



The term Deuteronomy means, “Second Law.” This is what it is called because in the Bible, it comes after all the laws found in the books of Leviticus and Numbers. However, it was written before these books. It was the first attempt to unify commands and customs and to give Israel the Law in which it would find life.

The first writing of Deuteronomy took place more than five hundred years after the encounter of Moses with God. The land of Canaan had been conquered and the Kingdom of David and Solomon had been established and then divided and weakened. The largest and the most prosperous province, situated to the north and called the Kingdom of Israel, had ceased to exist and a similar fate was threatening the Kingdom of Judah, the southern province, in the seventh century before Christ.

It was then that this Law of Yahweh became public. It revealed to the people the cause of their defeats and it offered them an opportunity for salvation. Forgotten in the Temple during the persecution of Manasseh, its discovery, in 622 (2 K 22:1), gave rise to Josiah’s reform.

In a fictitious way, the author attributes the warnings and the laws that are found in this book, to Moses. He situates the events that we read about in the steppes of Moab, on the other side of the Jordan. It was then, shortly before his death, that Moses gave Israel the laws that could save it.

The Love of God and the Promised Land

Moses had demanded the conquest of the land of Canaan. The Israelites were already ruling the land and they were trying to look good among the powerful of the time. They were endowed with a central power, an army, temples and a respected clergy. They were paying homage to their God, but in fact, they had gone back to being like other peoples.

Moses had spoken of serving Yahweh alone. Now, Deuteronomy insistently reminds Israel that Yahweh had loved them and had chosen them. Now, Israel is the people to whom Yahweh has granted the covenant and they should respond lovingly to God with all their hearts. See Deuteronomy 6:1.

Loving God, of course, but also loving their neighbors. The book seeks to strengthen the unity of the people and it shows how God’s love for his people is demanding that they establish a responsible and fraternal society.

The main divisions of the book are the following:

1. A retrospective look and a calling to attention: chapters 1:1–4:43.

1 ¹These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel, at the other side of the Jordan River, in the Arabah desert. They were facing Suf, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazereth and Dizahab. ²From Mount Horeb to Kadesh-Barnea they had had a journey of eleven days through the mountains of Seir. ³But now it was the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year after they left Egypt, when Moses told the children of Israel all that Yahweh had commanded him regarding them.

⁴After defeating Sihon, the king of the Amorites, who lived in Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan who ruled in Ashtaroth and in Edrei, ⁵Moses began to explain this law. They were in the land of Moab, at the other side of the Jordan.

First discourse of Moses: the judges

• ⁶Moses said, “Yahweh, our God, spoke to us at Mount Horeb: ‘You have stayed long enough at this mountain. ⁷Leave this place and go into the territory of the Amorites and to its neighboring peoples in the Arabah, the Mountains, the Lowlands, the Negeb and the seacoast, into the land of Canaan and Lebanon up to the great Euphrates River.

⁸Look: I offer you this land; you will take possession of it and live in the land which Yahweh swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and to all their descendants.’

⁹I said to you at that time: ‘I alone cannot be responsible for all of you. ¹⁰Yahweh, your God, has multiplied you, and now, you are as numerous as the stars in heaven. ¹¹May Yahweh, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousand times more and bless you just as he promised.

¹²But how can I alone resolve all your problems and disputes? ¹³Look for intelligent, keen-sighted and experienced men from each of your tribes, and I will place them over the people.’

¹⁴And you answered: ‘What you ask us to do is right.’ ¹⁵Thus, I chose from among the heads of your tribes wise and experienced men and placed them over you as leaders of the thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, and also as secretaries for each tribe. ¹⁶And I gave this order to the judges: ‘Attend to the complaints of your brothers, and judge with justice the lawsuit between an Israelite and his brother, or between an Israelite and a foreigner who lives in your midst.

¹⁷Do not be influenced by anyone when you judge, but listen to the poor and the rich alike, to the powerful as well as the weak, and do not be afraid of anyone because you act in place of God. And if there arises a very difficult case for you, refer this to me and I will attend to it.’

¹⁸At that time, I established what you had to do.

Rebellion at Kadesh

¹⁹Finally, having left Horeb, we passed through that wide and terrible desert that we saw, on the way to the hill country of the Amorites, as Yahweh had commanded us, and arriving at Kadesh-Barnea, ²⁰I said to you:

‘We have come to the mountain of the Amorites which Yahweh, our God, gives us. ²¹Look, Israel, at the land which Yahweh gives you; take possession of that which was promised to your ancestors. Do not be afraid or discouraged.’

²²Then all of you gathered around me and said to me: ‘Better send some men before us to explore the land and map out the roads leading to the cities where we are to go.’

²³That was a good suggestion, so I took twelve men from among you, one from each tribe, ²⁴who set out and climbed the mountains on foot until they came to the Valley of the Grapevines. ²⁵And once there, they took with them the fruits of the valley, and upon their return recounted to us what they had seen.

Pro 24:23;
Jas 2:9

Num
13:1–
14:9

Gen 12:7

18:13-26;
Num
11:11

2. A synthesis of the events related in Exodus and Numbers: chapters 4:44–11:32. The author insists on the importance of love to understand the Law of Yahweh.

3. Precepts that correct and revise the previous legislations: chapters 12–28.

4. An epilogue gathering texts of an exhortative nature: chapters: 29–34. The book concludes with the death of Moses and the new leadership of Joshua.

They told us: 'The land which Yahweh gives us is a good land.'

²⁶Nevertheless, you did not want to go up into the mountains but rebelled against the commands of Yahweh. ²⁷And you began to murmur in your tents: 'Yahweh does not like us; he made us leave Egypt to turn us over to the Amorites who in turn will kill us all. ²⁸Where shall we go? The messengers have frightened us with what they told us: The people who live in the land are greater and taller than us. The cities are great and are fortified with high walls. We have seen giants there as in times past.'

²⁹Then I said to you: 'Have no fear and do not be afraid of them. ³⁰Yahweh who leads you will likewise fight for you as he did in Egypt. ³¹You have also seen what he did in the desert where he carried you all the way just as a father carries his son, until we came to this place.'

³²But still you would not believe Yahweh, our God, ³³who went before you in all your journeys, and has instructed you where to set up camp; by night he has shown you the way with fire and by day with a cloud.

³⁴And when Yahweh heard the rumblings of your complaints, he was angry and he swore: ³⁵Not one from this perverse generation will see the beautiful land which I swore to give to your ancestors ³⁶except Caleb, the son of Jephunneh. He shall see it and I will give him and his children the land upon which he trod because he has faithfully followed Yahweh.

³⁷Yahweh was angry with me as well because of your fault, and he said to me: 'Neither will you enter there; ³⁸but your assistant, Joshua, the son of Nun, will

enter. Encourage him because he will be the one to give Israel its inheritance. ³⁹Your children will enter there; to them will I give the land, and they will possess it although you feared they would become the prey of your enemies. ⁴⁰But as for you, go back into the desert by the Red Sea.'

⁴¹And you answered me: 'We have sinned against Yahweh, our God. Now, we will go and fight as he has commanded us.' So each one took his weapons and thought it easy to climb the mountains. ⁴²But Yahweh told me: 'Tell them not to go and fight because I am not with them, or else they will be defeated by the enemy.'

⁴³I told you this but you did not listen. You disobeyed the order of Yahweh and went up to the mountains instead. ⁴⁴Then the Amorites who live on those mountains came out to meet you; they struck you and pursued you like bees from Seir to Hormah. ⁴⁵And you returned with much weeping in the presence of Yahweh who did not want to hear you nor listen to your voice. ⁴⁶So you were to remain at Kadesh for many days; and you know how long it was.

Through the desert

2 ¹We, therefore, turned back and set out towards the desert by the way leading to the Red Sea, as Yahweh had commanded me, and we walked around the mountains of Seir for a long time.

²Then, Yahweh said to me: ³'You have been going around these mountains for a long time; now, go north. ⁴Give this command to the people: You are to pass through the territory of your brothers, the children of Esau, who live in Seir. They

Num 14:
39-45

Ps 118:12

Hos 11:3;
Acts 13:18

13:21

Num 14:
21-35

Num
14:24

Num
20:12

Num
20:14

• **1.6** Each nation has its laws, the fruit of a people's long experience and of the reflection of their leaders. The laws of Israel were formed in the same way, but the experience of Israel was different from that of any other nation.

Thus, as an introduction to the laws of Israel, the authors of Deuteronomy placed on Moses' lips a long speech in which Israel is reminded of that first experience. These first chapters do not repeat the departure from Egypt itself, but deal with the events in the desert and especially with what happened in Kadesh, the oasis in the southern part of Pales-

tine, where the Israelites remained for "forty years."

The first chapter recalls the establishment of judges: Moses being the first legislator of his people, those who came after him always referred to his authority. This chapter also deals with the rebellion at Kadesh: at the outset of their history Israel found out how costly it was to oppose God's wise guidance.

Chapters 3 and 4 tell about the arrival in the Promised Land: It was Yahweh who brought them there and they must pay attention to him if they wish to continue to live freely on the land.

will be afraid of you, ⁵but be very careful that you do not attack them because I will not give you even the parcel of land on which you stand. Know that I have given to Esau the mountains of Seir as a possession. ⁶You shall buy food and water from them with your silver. ⁷Think of all the blessings that Yahweh has bestowed on you in all our work and how he has been present in your journey through the desert. Yahweh has been with you for forty years, and never have you been in want.

⁸So we passed through the land of our brothers, the children of Esau who live in Seir. We left the Arabah road that led to Elath and Ezion-geber, and we took the road going into the desert of Moab.

⁹Then Yahweh said to me: 'Do not attack Moab or provoke them to fight since I will not give you any of their land. Know that I have given Ar to the children of Lot as a possession.'

¹⁰(The Emim formerly lived there—a great and numerous people, and tall as the Anakim. ¹¹And just like the Anakim, they were also known as giants, but the Moabites called them Emim. ¹²And the Horites also used to live in Seir but the children of Esau drove them out, killed them and settled in their place, as Israel did in the land they possess and which Yahweh gave them.)

¹³And now rise up and pass through the brook of Zered.'

We then went to the brook of Zered. ¹⁴We walked for thirty-eight years from Kadesh-Barnea until we crossed the brook, until the entire generation of the men old enough to fight had perished just as Yahweh said. ¹⁵Even the hand of Yahweh was against them, dealing them their death in the camps until all of them perished.

¹⁶When finally all those who were old enough to fight died, ¹⁷Yahweh said to me: ¹⁸'Today you will pass through the frontiers of Moab, facing the city of Ar, ¹⁹and you will meet these people. Do not attack or defy them for I will not give you any of the land of the Ammonites. Know that I have given that land to the children of Lot.'

²⁰(This land was also considered the land of the giants who formerly lived there and whom the Ammonites called

Zummim. ²¹They were a great and numerous people, tall and of enormous stature, similar to the Anakim. But Yahweh destroyed them through the hand of the Ammonites, and in their place he made the Ammonites to dwell in the land. ²²He did the same with the people of Esau who dwell in Seir. They destroyed the Horites and took possession of their land up to this very day. ²³He dealt in the same manner with the Avvim who lived in the camps as far as Gaza. They were expelled by the Capthorim who killed them and occupied their place.)

²⁴Rise up and go to the brook of Arnon. Look, I give into your hands Sihon the Amorite, the king of Heshbon, and all his land. ²⁵Begin, right now, to occupy his land and fight. And I, for my part, will begin to instill among all the peoples under heaven the dread and fear of you. They will tremble when they hear your name; they will tremble like a woman in childbirth and they will lose courage when they face you.

Victory over Sihon and Og

²⁶From the desert of Kedemoth, I sent messengers to Sihon, the king of Heshbon, with these words of peace: ²⁷'I wish to pass through your land but I will go only by the road without turning aside either to the right or to the left. ²⁸We ask you to sell us food for money that we may eat, and water that we may drink. And let us only pass through as the children of Esau who live in Seir and the Moabites who dwell in Ar did for us, ²⁹until we come to the Jordan and enter the land which Yahweh, our God, gives to us.'

³⁰But Sihon, the king of Heshbon, would not let us pass through his land, (and Yahweh made him stubborn so that our God might give him into our hands.)

³¹And Yahweh said to me: 'You have to know that I have begun to give Sihon and his land over to you; begin conquering his land.' ³²Then, Sihon came out with all his men to meet us in battle at Jahaz. ³³And Yahweh, our God, gave him over to us and we defeated him together with his sons and all his men. ³⁴At that time we captured all their cities and pronounced an anathema over them, killing all their inhabitants, men, women and

Num 21:
21-25

Num
14:29;
1Cor 10:5

4:21

children without sparing anyone, ³⁵except the animals which were part of the plunder of the cities you have occupied.

³⁶From Aroer, the city at the edge of the brook Arnon, up to Galaad, there was neither a village nor a city which we did not capture. Yahweh, our God, gave everything over to us, ³⁷except the land of the Ammonites which we did not touch, the banks of the river Jabbok and the cities in the mountains, that is, all the places which Yahweh, our God, forbade us to take.

Num 21:
33-35

3 ¹On turning back, we went up the way to Bashan. Og, the king of Bashan, and all his people came out to fight us in Edrei. ²Then Yahweh said to me: “Do not be afraid because I am giving him into your hands together with his people and his land, that you may do to him what you did to Sihon, the Amorite king who lived in Heshbon.” ³And Yahweh gave Og, the king of Bashan, and all his people into our hands; and sparing no one, we killed everyone by the sword.

⁴We took possession of all their cities; there was not one of them that escaped us. We captured the sixty cities: the whole of the Argob region—the kingdom of Og, in Bashan. ⁵All these were cities fortified with high walls, with gates and bars, besides the innumerable villages in the open fields.

⁶We completely destroyed them for the honor of Yahweh, killing all the people, as we had done with Sihon, the king of Heshbon: we wiped out all the cities, men, women and children. ⁷The only things that we spared and kept for ourselves were the livestock and the plunder from the cities. ⁸We took possession of the land occupied by the two Amorite kings, the land beyond the Jordan, from the brook of Arnon up to the Mount of Hermon ⁹(the Sidonians call Hermon Sirion while the Amorites call it Senir.) ¹⁰And we captured all the cities on the plateau and all the land of Galaad and Bashan as far as Salecah and Edrei, cities in the kingdom of Og, in Bashan.

¹¹(Og, the king of Bashan, was the last survivor in the race of the giants. His iron bed, which is four and a half meters long and two meters wide, can be seen in Rabbah, a city of the Ammonites.)

¹²Then, we took possession of that

land. I gave to the tribes of Reuben and Gad half of the mountains of Gilead with their cities, from Aroer situated at the edge of the brook of Arnon. ¹³And I gave to half of Manasseh’s tribe the other half of the kingdom of Gilead and the whole kingdom of Og, or Bashan with the whole of the Argob region. The whole land of Bashan was called the land of the giants.

¹⁴Jair, a son of Manasseh, took all the territories of Argob up to the boundaries of Gesuri and Maacati. And he gave his name to these cities which until today are called villages of Jair.

¹⁵I gave part of Gilead to Makhir. ¹⁶And to the tribes of Reuben and Gad, I gave the territory from Gilead up to the brook of Arnon (the boundary lies halfway along the brook) and up to the river Jabbok, the boundary of the territory of the sons of Ammon. ¹⁷It is bounded by the Arabah in the west, and in the east by the Jordan, from Kinnereth up to the sea in the desert, known as the Salt Sea, at the foot of Mount Pisgah.

¹⁸Then I gave you these orders: “Yahweh, our God, has given you this land to own. ¹⁹But only your women, your children and your livestock, your numerous livestock, will remain in the cities which I have given you. ²⁰All the strong men will go armed ahead of their Israelite brothers until Yahweh gives them a place where they can rest as he has given you, and they too possess the land which I will give you at the other side of the Jordan. Then each one of you will return to his own inheritance which I have given you.”

²¹I also gave the following order to Joshua: “You have seen with your own eyes what Yahweh has done with those two kings, and he will do the same to the kingdoms where you shall go. ²²Do not be afraid because Yahweh will fight for you.”

²³Then I asked Yahweh: ²⁴“Yahweh, my Lord, you have begun to manifest your greatness and the power of your hand. For what God in the heavens and on the earth can do such works and deeds as you have done? ²⁵Do let me go and see that splendid land at the other side of the Jordan, those mountains without comparison and Lebanon, too.”

²⁶But because of your fault, Yahweh was angry with me and did not hear me. And Yahweh said to me: “It is enough,

Num
21:31

Jos 1:1

Num 32:

6:1; Lev 18:5 speak no more of this to me, ²⁷but climb to the top of Mount Pisgah and from there look to the west and to the north, to the south, and to the east. You shall see the land, but you shall not cross over the Jordan. ²⁸Give your orders to Joshua, encourage him and strengthen him because he will be the one to bring this people across and distribute to them the land which you see.”

²⁹We, then, remained in the valley opposite Bethpeor.

The Law: true wisdom

4 • ¹And now, Israel, listen to the norms and laws which I teach that you may put them into practice. And you will live and enter and take

possession of the land which Yahweh, the God of your fathers, gives you.

²Do not add anything to what I command you nor take anything away from it. But keep the commandments of Yahweh, your God, as I command you. ³You have seen with your own eyes what Yahweh has done with Baal-peor and with those who served him. Yahweh has destroyed them. ⁴But you who have been faithful to Yahweh, your God, are all alive today.

⁵See, as Yahweh, my God, ordered me, I am teaching you the

Rev
22:18

Num 25

• **4.1** Moses draws a lesson from past experience to convince us to observe God's law. He invites us to keep our eyes open: *You who have been faithful to Yahweh your God are all alive today* while the others are dead. In the midst of the many “dead” who fret and fight among themselves in the world, the believer is alive. And Moses also says: *Is there a nation whose norms and laws are as just as this Law?*

Yet, there are times in life in which temptations are strong and it seems that, if we were to abandon the divine order, we would find happiness; but happiness is found through God's law and it does not require our approval: *Do not add anything nor take anything away.*

Is there a nation whose gods are as near to it as Yahweh? The gods are false friends and projections of our imagination: we play with them and try to win them over so that our plans may be achieved. But God is present in all of his mystery, present and yet beyond reach. Despite the fact that we do not see him, we recognize him with all certitude and whenever he comes close to us, he leaves us secure.

