



## Deuteronomy - Chapter Thirty

### **V Deuteronomy 29:2-30:20 - Moses' Third Speech: Final Exhortation (continues/concludes)**

#### Summary of Chapter Thirty

In this chapter is a plain intimation of the mercy God has in store for Israel in the latter days. This passage refers to the prophetic warnings of the last two chapters, which have been mainly fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and in their dispersion to the present day; and there can be no doubt that the prophetic promise contained in these verses yet remain to come to pass. The promises of God will be fulfilled for those who choose to obey.

#### **V.b Deuteronomy 30:1-10 - God's Fidelity Assured**

Moses indicates that both the blessings and the curses will befall the people during the generations to come. Exile among the nations is assured but there will come a time when God will gather the faithful back to himself.

<sup>1</sup> When all these things have happened to you, the blessings and the curses that I have set before you, if you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, <sup>2</sup> and return to the Lord your God, and you and your children obey him with all your heart and with all your soul, just as I am commanding you today, <sup>3</sup> then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom the Lord your God has scattered you.

#### Deuteronomy 30:1-3

When all these things have happened to you. The context is exile, following from Deuteronomy 29:28. Both the blessings and the curses will come to pass. From

the height of blessing during the reigns of David and Solomon, to the depths of cursing at the fall of Jerusalem, Israel's history has been a legacy of either being blessed or cursed under the terms of the Old Covenant.

**If you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you.** God knew that Israel would be scattered and exiled and here, through Moses, God calls the Diaspora Jews, i.e. Israel dispersed among the nations, to remember the promises of the blessing and the curse.

The word for **mind**, Hebrew *lebab*, can also be rendered 'heart'. This verse anticipates that God's words, i.e. ***all these things***, will enter the exiles' hearts, leading them to return to God, or repent, which means to change their thinking and behaviour completely.

**Return to the Lord your God.** As Israel would return to the Lord, God would bless them and bring them back from captivity, and he would have compassion on them. Of course, this was fulfilled in part by the return of the Babylonian exiles during the times of Ezra and Nehemiah. However, a major fulfilment of this would come during the Twentieth Century, when God would regather Israel in the Promised Land. This modern regathering is a larger, broader, more sovereign, and more miraculous restoration than that recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah.

**With all your heart and with all your soul.** This follows the earlier commandment: <<***You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might***>> (Deuteronomy 6:5).

**God will restore your fortunes.** This expression uses the Hebrew word 'return.' As Israel returns to God (v.2), so he will 'return' to them: <<***Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts***>> (Zechariah 1:3).

**Gathering you again** reverses Deuteronomy 28:64 and 29:28.

The modern regathering of Israel more accurately fulfils this promise than the return from the Babylonian exile. Today, Israel is populated with Jews from virtually every country in the world. The breadth of this promise is important, because God repeats the idea in verse 4: <<***Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world, from there the Lord your God will gather you***>>. Adam Clarke, writing in 1811, recognised that this regathering had to be fulfilled in a future time: "As this promise refers to a return from captivity in which they had been scattered among all nations, consequently it is not the Babylonish captivity which is intended; and the repossession of their land must be different from that which was consequent on their return from Chaldea." Many theologians and commentators see this regathering of the Jews to be that which is spoken of for the final days: <<***And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one***>>

*hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the people of Israel*>> (Revelation 7:4).

<sup>4</sup> Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will bring you back. <sup>5</sup> The Lord your God will bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors.

#### Deuteronomy 30:4-5

Even if you are exiled to the ends of the world. The Assyrians scattered the ten tribes from the northern kingdom of Israel throughout the region. Later, the Babylonians took the tribes in Judah away and many ended up remaining in the lands of the Persian Empire. Throughout history Jews have been persecuted and have continued the migration until their descendants now live in just about every nation on earth: <<*I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out*>> (Ezekiel 20:34).

The Lord your God will bring you into the land that your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it. The regathering had to happen in the land of Israel. As already stated above, the modern regathering of Israel more accurately fulfils this promise than does the return from the Babylonian exile. In the return from Babylon, Israel was still a vassal state of the Persians. But in the modern regathering of Israel, you will possess it is literally fulfilled.

At one time, in the early days of the Zionist movement, the British offered the country of Uganda to the Jews as a place to establish a Jewish state. If that had happened, and if Jews from all over the world had flocked there to establish a Jewish state, it would not fulfil the promise of regathering stated here and in other OT passages, such as: <<*I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile*>> (Jeremiah 29:14). The promise here is plain: the land that your ancestors possessed. They only ever possessed the land God originally gave them.

He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. This promise is fulfilled only in the modern regathering of Israel, not in the return from the Babylonian exile. In the days of the return from Babylon, the Jewish community was small, weak, and poor. But today, under the modern regathering of Israel, the state of Israel does indeed prosper and the promise to make them more numerous than their ancestors is fulfilled. Israel, as a nation, is larger, stronger, and materially richer than at any time in Biblical history.

