

# DEUTERONOMY

STUDY ONE | CHAPTER 27: 1-26




God's new people in  
God's new place

## INTRODUCTION

You may wonder why we have begun these studies near the end of the book. It's because Chapter 27 is the event which helps us understand the rest of the book. Something momentous is happening here; something we have been anticipating since we met Abram in Genesis 12! There, God promised that Israel would be His chosen people, and that they would live in His chosen Land. Here, on the edge of that promised Land, we see God offer Himself fully to Israel. They are on the cusp of a new life. This is the purpose for which God redeemed them out of slavery. Everything before this point has been in anticipation of living with God in his holy Land, bound together in exclusive love and faithfulness.

So this is where we begin Deuteronomy, with God's grace fully on display, as He commits Himself and renews His promises to His people and calls them to respond to His invitation.

## STUDY FRAMEWORK

-  Bible Passage
-  Study Notes + Study Questions
-  Prayer

# Bible Passage

## DEUT 27 : 1-26

- 1 Now Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, "Keep the whole commandment that I command you today.
- 2 And on the day you cross over the Jordan to the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones and plaster them with plaster.
- 3 And you shall write on them all the words of this law, when you cross over to enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you.
- 4 And when you have crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, concerning which I command you today, on Mount Ebal, and you shall plaster them with plaster.
- 5 And there you shall build an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. You shall wield no iron tool on them; 6 you shall build an altar to the LORD your God of uncut stones. And you shall offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God,
- 7 and you shall sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there, and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God.
- 8 And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly."
- 9 Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, "Keep silence and hear, O Israel: this day you have become the people of the LORD your God.
- 10 You shall therefore obey the voice of the LORD your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes, which I command you today."
- 11 That day Moses charged the people, saying,
- 12 "When you have crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin.
- 13 And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.
- 14 And the Levites shall declare to all the men of Israel in a loud voice:
- 15 "'Cursed be the man who makes a carved or cast metal image, an abomination to the LORD, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen.'
- 16 "'Cursed be anyone who dishonors his father or his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 17 "'Cursed be anyone who moves his neighbor's landmark.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 18 "'Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 19 "'Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 20 "'Cursed be anyone who lies with his father's wife, because he has uncovered his father's nakedness.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 21 Cursed be anyone who lies with any kind of animal.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 22 "'Cursed be anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 23 "'Cursed be anyone who lies with his mother-in-law.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 24 "'Cursed be anyone who strikes down his neighbor in secret.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 25 "'Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'
- 26 "'Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'



# Study Notes

## STRUCTURE

There are three sections to this chapter. Note the change of tense through the three sections.

- vv.1-8: First and foremost, for when they enter the land. ( Future)
- vv.9-13: A people renewed, and promises cemented. ( Present)
- vv.14-26: Break the covenant at your own peril. (Future)

## WHAT ARE BLESSINGS AND CURSES?

This is the Old Testament's language for Life and Death. At the heart of the Biblical understanding of blessing is a relationship with God, who is the author of life in every sense of that word.

The terms also remind us of Genesis 1-2 where God's original design for blessing is overturned by sin and brings with it the judgments of chapter 3. But as we see God's plan to bless the world has in fact, not been overturned but continues here with His people as they are about to enter the Land.

Deuteronomy is God's appeal to His people to live life under His blessings. We will see the shape of blessing being spelt out in detail throughout the entire book. Being "cursed" is the opposite: it's alienation from God and living under His judgement. Isolation, barrenness, hatred, selfishness, conflict and death are the fruit of this path. Our passage today ends on a dour note, with a collection of curses spelled out in detail by the Levitical priests. The blessings come in the passage immediately after this.

## IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

- This passage is a bridge between the second and third speeches by Moses. Because of this, it summarizes the big themes of the last speech, and outlines the major components of the coming speech.
- Verses 14-26 (the curses) are also the first piece of a pair. The entirety of chapter 28 is a reminder that there are conditions to living in the land offered by God.

## IN DEUTERONOMY

- The promise and ceremony of Mt Ebal is only half of the multi-mountain covenant that takes place in Deuteronomy.
- Chapter 11.26-32 helps to form a bigger picture of what takes place at Mt Ebal & Gerizim.

## IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

- v.3 repeats the often used image within the Old Testament (Ex. 3.8, Lev. 20.24, Deut. 6.3, etc...) for the Promised land being filled with milk and honey.
- v.5 The process of hewing and engraving stones here is consistent with other examples within the Old Testament (Ex. 20.25; Josh. 8.31)
- The curses from vv.15-26 are a mix of laws from Exodus and Leviticus, including a number of the 10 commandments. (Note that the curses/laws listed also have a predominantly private emphasis).

# Study Questions

## WHAT DOES IT SAY?

How is the land described? What is so significant about it?

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What must God's people do when they enter the Land, and what must they do when they live in the land?

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## STUDY TIPS

Ⓐ Pray

Ⓑ Look closely

- Commands
- Descriptions of God or His People
- Words and phrases
- Repetitions, Contrasts, Surprises
- Big Bible Words
- Characters
- Dialogue – who is talking to whom?
- Setting (timeline and place) – does it change?

Ⓒ Look at the context

- What kind of writing is this?  
(eg. narrative, poetry, teaching)
- How does the dialogue progress?
- Divide the passage into its natural sections, looking for transitions in setting, speaker, or theme can help with this
- Create a heading for each section
- Summarize the section in your own words

Ⓓ Share

- In your small group share something you noticed

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Read Deut 26.16-19 for context. How does this help us understand the significance of what is happening 27.9?

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What is the relationship between v.9 and v.10?

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## STUDY TIPS

### Ⓐ Look at the context

- ▶ Read the passage immediately before and after
- ▶ How does the context help us understand the meaning of the text?
- ▶ Look up cross references.
- ▶ How do they help us better understand the passage?
- ▶ In your small group share how the context has added to your understanding of this week's passage.

### Ⓑ Summarize the big idea

- ▶ So, what's the main idea of the passage? How would you title this passage?
- ▶ In your small group share the main idea

### Ⓒ Stop to pray

- ▶ Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see Jesus more clearly, and love him more deeply, through the next steps of your study.



## WHAT DOES IT REVEAL?

Israel is about to receive the fulfillment of promises made by God many years before. Read Genesis 12:1-9. What does this say about what God desires?

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Gather together the truths and commands that describe what it means to belong to the LORD and live under his blessing. What do we learn (include Deut 26.16-19 )?

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In the New Testament we are told that Christians are now the heirs of the promised inheritance made to the people of God, through Christ. It is no longer a physical land but a far greater and glorious inheritance.

Read 1 Peter 1:3-25. What does Peter tell us about our privileged inheritance? How is it different from that of Israel's in Deuteronomy? How is our purpose similar?

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Turn some of the truths you have learnt about God and his purposes for you into a prayer before moving on to reflect on how you will respond.

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