



Deuteronomy - Chapter Four

I Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43 - Moses' First Speech: Historical Prologue (continues/concludes)

Summary of Chapter Four

Moses reminds the people that God gave them the law at Horeb and that they are to remain obedient to them as they were given without human alteration. They are especially to remain faithful to God, not make any images as idols, and not worship pagan gods as the people did at Peor and were punished for it. The main purpose for them to observe God's laws is that the other nations would see them as a wise people and would be drawn to God through them.

Moses also warns the people that if they are disobedient they will be punished; indeed they will be exiled from the land. However, God will never forsake them or forget the covenant he has made with his people. What they have witnessed of their God choosing them as a people and the mighty miracles they had witnessed should always remind them that there is no other God or force in all creation to match him.

Moses then set up three cities of refuge in Transjordan where people could flee if they were unintentionally killed a fellow Israelite and a close relative of the deceased was seeking retribution against the perpetrator.

The chapter ends with a summary statement ending the first address and leading into Moses' second.

I.h Deuteronomy 4:1-40 - Moses Commands Obedience

Chapter 4 is more obviously exhortation than Chapters 1-3, although they were also seeking to persuade and convince Israel to enter the land. Chapter 4 provides a transition into the legal section of Deuteronomy.

¹ So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you.

Deuteronomy 4:1

So now. The speech turns from recounting the past to exhortation.

Give heed is a common injunction in Deuteronomy and means ‘listen and obey.’ As is often the case, the command to listen and obey carries a motive clause to encourage that behaviour: so that you may live to enter and occupy the land.

As noticed before, one of Satan’s great strategies is to make people remember what they should forget, and forget what they should remember. If people do not remember their past sins and rebellions against God, they can easily repeat them, falling into the same sinful patterns and traps. Paul writes: <<*So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall*>> (1 Corinthians 10:12).

So that you may live. In the larger sense, spiritual life and death depended on Israel’s obedience. Yet also in the more immediate sense, physical life and death depended on their obedience. Israel was about to attack a strong nation and to push them out of the Promised Land; if they did not have the blessing of the Lord upon them, they would soon be in a lot of trouble. In fact, Israel’s first military loss in the Promised Land at Ai; refer to Joshua Chapter 7, came specifically because they had disobeyed God. Thirty six men died at Ai, because one man in Israel, i.e. Achan, did not obey the command of the Lord. The consequences of sin often go way beyond the individual sinner.

Land possession is not linked to military strategy or strength but to comprehensive obedience of the statutes and the ordinances that govern all aspects of life. As is common in Deuteronomy, mention of the land is qualified by reference to the patriarchs, your ancestors, in order to stimulate Israel’s trust in God’s faithfulness.

² You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you.

Deuteronomy 4:2

The authority and sufficiency of God’s Word is implied in the command neither add anything nor take away. Israel is to submit to God’s entire Word: <<*You must diligently observe everything that I command you; do not add to it or take anything from it*>> (Deuteronomy 12:32). Such a command is necessary because of their persistent rebellion in the previous forty years. Similar commands are also evident in Scripture: <<*Do not add to his words, or else he will rebuke you, and*

you will be found a liar>> (Proverbs 30:6), <<I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him>> (Ecclesiastes 3:14), and: <<I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this book; if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away that person's share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book>> (Revelation 22:18-19).

³ You have seen for yourselves what the Lord did with regard to the Baal of Peor – how the Lord your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, ⁴ while those of you who held fast to the Lord your God are all alive today.

Deuteronomy 4:3-4

You have seen for yourselves what the Lord did with regard to the Baal of Peor. At Baal Peor, Israel sinned by committing both sexual and spiritual immorality with the women of Moab. Moses warned the people of Israel that if they rejected God now as they did back then, the result would be the same. Many would die in the judgement of the Lord.

Held fast describes faithfulness to a covenant, as in marriage: <<*Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh*>> (Genesis 2:24), and is commanded of all Israel, for example: <<*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), and: <<*The Lord your God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear, his commandments you shall keep, his voice you shall obey, him you shall serve, and to him you shall hold fast*>> (Deuteronomy 13:4). Those who held fast rejected pagan worship and are therefore alive today as an example of the promise that those who obey will live being fulfilled.

⁵ See, just as the Lord my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy.

