

Under The Fig Tree



WEEK 10

Introduction

This week we return to the Eastern side of the Jordan River. We will read from the Book of Deuteronomy. This book contains Moses' final instructions to Israel before the nation crossed over to possess the Promised Land. In Hebrew, the Book is called *Devarim*, meaning *words*, or *things* – the last things that Moses taught Israel.

Before you begin to read the book, consider carefully what you are reading. This is not a dry book of theology: it is about knowing God personally. It is not a book that was for ancient Israel alone, though the words were spoken directly to them. It is not a book of fiction: it is a clear record of what happened to real people. It is not a book of lifeless ritual - God's laws bring protection and life. It is the fifth book of Torah – God's instruction or teaching. It contains the foundations of God's teaching for all His people, past, present and future. If we are natural members or have been adopted into the Israel of God – those who descend from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and who live by faith in the One True God, saved by the atoning Blood of Yeshua HaMashiach – this is our family history and the beginning of our teaching. We must read this book, and in fact the entire Bible, as relevant and a living word. Our goal is to read it in the context that it was written and also, with the Holy Spirit's help, discover how it applies to us in our own walk of faith.

Day 1

Deuteronomy Chapter 1. Imagine the scene: hundreds of thousands of Israelites are camped on the Eastern shore of the Jordan River. We do not know how Moses addressed the entire nation, only that he spoke the exact words to them that are recorded here. Perhaps he gathered the tribal leaders together and they conveyed the teaching to the people according to their divisions. Perhaps he addressed them all and God amplified his voice, as may have happened when the Ten Commandments were given at Mount Horeb. It is a miracle that we have these same words in our Bibles today, recorded so long ago and preserved over many generations.

Over many centuries families and communities of God's people have continued to gather together and study these same words, in synagogues and in church buildings, with those appointed by God to interpret them for every generation.

The place where this took place is in modern-day Jordan. We can still visit the region and look out over the plains to the West of the Jordan overlooking the city of Jericho, where Joshua was to lead the people. Ancient Jericho lies in ruins to this day. At the time of Moses, it was a thriving Canaanite city.

In Verse 2 we have a reference to the spies who went into Canaan at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 13, 32:8). If they had not been afraid of the giants it would have been just under two weeks from Horeb, the mountain where God spoke to them in the region of Sinai, instead of 38 years (Numbers 2:14). From Numbers 33:38, we know that Aaron died on Mount Hor in the 40th year of the Exodus on the first day of the fifth month. In Deuteronomy 3:1, we read that Moses spoke to the people on the first day of the eleventh month, so it was exactly six months since Aaron died. We have many precise details in this historical record. Moses gave a brief review of the forty year journey from Egypt, in this his final discourse. Even at age 120, and even though he was not allowed to go into the Promised Land himself, he was precise in the way he prepared the people. First came a review of their long journey. Read it for yourselves: pray that you will be shown what is especially relevant today.

Chapter 2. The Israelites' journey had taken them close to the cities of the descendants of Esau and Lot. Moses was told not to let Israel cause offence to these people because God had given them this territory as their possession. Other nations were dispossessed by Israel, including Heshbon, the possession of King Sihon. It is not easy for us to understand how God deals with different nations even to our modern day. We know that He keeps His promises and is totally faithful to His covenants. He chooses whom He chooses and it is not for us to question it. This should fill all nations with reverential fear, and make each of us determined to understand all that the Scriptures tell us. Joshua was soon to lead Israel over the Jordan to possess the Land of Canaan. It was to become their Land for all time (Deuteronomy 4:40). Just as God remembered the land He had given to Lot and Esau, so He still remembers what He gave to Israel right up until the present day. Nations still contest the right of Israel to the Land which God gave them, but God remembers His promises.

Chapter 3. Moses reminded Israel about how God had helped them to defeat Og, a great giant of a man (consider the size of his bed in verse 11). It was the giants that Israel feared after the spies returned at Kadesh Barnea, but now they had experienced a victory against these giants. This was all part of the preparation under the leadership of Moses, so that the Israelites would not fear giants any more.

Among these preparations was the allocation of land to two and a half tribes on the west of the Jordan.

