

C. Leviticus

1. Summary

- a. Leviticus = Latin “relating to the Levites”. [All the Israelite priests came from the tribe of Levi.] The Hebrew title, *wayyiqra*’, means “and he called.”
- b. Description: **Leviticus centers around the concept of the holiness of God, and how an unholy people can acceptably approach Him and then remain in continued fellowship.**⁴²

God being holy means he is majestically transcendent and morally pure. He is separate (from his creation) and sinless.

How can an unholy people approach a holy God?

- 1) The way to God is only through blood sacrifice
 - 2) The walk with God is only through obedience to his Laws.⁴³
 - 3) The New Testament teaches us that the required blood sacrifice⁴⁴ and obedience⁴⁵ are both fulfilled in Christ.
- c. God gave the laws to Moses, and Moses wrote them down.

Leviticus at a Glance⁴⁶

FOCUS	SACRIFICE				SANCTIFICATION				
REFERENCE	1:1-----8:1-----11:1-----16:1-----18:1-----21:1-----23:1-----25:1-----27:1—27:34								
DIVISION	THE LAWS OF SACRIFICE				THE LAWS OF SANCTIFICATION				
	THE OFFERINGS	CONSECRATION OF THE PRIESTS	PURITY OF THE PEOPLE	NATIONAL ATONEMENT	FOR THE PEOPLE	FOR THE PRIESTS	IN WORSHIP	IN THE LAND OF CANAAN	THROUGH VOWS
TOPIC	THE WAY TO GOD				THE WALK WITH GOD				
	THE LAWS OF ACCEPTABLE APPROACH TO GOD				THE LAWS OF CONTINUED FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD				
LOCATION	MOUNT SINAI								
TIME	c. 1 MONTH [God gave these laws to Moses at the Tent of Meeting at the base of Mt. Sinai in 1445 B.C., one year after the Exodus] Departed Egvot 1446: marched to Sinai for 2 months: had been at Sinai 10 months (received 10 cmdts/built tabernacle).								

⁴² Richard Lints, “The Holiness of God,” www.thegospelcoalition.org: “The holiness of God refers to the absolute moral purity of God and also the absolute moral distance between God and his human creatures. The prophet Isaiah declared, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty” (Isa 6:3). It is the only description of God repeated in the three-fold formula—a literary device to bring great emphasis. God is not just a little bit holy. God is REALLY, REALLY, REALLY holy. This served to remind Israel in the original context, and us at present, that God’s holiness is a matter of enormous spiritual significance. It also serves as a warning that we humans are not holy. Holiness is a central marker of the fundamental divide between God and the sinful human creature—most especially in their fallen condition but also in the redeemed state entirely dependent upon God for any holiness that might reside in them.”

⁴³ *Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, 41.

⁴⁴ Heb 9:12

⁴⁵ Rom 5:19; 1 Cor 1:30.

⁴⁶ *Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts*, 40.

TYPES OF OLD TESTAMENT LAWS	
Type	Explanation ⁴⁷
MORAL Ex 20:3-17; Deut 5:7-21	God's moral law (summarized in the Ten Commandments), expresses the character and will of God and sets forth the only standard of righteousness acceptable to him. Man is without power to conform to its perfect standard. Therefore, the law makes man aware of his sinfulness (Rom 7:7,13), condemns him as unrighteous (Rom 7:9-11; Gal 3:13; James 2:9) and, having removed any hope of salvation through his own righteousness, brings him to the place where he casts himself upon the grace of God, that he might trust only in the righteousness and merit of the atoning Savior, Jesus Christ (Gal 3:24). God's moral law is in force everywhere and at all times, for it is a reflection of his very being. It has never been canceled, nor indeed can it be.
CIVIL (Judicial, Social, Political) Ex 20:23— 23:33; Lev 17-26; Deut 21-25 Examples: Personal injury Theft Property damage Treatment of vulnerable people	The individual civil laws given by God through Moses were rooted in the basic principles set forth in the Ten Commandments. <u>Since man is inherently sinful and lawless, social life must come under regulation.</u> The family (including servants and strangers) needed laws to preserve it from corruption and dissolution. Crimes against individuals and property had to be punished. Also, stipulations for operating the government of Israel were given. God's wisdom and grace were manifest as he gave these laws so that there might be peace and order in the state, the family, and in other spheres of human relations. The dignity of the individual was to be preserved. A high premium was set on selflessness and consideration of others. The civil law governing Israel was designed for a theocracy—a government and religion combined—at a unique point in redemptive history in which God was preparing His people for the coming of Christ. However, the principles which lie under it are timeless and applicable to all generations.
CEREMONIAL (Religious) Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy	Embodied in the Old Testament are many laws governing the worship of God. Some are general in nature, having to do with purity of worship. Large numbers of the laws concern the sanctuary, its priesthood, and the rites and ceremonies connected with it and the covenant relationship between the Israelites and God. Some consist of prescriptions pertaining to special occasions of the religious year. In the ceremonial law, God spoke in picture language of the salvation he would accomplish through the life and death of Jesus Christ. The Book of Hebrews demonstrates that the types and shadows of the ceremonial law have passed away with the coming of Christ, the perfect High Priest, who as the Lamb of God sacrificed himself to satisfy the demand of the law and purchase salvation for His people.

Matthew 5:17 (Jesus speaking)

¹⁷ "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

⁴⁷ The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, 477.

