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DAILY *manna*

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GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

We have followed the journey of the children of Israel through the wilderness. For them, it was a 40-year journey. Now we have come to the end of their journey. The children of Israel would soon be transformed from a loose confederate of tribes into a nation. They were standing at the doorstep of Canaan, when Moses rehearsed before them the history of God's blessings and His laws. A nation must be governed by laws, and Deuteronomy (which means the second law) was written by Moses to remind the people that they were bound by the laws of God.

While some of the laws may not be directly applicable to us, yet Deuteronomy serves as a reminder to believers that the Word of God—the Holy Scripture—must be the rule of our life and faith.

Let me also encourage you to write in with your comments as to how we may improve *Daily Manna* (e-mail: calvary@singnet.com.sg). Parents, we want to remind you that *DM Junior* is also available for your children.

A note to new Daily Manna readers

In this book, you will find a reading plan that will guide you through reading the Bible in two years. You will also find a simple exposition based on the reading of the day. From the day's Bible passages, *Daily Manna* highlights biblical principles which may be applied in the Christian's daily living. We pray that the *Daily Manna* readings will make your reading through the Bible a more meaningful experience. Over the next two years, our focus will be on the Old Testament with the aim of giving you a more in-depth study of the OT books.

A step-by-step approach

1. Read the day's Bible chapters assigned in *Daily Manna*.
2. Review the Bible chapters to get an overview of what you have just read.
3. Read the accompanying devotions in *Daily Manna* and reflect on the lessons learnt.
4. Pray and ask God to help you apply His Word to your life.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Isaac Ong
Calvary B-P Church

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 1:1–8

LESSON

Spiritual preparation

VERSE 3

And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment unto them;

Deuteronomy' comes from two Greek words: 'deutero', which means 'second', and 'nomos', which means 'law'. Deuteronomy is a retelling of the covenant between God and His people, Israel. But this time, it is to a new generation of Israelites who were born to the generation that had experienced the great exodus and the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. All the adults of that first generation had died in the wilderness because of their sin and unbelief.

Forty years had elapsed since the exodus from Egypt. The children of Israel had arrived at the edge of the Promised Land. But before they could enter to possess the land that the Lord had promised their fathers, they must be prepared spiritually. To do that, Moses would deliver to them a series of three sermons recorded for us in this book. These messages were not based on Moses' thoughts. As God's messenger, he spoke to them "according unto all that the LORD had given him in commandment" [v. 3].

These messages that Moses was about to preach to his people are equally important to us Christians. Obedience is the great lesson of the book. The people of Israel were reminded of the great goodness and faithfulness of Jehovah: how He had redeemed them out of bondage, carried them through the wilderness, guided them, gave them food and sustained them.

He who chose Israel and dealt thus with them has a perfect claim on their love. That love is to be expressed by obedience.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 38
ACTS I

REMINDER

If ye love me, keep my commandments. – John 14:15

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 1:9–18

LESSON

Godly leaders

VERSE 13

Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.

Moses began his sermon by recounting how God had provided godly leaders to manage the affairs of the great multitude of Israelites. The weight of leadership was too great for Moses to bear alone. He needed leaders to help him so he could delegate responsibilities in an organised manner.

In a democratic process, Moses had apparently charged the people to choose their own leaders. These leaders were to be wise and understanding and also respected by the people. Besides serving as military commanders, these leaders were to serve as judges over legal matters that arose among the people. In this aspect, Moses emphasised the need to “judge righteously” [v. 16], that is, to be totally impartial and to fear no person when settling all disputes, because “the judgement is God’s” [v. 17]. Judges are accountable to God and God alone.

Today, we live in times that are just as perilous as those of the Israelites in their journey to the Promised Land. Just as the Israelites needed godly leaders to rule over them, the church today needs godly leaders to serve God’s people. The roles may have changed slightly but the qualifications are much the same. But with the distractions of the world and the demands of the cares of life exerting such a strong pull on people, it is difficult to find faithful men and women who are willing to make personal sacrifices to join the leadership or even go into full-time ministry.

However, with men it may be impossible, but with God all things are possible.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 39

ACTS 2

THOUGHT

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. – Jeremiah 3:15

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 1:19–33

LESSON

**Remembering the
lessons from history**

VERSE 26

*Notwithstanding ye would
not go up, but rebelled
against the commandment
of the LORD your God.*

Moses began his ‘history lesson’ with the account of the sin and rebellion of the previous generation of Israelites at Kadesh-barnea. Upon hearing the reports of the 12 spies sent to “search out the land”, they chose to focus on the negative aspects: that the enemy was stronger and taller, the cities were fortified, and the Anak or giants were there. Consequently they refused to “go up” and possess the land that the Lord had promised to their forefathers. They murmured and blamed God for their circumstances.

Moses did all he could to encourage them, challenging them not to fear their enemies but to trust God. He assured the people that God would lead them and fight for them just as He had led and fought for them in Egypt and in the desert wilderness. God would carry them along just as a father carries his son. They were privileged to witness God’s presence, guidance and power but still they had refused to trust in Him. Instead, they were gripped with fear and unbelief, and rebelled against God. Because of this, they lost the privilege to enter the Promised Land. How tragic!

The sins that kept Israel out of the Promised Land are the very same ones that condemn countless unbelievers to an eternal hell.

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” [Revelation 21:8].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 40
ACTS 3

REMINDER

Be not faithless, but believing. – John 20:27b

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 1:34–39

LESSON

God being angry

VERSE 34

*And the LORD heard the
voice of your words, and
was wroth, and swore,
saying,*

Liberal theologians tell us, “God is a god of love. He loves us and will not send anyone to hell.” But that is simply unbiblical. There are numerous instances in the Bible where we read that God was ‘wroth’. In today’s reading, we see that God was angry and had pronounced judgement on the unbelieving, ungrateful and rebellious Israelites. Israelites of that first ‘evil generation’ were prohibited from entering the Promised Land [v. 35]. Except for Joshua and Caleb, who had proved to be faithful, everyone aged 20 and older would perish in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy was written to remind Israel of what the Lord required of the Israelites as His people. It calls for total commitment to the Lord in worship and obedience. God will bless and protect His people if they are faithful to Him as their covenant Lord and are obedient to the covenant stipulations in His law. Otherwise, they will suffer curses for disobedience and transgressions. Israel can be prosperous and blessed in the Promised Land, but they must never commit the gross and evil sins of its current Canaanite inhabitants.

The lessons of Deuteronomy apply equally to Christians in the New Testament age. The Apostle Peter tells us that, while God is longsuffering and not willing that any should perish, He will tolerate sin and rebellion up to a point only, and then He will judge.

The Apostle Paul also warns: “Be not highminded, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee” [Romans 11:20–21].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 41
ACTS 4

THOUGHT

**Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? –
Genesis 18:25b**

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 1:40–46

LESSON

Defeat assured

VERSE 44

And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah.

The charge of God was clear: the people were to turn around and march into the wilderness towards the Red Sea. But what did they do? Again, they refused to obey. They made an incomplete, partial and false confession: they confessed their sin [v. 41] but did not repent. They did not turn to God, accepting and trusting what He had said.

They wanted to go into battle against the Amorites in the hills. God warned them clearly not to do so because He would not be with them, and that they would be defeated. The warning fell on deaf ears. The people refused to listen and the result was a total disaster. They were routed and driven down to Hormah, a distance of about 50 miles away.

How can you guarantee yourself a sure defeat when you go into battle against the devil? Easy. Just do what the Israelites did. Go to the battle alone. Leave God out of your plans. Better still, ignore His commandments. In other words, do what is right in your own eyes. In this way, defeat is assured.

There are numerous other incidents just like this in the Old Testament. It is a recurring lesson throughout the Bible and they are recorded for a reason. The Apostle Paul explains: “Now all these things happened unto them [the Israelites] for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” [1 Corinthians 10:11]. God has to reiterate His point because He knows we are forgetful people.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 42
ACTS 5

REMINDER

I am the vine, ye are the branches: ... without me, ye can do nothing. – John 15:5

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 2:1–8***LESSON****Being obedient to our faithful God****VERSE 7**

For the LORD thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: he knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the LORD thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.

Due to the Israelites' unbelief and rebellion, God delayed the timing of their reaching the Promised Land. The people wandered in the wilderness for many years. God did it with a purpose: to better prepare His people for their inheritance.

The Israelites learnt from their mistakes, were chastised and humbled. They also learnt that they needed to obey and honour God. Similarly for us, God allows trials in our life to strengthen our faith and teach us obedience. God knows what is best for His children and is always full of mercy and lovingkindness towards us.

God warned the Israelites not to provoke the Edomites when they passed through Seir. The Edomites were descendants of Esau (the brother of Jacob), so they were brothers to the Israelites. The Israelites were told to be kind and pay for whatever they used inside the Edomites' territory. As the Lord God had promised Mount Seir unto Esau for a possession, He would not allow anyone to take advantage of the perceived weakness of the tribe. Do not meddle with the land given by God to the Edomites. It is indeed comforting to know that our God is faithful in keeping all His promises.

God was also faithful to bless His people [v. 7–8]. God's presence was with the Israelites throughout their journey to the Promised Land and they lacked nothing since God has provided all their needs. God has been so good to us. Count every little blessing in our life and be thankful to Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 43**ACTS 6****MEDITATION**

Lord, help me to develop a personal, deep and intimate relationship with You. Keep me faithful. Let me walk in obedience to You all the time.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 2:9–25

LESSON

**Follow God
wholeheartedly**

VERSE 19

*And when thou comest nigh
over against the children
of Ammon, distress them
not, nor meddle with them:
for I will not give thee of
the land of the children of
Ammon any possession;
because I have given it unto
the children of Lot for a
possession.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 44
ACTS 7

The march of the second generation of Israelites into the Promised Land started only after the stiff-necked and rebellious first generation had all passed away. The latter were denied entry because they had refused to believe in God and had not trusted that God Almighty would deliver them.

In order for us to gain victory and blessings, we must rest in Him and gain the comfort of safe harbour in the Lord. Live a consecrated life and do not let sin corrupt your quest to claim assurance of victory in God.

Both the Moabites and the Ammonites (children of Lot) had removed the Rephaites, who were tall and strong. To put it more accurately, God had driven them out the same way He had destroyed the Horites in Seir for the descendants of Esau. Remember, all our blessings and possessions are from the Lord. Victories are possible only when God wills them. We need to exercise control over our emotions, behaviour and desires. If it is not the will of the Lord for us to do certain things, we should not waste our effort in vanity. Blessed are those who seek the Lord and are given the earnestness of His Spirit.

The Israelites obeyed God's instruction not to meddle with the nations they passed through during their journey to the Promised Land. They had practised self-control and humility. God then allowed them to start the war with Sihon the Amorites. They would win the battle only if they follow God's instruction.

PRAYER

O God, help me to be faithful and to serve You wholeheartedly, in spirit and in truth.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 2:26–37***LESSON****Victorious march over enemies****VERSE 31**

And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land.

Today, we read how God delivered great victory to His people over the Amorites, Sihon king of Heshbon. Although the Israelites had requested for a peaceful passage through the land occupied by the kingdom of Sihon, the king refused to let them pass through safely, like how they did in Seir and Ar. God thus caused the Amorite to be defeated by His people.

The messenger of Israel went to King Sihon to seek peace, assuring him that they would stay on the main road and would pay for all the consumed food and water, but King Sihon was stubborn and refused to accept the offer. Instead, he and his entire army went to the desert to attack the Israelites. As promised by God, the Israelites defeated Sihon, his sons and the entire army. They destroyed all the towns, and confiscated the livestock and valuables [Numbers 21:21–32].

We learn from this chapter that it is important for us to obey God. Keep away from what God forbids and endeavour to take what God allows us to keep. All blessings come from the Lord. God secured for Israel the victory over the Amorite king because “the Lord our God delivered him before us” [v. 33].

