

## The Final Words

### Deuteronomy 31-34

#### I. The Big Picture

- Deuteronomy is the last book of the Torah/Pentateuch
- Starting in Genesis – journeyed from Canaan to Egypt
- Exodus-Deuteronomy – journey from Egypt to Canaan
- Beginning of Genesis starts in a perfect garden and the Torah ends right before entering the promised land which is a reflection of the garden
- Deuteronomy focuses on Moses giving a pep talk to the new generation that will enter the promised land
  - Calling them to faithful to the covenant (1-11)
    - Shema – “Listen Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD alone, and you shall love the LORD your god with all your heart, all your soul, and all your might.” (6:4-5)
    - Unique among the nations
  - Laws on Worship, Leadership, and Civil Life (12-26)
  - Covenant Blessings and Curses (27-34)
    - Challenges Israel to listen and love their God (27-30)
    - Issues a warning and ultimatum – if they obey, things will go well and blessings will abound
    - If they don't obey and rebel – they suffer famine, plague, devastation, and ultimately exile
    - “Today I set before you life or death, blessing or curse, goodness or evil...So choose life, by loving the Lord your God and listening to him” (30:15-20)
    - Also knows Israel will rebel but says at any point they can turn back – fundamentally wrong with Israel's heart like the rest of humanity

#### II. Moses' Last Counsel (Deuteronomy 31)

1 So Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. 2 And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross this Jordan.' 3 "It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken. 4 "The LORD will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them. 5 "The LORD will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you.

6 "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."

7 Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. 8 "The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

9 So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 Then Moses commanded them, saying, "At the end of [every] seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. 12 "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. 13 "Their children, who have not known, will hear and

- God's exhortation, often through His servants, to the people of Israel
- By trusting in the Lord and obeying Him, His followers would be victorious in spite of great obstacles
- Ancient treaties specified that a copy of the treaty was to be placed before the gods
  - For Israel, that meant to place it in or near the ark of the covenant
- Where God chooses them to place the tabernacle
- Moses stresses the importance of centralizing the place of worship
- All were included, not just the men
  - The responsibility of the law is on all people, He has made a covenant with all people

learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting. 15 The LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the doorway of the tent. 16 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. 17 "Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?' 18 "But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods.

- Recalls when God came to dwell in the tabernacle in Exodus
- God predicts Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant and introduces a new image for judgment: hiding His face
  - Opposite of Aaron's blessing in Numbers 6:24-26
  - God allows His people free will, if they choose not to obey and turn their eyes from Him, He will turn away from them and pull His favor
  - God gives life and without His favor, all that is left is chaos

19 "Now therefore, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it on their lips, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel. 20 "For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant. 21 "Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore." 22 So Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the sons of Israel.

23 Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

24 It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26 "Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. 27 "For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death? 28 "Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. 29 "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands." 30 Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete: [Deu 31:19-30 NASB95] 19 "Now therefore, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it on their lips, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel. 20 "For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant. 21 "Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore." 22 So Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the sons of Israel. 23 Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you." 24 It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying, 26 "Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you. 27 "For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death? 28 "Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call

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30 Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete:

### III. The Song of Moses (Deuteronomy 32)

1 "Give ear, O heavens, and let me speak;  
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth. 2 "Let my  
teaching drop as the rain,  
My speech distill as the dew,  
As the droplets on the fresh grass  
And as the showers on the herb.  
3 "For I proclaim the name of the LORD;  
Ascribe greatness to our God!  
4 "The Rock! His work is perfect,  
For all His ways are just;  
A God of faithfulness and without injustice,  
Righteous and upright is He.  
5 "They have acted corruptly toward Him,  
[They are] not His children, because of their defect;  
[But are] a perverse and crooked generation.  
6 "Do you thus repay the LORD,  
O foolish and unwise people?  
Is not He your Father who has bought you?  
He has made you and established you.  
7 "Remember the days of old,  
Consider the years of all generations.  
Ask your father, and he will inform you,  
Your elders, and they will tell you.  
8 "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,  
When He separated the sons of man,  
He set the boundaries of the peoples  
According to the number of the sons of Israel.  
9 "For the LORD'S portion is His people;  
Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.  
10 "He found him in a desert land,  
And in the howling waste of a wilderness;  
He encircled him, He cared for him,  
He guarded him as the pupil of His eye.  
11 "Like an eagle that stirs up its nest,  
That hovers over its young,  
He spread His wings and caught them,  
He carried them on His pinions.  
12 "The LORD alone guided him,  
And there was no foreign god with him.  
13 "He made him ride on the high places of the earth,  
And he ate the produce of the field;  
And He made him suck honey from the rock,  
And oil from the flinty rock,  
14 Curds of cows, and milk of the flock,  
With fat of lambs,  
And rams, the breed of Bashan, and goats,  
With the finest of the wheat—  
And of the blood of grapes you drank wine.  
15 "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked—  
You are grown fat, thick, and sleek—  
Then he forsook God who made him,

