**The Book of Deuteronomy—Study Guide (Chapters 16-21)**

The Bible always takes precedence in our study of God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). This guide is just a “help” and is compiled from Ambassador College class notes, commentaries and personal study.

“Also it shall be, when he [the king] sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes” (Deuteronomy 17:18-19).

**Chapter 16: The Holy Days and Holy Day Offerings, and how judges were to judge.**

1-2: We are to observe the month of Abib as the only month in which the Passover is to be kept. Israel left Egypt by night (Exodus 12:42 and Numbers 33:3).

3-4: No leavened bread was to be eaten with the Passover, and no leaven was to be found among Israel for the seven days of Unleavened Bread. This festival was to help Israel remember their coming out of Egypt.

5-7: The Passover was not to be sacrificed within their gates, but at the place God chose. It should be done at twilight, which is between the two evenings, at the beginning of the 14th day (Leviticus 23:5).

8: After the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread start on the 15th day (Leviticus 23:6-8). On the seventh day, there was to be a holy convocation as well.

9-10: The first Sunday after the Passover was the starting day to count toward Pentecost or the Feast of Weeks (Leviticus 23:15-16, Numbers 28:26). A freewill offering was to be presented on Pentecost.

11-12: The entire household was to rejoice before God in the place where He chose to place His name (Shiloh was the first place chosen in the Promised Land—Joshua 18:1). Israel was to remember that they were slaves in Egypt, and needed to be careful to observe all these statutes.

13-15: The Feast of Tabernacles is to last seven days and once again the entire family is to rejoice in the place where God places His name. God will bless us in all the work of our hands, so we shall truly rejoice.

16-17: Three times—“foot pilgrimages” in a year all the males are to appear before God in the place He chooses. An offering is to be given, and none are to appear before Him empty. Everyone is to give as he is able according to the blessings God has provided.

18-20: Judges and officers were to be appointed within their cities. They were to judge with just judgment by not taking bribes which blind the eyes of the wise. This shows the power bribes have even on the righteous. Neither were they to show partiality. They were to be just and honest in their dealings (Proverbs 21:2-3, 15-16).

21-22: Idols and sacred pillars were not to be set up, especially near God’s altar. Israel did this often. One example was during the time of Gideon (Judges 6:23-26). Another example is in Ezekiel 8:12-16.

**Chapter 17: The administration and the duties of kings.**

1: Israel was not to sacrifice any animal with a blemish as it would be an abomination to God. Notice Malachi 1:7-8, 14. The sacrifices pointed to Christ who was sinless and without blemish (1Peter 1:19).

2-5: If a man or woman had gone out and served other gods, or worshipped the sun, moon or stars, then after diligent inquiry, if it was found to be true, that person was to be stoned to death in the gates. That was to be done in public, and it would demonstrate that the idol had no power to save its worshipper.

6-7: Two or three witnesses were necessary before anyone was condemned to death, and those witnesses would then be the first to cast stones against the culprit. This evil of idolatry was to be removed from Israel.

8: Each city was to have judges (Chapter 16:18). If a matter arose that was too difficult, they were to take it to the priests and the judges in the place God chose, who would then pronounce the sentence of judgment. Degrees of bloodshed referred to the intent of a murder whether it was intentional or manslaughter.

9-11: Judgments also included property settlements. The decision by the priest and judge would be final. All parties were to do what was decided. Those involved were not turn to the right or to the left of the decision.

12-13: The person who acted presumptuously and didn’t heed the priest or the judge, then that man was to die and all the people were to fear, so that they would no longer act in rebellion or in disobedience.

14-15: A prophecy that Israel would ask for a king. This happened in 1 Samuel 8:4-5, 10:19. So God tells them that their king shall be one that He will chose from among Israel. A king of Israel shall not be a foreigner.

16-17: Kings were not to not multiply horses, or rely on the military. He was not to cause the people to return to Egypt. He was not to multiply wives for himself who would turn him from God. Nor was he to multiply gold or silver for himself which would lead to greed. But, this is what Solomon had done (1 Kings 10:25-29; 11:1-3).

18-20: A king needed to have his own copy of this book. He was to read it every day so that he would learn to fear God and be careful to obey so that his heart would not be lifted up with pride and arrogance. The king was not above the law. This daily reading was to prevent him from turning aside from the commands of God.

**Chapter 18: About the Levites and the prophecy of the Prophet (Jesus Christ) who would come.**

1-2: The Levites were not to have an inheritance in Israel. They were to eat of the offerings which were presented to God. God is their inheritance (Numbers 18:24).

3-5: Various cuts of meat (shoulder, cheeks, and stomach), firstfruits, firstlings and the first of the fleece were to be given to the priests. God had chosen Levi and his sons to stand and minister in the name of the Lord forever.

6-8: If a Levite comes from any of the cities to the place where God chooses, then he may participate in the work and have equal portions of the food.

9-12: Israel was not to learn to follow the abominations of the surrounding nations. They were especially to avoid child sacrifice, witchcraft and sorcery (Leviticus 18:3, 21; 19:26, 31). Divination included searching out omens from the cries of animals or from looking at sticks/stones thrown down, or by looking at the stars.

13-14: We are to be blameless—wholehearted before God. All the nations that were to be dispossessed by Israel were involved in these abominations and they listened to the soothsayers. Notice Isaiah 8:19-20.

15-16: Proof that Moses was a prophet. However, God was going to raise up another Prophet who would speak all the words directly from God. Him shall they hear—this refers to Christ. Notice Acts 3:20-23, 26; 7:37.