Let us stay firm in our faith and trust in the Lord, as He is the one and only powerful God Who delivers. Do not fear, as God always prepares the way before us and help us to overcome all the obstacles.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EZEKIEL 45
ACTS 8

THOUGHT

Do you often rely on your own capabilities to complete daunting tasks? “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” [Psalm 127:1].

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 3:1–11

LESSON

Fear not

VERSE 2

And the LORD said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do unto him as thou didst unto Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon.

After the great victory over the Amorites, the Israelites went up north towards Bashan. Og, king of Bashan, and his whole army marched out to attack them. God knew that His people were fearful as the enemies were numerous and Og was gigantic. The Lord encouraged Moses to charge forward and they conquered the enemies completely. All this is within God’s plan. The Amorites and King Og were obstacles that blocked the way for the Israelites to march to the Promised Land, and they had to be removed.

Today, we have similar ‘enemies’ that block our path in claiming peace in the promised land of heaven. These include all the challenging trials such as poor health, financial difficulties, relationship breakdown as well as sins and temptations that we need to overcome (such as covetousness, pride and immorality). We need to rely on the strength of the Lord to claim victories over our enemies. Regardless of how gigantic the problem may seem, do not let fear and anxiety grip our hearts. God is able to help us overcome them. He is sovereign over all circumstances. He will protect and guide you.

Do not fear, as we have the rest in the Lord because we know He delivers. Be encouraged and leverage on the strength given by God to finish the race. Be assured that God knows what is best for us and have a divine purpose in our individual lives.

Remember to give thanks, praise and worship the Lord for His goodness and faithfulness.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 46

ACTS 9

MEDITATION

For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. – Psalm 91:11

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 3:12–22***LESSON****Press on****VERSE 18**

And I commanded you at that time, saying, The LORD your God hath given you this land to possess it: ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all that are meet for the war.

The land on the east side of Jordan had been conquered. The hard work was done by all of the tribes together. Moses distributed the conquered land to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He then warned them not to be complacent. Men of war were to press on to cross the Jordan River to help the rest of the tribes conquer the Promised Land.

As believers, our journey towards the Promised Land is filled with different challenges and trials. These include worldly desires and temptations that can cause us to compromise our spiritual desire to live a consecrated life. When we are victorious or comfortable, complacency sets in and brings us greater defeats. Press on and do not give up in fighting until you have secured the great inheritance God has promised. You should also be ready to help others who are in need, for the extension of the kingdom of Christ.

Joshua was called to succeed Moses in leading the Israelites. He was fearful but through Moses, God encouraged him to be courageous. He was reminded of all the goodness of God in the past: how God had helped His people win the battles and how the people had enjoyed victories in the presence of the Lord.

As children of God, we have nothing to fear as long as we obey His words and stay faithful to Him, as we know that victory is sure in the Lord.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 47**ACTS 10****THOUGHT**

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars. – 2 Chronicles 16:9

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 3:23–29

LESSON

Be warned

VERSE 26

But the LORD was wrath with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter.

Moses requested God to allow him to enter Canaan. He began the prayer by acknowledging the great work of God as he had personally experienced God’s divine power. “Let me go and see the good land,” pleaded Moses. However, God would not remove His hand of chastisement from Moses due to his terrible sin of disobedience earlier [Numbers 20:7–13].

Here, we learn that God demands full obedience and submission to His will. We need to be pruned to bear spiritual fruits and be teachable. As the Psalmist said, “Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of Thy law” [Psalm 94:12]. To mature spiritually, we need to allow God to discipline us. Follow God’s path closely and do not stray away.

Be thankful for all the blessings He bestows on us and remember that God’s grace is always more than sufficient. Note the mercy of God unto Moses. Due to the touching prayer of Moses, God granted Moses the privilege of viewing the Promised Land from the top of Mount Pisgah. God answers prayers. He may not grant us what we wish but He always gives us what He deems best for us.

God also cares for His people. He instructed Moses to encourage his successor Joshua as the second-generation leader to bring His people into Canaan. As leaders of the church, it is good to groom young leaders and prepare them to lead the church with strength and wisdom from God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EZEKIEL 48

ACTS 11

MEDITATION

Read Psalm 141.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 4:1–8

LESSON

Greatness from the Lord

VERSE 8

And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgements so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

In this chapter, Moses reminded the Israelites of the importance of keeping God's Word. Specifically, he mentioned two key reasons God's people should keep His Word. First, obedience was the only way they could gain the inheritance promised. Second, Israel was to stand out among the nations as a great nation that was righteous, wise and close to God.

The inheritance promised [v. 1] did not just refer to the Israelites being able to enter Canaan. It also referred to the Israelites being able to obtain a place in heaven, the Promised Land of God. Similarly, the life that was promised them also did not just refer to life on earth; it was the spiritual life that extends beyond the grave. Externally, the reward for obedience would be closeness of the nation to the true God. The outward display of this close relationship could be seen by the pre-eminent wisdom and understanding that the Israelites had, even among the pagan nations.

At the peak of its glory, Israel, under the leadership of Solomon, attracted many non-believers, notably the Queen of Sheba, to seek resolution to difficult issues. God has promised wisdom and understanding to those who obey His Word and seek to be close to Him. Perhaps it is time for us to examine ourselves as well as our testimonies to those around us.

Could others see God's wisdom and His greatness manifesting in the way we lead our lives?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 1
ACTS 12

THOUGHT

What an honour it is for one so unworthy as I to be thus upheld by God!

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 4:9–24

LESSON

**Watching yourself and
your children**

VERSE 9

*Only take heed to thyself,
and keep thy soul diligently,
lest thou forget the things
which thine eyes have seen,
and lest they depart from
thy heart all the days of
thy life: but teach them thy
sons, and thy sons' sons;*

In these verses, Moses reminded the Israelites of their covenant with the Lord and their receiving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Horeb. Following that, Moses highlighted how quickly they had fallen into idolatry and broken their side of the covenant. Moses knew how fallible man was and how man was prone to sin. Thus he took great pains to describe the many forms of idolatry that could take place so that the Israelites would not be misled by the idol-worshipping pagans in the land.

That said, the weakness of man and his fallibility is not a good excuse for man to forget and disobey God's law. Despite men being bent towards sin, it is our responsibility to keep our souls diligently [v. 9]. In fact, it is not just our own souls but also the souls of our children and the generations to come that we should look out for.

How then can we ensure that we do not forget lessons learnt in the past? A possible solution is to share with the younger ones the mistakes we have made in our lives. In doing so, we reflect upon our experience and remind ourselves of our foolishness while at the same time instil knowledge and a healthy fear of God in those whom we teach.

Finally, we must understand that, despite our own efforts not to fall into sin, it is not possible to live a holy, acceptable life without the help of the Holy Spirit. Let us therefore ask fervently for help—help that the Lord is more than willing to give!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 2
ACTS 13

MEDITATION

For with God nothing shall be impossible. – Luke 1:37

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 4:25–31***LESSON****Merciful, omnipresent
God****VERSE 29***But if from thence thou
shalt seek the LORD thy
God, thou shalt find him, if
thou seek him with all thy
heart and with all thy soul.*

In this portion of Scripture, Moses states three things. First, he told the Israelites that they would sin against God in the future, after corrupting themselves in the land. Second, he stated the punishment for this sin: God would scatter the people among the nations and the remaining would only be a remnant of His chosen people. Finally, he assured the people [v. 29] that those who repent [Leviticus 26:39–42] and turn back to God would not be forsaken.

It is sad to see that despite all the miracles they had witnessed and lessons they had learnt first-hand from God Almighty, there was a certainty that the people would return to their sinful ways. As such, God's punishment would be great and just, fulfilling what He had already instituted in the law He had given to the Israelites [Leviticus 26:14–39].

On the other hand, as Moses was quick to remind the Israelites, God also provided assurance that no matter how far they were scattered from the Promised Land and how few were left, as long as they turned back to Him in repentance and obedience, they would find that God had never forgotten His covenant with them.

Examine yourself to see if you have wandered away from the grace of God. Perhaps you have been corrupted by the idols in your workplace or home. Turn back to God today. Seek Him with all your hearts and souls and you will find that He has always been here with you.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 3
ACTS 14

REMINDER**Read Job 28:23–24.**

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 4:32–40

LESSON

Jehovah is God

VERSE 39

*Know therefore this day,
and consider it in thine
heart, that the LORD he is
God in heaven above, and
upon the earth beneath:
there is none else.*

Moses issued a challenge to the Israelites. Could they find any other nation that was as privileged as they who had witnessed countless mighty works by God? Clearly, no other nation could boast that they had seen their 'gods' do things of such greatness.

God always has a purpose for everything He does. His plan for all the wonders He had worked for the Israelites was to instil one simple lesson in them: that He alone was God, and that there was none other besides Him. On the surface, it seems a simple lesson. However, let us keep in mind that despite all the examples of God's greatness, the Israelites still fell into the sin of idolatry repeatedly. Let us therefore be wary of our own thoughts and habits as well, that we let nothing take the place of God in our hearts.

Our God is and always has been a good, gracious God Who is more than willing to pour down showers of blessing on those who obey His word. Nothing we have done has made us worthy of the promises made to us by Him. Why then would a God as powerful as Him deign to have anything whatsoever to do with us, much less promise us so much? The truth is that there is nothing special about us at all! God has chosen us out of His love for us, just as He had chosen the forefathers [v. 37] of Israel due to His love for them.

What a blessing it is to be loved by the true God!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 4
ACTS 15

MEDITATION

God is love. – 1 John 4:8b.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 4:41–43***LESSON****Grace in the Old Testament times****VERSE 42**

That the slayer might flee thither, which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that fleeing unto one of these cities he might live.

These three verses show God's mercy towards the sinner. Killing is often considered the gravest of sins. In Old Testament times, the law states that the punishment for a murderer is death [Exodus 21:12]. However, here we see the wonderful act of God's mercy to a person who had killed someone without ill intent. For the most grievous of sins, God had provided a refuge.

These cities are a type of Christ. First, a murderer who sought refuge in the city was safe only within the city. If the revenger of blood found him outside the city of refuge [Numbers 35:26–27], he could lawfully kill the murderer. Similarly, only those who are cloaked in Christ's righteousness are free from the wages of sin. It is impossible to be safe from the consequences of sin without the Light of the world drawing us close to Him and keeping us in His fold.

Second, the cities of refuge were placed in accessible locations, just as Christ is always accessible to those who seek Him. Just as the accidental murderer was able to travel to any one of the highly accessible cities—three on either side of River Jordan—with good roads leading to each city, Christ is always a prayer away.

However, murderers who found their way to the cities of refuge had to stand trial before the congregation [Numbers 35:24] in order to determine if the killing was accidental before they could obtain refuge. Christ, on the other hand, forgives all sins, as long as the sinner is repentant.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 5
ACTS 16

THOUGHT

God has always been gracious, yesterday, today and forevermore.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:1–6***LESSON****Taking ownership****VERSE 3**

The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

In these six verses, Moses calls the people of God to be responsible for the covenant that had been established at Mount Horeb. These verses precede those recording Moses reiterating the Ten Commandments and are meant to remind the Israelites of their accountability to God.

Between the original receiving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Horeb [Exodus 20] and this time, the Israelites had already disobeyed God and murmured against Him [Deuteronomy 1:27]. They were such a disobedient people that they eventually provoked Moses to anger and caused him to sin, resulting in him being unable to enter the Promised Land as punishment.

Are we any different from these Israelites? How often do we go back to the old, comfortable sinful life that we lead? How easy it is to forget God and indulge in sin. Moses had instructed the people of God to hear, that they might learn from the law, keep it and do as it says. We may have the opportunity to hear and learn the law but are we keeping it close to our hearts and trying to lead more Christ-centred lives as the love of God constrains us to?

