

THE FIFTH BOOK OF MOSES CALLED

DEUTERONOMY

Commentary by **ROBERT JAMIESON**

CHAPTER 1

DEUTERONOMY 1:1-46.

MOSES' SPEECH AT THE END OF THE FORTIETH YEAR.

1. *These be the words which Moses spake unto all Israel* — The mental condition of the people generally in that infantine age of the Church, and the greater number of them being of young or tender years, rendered it expedient to repeat the laws and counsels which God had given. Accordingly, to furnish a recapitulation of the leading branches of their faith and duty was among the last public services which Moses rendered

to Israel. The scene of their delivery was on the plains of Moab where the encampment was pitched

on this side Jordan — or, as the *Hebrew* word may be rendered “on the bank of the Jordan.”

in the wilderness, in the plain — the Arabah, a desert plain, or steppe, extended the whole way from the Red Sea north to the Sea of Tiberias. While the high tablelands of Moab were “cultivated fields,” the Jordan valley, at the foot of the mountains where Israel was encamped, was a part of the great desert plain, little more inviting than the desert of Arabia. The locale is indicated by the names of the most prominent places around it. Some of these places are unknown to us. The *Hebrew* word, *Suph*, “red” (for “sea,” which our translators have inserted, is not in the original, and Moses was now farther from the Red Sea than ever), probably meant a place noted for its reeds (^{צפח} Numbers 21:14).

Tophel — identified as Tafyle or Tafeilah, lying between Bozrah and Kerak.

Hazereth — is a different place from that at which the Israelites encamped after leaving “the desert of Sinai.”

2. *There are eleven days’ journey from Horeb* — Distances are computed in the East still by the hours or days occupied by the journey. A day’s journey on foot is about twenty miles — on camels, at the rate of three miles an hour, thirty miles — and by caravans, about twenty-five miles. But the Israelites, with children and flocks, would move at a slow rate. The length of the Ghor from Ezion-geber to Kadesh is a hundred miles. The days here mentioned were not necessarily successive days [ROBINSON], for the journey can be made in a much shorter period. But this mention of the *time* was made to show that the great number of years spent in travelling from Horeb to the plain of Moab was not owing to the length of the way, but to a very different cause; namely, banishment for their apostasy and frequent rebellions.

mount Seir — the mountainous country of Edom.

3-8. *in the fortieth year ... Moses spake unto the children of Israel*, etc. — This impressive discourse, in which Moses reviewed all that God had

done for His people, was delivered about a month before his death, and after peace and tranquillity had been restored by the complete conquest of Sihon and Og.

4. *Ashtaroth* — the royal residence of Og, so called from Astarte (“the moon”), the tutelary goddess of the Syrians. Og was slain at

Edrei — now Edhra, the ruins of which are fourteen miles in circumference [BURCKHARDT]; its general breadth is about two leagues.

5. *On this side Jordan, in the land of Moab, began Moses to declare this law* — that is, explain this law. He follows the same method here that he elsewhere observes; namely, that of first enumerating the marvellous doings of God in behalf of His people, and reminding them what an unworthy requital they had made for all His kindness — then he rehearses the law and its various precepts.

6. *The Lord our God spake unto us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount* — Horeb was the general name of a mountainous district; literally, “the parched” or “burnt region,” whereas Sinai was the name appropriated to a particular peak [see on <sup>¹⁰⁰⁰Exodus 19:2]. About a year had been spent among the recesses of that wild solitude, in laying the foundation, under the immediate direction of God, of a new and peculiar community, as to its social, political, and, above all, religious character; and when this purpose had been accomplished, they were ordered to break up their encampment in Horeb. The command given them was to march straight to Canaan, and possess it [<sup>¹⁰⁰⁰Deuteronomy 1:7].

7. *the mount of the Amorites* — the hilly tract lying next to Kadesh-barnea in the south of Canaan.

to the land of the Canaanites, and unto Lebanon — that is, Phoenicia, the country of Sidon, and the coast of the Mediterranean — from the Philistines to Lebanon. The name “Canaanite” is often used synonymously with that of “Phoenician.”

8. *I have set the land before you* — literally, “before your faces” — it is accessible; there is no impediment to your occupation. The order of the journey as indicated by the places mentioned would have led to a course of invasion, the opposite of what was eventually followed; namely, from the

seacoast eastward — instead of from the Jordan westward (see on ⁽⁴⁰¹⁾Numbers 20:1).

9-18. *I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone* — a little before their arrival in Horeb. Moses addresses that new generation as the representatives of their fathers, in whose sight and hearing all the transactions he recounts took place. A reference is here made to the suggestion of Jethro (⁽⁴⁰²⁾Exodus 18:18). In noticing his practical adoption of a plan by which the administration of justice was committed to a select number of subordinate officers, Moses, by a beautiful allusion to the patriarchal blessing, ascribed the necessity of that memorable change in the government to the vast increase of the population.

10. *ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude* — This was neither an Oriental hyperbole nor a mere empty boast. Abraham was told (⁽⁴⁰³⁾Genesis 15:5,6) to look to the stars, and though they “appear” innumerable, yet those seen by the naked eye amount, in reality, to no more than three thousand ten in both hemispheres. The Israelites already far exceeded that number, being at the last census above six hundred thousand (⁽⁴⁰⁴⁾Numbers 26:51). It was a seasonable memento, calculated to animate their faith in the accomplishment of other parts of the divine promise.

19-21. *we went through all that great and terrible wilderness* — of Paran, which included the desert and mountainous space lying between the wilderness of Shur westward, or towards Egypt and mount Seir, or the land of Edom eastwards; between the land of Canaan northwards, and the Red Sea southwards; and thus it appears to have comprehended really the wilderness of Sin and Sinai [FISK]. It is called by the Arabs El Tih, “the wandering.” It is a dreary waste of rock and of calcareous soil covered with black sharp flints; all travelers, from a feeling of its complete isolation from the world, describe it as a great and terrible wilderness.

22-33. *ye came ... and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land* — The proposal to despatch spies emanated from the people through unbelief; but Moses, believing them sincere, gave his cordial assent to this measure, and God on being consulted permitted them

to follow the suggestion (see on ^{QHE33}Numbers 13:1). The issue proved disastrous to them, only through their own sin and folly.

28. *the cities are great, and walled up to heaven* — an Oriental metaphor, meaning very high. The Arab marauders roam about on horseback, and hence the walls of St. Catherine's monastery on Sinai are so lofty that travelers are drawn up by a pulley in a basket.

Anakims — (See on ^{QHE33}Numbers 13:33). The honest and uncompromising language of Moses, in reminding the Israelites of their perverse conduct and outrageous rebellion at the report of the treacherous and fainthearted scouts, affords a strong evidence of the truth of this history as well as of the divine authority of his mission. There was great reason for his dwelling on this dark passage in their history, as it was their unbelief that excluded them from the privilege of entering the promised land (^{QHE33}Hebrews 3:19); and that unbelief was a marvellous exhibition of human perversity, considering the miracles which God had wrought in their favor, especially in the daily manifestations they had of His presence among them as their leader and protector.

34-36. *the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth* — In consequence of this aggravated offense (unbelief followed by open rebellion), the Israelites were doomed, in the righteous judgment of God, to a life of wandering in that dreary wilderness till the whole adult generation had disappeared by death. The only exceptions mentioned are Caleb and Joshua, who was to be Moses' successor.

37. *Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes* — This statement *seems* to indicate that it was on this occasion Moses was condemned to share the fate of the people. But we know that it was several years afterwards that Moses betrayed an unhappy spirit of distrust at the waters of strife (^{QHE33}Psalms 106:32,33). This verse must be considered therefore as a parenthesis.

39. *your children ... who in that day had no knowledge between good and evil* — All ancient versions read "to-day" instead of "that day"; and the sense is — "your children who now know," or "who know not *as yet* good or evil." As the children had not been partakers of the sinful outbreak, they were spared to obtain the privilege which their unbelieving

parents had forfeited. God's ways are not as man's ways [^{251B}Isaiah 55:8,9].

40-45. *turn you, and take your journey into the ... Red Sea* — This command they disregarded, and, determined to force an onward passage in spite of the earnest remonstrances of Moses, they attempted to cross the heights then occupied by the combined forces of the Amorites and Amalekites (compare ^{204B}Numbers 14:43), but were repulsed with great loss. People often experience distress even while in the way of duty. But how different their condition who suffer in situations where God is with them from the feelings of those who are conscious that they are in a position directly opposed to the divine will! The Israelites were grieved when they found themselves involved in difficulties and perils; but their sorrow arose not from a sense of the guilt so much as the sad effects of their perverse conduct; and “though they wept,” they were not true penitents. So the Lord would not hearken to their voice, nor give ear unto them.

46. *So ye abode at Kadesh many days* — That place had been the site of their encampment during the absence of the spies, which lasted forty days, and it is supposed from this verse that they prolonged their stay there after their defeat for a similar period.

CHAPTER 2

DEUTERONOMY 2:1-37.

STORY IS CONTINUED.

1. *Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea* — After their unsuccessful attack upon the Canaanites, the Israelites broke up their encampment at Kadesh, and journeying southward over the west desert of Tih as well as through the great valley of the Ghor and Arabah, they extended their removals as far as the gulf of Akaba.

we compassed mount Seir many days — In these few words Moses comprised the whole of that wandering nomadic life through which they passed during thirty-eight years, shifting from place to place, and regulating their stations by the prospect of pasturage and water. Within the interval they went northward a second time to Kadesh, but being refused a passage through Edom and opposed by the Canaanites and Amalekites, they again had no alternative but to traverse once more the great Arabah southwards to the Red Sea, where turning to the left and crossing the long, lofty mountain chain to the eastward of Ezion-geber (^{<REB>}Numbers 21:4,5), they issued into the great and elevated plains, which are still traversed by the Syrian pilgrims in their way to Mecca. They appear to have followed northward nearly the same route, which is now taken by the Syrian hadji, along the western skirts of this great desert, near the mountains of Edom [ROBINSON]. It was on entering these plains they received the command, “Ye have compassed this mountain (this hilly tract, now Jebel Shera) long enough, turn ye northward” [^{<REB>}Deuteronomy 2:3].

4. *the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir ... shall be afraid of you* — The same people who had haughtily repelled the approach of the Israelites from the western frontier were alarmed now that they had come round upon the weak side of their country.

5-7. *Meddle not with them* — that is, “which dwell in Seir” (^{<R104>}Deuteronomy 2:4) — for there was another branch of Esau’s posterity, namely, the Amalekites, who were to be fought against and destroyed (^{<R132>}Genesis 36:12 ^{<R174>}Exodus 17:14 ^{<R257>}Deuteronomy 25:17). But the people of Edom were not to be injured, either in their persons or property. And although the approach of so vast a nomadic horde as the Israelites naturally created apprehension, they were to take no advantage of the prevailing terror to compel the Edomites to accept whatever terms they imposed. They were merely to pass “through” or along their border, and to buy meat and water of them for money (^{<R116>}Deuteronomy 2:6). The people, kinder than their king, did sell them bread, meat, fruits, and water in their passage along their border (^{<R122>}Deuteronomy 2:29), in the same manner as the Syrian caravan of Mecca is now supplied by the people of the same mountains, who meet the pilgrims as at a fair or market on the hadji route [ROBINSON]. Although the Israelites still enjoyed a daily supply of the manna, there was no prohibition against their eating other food when opportunity afforded. Only they were not to cherish an inordinate desire for it. Water is a scarce commodity and is often paid for by travelers in those parts. It was the more incumbent on the Israelites to do so, as, by the blessing of God, they possessed plenty of means to purchase, and the long-continued experience of the extraordinary goodness of God to them, should inspire such confidence in Him as would suppress the smallest thought of resorting to fraud or violence in supplying their wants.

8-18. *we passed ... through the way of the plain* — the Arabah or great valley, from Elath (“trees”) (the Ailah of the Greeks and Romans). The site of it is marked by extensive mounds of rubbish.

Ezion-geber — now Akaba, both were within the territory of Edom; and after making a circuit of its southeastern boundary, the Israelites reached the border of Moab on the southeast of the Salt Sea. They had been forbidden by divine command to molest the Moabites in any way; and this special honor was conferred on that people not on their own account, for they were very wicked, but in virtue of their descent from Lot. (See on ^{<R133>}Deuteronomy 23:3). Their territory comprised the fine country on the south, and partly on the north of the Arnon. They had won it by their arms from the original inhabitants, the Emims, a race, terrible, as their

name imports, for physical power and stature (^{414F}Genesis 14:5), in like manner as the Edomites had obtained their settlement by the overthrow of the original occupiers of Seir, the Horims (^{414F}Genesis 14:6), who were troglodytes, or dwellers in caves. Moses alluded to these circumstances to encourage his countrymen to believe that God would much more enable them to expel the wicked and accursed Canaanites. At that time, however, the Moabites, having lost the greater part of their possessions through the usurpations of Sihon, were reduced to the small but fertile region between the Zered and the Arnon.

13. *Now rise up, and get you over the brook Zered* — The southern border of Moab, *Zered* (“woody”), now Wady Ahsy, separates the modern district of Kerak from Jebal, and, indeed, forms a natural division of the country between the north and south. Ar, called in later times Rabbah, was the capital of Moab and situated twenty-five miles south of the Arnon on the banks of a small but shady stream, the Beni Hamed. It is here mentioned as representative of the country dependent on it, a rich and well-cultivated country, as appears from the numerous ruins of cities, as well as from the traces of tillage still visible on the fields.

16. *all the men of war were consumed and dead from among the people* — The outbreak at Kadesh on the false report of the spies had been the occasion of the fatal decree by which God doomed the whole grown-up population to die in the wilderness [^{414E}Numbers 14:29]; but that outbreak only filled up the measure of their iniquities. For that generation, though not universally abandoned to heathenish and idolatrous practices, yet had all along displayed a fearful amount of ungodliness in the desert, which this history only hints at obscurely, but which is expressly asserted elsewhere (^{415E}Ezekiel 20:25,26 ^{415E}Amos 5:25,27 ^{416E}Acts 7:42,43).

19-37. *when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them* — The Ammonites, being kindred to the Moabites, were, from regard to the memory of their common ancestor, to remain undisturbed by the Israelites. The territory of this people had been directly north from that of Moab. It extended as far as the Jabbok, having been taken by them from a number of small Canaanitish tribes, namely, the Zamzummins, a bullying, presumptuous band of giants, as their name indicates; and the Avims, the aborigines of the district

extending from Hazerim or Hazeroth (El Hudhera) even unto Azzah (Gaza), but of which they had been dispossessed by the Capthorim (Philistines), who came out of Capthor (Lower Egypt) and settled in the western coast of Palestine. The limits of the Ammonites were now compressed; but they still possessed the mountainous region beyond the Jabbok (^{<0112>}Joshua 11:2). What a strange insight does this parenthesis of four verses give into the early history of Palestine! How many successive wars of conquest had swept over its early state — what changes of dynasty among the Canaanitish tribes had taken place long prior to the transactions recorded in this history!

24-36. *Rise ye up ... and pass over the river Arnon* — At its mouth, this stream is eighty-two feet wide and four deep. It flows in a channel banked by perpendicular cliffs of sandstone. At the date of the Israelitish migration to the east of the Jordan, the whole of the fine country lying between the Arnon and the Jabbok including the mountainous tract of Gilead, had been seized by the Amorites, who, being one of the nations doomed to destruction (see ^{<0100>}Deuteronomy 7:2 ^{<0106>}20:16), were utterly exterminated. Their country fell by right of conquest into the hands of the Israelites. Moses, however, considering this doom as referring solely to the Amorite possessions west of Jordan, sent a pacific message to Sihon, requesting permission to go through his territories, which lay on the east of that river. It is always customary to send messengers before to prepare the way; but the rejection of Moses' request by Sihon and his opposition to the advance of the Israelites (^{<0123>}Numbers 21:23 ^{<0125>}Judges 11:26) drew down on himself and his Amorite subjects the predicted doom on the first pitched battlefield with the Canaanites. It secured to Israel not only the possession of a fine and pastoral country, but, what was of more importance to them, a free access to the Jordan on the east.

CHAPTER 3

DEUTERONOMY 3:1-20.

CONQUEST OF OG, KING OF BASHAN.

1. *we turned, and went up the way to Bashan* — Bashan (“fruitful” or “flat”), now El-Bottein, lay situated to the north of Gilead and extended as far as Hermon. It was a rugged mountainous country, valuable however for its rich and luxuriant pastures.

Og the king of Bashan came out against us — Without provocation, he rushed to attack the Israelites, either disliking the presence of such dangerous neighbors, or burning to avenge the overthrow of his friends and allies.

2. *The Lord said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand* — Og’s gigantic appearance and the formidable array of forces he will bring to the field, need not discourage you; for, belonging to a doomed race, he is destined to share the fate of Sihon [⁰⁰²⁵Numbers 21:25].

3-8. *Argob* was the capital of a district in Bashan of the same name, which, together with other fifty-nine cities in the same province, were conspicuous for their lofty and fortified walls. It was a war of extermination. Houses and cities were razed to the ground; all classes of people were put to the sword; and nothing was saved but the cattle, of which an immense amount fell as spoil into the hands of the conquerors. Thus, the two Amorite kings and the entire population of their dominions were extirpated. The whole country east of the Jordan — first upland downs from the torrent of the Arnon on the south to that of the Jabbok on the north; next the high mountain tract of Gilead and Bashan from the deep ravine of Jabbok — became the possession of the Israelites.

9. *Hermon* — now Jebel-Es-Sheick — the majestic hill on which the long and elevated range of Anti-Lebanon terminates. Its summit and the ridges

on its sides are almost constantly covered with snow. It is not so much one high mountain as a whole cluster of mountain peaks, the highest in Palestine. According to the survey taken by the English Government Engineers in 1840, they were about 9376 feet above the sea. Being a mountain chain, it is no wonder that it should have received different names at different points from the different tribes which lay along the base — all of them designating extraordinary height: Hermon, the lofty peak; “Sirion,” or in an abbreviated form “Sion” (⁴⁰⁴⁸Deuteronomy 4:48), the upraised, glittering; “Shenir,” the glittering breastplate of ice.

11. *only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants* — literally, “of Rephaim.” He was not the last giant, but the only living remnant in the trans-jordanic country (⁴⁰⁵⁴Joshua 15:14), of a certain gigantic race, supposed to be the most ancient inhabitants of Palestine.

behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron — Although beds in the East are with the common people nothing more than a simple mattress, bedsteads are not unknown. They are in use among the great, who prefer them of iron or other metals, not only for strength and durability, but for the prevention of the troublesome insects which in warm climates commonly infest wood. Taking the cubit at half a yard, the bedstead of Og would measure thirteen and a half feet, so that as beds are usually a little larger than the persons who occupy them, the stature of the Amorite king may be estimated at about eleven or twelve feet; or he might have caused his bed to be made much larger than was necessary, as Alexander the Great did for each of his foot soldiers, to impress the Indians with an idea of the extraordinary strength and stature of his men [LE CLERC]. But how did Og’s bedstead come to be in Rabbath, of the children of Ammon? In answer to this question, it has been said, that Og had, on the eve of engagement, conveyed it to Rabbath for safety. Or it may be that Moses, after capturing it, may have sold it to the Ammonites, who had kept it as an antiquarian curiosity till their capital was sacked in the time of David. This is a most unlikely supposition, and besides renders it necessary to consider the latter clause of this verse as an interpolation inserted long after the time of Moses. To avoid this, some eminent critics take the *Hebrew* word rendered “bedstead” to mean “coffin.” They think that the king of Bashan having been wounded in battle, fled to Rabbath, where he

died and was buried; hence the dimensions of his “coffin” are given [DATHE, ROOS].

