

Deuteronomy 10:1-11
Two Tablets of Stone Like the First
December 27, 2020

“At that time the LORD said to me, ‘Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of wood. ² And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark.’

³ “So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. ⁴ And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. ⁵ Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the LORD commanded me.”

⁶ (Now the children of Israel journeyed from the wells of Bene Jaakan to Moserah, where Aaron died, and where he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his stead. ⁷ From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of rivers of water. ⁸ At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day. ⁹ Therefore Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God promised him.)

¹⁰ “As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights; the LORD also heard me at that time, and the LORD chose not to destroy you. ¹¹ Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, begin your journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.’

My friend Will Groben got his Master’s Degree at Dallas Theological Seminary in biblical Hebrew and Greek. I remember him emailing me once and saying how complicated the simple Greek word *eis* was to translate. In fact, in his email, he said that he felt like he had broken his brain, and I believe the word *eis* was a large part of that.

I felt bad for him. A broken brain is a difficult thing. Can’t do much good until the brain gets fixed. I broke my brain over this passage we are looking at today. It happens from time to time. There are things that are so complicated, it is hard to think them through.

This is especially true with verses 6 and 7. They seem to have absolutely nothing to do with the surrounding text, and – on the surface – they seem completely contradictory to anyone who has read the parallel passages in Numbers. Indeed, that is what Albert Barnes said about them –

“After this we have now four verses, (Deuteronomy 10:6, Deuteronomy 10:7, Deuteronomy 10:8, and Deuteronomy 10:9), which not only have no kind of connection with the verses before and after them, but also, as they stand in the present Hebrew text, directly contradict that very text; and the two first of these verses have not, in our Hebrew text, the least connection with the two last of them.” Albert Barnes

Is this so?

*Text Verse: Every word of God is pure;
He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Proverbs 30:5*

If Albert Barnes is right, then what we have is not the word of God. He gives several corrective possibilities to restore your confidence in the word. However, I would suggest to you that he is just plain wrong. So would the late scholar Charles Ellicott.

I was grateful to read Ellicott’s commentary, as it saved me oodles of time and an even greater broken brain. His insights were well received, even if I didn’t go with his conclusions. While typing, I did say out loud to the Lord that I can’t wait to thank Ellicott someday when I get the chance.

How can I do that if he is already dead? Because death is just an insignificant blip on the way to glory. For those who have come to Christ, they should be confident that this is true. And how does such a change come about? Well, a portion of it is found in our verses today.

There is a great and sure hope that we possess, and pictures of it are indeed found in these verses. They are a small, but tasty delight found in the greater tapestry that we call the Holy Bible. Great 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. The Two Tablets (verses 1-5)

The coming verses are closely connected to what ended our verses in the previous passage. There, it said –

“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.” Deuteronomy 9:25-29

In connection with that event, but just prior to it, came the words that open our passage today. In other words, verses 10:1-3 are logically followed by verses 9:25-29. Then verses 10:4, 5 follow that. Understanding the chronology, we begin now with...

“At that time

ba’eth hahiv – “in the time, the that.” These words set the tone for what follows. It is speaking of the time at Horeb, as was noted in verse 9:8 –

“Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry enough with you to have destroyed you.” Deuteronomy 9:8

What is presented here is not a chronological account, but one that is rhetorical. It takes what is more precisely recorded in Exodus and lays it out in a short synopsis of what took place without regard to the order in which the events occurred.

^{1 (con’t)} the LORD said to me,

As just noted, this logically precedes what was said at the end of the previous chapter. Without getting bogged down in the chronology which has already been provided, the main focus is on these few lines of historical narrative. Now, the Lord says...

^{1 (con’t)} ‘Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain

The word “stone” is plural – “tablets of stones like the first.” The words here follow after the narrative of Exodus 34. There it said –

“And the LORD said to Moses, ‘Cut two tablets of stone like the first ones, and I will write on these tablets the words that were on the first tablets which you broke. ² So be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself to Me there on the top of the mountain. ³ And no man shall come up with you, and let no man be seen throughout all the mountain; let neither flocks nor herds feed before that mountain.’

