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Deuteronomy

Moses Talks to the People of Israel

1 This is the message that Moses gave the people of Israel. He told them these things while they were in the Jordan Valley, in the desert east of the Jordan River. This was across from Suph, between the desert of Paran and the cities Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab.

²The trip from Mount Horeb (*Sinai*) through the Seir mountains to Kadesh Barnea takes only eleven days. ³But it was 40 years from the time the people of Israel left Egypt until the time they came to this place. On the first day of the eleventh month of the 40th year, Moses spoke to the people. Moses told them all the things the Lord commanded. ⁴This was after the Lord defeated Sihon and Og. (Sihon was the king of the Amorite people. Sihon lived in Heshbon. Og was the king of Bashan. Og lived in Ashtaroth and Edrei.) ⁵The people of Israel were on the east side of the Jordan River in the land of Moab, and Moses began to explain the things that God commanded. Moses said:

⁶“At Mount Horeb (*Sinai*) the Lord our God spoke to us. He said, ‘You have stayed at this mountain long enough. ⁷Go to the hill country where the Amorite people live. Go to all the places around there. Go to the Jordan Valley, the hill country, the western slopes, the Negev,* and the seacoast. Go through the land of Canaan and Lebanon as far as the great river, the Euphrates. ⁸Look, I am giving you that land. Go and take it. I promised to give that land to your ancestors*—Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob. I promised to give that land to them and to their descendants.*’”

Moses Chooses Leaders

⁹Moses said, “At that time I told you I couldn’t take care of you by myself. ¹⁰And now, there are even more of you! The Lord your God has added more and more people, so that today you are as many as the stars in the sky! ¹¹May the Lord, the God of your ancestors,* make you 1,000 times more than you are now! May he bless you like he promised! ¹²But I couldn’t take care of you and solve all your arguments by myself. ¹³So [I told you:] ‘Choose some men from each family group, and I will make them leaders over you. Choose wise men that have understanding and experience.’

¹⁴“And you said, ‘That is a good thing to do.’

¹⁵“So I took the wise and experienced men you chose from your family groups, and I made them your leaders. In this way, I gave you leaders over 1,000 people, leaders over 100 people, leaders over 50 people, leaders over 10 people. I also gave you officers for each of your family groups.

¹⁶“At that time, I told those judges, ‘Listen to the arguments between your people. Be fair when you judge each case. It does not matter if the problem is between two Israelite people or between an Israelite and a foreigner. You must judge each case fairly. ¹⁷When you judge, you must not think that one person is more important than another person. You must judge every person the same. Don’t be afraid of anyone, because your decision is from God. But if there is a case too hard for

Negev The desert area south of Judah.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

you to judge, then bring it to me and I will judge it.’¹⁸At that same time, I also told you all the other things you must do.

The Spies Go to Canaan

¹⁹“Then we obeyed the Lord our God. We left Mount Horeb (*Sinai*) and traveled toward the hill country of the Amorite people. We went through that big and terrible desert that you saw. We came to Kadesh Barnea. ²⁰Then I said to you, ‘You have now come to the hill country of the Amorites. The Lord our God will give us this country. ²¹Look, there it is! Go up and take the land for your own! The Lord, the God of your ancestors,* told you to do this. So don’t be afraid. Don’t worry about anything!’

²²“But you all came to me and said, ‘Let’s send some men to look at the land first. They can look for all the strong and weak places there. Then they can come back and tell us the way we should go. They can also tell us about the cities we will come to.’

²³“I thought that was a good idea. So I chose twelve men from among you, one man from each family group. ²⁴Then those men left and went up to the hill country. They came to the Valley of Eshcol and explored it. ²⁵They took some of the fruit from that land and brought it back to us. They told us about the land. They said, ‘The Lord our God is giving us a good land!’

²⁶“But you refused to go into the land. You refused to obey the Lord your God. ²⁷You went to your tents and began to complain. You said, ‘The Lord hates us! He brought us out of the land of Egypt just to let the Amorite people destroy us! ²⁸Where can we go now? Our brothers (*the twelve spies*) have made us afraid with their report. They said: The people there are bigger and taller than we are! The cities are big and have walls as high as the sky! And we saw giants* there!’

²⁹“So I said to you, ‘Don’t be upset! Don’t be afraid of those people! ³⁰The Lord your God will go before you and fight for you. He will do

this the same as he did in Egypt. You saw him go before you there ³¹and in the desert. You saw how the Lord your God carried you, like a man carries his son. The Lord brought you safely all the way to this place.’

³²“But you still did not trust the Lord your God! ³³When you were traveling, he went before you to find a place for you to put your camp. He went before you in a fire by night and in a cloud by day to show you which way you should go.

People Not Allowed to Enter Canaan

³⁴“The Lord heard what you said, and he became angry. He made a strong promise. He said, ³⁵‘None of you evil people who are living now will go into the good land that I promised to your ancestors.* ³⁶Only Caleb son of Jephunneh will see that land. I will give Caleb the land he walked on. And I will give that land to Caleb’s descendants.* Why? Because Caleb did all that I commanded.’

³⁷“The Lord was also angry with me because of you. He said to me, ‘Moses, you can’t enter the land, either. ³⁸But your helper, Joshua son of Nun will go into the land. Encourage Joshua, because he will lead the people of Israel to take the land for their own.’

³⁹“And the Lord said to us, ‘You said your little children would be taken by your enemies. But those children will go into the land. I don’t blame your children for your mistake, because they are still too young to know if something is right or wrong. So I will give the land to them. Your children will take the land for their own. ⁴⁰But you—you must turn around and go back to the desert on the road that leads to the Red Sea.’

⁴¹“Then you said, ‘Moses, we have sinned against the Lord. But now we will go and fight, like the Lord our God commanded us before.’ Then each of you put on your weapons. You thought it would be easy to go and take the hill country.

⁴²“But the Lord said to me, ‘Tell the people not to go up there and fight. Why? Because I

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

giants Literally, “Anakites,” descendants of Anak, a family famous for tall and powerful fighting men. See Num. 13:33.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

will not be with them, and their enemies will defeat them!’

⁴³“I spoke to you, but you did not listen. You refused to obey the Lord’s command. You thought you could use your own power. So you went up into the hill country. ⁴⁴But the Amorite people living there came out to fight against you. They were like a swarm of bees chasing you. They chased you all the way from Seir to Hormah. ⁴⁵Then you came back and cried to the Lord for help. But the Lord refused to listen to you. ⁴⁶So you stayed at Kadesh a long time.

Israel Wanders through the Desert

2“Then we did what the Lord told me to do. We went back into the desert on the road that leads to the Red Sea. We traveled for many days to go around the Seir* mountains. ²Then the Lord said to me, ³‘You have traveled around these mountains long enough. Turn north. ⁴Tell these things to the people: You will pass through the land of Seir. This land belongs to your relatives, the descendants* of Esau. They will be afraid of you. Be very careful. ⁵Don’t fight them. I will not give you any of their land—not even a foot of it. Why? Because I gave the hill country of Seir to Esau to keep as his own. ⁶You must pay the people of Esau for any food you eat or water you drink there. ⁷Remember that the Lord your God has blessed you in everything you have done. He knows about your walking through this great desert. The Lord your God has been with you these 40 years. You have always had everything you needed.’

⁸“So we passed by our relatives, the people of Esau living there in Seir. We left the road that leads from the Jordan Valley to the towns of Elath and Ezion Geber. We turned onto the road that goes to the desert in Moab.

Israel at Ar

⁹“The Lord said to me, ‘Don’t bother the people of Moab. Don’t start a war against them. I will not give you any of their land.

They are the descendants of Lot,* and I gave them the city of Ar.’”

(¹⁰In the past, the Emite people lived in Ar. They were strong people, and there were many of them. They were very tall, like the Anakite* people. ¹¹The Anakites were part of the Rephaite people. People thought the Emites were also Rephaites. But the people of Moab called them Emites. ¹²The Horite people also lived in Seir before, but Esau’s people took their land. Esau’s people destroyed the Horites and settled on their land. That is the same thing the people of Israel did to the people in the land that the Lord gave them for their own.)

¹³“The Lord told me, ‘Now, go to the other side of Zered Valley.’ So we crossed Zered Valley. ¹⁴It was 38 years from the time we left Kadesh Barnea until the time we crossed Zered Valley. All the fighting men of that generation in our camp had died. The Lord had sworn (*promised*) that that would happen. ¹⁵The Lord was against those men until they were all dead and gone from our camp.

¹⁶“After all the fighting men were dead and gone, ¹⁷the Lord said to me, ¹⁸‘Today you must cross the border at Ar and go into Moab. ¹⁹You will go near the Ammonite people. Don’t bother them. Don’t fight with them, because I will not give you their land. Why? Because they are descendants* of Lot, and I have given that land to them.’”

²⁰(That country is also known as the Land of Rephaim. The Rephaite people lived there in the past. The people of Ammon called them the Zamzummites. ²¹There were many Zamzummites, and they were very strong. They were tall, like the Anakite* people. But the Lord helped the Ammonite people destroy the Zamzummites. The Ammonite people took that land and live there now. ²²God did the same thing for Esau’s people. In the past, the Horite people lived in Seir (*Edom*). But Esau’s people destroyed the Horites, and Esau’s descendants still live there today. ²³God did

Seir Another name for Edom.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

descendants of Lot Lot’s sons were Moab and Ammon. See Gen. 19:30–38.

Anakite(s) Descendants of Anak, a family famous for tall and powerful fighting men. See Num. 13:33.

the same thing for some people from Crete. The Avvite people lived in the towns around Gaza. But some people came from Crete and destroyed the Avvites. Those people from Crete took that land and live there now.)

Fighting the Amorite People

²⁴“The Lord told me, ‘Get ready to go across Arnon Valley. I will let you defeat Sihon the Amorite, the king of Heshbon. I will let you take his country. So fight against him and take his land. ²⁵Today I will make all people everywhere afraid of you. They will hear the news about you, and they will be afraid and shake with fear.’

²⁶“While we were in the desert of Kedemoth, I sent messengers to Sihon, the king of Heshbon. The messengers offered peace to Sihon. They said, ²⁷‘Let us go through your land. We will stay on the road. We will not turn off the road to the right or to the left. ²⁸We will pay you in silver for any food we eat or any water we drink. We only want to march through your country. ²⁹Let us go through your land until we go across the Jordan River into the land that the Lord our God is giving us. Other people have let us go through their land—the people of Esau living in Seir and the Moabite people living in Ar.’

³⁰“But Sihon, the king of Heshbon, would not let us pass through his country. The Lord your God had made him very stubborn. The Lord did this so he could let you defeat King Sihon. And today, we know that really happened!

³¹“The Lord said to me, ‘I am giving King Sihon and his country to you. Now, go take his land!’

³²“Then King Sihon and all his people came out to fight against us at Jahaz. ³³But the Lord our God gave him to us. We defeated King Sihon, his sons, and all his people. ³⁴We captured all the cities that belonged to King Sihon at that time. We completely destroyed the people in every city—the men, women, and children. We did not leave anyone alive! ³⁵We took only the cattle and the valuable things from those cities. ³⁶We defeated the town of Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Valley and the other town in the middle of that valley. The Lord let us defeat all the cities

between the Arnon Valley and Gilead. No city was too strong for us. ³⁷But you did not go near the land that belongs to the people of Ammon. You did not go near the shores of the Jabbok River or the cities of the hill country. You did not go near any place that the Lord our God would not let us have.

Fighting the People of Bashan

3“We turned and went on the road to Bashan. Og, the king of Bashan, and all his men came out to fight against us at Edrei. ²The Lord said to me, ‘Don’t be afraid of Og. I have decided to give him to you. I will give you all his men and his land. You will defeat him just like you defeated Sihon, the Amorite king who ruled in Heshbon.’

³“So the Lord our God let us defeat Og, the king of Bashan. We destroyed him and all his men. None of them were left. ⁴Then we took all the cities that belonged to Og at that time. We took all the cities from Og’s people—60 cities in the area of Argob, Og’s kingdom in Bashan. ⁵All these cities were very strong. They had high walls, gates, and strong bars on the gates. There were also many towns that did not have walls. ⁶We destroyed them just like we destroyed the cities of Sihon king of Heshbon. We completely destroyed every city and all the people in them, even the women and the babies. ⁷But we kept all the cows and the valuable things from the cities for ourselves.

⁸“In that way, we took the land from the two Amorite kings. We took that land on the east side of the Jordan River, from Arnon Valley to Mount Hermon. ⁹(The people from Sidon call Mount Hermon, Sirion. But the Amorites called it Senir.) ¹⁰We took all the cities in the high plain and all of Gilead. We took all of Bashan, all the way to Salecah and Edrei. Salecah and Edrei were cities of Og’s kingdom of Bashan.”

(¹¹Og was the king of Bashan. Og was one of the few Rephaite people still alive. Og’s bed was made from iron. It was over 13 feet long and 6 feet wide.* The bed is still in the city of Rabbah, where the Ammonite people live.)

13 feet long and 6 feet wide Literally, “9 cubits long and 4 cubits wide, following the measure of a man’s cubit.”

The Land East of the Jordan River

¹²“So we took that land to be ours. I gave part of this land to the families groups of Reuben and Gad. I gave them the land from Aroer in the Arnon Valley to the hill country of Gilead with the cities in it. They got half of the hill country of Gilead. ¹³I gave the other half of Gilead and the whole area of Bashan to half of the family group of Manasseh.”

(Bashan was Og’s kingdom. Part of Bashan was called Argob. It was also called the Land of Rephaim. ¹⁴Jair, from the family group of Manasseh, took the whole area of Argob (*Bashan*). That area went all the way to the border of the Geshurite people and the Maacathite people. That area was named for Jair. So even today, people call Bashan the Towns of Jair.)

¹⁵“I gave Gilead to Makir. ¹⁶And to the Reuben family group and the Gad family group, I gave the land that begins at Gilead. This land goes from the Arnon Valley to the Jabbok River. The middle of the valley is one border. The Jabbok River is the border for the Ammonite people. ¹⁷The Jordan River near the desert is their western border. Lake Galilee* is north of this area and the Dead Sea* (the Salt Sea) is to the south. It is at the bottom of the cliffs of Pisgah. They are to the east.

¹⁸“At that time, I gave those family groups this command: ‘The Lord your God has given you the land on this side of the Jordan River to live in. But now your fighting men must take their weapons and lead the other Israelite family groups across the river. ¹⁹Your wives, your little children, and your cows (I know you have many cows) will stay here in the cities I have given you. ²⁰But you must help your Israelite relatives until they take the land that the Lord is giving them on the other side of the Jordan River. Help them until the Lord gives them peace there, just as he did for you here. Then you may come back to this land that I have given you.’

²¹“Then I told Joshua, ‘You have seen all the things the Lord your God has done to

these two kings. The Lord will do the same thing to all the kingdoms you will enter. ²²Don’t fear the kings of these lands, because the Lord your God will fight for you.’

Moses Not Allowed In Canaan

²³“Then I begged the Lord to do something special for me. I said, ²⁴‘Lord my Master, I am your servant. I know that you have shown me only a small part of the wonderful and powerful things you will do. There is no god in heaven or earth that can do the great and powerful things you have done! ²⁵Please let me go across the Jordan River and see the good land on the other side. Let me see the beautiful hill country and Lebanon.’

²⁶“But the Lord was angry at me because of you. He refused to listen to me. The Lord said to me, ‘That’s enough! Don’t say another word about this. ²⁷Go up to the top of Mount Pisgah. Look to the west, to the north, to the south, and to the east. You may see these things with your eyes, but you can never go across the Jordan River. ²⁸You must give instructions to Joshua. Encourage him. Make him strong! Why? Because Joshua must lead the people across the Jordan River. You can see the land, but Joshua will lead them into that land. He will help them take the land and live in it.’

²⁹“So we stayed in the valley across from Beth Peor.”

Moses’ Warning to Obey God’s Laws

4“Now, Israel, listen to the laws and to the commands that I teach you. Obey them and you will live. Then you can go in and take the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. ²You must not add to the things that I command you. And you must not take anything away. You must obey the commands of the Lord your God that I have given you.

³“You have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor. The Lord your God destroyed all your people who followed the false god Baal* at that place. ⁴But all of you who stayed with the Lord your God are alive today.

Lake Galilee Literally, “Kinnereth Lake.”

Dead Sea Literally, “Arabah Sea.”

Baal A false god that the Canaanite people worshiped.

⁵“I taught you the laws and rules that the Lord my God commanded me. I taught you these laws so that you could obey them in the land you are ready to enter and take for your own. ⁶Obey these laws carefully. This will show the people of the other nations that you are wise and understanding. The people of those nations will hear about these laws. Then they will say, ‘Truly, the people of this great nation (*Israel*) are wise and understanding.’

