-last verse of this chapter. He knows from past experience that someone, either individually or collectively, will turn his heart (*levav*, cf. 28.67) away from the Lord and worship what these abominations represent. If so, this would become a root producing fruit that is both poisonous and bitter, *ro’sh* and *meryry*. The latter is the only occurrence in the Bible whereas the former occurs in 32.33: “Their wine is the poison of serpents and the cruel venom of asps.”

The problem with such a person described in the previous verse is that he is of double mind. That is, upon hearing the *davar* of the sworn covenant or *’alah* (cf. vs. 14), he blesses himself in his heart (vs. 19), *levav* intimating that he does this secretly. His thoughts are hidden from apparent view, they consisting in believing to be safe or *shalom* (cf. 20.10) while walking in stubbornness of heart, *sheryruth* with *levav*, this noun implying hardness. “So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own counsels” [Ps 81.12]. Such an attitude leads to the sweeping away or *saphah* of what’s either moist or dry, this word also meaning to consume. “Lest you be swept away with all their sins” [Dt 16.26].

Vs. 20 speaks of the Lord’s anger and jealousy or *’aph* and *qin’ah*, the former being found last in 13.17 and the only use of the latter in Deuteronomy. “For zeal for your house has consumed me” [Ps 69.9]. In the verse at hand, both smoke against (literally ‘in’) the man of double mind. If this weren’t bad enough, there follows curses (*’alah*, cf. vs. 19) settling upon him, the verb being *ravats* which is applicable to beasts laying down with their four feet tucked under them (cf. 22.6 but not used there). Once in that position, the Lord will simply blot out (*machah*, cf. 25.19) his name from under heaven. If this weren’t enough, in vs. 21 the Lord does something which later will happen to Achan who was singled out tribe by tribe,



man by man (cf. Jos 7.16+). *Badal* (cf. 19.2) is the verb in the verse at hand also as to set aside, that is, for curses or evil, *rah* (cf. 17.12). Again, this is done in accord with the curses or *'alah* in the *torah* or law.

Vs. 22 brings one person's association with the detestable thing of vs. 17 to a new level by including future generations which will attribute any affliction or *makah* (cf. 28.59) in the land (that is, Canaan) to him. Not only that, even a foreigner from a long way off will be aware of the sickness present throughout the land, *tachalu'ym* being the noun which has four other biblical references one being Ps 103.3: "Who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases." In other words, there is no distinction between an individual Israelite and the nation as a whole; the action of one affects the other. The only comparison will be Sodom and Gomorrah as well as Admah and Zeboim, the latter two mentioned in Gen 10.19. Such is the power of divine anger and wrath, *'aph* and *chemah* both as in 9.19.

As a result of the total destruction but by reason of the *shiqush* or detestable thing...idols...all nations will ask (cf. vs. 24) why it happened or why such a display of heat of anger, *chory* here associated with *'aph*, the latter often associated with the nose and thus fire coming from there. Then they will know it's because Israel had forsaken their covenant with the Lord, the one he made when they came from Egypt. So while *shiqush* is the reason for such a display, it differs from the reason why Sodom and Gomorrah had been overthrown earlier. Vs. 26 spells out this difference further, namely, that Israel preferred worship of alien gods to the Lord, that is, divinities unknown to them previously. The word allotted is used, *chalaq* in the same sense as in 4.19. There the context is with regard to heavenly luminaries worshiped by all peoples whereas here it's more specific, *shiqush* vs. the Lord himself.

Vs. 27 continues with the familiar refrain of *'alah* (cf. vs. 21) or curses which caused Israel to be uprooted from the land which is newly possessed or better, repossessed land of Canaan. So working behind all this is the Lord's original promise to Abram: "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" [Gen 12.1]. Anything Israel does contrary to this is sure to bring down divine wrath in a manner they never had experienced. Moses refers to the result of being uprooted, namely, Israel being cast into another land which could be taken as Egypt though the reason for being there some four hundred years earlier is a severe famine. However, exposure to native divinities of Canaan at the time is not accounted for as much as it will be once Israel returns there. It's as though Israel's four century absence allowed the native gods not just to return but to grow stronger and more difficult to uproot.

Chapter Twenty-Nine concludes with mention of secret things or *satar* as in 7.20 but not noted there, this participle referring to things divine which are beyond human understanding. They stand in contrast to things which are revealed or *galah* (cf. 22.30 but not noted there). In other words, *galah* is part of *satar* as manifested in the *davar* of the *torah* (cf. vs. 21).

Numbers = Verses

beryth: 1, karath: 1, 'oth: 3, mopheth: 3, shamar: 3, qum: natsav: 10, havar: 12, 'alah: 12, qum: 13, shavah: 13, 'alah: 14, qerev: 16, goy: 16, levav: 18, ro'sh: 18, meryry: 18, 'alah: 19, shalom: 19, levav: 19, sheryruth: 19, saphah: 19, 'aph: 20, qin'ah: 20, 'alah: 20, ravats: 20, machah: 20, badal: 21, 'alah: 21, rah: 21, torah: 21, makah: 22, tachalu'ym: 22, 'aph: 23, chemah: 23, chory: 24, 'aph: 24, chalaq: 26, 'alah: 27, satar: 29, galah: 29, torah: 29.

## Chapter Thirty

1) "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you 2) and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice in all that I command you this day, with all your heart and with all your soul; 3) then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion upon you, and he will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. 4) If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will fetch you; 5) and the Lord your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed that you may possess it; and he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. 6) And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. 7) And the Lord your God will put all these curses upon your foes and enemies who persecuted you. 8) And you shall again obey the voice of the Lord and keep all his commandments which I command you this day. 9) The Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body and in the fruit of your cattle and in the fruit of your ground; for the Lord will again take delight in prospering you as he took delight in your fathers 10) if you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 11) "For this commandment which I command you this day is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. 12) It is not in heaven that you should say, 'Who will go up for us to heaven and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it?' 13) Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' 14) But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it. 15) "See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. 16) If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you this day by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to take possession of it. 17) But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, 18) I declare to you this day that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. 19) I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, 20) loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give them."

This chapter begins with the conjunctive *v-* showing immediate continuation from the

previous one which is put in terms of “things” or *davar*, these being the blessing and the curse. Note the definite article with *berakah* and *qelalah* (cf. 28.45) which bestows on them a certain solemnity and decisiveness. Vss. 1-3 form an extended sentence divided into two parts, “when” and “then,” the latter being the conjunctive *v-*. The Lord sets both before Israel (the common verb *natan*, to give; cf. 28.7). Such giving is a handing-over which the people have in their hands, if you will, and must stick with one and reject the other. Holding both simultaneously is out of the question, so a choice is needed and needed at once.

The “when” of vs. 1 continues by calling the blessing and curse to mind, the verb *shuv* and the noun *levav* (heart) being used together as in 4.39. *Shuv* fundamentally means to return, so here it’s a returning to the heart, if you will. This is to be done not just among (*b-*, ‘in’) nations but in “all” the nations indicating that Israel will be scattered far and wide, having ended up there by the Lord’s action of *nadach* (cf. 4.19). Countering this *nadach* is a return to the Lord in vs. 3, *shuv* as used with regard to mind (heart). Both the current generation as well as their children are to engage in this *shuv* which is followed at once by obeying the Lord’s voice, *shamah* and *qol* working together as in 28.62. This immediacy is indicated by the phrase which the RSV renders as “this day” but in Hebrew is “the day” which is more emphatic and indicative almost of the suspension of space and time. This distinction is found in Chapter Twenty-Nine; the seven occurrences of “the day” in the current chapter are found in vss. 2, 8, 11, 15, 16, 18 and 19. As for the *shuv* at hand, it’s to be done with one’s whole heart and soul, *levav* and *nephesh* being found together in 26.16.

The “when” introducing vs. 1 shifts over to the “then” of vs. 3 as a result of *shuv* which is what the Lord has been waiting for all along. In other words, the *shuv* which is of issue thus far becomes the *shuv* of Israel’s good fortunes through the Lord even in her *shevuth* or captivity. “When the Lord restores the fortunes of his people” [Ps 14.7]. In addition to this third *shuv* (in the sense of having the same verbal root), the Lord shows compassion, *racham* often applicable by parents to children. “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy” [Ex 33.19]. *Racham* is the turning point for Israel after having been scattered, *puts* (cf. 28.64) being the verb compared with *nadach* or vs. 1 which is more a forcing out. Opposite to both is the verb *qavats*, to gather also found in vs. 4.

Vs. 1 speaks of Israel being scattered “among all the nations” whereas vs. 4 takes this a step further. Here Israel as outcasts (*nadach*, cf. vs. 1) have gone to the furthest end of heaven or where the sky touches the horizon whether that be any of the four cardinal directions. Nevertheless, the Lord will both gather and fetch his people, *qavats* (cf. vs. 3) and *laqach* (the common verb to take).

Once the gathering and fetching of Israel is done, in vs. 5 the Lord will bring her into Canaan designated as the land once possessed by her fathers, *yarash* (cf. 26.1) being more a re-possession as noted several times earlier. There the Lord will circumcise (*mul*, cf. 10.16 but not noted there) the heart or *levav* (cf. vs. 2) of the people and children. In this way the present and future generations will be able to love the Lord, *’ahav* (cf. 23.5) with both *levav*

and *nephesh*, heart and soul, this pair noted in vs. 2. Not only that, the people will be able to live. Note that vss. 5 through 9 begin with the conjunctive *v-* to show the rapid sequence of blessings and their connection.

