

## Deuteronomy 29 • The Covenant in Moab

### Introduction

If we rush too fast, we might think that Scripture is merely repeating something it has already described previously. It is important to note that what is going on at the end of Deuteronomy as the second generation is about to take full possession of the Promised Land is not precisely identical to what the first generation underwent when it first came out of Egypt. This event is the other “bookend” which must be synchronized with its counterpart at Mt. Horeb in order to understand the full and complete meaning and definition of the Old Covenant. The foundation first provided in Exodus is not actually complete without this concluding event at the end of the Torah, and together serve as one of the most revealing forerunners of the true intent and working of the New Covenant it foreshadows.

<sup>1</sup>These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb.

### [Read v.1]

**Q: How do we know that this is not the same, identical covenant simply being repeated again?**

A: It specifically states this is “besides the covenant...at Horeb”.

**Q: From the outset, what would be obviously different about these two events?**

1. There is about 40 years’ separation between Horeb and Moab.
2. Horeb took place when Israel had just left Egypt, Moab takes place as Israel is just about to enter the Promised Land. (In fact, part of the Promised Land has already been apportioned to the tribes east of the Jordan River.)
3. Horeb involved the first generation which was prevented from entering the Promised Land, Moab involves the second generation which is granted entrance.
4. At Horeb the Law was proclaimed to the people through Moses for the first time, at Moab the people have themselves just proclaimed and written the Law on Gerizim and Ebal (Dt. 27-28).
5. At Horeb the first generation is only a “hearer”; at Moab the second generation is the more qualified “doer”.
6. Others?

**Q: How do you suppose these two separate events combine to provide a complete picture of what we have come to call the Old Covenant?**

A: It reflects the reciprocal nature of a covenant relationship with God which mutually obligates **both** parties according to God’s Word. In other words, the proof that God’s people heard and received the Law is proven by their putting it into practice. As with most biblically spiritual things, “hearers” are defined by being “doers”. (James 1:23-25)

**Application:** What was initially established through God’s Word by blood at Horeb is confirmed by being put into practice at Horeb. It is a picture of how salvation is always completed by the follow-on work of sanctification.

<sup>2</sup>And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land; <sup>3</sup>the great trials which your eyes have seen, those great signs and wonders. <sup>4</sup>Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear. <sup>5</sup>I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes have

### [Read v.2-9]

**Q: What is the main issue being addressed?**

A: It is speaking to the issue of whether or not God’s people have learned and applied the proper lessons from all the signs and wonders God rendered on their behalf.

[Continued on the next page.]

not worn out on you, and your sandal has not worn out on your foot. <sup>6</sup>You have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or strong drink, in order that you might know that I am the LORD your God. <sup>7</sup>When you reached this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon and Og the king of Bashan came out to meet us for battle, but we defeated them; <sup>8</sup>and we took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites. <sup>9</sup>So keep the words of this covenant to do them, that you may prosper in all that you do.

**Q: How might we categorize the signs and wonders God performed? [Hint: What are the different geographic locations listed?]**

1. "...in the land of Egypt..." (v.2-3), a picture of being saved out of the old life.
2. "...forty years in the wilderness..." (v.5-6) taking care of all personal needs, a picture of God's provision to live *in* this world but not *of* this world.
3. "...this place..." (v.7-8) at which they presently arrived and overcame the enemy, a picture of overcoming the world and the enemies of God.

**Q: So what is the greater meaning of v.4?**

A: That "*the LORD has not given you...eyes to see...*" is contrasted with "*You have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes...*" in v.2. In other words, they have not processed spiritually what they have witnessed personally.

**Point:** *What God accomplishes for us in the details concerning our physical being should serve to strengthen our faith that He is therefore going to complete every promise for our spiritual being.*

**Q: How would this concept be reinforced further by the fact that land has already been given over to Reuben, Gad and Manasseh?**

A: It is tangible proof that God has already begun to fulfill all His promises and obligations of their covenant relationship.

**Q: It may be a small word, but what is tremendously important about the conclusion in v.9 beginning with, "So..."?**

A: "So" or "therefore" is summarizing everything that came before it. Because God has, is and will keep His Word, so His people must likewise "*keep the words of this covenant and do them*". God has followed up speaking His Word at Horeb by His actions, so now His people speaking His Word at Moab must likewise personally follow up by putting it into practice.

