

Plan and Purpose Bible Lesson #III-22—Num. 28-Deut. 20

Since we have covered most of the law in previous lessons, we want in this and succeeding lessons and to review the history of what took place during and at the end of the exodus.

God instructed Moses to, before he died, take vengeance on the Midianites, apparently because they had joined with the Moabites in the hiring of Balaam to teach their young women to seduce the Israelite men from their God to their own pagan gods. Moses had each tribe provide one thousand men to go to war against the Midianites. When the war was over the Israelites had killed all of the men of Midian in that area and they took a spoil of all of all the women and children and the animals of the Midianites. When they brought the women and children and all of the animals to Moses, Moses was very angry with them for not killing all the people. He commanded that all of the male children and all of women that had lain with a man to be killed with only the virgin girls to be kept alive. There were 32,000 of these girls. He then divided all of the spoil, both of the animals and the virgin girls, half went to the men who had gone to battle and half to the congregation. A portion of each of the halves was then taken for the priests and Levites. The soldiers had also taken a spoil of the gold, silver and ornaments that the Midianites had. When the officers of the soldiers counted their men after the battle, they had not lost a single man. Because of this they took an offering of the gold, silver, etc. and brought it to Moses and Eleazar, the high priest, as an oblation for the LORD. The amount of gold that they offered was 16,750 shekels.

Once most of the land on the east side of the Jordan River had been captured and its inhabitants destroyed, the people of the tribes of Reuben and Gad, who had much cattle, saw that the land was ideal for raising cattle, so they went to Moses and asked if they could have their portion of the land on the east side of the river rather than on the west side. Moses agreed to let them have it, if their men would continue to go with the rest of the Israelites until all of the land was conquered. They agreed to do this. Some of the tribe of Manasseh also conquered some land on the east side and laid claim to it.

In Numbers 33 Moses reviews all of their travels from the time that they left Egypt. As they are now just about ready to cross the Jordan and go into the land, God told Moses to tell the people to completely drive out the people that are in the land. (Read Num. 33:50-56)

God gave Moses the boundaries of the land of Canaan in Num. 34. God also named the men that were to be responsible for the division of the land once it had been conquered. In addition to Joshua and Eleazar, a leader of each tribe was named to help with this division of land. Each tribe then was to give 4 cities with their suburbs (all of the land 3000 cubits from the wall of the city all around the city.) for their possession. Of these 48 cities, the Levites were then to select 6 cities to be cities of refuge for the men who killed someone, without the intent to kill, to flee to and live.

The book of Deuteronomy was written by Moses while the Israelites were on the east side of the Jordan River prior to their crossing under Joshua's leadership. The Ferrar Fenton Translation divides the book into a series of speeches that the translator feels that Moses made to the people to review the Exodus from Egypt. A note in the Companion Bible likewise breaks Deuteronomy down into ten speeches, however, Ferrar Fenton breaks it down into twelve speeches with a more logical sequence, so I am going to follow Ferrar Fenton's model. I get the impression that this was Moses' farewell to the people. He re-iterates the law to them and encourages them to righteousness. "Deuteronomy" means

the “second law.” Moses began these speeches on the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year since the Israelites left Egypt.

There appears to be several places where early Hebrew scribes inserted information they thought would be helpful. These are sometimes parenthetical statements, but not always. The first of these that we find is in verse 2 of Deut. 1. We’re told that it was only 11 days journey from Mt. Horeb (another name for Mt. Sinai) to Kadeshbarnea which was to be the southwest corner of the boundary of the land of Canaan that the Israelites were to inherit and where they had first come to when God told them to go into the land the first time. Yet, the Israelites had then wandered in the wilderness for 38 ½ years to get back to there. Now they have left Kadeshbarnea and have traveled to the east of Canaan and are about ready to cross the Jordan into the land.

Moses tells the people they are in number as the stars of the heavens, yet he in effect prays that they will multiply to 1000 times as many as they are now as he says this is what God has promised. This would roughly mean increasing from about 3 million to 3 billion. Moses reviews how leaders were appointed to help Moses deal with this number of people.

He then goes into a thorough discussion of how the people had agreed with him to send spies into the land and then how, when the report came back that there were giants in the land and that the people were strong, the people refused to go into the land when God told them to go. They had then spent the next 38 years wandering, or as Moses puts it in Deut. 2:1, they took their journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea and compassed Mt. Seir many days. He then reviews how finally after 38 years of doing this, God told him that they had compassed Mt. Seir enough and to turn north and pass through the lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon. They were to pay their way and not to take any of the land of these people. But then when they got to the land of the Amorites, they were to begin to take the land. They destroyed Sihon, king of Heshbon, and all of his people, then Og, king of Bashan, and all of his people. Incidentally, Og was one of the giants. (Read Deut. 3:11) This may refer to the tomb of Marduk in Babylon since it is of this same exact measurement. Marduk may have been Og.

Moses then relates that he gave all of their land to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half the tribe of Manasseh. A look at a map along with the description Moses gives us shows that the Israelites possessed all of the land on the east side of the Jordan River and the Dead Sea from the Dead Sea north to Lebanon. I don’t have a map that accurately shows the width of the land from the Jordan River east.