In vs. 7 the Lord will place curses or '*alah* (cf. 29.27) upon Israel's foes for having brought on persecution, *radaph* being the verb (cf. 28.45). This, in turn, will free up the people to *shamah* the *qol* (cf. vs. 2 for both) of the Lord plus *shamar* (cf. 29.3) his commandments: to hear->God's voice->to keep. All take place literally in "the day," second mention of this phrase.

Vs. 9 has the word "prosper" twice, the first being the verb *yatar* (cf. 28.11) and the second the adjective *tov* or good, the latter having the verb *sus* or rejoice (cf. 28.63) just as he had done with Israel's fathers. Vs. 10 adds the triad, if you will, of *shamah*, *qol* and *shamar* plus adding a turning (*shuv*) to the Lord with both *levav* and *nephesh*. Although Israel may find this initially difficult, in vs. 11 the Lord is quick to add that the commandment at hand is not hard, that is, neither far off nor in heaven which is countered by bringing it, hearing it and doing it. Third mention of "the day" in vs. 11 also helps by reason of its immediacy. The same applies to being beyond the sea (i.e., the Mediterranean). Instead, the commandment put in terms of *davar* in vs. 14 is *qarvov* (cf. 22.2 but not noted there) or near in the sense of being at hand. That is to say, this *davar* is both in Israel's mouth and heart (*levav*, cf. vs. 10).

Vs. 15 contains the fourth "the day" where the Lord sets or gives (*natan*, cf. vs. 1) the two pairs of life and good, death and evil. The fifth "the day" in vs. 16 speaks of obeying, loving, walking and keeping which will result in Israel flourishing in the land of Canaan. Nevertheless, in vs. 17 the Lord is fully aware this could go awry by Israel's collective heart (*levav*, cf. vs. 14) turning away, not hearing and being drawn (*nadach*, cf. vs. 4) to worship other gods plus serving them. Then in vs. 18, sixth mention of "the day," Israel will perish. The Lord uses heaven and earth, up and down, as witness to this, *hod* (cf. 8.19) being associated with the seventh and final "the day." That is to say, Israel is to choose life over death, death being equated with alien divinities.

Vs. 20 concludes Chapter Thirty by the need of Israel to both love, obey and cleave to the Lord, '*ahav*, *shamah* and *davaq* (cf. vss. 6, 8 and 28.21 respectively). All three in turn will allow Israel to at last settle or better, re-settle, in the same land as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

#### Numbers = Verses

berakah: 1, qelalah: 1, natan: 1, shuv: 1, levav: 1, nadach: 1, shuv: 2, shamah: 2, qol: 2, levav: 2, nephesh: 2, shuv: 3, shevuth: 3, qavats: 3, racham: 3, puts: 3, nadach: 4, qavats: 4, laqach: 4, yarash: 5, mul: 6, levav: 6, 'ahav: 6, levav: 6, nephesh: 6, 'alah: 7, radaph: 7, shamah: 8, qol: 8, shamar: 8, yatar: 9, sus: 9, shamah: 10, qol: 10, shamar: 10, levav: 10, nephesh: 10, qarov: 14, levav: 14, natan: 15, levav: 17, nadach: 17, hod: 18, 'ahav: 20, shamah: 20, davaq: 20.

## Chapter Thirty-One

1) So Moses continued to speak these words to all Israel. 2) And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old this day; I am no longer able to go out and come in. The Lord has said to me, 'You shall not go over this Jordan.' 3) The Lord your God himself will go over before you; he will destroy these nations before you so that you shall dispossess them; and Joshua will go over at your head as the Lord has spoken. 4) And the Lord will do to them as he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and to their land when he destroyed them. 5) And the Lord will give them over to you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandment which I have commanded you. 6) Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them: for it is the Lord your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you." 7) Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them; and you shall put them in possession of it. 8) It is the Lord who goes before you; he will be with you, he will not fail you or forsake you; do not fear or be dismayed." 9) And Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord and to all the elders of Israel. 10) And Moses commanded them, "At the end of every seven years, at the set time of the year of release, at the feast of booths, 11) when all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God at the place which he will choose, you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12) Assemble the people, men, women and little ones and the sojourner within your town, that they may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God and be careful to do all the words of this law, 13) and that their children who have not known it may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God as long as you live in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess." 14) And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, the days approach when you must die; call Joshua and present yourselves in the tent of meeting that I may commission him." And Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tent of meeting. 15) And the Lord appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud; and the pillar of cloud stood by the door of the tent. 16) And the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to sleep with your fathers; then this people will rise and play the harlot after the strange gods of the land where they go to be among them, and they will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them. 17) Then my anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide my face from them, and they will be devoured; and many evils and troubles will come upon them so that they will say in that day, 'Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?' 18) And I will surely hide my face in that day on account of all the evil which they have done because they have turned to other gods. 19) Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel; put it in their mouths that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel. 20) For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them and despise me and break my covenant. 21) And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their descendants); for I know the purposes which they are already forming, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give." 22) So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel. 23) And the Lord commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, "Be strong and of good courage; for you shall bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore to give them: I will be with you." 24) When Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end, 25) Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, 26) "Take this book of the law and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God that it may bthere for a witness against you. 27) For I know how rebellious and stubborn you



are; behold, while I am yet alive with you, today you have been rebellious against the Lord; how much more after my death! 28) Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call heaven and earth to witness against them. 29) For I know that after my death you will surely act corruptly and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and in the days to come evil will befall you because you will do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger through the work of your hands." 30) Then Moses spoke the words of this song until they were finished in the ears of all the assembly of Israel:

This chapter begins with the conjunctive *v*- translated as "so" along with the common verb *halak* (to go, cf. 11.22) rendering it literally as "and Moses is going and is speaking (*davar*)." It seems that *halak* supplements *davar* or Moses going to speak as a continuation of what he had uttered thus far, all being connected as the conjunctive demonstrates. He speaks not just to Israel but to "all Israel" meaning every man, woman and child plus any hangers-on. This is a critical time in Moses' life, he being quite old and apparently near or on his birthday, no longer able to get about on his own. Surely Joshua is with him, being mentioned in vs. 3. Right away Moses says that the Lord bade him not to lead the people across the Jordan; no explanation is given, for none is needed. Actually he speaks of this at the beginning of Deuteronomy: "The Lord was angry with me also on your account" [1.37]. This verse, in turn, refers to the original source of divine anger toward Moses instead of the people though the guilt of both are intertwined: "Because you did not believe in me...therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" [Num 20.12]. Although the people clearly were more at fault than Moses, Moses bore the brunt of their guilt by reason of being their leader.

In vs. 3 Moses says that the Lord will lead Israel across the Jordan which immediately brought back memories of having crossed the Red Sea, now only a handful still alive if at all. Moses was instrumental then as everyone knows, so when he mentions Joshua it comes as no surprise since for some time now he had been Moses' right-hand man. It seems that the Lord will destroy anyone in Israel's path (*shamad*, cf. 28.61), thereby allowing the people to dispossess them, *yarash* which also means the opposite, to inherit. This intimates that as soon as the Canaanite inhabitants are destroyed by the Lord, immediately their land falls into Israel's possession, the two actions being accomplished as one.

In vs. 4 Moses puts to rest any doubt what will happen under Joshua's leadership by referring to the defeat of Sihon and Og, this recounted in 2.26-3.11, the verb *shamad* also applicable to them and their kingdoms. In vs. 5 the Lord will hand them over to Israel which reads literally "gives to your faces," this being in according with his command or *mitsvah* (cf. 27.1). And so Israel is to be strong and of good courage, *chazaq* and *'amats* (cf. 11.8 and 15.7 respectively).

After the preliminary remarks in vss. 1-6 Moses introduces Joshua who had remained quietly in the background until now though his presence is no surprise to anyone. Moses repeats the same *chazaq* and *'amats* as he just did to the people, Joshua being the one responsible for them to possess Canaan, *nachal* inferring inheriting it (cf. 2.13). Then as in vs. 3, the Lord

will go before Joshua while he goes before Israel, for the Lord will neither fail nor abandon his people, *raphah* and *hazav* (cf. 9.14 and 28.2 respectively). Thus they will have no reason to fear nor be dismayed, *chatat* (cf. 1.21).

In vs. 9 Moses makes this appointment of Joshua official by writing it down as a law (*torah*, cf. 29.29). Not only that, he passed it on to the Levitical priests who will bear the ark of the Lord across the Jordan River. Most likely Moses attached this new *torah* to the ark which would ratify it even more while passing through the Jordan...baptizing it, if you will. Note that at this juncture Joshua doesn't speak. He knows it isn't the right occasion, his deference to Moses being appreciated by those assembled before him. If he decided to speak up, he might lose some credibility.

