



We begin this second study of the book of Deuteronomy with Moses' second *marvelous* speech to the children of Israel. This all took place during the 40th year, as Israel is about to inherit the Promised Land. Moses does not have much time to live, and in his 120th year he gives this second farewell message which spans *from chapter 4:44 all the way to 26!*

He is instructed by God to speak to the new generation—those who survived the forty years of wilderness wandering—about His wonderful laws. He reminds them of the importance of obeying them if they are to learn from the mistakes of their disobedient parents who perished in the desert.

Unlike the book of Leviticus, Deuteronomy principally addresses the lay people and not the priests. So it is a very practical book for all of us.

Moses begins reiterating the backbone of God's laws—the 10 Commandments. They are basically identical to what God mentioned with His own words some 40 years ago, except for one important additional reason to keep the 4th commandment.

Reasons to keep the Sabbath

Now, God inspires Moses to add another reason for keeping the Sabbath day holy. It is not just a reminder of God's creation week, but now a very personal reason is given.

It says, "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work...*And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand...therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day*" (Deut. 5:12-15).

As one source says, "For Jews of the first century the Sabbath was a time of intense spirituality. They related to God who created the universe in six days and rested on the seventh and...they reflected on the fact that God took them out of Egypt. So the Sabbath became for them *a celebration of their freedom*" (*The Seventh Day*, DVD transcript).

This additional reason to keep the Sabbath is far more personal, and reveals God not only as the Creator, but as a Savior that cares and intervenes for His people. Not only did He save the Israelites from the terrible oppression in Egypt and opened the Red Sea for their escape, but later, He would give His

very own life for the sins of mankind and free us from the oppression of the world, that spiritual Egypt and its pharaoh-master, Satan the Devil.

So, when we keep the Sabbath day holy, we not only honor God as our Creator, but also as *our Savior*, whom we have faith in, who loves us and intervenes in *our* lives. Just as He opened the Red Sea and protected His people, so He constantly intervenes for us today.

A brief history of the Sabbath

This is a good time to review the history of the Sabbath day and the 7 day week, which was established at the beginning of mankind. It was kept by Adam (Gen. 2:2-3), Noah (Gen. 7:10-11), Abraham (Gen. 26:5) and by the Israelites for 3,400 years up to now (by the Jews, who are the tribe of Judah and elements of Levites and Benjamites, who kept their Israelite identities while others lost theirs).

According to recent studies, the seven-day week is something embedded into our very being, whether we know it or not. Astronomer and anthropologist Anthony Aveni writes, "The seven-day biorhythm in the human body is one of the recent discoveries of modern chronobiology. It manifests itself in the form of small variations in blood pressure and heartbeat as well as response to infection and even organ transplant: for example, the probability of rejection of certain organs is now known to peak at weekly intervals following an implant" (*The Empires of Time*, p. 100). Other studies on labor reveal man needs to rest every seven days.

"In addition to being the key coordinating rhythm for the rest of the body's many rhythmic interactions," Perry and Dawson note, "a *seven-day cycle* [called the circaseptan cycle] has been found in fluctuations of blood pressure, acid content in blood, red blood cells, heartbeat, oral temperature, female breast temperature, urine chemistry and volume, the ratio between two important neurotransmitters, norepinephrine and epinephrine, and the rise and fall of several body chemicals such as the stress coping hormone, cortisol. In fact, weekly rhythms appear easiest to detect when the body is under stress, such as when it is defending itself against a virus, bacterium, or other harmful intruder. For example, cold symptoms (which are really signs of the body defending itself against the cold virus) last about a week. Chickenpox symptoms

(a high fever and small red spots) usually appear almost exactly two weeks after exposure to the illness" (*The Secrets Our Body Clocks Reveal*, 1988, p. 22).

Interestingly, the influence of the Sabbath was not limited to the Israelites, but known throughout much of the world. "There is evidence to suggest," says the new DVD, *The Seventh Day*, "that the religion of the exiled nation became so well-known that it influenced the philosophical and religious movements of the following centuries. Buddha, Zoroaster, Confucius, and Pythagoras all seem to have adopted elements of the Hebrew religion. For example, although there are no holy days in Buddhism today, evidently the Sabbath, or Uposatha, was a part of that religion early on..." The Blessed One [Buddha] established the rule for observance of a Sabbath; and he suggested that at the seventh-day meeting any monk whose conscience troubled him should confess his offense before the assembly of brothers" (Sheldon Cheney, *Men Who Have Walked With God*, p. 69). Arthur Lloyd, in his book *The Creed of Half Japan*, says the "order of monks kept their sabbath days for many centuries..." (P. 16). In more than 100 ancient and modern languages the seventh day of the weekly cycle was named 'Sabbath' or its equivalent."