Let us not be like the Israelites, who assumed that they were privileged and heirs to the promise just because they were children of Abraham. Instead, let us remember that our relationship with God is a personal one, not one that we have inherited from our fathers. Let us then strive to work out our salvation with meekness and trembling [Philippians 2:12], striving each day to grow in Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
DANIEL 6
ACTS 17

WARNING

But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire. – 2 Peter 2:22.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:7***LESSON****No other gods****VERSE 7***Thou shalt have none other gods before me.*

Moses began here to recapitulate the Law that was first written and then given to him by God Himself. It is proper once again to remind the Jewish pilgrims prior to their entry into the Promised Land of the special relationship they had with God. Moreover, all these 10 commandments were divinely calculated for His own people. The whole purpose for these prohibitions was to prevent them from their worst misery and promote their highest happiness.

First, they were commanded to forsake all false dependents. The command would instead lead them to the only true God Who only is the fountain of all that was good. 'Strange gods' are false deities that the Jewish people were not acquainted with.

Through the many miracles wrought by God in both Egypt and Sinai, He had rendered Himself to be familiar to them. They were intimately acquainted with the operation of His hands. They were not to put the creature in the place of their Creator. Furthermore, God bound them to serve only Him without other superstition and idolatry. Jesus reiterated with these words, "For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" [Matthew 4:10b].

God is the sole object of our religious worship. It is due to our Creator alone. To give it to any other creature is gross idolatry and repugnant to the Holy God. Therefore we gladly pay Him our adoration and desire to obey only Him Who is our life and hope.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 7
ACTS 18

PRAYER

Almighty God, our Creator, we bow and reverence only Thee for we owe our very existence and life to Thee.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:8–10***LESSON****Our jealous God****VERSE 9**

*Thou shalt not bow down
thyself unto them, nor serve
them: for I the LORD thy
God am a jealous God,
visiting the iniquity of the
fathers upon the children
unto the third and fourth
generation of them that
hate me,*

While the First Commandment focuses on the object of worship, the Second Commandment has to do with the means of worship. Every worshipper has to worship the one and only true God in an acceptable way that He requires and such as His words would approve. This commandment includes in its prohibitions every species of idolatry.

However, when reading this commandment, we may get the impression that God's people are not to make any images at all for any purpose. Of course, this cannot be the case. There are several occasions on which the Lord actually commanded His people to make images [Exodus 25–26]. What is forbidden is the making of any image of the divine nature. We can never picture the invisible God, for He has not revealed His divine form to any [Deuteronomy 4:12]. He is spiritual and invisible. It was said that "God is to be adored in the heart, not painted to the eye" (Thomas Watson).

Clearly, the reason for this prohibition is that He is a righteous and jealous God. He is zealous of His honour. He does not accept partial or divided homage. He either has all or none at all. He has declared, "I will not give my glory unto another" [Isaiah 48:11b]. He is displeased with those who bestow upon others what belongs only to Him.

Let all of God's people be aware that there are severe consequences for wrong worship, which may affect many generations to come. But there are great blessings installed for those who fear and love Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 8
ACTS 19

PRAYER

**Holy God, we seek to give only Thee our hearts
and all in worship and service.**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:11***LESSON****God's holy name****VERSE 11**

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

This Third Commandment forbids not only all false swearing by the name of God but all profanation of that name by the irreverent or frivolous use of it [Leviticus 19:12]. The name of God means God Himself, His divine being and essence. It has reference also to His Word, His properties and attributes as God, and to His works and actions, that is, all things appertaining to God. He is jealous of the honour of His name. Every man's good name is dear to him and it is worth more than his property and exalted position. God's name is dear to Him as well.

Our Lord taught His disciples to pray thus, "Hallowed be Thy Name" [Matthew 6:9b]. It is commonplace for men to speak irreverently of God's name in the exercise of devotion. Often, when they make their addresses to God in His worship and ordinances, they profane this holy duty by their rash and multiplicity of words, using vain repetitions [Matthew 6:7]. Likewise, in their hearing, men frequently take God's name in vain when they receive the divine message in a negligent manner, without much attention and reverence, especially when they make no effort to practise what they hear.

In light of the fact that all that is sacred and religious has reference to God, it follows that taking God's name in vain includes actions as well as words. Therefore, let your conversation and conduct always be such that there is never anything dishonourable to His glory, but always everything suited to His honour.

We should remember God's name with thankful gratitude [Psalm 105:1].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 9**ACTS 20****PRAYER**

O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:12–15***LESSON****Remember the Sabbath****VERSE 13***Six days thou shalt labour,
and do all thy work.*

The first word ‘remember’ is set in the beginning of the Fourth Commandment, from whence we may identify man’s great proneness, through worldly business and Satan’s temptations, to forget the Sabbath. It is to be observed, then, as a day of rest from all unnecessary labour.

The worker needs one day in the week for rest. It is also to be observed as a day of spiritual refreshment. The Sabbath is made for man, for the whole man, not only for bones and muscles but also for mind, heart and soul.

The Sabbath is sanctified when it is spent with God in humble and thankful acknowledgement of His love in creating us, and of His infinite mercy in redeeming us through our Lord Jesus. We should sanctify the Lord’s Day in remembrance of the rest of God after His work of creation. This rest does not, of course, imply anything like fatigue or exhaustion. It tells us that God’s purpose was fulfilled when His work in creating the universe was finished. It reminds us how God has delivered His children from the Egyptian bondage. The Sabbath is also given as a pledge of the covenant between God and His people [Ezekiel 20:12].

As God’s people, we observe the Lord’s Day not simply because this law of the Sabbath was given on Sinai but because the law of love is written in our hearts. We cannot reasonably expect that God should bless us in what we undertake on other days if we neglect to own Him on His day. We should prefer Him and the affairs of His worship before all things in the world.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 10
ACTS 21

PRAYER

**Holy Father, may we find delight with Thy people
in coming into the house of the Lord for worship.**

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 5:16

LESSON

Honouring our parents

VERSE 16

Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

This commandment requires honour to be given not only to the father but also to the mother. It is an addition that many human laws seem to have neglected. This honour is not based on agreement but authority. It models the relationship between God and mankind.

A submissive attitude towards authority is crucial in religious life. This precept not only prohibits all injurious acts, irreverent and unkind speeches to parents but it also requires all necessary acts of kindness, filial respect and obedience. It is noted, "Where parents are not honoured, a flaw lies at the basis, and the stability of the entire social fabric is endangered."

Children are duty bound to respect, love and obey their parents for the purpose of honouring and obeying God. If they do not honour them, they actually dishonour and rebel against God, the Giver of the Law. Children are to love their parents, listen to their teachings and obey their commands. Treat them with kind attention, assist them when they need it, labour to supply their wants, promote their comfort, increase their usefulness, and do them all the good. God also requires children to provide for their parents.

Honouring our parents is more than just an obligation. It is also a privilege. Any missed opportunities to show love and honour may bring deep regret years later. But if observed, it promises the prosperity of children and that of not only a long, but also a happy life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 11
ACTS 22

PRAYER

O heavenly Father, grant me the opportunity to show Thee my respect and honour by doing these to my earthly parents.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:17***LESSON****The religion of temper****VERSE 17***Thou shalt not kill.*

By this time, the children of Israel were standing at the edge of the Promised Land, with the hope of a land of their own soon be realised. As in all nations, there must be the rule of law. And the first giving of the law on Mount Sinai was from the Lord to Moses.

The second table of the law begins with the sins of deed: murder, adultery and theft. These are followed by the sin of word: maligning a man's reputation by false testimony. Last came the sin of the heart, which is covetousness. God's laws cover every aspect of man: his deeds, his words and even his intent. Thus the Psalmist says that the "commandment is exceeding broad" [Psalm 119:96b].

The Sixth Commandment, "Thou shalt not kill", deals with more than just the act of taking another man's life. One Puritan preacher rightly describes it as the religion of temper.

It is not just the act but also the motivation that prompted the act. This commandment forbids the taking of human life from pure hatred. It forbids any carelessness on our part that puts another person's life at risk. It is especially relevant to those who drive. Our carelessness can have fatal outcomes. Third, it forbids a deep-seated hatred and anger against another person. Fourth, it forbids indifference on our part when another person's life is threatened. Fifth, it forbids us to pursue our own ends at the expense of another. Lastly, and positively, it requires of us to cultivate a spirit of compassion and care for our fellowman.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

DANIEL 12
ACTS 23

THOUGHT

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgement: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. – Matthew 5:22

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:18***LESSON****The religion of body****VERSE 18***Neither shalt thou commit adultery.*

If the Sixth Commandment is the religion of temper, the Seventh Commandment is the religion of body. Man in his entirety was created by God. Creation is God's first claim upon us, believers and unbelievers alike. The use of the body is therefore regulated by God. The Apostle Paul writes, "The body is not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" [1 Corinthians 6:13b].

Creation gives man his life. Redemption gives man his dignity in Christ. Paul writes that Christ "is the saviour of the body" [Ephesians 5:23b]. Redemption is the second claim that God has upon us. Elsewhere, Paul adds, "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" [1 Corinthians 6:20].

If our Lord Jesus is the Saviour of our body, and our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, then the whole body is sacred, and all its functions are to be carried out and its appetites to be fulfilled in accordance to God's law. Paul reminds us that every believer "should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour" [1 Thessalonians 4:4].

The Seventh Commandment therefore forbids all deeds, thoughts and motivations that are impure and immoral, that debase us as redeemed people of God. Positively, the Seventh Commandment calls on believers to cultivate self-respect and discipline, and at the same time, have a high regard for the dignity of other people.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 1
ACTS 24

THOUGHT

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. – 1 Corinthians 6:18

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:19*

LESSON

The religion of property

VERSE 19

Neither shalt thou steal.

Theft, like murder and adultery, deprives a person of what is rightfully his. What are the prohibitions under the eighth commandment?

- It forbids a man from depriving another of his property (plain thievery).
- It forbids our depriving the right of another, refusing to return an item that you have borrowed.
- It forbids our gaining an undue advantage over another at his expense.
- It forbids our gaining wealth by unlawful means.
- It forbids our oppressing a poor debtor, and depriving him of his means of livelihood and putting him in harm's way.
- It forbids paying insufficient wages. The labourer is worthy of his hire and failing to pay a fair wage violates the Eighth Commandment.
- It forbids lending money at exorbitant interest rates.
- It forbids exploiting strangers, widows and orphans.
- It forbids unfair trading practices.
- It forbids mishandling another's property, such as driving a rented car in a careless manner.
- It forbids removing a neighbour's landmark.
- It forbids withholding of the tithe.

Positively, the Eighth Commandment requires believers to work hard as servants of Christ and for His glory. It also requires us to work hard for the good of others. The Bible upholds our right to just remuneration for our labour. But bear in mind that we are stewards, and we are to use what God has entrusted to us for the glory of God and the good of others.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 2
ACTS 25

THOUGHT

Work, that you may get. Get, that you may have to give.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 5:20

LESSON

The religion of the tongue

VERSE 20

Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.

The Ninth Commandment puts a bridle on our tongue. The Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Commandments protect another person's body, honour and property, the ninth commandment protects his name. It goes beyond forbidding the giving of false testimony in a court of law; it also commands a person not to tolerate (bear) falsehoods. Christians are to have no part in making, taking part in, supporting or perpetuating lies. We are to give no room for gossip, deceit and guile. We are not to needlessly tell of another's wrong deed under the guise of righteousness in denouncing it. We are not to resort to name-calling and labelling. God's people are not to give way to thoughtless speech that would stumble another person. Every unkind thought of another person, which might prompt an unkind word against him, is condemned by the Ninth Commandment.

Positively, this commandment requires that, as God's people, our speech must be marked by truth. "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" [Ephesians 4:25].

When we speak, our words must be ruled by love. That, in turn, calls for us to speak with self-restraint. A wise person is not measured by what he knows or says but by what he knows and when he says. Solomon gives this wise counsel, "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips *is* wise" [Proverbs 10:19].