(Read Deut. 4:1-20) Moses reminds them that he has been forbidden to enter the Promised Land because of his impatience with this people because of their seemingly continuous murmuring against Moses. Then he gives them a specific warning. (Read Deut. 4:23-40) As we continue on into the book of Judges, we will see this pattern of disobedience and deliverance several times. Yet, the disobedience will continue, but the promise spoken of in verse 31 will be and still is valid. It is very important, if we are to understand history and what is going on today, for us to know what Moses is saying here as it has always been and still is true. Because of a promise that God made to King David, as we will see in II Samuel 7, Israel no longer is driven from their land, but the enemy still takes and holds them captive until they repent and turn to God after being disobedient to Him.

Moses then chose the six cities that were to be cities of refuge, three on each side of the Jordan River. This ends the first speech.

Deut. 5 begins Moses’ second speech with the Ten Commandments beginning in verse 7. Moses then reminded the people that God had spoken these words to them directly, but they had then refused

to hear any more from Him for fear that they would die because of God speaking directly to them and the fire from which He spoke. Moses then went to considerable length to command and encourage the people to keep God's law. In verses 4 and 5 of chapter 6, Moses gives Israel the law that Jesus said was the most important law: **"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD : And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."** Moses commands that they teach God's law very diligently to their children and keep them ever aware of these laws by talking to them about them in their houses, as they walked, when they rose up in the morning and when they went to bed at night. Written laws were to always be visible as a reminder.

He warned that when they had settled into their cities which they hadn't built, and into their home which they hadn't built, and had wells they had not dug, and olive trees and vineyards they hadn't planted and had eaten and were full, they were not to forget Who had provided all this for them and Who had brought them out of bondage in Egypt.

They were to totally drive out the inhabitants of the land from before them and were not to have pity on them. They were not to let their sons marry the daughters of the people of the land nor to allow their daughters to marry the Israelite's sons. They were to totally destroy all signs of the pagan religion of the inhabitants of the land.

Moses reminded the people that God had chosen them to be a special people above all the people of the earth, but not because they were numerous, as they were the fewest of all people, but because God loved them and because He would keep the oath, or the promises, that He had made with Abraham and then with Isaac and Jacob. Moses promises that if they will obey God's commandments, statutes and judgments, God will bless them above all people, will take away all sickness, will cause them to prosper and multiply, both they and their flocks and herds. God also promised to go before them into the land, and even though it will appear that the people are stronger and more numerous than the Israelites, they were not to be afraid of them, but were to consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver unto them. He says He would send hornets into the land ahead of them that would drive out a large number of them. They were not to be afraid of them. Moses says that God would put the nations out before them little by little so that the wild animals would not be able to take over land that the Israelites did not have population enough to fill.

Num. 8:4 tells us that the raiment that the Israelites wore during the 40 years in the wilderness did not wear out, nor did their shoes, but remained good the whole 40 years. Moses tells the people that when they are in the Promised Land that they are going to have plenty, but when they do he warns them not to forget God's law and not get to the point that they begin to think that they have brought on this abundance themselves. God and his miracles are to be remembered, if He isn't, Moses warns that they will perish.

Chapter 9 begins the third speech. Moses gives the Israelites to understand that God has not brought them to the land and driven out the Canaanites because of the righteousness of the Israelites but because of the wickedness of the Canaanites. (Read Deut. 9:6-7) He goes on to remind them of their provocation at Mt. Sinai when they made the molten image of a calf and worshipped it, and of the various times that they had provoked the God in their travels, then of their refusal to go into the land of Canaan when God told them to go.

(Read Deut. 10:12-22) Because of this, Moses admonishes Israel to love the LORD their God and to keep His charge, His commandments, statutes and judgments always. He reminds them that he is not

speaking to their children who haven't seen the power of God exhibited, but to them who have seen His miracles and His acts. They have seen His chastisements and His outstretched arm (his mercy). Therefore, he emphasizes that they are to keep God's law. He tells them to remember that in the land of Egypt, they had to irrigate the land to get it to produce, but he tells them that in the land to which they are going, God will give them rain in due season and that their crops will flourish. But they are going to have to be obedient to God and teach their children to do the same.

Moses again emphasizes that they are to completely destroy every vestige of the pagan religion of the Canaanites. The Canaanites worshipped their gods on every high mountain, on every hill and under the green trees. For this reason, Moses tells them that when they settle into the land and have the promised rest from their enemies, God will establish a place for them to worship Him. They are not to do as the Canaanites have done. They can kill and eat their animals at their homes as they would the wild game, only they were to pour out the blood on the ground and not eat it at all. But their tithes of grain or animals were to be taken to where God would appoint once they were in the land and offer it and eat it there, not at their homes. Moses reminds them again that they are not to do as the Canaanites have done before them and worship anywhere, but where God appoints for them to worship. They are only to do what God commands them to do, they are not to add or subtract from what He tells them to do in their worship.

