

Deuteronomy

Lesson 5

Chapter 5

d) Giving of the Ten Commandments (5:1-33) (1) The Summon to Learn and Observe (5:1)

After a short explanation by the mystery writer, whom we believe to be Joshua, concerning Moses' location when he was giving this summary, the writer tells us that Moses summoned the people to learn and observe. Then we hear that Moses called the people to do just that. Chapter 5, verse 1. *"Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: 'Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing, that you may learn them and observe them carefully.'* (5:1).

This is not a new summons because the whole message in this book of Deuteronomy was delivered by Moses on the day of his one-hundred and twentieth birthday. The people were already there. The last thing Moses had said to them in the last chapter was this challenge. *"⁴⁰ So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."* (4:40).

When the passage says Moses "summoned all Israel" to hear the "statutes and the ordinances," it was all in the same context and setting. The crowd had not moved one inch. Before the word "summoned" was placed in the first Middle English translation of the Bible, its common meaning was *to notify by authority*. But by the time it was used in the first Modern English translation, the definition had added the idea of *a call to action*. It is the same today. When we are summoned, some authority has called us to act in some way. That was exactly what Moses was doing. He was notifying the Nation of Israel by the authority of the LORD to come learn and observe "carefully." Why? We must not forget that most of this crowd of adults standing before Moses had never heard the voice of the LORD when He gave the Ten Commandments forty years before; they were not born at that time. And although they had lived in the wilderness with Moses with the Ten Commandments in the Ark of the Covenant, inside the Holy of Holies, inside the Tent of Meeting, which covered the Tabernacle for forty years, all of that originally interaction had transpired long before and even back then, human nature had a tendency to forget. Moses wanted to make sure this new generation was notified and called to action to be faithful to the LORD.

(2) The Law Given to the Nation of Israel (5:2-3)

Then Moses spoke of the law given to the Nation of Israel. Verse 2. *"The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb.³ The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, with all those of us alive here today."* (5:2-3).

Because we were not there on that journey with the Israelites, we often struggle to identify places being mentioned. Because of that, in order to locate the places, we often have to glean from tidbits of information as they drip from the lips of the writers and piece them together to make a map. This passage is one of those drips. Here are some things we know. We know that Israel was camped at the foot of Mount Sinai for forty years. We know that Moses climbed Mount Sinai to meet with the LORD. We know that Moses was in the cleft of a rock when the LORD allowed him to see His back as He passed by Moses. But we also know that it was at Horeb where Moses saw the LORD in the burning bush and heard Him speak. We know that Moses was caring for some of his father-in-law's sheep at the time he saw the burning bush. The bush was at a place called Horeb. It

could not have been too far up the mountain for Moses to climb to meet the LORD and subsequently leave the sheep unattended. We know that when the nation of Israel followed Moses out of Egypt, Moses led them back to Horeb where he had met the LORD for the first time several months before, before being sent by the LORD to retrieve the nation from Egypt. But we also know that the camp of Israel was at the foot of Mount Sinai. Therefore, Horeb had to be a specific location named somewhere near Mount Sinai. Horeb was the place of Moses' calling and it was the place where the LORD delivered the Ten Commandments to the nation. Then, we can deduct that the LORD was up on Mount Sinai and the people were at its foot in that place called Horeb.

Moses said, "*The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, with all those of us alive here today.*" Actually, the LORD did make the covenant with the fathers of most of the people standing in front of him because most of them had not been born at the time. However, that is not what Moses was saying about "the covenant with our fathers." He meant the Ten Commandments were not given to the forefathers such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all those fathers who lived and died prior to the Exodus. When Moses said the LORD made the covenant "*with us, with all those of us alive here today,*" he meant all of the nation of Israel who had come out of Egypt with him, young and old, man, woman, boy and girl, all of those who were on the Promised Land journey. He also meant that the Ten Commandments given forty years before were still just as valid to the nation as when they were originally given. We must not forget, when Jacob and his sons moved to Egypt, they were but seventy in number. They were not a nation, they were just a family. But in Egypt, for four-hundred and thirty years, the family grew into a nation. These Ten Commandments were given to the nation, not the original family.

(a) The Voice of the LORD (5:4-5a)

Forty years before, the nation, fresh out of Egypt actually heard the voice of the LORD. Moses said the following as a reminder. "*The LORD spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire, ^{5a} while I was standing between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD;....*" (5:4-5a).