12, 13. *this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer ... gave I unto the Reubenites and to the Gadites* — The whole territory occupied by Sihon was parcelled out among the pastoral tribes of Reuben and Gad. It extended from the north bank of the Arnon to the south half of mount Gilead — a small mountain ridge, now called Djelaad, about six or seven miles south of the Jabbok, and eight miles in length. The northern portion of Gilead and the rich pasture lands of Bashan — a large province, consisting, with the exception of a few bleak and rocky spots, of strong and fertile soil — was assigned to the half-tribe of Manasseh.

14. *Jair the son of Manasseh took all the country of Argob* — The original inhabitants of the province north of Bashan, comprising sixty cities (^[REB]Deuteronomy 3:4), not having been extirpated along with Og, this people were afterwards brought into subjection by the energy of Jair. This chief, of the tribe of Manasseh, in accordance with the pastoral habits of his people, called these newly acquired towns by a name which signifies “Jair’s Bedouin Villages of Tents.”

unto this day — This remark must evidently have been introduced by Ezra, or some of the pious men who arranged and collected the books of Moses.

15. *I gave Gilead unto Machir* — It was only the half of Gilead (^[REB]Deuteronomy 3:12,13) which was given to the descendants of Machir, who was now dead.

16. *from Gilead* — that is, not the mountainous region, but the town Ramoth-gilead,

even unto the river Arnon half the valley — The word “valley” signifies a wady, either filled with water or dry, as the Arnon is in summer, and thus the proper rendering of the passage will be — “even to the half middle of the river Arnon” (compare ^[REB]Joshua 12:2). This prudent arrangement of the boundaries was evidently made to prevent all disputes between the adjacent tribes about the exclusive right to the water.

25. *I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon* — The natural and very earnest wish of Moses to be allowed to cross the Jordan was founded on the idea that the divine threatening might be conditional and revertible. “That goodly mountain” is supposed by Jewish writers to have pointed to the hill on which the temple was to be built (^{481B}Deuteronomy 12:5 ^{425D}Exodus 15:2). But biblical scholars now, generally, render the words — “that goodly mountain, even Lebanon,” and consider it to be mentioned as typifying the beauty of Palestine, of which hills and mountains were so prominent a feature.

26. *speak no more unto me of this matter* — that is, My decree is unalterable.

CHAPTER 4

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-13.

AN EXHORTATION TO OBEDIENCE.

1. *hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you* — By statutes were meant all ordinances respecting religion and the rites of divine worship; and by judgments, all enactments relative to civil matters. The two embraced the whole law of God.

2. *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you* — by the introduction of any heathen superstition or forms of worship different from those which I have appointed (⁽¹⁶¹²⁾Deuteronomy 12:32 ⁽¹⁶¹⁵⁾Numbers 15:39 ⁽¹⁶¹⁹⁾Matthew 15:9).

neither shall ye diminish aught from it — by the neglect or omission of any of the observances, however trivial or irksome, which I have prescribed. The character and provisions of the ancient dispensation were adapted with divine wisdom to the instruction of that infant state of the church. But it was only a temporary economy; and although God here authorizes Moses to command that all its institutions should be honored with unfailling observance, this did not prevent Him from commissioning other prophets to alter or abrogate them when the end of that dispensation was attained.

3, 4. *Your eyes have seen what the Lord did because of Baal-peor ... the Lord thy God hath destroyed them from among you* — It appears that the pestilence and the sword of justice overtook only the guilty in that affair (⁽¹⁶²¹⁾Numbers 25:1-9) while the rest of the people were spared. The allusion to that recent and appalling judgment was seasonably made as a powerful dissuasive against idolatry, and the fact mentioned was calculated to make a deep impression on people who knew and felt the truth of it.

5, 6. *this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes* — Moses predicted that the

faithful observance of the laws given them would raise their national character for intelligence and wisdom. In point of fact it did do so; for although the heathen world generally ridiculed the Hebrews for what they considered a foolish and absurd exclusiveness, some of the most eminent philosophers expressed the highest admiration of the fundamental principle in the Jewish religion — the unity of God; and their legislators borrowed some laws from the constitution of the Hebrews.

7-9. *what nation is there so great* — Here he represents their privileges and their duty in such significant and comprehensive terms, as were peculiarly calculated to arrest their attention and engage their interest. The former, their national advantages, are described (^{LEB}Deuteronomy 4:7,8), and they were twofold:

1. God's readiness to hear and aid them at all times; and
2. the excellence of that religion in which they were instructed, set forth in the "statutes and judgments so righteous" which the law of Moses contained.

Their duty corresponding to these pre-eminent advantages as a people, was also twofold:

1. their own faithful obedience to that law; and
2. their obligation to imbue the minds of the young and rising generation with similar sentiments of reverence and respect for it.

10. *the day that thou stoodest before the Lord ... in Horeb* — The delivery of the law from Sinai was an era never to be forgotten in the history of Israel. Some of those whom Moses was addressing had been present, though very young; while the rest were federally represented by their parents, who in their name and for their interest entered into the national covenant.

12. *ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude* — Although articulate sounds were heard emanating from the mount, no form or representation of the Divine Being who spoke was seen to indicate His nature or properties according to the notions of the heathen.

DEUTERONOMY 4:14-40.

A PARTICULAR DISSUASIVE AGAINST IDOLATRY.

15. *Take ... good heed ... for ye saw no manner of similitude* — The extreme proneness of the Israelites to idolatry, from their position in the midst of surrounding nations already abandoned to its seductions, accounts for their attention being repeatedly drawn to the fact that God did not appear on Sinai in any visible form; and an earnest caution, founded on that remarkable circumstance, is given to beware, not only of making representations of false gods, but also any fancied representation of the true God.

16-19. *Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image* — The things are here specified of which God prohibited any image or representation to be made for the purposes of worship; and, from the variety of details entered into, an idea may be formed of the extensive prevalence of idolatry in that age. In whatever way idolatry originated, whether from an intention to worship the true God through those things which seemed to afford the strongest evidences of His power, or whether a divine principle was supposed to reside in the things themselves, there was scarcely an element or object of nature but was deified. This was particularly the case with the Canaanites and Egyptians, against whose superstitious practices the caution, no doubt, was chiefly directed. The former worshipped Baal and Astarte, the latter Osiris and Isis, under the figure of a male and a female. It was in Egypt that animal-worship most prevailed, for the natives of that country deified among beasts the ox, the heifer, the sheep, and the goat, the dog, the cat, and the ape; among birds, the ibis, the hawk, and the crane; among reptiles, the crocodile, the frog, and the beetle; among fishes, all the fish of the Nile; some of these, as Osiris and Isis, were worshipped over all Egypt, the others only in particular provinces. In addition they embraced the Zabian superstition, the adoration of the Egyptians, in common with that of many other people, extending to the whole starry host. The very circumstantial details here given of the Canaanitish and Egyptian idolatry were owing to the past and prospective familiarity of the Israelites with it in all these forms.

20. *But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace* — that is, furnace for smelting iron. A furnace of this kind is round, sometimes thirty feet deep, and requiring the highest intensity of heat. Such is the tremendous image chosen to represent the bondage and affliction of the Israelites [ROSENMULLER].

to be unto him a people of inheritance — His peculiar possession from age to age; and therefore for you to abandon His worship for that of idols, especially the gross and debasing system of idolatry that prevails among the Egyptians, would be the greatest folly — the blackest ingratitude.

26. *I call heaven and earth to witness against you* — This solemn form of adjuration has been common in special circumstances among all people. It is used here figuratively, or as in other parts of Scripture where inanimate objects are called up as witnesses (⁴³⁰¹Deuteronomy 32:1 ²⁴⁰⁰Isaiah 1:2).

28. *there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands* — The compulsory measures of their tyrannical conquerors would force them into idolatry, so that their choice would become their punishment.

30. *in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God* — either towards the destined close of their captivities, when they evinced a returning spirit of repentance and faith, or in the age of Messiah, which is commonly called “the latter days,” and when the scattered tribes of Israel shall be converted to the Gospel of Christ. The occurrence of this auspicious event will be the most illustrious proof of the truth of the promise made in ⁴³⁰²Deuteronomy 4:31.

41-43. *Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan* — (See on ⁴³⁰³Joshua 20:7).

44-49. *this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel* — This is a preface to the rehearsal of the law, which, with the addition of various explanatory circumstances, the following chapters contain.

46. *Beth-peor* — that is, “house” or “temple of Peor.” It is probable that a temple of this Moabite idol stood in full view of the Hebrew camp, while Moses was urging the exclusive claims of God to their worship, and this allusion would be very significant if it were the temple where so many of the Israelites had grievously offended.

49. *The springs of Pisgah* — more frequently, Ashdoth-pisgah
(^{<HEB7}Deuteronomy 3:17 ^{<HEB7}Joshua 12:3 ^{<HEB7}13:20), the roots or foot of the
mountains east of the Jordan.

CHAPTER 5

DEUTERONOMY 5:1-29.

A COMMEMORATION OF THE COVENANT IN HOREB.

1. *Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments* — Whether this rehearsal of the law was made in a solemn assembly, or as some think at a general meeting of the elders as representatives of the people, is of little moment; it was addressed either directly or indirectly to the Hebrew people as principles of their peculiar constitution as a nation; and hence, as has been well observed, “the Jewish law has no obligation upon Christians, unless so much of it as given or commanded by Jesus Christ; for whatever in this law is conformable to the laws of nature, obliges us, not as given by Moses, but by virtue of an antecedent law common to all rational beings” [BISHOP WILSON].

3. *The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us* — The meaning is, “not with our fathers” only, “but with us” also, assuming it to be “a covenant” of grace. It may mean “not with our fathers” at all, if the reference is to the peculiar establishment of the covenant of Sinai; a law was not given to them as to us, nor was the covenant ratified in the same public manner and by the same solemn sanctions. Or, finally, the meaning may be “not with our fathers” who died in the wilderness, in consequence of their rebellion, and to whom God did not give the rewards promised only to the faithful; but “with us,” who alone, strictly speaking, shall enjoy the benefits of this covenant by entering on the possession of the promised land.

4. *The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount* — not in a visible and corporeal form, of which there was no trace (^{CRUIX}Deuteronomy 4:12,15), but freely, familiarly, and in such a manner that no doubt could be entertained of His presence.

5. *I stood between the Lord and you at that time* — as the messenger and interpreter of thy heavenly King, bringing near two objects formerly

removed from each other at a vast distance, namely, God and the people (^{<489>}Galatians 3:19). In this character Moses was a type of Christ, who is the only mediator between God and men (^{<541>}1 Timothy 2:5), the Mediator of a better covenant (^{<380>}Hebrews 8:6 ^{<391>}9:15 ^{<322>}12:24).

to show you the word of the Lord — not the ten commandments — for they were proclaimed directly by the Divine Speaker Himself, but the statutes and judgments which are repeated in the subsequent portion of this book.

6-20. *I am the Lord thy God* — The word “Lord” is expressive of authority or dominion; and God, who by natural claim as well as by covenant relation was entitled to exercise supremacy over His people Israel, had a sovereign right to establish laws for their government. [See on ^{<121>}Exodus 20:2.] The commandments which follow are, with a few slight verbal alterations, the same as formerly recorded (^{<121>}Exodus 20:1-17), and in some of them there is a distinct reference to that promulgation.

12. *Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee* — that is, keep it in mind as a sacred institution of former enactment and perpetual obligation. (See on ^{<121>}Exodus 20:8).

14. *that thy man-servant and thy maid-servant may rest as well as thou* — This is a different reason for the observance of the Sabbath from what is assigned in ^{<121>}Exodus 20:8-11, where that day is stated to be an appointed memorial of the creation. But the addition of another motive for the observance does not imply any necessary contrariety to the other; and it has been thought probable that, the commemorative design of the institution being well known, the other reason was specially mentioned on this repetition of the law, to secure the privilege of sabbatic rest to servants, of which, in some Hebrew families, they had been deprived. In this view, the allusion to the period of Egyptian bondage (^{<115>}Deuteronomy 5:15), when they themselves were not permitted to observe the Sabbath either as a day of rest or of public devotion, was peculiarly seasonable and significant, well fitted to come home to their business and bosoms.

16. *that it may go well with thee* — This clause is not in Exodus, but admitted into ^{<411>}Ephesians 6:3.

21. *Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, ... house, his field* —

An alteration is here made in the words (see ^{<0217>}Exodus 20:17), but it is so slight (“wife” being put in the first clause and “house” in the second) that it would not have been worth while noticing it, except that the interchange proves, contrary to the opinion of some eminent critics, that these two objects are included in one and the same commandment.

22. *he added no more* — (^{<0218>}Exodus 20:1). The pre-eminence of these ten commandments was shown in God’s announcing them directly: other laws and institutions were communicated to the people through the instrumentality of Moses.

23-28. *And ... ye came near unto me* — (See on ^{<0219>}Exodus 20:19).

29. *Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me* —

God can bestow such a heart, and has promised to give it, wherever it is asked (^{<0220>}Jeremiah 32:40). But the wish which is here expressed on the part of God for the piety and steadfast obedience of the Israelites did not relate to them as individuals, so much as a nation, whose religious character and progress would have a mighty influence on the world at large.

CHAPTER 6

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-25.

MOSES EXHORTS ISRAEL TO HEAR GOD AND TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS.

1-9. *Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them ... whither ye go to possess it* — The grand design of all the institutions prescribed to Israel was to form a religious people, whose national character should be distinguished by that fear of the Lord their God which would ensure their divine observance of His worship and their steadfast obedience to His will. The basis of their religion was an acknowledgment of the unity of God with the understanding and the love of God in the heart (^{<BIB>}Deuteronomy 6:4,5). Compared with the religious creed of all their contemporaries, how sound in principle, how elevated in character, how unlimited in the extent of its moral influence on the heart and habits of the people! Indeed, it is precisely the same basis on which rests the purer and more spiritual form of it which Christianity exhibits (^{<BIB>}Matthew 22:37 ^{<BIB>}Mark 12:30 ^{<BIB>}Luke 10:27). Moreover, to help in keeping a sense of religion in their minds, it was commanded that its great principles should be carried about with them wherever they went, as well as meet their eyes every time they entered their homes. A further provision was made for the earnest inculcation of them on the minds of the young by a system of parental training, which was designed to associate religion with all the most familiar and oft-recurring scenes of domestic life. It is probable that Moses used the phraseology in ^{<BIB>}Deuteronomy 6:7 merely in a figurative way, to signify assiduous, earnest, and frequent instruction; and perhaps he meant the metaphorical language in ^{<BIB>}Deuteronomy 6:8 to be taken in the same sense also. But as the Israelites interpreted it literally, many writers suppose that a reference was made to a superstitious custom borrowed from the Egyptians, who wore jewels and ornamental trinkets on the forehead and arm, inscribed

with certain words and sentences, as amulets to protect them from danger. These, it has been conjectured, Moses intended to supersede by substituting sentences of the law; and so the Hebrews understood him, for they have always considered the wearing of the *Tephilim*, or frontlets, a permanent obligation. The form was as follows: Four pieces of parchment, inscribed, the first with ^{<D31D}Exodus 13:2-10; the second with ^{<D31D}Exodus 13:11-16; the third with ^{<R00H}Deuteronomy 6:1-8; and the fourth with ^{<R11B}Deuteronomy 11:18-21, were enclosed in a square case or box of tough skin, on the side of which was placed the Hebrew letter (*shin*), and bound round the forehead with a thong or ribbon. When designed for the arms, those four texts were written on one slip of parchment, which, as well as the ink, was carefully prepared for the purpose. With regard to the other usage supposed to be alluded to, the ancient Egyptians had the lintels and imposts of their doors and gates inscribed with sentences indicative of a favorable omen [WILKINSON]; and this is still the case, for in Egypt and other Mohammedan countries, the front doors of houses (in Cairo, for instance) are painted red, white, and green, bearing conspicuously inscribed upon them such sentences from the Koran, as “God is the Creator,” “God is one, and Mohammed is his prophet.” Moses designed to turn this ancient and favorite custom to a better account and ordered that, instead of the former superstitious inscriptions, there should be written the words of God, persuading and enjoining the people to hold the laws in perpetual remembrance.

20-25. *when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying* — The directions given for the instruction of their children form only an extension of the preceding counsels.

CHAPTER 7

DEUTERONOMY 7:1-26.

ALL COMMUNION WITH THE NATIONS FORBIDDEN.

1. *the Hittites* — This people were descended from Heth, the second son of Canaan (⁽¹¹¹⁵⁾Genesis 10:15), and occupied the mountainous region about Hebron, in the south of Palestine.

the Gergashites — supposed by some to be the same as the Gergesenes (⁽¹⁰⁸⁸⁾Matthew 8:28), who lay to the east of Lake Gennesareth; but they are placed on the west of Jordan (⁽¹⁰⁴¹⁾Joshua 24:11), and others take them for a branch of the large family of the Hivites, as they are omitted in nine out of ten places where the tribes of Canaan are enumerated; in the tenth they are mentioned, while the Hivites are not.

the Amorites — descended from the fourth son of Canaan. They occupied, besides their conquest on the Moabite territory, extensive settlements west of the Dead Sea, in the mountains.

the Canaanites — located in Phoenicia, particularly about Tyre and Sidon, and being sprung from the oldest branch of the family of Canaan, bore his name.

the Perizzites — that is, *villagers*, a tribe who were dispersed throughout the country and lived in unwallled towns.

the Hivites — who dwelt about Ebal and Gerizim, extending towards Hermon. They are supposed to be the same as the Avims.

the Jebusites — resided about Jerusalem and the adjacent country.

seven nations greater and mightier than thou — Ten were formerly mentioned (⁽¹¹⁵⁾Genesis 15:19-21). But in the lapse of near five hundred years, it cannot be surprising that some of them had been extinguished in the many intestine feuds that prevailed among those warlike tribes. It is

more than probable that some, stationed on the east of Jordan, had fallen under the victorious arms of the Israelites.

2-6. *thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them* — This relentless doom of extermination which God denounced against those tribes of Canaan cannot be reconciled with the attributes of the divine character, except on the assumption that their gross idolatry and enormous wickedness left no reasonable hope of their repentance and amendment. If they were to be swept away like the antediluvians or the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, as incorrigible sinners who had filled up the measure of their iniquities, it mattered not to them in what way the judgment was inflicted; and God, as the Sovereign Disposer, had a right to employ any instruments that pleased Him for executing His judgments. Some think that they were to be exterminated as unprincipled usurpers of a country which God had assigned to the posterity of Eber and which had been occupied ages before by wandering shepherds of that race, till, on the migration of Jacob's family into Egypt through the pressure of famine, the Canaanites overspread the whole land, though they had no legitimate claim to it, and endeavored to retain possession of it by force. In this view their expulsion was just and proper. The strict prohibition against contracting any alliances with such infamous idolaters was a prudential rule, founded on the experience that "evil communications corrupt good manners" [¹1 Corinthians 15:33], and its importance or necessity was attested by the unhappy examples of Solomon and others in the subsequent history of Israel.