Then came the final word from God when Moses asked if he himself could enter the Promised Land (verse 26) – *Enough of that! Speak no more to Me of this matter*, said God. How clearly God spoke to Moses! How carefully He prepared His people for their entry into Canaan! How important is this for us today? See what the Holy Spirit shows you.

Chapter 4. Once more, Moses reminded the Children of Israel about their priority. God made a Covenant with them as with no other nation. The principles of the Covenant were made clear at Horeb and through the days in the wilderness. They had learned how easy it was to be tempted to follow false gods. They had constructed a golden calf and they had been seduced into both physical and spiritual harlotry with Moab. Moses, therefore, reminded them that they must not be tempted to follow false gods nor to make idols of any kind. God could not be made according to the likeness of anything on the earth. This message is relevant today. The same deceptions and temptations are still in the world and satan continues to use every device possible to seduce all people, including Israel and members of the

Christian Church. All kinds of idolatry go on in the world with all manner of images, from what adorns Hindu Temples down to what even adorns some Church buildings. What Moses told Israel is reiterated time and again through the Bible and is as relevant today as it was then.

Abraham crossed over from being a citizen of Ur to a citizen of the Kingdom of God, when he obeyed God and began his walk of faith. The word *Hebrew* comes from the word *avar*, which means *to cross over*. Abraham was a Hebrew. Israel was about to cross over the Jordan. They were Hebrews too, like their father Abraham. For them this was a physical act wherein they crossed an actual river to take possession of a physical land. Those who are baptized by immersion in water, declaring their faith in the One True God and His Son Yeshua HaMashiach are also Hebraic. They cross over from this world to become citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Like Abraham they become those who begin a walk of faith with the One True God. This is why the teaching of this chapter is so relevant to us if we have become disciples of Yeshua. The types and shadows point to our faith in Yeshua. The Children of Israel were at the point of departure into Canaan and were warned about idolatry. No more were they to yearn for Egypt as they had done in the wilderness. They were to be totally detached from the world and its gods. So it is for all who join the Israel of God through faith. We cannot sit on a fence between the world and the Kingdom of God, or have a foot in both camps. The Living God is a jealous God and demands that we serve Him and Him alone. This is the calling of the family of Abraham.

Day 2

Chapter 5. We should all receive the Laws of God as if we stood with Moses at Mount Horeb in the wilderness region of Sinai. This is a spiritual experience. When you first read the account in the Book of Exodus, like when Israel were first heard God speak, it is possible that the full impact was not received. I am not saying that you should become burdened to obey the law by ritual observance that becomes dry and lifeless. That was not God's intent for Israel and it is not God's intent for you. The intent of God was to impart the Spirit of the Law.

Just as you can enter into the Spirit of the Law as was intended at Horeb, so you can enter into the life of faith. Another climax of our readings was Genesis 22, when Abraham took Isaac onto Mount Moriah for sacrifice – his great act of faith. By the help of God's Spirit we can, as it were, be on Mount Moriah with Abraham in testimony of our faith in God. God speaks to us out of many of the records of Scripture, including Moriah and Horeb and develops overlapping spiritual truths in us, including law, grace, faith and obedience.

As we read these Scriptures, helped by the Spirit of God, it will be as if we were there receiving what God shared with His people. In this chapter and the ones that follow, like Israel, we have another opportunity to hear God speak to us afresh. Take plenty of time to allow the Holy Spirit to minister to you through what you read. We will read the words of Moses but it is really God speaking to us. Here we are then, on the edge of Jordan, being reminded about God's desire for His people. These are the words of a pastor – a shepherd – more than those of a lawyer. They are the words of our God, who wants to make His people His special treasure and a prophetic people through whom He speaks to the entire world.

Like Israel, make this a second opportunity to hear His voice. If you listen He will speak to you, as you read in a prayerful attitude. The Ten Commandments will come to you not as legal observance but as words of life from the heart of God.