The whole Bible insists on the reality and the historical value of such interventions. *Do not forget these things which your own eyes have seen* (v. 9). It is true that the story of Moses was written centuries later and many episodes of the Israelites' wandering through the desert became legends. But legends about the manna, the cloud and the crossing of the sea would not have arisen if the Israelite community had not experienced God's providence and his strong hand on many occasions. Israel discovered God day by day as a father accompanying his son (Dt 1:31).

RELIGION AND FAITH

These two terms constantly appear when we speak of our relationship with God. We must know, however, what we mean by “religion” and what we say when we speak of faith.

People of ancient nations were “religious” just as many are today: they believe that the world they inhabit is the work of a Creator-God. That is why we find in all the religions of antiquity, as in the first pages of the Bible, accounts of creation, which explain the origin of the world and of humankind. Since the Creator is the author of creation, only he can give the rules for its functioning: all the religions have naturally included in their accounts, prescriptions of morality. The God of religion (or gods, since polytheism is widespread) is served by a clergy which, in the name of the people, thanks him for the good things he has given to humans and begs him to renew these benefits during the coming year. Thus the religious feasts consist, first and above all, of thanksgiving and first fruits, as we see in the ritual texts of the Old Testament. Religion is by nature conservative, since it assures good order in the world; it is without “hope”: we have nothing fresh to hope for, but only to expect that tomorrow like today, will give us what we need in this world.

On opening the Bible, in making our “profession of faith” we recognize that we, too, are a religious people; do we not say: “I believe in the all-powerful God, Creator of heaven and earth?” But this religion we profess has been totally transfigured by faith: God, the Creator has revealed himself to the people of Israel, chosen from all eternity to be his “witness among the nations.” Throughout the centuries

norms and the laws that you may put them into practice in the land you are going to enter and have as your own. ⁶If you observe and practice them, other peoples will regard you as wise and intelligent. When they come to know of all these laws, they will say, "There is no people as wise and as intelligent as this great nation." ⁷For in truth, is there a nation as great as ours, whose gods are as near to it as Yahweh, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him? ⁸And is there a nation as great as ours whose norms and laws are as just as this Law which I give you today?

⁹But be careful and be on your guard. Do not forget these things which your own eyes have seen nor let them depart from your heart as long as you live. But on the contrary, teach them to your children and to your children's children.

• ¹⁰You were in the presence of Yahweh at Mount Horeb when he spoke to me, "Gather the people be-

fore me that they may hear my words. Thus they will fear me as long as they live in that land and will teach these words to their children."

¹¹Then you came nearer and stood at the foot of the mountain. It was burning in flames reaching up to heaven amid the dense fog and the dark clouds. ¹²And Yahweh spoke to you from the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words but did not see any figure; you only heard a voice. ¹³And Yahweh spoke to you that you might know his Covenant by which he commanded you to keep his ten commandments, which he had written on two slabs of stone. ¹⁴And as for me, he commanded me to teach you the norms and laws that you might put them into practice in the land which is going to be yours.

¹⁵Think well about what you are to do. You did not see any form on that day when Yahweh spoke to you at Mount Horeb from the midst of the fire. ¹⁶Therefore, do not become cor-

God has revealed himself in the history of Israel: he leads his people as a father guides his child (Dt 1:31), towards a plenitude that a human being can neither conceive nor imagine (Eph 1:15-23; 3:14-21; Col 1:9-14; 1:25-27).

God has made himself known as he is; he draws us towards a communion of eternal love with him (Jn 17:21). That is why hope, at least as defined by Paul (Rom 8:24-25), is at the very heart of our faith; and if our thanksgiving rises continually towards God for the good things received from him, it rises still more, infinitely more, towards this Father who has prepared us to receive our share in the inheritance of the saints in his kingdom of light, towards him "who has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son" (Col 1:13).

• 10. Moses remembers the experience of Sinai (also called Mount Horeb) because faith is rooted in an experience. When Paul tries to confirm in their faith Christians who are tempted to lose their way, he will remind them of the mystical experience they had when they entered the Church (Gal 3:1; Heb 12:18).

You did not see any figure; you only heard a voice (v. 12). Note the contrast between *seeing* and *hearing*, between false worship and authentic faith.

False cults create their own gods (ancient or modern ones, such as a leader or an ideology) in accordance with their *own way of seeing* and understanding the meaning of existence. People paint their own gods and fabricate their own truth according to their own mind which notices only what is visible, immediately effective, what can be enjoyed and used.

But true faith is rooted in the word heard: see Romans 10:14-17. Happy are those who believe though they have not seen! We believe in a truth which the people of God, the Church transmits to us. For a Christian, no "particular revelation," no "divine message" received by anyone, has any value if it is not first in complete harmony and in total dependence on the Word of God as well as on the Church which God has chosen to be a witness and guarantor of his word (Acts 10:41).

Do not make an idol or a god carved in the form of a man or of a woman (v. 16). We are back to the ban on making any image of

Job
28:28;
Bar 4:3

Ps
145:18;
147:19;
148:14

19:16-20;
Jos 24:1

20:18;
Heb 12:18

20:1

20:4;

32:1; Rom 1:23) rupted: do not make an idol or a god carved in the form of a man or of a woman, ¹⁷ or in the form of any animal that lives on the earth, or of any kind of bird that flies in the sky, ¹⁸ or of any reptile that crawls on the earth, or of any fish that lives in the water under the earth. ¹⁹ When you look at the heavens and you see the sun, the moon, the stars, and all the heavenly bodies, do not prostrate yourselves to adore and serve them as gods. ²⁰ Yahweh, your God, has left those for the rest of the peoples, but he has chosen you and has brought you from the fiery crucible, that is Egypt, to be his own people as you are now.

Wis 13:2
Jer 11:4
Num 20:12
20:5; Is 33:14; Zep 1:18; Heb 12:29

²¹ Through your fault, Yahweh became angry with me and he swore that I would not cross the Jordan nor enter into the beautiful land which he gives you as an inheritance. ²² I will die in this land and not be able to cross the Jordan. You, in turn, will cross over and possess that beautiful land. ²³ So, be careful not to forget the Covenant which Yahweh has made with you and do not make any kind of idols, as Yahweh, your God, has commanded you. ²⁴ Know that Yahweh, your God, is a devouring fire, Yahweh is a jealous God.

• ²⁵ When you have children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, do not be corrupted by having idols and doing that which offends Yahweh. If you anger him, you will perish from the land which is going to be yours after crossing the Jordan. ²⁶ Heaven and earth are witness to my warning: you will all be destroyed.

²⁷ Yahweh will scatter you among the peoples and only a few of you will remain among the nations where Yahweh will bring you. ²⁸ There you will be obliged to serve their gods, gods made by human hands, gods of wood and stone, which do not see or hear, or eat or feel. ²⁹ There you will look for Yahweh, your God, and you will encounter him if you search for him with all your heart and with all your soul in the midst of your anguish. ³⁰ When this happens in the last days, you will return to Yahweh, and you will listen to his voice. ³¹ Because Yahweh, your God, is a merciful God who will not reject you nor destroy you all, nor forget the Covenant he swore to your fathers.

Chosen by God

• ³² Ask of the times past. Inquire from the day when God created man

God. See the commentary on Exodus 20:4. Whether it be the image of some created force (like the sun) or the picture of some leader or the symbol of some group (homeland, party...) nothing that is created can be considered divine. It is also forbidden to make images of God because he is Holy, that is, he is not like anything that we can think of or imagine.

Do not prostrate yourselves to adore and serve them as gods. Obviously, today, few speak of adoring anything or anyone. Yet adoring is the same as surrendering oneself. Many persons serve political gods or the alienating idols of consumerism.

• 25. These lines remind us of the story of the prodigal son (Lk 15). Because Israel was the chosen people, they had a greater respon-

sibility. Their land was a gift from God and they would lose it if they abandoned him. The Israelites were living according to the First Covenant on Sinai. They expected material gifts, prosperity, lands and peace from God. Yahweh did not show them any other punishment than an eventual exile: leaving this marvelous land. But there was also the promise: *there you will look for Yahweh, your God.*

• 32. *Never has there been any deed as tremendous as those done for you (v. 34).* See the commentary on verse 9.

There are many people who think that what the Bible mainly teaches is "to believe in God." This expression leads itself to much confusion. Biblical faith is not in believing that God exists,

Lev
26:14

Ps 115:4;
Jer 2:27;
Is 44:9

Hos 5:15;
Is 55:6;
Jer 29:13

33:19

33:20

on earth. Ask from one end of the world to the other: Has there ever been anything as extraordinary as this? ³³Has anything like this been heard of before? Has there ever been a people who remained alive after hearing as you did the voice of the living God from the midst of the fire?

³⁴Never has there been a God who went out to look for a people and take them out from among the other nations by the strength of trials and signs, by wonders and by war, with a firm hand and an outstretched arm. Never has there been any deed as tremendous as those done for you by Yahweh in Egypt, which you saw with your own eyes.

20:3;
Is 43;
10-13;
Mk 12:32

³⁵You saw this that you might know that Yahweh is God and that there is no other besides him. ³⁶He let you hear his voice from heaven that you might fear him; on earth he let you see his blazing fire and from the midst of the fire you heard his word. ³⁷Because of the love he had for your fathers, he chose their descendants after them, and he himself made you leave Egypt with his great power. ³⁸He expelled before you peoples more numerous and stronger than you, and he has made you occupy their land: today he has given this to you as an inheritance. ³⁹Therefore, try to be convinced that Yahweh is the only God of heaven and earth, and that there is no other.

Is 65:20;

⁴⁰Observe the laws and the com-

mandments that I command you today, and everything will be well with you and your children after you. So you will live long in the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you forever.”

Second discourse of Moses

• ⁴¹Moses designated three cities at the other side of the Jordan, on the east, ⁴²where one who involuntarily kills his neighbor may find refuge, one who has never been his enemy before. He should flee into one of those cities and so save himself.

19:7-13;
21:13

⁴³These are the cities: Bezer on the desert plateau for the tribe of Reuben, Ramoth in Gilead for the tribe of Gad, and Golan in Bashan for the tribe of Manasseh.

⁴⁴This is the Law which Moses gave to the children of Israel. ⁴⁵These are the precepts, decrees, and laws which Moses made known to the children of Israel after their departure from Egypt, ⁴⁶at the other side of the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon, the king of the Amorites. This Sihon, who lived in Heshbon, was defeated by Moses and the children of Israel after their departure from Egypt ⁴⁷and they took possession of his land, as they had done with Og, the king of Bashan. The two Amorite kings ruled at the east of the Jordan, ⁴⁸from Aroer at the boundary of the brook of Arnon, up to Mount Sirion, also called Hermon ⁴⁹that is, the whole plain to the east of the Jordan up to the Dead Sea at the foot of Mount Pisgah.

The Ten Commandments

5 ¹Moses gathered the whole of Israel and said to them: “Listen, Israel, to the laws and norms which I teach you

20:2-17

or that God is powerful, or that God can help us. Instead, what is important is that God chose Israel for a unique mission in the world, that God is the only God and that Israel was different from all the other nations.

• 41. Here begins the second “discourse of Moses.”

In chapter 5:1-22, the Decalogue (the ten commandments) is presented for a second

time and in a way very similar to what is in Exodus 20:2.

5:23-31. God wants to find someone who could appear before him in the name of all the people. The glory of Moses consisted in his being a kind of mediator or representative of Israel.

5:33. The purpose of God’s Law is to make us happy. In that, God’s fatherly love is revealed.

this day. Learn them and be careful to put them into practice. ²Yahweh, our God, made a covenant with us in Horeb, and his covenant ³was not only with our fathers, but with us as well who are all alive here today. ⁴Yahweh spoke with us face to face from the midst of the fire in the mountain. ⁵And I stood between Yahweh and you to transmit his word to you, since you could not go up the mountain for fear of the great fire. These were his words:

⁶I am Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of slavery. ⁷Do not have other gods before me. ⁸Do not have idols, do not make any figure of things in the heaven or here below on the earth, or in the waters under the earth. ⁹Do not kneel before them or worship them, because I, Yahweh, am your God, a jealous God who punishes the children until the third and fourth generation for the wickedness of their parents who hate me. ¹⁰But I am merciful to the thousandth generation to those who love me and obey my commandments.

¹¹Do not take the name of Yahweh, your God, in vain because Yahweh will not leave unpunished him who takes his name in vain.

¹²Take care to keep holy the sabbath day, as Yahweh, your God, commands you. ¹³You have six days to work and do your tasks. ¹⁴But the seventh day is the Day of Rest in honor of Yahweh, your God. Do not do any work, you or your child, or your servant, or your ox, or your donkey, or any of your animals. Neither will the foreigner who lives in your land work. Your servant will rest just like you.

¹⁵Remember that you were once enslaved in the land of Egypt from where Yahweh, your God, brought you out with his powerful hand and outstretched arm. For that reason, Yahweh, your God, commands you to observe the sabbath.

¹⁶Honor your father and your mother as Yahweh, your God, has commanded, and you will live long and it will be well with you in the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you.

¹⁷Do not kill.

¹⁸Do not commit adultery.

¹⁹Do not steal.

²⁰Do not give false testimony against your neighbor.

²¹Do not desire the wife of your neighbor. Do not covet the house of your neighbor, or his field, or his servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his.

²²These are the words of Yahweh said to the whole assembly on the mountain when he spoke from the midst of the fire and the thick cloud. He said only this and he wrote these words on the two slabs of stone which he gave to me. ²³You heard that voice in the midst of darkness, while the mountain was becoming resplendent. Then all the heads of the tribes together with the elders gathered around me ²⁴and said: 'See, Yahweh, our God, has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice from the midst of the fire. We now know that the word of Yahweh is life for man. ²⁵We are, nevertheless, going to die devoured by this terrible fire if we keep listening to the voice of Yahweh, our God. ²⁶For who can remain alive after listening to the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as he has now done for us? ²⁷Better that you go nearer to hear all the things that Yahweh, our God, will say to you. Then tell these to us that we may put them into practice.'

²⁸Yahweh heard your words and said to me, "I have heard what this people said and they have spoken well. ²⁹May they always have the same spirit, fear me and observe all my precepts that all may go well with you and with your children for all time. ³⁰Rise up and tell them to return to their tents in the fields.

³¹But as for you, remain here with me that I may teach you all the commandments, precepts and laws which you have to teach that they may put them into practice in the land that I will give them for their possession."

³²Observe and carry out the things that Yahweh has commanded us. Do not turn aside from them either to the right or to the left. ³³Follow all the way which Yahweh has marked out for you, and you will live and be happy and you will live long in the land you are going to conquer.

Listen Israel: Yahweh is the Only One

6 ¹These are the commandments, the norms and the laws

that Yahweh, your God, has commanded me to teach you so that you may observe them in the land which is going to be yours. ²Fear Yahweh, observe his commandments all the days of your life and his norms that I teach you today. So also for your children and your children's children that they may live long.

and over to your children, speak of them when you are at home and when you travel, when you lie down and when you rise. ⁸Brand them on your hand as a sign, and keep them always before your eyes. ⁹Engrave them on your doorposts and on your city gates.

³Listen, then, Israel, observe these commandments and put them into practice. If you do this, you will be well and you will multiply in this land flowing with milk and honey, as Yahweh, the God of your fathers, promised you.

¹⁰Do not forget Yahweh when he has led you into the land which he promised to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for he will give you great and prosperous cities which you did not build, ¹¹houses filled with everything good which you did not provide, wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant. So when you have eaten and have been satisfied, ¹²do not forget Yahweh who brought you out from Egypt where you were enslaved. ¹³Fear Yahweh, your God, serve him and call on his

⁴Listen, Israel: Yahweh, our God, is One Yahweh. ⁵And you shall love Yahweh, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶Engrave on your heart the commandments that I pass on to you today. ⁷Repeat them over

15:26

Lk 11:28

Jer 31:33;
Mk 12:29

13:9

Pro 30:8

Mt 4:10

• **6.1 Listen Israel: Yahweh, our God, is One Yahweh.** These verses are the creed of the Jews: which they recite every day. Jesus alludes to this text when they question him about the most important command. See Mark 12:28 and its commentary.

You shall love Yahweh, your God, with all your heart. The love of God cannot be totally unselfish. Israel knew that by responding to the love of God who chose them, they were on the right path and God would reward them with peace and material prosperity.

Engrave on your heart the commandments: keep them present in your mind to help you organize your thinking and to be able to judge everything according to these standards.

Repeat them over and over to your children: knowing that you are responsible for their faith.

Brand them on your hand or, let them guide your actions.

Keep them always before your eyes so that you will not remember them when it is too late, when all you can do is moan over your mistakes.

Engrave them on your doorposts and on your city gates, or let them guide your economic and social life.

Yahweh is a jealous God—see Exodus

20:5. This expression shocks many people. But could there be true love without a certain kind of jealousy, not that which is always afraid of the infidelity of the loved one? This expression "jealous God" reveals in a poor and primitive language, an essential trait of our God who is so mysterious. He is not only Love, as many like to say, he is also a lover. It is not enough to speak of God who loves all of us in a vision of universal goodness: he chooses those whom he loves and each becomes all for him.

This expression already tells us what will cause the wonderment of Paul when he will speak of predestination, that is, the love of God who chose us even before the creation of the world (Rom 8:31-39; Eph 1:1). To speak of his jealousy is to affirm that he cannot renounce the reciprocal love and fidelity that he expects from his loved ones. The history of Israel will manifest this jealousy of God through the terrible trials he sends to his people: even the most bitter trials we are to endure in this life are nothing in comparison with what he is creating in us.