5. *thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars*, etc. — The removal of the temples, altars, and everything that had been enlisted in the service, or might tend to perpetuate the remembrance, of Canaanite idolatry, was likewise highly expedient for preserving the Israelites from all risk of contamination. It was imitated by the Scottish Reformers, and although many ardent lovers of architecture and the fine arts have anathematized their proceedings as vandalism, yet there was profound wisdom in the favorite maxim of Knox — "pull down the nests, and the rooks will disappear."

6-10. *For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God* — that is, set apart to the service of God, or chosen to execute the important purposes

of His providence. Their selection to this high destiny was neither on account of their numerical amount (for, till after the death of Joseph, they were but a handful of people); nor because of their extraordinary merits (for they had often pursued a most perverse and unworthy conduct); but it was in consequence of the covenant or promise made with their pious forefathers; and the motives that led to that special act were such as tended not only to vindicate God's wisdom, but to illustrate His glory in diffusing the best and most precious blessings to all mankind.

11-26. *Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day* — In the covenant into which God entered with Israel, He promised to bestow upon them a variety of blessings so long as they continued obedient to Him as their heavenly King. He pledged His veracity that His infinite perfections would be exerted for this purpose, as well as for delivering them from every evil to which, as a people, they would be exposed. That people accordingly were truly happy as a nation, and found every promise which the faithful God made to them amply fulfilled, so long as they adhered to that obedience which was required of them. See a beautiful illustration of this in ^{<49412>}Psalm 144:12-15.

15. *the evil diseases of Egypt* — (See ^{<4257>}Exodus 15:26). Besides those with which Pharaoh and his subjects were visited, Egypt has always been dreadfully scourged with diseases. The testimony of Moses is confirmed by the reports of many modern writers, who tell us that, notwithstanding its equal temperature and sereneness, that country has some indigenous maladies which are very malignant, such as ophthalmia, dysentery, smallpox, and the plague.

20. *Moreover the Lord thy God will send the hornet among them* — (See on ^{<46412>}Joshua 24:12 [and ^{<4233>}Exodus 23:28]).

22. *lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee* — (See on ^{<4229>}Exodus 23:29). The omnipotence of their Almighty Ruler could have given them possession of the promised land at once. But, the unburied corpses of the enemy and the portions of the country that might have been left desolate for a while, would have drawn an influx of dangerous beasts. This evil would be prevented by a progressive conquest and by the use of ordinary means, which God would bless.

CHAPTER 8

DEUTERONOMY 8:1-20.

AN EXHORTATION TO OBEDIENCE.

1. *All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live* — In all the wise arrangements of our Creator duty has been made inseparably connected with happiness; and the earnest enforcement of the divine law which Moses was making to the Israelites was in order to secure their being a happy (because a moral and religious) people: a course of prosperity is often called “life” (^{CH178}Genesis 17:18 ^{CH189}Proverbs 3:2).

live, and multiply — This reference to the future increase of their population proves that they were too few to occupy the land fully at first.

2, 3. *thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness* — The recapitulation of all their checkered experience during that long period was designed to awaken lively impressions of the goodness of God. First, Moses showed them the object of their protracted wanderings and varied hardships. These were trials of their obedience as well as chastisements for sin. Indeed, the discovery of their infidelity, inconstancy, and their rebellions and perverseness which this varied discipline brought to light, was of eminently practical use to the Israelites themselves, as it has been to the church in all subsequent ages. Next, he enlarged on the goodness of God to them, while reduced to the last extremities of despair, in the miraculous provision which, without anxiety or labor, was made for their daily support (see on ^{CH191}Exodus 16:4). Possessing no nutritious properties inherent in it, this contributed to their sustenance, as indeed all food does (^{CH192}Matthew 4:4) solely through the ordinance and blessing of God. This remark is applicable to the means of spiritual as well as natural life.

4. *Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years* — What a striking miracle was this! No doubt the Israelites

might have brought from Egypt more clothes than they wore at their outset; they might also have obtained supplies of various articles of food and raiment in barter with the neighboring tribes for the fleeces and skins of their sheep and goats; and in furnishing them with such opportunities the care of Providence appeared. But the strong and pointed terms which Moses here uses (see also ^{<697>}Deuteronomy 29:5) indicate a special or miraculous interposition of their loving Guardian in preserving them amid the wear and tear of their nomadic life in the desert. Thirdly, Moses expatiated on the goodness of the promised land.

7. *For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land* — All accounts, ancient and modern, concur in bearing testimony to the natural beauty and fertility of Palestine, and its great capabilities if properly cultivated.

a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills — These characteristic features are mentioned first, as they would be most striking; and all travelers describe how delightful and cheerful it is, after passing through the barren and thirsty desert, to be among running brooks and swelling hills and verdant valleys. It is observable that water is mentioned as the chief source of its ancient fertility.

8. *A land of wheat, and barley* — These cereal fruits were specially promised to the Israelites in the event of their faithful allegiance to the covenant of God (^{<981>}Psalm 81:16 ^{<974>}147:14). The wheat and barley were so abundant as to yield sixty and often an hundredfold (^{<132>}Genesis 26:12 ^{<138>}Matthew 13:8).

vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates — The limestone rocks and abrupt valleys were entirely covered, as traces of them still show, with plantations of figs, vines, and olive trees. Though in a southern latitude, its mountainous formations tempered the excessive heat, and hence, figs, pomegranates, etc. were produced in Palestine equally with wheat and barley, the produce of northern regions.

honey — The word “honey” is used often in a loose, indeterminate sense, very frequently to signify a syrup of dates or of grapes, which under the name of *dibs* is much used by all classes, wherever vineyards are found, as a condiment to their food. It resembles thin molasses, but is more pleasant

to the taste [ROBINSON]. This is esteemed a great delicacy in the East, and it was produced abundantly in Palestine.

9. *a land whose stones are iron* — The abundance of this metal in Palestine, especially among the mountains of Lebanon, those of Kesraoun, and elsewhere, is attested not only by JOSEPHUS, but by Volney, Buckingham, and other travelers.

brass — not the alloy brass, but the ore of copper. Although the mines may now be exhausted or neglected, they yielded plenty of those metals anciently (^{<1328>}1 Chronicles 22:3 ^{<1329>}1 Chronicles 29:2-7 ^{<1307>}Isaiah 60:17).

11-20. *Beware that thou forget not the Lord* — After mentioning those instances of the divine goodness, Moses founded on them an argument for their future obedience.

15. *Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions* — Large and venomous reptiles are found in great numbers there still, particularly in autumn. Travellers must use great caution in arranging their tents and beds at night; even during the day the legs not only of men, but of the animals they ride, are liable to be bitten.

who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint — (See on ^{<1812>}Deuteronomy 9:21).

CHAPTER 9

DEUTERONOMY 9:1-25.

MOSES DISSUADES THEM FROM THE OPINION OF THEIR OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

1. *this day* — means *this time*. The Israelites had reached the confines of the promised land, but were obliged, to their great mortification, to return. But now they certainly were to enter it. No obstacle could prevent their possession; neither the fortified defenses of the towns, for the resistance of the gigantic inhabitants of whom they had received from the spies so formidable a description.

cities great and fenced up to heaven — Oriental cities generally cover a much greater space than those in Europe; for the houses often stand apart with gardens and fields intervening. They are almost all surrounded with walls built of burnt or sun-dried bricks, about forty feet in height. All classes in the East, but especially the nomad tribes, in their ignorance of engineering and artillery, would have abandoned in despair the idea of an assault on a walled town, which to-day would be demolished in a few hours.

4-6. *Speak not thou in thine heart, ... saying, For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land* — Moses takes special care to guard his countrymen against the vanity of supposing that their own merits had procured them the distinguished privilege. The Canaanites were a hopelessly corrupt race, and deserved extermination; but history relates many remarkable instances in which God punished corrupt and guilty nations by the instrumentality of other people as bad as themselves. It was not for the sake of the Israelites, but for His own sake, for the promise made to their pious ancestors, and in furtherance of high and comprehensive purposes of good to the world, that God was about to give them a grant of Canaan.

7. Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord — To dislodge from their minds any presumptuous idea of their own righteousness, Moses rehearses their acts of disobedience and rebellion committed so frequently, and in circumstances of the most awful and impressive solemnity, that they had forfeited all claims to the favor of God. The candor and boldness with which he gave, and the patient submission with which the people bore, his recital of charges so discreditable to their national character, has often been appealed to as among the many evidences of the truth of this history.

8. Also in Horeb — rather, “even in Horeb,” where it might have been expected they would have acted otherwise.

12-29. Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people ... have corrupted themselves — With a view to humble them effectually, Moses proceeds to particularize some of the most atrocious instances of their infidelity. He begins with the impiety of the golden calf — an impiety which, while their miraculous emancipation from Egypt, the most stupendous displays of the Divine Majesty that were exhibited on the adjoining mount, and the recent ratification of the covenant by which they engaged to act as the people of God, were fresh in memory, indicated a degree of inconstancy or debasement almost incredible.

17. I took the two tables, ... and broke them before your eyes — not in the heat of intemperate passion, but in righteous indignation, from zeal to vindicate the unsullied honor of God, and by the suggestion of His Spirit to intimate that the covenant had been broken, and the people excluded from the divine favor.

18. I fell down before the Lord — The sudden and painful reaction which this scene of pagan revelry produced on the mind of the pious and patriotic leader can be more easily imagined than described. Great and public sins call for seasons of extraordinary humiliation, and in his deep affliction for the awful apostasy, he seems to have held a miraculous fast as long as before.

20. The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him — By allowing himself to be overborne by the tide of popular clamor, Aaron became a partaker in the guilt of idolatry and would have suffered the

penalty of his sinful compliance, had not the earnest intercession of Moses on his behalf prevailed.

21. *I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount* — that is, “the smitten rock” (El Leja) which was probably contiguous to, or a part of, Sinai. It is too seldom borne in mind that though the Israelites were supplied with water from this rock when they were stationed at Rephidim (Wady Feiran), there is nothing in the Scripture narrative which should lead us to suppose that the rock was in the immediate neighborhood of that place (see on ^{<BIB>}Exodus 17:5). The water on this smitten rock was probably the brook that descended from the mount. The water may have flowed at the distance of many miles from the rock, as the winter torrents do now through the wadies of Arabia-Petræa (^{<BIB>}Psalms 78:15,16). And the rock may have been smitten at such a height, and at a spot bearing such a relation to the Sinaitic valleys, as to furnish in this way supplies of water to the Israelites during the journey from Horeb by the way of mount Seir and Kadesh-barnea (^{<BIB>}Deuteronomy 1:1,2). On this supposition new light is, perhaps, cast on the figurative language of the apostle, when he speaks of “the rock following” the Israelites (^{<BIB>}1 Corinthians 10:4) [WILSON, *Land of the Bible*].

25. *Thus I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at the first* — After the enumeration of various acts of rebellion, he had mentioned the outbreak at Kadesh-barnea, which, on a superficial reading of this verse, would seem to have led Moses to a third and protracted season of humiliation. But on a comparison of this passage with ^{<BIB>}Numbers 14:5, the subject and language of this prayer show that only the second act of intercession (^{<BIB>}Deuteronomy 9:18) is now described in fuller detail.

CHAPTER 10

◀501▶ DEUTERONOMY 10:1-22.

GOD'S MERCY IN RESTORING THE TWO TABLES.

1. *At that time the Lord said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first* — It was when God had been pacified through the intercessions of Moses with the people who had so greatly offended Him by the worship of the golden calf. The obedient leader executed the orders he had received as to the preparation both of the hewn stones, and the ark or chest in which those sacred archives were to be laid.

3. *And I made an ark of shittim wood* — It appears, however, from ◀250▶Exodus 37:1, that the ark was not framed till his return from the mount, or most probably, he gave instructions to Bezaleel, the artist employed on the work, before he ascended the mount — that, on his descent, it might be finished, and ready to receive the precious deposit.

4, 5. *he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing* — that is, not Moses, who under the divine direction acted as amanuensis, but God Himself who made this inscription a second time with His own hand, to testify the importance He attached to the ten commandments. Different from other stone monuments of antiquity, which were made to stand upright and in the open air, those on which the divine law was engraven were portable, and designed to be kept as a treasure. JOSEPHUS says that each of the tables contained five precepts. But the tradition generally received, both among Jewish and Christian writers is, that one table contained four precepts, the other six.

5. *I ... put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the Lord commanded me* — Here is another minute, but important circumstance, the public mention of which at the time attests the veracity of the sacred historian.

6-9. *the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera* — So sudden a change from a spoken discourse to a historical narrative has greatly puzzled the most eminent biblical scholars, some of whom reject the parenthesis as a manifest interpolation. But it is found in the most ancient Hebrew manuscripts, and, believing that all contained in this book was given by inspiration and is entitled to profound respect, we must receive it as it stands, although acknowledging our inability to explain the insertion of these encampment details in this place. There is another difficulty in the narrative itself. The stations which the Israelites are said successively to have occupied are enumerated here in a different order from ^{<OR33>}Numbers 33:31. That the names of the stations in both passages are the same there can be no doubt; but, in Numbers, they are probably mentioned in reference to the *first* visit of the Hebrews during the long wandering southwards, before their return to Kadesh the *second* time; while here they have a reference to the second passage of the Israelites, when they again marched south, in order to compass the land of Edom. It is easy to conceive that Mosera (Hor) and the wells of Jaakan might lie in such a direction that a nomadic horde might, in different years, at one time take the former *first* in their way, and at another time the latter [ROBINSON].

10-22. Moses here resumes his address, and having made a passing allusion to the principal events in their history, concludes by exhorting them to fear the Lord and serve Him faithfully.

16. *Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart* — Here he teaches them the true and spiritual meaning of that rite, as was afterwards more strongly urged by Paul (^{<4125>}Romans 2:25,29), and should be applied by us to our baptism, which is “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God” [^{<4121>}1 Peter 3:21].

CHAPTER 11

DEUTERONOMY 11:1-32.

AN EXHORTATION TO OBEDIENCE.

1. *Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge* —

The reason for the frequent repetition of the same or similar counsels is to be traced to the infantine character and state of the church, which required line upon line and precept upon precept. Besides, the Israelites were a headstrong and perverse people, impatient of control, prone to rebellion, and, from their long stay in Egypt, so violently addicted to idolatry, that they ran imminent risk of being seduced by the religion of the country to which they were going, which, in its characteristic features, bore a strong resemblance to that of the country they had left.

2-9. *I speak not with your children which have not known ... But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did* — Moses is here giving a brief summary of the marvels and miracles of awful judgment which God had wrought in effecting their release from the tyranny of Pharaoh, as well as those which had taken place in the wilderness. He knew that he might dwell upon these, for he was addressing many who had been witnesses of those appalling incidents. For it will be remembered that the divine threatening that they should die in the wilderness, and its execution, extended only to males from twenty years and upward, who were able to go forth to war. No males under twenty years of age, no females, and none of the tribe of Levi, were objects of the denunciation (see ^{CHAS} Numbers 14:28-30 16:49). There might, therefore, have been many thousands of the Israelites at that time of whom Moses could say, “Your eyes have seen all the great acts which He did”; and with regard to those the historic review of Moses was well calculated to stir up their minds to the duty and advantages of obedience.

10-12. *For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out* — The physical features of Palestine

present a striking contrast to those of the land of bondage. A widely extending plain forms the cultivated portion of Egypt, and on the greater part of this low and level country rain never falls. This natural want is supplied by the annual overflow of the Nile, and by artificial means from the same source when the river has receded within its customary channel. Close by the bank the process of irrigation is very simple. The cultivator opens a small sluice on the edge of the square bed in which seed has been sown, making drill after drill; and when a sufficient quantity of water has poured in, he shuts it up with his foot. Where the bank is high, the water is drawn up by hydraulic engines, of which there are three kinds used, of different power, according to the subsidence of the stream. The water is distributed in small channels or earthen conduits, simple in construction, worked by the foot, and formed with a mattock by the gardener who directs their course, and which are banked up or opened, as occasion may require, by pressing in the soil with the foot. Thus was the land watered in which the Israelites had dwelt so long. Such vigilance and laborious industry would not be needed in the promised land. Instead of being visited with moisture only at one brief season and left during the rest of the year under a withering blight, every season it would enjoy the benign influences of a genial climate. The hills would attract the frequent clouds, and in the refreshing showers the blessing of God would especially rest upon the land.

12. *A land which the Lord thy God careth for* — that is, watering it, as it were, with His own hands, without human aid or mechanical means.

14. *the first rain and the latter rain* — The early rain commenced in autumn, that is, chiefly during the months of September and October, while the latter rain fell in the spring of the year, that is, during the months of March and April. It is true that occasional showers fell all the winter; but, at the autumnal and vernal seasons, they were more frequent, copious, and important; for the early rain was necessary, after a hot and protracted summer, to prepare the soil for receiving the seed; and the latter rain, which shortly preceded the harvest, was of the greatest use in invigorating the languishing powers of vegetation (^{<1024>}Jeremiah 5:24 ^{<1025>}Joel 2:23 ^{<1026>}Amos 4:7 ^{<1027>}James 5:7).

15-17. *I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle* — Undoubtedly the special blessing of the former and the latter rain [⁴⁸¹¹⁴Deuteronomy 11:14] was one principal cause of the extraordinary fertility of Canaan in ancient times. That blessing was promised to the Israelites as a temporal reward for their fidelity to the national covenant [⁴⁸¹¹³Deuteronomy 11:13]. It was threatened to be withdrawn on their disobedience or apostasy; and most signally is the execution of that threatening seen in the present sterility of Palestine. MR. LOWTHIAN, an English farmer, who was struck during his journey from Joppa to Jerusalem by not seeing a blade of grass, where even in the poorest localities of Britain some wild vegetation is found, directed his attention particularly to the subject, and pursued the inquiry during a month's residence in Jerusalem, where he learned that a miserably small quantity of milk is daily sold to the inhabitants at a dear rate, and that chiefly asses' milk. "Most clearly," says he, "did I perceive that the barrenness of large portions of the country was owing to the cessation of the early and latter rain, and that the absence of grass and flowers made it no longer the land (⁴⁸¹¹⁹Deuteronomy 11:9) flowing with milk and honey."

18-25. *lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them* — (See on ⁴⁸¹¹⁸Deuteronomy 6:1).

24. *Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours* — not as if the Jews should be lords of the world, but of very place within the promised land. It should be granted to them and possessed by them, on conditions of obedience:

from the wilderness — the Arabah on the south;

Lebanon — the northern limit;

Euphrates — their boundary on the east. Their grant of dominion extended so far, and the right was fulfilled to Solomon.

even unto the uttermost sea — the Mediterranean.

26-32. *Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse* — (See on ⁴⁸²¹¹Deuteronomy 27:11).

CHAPTER 12

DEUTERONOMY 12:1-15.

MONUMENTS OF IDOLATRY TO BE DESTROYED.

1. *These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe* — Having in the preceding chapter inculcated upon the Israelites the general obligation to fear and love God, Moses here enters into a detail of some special duties they were to practice on their obtaining possession of the promised land.

2. *Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods* — This divine command was founded on the tendencies of human nature; for to remove out of sight everything that had been associated with idolatry, that it might never be spoken of and no vestige of it remain, was the only effectual way to keep the Israelites from temptations to it. It is observable that Moses does not make any mention of temples, for such buildings were not in existence at that early period. The “places” chosen as the scene of heathen worship were situated either on the summit of a lofty mountain, or on some artificial mound, or in a grove, planted with particular trees, such as oaks, poplars, and elms (^{251B}Isaiah 57:5-7 ^{231B}Hosea 4:13). The reason for the selection of such sites was both to secure retirement and to direct the attention upward to heaven; and the “place” was nothing else than a consecrated enclosure, or at most, a canopy or screen from the weather.