The chapter begins, *and Moses called all Israel...* The term, *all Israel*, is an important phrase. At the time of Moses, Israel had been sifted. A generation had passed so that it was the children who were addressed, now grown to adulthood. *All Israel* means the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who live by faith and obedience to the One True God. Paul the Apostle taught that *not all Israel are of Israel*. He also taught that one day, *all Israel will be saved* (Romans 11:26). John the Baptist (Matthew 3:6-9) warned some of the religious leaders of his day that physical descent from Abraham was not the sole criterion for being counted among God's family. Ultimately, the *Israel of God* are those of physical descent from Abraham who live by faith in Yeshua, and those added from the gentile nations who are adopted into this family through faith (Romans 11).

For both Israel and us it is important to hear God's voice afresh on the banks of the Jordan, spoken lovingly through the mouth of Moses.

Chapter 6. Verse 4 of this chapter is called *the Shema*. It is the foundation of the statement of faith of Israel. *Shema* means *hear*. *Hear* from a biblical and Hebraic perspective means to act upon the words as well as listen to them with our ears. When God *hears* our prayers He answers them. When He *heard* Israel's cry in Egypt He delivered them. Hear, therefore, what God says to His people in these chapters.

The Shema begins: *Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one.* It is important to understand the meaning of the word *one*, so that we understand what God is saying – He is *one*. The Hebrew word for *one* is *Echad*. Slight modifications of the word illustrate the meaning of this word. The word *Yachad* means together – it was a name given to a group near the Dead Sea at Qumran, because they wanted to live in complete unity. One form of the verb *unite* is *iched*. These illustrations help us to understand the nature of the one-ness implied by *Echad*. It means a unity, all things being together. Therefore, Israel's God is not many gods in different forms. Rather, all manifestations of God are united in Him. The Creative Word was from Him. The spoken Word, now written down, came from Him. In Him is the Father and the Son. His Spirit is a manifestation of His one-ness. It is not that He is split into many parts, but that One God is expressed in a number of ways. This is a foundational doctrine for Israel, and for our understanding that Yeshua is God who came in the flesh. The wonder of it is that in Yeshua's prayer (John 17), He prayed that we would be included in that unity, an expression of God Himself in His people.

This is a very special chapter which includes instructions for how God desires His family to be built through the building up of our individual families and our homes. *Teach them diligently to your children....bind them as a sign on your hand...write them on the doorposts of your house...* this is strong emphasis on the importance of hearing, understanding and living out the teaching of God.

Do you hear the yearning heart of God through the words that you read? Do you feel Him drawing you into loving fellowship? Do you sense His desire to protect you and count you as a special treasure? Do you hear this more than you hear the words as dry and dutiful commands?

Chapter 7. God made a Covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This Covenant is irrevocable. If you have forgotten God's commitment through this Covenant, spend some time rereading the sections of the Bible where the Covenant was given to Abraham. On account of this Covenant, God chose Israel, the physical descendants of Jacob, to teach them to walk with Him in faith and obedience. The Covenant with Abraham also bears promise for all nations. We now know that some from every nation will join with the Covenant family through faith in Yeshua HaMashiach. This is the end that God had in view when He made Covenant with Abraham. Before the time came for inclusion of some from every nation, Israel was established in their land at the expense of the seven nations who lived there. We might ask how it can be that there was a covenant to include some from all nations and yet some nations were dispossessed, some even obliterated from the earth. God had told Abraham that Israel would go down to Egypt for 400 years (Genesis 15:12-16) until the iniquity of the Amorites was complete, and then they would possess the Land that was promised to Abraham. Now the iniquity was complete and the time had come. What was that iniquity?

After the Great Flood, Noah's family settled back on the earth that had been judged. Still people rebelled against God and followed false gods. Over time, tribes like the Amorites were completely demonized. Similar people to those wiped off the face of the earth by the Flood, were in Sodom and Gomorrah at the time of Abraham. Similar people will also be judged by God at the end of time. We can assume, therefore, that when Israel deposed seven nations from Canaan, this was the judgement of God on demonized people at this time- nations like Sodom and those before the Flood.

God teaches through contrasts. There are the Children of God and there are the children of the evil one. There is no in-between. Moses told Israel very clearly that they must not be proud because of their calling, but realize that their existence was out of the love of God and because of the Covenant with

Abraham. They would dispossess nations if they remained faithful, but they must be careful to destroy every abominable remembrance of the false gods. Otherwise they would suffer the same destruction as these abominations. There was no in-between.