So when you have eaten and have been satisfied, do not forget Yahweh. All of modern civilization seems to have forgotten this. People feel in command of science, technology and the world. More serious still: many are

Name when you have to swear an oath.

34:14

¹⁴Do not go after other gods; do not serve any of the gods of the nations around you, ¹⁵because your God, who is in your midst, is a jealous God. And when he burns in anger, you shall disappear from the face of the earth. ¹⁶You shall not put Yahweh, your God, to the test, as you did in Massah.

17:1;
Num 20:2;
Mt 4:7

¹⁷Observe the precepts, the commandments and the norms that Yahweh has commanded you. ¹⁸You shall do what is right and good in the eyes of Yahweh that you may be happy and may come to possess the splendid land which he swore to your fathers ¹⁹he would give you after having destroyed all your enemies before you.

12:26

• ²⁰And when your child asks you one day: What are these precepts, these commandments and these norms which Yahweh has commanded us? ²¹You shall answer your child: We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, but Yahweh led us out of Egypt with prodigious deeds. ²²And we have seen the great and wonderful things, the awesome marvels he has done against Pharaoh and all his people. ²³And he took us out from there to lead us into the land which he promised to our fathers. ²⁴Yahweh has commanded us to put into practice all these precepts and to fear him, our God. Because of this, we are happy and alive today, ²⁵and we shall be perfect in his eyes if we observe and

satisfied with enjoying the universe while losing themselves.

• 20. The Israelites celebrated the Passover every year. Every family observed the rites of that feast in a religious banquet. When they were gathered around the table one of the children would ask the father: "Father, what are we about to do?" Then, the father would answer: "Our ancestors were in Egypt as the Pharaoh's slaves..." We find this creed, the proclamation of the faith of Israel in the lines recited. It is not enough for the Israelites to "believe that there is a God," they have to re-

practice these commandments as he has told us to do.

7 ¹When Yahweh, your God, has brought you into the land where you are going and which you will conquer; when he drives away before you many peoples—the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites and the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites—seven nations that are much more numerous and more powerful than you; ²when he has given them into your hand and you defeat them, you must destroy them all according to the law of anathema.

³Do not make any covenant with them or have compassion on them. ⁴Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons, or taking their daughters for your sons, because they would seduce your children to abandon me and adore strange gods for which the anger of Yahweh would burn against you, and then he would destroy you. ⁵On the contrary, this is what you must do: destroy their altars and break their sacred pillars into pieces, demolish their poles and burn their idols.

34:13

How God rewards his faithful ones

⁶You are a people consecrated to Yahweh, your God. Yahweh has chosen you from among all the peoples on the face of the earth, that you may be his own people. ⁷Yahweh has bound himself to you and has chosen you, not because you are the most numerous among all the peoples (on the contrary, you are the

19:5;
Rom 9:4;
Tit 2:14;
1P 2:9

1Cor 1:26

call God's favors in the past in order to thank him.

So, too, Christians always look to the past to recall God's favors toward them and toward all humankind. The heart of prayer in the church is the Mass wherein we thank God for the salvation of the world through the death and resurrection of Christ.

The material promises made to Israel are an image of God's promises to the Church which no longer hopes for crops and sheep, but instead for more believers and for their growth in Christ.

1Jn 4:10 least). ⁸Rather, he has chosen you because of his love for you and to fulfill the oath he made to your fathers. Therefore, with a firm hand Yahweh brought you out from slavery in Egypt, from the power of Pharaoh.

20:5; 34:7 ⁹So know that Yahweh, your God, is the true and faithful God. He keeps his covenant, and his love reaches to the thousandth generation for those who love him and fulfill his commandments, ¹⁰but he punishes in their own persons those who hate him and he repays them without delay.

2K 14:6; Ezk 14:12 ¹¹So keep the commandments, the norms and the laws that today I command you to practice. ¹²If you observe these norms, if you keep and practice them, Yahweh will be faithful to his Covenant and will show you the love he promised to your fathers. ¹³He will love you, bless you and multiply you.

Jn 14:21; Lk 1:72 He will bless you with many children and abundant harvests: wheat, wine and oil; he will multiply the young of your cattle and of your sheep in the land that he promised your fathers he would give you.

15:26 ¹⁴You shall be more favored than all the peoples; there will be no sterile male or female among your people or in your livestock. ¹⁵Yahweh will remove from you all infirmities, he will not let any of the plagues of Egypt which you have known fall upon you. But he will inflict them upon those who hate you.

¹⁶So, destroy all the peoples which Yahweh, your God, will put in your power. Do not have pity on

them or serve their gods: this would be a trap for you.

¹⁷Perhaps you will say in your heart: "These nations are more numerous than I am, how then am I going to drive them away?" ¹⁸Do not be afraid, remember what Yahweh, your God, has done with Pharaoh and with the Egyptians, ¹⁹those terrible trials which you saw with your eyes and the marvels and signs, the strong hand and outstretched arm with which Yahweh, your God, has freed you. ²⁰He will do the same with all the people whom you fear. Yahweh will even send wasps to destroy those who remain and hide themselves to escape from you.

²¹Do not be afraid of them because Yahweh, your God, is in your midst. He is a great and terrible God.

²²It is he who will drive out these nations little by little before your eyes. If you were to destroy them all at once, the wild beasts would multiply and cause you trouble.

²³Yahweh, your God, will give these people over to you and he will fill them with fear until they all perish. ²⁴Yahweh will give their kings into your hands so that you may strike out their name from under heaven, and nothing will stand before you until you have destroyed them. ²⁵Burn the images of their gods and do not covet the gold or silver that covers them. Do not take it for yourself lest you be trapped by it, because Yahweh hates it. ²⁶None of these shall enter your house, for as they are accursed, the curse might return to you. Regard these as abominable because they are indeed "anathema" or accursed.

Do not forget God when you have everything

8 • ¹Be careful to fulfill all the commandments which I give you today, that you may live and increase, and conquer the land which Yahweh promised on oath to your fathers.

• **8.1** Verses 1-6 show the meaning of the wandering in the desert: a time of testing for Israel. Israel was poor and yet God's help was never lacking.

He gave you manna to eat, to show you that one lives not on bread alone, but that

everything coming from the mouth of God is life for God's children. The manna they were given was the sign of another food needed by all and which comes from the mouth of God: his Word (see commentary on Ex 16:16).

23:28;
Jos
24:12

Jdg 2:21

Lev
27:28

²Remember how Yahweh, your God, brought you through the desert for forty years. He humbled you, to test you and know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. ³He made you experience want, he made you experience hunger, but he gave you manna to eat which neither you nor your fathers had known, to show you that man lives not on bread alone, but that all that proceeds from the mouth of God is life for man. ⁴Your garment did not even fray, or your foot swell all these forty years. ⁵Understand, then, that Yahweh has taught you in the same way that a father teaches his child.

⁶Observe the commandments of Yahweh, your God; follow his ways and revere him. ⁷For Yahweh, your God, will bring you into that good land, a land of streams and rivers, of subterranean waters that gush forth in the valleys and mountains, ⁸a land of wheat and barley, of grapes and figs, of pomegranates and olives, a land of oil and honey, ⁹a land where the bread you eat is not rationed and where you will lack nothing, a land with iron in stones and copper mines in the mountains.

¹⁰You shall eat until you are satisfied, and you shall bless Yahweh for the good land he has given you.

¹¹So take care that you do not forget Yahweh, your God, by neglecting the commandments, norms and laws that I give you today. ¹²And when you have eaten and have been satisfied, when you have built comfortable homes and live in them, ¹³when your livestock have multiplied, when you have silver and gold in abundance, and an increase of good things of every kind, ¹⁴then do not let your heart become proud and do not forget Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, the house of slavery. ¹⁵It is he who has led you across this great and terrible desert, full of fiery

serpents and scorpions, an arid land where there is no water. But for you he made water gush forth from the hardest rock. ¹⁶And he fed you in the desert with manna which your fathers did not know.

He made you experience want and put you to the test, so that it would be for your good later on, ¹⁷lest you say, "With my own strength I have attained all these good things." ¹⁸Remember Yahweh, your God, the one who gave you power to become prosperous, as you are today, in fulfillment of the Covenant he promised under oath to your fathers.

¹⁹But if you forget Yahweh and follow other gods, if you pay them homage and bow before them, I warn you right now that you will surely perish. ²⁰In the same way that Yahweh destroyed the nations that stood in your way, so will he destroy you if you disobey Yahweh, your God.

9 ¹Listen, Israel: you are to cross the Jordan today to take the land of greater and stronger nations than yourself, nations with grand cities whose walls reach up to heaven. ²They are a great people, they are tall—the Anakites whom you have seen and of whom you heard it said that nothing can overcome them. ³But today you will see Yahweh, your God, crossing the Jordan before you. He will destroy them all and he will subject them to you. Then, you will seize the land from them and make them perish, as Yahweh promised you.

⁴When Yahweh, your God, has destroyed them in your presence, do not think: 'Yahweh brought me to this land and gave it to me because of my own goodness.' Yahweh drove those nations out because of their wickedness. ⁵It is not by your merits nor because you are good that you will conquer the land: Yahweh will deprive them of the land because they have done evil, and also to fulfill the promise he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

You are a stiff-necked people

• ⁶Know, therefore, that Yahweh has given you your inheritance, this excellent

Num 20:1

Is 10:13

Hos 2:10

16:14;
Wis 11:9;
Mt 4:4Hos 11:3;
1Cor
11:32Sir 10:12;
Jer 2:6

Num 21:6

Rom
11:32;
Eph 2:7-9;
Tit 3:5

• **9.6** Israel is a *rebellious people*. This is the way we translate the biblical expression: "stiff-necked people," or difficult to lead. Is this

only a reproach? From the very beginning Israel was an independent people, with a passion for freedom; they never worshiped their

land, not because of any merit of yours since you are a rebellious people. ⁷Remember and do not forget that it was because you rebelled that Yahweh became angry with you in the desert, for you have been rebellious towards Yahweh from the day you left Egypt until you arrived here.

⁸Then at Horeb, you provoked his anger and he was ready to destroy you.

⁹When I went up the mountain to receive the slabs of stone, the tables of the Covenant that Yahweh made with you, I stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking. ¹⁰And Yahweh gave me the two slabs of stone written with his finger, containing all the words that he told you on the mountain, from the midst of the fire, on the day of the Assembly.

¹¹And when Yahweh gave me the two slabs of stone, the tables of the Covenant, at the end of the forty days and forty nights, ¹²he said to me: "Go down from this mountain at once because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt, they have suddenly abandoned the way that I taught them and they have made an idol for themselves."

¹³And Yahweh also said to me: "I see this people; they are a rebellious people.

¹⁴Let me alone and I will destroy them and wipe out their name from under heaven. And out of you, I will make another people more numerous and greater than they." ¹⁵I, therefore, went down from the mountain, from the summit which was burning, holding in my hands the two tables of the Covenant. ¹⁶And I saw that you had sinned against Yahweh, your God, and that you had made a molten calf. ¹⁷How suddenly had you turned aside from the way which Yahweh had taught you! Holding the two slabs with both hands, I hurled them down and broke them into pieces in the sight of all.

¹⁸Then I fell prostrate before Yahweh and, as before, I passed forty days and forty nights without eating or drinking, for the sin which you had committed by

doing evil in the sight of Yahweh and arousing his anger. ¹⁹I was afraid that the wrath and anger of Yahweh against you had reached the point that he wanted to destroy you. And Yahweh listened to me, once more.

²⁰Yahweh was also very angry with Aaron and he was ready to destroy him. In the same way, I interceded for Aaron also. ²¹Regarding the sin, that calf which you had made—I threw it in the fire, broke it into pieces and ground it until it was fine as dust. Then I threw the dust into the brook that flows down from the mountain.

²²At Taberah and at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattavah, you provoked the wrath of Yahweh. ²³And when he wanted you to leave Kadesh-barnea saying, "Go up and take possession of the land that I have given you," you rebelled again. You did not believe Yahweh nor did you want to listen to his voice. ²⁴You have been rebellious against Yahweh ever since I have known you.

²⁵So, I lay prostrate before Yahweh for forty days and forty nights because he said he would destroy you. ²⁶I prayed to Yahweh and said to him: "O Lord God, do not destroy your people and your inheritance, whom you redeemed with your might, whom you brought out of Egypt with the strength of your hand. ²⁷Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness, or on their sins, ²⁸that it may not be said in the land from which you brought us out: 'Yahweh was not able to bring them to the land which he had promised them. He does not like them, so he brought them out of Egypt to slay them in the desert.' ²⁹Do not forget that they are your people and your possession whom you brought out of Egypt with your great power and outstretched arm."

10 ¹At that time, Yahweh said to me, "Make two slabs of stone like the first ones and come up to me. And make an ark of wood also. ²I shall write on the slabs the words that were on the first

Heb 12:21

32:20

Ezk 23; Ps 78:8; Acts 7:51

32:11-14

Num 14:16; Ps 115:2

34:1...

leaders but were always arguing and fighting with everyone, including their God. The parable of the prodigal son helps us to understand

why God so loved these people, and why, even now, they continue to be the "first-born" of God among all the nations of the earth.

slabs which you broke. Then you shall put them in the Ark of the Covenant.”

25:10

³So I made an ark of acacia wood, and made two slabs of stone like the first. And I climbed up the mountain carrying these. ⁴He wrote on the slabs, just as he had done with the first, the ten sayings that he spoke to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire, on the day of the Assembly; and Yahweh gave them to me. ⁵Upon my return, coming down from the mountain, I placed the tables in the ark which I made, and there they are as Yahweh commanded me.

Num
33:38

⁶The children of Israel left for the wells of Bene-jaakan, going through Moserah. Aaron died and was buried there, and his son Eleazar succeeded him. ⁷From there, they went to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of brooks and springs. ⁸It was then that Yahweh set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the Ark of the Covenant, to become his servants, to stand before the Lord, and to give blessings by calling on his name, as they do until this day. ⁹For that reason, Levi has no share in the inheritance with his brothers; Yahweh is his inheritance, as Yahweh, your God, told him.

¹⁰I therefore stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights as I did the first time. Yahweh again listened to my prayer and gave up his plan to destroy you. ¹¹And Yahweh said to me: “Rise up and lead this people that they may go and take possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance.”

Serve and Love God

• ¹²So now, Israel, what is it that Yahweh, your God, asks of you but to fear him and follow all his ways?

• **10.12** Here, the two commandments which Jesus combined into one are related.

Love God and serve him with all your heart and all your soul. A love which is the response to God's love: “Because the Lord bound himself to your fathers. He loved them, and then, he loved you.” Pay attention to the sequence: God loves first and chooses; then we respond to his love and try to express it by our obedience. God's mercy comes first, and as Paul will remind us, no one can boast of merits and rights before God (Rom 3:20-24).

Love him and serve him with all your heart and with all your soul. ¹³Observe the commandments of Yahweh and his laws which I command you today, for your good.

¹⁴See: the heavens, those that are seen and those that are unseen, the earth and all that is in it, everything belongs to Yahweh, your God. ¹⁵Nevertheless, it was on your fathers that Yahweh set his heart. He loved them, and after them, he chose their descendants—you—preferring you to all the peoples, as you can see this day.

¹⁶Purify your hearts, then, and do not be defiant towards Yahweh because ¹⁷Yahweh is the God of gods and the Lord of lords. He is the great God, the strong and terrible God. When he judges, he treats everyone equally; he does not let himself be bought by gifts. ¹⁸He renders justice to the orphan and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him bread and clothing. ¹⁹Love the stranger then, because you yourselves were strangers in the land of Egypt. ²⁰Fear Yahweh, your God, serve him, follow him and call on his name when you have to make an oath. ²¹He is your pride and he is your God, who has done those amazing things for you. ²²When you went down to Egypt, your ancestors were no more than seventy persons, but now, Yahweh, your God, has made you as many as the stars of heaven.

Ps 24:1;
Is 66:1;
19:5

Jer 4:4

1Tim 6:15;
Rev 17:14;
19:16;
Rom 2:11;
Acts
10:34;
Job 34:19Ps 146:7;
22:21;
19:7;
Wis 6:7;
Sir 35:
11-14

23:9

1:5

Purify your hearts. This text says more precisely: “Circumcise your hearts” (see Gen 17).

The widow, the orphan, the stranger. Responding to God's love means loving those who are helpless. In that period, the needy were individuals in a society without well-defined social classes. But, in today's world, there are entire classes and nations in the situation of the widow, the orphan and the alien of those days.

Today, this love for the forsaken often requires being committed to the lower classes of

11 • ¹So, love Yahweh, your God, and observe all that he has commanded you: his laws, norms and commandments. ²You, with whom I am speaking, understand all this. Perhaps this may be more difficult for your children who have not known the teaching of Yahweh or seen his greatness and strength. ³But you saw the signs and the marvels he did in Egypt against Pharaoh and all his land, ⁴and what he did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and chariots, when he buried them in the waters of the Red Sea, destroying them as they pursued us.

Num 16

⁵Remember, too, all that Yahweh did for you in the desert, until you came to this place, ⁶what he did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, from the tribe of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them with all their families, their tents and their followers, in the midst of all Israel. ⁷You have seen with your eyes all these great wonders that Yahweh has done. ⁸Therefore, observe all these commandments that I give you, that you may gather strength and occupy the land which you are going over to possess. ⁹And you will live long in the land which Yahweh swore to give to your ancestors and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.

• ¹⁰For the land you are to enter and possess is not like the land of Egypt which you left, where after having sown your seeds, you had to water them like a

vegetable garden with your feet on the water wheel, ¹¹but a land of mountains and valleys, which drinks water from the rain that comes from the heavens. ¹²Yahweh, your God, cares for this land and his eyes are constantly fixed on it from the beginning of the year until its end.

