

Deuteronomy 9:18-29
Forty Days and Forty Nights Before the Lord
December 13, 2020

¹⁸ And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. ¹⁹ For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also. ²⁰ And the LORD was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. ²¹ Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.

²² “Also at Taberah and Massah and Kibroth Hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath. ²³ Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, ‘Go up and possess the land which I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him nor obey His voice. ²⁴ You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.

²⁵ “Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you. ²⁶ Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: ‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷ Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, ²⁸ lest the land from which You brought us should say, “Because the LORD was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness.” ²⁹ Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.’

While going through our verses today, for those who did not follow the Numbers sermons – or for those who have forgotten what they said – we need to remember the symbolism of the law and those who are under it.

And this is not some stretch made up out of someone’s head to fit a personal theology. Rather, it is exactly what God is revealing in Scripture. The symbolism of Israel’s rejecting entry into Canaan in Numbers 14 is that of their rejection of Christ.

They were led from Sinai (meaning Horeb) to Kadesh Barnea, spies were sent in to inspect the land, the spies came back with a bad report, and the people rebelled. The typology was and is clear – that of being presented Christ Jesus. From there, they went into two thousand years of the punishments of the law. Paul indicates this when he describes those under the law in Galatians 4

***Text Verse:** “Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not hear the law? ²² For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. ²³ But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise, ²⁴ which things are symbolic. For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar—²⁵ for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children—²⁶ but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all.” Galatians 4:21-26*

Israel received the law, symbolic of giving birth to bondage. Israel was under that bondage until the time God set forth for the Messiah to come and deliver them from it. Christ Jesus came, they rejected Him, and the curses of the law came upon them.

However, in His faithfulness to the covenant, He has kept them as a people. His faithfulness is seen to have been established in our verses today. The words are clear, precise, and unambiguous.

Despite this, we are going to have to go back and forth and back and forth, and then we will have to go back and forth again throughout the books of Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy to really get this. Don’t get bogged down in it. It is typed, and it is always there for you to refer to should you forget the layout.

For now, sit back and enjoy in an hour what took me an entire, tiring, day to put together. But it was worth it. Throughout the day, I called out loud to the Lord – again and again – “Thank You, Lord. I love Your word.” It is a joy and a delight to have sermon typing day set before me. And it is a joy to have the fruits of that to set before you. And so, I now present the passage to you.

Wonderful things are to be found in His superior word. And so, let us turn to that precious word once again and... May God speak to us through His word today and may His glorious name ever be praised.

I. But the Lord Listened (Verses 18-24)

In the previous passage, we ended with these words –

“So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. ¹⁶ And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God—had made for yourselves a molded calf! You had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you. ¹⁷ Then I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes.” Deuteronomy 9:15-17

Moses now continues with the events, but he leaves out all of the detail concerning what happened at the foot of Sinai after he broke the tablets. That is recorded from Exodus 32:20-30. With that context understood, Moses continues with the narrative to this generation, explaining the events that followed, saying...

¹⁸ And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights;

The words, “as at the first,” could refer to either the words, “And I fell down before the Lord,” or “forty days and forty nights.” Both are true. First, Moses interceded before the Lord in Exodus 32, just before descending the mountain. There it said –

Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: “LORD, why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people whom You have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? ¹² Why should the Egyptians speak, and say, ‘He brought them out to harm them, to kill them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth’? Turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people. ¹³ Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Your servants, to whom You swore by Your own self, and said to them, ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven; and all this land that I have spoken of I give to your descendants, and they shall inherit it forever.’” ¹⁴ So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. Exodus 32:11-15

However, Moses’ first time before the Lord was also forty days and forty nights. That is recorded in Exodus 24 –

“Now the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. ¹⁷ The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. ¹⁸ So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.” Exodus 24:16-18

As you can see, the timeline is rather hard to follow. He came down from the mountain, went through the events recorded in Exodus 32, and then went back up the mountain. But even here in Deuteronomy, he will speak of those events, while off the mountain, in just a couple verses. The narrative goes back and forth, and it is not always chronological.