Deuteronomy 4:5

I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe. Moses had received the laws and commandments alone on the top of Mount Sinai and had faithfully taught them to the people. He now reminds them that they must be diligent in keeping those laws now they are about to enter the Promised Land: <<*And now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken your commandments, which you commanded by your servants the prophets, saying,*

“The land that you are entering to possess is a land unclean with the pollutions of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations. They have filled it from end to end with their uncleanness”>> (Ezra 9:10-11).

⁶ You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!’

Deuteronomy 4:6

Part of the incentive to keep the commandments is missiological. Obedience will show to other nations Israel’s wisdom and discernment, akin to the moral wisdom encouraged in Proverbs. Such wisdom will draw attention not only to Israel but ultimately to Israel’s God, as epitomised by the queen of Sheba’s visit with Solomon (1 Kings Chapter 10), a pattern intended by the Abrahamic covenant: <<*I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*>> (Genesis 12:3).

Paul shows that such wisdom ultimately points to the Messiah: <<*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus*>> (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

⁷ For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? ⁸ And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

Deuteronomy 4:7-8

For what other great nation has a god so near to it. In the verses following, the Lord’s nearness at Mount Horeb is recalled, although v.7 has in mind an ongoing nearness, notably in answering prayer. In Deuteronomy that nearness comes through God’s Word: <<*No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe*>> (Deuteronomy 30:14), and his presence in the midst of the people. Refer also to 1 Kings 8:52.

In comparison with other nations, Israel’s law is emphasised as righteous in order to encourage Israel to keep the laws of the following chapters and not to regard them as unduly onerous.

⁹ But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your

children's children — ¹⁰ how you once stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when the Lord said to me, 'Assemble the people for me, and I will let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me as long as they live on the earth, and may teach their children to do so'; ¹¹ you approached and stood at the foot of the mountain while the mountain was blazing up to the very heavens, shrouded in dark clouds.

Deuteronomy 4:9-11

But take care. Like all fallen humans, Israel's natural tendency is to ignore, forget, or disobey. Their failure in the past forty years adds testimony to this warning.

Make them known to your children. Each generation has the responsibility of instructing the next generation in the faith: <<*Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise*>> (Deuteronomy 6:7), and: <<*He established a decree in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our ancestors to teach to their children*>> (Psalm 78:5). The children were not only to be taught the things God had done for the people, they were to be taught his ways: <<*And, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord*>> (Ephesians 6:4).

I will let them hear my words. At Horeb the nation of Israel heard God speak. The intention of such a personal encounter was so that they would obey God, but they did not.

¹² Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice.

Deuteronomy 4:12

Saw no form; there was only a voice. The emphasis here, and in the second commandment <<*You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth*>> (Exodus 20:4), is that worship of an image is prohibited, since God's self-revelation was audible, not visible. Despite this, notice <<*You have seen for yourselves*>> (v.3), <<*your eyes have seen*>> (v.9), and <<*before your very eyes*>> in v.34. All these are visual demonstrations of just some of the things God can do. The words of Jesus should also be remembered here: <<*Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe'*>> (John 20:29).

Jesus also stated: <<*And the Father who sent me has himself testified on my behalf. You have never heard his voice or seen his form, and you do not have his word abiding in you, because you do not believe him whom he has sent*>> (John 5:37-38). This does not contradict Moses' statement for Jesus was talking to those of his own generation who had neither seen nor heard God, other than watching and listening to his Son.

¹³ He declared to you his covenant, which he charged you to observe, that is, the ten commandments; and he wrote them on two stone tablets. ¹⁴ And the Lord charged me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy.

Deuteronomy 4:13-14

He declared to you his covenant. Although not the entirety of the Sinai covenant, the Ten Commandments, literally 'Ten Words,' sum it up. They alone of God's commands were spoken audibly to all Israel and were written by God on the two stone tablets. The emphasis on covenant stresses the relational nature of the law: <<*Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples*>> (Exodus 19:5a).

The statutes and ordinances are the other laws given at Sinai, spoken only to Moses, who was instructed to teach them to Israel (Exodus Chapter 21 to Leviticus Chapter 27).

¹⁵ Since you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, ¹⁶ so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure – the likeness of male or female, ¹⁷ the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, ¹⁸ the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. ¹⁹ And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven.

Deuteronomy 4:15-19

Since you saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb. The absence of a visible form for God now gives reason for prohibiting the worship of idols and images. Israel was also forbidden to worship the creation of God. Neither any

animal nor bird nor fish nor the sun, the moon, and the stars are fit for worship. This is worshipping the creature rather than the creator as Paul concludes in Romans 1:25. Therefore, the people could not know what image to make of God even if it were permissible: <<*To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him?*>> (Isaiah 40:18).