Moses switches gear, as it were, in vs. 10 by way of anticipation of Israel's successful move into Canaan. That is to say, the people are to read the *torah* expounded in vs. 9, it to be done literally "in their ears" [vs. 11], a way of saying that they are to pay strict attention. Such reading is prefaced by a series of four conditions, if you will: 1) end of seven years, 2) set time (*mohed*, cf. 16.6) of release (*shemittah*, cf. 15.1), 3) feast of booths or *chag sukah* (cf. 16.10) and 4) when Israel assembles before the Lord at the place of his choosing (*maqom*, this phrase being found last in 16.16).

In vs. 12 Moses commands the people to assemble, *qahal* (cf. 4.10) being more a solemn gathering with religious overtones. Even the sojourner or *ger* (cf. 28.44) is to be included which shows the importance of such a *qahal*. Once assembled, everyone is to hear and learn to fear and be careful (*shamah*, *lamad*, *yare'* and *shamar*: 30.20, 20.18, 28.58 and 30.10 respectively). While all commands are important and interconnected, *shamar* stands out by reason of pertaining to the *davar* of the *torah*. All four are for those assembled but intended equally for their children that they may similarly hear and learn to fear the Lord. However, it's conditional in vs. 13 insofar as "you live in the land" about to be possessed, *yarash* (cf. vs. 3). In other words, failure to hear, learn, fear and keep result in dispossession of Canaan.

Once Moses has finished his address, the Lord turns attention to him (cf. vs. 14), that he's about to die, and is to summon Joshua in the tent of meeting (*mohed*, cf. vs 10). There both are to present themselves or *yatsav* (cf. 11.25) which connotes being fully present with a sense of expectation. They went with some anxiety as to what the Lord would say, namely, that Joshua will be commissioned while Moses looks on, *tsavah* (cf. 11.8) commonly as to command. The tent is a familiar place to Joshua, for Ex 33.11 says that while the Lord spoke with Moses, he remained inside the tent (of meeting). Thus without having to explain the matter, the two men went inside. In both instances the Lord took up his position outside the tent in a pillar of cloud. Once in place, the pillar remained right at the entrance addressing Moses but with less than desirable news. The Lord begins with the somewhat derogatory phrase "this people" which will play the harlot or *zanah* (cf. 23.18 but not noted there) with the strange gods or literally "gods of strangers" (*nakry*, cf. 23.20).

Vs. 16 suggests that the Israelites will seek these gods out actively, not that they will come to

them, with the words “they go to be among them” (*qerev*, cf. 29.16). Note the emphasis upon being in the very midst or *qerev* of such gods, that they will mingle freely with them as equals. This automatically leads to Israel forsaking (*hazav*, cf. vs. 8) the Lord and breaking (*parar*) the covenant made with him. Unfortunately the two are accomplished at once; the second verb also means to dissolve and to make void and occurs next in vs. 20.

Vs. 17 continues with the Lord’s displeasure towards his people, this being made known only to Moses and Joshua within the tent of meeting. As for the pillar of cloud, it’s necessary to keep anyone else at bay, for if they got wind of what the Lord was saying about them, either they’d apostatize then and now or stone the two leaders. Moses knew he was about to die so his anxiety level wasn’t as high as Joshua’s who had to face what the Lord was telling him about the people. It’s almost as though what had been privy to Moses as leader is now revealed to him, and it isn’t pretty. Nevertheless, Moses was tempted almost to despair after all he had been through. If it weren’t for the Lord’s presence, he may have considered suicide.

Vs. 17 speaks of “that day” when divine anger will be kindled, *’aph* and *charah* being used together as in 11.17. A result of this the Lord will forsake Israel by hiding his face, *hazav* followed by *satar* (cf. vs. 16 and 29.29 respectively). Furthermore, *’aph*->*charach*->*hazav* results in being devoured. If being chewed up weren’t enough next come evils and troubles, *rah* (cf. 29.21) and *tsarah*, the latter also as distress and found next in vs. 21. At this juncture the people ask a rhetorical question, that God isn’t among them (*qerev*, cf. vs. 16) or literally “among me.” Compare the use of *qerev* here with the previous verse with respect to being among the alien divinities of Canaan.

Vs. 18 has the Lord hiding his face, *satar* being used twice, the second translated as “surely.” *Satar* in the previous verse results in Israel being devoured whereas here...“in that day”...it is because of the evil (*rah*, cf. vs. 17) Israel had done defined as turning (*panah*, cf. 10.5) to alien gods. All these words about a calamity to happen in the future known essentially to Moses and Joshua are to be put into a song or *shyrah* (cf. vs. 21) after which it will be taught or *lamad* (cf. vs. 12) to the people as well as being put into their mouths which implies the music to which the words are set. As for the song, it comprises the bulk of Chapter Thirty-Two. So when being sung, the song will become a witness or *hed* (cf. 19.15), and if you jump ahead to read it, the contents are less than flattering for Israel though the people don’t know it yet. The *shyrah/hed* is thus literally “in (*b-*) the sons of Israel.”

In vs. 19 the Lord brings the people into Canaan described as flowing with milk and honey first described as such in 6.3 as related to Israel’s fathers. However, they will fatten up on this food making them turn to alien gods and despising the Lord, *na’ats* also connoting being rejected [vs. 20]. “The Lord saw it and spurned them” [32.19]. The connection between satiety and worship of Canaanite gods isn’t spelled out but implied as a result of gluttony leading to laziness leading to the easiest way out with regard to worship.

The song described in vs. 19 becomes a witness or *hed* (cf. vs. 19) by reason of being sung

which is what vs. 21 says when it will be un-forgotten by future generations of Israelites. This presupposes, of course, that such generations will be like their forefathers and remain faithful to the Lord and his covenant. However, in reality that will turn out differently.

Vs. 21 is divided into two sections, if you will, the second being the essence of what the Lord is communicating to Moses and Joshua, namely, that he knows the hidden agenda of the people. This is put literally as “the form which he (Israel) is doing,” the noun being *yetser* or a thing framed, here by way of intent. Chances are that the people hadn’t a clear-cut plan to apostatize but already were primed to make the move. “For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust” [Ps 103.14]. So when Moses heard these alarming words, words which he knew in essence well beforehand, at once he wrote down the song in one go—“the same day”—and taught it to Israel.

Once these depressing words are out of the way, in vs. 23 the Lord turns attention to Joshua while Moses is busy composing the song. He does so by commissioning him, *tsavah* as in vs. 14, bidding him to be strong (*chazaq* and *’amats* as in vs. 6) as leader of the people. Now Joshua knows more than ever that he’ll need every bit of divine consolation he can obtain after he gets the same perspective as the Lord into the nature of the people he is to lead.

Moses had finished writing the song which the Lord bade him to compose to the very end (vs. 24), these words intimating he was so preoccupied with the task at hand that he did it without pausing or hesitation. Just as immediately Moses commanded the Levites to put the book of the *torah* beside the ark of covenant. Compare with vs. 9 where Moses writes the *torah* and gives it to the same Levites. Although the *torah* and *shyrah* (song) are different, here they occupy the same place within the ark. Although tucked away in what could be called God’s presence among his people, the *shyrah* is to be a witness or *hed* literally “in (*b-*) you.” And so we have the two acting as one, uncomfortably close to Israel wherever the ark of the covenant goes.

In vs. 27 Moses echos the Lord by saying that he knows how rebellious and stubborn are the people, *mery* and *horeph*. Both are nouns, the first translated literally as “your rebellion.” “An evil man seeks only rebellion” [Prov 17.11]. The second means neck and is modified by the adjective *qasheh*, stiff or hard, both found together in 9.6. Moses says that Israel had been this way during his leadership and will continue to be so after his death, no words of comfort for Joshua.

To counter Israel’s seemingly irredeemable character, Moses decides to call an assembly (*qahal*, cf. vs. 12) of elders and offers to speak right into their ears his words (*davar*) regarding this. Not only that, he summons heaven and earth as witness, *hod* (cf. 30.18) literally “in (*b-*) them.” Both the elders and officers are just as prone to going along with the people, but if Moses can address them directly, again in their ears, perhaps they may cooperate with Joshua and thus prevent any rebellion against him should they worship the alien gods of Canaan. Moses puts this dangerous potential attitude upon the elders and officers by saying that they too will act in a corrupt fashion (*shachat*, cf. 9.26) and turn from

the instructions he had imparted earlier in the Sinai wilderness. At this juncture he may have been thinking of Jethro's words back in Ex 18.21, that is, choosing able-bodied men to help govern the people. While it worked well to date, nevertheless those who were chosen turned out to be just as prone to rebellion as those under them. So when Moses says that they will provoke the Lord by the work of their hands (vs. 29), he implies that they just might follow Aaron's example and fashion a calf to worship.

Chapter Thirty-One concludes with vs. 30 having the conjunctive *v-* translated as "then" to show the close connection between the dreary picture just depicted and the words (*davar*) of the song Moses is about to utter. "Until they were finished" or *tamam* (cf. 2.16) suggests that he will forge ahead with this song even though the people may be offended and attempt to stop him from finishing. That's why "in the ears" of the assembly (*qahal*, cf. 23.8) is added, indicative that he might have to resort to forcing them to pay attention whether they like it or not.