For now, Moses simply states that a second period of trial and probation is now set before Israel. They had to wait below as Moses ascended a second time to the Lord atop the mountain. Of this time, he says...

¹⁸ (con’t) I neither ate bread nor drank water,

This is referring to the ascension to receive the second set of tablets. That is specifically recorded in Exodus 34 –

“So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.” Exodus 34:18

This period of ascension will be the subject of the narrative at the beginning of Chapter 10 as well.

¹⁸ (con’t) because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

The major sin was that of the making of the golden calf, but the words *kal khatakem*, or “all your sin,” signifies more than just that. It includes unbelief, idolatry, ingratitude, and so on. Further, the word “your” is plural.

It wasn't just Israel as a nation, but the people individually. They had done *ha'ra*, or "the evil," in the sight of the Lord. Their wickedness was so great that Moses knew he had to intercede for them. As he says...

¹⁹ For I was afraid

Here, Moses introduces a new word into Scripture, *yagor*, or to be afraid. It is an uncommon word found only five times total. By introducing a new word, it is its own stress. Moses truly dreaded what might be the outcome of the matter.

¹⁹ of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you.

mipene ha'aph v'ha'khemah asher qatsaph Yehovah alekem l'hashmid etkem – "from face the nose and the hot displeasure which furious Yehovah with you to destroy you." The sentence is full of descriptive language. The idea is that the face of the Lord was burning with rage to the point of shooting forth flames of fury and entirely consuming the people. And yet...

¹⁹ (con't) But the LORD listened to me at that time also.

The words *gam ba'paam ha'hiv*, or "also in the time that," reflect more than just his petition before going down the mountain. They include Moses' intercession for the people when they moaned in Exodus prior to arriving at Sinai, and even his intercessions for them after they left Sinai.

This is certain because he will refer to the events after leaving Sinai in just a few verses. He is speaking to the people in an after-the-fact manner, reminding them that they have been disobedient moaners and evildoers all along, and he has had to intercede for them again and again.

But, we cannot allow ourselves to get too far from the typology. Moses is shown to be the mediator of the covenant. As this is so, he is a type of Christ who is the more perfect Mediator of the New Covenant. If the Lord was willing to forgive the transgressions of Israel because of the mediation of Moses, how much more secure are we in the mediation of the New Covenant in Christ!

As Israel the nation is a pattern of individual salvation, we can be completely confident in holding to the doctrine of eternal salvation for believers. The Bible teaches nothing less.

²⁰ And the LORD was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him;

The words are emphatic: *u-b'aharon hitanaph Yehovah meod l'hashmido* – "and in Aaron was enraged Yehovah, greatly to destroy him." This is the last time Moses will use the word *anaph*, or enraged. It is from a primitive root meaning, "to breathe hard."

In verse 9:8, he used this word, saying the Lord was enraged at the people for what they did while he was on the mountain receiving the law. Now, he singles out Aaron for that same infraction, emphasizing the severity of what he did.

Not only had the people seen the display of the Lord, at the giving of the Ten Commandments, but Aaron, Aaron's two oldest sons, and seventy chosen leaders of Israel had gone up and eaten a meal in the presence of the Lord before they had made the golden calf.

Aaron not only saw the display of God in the magnificent effects that came with the giving of the law, but he had seen the Lord and dined before His glory. Could he be saved after doing such a thing as trading the glory of the Lord for a worthless idol?

²⁰ (con't) so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.

It is wholly apparent, without it being said, that Aaron was singled out by the Lord. He had been with Moses throughout the miracles from the time prior to the exodus, he had been with Moses throughout all of the miracles since the time of the exodus,

he had been at the foot of the mountain to see the sight and hear the words of law, he had been on the mountain to have a meal in the presence of the Lord, and yet, he had led the people into the sin of worshipping the golden calf.

