

## January 31, 2021

### A New Leader Commissioned

### Deuteronomy 31-34

#### BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Jan 24	Exodus 19-21	Jan 28	Exodus 30-32
Jan 25	Exodus 22-24	Jan 29	Exodus 33-35
Jan 26	Exodus 25-27	Jan 30	Exodus 36-38
Jan 27	Exodus 28-29	Jan 31	Exodus 39-40

#### Overview of Deuteronomy 31-34

##### Deuteronomy 31

##### Deuteronomy 32 – The Song of Moses

##### Deuteronomy 33 – Moses blesses the Tribes

##### Deuteronomy 34 – The death of Moses

#### Lesson Idea:

#### Cross References:

**Background:** J.G. McConville in the *New Bible Commentary* introduces these final chapters of Deuteronomy:

Moses' main speeches are over. The time for action is very close; the promises are soon to be fulfilled. The rest of Deuteronomy is taken up with the handing over of leadership by Moses to Joshua, with farewell speeches and with the account of Moses' death.

#### Deuteronomy 31:1-8 Moses' Last Counsel

- 1 *So Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel.*
- 2 *And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross this Jordan.'*
- 3 *"It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken.*
- 4 *"The LORD will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them.*
- 5 *"The LORD will deliver them up before you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you.*
- 6 *"Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you."*

*7 Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance.*

*8 "The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."*

#### **NOTES:**

As Moses concluded his final address to Israel, he recognized that his time of leadership was coming to an end. In verse 2 Moses acknowledged both his inability to continue to lead, and the fact that God had forbidden him to enter into the Promised Land. But rather than lament his limitations, he poured himself into encouraging the next leader. Earlier in Deuteronomy God told Moses to prepare Joshua for his role over Israel: *'But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.'* (**Deuteronomy 3:28**)

McConville writes:

In God's wisdom, the new phase of Israel's history needed a new leader. Moses' commissioning of Joshua is an important theme of Deuteronomy, and vital for the people's confidence. We see here at what great personal cost Moses did this. His laying down of his own deepest desire is the best measure of his faithfulness. (McConville, *New Bible Commentary*).

Moses spoke encouraging words to Joshua. He assured Him that the Lord would go before the people and bring victory against their enemies. Moses knew from experience that God would not fail Joshua, because God had never failed Moses.

J.A. Thompson in the *Tyndale Commentary* explains:

Joshua had already been set apart by Moses before Eleazar and the congregation to assume the leadership after his death (1:38; cf. Num. 27:18–23). Repeating the promise of the divine presence already given to the people, Moses now charged Joshua publicly to lead Israel to the land of promise. The concept of the Holy War lies very close to the surface in these verses. Yahweh will be with Joshua and will not forsake him in the conflicts of coming days. Hence there is no need for him to *fear or be dismayed*.

**Deuteronomy 31:9-13**

*9 So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel.*

*10 Then Moses commanded them, saying, "At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths,*

*11 when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing.*

*12 "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law.*

*13 "Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."*

**NOTES:**

As a good leader, Moses realized that his legacy would need to influence not just the leader but the followers too. Moses spent time in the wilderness writing down the Law that the Lord had given him. He passed that copy of the Law on to the priests for preserving it. Moses commanded that it should be read to the whole assembly of Israel every seven years.

The public reading would coincide with the Year of Jubilee (see Deut 15) and the Feast of Booths (see Deut 16). This was very appropriate, because it was a time that all of Israel was supposed to gather together. The Year of Jubilee was also a time when all debts were settled, and servants were released. The Feast of Booths reminded the people of their time in the wilderness and how God cared for them from the time of their deliverance from Egypt until the conquest of the Promised Land. The reading of the Law every seven years would remind them that their obedience to God would keep them free and guarantee His continual provision for them.

He insisted that the adults bring their children to the public reading as well, *so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law* (v 12). It would especially be important for future generations who had not seen what God had done nor heard the Law as it was first pronounced. Thompson points out:

The reading of this law before all Israel every seven years at the feast of tabernacles, in the year of release, was a special occasion to remind Israel of her covenant obligations. One other value of such a covenant renewal

ceremony was that the children, at least once during childhood years, and possibly twice, could stand with a considerable congregation and share in a great act of covenant renewal.

It is always important for God's people to share the Word of the Lord with the next generation. Our children are being inundated with information from all over the world. They need to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, so they can know the Truth that can set them free. This is a constant theme in Deuteronomy that hearkens back to one of the foundational passages for Israel, Deuteronomy 6:4-6:

*4 "Hear, Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! 5 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 7 And you shall repeat them diligently to your sons and speak of them when you sit in your house, when you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you get up.*

**Deuteronomy 31:14-**

*Israel Will Fall Away*

*14 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting.*

*15 The LORD appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud, and the pillar of cloud stood at the doorway of the tent.*

*16 The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers; and this people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them.*

*17 "Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?'*

*18 "But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods.*

*19 "Now therefore, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the sons of Israel; put it on their lips, so that this song may be a witness for Me against the sons of Israel.*

20 "For when I bring them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to their fathers, and they have eaten and are satisfied and become prosperous, then they will turn to other gods and serve them, and spurn Me and break My covenant.

21 "Then it shall come about, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify before them as a witness (for it shall not be forgotten from the lips of their descendants ); for I know their intent which they are developing today, before I have brought them into the land which I swore."

22 So Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the sons of Israel.

#### Joshua Is Commissioned

23 Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "**Be strong and courageous**, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

24 It came about, when Moses finished writing the words of this law in a book until they were complete,

25 that Moses commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying,

26 "Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you.

27 "For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death?

28 "Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them.

29 "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands."

30 Then Moses spoke in the hearing of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were complete...

#### NOTES:

God personally commissioned Joshua as the new leader. God then commissioned Moses to write a song that could be taught to Israel to warn them against falling away from the Lord. That song is found in chapter 32. God gave Joshua the same words of encouragement that Moses had shared: "**Be strong and courageous**" (v 23). God reminded Joshua of His call: *for you shall bring*

*the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them.* God also reminded him of the precious promise of power: *and I will be with you.*

In verses 24-27 Moses commanded that the finished Law book should be put beside the ark of the covenant. This put a high emphasis on the importance of God's Word, because the Levites were to keep it next to place of God's presence. God is present through His Word, because it is inspired which means God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Moses called together the elders and officers of the tribes, so that they could be held accountable for knowing God's commands (v 28-29). Moses expressed his doubts that the people would be faithful after his death. In fact, the song that God told Moses to compose (Deut 32) was to be a perpetual reminder throughout the generations of the importance of following God's Word. Moses was assigning the responsibility of perpetuating the faith with the next set of leaders.

#### Deuteronomy 34 The Death of Moses

7 Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated.

8 So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses came to an end.

9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.

10 Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,

11 for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land,

12 and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Moses had a lasting legacy. Deuteronomy ends with a tribute to his life. But it also makes it clear that God provided a new leader after him. Joshua received the blessing of Moses both publicly and privately as Moses mentored him. He also received the sanction of God for leadership through the gift of the *spirit of wisdom*. We are blessed and equipped for any and every ministry to which God calls us, because He has given us of His Holy Spirit.

Notes:

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