⁷“The Lord our God is near when we ask him to help us. No other nation has a god like that! ⁸And no other nation is great enough to have laws and rules as good as the teachings I give you today. ⁹But you must be careful! Be sure that as long as you live you never forget the things you have seen. You must teach those things to your children and grandchildren. ¹⁰Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Mount Horeb (*Sinai*). The Lord said to me, ‘Gather the people together to listen to the things I say. Then they will learn to respect me as long as they live on earth. And they will teach these things to their children.’ ¹¹You came near and stood at the bottom of the mountain. The mountain burned with fire that reached up to the sky. There were thick black clouds and darkness. ¹²Then the Lord spoke to you from the fire. You heard the sound of someone speaking, but you did not see any form. There was only a voice. ¹³The Lord told you his Agreement. He told you the Ten Commandments and commanded you to follow them. The Lord wrote those laws of the Agreement on two stone tablets. ¹⁴At that time, the Lord also commanded me to teach you the other laws and rules that you must follow in the land you are going to take and live in.

¹⁵“On the day the Lord spoke to you from the fire at Mount Horeb (*Sinai*), you did not see him—there was no shape for God. ¹⁶So be careful! Don’t sin and destroy yourselves by making false gods or statues in the shape of any living thing. Don’t make an idol that looks like a man or a woman. ¹⁷Don’t make an idol that looks like an animal on the earth or like a bird that flies in the sky. ¹⁸And don’t make an idol that looks like anything that crawls on the ground or like a fish in the sea. ¹⁹And be careful when you look up to the sky

and see the sun, the moon, and the stars—all the many things in the sky. Be careful that you are not tempted to worship and serve those things. The Lord your God lets the other people in the world do those things. ²⁰But the Lord brought you out of Egypt and made you his own special people. It was as if the Lord reached into a hot furnace for melting iron and pulled you out of that fire. And now you are his people!

²¹“The Lord became angry at me because of you. The Lord swore (*promised*) that I could not go across the Jordan River. He told me that I could not go into the good land that the Lord your God is giving you. ²²So I must die here in this land. I can’t go across the Jordan River, but you will soon go across and take that good land and live there. ²³In that new land, you must be careful not to forget the Agreement that the Lord your God made with you. You must obey the Lord’s command. Don’t make any idols in any form! ²⁴Why? Because the Lord your God hates for his people to worship other gods. And the Lord can be like a fire that destroys!

²⁵“You will live in the country a long time. You will have children and grandchildren there. You will grow old there. And then you will ruin your lives—you will make all kinds of idols! When you do that, you will make God very angry! ²⁶So, I am warning you now. Heaven and earth are my witnesses! If you do that evil thing, then you will quickly be destroyed! You are crossing the Jordan River now to take that land. But if you make any idols, then you will not live there very long. No, you will be completely destroyed! ²⁷The Lord will scatter you among the nations. And only a few of you will be left alive to go to the countries where the Lord will send you. ²⁸There you will serve gods made by men—things made of wood and stone that can’t see or hear or eat or smell! ²⁹But there in these other lands you will look for the Lord your God. And if you look for him with all your heart and soul, you will find him. ³⁰When you are in trouble—when all those things happen to you—then you will come back to the Lord your God and obey him. ³¹The Lord your God is a merciful God! He will not leave you

there. He will not destroy you completely. He will not forget the Agreement that he made with your ancestors.*

Think About the Great Things God Did

³²“Has anything this great ever happened before? Never! Look at the past. Think about all the things that happened before you were born. Go all the way back to the time when God made people on the earth. Look at all the things that have happened anywhere in the world. Has anyone ever heard about anything as great as this? No! ³³You people heard God speaking to you from a fire, and you are still alive! Has that ever happened to anyone else? No! ³⁴And has any other god ever tried to go and take a people for himself from inside another nation? No! But you yourselves have seen the Lord your God do all these wonderful things! He showed you his power and strength. You saw the troubles that tested the people. You saw miracles and wonders. You saw war and the terrible things that happened. ³⁵The Lord showed you these things so that you would know that he is God. There is no other god like him! ³⁶The Lord let you hear his voice from heaven so he could teach you a lesson. On earth he let you see his great fire, and he spoke to you from it.

³⁷“The Lord loved your ancestors.* That is why he chose you, their descendants.* And that is why the Lord brought you out of Egypt. He was with you and brought you out with his great power. ³⁸When you moved forward, the Lord forced out nations that were greater and more powerful than you. And the Lord led you into their land. He gave you their land to live in. And is still doing that today.

³⁹“So today you must remember and accept that the Lord is God. He is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other God! ⁴⁰And you must obey his laws and commands that I give you today. Then everything will go well with you and your children who live after you. And you will live

a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving you—it will be yours forever!”

Moses Chooses the Cities of Safety

⁴¹Then Moses chose three cities on the east side of the Jordan River. ⁴²If a person accidentally killed another person, he could run away to one of those three cities and not be put to death. But he could be safe only if he did not hate the other person and did not mean to kill him. ⁴³The three cities that Moses chose were: Bezer in the high plains for Reuben’s family group; Ramoth in Gilead for Gad’s family group; and Golan in Bashan for Manasseh’s family group.

Introduction to the Law of Moses

⁴⁴Moses gave God’s law to the people of Israel. ⁴⁵Moses gave these teachings, laws, and rules to the people after they came out of Egypt. ⁴⁶Moses gave them these laws while they were on the east side of the Jordan River, in the valley across from Beth Peor. They were in the land of Sihon, the Amorite king that lived at Heshbon. (Moses and the people of Israel had defeated Sihon when they came out of Egypt. ⁴⁷They took Sihon’s land to keep. They also took the land of Og, the king of Bashan. These two Amorite kings lived on the east side of the Jordan River. ⁴⁸This land goes from Aroer on the edge of the Arnon Valley all the way to Mount Sirion* (Mount Hermon). ⁴⁹This land also included the whole Jordan Valley on the east side of the Jordan River. To the south, this land reached to the Dead Sea.* To the east, it reached to the foot of Mount Pisgah.)

The Ten Commandments

5 Moses called together all the people of Israel and said to them, “People of Israel, listen to the laws and rules that I tell you today. Learn these laws and be sure to obey them. ²The Lord our God made an agreement with us at Mount Horeb (*Sinai*). ³The Lord did not make this agreement with our ancestors,* but with us—yes, with all of us

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

Sirion Or “Siyon.”

Dead Sea Literally, “Arabah Sea.”

who are alive here today. ⁴The Lord spoke with you face to face at that mountain. He spoke to you from the fire. ⁵But you were afraid of the fire. And you did not go up the mountain. So I stood between the Lord and you to tell you what the Lord said. The Lord said: ⁶I am the Lord your God. I led you out of Egypt where you were slaves. ⁷So you must obey these commands:

⁷“You must not worship any other gods except me.

⁸“You must not make any idols.* Don’t make any statues or pictures of anything up in the sky or of anything on the earth or of anything down in the water. ⁹Don’t worship or serve idols of any kind. Why? Because I am the Lord your God. I hate for my people to worship other gods.* People who sin against me become my enemies. And I will punish those people. And I will punish their children, their grandchildren, and even their great-grandchildren. ¹⁰But I will be very kind to people who love me and obey my commands. I will be kind to their families for thousands of generations!*

¹¹“You must not use the name of the Lord your God in a wrong way. If a person uses the Lord’s name in a wrong way, then that person is guilty. And the Lord will not make him innocent.

¹²“You must keep the Sabbath* a special day like the Lord your God commanded. ¹³Work at your job six days a week. ¹⁴But the seventh day is a day of rest in honor of the Lord your God. So on that day no person should work—not you, your sons and daughters, foreigners living in your cities or your men and women slaves. Not even your cows, donkeys, and other animals should do any work! Your slaves should be able to rest just like you. ¹⁵Don’t forget that you were slaves in the land of Egypt. The

Lord your God brought you out of Egypt with his great power. He made you free. That is why the Lord your God commands you to always make the Sabbath* a special day.

¹⁶“You must honor (*respect*) your father and your mother. The Lord your God has commanded you to do this. If you follow this command, then you will live a long time, and everything will go well for you in the land that the Lord your God gives you.

¹⁷“You must not murder anyone.

¹⁸“You must not do the sin of adultery.*

¹⁹“You must not steal anything.

²⁰“You must not tell lies about other people.*

²¹“You must not want another man’s wife. You must not want his house, his fields, his men and women servants, his cows or his donkeys. You must not want to take anything that belongs to another person!”

The People Were Afraid of God

²²⌋Moses said,⌋ “The Lord gave these commands to all of you when you were together there at the mountain. The Lord spoke with a loud voice that came from the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness. After he gave us these commands, he didn’t say any more. He wrote his words on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

²³“You heard the voice from the darkness while the mountain was burning with fire. Then all the elders* and the other leaders of your family groups came to me. ²⁴They said, ‘The Lord our God has shown us his Glory and his greatness! We heard him speak from the fire! We have seen today that it is possible for a person to continue living even after God speaks to him. ²⁵But if we hear the Lord our God speak to us again, surely we will die! That terrible fire will destroy us! We don’t want to

idols Statues of false gods that people worshiped.

I hate ... gods Or, “I am El Kanah—the Jealous God.”

But I ... generations Or, “I will show mercy to thousands of people who love me and obey my commandments.”

Sabbath Saturday, a day of rest and worship for the Jews.

adultery Breaking the marriage promise by doing sexual sin.

You must not tell lies about other people Or, “You must not be a false witness against your neighbor.”

elders Older men that were city leaders; they helped make decisions for the people.

die! ²⁶No person has ever heard the living God speak from the fire like we have and still lived! ²⁷Moses, you go near and hear all the things the Lord our God says. Then tell us all the things the Lord tells you. We will listen to you, and we will do everything you say.’

The Lord Speaks to Moses

²⁸“The Lord heard what you said. And the Lord said to me, ‘I heard what the people said. And that is fine. ²⁹I only wanted to change their way of thinking—I wanted them to respect me and obey all my commands from the heart! Then everything would be fine with them and with their descendants* forever.

³⁰“Go and tell the people to go back to their tents. ³¹But you, Moses, stand here near me. I will tell you all the commands, laws, and rules that you must teach them. They must do these things in the land that I am giving them to live in.’

³²“So, you people must be careful to do all the things the Lord commanded you. Don’t stop following God! ³³You must live the way the Lord your God commanded you. Then you will continue to live, and everything will be fine with you. You will live a long life in the land that will belong to you.

Always Love and Obey God!

6“These are the commands, the laws, and the rules that the Lord your God told me to teach you. Obey these laws in the land that you are entering to live in. ²You and your descendants* must respect the Lord your God as long as you live. You must obey all his laws and commands that I give you. If you do this, then you will have a long life in that new land. ³People of Israel, listen carefully and obey these laws. Then everything will be fine with you. You will have many children, and you will get the land filled with many good things*—just like the Lord, the God of your ancestors,* promised.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

filled with many good things Literally, “flowing with milk and honey.”

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

⁴“Listen, people of Israel! The Lord is our God. The Lord is one! ⁵You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. ⁶Always remember these commands that I give you today. ⁷Be sure to teach them to your children. Talk about these commands when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road. Talk about them when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸Write these commands and tie them on your hands and wear them on your foreheads to help you remember my teachings. ⁹Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

¹⁰“The Lord your God made a promise to your ancestors,* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Lord promised to give you this land. The Lord will give you that land! And he will give you great and rich cities that you did not build. ¹¹The Lord will give you houses full of good things that you did not put there. The Lord will give you wells that you did not dig. The Lord will give you fields of grapes and olive trees that you did not plant. And you will have plenty to eat.

¹²“But be careful! Don’t forget the Lord. You were slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought you out of the land of Egypt. ¹³Respect the Lord your God and serve only him. And you must use only his name to make promises. [Don’t use the names of false gods!] ¹⁴You must not follow other gods. You must not follow the gods of the people who live around you. ¹⁵The Lord your God is always with you. And the Lord hates his people worshiping other gods! So if you follow those other gods, the Lord will become very angry at you. He will destroy you from the face of the earth.

¹⁶“You must not test the Lord your God like you tested him at Massah. ¹⁷You must be sure to obey the commands of the Lord your God. You must follow all the teachings and laws he has given you. ¹⁸You must do the things that are right and good—things that please the Lord. Then everything will go well for you, and you can go in and take the good land that the Lord promised your ancestors.* ¹⁹And you will force out all your enemies, just like the Lord said.

Teach Your Children the Things God Did

²⁰“In the future, your son might ask you, ‘The Lord our God gave you teachings, laws, and rules. What do they mean?’ ²¹Then you will say to your son, ‘We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his great power. ²²The Lord did great and amazing things. We saw him do these things to the Egyptian people, to Pharaoh, and to the people in Pharaoh’s house. ²³And the Lord brought us out of Egypt so that he could give us the land that he promised our ancestors.* ²⁴The Lord commanded us to follow all these teachings. We must respect the Lord our God. Then the Lord will always keep us alive and doing well, as we are today. ²⁵If we carefully obey the whole law, exactly like the Lord our God told us to, then God will say that we have done a very good thing.’*"

Israel, God’s Special People

7“The Lord your God will lead you into the land that you are entering to take for your own. The Lord will force out many nations for you—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—seven nations greater and more powerful than you. ²The Lord your God will put these nations under your power. And you will defeat them. You must destroy them completely. Don’t make an agreement with them. Don’t show them mercy. ³Don’t marry any of those people, and don’t let your sons or daughters marry any of the people from those other nations. ⁴Why? Because those people will turn your children away from following me. Then your children will serve other gods. And the Lord will become very angry at you. He will quickly destroy you.

Destroy False Gods

⁵“This is what you must do to those nations: You must smash their altars* and

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

If we ... good thing Or, “The Lord our God will credit us with righteousness (goodness) if we carefully obey the whole law, exactly as he commanded us.”

altar(s) A table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.

break their memorial stones* into pieces. Cut down their Asherah poles* and burn their statues! ⁶Why? Because you are the Lord’s own people. From all the people on earth, the Lord your God chose you to be his special people—people that belong only to him. ⁷Why did the Lord love and choose you? It was not because you are such a large nation. You had the fewest of all people! ⁸But the Lord brought you out of Egypt with great power. He made you free from slavery. He freed you from the control of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Why? Because the Lord loves you and because he wanted to keep the promise he made to your ancestors.*

⁹“So remember that the Lord your God is the only God, and you can trust him! He keeps his Agreement. He shows his love and kindness to all people who love him and obey his commands. He continues to show his love and kindness through a thousand generations. ¹⁰But the Lord punishes people who hate him. He will destroy them. He will not be slow to punish people who hate him. ¹¹So you must be careful to obey the commands, laws, and rules that I give you today.

¹²“If you listen to these laws, and if you are careful to obey them, then the Lord your God will keep his Agreement of love with you. He promised this to your ancestors.* ¹³He will love you and bless you. He will make your nation grow. He will bless your children. He will bless your fields with good crops. He will give you grain, new wine, and oil. He will bless your cows with baby calves and your sheep with lambs. You will have all these blessings in the land that he promised your ancestors* to give you.

¹⁴“You will be blessed more than all people. Every husband and wife will be able to have children. Your cows will be able to have calves. ¹⁵And the Lord will take away all sickness from you. The Lord will not let you catch any of the terrible diseases that you had in Egypt. But the Lord will make your

memorial stones Stones that were set up to help people remember the false gods they worshiped.

Asherah poles Poles used to honor the goddess Asherah. People thought she could help them have many children.

enemies catch those diseases. ¹⁶You must destroy all the people that the Lord your God helps you defeat. Don't feel sorry for them. Don't worship their gods! Why? Because they are a trap—they will ruin your life.

The Lord Promises to Help His People

¹⁷“Don't say in your heart, ‘These nations are stronger than we are. How can we force them out?’ ¹⁸You must not be afraid of them. You must remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all the people of Egypt. ¹⁹You saw the great troubles he gave them. You saw the amazing things he did. You saw the Lord use his great power and strength to bring you out of Egypt. The Lord your God will use that same power against all the people you fear.

²⁰“The Lord your God will even send the hornet* to find all the people that escape from you and hide themselves. He will destroy all those people. ²¹Don't be afraid of those people. Why? Because the Lord your God is with you. He is a great and awesome God. ²²The Lord your God will force those nations to leave your country little by little. You will not destroy them all at once. If you did, then the wild animals would grow to be too many for you. ²³But the Lord your God will let you defeat those nations. The Lord will confuse them in battle, until they are destroyed. ²⁴The Lord will help you defeat their kings. You will kill them, and the world will forget they ever lived. No man will be able to stop you. You will destroy them all!

²⁵“You must throw the statues of their gods into the fire and burn them. You must not want to keep the silver or the gold that is on those statues. You must not take that silver or gold for yourselves. It will be like a trap to you—it will ruin your life. Why? Because the Lord your God hates those idols. ²⁶And you must not bring any of those terrible idols into your homes. You must hate those terrible things! You must destroy those idols!

hornet A stinging insect, like a large wasp or bee. Here, it might mean God's angel or his great power.

Remember the Lord

8“You must obey all the commands that I give you today. Why? Because then you will live and grow to become a great nation. You will get the land that the Lord promised to your ancestors.* ²And you must remember the whole trip that the Lord your God has led you through these 40 years in the desert. The Lord was testing you. He wanted to make you humble. He wanted to know the things in your heart. He wanted to know if you would obey his commands. ³The Lord humbled you and let you be hungry. Then he fed you with manna*—something you did not know about before. It was something your ancestors* had never seen. Why did the Lord do these things? Because he wanted you to know that it is not just bread that keeps people alive. People's lives depend on what the Lord says. ⁴These past 40 years, your clothes did not wear out, and your feet did not swell. [Why? Because the Lord protected you!] ⁵You must remember that the Lord your God did all those things for you. God was like a father teaching and correcting his son.