He had not just partially, but completely walked away from the faith. His actions were wholly inexcusable and could not be any more exactly described than those Paul speaks of concerning certain believers –

“This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare,¹⁹ having faith and a good conscience, which some having rejected, concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck,²⁰ of whom are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I delivered to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme.” 1 Timothy 1:18-20

Aaron had suffered a complete shipwreck of the faith, and yet Moses interceded for him, and the Lord responded. Again, if this is what Moses was able to do as a mediator of a law of sin and death, how much more Christ who is the Mediator of the gospel that brings life!

21 Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made,

The word “then” is not correct. The Hebrew reads *v’eth* and should say, “And I took your sin.” The intercession for Aaron comes later in the chronology, not before. Concerning the words, “your sin,” that is explained by the next words, “the calf which you had made.” Their sin was a tangible fact that stood before them.

21 (con’t) and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust;

One can feel the anger in Moses’ words – “and burned it in the fire, and crushed it, grinding thoroughly, until that fine to dust.” He was utterly appalled at what they had done, and his actions – and his words of memory now – were a testimony to the magnitude of the offense.

As great as their idol supposedly was, he was determined to turn it into exactly the opposite – utter nothingness. When he could do no more to reduce it in size, he says...

21 (con’t) and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.

The result of this is explained in Exodus 32. The two accounts must be taken together to understand Moses’ intent –

“Then he took the calf which they had made, burned it in the fire, and ground it to powder; and he scattered it on the water and made the children of Israel drink it.” Exodus 32:20

Their source of drinking water would become the reminder of their sin. Each time they went there, it would be as if they were drinking in a reminder of what they had done to offend the Lord.

Yehovah their God, their true Source of life, was at the top of the mountain in smoke and fire. Their false idol, and the source of their shame, was there at the bottom of it drowned in the water they had to come to daily in order to drink and stay alive.

They were to remember the contrast between the two all the days they remained at the mountain. However, Moses next reveals to them that as soon as they left the mountain, they again forgot the Lord and failed to respond to Him in faith...

22 “Also at Taberah

u-ve-taverah – “and in Taberah.” Moses now continues the narrative of Israel’s constant failings. In verse 9:7, he had said –

“Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.” Deuteronomy 9:7

That took them from Egypt to Sinai. In 9:8 until 9:22, he described their failings while at Sinai. Now, he progresses on to the next stage of their ongoing failings, speaking first of their time just *after leaving* Horeb (Sinai).

The departure of Israel from the mountain is recorded in Numbers 10. In the turn of the page, and – literally – one verse after their departure was explained, it says in Numbers 11:1 –

“Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD burned among them, and consumed some in the outskirts of the camp.” Numbers 11:1

Without the water from the brook to remind them of their failing, they immediately began to complain, once again, against the Lord. In response, fire came out from the Lord against Israel. At that time, Moses had to intercede for them again –

“Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. ³ So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the LORD had burned among them.” Numbers 11:2, 3

The name Taberah signifies a part of the area they stopped at, not the name of the entire encampment. Before going forward in time from this event, Moses quickly goes back to the last event *before* arriving at Sinai, saying...

22 (con't) and Massah

u-ve-massah – “and in Massah.” This was the last stop *before arrival* at Sinai (Horeb). There the people complained about having no water, and so the Lord provided them with water from the rock. In other words, what we see in the first two names of this verse – Taberah and Massah – is that Mount Sinai is the center of the thought.

Nothing changed in their attitude during their entire time at the sacred mountain. The receiving of the law, and the cutting of the covenant with them did not change the people.

With that sobering thought in mind, Moses next more precisely names the first recorded stop after leaving Sinai, saying...

22 (con't) and Kibroth Hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath.