⁴ So he cut two tablets of stone like the first ones. Then Moses rose early in the morning and went up Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him; and he took in his hand the two tablets of stone.” Exodus 34:1-4

There is a difference between the first set of stones and the second that cannot go unnoted. The first set of stones was made by God. As it says in Exodus 32 –

“Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.” Exodus 32:16

The first set of tablets were made by God, and the words on them were written out by God as well. However, for this second set of tablets, the Lord instructs Moses to hew them and bring them up to Him. As these will be “like the first,” they bear the same appearance.

They will also be used for the same purpose as well. The fact that the Lord asks Moses to make the tablets, rather than being made by Him, shows that these are to be considered just as acceptable for the bearing of the law. Otherwise, He would have again made them Himself. Along with hewing the tablets, the Lord says...

¹ (con't) and make yourself an ark of wood.

Like the number of times Moses ascended the mountain, these words provide a second difficulty. Is this a temporary ark for keeping the tablets until the actual Ark of the Testimony is made, or is this simply a reminder that the tablets are to be set in the ark once it is completed?

What seems most probable is that only one ark was made. Verse 5 seems to indicate this. And so, what seems likely is that the tablets were made by Moses, he carried them up to the Lord. The Lord gave His instruction and wrote out the Ten Commandments on the tablets. Eventually, the Ark of the Covenant was made by the artificers, and at that time, the tablets were placed in the ark –

“And it came to pass in the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, that the tabernacle was raised up. ¹⁸ So Moses raised up the tabernacle, fastened its sockets, set up its boards, put in its bars, and raised up its pillars. ¹⁹ And he spread out the tent over the tabernacle and put the covering of the tent on top of it, as the LORD had commanded Moses. ²⁰ He took the Testimony and put it into the ark, inserted the poles through the rings of the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark. ²¹ And he brought the ark into the tabernacle, hung up the veil of the covering, and partitioned off the ark of the Testimony, as the LORD had commanded Moses.” Exodus 40:17-21

If there was only one ark made, then what Moses is presenting here is simply a snapshot of the events to remind the people of the things that occurred without regard to the lesser details, the specific time frames, or the actual chronology. This will become more evident when we come to the events of verses 6-9.

The intent, then, is to highlight Israel’s times of disobedience, the mercies they received, and the longsuffering of the Lord throughout their time in the wilderness.

For now, the narrative of the tablets hewn out by Moses continues, as he recounts the words of the Lord to him...

² And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets,

It would appear that these tablets were of lesser quality. If the Lord made the first two, there would have been the perfection of the Lord’s handiwork on them – both in the tablets and in the writing. However, one would think the tablets made by the hands of man would bear the imperfections of man, and only the words would reflect the perfect character of the Lord.

But as noted, it is obvious the Lord feels both sets were suitable for the purpose of conveying His words, regardless as to how the tablets themselves came to be. It is the words, then, that are considered by the Lord to have the importance above all else.

And there is the truth that the stones, though shaped through man, still came from the Lord originally anyway. It is His creation, and so the stones are His, regardless as to how they came to reflect the words which bear His moral standards. Concerning the first set that bore that moral standard, He said to Moses...

² (con't) which you broke;

Moses, who stands as representative of the law, is said to be the one who broke the tablets. The Lord reminds him of this. The Lord has Moses make a new set of tablets that will replace the first...

² (con't) and you shall put them in the ark.’

Moses will receive back the tablets, and it is he who is to deposit them in the ark. In obedience to the words of the Lord, it says...

³ “So I made an ark of acacia wood,

Three possibilities can be supposed from these words. Either 1) a temporary ark was made to hold the tablets; 2) Moses had Bezalel make the wooden part of the ark, having it ready for his descent from the mountain; or 3) Moses is simply speaking out events in an order for the people to understand that what he was instructed was accomplished.

Based on Exodus 40:20 (cited earlier), the last option seems the most likely. Moses is simply relaying the events in accord with the word of the Lord without regard to set chronology. It is no different than when it later says that Solomon built the temple in

Jerusalem. The meaning is that he is the one who instructed and oversaw the building of it, just as it is here with Moses and the ark.

What is of note is that because of how the events are relayed here, Mosaic authorship is absolutely certain. Anyone else would have entered the words as they had read them from Exodus, not wanting to confuse the narrative and diminish the reliability of their cause in the process of conveying it. Moses, however, would be unconcerned with such things. For now, he next notes...