SACRIFICES (OFFERINGS) IN LEVITICUS 1-7					
Name		Ch	Procedure	Purpose	Theology (Christ)
“ An offering by fire of a soothing (‘ pleasing’ NIV) aroma to the Lord” (1:9, 2:2; 3:5) like Christ is “ an offering and sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Eph 5:2).	Burnt Voluntary	1,6	The whole animal (minus skin) was burned on the altar. According to wealth, a bull, a male sheep or goat, or a turtledove or pigeon was sacrificed.	1) To make atonement ⁴⁸ for the sinner (for his sins in general). 2) To symbolize complete dedication and devotion to God and destruction of sin.	1) Foreshadows the atonement accomplished by Christ by his blood on the cross (Rom 6:2-7). 2) Pictures the complete devotion of the Christian who offers his life as a sacrifice to God (Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15).
	Grain Voluntary	2,6	Usually presented in conjunction with burnt or fellowship offerings, it consisted of wheat flour mixed with olive oil, incense, and salt, with no leaven or honey, and was baked, fried, or cooked. Some of it was burned and the rest was eaten by the priests.	The grain offering signified devotion and thanksgiving to God.	The presence of salt (to preserve from corruption) and absence of leaven (symbolizing absence of sin) picture the sinlessness of Christ (Heb 4:15; 1 Jn 3:5).
	Fellowship (Peace) Voluntary	3,7	A male or female animal from herd, flock, or goats was sacrificed. The fatty portions were burned on the altar, the priests received the breast and right thigh, and the family bringing the offering then celebrated a meal by eating the rest of the animal.	There were three types of fellowship offerings: 1) Thanksgiving: In response to a particular blessing. 2) Votive: To petition God with a vow or to thank Him for answering a petition accompanied by a vow. 3) Freewill: To express gratitude to God without regard to any particular blessing.	The fellowship offering expressed fellowship and peace with God. The Christian has fellowship and peace with God through Jesus Christ (Rom 5:1; Col 1:20) and eats his flesh (Jn 6:54-58).
	Sin Compulsory	4-5, 6	1) For the high priest, a bull 2) For the congregation as a whole, a bull 3) For a ruler, a male goat 4) For a commoner, a female goat or lamb 5) For the poor, two doves or pigeons 6) For the very poor, fine flour	To atone for specific unintentional sins, especially when no restitution was possible. ⁴⁹	Prefigures that in his death, Christ was made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), bore the punishment for sin (Is 53:5; 1 Pet 2:24) and suffered outside the gates of Jerusalem (Heb 13:11-13) ⁵⁰
	Guilt (Trespass) Compulsory	5,7	1) For sins against the Lord, a ram plus restitution estimated by the priest plus one-fifth. 2) For sins against man, a ram plus restitution of the value plus one-fifth.	To atone for specific unintentional sins, especially when restitution was possible.	Foreshadows that Christ is our guilt offering (Is 53:10; Col 2:13).

⁴⁸ “An atonement is a reconciliation of alienated parties, the restoration of a broken relationship. Atonement is accomplished by making amends, blotting out offenses, and giving satisfaction for wrongs done.” *New Geneva Study Bible*, 1772. **Hebrew language experts disagree as to whether the Hebrew word translated “make atonement” (Lev 1:4 and throughout Leviticus) means to “cover” sins (i.e., shield the worshipper from the holy wrath of God by applying blood as a protective covering) or to “wipe away” sins (i.e., cleanse the worshipper by removing sin with the cleansing agent of blood).** *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Volume 2, 689-709.

⁴⁹ In cases of defiant rebellion against God, the sin offering was of no avail (Nu 15:30-31). However, there appeared to be provision for a deliberate sin to be forgiven if the individual confessed and repented (Nu 5:6-7).

⁵⁰ When the sin offering was for the high priest or congregation, the bull was to be burned outside the camp (4:11,12,20, 21).

WHAT DID THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM TEACH?

THE NEED FOR HOLINESS

Because God now dwelt among the people in the tabernacle (Ex 40), a sacrificial system had to be instituted to remove the defilement of the people resulting from sin (Lev 1-5), so that they could live with a holy (transcendent, perfect, pure) God.

THE MEANS FOR CLEANSING

The animals to be sacrificed had to be without blemish, signifying that God requires perfection. The worshipper placed his hand on the animal, signifying his identification with the animal, and then the animal died in his place. The blood represented the life of the animal (Lev 17:14). Blood was placed on the horns of the altar, and once a year on the mercy seat (top of the Ark of the Covenant) in the Most Holy Place (Lev 16), signifying the cleansing of the worshipper and the tabernacle from defilement. The fat of the animal, representing the sweetest and best part, was burned on the altar to signify its being given to the Lord. The rest of the animal was burned (signifying complete dedication of the worshipper and complete destruction of corruption), or eaten (signifying fellowship with God), depending on the type of sacrifice.

THE FULFILLMENT IN CHRIST

The tabernacle and the sacrifices were earthly copies of the heavenly realities (Heb 10:24). Because Israel went on sinning year after year, and new animals were continually presented in the same repetitious ceremonies (Heb 10:1-4), the sacrifices were inadequate to truly atone for sins. The inadequacies had only one remedy—God must provide the ultimate sacrifice. The Old Testament prophets longed for the son of David who would simultaneously be the High Priest (Zech 3:8-9; Is 11:1) and for a Man who would die like a sheep as a guilt offering for the iniquity of the people (Is 53:4-10) and afterwards receive new life (Is 53:10-12). Christ fulfilled the need for the ultimate sacrifice. He was the Lamb without blemish or defect (1 Pet 1:19) who bore the punishment for our sins (1 Pet 2:24). He was the High Priest who entered the heavenly sanctuary with blood (Heb 9:7) in order to obtain eternal redemption (Heb 9:12) and cleanse us (Heb 10:22) and sanctify us (Heb 10:10) because “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness” (Heb 9:22). When Jesus died, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom (Mt 27:51, Mk 15:38, Lk 23:45). The tearing of the veil signified that Jesus' death opened the way for direct access to God for all believers, removing the barrier that the veil represented between the Most Holy Place and the rest of the temple. **Now, Christians draw near to God in his Most Holy Place with “a true heart in full assurance of faith” (Heb 10:22).**