⁶“You must obey the commands of the Lord your God. Follow him and respect him. ⁷The Lord your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with rivers and pools of water. Water flows out of the ground in the valleys and hills. ⁸It is a land with wheat and barley, grape vines, fig trees, and pomegranates.* It is a land with olive oil and honey. ⁹There you will have plenty of food. You will have everything you need. It is a land where the rocks are iron. You can dig copper out of the hills. ¹⁰You will have all you want to eat. Then you will praise the Lord your God for the good land he has given you.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person's parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

manna The special food God sent to the people of Israel while they wandered through the desert for 40 years.

pomegranate(s) A red fruit with many small seeds inside it. Each seed is covered with the soft, juicy part of the fruit.

Don't Forget What the Lord Did

¹¹“Be careful. Don’t forget the Lord your God! Be careful to obey the commands, laws, and rules that I give you today. ¹²Then you will have plenty to eat, and you will build good houses and live in them. ¹³Your cows, sheep, and goats will grow large. You will get plenty of gold and silver. You will have plenty of everything! ¹⁴When that happens, you must be careful not to become proud. You must not forget the Lord your God. You were slaves in Egypt. But the Lord made you free and brought you out of that land. ¹⁵The Lord led you through that great and terrible desert. Poisonous snakes and scorpions* were in that desert! The ground was dry, and there was no water anywhere. But the Lord gave you water out of the rock. ¹⁶In the desert, the Lord fed you manna*—something your ancestors* had never seen. The Lord tested you. Why? Because the Lord made you humble so that things would go well for you in the end. ¹⁷Don’t ever say to yourself, ‘I got all this wealth by my own power and ability.’ ¹⁸Remember the Lord your God. Remember that he is the One who gives you power to do those things! Why does the Lord do this? Because he wants to keep the Agreement that he made with your ancestors*—just like he is doing today!

¹⁹“Don’t ever forget the Lord your God. Don’t ever follow other gods! Don’t worship and serve them. If you do that, then I warn you today: You will surely be destroyed! ²⁰The Lord is destroying other nations for you. But if you follow those other gods, then you will be destroyed just like them! Why? Because you stopped listening to the Lord your God!

The Lord Will Be with Israel

9“Listen, you people of Israel! You will go across the Jordan River today. You will go into that land to force out nations greater and stronger than you. Their cities are big and

have walls as high as the sky! ²The people there are tall and strong. They are the Anakites.* You know about those people. You heard our spies say, ‘No person can win against the Anakites.’ ³But you can be sure that it is the Lord your God who goes across the river before you—and God is like a fire that destroys! The Lord will destroy those nations. He will make them fall before you. You will force those nations out. You will quickly destroy them. The Lord has promised you that this will happen.

⁴“The Lord your God will force those nations out for you. But don’t say to yourselves, ‘The Lord brought us to live in this land because we are such good people!’ [That is not the reason!] The Lord forced those nations out because they were evil—not because you were good. ⁵You are going in to take their land, but not because you are good and live right. You are going in, and the Lord your God is forcing those people out because of the evil way they lived. And the Lord wants to keep the promise he made to your ancestors*—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ⁶The Lord your God is giving you that good land to live in, but you should know that it is not because you are good. The truth is that you are very stubborn people!

Remember the Lord's Anger

⁷“Don’t forget that you made the Lord your God angry in the desert! You have refused to obey the Lord from the day you left the land of Egypt to the day you came to this place. ⁸You made the Lord angry at Mount Horeb (*Sinai*). The Lord was angry enough to destroy you! ⁹I went up the mountain to get the flat stones. The Agreement that the Lord made with you was written on those stones. I stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights. I did not eat any food or drink any water. ¹⁰The Lord gave me the flat stones. God wrote his commands on the stones with his finger. God wrote everything he said to you from the fire when you were gathered together at the mountain.

scorpions Insects with stingers in their tails that cause pain.

manna The special food God sent to the people of Israel while they wandered through the desert for 40 years.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

Anakites Descendants of Anak, a family famous for tall and powerful fighting men. See Num. 13:33.

¹¹“So, at the end of 40 days and 40 nights, the Lord gave me two flat stones—the stones of the Agreement. ¹²Then the Lord said to me, ‘Get up and quickly go down from here. The people you brought out of Egypt have ruined themselves. They stopped obeying my commands so quickly! They melted gold and made an idol for themselves.’

¹³“The Lord also said to me, ‘I have watched these people. They are very stubborn! ¹⁴Let me destroy these people completely, so no one will even remember their names! Then I will make another nation from you that is stronger and greater than these people.’

The Golden Calf

¹⁵“Then I turned and came down from the mountain. The mountain was burning with fire. And the two flat stones of the Agreement were in my hands. ¹⁶I looked and I saw you had sinned against the Lord your God. I saw the calf you made from melted gold! You stopped obeying the Lord so quickly! ¹⁷So I took the two flat stones and threw them down. There before your eyes I broke the stones to pieces. ¹⁸Then I bowed down before the Lord with my face to the ground for 40 days and 40 nights, like I did before. I did not eat any food or drink any water. I did this because you had sinned so badly. You did the thing that is evil to the Lord, and you made him angry. ¹⁹I was afraid of the Lord’s terrible anger. He was angry enough to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me again. ²⁰The Lord was very angry with Aaron—enough to destroy him! So I also prayed for Aaron at that time. ²¹I took that terrible thing—the calf you made—and burned it in the fire. I broke it into small pieces. And I crushed the pieces until they were dust. Then I threw the dust into the river that came down from the mountain.

Moses Asks God to Forgive Israel

²²“Also, at Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth Hattaavah you made the Lord angry. ²³And you did not obey when the Lord told you to leave Kadesh Barnea. He said, ‘Go up and take the land I am giving you.’ But you refused to obey the Lord your God. You did not trust him. You did not listen to his

command. ²⁴All the time that I have known you, you have refused to obey the Lord.

²⁵“So I bowed down before the Lord 40 days and 40 nights. Why? Because the Lord said he would destroy you. ²⁶I prayed to the Lord. I said: Lord my Master, don’t destroy your people. They belong to you. You freed them and brought them out of Egypt with your great power and strength. ²⁷Remember your promise to your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Forget how stubborn these people are. Don’t look at their evil ways or their sins. ²⁸If you punish your people, the Egyptians might say, ‘The Lord was not able to take his people into the land he promised them. And he hated them. So he took them into the desert to kill them.’ ²⁹But they are your people, Lord. They belong to you. You brought them out of Egypt with your great power and strength.

New Stone Tablets

10“At that time, the Lord said to me, ‘You must cut out two flat stones like the first two stones. Then you must come up to me on the mountain. Also make a wooden box. ²I will write on the flat stones the same words that were on the first stones—the stones you broke. Then you must put these new stones in the Box.’

³“So I made a box from acacia wood. I cut two flat stones like the first two stones. Then I went up on the mountain. I had the two flat stones in my hand. ⁴And the Lord wrote on the stones the same words he had written before—the Ten Commandments he spoke to you from the fire, when you were gathered together at the mountain. Then the Lord gave the two flat stones to me. ⁵I came back down from the mountain. I put the stones in the Box I had made. The Lord commanded me to put them there. And the stones are still there in that Box.”

⁶The people of Israel traveled from the wells of the people of Jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died and was buried. Aaron’s son Eleazar served in Aaron’s place as priest. ⁷Then the people of Israel went from Moserah to Gudgodah. And they went from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of rivers. ⁸At that time the Lord separated the family group of Levi from the other family groups for his special work.

They had the work of carrying the Lord's Box of the Agreement.* They also served as priests before the Lord. And they had the work of blessing people in the Lord's name. They still do this special work today. ⁹That is why the Levites* did not get any share of land like the other family groups did. The Levites have the Lord for their share. That is what the Lord your God promised them.)

¹⁰"I stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights, like the first time. The Lord also listened to me at that time. The Lord decided not to destroy you. ¹¹The Lord said to me, 'Go and lead the people on their trip. They will go in and live in the land that I promised their ancestors* to give them.'

What the Lord Really Wants

¹²"Now, people of Israel, listen! What does the Lord your God really want from you? The Lord wants you to respect him and do what he says. God wants you to love him and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. ¹³So obey the laws and commands of the Lord that I am giving you today. These laws and commands are for your own good.

¹⁴"Everything belongs to the Lord your God. The heavens, even the highest heavens, belong to the Lord. The earth and everything on it belong to the Lord your God. ¹⁵The Lord loved your ancestors* very much. He loved them so much that he chose you, their descendants,* to be his people. He chose you instead of any other nation. And you are still his chosen people today.

¹⁶"Stop being stubborn. Give your hearts to the Lord. ¹⁷Why? Because the Lord is your God. He is the God of gods and the Lord of lords. He is the great God. He is the amazing and powerful fighter. To the Lord every person

is the same. The Lord does not accept money to change his mind. ¹⁸He helps children that have no parents. He helps widows.* He loves even the strangers in our country. He gives them food and clothes. ¹⁹So you must also love those strangers. Why? Because you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt.

²⁰"You must respect the Lord your God and worship only him. Never leave him. When you make promises, you must use only his name. ²¹The Lord is the one you should praise. He is your God. He has done great and amazing things for you. You have seen those things with your own eyes. ²²When your ancestors* went down into Egypt, there were only 70 people. Now the Lord your God has made you many, many people—as many as the stars in the sky.

Remember the Lord

11 "So you must love the Lord your God. You must do the things he tells you to do. You must always obey his laws, rules, and commands. ²Remember today all the great things the Lord your God has done to teach you. It was you, not your children, that saw those things happen and lived through them. You saw how great the Lord is. You saw how strong he is, and you saw the powerful things he does. ³You, not your children, saw the miracles he did. You saw the things he did in Egypt to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and to his whole country. ⁴You, not your children, saw the things the Lord did to the Egyptian army—to their horses and chariots.* They were chasing you, but you saw the Lord cover them with the water from the Red Sea. You saw the Lord completely destroy them. ⁵It was you, not your children, that saw all the things the Lord your God did for you in the desert until you came to this place. ⁶You saw what the Lord did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab from Reuben's family. All the people of Israel watched as the ground opened up like a mouth and swallowed those men. It swallowed their families, their tents, and all of their servants

Box of the Agreement Or, "ark of the Covenant," the box containing the flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them and other things that proved God was with the people of Israel during their time in the Sinai desert.

Levites People from the tribe of Levi. They helped the priests in the temple and worked for the civil government.

ancestors Literally, "fathers," meaning a person's parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

descendants A person's children and their future families.

widows Women whose husbands have died.

chariot(s) A small wagon used in war.

and animals. ⁷It was you, not your children, that saw all those great things the Lord did.

⁸“So you must obey every command I tell you today. Then you will be strong. And you will be able to go across the Jordan River and take the land that you are ready to enter. ⁹Then you will live a long life in that country. The Lord promised to give that land to your ancestors* and all their descendants.* It is a land filled with many good things.* ¹⁰The land that you will get is not like the land of Egypt that you came from. In Egypt, you planted your seeds, and then you used your feet to pump water from the canals to water your plants. You watered your fields the same way you water a vegetable garden. ¹¹But the land that you will soon get is not like that. In Israel there are mountains and valleys. And the land gets its water from the rain that falls from the sky. ¹²The Lord your God cares for that land! The Lord your God watches over that land, from the beginning to the end of the year.

¹³“The Lord says, ‘You must listen carefully to the commands I give you today: You must love the Lord your God, and serve him with all your heart and all your soul. If you do that, then ¹⁴I will send rain for your land at the right time. I will send the autumn rain and the spring rain. Then you can gather your grain, your new wine, and your oil. ¹⁵And I will make grass grow in your fields for your cows. You will have plenty to eat.’

¹⁶“But be careful! Don’t be fooled. Don’t turn away to serve and worship other gods. ¹⁷If you do that, then the Lord will become very angry at you. He will shut the skies, and there will be no rain. The land will not make a harvest. And you will soon die in the good land that the Lord is giving you.

¹⁸“Remember these commands I give you. Keep them in your hearts. Write these commands and tie them on your hands and wear them on your foreheads for a way to

help you remember my laws. ¹⁹Teach these laws to your children. Talk about these things when you sit in your houses, when you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. ²⁰Write these commands on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates. ²¹Then both you and your children will live a long time in the land that the Lord promised to give to your ancestors.* You will live there as long as the skies are above the earth.

²²“Be careful to obey every command I have told you to follow: Love the Lord your God, follow all his ways, and be faithful to him. ²³Then, when you go into the land, the Lord will force all those other nations out. You will take the land from nations that are larger and more powerful than you. ²⁴All the land you walk on will be yours. Your land will go from the desert in the south all the way to Lebanon in the north. It will go from the Euphrates River in the east all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. ²⁵No person will be able to stand against you. The Lord your God will make the people fear you wherever you go in that land. That is what the Lord promised you before.

Israel's Choice: Blessings or Curses

²⁶“Today I am giving you a choice. You may choose the blessing or the curse. ²⁷You will get the blessing if you listen and obey the commands of the Lord your God that I have told you today. ²⁸But you will get the curse if you refuse to listen and obey the commands of the Lord your God. So don’t stop living the way I command you today. And don’t follow other gods. You know the Lord, but you don’t know those gods.

²⁹“The Lord your God will lead you to your land. You will soon go in and take that land. At that time, you must go to the top of Mount Gerizim and read the blessings to the people from there. And then, you must go to the top of Mount Ebal and read the curses to the people from there. ³⁰These mountains are on the other side of the Jordan River in the land of the Canaanite people living in the Jordan Valley. These mountains are toward the west, not far from the oak trees of Moreh near the town of Gilgal. ³¹You will go across

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

filled with many good things Literally, “flowing with milk and honey.”

the Jordan River. You will take the land that the Lord your God is giving you. This land will belong to you. When you are living in this land, ³²you must carefully obey all the laws and rules I give you today.

The Place for Worshipping God

12 “These are the laws and rules that you must obey in your new land. You must carefully obey these laws as long as you live in this land. The Lord is the God of your ancestors.* And the Lord is giving this land to you. ²You will take that land from the nations that live there now. You must completely destroy all the places where the people of these nations worship their gods. These places are on high mountains, on hills, and under green trees. ³You must smash their altars* and break their stone memorials* into pieces. You must burn their Asherah poles* and cut down the statues of their gods.

⁴“You must not worship the Lord your God in the same way that those people worship their gods. ⁵The Lord your God will choose a special place among your family groups. The Lord will put his name there. That will be his special house. You must go to that place to worship him. ⁶There you must bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, one tenth of your crops and animals,* your special gifts, any gifts you promised to the Lord, any special gift you want to give, and the first animals born in your herds and flocks. ⁷You and your families will eat together at that place, and the Lord your God will be there with you. At that place, you will enjoy sharing the things you worked for. You will remember that the Lord your God blessed you and gave you those good things.

⁸“You must not continue to worship the way we have been worshipping. Until now, each of us has been worshipping God any way

we wanted. ⁹Why? Because we have not yet entered the peaceful land that the Lord your God is giving you. ¹⁰But you will go across the Jordan River and live in that land. The Lord is giving that land to you. And the Lord will give you rest from all your enemies. You will be safe. ¹¹Then the Lord will choose a place to be his special house. The Lord will put his name there. And you must bring all the things I command you to that place. Bring your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, one tenth of your crops and animals,* your special gifts, any gifts you promised to the Lord, and the first animals born in your herd and flock. ¹²Come to that place with all your people—your children, all your servants, and the Levites* living in your towns. (These Levites will not have a share of the land for their own.) Enjoy yourselves together there with the Lord your God. ¹³Be sure you don’t offer your burnt offerings in just any place you see. ¹⁴The Lord will choose his special place among your family groups. Offer your burnt offerings and do all the other things I told you only in that place.

¹⁵“Wherever you live you may kill and eat any good animals, like gazelles and deer. You may eat as much of the meat as you want, as much as the Lord your God gives to you. Any person may eat this meat—people who are clean* and people who are unclean.* ¹⁶But you must not eat the blood. You must pour the blood on the ground like water.

¹⁷“There are some things you must not eat in the places where you live. These things are: the part of your grain that belongs to God, the part of your new wine and oil that belongs to God, the first animals born in your herd or flock, any gift that you promised to God, any special gifts you want to give or any other gifts for God. ¹⁸You must eat those offerings only at the place where the Lord your God will be together with you—the special place that the Lord your God will choose. You must go there and eat together with your sons, your

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

altar(s) A table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.

memorial(s) Stones that were set up to help people remember the false gods they worshiped.

Asherah poles Poles used to honor the goddess Asherah. People thought she could help them have many children.

one tenth ... animals Or, “tithes.” See Deut. 14:22–29.

Levites People from the tribe of Levi. They helped the priests in the temple and worked for the civil government.

clean Pure or acceptable to God for worship.

unclean Not pure or not acceptable to God for worship.

daughters, all your servants, and the Levites* living in your towns. Enjoy yourselves there with the Lord your God. Enjoy the things you have worked for. ¹⁹But be sure that you always share these meals with the Levites. Do this as long as you live in your land.