^{3 (con't)} **hewed two tablets of stone like the first,**

The ark is mentioned first, followed by the hewing of the stones. And then, thirdly, Moses says...

^{3 (con't)} **and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand.**

With the stones prepared, Moses (the law) ascended the mountain with the stones in his hand – meaning in His possession. Upon ascending the mountain, Moses next speaks of the work of the Lord...

⁴ **And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing,**

As noted in verse 2, it is the Lord who wrote on the tablets, despite the fact that they were hewn out by Moses, or someone Moses appointed to do it. Everything that was written on the first set was again written by the Lord on the second set. It was...

^{4 (con't)} **the Ten Commandments,**

asheret ha'davarim – “the Ten Words,” meaning the commandments...

^{4 (con't)} **which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly;**

This was recorded in Exodus 20, and then it was repeated to Israel on the banks of the Jordan in Deuteronomy 5, reminding them of what occurred, even before the eyes of the people. Those same words were inscribed on the tablets...

^{4 (con't)} **and the LORD gave them to me.**

Like before, the Lord gave the tablets to Moses (the law). The first time he received them, he came down the mountain and cast them out of his hands, breaking them. The second time, however...

⁵ **Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made;**

As the first time, Moses descended with the tablets, but this time, they were tablets he had made, and upon which the Lord had written. And this time, instead of casting them out of his hands, he secreted them away in the ark, as he then notes, “which I had made.”

An important point is that the timing of an event in the Hebrew is based on the context of what is occurring. Thus, the words “had made” depend on what Moses is referring to. As he is speaking almost forty years after the event, it is in relation to what he had once instructed those many years ago.

In other words, Moses instructed Bezalel to make the ark according to the word of the Lord. That was done, and so for Moses to say, “I put the tablets in the ark which I had made,” could have been some time after descending the mountain. Hence, as we saw earlier, it is probable that only one ark was made, and he is referring to that. With this in mind, he then says...

^{5 (con't)} **and there they are, just as the LORD commanded me.”**

The tablets were placed in the ark, and they remained in there, even until the day where Israel sat on the banks of the Jordan, receiving the words of Moses in preparation for their entry through the Jordan and into the land of promise.

Further, they are even recorded as having remained in the ark hundreds of years later, at the time when Solomon built the temple, as is seen in 1 Kings 8:9.

Ia. Pictures of Christ

With varying detail, what Moses has said in these first five verses was also detailed in Exodus 34:1-4, which we cited earlier.

There are two sets of tablets that were made. The first were by the Lord and written on by the Lord. The second were hewn by Moses and the same words as at first were written on them by the Lord. Therefore, what is written on the tablets, meaning the basis for the law, is what calls for the main attention.

The law is on both, but one set is broken while the other is secreted away in an ark. In this, we have a picture of Adam and of Christ. This first set of tablets pictures Adam. The first tablets were made by God and engraved by God. As it said in Exodus 32

—
“Now the tablets were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God engraved on the tablets.” Exodus 32:16

Adam was created by the Lord God (Genesis 2:7) and he was given the law by Him (Genesis 2:16, 17). However, Adam broke that law (Genesis 3:6).

The second set pictures Christ. They were made by Moses (Deuteronomy 10:1), but the words were still engraved by the Lord (Deuteronomy 10:2). Jesus came through man – He was not directly created by God as Adam was. Rather, His body was prepared by God throughout the history of man under law. It is reflective of the words of Hebrews 10 –

“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. ⁶In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come— In the volume of the book it is written of Me— To do Your will, O God.’” Hebrews 10:5-7

Christ came to do the will of God. He was born under God’s law. Thus, the second tablets were also written by the Lord.

In contrast to Adam who broke God’s law (pictured by Moses destroying the first set of tablets), Jesus never broke it. Rather, to fit the pattern of Christ, Moses secreted them away in – as it says – the ark of acacia wood. Remembering the typology of that from Exodus shows us Christ’s humanity.

The acacia, or *shittim* wood, is the base material for the ark. Its heartwood is dark reddish-brown and is beautiful when sanded and polished.