#### Numbers = Verses

halak: 1, shamad: 3, yarash: 3, shamad: 4, mitsvah: 5, chazaq: 6, 'amats: 6, chazaq: 7, 'amats' 7, nachal: 7, raphah: 8, hazav: 8, chatat: 8, torah: 9, torah: 10, mohed: 10, shemitah: 10, chag: 10, sukah: 10, maqom: 11, qahal (verb): 12, ger: 12, shamah: 12, lamad: 12, yare': 12, shamar: 12, yarash: 13, mohed: 14, yatsav: 14, tsavah: 14, zanah: 16, nakry: 16, qerev: 16, hazav: 16, parar: 16, 'aph: 17, charah: 17, hazav: 17, satar: 17, rah: 17, tsarah: 17, qerev: 17, satar: 18, rah: 18, panah: 18, shyrah: 19, lamad: 19, hed: 19, na'ats: 20, hed: vs. 21, yetser: 21, tsavah: 23, chazaq: 23, 'amats: 23, torah: 26, hed: 26, mery: 27, horeph: 27, qasheh: 27, qahal (verb): 28, hod: 28, shachat: 29, tamam: 30, qahal (noun): 30.

#### Chapter Thirty-Two

1) "Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 2) May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the gentle rain upon the tender grass and as the showers upon the herb. 3) For I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Ascribe greatness to our God! 4) "The Rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is he. 5) They have dealt corruptly with him, they are no longer his children because of their blemish; they are a perverse and crooked generation. 6) Do you thus requite the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you? 7) Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you. 8) When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. 9) For the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage. 10) "He found him in a desert land and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye. 11) Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions, 12) the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no foreign god with him. 13) He made him ride on the high places of the earth, and he ate the produce of the field; and



he made him suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock. 14) Curds from the herd and milk from the flock, with fat of lambs and rams, herds of Bashan and goats, with the finest of the wheat—and of the blood of the grape you drank wine. 15) "But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked; you waxed fat, you grew thick, you became sleek; then he forsook God who made him, and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation. 16) They stirred him to jealousy with strange gods; with abominable practices they provoked him to anger. 17) They sacrificed to demons which were no gods, to gods they had never known, to new gods that had come in of late whom your fathers had never dreaded. 18) You were unmindful of the Rock that begot you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth. 19) "The Lord saw it and spurned them because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters. 20) And he said, 'I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness. 21) They have stirred me to jealousy with what is no god; they have provoked me with their idols. So I will stir them to jealousy with those who are no people; I will provoke them with a foolish nation. 22) For a fire is kindled by my anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth and its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains. 23) "And I will heap evils upon them; I will spend my arrows upon them; 24) they shall be wasted with hunger and devoured with burning heat and poisonous pestilence; and I will send the teeth of beasts against them, with venom of crawling things of the dust. 25) In the open the sword shall bereave, and in the chambers shall be terror, destroying both young man and virgin, the sucking child with the man of gray hairs. 26) I would have said, "I will scatter them afar; I will make the remembrance of them cease from among men," 27) had I not feared provocation by the enemy lest their adversaries should judge amiss, lest they should say, "Our hand is triumphant, the Lord has not wrought all this." 28) "For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them. 29) If they were wise, they would understand this, they would discern their latter end! 30) How should one chase a thousand and two put ten thousand to flight unless their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had given them up? 31) For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges. 32) For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom and from the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of poison, their clusters are bitter; 33) their wine is the poison of serpents and the cruel venom of asps. 34) "Is not this laid up in store with me, sealed up in my treasuries? 35) Vengeance is mine and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly. 36) For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none remaining, bond or free. 37) Then he will say, 'Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge, 38) who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you, let them be your protection! 39) "'See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. 40) For I lift up my hand to heaven, and swear, As I live for ever, 41) if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries, and will requite those who hate me. 42) I will make my arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh—with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired heads of the enemy.' 43) "Praise his people, O you nations; for he avenges the blood of his servants and takes vengeance on his adversaries and makes expiation for the land of his people." 44) Moses came and recited all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he and Joshua the son of Nun. 45) And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, 46) he said to them, "Lay to heart all the words which I enjoin upon you this day, that you may command them to your children, that they may be careful to do all the words of this law. 47) For it is no trifle for you, but it is your life, and thereby you shall live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess." 48) And the Lord said to Moses that very day, 49) "Ascend this mountain of the Abarim,

Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho; and view the land of Canaan which I give to the people of Israel for a possession; 50) and die on the mountain which you ascend and be gathered to your people as Aaron your brother died in Mount Hor and was gathered to his people; 51) because you broke faith with me in the midst of the people of Israel at the waters of Meri-bath-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin; because you did not revere me as holy in the midst of the people of Israel. 52) For you shall see the land before you; but you shall not go there, into the land which I give to the people of Israel."

This chapter pretty much represents the essence of the Book of Deuteronomy coming towards the end of lengthy and repetitious accounts pertinent to observance of divine commandments and so forth. It and the next chapter are more poetic in nature which contributes to its richness. As the concluding words of the previous chapter have it, Moses spoke the words of this song...he *davar* the *davar*...“in the ears of all the assembly or *qahal* of Israel.” In sum, you get the impression that Moses has a fixed audience. They may squirm in the place where they are standing and would bolt if they could, but found themselves stuck there with their ears directed toward Moses. As a footnote in the RSV has it, “probably it (the song) dates from the early monarchy.” This implies all that has transpired from this point before entering Canaan through the Book of Joshua through the Book of Judges and finally when King David became after the interlude of King Saul. Thus it reflects all that has taken place and serve as a lesson for the present and future generations with the hope that such behavior won't be repeated.

The phrase “in the ears” mentioned in 31.30 as applied to Israel is found again in vs. 1 as applied primarily to the heavens above which Moses is addressing (*davar*), not the people of Israel. The heavens form a dome...an inverted bowl...which reaches to all cardinal points but is more than that by reason of being circular. So every heavenly body is positioned within this dome gazing down upon the Israelites, watching how Moses is about to handle them. He doesn't beat around the bush but gets down to the task as asking the heavens to be witness against the people. Everyone, of course, picked up on that right away, they being familiar with his style of leadership since having left Egypt. Once Moses has done this, he addresses the opposite end of the heavens, that is, the earth, *'emer* being the noun for words, not *davar*; which come from his mouth, and the only occurrence in Deuteronomy. Actually *'emer* and mouth are associated frequently throughout the Bible.

In vs. 2 Moses speaks of his teaching or *leqach* which derives from the verbal root *laqach*, the common verb to take and implies something one has received. “The wise man also may hear and increase in learning, and the man of understanding acquire skill” [Prov 1.5]. Such received teaching, if you will, has two functions:

1) it drops like dew, *haraph* also meaning to pluck or seize, the form at hand having one other reference, 33.28: “Yea, his heavens drop down dew.”

2) It distills as dew, *nazal* meaning to flow or to run. “He makes his wind blow, and the waters flow” [Ps 147.18]. Moses' teaching or *leqach* thus resembles gentle rain and showers, *sehryym* and *revyvym*. The former is the only use of this noun in the Bible derived

from a verbal root meaning to sweep away as in a torrent. The latter has five biblical references, one of which is Ps 65.10: “You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with shows and blessing its growth.” In sum, Moses starts off gently which must have come as a surprise to the people after hearing so much about their inability to keep divine ordinances, etc.

In vs. 3 Moses will proclaim or *qara'* (cf. 17.19) the Lord's name as well as giving greatness to him who here is “our God,” the verb being *yahav* (cf. 1.13 but not noted there) which also means to place.

Vs. 4 has the Lord as The Rock or *Tsur* (cf. 8.15 but not noted there) which for Moses was the place from which he saw God's glory pass by: “Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand upon the rock” [Ex 33.21]. The work or *pohal* of this Rock is perfect, *tamym* (cf. 18.13), the only other reference to this noun in Deuteronomy being 33.11: “and accept the work of his hands.” Also included are God's ways which are justice, faithfulness and no iniquity: *derek*, *mishpat*, *'emunah* and *havel* (cf. 28.7, 27.19 which is the only use of this noun in Deuteronomy and 25.16 but not noted there).

Now vs. 5 gets to what the people have been bracing themselves to hear. It starts off with Moses saying that they have dealt corruptly (*shachat*, cf. 31.29) which makes them no longer his children and has put a blemish upon them, *mum* also meaning a spot or defect as in 17.1. Such a permanent mark resembles a tattoo showing Israel to be a generation which is both perverse and crooked, *hiqesh* and *petaltol* (only use of this adjective in the Bible). The former is found with the verbal root for the latter in Ps 18.26: “With the crooked you show your perverse.” Use of the word generation (*dor*, cf. 29.22 but not noted there) with these two adjectives is a way of singling out the Israelites right before him in all their squimishness, hoping that their descendants will not follow their example.

Vs. 6 is the first of four rhetorical questions, the first with regard to requiting the Lord, *gamal* meaning to repay. “The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness” [Ps 18.20]. This is impossible from a people both foolish and lacking sense, *naval* and (not) *chakam* (cf. vs. 21 and 1.15 respectively). In the verse at hand the Lord also calls Israel their father who created, made and established them, *qanah*, *hasah* (cf. 16.13) and *kun*. The first verb means to purchase or buy while the third means to prepare (cf. 19.3 but not noted there). Surely there must have been a pause here, however short, while Moses allowed this question to sink into the minds of the people.

