

## LESSON TWENTY-THREE 31:1—32:47

### IV. MOSES' LAST DAYS

31:1—34:12

#### A. CHARGE TO JOSHUA (31:1-23)

##### 1. JOSHUA PRESENTED TO THE PEOPLE (31:1-8)

And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. 2 And he said unto them, I am a hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: and Jehovah hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. 3 Jehovah thy God, he will go over before thee; he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt dispossess them: *and* Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as Jehovah hath spoken. 4 And Jehovah will do unto them as he did to Sihon and to Og, the kings of the Amorites, and unto their land; whom he destroyed. 5 And Jehovah will deliver them up before you, and ye shall do unto them according unto all the commandment which I have commanded you. 6 Be strong and of good courage, fear not, nor be affrighted at them: for Jehovah thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. 7 And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of good courage: for thou shalt go with this people into the land which Jehovah hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. 8 And Jehovah, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

#### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 31:1-8

533. Moses cannot go over Jordan to possess the land, but someone can and will. Who was it? (We are not thinking of Joshua.)
534. For what reason should Israel and Joshua "be strong and of good courage"?
535. Beyond the bare word of Moses, how would Israel *know* Jehovah was with them?
536. What one quality has Moses exemplified for our emulation?

#### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 31:1-8

And Moses went on speaking these words to all Israel.

2 And he said to them, I am 120 years old this day; I can no more go out and come in; and the Lord has said to me, You shall not go over this Jordan.

3 The Lord your God will Himself go over before you, and He will destroy these nations from before you, and you shall dispossess them; and Joshua shall go over before you, as the Lord has said.

4 And the Lord will do to them as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them.

5 And the Lord will give them over to you, and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you.

6 Be strong, courageous and firm, fear not, nor be in terror before them; for it is the Lord your God Who goes with you; He will not fail you or forsake you.

7 And Moses called to Joshua, and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong, courageous and firm; for you shall go with this people into the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them; and you shall cause them to possess it.

8 It is the Lord Who goes before you; He will [march] with you; He will not fail you or let you go, or forsake you; [let there be no cowardice or flinching, but] fear not, neither become broken [in spirit] (depressed, dismayed and unnerved with alarm).

### COMMENT 31:1-8

One cannot help but be struck with the solemnity of these words, and those to follow. They remind us of Paul's touching farewell to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:18 ff.) Both these esteemed and beloved servants realized the seriousness of their position and that of the persons they were addressing. Thus the urgent, sincere, solemn heart-to-heart appeal. The application Mackintosh makes is good: "All who really enter into the situation and destiny of the people of God in a world like this *must* be serious. The true sense of things, the apprehension of them in the divine presence, must, of necessity, impart a holy gravity to the character, and a special pungency and power to the testimony."

I AM A HUNDRED AND TWENTY YEARS OLD THIS DAY (v. 2)—Not that the very day of this announcement was necessarily his "birthday." "This day" usually means "now," "at this time" in Deuteronomy, as we just saw in 30:15, 18, 19.

THOU SHALT NOT GO OVER (v. 2)—See 1:37, 38, note, and 32:51, 52.

JOSHUA, HE SHALL GO BEFORE THEE (v. 3)—This man was no newcomer to the role of a leader in Israel. Forty years before, as military leader and captain of Israel's hosts, he had defeated Amelek

(Ex. 17:8-14). As Moses' minister and attendant he accompanied him unto Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:13; 32:17). He also accompanied Moses during those times in which God spoke to him "face to face," apparently acting as his special minister in "the tent of meeting" (Ex. 33:11) before the tabernacle was erected. He and Caleb were the only ones among the twelve spies sent into Canaan who brought back an encouraging report (Num. 14:6-10, Deut. 1:35-38), and as a result were the only Israelites *among those numbered* who were not recipients of God's curse (Num. 14:28-34, 26:65). Thus he was "a man in whom is the Spirit." He and Eleazer the priest were instructed to oversee the proper division of the land, Num. 34:17, and he had just finished leading Israel in victorious battles on the east-side, Deut. 3:21.

Concerning the present charge, see also Num. 27:15-23. His further history is found in the book bearing his name, and one cannot but stand in awe and admiration of this "war horse" for God, whose farewell to Israel was, ". . . choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Jehovah" (Josh. 24:15). And to the credit of this man's character, the sacred historian could write as his epitaph, "And Israel served Jehovah all the days of Joshua . . ." (Josh. 24:31).

Joshua is now about 78, as he died 32 years later at age 110 (Josh. 24:29).

AS HE DID TO SIHON AND OG (v. 4)—Recorded in 2:26—3:11.

BE STRONG AND OF GOOD COURAGE, etc. (v. 6)—A verse that provides encouragement and challenge to every soul in the Lord's "armed forces." Here (as in 1:29, 30, etc.) all Israel is being addressed. But such words of encouragement are elsewhere given to Joshua alone—v. 7, 23, 3:21, 22, Josh. 1:5-9. His was a very grave and sobering responsibility—especially that of exterminating the Canaanite tribes and settling Israel in their divinely given land. The sequel in the book of Joshua reveals that the leadership of Israel was in able hands.

HE IT IS THAT DOTTH GO WITH THEE; HE WILL NOT FAIL THEE, NOR FORSAKE THEE (v. 6, Josh. 1:5)—What man who is truly fighting the Lord's battles is not heartened and emboldened with these words? *Because* of God's nearness and presence, we need not fear his (our) enemies. And the Hebrew writers rightly used the same principle to teach us we ought to be "free from the love of money; content with

such things as ye have" (See Heb. 13:5). Who is not helped and spurred on in the Lord's service by the assurance that Christ himself is *near*, with his strength (Matt. 18:20, 28:20, Acts 18:9, 10).