^{20–21}“The Lord your God promised to make your country larger. When the Lord does this, you might live too far from the place he chooses to be his special house. If it is too far, and you are hungry for meat, then you may eat any meat you have. You may kill any animal from the herd or flock that the Lord has given you. Do this the way I have commanded you. You may eat this meat there where you live any time you want. ²²You may eat this meat the same as you would eat gazelle or deer meat. Any person can do this—people who are clean* and people who are unclean.* ²³But be sure not to eat the blood. Why? Because the life is in the blood. And you must not eat meat that still has life in it. ²⁴Don’t eat the blood. You must pour the blood onto the ground like water. ²⁵So don’t eat blood. You must do everything that the Lord says is right. Then good things will happen to you and to your descendants.*

²⁶“If you decide to give something special to God, then you must go to the special place that the Lord your God will choose. And if you make a special promise, then you must go to that place to give that gift to God. ²⁷You must offer your burnt offerings in that place. Offer the meat and the blood of your burnt offerings on the altar* of the Lord your God. For your other sacrifices, you must pour the blood on the altar of the Lord your God. Then you may eat the meat. ²⁸Be careful to obey all the commands that I give you. When you do the things that are good and right—the things that please the Lord your God—then everything will go well for you and for your descendants* forever.

Levites People from the tribe of Levi. They helped the priests in the temple and worked for the civil government.

clean Pure or acceptable to God for worship.

unclean Not pure or not acceptable to God for worship.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

altar(s) A table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.

²⁹“You are going to take your land from other people. The Lord your God will destroy those people for you. You will force those people out of that land, and you will live there. ³⁰After that happens, be careful! You will destroy those people. So don’t fall into the trap of worshiping their false gods. Be careful! Don’t go to those false gods for help. Don’t say, ‘Those people worshiped these gods, so I will worship that way too!’ ³¹Don’t do that to the Lord your God! Don’t worship God like that! Why? Because those people do all kinds of bad things that the Lord hates. They even burn their children as sacrifices to their gods!

³²“You must be careful to do everything I command you. Don’t add anything to the things I tell you, and don’t take anything away.

False Prophets

13“A prophet or a person that explains dreams might come to you. He might tell you that he will show you a sign or a miracle. ²And the sign or miracle he told you about might come true. Then he might ask you to follow other gods (gods you don’t know). He might say to you, ‘Let’s serve those gods!’ ³Don’t listen to that person. Why? Because the Lord your God is testing you. The Lord wants to know if you love him with all your heart and all your soul. ⁴You must follow the Lord your God! Respect him. Obey the Lord’s commands, and do what he tells you. Serve the Lord, and never leave him! ⁵Also, you must kill that prophet or person that explains dreams. Why? Because he told you to turn against the Lord your God. And it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, where you were slaves. That person tried to pull you away from the life the Lord your God commanded you to live. So you must kill that person to remove that evil from your people.

⁶“Someone close to you might secretly persuade you to worship other gods. It might be your own brother, your son, your daughter, the wife you love or your closest friend. That person might say, ‘Let’s go and serve other gods.’ (These are gods that you and your ancestors never knew. ⁷They are the gods of

the people that live in the other lands around you, some near and some far away.) ⁸You must not agree with that person. Don't listen to him. Don't feel sorry for him. Don't let him go free. And don't protect him. ^{9–10}No! You must kill that person! You must kill him with stones. You be the first person to pick up stones and throw at him. Then all the people must throw stones to kill him. Why? Because that person tried to pull you away from the Lord your God. And it was the Lord who brought you out of the land of Egypt, where you were slaves. ¹¹Then all the people of Israel will hear and be afraid. And they will not do those evil things any more.

Cities that Must Be Destroyed

¹²"The Lord your God has given you cities to live in. Sometimes you might hear some bad news about one of these cities. You might hear that ¹³some bad people in your own nation are persuading the people of their city to do bad things. They might say to the people of their city, 'Let's go and serve other gods.' (These gods would be gods that you never knew before.) ¹⁴If you hear this kind of news, you must do all you can to learn if it is true. If you learn that it is true—if you prove that such a terrible thing really did happen—¹⁵then you must punish the people of that city. You must kill them all. And kill all their animals, too. You must destroy that city completely. ¹⁶Then you must gather all the valuable things and take them to the center of the city and burn the city and everything in it. It will be a burnt offering to the Lord your God. The city must become an empty pile of rocks forever. That city must never be built again. ¹⁷Everything in that city must be given to God to be destroyed. So you must not keep any of the things for yourselves. If you follow this command, then the Lord will stop being so angry at you. The Lord will be kind to you. He will feel sorry for you. He will let your nation grow larger, like he promised your ancestors.* ¹⁸This will happen if you listen to the Lord your God—if you obey all his commands that I give you

ancestors Literally, "fathers," meaning a person's parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

today. You must do the things that the Lord your God says are right.

Israel, God's Special People

14 "You are the children of the Lord your God. When someone dies, you must not cut yourselves or shave your heads to show your sadness. ²Why? Because you are different from other people. You are the Lord's special people. From all the people in the world, the Lord your God chose you to be his own special people.

Food the Israelites Are Allowed to Eat

³"Don't eat anything that the Lord hates. ⁴You may eat these animals: cows, sheep, goats, ⁵deer, gazelles, roe deer, wild sheep, wild goats, antelopes, and mountain sheep. ⁶You may eat any animal that has hooves* divided into two parts and that chews the cud.* ⁷But don't eat camels, rabbits or rock badgers. These animals chew the cud, but they don't have split hooves. So those animals are not a clean* food for you. ⁸And you must not eat pigs. Their hooves are divided, but they don't chew the cud. So pigs are not a clean food for you. Don't eat any meat from pigs. Don't even touch a pig's dead body.

⁹"You may eat any kind of fish that has fins and scales. ¹⁰But don't eat anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales. It is not a clean* food for you.

¹¹"You may eat any clean* bird. ¹²But don't eat any of these birds: eagles, vultures, buzzards, ¹³red kites, falcons, any kind of kite, ¹⁴any kind of raven, ¹⁵horned owls, screech owls, sea gulls, any kind of hawk, ¹⁶little owls, great owls, white owls, ¹⁷desert owls, ospreys, cormorants, ¹⁸storks, any kind of heron, hoopoes or bats.

¹⁹"All insects with wings are unclean.* So don't eat them. ²⁰But you may eat any clean* bird.

hooves The hard part of the foot of certain animals.

cud The food that is brought up from the stomach of some animals (like cows) and chewed again.

clean Pure or acceptable for eating or for worship.

unclean Not pure or not acceptable for eating or for worship.

²¹“Don’t eat any animal that has died by itself. You may give the dead animal to the foreigner in your town, and he can eat it. Or you may sell the dead animal to a foreigner. But you yourselves must not eat the dead animal. Why? Because you belong to the Lord your God. You are his special people.

“Don’t cook a baby goat in its mother’s milk.

Giving One Tenth

²²“Every year you must be sure to save one tenth of all the crops that grow in your fields. ²³Then you must go to the place the Lord chooses to be his special house. You will go there to be with the Lord your God. At that place you will eat the tenth of your crops—one tenth of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the first animals born in your herds and flocks. In this way, you will always remember to respect the Lord your God. ²⁴But that place might be too far for you to travel to. Maybe you will not be able to carry one tenth of all the crops that the Lord has blessed you with. If that happens, then ²⁵sell that part of your crops. Take the money with you and go to the special place that the Lord has chosen. ²⁶Use the money to buy anything you want—cows, sheep, wine or beer or any other food. Then you and your family should eat and enjoy yourselves there in that place with the Lord your God. ²⁷But don’t forget the Levites* living in your town. [Share your food with them] because they don’t have a share of the land like you have.

²⁸“At the end of every three years, you must gather one tenth of your harvest for that year. Store this food in your towns [where other people can use it]. ²⁹This food is for the Levites,* because they don’t have any land of their own. This food is also for other people in your towns that need it. That food is for foreigners, widows, and children that have no parents. If you do this, then the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do.

Levites People from the tribe of Levi. They helped the priests in the temple and worked for the civil government.

The Special Year of Canceling Debts

15“At the end of every seven years, you must cancel debts. ²This is the way you must do this: Every person that has lent money to another Israelite must cancel that debt. He should not ask a brother (an Israelite) to pay back that debt. Why? Because the Lord said to cancel debts during that year. ³You may require a foreigner to pay you back. But you must cancel any debt another Israelite owes you. ⁴There should not be any poor people in your country. Why? Because the Lord is giving you this land. And the Lord will greatly bless you. ⁵But this will happen only if you obey the Lord your God. You must be careful to obey every command that I have told you today. ⁶Then the Lord your God will bless you, like he promised. And you will have enough money to make loans to many nations. But you will not need to borrow from anyone. You will rule over many nations. But none of those nations will rule over you.

⁷“When you are living in the land the Lord your God is giving you, there might be a poor person among your people. You must not be selfish. You must not refuse to give help to that poor person. ⁸You must be willing to share with him. You must lend that person whatever he needs.

⁹“Don’t ever refuse to help someone simply because the seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near. Don’t let an evil thought like that enter your mind. You must never have bad thoughts about a person that needs help. You must not refuse to help him. If you don’t help that poor person, then he will complain to the Lord against you. And the Lord will find you guilty of sin.

¹⁰“Give the poor person all that you can. Don’t feel bad about giving to him. Why? Because the Lord your God will bless you for doing this good thing. He will bless you in all your work and in everything you do. ¹¹There will always be poor people in the land. That is why I command you to be ready to help your brother. Give to the poor people in your land that need help.

Letting Slaves Go Free

¹²“You might buy a Hebrew man or woman to serve you as a slave. You may keep that person as a slave for six years. But in the seventh year, you must let that person go free. ¹³But when you let your slave go free, don’t send him away with nothing. ¹⁴You must give that person some of your animals, grain, and wine. The Lord your God blessed you and gave you plenty of good things. In the same way, you must give plenty of good things to your slave. ¹⁵Remember, you were slaves in Egypt. And the Lord your God set you free. So that is why I am giving you this command today.

¹⁶“But one of your slaves might say to you, ‘I will not leave you.’ He might say this because he loves you and your family and because he has a good life with you. ¹⁷Make this servant put his ear against your door, and use a sharp tool to make a hole in his ear. This will show that he is your slave forever. You must do this even to the women slaves that want to stay with you.

¹⁸“Don’t feel bad about letting your slave go free. Remember, he served you six years at only half the money you would have paid a hired person. The Lord your God will bless you in everything you do.

Rules About Firstborn Animals

¹⁹“All the first male animals born in your herd and flock are special. You must give them to the Lord. Don’t use any of those animals for your work. And don’t cut wool from any of those sheep. ²⁰Every year you must take those animals to the place the Lord your God will choose. There with the Lord, you and your family will eat those animals.

²¹“But if an animal has something wrong with it—if it is crippled or blind or has something else wrong with it—then you must not sacrifice that animal to the Lord your God. ²²But you may eat the meat from that animal at home. Any person may eat it—people who are clean* and people who are unclean.* The rules for eating this meat is the same as the rules for

eating gazelles and deer. ²³But you must not eat the blood from the animal. You must pour the blood out on the ground like water.

Passover

16“Remember the month of Abib.* At that time, you must celebrate Passover* to honor the Lord your God. Why? Because in that month the Lord your God brought you out from Egypt by night. ²You must go to the place the Lord will choose to be his special house. There you must offer the Passover sacrifice to honor the Lord. You must offer the cows and goats. ³Don’t eat bread that has yeast in it with this sacrifice. You must eat unleavened bread* for seven days. This bread is called ‘Bread of Trouble.’ It will help you remember the troubles you had in Egypt. Remember how quickly you had to leave that country! You must remember that day as long as you live. ⁴There must be no yeast in anyone’s house anywhere in the country for seven days. Also, all the meat you sacrifice on the evening of the first day must be eaten before morning.

⁵“You must not sacrifice the Passover animal in any of the towns that the Lord your God gives you. ⁶You must sacrifice the Passover animal only at the place that the Lord your God will choose to be his special house. There you must sacrifice the Passover animal in the evening when the sun goes down. This is the holiday when you remember that God brought you out of Egypt. ⁷You must cook the Passover meat and eat it at the place the Lord your God will choose. Then, in the morning, you may go back home. ⁸You must eat unleavened bread* six days. On the seventh day you must not do any work. On this day, the people will come together for a special meeting to honor the Lord your God.

Abib This name means “young heads of grain.” This is the first month of the Jewish calendar, also called Nisan. It was about the same time as March and April.

Passover Important Jewish holy day. They ate a special meal on this day every spring to remember that God freed them from slavery in Egypt.

unleavened bread Bread made without yeast.

clean Pure or acceptable to God for worship.

unclean Not pure or not acceptable to God for worship.

Festival of Weeks (Pentecost)

⁹“You must count seven weeks from the time you began to harvest the grain. ¹⁰Then celebrate the Festival of Weeks for the Lord your God. Do this by bringing him some special gift you want to bring. Decide how much to give by thinking about how much the Lord your God has blessed you. ¹¹Go to the place the Lord will choose to be his special house. You and your people should enjoy yourselves together there with the Lord your God. Take all your people with you—your sons, your daughters, and all your servants. Also, take the Levites,* foreigners, orphans,* and widows* living in your towns. ¹²Remember, you were slaves in Egypt. So be sure to obey these laws.

Festival of Shelters

¹³“Seven days after you have gathered your harvest in from your threshing floor* and from your winepress,* you should celebrate the Festival of Shelters. ¹⁴Enjoy yourselves at this festival—you, your sons, your daughters, all your servants, and the Levites,* foreigners, orphans,* and widows* living in your towns. ¹⁵Celebrate this festival for seven days at the special place the Lord will choose. Do this to honor the Lord your God. The Lord your God blessed your harvest and all the work you did. So be very happy!

¹⁶“Three times a year all your men must come to meet with the Lord your God at the special place he will choose. They must come for the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Shelters. Every person that comes to meet with the Lord must bring a gift. ¹⁷Each man should give as much as he can. He should decide how much to give by thinking about how much the Lord has given him.

Levites People from the tribe of Levi. They helped the priests in the temple and worked for the civil government.

orphans Children whose parents have died.

widows Women whose husbands have died. Often these women had no one to care for them.

threshing floor A place where grain is beaten or walked on to remove the hulls from the grain.

winepress A place where people pressed grapes to make wine. This was often a shallow hole carved in rock.

Judges and Officers for the People

¹⁸“Choose men to be judges and officers in every town that the Lord your God gives you. Every family group must do this. And these men must be fair in judging the people. ¹⁹You must always be fair. You must not favor some people over other people. You must not take money to change your mind in judgment. Money blinds the eyes of wise people and changes what a good person will say. ²⁰Goodness and Fairness! You must try very hard to be good and fair all the time! Then you will live and keep the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

God Hates Idols

²¹“When you set up an altar* for the Lord your God, you must not place beside the altar any of the wooden poles that honor the goddess Asherah.* ²²And you must not set up special stones for worshiping false gods. The Lord your God hates those things.

Use Only Good Animals for Sacrifices

17“You must not sacrifice to the Lord your God a cow or sheep if there is anything wrong with it. Why? Because the Lord your God hates it!

Punishment for Worshiping Idols

²“You might hear about an evil thing that happens in one of the cities that the Lord your God is giving you. You might hear that a man or woman in your group has sinned against the Lord. You might hear that they have broken the Agreement of the Lord—³that they have worshiped other gods. Or maybe that they have worshiped the sun, the moon or the stars. That is against the Lord’s command that I gave you. ⁴If you hear bad news like this, then you must check it carefully. You must learn if it is true that this terrible thing has really happened in Israel. If you prove that it is true, ⁵then you must punish the person that did that evil thing. You must take that man or woman out to a public place near the city

altar(s) A table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.

Asherah A goddess that the Assyrians and Canaanites worshiped. They thought she could help them have children.

gates and kill them with stones. ⁶But a person should not be punished with death if only one witness says that person did the evil thing. But if two or three witnesses say it is true, then the person must be killed. ⁷The witnesses must throw the first stones to kill that person. Then the other people should throw stones to finish killing him. In this way, you will remove that evil from your group.

Difficult Court Decisions

⁸“There might be some problems that are too hard for your courts to judge. It might be a murder case or an argument between two people. Or it might be a fight in which someone was hurt. When these cases are argued in your towns, your judges there might not be able to decide what is right. Then you must go to the special place that the Lord your God will choose. ⁹The priests are from the Levi family group. You must go to those priests and to the judge on duty at that time. Those men will decide what to do about that problem. ¹⁰There at the Lord’s special place they will tell you their decision. You must do whatever they say. Be sure to do all the things they tell you to do. ¹¹You must accept their decision and follow their instructions exactly. You must do exactly what they tell you to do—don’t change anything!

¹²“You must punish any person that refuses to obey the judge or the priest that is there at that time serving the Lord your God. That person must die. You must remove that evil person from Israel. ¹³All the people will hear about this punishment and be afraid. And they will not be stubborn any more.