Chapter 8. The words of God to Israel were plain and clear. Blessing of every kind was before them, but there was a condition: they must hold fast to God, through obedience to His Commandments. Law is for the purpose of protection. By keeping the Commandments of God the Israelites would be identified by His character and ensure that they did not depart to follow false gods. God knows the strength of satan to distort truth and tempt all people. He knows the power of the world to beguile us and trap us. He has allowed satan much scope since Adam and Eve first listened to his temptations and lies. Now God warned Israel through Moses, in the strongest possible terms, that blessings were conditional on obedience. Obedience was for the purpose of maintaining a walk with Him, the Living God. If they departed from the way and were seduced into following false gods then they would suffer the same consequences as the nations that had been dispossessed. If they became like them they would be treated like them.

Day 3

We must read the history of Israel on at least five levels.

1. We read about how God dealt with *real people*. The physical descendants of Israel still exist in our day, and God's purposes for them are still being worked out, despite all. This is an important principle to maintain through our studies of both the Tanakh and the New Testament. All too soon we neglect to understand God's purposes for Israel and thereby misunderstand what He is doing in our day. Understanding what God is doing in this nation is key to understanding world affairs.
2. We must consider each step of covenant history as it unfolds through the entire Bible. God's plan is revealed step by step. Our current reading is in Deuteronomy, where God was establishing the nation, but this was not the end of the story. Israel was to obey God each step of the way, trusting for a future that would yet unfold.
3. God's Covenant with Abraham took account of sin and failure, without any compromise to His laws. Israel was given perfect laws that they were expected to obey in every way, but God knew they would fail because of the weakness of human flesh. God's laws must not be broken, but there was still provision for sin in God's laws, that God alone could bring. Later in their history, Israel was disobedient and suffered consequences of losing the blessing of God, even to the point that they were exiled from their Land, but God was not taken by surprise. He knew what would happen. It was logically possible for Israel to succeed through every step of God's unfolding plan – but the flesh is weak and Israel's sin was inevitable. They suffered because of their sin but God still provided a means of atonement totally in accord with His laws. But for sin, Yeshua's sacrifice would not have been necessary: because of sin, His sacrifice *was* necessary. He alone could bear the sins of the world and bring full atonement – His was the greatest suffering. He was born of the Tribe of Judah, to bear the suffering for the sins of His people. God made provision for fulfilling His Covenant with Israel despite their weakness. Our study of Israel through the Tanakh is to teach us about this and about the need for all people to find atonement through Yeshua's Sacrifice. Israel failed to keep the Laws of God but God did not fail to provide a means of atonement for Israel despite all. The Laws of God are fulfilled through faith in Yeshua, the end-point for all who will believe from Israel and all nations.
4. There are practical lessons from Israel's history that are intended for all generations of the people of God. We must learn to read the entire Bible and fit the themes together as one continuous whole.
5. There are spiritual lessons to be drawn from the history of Israel. We must hold this point in balance, otherwise we are in danger of treating Israel like a metaphor. The church that emerged since the time of Yeshua has not replaced Israel. Believers from the nations are grafted into the Israel of God and not replaced them. Yeshua always was at the centre of Israel, and always will be. He came to earth as a man at a particular time in history to suffer on the Cross. He was and is central to the Covenant purposes of God, from before Creation and for all time. Israel is a physical entity and there are also spiritual lessons to be drawn from their history.

Think on these things as you read the entire Bible, and set these principles in balance at these early stages of your studies.

We must read the account of Israel on the banks of the Jordan as though we ourselves are there listening to Moses. We can learn about our own walk of faith through what Moses taught. In a very real way it is as if we are going through our own wilderness: this world is as much a wilderness for us as it was for Israel. There is a parallel to the crossing of the Jordan, in that we are waiting for the return of Yeshua, who will take us into the eternal Kingdom. This is a spiritual dimension, but in this world there is also the need for us to continue to deal with sin. It says in Hebrews 9:28: *So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* He will return to take us out of the sinful world to a sinless eternity. Through faith in Yeshua we are included in the Covenant community and wait for our full salvation when He returns. As the end of the age gets nearer it is as if we are on the edge of the Jordan preparing to go over into eternal life. We must prepare in a way that we can learn from Israel's crossing the Jordan. We must be careful not to slip away through unbelief and so let the world and sin spoil what God has in store for us. Read again:

Hebrews 2 and 3. This speaks to us of our present situation in relation to our studies from Deuteronomy. Read these chapters carefully as a preparation for the remainder of what Moses taught.