That pictures Christ’s humanity. He, a Son of Adam from the Middle East, would bear the same general color as the wood. As *shittim* is an incorruptible wood, it pictures His incorruptible nature. Though a Man, He never sinned.

Further, *shittim* is a thorny tree, its name coming from a root, *shotet*, signifying scourging thorns. The very wood testifies to the trials Christ would endure in His passion for the reconciliation of man.

It is into this ark that the unbroken tablets were deposited, signifying Christ’s perfect fulfillment and embodiment of the law. On the top was placed the mercy seat, and the picture of the work of Christ as our place of propitiation before God is then seen.

Considering what we have here, it is evident that God’s law is permanent – the same law was inscribed on both sets of tablets. However, being permanent, they can still be broken.

In the first, God knew Moses would break them, picturing the breaking of the law by Adam (and all in Adam). However, the second set was unbroken. In this, it reveals Christ, and all who are in Christ. It shows us that sin comes through the law, but for those in Christ, they are no longer under law, but under grace. Sin is no longer imputed to those who have moved from Adam to Jesus.

*Tablets of stone which bring words of condemnation
Words which prick my very soul
How can I live up to such a standard? I see only damnation
How can my name ever be written on heaven’s scroll?*

*The words stand against me and show me my sin
They were meant to bring life, but only death do they bring
The man who lives by them, who is he? We are all done in!
From where can life come? Show me such a spring*

*So, has ended the strife! I now fully see
God Himself has condemned sin in the flesh, through Jesus
Marvelous words of life! To God the glory be!
Such a marvelous thing He has done for us!*

II. Inheritances of Water (verses 6 & 7)

We now arrive at a couple verses that are probably the most difficult of all to be found in Deuteronomy. So much is this the case, that they are claimed to be incorrect, contradictory, later insertions, and so on. If they were later insertions, they would not be inserted in such a difficult manner. So that can be tossed out on its ear.

As being incorrect, the Samaritan Pentateuch claims to be the correct text, realigning things as they supposedly should be. But then why would someone intentionally twist up the Hebrew text? Rather, it appears the Samaritan purposefully changed the text to avoid the difficulties. Further, the Greek matches the Hebrew.

Assuming there are contradictions is as simple as assuming that one's opinion as to why these verses are written as they are is correct, and that there are – in fact – contradictions.

It could be as simple as that Moses is trying to make a spiritual point concerning a particular issue, and he is doing it by purposefully making the text overtly complicated in the process.

One fact to note is that the other historical writings in Deuteronomy are in the first person, "We did this, and we did that." However, here they are in the third person, "The children of Israel did this, and the children of Israel did that."

Moses is obviously tying in what occurred in the reception of the tablets with what he is speaking of now. This is especially so because he will return to the time at Horeb for verses 8-11.

The NKJV makes verses 6-9 parenthetical, but this is not correct. Only 6 and 7 are. From there, the narrative returns to the time at Horeb. Because these two verses are parenthetical, we have to try to determine why this diversion is being made. He begins it with...

⁶(Now the children of Israel journeyed from the wells of Bene Jaakan to Moserah,

u-bene Yisrael naseu mi'beeroth bene yaaqan moserah – "and children Israel set out from wells Bene Yaaqan to Moserah." Numbers 33:31 seems to say exactly the opposite, and so it is immediately assumed the text is corrupt, contradictory, etc. –

"They departed from Moseroth and camped at Bene Jaakan."

Bene Yaaqan means "Sons of Twisting," meaning perverting. Moserah, here, is singular. In Numbers 33, it is plural. One must assume they are the same place. Moserah comes from a word meaning bond, but that comes from a word signifying chastisement.

It could be, like several of the other locations that they visited in their travels, they simply named a particularly unhappy spot Moserah, signifying the chastisement of the place. This is especially so because it does not say they encamped at these locations as it did in Numbers; only that they journeyed.

Or, if the same location, a change in the direction of travel is as simple as recognizing that in Numbers 20, the people had petitioned to enter Edom in order pass through, but Edom came out against them and they turned back. Thus, the reversal of the order can be explained by them backtracking from the land they had previously encamped at. In Numbers 21:4, it says –

"Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way." Numbers 21:4

As they had been turned back, and as these are not encampments, it would explain why they were so discouraged. They were travelling in a somewhat back track way, to places they had already been to.