Hebrews 10:19-22

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

2. Key sections

Chap	Summary
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8-9	Describes the ordination of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. In a seven-day ceremony, Aaron and his sons were washed, given special clothing, anointed with oil, and sprinkled with blood. After a series of offerings for both the priests and the people, the glory of the Lord appeared to all the people, and the Lord sent down fire to consume the final burnt offering. The people who saw it shouted for joy and fell facedown.
10	After Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu improperly put fire in an incense censer, the Lord devoured them with fire. ⁵¹ Then Aaron's other sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, improperly offered a sin offering by not eating its meat. However, Moses discerned that Aaron was not acting rebelliously, and he was satisfied.
11-14	This section describes various laws given by God to Israel regarding purity. There are laws about clean and unclean food, ⁵² purification after childbirth, infectious skin diseases and mildew, and bodily discharges. These laws taught the Israelites that God was pure and that impurities must be cleansed before one can approach him. ⁵³ Leviticus 11:44 summarizes the theme of Leviticus—"Be holy, for I am holy." ⁵⁴ Leviticus 11:44 ⁴⁴ For I am the Lord your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. Consecrate: Separate from anything unclean that would contaminate your relationship with God.

⁵¹ After the death of Aaron's sons, the Lord said to Aaron through Moses: Lev 10:3: "By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; and before all the people I must be glorified." Nadab and Abihu approached the Lord in an unauthorized way. In the Old Testament frequently warned against approaching God in an unfit state (Ex 19:12, 21). This principle is also evident in the New Testament (Act 5:1-10; 1 Cor 11:29-30). Eating sacrificial food while unclean (7:21) or entering the Most Holy Place without divine approval might lead to death (16:2). The same divine fire that ignited the inaugural sacrifice, providing atonement for the people (9:24), now engulfed those who encroached upon God's altar in an unauthorized fashion. The same divine wrath against sin that fell upon Christ in His vicarious sacrifice for his people will blaze against those who reject that sacrifice and yet attempt to approach God in their sin (Heb 10:26-31). *New Geneva Study Bible*, 164.

⁵² **Clean and Unclean Animals (Leviticus 11)** ChatGPT

- **Clean animals (permitted to eat):**
 - Land: Must have split hooves *and* chew the cud (e.g., cattle, sheep, goats, deer).
 - Water: Must have fins and scales (e.g., trout, salmon, carp).
 - Birds: Most domestic and non-scavenging birds (e.g., chickens, doves).
 - Insects: Those with jointed legs for hopping (e.g., locusts, crickets, grasshoppers).
- **Unclean animals (forbidden to eat):**
 - Land: Those without split hooves or that don't chew cud (e.g., pigs, camels, rabbits).
 - Water: Without fins or scales (e.g., catfish, eels, shellfish like shrimp or lobster).
 - Birds: Predators and scavengers (e.g., eagles, vultures, ravens).
 - Other creatures: All reptiles, amphibians, and most insects (e.g., snakes, frogs, flies).

Purpose in Israel's Context

- To **set Israel apart** from surrounding nations (holy distinction).
- To teach **obedience and purity** in daily life.
- To remind them constantly of God's holiness and their covenant identity.

Significance for Christians Today

- The New Testament (Mark 7:18–19; Acts 10:9–16; Colossians 2:16–17) declares all foods clean through Christ.
- The deeper principle remains: God's people are called to be **distinct, pure, and obedient**.
- For Christians, these laws now point symbolically to **spiritual holiness**, not dietary restrictions.
- While not binding, they still illustrate God's desire that His people live differently from the world.

⁵³ In these chapters, Moses explained the difference between the ceremonially clean and unclean. "Clean" means "fit for God's presence." "Unclean" means "unfit for God's presence." Anyone who was unclean or who had come in contact with uncleanness was to abstain from public worship until he was cleansed. The basic idea is that God is perfect life, while the essence of uncleanness is death. Normal, healthy creatures were clean, but abnormal or unhealthy creatures, and particularly corpses, were unclean. Abnormalities that suggested or that could lead to death were marks of uncleanness. Life and death were not to be mixed, so the unclean was never to enter God's presence. Ultimately, it is Christ, the great Mediator and High Priest, who triumphs over death and corruption on behalf of those who trust in Him (1 Cor 15:20-28, 50-57). *New Geneva Study Bible*, 165. R. Laird Harris argues that many of the laws of cleanliness promoted public health and protected Israel from disease. R. Laird Harris, *The Pentateuch*, Institute of Theological Studies, Lecture 18.

⁵⁴ Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the new covenant (Heb 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), also demands perfection (Matt 5:48). But he provides the new Israel with holiness by his perfect sacrifice, which removed the sins of his people forever (Heb 9, 10), and by His Holy Spirit, who inscribes God's moral law on their hearts (2 Cor 3:3; Jer 31:31-34). Without that holiness no one will see God (Heb 12:14).