Deuteronomy 9. Once again, Moses reminded the Children of Israel of the errors that the previous generation had committed in the wilderness, and implored them to have the right attitude now that they were to conquer Canaan. If we look ahead to the time when Yeshua will return to judge all nations, we too must be of a humble attitude. One day He will separate people from all nations like a shepherd separates sheep and goats but we, like Israel, can claim nothing from our own endeavours – it is all of Him.

Chapter 10. Verses 12 and 13 are central to our understanding of the Torah, just as it was for Israel. *What does the Lord require of you?*, was Moses key question, and here is the answer. When the leaders of Israel studied Torah in later years to try to discern the essence of God's teaching, it was to such passages they turned. Yeshua did not bring new teaching when He said that the Torah hung on two principles – to love the Lord God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength and our neighbours as ourselves – He simply reminded the people of His day what they should already have known. We find these same principles recalled by the Prophets of Israel. God's people were always to know that they were to learn to walk with Him in reverent fear, obeying Him in all things. This is the fruit of our love for God. This chapter is as alive for us today as it was when Moses first spoke to Israel.

Chapter 11. If we could hear Moses speaking, as Israel did, we would hear the earnest words of a man who loved them. He was an old man of 120 years. He had walked many miles through many years, with God and with the people of God. Now, he had earnest words on His heart to convey God's love to them and to warn them, because he knew what would come to pass in later days, when temptations would come and when the love of Israel would grow cold. He spoke strongly and lovingly to them. This was God speaking and this is how God also speaks to us.

The walk of faith is not logical according to human philosophy. Verse 26 is one of several times when the twofold future of blessing and curse is placed before Israel. They could choose their future

depending on their ability to walk with God. One future followed obedience, the other followed disobedience. Two futures were simultaneously held before Israel. Choice was a factor in determining the future, but choice is not an easy topic to study from the Bible and the history of Israel. There are forces at work in our lives that are stronger than our human will and so we need help with our choices and deliverance from the consequences of our actions. Often our sinful nature is stronger than our power to overcome it, so some consequences of our choices are inevitable despite human logic. Israel would discover this in later years and Moses knew it as he brought warning to them. They chose to follow God's plan for them, but did not realize that sin would be stronger than their ability to fulfill their choice. The other power greater than our power to choose, is the power of God. Ultimately His sovereign purposes, fulfilled through Yeshua, are behind the scenes of all covenant history, despite our weakness. All this we learn from the history of Israel. We have choice but God's sovereign purposes direct our paths despite our failures in maintaining our chosen path.

Day 4

Chapter 12. We continue to hear the earnest words of Moses. After all these years in the wilderness, he knew the way people gradually and easily fall away from a good path. He knows how easily people invent their own ideas of what pleases God. All manner of sins divert people to invent ideas of what might please God – really, there are hidden motives, and it is more about what will please *us* that leads us to sin. We can list some of them these sins: pride, haughtiness, ambition, laziness, temptation, self-satisfaction, imagining God as in the image of man and not the other way round, wrong theology, worldliness, listening to satan’s lies – “did God really say...?”. We can add many more sins and lusts of the flesh that appear in the Old and New Testament. We can all make our own list of human weaknesses that make us grow cold towards God. These things still happen today. Moses continued to remind Israel of exactly what God required of them. They were not to be tempted in any way to follow the practices of the other nations – *they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods* (verse 30). There were strict, but reasonable, conditions on God’s blessings. In particular the method of sacrifice was to be exactly as God required and in the place He appointed. Blood was to be drained from all meat, both in the Tabernacle and in the home. Embedded in God’s commands were principles that pointed to Yeshua’s shed Blood, and these were early days of preparation for His coming.

In verse 8, it says that everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. Moses reminded them that they must only live in the ways that God had ordained.