Pray that the Lord will put a bridle on your tongue so that your speech is bound by truth, and seasoned with grace.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 3
ACTS 26

THOUGHT

For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same [*is*] a perfect man, [and] able also to bridle the whole body. – James 3:2

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:21***LESSON****Avarice****VERSE 21**

*Neither shalt thou desire
thy neighbour's wife,
neither shalt thou covet thy
neighbour's house, his field,
or his manservant, or his
maidservant, his ox, or his
ass, or any thing that is thy
neighbour's.*

Just as there is restraint upon our body, property and tongue, there is also a restraint upon our heart. The Tenth Commandment is the religion of the heart. The Tenth Commandment forbids Christians to desire after objects that are inappropriate, to desire appropriate objects to an inappropriate degree. It also forbids Christians to acquire an appropriate object by inappropriate means. We are not to be envious of another's possessions, or wish him to be deprived of his possession because we do not have the same.

The root of covetousness is discontentment with God's providence. Unlike murder and theft, which are sins of visible deeds, covetousness is the hidden sin of the heart. The Tenth Commandment therefore reveals how deeply sin has struck its roots in our nature, that sin has permeated and saturated our very thoughts.

The sin of covetousness also tells us that a person may be blameless in the sight of other people because his deeds are deemed by them as righteous but not in the sight of God, Who judges by motives. The man may not be as blameless as he thinks.

Thus, the Tenth Commandment teaches us that the Christian faith must be a matter of the heart, and it requires the total submission of the whole man—not just his audible speech or visible deeds—to God. It demands that we bring our thoughts and motivations—unseen and unheard—into captivity and to the obedience of Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 4
ACTS 27

THOUGHT

Covetousness is idolatry. – Colossians 3:5

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 5:22–33***LESSON****The glory of God****VERSE 22**

These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

At Mount Sinai we are told that the majesty of Jehovah was veiled in cloud and thick darkness. This was the second time that the Ten Commandments were given to Moses. The first was in Exodus 20:1–17. The Lord Himself wrote these commandments or Decalogue on two tables of stone. They were given in an impressive way: with fire, cloud and a great voice [v. 22]. “The Word of the Lord endureth forever.”

Moses and the Israelites who assembled together witnessed the glory of God on Mount Sinai, a visible manifestation of God’s invisible being and holiness. Someday we who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb will also experience the most spectacular sight. We will be face-to-face with the risen and glorified Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ [1 John 3:2].

The surpassing glory of God makes such an impression on the hearts of sinners that they cry instinctively for mediation of the covenant between God and Israel. The covenant was effected through the mediation of Moses. He was doubly constituted as mediator, both by divine appointment and by the people’s desire. The messages from Jehovah were given to Moses and through him, communicated to Israel.

Moses exhorted the people by emphasising the need to fear and obey God, to reverence, worship and have fellowship with Him. They must walk in all the ways of God’s commandments. Blessings always follow such a walk with God. Those who obey God’s commandments will live, prosper and prolong their days in the promised land of God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 5
ACTS 28

THOUGHT

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. – 1 Timothy 2:5–6

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 6:1–9

LESSON

The command to love the Lord

VERSE 5

And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

The two key words, ‘one’ and ‘love’ [v. 4–5], have profound meaning and together they wonderfully supplement each other. The ‘one God’ must be loved and served by the whole man. The Lord our God is one Lord. This means that the Lord (Jehovah) is totally unique in His oneness. Scriptural Trinity implies that God is one; He embraces the universe. There is no other power or force beyond or outside Him. He is the only one true and living God Who alone deserves worship and obedience. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power.”

Throughout Scripture, God emphasises that He is one; “the Lord our God is one Lord” [v. 4], “there is none other God but one” [1 Corinthians 8:4c] and “there is one God” [1 Timothy 2:5a]. All Christians heartily affirm this truth. The key word ‘one’ is often used to denote unity in diversity.

The second great truth God wanted Israel to learn is found in verse 5. Jesus confirms this passage as the first and great commandment. The second is “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” [Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31]. The greatest command is clear: We must love God with all our heart, soul and strength. God commands us to love Him and He provides the grace to fulfil it.

It is of utmost importance that we keep God first in our lives. The best way to do this is to love Him with all of our heart, soul and strength.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 6
ROMANS 1

THOUGHT

And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. – Deuteronomy 10:12

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 6:10–25***LESSON****The warning about prosperity****VERSE 18**

And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers,

Before entering the Promised Land, Moses proclaimed God's covenant faithfulness in the hope of motivating the Israelites to obey God despite the imminent temptations and challenges. God gave them a generous inheritance. After they entered the land of plenty, would they soon forget God?

Having spent 40 years in the Sinai wilderness, the Israelites knew very little about the seduction of other cultures. Moses was more afraid of the forthcoming prosperity than the rigours of the wilderness—the temptation of forgetting the Lord [v. 12], idolatry [v. 14] and distrust [v. 16]. He warned them against those dangers and described the remedies.

Prosperity and abundance can lead to pride and arrogance. It can lead to the danger of forgetting God. Believers must not participate in idolatry and false worship. This act of unfaithfulness would result in judgement since the Lord is a jealous God [Deuteronomy 4:24; 5:9; 32:16, 21]. Another sin that the Israelites might be tempted in Canaan was that of testing the Lord [v. 16]. Temptation comes when our faith is tested in times of hardship. At Massah [Exodus 17:1–7] the people lacked water and thought they would die of thirst. Instead of trusting God in that trial, they tested God by complaining and quarrelling. The solution to the danger of testing God is to obey God, keep His commandments and His laws.

Parents must teach and remind their children how God delivered Israel from Egypt. The children must delight in God's holy Word, love it and make it a matter of study continually.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 7
ROMANS 2

THOUGHT

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. – 1 John 2:15

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 7:1–5

LESSON

Be ye separate

VERSE 2

*And when the LORD thy
God shall deliver them
before thee; thou shalt smite
them, and utterly destroy
them; thou shalt make no
covenant with them, nor
shew mercy unto them.*

Throughout life on earth, everyone has to face innumerable challenges, such as diseases, unemployment, financial difficulties, family problems, anger, stress, greed, war, death ... the list goes on and on. These enemies are so hostile, powerful and brutal in their attack that they threaten to drain the life out of man. But there is hope: the hope of God's presence and power. By trusting God we can be liberated from all our enemies and be victorious.

The Israelites were commanded by God to enter and occupy the Promised Land. The seven nations that occupied Canaan [v. 1] were gross in idolatry and infamous in custom and lust. The seven major enemies were larger and more powerful than Israel but God would deliver them. Moses forewarned them against toleration of idolatry.

The Israelites were to destroy the enemy totally. They were not to make any treaty with them. Neither should they show any mercy. No covenant was to be made, nor alliance formed with them. Any association with pagan worshippers would only lead to apostasy and bring about the destruction of God's own people. The Israelites were not to inter-marry with evil unbelievers of the Canaanite nations [v. 3–4], as it would lead the believer away from God into false worship. The disobedient Israelite would be destroyed because of his idolatry and rejection of God.

Believers today must maintain a separated position [2 Corinthians 6:14–18; 1 John 2:15–17] while at the same time love the lost and seek to win them to Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HOSEA 8
ROMANS 3

THOUGHT

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. – Ephesians 5:11

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 7:6–11***LESSON****God's treasured
possession****VERSE 6**

*For thou art an holy people
unto the LORD thy God:
the LORD thy God hath
chosen thee to be a special
people unto himself, above
all people that are upon the
face of the earth.*

Jehovah is one Lord. He is a spiritual Being. He is a holy and righteous God. He has of His own grace entered into relations of special intimacy with Israel, whom He has chosen to be His special people, above all people who are upon the face of the earth. The reason for this choice is not any merit or value within themselves but simply an outflowing of Jehovah's love and desire to bless [v. 7–8].

“For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God.” Holy by special covenant and should be holy in personal character and conduct—a people totally set apart to God. They were chosen because of an oath He swore to Israel's forefathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jehovah had promised the patriarchs that their descendants would become a mighty nation and inherit the Promised Land, Canaan [Genesis 17:7–8; 26:3–5; 28:13–15], and He would be faithful to His Word [Hebrews 6:13–15]. All the nations would be blessed through Abraham [Genesis 18:18].

“For ye were the fewest of all people.” There were only 70 Hebrews who first settled in Goshen in Egypt. The Lord redeemed and saved His people from the enslavement of Egypt. Israel was set free, guided and settled in the Land of Promise by God's mighty hand. They were to obey God and conquer all the enemies of the Promised Land.

God is faithful. He keeps His covenant of love to all those who love and obey Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 9
ROMANS 4

THOUGHT

For I am the Lord that bringeth you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. – Leviticus 11:45

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 7:12–26***LESSON****Fatal attraction****VERSE 25**

The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God.

From Genesis 2 through Revelation 21, the Bible refers to gold and silver no less than 783 times. God created gold and silver. They belong to Him. He is the perfect lover of the beautiful and has no quarrel with them. But there is one thing that He loves even more than beauty and that is the spiritual welfare of His children.

Here at the entrance to the land of their possession, God, through Moses, warned the Israelites not to desire the silver and gold on the graven images. They were to destroy them by fire. The Canaanites had polluted and corrupted the Promised Land with idolatry. Some of the statues of the gods they worshipped were covered or adorned with gold or silver ornaments. God saw that the valuable gold and excellent workmanship might be an inducement for the Israelites to strip the gold ornaments and preserve them. This might lead, remotely at least, to idolatry. The idols were accursed and those who had them or anything appertaining to them were accursed also.

Speaking of heathen abomination, Moses said, “Thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it *is* a cursed thing” [v. 26b]. All idol worship, superstitions and sins are abominable things that God hates.

Similarly, today we are tempted and distracted by the profit of ‘gods’ of our present time, for instance, materialism, covetousness and greed. If we do not separate ourselves from the world, we will be in danger of being destroyed.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 10
ROMANS 5

THOUGHT

Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them. – Deuteronomy 11:16

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 8:1–10

LESSON

**Do your problems serve
any purpose?**

VERSE 2

*And thou shalt remember
all the way which the LORD
thy God led thee these forty
years in the wilderness, to
humble thee, and to prove
thee, to know what was
in thine heart, whether
thou wouldst keep his
commandments, or no.*

Many times, we think of the Israelites' 40 years in the wilderness as simply punishment for unbelief. Certainly it was, for those who doubted and died in the desert. For that generation, the wilderness years were a test to show what was in their hearts—whether they would stay true to the Lord.

This has immense practical application for us as well. All of us have times in our lives when we feel helpless and lost—as if we are wandering in circles, achieving nothing. Have you considered that these times might be for the purpose of showing where you are in the Lord? That the reason for these times of fruitlessness is for you to see how you will respond?

The true nature of relationships is always revealed during tough times. Some are shown to be strong, others prove to be shallow. There are people who say they love you but bail out at the first sign of trouble. Others stay with you through thick and thin. Some demonstrate that they are simply 'fair-weather friends', while others are at your side no matter what. Our relationship with God is proved at these times as well.

Truly, trying times are tests that show our true heart. Our real feelings for the Lord are revealed in adversity and times of trouble. Will you stay with Him or will you forsake Him? Will you draw near, or will you run away?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 11
ROMANS 6

THOUGHT

**The pain you have been feeling cannot compare
to the joy that is coming.**

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 8:11–20

LESSON

Remembering God

VERSE 18

But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

One of the greatest dangers we face in life is ironically one that is brought about by our wealth. In a way, it is more difficult to reach certain people with the Gospel because they don't think they need God. When everything is fine and our lives are filled with abundance, it is not hard to have our hearts lifted up. In times of abundance, it is easy to forget, or to at least stop seeking Him with the urgency we once had. We can easily forget it was all His work on our behalf. We think highly of our own hard work and brilliance.

Yet we must see that God is the One Who gives us our body, our brain and our talents. It is all of God. We should always remember why God has blessed us. His plan is that all these ultimately further His eternal purpose. Therefore we have no right to use our material blessings to further our selfish purposes. Instead, we should use our resources to advance His kingdom.

