

Deut. 27:1 ¶ And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day.

This chapter begins with Moses being joined by the elders of Israel, the older men who had more to share in the way of learning from life experiences. They presented a united front in encouraging the people to keep all of the commandments that would be shared with them that day.

Deut. 27:2 And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister:

Deut. 27:3 And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee.

Deut. 27:4 Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaister them with plaister.

This instruction presupposes that the people will cross over Jordan to begin taking possession of the land God is giving them as He promised their fathers; it's another "when" statement, not an "if" statement. They are being instructed to gather some huge stones and coat them with plaster (cement, mortar made from lime). This would facilitate their being able to write the words of the law on the stones. I guess they would write on it while wet and then it would harden to preserve the writing—like writing in wet cement. The stones are to be set up at Mount Ebal (north of Shechem) as a constant reminder to the people of their commitment to obey God.

"the words of this law" – To inscribe all that Moses had presented in the last several chapters would have required a large amount of space to inscribe it. I tend to think the focus was on the ten commandments. I am reminded how Jesus stated that the whole of the law was actually embraced in just two commandments.

Matthew 22:37-40 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

However much was included, it was intended to represent the whole of what Moses had instructed them according to God's revelation to him and serve as a reminder of their commitment to serve Him in obedience.

Deut. 27:5 And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.

Deut. 27:6 Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God:

Deut. 27:7 And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God.

At the same place they are to build an altar of natural stones to YHWH; they are not to use tools of any sort in gathering the stones. They are then to offer burnt

offerings and peace offerings as they share a meal of fellowship and rejoicing before YHWH for His provision. God takes pleasure in giving us pleasure and enjoys fellowship with His people.

Deut. 27:8 And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly.

Moses is emphasizing the importance of inscribing the laws on the plastered stones very plainly to ensure that there was no misunderstanding of the instruction.

This is another reason that I think verse by verse teaching of the word of God is so important. It supplies context for the listener and provides more of a safeguard against the teacher being successful in attempting to dilute the teaching with his own opinion. We are to follow the commands of God—not of men. For the same reason it also emphasizes the importance of becoming familiar with the word personally through daily contact so that you are able to exercise discernment when listening to someone else teach.

Deut. 27:9 And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God.

Deut. 27:10 Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

Sometimes it seems like Moses is repeating himself ad nauseum. Since these words are inspired by the Holy Spirit...

2Peter 1:20-21 "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

...I think this continued repetition is another evidence of the love of God. It is almost as if He is begging His people to trust Him and follow Him in faith and obedience.

I would assume that Moses was the spokesperson as the spiritual leaders, the priests and Levites, gathered around him as an affirmation of their agreement with his instructions.

Again, Moses declares that they are to mark this day in their memory as a day of commitment to God as LORD, to obey His commandments (spiritual laws) and statutes (civil laws) as revealed to them by Moses.

Deut. 27:11 ¶ And Moses charged the people the same day, saying,

Deut. 27:12 These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin:

Deut. 27:13 And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

Moses goes on to instruct the people regarding a public rehearsal of the blessings God promises His people for their obedience and the curses they will suffer

should they choose to disobey. Mount Gerizim was separated from Mount Ebal by a narrow valley. Specific tribes were designated to declare God's blessings from Mount Gerizim and curses from Mount Ebal. The tribes on Mount Gerizim were to be Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Joseph and Benjamin. Those on Mount Ebal were to be Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali. JFB pointed out that those on Mount Gerizim represented the children of Leah and Rachel, while those on Mount Ebal predominantly represented the children of Zilpah and Bilhah. David Guzik noted that this location is in the geographic middle of Israel. Adam Clarke noted how the physical characteristics were appropriate for their designated purpose.

"On all hands it is allowed that *Gerizim* abounds with springs, gardens, and orchards, and that it is covered with a beautiful verdure, while *Ebal* is as *naked* and barren as a rock."

Note: Joshua 8:30-35 records that the people followed these instructions as given by Moses.

Deut. 27:14 And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice,

This verse makes it sound like the Levites are to declare all the curses and blessings and all the men of Israel are to answer "Amen" (so be it) to each one.

As we move into this next section of verses, we should note that "to curse" is to pronounce evil against.