The LORD had spoken to Moses from the midst of the fire in the burning bush. So, too, the LORD spoke to the Nation of Israel from the fire burning on Mount Sinai. Moses was standing just up the slope of the mountain where the people could see him and hear the LORD. At that time, Moses had told the people to hear the LORD and the LORD did not disappoint.

(b) The Fear of the People(5:5b)

In fact, the fire of the LORD caused a great fear in the people. Verse 5b. "...*for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.*" (5:5b).

We can imagine in our minds eye being there at the foot of the mountain. We would all be crowded together. Waiting. Then the fire from the mountain began to move down the slope coming nearer and nearer. We were called to be there. We could not run. Fear would have gripped us all.

(3) The Law Given by the LORD of Israel (5:5c-21)

And then we heard the law given by the LORD to Israel. Listen as Moses repeated what the LORD said. Verse 5c. "^{5c}*He said,*⁶ *I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.* ⁷ *You shall have no other gods before Me.* ⁸ *You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.* ⁹ *You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,* ¹⁰ *but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.* ¹¹ *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.* ¹² *Observe the sabbath day to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.* ¹³ *Six days you shall labor and do all your work,* ¹⁴ *but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so*

that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day. ¹⁶ Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and that it may go well with you on the land which the LORD your God gives you. ¹⁷ You shall not murder. ¹⁸ You shall not commit adultery. ¹⁹ You shall not steal. ²⁰ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. ²¹ You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, and you shall not desire your neighbor's house, his field or his male servant or his female servant, his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.” (5:5c-21).

There they had it. Moses quoted the Covenant that the LORD had made with the Nation of Israel forty years before. It was just as important to the LORD forty years later as it was on the day He first delivered it to the nation. We need not explain it. It is as clear to us as it was to them. It was the Ten Commandments of the LORD, to be learned, observed and followed.

3. Recounting the Reaction to the Ten Commandments

a) Remembering the Assembly (5:22a)

After recounting the reaction of the people to the Ten Commandments, he reminded the people that the LORD spoke these words to the assembly of the nation of Israel. Verse 22. *“These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly at the mountain from the midst of the fire, of the cloud and of the thick gloom, with a great voice, and He added no more.”* (5:22a).

We have already spoken about the mountain and the fire. We have not mentioned the cloud and the thick gloom. We are thankful to Moses for setting the scene. We are also thankful for Moses telling us that the people heard the great voice of the LORD. It had to be booming and loud. It had to be loud enough for even the deaf man to hear. But what strikes me the most is the final words, “He added no more.” What Moses just said to the people with him in the Plains of Moab was all that the LORD said to the people forty years before at Horeb on the side of Mount Sinai. That was it. It was the full covenant. It was every word of the covenant. It was all they needed to get them started of the laws required by their LORD.

b) Remembering the Tablets of Stone (5:22b)

Moses then reminded the people that the Covenant called the Ten Commandments were written on tablets of stone. Verse 22b. *“He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me.”* (5:22b).

The LORD wrote them on the first stones although Moses would later break them and the LORD would make Moses carve them again himself. We often see a shortened version of the Ten Commandments on plaques, carvings and paper, but on the original stones, all of what the LORD said to the people was written on the stones by the LORD. Not one word was changed or left out. Not one word was added.

c) Remembering the Fear of the Leaders (5:23-25)

And exactly as recorded in the book of Exodus written forty years before Moses delivered this message in the Plains of Moab, Moses was remembering the fear of the leaders. Verse 23. *“And when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. ²⁴ You said, ‘Behold, the LORD our God has shown us His glory and His greatness, and we have heard His voice from the midst of the fire; we have seen today that God speaks with man, yet he lives. ²⁵ Now then why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die.’”* (5:23-25).

The leaders of Israel were deathly afraid of the LORD because of the way He presented Himself in the fire and with the sound of His voice. In the last sentence the elders said, *“For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, then we will die.”*

May we put this in perspective. At that time, just over three months out of Egypt, there were 603,550 men twenty years of age and older standing on the side of that mountain. That number did not include all the women and children if they were there too. But if they were not at the mountain

side, it would not have mattered, the booming voice of the LORD would have been heard for miles and miles ricocheting off the mountains surrounding Mount Sinai. The women and the children would have heard the voice of the LORD and the Ten Commandments too if they were still in the camp. Be that as it may, the fire of the LORD that the people saw that day was so great that they believed it could have consumed them. Think about that. When the LORD came down the mountain in the fire to speak to the nation, they must have felt the heat burning hot against their skin though their clothing. It caused them to be fearful for their lives. In addition, the voice of the LORD was so great that they feared that His voice alone could have killed them. We have all been around where sound systems are blaring so loud that our hearts seem to stop beating. Surely the voice of the LORD had that same effect on the people. They were so afraid that they complained to Moses.