In vs. 7 Moses bids the people to remember the past, that is, going back many generations as well as the more immediate one of their fathers and elders. Included are those precious remaining Israelites who had first hand experience of leaving Egypt, crossing the Red Sea and experiencing the travails of forty years in the Sinai wilderness including God's revelation to Moses on Mount Horeb. As for the many generations, of course, they are long gone but memory of those who had lived in Egypt remains fresh because as just mentioned, some are still alive.

Strictly speaking Moses asks no question, intending to inquire as to how the present situation may be resolved in light of past events. Perhaps the oldest among the current generation might speak of how Israel had preserved its traditions and worship of the Lord in Egypt, that is, smack in the midst of a people who worshiped a multitude of alien divinities. The only difference was that the Israelites knew Egypt was not their true home so instinctively they felt an aversion to such worship. Canaan is another matter because the Lord promised it to Israel as her heritage, that is, a permanent home. If the inquiries proposed in the previous verse come off well, especially hints as how the present generation can comport itself among alien gods, Israel's future in Canaan will be secure.

In vs. 8 Moses outlines how the Lord gave each nation its inheritance and separated them one from another, *parad* meaning to break into pieces or to scatter. "For, lo, your enemies, O Lord, for, lo, your enemies shall perish; all evildoers shall be scattered" [Ps 92.9]. Use of *parad* can apply to the scattering of peoples for having built the tower of Babel: "So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth" [Gen 11.8], the verb *puts* (cf. 30.3) being used meaning to disperse. In the verse at hand, the next step is that the Lord fixed the bound of the peoples, *natsav* with *gevul* (cf. 29.10 and 27.17 respectively). He does this in accord with a plan, the Hebrew text reading literally "according to the number of the sons of Israel." Then as a supplement of sorts in vs. 9 Moses adds that the Lord is the portion of his people, *cheleq* (cf. 18.1) and that Jacob is his allotted heritage, *chevel* (cf. 3.14 but not noted there) also as a measuring line or tract of land with *nachalah* (cf. 26.1).

Vss. 10-14 speak of the Lord's special care for Israel which is reminiscent of Ezk 16.6-14, that section followed by a detailed description of succumbing to harlotry, etc., not unlike what follows the verses at hand. In vs. 10 the Lord finds "him" (not exactly specified though Jacob is mentioned in vs. 9) in the desert also rendered as "howling waste of the wilderness." The three words here are *tohu*, *yelel* and *yesheymon*. The first is famously associated with the very beginning of Genesis: "The earth was without form and void" [1.2]. The second is the only use of this noun in the Bible. The third is a wasteland compared with the more well known *midbar* (also in vs. 10) meaning a sterile, sandy area as well as a place for flocks. *Yesheymon* is found in Ps 68.7: "God, when you went forth before your people, when you marched through the wilderness."

Vs. 10 continues with what the Lord did in the *midbar/yesheymon*, namely, he encircled, cared for and kept or *savav*, *byn* and *natsar* (cf. 2.2, 1.15 and 33.9). Note that *byn* often translates as to understand; the preposition *byn* (between) also derives from it. *Natsar* is with respect to Israel being the apple of God's eye or *'yshon* which has four other biblical references, one of which is Ps 17.8: "Keep me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings."

In vs. 11 Moses likens the Lord to an eagle (*neshet*, cf. 14.12 but not noted there) getting its young ready to leave the nest and take to flight. A key word is *rachaph* or flutters with two other biblical references, Gen 1.2 and Jer 23, the former being cited here: "and the Spirit of

God was moving over the face of the waters.” The stirring up, fluttering, spreading of wings, catching and bearing are synonymous with the Lord leading or *nachah* in vs. 12, this verb applicable to governing. “And he brought them before the king of Moab” [1Sam 22.4]. The Lord along does this *nachah* minus any foreign god, *nekar* (cf. 31.16 but not noted there) being of similar sound and a noun, the text reading literally, “gods of strangers.”

In vs. 13 the Lord makes Israel ride on the earth’s high places, *rakav* applicable to either a chariot or upon a horse. “There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help” [33.26]. This making-to-ride intimates almost against one’s will which can apply to Israel’s perverse tendency to worship false gods. Vs. 13 can be seen in light of Ps 81.16: “I would feed you with the finest of the wheat, and with honey from the rock I would satisfy you.” As for the herds of Bashan, “You shall eat the flesh of the mighty and drink the blood of the princes of the earth—of rams, of lambs and of goats, of bulls, all of them fatlings of Bashan” [Ezk 39.18].

Now that the positive message in vss. 10-14 are out of the way, Moses returns to a lengthy scolding of Israel for much of Chapter Thirty-Two. He starts off in vs. 15 by calling Israel by the misnomer Jeshurun or the Upright One which is found next in 33.5 and then vs. 26. Jeshurun first forsakes God, *natash* meaning to let go or to send away. Compare with 1Sam 12.22: “The Lord will not cast away his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself.” Immediately after this *natash* Israel scoffs the Rock of salvation, the verb being *navel* (cf. 32.6 for the adjective, same spelling) which means to fade away or to esteem lightly. “Do not dishonor your glorious throne” [Jer 14.21]. As for the rock or *tsur* (cf. vs. 4) associated with salvation or *yeshuah*, Moses couldn’t help but recall his experience noted with regard to vs. 4 concerning Ex 33.21 when the Lord put him in the *tsur* to behold his divine glory. Vs. 15 contains the only reference in Deuteronomy for *yeshuah* which also translates as the proper name Jesus. “The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation” [Ex 15.2].

The next step in Israel’s self-degradation is to make the Lord jealous, *qana’* (cf. 6.15) by worshiping strange gods, the verb *zanah* (cf. 31.16) which means to act as a whore (‘gods’ aren’t in the Hebrew text). Coupled with this is provoking the Lord to anger, *kahas* (cf. 9.18) and *tohevah* (cf. 27.15) which means an abomination.

Right after mentioning strange gods, vs. 17 speaks of demons or *shed* which has one other biblical reference, Ps 106.37: “They sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons.” These are pretty much equivalent to no gods, gods which Israel never knew and new gods which Israel’s fathers never have dreaded, *sahar* fundamentally meaning to shudder or quiver. “Their kings are horribly afraid, their faces are convulsed” [Ezk 27.45].

*Nashah* is the verb for unmindful in vs. 18 with regard to the Lord as Rock (*tsur*, cf. vs. 15) which brought Israel into the world, this coupled with forgetting (*shakach*, cf. 4.31), the former intimating neglect which is the heart of the problem. It was only natural for the Lord to spurn his people, *na’ats* (cf. 31.20) also meaning to despise in vs. 19, because of the



provocation involved, *kahas* (cf. vs. 16). By calling them sons and daughters the *nashah*, *shakach* and *na'ats* are made all the more poignant.

In vs. 20 the Lord decides upon an experiment, if you will, by hiding (*satar*, cf. 31.18) his face to see what will happen, for he is dealing with a generation which is perverse and has no faith, *tahpukoth* and *'emun*. The former connotes deceit or fraud. "And delight in the perverseness of evil" [Prov 2.14]. The latter (i.e., faith) has four other biblical references such as Prov 13.17: "A bad messenger plunges men into trouble, but a faithful envoy brings healing."

In vs. 21 both perverseness and a lack of faith stir the Lord to jealousy, *qana'* pretty much as in vs. 16, here with amounts to no-god as well as idols, *hevel* meaning literally vanity or emptiness. "Vanity of vanities says the preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity" [Eccl 1.2]. In the verse at hand, the verb is *kahas* as in vs. 19. This instance the Lord tries a new trick, turning the tables on Israel by stirring the people to jealousy with regard to no-people as well as proving them (*kahas* again) with a nation that's foolish, *naval* (cf. vs. 6). When the Lord takes such a recourse to action ultimately it's for Israel's benefit although she doesn't know it now.

In vs. 22 the Lord kindles not just a fire but one coming from his nostrils (*'aph*, cf. 31.13) which reaches down to Sheol, this being the only time it's found in Deuteronomy. In between, as it were, this fire burns the earth as well as setting the foundations of the mountains ablaze. Such foundations rest beneath what they support, and not far below them we have Sheol.

Vss. 23-24 sound a lot like a series of plagues, reminiscent to the Israelites of the ten plagues which the Lord sent against Egypt: arrows, hunger, burning heat, pestilence, beats and crawling things. Following these the sword (implying an invasion) will bereave or *shakal* which implies making childless. "Therefore you shall no longer devour men and no longer bereave your nation of children" [Ezk 36.14].

In vss. 26-27 the Lord wonders aloud, taking the side of Israel's unnamed enemy, about scattering the people and having other peoples forget their name, *pa'ah* being the only use of this verb in the Bible. However, the Lord is restrained by fear of provocation (*kahas*, cf. vs. 19) by Israel's enemy, that she will claim the Lord hasn't done it. In a way, this will be a perverse proof for Israel that he doesn't exist and thus re-enforce the inclination to worship false gods.