## 2. LAW DELIVERED TO THE PRIESTS; COMMANDED TO BE READ BEFORE ALL ISREAL EVERY SEVEN YEARS (31:9-13)

And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, that bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, and unto all the elders of Israel. 10 And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of *every* seven years, in the set time of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, 11 when all Israel is come to appear before Jehovah thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. 12 Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones, and thy sojourner that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear Jehovah your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; 13 and that their children, who have not known, may hear, and learn to fear Jehovah your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over the Jordan to possess it.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 31:9-13

537. This is the first reference to Moses as the one who "wrote" this book. Read Num. 33:2; Ex. 24:4 for comparative references.
538. The priests had a two-fold responsibility to the law of Jehovah; they were not only to protect it, but to \_\_\_\_\_.
539. How often was this command of Moses fulfilled?
540. There is strong prophetic reference in this passage. To what future place is reference made?
541. For what purpose is the law of Jehovah to be read?

### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 31:9-13

9 And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it to the Levitical priests, who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel.

10 And Moses commanded them, At the end of every seven years, at the set time of the year of release [of debtors from their debts], at the feast of booths,

11 When all Israel comes to appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses [for His sanctuary], you shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing.

12 Assemble the people, men, women, and children, and the stranger and the sojourner within your towns, that they may hear and learn (reverently) to fear the Lord your God, and be watchful to do all the words of this law,

13 And that their children, who have not known it, may hear, and learn (reverently) to fear the Lord your God, as long as you live in the land which you go over Jordan to possess.

### COMMENT 31:9-13

AND MOSES WROTE THIS LAW (v. 9)—The first time Moses' *writing* is mentioned in this book. See also vv. 22, 24. But Moses had written much before this time (Ex. 24:4, Num. 33:2, etc.) See the Introduction, III, (The Writer), and the special works by Rotherham and McGarvey included in this volume.

AND DELIVERED IT UNTO THE PRIESTS . . . AND UNTO ALL THE ELDERS (v. 9)—A formal presentation, committing the keeping of the law into their hands. It was put by the side of the ark (v. 25), *inside* of which the tables of stone were kept. See 10:1-5, Heb. 9:1-5.

AT THE END OF EVERY SEVEN YEARS (v. 10)—See 15:1, 2, 9. The law which had been written was to be read to the people at the end of every seven years, during the festival of the year of release, that is, at the Feast of Tabernacles, Lev. 23:34, Deut. 16:13-16.

Adam Clarke comments: "It is strange that this commandment, relative to a *public* reading of the law every seven years, should have been rarely attended to. It does not appear that from the time mentioned, Josh. viii. 30, at which time this public reading took place, till the reign of *Jehosphaphat*, 2 Chron. xvii. 7 [See also v. 9] there was any public seventh year reading—a period of 530 years. The next seventh year reading was not till the eighteenth year of the reign of *Josiah*, 2 Chron. xxxiv. 30, a space of *two hundred and eighty-two* years. Nor do we find any other publicly mentioned from this time till the return from the Babylonish captivity, Neh. viii. 2. Nor is there any other record from that time to the destruction of Jerusalem."

The law was delivered to the priests and elders *not merely* for safe-keeping. It was to be *read* and enforced (vv. 12, 13). During the

centuries of the Dark Ages the Roman Church kept the Bible "safely"—safely locked to the walls and pulpits of monasteries and cathedrals! Throughout Europe the word of God was preserved in Greek, Hebrew and Latin. The latter language, understood only by the learned, was again used in the sacred services. Thus the ignorance of the common man was perpetuated; for Latin was not understood by the common man.

ASSEMBLE THE PEOPLE, etc. (vv. 12, 13)—Nehemiah, chapter 8, provides an illustration of this passage. The law was to be read so all Israel could "hear . . . learn . . . fear . . . observe." Thus when Ezra read, he did so "distinctly; and gave the sense, so that they understood the reading" (Neh. 8:8). God wants his message *communicated* to his people! Reading, with understanding, is good; a mere rattling of words, a matter of mechanics, is not enough! "Till I arrive, go ahead with the public reading, the preaching and the teaching" (I Tim. 4:13, Berkeley).

### 3. JOSHUA COMMISSIONED (31:14-23)

#### a. GOD CONFERS WITH MOSES AND JOSHUA (31:14, 15)

14 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourself in the tent of meeting, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tent of meeting. 15 And Jehovah appeared in the Tent in a pillar of cloud: and the pillar of cloud stood over the door of the Tent.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 31:14, 15

542. What tent is "the tent of meeting"? Cf. Ex. 40:7, Num. 11:16; 12:4.
543. Do we have a "tent of meeting" today? i.e., a place where Jehovah has promised to meet us?

### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 31:14, 15

14 And the Lord said to Moses, Behold, your days are nearing when you must die. Call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tent of meeting, that I may give him his charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tent of meeting.

15 And the Lord appeared in the tent in a pillar of cloud; and the pillar of cloud stood over the door of the tent.

## COMMENT 31:14, 15

The "tent of meeting" is not to be confused with the tabernacle. Compare Ex. 33:7-11, and note that Joshua is involved in that conference also. The "tent of meeting" (Heb. *eth haahel*) is there referred to before the Tabernacle (Heb. *eth hammishcan*) was erected (Ex. 40:17). Nor should it be confused with Moses' own abode. Moses went to it without the camp, and returned again. Rather, it was a simple place of revelation and of the meeting of the people with Jehovah. See also Num. 11:16, 12:4.