(1) Acknowledging the Voice of God (5:26)

But the people of Israel still acknowledged that it was the voice of God. Verse 26. *“For who is there of all flesh who has heard the voice of the living God speaking from the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived?”* (5:26).

The people were surprised that they had heard the voice of the living God and lived. Rightly so, they questioned if any other people throughout all of time had ever heard the voice of the living God and lived. Adam had. So had Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob. But the LORD did not speak to them in such flames and volume. But they were individuals. Had any other group of people ever heard? Not recorded in our Scripture.

(2) Shirking the Voice of God (5:27)

The fear of the people was so great that Moses reminded them of their shirking at the voice of God. Verse 27. *“Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do it.”* (5:27).

The people never wanted to hear or experience the voice of God again. They would rather that Moses would speak to God and relay the messages and instructions to them.

d) Remembering the Reaction of the LORD (5:28-30)

Then Moses recounted remembering the reaction of the LORD. Verse 28. *“The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken.”*²⁹ *“Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!”*³⁰ *“Go, say to them, ‘Return to your tents.’”* (5:28-30).

When the people begged Moses to be the intermediary between them and the voice of the LORD, the LORD heard it and agreed. Moses remembered how the LORD allowed all the people to return to their tents. But there is an interesting thing in Moses' words that the LORD said to him. *“Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever!”*

The LORD knew better. He knew the people would not always fear him and keep His commandments. He knew what was going to happen in about a year when He had led them to Kadesh-barnea and they refused to keep His command to go in and take the Promised Land. The LORD God is all knowing. He knew. *“Oh that they had such a heart,”* but they did not.

(1) Observe the Law and Pass On (5:31)

Moses then reminded the people that the LORD told him to stand by Him and He would teach Moses all the commands, statutes and judgments. Verse 31. *“But as for you, stand here by Me, that I may speak to you all the commandments and the statutes and the judgments which you shall teach them, that they may observe them in the land which I give them to possess.”* (5:31).

And so, forty years before, Moses was faithful to stand by the LORD, listen and learn. He was also faithful to pass on to the people the laws, commands, statutes and judgments they needed to observe.

4. Observe the Law and Press On (5:32)

But the LORD was clear. The people were not to just to pass on the law, they were to press on the law. Verse 32. *“So you shall observe to do just as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right or to the left.”* (5:32).

The law of the LORD was the law of the LORD and the LORD’s people were not to deviate from the law of the LORD at all. They were to stay on the straight path of its guidance, never turning to the right or to the left.

5. Observe the Law and Possess On (5:33)

The people were to pass on the law, press on the law and that would allow them to possess the land based on the law. Verse. 33. *“You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may be well with you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess.”* (5:33).

The gift of the Promised Land was in front of them. All they had to do was abide by the law of the LORD and press on to possess the land. Thirty nine years before, in the second year out of Egypt, the nation had failed. Now, forty years after coming out of Egypt, it was time to cross the Jordan River and possess the part of the Promised Land they were headed to years before when they failed to follow the law of the LORD.

Chapter 6

6. Obey God and Prosper (6:1-3)

Picking up in chapter 6, Moses, in the Plains of Moab, reminded the people of Israel to obey God and prosper. Verse 1. *“Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it,² so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.³ O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.”* (6:1-3).

That land was just about fifteen miles away on the west side of the Jordan River. It was everything that the LORD promised Israel it would be forty years before. It awaited this new generation of this nation if she would only obey God, then she would prosper in the land.

a) Moses’s Command from the LORD (6:4-9)

For that new generation, listening to Moses in the Plains of Moab, Moses had a command for them from the LORD. Verse 4. *“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.⁶ These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart.⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”* (6:4-9).

Moses’ words, “*The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!*” was an acknowledgement of the unity of God. His words “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might,*” was and acknowledgment of the love of God in the hearts of the people. These two commands were to be taught to all children down through all the ages to come. It all had to do with the supreme majesty of the LORD God.

One day, about 1539 years after Moses gave this command to the nation in the Plains of Moab, the scribes would ask Jesus to tell them what He considered the essence of the law (Matthew 22:34-40). Jesus quoted the words He told Moses to say here in Deuteronomy 6:5. In the book of Matthew Jesus' words were recorded as follows. "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." (Matthew 22:37).