Taberah is a part of the location named Kibroth Hattaavah. Not only did the outskirts of the camp complain, but all of them did – lusting after the foods they had left behind in Egypt. In response, the Lord sent them quail to feed them, but before the quail was finished, it says –

“the wrath of the LORD was aroused against the people, and the LORD struck the people with a very great plague. ³⁴ So he called the name of that place Kibroth Hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had yielded to craving.” Numbers 11:33, 34

The name *Qivroth* comes from *qever*, a grave, or a place for burial. *Ha* is the definite article, and *taavah* means desire. Thus, the place means *Craves of the Lusting*. Instead of craving the Source of all life, the people craved what they had left behind when they were in their bondage.

It is a perfect picture of us, being saved by Christ and yet continually going back in our hearts and desires, longing for the things Christ redeemed us from. For now, Moses is not yet done with his chiding of the people. After their short journey from Sinai (Horeb) to their arrival at the very border of the land of promise, he continues with the mournful words...

²³ Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, ‘Go up and possess the land which I have given you,’

This is the spot where, in Numbers 13, the twelve spies were sent out from to see the land and bring back a report to the people. Upon their return, they were to provide their report and then accept the word of the Lord and go forth to possess what had been promised – even since the time of Abraham. However...

²³ (con't) **then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God,**

The translation is incorrect. Instead, it says: *va'tamru eth pi Yehovah elohekem* – “and you rebelled mouth of Yehovah your God. No command was given to go up to the land. The Lord spoke and He expected them to believe. This is confirmed by the author of Hebrews, saying, “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:19).

The typology is important because coming to Canaan pictures Israel coming to the time of Christ. He came and offered them the New Covenant and eternal life. They rejected the words of His mouth...

²³ (con't) **and you did not believe Him nor obey His voice.**

The word translated as “obey” is *shama*. It means to hear and be attentive to. As this was not a command, it means, “you did not believe Him and hearken to His voice.” The typology, again, anticipates Christ. It is what Paul says concerning the gospel –

“But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith which we preach): ⁹ that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” Romans 10:8, 9

Israel failed to believe and hearken to the word of Christ. As far as the ongoing narrative from Moses, it is at this location that the spies – minus Joshua and Caleb – came back and gave a bad report. And it is here that the people then rebelled against the Lord.

Israel’s history, up to the present time, is recorded here in these verses. They were called as a people, and until they were given the law, they failed to have faith in the Lord. They were given the law, and during their time of law, they failed to have faith in the Lord. Remember our text verse, Paul says that the time of the law is equated to the receiving of the law at Sinai.

And then, they were offered Christ, symbolized by bringing the people to the very doorstep of Canaan. And yet, they failed to have faith in the Lord. In that, they were turned back into the wilderness – a picture of their exile for the past two thousand years.

Their entire history, both in the biblical narrative being spoken forth by Moses, and in what that pictures – meaning their actual historical record – has been one of failing to have faith in the Lord. Of this list of stops, the scholar Keil incorrectly says –

“The list is not arranged chronologically, but advances gradually from the smaller to the more serious forms of guilt. For Moses was seeking to sharpen the consciences of the people, and to impress upon them the fact that they had been rebellious against the Lord (see at Deuteronomy 9:7) from the very beginning, ‘from the day that I knew you.’” Keil

It is not from the “smaller to the more serious forms of guilt.” This is certain because those infractions before the giving of the law are to be considered less serious than those after the giving of the law, and – indeed – after having seen the continued glory of the Lord in the various ways He manifested Himself.

Rather, the list is not arranged solely chronologically in order to highlight the fact that *the giving of the law changed nothing in the people* in regard to their relationship with the Lord. This is precisely why the Lord promised the people a New Covenant.

Here, Moses (the law) is remembering the sins of the people. In the New Covenant, their sins will be remembered no more (see our closing verse). However, one cannot truly appreciate the grace of the New Covenant without understanding the magnitude of the burden of sin in man – both apart from the law, and even more especially because of the law. Without the Christ Covenant, only sin and rebellion are remembered...