Usually, the distinction between the two tents is quite apparent from the context. It should be noted, however, that both are referred to as "the tent of meeting" or "the Tent": with reference to the tabernacle in such passages as Ex. 39:32, 33; The "field office" of Moses in such scriptures as Ex. 33:7.

Many commentators hold, however, that the phrase "tent of meeting" consistently refers only to the tabernacle proper after that structure was erected—that is, it superseded or replaced it, and took on its predecessor's name. It could be so in the present case; but normally none but the priests were privileged to enter the sanctuary, and Moses and Joshua presented themselves "in" the tent (v. 14).

b. MOSES COMMANDED TO WRITE A SONG AS A  
WITNESS AGAINST ISRAEL (31:16-22)

16 And Jehovah said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and play the harlot after the strange gods of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. 17 Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall come upon them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us? 18 And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evil which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. 19 Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach thou it the children of Israel: put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. 20 For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swore unto their fathers, flowing with milk and honey, and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxed fat; then will they turn unto other gods, and serve them, and

despise me, and break my covenant. 21 And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are come upon them, that this song shall testify before them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed; for I know their imagination which they frame this day, before I have brought them into the land which I sware. 22 So Moses write this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 31:16-22

544. Please remember that the constant reference to death as a sleep has no reference to the spirit of man, but only to his body. What comfort is there in the adding of our decayed body to those of "our fathers"?
545. God *is* concerned with the actions and thoughts of His people. Has He changed?
546. Advertising by song is not new. We can remember more what is sung and what we sing. Who knew this before Madison Avenue?

### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 31:16-22

16 And the Lord said to Moses, Behold, you shall sleep with your fathers; and this people will rise up, and play the harlot after the strange gods of the land where they go to be among them, and they will forsake Me, and break My covenant which I have made with them.

17 Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Have not these evils come upon us because our God is not among us?

18 And I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they have done in turning to other gods.

19 And now write this song for you, and teach it to the Israelites; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for Me against the Israelites.

20 For when I have brought them into the land which I swore to their fathers, that flows with milk and honey, and they have eaten and filled themselves, and become fat; then they will turn to other gods, and serve them, and despise and scorn Me, and break My covenant.

21 And when many evils and troubles have befallen them, this [sacred] song will confront them as a witness, for it will never be



forgotten from the mouths of their descendants; for I know their strong desire and the purposes which they are forming even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swore to give them.

22 Moses wrote this song the same day, and taught it to the Israelites. [See 32:1-43.]

### COMMENT 31:16-22

The song of Moses follows in chapter 32. The essence of vv. 16-18 we have seen repeated again and again in Deuteronomy: The forsaking of God and his commandments will have devastating consequences.

THEY SHALL HAVE EATEN AND FILLED THEMSELVES, AND WAXED FAT . . . AND BREAK MY COVENANT (v. 20)—See 6:10-12, 8:7-20, 11:10-16, etc.

THIS SONG SHALL TESTIFY BEFORE THEM AS A WITNESS (v. 20)—The word of God stands as our guide, lamp, and source of life. But if we depart from it, it can only act as a witness and judge against us. *The same words* condemn or justify, depending on the lives of those who receive them. In the present case, God, in his foreknowledge, knew (as we have seen so many times) that Israel would rebel and disobey: FOR I KNOW THEIR IMAGINATION WHICH THEY FRAME THIS DAY, BEFORE I HAVE BROUGHT THEM INTO THE LAND (v. 21)—As we have attempted to explain elsewhere, the fact that God *knows in advance* that a person or persons will commit sin does not *compel* the individual to commit it. In the present case, it should be observed that Israel was already notoriously rebellious against God and his law—and the Lord knew this rebellion would persist. They were already making plans for various wicked practices in which they could participate as soon as they crossed over the Jordan. And nearly the entire book of Judges chronicles the historical accuracy of this prediction.

The above phrase brings to the memory such passages as Gen. 6:5 and 8:21. Baumgartner would define *yetser* ("imagination") in *all* these passages as "form, purpose"—that is, of the mind. What powers has the mind! Powers to conceive, imagine, visualize, conceptualize, arrange, design. But conceive or design *what?* That is the greatest question of the ages! And that is why *all* are in need of a *renewed* mind (Rom. 12:2, Eph. 4:22-24). Then the mind can imagine and scheme for *Christ* and the advancement of his kingdom!

## c. JOSHUA CHARGED AND ENCOURAGED (31:23)

23 And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of good courage; for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with thee.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 31:23

547. In face of the promises of defection, how could Joshua be "strong and of good courage"? There is a lesson in this for us. For which generation is each man responsible?

## AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 31:23

23 And [the Lord] charged Joshua son of Nun, Be strong and courageous and firm; for you shall bring the Israelites into the land which I swore to give them; and I will be with you.

## COMMENT 31:23

See also vv. 7, 8, and God's words to Moses' successor in Josh. 1:5-9. Surely the new leader needed this encouragement, for he had witnessed the ups and downs of Israel during the entire journey from Egypt. But what leader in the Lord's work does not thrill to the encouragement given to Joshua? And what leader does not need such words of assurance? Surely *part* of Joshua's success in the years that followed are attributable to the encouragement of his predecessor!