Most certainly, we have all heard of how some sects of Jewish people tie this Scripture on their arms with bands and some hang this Scriptures in a little box dangling between their eyes. Some have it hanging on the door post of their homes in a little brass scroll container. That is not exactly what the LORD meant here. He meant for the people to read it, learn it, know it by heart and keep it in their minds always. But if they needed to make a sign and put it on the door post of their home or attach it to the gate of their property, that was fine too. It was not for them only, it was the world to see Whom they belonged to and what they stood for.

b) Moses' Warning about Forgetting the LORD

Moses knew that the people he had dealt with the last forty years had short memories. He warned the people about forgetting the LORD and what He had done for them and what He would continue to do for them. Verse 10. *"Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, ¹¹ and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, ¹² then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. ¹³ You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. ¹⁴ You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, ¹⁵ for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth."* (6:10-15).

The warning was severe. If the people forgot the LORD, He would kindled His anger against them and wipe them from the face of the earth if they broke His commandment and followed other gods. We must stop here to explain what that meant. The LORD had an everlasting promise with the nation of Israel. It will be the premiere nation of the world one day during the LORD's thousand year reign on earth which is still to come in our future. Therefore, the LORD would never wipe the entire nation of Israel off the face of the earth. Rather, here Moses must be directing this warning to each individual person. Any Jew who worshiped other gods or forgot the LORD would be wiped off the earth. We will see in the books of Kings along with some of the prophets that the LORD did just that with the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. He did it again with the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 BC. In both cases, 90% of the Jews were killed, but a tenth, a remnant, who loved the LORD God and stayed true to Him were saved although they were taken into exile.

c) Moses' Reminder about Testing the LORD (6:16-19)

Moses then reminded the nation there on the Plains of Moab about the time some of them tested the LORD and His commandments in a place they called Massah. Verse 16. *"You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah. ¹⁷ You should diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. ¹⁸ You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give your fathers, ¹⁹ by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken."* (6:16-19).

What did the nation of Israel do at Massah? In Exodus 17, the new nation of Israel was three months out of Egypt and had just arrived at the land connected to Horeb and Mount Sinai. They had arrived at the place they could rest for a while. There they were thirsty and there was no water. They had settled in the place and they called it *Rephidim* which means *resting place*. The people of Israel gave it that name because it was a safe place for them to rest and reorganize after the hard

three month journey out of Egypt. But there was no water. The people began to complain against Moses. Here we will pick up with the story in Exodus 17:2.

Exodus 17:2 *Therefore the people quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water that we may drink.” And Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?”³ But the people thirsted there for water; and they grumbled against Moses and said, “Why, now, have you brought us up from Egypt, to kill us and our children and ^bour livestock with thirst?”⁴ So Moses cried out to the LORD, saying, “What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me.”⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pass before the people and take with you some of the elders of Israel; and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶ Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb; and you shall strike the rock, and water will come out of it, that the people may drink.” And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.⁷ He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the LORD, saying, “Is the LORD among us, or not?” (Exodus 17:2-7).*

The word “Massah” means *tested or tried*. Moses also called the place “Meribah.” It means *contention*. Moses gave the same place both names. It was a place of testing God and being continuous with God.

The reason Moses brought up Massah was because he was warning them not to do what they had done in the past. Never again should they test God and contend with Him. Rather, they should follow His commands, trust Him and watch the wonders which He would do for them.

d) Moses' Answer for Trusting the LORD (6:20 – 25)

Moses was a wonderful leader and he really did understand human nature. He knew that sometime in the future, some generation of Jews would question the reason it was necessary to follow all the commands of the LORD. It would be like teenagers questioning the principles that their parents live by. Moses gave the answer for why the LORD’s commands should be trusted. Verse 20. *“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the Lord our God commanded you?’²¹ then you shall say to your son, ‘We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us from Egypt with a mighty hand.²² Moreover, the Lord showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household;²³ He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land which He had sworn to our fathers.²⁴ So the Lord commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always and for our survival, as it is today.²⁵ It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.”* (6:20-25).

In essence, Moses told the nation to tell their children throughout the coming generations that when the people of the nation of Israel were faithful to the LORD and trusted His commands completely, the LORD would be their Caretaker for good and for survival. Trusting Him was righteousness. Righteousness was trusting His commands.

In our chapter 7, Moses will give the Nation of Israel specific warnings about how they are to interact with the Canaanite tribes whom they will encounter just beyond the Jordan River. We will leave that to the next lesson.