Other than the direction, the main difference in the names is the note of traveling “from the wells” of Bene Jaakan, or “the Sons of Twisting.” According to the words, Moserah is...

6 (con't) where Aaron died, and where he was buried;

Here, it says Aaron, or “Very High,” died and was buried in Moserah. This appears contradictory to Numbers 33 also –

“They moved from Kadesh and camped at Mount Hor, on the boundary of the land of Edom. ³⁸ Then Aaron the priest went up to Mount Hor at the command of the LORD, and died there in the fortieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, on the first day of the fifth month. ³⁹ Aaron was one hundred and twenty-three years old when he died on Mount Hor.” Numbers 33:37-39

Again, understanding that this is probably not the same place as Moseroth, and that the name is given to the place based on the events the people faced, calling the place Moserah, or Chastisement, fits the narrative of Aaron’s death. Even if it is the same place, it could be that Mount Hor is located at Moserah.

6 (con't) and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his stead.

Eleazar was installed as priest in place of Aaron. His name means “Whom God helps.”

7 From there they journeyed to Gudgodah,

Again, this is different than what happened in Numbers 33. There it says they went from Bene Jaakan and camped at Hor Hagidgad, or Cavern of the Gatherers. Here, Gudgodah in Hebrew is *ha'gudgodah*, or “The Gathered.” Again, it doesn’t say they encamped as it did in Numbers.

It should be noted that the name *ha'gidgad* and *ha'gudgodah*, are the same spelling with the exception of an additional letter, the h, at the end of Gudgodah. The “h” can simply mean in the area of Gudgod or Gidgad. Next...

7 (con't) and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah,

In Numbers 33, it says, “They went from Hor Hagidgad and camped at Jotbathah.” Thus, it is apparent, based on the similar spelling that *ha'gudgodah* and *chor ha'gidgad* are the same area, or a similar area, with the name slightly varied. Jotbathah, or Yotbathah, means “Pleasantness.” It is described as...

7 (con't) a land of rivers of water.

eretz nakhale mayim – “land wadis of water.” The word translated as “rivers” here is *nakhal*. It signifies a wadi. It comes from the verb signifying “to inherit” or “take as a possession.” One could then translate this as, “land of inheritances of water.”

Ila. Pictures of Christ

What we have here is a continued picture of going from the law to grace in Christ. Bene Yaaqan means “Sons of Twisting.” It is reflective of life under the law. The law is given, and those under law – from Adam on – inevitably twist it.

Here, it says that the children of Israel journeyed from the wells of Bene Jaakan. A well is where one derives his source of water. It is a picture of those under the law drawing their spiritual water from the law, and thus are Sons of Twisting. From there, they moved to Moserah, meaning Bond, but in the sense of Chastisement.

When one is bound to the law, he is in bondage to it, and in not meeting it, chastisement comes. It is at this spot where Aaron is said to have died, and where he was buried. It then noted that Eleazar ministered in his stead.

This picture was previously partially explained when Aaron’s death was recorded in Numbers. The transfer of the priesthood from Aaron, meaning Very High, and typical of Christ – but who is also the line of the high priest of the law, to the son Eleazar – or Whom God Helps, represents the change of the priesthood from that which pictures Christ in his work, “Very High,” to that whom pictures Christ in His person, “Whom God helps.”

Christ, in His work, died in Chastisement for the sins of those under the law. He did this by fulfilling the law and establishing the New Covenant, becoming God's true, and final, High Priest. Being fully God, it is He who helps those who come to Him in faith.

Aaron, representative of the Law of Moses, died outside of the Land of Promise, because it is not by works of the law that one can enter, but through faith in Christ. The typology is set because the typology points to Christ.

It then says that after Aaron died, the congregation moved to *ha'gugodah*, or "The Gugodah," meaning, "The Gathered." It signifies those who are brought into the assembly of Christ. From there, it says they journeyed to Yotbathah, or Pleasantness, a place described as a land of inheritances of water. In other words, it is the rivers of water Christ speaks of in John 7 –

"On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. ³⁸ He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' ³⁹ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." John 7:37-39

This short parenthesis was given by inspiration through Moses to supplement the narrative of the two sets of tablets. There is the broken law in us, or the fulfilled law in Christ. There is living out the law, or there is being granted the righteousness of the fulfilled law.