3. *And ye shall overthrow their altars* — piles of turf or small stones.

and break their pillars — Before the art of sculpture was known, the statues of idols were only rude blocks of colored stones.

5. *unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose ... to put his name there ... thou shalt come* — They were forbidden to worship either in the impure superstitious manner of the heathen, or in any of the places frequented by them. A particular place for the general rendezvous of all

the tribes would be chosen by God Himself; and the choice of one common place for the solemn rites of religion was an act of divine wisdom, for the security of the true religion. It was admirably calculated to prevent the corruption which would otherwise have crept in from their frequenting groves and high hills — to preserve uniformity of worship and keep alive their faith in Him to whom all their sacrifices pointed. The place was successively Mizpeh, Shiloh, and especially Jerusalem. But in all the references made to it by Moses, the name is never mentioned. This studied silence was maintained partly lest the Canaanites within whose territories it lay might have concentrated their forces to frustrate all hopes of obtaining it; partly lest the desire of possessing a place of such importance might have become a cause of strife or rivalry amongst the Hebrew tribes, as about the appointment to the priesthood (⁽⁴⁰⁴⁾Numbers 16:1-30).

7. *there ye shall eat before the Lord* — of the things mentioned (⁽⁴²¹⁾Deuteronomy 12:6); but of course, none of the parts assigned to the priests before the Lord — in the place where the sanctuary should be established, and in those parts of the Holy City which the people were at liberty to frequent and inhabit.

12. *ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters*, etc. — Hence it appears that, although males only were commanded to appear before God at the annual solemn feasts (⁽⁴²³⁾Exodus 23:17), the women were allowed to accompany them (⁽⁴⁰⁸⁾1 Samuel 1:3-23).

15. *Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates* — Every animal designed for food, whether ox, goat, or lamb, was during the abode in the wilderness ordered to be slain as a peace offering at the door of the tabernacle; its blood to be sprinkled, and its fat burnt upon the altar by the priest. The encampment, being then round about the altar, made this practice, appointed to prevent idolatry, easy and practicable. But on the settlement in the promised land, the obligation to slay at the tabernacle was dispensed with. The people were left at liberty to prepare their meat in their cities or homes.

according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee — The style of living should be accommodated to one's condition and means — profuse and riotous indulgence can never secure the divine blessing.

the unclean and the clean may eat thereof — The unclean here are those who were under some slight defilement, which, without excluding them from society, yet debarred them from eating any of the sacred meats (^{<BR22>}Leviticus 7:20). They were at liberty freely to partake of common articles of food.

of the roebuck — the gazelle.

and as of the hart — The Syrian deer (*Cervus barbatus*) is a species between our red and fallow deer, distinguished by the want of a bis-antler, or second branch on the horns, reckoning from below, and for a spotted livery which is effaced only in the third or fourth year.

^{<BR26>}DEUTERONOMY 12:16-25.

BLOOD PROHIBITED.

16. *ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water* — The prohibition against eating or drinking blood as an unnatural custom accompanied the announcement of the divine grant of animal flesh for food (^{<BR34>}Genesis 9:4), and the prohibition was repeatedly renewed by Moses with reference to the great objects of the law (^{<BR72>}Leviticus 17:12), the prevention of idolatry, and the consecration of the sacrificial blood to God. In regard, however, to the blood of animals slain for food, it might be shed without ceremony and poured on the ground as a common thing like water — only for the sake of decency, as well as for preventing all risk of idolatry, it was to be covered over with earth (^{<BR73>}Leviticus 17:13), in opposition to the practice of heathen sportsmen, who left it exposed as an offering to the god of the chase.

22-28. *Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so shalt thou eat them,* etc. — Game when procured in the wilderness had not been required to be brought to the door of the tabernacle. The people were now to be as free in the killing of domestic cattle as of wild animals. The permission to hunt and use venison for food was doubtless a great boon to the Israelites, not only in the wilderness, but on their settlement in Canaan, as the mountainous ranges of Lebanon, Carmel, and Gilead, on which deer

abounded in vast numbers, would thus furnish them with a plentiful and luxuriant repast.

DEUTERONOMY 12:26-32.

HOLY THINGS TO BE EATEN IN THE HOLY PLACE.

26. *Only thy holy things which thou hast* — The tithes mentioned (^(RS27)Deuteronomy 12:17) are not to be considered ordinary tithes, which belonged to the Levites, and of which private Israelites had a right to eat; but they are other extraordinary tithes or gifts, which the people carried to the sanctuary to be presented as peace offerings, and on which, after being offered and the allotted portion given to the priest, they feasted with their families and friends (^(RS23)Leviticus 27:30).

29, 30. *Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them ... saying, How did these nations serve their gods?* — The Israelites, influenced by superstitious fear, too often endeavored to propitiate the deities of Canaan. Their Egyptian education had early impressed that bugbear notion of a set of local deities, who expected their dues of all who came to inhabit the country which they honored with their protection, and severely resented the neglect of payment in all newcomers [WARBURTON]. Taking into consideration the prevalence of this idea among them, we see that against an Egyptian influence was directed the full force of the wholesome caution with which this chapter closes.

CHAPTER 13

<613>DEUTERONOMY 13:1-5.

ENTICERS TO IDOLATRY TO BE PUT TO DEATH.

1. *If there arise among you a prophet* — The special counsels which follow arose out of the general precept contained in <612>Deuteronomy 12:32; and the purport of them is, that every attempt to seduce others from the course of duty which that divine standard of faith and worship prescribes must not only be strenuously resisted, but the seducer punished by the law of the land. This is exemplified in three cases of enticement to idolatry.

a prophet — that is, some notable person laying claim to the character and authority of the prophetic office (<611>Numbers 12:6 <610>1 Samuel 10:6), performing feats of dexterity or power in support of his pretensions, or even predicting events which occurred as he foretold; as, for instance, an eclipse which a knowledge of natural science might enable him to anticipate (or, as Caiaphas, <609>John 18:14). Should the aim of such a one be to seduce the people from the worship of the true God, he is an impostor and must be put to death. No prodigy, however wonderful, no human authority, however great, should be allowed to shake their belief in the divine character and truth of a religion so solemnly taught and so awfully attested (compare <608>Galatians 1:8). The modern Jews appeal to this passage as justifying their rejection of Jesus Christ. But He possessed all the characteristics of a true prophet, and He was so far from alienating the people from God and His worship that the grand object of His ministry was to lead to a purer, more spiritual and perfect observance of the law.

DEUTERONOMY 13:6-18.

WITHOUT REGARD TO NEARNESS OF RELATION.

6. *If thy brother ... entice thee secretly* — This term being applied very loosely in all Eastern countries (^{<0113>}Genesis 20:13), other expressions are added to intimate that no degree of kindred, however intimate, should be allowed to screen an enticer to idolatry, to conceal his crime, or protect his person. Piety and duty must overcome affection or compassion, and an accusation must be lodged before a magistrate.

9. *thou shalt surely kill him* — not hastily, or in a private manner, but after trial and conviction; and his relative, as informer, was to cast the first stone (see on ^{<0170>}Deuteronomy 17:2 and ^{<0178>}Acts 7:58). It is manifest that what was done in secret could not be legally proved by a single informer; and hence Jewish writers say that spies were set in some private part of the house, to hear the conversation and watch the conduct of a person suspected of idolatrous tendencies.

12-18. *Certain men, the children of Belial* — lawless, designing demagogues (^{<0192>}Judges 19:22 ^{<0116>}1 Samuel 1:16 ^{<0255>}1 Samuel 25:25), who abused their influence to withdraw the inhabitants of the city to idol-worship.

14. *Then shalt thou inquire* — that is, the magistrate, to whom it officially belonged to make the necessary investigation. In the event of the report proving true, the most summary proceedings were to be commenced against the apostate inhabitants. The law in this chapter has been represented as stern and sanguinary, but it was in accordance with the national constitution of Israel. God being their King, idolatry was treason, and a city turned to idols put itself into a state, and incurred the punishment, of rebellion.

16. *it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again* — Its ruins shall be a permanent monument of the divine justice, and a beacon for the warning and terror of posterity.

17. *there shall cleave naught of the cursed thing to thine hand* — No spoil shall be taken from a city thus solemnly devoted to destruction.

Every living creature must be put to the sword — everything belonging to it reduced to ashes — that nothing but its infamy may remain.

CHAPTER 14

<614> DEUTERONOMY 14:1,2.

GOD'S PEOPLE MUST NOT DISFIGURE THEMSELVES IN MOURNING.

1. *ye shall not cut yourselves ... for the dead* — It was a common practice of idolaters, both on ceremonious occasions of their worship (<1183> 1 Kings 18:28), and at funerals (compare <21416> Jeremiah 16:6 <24115> 41:5), to make ghastly incisions on their faces and other parts of their persons with their finger nails or sharp instruments. The making a large bare space between the eyebrows was another heathen custom in honor of the dead (see on <6127> Leviticus 19:27,28 and <6215> Leviticus 21:5). Such indecorous and degrading usages, being extravagant and unnatural expressions of hopeless sorrow (<5143> 1 Thessalonians 4:13), were to be carefully avoided by the Israelites, as derogatory to the character, and inconsistent with the position, of those who were the people of God (<6142> Deuteronomy 14:2).

<6143> DEUTERONOMY 14:3-21.

WHAT MAY BE EATEN, AND WHAT NOT.

3. *Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing* — that is, anything forbidden as unclean (see on <6111> Leviticus 11:1).

<6144> DEUTERONOMY 14:4-8.

OF BEASTS.

5. *The hart* — (see on <61215> Deuteronomy 12:15).

fallow deer — The Hebrew word (*Jachmur*) so rendered, does not represent the fallow deer, which is unknown in Western Asia, but an antelope (*Oryx leucoryx*), called by the Arabs, *jazmar*. It is of a white color, black at the extremities, and a bright red on the thighs. It was used at Solomon's table.

wild goat — The word *akko* is different from that commonly used for a wild goat (^{<0212>}1 Samuel 24:2 ^{<0448>}Psalms 104:18 ^{<0159>}Proverbs 5:19), and it is supposed to be a goat-deer, having the body of a stag, but the head, horns, and beard of a goat. An animal of this sort is found in the East, and called *Lerwee* [SHAW, *Travels*].

pygarg — a species of antelope (*Oryx addax*) with white buttocks, wreathed horns two feet in length, and standing about three feet seven inches high at the shoulders. It is common in the tracks which the Israelites had frequented [SHAW].

wild ox — supposed to be the *Nubian Oryx*, which differs from the *Oryx leucoryx* (formerly mentioned) by its black color; and it is, moreover, of larger stature and more slender frame, with longer and more curved horns. It is called *Bekkar-El-Wash* by the Arabs.

chamois — rendered by the *Septuagint* Cameleopard; but, by others who rightly judge it must have been an animal more familiar to the Hebrews, it is thought to be the *Kebesch* (*Ovis tragelaphus*), rather larger than a common sheep, covered not with wool, but with reddish hair — a Syrian sheep-goat.

^{<0541>}DEUTERONOMY 14:11-20.

OF BIRDS.

11-20. Of all clean birds ye shall eat — (See on ^{<0121>}Leviticus 11:21).

13. glede — thought to be the same as that rendered *vulture* (see on ^{<0114>}Leviticus 11:14).

15. the cuckow — more probably the sea-gull. [See on ^{<0116>}Leviticus 11:16].

16. *the swan* — rather, the goose [MICHAELIS]. [See on ^{<B118>}Leviticus 11:18].

17. *gier eagle* — The Hebrew word *Rachemah* is manifestly identical with *Rachamah*, the name which the Arabs give to the common vulture of Western Asia and Egypt (*Neophron percnopterus*). (See on ^{<B118>}Leviticus 11:18).

cormorant — rather, the *plungeon*; a seafowl. [See on ^{<B117>}Leviticus 11:17].

18. *the lapwing* — the upupa or hoop: a beautiful bird, but of the most unclean habits. [See on ^{<B119>}Leviticus 11:19].

21. *Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself* — (See on ^{<B175>}Leviticus 17:15 and ^{<B218>}Leviticus 22:8).

thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates — not a proselyte, for he, as well as an Israelite, was subject to this law; but a heathen traveler or sojourner.

Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk — This is the third place in which the prohibition is repeated [^{<D236>}Exodus 23:19 34:26]. It was pointed against an annual pagan ceremony (see on ^{<D236>}Exodus 23:19).

[^{<B142>}Deuteronomy 14:22-29. LAW OF THE TITHE].

22-27. *Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed* — The dedication of a tenth part of the year's produce in everything was then a religious duty. It was to be brought as an offering to the sanctuary; and, where distance prevented its being taken in kind, it was by this statute convertible into money.

28, 29. *At the end of three years ... the Levite ... shall come*, etc. — The Levites having no inheritance like the other tribes, the Israelites were not to forget them, but honestly to tithe their increase [^{<B189>}Numbers 18:24]. Besides the tenth of all the land produce, they had forty-eight cities, with the surrounding grounds [^{<B187>}Numbers 35:7], "the best of the land," and a certain proportion of the sacrifices as their allotted perquisites. They had, therefore, if not an affluent, yet a comfortable and independent, fund for their support.

CHAPTER 15

DEUTERONOMY 15:1-11.

THE SEVENTH YEAR, A YEAR OF RELEASE FOR THE POOR.

1. *At the end of every seven years* — during the last of the seven, that is, the sabbatical year (^{<127D>}Exodus 21:2 23:11 ^{<125D>}Leviticus 25:4 ^{<126H>}Jeremiah 34:14).
2. *Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbor shall release it* — not by an absolute discharge of the debt, but by passing over that year without exacting payment. The relief was temporary and peculiar to that year during which there was a total suspension of agricultural labor.
he shall not exact it ... of his brother — that is, an Israelite, so called in opposition to a stranger or foreigner.
because it is called the Lord's release — The reason for acquitting a debtor at that particular period proceeded from obedience to the command, and a regard for the honor, of God; an acknowledgment of holding their property of Him, and gratitude for His kindness.
3. *Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again* — Admission to all the religious privileges of the Israelites was freely granted to heathen proselytes, though this spiritual incorporation did not always imply an equal participation of civil rights and privileges (^{<125H>}Leviticus 25:44 ^{<126H>}Jeremiah 34:14; compare ^{<127D>}1 Chronicles 22:2 ^{<127D>}2 Chronicles 2:17).
4. *Save when there shall be no poor man among you* — Apparently a qualifying clause added to limit the application of the foregoing statement [^{<125D>}Deuteronomy 15:3]; so that “the brother” to be released pointed to a poor borrower, whereas it is implied that if he were rich, the restoration of the loan might be demanded even during that year. But the words may properly be rendered (as on the *Margin*) *to the end, in order that there may be no poor among you* — that is, that none be reduced to inconvenient

straits and poverty by unseasonable exaction of debts at a time when there was no labor and no produce, and that all may enjoy comfort and prosperity, which will be the case through the special blessing of God on the land, provided they are obedient.

7-11. *If there be among you a poor man ... thou shalt not harden thine heart* — Lest the foregoing law should prevent the Israelites lending to the poor, Moses here admonishes them against so mean and selfish a spirit and exhorts them to give in a liberal spirit of charity and kindness, which will secure the divine blessing (^{<6518>}Romans 12:8 ^{<4002>}2 Corinthians 9:7).

11. *For the poor shall never cease out of the land* — Although every Israelite on the conquest of Canaan became the owner of property, yet in the providence of God who foresaw the event, it was permitted, partly as a punishment of disobedience and partly for the exercise of benevolent and charitable feelings, that “the poor should never cease out of the land.”

^{<6512>}DEUTERONOMY 15:12-19.

HEBREW SERVANTS' FREEDOM.

12. *if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee* — The last extremity of an insolvent debtor, when his house or land was not sufficient to cancel his debt, was to be sold as a slave with his family (^{<6539>}Leviticus 25:39 ^{<1001>}2 Kings 4:1 ^{<6511>}Nehemiah 5:1-13 ^{<8309>}Job 24:9 ^{<6515>}Matthew 18:25). The term of servitude could not last beyond six years. They obtained their freedom either after six years from the time of their sale or before the end of the seventh year. At the year of jubilee, such slaves were emancipated even if their six years of service were not completed [see on ^{<6539>}Leviticus 25:39].

13-15. *thou shalt not let him go away empty* — A seasonable and wise provision for enabling a poor unfortunate to regain his original status in society, and the motive urged for his kindness and humanity to the Hebrew slave was the remembrance that the whole nation was once a degraded and persecuted band of helots in Egypt. Thus, kindness towards their slaves, unparalleled elsewhere in those days, was inculcated by the

Mosaic law; and in all their conduct towards persons in that reduced condition, leniency and gentleness were enforced by an appeal which no Israelite could resist.

16, 17. *if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee* — If they declined to avail themselves of the privilege of release and chose to remain with their master, then by a peculiar form of ceremony they became a party to the transaction, voluntarily sold themselves to their employer, and continued in his service till death.

18. *he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee* — that is, he is entitled to double wages because his service was more advantageous to you, being both without wages and for a length of time, whereas hired servants were engaged yearly (^{<1825>}Leviticus 25:53), or at most for three years (^{<2364>}Isaiah 16:14).

19. *All the firstling males of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the Lord thy God* — (See on ^{<1010>}Exodus 13:2; also see ^{<1223>}Exodus 22:30).

thou shalt do not work with the firstling of thy bullock — that is, the second firstlings (see ^{<6107>}Deuteronomy 12:17,18 ^{<6143>}14:23).

CHAPTER 16

DEUTERONOMY 16:1-22.

THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER.

1. *Observe the month of Abib* — or first-fruits. It comprehended the latter part of our March and the beginning of April. Green ears of the barley, which were then full, were offered as first-fruits, on the second day of the passover.

for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee out of Egypt by night — This statement is apparently at variance with the prohibition (⁽¹²²²⁾Exodus 12:22) as well as with the recorded fact that their departure took place in the *morning* (⁽¹³³⁾Exodus 13:3 ⁽¹⁶³³⁾Numbers 33:3). But it is susceptible of easy reconciliation. Pharaoh's permission, the first step of emancipation, was extorted during the night, the preparations for departure commenced, the rendezvous at Rameses made, and the march entered on in the morning.

2. *Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover* — not the paschal lamb, which was strictly and properly the passover. The whole solemnity is here meant, as is evident from the mention of the additional victims that required to be offered on the subsequent days of the feast (⁽¹³³⁾Numbers 28:18,19 ⁽¹⁸³³⁾2 Chronicles 35:8,9), and from the allusion to the continued use of unleavened bread for seven days, whereas the passover itself was to be eaten at once. The words before us are equivalent to "thou shalt observe the feast of the passover."

3. *seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread* — a sour, unpleasant, unwholesome kind of bread, designed to be a memorial of their Egyptian misery and of the haste with which they departed, not allowing time for their morning dough to ferment.

5, 6. *Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates* — The passover was to be observed nowhere but in the court of the

tabernacle or temple, as it was not a religious feast or sacramental occasion merely, but an actual sacrifice (^{<1227>}Exodus 12:27 ^{<1238>}23:18 ^{<1245>}34:25). The blood had to be sprinkled on the altar and in the place where the true Passover was afterwards to be sacrificed for us “at even, at the going down of the sun” — literally, “between the evenings.”