Be careful of prosperity. If you are prosperous financially, keep in mind that God allows you to be so. Also, do not let yourself fall into the trap of thinking that you will finally be happy if you could just get a 'little more.' If you find that 'little more,' you will not find happiness.

Look at how prosperous you are, then look at how moral you are. God will take away your prosperity so that we can see our immorality. He will then deal with you even as He had dealt with Israel.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 12
ROMANS 7

THOUGHT

Material wealth can cause amnesia of divine blessings.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 9:1–5

LESSON

Warning against pride

VERSE 4

Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.

Moses addressed what was perhaps the greatest threat the children of Israel had faced upon entering Canaan. It did not come from a hostile force positioned from outside against them but it came from within their own hearts. Moses warned the Israelites once they began to prosper in the land, they would think that it was their own strength that had preserved and prospered them. They would be tempted to explain their victory over the Canaanites in terms of their own merit rather than God's grace.

Our fall into the sin of pride does not normally materialise in words. Long before we say proud words, we are already thinking proud thoughts in our heart. Seeing all the lands before their eyes, the Israelites thought in their hearts that it was because of their righteousness that the Lord had given them their land.

The truth is there was nothing good in them that made them worthy of the lands they had received. Similarly for us, there is nothing righteous in us that cause us to be deserving of God's blessings.

When we receive any gift from God, we are tempted to take it and use it to glorify ourselves. That is a real temptation for many of us. There is a danger of falling into the trap of thinking that when God uses us, it is because of our excellent spirituality. Remember, the greatest things you can ever do are the things that God does through you.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 13
ROMANS 8

THOUGHT

God is great, not you.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 9:6–29***LESSON****Defiance of authority****VERSE 24**

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

Moses reminded the people that they had not exactly been the most pleasant people to work with. They had been quite stubborn. Moses summed it all up in one sentence: There had never been a time when Israel was not rebellious. Ever since he knew them, they had been continually defiant. Israel's disobedience to God began with their unbelief. They did not believe God loved them. They did not think that God was mighty enough to bring them into the Promised Land.

The source of this rebellious attitude is to be found in self-centeredness, more specifically in the preference of man's own will over the way of God. When man chooses another lord other than the eternal and holy God Almighty, he sets up a standard of rebellion, and is in revolt.

Rebellion is an open door to the devil into a person's life. The Bible strictly warns us against rebellion, and its consequences are not to be taken lightly. God's Word tells us that rebellion is in the same category of sin as witchcraft. The Bible is clear that a man who is rebellious is a man whose heart is not right with God.

If you have been rebellious, stop this foolishness! Forsake it and turn to the Lord. Repent of your ways, that you shall receive mercy. God's Word warns us that a rebellious heart darkens one's spiritual eyesight (discernment), and it deafens one's ears towards the voice of God. God cannot and He will not treat obstinate rebels as if they are loyal and obedient subjects. He will maintain His honour and authority.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HOSEA 14
ROMANS 9

THOUGHT

When our spiritual eyesight is blinded, our discernment suffers greatly.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 10:1–11***LESSON****Second chance****VERSE 4**

And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me.

Moses broke the tablets of the law not only out of anger but also as a powerful visual representation of Israel's breaking of the law of God. Sin is something to be angry about, but Moses had destroyed the written Word of God in his anger. Now God commanded that the Law be restored on two new tablets. This time round, God was not making the tablets—Moses was. Moses would have another set of tablets, but he would have to cut them out himself.

When God gives you a blessing and when you mess it up, He will sometimes replace it. But the second time round, it involves more work to get back what you have had before.

Our God is a God of second chances. "But thou, O LORD, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth" [Psalm 86:15]. He is faithful and patient towards us. There are times when we let our emotions reign over us, or when we try to exert our will in getting things done our way; God allows all these. We will then soon realise our mistakes and turn back to Him, only to find Him with us all along.

Just as God is longsuffering and forgiving, He wants His children to be patient with others and forgive others too. He gives us second chances, and we must also give the same to others. Those who could not forgive others may not have experienced what it means to be forgiven by God in the first place.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JOEL 1
ROMANS 10

THOUGHT

God's grace is our model.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 10:12–22

LESSON

Who is your God?

VERSE 17

For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.

Moses was distinguishing the true God from all the local gods worshipped throughout the land. Unlike the pagan gods, the Lord our God is the great Lord of lords, omnipotent and just. He is never blinded by personalities. Nor can He be bribed through some manoeuvring on our part.

And the precious truth is, the God Whom the children of Israel knew thousands of years ago is the same God Whom we worship today. He is still the great and mighty God of Israel. What he hated then, He still abhors today. What touched God's heart then also touches God's heart now.

When you realise that God holds your very breath in His hand and can let you stop breathing at any moment, it could be a sobering thought. When you think even further and consider that the very atoms that hold your physical body together, that if He wants to, He could let go and you will disintegrate, it is even a more terrible thought. But when you realise that He is the totally pure and holy God, and that we are totally unfit to come before His presence, and yet He puts up with us anyway, even loving us, it is the most wondrous thought.

God is the One Who blesses us even though we do not deserve it. He is faithful and patient towards us, even when we have been stubborn and rebellious. As you start or end your day, look at what God has called you to do. See and remember how He is blessing you.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JOEL 2
ROMANS 11

THOUGHT

Jesus, my Lord, my God and my All.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 11:1–7

LESSON

**Obedience, the hallmark
of love**

VERSE 1

*Therefore thou shalt love
the LORD thy God, and keep
his charge, and his statutes,
and his judgements, and his
commandments, alway.*

This whole chapter focuses on the importance of loving obedience to God. The stress is on the outward evidence of love out of gratitude to God's deliverance of His people. The deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt, their great escape through the Red Sea and the provisions in their wilderness wanderings are all evidence of God's promise of protection.

Although God judged the Egyptians, He did not spare His own people either. The disobedience of both Dathan and Abiram was severely dealt with. Their defiance in questioning Moses and Aaron's authority over the priesthood resulted in their dying a horrible death [Numbers 16:30]. Such illustrations of God's dealings with His own people serve as a reminder for us to recall His blessings upon us and then respond in loving obedience. Indeed, none of us deserves even the least of God's favour. The greatest debt of love we owe Him is proved at the cross of Calvary.

As God's children, let us heed the same call to love and serve our Lord Jesus in obedience to His will. Parents expect obedience from their children. Our heavenly Father deserves much more from us, His children. Have you lost your first love for the Lord? How much you love God is seen in your obedience to His commandments. How obedient are you as a child of God?

It is certainly a joy to please and obey someone we love. Note the stress on the frequency of obedience out of love in verse 1: 'alway'. We should love and obey God always.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JOEL 3
ROMANS 12

REMINDER

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous. – 1 John 5:3

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 11:8–25***LESSON****The rewards of obedience****VERSE 23**

Then will the LORD drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves.

As in the previous passage, the emphasis on loving obedience is again repeated here. The assurance that God kept His promises and empowered the nation of Israel was a definite motivating factor for the Israelites to continue loving the Lord. The only condition was that they must pledge their allegiance to the Lord and to Him alone. God always keeps His promise. In reading further, we shall discover how God takes care of His people at all times.

After reminding the Israelites of God's deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, the promise of His greater works to come in the land of Canaan is very comforting indeed. This shows God's loving care of His chosen people. Whatever God promises will surely come to pass.

The rewards of obedience are mentioned specifically in this passage. Not only would Canaan be their possession, the Israelites were also promised longevity as well for their continued obedience. However, their disobedience would certainly incur the wrath of God. Throughout Scripture, we read of God dealing very severely with disobedience, for example, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The best illustration of loving obedience is God the Son going to the cross of Calvary in obedience to God the Father. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" [Philippians 2:8]. Even the Son of God is obedient, so let us emulate His example. Keeping God's commandments is the evidence of our love for God. When we love someone, we want to please that person.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
AMOS 1
ROMANS 13

REMINDER

If ye love Me, keep My commandments. – John 14:15

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 11:26–32

LESSON

**Choice: Blessing or
curse?**

VERSE 26

*Behold, I set before you this
day a blessing and a curse;*

Here in this short passage we are reminded once again of the blessings of obedience in contrast to curses of disobedience. Upon entering Canaan, Moses proclaimed publicly the announcement of the blessings to be made on Mount Gerizim and curses on Mount Ebal.

God's commandments are not burdensome at all. In fact, it is very direct and clear-cut. Obviously, blessings in the form of rewards are the natural outcome. Likewise, curses in the form of punishments are the result of disobedience. When we allow others to become stumbling blocks in our Christian walk with God, we become cursed. Likewise, when we succumb to the seduction of sin and revert to false worship, we face the same punishment.

This repeated exhortation to obedience emphasises the importance of our love for God. "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" [Exodus 20:5] warns us against the sin of idolatry. God our Creator and Saviour deserves our utmost devotion. God will bestow His blessings upon all His children when they obey His law and statutes, His judgements and commandments.

Blessing or curse, the choice is yours. We may think the answer is obvious. However, Satan has blinded the eyes of many so that they choose to follow him. Are you one of them? If so, it is not too late to seek God's forgiveness and return to Him. Then you will enjoy the assurance of God's blessings. Pray for wisdom to make the right decision at the crossroad of your life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 2
ROMANS 14

MEDITATION

**"Choose you this day whom ye will serve" –
Joshua 24:15**

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 12:1–16

LESSON

No graven images

VERSE 4

*Ye shall not do so unto the
LORD your God.*

We read of Moses charging the Israelites with God's particular statutes. He began with emphasis on the worship of God. This is in line with the repetition of the call to obey and love God. Specific instructions were given to the people to obey God's very first commandment.

Starting afresh in any new place is a challenge indeed. When the Israelites settled in their new home in Canaan, Moses exhorted them to remember the very first commandment of God. Since God is a jealous God, His children must not allow anyone or anything to come in between their relationship with Him. Hence, the Israelites had to get rid of graven images.

The very first thing the Israelites did was to destroy all altars, pillars, groves and images set up by the Canaanites. There must be no reminder of any previous idolatrous worship of the pagan gods. God's glory and praise must never be taken away from Him [Isaiah 42:8]. Even more subtle is the worship of other idols in our daily living. Beware the danger of the love of money, career or even putting self first before God.

There must be no duplicate of false worship whatsoever. Since God is holy, no compromise is allowed in our worship of Him. The amount of time spent on someone or something shows your love for that person or object. As God's children, we must live a life of loving obedience for our Lord Jesus at all times.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 3
ROMANS 15

WARNING

**Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image
– Exodus 20:4a**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 12:17–28***LESSON****Caring for your own****VERSE 19**

*Take heed to thyself that
thou forsake not the Levite
as long as thou livest upon
the earth.*

This passage details very elaborate instructions on holy living for God. Whatever was done must glorify and honour our Lord. Special emphasis on the needs of the Levites was mentioned.

The Jews were privileged to have Levites living near them to instruct them in the Law and restrain them from wrongdoing when needed. They in turn must share their tithes and offerings with the Levites who had no part of the inheritance. The nature of the Levites' duties was such that they had no way of pursuing a regular, normal livelihood. Hence, their necessities were taken care of by their fellow Jews, as commanded by God. The priests served the people of God. Any neglect shown to them was a dishonour to God.

“Forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you” [Deuteronomy 12:12] gives the reason for such special care of the Levites. This should not be a surprise because charity begins at home. The tribe of Levi was excluded in the share of the division of land among the 12 tribes of Israel. Their needs would be taken care of by their own people.

Believers are encouraged to “do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” [Galatians 6:10b]. True worship must result in deeds of love. Ministers of God who take care of their flock deserve to be provided for. Indeed, those who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel. This was ordained by our Lord Himself [1 Corinthians 9:13–14].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 4
ROMANS 16

THOUGHT

The workman is worthy of his meat. – Matthew 10:10b

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 12:29–32***LESSON****Absolute obedience****VERSE 32**

*What thing soever I
command you, observe to do
it: thou shalt not add thereto,
nor diminish from it.*

The warning in this short passage is very severe indeed. Specific instructions were given to the Israelites about the consequences of following other gods. God's people must pattern their lives on holy living. False worship and idolatry incur God's wrath. Added to such an abomination is child sacrifice, which is considered murder. Not only is this barbaric and inhuman, it is also against natural affection. Such a pagan practice roots from Satanic worship. Once again, the Israelites were reminded of the need for absolute obedience to God's commandment. Upon possession of Canaan, the Jews were forbidden to adopt the religious practices of their false worship.