B. THE PRESERVATION OF THE BOOK  
(31:24-29)

24 And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, 25 that Moses commanded the Levites, that bare the ark of the covenant of Jehovah, saying, 26 Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. 27 For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against Jehovah; and how much more after my death? 28 Assemble unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to witness against them. 29 For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you;

and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do that which is evil in the sight of Jehovah, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 31:24-29

548. What is included in "this law" of verse 24?  
 549. What is in the ark? Was there a receptacle along side of the ark?  
 550. Wouldn't the strong words of verse 29 offend the elders? Discuss.

### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 31:24-29

24 And when Moses had finished writing the words of this law in a book to the very end,

25 He commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord,

26 Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against you.

27 For I know your rebellion and stubbornness; behold, while I am yet alive with you, today you have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death!

28 Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears and call Heaven and earth to witness against them.

29 For I know that after my death you will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because you will do what is evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger through the work of your hands.

### COMMENT 31:24-29

It will be noticed that we have here

1. The words of the law finished (v. 24)
2. The words of the law preserved (vv. 25, 26)
3. The words of the law as a witness to Israel (vv. 27-29)

MOSES . . . MADE AN END OF WRITING THE WORDS OF THE LAW IN A BOOK (v. 24)—See also v. 9. Whether this passage refers to more than Deuteronomy has been long debated. (Compare our discussion under 27:3). But it is well to notice there is no limiting of the size of the

book; nor are we told if other materials were included in it. The phrasing of vv. 24-25 would lead us to believe all of Deuteronomy, at least, was included in Moses' book. Very likely more is meant:

"The 'book' here spoken of would contain the whole of the Pentateuch up to this verse, and be 'the book of Moses,' called generally by the Jews 'the Law' (Cp. St. Matt. xxii. 40; Gal. iv. 21)." (F. C. Cook)

By comparing v. 9 it appears two copies were made, J. F. B., commenting on vv. 9-13 as well as v. 26, states,

"It was usual in cases of public or private contract for two copies of the engagement to be made—one to be deposited in the national archives, or some secure place for reference, should occasion require; the other to remain in the hands of the contracting parties (Jeremiah 32:12-14). The same course was followed on this renewal of the covenant between God and Israel. Two written copies were prepared, the one of which was delivered to the public representatives of Israel, viz., the priests and the elders . . . The second copy of the law . . . was deposited for greater security and reference in a little chest *beside* the ark of the covenant . . ."

THE LEVITES THAT BARE THE ARK OF THE COVENANT (v. 25)—As in v. 9, "the priests the sons of Levi, that bare the ark . . ." According to Num. 4:4 ff. this was the job of the Kohathites, who, though of the priestly tribe, were not priests. It was they who carried the ark on their journey through the wilderness. But it was only the priests who could touch the ark, and the Kohathites carried the ark only after it was carefully wrapped and prepared by the priests. On special occasions, however, the priests themselves *did* carry the ark: Josh. 3:3, 4:9, 10; 6:6, 12; 8:33, I K. 8:3.

## SUMMARY OF CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

*Moses, being one hundred and twenty years old and about to die, calls the people together, and exhorts them to courage and obedience, 1-6. Delivers a charge to Joshua, 7, 8. Delivers the law which he had written to the priests, with a solemn charge that they should read it every seventh year, publicly to all the people, 9-13. The Lord calls Moses and Joshua to the tabernacle, 14. He appears to them, informs Moses of his approaching death, and delivers to him a prophetic and historical song, or poem, which he is to leave with Israel, for their instruction and reproof, 15-21. Moses writes the song the same day, and teaches it to the Israelites, 22; gives Joshua a charge, 23; finishes writ-*

ing the book of the law, 24. Commands the Levites to lay it up in the side of the ark, 25, 26. Predicts their rebellions, 27. Orders the elders to be gathered together, and shows them what evils would befall the people in the latter days, 28, 29, and repeats the song to them, 30.

### C. THE SONG OF MOSES (31:30—32:47)

The song is difficult to outline, but the main contents may be grouped as follows:

#### INTRODUCTION 31:30—32:1, 2

1. The greatness and faithfulness of *God*, in contrast with the faithlessness of Israel (32:3-18)
2. The chastisement and the need of its infliction by God (32:19-33).
3. God's compassion upon his people in their low and humbled state (32:34-42).

30 And Moses spake in the ears of all the assembly of Israel the words of this song, until they were finished.

1 Give ear, ye heavens, and I will speak;  
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

2 My doctrine shall drop as the rain,  
My speech shall distil as the dew;  
As the small rain upon the tender grass,  
And as the showers upon the herb:

GIVE EAR YE HEAVENS . . . LET THE EARTH HEAR (v. 1)—another way of appealing to the witness of God. "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall utterly perish from off the land . . ." (4:26). The whole universe is called to witness the procedure. Let all eyes and ears testify to the reading.

3 For I will proclaim the name of Jehovah;  
Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

4 The Rock, his work is perfect;  
For all his ways are justice:  
A God of faithfulness and without iniquity,  
Just and right is he.

5 They have dealt corruptly with him, *they are* not his children,  
*it is* their blemish;  
*They are* a perverse and crooked generation.

6 Do ye thus requite Jehovah,  
O foolish people and unwise?  
Is not he thy father that hath brought thee?  
He hath made thee, and established thee.

7 Remember the days of old,  
Consider the years of many generations:  
Ask thy father, and he will show thee;  
Thine elders, and they will tell thee.

8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,  
When he separated the children of men,  
He set the bounds of the peoples  
According to the number of the children of Israel.