Chapter 13. Moses knew that the time would come when false prophets would arise who prophesied out of their own minds, or worse, according to satan’s deceptions. This still goes on. Satan’s days are numbered but he will continue to sidetrack the people of God in every generation, tricking them into worshipping false gods and ultimately worshipping him. Prophecy is the gift of God whereby those whom He chooses become His mouthpiece. The Prophet Amos wrote that God does nothing without revealing it through the mouth of His prophets. The people of God must be awake to hear the voice of God. He speaks to us through His Spirit as we read the Scriptures. He also speaks to us, in every generation, in various other ways according to what we need to know. Every prophecy must be tested. This is as true today as it was in the days of Ancient Israel.

Chapter 14. God requires His people to have an outward character that reflects the inner truth of what He intends us to be. The world around would observe the Israelites and see them as God intended them to be seen, and thereby know that there is a God in Heaven who cares for and leads His people. The regulations included what should be worn, what should be eaten, even how they should cut their hair and conduct themselves in all matters of life and death. As we study the outward manifestations of God’s laws we should also consider the inner character of which they speak.

For example, the eating of clean foods speaks of the spiritual food that we should eat, learning from physical examples. The cud-chewing animals speak of the manner in which we should digest the teaching of Scripture, “chewing it carefully” and digesting it well. We should not be like bottom feeding fish that grovel around in all sorts of filth. God’s people should not eat such food either physically or spiritually. See what the Holy Spirit teaches you about the inner truths of outward principles, such as Israel were taught.

Tithing, in the way God prescribed, is an act of faith towards Him and also a witness of His existence. If God's people give back to Him from what He has given to them then they believe He exists, trust Him, tell Him so, build their fellowship with Him, and indicate to the world around that it is the God of Israel who walks with us and teaches us. In every way there must be an authentic witness of the character and requirements of the One True God. At this time, Israel was that sole witness, in a world full of idols and false gods.

Chapter 15. Here are some of the principles that hang on the Law that you shall love your neighbour as yourself. There will be unforeseen difficulties in this world. Some people will become poor and some people will become slaves. Slaves within the Hebrew community are more like servants than people that have been abused by tyrants, as has happened to slaves throughout the history of the world. Yet, even slaves who were cared for should not be in servitude for too long in Israel. A seven year cycle ensured that no Israelite would be subject to servitude for too long, and care for the poor was also a priority in the community. This reflects the character of God, and is related to our deliverance from bondage through salvation in Yeshua.

Day 5

Chapter 16. Even if we were to experience all the miracles that God will do for us, in time we would forget. It only takes a generation before God's works are put into the history books and considered more like fiction than fact. Israel was always to remember what God did in delivering them from Egypt. Moses reminded them of the precise requirements. The yearly cycle not only remembered what He had done, but looked forward to a greater deliverance that would come through the Sacrifice of Yeshua. The Feasts of the Lord take on a higher significance now that He has been revealed. They are layer on layer of truth, including what He did in Egypt, at Calvary and what He is yet to do. We too should keep alive these remembrances through our weekly and yearly practices of faith. It is a wonderful fact that Israel has been obedient to what Moses taught, as far as circumstances allowed, since the times of Moses – a living testimony to the Living God. Since the Temple was destroyed in AD 70 it has not been possible to offer the sacrifices at the Altar, but still the Feasts are kept. This is in preparation for the day when the veil will be fully removed from the eyes of *all Israel*, and Yeshua will become the fulfillment of all that Moses taught on the edge of the Jordan.

Chapter 17. The first verse of this Chapter reminds us of what the Prophet Malachi wrote. Blemished sacrifices were indeed offered and it was the symptom of general decay in the society of Israel. God forewarned the nation about this, with strong justice to be applied to anyone who departed from Him to follow false gods. Principles of judgement and justice ensured that everyone had a fair trial, but justice was not compromised on matters of life and death. These passages of Torah should be read as relevant to the administration of justice in the entire world. The Bible should be at the foundation of all of our legal systems in the balance of justice with mercy that is at the heart of God. Our readings from Deuteronomy have great relevance today, as they did when first written.

Notice that there is provision made for a King in Israel. When Israel, later, *did* want a King, Moses' instructions were forgotten. Read what these instructions were (verses 14-20). When we read the Books of Samuel, Chronicles and Kings, we will see how far Israel and their kings departed from these instructions. The entire history of Israel is understood according to the way they followed or departed from the instructions God gave through Moses, and the kings of Israel were key to the rise and fall of the nation.