What is also of note with modern Israel is that many are Jews only through birthright rather than by faith and, as a result, seem to be subject to the curse of having many enemies oppose them. Too many of them are still not obeying God's laws given to the Jews, let alone recognising that they should now follow the Messiah who came to die for their sins. It will only be those who do recognise Jesus as their long awaited Messiah who will be truly richer, i.e. spiritually fulfilled, than those who preceded them.

Your ancestors either refers to the patriarch: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as in v.20, or to earlier generations living in the land.

<sup>6</sup> 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

Circumcise your heart. This is a key promise in Deuteronomy, looking forward to genuine covenant participation, as seen in: <<*But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says 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*>> (Jeremiah 31:33), <<*A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances*>> (Ezekiel 36:26-27), <<*Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So, if those who are uncircumcised keep the requirements of the law, will not their uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law will condemn you that have the written code and circumcision but break the law. For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. Rather, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart – it is spiritual and not literal. Such a person receives praise not from others but from God*>> (Romans 2:25-29), and: <<*In him also you were circumcised with a spiritual circumcision, by putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of Christ*>> (Colossians 2:11). Refer also to the comment made on Deuteronomy 10:16.

So that you will love the Lord your God. God's changing of the heart enables obedience; refer again to Deuteronomy 6:5 and the associated comments.

As remarkable and as prophetically meaningful the modern regathering of Israel is, it is incomplete. The spiritual dimension of the regathering has not yet been accomplished. Today Israel is a largely secular nation. There is respect for the

Bible as a book of history and national identity, but there is not, and has not been, a true turning to the Lord God, particularly as a nation.

It could be said that in a sense, not even the religious or Orthodox Jews have completely turned to the Lord. Although they have had an important and precious part in God's plan for Israel in helping a spiritual consciousness for the Jewish people to survive through the centuries of the Diaspora, they have not truly turned to the Lord. This can be said because the character and nature of the Lord is perfectly expressed in his Messiah, Jesus. Jesus said: *<<Whoever believes in me believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me>>* (John 12:44-45). Since the Jewish people, except for a precious remnant, reject Jesus, they are rejecting the Lord their God.

However, God's promise still stands. As the final aspect of the promise to regather Israel, God will restore them spiritually. He promises to circumcise your heart. This is an idea repeated in the promises of the New Covenant, as already seen above in passages like Ezekiel 36:26-27: *<<A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you, and make you follow my statutes and be careful to observe my ordinances>>*. Indeed, Paul promised that all Israel will be saved in Romans 11:26. Jesus said that he would not return until Israel embraced him as Messiah: *<<For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord">>* (Matthew 23:39). Some have thought that because the modern regathering of Israel has not yet demonstrated this spiritual dynamic that it has nothing to do with these prophecies. However, the spiritual dynamic is properly listed in vv.2-6 as the last of the blessings of regathering. Also, the picture of regathering in Ezekiel Chapter 37, the vision of the dry bones, shows Israel regathered, and strong, before the Lord breathed the breath of his Spirit on the regathered Israel. The modern regathering of Israel is regarded as a remarkable sign, and an extremely significant, but thus far only partial, fulfilment of these prophecies.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on the adversaries who took advantage of you. <sup>8</sup> Then you shall again obey the Lord, observing all his commandments that I am commanding you today, <sup>9</sup> and the Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings, in the fruit of your body, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your soil. For the Lord will again take delight in prospering you, just as he delighted in prospering your ancestors, <sup>10</sup> when you obey the Lord your God by observing his commandments and decrees that are written in this book of the law,

because you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

### Deuteronomy 30:7-10

The Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on the adversaries who took advantage of you. In part, these prophecies are fulfilled now in the modern regathering of Israel. But perhaps their ultimate fulfilment will happen in the millennium, when Israel has regathered as a people truly turned to the Lord and his Messiah, Jesus.

The Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all your undertakings. The blessings promised in Deuteronomy 28:1-14 will now be realised.

### V.c Deuteronomy 30:11-20 - Exhortation to Choose Life

Moses makes it clear that the choice is not a difficult one to make. If the people choose to accept that God is Lord of their lives and they undertake to live by his law and commandments then they will have a blessed life. If not, they won't.

<sup>11</sup> Surely, this commandment that I am commanding you today is not too hard for you, nor is it too far away.

### Deuteronomy 30:11

This commandment that I am commanding you today. The covenant which God made with Israel, the Old Covenant, was not too mysterious for Israel, nor is it far off. Israel could indeed keep this covenant, for: **<<the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes>>** (Psalm 19:8). God was not expecting the impossible from Israel when he expected them to keep this covenant.

Not too hard for you. When the heart is circumcised, keeping the law is possible.

<sup>12</sup> It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?'

<sup>13</sup> Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us, and get it for us so that we may hear it and observe it?' <sup>14</sup> No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe.