How to Choose a King

¹⁴“You will enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You will take that land and live in it. Then you will say, ‘We will put a king over us, like all the nations around us.’ ¹⁵When that happens, then you must be sure to choose the king that the Lord chooses. The king over you must be one of your own people. You must not make a foreigner your king. ¹⁶The king must not get more and more horses for himself. And he must not send people to Egypt to get more

horses. Why? Because the Lord has told you, ‘You must never go back that way.’ ¹⁷Also, the king must not have too many wives. Why? Because that will make him turn away from the Lord. And the king must not make himself rich with silver and gold.

¹⁸“And when the king begins to rule, he must write a copy of the law for himself in a book. He must make that copy from the books that the priests and Levites* keep. ¹⁹The king must keep that book with him. He must read from that book all his life. Why? Because the king must learn to respect the Lord his God. And the king must learn to completely obey everything the law commands. ²⁰Then the king will not think that he is better than any of his own people. And he will not turn away from the law, but he will follow it exactly. Then that king and his descendants* will rule the kingdom of Israel a long time.

Supporting the Priests and Levites

18“The family group of Levi will not get any share of land in Israel. Those people will serve as priests. They will live by eating the sacrifices that are cooked on the fire and offered to the Lord. That is the share for the people from the Levi family group. ²Those Levites* will not get any share of land like the other family groups. The Levites’ share is the Lord himself, just like the Lord said to them.

³“When you kill a cow or a sheep for a sacrifice, you must give the priests these parts: the shoulder, both cheeks, and the stomach. ⁴You must give the priests the first part of your harvest. You must give them the first part of your grain, your new wine, and your oil. You must give the Levites* the first wool cut from your sheep. ⁵Why? Because the Lord your God looked at all your family groups and chose Levi and his descendants* to serve him as priests forever.

⁶“Every Levite* man has a special time to work at the temple. But if he wants to work there some other time too, then he may work

Levites People from the tribe of Levi. They helped the priests in the temple and worked for the civil government.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

anytime he wants. Any Levite living in any town anywhere in Israel may leave his home and come to the Lord's special place. He may do this any time he wants. ⁷And this Levite may serve in the name of the Lord his God, the same as all his brother Levites that are on duty before the Lord. ⁸And that Levite will get an equal share with the other Levites, in addition to the share his family normally gets.

Israel Must Not Live Like Other Nations

⁹“When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you, don't learn to do the terrible things the people of the other nations there do. ¹⁰Don't sacrifice your sons or daughters in the fires on your altars.* Don't try to learn what will happen in the future by talking to a fortune teller or by going to a magician, a witch or a sorcerer. ¹¹Don't let anyone try to put magic spells on other people. Don't let any of your people become a medium* or a wizard.* And no person should try to talk with someone that has died. ¹²The Lord your God hates people doing those things. That is why he is forcing those other nations out of this country for you. ¹³You must be faithful to the Lord your God.

The Lord's Special Prophet

¹⁴“You must force those other nations out of your land. The people of those nations listen to people who use magic and try to tell the future. But the Lord your God will not let you do those things. ¹⁵The Lord your God will send to you a prophet.* This prophet will come from among your own people. He will be like me. You must listen to this prophet. ¹⁶God will send you this prophet because that is what you asked him to do. When you were gathered together at Mount Horeb (*Sinai*), you were afraid of God's voice and the great fire you saw on the mountain. So you said, ‘Don't let us hear the voice of the Lord our

God again! Don't let us see that great fire or we will die!’

¹⁷“The Lord said to me, ‘The thing they ask for is good. ¹⁸I will send them a prophet* like you. This prophet will be one of their own people. I will tell him the things he must say. And he will tell the people everything I command. ¹⁹This prophet will speak for me. And when he speaks, if any person refuses to listen to my commands, then I will punish that person.’

How to Know False Prophets

²⁰“But a prophet* might say something that I did not tell him to say. And he might tell people that he is speaking for me. If this happens, then that prophet must be killed. Also, a prophet might come that speaks for other gods. That prophet must also be killed. ²¹You might be thinking, ‘How can we know if something a prophet says is not from the Lord?’ ²²If a prophet says he is speaking for the Lord, but the thing does not happen, then you will know that the Lord did not say it. You will know that this prophet was speaking his own ideas. You don't need to be afraid of him.

Cities of Safety

19“The Lord your God is giving you land that belongs to other nations. The Lord will destroy those nations. You will live where those people lived. You will take their cities and their houses. When that happens, ²⁻³you must divide the land into three parts. Then in each part you must choose a city close to everyone in that area. And you must prepare roads to those cities. Then any person that kills another person may run to that city for safety.

⁴“This is the rule for the person that kills someone and runs away to one of those three cities to be safe: It must be a person that killed the other person accidentally. It must be a person that did not hate the person he killed. ⁵Here is an example: A man goes into the forest with another person to cut wood. The man swings his axe to cut down a tree, but the head of the axe separates from the handle. The axe head hits the other person and kills him. The man who swung the axe may then run to one of those three cities and be safe. ⁶But if

altar(s) A table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.

medium A person that tries to talk with the spirits of dead people.

wizard A person that tries to use evil spirits to do magic.

prophet A person called by God to be a special servant. God used dreams and visions to show them things to teach to the people.

the city is too far away, he might not be able to run there fast enough. A close relative* of the person he killed might run after him and catch him before he reaches the city. The close relative might be very angry and kill the man. But the man did not deserve death. He did not hate the person he killed. ⁷“The cities must be close to everyone.” That is why I command you to choose three special cities.

⁸“The Lord your God promised your fathers that he would make your land larger. He will give you all the land that he promised to give to your ancestors.* ⁹He will do this if you completely obey his commands that I give you today—if you love the Lord your God and always live the way he wants. Then, when the Lord makes your land larger, you should choose three more cities for safety. They should be added to the first three cities. ¹⁰Then innocent people will not be killed in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. And you will not be guilty for any deaths.

¹¹“But a man might hate another person. That man might hide, waiting to kill the person he hates. He might kill that person and run away into one of those cities of safety. ¹²If that happens, then the elders (*leaders*) in that man’s home town must send someone to get him and take him away from the city of safety. Those leaders must give that man to the close relative.* The murderer must die. ¹³You must not feel sorry for him. He was guilty of killing an innocent person. You must remove that guilt from Israel. Then everything will go well for you.

Property Lines

¹⁴“You must not move the stones that mark your neighbor’s property. People put those stones there in the past to mark each person’s property. Those stones mark the land that the Lord your God gave you.

close relative Literally, “avenger of blood.” When a person was killed, his relative had to be sure the killer was punished.

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

Witnesses

¹⁵“If a person is accused of doing something against the law, one witness is not enough to prove that the person is guilty. There must be two or three witnesses to prove that the person really did wrong.

¹⁶“A witness might try to hurt another person by lying and saying that this person did wrong. ¹⁷If that happens, then both of those people must go to the Lord’s special house and be judged by the priests and judges that are on duty at that time. ¹⁸The judges must ask careful questions. They might find that the witness lied against the other person. If the witness lied, ¹⁹then you must punish him. You must do to him the same thing he wanted to do to the other person. In this way, you will remove that evil from your group. ²⁰Other people will hear about this and be afraid. And those people will not do evil things like that again.

²¹“Punishment must be as severe as the crime.” Don’t feel sorry about punishing a person that does wrong. If a person takes a life, then he must pay with his own life. The rule is: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a hand for a hand, a foot for a foot.

Rules for War

20“When you go out to battle against your enemies, and you see horses, chariots,* and many more people than you have, you must not be afraid of them. Why? Because the Lord your God is with you—and the Lord brought you out of Egypt.

²“When you go to the battle, the priest must go to the soldiers and speak to them. ³The priest will say, ‘Men of Israel, listen to me! Today you are going against your enemies in battle. Don’t lose your courage! Don’t be troubled or upset! Don’t be afraid of the enemy! ⁴Why? Because the Lord your God is going with you. He will help you fight against your enemies. The Lord your God will help you win!’

⁵“Those [Levite] officers will say to the soldiers, ‘Is there any man here that has built a new house, but has not yet dedicated it? That

chariot(s) A small wagon used in war.

man should go back home. He might be killed in the battle. And then another person will dedicate that man's house. ⁶Is there any man here that has planted a field of grapes, but has not yet gathered any of the grapes? That man should go back home. If that man dies in the battle, then another person will enjoy the fruit from his field. ⁷Is there any man here that is engaged to be married? That man should go back home. If he dies in the battle, then another man will marry the woman he is engaged to.'

⁸"Those [Levite] officers must also say to the people, 'Is there any man here that has lost his courage and is afraid? He should go back home. Then he will not cause the other soldiers to lose their courage too.' ⁹Then, after the officers have finished speaking to the army, they must choose captains to lead the soldiers.

¹⁰"When you go to attack a city, you must first offer peace to the people there. ¹¹If they accept your offer and open their gates, then all the people in that city will become your slaves and be forced to work for you. ¹²But if the city refuses to make peace with you and fights against you, then you should surround the city. ¹³And when the Lord your God lets you take the city, you must kill all the men in it. ¹⁴But you may take for yourselves the women, the children, the cows, and everything else in the city. You may use all these things. The Lord your God has given these things to you. ¹⁵That is what you must do to all the cities that are very far from you—the cities that are not in the land where you will live.

¹⁶"But when you take cities in the land that the Lord your God is giving you, you must kill everyone. ¹⁷You must completely destroy all the people—the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The Lord your God has commanded you to do this. ¹⁸Why? Because then they won't be able teach you to sin against the Lord your God. They will not be able to teach you to do any of the terrible things they do when they worship their gods.

¹⁹"When you are making war against a city, you might surround that city for a long time. You must not cut down the fruit trees around that city. You may eat the fruit from

these trees, but you must not cut them down. These trees are not the enemy, so don't make war against them! ²⁰But you may cut down the trees that you know are not fruit trees. You may use these trees to build weapons for making war against that city. You may use them until the city falls.

If a Person Is Found Murdered

21 "In the land that the Lord your God is giving you, a man might be found murdered in a field. But no one knows who killed him. ²Then your leaders and judges must come out and measure the distance to the towns around the person that was killed. ³When you learn which town is nearest to the dead man, the leaders of that town must take a cow from their herds. It must be a cow that never had a calf. And it must be a cow that has never been used for work. ⁴The leaders of that town must then bring the cow down to a valley with running water. It must be a valley that has never been plowed or had anything planted in it. Then the leaders must break the cow's neck there in that valley. ⁵The priests, the descendants* of Levi, must also go there. (The Lord your God has chosen these priests to serve him and to bless people in his name. The priests will decide who is right in every argument where a person is hurt.) ⁶All the leaders of the town nearest the murdered man must wash their hands over the cow that had its neck broken in the valley. ⁷These leaders must say, 'We did not kill this man. And we did not see it happen. ⁸Lord, you saved Israel. We are your people. Now make us pure.* Don't blame us for killing an innocent man.' In this way, those men will not be blamed for killing an innocent man. ⁹In this way, you will do the right thing. And you will remove that guilt from your group.

Women Captured in War

¹⁰"You might fight against your enemies, and the Lord your God might let you defeat them. You might carry your enemies away as

descendants A person's children and their future families.

make ... pure Or, "make atonement." The Hebrew word means "to cover," "to hide," or "to erase sins."

captives. ¹¹You might see a beautiful woman among the captives that you want to be your wife. ¹²You must then bring her into your house. She must shave her head and cut her nails. ¹³She must take off the clothes she was wearing that showed she was taken in war. She must stay in your house and be sad about losing her father and her mother for a full month. After that, you may go to her and become her husband. She will be your wife. ¹⁴If you are not pleased with her, then you must divorce her and let her go free. You cannot sell her. You must not treat her like a slave. Why? Because you had sexual relations with her.

The Oldest Son

¹⁵“A man might have two wives. And he might love one wife more than the other. Both wives might have children for him. And the first child might be the child of the wife he does not love. ¹⁶When the man divides his property among his children, he can’t give the son of the wife he loves the things that belong to the firstborn* child. ¹⁷The man must accept the first child, the son of the wife he doesn’t love. The man must give the first son a double share of all his things. Why? Because that child is his first child. The right of the firstborn* child belongs to that child.

Children Who Refuse to Obey

¹⁸“A man might have a son who is stubborn and refuses to obey. This son doesn’t obey his father or mother. They punish the son, but he still refuses to listen to them. ¹⁹His father and mother must then take him to the leaders of the town at the town meeting place. ²⁰They must say to the leaders of the town: ‘Our son is stubborn and refuses to obey. He doesn’t do anything we tell him to do. He eats and he drinks too much.’ ²¹Then the men in the town must kill the son with stones. By doing this you will remove this evil from yourselves. All the people of Israel will hear about this and be afraid.

firstborn The first born child. The firstborn son was very important in ancient times.

Criminals Killed and Hung on a Tree

²²“A person might be guilty of a sin that must be punished by death. After he is killed, people might hang his body on a tree. ²³You must not let that body stay on the tree all night. You must be sure to bury this man on the same day. Why? Because the person that hangs on a tree is cursed by God. You must not ruin the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

Other Laws

22 “If you see that your neighbor’s cow or sheep is loose, you must not ignore it. You must be sure to take it back to its owner. ²If the owner does not live near you or if you don’t know who it belongs to, then you may take the cow or sheep to your house. And you may keep it with you until the owner comes looking for it. Then you must give it back to him. ³You must do the same thing when you find your neighbor’s donkey, your neighbor’s clothes or anything else your neighbor loses. You must help your neighbor.

⁴“If your neighbor’s donkey or cow has fallen down on the road, you must not ignore it. You must help him lift it up again.

⁵“A woman must not wear men’s clothes. And a man must not wear women’s clothes. That is very disgusting to the Lord your God.

⁶“You might be walking along a path and find a bird’s nest in a tree or on the ground. If the mother bird is sitting with her baby birds or on the eggs, then you must not take the mother bird with the babies. ⁷You may take the babies for yourself. But you must let the mother go. If you obey these laws, then things will go well for you, and you will live a long time.

⁸“When you build a new house, you must build a wall around your roof.* Then you will not be guilty for the death of a person that falls from the house.

Things That Must Not Be Put Together

⁹“You must not plant seeds of grain in the same fields as your grapevines. Why?

wall around your roof In ancient Israel the roofs of houses were flat, and people used them like an extra room. This law made the roof a safer place.

Because then they become useless,* and you can't use either the grapes or the grain that grows from the seeds you planted.

¹⁰“You must not plow with a cow and a donkey together.

¹¹“You must not wear cloth made by weaving together wool and linen.

¹²“Tie several pieces of thread together. Then put these tassels* on the four corners of the robes you wear.

Marriage Laws

¹³“A man might marry a girl and have sexual relations with her. Then he might decide that he does not like her. ¹⁴He might lie and say, ‘I married this woman, but when we had sexual relations, I found she was not a virgin.*’ By saying this against her, people might think bad things about her. ¹⁵If this happens, the girl's father and mother must bring the proof that the girl was a virgin to the town elders (*leaders*) at the meeting place of the town. ¹⁶The girl's father must say to the leaders, ‘I gave my daughter to this man to be his wife, but now he does not want her. ¹⁷This man has told lies against my daughter. He said, “I did not find the proof that your daughter is a virgin.” But here is the proof that my daughter was a virgin.’” Then they should show the cloth* to the town leaders. ¹⁸Then the leaders of that town must take that man and punish him. ¹⁹They must fine him 40 ounces of silver.* They must give the money to the girl's father because her husband brought shame to an Israelite girl. And the girl must continue to be the man's wife. He can't divorce her all his life.

²⁰“But the things that the husband said about his wife might be true. The wife's

they become useless Literally, “they become holy.” This means these things belonged only to God, so they couldn't be used by the people.

tassels These pieces of string were made from different materials, so they became holy. This helped the people remember God and his commands.

virgin A woman who has not had sexual relations with anyone.

cloth The blood-stained bed cover that the bride kept from her wedding night to prove she was a virgin when she married.

40 ounces of silver This is probably twice the amount of money that a man usually paid the father of the bride to seal the marriage agreement. See Deut. 22:29.

parents might not have the proof that she was a virgin.* If this happens, ²¹then the town leaders must bring the girl to the door of her father's house. Then the men of the town must kill her with stones. Why? Because she has done a shameful thing in Israel. She has acted like a prostitute* in her father's house. You must remove that evil from your people.

Sexual Sins

²²“If a man is found having sexual relations with another man's wife, then both of them must die—the woman and the man that had sexual relations with her. You must remove that evil from Israel.

²³“A man might meet a virgin* girl engaged to another man. He might have sexual relations with her. If this happens in the city, ²⁴then you must bring them both out to the public place near the gate of that city, and you must kill them with stones. You must kill the man, because he used another man's wife for sexual sin. And you must kill the girl, because she was in the city but did not call for help. You must remove that evil from your people.

²⁵“But if a man finds an engaged girl out in the field and forces her to have sexual relations with him, then only the man must die. ²⁶You must do nothing to the girl. She did nothing that deserves the punishment of death. This is like a person attacking his neighbor and killing him. ²⁷The man found the engaged girl out in the field. He attacked her. And maybe she called for help, but there was no one to help her. [So she must not be punished.]