- The Torah is a source of life
- Rock can also be translated 'mountain' and is a continued theme throughout the poem
- Perfect = complete
  
- Language comparing them to a blemished sacrificial offering
- Also uses Garden of Eden language – formed them and established them
- Paul uses similar language in Philippians 2:15 – “so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world”
- “days of old” – all the generations up to this point and on
- ‘Most High’ – El or Elyon – applied frequently to the chief Canaanite deity in ancient times
  - Emphasizes the Lord’s sovereignty over all creation
- Reflecting back on the tower of Babel
- ‘sons of Israel’ – in oldest Hebrew manuscripts it says sons of El
- But God saves Israel for himself – they are set apart
- ‘waste’ = ‘tov’ – same word used in Gen. 1 to describe the world before creation
- ‘pupil’ – translates as ‘tiny man’ – was close enough to them that they are reflected in his eyes
- ‘hovers’ is the same word used in Gen. 1 as the spirit that hovers over the waters
- He found them in the desert, guided them, and provided a royal feast for them there – everything they needed, they had
  
- Jeshurun = ‘upright one’
  - Sarcastic name for Israel because they are not the upright ones, God is

And scorned the Rock of his salvation.  
16 "They made Him jealous with strange [gods;]  
With abominations they provoked Him to anger.  
17 "They sacrificed to demons who were not God,  
To gods whom they have not known,  
New [gods] who came lately,  
Whom your fathers did not dread.  
18 "You neglected the Rock who begot you,  
And forgot the God who gave you birth.

19 "The LORD saw [this,] and spurned [them]  
Because of the provocation of His sons and daughters.  
20 "Then He said, 'I will hide My face from them,  
I will see what their end [shall be;]  
For they are a perverse generation,  
Sons in whom is no faithfulness.  
21 'They have made Me jealous with [what] is not God;  
They have provoked Me to anger with their idols.  
So I will make them jealous with [those who] are not a  
people;  
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation,  
22 For a fire is kindled in My anger,  
And burns to the lowest part of Sheol,  
And consumes the earth with its yield,  
And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

23 'I will heap misfortunes on them;  
I will use My arrows on them.  
24 '[They will be] wasted by famine, and consumed by  
plague  
And bitter destruction;  
And the teeth of beasts I will send upon them,  
With the venom of crawling things of the dust.  
25 'Outside the sword will bereave, And inside terror—  
Both young man and virgin,  
The nursling with the man of gray hair.  
26 'I would have said, "I will cut them to pieces,  
I will remove the memory of them from men,"  
27 Had I not feared the provocation by the enemy,  
That their adversaries would misjudge,  
That they would say, "Our hand is triumphant,  
And the LORD has not done all this."

28 "For they are a nation lacking in counsel,  
And there is no understanding in them.  
29 "Would that they were wise, that they understood this,  
That they would discern their future!  
30 "How could one chase a thousand,  
And two put ten thousand to flight,  
Unless their Rock had sold them,  
And the LORD had given them up?  
31 "Indeed their rock is not like our Rock,  
Even our enemies themselves judge this.  
32 "For their vine is from the vine of Sodom,  
And from the fields of Gomorrah;  
Their grapes are grapes of poison,  
Their clusters, bitter.  
33 "Their wine is the venom of serpents,  
And the deadly poison of cobras.

- Jealousy refers to the covenant's demand for exclusive loyalty to God
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- Vs. 21 – lit. 'with a non-god' and 'with a non-people'

- Arrows often represent divine judgement or spiritual attack
- The Lord will personally send sickness and plague, food shortages, and enemies (specifically, snakes)
  - Essentially, from this point forward, every blessing and disaster that Israel receives comes directly from God
- The pride and arrogance of the other nations softens God's punishment on Israel

- Vs. 28 goes back to talking about rebellious Israel – if they had thought through and really understood God's word, they wouldn't end up in exile
- Those who are faithful and keep God's covenant are considered His people, those who are unfaithful are not
- Reference to Sodom and Gomorrah symbolize moral corruption (bad heart)

34 'Is it not laid up in store with Me,  
Sealed up in My treasuries?  
35 'Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,  
In due time their foot will slip;  
For the day of their calamity is near,  
And the impending things are hastening upon them.'  
36 "For the LORD will vindicate His people,  
And will have compassion on His servants,  
When He sees that [their] strength is gone,  
And there is none [remaining,] bond or free.  
37 "And He will say, 'Where are their gods,  
The rock in which they sought refuge?  
38 'Who ate the fat of their sacrifices,  
[And] drank the wine of their drink offering?  
Let them rise up and help you,  
Let them be your hiding place!  
39 'See now that I, I am He,  
And there is no god besides Me;  
It is I who put to death and give life.  
I have wounded and it is I who heal,  
And there is no one who can deliver from My hand.  
40 'Indeed, I lift up My hand to heaven,  
And say, as I live forever,  
41 If I sharpen My flashing sword,  
And My hand takes hold on justice,  
I will render vengeance on My adversaries,  
And I will repay those who hate Me.  
42 'I will make My arrows drunk with blood,  
And My sword will devour flesh,  
With the blood of the slain and the captives,  
From the long-haired leaders of the enemy.'  
43 "Rejoice, O nations, [with] His people;  
For He will avenge the blood of His servants,  
And will render vengeance on His adversaries,  
And will atone for His land [and] His people."