Take care and watch yourselves closely. The warning is not to get carried away but to ensure that whatever they do, they do in accordance with the will of God: <<*Did not one God make her? Both flesh and spirit are his. And what does the one God desire? Godly offspring. So look to yourselves, and do not let anyone be faithless to the wife of his youth*>> (Malachi 2:15).

²⁰ But the Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt, to become a people of his very own possession, as you are now.

Deuteronomy 4:20

The Lord's saving acts in bringing Israel out from slavery in Egypt, which Moses refers to as the iron-smelter; give cause to worship: <<*for they are your people and heritage, which you brought out of Egypt, from the midst of the iron-smelter*>> (1 Kings 8:51), and: <<*which I commanded your ancestors when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron-smelter, saying, Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God*>> (Jeremiah 11:4).

His very own possession suggests privilege and intimacy: <<*I prayed to the Lord and said, 'Lord God, do not destroy the people who are your very own possession, whom you redeemed in your greatness, whom you brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; pay no attention to the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin, otherwise the land from which you have brought us might say, "Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to let them die in the wilderness." For they are the people of your very own possession, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm'*>> (Deuteronomy 9:26-29). Israel is the Lord's inheritance: <<*He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds*>> (Titus 2:14); the land is Israel's inheritance, although the landless tribe of Levi has the Lord as their inheritance: <<*The Levites have no portion among you, for the priesthood of the Lord is their heritage*>> (Joshua 18:7a).

²¹ The Lord was angry with me because of you, and he vowed that I should not cross the Jordan and that I should not enter the good land

that the Lord your God is giving for your possession. ²² For I am going to die in this land without crossing over the Jordan, but you are going to cross over to take possession of that good land.

Deuteronomy 4:21-22

The Lord was angry with me because of you. Moses had lost his temper due to the people's continuous complaining at Meribah and struck the rock. It was for the sake of Israel that God disciplined Moses, not allowing him to enter the Promised Land. Israel needed to see that no man, not even Moses was above the Law. They also had to understand that it was indeed better that Joshua lead them into the Promised Land instead of Moses.

For I am going to die in this land without crossing over the Jordan, but you are going to cross over. Moses was humble enough to recognise his own sin and failure before Israel, and he had enough faith to believe that they could make it, even without him. Moses knew that he was replaceable. It is a dangerous thing when anybody in the ministry begins to think they are doing something no one else can do, or that they are irreplaceable. God can and does use anyone; if a ministry does depend on one irreplaceable person, then it is of man and not of God. Moses was humble enough, and wise enough, to know this.

I should not enter the good land. The land was described as 'good' by the spies: <<*And Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the Israelites, 'The land that we went through as spies is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey'*>> (Numbers 14:6-8). The repeated emphasis serves as encouragement to Israel to enter.

²³ So be careful not to forget the covenant that the Lord your God made with you, and not to make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything that the Lord your God has forbidden you. ²⁴ For the Lord your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God.

Deuteronomy 4:23-24

These verses mark a return to the prohibition of idolatry.

So be careful again suggests the ease with which people fall into idolatry.

From the iron furnace of Egypt (v.20) to a devouring fire: <<*So now why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer, we shall die*>> (Deuteronomy 5:25), and: <<*Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by*

which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire>> (Hebrews 12:28-29). Israel's covenant relationship with the Lord is to be exclusive.

God is jealous for his people's unqualified allegiance. This is in fact the language of love. He is also jealous for his name: <<*Therefore, thus says the Lord God: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name*>> (Ezekiel 39:25).

²⁵ 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, ²⁶ 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

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today. Creation itself would testify against an idol worshipping Israel: <<*Hear, O heavens, and listen, O earth; for the Lord has spoken: I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me*>> (Isaiah 1:2), <<*Hear, O earth; I am going to bring disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not given heed to my words; and as for my teaching, they have rejected it*>> (Jeremiah 6:19), and: <<*Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel*>> (Micah 6:2). They would be destroyed in the land God promised to give them. Calling on elements of nature to testify to an oath is a common feature of ancient Near Eastern covenant documents. Refer also to Deuteronomy 30:19 and 31:28.

²⁷ The Lord will scatter you among the peoples; only a few of you will be left among the nations where the Lord will lead you. ²⁸ There you will serve other gods made by human hands, objects of wood and stone that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

Deuteronomy 4:27-28

The Lord will scatter you among the peoples. God gave Israel the Promised Land, but not unconditionally. If they persisted in idol worship, God would remove them from the land and scatter them among the nations. This, of course, is exactly what happened years later when the ten northern tribes were dispersed among the nations by the Assyrians and again at the time of the Babylonian Exile of Judah.