- 16 **This chapter describes the Day of Atonement (Hebrew, *yom kippur*).** This day was the holiest day in the Hebrew calendar. On this day the High Priest made annual atonement for the sins of the nation. The people and the tabernacle were cleansed through the rituals of the day. After offering a number of sacrifices, the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place (the innermost chamber of the tabernacle) and sprinkled the mercy seat (on it and in front of it) of the ark of the covenant with blood. He then went into the tabernacle courtyard, laid his hands on the head of a live goat while confessing the sins of the Israelites, and sent the scapegoat into the desert. The sprinkling of the mercy seat symbolized the covering of sins or wiping away of sins by blood sacrifice which thereby turned aside God's wrath. The scapegoat, an innocent substitute carrying the sins of the people, symbolized the removal of sin which thereby turned aside God's wrath.⁵⁵ "Azazel" (v. 8,10,26) referred to the place to which the scapegoat was sent and was apparently also a nickname for the scapegoat.
- 17-22 Civil Laws: This section outlines civil and community laws for Israel. They include prohibitions against idolatry, eating blood, and improper sacrifices. They establish rules for sexual morality, holiness in daily life, respect for parents and the elderly, fair treatment of neighbors, honesty in business, and care for the poor. Priests have stricter standards of purity. Festivals and offerings are regulated. Together, these laws aim to set Israel apart as holy to God and just in their dealings with one another.
- 23-25 **In this section, the Lord appoints the feasts which are to be proclaimed as sacred assemblies**—the Sabbath, the Feast of Passover and Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Weeks, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Lord also appoints the Sabbath Year and the Year of Jubilee.

Holy Feasts⁵⁶

The Sabbath principle permeates each of these feasts, which are intended to express the divine-human relationship. Each feast requires (1) cessation from ordinary work and (2) dedication to the Lord by means of offerings.

Feast	Verse	When	Significance
Sabbath	23:3	Weekly	Creation
Passover	23:4-8	Spring	Salvation
Unleavened Bread	23:6-8	Spring	Salvation
Firstfruits	23:9-14	Spring	Dedication
Weeks	23:15-21	Spring	Dedication
Trumpets	23:23-25	Fall	Solemn assembly; spiritual preparation
Day of Atonement	23:26-32	Fall	Redemption
Booths	23:33-36	Fall	Joyful remembrance of the Lord's historic guidance

- 26 **Obedience to God's laws would be rewarded** with rain, healthy crops, peace in the land, defeat of enemies, increase of numbers, and, most of all, the Lord's dwelling among Israel. **Disobedience to God's laws would be punished** with terror, disease, poor harvests, defeat by enemies, attack by wild animals, plagues, famine, cannibalism, ruined cities, and dispersal among the nations. However, confession and repentance would cause the Lord to remember his covenant made with Israel's forefathers so that he would not completely destroy Israel while they were living in the land of their enemies.

⁵⁵ The language of the Day of Atonement is applied to Christ in Heb 9:6-18 and 13:11-13. That Christ was delivered to the Gentiles and killed outside the walls of Jerusalem indicated that He was sent "outside the camp" like the scapegoat of old. *New Geneva Study Bible*, 173. The turning aside of God's wrath, symbolized by the sprinkling of blood on the mercy seat, is called "propitiation." The removal of the defilement of sin, symbolized by the scapegoat carrying away the sins of the people, is called "expiation." Jesus accomplished both propitiation and expiation for His people. The ideas are combined in John the Baptist's words about Jesus in John 1:29: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Compare with Psalm 103:10-12.

⁵⁶ *ESV Study Bible*, 247.