¹³If you truly obey the commandments that I give you today, if you love Yahweh and serve me with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹⁴I will give rain to your land in season, both in autumn and in spring, that you may harvest your wheat, wine and oil. ¹⁵Your field will give you grass for your cattle, and you will eat until you are satisfied. ¹⁶But if you turn aside, if you serve other gods and bow before them, ¹⁷the anger of Yahweh will break out against you. He will close up the heavens and it will cease to rain; the land will not yield its fruit and you will suddenly perish in that beautiful land which Yahweh gives you.

¹⁸Engrave these words of mine on your heart and in your soul, brand them on your hand as a sign, and keep them always before your eyes. ¹⁹Teach them to your children. Speak of them when you are at home and when you travel, when you lie down and when you rise. ²⁰Engrave them on your doorposts and on your city gates. ²¹Then your days and the days of your children will be multiplied in the land which Yahweh swore to give to your fathers, and you will dwell in that land as long as the heavens are above the earth.

²²For if you observe the commandments that I command you to practice, if you love Yahweh and follow his ways, clinging to him, ²³Yahweh will destroy all

Jer 5:24;
Jas 5:7

Mt 23:5

Jer 33:25

society. *God will render justice to them.* If we do not know spontaneously how to achieve this justice with the means taught in the Gospel, God will bring justice in a more radical way.

• **11.1** "To you who saw the miracles, I say: remember." The same lessons are repeated. Israel will continue safely in the land if future generations do not forget what the Lord did for their ancestors. Thus, those who saw God's marvelous deeds have the obligation to teach them to their children.

Faith is not as much rooted in a doctrine than in the discovery of God's liberating inter-

ventions. We see him in our life, in the life of a Christian community, which transforms those who are in contact with it.

At whatever time, the way for parents to educate their children in the faith is to share their own religious experience with them and to show them how they found the living God. Faith is passed on from one person to another.

• 10. Deuteronomy mentions several times the *land flowing with milk and honey* (v. 9). This means usually in the Bible a blessed country. The present paragraph however gives it a different meaning. In the land of Egypt, people

those nations before you and you will seize the land from greater and more powerful nations.

Jos 1:3-5 ²⁴Every place where you set foot will be yours; your territory will be from the desert up to Lebanon and from the Euphrates River up to the Western Sea. ²⁵No one will be able to stand against you. In all the land that you tread, Yahweh will make the peoples fear and be afraid when they hear of you, as he himself has said.

There will be one sanctuary

27—28; 30:15 • ²⁶See that on this day, I set before you a blessing and a curse. ²⁷A blessing if you obey the commandments of Yahweh that I command you today; ²⁸a curse if you disobey these commandments and turn aside from the way that I show you now, to follow strange gods which are not yours. ²⁹When Yahweh, your God, has brought you into the land you are going to conquer, you shall set the blessing on Mount Gerizim, and the curse on Mount Ebal. ³⁰(Those mountains are at the other side of the Jordan, beyond the western road, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the Arabah, opposite Gilgal, near the oak of Moreh.) ³¹Now you are going to cross the Jordan to take possession of the land which Yahweh gives you. You are to possess it and live in it, ³²and be careful to carry out all the laws and precepts which I now set before you.

Jos 8:33

12 • ¹These are the precepts, the norms and the laws that you

work and harvest. In Israel instead the flocks depend on grass, and on rain, which is given by God; and it is the same for honey. So life in Israel will always depend on divine generosity and people's faithfulness to the covenant.

• 26. Here we have a reference to the Covenant held by Joshua (Jos 8:30).

• **12.1** In chapter 12 we have the beginning of the laws which must govern Israel if they are to really become God's people.

The first law directs them to destroy the pagans' sacred places. These were places set on hilltops in the middle of woods. There a pole was placed between vertical stones.

The second prescription deals with having no other temple than the one in Jerusalem. At-

tempting to counter abuses coming from the multiplication of cultic places, the Jewish priests managed to achieve religious unity around the Jerusalem Temple. This unification of the cult was part of king Josiah's great project: to reunite the ancient kingdom of the north to the kingdom of Judah (1 K 23:8-9).

shall endeavor to put into practice all the days of your life in the land which Yahweh, the God of your fathers, has given you. ²Totally destroy all the places where the peoples you are going to drive away had worshiped their gods. Do this in the high mountains as well as in the hills and under every green tree. ³Destroy their altars, smash their pedestals, burn their sacred pillars, and break into pieces the images of their gods. Wipe out in those places even the name of their gods.

⁴Do not build similar sanctuaries for Yahweh, ⁵for he himself has already chosen a place among all the tribes to put his Name there and dwell in it. There you will go and look for Yahweh.

⁶To that place you will bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, tithes and offerings. There you will present the offerings that you promised to God and those which you voluntarily offer, as well as the firstlings of your cattle and sheep.

⁷There you shall eat in the presence of Yahweh and feast together with your families, enjoying everything you have reaped through the blessing of Yahweh. ⁸You shall not do there as we do here. For now every-

1K 14:23;
2K 16:4;
Is 57:5;
Jer 2:20

Ezk 6:13;
23:24

1K 8:29;
Jn 4:20

Jdg 17:6;
21:25

one does what seems best for him,⁹ because we have not yet come to the place of rest, that is, the land which Yahweh is giving you as your inheritance.

¹⁰When you cross the Jordan and settle in the land which Yahweh will give you, when he has delivered you from all your enemies, you will at last find rest.

¹¹Then you shall bring to the place chosen by Yahweh as a dwelling place for his Name, everything which I commanded: the burnt offerings, the sacrifices, the tithes and the first-fruits of the work of your hand, and the selected offerings which you promised by vow to Yahweh:

¹²There you shall celebrate your banquets before Yahweh: you and your children, your servants as well as the Levites who live among you, since they have no portion or inheritance as you have.

• ¹³Be careful not to offer your holocaust in any place. ¹⁴Only in the place chosen by Yahweh in the land of one of your tribes are you to offer your holocaust, and only there will you do all that I command you.

Lev 3:17

¹⁵However, in all your cities you may slaughter and eat meat, as much as you like of the animals Yahweh has blessed you with. Both the clean and the unclean may eat of it, just as you would eat gazelle or deer. ¹⁶Only you must not eat the blood but pour it out upon the earth like water.

¹⁷You may not eat in your cities the tithes of your wheat, wine and oil, or the firstlings of your herd or your flock, or any of the things which you have offered to Yahweh either freely or by vow. ¹⁸These you are to eat before Yahweh in the place Yahweh has chosen, together with your children and your servants, and you will feast before Yahweh, your God, enjoying the fruit of your labor. ¹⁹Be careful not to forget the Levite as long as you live.

• 13. Chapter 12:13-19 establishes the distinction between killing animals to offer them in sacrifice, which was only allowed in the Jerusalem Temple, and killing them to use the meat, which can be done in any place.

From 12:29 to 13:19: a new warning against the danger of idolatry. *You will purge the evil from your midst* (13:6). In 1 Corinthians 5:13, Paul will recall these words when he

²⁰When Yahweh has extended your boundaries as he promised you, and you would like to eat meat, you may do so whenever you like. ²¹If the place chosen by Yahweh for his dwelling is too far, then you may kill any of your herd or your flock, which Yahweh has given you, in the manner that I have prescribed for you. ²²You may eat it within your cities as much as you like, but you shall eat it just as the gazelle or the deer is eaten: all may equally eat of it—the clean and the unclean. ²³Only take care not to eat the blood because blood and life are one and you must not eat the life with the flesh. ²⁴Do not eat it but pour it as water is poured upon the land, ²⁵that all may go well with you and with your children after you, doing what is pleasing in the eyes of Yahweh.

Gen 9:4;
Lev 1:5

²⁶In turn, you shall bring with you the things you have consecrated and offered by vow to Yahweh and go to the place chosen by Yahweh. ²⁷There you will sacrifice your holocausts, the flesh as well as the blood, on the altar of Yahweh, your God. Pour out the blood on the altar, and then eat the flesh.

²⁸Be careful to obey all that I command you, and all shall always be well with you and with your children after you, for doing what is right and good in the eyes of Yahweh.

²⁹Yahweh, your God, will destroy before you the nations you drive away. When you have destroyed them and dwell in their land, be careful after having destroyed them. ³⁰Let it not be that you fall in the trap and follow their example. Do not look at their gods saying: "How did this nation serve their gods? We will do the same."

³¹This you shall not do, even to honor Yahweh your God, since in order to honor their gods, ³²they have done everything that Yahweh abhors, including burning their children in honor of their gods.

Lev 18:26;
2K 16:3;
Ezk 16:21Jer 23:9;
Mt 24:24;
Rev 13:14

asks the Christian community to expel those who give bad example and who refuse to transform their lives. As it was mentioned about Joshua 6, this command to kill those who cause idolatry comes from the certainty that the faith of Israel is the most precious in the world: God's chosen people cannot allow their faith to be contaminated by human errors for any price or under any circumstance.

Do not be led astray

13 • ¹Do all that I command you without adding or taking anything away from it.

²What about the prophet or the professional dreamer who gives you signs or miracles? ³If these signs or these marvels happen, and he takes advantage of them to say: "Come and let us follow other gods (gods which are not ours), and let us serve them," ⁴do not pay attention to the words of this prophet or dreamer; because Yahweh, your God, is testing you to know if you really love him with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁵It is Yahweh, your God, you will follow and him will you fear. Obey his commandments and listen to his voice. Serve him and cling to him.

⁶As for the prophet or dreamer, he must die because he has spoken to draw you away from Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery. This prophet must die because he wanted you to stray from the path that Yahweh has commanded you to follow. In this way you will purge the evil from your midst.

⁷If your brother, the child of your father, or if your son or daughter, or the woman you love or your close friend secretly tries to lure you, saying: "Come, let us serve other gods," gods whom neither you nor your ancestors have known, ⁸the gods of either the neighboring nations that surround you along the boundaries of your land or those far away, ⁹do not yield to him or listen to him. Do not pity him, or pardon him or cover up for him, ¹⁰but denounce him. You shall deal him his death and your hand shall be the first raised against him, and then the hand of all the people. ¹¹You shall kill him by stoning because he tried to draw you away from Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from that house of slavery. ¹²All in Israel

will hear of this and they will fear, and never dare to do such evil.

¹³You may hear that in some of the cities that Yahweh will give you to dwell in, ¹⁴some evil people have appeared. You will perhaps hear that they have perverted their fellow residents and have invited them to serve new and strange gods. ¹⁵Then carefully inquire about them and try to discover the truth of the matter. If it is certain and you have confirmed that such a shameful thing has indeed been done, ¹⁶you shall kill by the sword all the inhabitants of that city. You shall curse the city and all that is in it, even the animals. ¹⁷Then you shall pile up all the plunder in the center of the square and set the city on fire with all the plunder so as to fulfill the curse of Yahweh. This city will forever be a heap of ruins, and will never again be rebuilt.

¹⁸You shall not take hold of anything from this city, not even the smallest thing, in order to appease the wrath of Yahweh, and that he may have mercy on you. Then he will bless you and fulfill the promise he has sworn to your ancestors ¹⁹if you listen to the voice of Yahweh, observing all his commandments that I command you today, and doing what is right in the sight of Yahweh, your God.

14 ¹Yahweh holds you as his people, so you will not cut yourselves or cut the hair on your forehead for the dead. ²You are a people, holy and consecrated to Yahweh, your God. Yahweh has chosen you from among all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his very own people.

Lev 19:
27-28;
Is 1:2

Animals "clean" and "unclean"

• ³Do not eat anything that is unclean. ⁴These are the animals that you may eat: ox, sheep, goat, ⁵deer, gazelle, roebuck, wild goat, ibex, antelope, and mountain sheep. ⁶You may eat any animal that chews the cud and has a split hoof.

Lev 11

• **13.1** A prophet may perform wonders: if it is to bring about separation from the Lord, he is a fraud. Does God want us to change our membership from one church to another in order to go where we think miracles are happening?

The text stresses that the Word of God and

his commandments are the only foundation of our faith: we do not believe because we have seen signs and wonders (Jn 4:46) but because God has spoken.

• **14.3** Another list of "clean" and "unclean" animals (see Lev 11).

⁷But of those that chew cud or have a split hoof, you may not eat the following: camel, hare, and rock badger, because they do chew the cud but do not have a divided hoof—these are unclean for you. Neither shall you eat the meat ⁸of the pig because although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. Regard it as unclean: do not eat their meat or touch their carcass.

⁹Of all the animals that live in the water, you may eat the following: all that has fins and scales, ¹⁰but not those that do not have fins and scales. Consider them as unclean. ¹¹You may eat all clean birds. ¹²But do not eat the following: eagle, vulture, osprey, ¹³buzzard, kite, the different kinds of falcons, ¹⁴all kinds of ravens,— ¹⁵ostrich, nighthawk, sea gull, and all the different kinds of hawk, ¹⁶eagle, owl and ibis, swan, ¹⁷pelican, purple gallinule, cormorant, ¹⁸stork, the different kinds of heron, hoopoe, and bat. ¹⁹Consider as unclean all winged insects. Do not eat them. ²⁰But you may eat all clean birds.

²¹Do not eat any animal that you find dead. You may give it to the foreigner who lives in your city, or sell it to the stranger, for you are a people consecrated to Yahweh, your God.

Do not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

Tithes

• ²²Every year separate the tenth part from the yield of what you have sown in your fields. ²³In the presence of Yahweh, in the place he has chosen as the dwelling place for his Name, you shall eat the tithe of your wheat, your oil and your wine, and the firstlings of your herd and flock that you may learn to honor Yahweh, your God, all the days of your life.

²⁴The journey may be too long for you to bring those tithes to the place Yahweh has chosen as a dwelling place for his Name. In that case, when Yahweh

your God, blesses you, exchange them all for money. ²⁵Take the money in your hand and go to the place chosen by Yahweh. ²⁶There you shall buy whatever you like—oxen or sheep, or wine or strong drink—anything you like. And there you shall eat in the presence of Yahweh, and shall rejoice—you and your household. ²⁷And do not forget the Levite who dwells in your cities, since he has nothing of his own and no inheritance as you have.

²⁸Every three years, separate the tithes of all the year's harvest but store them in the city. ²⁹Then the Levite among you who has no inheritance of his own, and the foreigner, the orphan and the widow who live in your cities may come and eat, and be satisfied. So Yahweh will bless all the works of your hands, all that you undertake.

The year of forgiveness

15 ¹Every seven years you shall pardon debts. ²You shall do this in the following manner: the creditor shall pardon any debt of his neighbor or brother, and shall stop exacting it of him because Yahweh's pardon has been proclaimed. ³You may demand that a foreigner pay back his debts but you shall pardon the debt of your brother. ⁴However you should have no poor in your midst for Yahweh will give you prosperity in the land that you have conquered. ⁵If you listen to the voice of Yahweh, your God, and obey all that he has commanded you, which I now remind you of, he will bless you as he promised. ⁶You shall lend to many nations but you shall not borrow; you shall drive away many nations and they shall not have dominion over you.

The poor and enslaved

• ⁷If there is anybody poor among your brothers, who lives in your cities in the land that Yahweh gives you, do

• 22. In verses 22-29, we read about the *tithes*, that is the tenth part of the crops to be offered to God. Deuteronomy makes this offering the foundation of a believer's faith. Elsewhere in the Bible, the author will emphasize that "the just one has compassion, he gives and lends; and in the end, he owns the land" while "the unjust one borrows and does not repay and in the end, he is thrown out of the land"

(Ps 37). The person who knows how to give does not squander: he is content with what he has and lacks nothing, while the one who refuses to give never has enough and never feels happy (Pro 11:24). See also 2 Corinthians 9:6.

The same spirit inspires chapter 15 concerning the sabbatical year (see Lev 25:1).

• 15.7 It is painful for the author of the

not harden your heart or close your hand, ⁸but be open-handed and lend him all that he needs.

1Jn 3:17

⁹Be careful that you do not harbor in your heart these perverse thoughts: "The seventh year, the year of pardon, is near," so you look coldly at your poor brother and lend him nothing. He may cry to Yahweh against you, and you will be guilty. ¹⁰When you give anything, give it willingly, and Yahweh, your God, will bless you for this in all your work and in all that you undertake.

Mk 14:7;
Jn 12:8

¹¹The poor will not disappear from this land. Therefore I give you this commandment: you must be open-handed to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in your land.

21:2;
Jn 8:35

¹²If your fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself to you as a slave, he shall serve you for six years, and in the seventh, you shall set him free. ¹³When you set him free, do not let him go empty-handed, ¹⁴but give him something from your flock, from your store of wheat and wine, something from the good things that Yahweh has blessed you with.

¹⁵Remember that you too were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Yahweh, your God, has given you freedom. Because of this, I give you this commandment.

21:5

¹⁶But if your slave says: "I do not want to leave," because he loves you and your household and knows that

he will be well off with you, ¹⁷you shall then take an awl and thrust it through his ear into the door of your house, and he will serve you forever. You shall do likewise with your maid-servant.

¹⁸Do not think it hard on you to give him freedom, because for six years you have gained from him twice as much as from a hired servant.

13:2

¹⁹You shall consecrate to Yahweh all the male firstlings that are born of your cattle or sheep. You shall not use the firstling of your cattle for work, nor shear the firstling of your sheep.

²⁰You shall eat these every three years in the presence of Yahweh with all your family in the place Yahweh has chosen. ²¹You shall not sacrifice an animal to Yahweh if it has any defect, if it is lame or blind, ²²but shall eat it in your house; the clean as well as the unclean may eat of it, as you would eat a gazelle or a deer. ²³Only take care that you do not eat the blood, you shall pour it out on the ground like water.

Israel's three feasts

16 • ¹Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover in honor of Yahweh since it was in this month that Yahweh, your God, brought you out of Egypt by night. ²On the Passover, you shall sacrifice oxen and sheep to Yahweh in the place he has chosen for his Name to dwell. ³For the Passover supper, you are not to eat leavened bread, but for seven days, you shall eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt hastily. So you shall re-

12:1;
23:1412:34;
1Cor 5:8

book to find that there are poor people on the land God gave to his children: did God not give all that was necessary for everyone? Yet, there are poor people and he asks believers to help them break out of this subhuman situation. It is not a question of giving them a piece of bread for today, but of loaning them what they need to begin again, to work the land of their ancestors and to earn a living with dignity. The Israelites know that debts are cancelled every seven years. Even with that, they will loan what is necessary.