²⁴ **You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.**

The Hebrew says *im*, with. “Rebellious you have been with Yehovah.” It is a reflection of the name, Israel, or “He strives with God.” They can strive with God for God, or they can strive with God against God. In this case, it is “against.”

From their calling as a people out of the bondage of Egypt, they have remained rebellious against the Lord, and against the law that the Lord has given them. As Israel is simply a template for the individual person called by the Lord, it is prudent that we don't point our fingers too accusingly at them.

Even on the best of days, when we direct our hearts to the Lord in the most heartfelt manner that we can, we still fall short of giving Him all of who we are. There is always a streak of rebellion in our hearts. With his short snapshot of their history stated, Moses now returns to the thought of verse 18..

*The Lord has covenanted with you and will never forget
Even when you stray away
He will fulfill every promise, you can bet
And will bring You to Himself some glorious day*

*And this, despite yourself; so, He has revealed
And He will continue to save, because He has spoken
When You believed by faith, the deal was sealed
He has given You His Spirit as a sure token*

*And so, let us live for the Lord, remembering Him always
And let us not forget the great things He has done
Let us live for the Lord, for all of our days
For God, in Christ, has given us His Son*

*Great is the Lord and worthy of all praise
Great is our God; let us honor Him for all of our days*

II. Your People and Your Inheritance (Verses 25-29)

²⁵ “Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you.

That this is a repetition of the thought of verse 18 is seen in the words he will say in the next verse. Moses was on the mountain with the Lord, receiving the tablets and the instructions for the tabernacle and priestly service. While there, the people made the golden calf and celebrated. It was at that time, while he was on the mountain, that we read –

“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. ⁸ They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it, and said, ‘This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!’” ⁹ And the LORD said to Moses, ‘I have seen this people, and indeed it is a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰ Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.’” Exodus 32:7-10

In response to the Lord's words, Moses petitioned the Lord for the people. The Lord relented, as we saw earlier in this sermon, and Moses went down the mountain to see what the Lord had described concerning their behavior.

Once down, he cast the tablets out of his hands, destroyed the golden calf, had the Levites go through the camp to destroy those who participated, and so on.

Eventually, he went back up the mountain with two new tablets (Exodus 34:1/Deuteronomy 10:1) and fell before the Lord as he did before going down the mountain. This was, again, for forty days and forty nights (Exodus 34:28). With this timeline understood, Moses now substantially repeats what he had said before going down the mountain...

26 Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said:

As we just saw, Moses had petitioned the Lord before coming down, and the Lord relented concerning destroying the people (32:14). As this is so, why would Moses need to petition the Lord to not destroy the people? The answer is then found in Exodus 33 –

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Depart and go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give it.’² And I will send My Angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanite and the Amorite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite.³ Go up to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, lest I consume you on the way, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

⁴ And when the people heard this bad news, they mourned, and no one put on his ornaments.⁵ For the LORD had said to Moses, “Say to the children of Israel, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. I could come up into your midst in one moment and consume you. Now therefore, take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you.’”⁶ So the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments by Mount Horeb. Exodus 33:1-6

In other words, Moses had stayed the wrath of the Lord concerning the destruction of Israel for the sin of the golden calf. However, the Lord had not relented concerning the complete destruction of Israel for some other *future* offense.

It was Moses’ petitioning of the Lord now, which forever secured them from total destruction. That is seen in the renewal of the covenant in the words of Exodus 34 during this forty-day period –

So Moses made haste and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshiped.⁹ Then he said, “If now I have found grace in Your sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray, go among us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us as Your inheritance.”