Strict adherence to God's command is mentioned in verse 32. Moses gave the same caution here as he did earlier [Deuteronomy 4:2] concerning the Word of God. God's people are not allowed to add or take away from God's commandments. Moses warned them about the consequence of disobedience.

Our society is permeated by idolatry and false worship. Many of the world's false religions are detestable in the sight of God. Scripture warns us that addition or subtraction from God's Word will result in severe judgement. Sad to say, carnal fleshly behaviour of believers today is the outcome of their imitation of the religious practices of the world.

How is your spiritual life? Do you follow our Lord Jesus whole-heartedly? True worship of God must be evidenced in a loving obedient lifestyle according to His Word.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 5
I CORINTHIANS I

THOUGHT

Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. – Psalm 119:115

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 13:1–11***LESSON****Putting God first****VERSE 11**

*And all Israel shall hear,
and fear, and shall do no
more any such wickedness
as this is among you.*

Once again Moses gave a very severe warning against the sin of idolatry. In the previous chapter, Moses cautioned the Israelites against the danger of idolatry from the Canaanites. Now, in this chapter, the people were warned about the same danger coming from within themselves.

No one must be allowed to come between God and the believer. Three instances of seduction to idolatry are mentioned here, and each case results in the same judicial punishment: death. The second instance of a loved one or close friend seducing the believer into false worship stresses the personal responsibility of that seduced person to take the lead in executing justice by stoning that false prophet. Such severity was warranted because it would deter evil.

We may wonder why false prophecies were allowed to come to pass. It was meant as a test for the people to prove their love for God [v. 3]. Let us be reminded that partial obedience is actually disobedience. God expects full obedience from His children.

Every believer must be on guard whenever religious teachers claim some special powers or signs. A case in point: a false prophet may do signs and wonders as proof of his truthful teaching. However, the moment that prophet diverts anyone to follow other gods, it is a sure indication of false teaching. Any true prophet must always point us to the one true and living God. Added to this truth is the fact that believers must always put God first in their lives.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 6

I CORINTHIANS 2

THOUGHT

**My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. –
Proverbs 1:10**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 13:12–18***LESSON****Doing the right thing****VERSE 18**

*When thou shalt hearken
to the voice of the LORD
thy God, to keep all his
commandments which I
command thee this day, to
do that which is right in the
eyes of the LORD thy God.*

The passage for today offers us two important pieces of advice. The first one is a call to separate ourselves from bad influence. There was news that some men in certain cities had been leading people away from God to serve unknown gods [v. 13]. God’s instruction for Israel was to annihilate them completely [v. 15–16].

These sons of Belial were those who had switched their alliance to the devil (‘Belial’ is another name for Satan). They were abomination in the sight of the holy God. God told His people to smite and destroy them utterly, even the cattle that they had raised. The spoils that were gathered were to be burnt with fire, together with the whole city. Such is the holiness of God: He would not allow any sinful behaviour in His sight.

To apply this in our lives, some of our people who “are gone out from among us” [v. 13] can lead us away from God. We are to separate ourselves from them if they insist on going their ways. We should not cleave to things that are wayward [v. 17] and should do that which is right [v. 18].

However, the second piece of advice in this message is we must “enquire, and make search, and ask diligently” [v. 14] before we do anything, for any wrong judgement and actions on our part may cause others to stumble, and even destroy the unity and harmony of the church. In other words, we need to ask God for wisdom so that we can discern what is right.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 7**I CORINTHIANS 3****THOUGHT**

King Solomon asked for wisdom and God gave him understanding.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 14:1–21***LESSON**

**For thou art an holy
people**

VERSE 2

*For thou art an holy people
unto the LORD thy God,
and the LORD hath chosen
thee to be a peculiar people
unto himself, above all the
nations that are upon the
earth.*

The passage for our consideration today centres around one theme: separation. Verse 2 in particular brings to our attention this focus. Separated from the world and consecrated to God, we are a holy people unto God, for He has chosen us to be His special people, different from the nations of this world.

Bearing this in mind, we should go beyond the letter and read Deuteronomy in spirit, especially the dietary laws, the main contents of this passage. Restrictions on our diet are no longer in place. God has cleansed all animals for us to eat [Acts 10]. Any attempt to draw the one principle behind the difference between clean and unclean animals does not benefit us. Not only that, it misses the point this passage is making.

This applies to the first verse as well. The laceration of one's body and the shaving of one's forehead have to do with pagan practices of mourning. The pagans then believed in "bathing in one's own blood" in sorrow, a practice [v. 21] where God forbids seething a kid in his mother's milk. By forbidding these actions, God teaches us the importance of separation.

God is clear on what we should do. We are supposed to separate ourselves from any such associations. In today's context, we are to draw a clear line between the world and us. We are still on this earth and should do our best to evangelise non-believers but remember that we are different from the world, like light is different from darkness.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 8

I CORINTHIANS 4

THOUGHT

Why do you call yourself a Christian?

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 14:22–29***LESSON****That the Lord may bless thee****VERSE 29**

And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest.

Today's passage is about tithing, though they are special tithes that are described for us only in the Book of Deuteronomy. Yet again, no matter what the contents of the law may be, the significance of these instructions is summarised for us [v. 23–29]. God taught the Israelites about tithes so that His people could learn to fear God and how God would bless them.

The first kind of tithes here was a yearly one [v. 22] and it involved bringing the firstfruits (corn, wine, oil) to attend a feast in a place where God had chosen [v. 23]. The emphasis of spirit over letter is again shown in the flexibility allowed when distance made attending this feast difficult [v. 24].

The second kind of tithes involved bringing food to the Levites, strangers, the fatherless and widows every three years [v. 27–29]. If the first is a tithe of consecration in holy fear of God, the second is a tithe of compassion—providing for those who are doing God's work and also for the poor and needy. A cheerful giver who brings this tithe shall in turn be blessed in all the work he does [v. 29].

These two principles can be applied today to our tithes and offerings every week. We tithe because we thank the Lord and submit to Him in reverential fear. At the same time, we tithe for the love of the church and His people, and eventually for our love for God. And God does see. He will bless us with even more.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

AMOS 9**I CORINTHIANS 5****REMINDER****We can never out-give God.**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 15:1–6***LESSON****Blessed as a nation****VERSE 6**

*For the LORD thy God
blesseth thee, as he
promised thee: and thou
shalt lend unto many
nations, but thou shalt not
borrow; and thou shalt
reign over many nations,
but they shall not reign over
thee.*

Deuteronomy 15 contains a series of instructions on what the Israelites should do every seven years. This is known to us as the Sabbath year of release. Today's lesson addresses the release of debts [v. 1–6]. On the seventh year, a person who lends to his brother shall write off the debt [v. 2]. The rationale is this is so that no one would become heavily indebted within the nation of Israel [v. 4].

Poverty is a vicious cycle. One who is poor often finds it hard to get back to normal life again. Instead, it is often a spiral downward. To break the cycle, an external help is necessary. In God's law, God is the One Who institutes that help. It allows a person caught in the snare of poverty to start afresh. What a relief it is for such a one!

This reminds us of God's grace for us. By ourselves, we are dead in sin and totally depraved. We cannot save ourselves. Instead, sins often beget sins, and soon we find ourselves sinking in the quicksand of iniquities. But God is gracious. From outside, He reaches out to catch hold of us. He saves us out of the pit. Because of God's grace, we get to rest before starting afresh again. We are made a new man. Sin no longer reigns over us.

However, not everyone enjoys this privilege [v. 3]. Strangers to God's grace still face the same debt, if not more, after the Sabbath year. Without God's grace, there is only a hopeless end.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

OBADIAH
I CORINTHIANS 6

THOUGHT

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. – Galatians 6:10

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 15:7–11

LESSON

**Give without expecting
return**

VERSE 10

*Thou shalt surely give him,
and thine heart shall not
be grieved when thou givest
unto him: because that for
this thing the LORD thy God
shall bless thee in all thy
works, and in all that thou
puttest thine hand unto.*

Read yesterday’s verses again. Do you see a loophole for ‘freeloaders’ in this ‘social system’? Will there be people who actually choose to borrow at the end of the sixth year, knowing that their debts would be written off in the coming year? Did God overlook this? What was God’s instruction in this matter then?

Read on. If a poor man who is your brother asks for your help, you are not supposed to harden your heart [v. 7–8]. Instead, you should open your hand wide unto him and lend him sufficient to cover his needs. Note that this is not a call for us to give indiscriminately or excessively. It states clearly that this must be a poor brother and we must give enough for his needs. Naturally, we can only know one’s needs when we have assessed it.

The passage continues about people who harbour a wicked thought and “have an evil eye” in this process [v. 9–10], probably thinking that the poor are out to con them. Instead, we should give the poor and needy the benefit of the doubt after we have made the proper wise assessment. Then give cheerfully. “Thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him.” And the Lord, seeing this, will surely bless you [v. 10].

God knows all these will happen. He has allowed it to be so. In a way, to love and give is a sacrifice that makes us vulnerable. But once we have taken that step, the giver becomes the receiver.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JONAH 1
1 CORINTHIANS 7

THOUGHT

I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. – Acts 20:35

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 15:12–18***LESSON****Freed to free****VERSE 15**

*And thou shalt remember
that thou wast a bondman
in the land of Egypt,
and the LORD thy God
redeemed thee: therefore I
command thee this thing
to day.*

This section of Deuteronomy 15 deals with the freeing of servants on the Sabbath year of release. The Israelites were told to release their Hebrew servants on their seventh year of servitude [v. 12]. Not only that, they were supposed to also send them away with supplies [v. 14]. As much as the Lord has blessed us, we should also bless others, especially those who have served us.

God is clear on why masters should show such grace to their servants. These masters themselves had been slaves before [v. 15]. If not for God's deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, they would still be under the bondage of slavery. In a way, the Israelites were freed so that they could understand what it meant to be bound.

The spirit behind this sabbatical law was in no way different from that underlying Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant [Matthew 18]. We who are forgiven much are to forgive others. We who have experienced God's love ought to be able to translate this love to our brethren in Christ. Keeping this in mind, it should not be hard for us to set a person free [v. 18]. In fact, freeing others should be a pleasure.

A provision had also been made for the possibility of a servant wanting to stay with his master either for relational or economical reason [v. 16–17]. If the master was willing to keep a servant who was close or dependent on him, then he could do that by observing a certain ceremony.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JONAH 2
I CORINTHIANS 8

THOUGHT

What a joy it is to have people who willingly want to follow and serve you! You must have been a loving and generous master.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 15:19–23***LESSON****Consecrating the best****VERSE 19**

All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep.

Before entering the discussion of the Passover ceremonial laws, Deuteronomy uses five verses to describe the offering of the firstlings. This is a natural link to Deuteronomy 16, as the Passover is instituted to remember the day when the Spirit of God passed through Egypt, taking the lives of all the firstborn and sparing those who were saved by the blood of the lamb.

Verse 19 reiterates the law for all to sanctify all firstborn to the Lord. This is to honour God—offering him our first and our best. However, Deuteronomy is unique in adding the additional description of eating the firstborn every year in the place where God had chosen [v. 20]. No matter who you were as an Israelite, you were supposed to eat it within the land that God had chosen [v. 22].

Certain laws mentioned in Leviticus also apply, like the forbidding of one to sacrifice any firstborn with blemishes to God (though that does not mean it should not be eaten) and the restriction on eating blood.