Deut. 27:15 Cursed *be* the man that maketh *any* graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth *it* in a secret *place*. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen. I thought about listing all the other instances in which each of these instructions had been given, but decided against it. Suffice it to say that this one is repeated several times. It is one of the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:4 "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:"

Observations:

- The idol is a product of man's craftsmanship. How could they possibly think it capable to any action to their benefit or detriment?
- Idols are disgusting to YHWH.
- This instruction adds a warning against worshipping an idol in secret. It is recognition of man's propensity to want to maintain acceptable appearances through hypocrisy. Jesus directed one of His most public displays of anger in His tirade against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (see Matthew 23).

Deut. 27:16 Cursed *be* he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

The Hebrew for "setteth light" defines it as "hold in contempt...lightly esteem." Again, this is directly connected to one of the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:12 "Honour thy father and thy mother:"

Deut. 27:17 Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.

The NLT gets to the heart of the instruction: "Cursed is anyone who steals property from a neighbor by moving a boundary marker." Another one of the Ten Commandments is directly connected to this curse.

Exodus 20:15 "Thou shalt not steal."

Deut. 27:18 Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This is one of those statements that is directed at the sin nature of man. To mislead a blind man is one of those actions that one would think would be contemptible in any society. There is nothing to be gained in the act. It can only be done as a result of a sadistic spirit that takes pleasure in the pain or misfortune of someone else.

Deut. 27:19 Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This statement speaks to denying justice to those in need and without influence—the stranger, orphan, and widow—those with the least resources to defend themselves. It almost falls into the category of the previous one, except that there is a more obvious possibility of being motivated by greed rather than just enjoying someone else's pain.

Deut. 27:20 Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen.

As disgusting as it sounds, this instruction would be more necessary in a society that accepts polygamous marriages. We know that God intended there to be one man for one woman. As with any area in which we disregard God's will, the consequences that result far outweigh the perceived pleasure in doing so. This would again connect to the commandment to honor father and mother.

Deut. 27:21 Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This makes reference to an extremely disgusting practice. It has always boggled my mind that thoughts of participating in such actions would ever be entertained by humans. The NIV Commentary made note that the Hittites used this horrible practice "to bring people into union with their gods."

Much to my dismay and giving evidence to how immoral our society is today, the following article was found at www.lonestartimes.com from 2006.

"Apparently Rep. David Linsky is a real dog lover. You see, the Democratic state legislator wants to legalize sex with animals in the commonwealth of Massachusetts."

I was also horrified to read recently that Florida (where I live) is just now trying to pass legislation that will outlaw such actions. It is currently one of sixteen

states that permit such perversion. Following is a quote from www.tcpalm.com on March 10, 2009.

"The act of bestiality is a step closer to becoming illegal in Florida now that a Senate committee voted to slap a third-degree felony charge on anyone who has sex with animals. Florida is one of only 16 states that still permit bestiality – a fact that animal-rights activist and Sunrise Sen. Nan Rich learned to her horror when a Panhandle man three years ago was suspected of accidentally asphyxiating a family goat with which he was copulating."

Deut. 27:22 Cursed *be* he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This instruction stands out since this practice was not forbidden in the early history of man. Obviously, there had to be intermarriage among siblings in establishing a population of people on planet earth through Adam and Eve, and again after the flood through the descendants of Noah. Of prominent note is the fact that Sarah and Abraham had the same father.

Genesis 20:11-12 "And Abraham said, Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet indeed **she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother;** and she became my wife."

By the time of this instruction, however, it would seem that the gene pool was in need of the protection provided by this instruction in preventing physical and health defects.

Deut. 27:23 Cursed *be* he that lieth with his mother in law. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This is another instruction against the lust of the flesh, this time against a man's wife's mother. The lust of the flesh certainly figures prominently in many of these instructions.

Deut. 27:24 Cursed *be* he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This curse is directed toward the coward, one who would attack and beat his neighbor when there was no one around to help the victim or witness his cowardness.

Deut. 27:25 Cursed *be* he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen.

The fact that a man will agree to murder an innocent person for financial gain is again a testament to the vile sin nature of man. I couldn't help but think of Paul's words to Timothy.

1Timothy 6:10 "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Deut. 27:26 Cursed *be* he that confirmeth not *all* the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

This instruction is basically a statement of cursing against anyone who does not agree to abide by every one of these instructions. They aren't just to give lip service; they are to live their lives according to each and every one of these laws.