• **16.1** What refers to the feasts is very similar to what is read in Leviticus 23. Notice the insistence on the obligation of celebrating this feast "at the place which Yahweh has chosen," that is to say, in Jerusalem. Hence the pilgrimage of the Jews to Jerusalem, at least on the occasion of the Passover feast. Jesus himself will observe this law which applies to all males, from twelve years of age onwards (Lk 2:41). In several passages of the Gospel we read: "Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the Feast" (Jn 2:13; 5:1).

member all the days of your life the day on which you left Egypt.

⁴For seven days, no leaven shall be seen throughout your territory; nor shall any of the flesh you sacrificed on the evening of the first day be left for the following day.

⁵You may not offer the Passover sacrifice in any city which Yahweh gives you, ⁶but only in the place chosen by Yahweh as the dwelling place for his Name.

Sacrifice the Passover in the evening, at sunset, at the time you came out of Egypt. ⁷You shall roast it and eat it in the place chosen by Yahweh, your God. And then, in the morning you shall return to your house. ⁸You shall eat unleavened bread for six days, and on the seventh, you shall celebrate a solemn assembly in honor of Yahweh and you shall not work.

⁹You shall count seven weeks, beginning from the day you start cutting the standing wheat. ¹⁰Then you shall celebrate the Feast of the Seven Weeks for Yahweh, your God, making a voluntary offering from your harvest in proportion to the way Yahweh, your God, blesses you.

¹¹At the place Yahweh has chosen as the dwelling place for his Name, you shall feast, you and your children, your servants, the Levite who lives in your cities, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow who live among you. ¹²Remember that you were a slave in Egypt and be careful to put these precepts into practice.

¹³Celebrate too the Feast of the Tents for seven days, after gathering the produce of your threshing floor and of your winepress. ¹⁴Rejoice during this feast—you and your children, your servants, the Levite, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow who live in your city. ¹⁵You shall feast for seven days in honor of Yahweh at the place chosen by him; because Yahweh will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that your joy may be complete.

¹⁶Three times a year all your men shall present themselves before Yahweh, your God, in the place chosen by him: on the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the Feast of Weeks, and on the Feast of Tents. And you shall not present yourselves empty-handed, ¹⁷but each one will offer in proportion to what he has, ac-

ording to the blessing that Yahweh has bestowed upon you.

Regarding justice

¹⁸Appoint judges and secretaries for your tribes in every city which Yahweh gives you, that they may judge the people according to justice.

¹⁹You shall not bend the law or show partiality. Do not accept gifts because gifts blind the eyes of the wise and subvert the cause of the righteous. ²⁰Justice! Seek justice if you want to live and inherit the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you.

²¹Do not plant any tree or sacred pillar near the altar of your God. ²²Do not put up there the sacred stones that Yahweh hates.

17 ¹You shall not sacrifice to Yahweh, your God, an ox or a sheep that has any blemish or defect because Yahweh abhors this.

²If there is among you, in any of the cities which Yahweh will give you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of Yahweh to the point of breaking his covenant, ³if they go to serve other gods and bow before them—to the sun, or the moon, or the stars of heaven—which I have forbidden, ⁴and this has been reported to you or you learn of it, you shall begin to investigate the matter well. If you have proved that this abomination has indeed been committed in Israel, ⁵you shall bring to the gates of the city that man or woman who committed the misdeed, and you shall stone him or her to death. ⁶But you will need the testimony of two or three witnesses to condemn a person to death. No one will be condemned by the accusation of only one witness. ⁷The hands of the witnesses shall throw the first stones to kill the accused. Afterwards all the people shall stone him. In this way, you will make the evil disappear from your midst.

⁸If a very difficult case is presented to you which you cannot resolve in the city tribunal, either about murder, a legal dispute or a quarrel because of injuries, you shall go up to the place chosen by Yahweh, your God; ⁹you shall approach the Levite priests and the judge in office at that time. You shall consult them and they will point out to you the decision on

23:14;
Lev
23:15

23:8;
Pro 17:23

Jn 8:7;
1Cor 5:13

34:23

21:5

the case. ¹⁰You shall carry out the decision that they have made for you in that place chosen by Yahweh, and you shall act in accordance with what they have instructed you. ¹¹You shall follow the instructions or the verdict they have given you without turning aside either to the right or to the left from the decision they made for you.

¹²He who dares to act in another way and does not listen to the priest who stands there in the service of Yahweh, or to the judge, that man will die. You shall banish evil from Israel. ¹³So all the people upon knowing this shall fear and not make decisions without the right to do so.

The kings

¹⁴When you come to the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you, when you have conquered it and live in it, you shall perhaps say: "I would like to have a king like all the neighboring nations." ¹⁵Then you have to appoint a king chosen by Yahweh from among your brothers. You shall not appoint a foreign king who is not a brother Israelite.

¹⁶Ensure that your king does not acquire many horses, lest he again send his people to Egypt to get more horses. For Yahweh commanded you never to go back that way.

¹⁷Neither shall he have many women lest they pervert his heart. And neither let him pile up gold and silver.

¹⁸When he ascends the throne, let him copy for his use this Law from the book of the Levite priests. ¹⁹He shall bring it with him and read it every day of his life, that he may learn to fear Yahweh, keeping all the sayings of the Law and putting his precepts into practice.

²⁰So let him not become conceited nor look down on his brothers, nor turn aside from this commandment either to

the right or to the left, so that he and his children may lengthen the days of their reign in the midst of Israel.

The priests of the tribe of Levi

18 • ¹The Levite priests, the whole tribe of Levi, will have no share or inheritance as the rest of the children of Israel have, but they shall live on the burnt offerings in honor of Yahweh, and on what is consecrated to him. ²The Levite shall have no share in the inheritance received by his brother because Yahweh is his inheritance as he has promised.

³This will be the right of the priests from what is offered, whether ox or sheep: to the priest shall be given the shoulder, the jaws and the stomach. ⁴You shall also give him the firstfruits of your wheat, your wine and your oil, as well as the first wool from the shearing of your sheep, ⁵for Yahweh chose him from among all the tribes to be the servant of his Name, he and his children forever.

⁶If a Levite comes from one of the cities of the territory of Israel where he resides, and he wishes to enter into the place chosen by Yahweh, ⁷he shall officiate in the Name of Yahweh, his God, like all his Levite brothers who stand there with him in the presence of Yahweh. ⁸He shall eat the same portion, regardless of what he has obtained from the sale of his family goods.

Prophets and "the" Prophet

• ⁹When you have entered into the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you, do not imitate the evil deeds of those people. ¹⁰You must not have in your midst anyone who makes his child pass through the fire, or one who practices divination, or anyone who consults the stars,

• **17.14** Here we have references to the three institutions acknowledged by the Jews: kings, priests and prophets.

Verses 14-20. The kings of Israel were negotiating with Egypt. In exchange for the horses they wished to purchase, they sent young Israelites to serve in the Pharaoh's armies.

• **18.1** *The Levite priests will have no share or inheritance.* About the priests of the

tribe of Levi, see the commentary on Numbers 3 and 4.

• 9. This text condemns magicians and fortune-tellers and then praises the true prophets.

God's people live by the word of God, not only by the word found written in a book, but by what God says through the prophets. There are some who receive a special gift from the

Lev 19:31; Is 8:19
 Lev 19:31; Is 8:19
 who is a sorcerer, ¹¹ or one who practices enchantments or who consults the spirits, no diviner or one who asks questions of the dead. ¹² For Yahweh abhors those who do these things, and it is precisely for this reason that he drives them away before you. ¹³ You must be blameless for Yahweh, your God.

Mt 5:48

¹⁴ Those people that you are to drive away listened to sorcerers and diviners, but Yahweh, your God, has provided you with something different. ¹⁵ He will raise up for you a prophet like myself from among the people, from your brothers, to whom you shall listen. ¹⁶ Remember that in Horeb, on the day of the Assembly, you said: "I am afraid to die and I do not want to hear the voice of Yahweh again or see again that great fire."

Num 12:6; Mk 9:4; Jn 1:21; Acts 3:22-23; 7:37

¹⁷ So Yahweh said to me: "They have spoken well. ¹⁸ I shall raise up a prophet from their midst, one of their brothers, who will be like you. I will put my words into his mouth and he will tell them all that I command. ¹⁹ If someone does not listen to my words when the prophet speaks on my behalf, I myself will call him to account for it. ²⁰ But any prophet who says in

4:15; Jer 1:9; Ezk 3:1; Jn 12:49-50

Jer 28:15

Spirit to guide people and nations toward the real goals which God proposes to us.

You must have no fortune-tellers among you. Human beings have always been tempted to pierce through the mystery of their future: many soothsayers and false prophets have responded, as the authors of horoscopes do today, to this desire to snatch secrets from a God we distrust. But this is not the role of the prophets of Israel: their mission is to courageously proclaim what God demands today.

I shall raise up a prophet from their midst. This "prophet" means the whole series of prophets who will continue to address Israel, as can be seen at the end of the paragraph (vv. 20-22). Yet, in the future, Israel was expecting a prophet greater than all others, a prophet who would lead the entire people as well as Moses had done. When John the Baptist ap-

peared, some asked: "Are you the prophet?" (Jn 1:21), and Christians understood that Christ was "the Prophet" (see Acts 3:22).

²¹ You will perhaps ask: "How are we going to know that a word does not come from Yahweh?" ²² If any prophet speaks in the name of Yahweh and if that which he says does not happen, you shall know that the word does not come from Yahweh. The prophet has spoken to boast and you shall not pay any attention to him.

Cities of refuge

19 • ¹ When Yahweh, your God, has destroyed the nations whose land he will give you, when you have driven them away and you occupy their houses, ² you shall set aside three cities in the midst of the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you in possession. ³ Open a way to them and divide in three parts the territory that Yahweh, your God, gives you in possession: so that anyone who has killed someone may find refuge in those cities.

21:13

⁴ But who may find refuge there to save himself? The person who caused the death of his neighbor with whom he had had no quarrel before. ⁵ For example, if someone goes to the forest with a companion to cut firewood and as he wields the axe to cut a tree, the blade

peared, some asked: "Are you the prophet?" (Jn 1:21), and Christians understood that Christ was "the Prophet" (see Acts 3:22).

• **19.1** The Israelites had a very strong sense of family solidarity and of revenge. When a person killed another person, even unintentionally, the family of the dead person had to kill the killer.

Here we see how God acts to educate his people. He could not directly attack such a deeply-rooted mentality. By designating cities of refuge for the person who killed someone unintentionally, the right to take justice into one's own hands was at first limited, and with time it would disappear.

Verse 15. A single witness is not enough to condemn anyone. This principle is recalled in various parts of the New Testament as, for example, in the condemnation of Jesus.

comes off its handle, mortally wounding his companion, he can flee into one of those cities and so save himself. ⁶The avenger of blood must not be allowed, in his rage, to hunt the killer and catch up with him because the distance is great, and kill him in turn, when in reality the latter is not guilty of murder, since he had had no previous quarrel with his companion.

⁷For this reason, I command you to set aside these three cities. ⁸But perhaps Yahweh will extend your frontiers as he has sworn to your fathers, and give you all the land that he promised to your fathers, ⁹on condition that you keep his commandments and do what I tell you today, that is, that you love Yahweh, your God, and follow his ways at all times. Then you shall add three more to these three cities.

¹⁰In that way, innocent blood shall not be shed in the midst of the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you as your inheritance, and you will not be guilty of such shedding of blood.

¹¹But if a man, because of a feud with his neighbor, ambushes him and falls on him and wounds him fatally, and if afterwards the aggressor flees into one of these cities, ¹²the heads of this city shall order that he be arrested there in the place of asylum. And he shall be put in the hands of the relatives of the victim that they may kill him. ¹³Do not show pity to him for you must remove from Israel the shedding of innocent blood, so that you may have prosperity.

¹⁴In the inheritance you receive in the land which Yahweh, your God, will give as your possession, do not move the boundaries of your neighbor set by your ancestors.

¹⁵A sole witness is not enough to condemn anyone, whatever be the crime or offense of which the person is accused. Only by the testimony of two or three witnesses can a case be resolved. ¹⁶If only one witness rises against a person and accuses him of an offense, ¹⁷both parties involved shall appear before Yahweh in the presence of the priests and judges then in office, who may deal with it.

¹⁸The judges will examine the case in detail, and if it turns out that the witness had lied in falsely accusing his brother,

¹⁹they shall impose on him the punishment which the lying witness tried to impose on his brother. So shall you uproot evil from your midst, ²⁰because others, upon knowing it, shall fear and not do the same.

²¹Do not feel sorry for him: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

21:23;
Mt 5:38

War

20 ¹When you go to war against your enemies and you see horses, chariots and an army more numerous than yours, then have no fear because Yahweh, your God, who brought you out of Egypt, is with you.

²When the hour of battle draws near, the priest shall advance to the head of the army and shall speak to the people saying: ³“Listen, Israel, today you are to enter into battle against your enemies. Do not let your heart be discouraged, or afraid or troubled, and do not tremble before them, ⁴for Yahweh, your God, is with you, to fight in your favor against your enemies and save you.” ⁵So the secretaries shall say to the people: “Is there anyone of you who has just built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go home; lest he die in battle and another dedicate it. ⁶Is there anyone among you who has planted a new vineyard and has not yet enjoyed its fruits? Let him go home, lest he die in the war and another enjoy its fruit. ⁷Is there anyone who has made a promise to marry and has not yet been married? Let him go back to his home at once, lest he die in combat and another take the woman as his wife.”

1Mac
3:56

⁸They shall also say: “Is there anyone who is afraid or weakhearted? Let him go home immediately, lest his fear discourage others.” ⁹When they have finished speaking, commanders shall be put at the head of the people.

Lk 14:18

¹⁰When you draw near to a city to lay siege to it, you shall first offer it peace.

¹¹If it accepts your proposal and opens the gates to you, all the people found in it shall become your slaves and serve you.

Jos 16:10;
17:13;
Jdg 1:28

¹²If they do not accept the peace that you offer them and declare war against you, you shall lay siege to the city. ¹³And when Yahweh, your God, gives it into your hands, you shall kill by the sword all

Mt 18:16;
Jn 8:16-
17;
2Cor 13:1;
1Tim 5:19;
Heb 10:28

the men, ¹⁴but the women and children, the livestock and all the other things which you find there shall be your booty, and you shall eat from the plunder of your enemies which Yahweh has given over to you.

¹⁵This you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you and which are not in the country which you will possess. ¹⁶But in the cities which Yahweh gives you as an inheritance, you shall not leave anything that lives. ¹⁷You must destroy them all according to the law of anathema—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as Yahweh, your God, has commanded you, ¹⁸that they may not teach you all those evil things which they have done to honor their gods, for by imitating them you shall sin against Yahweh, your God.

¹⁹If, on attacking a city, you have to lay siege to it for a long time before capturing it, you shall not destroy the fruit trees around it nor cut them with your axe, that you may eat their fruit. Do not cut them, then. Are the trees of the field men that they should also be stricken? ²⁰If there are trees in the field which are not fruit-bearing, but are for other uses, cut them down and make ladders and instruments out of them with which you may seize the city that offers you resistance.

Laws and rights

21 ¹If the corpse of a slain man is found in the land which Yahweh, your God, will give you, and it is not known who killed him, ²your judges and leaders shall go out to measure the distance between the victim and the surrounding cities to ³determine which city is nearest to the dead man.

And the leaders of that city shall take a calf that has never been used for work or borne a yoke. ⁴And they shall bring it down to an overflowing brook, to a place which has never been plowed or sown, and there they shall break its neck. ⁵The priests, descendants of Levi, shall be present for they were chosen by Yahweh to minister and give the blessings in his name, and they are those who decide on all lawsuits or criminal cases.

⁶Then all the elders of the city nearest to the man found dead shall wash their hands in the brook over the calf whose

neck was broken. ⁷And they shall pronounce these words, “Our hands did not shed this blood, and our eyes did not see it. ⁸Forgive, O Yahweh, your people of Israel whom you rescued, and do not charge them with this shedding of innocent blood.” ⁹So they shall be absolved from this blood; you shall have removed from your midst the guilt of innocent blood and have done what is right in the eyes of Yahweh.

¹⁰When you go to war against your enemies, and Yahweh, your God, delivers them over to you, ¹¹if you see among the captives a beautiful woman, and you fall in love with her and desire to have her as your wife, ¹²you shall bring her to your house. First, she shall shave her head and clip her nails. ¹³She shall take off the dress of a captive and stay in your house. And she will mourn for her father and mother for a month, after which you may have relations with her. So you shall be her husband and she your wife. ¹⁴If in time she does not please you anymore, you shall set her free. You shall not sell her for money, nor make her your slave, since you have taken her by force.

¹⁵When a man has two wives and prefers one to the other, supposing that both of them bear him children, and the first-born is the son of the wife he loves less, ¹⁶then on the day he divides the inheritance among his children, he cannot give the right of the first-born to the son of the woman he prefers, at the expense of the true first-born who is the son of the woman he loves less. ¹⁷On the contrary, he should recognize the child of the woman he loves less as the first-born and give him a double share of all his property. He is his first-born, and to him belongs the right of the first-born.

¹⁸If a man has a stubborn and rebellious child who does not pay attention to what his father or mother commands, and does not listen to them when they call him, ¹⁹his parents shall seize him and bring him before the leaders of the city, to the gate of judgment, ²⁰and shall say to them: “This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he does not pay any attention to us; he is spoiled and a drunkard.” ²¹Then all the men of this town shall stone him to death. In this way shall you banish evil from your midst, and all Israel upon knowing this shall fear.