D. Numbers

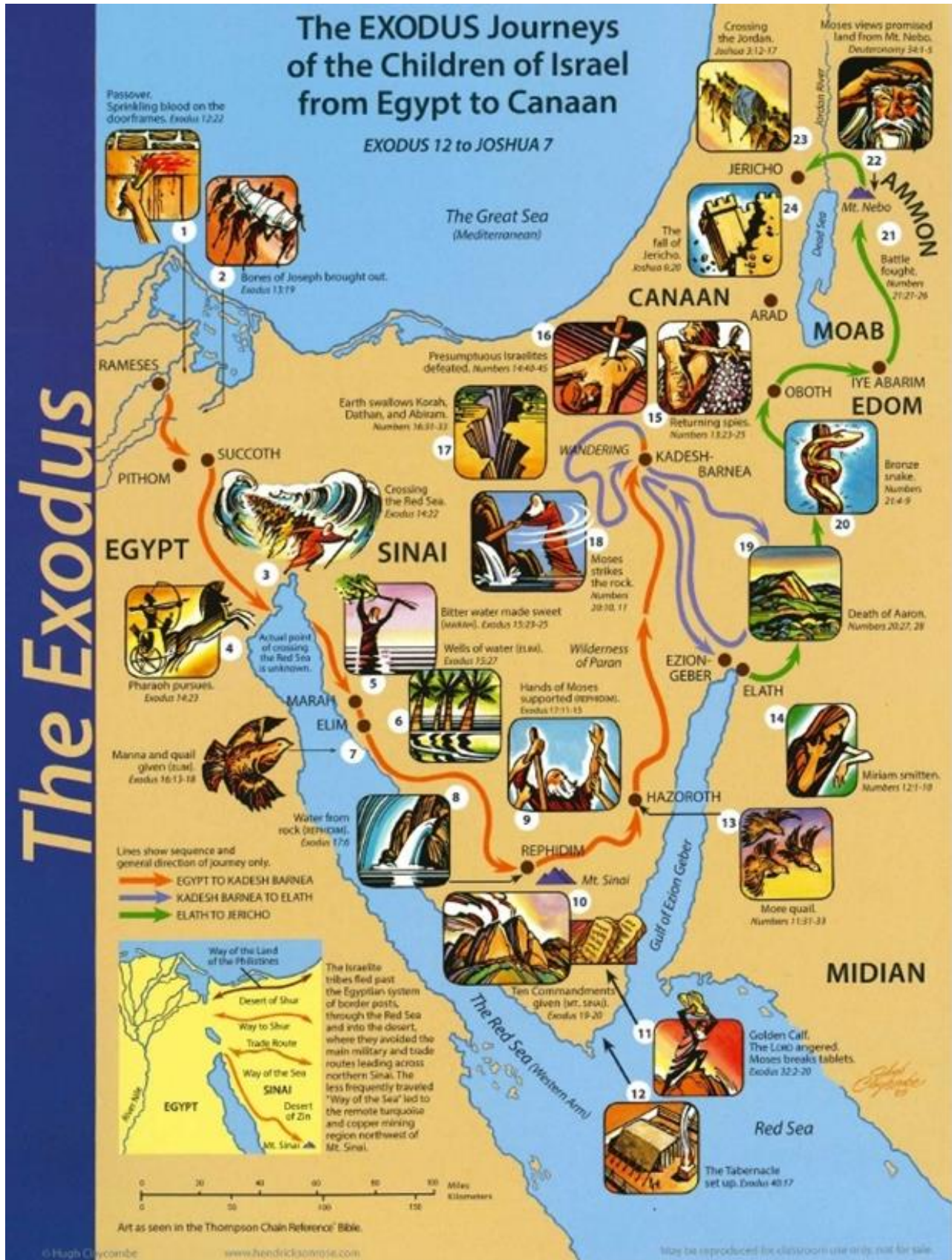
1. Summary

- a. Numbers = From Latin word for Greek title *Arithmoi*, referring to the two censuses taken in chapters 1 and 26. The Hebrew title is *bemidbar*, meaning “in the wilderness.”
- b. Description: Covering 39 years (c. 1445-1406 B.C.), **Numbers records the departure of Israel from Sinai, the wanderings around Kadesh Barnea, and finally the arrival in the plains of Moab in the fortieth year.** The theme of divine judgment is prominent in Numbers, which records the failure of Israel to believe in the promise of God and the resulting judgment of wandering in the wilderness for forty years. However, God’s grace and mercy are evident as he leads Israel by the pillars of fire and cloud, provides manna and water which prefigure the coming of Christ (Jn 6:31-33; 1 Cor 10:4), and provides a bronze serpent as a means of healing those bitten by poisonous snakes, a picture of the crucifixion (Nu 21:4-9; Jn 3:14).

Numbers at a Glance⁵⁷

FOCUS	THE OLD GENERATION		THE TRAGIC TRANSITION				THE NEW GENERATION		
REFERENCE	1:1-----5:1-----10:11-----13:1-----15:1-----20:1-----22:1-----28:1-----31:1-----36:13								
DIVISION	ORGANIZATION OF ISRAEL	SANCTIFICATION OF ISRAEL	TO KADESH	AT KADESH	IN WILDER-NESS	TO MOAB	REORGA-NIZATION OF ISRAEL	REGULA-TIONS OF OFFERINGS AND VOWS	CONQUEST AND DIVISION OF ISRAEL
TOPIC	ORDER		DISORDER				REORDER		
	PREPARATION		POSTPONEMENT				PREPARATION		
LOCATION	MOUNT SINAI		WILDERNESS				PLAINS OF MOAB		
TIME	20 DAYS		38 YEARS, 3 MONTHS, AND 10 DAYS				C. 5 MONTHS		

⁵⁷ Nelson’s Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts, 50.



2. Key chapters and events

Chap Summary

- 1-2 **While still in Sinai, the Lord commanded Israel to take a military census, and they counted 603,550 men aged twenty or older and able to serve in the army.** The Levites were not counted with the other tribes since they were set apart to care for the tabernacle and were exempt from military service. The twelve tribes were arranged in camping and marching arrangements. It is estimated there were 2 million Israelites (men, women, and children).
- 3-4 The Levites were organized, counted, and arranged around the tabernacle.
- 6 The Lord instructed Moses to instruct Aaron (Moses' brother, the High Priest) and his sons (the priests) to bless the people of Israel by saying to them:
Numbers 6:24-26
*²⁴ The Lord bless you and keep you;
²⁵ the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
²⁶ the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*
- 10 On the 20th day of the second month of the second year since the Exodus [1444 B.C.], the cloud signifying God's presence lifted up from the tabernacle and again led the people who marched behind in the designated formation with the ark of the covenant carried by Levites leading the way. **The Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land.**
- 11 **Only three days into the march, the people complained about their hardships.** The Lord sent fire to consume the outer edge of the camp. Then some of the people complained that they wanted meat in addition to manna. The Lord sent lots of quail but also sent a plague on the people who had complained.
- 12 **Miriam and Aaron grumbled against Moses** and said, "Has the Lord only spoken through Moses?" They were jealous of Moses (who was the most humble man on the earth, 12:3). The Lord turned Miriam leprous. After Moses interceded to the Lord, Miriam was confined outside camp and then allowed to return.
- 13-14 **While Israel was encamped at Kadesh in the desert of Paran, the Lord commanded Moses to send twelve spies (one from each tribe) into Canaan to explore it.** They returned to report a land flowing with milk and honey and huge fruit. However, it was also filled with powerful people in fortified cities. Ten of the spies spread frightening reports among the people. **Only Caleb and Joshua called upon the people to trust in the Lord's faithfulness and to go in and conquer that land as commanded.** The Lord's anger burned against the people. Moses pleaded with the Lord not to strike them down by appealing to his name. The Lord forgave the people but declared that **none from that rebellious generation except for Caleb and Joshua would be allowed to enter the Promised Land.** All those twenty years and older who were counted in the census would die in the wilderness. Their children would inherit the land after wandering in the wilderness for 40 years (one year for each of the 40 days the spies were exploring Canaan). The Lord struck down the ten unfaithful spies with a plague. After hearing the Lord pronounce judgment of 40 years of wilderness wandering, the Israelites regretted their grumbling and decided to go ahead and conquer Canaan, even though neither Moses nor the ark went with them. They were soundly defeated by the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in the high country.
- 16 **Korah (a Levite), Dathan and Abiram (Reubenites), and 250 well-known community leaders opposed Moses.** The Lord caused an earthquake which swallowed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and their families. The Lord sent fire to consume the 250 community leaders. The next day the whole Israelite community grumbled against Moses and the Lord killed 14,700 of them with a plague.
- 17 The Lord instructed Moses to have the Israelites place a staff from each of the tribal leaders in front of the tabernacle ("Tent of Meeting"). Aaron's staff, representing the tribe of Levi, budded, blossomed, and produced almonds. The Lord commanded Moses to place Aaron's staff in front of the ark as a sign to the rebellious. The Lord was affirming the place of the Aaronic priesthood in the worship of Israel.