9 For Jehovah's portion is his people;  
Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

10 He found him in a desert land,  
And in the waste howling wilderness;  
He compassed him about, he cared for him,  
He kept him as the apple of his eye.

11 As an eagle that stirreth up her nest,  
That fluttereth over her young,  
He spread abroad his wings, he took them,  
He bare them on his pinions.

12 Jehovah alone did lead him,  
And there was no foreign god with him.

13 He made him ride on the high places of the earth,  
And he did eat the increase of the field;  
And he made him to suck honey out of the rock,  
And oil out of the flinty rock;

14 Butter of the herd, and milk of the flock,  
With fat of lambs,  
And rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats,  
With the finest of the wheat;  
And of the blood of the grape thou drankest wine.

15 But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked:  
Thou art waxed fat, thou art grown thick, thou art become sleek;  
Then he forsook God who made him,  
And lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

16 They moved him to jealousy with strange *gods*;  
With abominations provoked they him to anger.

17 They sacrificed unto demons, *which were no God*,

To gods that they knew not,  
 To new *gods that* came up of late,  
 Which your fathers dreaded not.  
 18 Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful,  
 And hast forgotten God that gave thee birth.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 31:30—32:18

551. Who is "The Rock" of verse 4? Why use this name?  
 552. There are some very strong comparisons and contrasts between Jehovah and Israel. List three of them.  
 553. Israel has endearing names. List three of them.  
 554. There are several figurative descriptions of Israel that will describe the "Israel of God" today. Mention two.  
 555. Sin, Servitude, Sorrow, Salvation; this is the vicious circle of Israel's history. How can this circle be broken?

### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 31:30—32:18

30 And Moses spoke in the hearing of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended.

#### CHAPTER 32

Give ear, O heavens, and I [Moses] will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth.

2 My message shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the light rain upon the tender grass, and as the showers upon the herb.

3 For I will proclaim the name [and presence] of the Lord. Concede and ascribe greatness to our God.

4 He is the Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are law and justice, a God of faithfulness, without breach or deviation, just and right is He.

5 They [Israel] have spoiled themselves. They are not sons to Him, that is their blemish. A perverse and crooked generation!

6 Do you thus repay the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? Is not He your father Who acquired you for His own? Who made and established you [as a nation]?

7 Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you.

8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the Israelites.

9 For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob [Israel] is the lot of His inheritance.

10 He found him in a desert land, in the howling void of the wilderness; He kept circling around him, He scanned him (penetratingly), He kept him as the pupil of His eye.

11 As an eagle that stirs up her nest, that flutters over her young, He spread abroad His wings; He took them, He bore them on His pinions. [Luke 13:34.]

12 So the Lord alone led him; there was no foreign god with Him.

13 He made Israel ride on the high places of the earth, and he ate the increase of the field; and He made him to suck honey out of the rock and oil out of the flinty rock;

14 Butter and curds of the herd and milk of the flock, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan and he-goats, with the finest of the wheat; and you drank wine of the blood of the grape.

15 But Jeshurun [Israel] grew fat and kicked. You became fat, you grew thick, you were gorged and sleek! Then he forsook God Who made him, and forsook and despised the Rock of his salvation.

16 They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations they provoked Him to anger.

17 They sacrificed to demons, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods lately come up, whom your fathers never knew or feared.

18 Of the Rock that bore you you were unmindful; you forgot the God Who travailed in your birth.

### COMMENT 31:30—32:18

THE ROCK (v. 4)—A central figure of God in the song (vv. 13, 15, 18, 30, 31). And note in vv. 37-38 Israel is rebuked for placing their confidence not in the Rock but in the "rock" of their own making—an idol. God is the essence of immutable and impregnable strength—traits this figure of speech depicts. Cf. Gen. 49:24, I Sam. 2:2, Ps. 18:2, Matt. 16:18, Jn. 1:42, etc.

THY FATHER THAT BROUGHT THEE (v. 6)—Thus, they were a redeemed people (Ex. 6:6). HE HATH MADE THEE, AND ESTABLISHED THEE (v. 6)—As David could say



He brought me up also out of a horrible pit,  
 out of the miry clay;  
 And he set my feet upon a rock,  
 and established my goings.

—Ps. 40:2

**JEHOVAH ALONE DID LEAD HIM, AND THERE WAS NO FOREIGN GOD WITH HIM** (v. 12)—A verse that at once sets forth the strength and independence of God's power. **HE** it was that led Israel, supplied Israel, preserved Israel, protected Israel—**HE** and no other! It was not a multitude of heathen gods that did it, it was **THE ALMIGHTY** God! *And he depends upon no other source of power.* Note 8:3 and notes, 4:35-39. Yet there was ever the tendency to attribute God's power to heathen deities: "These are thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Ex. 32:4, I K. 12:28, 29). And throughout much of Israel's history Jehovah-worship and idolatry were mixed together in a confusing and contradictory hodge-podge! Note, for example, the story of Micah and his house of idols (Judges, Ch. 17). It was not a matter of totally leaving God—or totally leaving Jehovah-worship. Rather, "They feared Jehovah, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away" (II K. 17:33). It should hardly need saying that such luke warm dedication to God and his word is a stench in the nostrils of the Almighty.