Vs. 28 speaks of Israel lacking counsel, the participle *'avad* (cf. 28.22) meaning to perish, that any counsel or *hetsah* (the only use in Deuteronomy) from the Lord is death-dealing. "Give here your advice and counsel" [Jud 20.7]. In addition to this toxic counsel, Israel lacks understanding, *tevunah* being the only use in Deuteronomy. "Apply your heart to understanding" [Prov 2.2]. Should Israel be wise or *chakam* (only use of this verb in Deuteronomy, three in a row which says something about Israel), she would be able to

discern their end, *byn* (cf. vs. 20) being the verb from which *tevunah* is derived. Such understanding pertains to Israel's end or *'acharyth* (cf. 4.30) which can be twofold: destruction or the purpose for which the Lord had in mind.

Vs. 30 is a rhetorical question about Israel's inability to believe that ruin has befallen them because their Rock (*tsur*; cf. vs. 18) had abandoned them, *sagar* meaning to shut up or to put away. "And has not delivered me into the hand of the enemy; you have set my feet in a broad place" [Ps 37.8]. Vs. 31 speaks of Israel's unidentified enemies as an imitation of the divine Rock who had set themselves up as judges, *palyl* having two other biblical references, Ex 21.22 and Job 31.11, the former being cited here: "and he shall pay as the judges determine."

Vs. 32 compares Israel with the dreaded image of Sodom and Gomorrah or as being a vine which yields bitter grapes. Similarly in vs. 33 the wine derived is poisonous and venomous as that of serpents. Behind this image of Sodom and Gomorrah is the intercession of Abraham of which Israel is well aware, an intercession that failed to achieve pardon for the two cities (cf. Gen 18.22-33).

Vs. 34 is another rhetorical question, this and the one in vs. 30 sandwiching the verses about Sodom and Gomorrah. The fate of Israel which could be not unlike these two cities is stored up with the Lord, *kamas* as the only use of this verb in the Bible. Not only that, it's sealed in his treasuries or *'otsar* (cf. 28.12). Such is the form of vengeance in vs. 35, *naqam* found next in vs. 41 as well as recompense, *shilem* being the noun and only use of this word in the Bible which is akin to *shalom*. This is followed by two mentions of time, time and day after which comes calamity and doom. The first is *'eyd* as in Ps 18.18: "They came upon me in the day of my calamity, but the Lord was my stay." The second is *hatyd* which has five other biblical references, one of which is Job 3.8: "Let those curse it who curse the day." The first is near and the latter comes swiftly, *qarov* (cf. 30.14) and *chus* (Ps 119.60, 'I made haste and delayed not').

At long last and for what seems to Israel an eternity, Moses (vs. 36) begins to take a comforting stance as to the Lord's relationship. He will have vindication and compassion, the two verbs being *dyn* (cf. 17.8) and *nacham* which also means to lament or grieve. "When I think of your ordinances from of old, I take comfort, O Lord" [Ps 119.52]. However, both are conditional, namely, that Israel's power is gone, the common noun for hand and the verb *'azal* which has five other biblical references, one of which is 1Sam 9.7: "For the bread in our sacks is gone." Also both the person in bondage and the one who is free will not remain.

Vs. 37 is yet another rhetorical question, the Lord asking the whereabouts of Israel's gods which supposedly form a rock of refuge, *tsur* with *chasah*, the latter being a verb meaning to trust. "O Lord my God, in you do I take refuge" [Ps 7.1]. While taking refuge in this precarious shelter, Israel ate sacrifices made to such gods as noted in vs. 38. If Israel considers them to be this *tsur*, the Lord encourages them, ironically speaking, to let them be their protection or *sitrah*, the only use of this noun in the Bible and derived from *satar* (cf.

vs. 20).

In response to Israel's idolatry in the previous verse now (vs. 39) he says literally "I, I he" and "there is no god with me." He demonstrates this by setting up two pairs of opposites: kill and make alive, wound and heal. It's impossible for anyone to change this as through idol worship, for no one can deliver from the Lord's hand, the verb being *natsal* (cf. 25.11 but not noted there) suggestive of rescuing.

As for the Lord's hand in vs. 39, it's mentioned again in vs. 40 where he lifts it up to heaven, about to swear or make some kind of oath, the common verb *'amar* (to speak) being used. This speaking continues through vs. 42 where the Lord's arrows will be drunk with blood and his sword devour flesh, as directed to taking vengeance upon adversaries and requiting those who hate him. The two verbs are *naqam* (cf. vs. 35) and *shalom* meaning to repay as in 7.10.

Vs. 43 concludes the song "in the ears of all the assembly of Israel" [vs. 1] with an exhortation not just to Israel but to all nations (*goy*, cf. 29.16) consisting of three parts, the first two with regard to avenging (*naqam*, cf. vs. 41) both his servants and adversaries followed by making expiation or *kaphar* (cf. 21.8) literally for "his land his people," *'adamah* (cf. 28.21) and people being one and the same. Hopefully the people will respond to this divine willingness to cover over...to *kaphar*...what they had done.

Vs. 44 repeats the words of vs. 1 noted in the paragraph above, that is, with a second *davar* to show Israel the importance of what he had just communicated. That's why in vs. 46 he exhorts the people to lay these *davar* on their hearts (*levav*, cf. 30.17) which reads literally and right to the point, "place your hearts." While Moses obviously cares for the people he's addressing, he's more concerned about future generations, that their children may be careful or *shamar* (cf. 31.12) to do all the *davar* handed to him by the Lord. Such *davar* are no trifling matter or literally no *davar* which is *reyq*, an adjective meaning vain or empty. "But he who follows worthless pursuits has no sense" [Prov 12.11]. In sum, the *davar* from the Lord are Israel's very life which will enable her to take up permanent residence in Canaan.

Vs. 48 has not just "that day" but "that very day," *hetsem* (cf. 8.17) meaning essentially bone. The idea is that the day at hand is more than a *kairos* event, if you will, but a turning point in the life of Moses who is about to die. The conjunctive *v-* which begins this verse also ties Moses' song with the immediacy and importance at hand. Now the Lord bids Moses to ascend Mount Nebo to view the land of Canaan, it being opposite Jericho which is a fertile plain. There the Lord tells Moses outrightly to die there and like Aaron, to be gathered to the people (cf. Num 20.22+), the verb *'asaph* essentially as to increase meaning here to be received by Israel. (Cf. 28.38 but not noted there).

In vs. 51 the Lord informs Moses why he is to die, less than comforting last words to be sure. It's because he broke faith with the Lord at Meribah-kadesh, the verb being *mahal* which also means to act treacherously. When the Moses heard this obviously he was terrified. "If

any man's wife goes astray and acts unfaithfully against him" [Num 5.12]. The incident at hand is recounted in Num 20.2-12 where responsibility clearly lay with the people who complained bitterly about a lack of water. Both Moses and Aaron responded naturally by beseeching the Lord who to their surprise rebuked them for what seems to be as not taking immediate action. Regardless, the point seems to be that all members of the assembly of Israel are interconnected and that the action of one person affects everyone else. In the verse at hand, this is intimated by *malah* being in the midst of Israel, *tavek* always used with a prefaced which here is rendered as *betok*. There Moses failed to revere the Lord as holy, *qadash* (cf. vs. 12), again, *betok* the people.

And so Chapter Thirty-Two concludes with Moses standing there on Mount Nebo after having been rebuked, something he had expected all along but kept to himself, and taking one glimpse at Canaan which the Lord forbade him to enter. However, Moses is not to die immediately as he gazes in that direction. Chapter Thirty-Three has a final blessing which in a sense is part two of the song he had just concluded.

#### Numbers = Verses

'emer: 1, leqach: 2, haraph: 2, nazal: 2, sehyrym: 2, revyvym: 2, qara': 3, yahav: 3, tsur: 4, tamym: 4, pohal: 4, derek: 4, mishpat: 4, 'emunah: 4, havel: 4, shachat: 5, mum: 5, dor: 5, hiqesh: 5, petaltol: 5, naval: 6, chakam: 6, qanah: 6, hasah: 6, kun: 6, parad: 8, natsav: 8, gevul: 8, cheleq: 9, chevel: 9, nachalah: 9, tohu: 10, yeled: 10, yesheymon: 10, savav: 10, byn: 10, natsar: 10, 'yshon: 10, nesher: 11, rachaph: 11, nachah: 12, nekar: 12, rakav: 13, natash: 15, navel: 15, tsur: 15, yeshuah: 15, qana': 16, zanah: 16, kahas: 16, shed: 17, sahar: 17, tsur: 18, shakach: 18, na'ats: 19, kahas: 19, satar: 20, tahpukoth: 20, 'emun: 20, qana': 21, hevel: 21, kahas: 21, naval: 21, 'aph: 22, shakal: 25, pa'ah: 26, kahas: 27, 'avad: 28, hetsah: 28, tevunah: 28, byn: 29, 'acharyth: 29, tsur: 30, sagar: 30, palyl: 31, kamas: 34, 'otsar: 34, shilem: 35, 'eyd: 35, hatyd: 35, qarov: 35, chus: 35, dyn: 36, nacham: 36, 'azal: 36, tsur: 37, chasah: 37, sitrah: 38, natsal: 39, naqam: 41, shalom (verb): 41, goy: 43, naqam: 41, kaphar: 43, 'adamah: 43, levav: 46, shamar: 46, reyq: 47, hetsem: 48, 'asaph: 50, mahal: 51, betok: 51, qadash: 51.