Gen
25:31;
27:36

2K 2:9;
Gen 49:3

²²If a man, guilty of any crime that deserves death, has been put to death by hanging him on a tree, ²³his body must not remain hanging there through the night. But you shall bury him on the same day because the hanged man is a curse of God. So you shall not defile the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you as an inheritance.

Give back what you find

23:4-5

22 ¹If you find the lost ox or sheep of your brother, do not pretend that you did not see it, but bring it back to its owner. ²If your brother does not live near you, or you do not know to whom the animal belongs, you shall keep it in your house until its owner comes looking for it. Then you shall return it to him.

³Do the same with his ass, his clothes, or with anything lost by your brother that you happen to find. Do not pretend not to notice them. ⁴If you see the ass of your brother or his ox fall down by the way, do not pretend not to notice it, but help your brother lift the animal up.

⁵A woman must not wear a man's clothing, nor a man the clothing of a woman, because whoever does such a thing deserves the reprobation of Yahweh.

Lev 22:28

⁶If you find along your way a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground, and the mother-bird is sitting upon the birdlings or upon the eggs, you shall not bring with you the mother-bird together with the young, ⁷but you shall let the mother go and take only the young. Then you shall prosper and live long.

⁸When you build a new house, you shall construct a small wall around the roof, lest someone should fall from it, and your house become stained with blood.

⁹Do not sow any other seed in your vineyard because when you do this, you can neither eat from the produce of the grapes nor from the produce of the other plants.

¹⁰Do not plow with an ox and an ass together.

Lev 19:19

¹¹Do not wear a garment woven from wool and linen together.

¹²Make for yourself tassels on the four corners of your cloak with which you cover yourself.

¹³It may happen that a man takes a wife and afterwards does not like her, ¹⁴so he reproaches her for her behavior, and defames her by saying: "I married this woman, but when I went to bed with her, I found out that she was not a virgin."

¹⁵In this case, the father and mother of the young woman shall take the sheet of the wedding night which proves that she was a virgin, and will show this to the judges of the city. ¹⁶The father of the young woman shall then say to the judges: "I have given my daughter as wife to this man, but now that he no longer likes her, ¹⁷he pretends that when he married her she was not a virgin. And yet, see, here is the proof of my daughter's virginity." ¹⁸They shall spread the sheet before the judges of the city. If the man is guilty, the judges shall arrest him and have him whipped.

¹⁹They shall also fine him a hundred silver coins which they shall give to the father of the young woman because the man publicly defamed a virgin of Israel. The husband shall have her as his wife and cannot repudiate her as long as he lives.

²⁰But if what the man says is true, and the proof of her virginity is not found, ²¹then you shall bring her to the door of her father's house and the people shall stone her to death for having committed an evil deed in Israel—becoming a prostitute while still in her father's house. So shall you banish evil from your midst.

²²If a man is caught lying with a married woman, the two shall die: the adulterer and the adulteress. So shall you banish evil from Israel.

Jn 8:5

²³If a young woman has been promised in marriage to a man, and another man meets her in the city and lies with her, ²⁴they shall bring the two and stone them to death: the young woman because she did not cry for help when she was in the city, and the man because he dishonored the future wife of his neighbor. So shall you banish evil from your midst.

²⁵But if in the fields, a man meets a young woman promised in marriage, and violates her by force, then only the man shall die. ²⁶The young woman shall not

suffer punishment. She does not deserve death, for this case is similar to a highwayman who falls upon a man and murders him; in the same manner, the young woman was assaulted. ²⁷She was alone in the fields, she cried but no one came to help her.

²⁸If a man meets a young virgin who is not promised in marriage to another man, and that man violates her by force, and they are caught by surprise, ²⁹the man who lay with her shall give to the father of the young woman fifty pieces of silver, and take her as his wife, because he has dishonored her, and he cannot send her away all his life.

Act worthily as a consecrated people

23 ¹No man shall take the wife of his father; let him not dishonor his father.

²The man whose testicles are crushed and whose penis is cut shall not be admitted into the assembly of Yahweh. ³Nor shall the half-breed be admitted into the assembly of Yahweh, even to the tenth generation. ⁴The Ammonite or Moabite shall never be admitted into the assembly of Yahweh even after the tenth generation, ⁵because when you came forth from Egypt, they did not go out to meet you with bread and water, but instead they hired Balaam, the son of Beor, from the Pethor in Mesopotamia, to curse you. ⁶But Yahweh, your God, did not listen to Balaam and turned the curse into a blessing because Yahweh loves you. ⁷You shall never share your prosperity or happiness with these peoples.

⁸You shall not regard the Edomite as abominable, for he is your brother, or the Egyptian, because you were a pilgrim in his land. ⁹From the third generation, their descendants can be admitted into the assembly of Yahweh.

¹⁰When you set out against your enemies, you shall keep yourselves from every evil act. ¹¹If there is among you a man who is not clean by reason of nocturnal emission, he shall go and stay outside the camp. ¹²When evening comes, he shall bathe himself and after sunset, he may enter the camp.

¹³You shall have a place outside the camp for your natural necessities. ¹⁴You shall bring a stick with your equipment with which you may dig a hole, and then

cover up the excrement with the unearthened soil. ¹⁵Because Yahweh, your God, walks in the midst of the camp to protect you and give your enemy into your hands; your camp must be sacred, that Yahweh may not see anything indecent in it; otherwise, he will turn away from you.

¹⁶You shall not turn over to his master the slave who ran away from his house and sought refuge with you. ¹⁷He shall stay with you among your household, in the place that he chooses in one of your cities, where it seems best for him. You shall not oppress him.

¹⁸There shall not be among the daughters of Israel a consecrated prostitute, or a consecrated homosexual among the sons of Israel.

¹⁹You shall not bring into the house of Yahweh, your God, a gift for prostitutes, or the wages of a dog, that is, a homosexual, to pay for the vow that you have made, for both of these are abominable in the eyes of Yahweh. ²⁰You shall not lend with interest to your brothers, either in money or food, or in any other thing. ²¹You can lend with interest to a foreigner, but not to your brother, so that Yahweh, your God, may bless you in all your undertakings in the land you are to possess. ²²If you make any vow to Yahweh, you shall not be late in fulfilling it for Yahweh will surely require it of you and it would be charged as sin against you. ²³If you abstain from making vows, you do not commit any sin. ²⁴Fulfill your promises and, if you make any vow, you shall offer what you have promised to Yahweh.

²⁵If you go through the vineyard of your neighbor, you may eat as many grapes as you wish, but you may not bring any away. ²⁶If you pass through the wheat fields of your neighbor, you may pluck the ears with your hand, but you shall not put a sickle to your neighbor's standing wheat.

24 ¹If a man marries a woman, and then dislikes her because of some notable defect he discovers in her, he may write a certificate of divorce, give it to the woman, and send her out of his house.

²If afterwards she becomes the wife of another man ³and he also dislikes her

Gen 34

1Cor 5:1;
Lev 18:8Is 56:3;
Mt 19:12Lev 21:17;
Ne 13:23;
Zec 9:6

Num 22:2

Mt 5:43

Lev
15:16Is 30:11;
1K 2:39Hos 4:14;
1K 14:2322:24;
Lev
25:35Num 30:3;
Pro 20:25

Mt 12:1

Is 50:1;
Jer 3:8;
Mt 5:31;
19:7

and sends her out with a certificate of divorce; or, if this second man who took her to be his wife dies, ⁴the first husband who sent her away cannot take her back as wife, since she has been defiled. It is an abomination in the eyes of Yahweh for him to take her back. You shall not defile the land which Yahweh will give you for an inheritance.

Solidarity in society

⁵The newly married man shall not go to war or be given other public duties. He shall be exempt from everything throughout the year, that he may stay in his house and make his wife happy.

⁶Mill and grindstone shall not be taken as a pledge. Can life be taken as a pledge?

⁷If a man is caught kidnapping an Israelite, that is to say, one of his brothers, to sell him as a slave, the kidnapper must die. So shall you banish evil from the midst of your people.

⁸Be careful of contagious leprosy. Obey and put into practice what the Levite priests tell you to do; fulfill what I commanded them. ⁹Remember what Yahweh, your God, did to Miriam, when the people were on the way coming out of Egypt.

¹⁰When you lend anything to your neighbor, you shall not go into his house to take anything as pledge. ¹¹Wait outside, and he shall come

out of the house to give you the pledge. ¹²If you have taken as pledge the cloak of a poor man, you shall not keep it overnight; ¹³you shall return it to him when the sun goes down that he may sleep in his cloak. Then the poor shall bless you and you shall be righteous in the eyes of Yahweh, your God.

¹⁴Do not exploit the lowly and the poor daily-wage earner, whether he be one of your brothers or a foreigner whom you find in your land in any of your cities. ¹⁵Pay him daily before the sun goes down, because he is poor and he depends on his earnings. Then he will not cry to Yahweh against you, and you will have no sin.

¹⁶Parents shall not be put to death for the sin of their children, nor the children for the sin of their parents. Everyone must pay for his own sin.

¹⁷Do not violate the right of the foreigner, or of the orphan, or take as pledge the clothing of a widow. ¹⁸Remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and Yahweh, your God, rescued you. This is why I command you to do this.

¹⁹When you harvest the wheat in your fields, if you drop a sheaf, do not return to pick it up, but let it be there for the foreigner, the orphan and the widow. Yahweh will bless you for this in all your work.

• **24.5** We have here a series of laws promoting more human relations. This is the extent of the prophets' preaching: in all aspects of social life to create among people a spirit of cooperation and kindness similar to the merciful attitude of God himself.

All of this was meant for a nation of farmers with a rather primitive economy; it would have to be adapted for our more sophisticated society. To each of these prescriptions correspond, in the same order, many other aspects of a truly human legislation:

- help to the newly married;
- job security;

- the fight against prostitution and the exploitation of immigrants;
- the provision of a minimum recompense for those fired and for the families of strikers;
- wages paid when due;

Then comes care for the abandoned. We cannot consider what we earn as exclusively ours. We have an obligation to observe the laws of social solidarity and to pay faithfully what they require. Now no longer are we able to limit our solidarity to a national plan: the richer countries must share with others, that they have often ruined by their own development and the free exchange they have imposed on them.

Hos 3:1;
Jer 3:1

Lk 14:20

21:16

Lev
13–14

Num
12:10

Job 22:6;
Am 2:8

22:26

Jer
22:13;
Mal 3:5

Lev
19:13;
Jas 5:4

Gen
18:24;
2K 14:6;
Jer 31:29;
Ezk 14:12

Lev 19:9;
Ru 2:15

²⁰When you harvest your olives, do not go back to beat the trees another time, what is left shall be for the foreigner, the orphan and the widow. ²¹When you gather the grapes in your vineyard, do not return to look for what has been left. This will be the share of the foreigner, the orphan and the widow. ²²Remember that you were a slave in Egypt. This is why, I command you to do this.

Is 5:20;
Am 2:6

25 ¹When there is a dispute between two persons, let them go to the judges. These will declare who is righteous and who is guilty. ²If he deserves flogging, the judge shall make him fall down on the ground in his presence and shall have him flogged with the number of stripes in proportion to his sin. ³You may give him forty stripes—not more—otherwise, the punishment would be too much and your brother would be dishonored in your eyes.

2Cor
11:24

1Cor 9:9;
1Tim 5:18

⁴Do not muzzle an ox when it threshes the grain.

Ru 4;
Mk 12:18

⁵If two brothers live together and one of them dies without any child, the wife of the dead man shall not marry anyone other than the brother of her husband. He shall take her as his wife and shall give offspring to his brother. ⁶The first son she bears will perpetuate the name and the family of the dead. In this way his name shall not be wiped out of Israel.

⁷If the brother-in-law refuses to take her for his wife, she shall present herself at the city gates and say to the elders, “My brother-in-law refuses to perpetuate his brother’s name in Israel. He does not want to perform his duty as brother-in-law in my favor.”

⁸Then the judges shall call this man and speak to him. If he persists and says: “I do not want to take her for my wife,” ⁹his sister-in-law shall go up to him and in the presence of the judges remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face and

say these words, “So shall it be done to the man who does not perpetuate the name of his brother.” ¹⁰His family shall be called in Israel “the house of the bare-footed one.”

¹¹If two men fight with each other and the wife of one draws near to save her husband from the blows of the other, extends her hand and grasps him by the testicles, ¹²you shall cut off the woman’s hand without pity.

¹³You shall not keep in your bag two weights, one heavier and the other lighter, ¹⁴nor shall you have in your house a large measure and a small one.

¹⁵You shall have a full and exact weight, and an equally just and exact measure, that you may lengthen your days in the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you. ¹⁶Because Yahweh hates him who does such things and any kind of injustice.

¹⁷Remember what Amalek did to you when you were on the road, coming out of Egypt. ¹⁸He went out to meet you on the way and when you were weak and tired attacked all who were left behind. He had no fear of God. ¹⁹Therefore, when Yahweh, your God, after subduing all your enemies around you, has given you rest in the land which he gives you, you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under the heavens. Do not forget.

Lev
19:35;
Am 8:5;
Hos 12:8;
Mic 6:10

17:8;
Num
24:20;
1S 15:2
17:14

The Israelite proclaims his faith

26 ¹When you come into the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you as an inheritance, when you possess it and dwell in it, ²you shall take the firstfruits of all your harvests, place them in a large basket and bring it to the place chosen by Yahweh, your God, as the dwelling place for his Name.

13:12

³Present these to the priest who is in office, and say to him, “On this day, I confess that Yahweh, my God, let me enter into the land he prom-

• **26.1** *My father was a wandering Aramean.* This paragraph is like a profession of faith for the Israelites. They know they were chosen from among pagan Arameans and that God, after liberating them, had given them the

prosperity they were enjoying. Likewise, the various formulations of the “creed” which the Church now uses, place at the very center the liberating work that God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, realizes for our benefit.

ised our fathers that he would give us.”⁴ Then the priest shall take the large basket from your hands and place it before the altar of Yahweh, your God,⁵ and you shall say these words before Yahweh, “My father was a wandering Aramean. He went down to Egypt to find refuge there, while still few in number; but in that country, he became a great and powerful nation.

Ps 105:12

⁶The Egyptians maltreated us, oppressed us and subjected us to harsh slavery. ⁷So we called to Yahweh, the God of our ancestors, and Yahweh listened to us. He saw our humiliation, our hard labor and the oppression to which we were subjected. ⁸He brought us out of Egypt with a firm hand, manifesting his power with signs and awesome wonders. ⁹And he brought us here to give us this land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰So now I bring and offer the firstfruits of the land which you, Yahweh, have given me.”

¹¹You shall place these before Yahweh, bow before him and worship Yahweh, your God. Afterwards, you and your household shall feast on all the good things Yahweh has given you and your family. The Levite and the foreigner who lives among you shall also feast with you.

14:28

¹²On the third year, the year of tithing, when you have finished separating the tithes from all your harvests and have given them to the Levite, the foreigner, the widow and the orphan, that they may eat within your very city until they are satisfied,¹³ you shall say in the presence of Yahweh,

“I have brought out of my house the

sacred share. I have given it to the Levite, the foreigner, the orphan and the widow according to the commandments that you have given me, without going against any of them or forgetting them. ¹⁴Of that tithe I have not eaten anything in time of mourning, or removed any of it while I was unclean. I have offered nothing to the dead. I have obeyed the voice of Yahweh, my God, and have done as he has commanded me.

1K 8:43

¹⁵From your sanctuary, from on high in the heavens, look down and bless your people Israel, as you bless the land which you have given us just as you had promised to our ancestors, the land flowing with milk and honey.”

¹⁶On this day, Yahweh, your God, commands you to fulfill these norms and these commandments. Obey them now and put them into practice with all your heart and with all your soul.

¹⁷Today Yahweh has declared to you that he will be your God, and so you shall follow his ways, observing his norms, his commandments and his laws, and listening to his voice.

¹⁸Today Yahweh has declared that you will be his very own people even as he had promised you, and you must obey all his commandments. ¹⁹He, for his part, will give you honor, renown and glory, and set you high above all the nations he has made, and you will become a nation consecrated to Yahweh, your God, as he has declared.

Renewal of the Covenant

27 • ¹Moses and the elders of Israel gave this order to the people: “Observe all the commandments that I give you today. ²When you cross the Jordan to go to the land which Yahweh, your God, will give you, set up large stones and plaster them with lime. ³Then you shall write upon them all the words of this Law at the time that you cross over, that you may enter the land which Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, will give you

Jos 8:32

• **27.1** In chapters 27–28 we have the conclusion of “the discourse of Moses” which was found in chapters 5–11.

Notice the ceremony for the renewal of the Covenant (vv. 4–26). It took place in Shechem, in the days of Joshua (Jos 8:32). The whole

people promised to observe the ten commandments expressed here in the form of curses.

We know that this “discourse of Moses” was, in fact, written during the last days of the kingdom of Judah. At that time, it was enough

as he has promised, a land flowing with milk and honey.

⁴When you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal as I command you today, and plaster them with lime.⁵Set up there an altar in honor of Yahweh, built with unhewn stones.⁶Build the altar to Yahweh with uncut stones and on this altar offer burnt offerings to Yahweh, your God.⁷There you shall also sacrifice peace offerings; you shall eat and feast in the presence of Yahweh, your God.⁸Write plainly upon these stones all the words of this Law.”

⁹Then Moses and the priests from the tribe of Levi said to the people of Israel: “Pay attention and listen, Israel. Today you have become the people of Yahweh, your God:¹⁰Listen, therefore, to his voice and put into practice the commandments and the norms that I give you today.”

¹¹On that day, Moses gave this command to the people:¹²When you have crossed the Jordan River, the tribes of Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin shall stand on Mount Gerizim to repeat the blessings over the people,¹³ while those of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali shall stand on Mount Ebal to repeat the curses.

¹⁴The Levites shall declare to all the Israelites with a loud voice:

¹⁵Cursed be the man who makes an idol covered with metal, a thing hateful to Yahweh, the work of the hands of a craftsman, and sets it up in a hidden place! All the people shall answer: Amen!