²⁸“A man might find a virgin* girl that is not engaged and force her to have sexual relations with him. If other people see this happen, ²⁹then he must pay the girl's father 20 ounces of silver.* And the girl will become the man's wife. Why? Because he used her for sexual sin. He can't divorce her all his life.

virgin A woman who has not had sexual relations with anyone.

prostitute A woman paid by men for sexual sin.

20 ounces of silver This money became the dowry, the money a man paid to a woman's father to seal the marriage agreement. Often the father saved this money to take care of the woman if something happened to her husband.

³⁰“A man must not bring shame to his father by having sexual relations with his father’s wife.”

People Who Can Join in Worship

23 “A man with crushed testicles or part of his sex organs cut off may not join with the men of Israel to worship the Lord. ²If a man’s parents were not legally married, then that man may not join with the men of Israel to worship the Lord. And none of his descendants* to the tenth generation—may join in that group!

³“An Ammonite or Moabite may not join with the men of Israel to worship the Lord. And none of their descendants*—to the tenth generation—may join in that group. ⁴Why? Because the Ammonites and Moabites refused to give you bread and water on your trip at the time you came from Egypt. They also tried to hire Balaam to curse you. (Balaam was the son of Beor from the city of Pethor in Mesopotamia.) ⁵But the Lord your God refused to listen to Balaam. The Lord changed the curse into a blessing for you. Why? Because the Lord your God loves you. ⁶You must never try to make peace with the Ammonite or Moabite people. As long as you live, don’t be friendly to them.

People the Israelites Must Accept

⁷“You must not hate an Edomite. Why? Because he is your relative. You must not hate an Egyptian. Why? Because you were a stranger in his land. ⁸The children of the third generation born to the Edomites and Egyptians may join with the men of Israel to worship the Lord.

Keeping the Army Camp Clean

⁹“When your army goes to fight against your enemies, stay away from everything that would make you unclean.* ¹⁰If there is any man who is unclean because he had a wet dream during the night, then he must go out of the camp. He must stay away from the camp. ¹¹Then, when evening comes, the man must

bathe himself in water. And when the sun goes down, he may come into the camp again.

¹²“You also must have a place outside the camp where you can go to have a bowel movement. ¹³With your weapons, you must also carry a stick to dig with. Then, when you have a bowel movement, you must dig a hole and cover it up. ¹⁴Why? Because the Lord your God is there with you in your camp to save you and to help you defeat your enemies. So the camp must be holy. Then the Lord will not see something disgusting and leave you.

Other Laws

¹⁵“If a slave runs away from his master to you, you must not give this slave back to his master. ¹⁶This slave may live with you wherever he likes. He may live in whatever city he chooses. You must not trouble him.

¹⁷“An Israelite man or woman must never become a temple prostitute.* ¹⁸The money earned by a man* or woman prostitute must not be brought to the special house of the Lord your God. A person can’t use that money to pay for the things he promised to give to God. Why? Because the Lord your God hates for people to sell their bodies for sexual sin.

¹⁹“When you loan something to another Israelite, you must not charge interest. Don’t charge interest on money, on food or on anything that may earn interest. ²⁰You may charge interest to a foreigner. But you must not charge interest to another Israelite. If you follow these rules, then the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do in the land where you are going to live.

²¹“When you make a promise to the Lord your God, don’t be slow to pay all that you promised. Why? Because the Lord your God will demand that you pay it. You will sin if you don’t pay the things you promised. ²²If you don’t make a promise, then you are not sinning. ²³But you must do the things you say you will do. If you make a special promise to

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

unclean Not pure or not acceptable to God for worship.

temple prostitute The people who worshiped false gods in the land of Canaan had both men and women serving as priests by giving their bodies in sexual sin.

man Literally, “dog.” This probably means a man paid by other men that use him for sexual sin.

God, then you chose to make that promise. God did not force you to make that promise. So you must do the thing you promised!

²⁴“When you go through another person’s field of grapes, you may eat as many grapes as you want. But you can’t put any of the grapes in your basket and take them with you.” ²⁵When you go through another person’s field of grain, you may eat all the grain you can pick with your hands. But you can’t use a sickle to cut that person’s grain and take it with you.

24“A man might marry a woman, and then find some secret thing about her that he does not like. If that man is not pleased with her, he must write the divorce papers and give them to her. Then he must send her from his house. ²When she has left his house, she may go and become another man’s wife. ^{3–4}But suppose the new husband also does not like her and sends her away. If that man divorces her, then the first husband may not take her again to be his wife. Or if the new husband dies, then her first husband may not take her again to be his wife. She has become unclean to him. If he married her again, he would be doing something the Lord hates. You must not sin like this in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.

⁵“When a man is newly married, he must not be sent into the army. And he must not be given any other special work. For one year he must be free to stay home and make his new wife happy.

⁶“When you lend a person something, you must not take as security* any part of the stones he uses to grind flour. Why? Because that would be the same as taking away his food.

⁷“A person might kidnap another Israelite—one of his own people. And that kidnapper might sell that person as a slave. If that happens, then that kidnapper must be killed. You must remove that evil from your group.

⁸“When you have a very bad skin disease,* be very careful to follow all the things the Levite priests teach you. You must follow carefully the things I told the priests to do. ⁹Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam* on your trip out of Egypt.

¹⁰“When you give a person any kind of loan, you must not go into his house to get security.* ¹¹You must stand outside. Then the person that you gave the loan to will bring out the security to you. ¹²If he is a poor man, then he might give the clothes that keep him warm. You must not keep that security overnight. ¹³You must give his security back to him every evening. Then he will have clothes to sleep in. He will bless you, and the Lord your God will accept this as living right and doing good.

¹⁴“You must not cheat a hired servant that is poor and needy. It does not matter if he is an Israelite or if he is a foreigner living in one of your cities. ¹⁵Give him his pay every day before sunset. Why? Because he is poor and depends on the money. If you don’t pay him, he will complain against you to the Lord. And you will be guilty of sin.

¹⁶“Parents must not be put to death for something their children did. And children must not be put to death for something their parents did. A person should be put to death only for a bad thing that he himself did.

¹⁷“You must make sure that foreigners and orphans* are treated fairly. And you must never take clothes from a widow* as security.* ¹⁸Remember, you were poor slaves in Egypt. And the Lord your God took you from that place and set you free. That is why I tell you to do these things for poor people.

¹⁹“You might be gathering your harvest in the field, and you might forget and leave some grain there. You must not go back to get it. It will be for the foreigners, the orphans,* and the widows.* If you leave some grain for

a very bad skin disease Or, “leprosy.”

Miriam See Num. 12:1–15.

orphans Children whose parents have died.

widow(s) Women whose husbands have died. Often these women had no one to care for them.

security Anything a person gives to show he will pay his loan. If the person does not pay back his loan, then the lender can keep that thing.

them, then the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do. ²⁰When you beat your olive trees, you must not go back to check the branches. The olives you leave will be for the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows. ²¹When you gather the grapes from your vineyard, you must not go back to gather the grapes you left. Those grapes will be for the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows. ²²Remember you were poor slaves in Egypt. That is why I tell you to do these things for poor people.

25 “When two people have an argument, they should go to the court. The judges will decide which person is right and which person is wrong. ²If the judge decides a person must be beaten with a whip, then the judge must make that person lie face down. Someone will beat the guilty person while the judge watches. The number of times he must be hit depends on the crime. ³You must never hit a person more than 40 times. If you beat a person more than 40 times, then that shows that person’s life is not important to you.

⁴“When an animal is being used to separate grain, you must not cover its mouth to stop it from eating.

⁵“If two brothers live together, and one of them dies and has no son, then the wife of the dead brother must not be married to a stranger outside the family. Her husband’s brother must take her as a wife and have sexual relations with her. Her husband’s brother must do the duty of a husband’s brother for her. ⁶Then the first child that she gives birth to will take the place of the man’s dead brother. Then the dead brother’s name will not be taken out of Israel. ⁷If the man does not want to take his brother’s wife, then the brother’s wife must go to the leaders at the town meeting place. His brother’s wife must say to the leaders, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to keep his brother’s name alive in Israel. He will not do the duty of a husband’s brother to me.’ ⁸Then the leaders of the city must call the man and talk to him. If the man is stubborn and says, ‘I don’t want to take her,’ ⁹then his brother’s wife must come to him in front of the leaders. She must

take his shoe off his foot. Then she must spit in his face. She must say, ‘This is being done to the man who will not build up his brother’s family!’ ¹⁰Then that brother’s family will be known in Israel as ‘the family of the man who had his shoe taken off.’

¹¹“Two men might be fighting against each other. One man’s wife might come to help her husband. But she must not grab the other man’s private parts. ¹²If she does that, then cut off her hand. Don’t feel sorry for her.

¹³“[Don’t carry trick weights for cheating people.] Don’t use weights that are too heavy or too light. ¹⁴Don’t keep measures in your house that are too large or too small. ¹⁵You must use weights and measures that are correct and accurate. Then you will live a long time in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. ¹⁶The Lord your God hates people that cheat with false weights and measures. Yes, he hates all people who do wrong.

The Amalekites Must Be Destroyed

¹⁷“Remember what the people of Amalek did to you when you were coming from Egypt. ¹⁸The Amalekites did not respect God. They attacked you when you were weak and tired. They killed all your people who were slow and walking behind everyone else. ¹⁹That is why you must destroy the memory of the Amalekites from the world. You will do this when you enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you. There he will give you rest from all the enemies around you. But don’t forget to destroy the Amalekites!

The First Harvest

26 “You will soon enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You will take that land and live there. ²You will gather the crops that grow in the land the Lord is giving you. You must take the first crops and put them in baskets. Then take that first part of your harvest to the place the Lord your God chooses to be his special house. ³Go to the priest that is serving at that time. Tell him, ‘The Lord promised our ancestors that he would give us some land. Today I come to announce to the Lord your God that I have come to that land!’

⁴“Then the priest will take the basket from you. He will put it down in front of the altar* of the Lord your God. ⁵Then there before the Lord your God you will say: ‘My ancestor was a wandering Aramean.* He went down into Egypt and stayed there. When he went there, he had only a few people in his family. But in Egypt he became a great nation—a powerful nation with many people. ⁶The Egyptians treated us badly. They made us slaves. They hurt us and forced us to work very hard. ⁷Then we prayed to the Lord, the God of our ancestors,* and complained about them. And the Lord heard us. He saw our trouble, our hard work, and our suffering. ⁸Then the Lord brought us out of Egypt with his great power and strength. He used great miracles and wonders. He did amazing things. ⁹So he brought us to this place. He gave us this land—a land filled with many good things.* ¹⁰Now, Lord, I bring you the first harvest from the land that you gave me.’

“Then you must put the harvest down before the Lord your God and bow down to worship him. ¹¹Then you must [have a meal together and] enjoy all the good things that the Lord your God has given to you and your family. You must share those things with the Levites* and the foreigners living among you.

¹²“Every third year is the Year of Tithes. In that year, you must give one tenth of your harvest to the Levites,* to the foreigners living in your country, and to the widows* and orphans.* Then those people will have plenty to eat in every city. ¹³You must say to the Lord your God, ‘I have taken out of my house the holy part of my harvest. I have given it to the Levites,* to the foreigners, and to the orphans and widows. I have followed all the

commands you gave me. I have not refused to obey any of your commands. I have not forgotten them. ¹⁴I have not eaten this food when I was sad.* I was not unclean when I collected this food.* I have not offered any of this food for dead people. I have obeyed you, Lord my God. I have done all the things you commanded me. ¹⁵Look down from your holy home, from heaven, and bless your people Israel. And bless the land that you gave us. You promised our ancestors* to give us this land—a land filled with many good things.*’

Obey the Lord's Commands

¹⁶“Today the Lord your God commands you to obey all these laws and rules. Be careful to follow them with all your heart and soul. ¹⁷Today you have said that the Lord is your God. You have promised to live the way he wants. You promised to follow his teachings, and to obey his laws and commands. You said you will do everything he tells you to do. ¹⁸And today the Lord has accepted you to be his own people. He has promised you this. The Lord also said that you must obey all his commands. ¹⁹The Lord will make you greater than all the nations he made. He will give you praise, fame, and honor. And you will be his own special people—just like he promised.”

Stones Memorials for the People

27 Moses and the elders (*leaders*) of Israel spoke to the people. Moses said, “Obey all the commands that I give you today. ²You will soon go across the Jordan River into the land that the Lord your God is giving you. On that day, you must put up large stones. Cover those stones with plaster.* ³Then write on those stones all these commands and teachings. You must do this when you go across the Jordan River. Then you may go into the land that the Lord your God is giving

altar(s) A table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.

Aramean A person from ancient Syria. Here this might be Abraham, Isaac or probably Jacob (Israel).

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

filled with many good things Literally, “flowing with milk and honey.”

Levites People from the tribe of Levi. They helped the priests in the temple and worked for the civil government.

widows Women whose husbands have died. Often these women had no one to care for them.

orphans Children whose parents have died.

I have ... sad People ate this food to be happy about the many things God gave them, so it could not be from food used during a time of sadness.

I was ... food This would mean other people could not eat this food during the celebration to honor the Lord.

plaster A type of mud or cement that people used to cover a wall and make it smooth.

you—a land filled with many good things.* The Lord, the God of your ancestors,* promised to give you this land.

⁴“After you go across the Jordan River, you must do the things I command you today. You must set up the stones on Mount Ebal. You must cover these stones with plaster.* ⁵Also, use some stones there to build an altar* to the Lord your God. Don’t use iron tools to cut the stones. ⁶You must not use cut stones to build the altar for the Lord your God. Offer burnt offerings on this altar to the Lord your God. ⁷And you must sacrifice and eat fellowship offerings there. Eat and enjoy yourselves there together with the Lord your God. ⁸You must write all of these teachings on the stones that you set up. Write clearly so they are easy to read.”

The People Agree to the Curses of the Law

⁹Moses, the priests, and the Levites spoke to all the people of Israel. Moses said, “Be quiet and listen, Israel! Today you have become the people of the Lord your God. ¹⁰So you must do everything that the Lord your God tells you. You must obey his commands and his laws that I am giving you today.”

¹¹The same day, Moses also told the people, ¹²“After you have gone across the Jordan River, these family groups will stand on Mount Gerizim to read the blessings to the people: Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph, and Benjamin. ¹³And these family groups will stand on Mount Ebal to read the curses: Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

¹⁴“And the Levites* will say to all the people of Israel with a loud voice: ¹⁵‘Cursed is the person that makes a false god and puts it in its secret place. Those false gods are only statues that some worker makes from wood, stone or metal. The Lord hates those things!’

“Then all the people will answer, ‘Amen!’*’

¹⁶“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that does things that show he does not respect his father or his mother!’

“Then all the people will answer, ‘Amen!’

¹⁷“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that moves his neighbor’s landmark*!’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

¹⁸“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that is mean to a blind man and tricks him into walking off the road!’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

¹⁹“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that does not give fair judgment for the foreigners, orphans,* and widows*!’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

²⁰“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that has sexual relations with his father’s wife.* Why? Because he brings shame to his father*!’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

²¹“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that has sexual relations with any kind of animal!’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

²²“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that has sexual relations with his sister or half sister!’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

²³“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that has sexual relations with his mother-in-law!’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

²⁴“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that kills another person, even if he is not caught!’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

filled with many good things Literally, “flowing with milk and honey.”

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

plaster A type of mud or cement that people used to cover a wall and make it smooth.

altar(s) A table or raised area used for offering sacrifices.

Levites People from the tribe of Levi. They helped the priests in the temple and worked for the civil government.

Amen This Hebrew word means “This is true,” or “I agree.”

landmark A stone or sign that showed where the limits of a person’s property were.

orphans Children whose parents have died.

widows Women whose husbands have died. Often these women had no one to care for them.

father’s wife Here this means the father’s wife, even if she is not the mother of the son.

brings shame to his father Literally, “uncovers his father’s nakedness.”

²⁵“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that takes money to kill an innocent person!’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’

²⁶“[The Levites will say,] ‘Cursed is the person that does not support this law and agree to obey it.’

“Then all the people will say, ‘Amen!’”

Blessings for Obeying the Law

28 “Now, if you will be careful to obey the Lord your God and follow all his commands that I tell you today, then the Lord your God will put you high above all the nations on earth. ²If you will obey the Lord your God, then all these blessings will come to you and be yours:

- ³ “The Lord will bless you
in the city and in the field.
- ⁴ The Lord will bless you
and give you many children.
He will bless your land
and give you good crops.
He will bless your animals
and let them have many babies.
He will bless all your calves and lambs.
- ⁵ The Lord will bless your baskets and pans
and fill them with food.
- ⁶ The Lord will bless you at all times
in everything you do.

⁷“The Lord will help you defeat your enemies that come to fight against you. Your enemies will come against you one way, but they will run away from you seven different ways!

⁸“The Lord will bless you and fill your barns. He will bless everything you do. The Lord your God will bless you in the land that he is giving you. ⁹The Lord will make you his own special people, like he promised. The Lord will do this if you follow the Lord your God and obey his commands. ¹⁰Then all the people in that land will see that you are called by the name of the Lord. And they will be afraid of you.