Even if one claiming to be a prophet comes in their midst and predicts something that comes to pass and then tries to use that to get them to worship other gods, they are not to follow him. In fact they are to kill him. The same would apply to a brother, a son, a daughter, or even one's own wife if they tried to lead them away from the true God. Later on we will see that even King Solomon was guilty of being led to worship other gods by his wives and the kingdom was divided because of it. If a whole city went to worshipping false gods, they are to be sure that it is true, and if true, they are to totally destroy the whole city and all that is in it and never rebuild the city.

Deut. 14 begins Moses' fourth speech. In this speech he admonishes against sin against one's own self. He begins by repeating the laws of clean and unclean animals that we saw in Leviticus 11. He warns against eating anything that died of itself without being bled out.

He then repeats the necessity of tithing and the laws dealing with the tithe and the necessity of providing for the Levites. The law of the seventh year release of debt is reviewed by Moses. All debt was to be released every seventh year. It could be exacted again from the stranger, but not of a fellow Israelite. If there be a poor man who is in need, one is to lend to him sufficient to meet his need without worrying about how soon the seventh year is.

If a Hebrew man or woman is sold to them, he or she is to be released in the seventh year. When they are released, they are not to be sent away empty handed, but are to be freely given their needs from the threshing floor, the flocks or herds, and of the wine. The servant can stay should he or she desire, and they would become a servant for ever. The firstling males of the herd or flock are to be sacrificed unto the LORD and eaten where God appoints that it be done.

Moses reminds them to keep the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles when they are settled in the land.

Ferrar Fenton begins what he feels is Moses' fifth speech with Deut. 16:18 and headlines this speech as "Local Government." Here Moses instructs the Israelites to select judges and officers in all

their towns and cities and they are to judge the people with just judgment. They are not to wrest judgment nor take a bribe of any kind.

They are not to plant a grove near the altar that God has them set up nor are they to set up any image. They were not to sacrifice anything to God that has any kind of blemish.

Should there be a man or woman that has gone and served other gods and the people hear of it, they are to enquire diligently to determine if it is true. If it is true and witnessed by at least two witnesses, then the man or woman are to be stoned to death.

If a matter was too difficult to render a decision on at the local level, they were to take the matter to the place that God would choose and present it before the judges and priests there. Their decision would be final and whatever sentence they passed down, Moses says to do what they say not varying to the right hand or to the left. Any man that refused to do as the judges and priests say (contempt of court in our current day) was to die.

Moses predicted that the day would come that the people would want a king instead of the governmental organization that God had told Moses to set up. Moses had some instruction for that king. He was to be someone whom God chose. He was not to be a stranger who was not an Israelite. He was not to multiply horses, wives, silver or gold to himself. He is to write himself a copy of all of the law that God had given Moses and was to keep it with him all his life that he might learn to fear God and to keep the words of the law and to do them that his heart not be lifted up above his brethren and that his days in his kingdom might be prolonged and that of his children.

Moses reviews the compensation that we discussed in our study of the law that is to be paid to the priests and the Levites.

He again warns against observing any of the religious practices of the Canaanites or tolerating anyone promoting any of these practices. God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses to teach the people what God told him. This is a prophecy of Christ ultimately, but there would be many prophets before Him. Moses told them the way to test whether the prophet was speaking what God told him to or not was to see if it came to pass. If it didn't come to pass, the prophet was speaking for himself only and the people were not to be afraid of him.

Moses reviews the command to set aside cities for cities of refuge. A few other rules include not removing one's neighbor's landmark, at least two witnesses are required to convict a man of any sin, and if a witness is determined by the judge to be a false witness, he is to receive the sentence that would have been imposed on the person whom he or she is witnessing falsely about.

Ferrar Fenton has a note in his translation stating that he believes that the first nine verses of chapter 21 should be a part of this speech. These verses cover how the elders and judges of the city should respond if a person is found slain in the field and there is no evidence as to who killed the person. We discussed this sin in our study of the law.

Deut. 20 comprises speech number six and outlines the laws having to do with warfare. First, the people are admonished not to be fearful of going into battle against a foe larger and stronger than they as God will be with them against their foes. A man who has built a new house and has not dedicated it, or a man that has planted a new vineyard and has not eaten of it, or a man who has betrothed a wife, but has not taken her are all to be excused from the fighting and sent home to dedicate the new house, eat of the new vineyard or to take the new wife. Any man that is fearful, or of a faint heart, is to be released to return to his home.

Once the officers have excused these men, Moses says that if they approach a city, they are first to proclaim peace unto it. If the people of the city agree to the proclamation of peace, then they are to become servants of Israel. If they refuse to accept the peace proclamation, then they are to besiege the city and when God delivers it into their hands, they are to kill every male, but save the women and little ones and all of the sheep and cattle as a spoil as well as other things of value. This did not apply to the cities of the Canaanites which they were about to go against. These cities were to be totally destroyed and were to not save anything alive that breatheth.

When besieging a city they were not to cut down any tree that bore fruit of any kind, but were to use only trees that did not provide food for their bulwarks that were used in the siege.

We'll pick up with Deut. 21:10 in our next lesson as we look at speech number seven. JRL