**AND HE MADE HIM TO SUCK HONEY OUT OF THE ROCK** (v. 13)—This phrase, along with v. 14, has a parallel in Ps. 81:16, "He would feed them also with the finest of the wheat; And with the honey out of the rock would I satisfy thee." Rocks or ledges, of course, are places for bees to construct their honeycombs and deposit honey—especially *under* them, or in the crevices *between* them. And it was this metaphor of prosperity and God's goodness that led the song writer F. A. Graves to pen the words of his well-known hymn:

Have you "tasted that the Lord is gracious?"  
 Do you walk in the way that's new?  
 Have you drunk from the living fountain?  
 There's Honey in the Rock for you.

Oh, there's Honey in the Rock, my brother, . . .  
 There's Honey in the Rock for you.  
 Leave your sins for the blood to cover,  
 There's Honey in the Rock for you.

OIL OUT OF THE FLINTY ROCK (v. 13)—That is, olive oil would be plentiful in this new land, and olive trees, because of God's blessing, would grow even in the most obstinate soil. It would be "a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of olive trees and honey" (8:8). Olive oil was (and is) used widely for food in the near east.

BUT JESHURUN WAXED FAT AND KICKED (v. 15)—Jeshurun is a symbolical or poetical name of endearment for Israel. Gesenius says it is "a tender and loving appellation of the people of Israel." At the same time, he believes there is an allusion to the idea of rectitude or uprightness. He mentions the possibility of it being a diminutive form of *Israel* and meaning something like "the righteous little people." Whatever its precise meaning, it is always used in place of Israel. It occurs only here, 33:5, 26, and Isa. 44:2.

THEN HE FORSOOK GOD (v. 15)—i.e., the prosperity of Israel (though given by God) became their undoing. Cf. the warning of 8:11 ff.

19 And Jehovah saw *it*, and abhorred *them*,  
 Because of the provocation of his sons and his daughters.  
 20 And he said, I will hide my face from them,  
 I will see what their end shall be:  
 For they are a very perverse generation,  
 Children in whom is no faithfulness.  
 21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God;  
 They have provoked me to anger with their vanities:  
 And I will move them to jealousy with those that are not a people;  
 I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.  
 22 For a fire is kindled in mine anger,  
 And burneth unto the lowest Sheol,  
 And devoureth the earth with its increase,  
 And setteth on fire the foundations of the mountains.  
 23 I will heap evils upon them;  
 I will spend mine arrows upon them:  
 24 *They shall be* wasted with hunger, and devoured with burning heat  
 And bitter destruction;  
 And the teeth of beasts will I send upon them,  
 With the poison of crawling things of the dust.  
 25 Without shall the sword bereave,  
 And in the chambers terror;

*It shall destroy* both young man and virgin,

The suckling with the man of gray hairs.

26 I said, I would scatter them afar,

I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men;

27 Were it not that I feared the provocation of the enemy,

Lest their adversaries should judge amiss,

Lest they should say, Our hand is exalted,

And Jehovah hath not done all this.

28 For they are a nation void of counsel,

And there is no understanding in them.

29 Oh that they were wise, that they understood this,

That they would consider their latter end!

30 How should one chase a thousand

And two put ten thousand to flight,

Except their Rock had sold them,

And Jehovah had delivered them up?

31 For their rock is not as our Rock,

Even our enemies themselves being judges.

32 For their vine is of the vine of Sodom,

And of the fields of Gomorrah:

Their grapes are grapes of gall,

Their clusters are bitter:

33 Their wine is the poison of serpents,

And the cruel venom of asps.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 32:19-33

556. What is meant by the use of the word "provocation"?

557. What foreign people are meant in verse 21?

558. Where is "Sheol"? Explain the use of this term here.

559. Something will restrain God's wrath as mentioned in verses 26 and 27. What is it?

560. Itemize what Israel was as contrasted with what they should have been.

### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 32:19-33

19 And the Lord saw it, He spurned and rejected them, from indignation with His sons and His daughters.

20 And He said, I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be. For they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.

21 They have moved Me to jealousy with what is not God; they have angered Me with their idols; so I will move them to jealousy with those not a people; I will anger them with a foolish nation.

22 For a fire is kindled by My anger, and it burns to the depths of Sheol, devours the earth with its increase, and sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.

23 And I will heap evils upon them; I will spend My arrows upon them.

24 They shall be wasted with hunger, and devoured with burning heat and poisonous pestilence; and the teeth of beasts will I send against them, with the poison of crawling things of the dust.

25 From without the sword shall bereave, and in the chambers shall be terror, destroying both young man and virgin, the sucking child with the man of gray hairs.

26 I said, I would scatter them afar, and I would have made the remembrance of them to cease from among men,

27 Had I not feared the provocation of the foe, lest their enemies misconstrue it, and lest they should say, Our own hand has prevailed; all this was not the work of the Lord.

28 For they are a nation void of counsel, and there is no understanding in them.

29 O that they were wise, and would see through this [present triumph] to their ultimate fate!

30 How could one have chased 1,000 and two put 10,000 to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had delivered them up?

31 For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.

32 For their vine comes from the vine of Sodom, and from the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of (poisonous) gall, their clusters are bitter;

33 Their wine is the (furious) venom of serpents, and the pitiless poison of vipers;

### COMMENT 32:19-33

AND I WILL MOVE THEM TO JEALOUSY WITH THOSE THAT ARE NOT A PEOPLE . . . A FOOLISH NATION (v. 21)—See also Rom. 10:16-19. Those not in God's service are important as eternal souls, but if they are not in fact his children, they are "a foolish nation"—even as we were "no people" (I Pet. 2:10) before coming to Christ. They are those "having no hope and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:12).