20-21 **After wandering for 39 years since their rebellion at Kadesh, Israel came full circle and returned to Kadesh. After Miriam died, the people grumbled because they had no water** (most of the older generation had died out by now, but the grumbling had continued to the next generation). At Meribah, the Lord instructed Moses to speak to a rock so that it would produce water. In anger, Moses said, "Hear now you rebels: shall we bring water for you out of this rock?" He was angry and taking partial credit with God, and he struck the rock twice, although the Lord had said to speak to it. As a result, the Lord told Moses and Aaron that they would not bring Israel into the promised land. In the rest of this section of Numbers, Edom denied Israel passage, Israel had to go around, Aaron died, and Israel destroyed the city of Arad. When the people grumbled, the Lord sent venomous snakes. **The Lord instructed Moses to make a bronze snake and put it on a pole. Anyone who looked to the snake would live.**⁵⁸ Israel then defeated the Amorites and the king of Bashan.

22-24 **After Israel arrived in the plains of Moab along the Jordan across from Jericho, the frightened king of Moab, king Balak, summoned the pagan diviner Balaam to put a curse on Israel. The Lord appeared to Balaam and permitted him to go to the king of Moab, but not to curse Israel. After the angel of the Lord blocked Balaam's way (because he was going for the money rather than to serve the Lord), a talking donkey saw the angel before Balaam did, and the angel of the Lord reminded Balaam only to speak the Lord's words. Rather than cursing Israel, Balaam spoke the Lord's words and blessed Israel four times.**

Numbers 23:19-20 (the prophet Balaam to the king Balak)

*¹⁹ God is not man, that he should lie,
Or a son of man, that he should change his mind.
Has he said, and will he not do it?
Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it?*

In a fourth blessing, Balaam prophesied of a future king who would conquer his enemies.⁵⁹

Numbers 24:17

*¹⁷ I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near
a star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.
it shall crush the forehead of Moab and break down all the sons of Sheth.*

25 After some Israelite men had sexual relations with Moabite women and offered sacrifices to their gods, the Lord killed 24,000 Israelites with a plague. The Midianite women were instrumental in seducing the Israelites (25:6; 16-18) as well, apparently instigated by Balaam (31:16) who, although the Lord didn't allow him to pronounce curses on Israel, still found a way to bring them pain by instigating their path into pagan worship.

26 The Lord ordered another census which tallied 601,730 fighting men. None of the fighting men from the previous generation were still alive except for Joshua and Caleb.

27 **At the Lord's direction, Moses commissioned Joshua to be his successor.**

31 Because the Midianites had seduced Israel to pagan worship (25:6, 16-18, 31:16), the Lord commanded Moses to send the Israelite army to destroy them. Balaam, while not cursing Israel in chapter 24, apparently befriended them and influenced them to have the relationship with Moabite and Midianite women and gods.

32 The Reubenites and Gadites (and later, the half-tribe of Manasseh) requested and were granted permission to settle east of the Jordan on the condition that their fighting men go across the Jordan and help conquer Canaan first. Moses sternly warned them against rebellion:

Numbers 32:23

*²³ But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the Lord,
and be sure your sin will find you out.*

33 A history of Israel's journey was summarized from the Exodus to the plains of Moab.

34-36 The Lord described the boundaries of Canaan and established towns for the Levites.

⁵⁸ This incident typifies faith in the work of Christ in Jn 3:15-16.

⁵⁹ This prophecy is initially about David, 2 Sam 8:2-14; and ultimately about Christ, Col 2:15; 1 Cor 15:25-26; Rev 20:10,14.

3. Theological Lessons from Numbers⁶⁰

- a. The book of Numbers portrays God's covenant **faithfulness** in contrast with the book's repeated depiction of human **faithlessness**—the utter failure of humanity to meet God's standards by its own strength. Human failures are clearly portrayed and contrasted with the wise measures of the ever-faithful covenant God. Even Moses, the greatest leader of all, sinned and was not permitted to enter the promised land. This shows that even the best of persons are still sinners and are saved only through the merits of Christ—salvation comes only by the grace of God.
- b. A second major theme of Numbers is the sovereign power of God in history. Despite imposing obstacles (like feeding two million people for 40 years), great dangers (from the wilderness and from attacking armies), and the failures of His people, God brings them safely through the wilderness. His sovereign power is sufficient for every eventuality.
- c. Throughout the narrative, Numbers pictures the progress of God's people in redemption, pointing forward to Christ who is the true Water that makes life possible and the true Rock that provides safety. As Christians, we face the same temptations faced by the Israelites in the wilderness. Our only source of strength against temptation is Christ.