The Shema

After rehearsing the Ten Commandments and the promises of blessings from God if kept, Moses mentions what has come to be called by the Jews as the Shema, or Jewish creed: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4).

This is used by Jews to state there is only one God. Yet, it is very important to note the term for "one" here in the Hebrew is *echad* and not *yachid*. *Yachid* is the Hebrew term for the numerical one, while *echad* is more indeterminate, allowing for more than one as in the case of Adam and Eve becoming one (*echad*).

According to *The Hebrew/Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*, the word *echad* means, "to unite, to join together, to be in unity." *Echad* also conveys the idea of being 'bound together' like the cords of a rope. The tighter the cords are bound, the greater the strength produced. *Echad* does indeed mean 'one' but it is a oneness that is produced by a collective unity, as in a family or a team.

Scholars are now bringing to light the influence of the 13th century Jewish theologian Maimonides in

making the Shema the hallmark of Judaism. The following quote shows how Maimonides changed "*echad*" to "*yachid*" in his attempts to preserve strict monotheism: "Even more striking is the very word used in the Shema to proclaim the oneness of God: *echad*. This word allows for plurality or diversity within the unity. This can be seen clearly in several passages. In Genesis 1:5, 2:24, Ezra 2:64 and Ezekiel 37:17, the oneness is the result of combining evening and morning, man and wife, the individual members of an assembly and two sticks, respectively.

"There is, however, another Hebrew word to describe an indivisible unity: *yachid*. The scholar Maimonides, when composing his famous Thirteen Articles of Faith, substituted *yachid* for *echad* in describing the nature of God. Ever since, the notion of an indivisible unity of God has been fostered by Judaism; nevertheless, the Bible gives ample instances to show that there is a diversity within God's unity" (Northwestern University web site; "Most Frequently Asked Questions of Jewish Evangelism").

The greatest Commandment

Next comes what Christ said was the greatest commandment in the Bible: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (Deut. 6:5).

This shall be taught to our children as well. "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down and when you wake" (6:6-7).

Moses then warns them of becoming complacent and forgetting about God's commandments when things go very well. "So it shall be when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant—when you have eaten are full—then beware, lest you forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt... You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him... You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you" (Deut. 6:10-14).

This is a warning to all of us, when God prospers us, and the tendency is to forget who made it all

possible and begin to break His laws. Abraham Lincoln once warned the U.S. of the same thing, saying, “We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven...Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, *too proud to pray to the God that made us.*”

God then instructs them on how to deal with all the Canaanites tribes, they are not to mingle with them and are to exterminate them because of their abominable religions and acts. God gave them, as He mentioned to Abraham in Genesis 15:13-16, 400 years to repent and they only got worse. Now He didn't want the Canaanites to contaminate the pure religion of the Israelites, so just as a barrel of rotten apples rots any good apple placed inside it, the barrel had to be totally emptied and cleaned up.

God mentions He is not a respecter of persons, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers” (7:6-8).

Next, Moses lists all the blessings for obedience under the Old Testament: He will multiply you, bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land, take away sicknesses, destruction of your enemies by supernatural means, such as hornets being sent against them (Deut 7:20).

God then reveals one of the reasons for letting them wander through the wilderness: “to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the Lord your God chastens you” (Deut. 8:2-5).

Again they are warned when they prosper in the Promised Land not to forget God or get vain. “Then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth. And you shall remember the Lord your God, for it is He who gives

you power to get wealth...Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the Lord your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day that *you shall surely perish*” (Deut. 8:17-19).

Next, the reason again is given why they will inherit the land and are to destroy the Canaanites and that God is not a respecter of persons: “Do not think in your heart, after the Lord your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land:’ but it is because of the *wickedness* of these nations that the Lord is driving them out from before you...and that He may fulfill the word which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore understand that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people. Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the Lord...to wrath in the wilderness from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord” (Deut. 9:4-7).

Moses reminds them how many times he had to intercede for them during the many rebellions of their parents and mentions the golden calf incident at Mount Sinai, where he broke the tablets with the Ten Commandments in his wrath and make new ones for God to write on them again.

He then explains in a beautiful way what God wants from all of us: “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good. The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them ...Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer...For the Lord shows no partiality” (Deut. 10:12-17).