6. *at the season* — that is, the month and day, though not perhaps the precise hour. The immense number of victims that had to be immolated on the eve of the passover — that is, within a space of four hours — has appeared to some writers a great difficulty. But the large number of officiating priests, their dexterity and skill in the preparation of the sacrifices, the wide range of the court, the extraordinary dimensions of the altar of burnt offering and orderly method of conducting the solemn ceremonial, rendered it easy to do that in a few hours, which would otherwise have required as many days.

7. *thou shalt roast and eat it* — (See on ^{<1218>}Exodus 12:8; compare *Note*, ^{<4653>}2 Chronicles 35:13).

thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents — The sense of this passage, on the first glance of the words, seems to point to the morning after the first day — the passover eve. Perhaps, however, the divinely appointed duration of this feast, the solemn character and important object, the journey of the people from the distant parts of the land to be present, and the recorded examples of their continuing all the time (^{<4412>}2 Chronicles 30:21), (though these may be considered extraordinary, and therefore exceptional occasions), may warrant the conclusion that the leave given to the people to return home was to be on the morning after the completion of the seven days.

9-12. *Seven weeks shalt thou number* — The feast of weeks, or a WEEK OF WEEKS: the feast of pentecost (see on ^{<1831>}Leviticus 23:10; also see ^{<1242>}Exodus 34:22 ^{<4411>}Acts 2:1). As on the second day of the passover a sheaf of new barley, reaped on purpose, was offered, so on the second day of pentecost a sheaf of new wheat was presented as first-fruits (^{<1236>}Exodus 23:16 ^{<4435>}Numbers 28:26), a freewill, spontaneous tribute of gratitude to God for His temporal bounties. This feast was instituted in memory of the giving of the law, that spiritual food by which man’s soul is nourished (^{<4888>}Deuteronomy 8:3).

13-17. *Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days* — (See on ^{<0234>}Exodus 23:14; ^{<0234>}Leviticus 23:34; and ^{<0232>}Numbers 29:12). Various conjectures have been formed to account for the appointment of this feast at the conclusion of the whole harvest. Some imagine that it was designed to remind the Israelites of the time when they had no cornfields to reap but were daily supplied with manna; others think that it suited the convenience of the people better than any other period of the year for dwelling in booths; others that it was the time of Moses' second descent from the mount; while a fourth class are of opinion that this feast was fixed to the time of the year when the Word was made flesh and *dwelt* — literally, “tabernacled” — among us (^{<0114>}John 1:14), Christ being actually born at that season.

15. *in all the works of thine hands ... rejoice* — that is, praising God with a warm and elevated heart. According to Jewish tradition, no marriages were allowed to be celebrated during these great festivals, that no personal or private rejoicings might be mingled with the demonstrations of public and national gladness.

16. *Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God* — No *command* was laid on women to undertake the journeys, partly from regard to the natural weakness of their sex, and partly to their domestic cares.

18-20. *Judges and officers shalt thou make* — These last meant heralds or bailiffs, employed in executing the sentence of their superiors.

in all thy gates — The gate was the place of public resort among the Israelites and other Eastern people, where business was transacted and cases decided. The Ottoman Porte derived its name from the administration of justice at its gates.

21. *Thou shalt not plant thee a grove* — A grove has in Scripture a variety of significations — a group of overshadowing trees, or a grove adorned with altars dedicated to a particular deity, or a wooden image in a grove (^{<0165>}Judges 6:25 ^{<0204>}2 Kings 23:4-6). They might be placed near the earthen and temporary altars erected in the wilderness, but they could not exist either at the tabernacle or temples. They were places, which, with

their usual accompaniments, presented strong allurements to idolatry; and therefore the Israelites were prohibited from planting them.

22. *Neither shalt thou set thee up any image* — erroneously rendered so for “pillar”; pillars of various kinds, and materials of wood or stone were erected in the neighborhood of altars. Sometimes they were conical or oblong, at other times they served as pedestals for the statues of idols. A superstitious reverence was attached to them, and hence they were forbidden.

CHAPTER 17

DEUTERONOMY 17:1.

THINGS SACRIFICED MUST BE SOUND.

1. *Thou shalt not sacrifice ... any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish*

— Under the name of bullock were comprehended bulls, cows, and calves; under that of sheep, rams, lambs, kids, he- and she-goats. An ox, from mutilation, was inadmissible. The qualifications required in animals destined for sacrifice are described (^{Exodus 12:5} ^{Leviticus 1:3}).

DEUTERONOMY 17:2-7.

IDOLATERS MUST BE SLAIN.

2-7. *If there be found among you ... man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness*

— The grand object contemplated in choosing Israel was to preserve the knowledge and worship of the one true God; and hence idolatry of any kind, whether of the heavenly bodies or in some grosser form, is called “a transgression of His covenant.” No rank or sex could palliate this crime. Every reported case, even a flying rumor of the perpetration of so heinous an offense, was to be judicially examined; and if proved by the testimony of competent witnesses, the offender was to be taken without the gates and stoned to death, the witnesses casting the first stone at him. The object of this special arrangement was partly to deter the witnesses from making a rash accusation by the prominent part they had to act as executioners, and partly to give a public assurance that the crime had met its due punishment.

<6708 DEUTERONOMY 17:8-13.

THE PRIESTS AND JUDGES TO DETERMINE CONTROVERSIES.

8-13. *If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment* — In all civil or criminal cases, where there was any doubt or difficulty in giving a decision, the local magistrates were to submit them by reference to the tribunal of the Sanhedrim — the supreme council, which was composed partly of civil and partly of ecclesiastical persons. “The priests and Levites,” should rather be “the priests — the Levites”; that is, the Levitical priests, including the high priest, who were members of the legislative assembly; and who, as forming one body, are called “the judge.” Their sittings were held in the neighborhood of the sanctuary because in great emergencies the high priest had to consult God by Urim (<0272 Numbers 27:21). From their judgment there was no appeal; and if a person were so perverse and refractory as to refuse obedience to their sentences, his conduct, as inconsistent with the maintenance of order and good government, was then to be regarded and punished as a capital crime.

<6774 DEUTERONOMY 17:14-20.

THE ELECTION AND DUTY OF A KING.

14. *When thou ... shalt say, I will set a king over me* — In the following passage Moses *prophetically* announces a revolution which should occur at a later period in the national history of Israel. No sanction or recommendation was indicated; on the contrary, when the popular clamor had effected that constitutional change on the theocracy by the appointment of a king, the divine disapproval was expressed in the most unequivocal terms (<0871 1 Samuel 8:7). Permission at length was granted, God reserving to Himself the nomination of the family and the person who should be elevated to the regal dignity (<0915 1 Samuel 9:15 <0916 10:24 <0917 16:12 <1304 1 Chronicles 28:4). In short, Moses foreseeing that his ignorant and fickle countrymen, insensible to their advantages as a peculiar people, would soon wish to change their constitution and be like other nations,

provides to a certain extent for such an emergency and lays down the principles on which a king in Israel must act. He was to possess certain indispensable requisites. He was to be an Israelite, of the same race and religion, to preserve the purity of the established worship, as well as be a type of Christ, a spiritual king, one of their brethren.

15. *thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother* — that is, by their free and voluntary choice. But God, in the retributions of His providence, did allow foreign princes to usurp the dominion (^{<3827>}Jeremiah 38:17 ^{<4227>}Matthew 22:17).

16. *he shall not multiply horses to himself* — The use of these animals was not absolutely prohibited, nor is there any reason to conclude that they might not be employed as part of the state equipage. But the multiplication of horses would inevitably lead to many evils, to increased intercourse with foreign nations, especially with Egypt, to the importation of an animal to which the character of the country was not suited, to the establishment of an Oriental military despotism, to proud and pompous parade in peace, to a dependence upon Egypt in time of war, and a consequent withdrawal of trust and confidence in God. (^{<1082>}2 Samuel 8:4 ^{<1025>}1 Kings 10:26 ^{<4116>}2 Chronicles 1:16 9:28 ^{<2313>}Isaiah 31:3).

17. *Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away* — There were the strongest reasons for recording an express prohibition on this point, founded on the practice of neighboring countries in which polygamy prevailed, and whose kings had numerous harems; besides, the monarch of Israel was to be absolutely independent of the people and had nothing but the divine law to restrain his passions. The mischievous effects resulting from the breach of this condition were exemplified in the history of Solomon and other princes, who, by trampling on the restrictive law, corrupted themselves as well as the nation.

neither shall he greatly multiply ... silver and gold — that is, the kings were forbidden to accumulate money for private purposes.

18-20. *he shall write him a copy of this law in a book* — The original scroll of the ancient Scriptures was deposited in the sanctuary under the strict custody of the priests (see on ^{<6313>}Deuteronomy 31:26 and ^{<12213>}2 Kings

22:8). Each monarch, on his accession, was to be furnished with a true and faithful copy, which he was to keep constantly beside him, and daily peruse it, that his character and sentiments being cast into its sanctifying mould, he might discharge his royal functions in the spirit of faith and piety, of humility and a love or righteousness.

20. *that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children* — From this it appears that the crown in Israel was to be hereditary, unless forfeited by personal crime.

CHAPTER 18

DEUTERONOMY 18:1-8.

THE LORD IS THE PRIESTS' AND THE LEVITES' INHERITANCE.

1. *The priests the Levites ... shall eat the offerings* — As the tribe of Levi had no inheritance allotted them like the other tribes but were wholly consecrated to the priestly office, their maintenance was to arise from tithes, first-fruits, and certain portions of the oblations presented on the altar, which God having by express appointment reserved to Himself made over, after being offered, to His ministers.

3. *this shall be the priest's due from the people* — All who offered sacrifices of thanksgiving or peace offerings (⁴⁰⁰³Leviticus 7:31-33) were ordered to give the breast and shoulder as perquisites to the priests. Here “the two cheeks” or head and “the maw” or stomach, deemed anciently a great dainty, are specified. But whether this is a new injunction, or a repetition of the old with the supplement of more details, it is not easy to determine.

6-8. *if a Levite ... come with all the desire of his mind* — It appears that the Levites served in rotation from the earliest times; but, from their great numbers, it was only at infrequent intervals they could be called into actual service. Should any Levite, however, under the influence of eminent piety, resolve to devote himself wholly and continually to the sacred duties of the sanctuary, he was allowed to realize his ardent wishes; and as he was admitted to a share of the work, so also to a share of the remuneration. Though he might have private property, that was to form no ground for withholding or even diminishing his claim to maintenance like the other ministering priests. The reason or principle of the enactment is obvious (⁴⁰⁰³1 Corinthians 9:13). At the same time, while every facility was afforded for the admission of such a zealous and self-denying officer, this admission was to be in an orderly manner: he was to minister “as all

his brethren” — that is, a Gershonite with Gershonites; a Merarite with Merarites; so that there might be no derangement of the established courses.

DEUTERONOMY 18:9-14.

THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE NATIONS ARE TO BE AVOIDED.

9-14. *thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations* — (See on ^{<6820>}Leviticus 18:21, ^{<6821>}Leviticus 19:26, ^{<6822>}Leviticus 19:31, and ^{<6823>}Leviticus 20:4). In spite of this express command, the people of Canaan, especially the Philistines, were a constant snare and stumbling block to the Israelites, on account of their divinations and superstitious practices.

DEUTERONOMY 18:15-19.

CHRIST THE PROPHET IS TO BE HEARD.

15-19. *The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet* — The insertion of this promise, in connection with the preceding prohibition, might warrant the application (which some make of it) to that order of true prophets whom God commissioned in unbroken succession to instruct, to direct, and warn His people; and in this view the purport of it is, “There is no need to consult with diviners and soothsayers, as I shall afford you the benefit of divinely appointed prophets, for judging of whose credentials a sure criterion is given” (^{<6824>}Deuteronomy 18:20-22). But the prophet here promised was pre-eminently the Messiah, for He alone was “like unto Moses” (see on ^{<6825>}Deuteronomy 34:10) “in His mediatorial character; in the peculiar excellence of His ministry; in the number, variety, and magnitude of His miracles; in His close and familiar communion with God; and in His being the author of a new dispensation of religion.” This prediction was fulfilled fifteen hundred years afterwards and was expressly applied to Jesus Christ by Peter (^{<4182>}Acts 3:22,23), and by Stephen (^{<4183>}Acts 7:37).

19. *whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him* — The direful consequences of unbelief in Christ, and disregard of His mission, the Jewish people have been experiencing during eighteen hundred years.

CHAPTER 19

DEUTERONOMY 19:1-13.

OF THE CITIES OF REFUGE.

2. *Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land* — Goelism, or the duty of the nearest kinsmen to avenge the death of a slaughtered relative, being the customary law of that age (as it still is among the Arabs and other people of the East), Moses incorporated it in an improved form with his legislative code. For the protection of the unintentional homicide, he provided certain cities of refuge — three had been destined for this purpose on the east of Jordan (^{<694H>}Deuteronomy 4:41 ^{<695H>}Numbers 35:11); three were to be invested with the same privilege on the west of that river when Canaan should be conquered.

in the midst of thy land — in such a position that they would be conspicuous and accessible, and equidistant from the extremities of the land and from each other.

3. *Thou shalt prepare thee a way* — The roads leading to them were to be kept in good condition and the brooks or rivers to be spanned by good bridges; the width of the roads was to be thirty-two cubits; and at all the crossroads signposts were to be erected with the words, *Mekeleth, Mekeleth*, “refuge, refuge,” painted on them.

divide the coasts of thy land ... into three parts — the whole extent of the country from the south to the north. The three cities on each side of Jordan were opposite to each other, “as two rows of vines in a vineyard” (see on ^{<691H>}Joshua 20:7).

6, 7. *Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot* — This verse is a continuation of ^{<692H>}Deuteronomy 19:3 (for ^{<693H>}Deuteronomy 19:4,5, which are explanatory, are in a parenthetical form), and the meaning is that if the kinsman of a person inadvertently killed should, under the impulse of sudden excitement and without

inquiring into the circumstances, inflict summary vengeance on the homicide, however guiltless, the law tolerated such an act; it was to pass with impunity. But to prevent such precipitate measures, the cities of refuge were established for the reception of the homicide, that “innocent blood might not be shed in thy land” (^{<0590>}Deuteronomy 19:10). In the case of premeditated murder (^{<0591>}Deuteronomy 19:11,12), they afforded no immunity; but, if it were only manslaughter, the moment the fugitive was within the gates, he found himself in a safe asylum (^{<0652>}Numbers 35:26-28 ^{<0616>}Joshua 20:6).

8, 9. *And if the Lord thy God enlarge thy coast* — Three additional sanctuaries were to be established in the event of their territory extending over the country from Hermon and Gilead to the Euphrates (see ^{<0158>}Genesis 15:18 ^{<0233>}Exodus 23:31). But it was obscurely hinted that this last provision would never be carried into effect, as the Israelites would not fulfill the conditions, namely, “that of keeping the commandments, to love the Lord, and walk ever in his ways.” In point of fact, although that region was brought into subjection by David and Solomon, we do not find that cities of refuge were established; because those sovereigns only made the ancient inhabitants tributary, instead of sending a colony of Israelites to possess it. The privilege of sanctuary cities, however, was given only for Israelites; and besides, that conquered territory did not remain long under the power of the Hebrew kings.

^{<0594>}DEUTERONOMY 19:14.

THE LANDMARK IS NOT TO BE REMOVED.

14. *Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour’s landmark, which they of old have set in thine inheritance* — The state of Palestine in regard to enclosures is very much the same now as it has always been. Though gardens and vineyards are surrounded by dry-stone walls or hedges of prickly pear, the boundaries of arable fields are marked by nothing but by a little trench, a small cairn, or a single erect stone, placed at certain intervals. It is manifest that a dishonest person could easily fill the gutter with earth, or remove these stones a few feet without much risk of

detection and so enlarge his own field by a stealthy encroachment on his neighbor's. This law, then, was made to prevent such trespasses.

<0515> DEUTERONOMY 19:15.

TWO WITNESSES REQUIRED.

15. *One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity* — The following rules to regulate the admission of testimony in public courts are founded on the principles of natural justice. A single witness shall not be admitted to the condemnation of an accused person.

<0516> DEUTERONOMY 19:16-21.

PUNISHMENT OF A FALSE WITNESS.

16-21. But if convicted of perjury, it will be sufficient for his own condemnation, and his punishment shall be exactly the same as would have overtaken the object of his malignant prosecution. (See on <0223> Exodus 21:23; see also <0220> Leviticus 24:20).

CHAPTER 20

DEUTERONOMY 20:1-20.

THE PRIESTS' EXHORTATION TO ENCOURAGE THE PEOPLE TO BATTLE.

1. *When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies* — In the approaching invasion of Canaan, or in any just and defensive war, the Israelites had reason to expect the presence and favor of God.

2-4. *when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people* — Jewish writers say that there was a war priest appointed by a special ceremonial to attend the army. It was natural that the solemn objects and motives of religion should have been applied to animate patriotism, and so give additional impulse to valor; other people have done this. But in the case of Israel, the regular attendance of a priest on the battlefield was in accordance with their theocratic government, in which everything was done directly by God through His delegated ministers. It was the province of this priest to sound the trumpets (^(GEN)Numbers 10:9 ^(GEN)31:6), and he had others under him who repeated at the head of each battalion the exhortations which he addressed to the warriors in general. The speech (^(GEN)Deuteronomy 20:3,4) is marked by a brevity and expressiveness admirably suited to the occasion, namely, when the men were drawn up in line.

4. *your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you* — According to Jewish writers, the ark was always taken into the field of combat. But there is no evidence of this in the sacred history; and it must have been a sufficient ground of encouragement to be assured that God was on their side.

5-8. *And the officers shall speak unto the people* — literally, *Shoterim*, who are called “scribes” or “overseers” (^(GEN)Exodus 5:6). They might be keepers of the muster-roll, or perhaps rather military heralds, whose duty it was to announce the orders of the generals (^(GEN)2 Chronicles 26:11). This

proclamation (^{4621b}Deuteronomy 20:5-8) must have been made previous to the priest's address, as great disorder and inconvenience must have been occasioned if the serried ranks were broken by the departure of those to whom the privilege was granted. Four grounds of exemption are expressly mentioned:

(1) The dedication of a new house, which, as in all Oriental countries still, was an important event, and celebrated by festive and religious ceremonies (⁴⁶²²Nehemiah 12:27); exemption for a year.

(2) The planting of a vineyard. The fruit of the first three years being declared unfit for use, and the first-fruits producible on the fourth, the exemption in this case lasted at least four years.

(3) The betrothal of a wife, which was always a considerable time before marriage. It was deemed a great hardship to leave a house unfinished, a new property half cultivated, and a recently contracted marriage; and the exemptions allowed in these cases were founded on the principle that a man's heart being deeply engrossed by something at a distance, he would not be very enthusiastic in the public service.

(4) The ground of exemption was cowardice. From the composition of the Israelitish army, which was an irregular militia, all above twenty years being liable to serve, many totally unfit for war must have been called to the field; and it was therefore a prudential arrangement to rid the army of such unwarlike elements — persons who could render no efficient service, and the contagion of whose craven spirit might lead to panic and defeat.

9. *they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people* — When the exempted parties have withdrawn, the combatants shall be ranged in order of battle.