¹⁶Cursed be he who despises his father or mother! And the people shall respond: Amen!

¹⁷Cursed be he who moves the boundaries of his neighbor's inheritance. All the people shall respond: Amen!

¹⁸Cursed be he who leads the blind astray from the way! All the people shall respond: Amen!

¹⁹Cursed be anyone who does not respect the rights of the foreigner, the orphan and the widow! All the people shall respond: Amen!

²⁰Cursed be he who lies with the wife of his father and dishonors his father's bed! All the people shall respond: Amen!

²¹Cursed be anyone who sins with any kind of animal! The people shall respond: Amen!

²²Cursed be he who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or mother! All the people shall respond: Amen!

²³Cursed be he who lies with his mother-in-law! All the people shall say: Amen!

²⁴Cursed be anyone who treacherously murders a neighbor! All the people shall say: Amen!

²⁵Cursed be anyone who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person! All the people shall say: Amen!

²⁶Cursed be anyone who does not affirm the words of this Law by putting them into practice! And all the people shall say: Amen!

Blessings and curses

28 • ¹Well now, if you obey in truth the voice of Yahweh, your God, practicing and observing all the commandments which I give you today, Yahweh, your God, shall raise you high above all the nations of the earth. ²Then all these

22:18

Lev 18:9

Gal 3:10

23:20;
Lev 26:3

Lk 6:20

Jdg 16:31

21:17

to recall history to see the many misfortunes which had taken place because the people had not lived according to the way the Lord required. The blessings had not been many, nor had they lasted long. On the contrary, the most cruel situations described in this chapter had happened.

If you obey in truth the voice of Yahweh, he shall raise you high above all nations (28:1). The author is convinced that the people could follow all this and thus, find happiness. Yet, the conclusion is negative: in fact, Israel did not listen and would disobey to the extent of being lost. At the time when these pages were written, the prophet Jeremiah was

much more pessimistic in saying that the First Covenant, with its promise of material happiness, was no longer valid. According to him it is as difficult for people to stop sinning as it is to change the color of their skin (Jer 13:23).

Thus, the actual law was very good, but Israel could not observe it until God gave believers a new heart and a new spirit (see Jer 31:31).

• **28.1** We often ask a priest to bless or “baptize” a house, a boat, a piece of machinery, some new equipment. The word “to bless,” that is *to say good things*, combines different meanings:

blessings shall reach you and come upon you for having obeyed the voice of Yahweh, your God:

³Blessed shall you be in the city and in the field. ⁴Blessed shall be the fruit of your body and the fruit of your land, the young of your asses, the offspring of your cattle and sheep.

⁵Blessed shall be your basket and your bowl of dough. ⁶Blessed shall you be when you begin and when you finish.

⁷Yahweh will bring down your enemies who rise against you, and put them at your feet. By one way they shall come out against you but by seven ways they shall flee from you.

⁸Yahweh will order the blessing to be with you in your granaries and in your activities. He shall bless you in the land which Yahweh, your God, gives you.

⁹Yahweh shall make you a holy people, as he has sworn, if you keep his commandments and follow in his ways. ¹⁰Then all the nations of the earth shall see that you are under the protection of Yahweh and they will respect you.

¹¹Yahweh shall fill you with all kinds of good things, increasing the fruit of your womb, the fruit of your livestock and the fruit of your land which Yahweh promised on oath to your ancestors that he would give you.

¹²Yahweh shall open the heavens for you, his rich treasury, to give rain in its season which your fields need, and he shall bless all that you plan to do. You shall lend to many nations but it shall not be necessary for you to borrow anything from them.

¹³Yahweh will set you at the head of the nations and not at the tail; you shall always be on top and never below, if you fulfill the commandments of Yahweh, your God, which I command you today, ¹⁴observing them and putting them into

practice, without turning aside either to the right or to the left to follow and worship other gods.

¹⁵But if you do not obey the voice of Yahweh, your God, and do not take care to practice all his commandments and norms which I command you today, all these curses shall come upon you:

¹⁶Cursed shall you be in the city and in the field. ¹⁷Cursed shall your granary be, and cursed shall your storage houses be. ¹⁸Cursed shall be the fruit of your body and the fruit of your land, the offspring of your cattle and the young of your sheep. ¹⁹Cursed shall you be in everything you do, from beginning to end.

²⁰Yahweh will send misfortune, destruction and fear upon everything you do until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil deeds you have done in forsaking Yahweh. ²¹He shall make pestilence cling to you until you disappear from the land which you are entering today to make it yours.

²²Yahweh will punish you with tuberculosis, fever, inflammation, fiery heat, wheat-smug and mildew that shall pursue you until you die.

²³The heavens above you shall be brass and the earth under you shall be iron. ²⁴Instead of rain, Yahweh shall make ashes and powder fall from heaven until you are destroyed.

²⁵Yahweh shall let you be defeated before your enemies. By one way you shall go out to fight them but by seven ways you shall flee from them. All the nations of the earth shall be horrified to see you.

²⁶Your dead bodies shall serve as food for all the birds of the air, and no one shall chase them away. ²⁷Yahweh shall strike you with the boils and plagues of Egypt, with tumors, scurvy and itch, from which you cannot be healed.

Lev 26:14

9:8;
Rev 16:2

– to give thanks to God from whom every good thing comes;

– to refer to the good that God thinks about this or that new acquisition or sign of progress; to describe all the benefits that can be derived from this house, this sewing machine, etc... for the human and spiritual development of a person or a group;

– to ask the Lord that we may use things according to his will; since it is the only way for

us to obtain the good that may be expected from them.

Yahweh shall make you a holy people... Yahweh shall fill you... Yahweh shall open the heavens for you... Naturally, all of this is realized through the good use we make of things: we do not expect miracles. We do know that wonders can come through the poorest instruments.

²⁸Yahweh shall punish you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind. ²⁹In the same way that the blind grope in darkness, so shall you grope in broad daylight, and you shall not succeed. You shall always be oppressed and robbed, with no one to defend you.

Am 5:11;
Mic 6:15

³⁰You shall be engaged to marry a woman, but another man shall lie with her. You shall build a house but not live in it. You shall plant a vineyard but not eat its grapes. ³¹Your ox shall be slaughtered before you but you shall not eat of it. Before your very eyes, you shall be robbed of your ass, which will never be recovered. Your sheep shall be turned over to your enemies, but no one shall come to defend you.

³²Your sons and daughters shall be handed over to foreign nations and you shall yearn for them continually but you will be unable to take action.

³³A people unknown to you shall eat the fruit of your fields, the fruit of all your toil. And you shall never cease to be exploited and oppressed all your life. ³⁴You shall be driven mad by what you see.

³⁵Yahweh will strike you with the most malignant boils on the knees and legs, from which you cannot be healed, from the sole of your foot to the crown of your head.

³⁶Yahweh will bring you and the king you have chosen to a nation which neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you shall serve other gods made of wood and stone.

³⁷All the nations to which Yahweh will bring you will be astonished, and will make you a byword and the butt of jokes.

Hag 1:6

³⁸You shall sow many seeds in your fields but shall harvest very little because the locusts shall devour them. ³⁹You shall plant and cultivate a vineyard but shall not drink wine or eat grapes because the worms shall devour them.

⁴⁰You shall have olive trees throughout all your territory, but they shall not give you even a drop of oil to anoint yourself, for the olives shall drop off and rot. ⁴¹You shall have sons and daughters but they shall not be yours for they shall be taken into captivity. ⁴²All your trees and all the produce of your land shall be infested with insects.

⁴³The foreigner who lives with you

shall prosper every day at your expense as you become poorer. ⁴⁴He shall lend to you and you shall have to borrow; he shall always be the head and you the tail.

⁴⁵All these curses shall fall upon you, pursue you and oppress you until all of you perish, for you did not listen to the voice of Yahweh, your God, or obey the commandments and the norms which he gave you. ⁴⁶These shall be forever upon you and your descendants as an awesome sign.

⁴⁷For having not served Yahweh, your God, with joy and gladness of heart when you lacked nothing, ⁴⁸you shall serve the enemies Yahweh will send against you, while you go hungry, thirsty, naked and suffer all kinds of misery. They shall put a yoke of iron upon your neck until they have destroyed you all.

⁴⁹Yahweh shall make a nation from afar come against you, as swift as the eagle flies, ⁵⁰a nation whose language you do not understand, a cruel nation that does not show respect to the old or compassion to the young. ⁵¹They shall consume the offspring of your livestock and the produce of your land so that you perish, leaving you with no wheat or wine or oil or the young of your cattle and sheep until they finish you off.

Jer 5:15

⁵²They shall besiege you in all your cities until the highest and most fortified walls in which you placed your trust fall down throughout your land. You shall remain besieged within your cities throughout the land which Yahweh, your God, will give you.

⁵³You shall eat the fruit of your body, the flesh of your sons and daughters which Yahweh has given you, in the siege and anguish to which your enemy will reduce you.

2K 6:28;
Jer 19:9;
Lm 2:20

⁵⁴The most refined among you shall look with distrust at his brother, his wife and his children who are still alive ⁵⁵refusing to share with them the flesh of his children that he is eating, because nothing is left to him during the siege and the anguish to which your enemy shall reduce you in your cities.

⁵⁶The most tender and delicate woman among your people, so delicate and tender that she will not dare go barefoot, shall look with distrust at the husband of her heart, and also at her son and daughter. ⁵⁷She shall hide from them to eat the

placenta from her womb and the children to whom she gave birth, for lack of any other food, when your enemy lays siege to your cities and reduces you to the most extreme misery.

⁵⁸If you do not put into practice all the words of this Law which are written in this book and do not fear that glorious and terrible Name, Yahweh, your God, ⁵⁹he will punish you, you and your descendants, with fearful plagues, severe and lasting plagues, malignant sicknesses and incurable diseases.

⁶⁰He will make all the plagues of Egypt fall upon you, which you were afraid of, and these shall cling to you.

⁶¹Even more, Yahweh shall order all the diseases and plagues which are not recorded in this book of the Law to be with you until you are wiped out. ⁶²For not having obeyed the voice of Yahweh, your God, only a few of you will remain, although before, you were as numerous as the stars of the heaven.

⁶³So it shall happen, that in the same manner that it pleased Yahweh to do you good and to multiply you, it shall also please him to pursue and destroy you. You shall be plucked off the land you are entering to conquer.

⁶⁴Yahweh shall scatter you among all the nations, from one end of the earth to the other, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your ancestors have known.

⁶⁵In those nations, you shall not have peace or rest for the sole of your foot. There Yahweh shall give you a cowardly heart, swollen eyes and anxious soul by day and by night. ⁶⁶Your life shall be before you as a pendant that hangs on a thread, and you shall be in dread night and day. ⁶⁷In the morning you shall say: "Would it were evening!" but in the evening you shall say: "Would it were morning!" because of the fear that makes your heart tremble when you behold what your eyes see.

⁶⁸Yahweh shall bring you back to Egypt for your sin, in spite of what he said to you: "You shall not see it again." There you shall offer yourselves for sale

to your enemies as slaves, but no man will buy you."

⁶⁹These are the words of the Covenant which Yahweh commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the Covenant he made with them at Horeb.

Another conclusion

29 • ¹Moses summoned all the people of Israel and said to them: "You have seen all that Yahweh did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, to his servants and to all his land, ²the great plagues which you yourselves witnessed, the signs and the marvels. ³But to this very day, Yahweh has not given you a heart to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear.

⁴Yahweh made you wander in the desert for forty years, but your clothes did not wear out and neither did your sandals from so much journeying. ⁵You did not have bread to eat, or wine or fermented liquor to drink, so that you might know that I, Yahweh, am your God. ⁶And when we came to this place, Sihon, the king of Heshbon, and Og, the king of Bashan, set out to fight against us, but we defeated them ⁷and seized their lands, which we then gave as an inheritance and a possession to Reuben, Gad and to half of the tribe of Manasseh.

⁸So observe the conditions of this Covenant and put them into practice, that you may succeed in whatever you do. ⁹You are all here today in the presence of Yahweh, your God: your leaders, your elders, your secretaries, all the people of Israel, ¹⁰with your sons and daughters, and with your wives, together with the foreigner who lives in your field, who cuts the firewood or fetches water for you. ¹¹You are here in this place to celebrate a Covenant with Yahweh, your God. ¹²Through this oath he makes you his people and he becomes your God, as he said to you and promised to your ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

¹³And not only with you do I make this covenant and this oath today, ¹⁴but I make it both with those who are here

Is 29:10;
Lk 24:31;
Rom 11:8

Jos 1:7

Jos 9:21

Job 7:4

Hos 8:13

• **29.1** This new discourse was written on the return from the Exile when, determined to be faithful to the Law of the Lord from then on, the Jews began to rebuild their nation.

with you today in the presence of Yahweh and with those who are not here.

¹⁵You know very well how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we crossed through other lands. ¹⁶You have seen the abominations and the loathsome idols they kept: of stone, wood, gold and silver.

¹⁷So may there be no man or woman, family or tribe among you whose heart turns away from Yahweh to go and serve the gods of those nations. May no poisonous and bitter plants sprout among you.

¹⁸If anyone does not heed the words of this sworn Covenant, thinking, "I shall have peace though I do as I please, the just and the sinner perish together,"

¹⁹Yahweh shall not pardon him. His rage and jealousy shall burn against that man, and all the curses written in this book await him. Yahweh will wipe out his name from under the heavens, ²⁰and will separate him from the tribes of Israel to his misfortune, according to all the curses of the Covenant expressed in this book of the Law.

²¹The future generations that will come after you and the foreigners who come from distant countries shall see the plagues of this land and the plagues Yahweh inflicted on it, and they shall say,

²²"A land of salt and sulfur is this one, burned and unsown; not even grass can be seen. So it was with Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, when Yahweh destroyed them and laid them waste in his anger and rage."

²³All the nations shall ask: "Why has Yahweh dealt so with this nation? What does such anger mean?" ²⁴And they shall answer: "This happened because they abandoned the Covenant which Yahweh, the God of their ancestors, made with them when he brought them out of Egypt, ²⁵because they went to serve

other gods and worshiped them, gods that were not theirs and to whom Yahweh had not entrusted them.

²⁶Therefore Yahweh was angry with that land, bringing upon it all the curses written in this book. ²⁷Yahweh has pulled them out of their land with anger, rage and great indignation, and cast them into another land, as you can see today.

²⁸The secret things belong to Yahweh, our God, but what he made known to us belongs to us and our children forever. So we have to put into practice all the provisions of this Law!

30 ¹When these things come upon you according to this blessing and this curse that I have set before you, you will recall them among the nations where Yahweh, your God, has driven you. ²Then you will return to him, you and your children; you will listen to his voice with all your heart and with all your soul, obeying all that I command you today.

³So Yahweh, your God, will bring back the captives of your people, he will have pity on you, and will gather you again from all the nations where Yahweh has scattered you. ⁴Though you are driven out at the other end of the earth, ⁵Yahweh will gather you even from there, and will take you once again to the land which your ancestors possessed so that it may also be yours. He will make you happy and make you more numerous than your ancestors.

My commands are not beyond your reach

• ⁶Yahweh, your God, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants that you may love Yahweh with all your heart and with all your soul, in order that you may live.

• **30.6** *These commands are not beyond your strength* (v. 11): obedience to the will of God is the most natural way for those who are sincere. *My word is very near you so that you can put it into practice* (v. 14); yet, no one will do so until he has received the "circumcision of the heart."

Yahweh will circumcise your heart (v. 6), that is, he will make you pure and holy. See Ezekiel 36:26-27.

Few pages in the Bible emphasize so much and in such a persuasive way, the love of the Lord, a jealous love coming from his desire to make us happy: *Yahweh your God will circumcise your heart so that you may love him and live happily. Yahweh will again be pleased to treat you well.*

It is in your mouth (v. 14). This means: You know it by heart.

Heb
12:15

Rev
22:18

Gen
19:25;
Hos 11:8

Mic 2:12;
Am 9:14;
Jer
31:10;
Jn 11:52

Mt 24:31

10:16;
Jer 4:4

⁷So Yahweh, your God, will inflict all these curses upon your enemies who hate you and persecute you.

⁸You shall again listen to Yahweh and put into practice all his commandments that I give you today.

⁹Yahweh, your God, will make you succeed in everything you do. He will multiply for your good your children, the offspring of your livestock and the fruits of your land. For Yahweh will again be pleased to treat you well, as he did your ancestors. ¹⁰For you shall turn to Yahweh, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and observe his commandments and norms, in a word, everything written in this book of the Law.

¹¹These commandments that I give you today are neither too high nor too far for you. ¹²They are not in heaven that you should say: "Who will go up to heaven to get these commandments that we may hear them and put them into practice." ¹³Neither are they at the other side of the sea for you to say: "Who will cross to the other side and bring them to us, that we may hear them and put them into practice."

¹⁴On the contrary, my word is very near you; it is already in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can put it into practice.

Choose life

• ¹⁵See, I set before you on this day life and good, evil and death. ¹⁶I

command you to love Yahweh, your God and follow his ways. Observe his commandments, his norms and his laws, and you will live and increase, and Yahweh will give you his blessing in the land you are going to possess. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away and does not listen, if you are drawn away and bow before other gods to serve them, ¹⁸I declare on this day that you shall perish. You shall not last in the land you are going to occupy on the other side of the Jordan.

¹⁹Let the heavens and the earth listen, that they may be witnesses against you. I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore, choose life that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰loving Yahweh, listening to his voice, and being one with him. In this is life for you and length of days in the land which Yahweh swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Joshua succeeds Moses

31 • ¹When Moses finished telling all Israel these words, he said, ²"I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I can no longer deal with anything—Remember that Yahweh told me that I shall not cross the Jordan River. ³Now Joshua shall be at your head, as Yahweh has said. He, your God, will go before you to destroy these nations before you, and you will drive them away.

