



## Deuteronomy - Chapter Ten

### **II Deuteronomy 4:44-11:32 - Moses' Second Speech: General Covenant Stipulations (continues)**

#### **II.h Deuteronomy 9:1-10:11 - Recounting the golden calf incident (continues/concludes)**

##### Summary of Chapter Ten

Moses recounts how God had instructed him to carve out replacement stone tablets and an ark to contain them, and to return to the mountain to have the Ten Commandments re-written. Moses again stayed on the mountain for forty days and nights, praying so that God would forgive his people.

The story then turns to the next stage of their journey during which Moses brother Aaron, the high priest of Israel, died. Levi was to carry the ark and to minister before the Lord and therefore would receive no allotment of land.

Moses concludes the chapter with a summary of the law and an exhortation to the people of just how they are to act in order to maintain their special status as God's chosen people.

#### **II.h.ii Deuteronomy 10:1-11 - The Second Pair of Tablets**

Moses concludes his recollection of the time he spent with God on the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments for a second time. He then summarises the next stage of the journey during which Aaron died.

<sup>1</sup> At that time the Lord said to me, 'Carve out two tablets of stone like the former ones, and come up to me on the mountain, and make an ark of wood. <sup>2</sup> I will write on the tablets the words that were on the former tablets, which you smashed, and you shall put them in the ark.'

<sup>3</sup> So I made an ark of acacia wood, cut two tablets of stone like the

former ones, and went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. <sup>4</sup> Then he wrote on the tablets the same words as before, the ten commandments that the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain out of the fire on the day of the assembly; and the Lord gave them to me. <sup>5</sup> So I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark that I had made; and there they are, as the Lord commanded me.

### Deuteronomy 10:1-5

Carve out two tablets of stone. Moses broke the tablets of the law, not only out of anger, but also as a powerful visual representation of Israel's breaking of the law of God. Now God commanded that the law be restored by bringing forth two new tablets of the law. Rather than an explicit reply, the Lord's answer is demonstrated in the command to replace the two tablets of stone broken in Deuteronomy 9:17. The new tablets are like the former ones, with the same words, writing, and commandments (vv.2-4).

God wanted his written Word to be the starting point for Israel's right walk with him. Therefore he restored the tablets, even writing on the second tablets with his own hand. This is a powerful picture of the inspiration of God's Word; although God did not literally write the Scriptures with his own hand, he did perfectly guide the minds and hands of the writers, so that the Scriptures are 'God-breathed' (2 Timothy 3:16), that is, given by the inspiration of God.

Deuteronomy first mentions the ark here as simply a chest or box made of wood; it is not described as the footstool of God's throne. The ark was constructed (Exodus 37:1-9) soon after the writing of the replacement tablets (Exodus 34:1-4); for instructions to build the ark, refer to Exodus Chapter 25. It was a common practice in the ancient Near East to deposit covenant documents in religious shrines, one copy for each party.

There they are. The covenant is still in place, despite Israel's persistent provocations to anger the Lord over the past forty years.

Getting right with God after a time of rebellion must always begin and centre on God's Word. In the days of Josiah, King of Judah, repentance and revival came to the people of God when they focused on God's Word again; refer to 2 Kings 22:8-23:25.

<sup>6</sup> (The Israelites journeyed from Beeroth-bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried; his son Eleazar succeeded him as priest. <sup>7</sup> From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land with flowing streams. <sup>8</sup> At that time the

Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to minister to him, and to bless in his name, to this day. <sup>9</sup> Therefore Levi has no allotment or inheritance with his kindred; the Lord is his inheritance, as the Lord your God promised him.)

### Deuteronomy 10:6-9

Even though Aaron eventually died, Moses' prayer for him was answered (Deuteronomy 9:20). Moreover, Aaron's death did not end the priesthood. God continued to provide priests through Aaron's son, Eleazar, and the tribe of Levi; refer to Exodus 32:26-29, Numbers 3:6-14 and Deuteronomy 21:5. Since this tribe owned no land (Deuteronomy 18:1-2), it is singled out for specific care and provision by the other tribes, e.g. Deuteronomy 12:12 and 14:27.

This parenthesis speaking about the priesthood demonstrated the need for priestly sacrifice and intercession in getting right with God after a time of rebellion. Israel needed the sacrifice, intercession, and blessing that the Levites would bring to the nation. The need for a priesthood shouted to Israel: "You can't do it on your own. You need to come to God through a mediator, who will atone for your sin, pray for you, and bless you. If you refuse your priestly mediator, and trust in your own ability to do these things, you will perish." Although Christians can now come into the direct presence of God, they do so through Jesus Christ as their mediator.

To stand before the Lord to minister to him. Getting right with God after a time of rebellion must always have a focus on the priestly ministry of Jesus on behalf of his disciples. This work of Jesus is shown in his atonement for sin on the Cross, on his intercession for his people in heaven, and on the blessing that he brings to them from heaven.