Only a few of you will be left among the nations. The punishment for idolatry is exile to a pagan land, yet a remnant will survive: *<<Gleanings will be left in it, as when an olive tree is beaten – two or three berries in the top of the highest bough, four or five on the branches of a fruit tree, says the Lord God of Israel>>* (Isaiah 17:6), and: *<<If thieves came to you, if plunderers by night – how you have been destroyed! – would they not steal only what they wanted? If grape-gatherers came to you, would they not leave gleanings?>>* (Obadiah 5). God will hand Israel over to an idolatrous nation to continue the sinful practice. In the same way, God gives people over to the ways of the world if they will not follow his ways: *<<Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever! Amen. For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error. And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind and to things that should not be done>>* (Romans 1:24-28).

There you will serve other gods made by human hands. If Israel were exiled, they would then get their fill of idols. God would put them in a land filled with idols. Sarcasm is expressed here that other gods neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell: *<<Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; they make no sound in their throats>>* (Psalm 115:4-7). Paul's teaching on this subject met with incredulity by some pagan worshippers in Ephesus: *<<You also see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost the whole of Asia this Paul has persuaded and drawn away a considerable number of people by saying that gods made with hands are not gods>>* (Acts 19:26). Yet the thought that a person could make an inanimate object and then worship it as a God is actually laughable.

²⁹ From there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul. ³⁰ In your distress, when all these things have happened to you in time to come, you will return to the Lord your God and heed him.

Deuteronomy 4:29-30

From there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find him. Exile is not the end. There remains hope of repentance and return; refer to Deuteronomy

30:1-10. God would not totally abandon Israel in exile. When they were ready to turn back to the Lord, he would be ready to receive them: <<*For thus says the Lord to the house of Israel: Seek me and live*>> (Amos 5:4), and: <<*I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob, I will gather the survivors of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture; it will resound with people*>> (Micah 2:12).

With all your heart and soul. However, if Israel was to find the Lord, they had to seek him with all their heart and all their soul. In this context, to seek God with the heart has the idea of passionately seeking him, seeking him because they really want to love the Lord. Seeking God with the soul has the idea of seeking God with the mind, will, and emotions; with giving everything to him: The demand is for a heart that totally loves the Lord. Deuteronomy anticipates the new covenant, when God's words will be truly and effectively written on the heart: <<*The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt – a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. 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. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more*>> (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

Return to the Lord your God and heed him. Returning to the Lord means forsaking the worship of visible forms and obeying his commands; this is the mark of an obedient heart.

³¹ Because the Lord your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them.

Deuteronomy 4:31

Because the Lord your God is a merciful God. God's mercy does not compromise his jealous anger: <<*The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty, but visiting the iniquity of the parents upon the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation'*>> (Exodus 34:6-7), and: <<*You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of*

parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments>> (Deuteronomy 5:9-10). In Deuteronomy, mercy is grounded in the Lord's faithfulness to the Abrahamic promises. God will maintain his covenant with Abraham, even if Israel forgets it: <<What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true, as it is written, 'So that you may be justified in your words, and prevail in your judging'>> (Romans 3:3-4). God also swore those promises under oath: <<The angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, 'By myself I have sworn, says the Lord: Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son'>> (Genesis 22:15-16), and: <<In the same way, when God desired to show even more clearly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it by an oath, so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God would prove false, we who have taken refuge might be strongly encouraged to seize the hope set before us>> (Hebrews 6:17-18).

³² For ask now about former ages, long before your own, ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of heaven to the other: has anything so great as this ever happened or has its like ever been heard of? ³³ Has any people ever heard the voice of a god speaking out of a fire, as you have heard, and lived? ³⁴ Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of power, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

Deuteronomy 4:32-34

For ask now about former ages. Moses asked Israel to carefully consider the days that are past, and if God had ever dealt with any other nation the way he had dealt with Israel. Israel needed to know they had a special place in the plan of God.

The Lord's approach to Israel at Sinai is the greatest event in any time (ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth), or any place (from one end of heaven to the other). Israel heard God's audible voice from heaven; they saw his holy fire, and benefited from his divine choice. They could know this from all God had done for them. The theme of Israel's uniqueness as a people resumes from vv.5-20.