⁴Yahweh shall deal with these cities as he dealt with Sihon and Og, the Amorite

• 15. This text about the *two ways* is very famous, reminding us of the importance of our free decisions and God's respect for human freedom (see also Sir 15:11).

Throughout Deuteronomy faithfulness to God is spoken of together with the remembrance of his promises and rewards here on earth. This should not surprise us. In those distant times the people of God had no understanding of another life nor of the resurrection and the vision of God after death. They only focused on the present life and their na-

tional destiny which, in their view, were more important than the destiny of the individual. For them, God's justice had to be seen on earth in the present.

Later, the Gospel will not promise lands or houses, except in a figurative way (Mk 10:28). Prosperity will not be mentioned except for the final day when God will create the world anew (Acts 3:21 and Rev 21:3).

• **31.1** The last chapters include several memories of Moses.

Job 28;
Mt 11:30;
1Jn 5:3
Rom 10:
6-8

11:26;
Ps 1:1;
Jer 21:8;

Sir 15:16

31:28

Jos 14:11;
1K 3:7

kings, and their land, which he destroyed. ⁵So when he has given these nations over to you, you shall do the same, according to what I have commanded you.

Gen 28:15; Jos 1:5; Heb 13:5
 Gen 28:15; Jos 1:5; Heb 13:5
⁶Be valiant and strong, do not fear or tremble before them for Yahweh, your God, is with you; he will not leave you or abandon you."

Num 27:18
⁷After this, Moses called Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel: "Be valiant and strong, you shall go with this people into the land which Yahweh swore to their ancestors he would give them and you shall give it to them as their possession. ⁸Yahweh shall go before you. He shall be with you; he shall not leave you or abandon you. Do not fear, then, or be discouraged."

Jos 8:32; 2K 23:1
⁹Moses put this Law in writing and entrusted it to the priests, descendants of Levi, who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh, as well as to all the leaders of Israel, ¹⁰giving this order to them: "Every seven years, at the time fixed for the Year of Pardon, on the Feast of the Tents, ¹¹when all Israel assembles to present themselves before Yahweh in the place chosen by him, you shall read this Law in the hearing of all Israel.

Ne 8

¹²Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the foreigner who lives in your cities—that they may listen to it, learn to fear Yahweh and take care to put into practice all the words of this Law. ¹³Your children who do not know it yet shall hear it and learn to fear Yahweh, your God, all the days that they live in the land which you are going to conquer after crossing the Jordan."

¹⁴Yahweh said to Moses: "The day of your death is already near. Call Joshua that the two of you may present yourselves to me in the Tent of Meeting, that I may give him my orders."

So Moses and Joshua presented themselves in the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁵Yahweh appeared to them in the Tent in a column of cloud; the column was at the entrance of the Tent. ¹⁶And Yahweh said to Moses:

33:9

34:15; Ezk 16:15; Jos 24:33; 1S 7:3; Jer 31:31

"Now you are going to rest with your ancestors. Then this people shall rebel and prostitute themselves to strange gods, the gods of the land which they are going to enter. They shall abandon me and break the Covenant I have made with them. ¹⁷On that day, I shall be angry with them, I shall abandon them and hide my face from them. They will be devoured, and many evils and adversities will come upon them so that they will say: "Have not these evils come upon me because my God is not in our midst anymore?" ¹⁸But on that day I shall hide my face from them because of all the evil which they have done in going after other gods.

¹⁹So, write this song and teach it to the children of Israel and have them remember it, for this song shall be my witness against the children of Israel. ²⁰For I shall bring them to the land which I swore to their ancestors, a land flowing with milk and honey, but after they have eaten and are satisfied and have grown fat, they shall turn to other gods and pay homage to them while despising me and breaking my Covenant.

²¹And when these evils and calamities without number come upon them, this song shall bear witness against them, since their descendants will not forget it. I know very well the plans they are already making even before they have entered the land which I promised them." ²²On that day, Moses wrote this song and taught it to the children of Israel. ²³Then Moses told Joshua, son of Nun, "Be valiant and strong, for you shall bring the children of Israel to the land which Yah-

The hymn in chapter 32 is a song to the constant love of the Lord who guides all of Israel's history.

- Yahweh chooses Israel (vv. 7-9).
- He leads Israel through the desert to the Promised Land (vv. 10-14).
- Israel, fully satisfied, shuns God and gives itself idols (vv. 15-18).
- Yahweh becomes Israel's enemy (vv. 22-30).
- The people, humbled and exiled, must rely

on the compassion of Yahweh who, in the end, will liberate them and make them victorious over the wicked (vv. 31-43).

He set up the boundaries for the peoples after the number of the sons of God. The sons of God are the angels responsible for the different nations, whereas Yahweh personally takes care of Israel.

Like an eagle. This is an image of God looking after his people; no one will snatch them away from his protection.

weh promised to them, and I shall be with you.”

²⁴When he finished writing in a book all the words of this Law, ²⁵Moses gave this order to the Levites who carried the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh, ²⁶“Take the book of this Law. Place it by the side of the Ark of the Covenant of Yahweh, your God. There it shall remain as a witness against you, ²⁷because I know how rebellious and stubborn you are. If today, as I live among you, you are rebellious against Yahweh, how much more shall you be after my death?”

Acts 20:29

²⁸Gather together around me all the leaders and secretaries of all the tribes, I am going to say these words in their hearing, and I shall ask heaven and earth to witness against you.

²⁹For I know that after my death, you shall do perverse things and shall stray from the way that I have pointed out to you. And misfortune shall come upon you in the future for doing what is evil in the eyes of Yahweh, provoking his anger with the work of your hands.”

³⁰Then, before the whole assembly of Israel, Moses recited this song until the end.

Song of Moses

32 Listen, O heavens, as I speak; hear, earth, the words of my mouth.

Is 55:10; Ps 72:6

²May my teaching be drenching as the rain, and my words, permeate gently as the dew:

like abundant rain upon the grass, like a gentle shower on the tender crops.

³For I will proclaim the name of the Lord and declare the greatness of our God.

2S 23:3; Is 26:4; Mt 7:24; 16:18

⁴He is the Rock, and perfect are all his works, just are all his ways.

A faithful God he is, upright and just and unerring.

⁵Yet he has been treated perversely by his degenerate children—a deceitful and crooked generation.

Is 1:2; Mt 17:17

⁶Is this how you repay the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? He is your father, your creator, who formed you and set you up.

⁷Recall the days of old, think of the years gone by; your father will teach you about them, your elders will enlighten you.

⁸When the Most High divided humankind and gave the nations their inheritance,

Gen 10; Acts 17:26

he set up boundaries for the peoples after the number of the sons of God.

⁹But the Lord keeps for himself his portion

Jacob, his chosen one.

¹⁰In the wilderness he found them, in a barren, howling wasteland; he shielded them and cared for them as the apple of his eye.

Jer 2:2; Ezk 16:5; Hos 13:5

¹¹Like an eagle watching its nest, hovering over its young, supporting them on its spread wings and carrying them on its pinions,

Is 43:14

¹²the Lord alone led them, without the aid of a foreign god.

Is 43:11

¹³He made them ride on the heights and live on the produce of the earth.

Ps 81:17

He gave them honey to suck from the rock,

olive oil from the hard stony crag,

¹⁴curds from the herd, milk from the flock,

Ps 147

fatted lambs and goats and Bashan bulls,

the finest wheat and the best grape wine.

¹⁵Israel grew up well nourished—you were fat, heavy and overfed.

Hos 13:6

But they abandoned God, their creator; they rejected the rock, their savior.

¹⁶They made him jealous with their strange gods;

they angered him with their abominable deeds.

¹⁷They sacrificed not to him but to the demons, to gods they had not known, to newly arrived gods they feared but which their ancestors never revered.

1CoR 10:20; Rev 9:20

¹⁸They have disowned the Rock who fathered them; they have forgotten the God who gave them birth.

¹⁹The Lord saw this, and in his anger rejected his sons and daughters.

²⁰He said, “I will hide my face from them and see what will become of them.

32.15 Verse 15 summarizes Israel’s rebellious attitude.

Israel grew up well-nourished. The prodigal son, after having received everything from his father, thinks that he will be freer by getting rid of him.

gal son, after having received everything from his father, thinks that he will be freer by getting rid of him.

They are so perverse, so unfaithful!

²¹They made me jealous with their false gods

and angered me with their idols.
I will, therefore, make them envious of a foolish people,

I will provoke them to anger with an empty-headed nation.

²²For my wrath has kindled a fire, burning the world of death to its depths, devouring the earth and its harvests, setting ablaze the foundations of the mountains.

²³I will send them trouble upon trouble

and spend all my arrows upon them;

²⁴I will afflict them with famine, deadly diseases and pestilence.

I will send them wild beasts and venomous snakes.

²⁵Their children will fall by the sword; terror shall reign within,

destroying both young man and virgin, both the nursing child and the old man.

²⁶I said I would scatter them afar and blot out their memory among humankind,

²⁷but I feared the enemy's boasting, lest the adversary misunderstand and say; 'We have triumphed, the Lord has not brought this about.'

²⁸They are a senseless and undiscerning nation.

Had they wisdom, they would have known

²⁹the meaning of this and the end awaiting them.

³⁰For how could one or two men put to flight a thousand or ten thousand, unless their Rock had abandoned them, unless their Lord had given them up?

³¹Even our enemies understand this: their rock indeed is not like our Rock:

³²They are an offshoot of Sodom's vinestock,

an outgrowth from the fields of Gomorrah;

their grapes are poison, their clusters bitter,

³³their wine contains venom from the cruel fangs of deadly vipers.

³⁴I have kept this in reserve and sealed up in my storehouse.

³⁵Vengeance and recompense is mine. Their feet will slip in due time, their day of calamity is at hand,

and swiftly their doom will come.

³⁶The Lord will give justice to his people and have mercy on his servants, when he sees their strength failing and both slave and free disappearing.

³⁷He will say, "Where are their gods, the rock they thought could be their refuge,

³⁸who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their libations?

Let them rise up now and help you, let them give you protection!

³⁹Learn this now—that I alone am He; there is no god besides me.

It is I who give both death and life; it is I who wound and heal as well and out of my hand no one can deliver.

⁴⁰I raise my hand to heaven and swear:

as truly as I live forever,

⁴¹when I sharpen my glittering sword and my hand takes hold of judgment,

I will deal out vengeance upon my foes

and retribution upon those who hate me.

⁴²My arrows will drip with blood, my sword will sink deep into the flesh—blood of the wounded and slain captives,

flesh of beheaded enemy leaders.

⁴³Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge his servants' blood, take vengeance on his adversaries, and perform the rite of expiation for his people and his land.

⁴⁴Moses recited the words of this song in the hearing of the people, and Joshua, son of Nun, was with him.

⁴⁵When Moses had finished reciting these words to all Israel, ⁴⁶he said to them, "Be attentive to all these words which I declare to you today. Repeat them to your children so that they may take care to put all these laws into practice. ⁴⁷It is no slight matter: on this depends your life, and by this, you shall lengthen your days in the land you are going to conquer after crossing the Jordan."

⁴⁸*Yahweh spoke to Moses on that same day and he said: "Go up to the mountains of Abarim in the land of Moab and climb Mount Nebo facing Jericho. From there you shall see the land of Canaan which I give to the children of Israel. ⁵⁰Then you shall die on Mount Nebo*

Is 45:6;
Jer 2:11;
Rom
10:19;
11:11;
1Cor
10:22

Ezk 5:16

2K 18:35

Is 30:17;
50:1

Jdg 2:14

Is 5:2;
Jer 2:21

Rom
12:19;
Heb
10:30

2Mac 7:6;
Ps
135:14

Is 43:11;
Hos 13:4;
Acts 4:12

Rev 10:5

2Mac 7:6;
Rev 6:10;
19:2;
Heb 1:6;
Rom
15:10

Nun
27:12

Nun
20:24

and join your fathers as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and went to join them. ⁵¹Remember that you did not trust me at the waters of Meribah in the desert of Zion, when you did not proclaim me before the Israelites. ⁵²Therefore you shall not enter the Land, but shall only see it from afar.”

Blessings of Moses

33 ¹This is the blessing that Moses gave to the children of Israel before he died. He said:

²“Yahweh has come from Sinai; he rises above the horizon of Seir for his people. He has shone from Mount Paran; he has come to Meribah of Kadesh for them; his midday radiance has reached Ashdot.

³Yahweh loves these tribes and his hand protects his holy ones; they bow before his feet, waiting for his teaching.

⁴⁻⁵He came to Israel as king, and made himself the inheritance of the children of Israel when the leaders assembled and the tribes of Israel gathered together.

⁶Let Reuben live and not die, nor let his men be few.”

⁷This is the blessing for Judah: “Listen, Yahweh, to the voice of Judah, and let him be with his people. His hands will fight for him and will help him against his opponents.”

⁸He said of Levi: “You have given, O Yahweh, your Thummim and Urim to him who loves you, whom you tested at Massah and reproached at Meribah. ⁹He said to his parents ‘I do not know you,’ and disowned his brothers and sisters and children. He has observed your words and kept your Covenant. ¹⁰They teach Jacob your decrees, Israel your Law. They offer you incense and make sacrifices on your altar. ¹¹Bless, O Yahweh, his courage and accept his service. Strike the back of his foes, that his enemies may not rise against him anymore.”

¹²He said of Benjamin: “Beloved of Yahweh, you put your trust in him who protects you, and you dwell in his hills.”

¹³He said of Joseph: “Your land has received the blessings of Yahweh, the dew from heaven and the waters that gush forth from the deep, ¹⁴the sun-ripened fruits and the liberal produce of the months, ¹⁵the best of the ancient mountains and the everlasting hills, the generous land and all that is in it. ¹⁶May the blessing of him who arose in the bush descend upon the head of Joseph, for he is the chosen one among his brothers. ¹⁷Joseph is his firstling bull, glory to him! His horns are those of a wild ox, with which he strikes all the people at the same time. See the multitudes of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh!”

¹⁸He said of Zebulun: “Rejoice, Zebulun, when you journey. Rejoice, Issachar, in your tents. ¹⁹They call the peoples to the sacred mountain for the prescribed sacrifices. They enjoy the riches of the sea and the hidden treasures of the sand.”

²⁰He said of Gad: “Blessed be he who enlarges Gad. Like a lioness, he couches and tears the arm and head. ²¹He chooses the best part, the part reserved for the leader. He has led the people. He has fulfilled the justice of Yahweh and his decisions in favor of Israel.”

²²He said of Dan: “Dan is a lion’s cub that leaps forth from Bashan.”

²³He said of Naphtali: “Naphtali is filled with favors, filled with the blessing of Yahweh. May your land reach to the south and to the sea!”

²⁴He said of Asher: “May Asher be blessed among the sons. May he be preferred to his brothers and let him put his feet in oil. ²⁵May his fastening bars be iron and bronze. May you be strong as long as you live.

²⁶There is none like our God, O Israel, who walks above the heavens, riding above the clouds, and comes to help you in his zeal.

²⁷The eternal God is a refuge; from eternity he frees you with his arm. He drives your enemy away before you and says to you: ‘Destroy him.’

²⁸Israel dwells in safety. The fountain of Jacob flows in the land of wheat and wine, and dew comes from heaven.

Gen 49:22

3:1

Ps 92:11

Num 20:13

Gen 49

Ps 68:18; Jdg 5:4; Heb 3:3

17:1

32:25

15:11; Ps 18:10

Jer 23:6; Is 8:6

• **33.1** Moses’ blessings resemble Jacob’s in Genesis 49. We have here a poetic announcement of the future destiny of the twelve

tribes, but probably written much later, perhaps a short time before the captivity.

²⁹Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by Yahweh? He is the shield that protects you, the sword that gives you victory! Your enemies shall flee from you, but you, you are outstanding in everything.”

Moses' death

3:27;
Num 22:1

34 ¹From the barren plain of Moab, Moses went up to Mount Nebo, to the summit of Pisgah, opposite Jericho. And Yahweh showed him all the Land: from Gilead to Dan, ²the whole of Naphtali, the land of Ephraim, and of Manasseh, the whole land of Judah, as far as the Western Sea, ³the Negeb, the Plains, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. ⁴And Yahweh said to him: “This is the land about which I swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, promising it to their descendants. I have let you see it with your own eyes, but you shall not enter it.”

⁵Moses, the servant of God, died

there in the land of Moab, according to the will of Yahweh. ⁶They buried him in the valley in the land of Moab opposite Beth-peor; but to this very day, no one knows where his tomb is.

⁷Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died. He did not lose his vigor and his eyes still saw clearly. ⁸The children of Israel mourned for him in the plains of Moab for thirty days. ⁹But Joshua, son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands upon him. The children of Israel obeyed him and did as Yahweh had commanded Moses.

¹⁰No prophet like Moses has appeared again. Yahweh conversed with him face to face. ¹¹What signs and wonders he worked in Egypt against Pharaoh, against his people and all his land! ¹²What a powerful hand was his that worked these terrible things in the sight of all Israel!

Jdt 1:9

Ps 92:15

2K 2:15;
Is 11:2;
Num
27:18

33:11;
Jn 1:17;
1Cor
13:13

• **34.1** The book concludes with the death of Moses. There is something grandiose in this solitary end of the leader and founder of Israel. God had separated him from his people, when he shared his secrets with him and gave him his own authority. Moses alone had to bear the responsibility and the burden of Israel before God, to the point of becoming identified with Israel.

No prophet like Moses has appeared again (v. 10). All our faith is affirmed in the revelation of the only God to Moses and in the election of Israel under his leadership. However,

this does not mean that revelation ceased. Israel knows that *no prophet has appeared* though they continue to expect a *prophet like him* (18:18). This means that faith is not locked in the faithfulness to a book, even if such a book is the Old Testament. God's people continued to discover the ways of God and the contemporaries of Jesus had to see in him the expected "Prophet." As for us, our faith is also rooted in the faith of the Church and, with the Church, we discover everyday the teaching of the Spirit.

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