

CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

[Adapted from Bethel Bible- Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic., 3166]

DHW BIBLE CLASS LESSON 1

DEUTERONOMY

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The book of Deuteronomy is the last of the five books which form the Pentateuch, also known to the Jews as the *Torah*. The name "Deuteronomy" is a combination of two Greek words: *deuteros* which means "second" and *nomos* which means "law." Thus the name means "the second law." This name is taken from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX). Most scholars think that this is not an appropriate name because the book does not contain a "second law" that is different from the Law given at Mount Sinai (recorded in Exodus and Leviticus) – it is **a recollection and repetition of the history and laws** of the previous four books. The Hebrew name of the book is taken from the opening words of the book, literally, "these the words," *elleh haddebarim*. Hence, the Hebrew name is more appropriate as the book recounts what the LORD God said to the people of Israel through Moses.

We must realise that the majority of the Israelites, at that point in time, were the children of the first generation who rebelled against the LORD at Kadesh-barnea, and were refused entry into the Promised Land. The law was repeated to remind this new generation of the past and to warn them against committing the sins of their forefathers and incurring the wrath of God. The book comprises a mixture of laws, history and exhortations. Moses saw the need to speak to the Israelites so that they would not make the same mistakes and forfeit the blessings of God.

Contrary to the views of some modern Bible scholars, there is no doubt that Moses was the author. The opening words declare that it was Moses who spoke these words to "all Israel" (1:1). The second last chapter of the book states that Moses blessed the children of Israel with the blessings of God (33:1). The Lord Jesus Christ referred to the law of divorce written by Moses (Matthew 19:8): *He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so* (quoted from Deuteronomy 24:1-4). The Apostle Paul also referred to the law of Moses (1 Corinthians 9:9): *For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the*

mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen?

Our study of the book will reveal three interwoven main features. Moses gave five speeches or sermons in the book, and in the sermons he reminded the people of the law of God, and built upon them by remembering their history. While these laws were given to the children of Israel, they are nevertheless of great spiritual benefit to us today as we draw divine truths and principles from them. The book is therefore not just for the Jews “there and then” but also for us “here and now”.

OUTLINE

A. Moses Prepared All Israel to Possess the Promised Land (1:1-8).

1. The location where Moses spoke to “all Israel” (1:1).
2. A reminder that they took only 11 days to travel from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea (1:2).
3. They had marched for forty years to arrive at the present location where Moses gave them the words of the LORD (1:3).
4. Moses recalled their victories against King Sihon and King Og (1:4).
5. Moses made his first speech to Israel (1:5-8).

a) Moses recalled that the LORD had told the Israelites to depart from Horeb and proceed to the Promised Land (1:6-7).

b) The LORD called on them to enter and possess the land that He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (1:8).

B. Moses Recounted the Need to Share His Duties and Responsibilities (1:9-18).

1. Moses recalled that he alone could not bear the burdens of an enlarged Israel (1:9-12).

2. The people agreed with Moses that men with special abilities should share in the administration (1:13-15).

3. The judges should apply certain principles (1:16-18).

a) The judges must judge righteously (1:16b)

b) The judges must judge fairly without respect of persons (1:17a).

c) The judges must realise that they judge on behalf of God (1:17b).

d) The judges could refer hard cases to Moses (1:17c).

e) Moses commanded them

to do so (1:18).

C. Moses Recounted the Events at Kadesh-barnea (1:19-25).

1. It was a difficult trek from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea (1:19-20).
2. At Kadesh-barnea, the LORD commanded the Israelites to enter and possess the Promised Land (1:21).
3. An expedition was sent to spy the land (1:22-25).
 - a) This was the suggestion of the people (1:22).
 - b) Moses chose twelve men to spy the land (1:23).
 - c) The twelve returned and reported that the land was good (1:24-25).

D. Moses Recounted the Outcome of the Negative Response and of the Israelites (1:26-40).

1. The Israelites refused to enter the land (1:26-28).
 - a) They rebelled against the LORD (1:26).
 - b) They grumbled and charged the LORD for hating them (1:27).
 - c) They were afraid of the inhabitants of the land and the Anakims (1:28).
2. Moses tried to encourage them (1:29-31).
 - a) Moses told them not to be

afraid of the Canaanites (1:29).

- b) The LORD would fight for them as He did in Egypt (1:30).
- c) The LORD had protected and provided for them in all their journeys (1:31).
3. The Israelites still refused to enter (1:32-33).
 - a) They did not have faith (1:32).
 - b) The LORD had protected and preserved them (1:33).
4. The LORD'S response to their unbelief (1:34-40).
 - a) The LORD heard their complaints and was angry (1:34).
 - b) The LORD disallowed the rebels from entering the Promised Land (1:35).
 - c) Caleb and Joshua were the two exceptions (1:36-38).
 - d) The children of the Israelites would be able to enter the land (1:39).
 - e) The LORD commanded them to turn back into the wilderness instead of entering the land (1:40).

E. Moses Recounted their Reaction to the Judgement of the LORD (1:41- 46).

1. They acknowledged their sin against the LORD but thought that they could redress it by going in to possess the land (1:41).
2. The LORD commanded them not to go in or fight because He would not be with them (1:42).
3. Moses told them but they did not obey (1:43).
4. They were defeated by the Amorites (1:44).
5. Although they wept, the LORD would not hear their cry (1:45-46).

COMMENTARY

Missed Opportunity

The children of Israel were now at the threshold of the Promised Land. They were on the east side of Jordan on the plains of Moab. They had travelled forty years since they left Egypt.