There is drawing water from the wells of the Sons of Twisting, meaning those under law, or there is a land of inheritances of water from the Source of true life, meaning the grace of God in Christ. In the end, the Lord is giving us beautiful pictures of Christ through Moses' words. With this understood, the narrative now transfers back to Moses' words concerning the time at Horeb...

*A greater priesthood lies yet ahead
But it cannot come when the old remains alive
Not until the first one is finished and dead
Can the new come in and begin to thrive*

*But the first cannot end until all is complete
Only when that happens can the new one come in
When the law is fulfilled, and the devil suffers defeat
Then! Joyfully then, will the New Covenant begin*

*Let us put our trust in the One who has done it
Let us look to He who died on Calvary's tree
To Him alone shall we our souls commit
Because He alone has set us free!*

III. Arise, Begin Your Journey (verses 8-11)

Prior to the parenthetical verses, the last thing that was mentioned was that Moses placed the tablets into the ark. The narrative now continues exactly by going to those who would bear the ark, Levi.

⁸ At that time

ba'eth hahiv – "in the time, the that." It is the same words that opened the chapter today. They, like those words, set the tone for what is said. It is again speaking of the time at Horeb. And so, we see again that what is presented is not chronological but rhetorical.

It is while at Horeb, and during the time between the reception of the two separate sets of tablets that...

^{8 (con't)} the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD,

The holy duties, including bearing the ark of the Lord, was granted solely to those of the tribe of Levi. The priests conducted certain duties that no other Levites could do, but the tribe of Levi – as a whole – was given the honors named now in this verse. This was based on what occurred after Moses came down the mountain with the original Ten Commandments. At that time, it said –

Now when Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies), ²⁶ then Moses stood in the entrance of the camp, and said, "Whoever is on the LORD's side—come to

me!” And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together to him. ²⁷ And he said to them, “Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.’” ²⁸ So the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And about three thousand men of the people fell that day. ²⁹ Then Moses said, “Consecrate yourselves today to the LORD, that He may bestow on you a blessing this day, for every man has opposed his son and his brother.” Exodus 32:25-29

Because of their defense of the honor of the Lord, He separated Levi to bear the ark. The Levites were also...

⁸ (con’t) to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day.

Levites are shown elsewhere – numerous times – to praise and sing before the Lord. There were certain priestly duties that were reserved for them alone, but the Levites had many duties serving and ministering to the Lord. This was their portion...

⁹ Therefore Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his brethren;

This means that those of the tribe of Levi would not be granted a parcel of land as the other tribes would. They would be granted cities within the lands of the other tribes, and they would live off of the tithes and offerings of the people of the land.

This will be expanded on later as Israel is given the particular instructions concerning their tithes. The Lord is their inheritance, and that means that what is offered from the people, to the Lord, would be distributed to them. As it says...

⁹ (con’t) the LORD is his inheritance,

There is an emphasis in the Hebrew: *Yehovah hu nakhalato* – “Yehovah, He, his inheritance.” They will possess no tribal land, but rather, the portion of the tribal lands that are dedicated and offered to the Lord would be for those of the tribe of Levi.

⁹ (con’t) just as the LORD your God promised him.)

This is exactly recorded in Numbers 18. The rights and benefits of their tribe are defined there, and they will be expanded upon again here in Deuteronomy. With those words conveyed, Moses now continues further in his thoughts to the second time atop the mountain...

¹⁰ “As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights; the LORD also heard me at that time, and the LORD chose not to destroy you.

This returns to the thought spoken out in verses 9:18 & 25. There the Lord spoke of the forty days and nights that he interceded for Israel. What is obvious, is that the connection to Levi here is a part of that.

Israel sinned, but Moses called for those who would defend the honor of the Lord to come forward and kill the offenders. Levi did. Moses was instructed to make another set of tablets, which he did. He was then instructed to place them in the ark, which he did.

However, during the time on the mountain, Moses also petitioned the Lord for Israel. The Lord accepted Moses’ petition and He chose to not destroy Israel. In the process, he determined to reward the tribe who had stood up for His honor. That would have been a moot point if He had destroyed the people. But in His turning from His anger, He chose to reward Levi.