**Application:** *Just as God followed through and proved His Word by fulfilling His promises, so His people must follow through and prove their commitment to His Word by putting it into practice.*

<sup>10</sup>"You stand today, all of you, before the LORD your God: your chiefs, your tribes, your elders and your officers, even all the men of Israel, <sup>11</sup>your little ones, your wives, and the alien who is within your camps, from the one who chops your wood to the one who draws your water, <sup>12</sup>that you may enter into the covenant with the LORD your God, and into His oath which the LORD your God is making with you today, <sup>13</sup>in order that He may establish you today as His people and that He may be your God, just as He spoke to you and as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

**[Read v.10-13]**

**Q: What is obviously different about what is taking place at Moab from what took place at Horeb?**

A: Not just the seventy elders, and not limited exclusively to the ethnic descendants of Israel, but to all who have been incorporated into spiritual Israel are required to be in attendance. This was not just a gathering of those counted in a census as being of the right age and belonging to a tribe, but the whole congregation of Israel regardless of age, condition, status, or gender and even regardless of being "native-born" or "naturalized".

**Point:** *This is another of many indications that God's salvific plan was never limited to just one nation, but that through them the whole world would be saved.*

**Q: Why might it be important that v.12 specifies that this is "HIS oath which the LORD your God is making"?**

A: It reinforces the dual nature of a covenant relationship by which both parties are mutually bound.

**Q: What is the three-fold purpose provided in v.13?**

1. "...that He may establish you today as His people..."
2. "...that He may be your God..."
3. "...as He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob".

**Point:** Note how these things express the fulfillment of God's promises for the past, present and future as well as for both the course of this present life and the one to come.

**Q: Why might this last inclusion of the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob be a powerful statement since the congregation at Moab is not limited to just ethnic Israel?**

A: It shows how the inclusion of the whole world in the covenant with Israel is inclusive of **all** the covenants. Those in spiritual Israel are heirs together of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who came before as well. Those spiritually incorporated into Israel can call the patriarchs "*your fathers*" as legitimately as their direct physical descendants.

**Application:** God's covenant relationship, whether under the "Old" or the "New", has always been intended for everyone.

**[Read v.14-21]**

<sup>14</sup>Now not with you alone am I making this covenant and this oath, <sup>15</sup>but both with those who stand here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God and with those who are not with us here today <sup>16</sup>(for you know how we lived in the land of Egypt, and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed; <sup>17</sup>moreover, you have seen their abominations and their idols of wood, stone, silver, and gold, which they had with them); <sup>18</sup>so that there will not be among you a man or woman, or family or tribe, whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations; that there will not be among you a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood. <sup>19</sup>It shall be when he hears the words of this curse, that he will boast, saying, 'I have peace though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart in order to destroy the watered land with the dry.' <sup>20</sup>The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him, but rather the anger of the LORD and His jealousy will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. <sup>21</sup>Then the LORD will single him out for adversity from all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant which are written in this book of the law.

**Q: How does v.14-15 expand on the previous verses as to who may have a covenant relationship with God?**

A: Whereas the previous section described everyone in Israel regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, standing or having been descended from Gentile or Jew, it extends beyond just those who took the oath historically at Moab, but to "*those who are not with us here today*"—to every future generation as well. This was not a one-time event limited to just those physically present.

**Q: How do we know from the reference to false religion in v.16-18 that a covenant relationship requires more than just hearing and knowing the Law?**

A: The disobedient are those "*whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God*". (v.18)

*Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me.*

— John 14:23-24

**Q: What is the greater danger of unfaithfulness for God's people that is being described in v.18?**

A: It is not merely speaking of bad influences, but something which becomes "*a root bearing poisonous fruit and wormwood*"—something which grows corruption from within.

**Q: What is the greater spiritual meaning of "wormwood"?**

A: "*Wormwood*" is referenced in Scripture in at least eight other places. (Pr. 5:4; Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15; 3:19; Amos 5:7; 6:1; Rev. 8:11) It refers to a process by which pure and healthy water (which in Scripture typifies the Word) is rendered bitter and even poisonous.

**Q: How does this fit in with the overall context of what is being taught?**

A: The greater theme is not just hearing, but keeping and putting God's Word into practice. Here we have the ultimate example of the effect of hearing but willfully refusing to live according to God's Word. Such persons are a root which instead of producing good spiritual fruit which brings satisfying nourishment, impart multiplied hazardous spiritual results.