¹⁰ And He said: “Behold, I make a covenant. Before all your people I will do marvels such as have not been done in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among whom you are shall see the work of the LORD. For it is an awesome thing that I will do with you.” Exodus 34:8-10

26 (con’t) ‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

In verse 9:12, The Lord said to Moses,

*“Arise, go down quickly from here, for **your** people whom **you** brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly.”*

Moses’ got it. He understood that even after receiving the Ten Commandments and beholding the splendor and terror of the Lord, it was not enough to keep Israel from disobeying Him. In that state, He could – at any time – disinherit them and stretch out His hand and destroy them.

And so, Moses says to Yehovah, “do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.”

In this petition, he mirrors his words previously spoken while on the mountain, but this petition goes beyond anything stated before. This is because they have not yet done anything else wrong. The Lord had relented from destroying them because of the calf, but He had also threatened He might destroy them for a future infraction.

Knowing this, Moses is asking for the Lord to state, in advance and without any possibility of changing His mind, that He will never utterly destroy Israel. And Moses received that guarantee. The Lord will lead them into the promise, and He will be their people. In fact, He later codified it in the written law –

“Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I am the LORD their God.

⁴⁵ But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am the LORD.” Leviticus 26:44, 45

Moses appeals to the Lord in this verse for the people “whom You have brought out of Egypt.” The Lord repeats that when He speaks of Israel, “whom I brought out of the land of Egypt.” Israel would forever stand, even in their rejection of the Lord, because the Lord spoke that it would be so.

This is the glory of the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It is grace that extends even to the complete turning away from Him by His people. He has covenanted, and He will perform.

It has taken almost an entire sermon to get to this, but this is one of the major points of the entire passage. Israel is guaranteed to always remain a people before the Lord, even when they are not His people. This is so that He might be their God.

Yehovah has spoken; it is, and it shall be – despite the conduct of the people. And this came about not because of their righteousness, nor because of their goodness. This is because, as Moses acknowledges, that is totally lacking in them. Rather...

²⁷ Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin,

In this verse is a noun found only here in the Bible, *qeshi*, or “stubbornness.” Moses’ appeal is, as has been seen again and again, based on the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The promise was made, and it could not be revoked. But the Lord promised to destroy the people and to accomplish it through Moses. Moses, instead, petitioned for all of the people – his own stubborn, wicked family.

But more, Moses petitions this because even if the Lord established the promise through him, the people of Egypt might misunderstand. Moses’ petition, then, is truly for his people, but it is more especially for the honor of the Lord. As he says...

²⁸ lest the land from which You brought us should say,

Here, the land is referred to as the people of the land. It is a poetic way of conveying the thought where he uses the singular “land,” but the verb translated as “should say” is plural. And their words...

^{28 (con’t)} “Because the LORD was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness.”

It is a double attack, first against the ability of the Lord, and secondly because of the relationship between the Lord and the people. Just as an inability to bring them into the good land He promised would mean He was not the true God, so hating His people would be contrary to His initial choice of redeeming them. In such fickleness, it would – again – mean that He was not the true God.

Moses’ words here are similar to what he will later refer to in the Song of Moses concerning the Lord’s annihilation of Israel –

*“I would have said, ‘I will dash them in pieces,
I will make the memory of them to cease from among men,’
²⁷ Had I not feared the wrath of the enemy,
Lest their adversaries should misunderstand,
Lest they should say, ‘Our hand is high;
And it is not the LORD who has done all this.’” Deuteronomy 32:26, 27*

The honor of the Lord – even to this day in human history – is tied up in the preservation of Israel. How people in the church cannot see this is, literally, astonishing. It shows that they are untrained in the word, unschooled in proper theology, and they have no understanding of the nature of God, nor of His covenant promises.

It is exactly why people teach and believe that salvation can be lost. What a miserable state we are in when we cannot rightly discern these things from passages that are so clear and obvious. Yes, there is difficulty in the study, but proper theology is – after all – hard work. For now, Moses continues...