Beeroth-bene-jaakan to Moserah. There is a similar journey referred to in their wanderings but it appears to be in reverse: <<*They set out from Hashmonah and camped at Moseroth. They set out from Moseroth and camped at Bene-jaakan*>> (Numbers 33:30-31). The location of Moserah is uncertain, but presumably it was close to Mount Hor for there Aaron died: <<*Moses did as the Lord had commanded; they went up Mount Hor in the sight of the whole congregation. Moses stripped Aaron of his vestments, and put them on his son Eleazar; and Aaron died there on the top of the mountain. Moses and Eleazar came down from the mountain*>> (Numbers 20:27-28).

Gudgodah is the same as Hor-haggidgad and Jotbathah was the next destination: <<*They set out from Bene-jaakan and camped at Hor-haggidgad. They set out from Hor-haggidgad and camped at Jotbathah. They set out from Jotbathah and camped at Abronah*>> (Numbers 33:32-34).

Jotbathah is described as a land with flowing streams. This would have been a great relief to the multitude of Hebrews travelling in the wilderness and a sign of God's continuing provision: <<*As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God*>> (Psalm 42:1), and: <<*Each will be like a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land*>> (Isaiah 32:2).

To minister to him, and to bless in his name, to this day. The tribe of Levi was chosen to serve God by ministering to him in the Tabernacle and serving as ministers for the people. Here, they are chosen to carry the ark as, indeed, they carry all the equipment associated with the Tabernacle. However, when the Temple is built they will not have to fulfil that part of their role: <<*And so the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the things for its service*>> (1 Chronicles 23:26). This privileged role means they are not counted among the fighting men nor will they receive an allotment or inheritance when they enter the land.

<sup>10</sup> I stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights, as I had done the first time. And once again the Lord listened to me. The Lord was unwilling to destroy you. <sup>11</sup> The Lord said to me, 'Get up, go on your journey at the head of the people, that they may go in and occupy the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them.'

#### Deuteronomy 10:10-11

The command to get up, go on your journey indicates that with the tablets replaced and the ark built, Moses' intercession has been answered fully. Israel's rebellion at Mount Sinai with the golden calf was significant; it was no small matter. Yet God was not done with them. After they came back to his Word and came through the rituals of his priesthood, it was time to move on. God had a place to take them and they had to go about the business of getting there.

The Lord was unwilling to destroy you. God had the power and authority to kill every person for their continued disobedience. The sin of the people meant that they were worthy of destruction. Yet they were saved by the grace and mercy of their loving Father, and by the intercession of Moses: <<*The Lord said to Moses, 'I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favour in my sight, and I know you by name'*>> (Exodus 33:17).

That they may go in and occupy the land. Getting right with God after a time of rebellion must always come to a place of progress again. It does no good to come back to the Word, come through God's priesthood in Jesus, and then remain stuck in the same place. God wants his church to move on with him, and when they are walking right with God again, they will go in and occupy the land.

## II.i Deuteronomy 10:12-11:32 - Exhortation

Having focused on the key commandments and the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4-5), and having repeatedly expressed concern at Israel's record of failure and its heart of fear and pride, Moses now exhorts the Israelites to get their hearts right.

### II.i.i Deuteronomy 10:12-22 - The Essence of the Law

Moses provides a summary of the law and the Israelites responsibility to keep it.

<sup>12</sup> So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you? Only 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, <sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.

#### Deuteronomy 10:12-13

So now marks a transition from history to exhortation.

What does the Lord your God require of you? Five commands follow, the central one of which is love. The prophet wrote: <<*He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*>> (Micah 6:8).

Only to fear the Lord your God. God requires a reverential honour towards him; not a fear that would make people shrink back, but a heart that so honours God that they would be hesitant to offend him.

Walk in all his ways. God requires Christians to live their lives after the pattern he has set for them; to walk on his road not on their own.

To serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. God requires his people to serve him, to see all that they do as service unto him, and to do all that they do as if doing it unto him.

To keep the commandments of the Lord your God and his decrees. God requires Christians to not only know his Word, but to *keep* it, in the sense of possessing it in themselves, and in the sense of protecting it.

For your good. Every command of God is given for the good of every individual in the church. They are never given so he can exercise his power, or so he can feel important. Every command he makes is with their best interest in mind, even if they cannot sense it or understand it. Obedience is for the people's benefit in the end.

<sup>14</sup> Although heaven and the heaven of heavens belong to the Lord your God, the earth with all that is in it, <sup>15</sup> yet the Lord set his heart in love on your ancestors alone and chose you, their descendants after them, out of all the peoples, as it is today.

#### Deuteronomy 10:14-15

The contrast between the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it and Israel's ancestors heightens the sense of astonishment at election and grace: <<*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved*>> (Ephesians 1:3-6).

The Lord set his heart in love on your ancestors. God requires this conduct from his people because they are his special possession. Although heaven and earth belong to God, he set his focus and attention on Israel beginning with their forefathers.

Out of all the peoples, as it is today. Being chosen, having the special attention of God focused upon one, is a place of great privilege, but also a place of great responsibility: <<*You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name*>> (John 15:16). Israel had a special responsibility to obedience and so does the church.

<sup>16</sup> Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart, and do not be stubborn any longer.