10-20. *When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it* — An important principle is here introduced into the war law of Israel regarding the people they fought against and the cities they besieged. With “the cities of those people which God doth give thee” in Canaan, it was to be a war of utter extermination (⁴⁶²³Deuteronomy 20:17,18). But when on a just occasion, they went against other nations,

they were first to make a proclamation of peace, which if allowed by a surrender, the people would become dependent (⁽⁴⁸¹¹⁾Deuteronomy 20:11), and in the relation of tributaries the conquered nations would receive the highest blessings from alliance with the chosen people; they would be brought to the knowledge of Israel's God and of Israel's worship, as well as a participation of Israel's privileges. But if the besieged city refused to capitulate and be taken, a universal massacre was to be made of the males while the women and children were to be preserved and kindly treated (⁽⁴⁸¹³⁾Deuteronomy 20:13,14). By this means a provision was made for a friendly and useful connection being established between the captors and the captives; and Israel, even through her conquests, would prove a blessing to the nations.

19. *thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them*

— In a protracted siege, wood would be required for various purposes, both for military works and for fuel. But fruit-bearing trees were to be carefully spared; and, indeed, in warm countries like India, where the people live much more on fruit than we do, the destruction of a fruit tree is considered a sort of sacrilege.

20. *thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee*

— It is evident that some sort of military engines were intended; and accordingly we know, that in Egypt, where the Israelites learned their military tactics, the method of conducting a siege was by throwing up banks, and making advances with movable towers, or with the testudo [WILKINSON].

CHAPTER 21

DEUTERONOMY 21:1-9.

EXPIATION OF UNCERTAIN MURDER.

1-6. *If one be found slain ... lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him* — The ceremonies here ordained to be observed on the discovery of a slaughtered corpse show the ideas of sanctity which the Mosaic law sought to associate with human blood, the horror which murder inspired, as well as the fears that were felt lest God should avenge it on the country at large, and the pollution which the land was supposed to contract from the effusion of innocent, unexpiated blood. According to Jewish writers, the Sanhedrin, taking charge of such a case, sent a deputation to examine the neighborhood. They reported to the nearest town to the spot where the body was found. An order was then issued by their supreme authority to the elders or magistrates of that town, to provide the heifer at the civic expense and go through the appointed ceremonial. The engagement of the public authorities in the work of expiation, the purchase of the victim heifer, the conducting it to a “rough valley” which might be at a considerable distance, and which, as the original implies, was a wady, a perennial stream, in the waters of which the polluting blood would be wiped away from the land, and a desert withal, incapable of cultivation; the washing of the hands, which was an ancient act symbolical of innocence — the whole of the ceremonial was calculated to make a deep impression on the Jewish, as well as on the Oriental, mind generally; to stimulate the activity of the magistrates in the discharge of their official duties; to lead to the discovery of the criminal, and the repression of crime.

◀(21) DEUTERONOMY 21:10-23.

THE TREATMENT OF A CAPTIVE TAKEN TO WIFE.

10-14. *When thou goest to war ... and seest among the captives a beautiful woman ... that thou wouldest have her to thy wife* — According to the war customs of all ancient nations, a female captive became the slave of the victor, who had the sole and unchallengeable control of right to her person. Moses improved this existing usage by special regulations on the subject. He enacted that, in the event that her master was captivated by her beauty and contemplated a marriage with her, a month should be allowed to elapse, during which her perturbed feelings might be calmed, her mind reconciled to her altered condition, and she might bewail the loss of her parents, now to her the same as dead. A month was the usual period of mourning with the Jews, and the circumstances mentioned here were the signs of grief — the shaving of the head, the allowing the nails to grow uncut, the putting off her gorgeous dress in which ladies, on the eve of being captured, arrayed themselves to be the more attractive to their captors. The delay was full of humanity and kindness to the female slave, as well as a prudential measure to try the strength of her master's affections. If his love should afterwards cool and he become indifferent to her person, he was not to lord it over her, neither to sell her in the slave market, nor retain her in a subordinate condition in his house; but she was to be free to go where her inclinations led her.

15-17. *If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated* — In the original and all other translations, the words are rendered “have had,” referring to events that have already taken place; and that the “had” has, by some mistake, been omitted in our version, seems highly probable from the other verbs being in the past tense — “hers that was hated,” not “hers that is hated”; evidently intimating that she (the first wife) was dead at the time referred to. Moses, therefore, does not here legislate upon the case of a man who has two wives at the same time, but on that of a man who has married twice in succession, the second wife after the decease of the first; and there was an obvious necessity for legislation in these circumstances; for the first wife, who was hated, was dead, and the second wife, the favorite, was alive; and with the feelings of a stepmother, she would urge

her husband to make her own son the heir. This case has no bearing upon polygamy, which there is no evidence that the Mosaic code legalized.

18-21. *If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son* — A severe law was enacted in this case. But the consent of both parents was required as a prevention of any abuse of it; for it was reasonable to suppose that they would not both agree to a criminal information against their son except from absolute necessity, arising from his inveterate and hopeless wickedness; and, in that view, the law was wise and salutary, as such a person would be a pest and nuisance to society. The punishment was that to which blasphemers were doomed [¹⁸²³Leviticus 24:23]; for parents are considered God's representatives and invested with a portion of his authority over their children.

22, 23. *if a man have committed a sin ... and thou hang him on a tree* — Hanging was not a Hebrew form of execution (gibbeting is meant), but the body was not to be left to rot or be a prey to ravenous birds; it was to be buried "that day," either because the stench in a hot climate would corrupt the air, or the spectacle of an exposed corpse bring ceremonial defilement on the land.

CHAPTER 22

<121> DEUTERONOMY 22:1-4.

OF HUMANITY TOWARD BRETHREN.

1. *Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them*, etc. — “Brother” is a term of extensive application, comprehending persons of every description; not a relative, neighbor, or fellow countryman only, but any human being, known or unknown, a foreigner, and even an enemy (<121> Exodus 23:4). The duty inculcated is an act of common justice and charity, which, while it was taught by the law of nature, was more clearly and forcibly enjoined in the law delivered by God to His people. Indifference or dissimulation in the circumstances supposed would not only be cruelty to the dumb animals, but a violation of the common rights of humanity; and therefore the dictates of natural feeling, and still more the authority of the divine law, enjoined that the lost or missing property of another should be taken care of by the finder, till a proper opportunity occurred of restoring it to the owner.

<121> DEUTERONOMY 22:5-12.

THE SEX TO BE DISTINGUISHED BY APPAREL.

5. *The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment* — Though disguises were assumed at certain times in heathen temples, it is probable that a reference was made to unbecoming levities practiced in common life. They were properly forbidden; for the adoption of the habiliments of the one sex by the other is an outrage on decency, obliterates the distinctions of nature by fostering softness and effeminacy in the man, impudence and boldness in the woman as well as levity and hypocrisy in both; and, in short, it opens

the door to an influx of so many evils that all who wear the dress of another sex are pronounced “an abomination unto the Lord.”

6, 7. *If a bird’s nest chance to be before thee* — This is a beautiful instance of the humanizing spirit of the Mosaic law, in checking a tendency to wanton destructiveness and encouraging a spirit of kind and compassionate tenderness to the tiniest creatures. But there was wisdom as well as humanity in the precept; for, as birds are well known to serve important uses in the economy of nature, the extirpation of a species, whether of edible or ravenous birds, must in any country be productive of serious evils. But Palestine, in particular, was situated in a climate which produced poisonous snakes and scorpions; and the deserts and mountains would have been overrun with them as well as immense swarms of flies, locusts, mice, and vermin of various kinds if the birds which fed upon them were extirpated [MICHAELIS]. Accordingly, the counsel given in this passage was wise as well as humane, to leave the hen undisturbed for the propagation of the species, while the taking of the brood occasionally was permitted as a check to too rapid an increase.

8. *thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence* — The tops of houses in ancient Judea, as in the East still, were flat, being composed of branches or twigs laid across large beams, and covered with a cement of clay or strong plaster. They were surrounded by a parapet breast high. In summer the roof is a favorite resort for coolness, and accidents would frequently happen from persons incautiously approaching the edge and falling into the street or court; hence it was a wise and prudent precaution in the Jewish legislator to provide that a stone balustrade or timber railing round the roof should form an essential part of every new house.

9. *Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds* — (See on ^{<BIB>}Leviticus 19:19).

10. *Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together* — Whether this association, like the mixture of seeds, had been dictated by superstitious motives and the prohibition was symbolical, designed to teach a moral lesson (^{<BIB>}2 Corinthians 6:14), may or may not have been the case. But the prohibition prevented a great inhumanity still occasionally practiced by the poorer sort in Oriental countries. An ox and ass, being of

different species and of very different characters, cannot associate comfortably, nor unite cheerfully in drawing a plough or a wagon. The ass being much smaller and his step shorter, there would be an unequal and irregular draft. Besides, the ass, from feeding on coarse and poisonous weeds, has a fetid breath, which its yoke fellow seeks to avoid, not only as poisonous and offensive, but producing leanness, or, if long continued, death; and hence, it has been observed always to hold away its head from the ass and to pull only with one shoulder.

11. *thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts* — The essence of the crime (³⁰⁰⁸Zephaniah 1:8) consisted, not in wearing a woollen and a linen robe, but in the two stuffs being woven together, according to a favorite superstition of ancient idolaters (see on ⁶¹⁹⁹Leviticus 19:19).

12. *thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters* — or, according to some eminent biblical interpreters, *tassels on the coverlet of the bed*. The precept is not the same as ⁴¹⁵³Numbers 15:38.

13-30. *If a man take a wife*, etc. — The regulations that follow might be imperatively needful in the *then* situation of the Israelites; and yet, it is not necessary that *we* should curiously and impertinently inquire into them. So far was it from being unworthy of God to leave such things upon record, that the enactments must heighten our admiration of His wisdom and goodness in the management of a people so perverse and so given to irregular passions. Nor is it a better argument that the Scriptures were not written by inspiration of God to object that this passage, and others of a like nature, tend to corrupt the imagination and will be abused by evil-disposed readers, than it is to say that the sun was not created by God, because its light *may* be abused by wicked men as an assistant in committing crimes which they have meditated [HORNE].

CHAPTER 23

DEUTERONOMY 23:1-25.

WHO MAY AND WHO MAY NOT ENTER INTO THE CONGREGATION.

1-3. *He that is wounded ..., shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord* — “To enter into the congregation of the Lord” means either admission to public honors and offices in the Church and State of Israel, or, in the case of foreigners, incorporation with that nation by marriage. The rule was that strangers and foreigners, for fear of friendship or marriage connections with them leading the people into idolatry, were not admissible till their conversion to the Jewish faith. But this passage describes certain limitations of the general rule. The following parties were excluded from the full rights and privileges of citizenship:

- (1) Eunuchs** — It was a very ancient practice for parents in the East by various arts to mutilate their children, with a view to training them for service in the houses of the great.
- (2) Bastards** — Such an indelible stigma in both these instances was designed as a discouragement to practices that were disgraceful, but too common from intercourse with foreigners.
- (3) Ammonites and Moabites** — Without provocation they had combined to engage a soothsayer to curse the Israelites; and had further endeavored, by ensnaring them into the guilt and licentious abominations of idolatry, to seduce them from their allegiance to God.

3. *even to the their tenth generation shall they not enter* — Many eminent writers think that this law of exclusion was applicable only to males; at all events that a definite is used for an indefinite number (⁴³³Nehemiah 13:1 ⁴³⁴Ruth 4:10 ⁴³⁵2 Kings 10:2). Many of the Israelites being established on the east side of Jordan in the immediate neighborhood of those people, God raised this partition wall between them to prevent

the consequences of evil communications. More favor was to be shown to Edomites and Egyptians — to the former from their near relationship to Israel; and to the latter, from their early hospitalities to the family of Jacob, as well as the many acts of kindness rendered them by private Egyptians at the Exodus (⁴⁰²³Exodus 12:36). The grandchildren of Edomite or Egyptian proselytes were declared admissible to the full rights of citizenship as native Israelites; and by this remarkable provision, God taught His people a practical lesson of generosity and gratitude for special deeds of kindness, to the forgetfulness of all the persecution and ill services sustained from those two nations.

9-14. *When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing* — from the excesses incident to camp life, as well as from habits of personal neglect and impurity.

15, 16. *Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which has escaped from his master unto thee* — evidently a servant of the Canaanites or some of the neighboring people, who was driven by tyrannical oppression, or induced, with a view of embracing the true religion, to take refuge in Israel.

19, 20. *Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother ... Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury* — The Israelites lived in a simple state of society, and hence they were encouraged to lend to each other in a friendly way without any hope of gain. But the case was different with foreigners, who, engaged in trade and commerce, borrowed to enlarge their capital, and might reasonably be expected to pay interest on their loans.

21, 22. *When thou shalt vow a vow* — (See on ⁴⁰⁴⁰Numbers 30:2).

24, 25. *When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure* — Vineyards, like cornfields mentioned in the next verse [⁴⁰⁵²Deuteronomy 23:25], were often unenclosed. In vine-growing countries grapes are amazingly cheap; and we need not wonder, therefore, that all within reach of a person's arm, was free; the quantity plucked was a loss never felt by the proprietor, and it was a kindly privilege afforded to the poor and wayfaring man.

CHAPTER 24

DEUTERONOMY 24:1-22.

OF DIVORCES.

1-4. *When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes* — It appears that the practice of divorces was at this early period very prevalent amongst the Israelites, who had in all probability become familiar with it in Egypt [LANE]. The usage, being too deep-rooted to be soon or easily abolished, was tolerated by Moses (⁴⁹⁸Matthew 19:8). But it was accompanied under the law with two conditions, which were calculated greatly to prevent the evils incident to the permitted system; namely:

(1) The act of divorcement was to be certified on a written document, the preparation of which, with legal formality, would afford time for reflection and repentance; and

(2) In the event of the divorced wife being married to another husband, she could not, on the termination of that second marriage, be restored to her first husband, however desirous he might be to receive her.

5. *When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war* — This law of exemption was founded on good policy and was favorable to matrimony, as it afforded a full opportunity for the affections of the newly married pair being more firmly rooted, and it diminished or removed occasions for the divorces just mentioned.

6. *No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge* — The “upper” stone being concave, covers the “nether” like a lid; and it has a small aperture, through which the corn is poured, as well as a handle by which it is turned. The propriety of the law was founded on the custom of grinding corn every morning for daily consumption. If either of the stones, therefore, which composed the handmill was wanting, a person would be deprived of his necessary provision.

7. *If a man be found stealing any of his brethren* — (See ^{<0216>}Exodus 21:16).

8, 9. *Take heed in the plague of leprosy* — (See ^{<0834>}Leviticus 13:14).

10-13. *When thou dost lend thy brother anything, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge* — The course recommended was, in kind and considerate regard, to spare the borrower's feelings. In the case of a poor man who had pledged his cloak, it was to be restored before night, as the poor in Eastern countries have commonly no other covering for wrapping themselves in when they go to sleep than the garment they have worn during the day.

14, 15. *Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy* — Hired servants in the East are paid at the close of the day; and for a master to defraud the laborer of his hire, or to withhold it wrongfully for a night, might have subjected a poor man with his family to suffering and was therefore an injustice to be avoided (^{<0813>}Leviticus 19:13).

16-18. *The fathers shall not be put to death for the children* — The rule was addressed for the guidance of magistrates, and it established the equitable principle that none should be responsible for the crimes of others.

19-22. *When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field* — The grain, pulled up by the roots or cut down with a sickle, was laid in loose sheaves; the fruit of the olive was obtained by striking the branches with long poles; and the grape clusters, severed by a hook, were gathered in the hands of the vintager. Here is a beneficent provision for the poor. Every forgotten sheaf in the harvest-field was to lie; the olive tree was not to be beaten a second time; nor were grapes to be gathered, in order that, in collecting what remained, the hearts of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow might be gladdened by the bounty of Providence.

CHAPTER 25

DEUTERONOMY 25:1-19.

STRIPES MUST NOT EXCEED FORTY.

2, 3. *if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten* — In judicial sentences, which awarded punishment short of capital, scourging, like the Egyptian bastinado, was the most common form in which they were executed. The Mosaic law, however, introduced two important restrictions; namely:

- (1) The punishment should be inflicted in presence of the judge instead of being inflicted in private by some heartless official; and
- (2) The maximum amount of it should be limited to forty stripes, instead of being awarded according to the arbitrary will or passion of the magistrate.

The Egyptian, like Turkish and Chinese rulers, often applied the stick till they caused death or lameness for life. Of what the scourge consisted at first we are not informed; but in later times, when the Jews were exceedingly scrupulous in adhering to the letter of the law and, for fear of miscalculation, were desirous of keeping within the prescribed limit, it was formed of three cords, terminating in leathern thongs, and thirteen strokes of this counted as thirty-nine stripes (^{<47124>}2 Corinthians 11:24).

4. *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn* — In Judea, as in modern Syria and Egypt, the larger grains were beaten out by the feet of oxen, which, yoked together, day after day trod round the wide open spaces which form the threshing-floors. The animals were allowed freely to pick up a mouthful, when they chose to do so: a wise as well as humane regulation, introduced by the law of Moses (compare ^{<4899>}1 Corinthians 9:9 ^{<5487>}1 Timothy 5:17,18).

5-10. *the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother ... shall take her to him to wife* — This usage existed

before the age of Moses (^{<1318>}Genesis 38:8). But the Mosaic law rendered the custom obligatory (^{<1225>}Matthew 22:25) on younger brothers, or the nearest kinsman, to marry the widow (^{<1844>}Ruth 4:4), by associating the natural desire of perpetuating a brother's name with the preservation of property in the Hebrew families and tribes. If the younger brother declined to comply with the law, the widow brought her claim before the authorities of the place at a public assembly (the gate of the city); and he having declared his refusal, she was ordered to loose the thong of his shoe — a sign of degradation — following up that act by spitting on the ground — the strongest expression of ignominy and contempt among Eastern people. The shoe was kept by the magistrate as an evidence of the transaction, and the parties separated.

13-16. *Thou shalt not have ... divers weights* — Weights were anciently made of stone and are frequently used still by Eastern shopkeepers and traders, who take them out of the bag and put them in the balance. The man who is not cheated by the trader and his bag of divers weights must be blessed with more acuteness than most of his fellows [ROBERTS]. (Compare ^{<1611>}Proverbs 16:11 ^{<1110>}20:10).

17-19. *Remember what Amalek did* — This cold-blooded and dastardly atrocity is not narrated in the previous history (^{<1274>}Exodus 17:14). It was an unprovoked outrage on the laws of nature and humanity, as well as a daring defiance of that God who had so signally shown His favor towards Israel.

CHAPTER 26

DEUTERONOMY 26:1-15.

THE CONFESSION OF HIM THAT OFFERS THE BASKET OF FIRST FRUITS.

2. *Thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth* — The Israelites in Canaan, being God’s tenants-at-will, were required to give Him tribute in the form of first-fruits and tithes. No Israelite was at liberty to use any productions of his field until he had presented the required offerings. The tribute began to be exigible after the settlement in the promised land, and it was yearly repeated at one of the great feasts (⁽¹⁵¹⁴⁾Leviticus 2:14 ⁽¹⁵²⁰⁾23:10 ⁽¹⁵²⁵⁾23:15 ⁽¹⁵³⁰⁾Numbers 28:26 ⁽¹⁵⁴¹⁾Deuteronomy 16:9). Every master of a family carried it on his shoulders in a little basket of osier, peeled willow, or palm leaves, and brought it to the sanctuary.