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

¹ For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ⁶ Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." ⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

⁶⁰ *New Geneva Study Bible*, 190.

- d. Israel failed the Lord's testing in the wilderness for 40 years. However, Jesus, the true Israel, passed the Lord's testing in the wilderness for 40 days as the obedient representative of his people.

Numbers 14:34 (God tells Moses and Aaron to say this to the people)

³⁴ "According to the number of the days in which you spied out the land, forty days, a year for each day, you shall bear your iniquity forty years, and you shall know my displeasure."

Psalm 78:40

⁴⁰ How often they rebelled against him in the wilderness and grieved him in the desert!

Matthew 4:1-11

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³ And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶ and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹ And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

E. Deuteronomy

1. Summary⁶¹

- a. Deuteronomy = A title from the Greek word *Deuteronomion*, meaning “second law.” However, it is not a second law but an **expansion** of much of the original law given on Mount Sinai.
- b. Description: Deuteronomy consists of a series of farewell messages by Israel's 120-year-old leader, Moses. It is addressed to the new generation destined to possess the Promised Land. Like Leviticus, Deuteronomy contains a vast amount of legal detail, but its emphasis is on laypersons rather than the priests. Moses reminds the new generation of the importance of obedience if they are to learn from the sad example of their parents. This account does not progress historically. It takes place entirely on the plains of Moab due east of Jericho and the Jordan River and covers about one month. The book was written at the end of the forty-year period in the wilderness (c. 1406 B.C.) when the new generation was on the verge of entering Canaan.

Deuteronomy at a Glance⁶²

FOCUS	FIRST SERMON	SECOND SERMON				THIRD SERMON		
REFERENCE	1:1-----4:44-----12:1-----16:18-----21:1-----27:1-----29:1-----31:1-----34:12							
DIVISION	REVIEW OF GOD'S ACTS FOR ISRAEL	EXPOSITION OF THE DECALOGUE	CEREMONIAL LAWS	CIVIL LAWS	SOCIAL LAWS	RATIFICATION OF THE COVENANT	PALESTINIAN COVENANT	TRANSITION OF COVENANT MEDIATOR
TOPIC	WHAT GOD HAS DONE	WHAT GOD EXPECTED OF ISRAEL				WHAT GOD WILL DO		
	HISTORICAL	LEGAL				PROPHETICAL		
LOCATION	PLAINS OF MOAB							
TIME	c. 1 MONTH							

2. Overview of Deuteronomy

Chap Summary

- 1-4 In the fortieth year from the Exodus, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to all Israel from the eastern side of the Jordan. **Moses recounted the history of Israel's time in the wilderness from their stay at Mount Sinai. Moses commanded the people to obey God in the Promised Land.** He exhorted them to particularly take heed to obey the Ten Commandments spoken directly to them from Mount Horeb (Sinai) (4:9-13).
- 5 **Moses reminded the Israelites of the covenant the Lord made with them at Horeb (Sinai). He repeated the Ten Commandments (5:6-21).** He reminded them that obedience to God's commandments would bring them long lives in the Promised Land.

⁶¹ Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts, 57, 59.

⁶² Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts, 58.

- 6 **Moses gave the people the greatest commandment.** Jews call this passage the “Shema,” which means “hear.” This is one of the most important passages in the Bible and particularly relevant to parents.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. ⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

- 7 **Moses commanded the people to destroy the current pagan occupants of Canaan when they went in to possess the land.**⁶³ He reminded Israel that they were a holy people chosen by God and therefore must obey Him.

Deuteronomy 7:6-11

⁶ “For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰ and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. ¹¹ You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.”

- 8 **Moses instructed Israel to remember the Lord who had cared for them for 40 years in the wilderness.** He miraculously fed them with manna and ensured their garments did not wear out and chastened them like a father. He was bringing them into a land in which they would lack nothing, and their new wealth would tempt them to forget the Lord who brought them out of bondage. Therefore, the Lord would destroy them in Canaan if they forgot who brought them there.
- 9 **Moses reminded Israel that they were not possessing Canaan because of their righteousness;** rather, they were stubborn (some translations say “stiff-necked”).

Deuteronomy 9:4-6

⁴ “Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,’ whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving them out before you. ⁵ Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. ⁶ “Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.”

⁶³ Some think that the God of the Old Testament was harsh and vengeful to decree the destruction of the Canaanites, but this is to forget that God is just. The sins of the land's inhabitants were extreme, and the time for judgment had come (compare Gen 15:16). God used Israel to punish the Canaanites but warned that if Israel committed apostasy, leaving the God who had graciously revealed Himself to them, they too would perish (28:15-68). *New Geneva Study Bible*, 251.

Moses then reminded the people of their various acts of rebellion, particularly the golden calf incident and the refusal to possess the land after the spies were sent out from Kadesh Barnea.

- 10 **Moses reminded Israel that outward obedience came from God's sovereign choice and inner heart transformation.**⁶⁴

Deuteronomy 10:12-16

¹² "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, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good? ¹⁴ Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵ Yet the Lord set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day. ¹⁶ Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn."