#### Deuteronomy 10:16

Circumcise, then, the foreskin of your heart. The mention of descendants in v.15 recalls Genesis Chapter 17, where God instituted circumcision as his covenant sign for Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 17:9-14). This verse explicitly recognises Israel's need to change its heart; refer to Deuteronomy 29:4, Jeremiah 4:4 and 9:25-26, and Romans 2:25-29. Here, circumcision symbolises removing the stubbornness that prevents the heart from properly loving God; consider Exodus 6:12 ESV, where 'uncircumcised lips' do not speak well; and Jeremiah 6:10 ESV, where 'uncircumcised ears' do not hear clearly. This is a command beyond any human's competence to fulfil: <<*Moreover, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live*>> (Deuteronomy 30:6).

Do not be stubborn any longer. This theme would be repeated later in the prophets. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts: <<*Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, remove the foreskin of your hearts, O people of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, or else my wrath will go forth like fire, and burn with no one to quench it, because of the evil of your doings*>> (Jeremiah 4:4). To fulfil God's law, it takes more than being given a command; it takes an inner transformation, a transformation that only God can bring. God commands them to do something that only he could do in them to show them the need to have the inner transformation, and to compel them to seek him for this inner work. Israel is said to have uncircumcised hearts in Leviticus 26:41, Jeremiah 9:26, and Ezekiel 44:7-9. Refer to Deuteronomy 9:6 and the comment made there.

<sup>17</sup> For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe,  
<sup>18</sup> who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. <sup>19</sup> You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

#### Deuteronomy 10:17-19

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords. The basis of this brief section of commands is set in the character of God.

Israel's heart needs correction because for, the Lord your God is the mighty and awesome God. When God requires the church to show justice, to show no partiality nor to take bribes, and compassion to love strangers, and reverence, to take oaths in his name, it is because these virtues answer to aspects in God's own character.

Who is not partial and takes no bribe. The election of Israel (v.15) does not mean God will cut moral corners in showing special favours to Israel. He is a just God (v.18).

The orphan and widow, and the strangers are the main categories of landless people in addition to the Levites. Deuteronomy commands special care for such people, for example: <<*the Levites, because they have no allotment or inheritance with you, as well as the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows in your towns, may come and eat their fill so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work that you undertake*>> (Deuteronomy 14:29), and: <<'Cursed be anyone who deprives the alien, the orphan, and the widow of justice.' All the people shall say, 'Amen!''>> (Deuteronomy 27:19).

For you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Israel's own experience in Egypt is a motivation for several laws in Deuteronomy, e.g. Deuteronomy 15:15 and 24:18-22.

<sup>20</sup> You shall fear the Lord your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast, and by his name you shall swear.

#### Deuteronomy 10:20

You shall fear the Lord your God. This is a call for reverential fear because of his awesome powers to create and sustain everything that is seen and unseen, known and unknowable.

Him alone you shall worship. Both the first commandment and the *Shema* recognise that there is and only ever will be one God, even if he is in three persons. It is right for the church to offer up praise and worship to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, but they are still worshipping God alone.

You shall hold fast. As in Deuteronomy 4:4, this is a command to hold on to the commandments and to obey them: <<*but hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day*>> (Joshua 23:8), <<*For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following him but kept the commandments that the Lord commanded Moses*>> (2 Kings 18:6), and: <<*I cling to your decrees, O Lord; let me not be put to shame*>> (Psalm 119:31).

<sup>21</sup> He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen.

#### Deuteronomy 10:21

He is your praise. This is true in two senses. First, God is the object of the church's praise; second, he is also the one who makes them praiseworthy. Any wisdom, beauty, or skill they show is not to their praise, but his.

Who has done for you these great and awesome things. The obedience God calls Christians to is always set in the context of what he did for them. Their service and obedience unto the Lord is based on what he has done for them, and is to be the grateful response to his goodness. If there is a lack in obedience and reverence, there is almost always a lack of appreciation for what the Lord has done.

That your own eyes have seen. Once again, Moses states they know what he says to be true because they and their parents were eye witnesses to what has happened and therefore they bear witness to the truth: <<*Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed*>> (Luke 1:1-4),

and: <<*We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us – we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ*>> (1 John 1:1-3).

<sup>22</sup> Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons; and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars in heaven.

### Deuteronomy 10:22

Your ancestors went down to Egypt seventy persons. Both Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5 record the number of people who started the Hebrew race in Egypt as being seventy. However, this includes Joseph, his wife and their first two sons Manasseh and Ephraim, who were already in Egypt when Jacob and his family arrived. Acts 7:14 records the number as seventy five but, based on the Greek in the Septuagint, that includes further sons born to Joseph after his father arrived.

As numerous as the stars in heaven. Having referred to the election of Abraham in Deuteronomy 10:15, Moses now speaks of the fulfilment of part of the Abrahamic promise: <<*He brought him outside and said, ‘Look towards heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.’ Then he said to him, ‘So shall your descendants be’*>> (Genesis 15:5). Refer to Deuteronomy 1:10 and the associated comment.