5. *thou shalt say ... A Syrian ready to perish was my father* — rather, “a wandering Syrian.” The ancestors of the Hebrews were nomad shepherds, either Syrians by birth as Abraham, or by long residence as Jacob. When they were established as a nation in the possession of the promised land, they were indebted to God’s unmerited goodness for their distinguished privileges, and in token of gratitude they brought this basket of first-fruits.

11. *thou shalt rejoice* — feasting with friends and the Levites, who were invited on such occasions to share in the cheerful festivities that followed oblations (⁽¹⁵⁴¹⁾Deuteronomy 12:7 16:10-15).

12-15. *When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year* — Among the Hebrews there were two tithings. The first was appropriated to the Levites (⁽¹⁵⁵²⁾Numbers 18:21). The second, being the tenth of what remained, was brought to Jerusalem in kind; or it was converted into money, and the owner, on arriving in the capital, purchased sheep, bread, and oil (⁽¹⁵⁶²⁾Deuteronomy 14:22,23). This was done for two consecutive years. But this second tithing was eaten at

home, and the third year distributed among the poor of the place
(⁶⁸⁴³Deuteronomy 14:28,29).

13. *thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house* — This was a solemn declaration that nothing which should be devoted to the divine service had been secretly reserved for personal use.

14. *I have not eaten thereof in my mourning* — in a season of sorrow, which brought defilement on sacred things; under a pretense of poverty, and grudging to give any away to the poor.

neither ... for any unclean use — that is, any common purpose, different from what God had appointed and which would have been a desecration of it.

nor given ought thereof for the dead — on any funeral service, or, to an *idol*, which is a dead thing.

CHAPTER 27

DEUTERONOMY 27:1-10.

THE PEOPLE ARE TO WRITE THE LAW UPON STONES.

2. *it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan* — “Day” is often put for “time”; and it was not till some days after the passage that the following instructions were acted upon.

thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister —

These stones were to be taken in their natural state, unhewn, and unpolished — the occasion on which they were used not admitting of long or elaborate preparation; and they were to be daubed over with paint or whitewash, to render them more conspicuous. Stones and even rocks are seen in Egypt and the peninsula of Sinai, containing inscriptions made three thousand years ago, in paint or plaister. By some similar method those stones may have been inscribed, and it is most probable that Moses learned the art from the Egyptians.

3. *thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law* — It might be, as some think, the Decalogue; but a greater probability is that it was “the blessings and curses,” which comprised in fact an epitome of the law (¹⁰⁸⁵Joshua 8:34).

5-10. *there shalt thou build an altar ... of whole stones* — The stones were to be in their natural state, as if a chisel would communicate pollution to them. The stony pile was to be so large as to contain all the conditions of the covenant, so elevated as to be visible to the whole congregation of Israel; and the religious ceremonial performed on the occasion was to consist: first, of the elementary worship needed for sinful men; and secondly, of the peace offerings, or lively, social feasts, that were suited to the happy people whose God was the Lord. There were thus, the law which condemned, and the typical expiation — the two great principles of revealed religion.

DEUTERONOMY 27:11-13.

THE TRIBES DIVIDED ON GERIZIM AND EBAL.

12-15. *These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people ... these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse* — Those long, rocky ridges lay in the province of Samaria, and the peaks referred to were near Shechem (Nablous), rising in steep precipices to the height of about eight hundred feet and separated by a green, well-watered valley of about five hundred yards wide. The people of Israel were here divided into two parts. On mount Gerizim (now Jebel-et-Tur) were stationed the descendants of Rachel and Leah, the two principal wives of Jacob, and to them was assigned the most pleasant and honorable office of pronouncing the benedictions; while on the twin hill of Ebal (now Imad-el-Deen) were placed the posterity of the two secondary wives, Zilpah and Bilhah, with those of Reuben, who had lost the primogeniture, and Zebulun, Leah's youngest son; to them was committed the necessary but painful duty of pronouncing the maledictions (see on ⁴⁰⁷¹Judges 9:7). The ceremony might have taken place on the lower spurs of the mountains, where they approach more closely to each other; and the course observed was as follows: Amid the silent expectations of the solemn assembly, the priests standing round the ark in the valley below, said aloud, looking to Gerizim, "Blessed is the man that maketh not any graven image," when the people ranged on that hill responded in full simultaneous shouts of "Amen"; then turning round to Ebal, they cried, "Cursed is the man that maketh any graven image"; to which those that covered the ridge answered, "Amen." The same course at every pause was followed with all the blessings and curses (see on ⁴⁰⁸³Joshua 8:33,34). These curses attendant on disobedience to the divine will, which had been revealed as a law from heaven, be it observed, are given in the form of a *declaration*, not a *wish*, as the words should be rendered, "Cursed is he," and not, "Cursed be he."

CHAPTER 28

DEUTERONOMY 28:1-68.

THE BLESSINGS FOR OBEDIENCE.

1. *if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God* —

In this chapter the blessings and curses are enumerated at length, and in various minute details, so that on the first entrance of the Israelites into the land of promise, their whole destiny was laid before them, as it was to result from their obedience or the contrary.

2. *all these blessings shall come on thee* — Their national obedience was to be rewarded by extraordinary and universal prosperity.

7. *flee before thee seven ways* — that is, in various directions, as always happens in a rout.

10. *called by the name of the Lord* — That they are really and actually His people (⁶¹⁴¹Deuteronomy 14:1 ⁶²⁶⁸26:18).

11. *the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods* — Beside the natural capabilities of Canaan, its extraordinary fruitfulness was traceable to the special blessing of Heaven.

12. *The Lord shall open unto thee his good treasure* — The seasonable supply of the early and latter rain was one of the principal means by which their land was so uncommonly fruitful.

thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow — that is, thou shalt be in such affluent circumstances, as to be capable, out of thy superfluous wealth, to give aid to thy poorer neighbors.

13, 14. *the head, and not the tail* — an Oriental form of expression, indicating the possession of independent power and great dignity and acknowledged excellence (²¹⁰⁴Isaiah 9:14 ²³⁹⁵19:15).

15-20. *But ... if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord* —

Curses that were to follow them in the event of disobedience are now enumerated, and they are almost exact counterparts of the blessings which were described in the preceding context as the reward of a faithful adherence to the covenant.

21. *pestilence* — some fatal epidemic. There is no reason, however, to think that the plague, which is the great modern scourge of the East, is referred to.

22. *a consumption* — a wasting disorder; but the modern tuberculosis is almost unknown in Asia.

fever ... inflammation ... extreme burning — Fever is rendered “burning ague” (^{ORIG}Leviticus 26:16), and the others mentioned along with it evidently point to those febrile affections which are of malignant character and great frequency in the East.

the sword — rather, “dryness” — the effect on the human body of such violent disorders.

blasting, and with mildew — two atmospheric influences fatal to grain.

23. *heaven ... brass ... earth ... iron* — strong Oriental figures used to describe the effects of long-continued drought. This want of regular and seasonable rain is allowed by the most intelligent observers to be one great cause of the present sterility of Palestine.

24. *the rain of thy land powder and dust* — an allusion probably to the dreadful effects of tornadoes in the East, which, raising the sands in immense twisted pillars, drive them along with the fury of a tempest. These shifting sands are most destructive to cultivated lands; and in consequence of their encroachments, many once fertile regions of the East are now barren deserts.

27. *the botch of Egypt* — a troublesome eruption, marked by red pimples, to which, at the rising of the Nile, the Egyptians are subject.

emerods — fistulæ or piles.

scab — scurvy.

itch — the disease commonly known by that name; but it is far more malignant in the East than is ever witnessed in our part of the world.

28. *madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart* — They would be bewildered and paralyzed with terror at the extent of their calamities.

29-33. *thou shalt grope at noonday* — a general description of the painful uncertainty in which they would live. During the Middle Ages the Jews were driven from society into hiding-places which they were afraid to leave, not knowing from what quarter they might be assailed and their children dragged into captivity, from which no friend could rescue, and no money ransom them.

35. *the Lord shall smite thee in the knees, and in the legs* — This is an exact description of elephantiasis, a horrible disease, something like leprosy, which attacks particularly the lower extremities.

36. *The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king*, etc. — This shows how widespread would be the national calamity; and at the same time how hopeless, when he who should have been their defender shared the captive fate of his subjects.

there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone — The Hebrew exiles, with some honorable exceptions, were seduced or compelled into idolatry in the Assyrian and Babylonish captivities (^{צחח}Jeremiah 44:17-19). Thus, the sin to which they had too often betrayed a perverse fondness, a deep-rooted propensity, became their punishment and their misery.

37. *And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee*, etc. — The annals of almost every nation, for eighteen hundred years, afford abundant proofs that this has been, as it still is, the case — the very name of Jew being a universally recognized term for extreme degradation and wretchedness.

49. *The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far* — the invasion of the Romans — “they came from far.” The soldiers of the invading army were taken from France, Spain, and Britain — then considered “the end of the earth.” Julius Severus, the commander, afterwards Vespasian and Hadrian, left Britain for the scene of contest. Moreover, the ensign on the standards of the Roman army was “an eagle”; and the dialects spoken by

the soldiers of the different nations that composed that army were altogether unintelligible to the Jews.

50. *A nation of fierce countenance* — a just description of the Romans, who were not only bold and unyielding, but ruthless and implacable.

51. *he shall eat the fruit of thy cattle*, etc. — According to the Jewish historian, every district of the country through which they passed was strewn with the wrecks of their devastation.

52. *he shall besiege thee ... until thy high and fenced walls come down* — All the fortified places to which the people betook themselves for safety were burnt or demolished, and the walls of Jerusalem itself razed to the ground.

53-57. *And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body* — (See ^{<16>}2 Kings 6:29 ^{<30>}Lamentations 4:10). Such were the dreadful extremities to which the inhabitants during the siege were reduced that many women sustained a wretched existence by eating the flesh of their own children. Parental affection was extinguished, and the nearest relatives were jealously avoided, lest they should discover and demand a share of the revolting viands.

62. *ye shall be left few in number* — There has been, ever since the destruction of Jerusalem, only an inconsiderable remnant of Jews existing in that land — aliens in the land of their fathers; and of all classes of the inhabitants they are the most degraded and miserable beings, dependent for their support on contributions from other lands.

63. *ye shall be plucked from off the land* — Hadrian issued a proclamation, forbidding any Jews to reside in Judea, or even to approach its confines.

64. *the Lord shall scatter thee among all people* — There is, perhaps, not a country in the world where Jews are not to be found. Who that looks on this condition of the Hebrews is not filled with awe, when he considers the fulfillment of this prophecy?

68. *The Lord shall bring thee into Egypt again with ships* — The accomplishment of this prediction took place under Titus, when, according

to JOSEPHUS, multitudes of Jews were transported in ships to the land of the Nile, and sold as slaves. “Here, then, are instances of prophecies delivered above three thousand years ago; and yet, as we see, being fulfilled in the world at this very time; and what stronger proofs can we desire of the divine legation of Moses? How these instances may affect others I know not; but for myself, I must acknowledge, they not only convince but amaze and astonish me beyond expression; they are truly, as Moses foretold (¹⁵⁸⁶ Deuteronomy 28:45,46) they would be, ‘a sign and a wonder for ever’” [BISHOP NEWTON].

CHAPTER 29

DEUTERONOMY 29:1-29.

AN EXHORTATION TO OBEDIENCE.

1. *These are the words of the covenant* — The discourse of Moses is continued, and the subject of that discourse was Israel's covenant with God, the privileges it conferred, and the obligations it imposed.

beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb — It was substantially the same; but it was renewed now, in different circumstances. They had violated its conditions. Moses rehearses these, that they might have a better knowledge of its conditions and be more disposed to comply with them.

2. *Moses called unto all Israel, ... Ye have seen all that the Lord did*, etc. — This appeal to the experience of the people, though made generally, was applicable only to that portion of them who had been very young at the period of the Exodus, and who remembered the marvellous transactions that preceded and followed that era. Yet, alas! those wonderful events made no good impression upon them (Deuteronomy 29:4). They were strangers to that grace of wisdom which is liberally given to all who ask it; and their insensibility was all the more inexcusable that so many miracles had been performed which might have led to a certain conviction of the presence and the power of God with them. The preservation of their clothes and shoes, the supply of daily food and fresh water — these continued without interruption or diminution during so many years' sojourn in the desert. They were miracles which unmistakably proclaimed the immediate hand of God and were performed for the express purpose of training them to a practical knowledge of, and habitual confidence in, Him. Their experience of this extraordinary goodness and care, together with their remembrance of the brilliant successes by which, with little exertion or loss on their part, God enabled them to acquire the valuable territory on which they stood, is mentioned

again to enforce a faithful adherence to the covenant, as the direct and sure means of obtaining its promised blessings.

10-29. *Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God* — The whole congregation of Israel, of all ages and conditions, all — young as well as old; menials as well as masters; native Israelites as well as naturalized strangers — all were assembled before the tabernacle to renew the *Sinaitic* covenant. None of them were allowed to consider themselves as exempt from the terms of that national compact, lest any lapsing into idolatry might prove a root of bitterness, spreading its noxious seed and corrupt influence all around (compare ^{<8015}Hebrews 12:15). It was of the greatest consequence thus to reach the heart and conscience of everyone, for some might delude themselves with the vain idea that by taking the oath by which they engaged themselves in covenant with God, they would surely secure its blessings. Then, even though they would not rigidly adhere to His worship and commands, but would follow the devices and inclinations of their own hearts, yet they would think that He would wink at such liberties and not punish them. It was of the greatest consequence to impress all with the strong and abiding conviction, that while the covenant of grace had special blessings belonging to it, it at the same time had curses in reserve for transgressors, the infliction of which would be as certain, as lasting and severe. This was the advantage contemplated in the law being rehearsed a second time. The picture of a once rich and flourishing region, blasted and doomed in consequence of the sins of its inhabitants, is very striking, and calculated to awaken awe in every reflecting mind. Such is, and long has been, the desolate state of Palestine; and, in looking at its ruined cities, its blasted coast, its naked mountains, its sterile and parched soil — all the sad and unmistakable evidences of a land lying under a curse — numbers of travelers from Europe, America, and the Indies (“strangers from a far country,” ^{<8020}Deuteronomy 29:22) in the present day see that the Lord has executed His threatening. Who can resist the conclusion that it has been inflicted “because the inhabitants had forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers....and the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book”?

29. *The secret things belong unto the Lord* — This verse has no apparent connection with the thread of discourse. It is thought to have been said in

answer to the looks of astonishment or the words of inquiry as to whether they would be ever so wicked as to deserve such punishments. The recorded history of God's providential dealings towards Israel presents a wonderful combination of "goodness and severity." There is much of it involved in mystery too profound for our limited capacities to fathom; but, from the comprehensive wisdom displayed in those parts which have been made known to us, we are prepared to enter into the full spirit of the apostle's exclamation, "How unsearchable are his judgments" (~~11:33~~ Romans 11:33).

CHAPTER 30

DEUTERONOMY 30:1-10.

GREAT MERCIES PROMISED UNTO THE PENITENT.

1-10. *when all these things are come upon thee, ... and [thou] shalt return ... then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity* — The hopes of the Hebrew people are ardently directed to this promise, and they confidently expect that God, commiserating their forlorn and fallen condition, will yet rescue them from all the evils of their long dispersion. They do not consider the promise as fulfilled by their restoration from the captivity in Babylon, for Israel was not then scattered in the manner here described — “among all the nations,” unto the utmost parts of heaven” (^{<500>}Deuteronomy 30:4). When God recalled them from that bondage, all the Israelites were not brought back. They were not multiplied above their fathers (^{<500>}Deuteronomy 30:5), nor were their hearts and those of their children circumcised to love the Lord (^{<500>}Deuteronomy 30:6). It is not, therefore, of the Babylonish captivity that Moses was speaking in this passage; it must be of the dispersed state to which they have been doomed for eighteen hundred years. This prediction may have been partially accomplished on the return of the Israelites from Babylon; for, according to the structure and design of Scripture prophecy, it may have pointed to several similar eras in their national history; and this view is sanctioned by the prayer of Nehemiah (^{<500>}Nehemiah 1:8,9). But undoubtedly it will receive its full and complete accomplishment in the conversion of the Jews to the Gospel of Christ. At the restoration from the Babylonish captivity, that people were changed in many respects for the better. They were completely weaned from idolatry; and this outward reformation was a prelude to the higher attainments they are destined to reach in the age of Messiah, “when the Lord God will circumcise their hearts and the hearts of their seed to love the Lord.” The course pointed out seems clearly to be this: that the hearts of the Hebrew people shall be circumcised (^{<500>}Colossians 2:2); in other words, by the combined influences of the

Word and spirit of God, their hearts will be touched and purified from all their superstition and unbelief. They will be converted to the faith of Jesus Christ as their Messiah — a spiritual deliverer, and the effect of their conversion will be that they will return and obey the voice (the Gospel, the evangelical law) of the Lord. The words may be interpreted either wholly in a spiritual sense (^{<small>6151</small> John 11:51,52), or, as many think, in a literal sense also (^{<small>6151</small> Romans 11:1-36). They will be recalled from all places of the dispersion to their own land and enjoy the highest prosperity. The mercies and favors of a bountiful Providence will not then be abused as formerly (^{<small>6151</small> Deuteronomy 31:20 32:15). They will be received in a better spirit and employed to nobler purposes. They will be happy, “for the Lord will again rejoice over them for good, as He rejoiced over their fathers.”}}}

^{<small>6151</small> DEUTERONOMY 30:11-14.}

THE COMMANDMENT IS MANIFEST.

11-14. *For this commandment ... is not hidden ... neither is it far off* — That law of loving and obeying God, which was the subject of Moses’ discourse, was well known to the Israelites. They could not plead ignorance of its existence and requirements. It was not concealed as an impenetrable mystery in heaven, for it had been revealed; nor was it carefully withheld from the people as a dangerous discovery; for the youngest and humblest of them were instructed in those truths, which were subjects of earnest study and research among the wisest and greatest of other nations. They were not under a necessity of undertaking long journeys or distant voyages, as many ancient sages did in quest of knowledge. They enjoyed the peculiar privilege of a familiar acquaintance with it. It was with them a subject of common conversation, engraven on their memories, and frequently explained and inculcated on their hearts. The apostle Paul (^{<small>6150</small> Romans 10:6-8) has applied this passage to the Gospel, for the law of Christ is substantially the same as that of Moses, only exhibited more clearly in its spiritual nature and extensive application; and, accompanied with the advantages of Gospel grace, it is practicable and easy.}

DEUTERONOMY 30:15-20.**DEATH AND LIFE ARE SET BEFORE THE ISRAELITES.**

15-20. *See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil* — the alternative of a good and happy, or a disobedient and miserable life. Love of God and compliance with His will are the only ways of securing the blessings and avoiding the evils described. The choice was left to them, and in urging upon them the inducements to a wise choice, Moses warmed as he proceeded into a tone of solemn and impressive earnestness similar to that of Paul to the elders of Ephesus (^{<406>}Acts 20:26,27).

CHAPTER 31

DEUTERONOMY 31:1-8.

MOSES ENCOURAGES THE PEOPLE AND JOSHUA.

1. *Moses went and spake* — It is probable that this rehearsal of the law extended over several successive days; and it might be the last and most important day on which the return of Moses to the place of assembly is specially noticed. In drawing his discourse towards a conclusion, he adverted to his advanced age; and although neither his physical nor intellectual powers had suffered any decay (⁴⁵⁰Deuteronomy 34:7), yet he knew, by a special revelation, that the time had arrived when he was about to be withdrawn from the superintendence and government of Israel.