¹¹“And the Lord will give you many good things. He will give you many children. He will give your cows many calves. He will give you a good harvest in the land that the Lord

promised your ancestors* to give you. ¹²The Lord will open his storehouse where he keeps his rich blessings. The Lord will send rain at the right time for your land. The Lord will bless everything you do. You will have money to lend to many nations. And you will not need to borrow anything from them. ¹³The Lord will make you be like the head, not the tail. You will be on top, not on the bottom. This will happen if you listen to the commands of the Lord your God that I tell you today. You must carefully obey these commands. ¹⁴You must not turn away from any of the teachings that I give you today. You must not turn away to the right or to the left. You must not follow other gods to serve them.

Curses for Not Obeying the Law

¹⁵“But if you don’t listen to things the Lord your God tells you—if you don’t obey all his commands and laws that I tell you today—then all these bad things will happen to you:

- ¹⁶ “The Lord will curse you
in the city and in the field.
- ¹⁷ The Lord will curse your baskets and pans
and they will have no food in them.
- ¹⁸ The Lord will curse you,
and you will not have many children.
He will curse your land
and you will not have good crops.
He will curse your animals
and they will not have many babies.
He will curse all your calves and lambs.
- ¹⁹ The Lord will curse you at all times
in everything you do.

²⁰“If you do evil and turn away from the Lord, then he will make bad things happen to you. You will have frustration and trouble in everything you do. He will continue to do this until you are quickly and completely destroyed. He will do this because you turned away from him and left him. ²¹The Lord will cause you to have terrible diseases until you are finished—destroyed from the land you are going to take. ²²The Lord will punish you with

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

diseases, fever, and swelling. The Lord will send you terrible heat and you will have no rain. Your crops will die from the heat and disease.* All these bad things will happen until you are destroyed! ²³There will be no clouds in the sky—the sky will look like polished brass. And the ground under you will be hard like iron. ²⁴The Lord will not send rain—only sand and dust will fall from the sky. It will come down on you until you are destroyed.

²⁵“The Lord will let your enemies defeat you. You will go to fight against your enemies one way, but you will run away from them seven different ways. The bad things that happen to you will make all the people on earth afraid. ²⁶Your dead bodies will be food for the wild birds and animals. There will be no one to scare them away from your dead bodies.

²⁷“The Lord will punish you with boils, like those he sent on the Egyptians. He will punish you with tumors, sores that run, and an itch that can’t be cured. ²⁸The Lord will punish you by making you crazy. He will make you blind and confused. ²⁹In daylight, you will have to feel your way like a blind man. You will fail in everything you do. Again and again people will hurt you and steal things from you. And there will not be anyone to save you.

³⁰“You will be engaged to a woman, but another man will have sexual relations with her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a field of grapes, but you will not gather anything from it. ³¹People will kill your cows in front of you. But you will not eat any of the meat. People will take your donkeys. And they will not give them back to you. Your enemies will get your sheep. And there will not be anyone to save you.

³²“Other people will be allowed to take your sons and your daughters. Day after day, you will look for your children. You will look for them until your eyes become weak and blind—but you will not find them. And God will not help you.

³³“A nation that you don’t know will take all your crops and all the things you worked

for. People will treat you badly and abuse you. ³⁴The things you see will make you go crazy! ³⁵The Lord will punish you with sore boils that can’t be healed. These boils will be on your knees and legs. The boils will be on every part of your body—from the bottom of your feet to the top of your head.

³⁶“The Lord will send you and your king away to a nation you don’t know. You and your ancestors* have never seen that nation. There you will serve false gods made of wood and stone. ³⁷In the countries where the Lord will send you, the people will be shocked at the bad things that happen to you. They will laugh at you and say bad things about you.

The Curse of Failure

³⁸“Your fields will produce plenty of grain. But your harvest will be small. Why? Because the locusts* will eat your harvest. ³⁹You will plant fields of grapes and work hard in them. But you will not gather the grapes or drink the wine from them. Why? Because the worms will eat them. ⁴⁰You will have olive trees everywhere on your land. But you will not have any of the oil to use. Why? Because the olives will drop to the ground and rot. ⁴¹You will have sons and daughters. But you will not be able to keep them. Why? Because they will be captured and taken away. ⁴²Locusts will destroy all your trees and the crops in your fields. ⁴³The foreigners living among you will get more and more power. And you will lose the power you had. ⁴⁴The foreigners will have money to loan you. But you will not have any money to loan them. They will control you like the head [controls the body]. You will be like the tail.

⁴⁵“All these curses will come on you. They will keep chasing you and catching you, until you are destroyed. Why? Because you did not listen to the things the Lord your God told you. You did not obey the commands and laws that he gave you. ⁴⁶These curses will show people that God judged you and your

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

locusts Insects like grasshoppers. Locusts can destroy a large crop very quickly.

disease This might be mildew, a disease that turns the heads of grain yellow and stops them from growing seeds.

descendants* forever. People will be amazed at the terrible things that happen to you.

⁴⁷“The Lord your God gave you many blessings. But you did not serve him with joy and a glad heart. ⁴⁸So you will serve the enemies that the Lord will send against you. You will be hungry, thirsty, naked, and poor. The Lord will put a load on you that can’t be removed. You will carry that load until he destroys you.*

The Curse of an Enemy Nation

⁴⁹“The Lord will bring a nation from far away to fight you. You will not understand their language. They will come quickly, like an eagle coming down from the sky. ⁵⁰Those people will be cruel. They will not care about old people. They will not show mercy to young children. ⁵¹They will take your animals and the food you grow. They will take everything until they destroy you. They will not leave you any grain, wine, oil, cows, sheep or goats. They will take everything, until they destroy you.

⁵²“That nation will surround and attack your cities. You think that the tall, strong walls around your cities will protect you. But those walls will fall down. The enemy will surround all your cities everywhere in the land the Lord your God is giving you. ⁵³You will suffer very much. The enemy will surround your cities. They will not let you have any food. You will become very hungry. You will be so hungry that you will eat your own sons and daughters—you will eat the bodies of the children that the Lord your God gave you.

⁵⁴“Even the most gentle and kind man among you will become cruel. He will be cruel to other people. He will be cruel to his wife that he loves so much. And he will be cruel to his children that are still alive. ⁵⁵He will have nothing left to eat, so he will eat his own children. And he will not share that meat with anyone—not even the other people in his own family! All those bad things will happen

when your enemy comes to surround your cities and make you suffer.

⁵⁶“Even the most gentle and kind woman among you will become cruel. She might be a lady so gentle and delicate that she never put her feet on the ground to walk anywhere. But she will become cruel to her husband that she loves so much. And she will be cruel to her own son and daughter. ⁵⁷She will hide and give birth to a baby. And she will eat the baby and everything that comes out of her body with it. All those bad things will happen when your enemy comes to surround your cities and make you suffer.

⁵⁸“You must obey all the commands and teachings that are written in this book. And you must respect the wonderful and awesome name of the Lord your God. If you don’t obey, then ⁵⁹the Lord will give you and your descendants* many troubles. Your troubles and diseases will be terrible! ⁶⁰You saw many troubles and diseases in Egypt, and they made you afraid. The Lord will bring all those bad things against you! ⁶¹The Lord will even bring troubles and diseases that are not written in this *Book of Teachings*. He will continue to do this until you are destroyed. ⁶²You might have as many people as the stars in the sky. But only a few of you will be left. Why? Because you did not listen to the Lord your God.

⁶³“The Lord was happy to be good to you and to make your nation grow. In the same way, the Lord will be happy to ruin and destroy you. You are going to take that land to be yours. But people will take you out of that land! ⁶⁴The Lord will scatter you among all the people in the world. The Lord will scatter you from one end of the earth to the other. There you will serve false gods made of wood and stone. They are false gods that you or your ancestors* never worshiped.

⁶⁵“You will not have any peace among these nations. You will have no place to rest. The Lord will fill your mind with worry. Your eyes will feel tired. You will be very upset. ⁶⁶You will live with danger and always be afraid. You will be afraid night and day. You

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

The Lord ... until he destroys you Literally, “The Lord will put an iron yoke on your neck until he destroys you.”

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

will never feel sure about your life. ⁶⁷In the morning you will say, ‘I wish it were evening!’ In the evening you will say, ‘I wish it were morning!’ Why? Because of the fear that will be in your heart, and because of the bad things you will see. ⁶⁸The Lord will send you back to Egypt in ships. I said you would never have to go to that place again, but the Lord will send you there. In Egypt, you will try to sell yourselves as slaves to your enemies. But no person will buy you.”

The Agreement in Moab

29 The Lord made an agreement with the people of Israel at Mount Horeb (*Sinai*). In addition to that agreement, the Lord also commanded Moses to make another agreement with them while they were in Moab. This is that agreement.

²Moses called together all the Israelite people. He said to them, “You saw all the things the Lord did in the land of Egypt. You saw the things he did to Pharaoh, to Pharaoh’s officers, and to his whole country. ³You saw the great troubles he gave them. You saw the miracles and amazing things he did. ⁴But even today you still don’t understand what happened. The Lord has not let you really understand what you saw and heard. ⁵The Lord led you through the desert for 40 years. And during all that time your clothes and your shoes did not wear out. ⁶You did not have any food with you. You did not have any wine or anything else to drink. [But the Lord took care of you.] He did this so that you would understand that he is the Lord your God.

⁷“You came to this place, and King Sihon from Heshbon and King Og from Bashan came out to fight against us. But we defeated them. ⁸Then we took their land and gave it to the people in the family groups of Reuben and Gad, and to half the family group of Manasseh. ⁹If you obey all the commands in this agreement, then you will continue to succeed in everything you do.

¹⁰“Today all of you are standing here before the Lord your God. Your leaders, your officials, your elders (*leaders*), and all the other men are here. ¹¹Your wives and children are here and also the foreigners living among

you—the people who cut your wood and bring you water. ¹²You are all here to enter into an agreement with the Lord your God. The Lord is making this agreement with you today. ¹³With this agreement, the Lord is making you his own special people. And he himself will become your God. He told you this. He promised this to your ancestors*—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ¹⁴The Lord is making this agreement with its promises not only with you people. ¹⁵He is making this agreement with all of us that stand here today before the Lord our God. But this agreement is also for our descendants* that are not here with us today. ¹⁶You remember how we lived in the land of Egypt. And you remember how we traveled through the countries that were on our way here. ¹⁷You saw their hated things—the idols* they had made from wood, stone, silver, and gold. ¹⁸Be sure that there is no man, woman, family or family group here today that turns away from the Lord our God. No person should go and serve the gods of the other nations. People who do that are like a plant that grows bitter and poisonous fruit.

¹⁹“A person might hear these curses, but he might comfort himself and say, ‘I will continue doing what I want. Nothing bad will happen to me.’ That person might cause bad things to happen not only to himself but to everyone—even to the good people.* ^{20–21}The Lord will not forgive that person. No, the Lord will be angry and upset at that person. The Lord will punish that person. The Lord will separate that person from all the family groups of Israel. The Lord will completely destroy him. All the bad things that are written in this book will happen to him. Those things are a part of the Agreement that is written in this *Book of Teachings*.

²²“In the future, your descendants* and foreigners from faraway countries will see how the land has been ruined. They will see

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

idols Statues of false gods that people worshiped.

That person ... people Literally, “thereby bringing to an end the soaked and the thirsty.”

the diseases that the Lord has brought to it. ²³All the land will be useless—destroyed by burning sulfur and covered with salt. The land will have nothing planted in it. Nothing will be growing—not even weeds. The land will be destroyed like Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, the cities the Lord destroyed when he was very angry.

²⁴“All the other nations will ask, ‘Why did the Lord do this to this land? Why was he so angry?’ ²⁵The answer will be: ‘The Lord is angry because the people of Israel left the Agreement of the Lord, the God of their ancestors.* They stopped following the Agreement that the Lord made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. ²⁶The people of Israel started serving other gods—gods they never worshiped before. The Lord told his people not to worship those gods. ²⁷That is why the Lord became very angry against the people of this land. So he brought to them all the curses that are written in this book. ²⁸The Lord became very angry and upset at them. So he took them out of their land. He put them in another land, where they are today.’

²⁹“There are some things that the Lord our God has kept secret. Only he knows those things. But the Lord told us about some things. And those teachings are for us and our descendants* forever! And we must obey all the commands in that law.

The Israelites Will Return to Their Land

30“All these things I have said will happen to you. You will have good things from the blessings, and you will have bad things from the curses. The Lord your God will send you away to other nations. Then you will think about these things. ²At that time, you and your descendants* will return to the Lord your God. You will follow him with all your heart and completely obey all his commands that I have given you today. ³Then the Lord your God will be kind to you. The Lord will make you free again! He will bring you back from those nations where he

sent you. ⁴Even if you were sent to the farthest parts of the earth, the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back from there. ⁵The Lord will bring you into the land your ancestors* had, and the land will become yours. The Lord will do good to you, and you will have more than your ancestors had. You will have more people in your nation than they ever had. ⁶The Lord your God will make you and your descendants want to obey him.* Then you will love the Lord with all your heart. And you will live!

⁷“Then the Lord your God will make all those bad things happen to your enemies. Why? Because those people hate you and give you trouble. ⁸And you will again obey the Lord. You will obey all his commands that I give you today. ⁹The Lord your God will make you successful in everything you do. He will bless you with many children. He will bless your cows—they will have many baby calves. He will bless your fields—they will grow many good crops. The Lord will be good to you. The Lord will again enjoy doing good for you, the same as he enjoyed doing good for your ancestors.* ¹⁰But you must do the things that the Lord your God tells you to do. You must obey his commands and follow the rules that are written in this *Book of Teachings*. You must obey the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Then these good things will happen to you.

Life or Death

¹¹“This command that I give you today is not too hard for you. It is not far off. ¹²This command is not in heaven so that you should say, ‘Who will go up to heaven for us and bring it to us, so that we can hear and do it?’ ¹³This command is not on the other side of the sea so that you should say, ‘Who will go across the sea for us and bring it to us, so that we can hear it and do it?’ ¹⁴No, the word is very near to you! It is in your mouth and in your heart. So you can obey it!

¹⁵“Today I have given you a choice between life and death, good and evil. ¹⁶I

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

make you ... obey him Literally, “circumcise the hearts of you and your seed.”

command you today to love the Lord your God. I command you to follow him and to obey his commands, laws, and rules. Then you will live, and your nation will grow larger. And the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take for your own. ¹⁷But if you turn away from the Lord and refuse to listen—if you are led away to worship and serve other gods, ¹⁸then you will be destroyed. I am warning you! If you turn away from the Lord, you will not live long in that land across the Jordan River that you are ready to enter and take for your own.

¹⁹“Today I am giving you a choice of two ways. And I ask heaven and earth to be witnesses of your choice. You can choose life or death. The first choice will bring a blessing. The other choice will bring a curse. So choose life! Then you and your children will live. ²⁰You must love the Lord your God and obey him. Never leave him! Why? Because the Lord is your life. And the Lord will give you a long life in the land that he promised to give to your ancestors*—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Joshua Will Be the New Leader

31 Then Moses went and spoke these words to all the people of Israel. ²Moses said to them, “I am now 120 years old. I can’t lead you any more. The Lord said to me: ‘You will not go across the Jordan River.’ ³But, the Lord your God will lead you people into that land! The Lord will destroy these nations for you. You will take their land away from them. But the Lord said that Joshua must lead you.

⁴“The Lord destroyed Sihon and Og. The Lord destroyed those Amorite kings. And the Lord will do the same thing for you again! ⁵The Lord will help you defeat these nations. But you must do to them everything I told you to do. ⁶Be strong and be brave. Don’t be afraid of those people! Why? Because the Lord your God is with you. He will not fail you or leave you.”

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

⁷Then Moses called Joshua. All the people of Israel watched while Moses said to Joshua, “Be strong and brave. You will lead these people into the land that the Lord promised to give to their ancestors.* You will help the people of Israel take this land to be their own. ⁸The Lord will lead you. He himself is with you. He will not fail you or leave you. Don’t worry. Don’t be afraid!”

Moses Writes the Teachings

⁹Then Moses wrote the Teachings and gave them to the priests. The priests are from the family group of Levi. They have the work of carrying the Lord’s Box of the Agreement.* Moses also gave the Teachings to all the elders (*leaders*) of Israel. ¹⁰Then Moses spoke to the leaders. He said, “At the end of every seven years, in the Year of Freedom, read these Teachings at the Festival of Shelters. ¹¹At that time, all the people of Israel must come to meet with the Lord your God at the special place he will choose. Then you must read the Teachings to the people so that they can hear them. ¹²Bring together all the people—the men, the women, the little children, and the foreigners living in your cities. They will hear the Teachings, and they will learn to respect the Lord your God. Then they will be able to do all the things in the Teachings. ¹³If their descendants* don’t know the Teachings, then they will hear them. And they will learn to respect the Lord your God. They will respect him as long as you live in your country. You will soon go across the Jordan River and take that land to be your own.”

The Lord Calls Moses and Joshua

¹⁴The Lord said to Moses, “Now the time is near for you to die. Get Joshua and come to the Meeting Tent.* I will tell Joshua the

Box of the Agreement Or, “ark of the Covenant,” the box containing the flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them and other things that proved God was with the people of Israel during their time in the Sinai desert.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

Meeting Tent The Holy Tent (tabernacle) where the people of Israel went to meet with God.

things he must do.” So Moses and Joshua went to the Meeting Tent.

