



## Reading of the book of Deuteronomy

### *DID YOU KNOW?*

1. The book of Deuteronomy opens with a summary of Israel's experiences in the desert; then it develops some of the fundamental laws mentioned in the previous books, before concluding with a series of prophecies following the story of the chosen people to their final return to Palestine.
2. Deuteronomy is mainly devoted to Moses' speeches delivered shortly before his death in the plains of Moab facing Palestine. The New Testament refers to Deuteronomy more than 80 times. No book of the Old Testament has ever been quoted so much by Christ. The concepts of God's love and man's obedience predominate.
3. Moses adopted the strategy of establishing leadership groups to better manage the Israelites who had grown in number. The latter was responsible for distributing justice equitably. These leaders were subdivided into four (4) groups (De. 1: 15-16): commanders of thousands - commanders of hundreds – commanders of fifties – commanders of tens.
4. God forbade the people of Israel to attack the inhabitants of Seir because they were the descendants of Esau (De. 2: 4-5) as well as the Ammonites because they were the descendants of Lot, the nephew of Abraham (De. 2: 9, 19).
5. God did not allow Moses to enter the Promised Land due to the incident in Numbers 20. In his farewell address, Moses could not refrain from expressing his resentment towards the Israelites for their responsibility in his punishment (De. 3:26; 4:21).
6. Everyone who listened to Moses when he reviewed the history of the Israelites grew up in the wilderness except Joshua, Caleb, and Moses' family. He bitterly recalled the series of acts of rebellion that resulted in the punishment that lasted forty years in this great and dreadful desert (De. 1:19)
7. There was a formal prohibition on the Israelites from making any representation, human or animal, of God (De. 4: 15-16 and 23), as had been customary among other neighboring peoples.
8. One of the main reasons for the day of rest (Sabbath) is because the people were in bondage in Egypt, and as slaves, they did not have a day of rest (De. 5:15).
9. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is perhaps the most cited in the whole Bible. Called "Shema," they are recited every morning and evening by Orthodox Jews and have been for centuries. They vividly emphasize the importance of God's laws to the Israelites.

10. Deuteronomy clearly shows that it was out of sheer grace that God chose the Israelites. He did not choose them for their power, their goodness (De. 9: 5) much less for their faithfulness (De. 9: 24). Rather, he chose them out of love, and had made irrevocable promises to their ancestors (De. 9: 5). Indeed, Deuteronomy promises the Promised Land to the Israelites 69 times.
11. Each year, the Israelites presented the tithe of their harvest as an offering to God. Every three years, this tithe was distributed to the needy. God accepted these gifts offered to the poor as if he received them himself. In a parable, Jesus expressed this practice in a very beautiful way (Mt. 25: 31-46).
12. The sacrifice of children was a common practice in the Canaanite religion (De. 12:31; 18:10). God had already declared that the Israelites' invasion of the Canaanites would constitute punishment for these abominable practices (De. 9: 4).
13. Death by stoning was reserved for false prophets and anyone who would invite the people to idolatry (De. 12: 5-12).
14. The people could not offer burnt offerings to God anywhere. He was to do so in the specific place chosen by God (De. 12: 13-14).
15. The 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy contains some of the laws specifically enacted to defend the poor (ref. De. 15: 9). One of these laws called gleaning is still practiced today in a modern form. For example, some faith-based organizations in the United States sign contracts with farmers to collect abandoned products to feed the poor
16. Any firstborn of animals that had any physical defect could not be offered as a sacrifice to the Lord (De. 15: 20-12).
17. The bread of affliction which the people ate during the Passover was the unleavened bread which they ate as they rushed out of Egypt (De. 16: 3).
18. There are three major important feasts that the Israelites were to observe:
  - The feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) (De. 16: 1-8).
  - The Feast of Seven weeks (the Harvest Festival) (De. 16: 9).
  - The Feast of the Tabernacle (De. 16: 13-15).
19. God formally prohibited judges and officials from receiving gifts so that their judgment would not be influenced or distorted (De. 16: 18-20).
20. In the case of a person accused of idolatry, the search should follow the following process:
  - We must seek to establish a fact (De. 17: 4).
  - It takes more than one witness (De. 17: 5)
  - If the fact proves that this person is guilty, he should be stoned (De. 17: 7).

21. If there was a case that went beyond a judge, it had to be brought before a high council made up of priests, Levites, and judges to process and give the verdict (De. 17: 8-10).
22. If the people were to go to war, the priest had to reassure the people to rely on God and at the same time prohibit certain soldiers from staying at home at the risk of dying on the battlefield for reasons mentioned in Deuteronomy 20: 5 - 8.
23. The one who was hanged on a tree for a committed crime was to be buried the same day because it was a curse to die of such a death (De. 21: 22-23).
24. God forbade the people of Israel to fight against the Ammonites and the Moabites (De. 2: 4, 17-19). However, the latter could never enter the assembly of Israel because they were hostile to these people when they left Egypt (De. 23: 3-4).
25. An Israelite had to protect a slave who came to take refuge with him. He was neither to return it to his master nor to oppress him himself (De. 23: 15-16).
26. A newly married man could not participate in the war for a year because he had to make his wife happy (De. 24: 5).
27. God forbade employers to exploit poor workers. This was considered a sin (De. 24: 14-15).
28. God forbade the Israelites to violate the rights of foreigners and orphans (De. 24:17, 27, 19). On the contrary, they should treat them with fairness and dignity. The importance God placed on foreigners, orphans, and widows was manifested in the fact that he commanded the Israelites to tithe them in the third year, called the year of tithing (De. 26: 12-14).
29. Moses warned the Israelites that if they disobey God's law, they would be torn from their land and scattered throughout the world (De. 28:20, 37). At least three times in history, this type of dispersal of Jews (called the Diaspora) has occurred on a very large scale. Assyria, Babylon, and finally Rome invaded the land of the Jews and dispersed them to very distant countries.