Ultimately God *did* choose a King who obeyed these instructions perfectly. He is Yeshua HaMashiach, the King of the Jews. King Yeshua wrote for Himself a copy of the law – He is still writing it by the power of His Spirit, on the hearts of every one of His disciples.

Chapter 18. The Levites were set apart in a special way. They were given provisions for their family from the offerings of the other tribes. Whilst on duty they ate from the offerings made in the Tabernacle. We should meditate upon what they did, and prayerfully consider what this implied. They shared in God's portion. They ate with Him, as it were. When Yeshua came to world He said that His disciples must eat of His flesh and drink of His blood. This is a fulfillment of what we read here. He is the sacrifice of the New Covenant and we are all priests of the order of Melchizedek, if we are His disciples. To eat of His flesh and drink of His blood is to feed on Him. The flesh counts for nothing, so this is about spiritual life. What the Levites rehearsed in the Tabernacle is fulfilled in our life in Yeshua.

Again, Moses warned about false gods and false prophets. He told the people that there would always be the true prophetic voice among them and they must learn to listen to what God was saying through His prophets. The fullest meaning of raising up a Prophet like Moses was when Yeshua became Prophet, High Priest, and King. In all ways He was the one whom Moses foreshadowed.

Chapter 19. Read again about aspects of justice and mercy that come from the Heart of God. There must be strict justice but it must be carefully administered. Here again we read about the safety fence around law and justice through the provision of cities of refuge. Everyone accused must have a fair trial and complete justice. This brings to our mind the corruption that had come into Israel at the time of Yeshua. He was sentenced to death by corrupt leaders on the testimony of false witnesses. This illustrates how important it was that Israel should learn righteousness and practice it in obedience to Moses' instructions.

Day 6

Chapter 20. God took account of the extremes of life on this earth. The same is true today. It is a fallen world and God has allowed the extremes of poverty, famine, sickness and war. We may not fully understand why, but must believe that God is not taken by surprise by the difficulties of the world. Yeshua said, *there will be wars and rumours of wars*, but that we should not be alarmed. God sent Adam and Eve out from the bliss of the Garden of Eden into a world where there would be trials and this continues in all extremes. Therefore, God also told Israel that there would be wars. He told them that, if they obeyed Him, they would never fail to be victorious. He gave them precise principles, including the selection of the fighting men, leaving behind those who might not be whole-hearted due to various circumstances. They would win their battles, but they would have to fight. In all things, including warfare, they must listen to the voice of God.

Chapter 21. There is good reason for every one of God's laws. If they are not understood they still must be obeyed. In the obeying comes understanding, as God continues to speak to His people through their actions. In this chapter are a number of situations that would arise in the life of Israel. Read about them and see if the Holy Spirit speaks to you about them. Remember that there must be complete justice in all things. Justice is administered with mercy, and mercy is dispensed through sacrifice. Every sacrifice points to Yeshua. There must also be purity in action and motive. This is behind the reason why a captured woman is treated the way outlined here. A wife must not be taken lustfully, but lovingly, and this love must be proved before a captured woman is taken as a wife – everything must be tested in the life of Israel.

Should there ever be a rebellious son who is stoned? Sin must be removed from the camp of Israel. Just as there is no place for rebellious people in the eternal Kingdom, so the law must be obeyed regarding rebellious sons. Yet, more than anything, the death penalty for a rebellious son is meant as a deterrent, so that every son will be aware of his duty and never rebel. Similarly, our present rebellious world should know of the justice of God and know of the penalty for sin. The heart of the teaching in this chapter concerns matters of eternal significance. One day there will be a reckoning at the judgement seat of Yeshua and there will be no compromise. The penalty for rebellion against God is death. That penalty should be a deterrent against sin for all people and a power that drives them to Yeshua for mercy.