¹⁵The Lord appeared at the Tent in a tall cloud. The tall cloud stood over the entrance of the Tent. ¹⁶The Lord said to Moses, “You will die soon. And after you have gone to be with your ancestors,* these people will not continue to be faithful to me. They will break the Agreement I made with them. They will leave me and begin worshiping other gods—the false gods of the land where they are going. ¹⁷At that time, I will become very angry at them, and I will leave them. I will refuse to help them, and they will be destroyed. Terrible things will happen to them, and they will have many troubles. Then they will say, ‘These bad things happened to us because our God is not with us.’ ¹⁸And I will refuse to help them, because they have done evil and worshiped other gods.

¹⁹“So write down this song, and teach it to the people of Israel. Teach them to sing this song. Then this song will be a witness for me against the people of Israel. ²⁰I will take them into the land that I promised to give to their ancestors*—a land filled with many good things.* And they will have all they want to eat. They will have a rich life. But then they will turn to other gods and serve them. They will turn away from me and break my Agreement. ²¹Then many terrible things will happen to them. They will have many troubles. At that time, their people will still know this song, and it will show them how wrong they are. I have not yet taken them into the land I promised to give them. But I already know what they are planning to do there.”

²²So that same day Moses wrote down the song. And he taught the song to the people of Israel.

²³Then the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun. The Lord said, “Be strong and brave. You will lead the people of Israel into the land I promised them. And I will be with you.”

ancestors Literally, “fathers,” meaning a person’s parents, grandparents, and all the people they are descended from.

filled with many good things Literally, “flowing with milk and honey.”

Moses Warns the People of Israel

²⁴Moses carefully wrote all these teachings in a book. When he finished, ²⁵he gave a command to the Levites.* (These men carry the Lord’s Box of the Agreement.*) Moses said, ²⁶“Take this *Book of Teachings* and put it by the side of the Box of the Agreement of the Lord your God. Then it will be a witness against you. ²⁷I know you are very stubborn. I know you want to live your own way. Look, you refused to obey the Lord while I was with you. So I know you will refuse to obey him after I die. ²⁸Bring together all the officers and leaders of your family groups. I will tell them these things. And I will call heaven and earth to be witnesses against them. ²⁹I know that after my death you will become evil. You will turn from the way I commanded you to follow. Bad things will happen to you in the future. Why? Because you want to do the things that the Lord says are evil. You will make him angry because of the bad things you do.”

The Song of Moses

³⁰All the people of Israel were gathered together. And Moses sang this song for them. Moses sang the whole song:

32 “Skies, listen and I will speak.
Earth, hear the words of my mouth.
² My teachings will come like the rain,
like a mist falling [to the ground],
like a gentle rain on the soft grass,
like rain on the green plants.
³ Praise God* as I speak the Lord’s name!
⁴ “The Rock (*the Lord*)—his work is perfect!
Why? Because all his ways are right!
God is true and faithful.
He is good and honest.
⁵ And you are not really his children.
Your sins would make him dirty.
You are crooked liars.

Levites People from the tribe of Levi. They helped the priests in the temple and worked for the civil government.

Box of the Agreement Or, “ark of the Covenant,” the box containing the flat stones with the Ten Commandments written on them and other things that proved God was with the people of Israel during their time in the Sinai desert.

Praise God Or “Give honor to God” or “Speak of the greatness of God.”

- 6 Is that the way you should pay back the
 Lord _└for all that he did for you? No!_┘
 You are stupid, foolish people.
 The Lord is your Father.
 He made you.
 He is your Creator.
 He supports you.
- 7 “Remember what happened long ago.
 Think about the things that happened
 many, many years ago.
 Ask your father;
 he will tell you.
 Ask your leaders;
 they will tell you.
- 8 God Most-High separated
 the people on earth and gave
 each nation its own land.
 God set up borders for those people.
 He made as many nations
 as there are angels.*
- 9 The Lord’s share is his people;
 Jacob (*Israel*) belongs to the Lord.
- 10 “The Lord found Jacob (*Israel*) in
 a desert land,
 an empty, windy land.
 The Lord surrounded Jacob
 to watch over him.
 He protected him,
 like the pupil of his eye.
- 11 The Lord was like an eagle to Israel.
 An eagle pushes her babies
 from the nest _└to teach them to fly_┘.
 She flies with her babies
 to protect them.
 She spreads her wings to catch them
 └when they fall┘.
 And she carries them on her wings
 └to a safe place┘.
 The Lord is like that.
- 12 “The Lord alone led Jacob (*Israel*).
 No foreign gods helped him.
- 13 The Lord led Jacob to take control of
 the hill country.
 Jacob took the harvest in the fields.
 The Lord gave Jacob honey from the rock;
 he made olive oil flow
 from the hard rock.

- 14 _└The Lord gave Israel_┘
 butter from the herd
 and milk from the flock.
 └He gave Israel┘ fat lambs and goats,
 the best rams from Bashan,
 and the finest wheat.
 You _└people of Israel_┘ drank wine
 from the red juice of the grape.
- 15 “But Jeshurun* became fat
 and kicked _└like a bull_┘.
 (Yes, you people were fed well!
 You became full and fat!)
 Then he left the God who made him!
 He ran away from the Rock
 who saved him.
- 16 The Lord’s people made him jealous—
 They worshiped other gods!
 They worshiped those horrible idols.
 And that made God angry.
- 17 They offered sacrifices to demons
 that were not real gods.
 Those were new gods
 that they did not know.
 Those were new gods
 that your ancestors did not know.
- 18 You left the Rock (*God*) who made you;
 you forgot the God who gave you life.
- 19 “The Lord saw this and became upset.
 His sons and daughters made him angry!
- 20 So the Lord said,
 ‘I will turn away from them,
 then let’s see what happens!
 They are a rebellious people.
 They are like children who won’t learn
 their lessons!’
- 21 They made me jealous with _└demons_┘
 that aren’t gods.
 They made me angry with those
 worthless idols.
 So I will make them jealous with people
 that are not a real nation.
 I will make them angry with people
 that are a foolish* nation.

Jeshurun This is another name for Israel. This name means “good” or “honest.”

angels Literally, “sons of El (God).” The traditional Hebrew text has, “sons (people) of Israel.”

foolish This is a word play. The Hebrew word meaning “foolish” is like the word meaning “worthless.”

22 My anger will burn like a fire,
burning down to the deepest grave,*
burning the earth and all it produces,
burning deep down below the
mountains!

23 “I will bring troubles to the Israelites.
I will shoot all my arrows at them.

24 They will become thin from hunger.
Terrible diseases will destroy them.
I will send wild animals against them.
Poisonous snakes and lizards will
bite them.

25 In the streets, soldiers will kill them.
In their houses, terrible things
will happen.
Soldiers will kill young men and women.
They will kill babies and old people.

26 I thought about destroying the Israelites
so people would forget them
completely!

27 But I know what their enemies would say.
The enemy would not understand.
They would brag and say,
“The Lord did not destroy Israel.
We won by our own power!”

28 “The people [of Israel] are foolish.
They don’t understand.

29 If they were wise,
they would understand,
they would know what
would happen to them!

30 Can one person chase away 1,000 men?
Can two men cause 10,000 men
to run away?
That will happen only if the Lord
gives them to their enemy!
That will happen only
if their Rock* (*God*)
sells them like slaves!

31 The ‘rock’ of our enemies is not strong
like our Rock (*the Lord*).
Even our enemies know that!

32 Their vines and fields will be destroyed,
like Sodom and Gomorrah.*

33 Their grapes are like bitter poison.
Their wine is like poison from snakes.

34 “The Lord says,
‘I am saving that punishment.
I have it locked up in my storehouse!

35 I will punish them
for the bad things they did.
But I am saving that punishment
for when they slip and do bad things.
Their time of trouble is near.
Their punishment will come
quickly.’

36 “The Lord will judge his people.
They are his servants,
and he will show them mercy.
He will see that their power is gone.
He will see that they are all helpless—
the slaves and free people, too.

37 Then the Lord will say,
‘Where are the false gods?
Where is the ‘rock’ that you ran
to for protection?

38 Those false gods ate the fat of your
sacrifices.
And they drank the wine of your offerings.
So let those gods get up and help you!
Let them protect you!

39 “Now, see that I and only I am God!
There is no other God!

I put people to death
and I let people live.
I can hurt people,
and I can make them well.
No one can save another person
from my power!

40 I raise my hand toward heaven
and make this promise.
As surely as I live forever,
these things will happen!

41 I swear (*promise*),
I will sharpen my flashing sword.
I will use it to punish my enemies.
I will give them the punishment
they deserve.

grave Or, “Sheol,” the place of death.

Rock A name for God. It shows he is like a fortress or a strong
place of safety.

Sodom and Gomorrah Two cities God destroyed because the
people were so evil. See Gen. 19.

- ⁴² My enemies will be killed
and taken as prisoners.
My arrows will be covered
with their blood.
My sword will cut off the heads
of their soldiers.’
- ⁴³ “The whole world should be happy for
God’s people!
[Why? Because he helps them]—
he punishes people who kill
his servants.
He gives his enemies
the punishment they deserve.
And he makes his land and people pure.*”

Moses Teaches the People His Song

⁴⁴Moses and Joshua son of Nun came and sang all the words of this song for the people of Israel to hear. ⁴⁵When Moses finished giving these teachings to the people, ⁴⁶he said to them, “You must be sure to pay attention to all the commands I tell you today. And you must tell your children to completely obey the commands in this Law. ⁴⁷Don’t think these teachings are not important! They are your life! Through these teachings you will live a long time in the land across the Jordan River that you are ready to take.”

Moses on Mount Nebo

⁴⁸The Lord spoke to Moses that same day. The Lord said, ⁴⁹“Go to the Abarim Mountains. Go up on Mount Nebo in the land of Moab across from the city of Jericho. Then you can look at the land of Canaan that I am giving to the people of Israel to live in. ⁵⁰You will die on that mountain. You will go to be with your people, the same as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor. ⁵¹Why? Because you both sinned against me. You were at the waters of Meribah near Kadesh. That was in the desert of Zin. There, in front of the people of Israel, you did not honor me and show that I am holy. ⁵²So now you may see the land that I am giving to the people of Israel. But you can’t go into that land.”

make ... pure Or, “make atonement for ...” The Hebrew word means “to cover,” “to hide,” or “to erase sins.”

Moses Blesses the People

33 This is the blessing that Moses, the man of God, gave the people of Israel before he died. ²Moses said:

- “The Lord came from Sinai,
like a light shining at dawn over Seir.
like a light shining from Mount Paran.
The Lord came with 10,000 holy ones.
God’s mighty soldiers
were by his side.*
- ³ Yes, the Lord loves his people.
All his holy people are in his hand.
They sit at his feet
and learn his teachings!
- ⁴ Moses gave us the Law.
Those teaching are for Jacob’s people.
- ⁵ At that time, the people of Israel
and their leaders met together,
and the Lord became Jeshurun’s* king!

Reuben’s Blessing

- ⁶ “Let Reuben live, and not die!
But let there be only a few people
in his family group!”

Judah’s Blessing

- ⁷Moses said these things about Judah:
- “Lord, listen to the leader from Judah
when he calls for help.
Bring him to his people.
Make him strong,
and help him defeat his enemies!”

Levi’s Blessing

- ⁸Moses said these things about Levi:
- “Levi is your true follower.
He keeps the Urim and Thummim.*
At Massah you tested the people of Levi.
At the waters of Meribah* you proved
that they are yours.

The Lord came ... side Or, “The Lord came from 10,000 holy [angels] where his troops were by his right side.”

Jeshurun This is another name for Israel. This name means “good” or “honest.”

Urim and Thummim Used by the priest to learn God’s answer to questions. They were probably like lots—stones, sticks or bones that were thrown like dice to make decisions.

Massah ... Meribah See Num. 20:1–13 for the story.

- 9 [They cared more for you, Lord,
 than for their own families.]
 They ignored their fathers and mothers.
 They did not recognize their brothers.
 They did not pay attention to their
 children.
 But they obeyed your commands.
 They kept your Agreement.
- 10 They will teach your rules to Jacob*
 They will teach your Law to Israel.
 They will burn incense* before you.
 They will offer burnt offerings
 on your altar.
- 11 Lord, bless the things that belong to Levi.
 Accept the things he does.
 Destroy the men who attack him!
 Defeat his enemies,
 so that they will never attack again.”

Benjamin's Blessing

- 12 Moses said this about Benjamin:
- “The Lord loves Benjamin.
 Benjamin will live safely near him.
 The Lord protects him all the time.
 And the Lord will live in his land.*”

Joseph's Blessing

- 13 Moses said this about Joseph:
- “May the Lord bless Joseph's land.
 Lord, send them rain from the skies above
 and water from the ground below.
- 14 Let the sun give them good fruit.
 Let each month bring its best fruit.
- 15 Let the hills and ancient mountains
 produce their best fruit.
- 16 Let the earth give its best to Joseph.
 Joseph was separated from his brothers.
 So may the Lord in the [burning] bush
 give his best to Joseph.
- 17 Joseph is like a powerful bull.
 His two sons are like bull's horns.

Jacob Another name for Israel.

incense Special dried tree sap. Burned to make a sweet-smelling smoke, it was offered as a sacrifice to God.

And the Lord will live in his land Literally, “And he will dwell between his shoulders.” This probably means that the Lord's temple will be in Jerusalem, at the border between Benjamin and Judah's land.

They will attack other people
 and push them to the ends of the earth!
 Yes, Manasseh has thousands of people,
 and Ephraim has ten thousands.”

Zebulun's and Issachar's Blessing

- 18 Moses said this about Zebulun:
- “Zebulun, be happy, when you go out.
 Issachar, [be happy], in your tents at home.
- 19 They will call the people to their
 mountain.
 There they will offer good sacrifices.
 They will take riches from the sea
 and treasures from the shore.”

Gad's Blessing

- 20 Moses said this about Gad:
- “Praise [God] who gave Gad more land!
 Gad is like a lion.
 He lies down and waits.
 Then he attacks
 and tears the animal in pieces.
- 21 He chooses the best part for himself.
 He takes the king's share.
 The leaders of the people come to him.
 He does what the Lord says is good.
 He does what is right
 for the people of Israel.”

Dan's Blessing

- 22 Moses said this about Dan:
- “Dan is a lion's cub
 that jumps out from Bashan.”

Naphtali's Blessing

- 23 Moses said this about Naphtali:
- “Naphtali, you will get plenty of good things.
 The Lord will truly bless you.
 You will get the land by Lake Galilee.”

Asher's Blessing

- 24 Moses said this about Asher:
- “Asher* is the most blessed of the sons.
 Let him be the favorite of his brothers.
 And let him wash his feet in oil.

Asher This name means, “blessed” or “happy.”

- 25 Your gates will have locks
made from iron and bronze.
You will be strong all your life.”

Moses Gives Praise to God

- 26 “There is no one like God, Jeshurun*!
God rides on the clouds in his glory
through the skies to help you.
27 God lives forever.
He is your place of safety.
God’s power continues forever!
He is protecting you.
God will force your enemies
to leave your land.
He will say,
‘Destroy the enemy!’
28 So Israel will live in safety,
Jacob’s well belongs to them.
They will get a land of grain and wine.
And that land will get plenty of rain.
29 Israel, you are blessed.
No other nation is like you.
The Lord saved you.
The Lord is like a strong shield
protecting you.
The Lord is like a powerful sword.
Your enemies will be afraid of you.
And you will trample their
holy places!”

Moses Dies

34 Moses climbed Mount Nebo. Moses went from the Jordan Valley in Moab to the top of Mount Pisgah. This was across the Jordan River from Jericho. The Lord showed Moses all the land from Gilead to Dan. ²The Lord showed him all the land of Naphtali,

Ephraim, and Manasseh. He showed him all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea. ³The Lord showed Moses the Negev* and the valley that goes from Zoar to Jericho, the city of palm trees. ⁴The Lord said to Moses, “This is the land I promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I said to them, ‘I will give this land to your descendants.* I have let you see the land, but you cannot go there.’”

⁵Then Moses, the Lord’s servant, died there in the land of Moab. The Lord had told Moses this would happen. ⁶The Lord buried Moses in Moab. This was in the valley across from Beth Peor. But even today no person knows exactly where Moses’ grave is. ⁷Moses was 120 years old when he died. He was as strong as ever, and his eyes were still good. ⁸The people of Israel cried for Moses for 30 days. They stayed in the Jordan Valley in Moab until the time of sadness was finished.

Joshua Becomes the New Leader

⁹Moses had put his hands on Joshua and appointed him to be the new leader. Then Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom. So the people of Israel began to obey Joshua. They did the things that the Lord had commanded Moses.

¹⁰Israel never had another prophet* like Moses: The Lord knew Moses face to face. ¹¹The Lord sent Moses to do powerful miracles in the land of Egypt. Pharaoh, all his officers, and all the people in Egypt saw those miracles. ¹²No other prophet ever did all the powerful and amazing things that Moses did. All the people of Israel saw the things he did.

Jeshurun This is another name for Israel. This name means “good” or “honest.”

Negev The desert area south of Judah.

descendants A person’s children and their future families.

prophet A person chosen by God to be a special servant.