#### Chapter Thirty-Three

1) This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. 2) He said, "The Lord came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran, he came from the ten thousands of holy ones with flaming fire at his right hand. 3) Yes, he loved his people; all those consecrated to him were in his hand; so they followed in your steps, receiving direction from you 4) when Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob. 5) Thus the Lord became king in Jeshurun when the heads of the people were gathered, all the tribes of Israel together. 6) "Let Reuben live and not die, nor let his men be few." 7) And this he said of Judah: "Hear, O Lord, the voice of Judah and bring him in to his people. With your hands contend for him and be a help against his adversaries." 8) And of Levi he said, "Give to Levi your Thummim, and your Urim to your godly one whom you tested at Massah, with whom you strove at the waters of Meribah; 9) who said of his father and mother, 'I regard them not'; he

disowned his brothers, and ignored his children. For they observed your word and kept your covenant. 10) They shall teach Jacob your ordinances and Israel your law; they shall put incense before you and whole burnt offering upon your altar. 11) Bless, O Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; crush the loins of his adversaries, of those that hate him, that they rise not again." 12) Of Benjamin he said, "The beloved of the Lord, he dwells in safety by him; he encompasses him all the day long and makes his dwelling between his shoulders." 13) And of Joseph he said, "Blessed by the Lord be his land, with the choicest gifts of heaven above and of the deep that couches beneath, 14) with the choicest fruits of the sun and the rich yield of the months, 15) with the finest produce of the ancient mountains and the abundance of the everlasting hills, 16) with the best gifts of the earth and its fulness and the favor of him who dwelt in the bush. Let these come upon the head of Joseph and upon the crown of the head of him that is prince among his brothers. 17) His firstling bull has majesty, and his horns are the horns of a wild ox; with them he shall push the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth; such are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and such are the thousands of Manasseh." 18) And of Zebulun he said, "Rejoice, Zebulun, in your going out; and Issachar in your tents. 19) They shall call peoples to their mountain; there they offer right sacrifices; for they suck the affluence of the seas and the hidden treasures of the sand." 20) And of Gad he said, "Blessed be he who enlarges Gad! Gad couches like a lion, he tears the arm, and the crown of the head. 21) He chose the best of the land for himself, for there a commander's portion was reserved; and he came to the heads of the people, with Israel he executed the commands and just decrees of the Lord." 22) And of Dan he said, "Dan is a lion's whelp that leaps forth from Bashan." 23) And of Naphtali he said, "O Naphtali, satisfied with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord, possess the lake and the south." 24) And of Asher he said, "Blessed above sons be Asher; let him be the favorite of his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil. 25) Your bars shall be iron and bronze; and as your days, so shall your strength be. 26) "There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help and in his majesty through the skies. 27) The eternal God is your dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms. And he thrust out the enemy before you, and said, Destroy. 28) So Israel dwelt in safety, the fountain of Jacob alone, in a land of grain and wine; yes, his heavens drop down dew. 29) Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, the shield of your help and the sword of your triumph! Your enemies shall come fawning to you; and you shall tread upon their high places."

Here the conjunctive *v*- (not in the **RSV**) beginning a new chapter is especially important because it's connected directly with the Lord's words to Moses, namely, that he would die on top of Mount Nebo. Throughout his life Moses performed many blessings (*berakah*, cf. 30.1) but this one...his last...is special because it involves Israel as a whole. While there's no mention of the people gathered at the base of Nebo, this is secondary. Everyone knew that Moses ascended there for the last time, he having informed his successor Joshua who, in turn, informed the people. It didn't matter if no one could communicate with Moses. They knew he was up there doing what he did best throughout his life, mediating for them before the Lord.

Appropriately enough Moses begins with saying that the Lord came from Sinai, implying the wilderness, into which he wanted his people to enter but to do so initially with pharaoh's permission. The first instance of several encounters is Ex 5.1: Let my people go that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness." Because pharaoh refused, the Lord came to the Israelites. Then there follows two mentions of the Lord with respect to light:



1) Dawned from Seir mentioned last in Chapter Two as the place where the descendants of Esau live and through which Israel had to traverse but not remain. The verb is *zarach* which often is applied to the rising of the sun. "Light rises in the darkness for the upright" [Ps 112.4].

2) Shone from Mount Paran (cf. 1.1), this area being home to Ishmael and later where the Lord in a cloud settled down (cf. Num 10.12). It is found at the very beginning of Israel's forty year long journey throughout Sinai. The verb is *yaphah* which is more to give or to scatter light. "Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God shines forth" [Ps 50.2].

In addition to this the Lord comes from ten thousand ones, most likely referring to the Israelites as in 14.2: "Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth the Lord has chosen you to be his treasured possession." A third reference to light may be added here, that is, the Lord is accompanied with flaming fire of which the **RSV** says "the meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain." Anyway, it could refer to the pillar of light which had accompanied Israel during the day.

*Chavav* is the verb for love in vs. 3 which connotes breathing as well as cherishing and is the only use of this word in the Bible. The object is "peoples" as opposed to the singular "people" in the **RSV**. Perhaps just before his death as Moses continues to gaze out from Mount Nebo he realizes that the Lord loves not just Israel but those dwelling in Canaan. If he could change the plan to exterminate them, he would do it now but it's too late. Moses speaks of those consecrated to the Lord, *qadash* meaning to be set apart, to be holy (cf. 32.51). Most likely he means Israel who is "in your hand," not "in his hand" as the **RSV** has it. Being set apart means following in the Lord's steps (the **RSV** 'says "meaning of the Hebrew word is uncertain') and literally as "lifting *davar* from you."

In vs. 4 Moses seems to speak of himself though it's not exactly clear, this verse continuing into the next, having begin in the previous one. He is associated with *Torah* (cf. 31.26) which is a possession or *morashah* hearkening back to Ex 6.8: "I will give it (the land) to you for a possession." More specifically this *Torah/morashah* is for the *qahal* (cf. 31.30) of Jacob.

The idea of *qahal* or sacred assembly applied to Jacob carries over to all Israel's tribes in vs. 5, that is, once they have been gathered together (*yasaph*, cf. 5.22). This comes about once the Lord has become king in Jeshurun (cf. 32.15).

For the rest of Chapter Thirty-Three Moses blesses each of the tribes of Israel, Simeon being omitted because, as the **RSV** notes, it has disappeared (cf. Gen 49.5-7). The first mentioned is Reuben whom Moses begs to live, that tribe being threatened with extinction. Nothing more is said, just a simple, heartfelt plea.

Next comes Judah in vs. 7 whose voice Moses begs the Lord to hear. He also implores the Lord to contend for him, literally as "with his hands he contended," the verb being *ryv* (cf. 21.5) as well as to help against his adversaries, the noun being *hezer* and found next in vs.

26.

As for Levi, vss. 8 and 9 form one extended sentence starting off with Moses' request to the Lord to give him the Thummim and Urim, the Hebrew lacking "Give to Levi." "And in the breastplate of judgment you shall put the Urim and the Thummim, and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goes in before the Lord" [Ex 28.30]. *Chasyd* or holy one is found in this verse which seems to belong to Levi, this noun derived from *chesed*, divine mercy. "With the loyal you show yourself loyal; with the blameless you show yourself blameless" [2Sam 22.26]. As for Massah and Meribah, cf. Ex 17.1-7 when the people complained about a lack of water; also cf. 32.51. In both places the Levites aren't mentioned.

The loyalty of the Levites as well as having no inheritance promised to Israel stems in part from having no attachment to their parents or siblings. Instead, in vs. 9 they exchange these family relationships for *shamar* and *natsar* or observing the divine word and keeping the covenant. Their loyal can be traced to having helped Moses in the difficult task of slaying their fellow Israelites for having worshiped the calf Aaron had forged (cf. Ex 32.26). For the verbs cf. 32.36 and 10 respectively and the nouns *'imrah* and *beryth*, 32.2 but not noted there and 29.1 respectively. The Levites will teach the Lord's ordinances (*mishpat*) to Jacob and the *torah* to Israel (cf. 32.4 and vs. 4 respectively), the verb being *yarah* (cf. 17.11) fundamentally meaning to cast. Furthermore they will offer incense and make sacrifices.

Vs. 11 seems to be an interlude of sorts, a bursting into praise as Moses blesses the various tribes. He exclaims a blessing upon the Lord's substance or *chayl* (cf. 8.18) which means strength or valor. Following this is a wish for the Lord to do away with his adversaries which here are unspecified but can be taken in a generic way.

The next tribe to receive Moses' blessing is Benjamin in vs. 12 who he calls beloved of the Lord, *yedyd*. "That your beloved may be delivered" [Ps 60.5]. He will have the advantage of dwelling in safety, *betach* (cf. 12.10) intimating trust. Such words are reminiscent of John, the discipline beloved Jesus Christ. This assumes the form of encompassing Benjamin, *chaphaph* meaning to protect, the only word in the Bible. Also the Lord will dwell between the shoulders of Benjamin, these words similar to vs. 27, "everlasting arms."