Chapter 22. Again we have deeply rooted principles of purity, compassion, honesty and care. Read them carefully and see if the Holy Spirit shows you something you may not have understood. Why does God care so much for a bird and its eggs in the same section of teaching as he cares for chastity in marriage? There are general principles behind every one of God's laws. The maintenance of bird species is important of itself, so birds' eggs must be preserved, but if we are careful about birds, will we not also be careful about one another? If we try to plough a field with an ox and a donkey won't we learn something about the way this principle of imbalance implies to other parts of our lives, and be ready to appreciate Paul's teaching that we should not be yoked together with (married to or dependant on) an unbeliever? If we put a parapet (protective fence) around the roof of our house, won't we also be careful of both the practical and spiritual safety of our neighbours in many other ways. The entire law is a safety fence to our lives and the Gospel is the power of God to preserve us for eternal life. Paul, at the

end of his ministry, said that he had fulfilled his duty in declaring the full counsel of God to whom he was responsible, so the blood of no man was on his hands. In this sense, the Gospel is like a parapet around a flat roof. See if God allows you to touch on deeper aspects of truth from the simple practices of the law that He taught Israel. Note carefully how important it is to God that there is absolute purity in our marriages, from the very first day that a man and a woman come together. The Bible is quite clear on these most sensitive matters. Marriage is also a training ground for our relationship with God. This too must be perfectly pure, almost too pure and intimate for us to find adequate words to describe it! Yet we must not be afraid to consider these matters as God intends.

Chapter 23. The division of the Bible into chapters and verses is useful, but it does not always divide the themes of the Bible accurately. When Moses spoke, there were no such chapter divisions – it was one continuous monologue. In the way our Bibles are divided, Chapter 23, like Chapter 22, contains a range of themes as if Moses is recalling a variety of essential but diverse issues of importance to Israel. Read each new instruction, and pause to reflect on what is being taught before you go on to the next idea.

We begin with how the community of Israel must be kept a pure and separate people. Physical deformity excludes a person from the assembly, just as no foreigner shall be permitted in. We must remember that God was willing to help those who, for various reasons, were sick and diseased, so we must not jump to conclusions when we read of this ban on certain people. The intention for the Children of Israel was that, through obedience to all His ways, there would be no sick among them. Sin and sickness is a big topic. Sickness was a clearer symptom of sin in the days of Moses than we can assume today.

Israel did not live up to God's commands so, by the time of Yeshua, a greater need had been revealed and Yeshua came to deal with spiritual sickness in all fullness. His physical miracles were a sign concerning the hidden character of sin. This is not to say that some sin does not lead to sickness even in our day, but by the time Yeshua came, Israel had not lived up to their side of the Covenant. Sin and sickness were not so directly associated as they had been. Yeshua came to deal more with the greater need in a sinful world, not sickness of the body, but sin sickness of the soul and spirit. We find this in the Gospels, for example the man born blind, whom Yeshua healed, had not sinned and neither had his parents, to cause his blindness. With the world opening up to the Gospel we can no longer exclude those who are sick, deformed or from other nations from the covenant family. Anyone may be included who has been brought to repentance and faith through the atoning Blood of Yeshua. Otherwise, none of us would be allowed into the eternal Kingdom, because the rules for Israel would have excluded us all!

Read the rules for Israel carefully. Be careful to discern how they apply today, physically, spiritually or both. Remember that we are still to be living witnesses of the Lord God in a watching world.

From high things to low, all must be considered, so it is not out of place to be studying rules of hygiene with matters of the spirit. There is both practical and spiritual application. Practically, it was very important for Israel to know how to dispose of waste. These same principles apply today even in our big cities. Spiritually, purity and separation from unclean spiritual matter is to be learned from the physical practices of hygiene.

Day 7

A Day for Rest and Further Reflection

Do you echo the words in Psalm 119, *Oh how I love your Torah! It is my meditation all the day?* We have reflected on many aspects of God's teaching to Israel before they entered the Promised Land. Take some time to review this today. You may enjoy reading Psalm 119 again. Also read:

2 Peter. Peter's teaching is like that of Moses. He is telling disciples of Yeshua to be pure in all things and to grow in maturity. He, like Moses, warns us about false prophets who will come to lead us astray and to follow false gods. He also reminds us that the day of Yeshua's return is nearer than we might think. Read the three chapters of the letter, finding parallels to Deuteronomy and make notes of all that you read.