2-8. *also the Lord hath said* — should be “*for the Lord hath said*” thou shalt not go over this Jordan. While taking a solemn leave of the people, Moses exhorted them not to be intimidated by the menacing opposition of enemies; to take encouragement from the continued presence of their covenanted God; and to rest assured that the same divine power, which had enabled them to discomfit their first assailants on the east of Jordan, would aid them not less effectually in the adventurous enterprise which they were about to undertake, and by which they would obtain possession of “the land which He had sworn unto their fathers to give them.”

DEUTERONOMY 31:9-13.

HE DELIVERS THE LAW TO THE PRIESTS, TO READ IT EVERY SEVENTH YEAR TO THE PEOPLE.

9-13. *And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests* — The law thus committed to writing was either the whole book of Deuteronomy, or the important part of it contained between the twenty-seventh and thirtieth chapters. It was usual in cases of public or private

contract for two copies of the engagement to be made — one to be deposited in the national archives or some secure place for reference, should occasion require. The other was to remain in the hands of the contracting parties (⁻³⁶³²Jeremiah 32:12-14). The same course was followed on this renewal of the covenant between God and Israel. Two written copies of the law were prepared, the one of which was delivered to the public representatives of Israel; namely, the priests and the elders.

the priests, ... who bare the ark of the covenant — In all ordinary journeys, it was the common duty of the Levites to carry the ark and its furniture (⁻⁰⁰¹⁵Numbers 4:15); but, on solemn or extraordinary occasions, that office was discharged by the priests (⁻⁰⁰³³Joshua 3:3-8 ⁻⁰⁰⁶⁶6:6 ⁻¹³⁵¹1 Chronicles 15:11,12).

all the elders of Israel — They were assistants to the priests and overseers to take care of the preservation, rehearsal, and observance of the law.

10, 11. *At the end of every seven years, ... thou shalt read this law* — At the return of the sabbatic year and during the feast of tabernacles, the law was to be publicly read. This order of Moses was a future and prospective arrangement; for the observance of the sabbatic year did not commence till the conquest and peaceful occupation of Canaan. The ordinance served several important purposes. For, while the people had opportunities of being instructed in the law every Sabbath and daily in their own homes, this public periodical rehearsal at meetings in the courts of the sanctuary, where women and children of twelve years were present (as they usually were at the great festivals), was calculated to produce good and pious impressions of divine truth amid the sacred associations of the time and place. Besides, it formed a public guarantee for the preservation, integrity, and faithful transmission of the Sacred Book to successive ages.

14, 15. *the Lord said unto Moses, ...call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation* — Joshua had been publicly designated to the office of commander by Moses [⁻⁰⁰²²Numbers 27:22,23]; and God was pleased to confirm his appointment by the visible symbols of His presence and approval. As none but the priests were privileged to enter the sanctuary, it is probable that this significant manifestation of the

cloudy pillar was made while the leaders stood at the door of the tabernacle.

16-22. *the Lord said unto Moses, ... this people will rise up* — In this remarkable interview, Moses was distinctly apprised of the infidelity of Israel, their corruptions of the true religion through intercourse with the idolatrous inhabitants of Canaan (^{<316b>}Amos 5:26), and their chastisements in consequence of those national defections.

17. *Then my anger shall be kindled, ... and I will hide my face from them* — an announcement of the withdrawal of the divine favor and protection of which the Shekinah was the symbol and pledge. It never appeared in the second temple; and its non-appearance was a prelude of “all the evils that came upon them, because their God was not among them.”

19. *Now therefore write ye this song* — National songs take deep hold of the memories and have a powerful influence in stirring the deepest feelings of a people. In accordance with this principle in human nature, a song was ordered to be composed by Moses, doubtless under divine inspiration, which was to be learnt by the Israelites themselves and to be taught to their children in every age, embodying the substance of the preceding addresses, and of a strain well suited to inspire the popular mind with a strong sense of God’s favor to their nation.

26. *Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark* — The second copy of the law (see on ^{<65b>}Deuteronomy 31:9) was deposited for greater security and reverence in a little chest *beside* the ark of the covenant, for there was nothing contained within it but the tables of stone (^{<18b>}1 Kings 8:9). Others think it was put *within* the ark, it being certain, from the testimony of Paul (^{<39b>}Hebrews 9:4), that there were once other things inside the ark, and that this was the copy found in the time of Josiah (^{<22b>}2 Kings 22:8).

CHAPTER 32

DEUTERONOMY 32:1-43.

MOSES' SONG, WHICH SETS FORTH THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD.

1. *Give ear, O ye heavens; ... hear, O earth* — The magnificence of the exordium, the grandeur of the theme, the frequent and sudden transitions, the elevated strain of the sentiments and language, entitle this song to be ranked amongst the noblest specimens of poetry to be found in the Scriptures.

2, 3. *My doctrine shall drop*, etc. — The language may justly be taken as uttered in the form of a wish or prayer, and the comparison of wholesome instruction to the pure, gentle, and insinuating influence of rain or dew, is frequently made by the sacred writers (²³¹⁰Isaiah 5:6 ²³⁵⁰55:10,11).

4. *He is the Rock* — a word expressive of power and stability. The application of it in this passage is to declare that God had been true to His covenant with their fathers and them. Nothing that He had promised had failed; so that if their national experience had been painfully checkered by severe and protracted trials, notwithstanding the brightest promises, that result was traceable to their own undutiful and perverse conduct; not to any vacillation or unfaithfulness on the part of God (³⁰¹⁷James 1:17), whose procedure was marked by justice and judgment, whether they had been exalted to prosperity or plunged into the depths of affliction.

5. *They have corrupted themselves* — that is, the Israelites by their frequent lapses and their inveterate attachment to idolatry.

their spot is not the spot of his children — This is an allusion to the marks which idolaters inscribe on their foreheads or their arms with paint or other substances, in various colors and forms — straight, oval, or circular, according to the favorite idol of their worship.

6. *is not he thy father that hath bought thee* — or emancipated thee from Egyptian bondage.

and made thee — advanced the nation to unprecedented and peculiar privileges.

8, 9. *When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance* — In the division of the earth, which Noah is believed to have made by divine direction (^{<1105>}Genesis 10:5 ^{<1106>}Deuteronomy 2:5-9 ^{<1172>}Acts 17:26,27), Palestine was reserved by the wisdom and goodness of Heaven for the possession of His peculiar people and the display of the most stupendous wonders. The theater was small, but admirably suited for the convenient observation of the human race — at the junction of the two great continents of Asia and Africa, and almost within sight of Europe. From this spot as from a common center the report of God's wonderful works, the glad tidings of salvation through the obedience and sufferings of His own eternal Son, might be rapidly and easily wafted to every part of the globe.

he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel — Another rendering, which has received the sanction of eminent scholars, has been proposed as follows: “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam and set the bounds of every people, the children of Israel were few in numbers, when the Lord chose that people and made Jacob His inheritance” (compare ^{<1505>}Deuteronomy 30:5 ^{<1506>}Genesis 34:30 ^{<1530>}Psalm 105:9-12).

10. *found him in a desert land* — took him into a covenant relation at Sinai, or rather “sustained,” “provided for him” in a desert land.

a waste howling wilderness — a common Oriental expression for a desert infested by wild beasts.

11. *As an eaglefluttereth over her young* — This beautiful and expressive metaphor is founded on the extraordinary care and attachment which the female eagle cherishes for her young. When her newly fledged progeny are sufficiently advanced to soar in their native element, she, in their first attempts at flying, supports them on the tip of her wing, encouraging, directing, and aiding their feeble efforts to longer and sublimer

flights. So did God take the most tender and powerful care of His chosen people; He carried them out of Egypt and led them through all the horrors of the wilderness to the promised inheritance.

13, 14. *He made him ride on the high places*, etc. — All these expressions seem to have peculiar reference to their home in the trans-jordanic territory, that being the extent of Palestine that they had seen at the time when Moses is represented as uttering these words. “The high places” and “the fields” are specially applicable to the tablelands of Gilead as are the allusions to the herds and flocks, the honey of the wild bees which hive in the crevices of the rocks, the oil from the olive as it grew singly or in small clumps on the tops of hills where scarcely anything else would grow, the finest wheat (¹³⁸¹⁶Psalm 81:16 ¹³¹⁷⁴147:14), and the prolific vintage.

15. *But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked* — This is a poetical name for Israel. The metaphor here used is derived from a pampered animal, which, instead of being tame and gentle, becomes mischievous and vicious, in consequence of good living and kind treatment. So did the Israelites conduct themselves by their various acts of rebellion, murmuring, and idolatrous apostasy.

17. *They sacrificed unto devils* — (See on ¹³¹⁷⁷Leviticus 17:7).

21. *those which are not a people* — that is, not favored with such great and peculiar privileges as the Israelites (or, rather poor, despised heathens). The language points to the future calling of the Gentiles.

23. *I will spend mine arrows upon them* — War, famine, pestilence (¹³¹⁷⁷Psalm 77:17) are called in Scripture the arrows of the Almighty.

29. *Oh, ... that they would consider their latter end* — The terrible judgments, which, in the event of their continued and incorrigible disobedience, would impart so awful a character to the close of their national history.

32. *vine of Sodom ... grapes of gall* — This fruit, which the Arabs call “Lot’s Sea Orange,” is of a bright yellow color and grows in clusters of three or four. When mellow, it is tempting in appearance, but on being struck, explodes like a puffball, consisting of skin and fiber only.

44-47. *Moses ... spake all the words of this song in the ears*, etc. — It has been beautifully styled “the Song of the Dying Swan” [LOWTH]. It was designed to be a national anthem, which it should be the duty and care of magistrates to make well known by frequent repetition, to animate the people to right sentiments towards a steadfast adherence to His service.

48-51. *Get thee up ... and die ... Because ye trespassed ... at Meribah* — (See on ^{<0013>}Numbers 20:13).

52. *thou shalt see the land, but thou shalt not go thither* — (^{<0012>}Numbers 27:12). Notwithstanding so severe a disappointment, not a murmur of complaint escapes his lips. He is not only resigned but acquiescing; and in the near prospect of his death, he pours forth the feelings of his devout heart in sublime strains and eloquent blessings.

CHAPTER 33

DEUTERONOMY 33:1-28.

THE MAJESTY OF GOD.

1. *Moses the man of God* — This was a common designation of a prophet (^{<BIB>}1 Samuel 2:27 ^{<BIB>}9:6), and it is here applied to Moses, when, like Jacob, he was about to deliver ministerially before his death, a prophetic benediction to Israel.

2-4. *The Lord came* — Under a beautiful metaphor, borrowed from the dawn and progressive splendor of the sun, the Majesty of God is sublimely described as a divine light which appeared in Sinai and scattered its beams on all the adjoining region in directing Israel's march to Canaan. In these descriptions of a *theophania*, God is represented as coming from the south, and the allusion is in general to the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai; but other mountains in the same direction are mentioned with it. The location of Seir was on the east of the Ghor; mount Paran was either the chain on the west of the Ghor, or rather the mountains on the southern border of the desert towards the peninsula [ROBINSON]. (Compare ^{<BIB>}Judges 5:4,5 ^{<BIB>}Psalms 68:7,8 ^{<BIB>}Habakkuk 3:3).

ten thousands of saints — rendered by some, “with the ten thousand of Kadesh,” or perhaps better still, “from Meribah” [EWALD].

a fiery law — so called both because of the thunder and lightning which accompanied its promulgation (^{<BIB>}Exodus 19:16-18 ^{<BIB>}Deuteronomy 4:11), and the fierce, unrelenting curse denounced against the violation of its precepts (^{<BIB>}2 Corinthians 3:7-9). Notwithstanding those awe-inspiring symbols of Majesty that were displayed on Sinai, the law was really given in kindness and love, as a means of promoting both the temporal and eternal welfare of the people. And it was “the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob,” not only from the hereditary obligation under which that people were laid to observe it, but from its being the grand distinction, the peculiar privilege of the nation.

6. *Let Reuben live, and not die* — Although deprived of the honor and privileges of primogeniture, he was still to hold rank as one of the tribes of Israel. He was more numerous than several other tribes (^{<012>}Numbers 1:21 ^{<021>}2:11). Yet gradually he sank into a mere nomadic tribe, which had enough to do merely “to live and not die.” Many eminent biblical scholars, resting on the most ancient and approved manuscripts of the *Septuagint*, consider the latter clause as referring to Simeon; “and Simeon, let his men be few,” a reading of the text which is in harmony with other statements of Scripture respecting this tribe (^{<0216>}Numbers 25:6-14 ^{<0123>}1:23 ^{<034>}26:14 ^{<091>}Joshua 19:1).

7. *this is the blessing of Judah* — Its general purport points to the great power and independence of Judah, as well as its taking the lead in all military expeditions.

8-10. *of Levi he said* — The burden of this blessing is the appointment of the Levites to the dignified and sacred office of the priesthood (^{<0911>}Leviticus 10:11 ^{<0218>}Deuteronomy 22:8 ^{<0718>}17:8-11), a reward for their zeal in supporting the cause of God, and their unsparing severity in chastising even their nearest and dearest relatives who had participated in the idolatry of the molten calf (^{<0325>}Exodus 32:25-28; compare ^{<0111>}Malachi 2:4-6).

12. *of Benjamin he said* — A distinguishing favor was conferred on this tribe in having its portion assigned near the temple of God.

between his shoulders — that is, on his sides or borders. Mount Zion, on which stood the city of Jerusalem, belonged to Judah; but Mount Moriah, the site of the sacred edifice, lay in the confines of Benjamin.

13-17. *of Joseph he said* — The territory of this tribe, diversified by hill and dale, wood and water, would be rich in all the productions — olives, grapes, figs, etc., which are reared in a mountainous region, as well as in the grain and herbs that grow in the level fields. “The firstling of the bullock and the horns of the unicorn” (rhinoceros), indicate glory and strength, and it is supposed that under these emblems were shadowed forth the triumphs of Joshua and the new kingdom of Jeroboam, both of whom were of Ephraim (compare ^{<0442>}Genesis 48:20).

18, 19. *Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out* — on commercial enterprises and voyages by sea.

and, Issachar in thy tents — preferring to reside in their maritime towns.

19. *shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand* — Both tribes should traffic with the Phoenicians in gold and silver, pearl and coral, especially in *murex*, the shellfish that yielded the famous Tyrian dye, and in glass, which was manufactured from the sand of the river Belus, in their immediate neighborhood.

20, 21. *of Gad he said* — Its possessions were larger than they would have been had they lain west of Jordan; and this tribe had the honor of being settled by Moses himself in the first portion of land conquered. In the forest region, south of the Jabbok, “he dwelt as a lion” (compare ^{<RB>}Genesis 30:11 49:19). Notwithstanding, they faithfully kept their engagement to join the “heads of the people” (^{<RB>}Deuteronomy 33:21) in the invasion of Canaan.

22. *Daniel is a lion’s whelp* — His proper settlement in the south of Canaan being too small, he by a sudden and successful irruption, established a colony in the northern extremity of the land. This might well be described as the leap of a young lion from the hills of Bashan.

23. *of Naphtali he said* — The pleasant and fertile territory of this tribe lay to “the west,” on the borders of lakes Merom and Chinnereth, and to “the south” of the northern Danites.

24, 25. *of Asher he said* — The condition of this tribe is described as combining all the elements of earthly felicity.

dip his foot in oil — These words allude either to the process of extracting the oil by foot presses, or to his district as particularly fertile and adapted to the culture of the olive.

25. *shoes of iron and brass* — These shoes suited his rocky coast from Carmel to Sidon. Country people as well as ancient warriors had their lower extremities protected by metallic greaves (^{<RB>}1 Samuel 17:6 ^{<RB>}Ephesians 6:15) and iron-soled shoes.

26-29. *There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun* — The chapter concludes with a congratulatory address to Israel on their peculiar happiness and privilege in having Jehovah for their God and protector.

who rideth upon the heaven in thy help — an evident allusion to the pillar of cloud and fire, which was both the guide and shelter of Israel.

28. *the fountain of Jacob* — The posterity of Israel shall dwell in a blessed and favored land.

CHAPTER 34

DEUTERONOMY 34:1-12.

MOSES FROM MOUNT NEBO VIEWS THE LAND.

1. *Moses went up from the plains of Moab* — This chapter appears from internal evidence to have been written subsequently to the death of Moses, and it probably formed, at one time, an introduction to the Book of Joshua.

unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah — literally, the head or summit of *the Pisgah*; that is, the height (compare ^{<0234>}Numbers 23:14 ^{<0307>}Deuteronomy 3:17-27 ^{<0349>}4:49). The general name given to the whole mountain range east of Jordan, was Abarim (compare ^{<0349>}Deuteronomy 32:49), and the peak to which Moses ascended was dedicated to the heathen Nebo, as Balaam's standing place had been consecrated to Peor. Some modern travelers have fixed on Jebel Attarus, a high mountain south of the Jabbok (Zurka), as the Nebo of this passage [BURCKHARDT, SEETZEN, etc.]. But it is situated too far north for a height which, being described as "over against Jericho," must be looked for above the last stage of the Jordan.

the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead — That pastoral region was discernible at the northern extremity of the mountain line on which he stood, till it ended, far beyond his sight in Dan. Westward, there were on the horizon, the distant hills of "all Naphtali." Coming nearer, was "the land of Ephraim and Manasseh." Immediately opposite was "all the land of Judah," a title at first restricted to the portion of this tribe, beyond which were "the utmost sea" (the Mediterranean) and the Desert of the "South." These were the four great marks of the future inheritance of his people, on which the narrative fixes our attention. Immediately below him was "the circle" of the plain of Jericho, with its oasis of palm trees; and far away on his left, the last inhabited spot before the great desert "Zoar." The foreground of the picture alone was clearly discernible. There was no

miraculous power of vision imparted to Moses. That he should see all that is described is what any man could do, if he attained sufficient elevation. The atmosphere of the climate is so subtle and free from vapor that the sight is carried to a distance of which the beholder, who judges from the more dense air of Europe, can form no idea [VERE MONRO]. But between him and that “good land,” the deep valley of the Jordan intervened; “he was not to go over thither.”

5. *Moses ... died* — After having governed the Israelites forty years.

6. *he buried him* — or, “he was buried in a valley,” that is, a ravine or gorge of the Pisgah. Some think that he entered a cave and there died, being, according to an ancient tradition of Jews and Christians, buried by angels (^{-610B}Jude 1:9 ^{-620B}Numbers 21:20).

no man knoweth of his sepulcher unto this day — This concealment seems to have been owing to a special and wise arrangement of Providence, to prevent its being ranked among “holy places,” and made the resort of superstitious pilgrims or idolatrous veneration, in after ages.

8. *wept for Moses ... thirty days* — Seven days was the usual period of mourning, but for persons in high rank or official eminence, it was extended to thirty (^{-610B}Genesis 50:3-10 ^{-620B}Numbers 20:29).

9. *Joshua ... was full of the spirit of wisdom* — He was appointed to a peculiar and extraordinary office. He was not the successor of Moses, for he was not a prophet or civil ruler, but the general or leader, called to head the people in the war of invasion and the subsequent allocation of the tribes.

10-12. *there arose not a prophet since* — In whatever light we view this extraordinary man, the eulogy pronounced in these inspired words will appear just. No Hebrew prophet or ruler equalled him in character or official dignity, or in knowledge of God’s will and opportunities of announcing it.