

It is time for them to enter the Promised Land – the land promised to Abraham’s descendants many centuries ago. The vast camp of Israelites is pitched on the plains of Moab, across the Jordan River from Jericho. They will enter the land under the leadership of Joshua instead of me. I’ve already transferred my leadership over to him, and the Israelites have agreed to follow him.

I am one hundred and twenty years-old, but my eyesight is still excellent, and I have as much energy as I did as a young man. However, I won’t be alive much longer.

I know it is nearing time for me to die, because God will not let me enter the Promised Land. I was a powerful prophet who tried very hard to be God’s chosen leader. But...one time...I dishonored God, in front of all of his people. I *sinned* by dishonoring God in front of all the people. God told me how to miraculously bring forth water from a rock, but I chose not to follow his instructions, not *exactly*.

Prideful disobedience is a high cost to pay. I will get to see the Promised Land from a mountain, but I will not get to enter it. I agree with God’s punishment completely. My people need every bit of encouragement to follow God’s laws exactly.

My very last job is to remind the Israelites of everything that has happened to them for the last forty-plus years, and to encourage them to keep all of the laws given to them by God. My last words to God’s people, my people, are recorded in a book of the Bible that you call *Deuteronomy*.

The name *Deuteronomy* derives from Greek, it means Second Law. It is the second giving of the law to the Israelites to help prepare them to enter the Promised Land. In this book, I repeat much of the history of the last forty years. It will remind you very much of the books of *Exodus*, *Leviticus* and *Numbers*.

I start my speech to the people by reminding them that they had chosen the leaders to help me lead them and judge them. That model worked well.

I tell them how twelve spies were chosen to go into Canaan to appraise the conditions there, and how they refused to follow God and conquer the country. The penalty for their rebellion was to wander for forty years in the wilderness until all of the fighting men were dead. All except Caleb and Joshua, the only spies who wanted to obey God and conquer the land.

I remind them how God was faithful to provide for them for forty years so they lacked nothing. How after the forty years, God led them to the Plains of Moab, after defeating the kings of Bashan and Heshbon. How we divided those lands on the east side of Jordan between the tribes of Gad, Reuben and Manasseh.

Following that history reminder, I strongly encourage the people to follow God's laws *exactly*. Don't add anything to them, or take anything away. Don't forget them through the generations, follow them completely.

More than anything, I command that they not worship idols. God is the only true God. Worship him only, so that you and your children will live long in the land. The sin of idol worship will surely bring them death and destruction. It will cause them to lose the Promised Land, lose the blessing of God, God will take the Promised Land away from them. I know that this generation has seen the greatness of God with their own eyes, but worry that future generations will not be convinced of God's greatness.

I remind the people of the laws given by God at Sinai, starting with the Ten Commandments. I give them a command that will come to be known as the Shema, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

I follow that commandment with one that will come to be known as The Greatest Commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." These commands are supposed to be upon their hearts. They are to be impressed on their children by talking about them all the time, and by using symbols as reminders.

I remind them that God chose them out of all people to be his treasured possession because he loves them and because he wants to keep his promise to Abraham and their forefathers.

Over and over, I say to them...be careful to obey God...follow every commandment, *exactly*...that you may have life. I tell them of the blessings that follow obedience, and the consequences that follow disobedience.

Over and over, I say to them...love the Lord...honor the Lord...follow him with your heart and mind.

Over and over, I say to them...follow the Lord only...never, never, never worship foreign gods and idols. I warn them that false prophets are so dangerous that they must be put to death.

I make it clear to them that the Lord is not giving them the Promised Land because of their righteousness. In fact, they are receiving the Land despite their many failings, such as the making of the golden calf and their recurring grumbling and complaining.

I remind them of the many laws, rituals, offerings, and feasts mandated by God, including: tithes, the Jubilee, Passover, and so much more.

I do slip in some prophecies. I am a prophet you know! I tell them that someday they will want a king. I know this sounds silly because nothing like it is on their minds, but it won't be long before having a king seems like a good idea to them. When they choose a king, I tell them to appoint the king that God chooses, and that he must be an Israelite.

In what must be a surprise to them, I tell them that their kings must not acquire much gold, have many wives, or have many horses, most especially horses that come from Egypt. I also say that the king is to write himself a copy of the law and follow it constantly, so that his descendants will rule over Israel a long time.¹

It won't be too long before King Solomon violates every one of those rules, and not long before the Israelites won't even be able to find a copy of the law.

¹ Deut. 17:14-20

Consequently, it won't be too long before the Israelites lose most of their land and the descendants of David no longer rule.

I also prophesy that God will raise up a prophet like me. This is an easy one to make, because God specifically told me he would.² That is why many people of Jesus' time will wonder if Jesus was that prophet.

I continue to remind them of various laws and regulations, and of rewards and consequences and punishments based on their behavior.

I repeat the covenant between God and Israel. I remind them that it is well within their ability to follow the covenant and all of its regulations. I remind them once again of the rewards and blessings that will follow their obedience.

When I finish speaking, I appoint Joshua as my successor. I write down all of the law and charge the leaders of Israel to follow the laws and make sure their children do, too. I tell them to place a copy of the law by the Ark of the Covenant and keep it there.

I want to think that my words will have a long-term effect on my people, but God dashes that hope quickly enough. He tells me that the people will soon rebel against God and start worshiping foreign gods. He has me teach the people a song that will testify against them when they wonder why they are not receiving God's blessings any longer.

I give the people a very lengthy blessing. One last time, I tell them that the laws are not idle words, but they are their *life*.

Life! God's words are life! I know you live in a time when many people don't regard the Bible as being relevant or true. But, I'm telling you the same thing. God's words are life!

I'm ready to go. I've served God with all my heart, but I truly am ready to be done with these hard-hearted rebellious Hebrews. They are my brothers and sisters, and I love them dearly. But I have had enough. My life is at an end.

² Deut. 18:15-19

This afternoon, I will climb Mount Nebo. I have the energy of a much younger man. I still have great eyesight. A good thing, too. God is going to show me the entire promised land from that mountain. I will see the land all the way west to the Mediterranean Sea, north to Dan, and south to the Negev. I will look down on the Dead Sea and Jericho.

Come tot hink o fit, I've worked for eitghty years for my people to receive the Promised Land and now they are going to take posession of it. It couldn't get any better.

Yes! I've gotten to know the Lord face to face over the years. The only prophet to do so. Then, in a place nobody will ever know, God himself will bury me.