By a mighty hand and an outstretched arm represents God's power: <<*I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go*>> (Exodus 3:19-20), and: <<*Because of the multitude of oppressions people cry out; they call for help because of the arm of the mighty*>> (Job 35:9).

³⁵ To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him. ³⁶ From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, while you heard his words coming out of the fire.

Deuteronomy 4:35-36

To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the Lord is God. The plagues were revelatory, so that Israel, as well as Pharaoh and Egypt, might know the Lord: <<*I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians*>> (Exodus 6:7).

There is no other besides him. Deuteronomy asserts clear monotheism, the belief in only one true God: <<*Then the scribe said to him, 'You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that "he is one, and besides him there is no other"'*>> (Mark 12:32). God is sovereign both in heaven and on earth.

³⁷ And because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants after them. He brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, ³⁸ driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, giving you their land for a possession, as it is still today. ³⁹ So acknowledge today and take to heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. ⁴⁰ Keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the Lord your God is giving you for all time.

Deuteronomy 4:37-40

And because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants after them. Juxtaposed with God's universal sovereignty is his love of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. A key, and unique, theme of Deuteronomy is the love of God for the patriarchs, both here and Deuteronomy 10:15, or for his people in general: <<*Thus says the Lord: The people who survived the sword found grace in the*

wilderness; when Israel sought for rest, the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you>> (Jeremiah 31:2-3), and Israel's reciprocal love for God.

As it is still today. Expressions like this occur regularly in Deuteronomy to give Israel confidence in God's power and faithfulness.

So acknowledge today and take to heart. Deuteronomy is constantly concerned with the state of Israel's heart.

Keep his statutes and his commandments. In light of who God is, and all he did for Israel, obedience to his commands made perfect sense. It was simply what should be done. People are fools to disobey such a God of love and power. The Lord gives man the invitation: <<*Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord*>> (Isaiah 1:18a). When the alternatives are considered, serving God is the only option, even though doing so may seem hard at times.

I.i Deuteronomy 4:41-43 - Setting apart cities of refuge

Three cities, Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan, are set apart in Transjordan as places to which a person guilty of manslaughter can flee to evade revenge from the dead person's family; refer also to Numbers 35:9-28. In Deuteronomy 19:1-13, three more cities west of the Jordan are set apart for the same purpose.

⁴¹ Then Moses set apart on the east side of the Jordan three cities ⁴² to which a homicide could flee, someone who unintentionally kills another person, the two not having been at enmity before; the homicide could flee to one of these cities and live: ⁴³ Bezer in the wilderness on the tableland belonging to the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead belonging to the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan belonging to the Manassites.

Deuteronomy 4:41-43

Then Moses set apart on the east side of the Jordan three cities. This was part of the essential preparation for entering the Promised Land. God commanded that three cities of refuge be readied on each side of the Jordan River: <<*you shall designate three cities beyond the Jordan, and three cities in the land of Canaan, to be cities of refuge*>> (Numbers 35:14), and here, the three cities on the east side of the Jordan were appointed. Moses could not appoint all six cities of refuge, because they had not yet taken the land on the western side of the Jordan River. Still, although he could not obey all of God's command to appoint six cities of refuge, he did what he could and appointed these three on the east of the River Jordan.

II Deuteronomy 4:44-11:32 - Moses' Second Speech: General Covenant Stipulations

The first part of Moses' second speech largely consists of general covenant stipulations. More specific stipulations follow in Chapters 12-16.

II.a Deuteronomy 4:44-49 - Transition to the Second Address

These verses provide the geographical and historical setting of the second speech.

⁴⁴ This is the law that Moses set before the Israelites. ⁴⁵ These are the decrees and the statutes and ordinances that Moses spoke to the Israelites when they had come out of Egypt, ⁴⁶ beyond the Jordan in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of King Sihon of the Amorites, who reigned at Heshbon, whom Moses and the Israelites defeated when they came out of Egypt. ⁴⁷ They occupied his land and the land of King Og of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites on the eastern side of the Jordan: ⁴⁸ from Aroer, which is on the edge of the Wadi Arnon, as far as Mount Sirion (that is, Hermon), ⁴⁹ together with all the Arabah on the east side of the Jordan as far as the Sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of Pisgah.

Deuteronomy 4:44-49

This is the law that Moses set before the Israelites. As Moses addressed the nation they were on the threshold of the Promised Land. It had been some thirty eight years since they received the Law of God at Mount Sinai and now Moses reviewed and explained the Law of God with the new generation.