### Deuteronomy 30:12-14

Who will go up to heaven for us. Heaven would be beyond the reach of mortals: <<*Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of the hand? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is the person's name? And what is the name of the person's child? Surely you know!*>> (Proverbs 30:4). The answer to this riddle is now known: <<*No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man*>> (John 3:13).

Neither is it beyond the sea: <<*The deep says, "It is not in me", and the sea says, "It is not with me"*>> (Job 28:14).

It is in your mouth and in your heart. This is the result of the circumcised heart that enables obedience. Paul quotes from these verses in Romans 10:6-8 to show that the Jews already had the message of faith through the Scriptures.

However, this is not intended to mean that the Mosaic Law could be perfectly kept, and that a person could be sufficiently obedient to the Mosaic Law to earn a righteous standing before God. Remember that the law was only one aspect of the Old Covenant. There were also the aspects of sacrifice and the choice. God never expected Israel to perfectly obey the law and find righteousness through law-obedience. That is why he provision for the ultimate sacrifice: <<*Abraham said, 'God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt-offering, my son.'* So the two of them walked on together>> (Genesis 22:8), the punishment of a perfect, innocent victim in the place of the sinner. God did not expect an Israelite to trust in his obedience to the law to save him, although God had wanted Israel to love his law. God expected an Israelite to trust in the atonement made by sacrifice to make him righteous, and to understand that this sacrifice pointed towards a perfect sacrifice God would one day make through the Messiah. In this, a godly Israelite, in the Old Covenant, trusted in the work of Jesus the Messiah to save him even before the time of Jesus.

For you to observe. The Old Covenant, as a whole, including the aspects of law, sacrifice, and choice could be kept. It was not beyond Israel's capability to keep.

<sup>15</sup> See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. <sup>16</sup> If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. <sup>17</sup> But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to

other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup> I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

#### Deuteronomy 30:15-18

I have set before you. The climax of Moses' preaching is to seek a commitment from Israel to trust in God's grace and thus obey his commands. Under the terms of the Old Covenant, Israel had a choice: life and prosperity, death and adversity. It was up to them. God was going to glorify himself through Israel one way or another. How it would happen was really their choice.

The Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. Under the terms of the Old Covenant, Israel, if obedient, would see blessing. If disobedient, then Israel would surely perish. It was up to Israel, and based on their conduct. It is essential to understand that those in Jesus Christ do not relate to God on the terms of the Old Covenant, but on the terms of a better covenant: the New Covenant. Under the New Covenant, a relationship with God is not based on what one does for God, but on what Jesus has done on behalf of the one who believes. There is, of course, more to the New Covenant than this, but this is one crucial distinction between the two covenants. If this Old Covenant is inferior to the New Covenant, and if there was a high price to pay for rejecting the Old Covenant, should people not know there is an even greater penalty for rejecting an even greater covenant? This is what the NT warns: <<*Anyone who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy 'on the testimony of two or three witnesses.'* How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by those who have spurned the Son of God, profaned the blood of the covenant by which they were sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace?>> (Hebrews 10:28-29).

<sup>19</sup> I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, <sup>20</sup> loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

#### Deuteronomy 30:19-20

I call heaven and earth. In these most solemn words, Moses set the choice before Israel. They had to choose between life and death, blessings and curses. Ancient treaties had witnesses to their ratification. Often those witnesses were the gods. In Deuteronomy, since God himself is a partner to the covenant, heaven and earth are called as witnesses. This was also seen in: <<*When you have had children and*

*children's children, and become complacent in the land, if you act corruptly by making an idol in the form of anything, thus doing what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, and provoking him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to occupy; you will not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed>>* (Deuteronomy 4:25-26); refer also to the associated comments. Life, and living remains a key theme in this chapter also.

At the same time, although the choice belonged to Israel, God cared about what they chose. When Moses pleaded with Israel, crying out choose life, it can be known that he reflected the heart of God toward Israel. How God glorified himself through Israel was up to them, but it was obviously God's preference that he glorify himself through an obedient, blessed Israel. So he pleaded choose life! To choose life is to choose God himself, to trust in God's grace and circumcision of the heart. This was part of the reason for the Messiah's coming: <<*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly*>> (John 10:10).

People today, even outside the Old Covenant, are confronted with the choice. However, the choice focuses first not on "Will I obey God or not?" but on "Will I trust in Jesus for my standing before God?" Jesus said: <<*Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters*>> (Luke 11:23). Jesus is still asking the question: <<*But who do you say that I am?*>> (Mark 8:29a), and a person's choice when answering that question determines their eternal destiny.

Loving the Lord your God, obeying him. To love God this way, to really trust him, is explained well in v.20. To love and trust God means to obey his voice, for a child who really loves and trusts their father will obey him. It means holding fast to him, for if a person really loves and trusts him, they will be attached to him. It means to regard him both as life and length of days, because if a person loves and trusts him, he is not part of their life, he becomes their life.