What nation is referred to here? It is hard to say which of the many invaders of Israel (if a *specific* one is indeed being referred to) the Holy Spirit intends. Both Assyria and Babylon attacked while Israel was filled with idolatry (note vv. 16, 17).

. . . FIRE . . . BURNETH UNTO THE LOWEST SHEOL (v. 22)—The A. V. has "unto the lowest hell," but in either case the reader might be misled. the word *sheol* literally signifies the unseen state, or the unseen *place*. Baumgartner defines it here, "waste, no-country, underworld." The present passage *could* be a *general* description of God as a consuming fire. But it seems better to apply it to the immediate case: God's wrath would be upon their *whole land* when they were disobedient: Their crops, fields, houses, grain-storage bins—all would be destroyed; Clarke remarks on this phrase, ". . . the very deepest destruction; a total extermination, so that *the earth*—their land and *its increase*, and all their property should be seized; and the *foundations of their mountains* [v. 22]—their strongest fortresses, should be razed to the ground. All this was fulfilled in a most remarkable manner in the last destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, so that of the fortifications of that city not one stone was left on another."

AND THE TEETH OF BEASTS WILL I SEND UPON THEM (v. 24)—See also Lev. 26:22. In 7:22 we saw the strategy of defeating Israel's enemies was to be little by little "lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee." But disobedience would also bring them. We do not have a *recorded* instance of this as far as the Israelites themselves are concerned. But in II K. 17:24-26 we have such an act of God toward the foreign occupants of Samaria brought in by the Assyrians.

I SAID, I WOULD SCATTER THEM AFAR, I WOULD MAKE THE REMEMBRANCE OF THEM TO CEASE (v. 26)—See Ex. 32:9-14, Deut. 9:13, 14; 25-29. The wrath of God was stayed, not because of a deserving Israel, but "Lest their adversaries should judge amiss," etc. (v. 27). ". . . lest their enemies misconstrue it" (Amplified).

The translation of The Torah is helpful from vv. 26-30:

- 26 I might have reduced them to naught,  
 Made their memory cease among men,  
 27 But for fear of the taunts of the foe,  
 Their enemies who might misjudge  
 And say, "Our own hand has prevailed;  
 None of this was wrought by the Lord!"

- 28 For they [the heathen nations] are a folk  
void of sense,  
Lacking in all discernment.
- 29 Were they wise, they would think upon this,  
Gain insight into their future:
- 30 How could one have routed a thousand,  
Or two put ten thousand to flight,  
Unless their rock had sold them,  
The Lord had given them up?"

Verse 30 shows the weakness of Israel *without Jehovah*. No foe can stand before him, but enemies can overrun his own people if he has abandoned them.

Oh! how would one have chased a thousand,  
And two put ten thousand to flight,—  
Were it not that their Rock had sold them,  
And Yahweh had abandoned them;

(Rotherham)

The idea, of course, is that Israel's defeat at the hand of their enemies would have been impossible unless God had abandoned his people.

FOR THEIR ROCK IS NOT AS OUR ROCK (v. 31)—a statement equivalent of saying, "For their god(s) are not as our God." To foreign nations, whose god (rock) was powerless and dead, his physical presence or non-presence made no *actual* difference in the outcome of battles—or any other event for that matter. But Israel lost no battles "unless their Rock had sold them." The powerless rock of the heathen "is not as our Rock," who is omnipotent.

EVEN OUR ENEMIES THEMSELVES BEING JUDGES (v. 31)—i.e., Israel's enemies can testify to the above truth. The Egyptians, for example, were helpless before Israel's God, shouting, "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for Jehovah fighteth for them against the Egyptians" (Ex. 14:25). See also Ex. 15:14-16, Deut. 2:25.

VINE OF SODOM . . . FIELDS OF GOMORRAH (v. 32)—To become like these became (Gen. 19:23-28) would be to become a desolate waste, unproductive and sterile. See 29:22-28, notes. Whatever would be produced in Israel, as in vv. 32-33 would be of the poorest quality. But it is possible that this picturesque phrase means more. "Sodom and Go-

morrah are here advanced as types of what is depraved, and to the moral taste nauseous (cf. Isa. i. 10; Jer. xxiii. 14)." (Pulpit)

GRAPES OF GALL (v. 32)—See 29:18-20, notes. Vv. 32-33 could be taken to describe a degenerate *people* as well as a degenerate *land*.

34 Is not this laid up in store with me,  
Sealed up among my treasures?  
35 Vengeance is mine, and recompense,  
At the time when their foot shall slide:  
For the day of their calamity is at hand,  
And the things that are to come upon them shall make haste.  
36 For Jehovah will judge his people,  
And repent himself for his servants;  
When he seeth that *their* power is gone,  
And there is none *remaining*, shut up or left at large.  
37 And he will say, Where are their gods,  
The rock in which they took refuge;  
38 Which did eat the fat of their sacrifices,  
*And* drank the wine of their drink-offering?  
Let them rise up and help you,  
Let them be your protection.  
39 See now that I, even I, am he,  
And there is no god with me:  
I kill, and I make alive;  
I wound, and I heal;  
And there is none that can deliver out of my hand.  
40 For I lift up my hand to heaven,  
And say, As I live for ever,  
41 If I whet my glittering sword,  
And my hand take hold on judgment;  
I will render vengeance to mine adversaries,  
And will recompense them that hate me.  
52 I will make mine arrows drunk with blood,  
And my sword shall devour flesh;  
With the blood of the slain and the captives,  
From the head of the leaders of the enemy.  
43 Rejoice, O ye nations, *with* his people:  
For he will avenge the blood of his servants,  
And will render vengeance to his adversaries,  
And will make expiation for his land, for his people.