- God's plan is already fixed and certain and sin will be punished in due time
  - Moses' point is that not every Israelite is a 'true' Israelite who honors God and follows his laws
    - Faithful Israelites are contrasted with unfaithful Israelites
  - This is carried out especially in the book of Isaiah
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- Some of those who remain faithful to Him (servants, prophets) will be killed by those who are unfaithful
    - God will avenge them and bring atonement for the land and people through the spilled blood of the servants
  - The nations outside of Israel should also rejoice with the loyal servants because through them, they also will be blessed
  - Gen 3:15 – "And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel."
    - Some will follow the path of the snake, others will stay loyal and see the snake crushed
    - Ultimately fulfilled through Jesus
  - Connected to the suffering servant in Isaiah 53

44 Then Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the hearing of the people, he, with Joshua the son of Nun. 45 When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel, 46 he said to them, "Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, [even] all the words of this law. 47 "For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

#### IV. The Blessing of Moses (Deuteronomy 33)

1 Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before his death.  
2 He said,  
"The LORD came from Sinai,  
And dawned on them from Seir;  
He shone forth from Mount Paran,  
And He came from the midst of ten thousand holy ones;  
At His right hand there was flashing lightning for them.

3 "Indeed, He loves the people;  
All Your holy ones are in Your hand,  
And they followed in Your steps;  
[Everyone] receives of Your words.  
4 "Moses charged us with a law,  
A possession for the assembly of Jacob.  
5 "And He was king in Jeshurun,  
When the heads of the people were gathered,  
The tribes of Israel together

- Rueben – prayer for survival and longevity, despite being small
- Simeon – not even mentioned
- Judah – request for divine assistance in battle and gathering the tribe to its people

- Levi – entrusted with teaching the law, offering sacrifices, and receiving blessings on their service and strength
- Benjamin – Described as the beloved of the LORD who dwells in safety, with God protecting them
- Joseph (Ephraim & Manasseh) – A substantial blessing of agricultural abundance (dew, sun, fruit) and military strength
- Zebulun & Issachar – blessed with success in commerce and trade, along with joy in their territory
- Gad – Praised for their strength and leadership, expanding their territory
- Dan – Described as a fierce lion, leaping from Bashan
- Naphtali – Sated with favor and full of the blessing of the Lord
- Asher – Blessed with being favored by his brothers and having a protected prosperous land
- Good to reflect back on Jacob’s prophesy of his sons in Genesis 49 and how most are very similar or in agreement

26 "There is none like the God of Jeshurun,  
Who rides the heavens to your help,  
And through the skies in His majesty.

27 "The eternal God is a dwelling place,  
And underneath are the everlasting arms;  
And He drove out the enemy from before you,  
And said, 'Destroy!'

28 "So Israel dwells in security,  
The fountain of Jacob secluded,

In a land of grain and new wine;  
His heavens also drop down dew.

29 "Blessed are you, O Israel;  
Who is like you, a people saved by the LORD,  
Who is the shield of your help  
And the sword of your majesty!  
So your enemies will cringe before you,  
And you will tread upon their high places."

#### V. The Death of Moses (Deuteronomy 34)

1 Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, 2 and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, 3 and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. 4 Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see [it] with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." 5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. 6 And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day. 7 Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. 8 So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping [and] mourning for Moses came to an end. 9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. 10 Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, 11 for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, 12 and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

- Moses is the first servant of YHWH – first suffering servant
  - Unable to go into the promised land because of sin and he is still morally under the punishment of sin so he has to die
- 120 years old – Gen 6:3
  - 3 generations, 40 years each
- Spirit fills Joshua and he officially assumes leadership over the Israelites
- Moses becomes the archetypal prophet – sees the end of the story and proclaims that while Israel’s idolatry will lead to death, God will bring atonement, blessing, and life to the nations
- The author emphasizes that there was no other leader like Moses
- Because of this, we can look forward with hope to a coming prophet and leader who will be even greater than Moses, the suffering servant who will die on behalf of God’s people.

#### VI. The End...But Wait?

- Deuteronomy is the end of the Torah, but we are still left with many unanswered questions:
  - When is the descendant of the woman going to come and defeat evil (Gen 3)?
  - How is God going to rescue His world and restore blessing to all nations through Abraham’s family (Gen 12)?
  - How can God’s holiness be reconciled with continuously rebellious people (Exod.-Num.)?
  - How will God transform the hearts of His people (Deut.)?