Forty years ago, it had taken their ancestors slightly more than eleven days to reach Kadesh-barnea after their initial stay in Horeb (another name for Sinai) [cf. Num. 10:11; 11:32; 12:14]. They were given the opportunity to enter the Promised Land but they missed the opportunity because of their unbelief. As a result, they had to wander in the wilderness for forty years. However during those forty years, God continued to protect

and provide for them until they arrived at their present location blessed with a new generation of people no less than the number who had left Egypt! However, they did not arrive at this point without struggle. They had fought against the powerful king of Sihon and the king of Og. The LORD was with them and they had won. All Israel should be comforted and encouraged when they looked back upon the grace and mercy of the LORD.

Moses posed to “all Israel” (a phrase used frequently in this book, signifying the solidarity of the nation) the Promised Land which was within their sight and charged them not to repeat the mistake of their forefathers.

Need for a Just and Fair Administration

The LORD blessed and multiplied Israel, and Moses could not bear the administrative burden alone. He needed to choose some good assistants. A good leader must have three qualities - wise, understanding, and known among the tribes (1:11). A “wise” leader is intelligent and knowledgeable. An “understanding” leader is discerning.

The three groups of leaders were captains, officers and judges. The captains were the military leaders. The officers were the social leaders.

The judges were the law keepers.

The judges were given four basic guidelines. They must judge righteously (1:16). They must have no respect of anyone in judgement whether weak or strong (1:17a). They must not be afraid of man because the judgement is God's. Lastly, if a case was too difficult, they should bring it to Moses.

These principles clearly teach that when the LORD blesses a church with more people, there is a need for proper governing and administration with godly leaders. The spiritual qualifications are highlighted with no mention of any physical training or personal background. In the choice of godly leaders, we too need men and women of God who possess spiritual qualifications. A more detailed list is found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. It serves all Christians well if we study these qualifications and take them to heart in our choice of present day leaders. If we do not, our church will fall by the way side like many before us that brought in worldly and carnal leaders.

Learning From Mistakes of Others

Moses recollected the failure of the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land at Kadesh-barnea when they had the opportunity to do so. God had led them to the doorstep of the land. The land was

before them. All they had to do was to "go up and possess it" and God told them to "fear not, neither be discouraged" (1:21). They wanted a team of scouts to bring back a report on the land. The twelve scouts returned and reported that the land which the LORD gave them was good (1:25).

But they rebelled against the commandment of the LORD. They grumbled and accused God of trying to kill them. Moses reminded them that the LORD had been good to them in Egypt and in all their journeys through the wilderness. He had protected and preserved them. He had gone before them in their journeying, and had chosen a safe place for them to pitch their tents. He had given them a pillar of fire for light and a pillar of cloud for shade. In spite of these experiences and assurances, they chose not to believe the LORD.

The LORD heard their words and was angry. He passed a judgement on them – they wandered in the wilderness for forty years and all those aged above twenty would not enter the Promised Land, except for Caleb and Joshua.

The people tried to reverse God's decision by going up to fight against the Amorites (another name for Canaanites). The LORD told them that He would not be with them but they took their best warriors and

went to battle with the Amorites anyway. They lost – without the LORD, there will be no victory.

Practical Value

Moses' motivation for recalling the past experiences to this present generation was clear – they would do well to avoid repeating the mistakes of their fathers. He drew on all the past experiences to encourage and assure them. He laid out all the reasons for them to obey the LORD – (1) the LORD would fight for them, protect and provide for them, (2) the land that the LORD had promised was good, and (3) the LORD had done many miraculous works before them and on their behalf.

A person who soon forgets his past will repeat his mistakes and suffer the consequences again. A person who remembers and learns from his past will make progress. This is a warning to all the people of God. We have the full revelation of God in the Bible. The Divine record shows the Almighty power of God and His gracious dealings with His people. It reveals that His words and promises are true. The Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten and beloved Son had come, died and rose from the dead. His resurrection is a guarantee of all His words and promises. There is no reason or excuse for us not to obey Him and do His will. We have a choice – to obey the Lord our God or to listen to ourselves. Each one of us

has to make the decision. Learn from the mistakes of the Israelites who rebelled against God and murmured against Him. They chose their own ways and had to struggle and suffer for many years. If we hear the words of the Lord and do His will, we will live more abundantly. Our yoke will be light for the Lord Jesus Christ is with us.

**DAILY READING & DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS**

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Deuteronomy 1:1-8; 1 Peter 2:9-12

TUESDAY: Deuteronomy 1:9-18; Romans 12:5-8.\

WEDNESDAY: Deuteronomy 1:19-25; Psalm 23:1-6; Isaiah 26:3

THURSDAY: Deuteronomy 1:26-40; Acts 5:29; Ephesians 5:6

FRIDAY: Deuteronomy 1:41-46; Titus 3:3-9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How long did it take Israel to travel from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea initially? How long did it take them to be near Kadesh-barnea again?

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2. In his opening words, what was Moses trying to tell "all Israel"?

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3. What was Moses trying to impress upon the Israelites in verses 19-25?

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4. What are the sins described in verses 26, 27, and 32; and what made the guilt of it greater as in verses 31 & 32?

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5. How would you explain Moses' words in verse 37?

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6. What sin(s) were the Israelites guilty of in verses 41-45?

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7. In this chapter what does Moses want the people of God to know about God's character?

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8. What valuable principle have you learnt from this chapter?

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