God is clear in His instruction and consistent in His commands. The different books in the Pentateuch come together to present to us the whole counsel of God during Moses' time. Similarly, for today, the whole Bible is our guide in our walk with God. Although many of those laws evidently do not apply to us today, the spirit of the teaching still stands. We have to consecrate ourselves to God. We have to obey Him. And we have to look into His Word for guidance.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
JONAH 3
I CORINTHIANS 9**

THOUGHT

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. – Psalm 119:33–34

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 16:1–17

LESSON

**Remembering God's
grace through difficult
times**

VERSE 3

Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.

The Passover (*pesach*) was celebrated to commemorate God's deliverance of Israel from the tenth plague and from bondage in Egypt [Exodus 11–12; Leviticus 23:5–8]. The exodus was such a significant event in Israel's history that the month of Abib, when it took place, marks the beginning of Israel's annual calendar.

For the first Passover, the unleavened bread was a practical necessity. The Israelites left Egypt in such a hurry there was no time for the dough to rise. But the Feast of Unleavened Bread, following the Passover, continued to be important. Leaven was a picture of sin and corruption, because a little leaven would influence a whole lump of dough, the way a little sin can corrupt the whole body and soul. Also, leaven would 'puff up' the lump, even as pride and sin cause us to be 'puffed up'.

Significantly, God called them to 'walk unleavened' after their initial deliverance from Egypt. Symbolically, they were called to a pure walk with the Lord. The purity of the feast of Unleavened Bread followed upon the blood-deliverance of the Passover. We can only walk in purity before the Lord after we have had the blood-deliverance at the Cross.

Prophetically, the feast of Unleavened Bread relates to the time of Jesus' burial, after His perfect, sinless sacrifice on the Cross, in which He was received by God the Father as holy and complete, the Holy One who would not see corruption [Acts 2:27], perfectly accomplishing our salvation.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

JONAH 4
I CORINTHIANS 10

THOUGHT

The Feast of Unleavened Bread reminds the Israelites of the oppression the nation had suffered in Egypt, and the difficulty and peril amidst which their deliverance had been effected.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 16:18–22***LESSON****God's hatred of the perversion of justice****VERSE 19**

Thou shalt not wrest judgement; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

After God had chosen the Israelites to inherit the land, He gave them laws to order their daily lives. However, the responsibility to appoint judges and officials to run the legal system lay with the people. One important condition for the Israelites to occupy the land was for 'justice to prevail'.

A paraphrased Bible puts it like this: "Appoint judges and officials for yourselves from each of your tribes in all the towns the Lord your God is giving you. They must judge the people fairly. You must never twist justice or show partiality. Never accept a bribe, for bribes blind the eyes of the wise and corrupt the decisions of the godly. Let true justice prevail, so you may live and occupy the land that the Lord your God is giving you" [v. 18–20].

The judges were not to favour one party over another [Exodus 23:2–3]. The small as well as the great were to be heard, and neither for favour nor for fear were they to pervert justice. The judges had a great responsibility for they were acting on behalf of God. They were, so to speak, appointed by God and were administering in His name. The judges were to the best of their ability representing God. By His authority, they were also answerable to Him.

"And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgement" [2 Chronicles 19:6].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MICAH I
I CORINTHIANS II

THOUGHT**Read Proverbs 6:16–19.**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 17:1–13***LESSON****Removing evil from
society****VERSE 12**

*And the man that will do
presumptuously, and will
not hearken unto the priest
that standeth to minister
there before the LORD thy
God, or unto the judge,
even that man shall die:
and thou shalt put away
the evil from Israel.*

When Israel was theocratic, God allowed for courts of appeal in the land. These were higher courts where cases were taken beyond the local judges to the priests and the Levites, who were understood to be wiser judges because of their knowledge of God's Word. Therefore, "the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest ... that man shall die." The authority of the judges had to be respected. Therefore contempt of court was a capital crime. God thought it essential for the courts and the judges to be esteemed by the people of Israel.

Sin is so abhorrent to God that it cannot coexist with Him. The same should be true for His people. God is holy, and He expects His people to reflect His holiness [Leviticus 11:45; 19:2].

God used severe measures to remove sins and sinners from the covenant community. He offered forgiveness, but only for the truly repentant. Those who hardened their hearts could expect God's judgement: a devouring fire that consumed sinners and their sins [Isaiah 33:14; Hebrews 12:28–29]. Such cleansing was meant to heal the community of believers and deter others from rebelling against the Lord [v. 13].

In the Old Testament, God's judgement among His people was often immediate [Numbers 11:1–3; 16:1–50; Joshua 7:1–26]. God made His people aware of His demand for obedience and of the penalty for those who did not comply.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MICAH 2
I CORINTHIANS 12

THOUGHT

God's retribution is now reserved for the future day of judgement, when the sins of the unrighteous and the saints will be exposed and judged [Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27; 1 Peter 4:5].

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 17:14–20***LESSON****Guidelines for rulers and kings****VERSE 15**

Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.

When the children of Israel had settled in the land God had given them, and when they wished to have a king rule over them, God gave them certain guidelines to follow.

It was forbidden for the king to multiply horses, to have many wives, and to amass large treasures of silver and gold. He must have a copy of the Law written out for him from that kept by the priests, so that he could read it all the days of his life.

The multiplying of horses was prohibited not only to check the pride and wantonness of the king but also to separate the people from the supplier of good horses, namely Egypt [v. 16]. They should not be going back to that country from which they had been so miraculously delivered. This was a prohibition that could only have been given at an early stage in the history of the people. At a later period, after they had been well established in Canaan, such a ban would not have been necessary.

Multiplying wives and hoarding large treasures was also a common practice among ancient monarchs. Having vast harems and huge accumulations of the precious metals posed a danger of the King of Israel being seduced to follow this usage. He could have his heart turned away from the Lord. So it was fitting that such a prohibition should be prospectively enacted for his guidance. Both these prohibitions were neglected by Solomon [1 Kings 3:3–4], and probably by other Jewish kings.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MICAH 3
I CORINTHIANS 13

THOUGHT

“Never return to Egypt” spiritually means having once come over from Satan to Christ, it is altogether forbidden to even imagine of a return.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 18:1–9***LESSON****The Lord, our inheritance****VERSE 2**

Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.

The Levites—those of the tribe of Levi who were the paid ministers for the nation of Israel—shall have no inheritance among their brethren. In other words, they were not to have allotted portions of land for their own possession. Instead, the Levites were to be supported by the gifts and offerings of God’s people. The Levites were permitted to receive at least a portion of most animals sacrificed to the Lord, and thus were provided with meat for food.

Furthermore, the Lord Himself was their special possession. The allotment of the Levites was spiritual, not territorial or material. They were supposed to be totally devoted to the Lord by giving their whole lives to His service. What they have was God only. The Lord was their inheritance. This idea is a remarkable inverse of the idea that Israel was the Lord’s possession [Deuteronomy 7:6].

What is the implication of this relationship then? We are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation” [1 Peter 2:9]. After Christ has died on the Cross for our sin, the veil of partition between God and us was torn in twain. We can now come boldly before Him, as priests like the Levites. Not only that, we are royal priests and co-heirs with Christ.

Seen in this light, we have no everlasting possession but God. The Lord is our inheritance. We are His and He is ours. We are supposed to fully consecrate our lives to Him, serving Him with all our gifts and talents.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MICAH 4
I CORINTHIANS 14

THOUGHT

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: – 1 Peter 2:9

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 18:10–14***LESSON****Avoiding occult practices****VERSE 12**

*For all that do these things
are an abomination unto
the LORD: and because of
these abominations the
LORD thy God doth drive
them out from before thee.*

Death appears to be the only future man can be certain of, yet people of all ages and civilisations yearn impossibly to know about what lies ahead of them. Predicting the future (not speaking of scientific forecasting) is big business today for those who claim unique occult or psychic knowledge and powers.

In our present society, millions believe in the occult, such as astrology and zodiac signs, in guiding their daily lives. When spiritualism, astrology, teacup reading and the like are widely practised, the injunctions given to ancient Israel have a particular relevance. Not only is it impossible to discover the future by such practices, the practices themselves are forbidden by God to people who call themselves members of the covenant family. A Christian has no business participating in, or approving, any of these practices because these are either money-grabbing frauds or, worse, satanic or demonic exercises.

Occult practices are also forms of idolatry. It leads people away from trusting God and encourages them to put trust in what God created instead. The Bible clearly forbids us to participate in these activities, which includes practices like reading our horoscope, studying our signs and computing a natal chart. It is an occult art, meaning that it involves ‘knowledge of hidden things,’ seeking spiritual knowledge apart from God’s revelation.

As part of God’s covenant family, we should place our trust and hope in God’s promises to us. God is the One Who has led us through the past. He guides us in the present. He will show us our future.

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MICAH 5
I CORINTHIANS 15**

THOUGHT

Focus on God alone. God should be so big in our lives that we do not have time for other things. Neither do we need anything else!

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 18:15–22

LESSON

The reason for true prophets

VERSE 18

I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

Besides the priests and Levites who interceded for the people and the ordinary ministers who taught them God's law, the Israelites had prophets among them who were like extraordinary ministers, to reprove them of their faults, to remind them of their duty, and to foretell of things to come, warnings of judgement and assurance of deliverances.

With these prophets, the people need not use divinations or consult with spirits, for they could enquire of God's prophets even concerning their private affairs, as Saul did when he was looking for his father's asses [1 Samuel 9:6].

They also could not miss their duties through ignorance or mistake, nor differ in their opinions about them, for the prophets could advise them in every difficult and doubtful case. These prophets were like unto Moses in some aspects, though far inferior to him [Deuteronomy 34:10].

Whether a succession of prophets was included in this promise or not, we are sure that these prophets primarily point to Christ, and it is the clearest promise of Him that is in all the laws of Moses. Our Lord Jesus, as the Messiah, promised the coming of One Who is prophet, priest and king. The people had an eye to this promise concerning Him, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world." It was His Spirit that spoke in all the other prophets.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MICAH 6
I CORINTHIANS 16

THOUGHT

The prophets of the New Testament period were linked with the apostles in the foundation of the church [Ephesians 2:20; 3:5] as expositors of the fulfilment in Christ of Old testament prophecy [Romans 16:25–27].

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 19:1–14***LESSON****Order and grace****VERSE 10**

That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee.

The Bible is clearly against premeditated murder. It is a crime punishable by death [v. 11–13]. However, there are cases of homicide where killing is not intentional. Verse 5 paints a scenario of someone who kills another by mistake.

For this reason, three cities spaced out from north to south were chosen as refuge cities for people who killed someone accidentally. (In fact, there were six in all, three each on either side of the Jordan River. Deuteronomy here is referring to the ones on the west.) These are cities for people who needed God's grace in cases like these to seek refuge. The rationale was provided: so that innocent blood would not be shed [v. 10]. Order was also thus maintained.

Another law of maintaining civil order is that every Israelite was told to stay within his own allotted land and not remove his neighbour's landmark [v. 14]. Both laws show that our God is a God of order.

In addition, a person who killed another accidentally might not be totally innocent. In the case illustrated here [v. 5], he should at least do his due diligence of checking if the axe was safe for use. God thus gave him a second chance. He would be safe if he managed to enter one of the refuge cities and was judged as innocent by the elders in it. Our God is thus also a God of grace.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MICAH 7
2 CORINTHIANS 1

THOUGHT

In the order of the universe lies the evidence of God's grace.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 19:15–21

LESSON

Showing no pity

VERSE 21

*And thine eye shall not
pity; but life shall go for life,
eye for eye, tooth for tooth,
hand for hand, foot for foot.*

It would be a mistake to think that God condones disobedience and sin. Notice that in the case of killing (yesterday's lesson), a person who was found guilty of killing would still be cast out even if he managed to enter the city of refuge [v. 12]. No pity would be given [v. 13]. This is the same for bearing false witness as well [v. 21].

In the case of a suspected false witness, a fair trial would be given. This person remained innocent until proved to be guilty. The judges were to investigate diligently [v. 18] and, if convicted, the person would suffer the same damage that he had done on the person whom he had accused falsely. This iron rule of an eye for eye was also practised in the case of killing.