- 11 Moses told the people that great **blessing** awaited those who wholeheartedly loved and obeyed the Lord. However, **curses** awaited those who disobeyed the Lord's commandments and followed other gods.
- 12-26 Moses gave a **detailed sermon** explaining and expanding the various moral, civil, and ceremonial laws given on Mount Sinai.
- 18 **Moses foretold the coming of a new prophet.**⁶⁵

Deuteronomy 18:15-22

¹⁵ "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— ¹⁶ just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.' ¹⁷ And the Lord said to me, 'They are right in what they have spoken. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. ¹⁹ And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. ²⁰ But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die.' ²¹ And if you say in your heart, 'How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?'— ²² when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him."

- 27 **Moses commanded Israel to conduct a ceremony after they crossed the Jordan.** They were to write the words of the law on whitewashed stones and then build an altar with them on Mount Ebal. Six tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim (south of Shechem) and pronounce curses. Six tribes were to stand on Mount Ebal (north of Shechem) and pronounce blessings. The enumeration followed the names of the twelve patriarchs rather than the later tribal divisions.

⁶⁴ The Old Testament does not teach a religion of merely outward form. Circumcision was a *symbol*, a *sacrament*, an *outward sign of an inward grace*. Apart from this, as Paul indicates, circumcision was of no saving significance. True circumcision is "of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter" (Rom 2:29). Deut 30:6 says that "the Lord your God will circumcise your heart." See also Jer 4:4. *New Geneva Study Bible*, 255.

⁶⁵ Moses, the preeminent prophet of the Old Testament period, introduces the topic of Israelite prophecy. God would communicate His word to Israel through a succession of prophets. As mediators of God's word to the people, the other Old Testament prophets would function in ways similar to Moses (18:16). But none would be the initial mediators of a covenant, and none would equal Moses' intimacy with God or receive divine revelations as clear as those given to him (Num 12:6-8; Deut 34:10). This passage, then, finds final fulfillment in the Prophet who is equal to, indeed greater than, the prophet Moses—Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22-26; 7:37; compare Jn 5:45-47; Heb 3:2-6). Like Moses, Christ is the Mediator of a covenant between God and His people (Luke 22:20; Heb 8:7-13). *New Geneva Study Bible*, 266.

- 28 **Moses then described a sampling of blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience.** Blessings included exaltation among the nations, increase of children and animals, defeat of enemies, holiness, and good harvests. The curses included drought and crop failure, disease and blindness, invasion and captivity, and disgrace.
- 29 **Moses renewed the covenant with the people and affirmed its continuity with the Abrahamic Covenant.**

Deuteronomy 29:10-13

¹⁰ "You are standing today, all of you, before the Lord your God: the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, ¹¹ your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, ¹² so that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the Lord your God, which the Lord your God is making with you today, ¹³ that he may establish you today as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob."

- 30 Moses anticipated the possibility of judgment and exile for Israel and looked beyond the time of judgment to Israel's future repentance, restoration, and divine blessing. Significantly, **Moses' reference to the circumcision of the heart finds fulfillment in later prophecies and ultimately in the New Testament.**

Deuteronomy 30:6

⁶ And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. ³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Ezekiel 36:25-27

²⁵ "I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."

Romans 2:29

²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

- 30 **Moses then called heaven and earth as witnesses that he was setting forth a command to choose life over death and blessing over cursing.**
- 31-32 **Moses appointed Joshua the new leader of Israel and commanded the law to be read every seven years before all of Israel.** Then the Lord spoke to Moses and predicted that Israel would play the harlot with the gods of foreigners and would receive many troubles. The Lord commanded Moses to write a song and teach it to the Israelites as a witness that they would turn to other gods and provoke God by breaking His covenant. Moses wrote the song and spoke it to the whole assembly of Israel. Yet even this song of judgment struck a note of divine grace:

Deuteronomy 32:43 (the last verse of the song)

⁴³ "Rejoice with him, O heavens; bow down to him, all gods, for he avenges the blood of his children and takes vengeance on his adversaries. He repays those who hate him and cleanses his people's land."

- 33 Moses pronounced a final blessing on the tribes of Israel.
- 34 **From Pisgah (mountain range) on the top of Mount Nebo, the Lord showed Moses much of the Promised Land. Then Moses died on Mount Nebo at 120 years of age. Israel mourned for thirty days. The Israelites were now set to conquer the Promised Land of Canaan under Joshua's leadership. [Caleb was also part of Joshua's leadership team.]**

Deuteronomy 34:9-12

⁹ And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him and did as the Lord had commanded Moses. ¹⁰ And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, ¹¹ none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, ¹² and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.

***A SUMMARY OF HOW THE OLD COVENANT WITH ISRAEL
LOOKED FORWARD TO A BETTER COVENANT IN CHRIST⁶⁶***

- ◆ Moses, the founder of Israel's theocracy, mediated the old covenant, but Jesus Christ, the Son of God, mediated the new covenant (Jer 31:31-34).
- ◆ The substance of the covenants is the same, but their manner of administration differs significantly. Whereas the old covenant was written on tablets of stone, Christ writes the new covenant through the Spirit on the tablets of human hearts (2 Cor 3:3).
- ◆ The old covenant was ratified with Israel's promise, "We will hear and do" (Deut 5:27; compare Ex 19:8; 20:19). But the new covenant depends on God's better promise, "I will . . . write it on their hearts" (Jer 31:33; Heb 8:7).
- ◆ The old covenant called for shedding the blood of animals; the everlasting new covenant was instituted once and for all by the blood of Christ (Jer 32:40; Heb 9:11-28).
- ◆ The old covenant called for a heart religion, but it failed through human weakness and became obsolete after its fulfillment at Calvary (Rom 8:3; Heb 7:12; 8:13).

⁶⁶ *New Geneva Study Bible*, 240.