Of the tribes Moses blesses Joseph receives the most attention starting in vs. 12 and running through vs. 17. The noun for choicest is *mege'd* meaning something very precious and in the Hebrew refers to the dew and choicest fruits, monthly produce, everlasting hills, and gifts of the earth in vss. 15 and 16. In other words, the same prerogative pharaoh bestowed upon Joseph in Egypt is magnified by the Lord. In sum, Joseph is a prince among his brothers which is rendered by the two nouns *qadqod* or crown and *nazyr* which means Nazirite or one separated for special service to the Lord." For the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from birth" [Jud 13.5] referring to Samson. Joseph will push all peoples to the ends of the earth, this followed by brief mention in vs. 17 of Ephraim and Manasseh who will assist him.

Vs. 18 has brief mention of Zebulun and Issachar, the former with regard to going out and

the latter with regard to remaining in tents. Vs. 19 says that they will perform right sacrifices or literally “sacrifices of righteousness” (*tsedeq*, cf. 16.20).

Vss. 20-21 pertain to Gad’s leadership qualities as compared with a lion. More importantly, God does commands and just decrees of the Lord, *tsedaqah* and *mishpat* (cf. 24.13 and vs. 10 respectively).

Dan is a lion’s whelp in vs. 22, leaping from Bashan which is mentioned first in 1.4 with regard to King Og.

As for Naphtali in vs. 23, this tribe is satisfied with favor or *ratson* (cf. vs. 16 but not noted there) and divine blessings.

In vs. 24 Moses calls Asher the favorite or *baruk* (blessed) of his brothers.

Jeshurun is mentioned in vs. 26 and noted last in 32.15, a misnomer for Israel whose God is associated with the heavens and skies, God being his dwelling or *mahon* also meaning a refuge. “O Lord, I love the habitation of your house and the place where your glory dwells” [Ps 26.8]. Note the connection between Benjamin’s shoulders in vs. 12 with the everlasting arms here in vs. 27. Also in vs. 27 the Lord commands Jeshurun to destroy its enemies, *shamad* (cf. 31.4).

In vs. 28 signals Moses drawing to conclusion his blessing of Israel’s tribes saying that it will dwell in safety, *betach* (cf. vs. 12). Also Jacob is a fountain dropping dew producing grain and wine. The conclusion reaches a crescendo in vs. 29 when Moses pronounces Israel happy or *’esher* which connotes being straight or to prosper. “Happy is the man who takes refuge in him” [Ps 34.8]! The reason for such happiness rests in the fact that the Lord saved Israel, *yashah* (cf. 28.31), this being bound up with Israel treading upon the high places of her enemies, *marom* (cf. 32.13) also intimating places where Canaanites worship their deities. “Demolish all their high places” [Num 33.52]. Certainly from Mount Nebo Moses could pick out several such mountain tops.

#### Numbers = Verses

berakah: 1, zarach: 2, yaphah: 2, chavav: 3, qadash: 3, torah: 4, morashah: 4, qahal (noun): 4, yasaph: 5, ryv: 7, hezer: 7, chasyd: 8, shamar: 9, natsar: 9, ‘imrah, beryth: 9, mishpat: 10, torah: 10, yarah: 10, chayl: 11, yedyd: 12, betach: 12, meged: 14, qadqad: 16, nazyr: 16, tsedeq: 19, tsedaqah: 21, mishpat: 21, ratson: 23, baruk: 24, mahon: 27, shamad: 27, betach: 28, ‘esher: 29, yashah: 29, marom: 29.

### Chapter Thirty-Four

1) And Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah which is

opposite Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2) all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, 3) the Negeb, and the Plain, that is, the valley of Jericho the city of palm trees as far as Zoar. 4) And the Lord said to him, "This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, 'I will give it to your descendants.' I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." 5) So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab according to the word of the Lord, 6) and he buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows the place of his burial to this day. 7) Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died; his eye was not dim nor his natural force abated. 8) And the people of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. 9) And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him; so the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses. 10) And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses whom the Lord knew face to face, 11) none like him for all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land 12) and for all the mighty power and all the great and terrible deeds which Moses wrought in the sight of all Israel.

The conjunctive *v-* shows the immediacy of Moses' blessing in the previous chapter with the dramatic conclusion of the current one, the conclusion of the Book of Deuteronomy. Compare Moses ascending Mount Nebo with 32.49 where the Lord bids him to do the same, that is, in between the song of Chapter Thirty-Two and the blessing of Chapter Thirty-Three. In other words, we have two ascents: one required for the song and the other for the death of Moses. From this summit Moses could see Jericho with its rich plains, an enticing view after forty years of being in the Sinai wilderness. In essence Moses could see just about the entire land Israel is destined to enter and take possession or as has been noted several times earlier, repossess. After all, it's the land the Lord swore to the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a promises which occurs frequently in Deuteronomy. It might be interesting to compare the Lord showing Canaan to Moses with the devil showing Jesus the kingdoms of the earth: "Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them" [Mt 4.8]. Chances are that Jesus thought of Moses, the two instances having a certain parallel but an obvious major difference.

Of the three the divine promises has the most weight with Abraham "God from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" [Gen 12.1]. Moses too could identify with these words. Although he and the Israelites had experienced hardship in Egypt, it was only towards the end of their four hundred year stay there that they had experience oppression. So in many ways Egypt had become their home. Like Abraham, Moses left that comfortable place for the unknown but unlike Abraham, never entered it but saw it. But for Moses to see Canaan from on top of Nebo was sufficient for him.

As soon as the Lord told Moses that he won't enter Canaan, he died being called servant (*heved*, cf. 15.17) of the Lord in vs. 5. When this verse says that Moses died there according to the word of the Lord, he as mouthpiece of the divine *davar* ended his ministry with the

same *davar* which opens Deuteronomy: “These are the *davar* which Moses *davar* to all Israel” [1.1]. Because Moses was on top of Mount Nebo away from the people, it was up to the Lord to bury him and did so in secret. That means no one knows his burial place, a fitting end to someone who had spent most of his wandering after he had left Egypt. The words about not knowing this “to this day” serve to heighten the sense of mystery about Moses’ end, for since the Lord was responsible for interring him, he made sure his grave never would be discovered. This is true despite narrowing down the location to the valley in Moab opposite Beth-peor (vs. 6).

Moses died in what could be described as the fulness of years, his eyes neither dim nor his natural force abated. *Kahah* is the verb for dim which also means to be darkened. “His right eye shall be darkened utterly” [Zech 11.17]. *Lech* is the noun for natural force meaning vigor or freshness, the only use of this noun in the Bible used here with the verb *nus* meaning to flee (cf. 32.30 but not noted there). So if Moses was in such good health, the Lord didn’t murder him, if you will. The sight of Canaan and promise it held out for Israel according to the three patriarchs was sufficient to make him pass from this world. However, Moses didn’t ascend into heaven as did Elijah. His whole life revolved in getting Israel into the land of promise, so to be buried as close to that land as possible was sufficient. So while Moses’ body may lay in the ground, his vision passed over with Israel into Canaan.

Vs. 8 speaks of a thirty day mourning period by Israel for Moses. Mention that this time had ended signals in fact a beginning, of getting ready to cross the Jordan River under Joshua’s guidance. Now attention begins to shift to Joshua who will dominate the next book after Deuteronomy, he being full of the spirit of wisdom, *ruach* and *chakmah* (cf. 2.30 and 4.6 respectively). Both are transmitted by the laying on of hands: “Call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tent of meeting that I may commission him” [31.14]. If Moses had done this in private, the people may dispute Joshua’s leadership which is why as vs. 9 continues, they obeyed Joshua and did as the Lord commanded Moses.

Vs. 10 calls Moses a prophet, the last and only other time being 18.15: “The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you.” That is to say, Moses is speaking of Joshua without naming him although everyone had a pretty good idea it was him. However, only to Moses is attributed the fact that the Lord knew...that intimate knowledge of *yadah* (cf. 18.21)...Moses face to face. “Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent” [Ex 33.11]. Again note the close connection between Moses and Joshua which is important to insert here at the end of Deuteronomy. Although the final two verses of this book end with mention of signs and wonders Moses had done in Egypt as well as the equally wonderful things he had done in the Sinai wilderness, especially at Horeb, the speaking face to face superceded them all and informed them all.

Numbers = Verses



heved: 5, kahah: 7, leach: 7, nus: 7, ruach: 9, chakmah: 9, yadah: 10.

+ The End +

A brief concluding remark on the text, if you will:

Going through the Book of Deuteronomy is not an easy read. It's a constant give-and-take between the Lord's faithfulness and Israel' tendency to stray from him which takes the form of being attracted to the alien gods of Canaan. Nevertheless, once you've managed to survive reading through this repetitious document—in the spirit of *lectio divina*, of course—it dawns that Deuteronomy is an image of your own journey towards God. That is to say, the continuous mention of straying from the Lord and his constant readiness to receive Israel is not proper to that nation alone. Everyone shares in it. All the falls and restorations by Israel—and the people haven't even settled in Canaan—mirror an individual person's struggles. And these struggles aren't pretty, just as boring as pointed out with regard to Deuteronomy.

Then there's the prospect laying ahead, the Book of Joshua, which is replete with similar advances and backslidings. While it may be difficult to cope with these constant ups and downs, after a while things smooth out and you realize who's in charge, delighting in that regardless of what happens. Yes, the key isn't getting worked up whether we're up or down but in seeing a much larger pattern taking shape through them which has God as its source. Revelation and appreciation of the Lord's *davar*...his expression mentioned so many times in Deuteronomy...is the only thing that matters.

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