In other words, the point of what is said here is actually the continued scolding of Israel for their evil behavior, the mercy of the Lord, a demonstration of what pleases the Lord, and what brought the people to the structure in which they now existed.

The Lord was angry enough to destroy all of the people, but He graciously forgave them through the mediation of Moses. At the same time, He elevated the tribe of Levi because of their forsaking even their relations and putting the honor of the Lord first. In doing so, Levi was given a special honor that would continue throughout Israel’s history.

It is with these points highlighted that Moses next says...

***11 (fin) Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, begin your journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.’**

The word “Arise” surely has a double meaning here. First, it said in verse 9:25, “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.”

In telling Moses to arise, it signifies that His decision was made. And that decision was to “Arise, begin your journey.” The single word conveys both events – 1) Arise from before Me; I have forgiven, and 2) Arise from this place and make your journey.

In the chronology of events, it will still be an extended period of time before they actually depart from Horeb, but the assurance has been made. The Lord had said to Moses, “Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they” (9:14).

Instead, Moses would lead the people, Israel. And in his leading, they would go in and possess the land promised to their fathers. At this time, Moses had no idea that this would mean an extended period in the wilderness while an entire generation would perish, but the promise of the Lord would stand, as testified to by the fact that he is there with Israel on the east side of Jordan.

Though seemingly disjointed and obscure when we started, you can see now that the passage we have looked at is marvelously placed in the ongoing narrative. Each section is carefully building up the contents of the book so that nothing is left unattended to for future generations to read and understand all that has occurred in Israel’s history.

Further, what is presented shows us the very heart of God concerning countless points of His character, and of proper theology. He wants us to know that the law can’t save, but that He can. He wants us to understand our need, and His ability to fill that need.

He wants us to shun self and to, in turn, rely on Him. And He shows us the benefits of what doing so will be. And more, the Lord is showing us, through Moses, that true mediation can overcome even the greatest of evils and offenses against Him.

In this, we can then see the absolute surety we possess. Moses petitioned for Israel for forty days and forty nights. Christ Jesus never ceases to Mediate on our behalf. If the Lord forgave an entire nation of its offences because of Moses’ pleas, how much more can we be certain that we are forever safe in our salvation because of the Lord’s petitions for us.

Let us trust in this and let us be confident in it. To say otherwise to ourselves is to raise our own faults and failings above the cleansing and sanctifying power of Christ’s work. Such can never be. Rest in Christ, trust in Christ, and be confident of the effectiveness of the ongoing ministry of Jesus Christ for you.

Closing Verse: “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.” Hebrews 7:25

Next Week: Deuteronomy 10:12-22 This is why to Him our shouts we raise, and to Him we do applaud... (He Is Your Praise, and He Is Your God) (35th 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.

Two Tablets of Stone Like the First

“At that time the LORD said to me
‘Hew for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, so you shall do
And come up to Me on the mountain
And make yourself an ark of wood, too

And I will write on the tablets
The words that were on the first tablets again plainly
The tablets which you broke
And you shall put them in the ark, away from the eyes of Me

“So I made an ark of acacia wood

Hewed two tablets of stone like the first as planned
And went up the mountain
Having the two tablets in my hand

And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing
The Ten Commandments, which the LORD had spoken to you
In the mountain from the midst of the fire
-----in the day of the assembly
And the LORD gave them to me before saying adieu

Then I turned and came down from the mountain
And put the tablets in the ark which I had made
And there they are

Just as the LORD commanded me; this is where they have stayed

(Now the children of Israel journeyed
From the wells of Bene Jaakan to Moserah, so they were led
Where Aaron died, and where he was buried
And Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his stead

From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, as the Lord had planned
And from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a rivers-of-water land

At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi
To bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD
To stand before the LORD to minister to Him
And to bless in His name, to this day, according to His word

Therefore Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his brethren
The LORD is his inheritance, as you now know quite well
Just as the LORD your God promised him
Just as the Lord your God did tell

As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain
Forty days and forty nights; that time did accrue
The LORD also heard me at that time
And the LORD chose not to destroy you

Then the LORD said to me
Arise, begin your journey before the people as you live
That they may go in and possess the land
Which I swore to their fathers to them give

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...