29 Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance,

The words are precise, and they are specific. And further, they are often repeated in Scripture. Israel is the Lord's inheritance. That did not change, nor has it gone from a literal body to a spiritual body. Rather, they remain so. Paul says as much in Ephesians –

“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” Ephesians 2:11-13

Believing Gentiles are brought into the commonwealth of Israel. Even if Israel is temporarily excluded from those covenant promises, it is because of disobedience and punishment, not because of rejection. Understanding this, Moses says...

***29 (fin) whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.’**

The final words of Moses for the passage, as he lay there before the Lord and which he repeats now to the people before him, is that Israel had nothing to do with being brought out. They were weak; He was strong. They were hemmed in; He stretched out His arm.

They could not boast in their freeing themselves, and Moses' words of the entire passage show that they could not boast that the Lord did this because they were great, righteous, deserving, or better than any others.

All of those, and any other positives they could lie about to themselves – about themselves – are shown to be false. The honor of the events, the glory of what has transpired, and the majesty of the unfolding redemptive narrative belongs solely to the Lord.

With that understood, and again remembering that Israel is a template, or pattern, of the individual believer, we must remember (and never forget) that our salvation – how the events came about, the glory of what transpired, and the majesty of including us in the redemptive narrative – belongs solely to the Lord.

He did the work, and all Israel had to do was to follow. He did the work, and all we have to do is believe. No credit belongs to us for the things we have received. Rather, all of the credit, the praise, the marvel... all of it is to be directed to the One who sits on heaven's throne, and who was willing to come and redeem us from the land of bondage and toil.

Praise God for Jesus Christ who has set us free, and who will see us through to the end that He has promised when He covenanted with us. Praise God for Jesus Christ.

Closing Verse: *“For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.” Hebrews 8:7-12*

Next Week: Deuteronomy 10:1-11 *Moses is in the sweet zone, the Lord's anger is reversed...* (Two Tablets of Stone Like the First) (34th Deuteronomy Sermon)

The Lord has you exactly where He wants you. He has a good plan and purpose for you. But He also has expectations of you as He prepares you for entrance into His Land of Promise. So, follow Him and trust Him and He will do marvelous things for you and through you.

Forty Days and Forty Nights Before the Lord

And I fell down before the LORD in an emotional outburst
Forty days and forty nights, as at the first

I neither ate bread nor drank water
Because of all your sin which you committed on that day
In doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD
To provoke Him to anger in that way

For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure
With which the LORD was angry with you, as you know
To destroy you, which He could do
But the LORD listened to me at that time also

And the LORD was very angry with Aaron
-----and would have destroyed him for his crime
So I prayed for Aaron also at the same time

Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made
And burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small
-----so that calf was ended
Until it was as fine as dust
And I threw its dust into the brook that
-----from the mountain descended

“Also at Taberah and Massah and Kibroth Hattaavah
You provoked the LORD to wrath, so you did do
Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying
‘Go up and possess the land which I have given you

Then you rebelled against the commandment of the
-----LORD your God; such was your choice
And you did not believe Him nor obey His voice

You have been rebellious against the LORD, it is true
From the day that I knew you

Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD
Forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself as if dead
Because the LORD had said He would destroy you
Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said:

‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people
And Your inheritance whom You have redeemed, a deed so grand
Through Your greatness
Whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand

Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
Do not look on the stubbornness of this people let it not
-----be this way
Or on their wickedness or their sin
Lest the land from which You brought us should say...

“Because the LORD was not able to bring them to the land
Which He promised them (that would only cause a huge mess)
And because He hated them
He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness

Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance
Whom You brought out, safe from Egypt’s harm
By Your mighty power
And by Your outstretched arm

Lord God, turn our hearts to be obedient to Your word
Give us wisdom to be ever faithful to You
May we carefully heed each thing we have heard
Yes, Lord God may our hearts be faithful and true

And we shall be content and satisfied in You alone
We will follow You as we sing our songs of praise
Hallelujah to You; to us Your path You have shown
Hallelujah we shall sing to You for all of our days

Hallelujah and Amen...