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS 32:34-43

561. What does God have laid up in His treasury?  
 562. How is it possible to say of God that He repents?  
 563. Are we to believe God takes some type of delight in bloodshed?  
 Cf. Verses 41-32.

## AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 32:34-43

34 Is not this laid up in store with Me, sealed up in My treasures?  
 35 Vengeance is Mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slide; for the day of their disaster is at hand, and their doom comes speedily.

36 For the Lord will pass sentence for His people, and relent for His servants' sake, when He sees that their power is gone, and none remain, whether bond or free.

37 And He will say, Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge.

38 Who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you, let them be your protection.

39 See now that I, I am He, and there is no god beside Me; I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; and there is none who can deliver out of My hand.

40 For I lift up My hand to Heaven, and swear, As I live for ever,

41 If I whet My lightning sword, and My hand takes hold on judgment, I will wreak vengeance on My foes, and recompense those who hate Me.

42 I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh with the blood of the slain and the captives, from the long-haired heads of the foe.

43 Rejoice with His people, O you nations, for He avenges the blood of His servants, and vengeance He inflicts on His foes, and clears guilt from the land of His people.

## COMMENT 32:34-43

MY TREASURES (v. 34)—The Hebrew word *otsar*, according to Tregelles, means properly, what is laid up, a store, stock. Thus God has reserved in his "treasure" such items as vengeance (v. 35) and judgment (v. 36).



FOR JEHOVAH WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE . . . AND REPENT HIMSELF (v. 36)—Better, as in the R.S.V. and others, "For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone," etc.

Ferrar Fenton has,

Then the LORD will redress His  
People;—  
For His servants He deeply grieves,  
When he sees their power departing,  
And fail, and fade, and decay.  
Then He asks, "Where now are  
their godlings?  
The power upon whom they  
trust—

In Israel's despair and desperation, they would come to realize the uselessness and worthlessness of their heathen gods. Finally, the living God would rescue his chosen nation (vv. 39-43). Again and again this is Israel's history, especially in the period of the Judges, between the death of Joshua and the anointing of Saul.

44 And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Hoshea the son of Nun. 45 And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel; 46 and he said unto them, Set your heart unto all the words which I testify unto you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, *even* all the words of this law. 47 For it is no vain thing for you; because it is your life, and through this thing ye shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over the Jordan to possess it.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS 32:44-47

564. Who is Hoshea? Cf. Num. 13:16.  
565. What is involved in fulfilling the injunction to "set your heart"?  
566. Hearing, heeding, living, the word of God will give us \_\_\_\_\_?

### AMPLIFIED TRANSLATION 31:44-47

44 And Moses came and spoke all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he and Hoshea (Joshua) son of Nun.

45 And when Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel,

46 He said to them, Set your [minds and] hearts on all the words which I command you this day, that you may command them to your children, that they may be watchful to do all the words of this law.

47 For it is not an empty and worthless trifle for you; it is your very life; by it you shall live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to possess.

### COMMENT 32:44-47

HOSHEA (v. 44)—that is, Joshua. Num. 13:16 informs us that "Moses called Hoshea ['Jehovah is help'] the son of Nun Joshua ['Jehovah saves']." Depending on the version used, Hoshea may be rendered "Oshea," and Joshua "Jehoshua."

SET YOUR HEART UNTO ALL THE WORDS (v. 46)—Give heed to them and carefully abide by them BECAUSE IT IS YOUR LIFE (v. 47)—a phrase reminiscent of 4:1, 8:3, 30:19-20. Heeding God's word, in whatever dispensation it might be given, has always meant *life!* See Jn. 6:63, 68. In Israel's case, as Moses emphasized again and again, this meant not only life eternal, but THROUGH THIS THING YE SHALL PROLONG YOUR DAYS IN THE LAND (v. 47).

### QUESTIONS, LESSON TWENTY-THREE

(31:1—32:47)

#### OVER CHAPTER 31

1. How old is Moses now?
2. Who is appointed as his successor, and who appoints him?
3. List at least three factors (or incidents) in this man's life that show he possessed the qualities needed as Israel's leader.
4. Show that he was a *spiritual* man, as well as one with good military leadership. (Overlaps with 3.)
5. Do you remember the words of encouragement Moses gave to Israel (also found in the book of Hebrews)?
6. To whom was the law delivered?
7. How often was it to be read before all Israel—How often was it *actually* read?
8. The "tent of meeting" is a name for \_\_\_\_\_, and also for \_\_\_\_\_.
9. What is said about Israel's *imagination*? What *could* and should have been said about it?
10. Where was the "book of the law" kept?

## OVER CHAPTER 32

11. What material object, more than any other, is the central figure for *God* in this chapter?
12. What traits does it bring to mind?
13. Do you recall any phrases that show how *much* God cared for Israel in the wilderness?
14. Explain: "honey out of the rock . . . oil out of the flinty rock" (v. 13).
15. How would Israel's new found prosperity effect them?
16. Who or what is Jeshurun?
17. Distinguish between "Rock" and "rock" in this chapter.
18. Who are "those that are not a people" (v. 21)?
19. God's fire would be kindled because of Israel's wickedness. How extensively would it destroy?
20. What (in this chapter) restrained God from completely obliterating Israel from the face of the earth?
21. Would Israel ever be vindicated and restored?
22. Whose help did (does) God *not* need to deliver Israel?
23. Why should Israel set their hearts to these words?