17-19: The words of the Prophet (Jesus Christ) will be the words of God, and those words will be heard and obedience will be required by those who hear. Notice John 4:25, 8:28; Hebrews 1:1-2.

20: But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in God’s name which God has not commanded, or speaks in the name of another god, that prophet shall die.

21-22: God gives the key in how to detect false prophets. If the thing does not come to pass that was predicted in the name of the Lord; that prophet has spoken presumptuously and therefore don’t be afraid of him or of convicting him for his sin.

**Chapter 19: Cities of refuge and the laws regarding manslaughter.**

1-3: Once Israel came into the land they were to separate three cities in which a manslayer could flee. (Three cities were already established on the east side of the Jordan River). The territory was to be divided into three parts and roads were to be built throughout the land for easy access (Joshua 20:7-9 lists all six cities).

4-5: The criterion for a manslayer was that he must not have hated his neighbor in the past, nor must the death have been intentional. In cases like this he may live, but he had to flee to a city of refuge. (It is interesting to note that an ax was used—so there had to have been facilities to make ax heads of iron at that time).

6: The cities of refuge were to be easily accessible so that the slayer could flee there before the avenger came to kill him--which was allowed in Israel (Numbers 35:15-29).

7-10: Three cities were to be reserved on the west side of the Jordan, and later if Israel obeyed God and was blessed with more territory, then they were to choose another three cities. (Genesis 15:18-19 discusses a lot more land that Israel could eventually inherit).This manslayer law made sure no more innocent blood was shed.

11-13: The laws regarding a man who truly was a murderer. If he fled to one of these cities, then the elders of his city would extradite him and turn him over to the avenger. Eyes should not pity a murderer. This penalty of death for a murderer was to be a deterrent for that sin.

14: It would be against the law to later remove your neighbor’s landmark which had been determined by those who first came into the land and originally set up the mark.

15: One witness was not enough to convict a person of any sin or iniquity. Two or three witnesses were required so that the matter would then be established.

16-19: If a false witness presented testimony, then both individuals would be brought before the priests and judges. After careful inquiry, the false witness would receive the same punishment he had hoped for the other.

20-21: Those who remain are to hear and fear and not again commit such evil. Eye shall not pity, and life shall be for life, tooth for tooth, and eye for eye, which refers to appropriate penalties and or compensation that fits the crime. Notice Exodus 21:18-19, 22-27. (In Matthew 5:38-39, Jesus said we are not to have this attitude).

**Chapter 20: Principles concerning warfare.**

1: These are the instructions to Israel when they were about to battle those nations mightier than themselves.

First, they were not to fear the multitudes nor the armament, for God would be with Israel.

2-4: The priests were then to reinforce the fact that God would be with them and they were not to fear or tremble for God would fight against their enemies.

5-7: The officers then gave three reasons for men to leave the battlefield: those who had just built a home, those who had just planted a vineyard, and those who had just been engaged to get married. Private ownership of homes and vineyards, and marital responsibilities were important and respected.

8-9: Then the officers were also to allow those who were fearful to leave lest their fear affect the others. Notice Judges 7:2-3. This principle is also found in 1 Samuel 30:8-10; 21-25, when the weary stayed behind. After the officers spoke, captains were then chosen to lead the army into battle.

10-11: When approaching a city for battle, they were first to make a peace offer. If the city agreed to a peace treaty, then the people were to be spared and they were to come under tribute and servitude to Israel.

12-14: If the city refused a peace treaty, then the city was to be taken and all the males were to be killed. The women and little children and livestock were to be spared. They were to plunder the city of its wealth.

15-16: These instructions were for those cities that were outside of the Promised Land. All the cities within the Promised Land were to be destroyed and nothing in them was to be left alive.

17-18: The list of the nations that were to be destroyed. The reason for their destruction was that they would have taught Israel about their gods and hereby cause Israel to sin. God used Israel, who chose to fight, to remove the nations in the Promised Land (Acts 7:45).

19-20: When building siege works against a city, Israel was not to cut down trees that produced food. They were only to use trees that did not produce fruit. The trees of the field which bore fruit were for man’s food.

**Chapter 21: Laws regarding unsolved murders, marriages, and rebellious sons.**

1-4: The closest town to the murdered man would be responsible for sacrificing a heifer which had not been yoked. Its neck was to be broken in a valley which had neither been plowed nor sown and had flowing water.

5-7: The Levites, by whom every controversy and every assault was to be resolved, were to give a blessing. The elders were to wash their hands over the dead heifer and proclaim that they didn’t see or know of the crime.

8-9: A request that the Lord would provide forgiveness (which Christ did for all of us). So that the guilt of innocent blood would be removed, Israel was to follow these instructions and do what was right in God’s sight.

10-14: Laws regarding marriage to a captive woman. She shall be able to mourn her parents for a month. If she doesn’t please the husband, she may be set free--not sold, but freed.

15-17: If a man has two wives, and the unloved wife has the firstborn son, the man shall not give preference to the firstborn of the loved wife. His true firstborn is to receive preeminence and is to receive a double portion. (The original intent for marriage was one husband and one wife. Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31-33).

18-21: A rebellious son who was a drunkard and didn’t heed his parents was to be brought to the elders of the city. The men of the city were to stone him with stones so that the evil would be removed.

22-23: A person who is hanged was to be buried before nightfall. Oftentimes the person who was stoned would be hanged as a public reminder that the sin was not to be tolerated. “He who is hanged is accursed of God.” This is quoted about Christ in Galatians 3:13.