**Q: How do we know that this is not referring simply to those who never entered into a covenant relationship with the Lord, but speak directly to those who do and subsequently refuse to follow through with obedience?**

A: In v.19 he confesses, "...I walk in the stubbornness of my heart..." which is directly opposite of following from the heart (v.18), and is followed up with his knowing that his actions "destroy the watered land with the dry", indicating he is fully aware not only of the blessings for obedience but the curses for disobedience articulated in both the covenants at Horeb and Moab.

**Q: Why does it specifically state that it is not God's anger alone that burns against such individuals, but His jealousy?**

A: "Jealousy" as biblically defined is the intense desire to keep someone in a pure and faithful, untainted relationship. God is especially moved to action against someone enticing His Bride in an attempt to make her unfaithful to Him.

*Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;*  
— Hebrews 12:14-15

**Application:** God's people must not only resist the outside influences of the world, but even more importantly guard against those on the inside who fall away to become a growing influence corrupting others from God's Word and ways.

<sup>22</sup>"Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it, will say, <sup>23</sup>'All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.' <sup>24</sup>All the nations will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land? Why this great outburst of anger?' <sup>25</sup>Then men will say, 'Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. <sup>26</sup>They went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they have not known and whom He had not allotted to them. <sup>27</sup>Therefore, the anger of the LORD burned against

**[Read v.22-28]**

**Q: How is this building yet further on the theme of faithfulness to God's Word from the heart?**

A: Just as all the fulfillments of God's promises were a visible proof of the heart's condition resulting in a faithful relationship, so too the execution of the curses serve as visible evidence of a disobedient heart indicative of an unfaithful relationship.

**Q: How do we know that just as the covenant is for every generation that the consequences for violating it are also for every generation?**

A: It is not only specified for "the generation to come", but to be witnessed by both Jew and Gentile ("foreigner") alike. (v.22)

**Q: To what is this spiritual adultery and its consequences likened?**

A: "...like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim..." (v.23)

**Q: What do these cities have in common?**

A: They were among the five cities of the plain in the Valley of Siddim on which God wrought supernatural judgment for the worst kind of physical unfaithfulness (homosexuality) reflecting the worst kind of spiritual

that land, to bring upon it every curse which is written in this book; <sup>28</sup>and the LORD uprooted them from their land in anger and in fury and in great wrath, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.'

<sup>29</sup>“The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law.

unfaithfulness. (Gen. 10:19; 14:2) Through Hosea the concept is reinforced that Admah and Zeboiim represent final judgment in that the wrath of God's anger results in permanent and eternal destruction with no hope of recovery. (Hos. 11:8)

**Q: Is there a prophetic meaning to these verses?**

A: This is exactly what happened to Israel repeatedly, especially in the Diasporas of Babylon in Jeremiah's time and the Roman destruction and dispersion beginning in 70 AD.

**Application:** *The physical consequences of the curses in God's Word come about as a reflection of the spiritual condition of a heart showing itself to be unfaithful, willfully forsaking an exclusive covenant relationship in the character of adultery, the willful rejection of one for another.*

**[Read v.29]**

**Q: How does this summarize the purpose of a covenant relationship with God?**

A: Everything we need to know in order to fulfill our part of the agreement has been made known; there is nothing additional required beyond the need to “observe all the words of this law”.

**Q: How is it reinforced for the third time in this chapter that the covenants of Horeb and Moab are intended for every generation?**

A: It specifically states, “to us and to our sons forever”.

**Q: What are spiritual secrets actually intended to bring about as far as God's people are concerned?**

A: Obedience to God's Word—“...that we may observe all the words of this law”.

*The secret of the LORD is for those who fear Him,  
And He will make them know His covenant.*

— Psalm 25:14

**Application:** *Everything we need to know for this life and the one to come has been revealed. A covenant relationship requires simply being faithful to God's Word as we already know it.*

**Overall Application**

*At the close of Deuteronomy with the requirement of the oath at Moab, there is something strikingly missing from the covenant of Moab which was critical to concluding the covenant at Horeb: the sprinkling of blood. The lack of a need for a second sprinkling alludes to the greater fulfillment of the new covenant by the blood of Christ who needs only be crucified once for our sins. From that point on, what is required is daily obedience to His Word. Salvation begins with our initial **one-time** life-changing decision to choose Christ, but is followed up with the work of sanctification which is a **daily** decision to choose His Word and ways over our own. This was always the pattern, even with the Old Covenant.*