Some may query the rationale for this iron rule. If an innocent life is lost, do we set things right if we kill another for a life taken? Is it right to do unto a person the evil he has done on another? These laws act as deterrence for possible offenders in the future. "And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you" [v. 20].

Murder and bearing false witness are both grievous sins; they cause great harm to others. As such, we need to know that there are serious consequences for them. By breaking these commandments in wilful disobedience, we not only sin against others but also sin against God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NAHUM I
2 CORINTHIANS 2

THOUGHT

God's justice is never compromised by God's grace.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 20:1–14

LESSON

Fear

VERSE 8

And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.

Fear is one of the biggest stumbling blocks in our walk of faith. We may be blessed by the most wondrous truth to do great things for God. But if fear arises and reigns in our hearts, faith will not result in great works.

This is the case for warfare. In the first four verses of today's passage, God told the Israelites to set out in faith and fear not, because He would go with them to fight for them and to save them, if necessary. Yet many held back. Several people were sent home [v. 5–7]. God knew the faith of His people; these people would go to war with the fear that they would never return to complete the things they had set out to achieve in life.

The heart of the problem is that people filled with fear will not only fight badly but will also affect the morale of others [v. 8]. It was only after those people were sent home that the Israelites were organised and briefed on the military strategy [v. 9–14].

Is fear holding you back in your battles in life? The assurance is that when you are doing God's will, God will always be with you. However, we should also note the advice here. If you are bogged down by fear in life, do not avoid the issue. Face your fear and resolve it. Ask God for help. It is only when the problem is resolved that you can start to do things smoothly and effectively for His glory.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NAHUM 2
2 CORINTHIANS 3

THOUGHT

What are the fears that are holding you back from doing great and mighty things for God?

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 20:15–20

LESSON

Why all of them?

VERSE 16

But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth.

The latter half of Deuteronomy 20 illustrates two different treatments of Israel's enemies. For cities that are far from Israel, the Israelites are allowed to keep "the women, little ones, the cattle, and all that is in the city" [v. 14]. In the cities that God had given to them as an inheritance, they were supposed to kill all that had breath [v. 16]. The people to be annihilated were also listed [v. 17].

Why did God instruct them to kill all? If these people were left alive, they would lead the Israelites astray and into sin [v. 18]. God made it clear that the pollution was in wicked men and their possessions, for He told the Israelites to leave the fruit trees standing.

Yet we know Israel did not eventually do that. Pockets of pagan communities were allowed to live within Canaan. This would lead to grave consequences. It was the direct cause of the cycles of apostasy that Israel had to go through in Bible history.

The cleansing of the land is akin to purging ourselves from sin. If we allow certain sins to stay in our lives, sin will eventually beget sin and take control of our lives. God has given His people a land of milk and honey and it should not be tainted by abomination. Similarly, God has made us a new man in Christ and our body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit, should not be polluted by sin.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
NAHUM 3
2 CORINTHIANS 4

THOUGHT

They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee. – Exodus 23:33

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 21:1–9

LESSON

On unsolved murders

VERSE 9

*So shalt thou put away the
guilt of innocent blood from
among you, when thou
shalt do that which is right
in the sight of the LORD.*

God's teaching on holiness continues in His instruction on how to deal with unsolved murders. Through it, we also learn about the sanctity of human life.

Man is created in the image of God and every human life is precious. This is why killing is a sin and a crime punishable by death. In the case of a premeditated murder where the murderer is not found, a grave injustice is involved, especially in the killing of a righteous man. Remember the murder of Abel. God said that the voice of Abel's blood cried unto Him from the ground [Genesis 4:10].

What followed was a ceremony that re-enacted the murder, done by the elders of the city nearest to the crime. The breaking of a heifer's neck [v. 4] shows that it was not an offering rite, as no blood was involved. Instead, the violent killing of this innocent animal in a wasted valley served to remind all of the wrong done on the victim.

The elders then washed their hands over the heifer [v. 6]. By doing so, the elders were testifying that they had nothing to do with the murder. It is believed that the land on which the heifer was killed would not be tilled or sown until the murderer was found. If the murderer was a child of God, the more he should be tracked down and punished. The sin of one Israelite can affect the whole nation, as clearly shown to us in the sin of Achan [Joshua 7]. This is why the elders asked for the mercy of the Lord [v. 8].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HABAKKUK 1
2 CORINTHIANS 5

REMINDER

He who kills a man destroys a being that is created in the image of God.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 21:10–23

LESSON

That thy land be not defiled

VERSE 23

His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

The second part of Deuteronomy 21 contains three sets of instructions on three separate issues, namely the privilege of a firstborn [v. 15–17], the punishment of a rebellious son [v. 18–21] and the treatment of the dead body of a criminal [v. 22–23]. God is the One Who decides who should be the firstborn in a family. This blessed status should not change according to the likings of a man. The double portion of a firstborn is secured. Honouring the promise given to a firstborn is honouring God.

In the case of the stubborn son, we ought to remember that God has commanded us to honour our parents. A wayward and wilful son who does not care for his parents but instead spends all his money on food and wine [v. 20] does not honour his parents. He is an abomination in God's sight and must be severely punished. Note that this punishment is not a corrective act to change the son. Instead, it is to show others the consequence of not honouring God and one's parents [v. 21].

The third case involves the removal of a dead body after he had been hung on a tree as a result of capital punishment. An accursed one should not be left in public display through the night. In this way, the land is not defiled.

All three cases demonstrate the holiness of God. Holiness is also expected of everything that exists and happens in His land.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HABAKKUK 2
2 CORINTHIANS 6

THOUGHT

LORD, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. – Psalm 15:1–2

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 22:1–12

LESSON

From the Sixth Commandment to the Seventh

VERSE 12

*Thou shalt make thee
fringes upon the four
quarters of thy vesture,
wherewith thou coverest
thyself.*

It is often noticed that Deuteronomy 19:1–22:8 points towards the Sixth Commandment, the law against killing. Deuteronomy 22:9–30 is written against sexual impurity and adultery, thus carrying the spirit of the Seventh Commandment.

The emphases on these two commandments are not surprising, as both are sins punishable by death in Old Testament times. It is also worth noting that our Lord Jesus, after His beatitudes and discourse on salt, light and higher righteousness, followed up with instructions against killing and adultery [Matthew 5].

The killing of a brother (be it murder in action or hatred in the heart) rooted from a disrespect of a fellow human being and a lack of love for one who is created in the image of God. We are told to love one another. In Deuteronomy 22, this love for the person extends to the love for his belongings [v. 1–4]. It goes further to elaborate on behaviour resulting from the compassion in one's heart [v. 5–8].

The transition to instructions against infidelity and sexual impurity begins in verse 9 (with a hint in verse 5, warning against cross-dressing). One should not sow one's vineyard with different seeds, or plough with an ox and an ass together, or even wear a garment made of diverse materials. The purpose of these teachings is to uphold the purity of Israel, that it will not be unequally yoked to non-believers, and that the people should be faithful to the ones they marry, even as they are faithful to God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HABAKKUK 3
2 CORINTHIANS 7

REMINDER

Recall Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5 in what constitutes killing and adultery.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 22:13–30***LESSON****Laws about sexual
conduct****VERSE 24**

Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.

The spirit of the Seventh Commandment covers more than the physical act of adultery. In the Ancient Near East, it was considered 'the great sin,' equally grievous as idolatry and blasphemy. It shakes the foundations of society—the family unit—and is thus, not surprising, punishable by death.

Our Lord Jesus teaches us that adultery is a matter of the heart [Matthew 5:28]. Sexual misconduct is a real issue, both in the Old Testament times and in the present day. In today's passage, six different possible scenarios were considered and the punishment meted out: (a) the case of a man hating his wife and accusing her of not being a virgin when he first married her [v. 13–21]; (b) the case of a man who slept with a married woman [v. 22]; (c) the case of a man who slept with a betrothed woman [v. 23–24]; (d) The case of a man who raped a betrothed woman [v. 25–27]; (e) The case of a man who raped a woman who was not betrothed [v. 28–29]; and (f) The case of a man who slept with his father's wife [v. 30].

The reason why these sins have to be explicitly spelt out and dealt with tells us at least two things. For one, it is rampant and there is a need for clear instructions on how we should behave and judge. For another, it often involves varying details that affect the way we see the issue.

But no matter what the case is, we are sure that all our actions come with consequences.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZEPHANIAH 1
2 CORINTHIANS 8

THOUGHT

It is the ability to control ourselves against the instant gratification of our lusts that separates us from the beasts.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 23:1–8***LESSON****Covenantal relationship****VERSE 8**

*The children that are
begotten of them shall
enter into the congregation
of the LORD in their third
generation.*

God is clear about who should enter the assembly of God's people and who should not. The latter includes (a) a person who has wounded his reproductive organ or has castrated himself [v. 1]; (b) a person who is born of a mixed marriage [v. 2]; (c) the descendants of an Ammonite or a Moabite [v. 3].

What is the connection among these three groups of people? They are either people who could no longer multiply or the descendants of people who have committed wrongs in the past. This brings out an essential element in God's covenant with man. It not only affects a people but also concerns their descendants.

The Ammonites and the Moabites were remembered for their refusal to help the Israelites when the Israelites first came out of Egypt, and for their hiring of Balaam to curse them [v. 4]. The Edomites were remembered as a brother. They were descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob, and the Egyptians even as a host. For that reason, the descendants of the Edomites and, interestingly, the Egyptians were allowed to enter the congregation of the Lord.

Covenantal blessings and curses that root from the actions of our fathers is an important element of Old Testament theology. It is true that God knows us personally as individuals. Yet it is also true that God often deals with us as one people, allowing us to inherit His promises and blessings of old, and reminding us of the consequences of our actions on future generations.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZEPHANIAH 2
2 CORINTHIANS 9

THOUGHT

Are you leaving behind a good legacy for your children?

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 23:9–14***LESSON****No unclean thing****VERSE 14**

For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.

God's instructions to His people then turn to their spiritual cleanliness in times of war. Going into battle is a common yet important part of Old Testament living, for whether it is the fighting for, or the defence of, resources, it concerns the survival of a people. As such, all aspect of life is to be considered if God's people want His blessings, for God would not bless unclean things that are abominable in His sight.

Verses 10 to 12 contain the details. It involves the bodily discharge of a man and what he should do in cases like these. An emphasis was made to keep an unclean man outside the camp. This is because the spirit of God walks in the midst of the camp and turns away from the camp if it contains anything unclean [v. 14]. "Therefore shall thy camp be holy" is the charge, and for this reason, every man should keep all diligence to preserve sanctity in the presence of the Lord.

These instructions tell us of the holiness of God and remind us of the need to keep ourselves clean—physically, and more importantly, spiritually. Like people of old, we are fighting battles every day. To make it more precarious, these are not carnal battles but difficult, spiritual ones with the devil.

The only way for us to be triumphant in our fight is for us to be holy, striving to be like Christ, keeping every appearance of evil outside us, so that the Holy Spirit dwelling within us can use us for God's glory.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZEPHANIAH 3
2 CORINTHIANS 10

THOUGHT**Look within for victories without.**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 23:15–25***LESSON****A people of integrity****VERSE 17**

*There shall be no whore of
the daughters of Israel, nor
a sodomite of the sons of
Israel.*

Perhaps linked to the instructions on war [v. 14], God next taught the Israelites about the treatment of slaves who had voluntarily switched masters. How should the Israelites treat slaves who want to follow them? The Israelites should keep them and not oppress them [v. 15–16]. The wish of these servants should be honoured, as they wished to serve God’s people, and thus followed God.

The people of God did not treat others unfairly. Instead, they should seize every opportunity to do good to others. In their dealings with people, they should be people of integrity. There should not be any female or male prostitutes among them [v. 17–18]. They should not charge interest on money that they ought to freely lend to their brother [v. 19–20]. In the occasion when they needed to make a vow to God or to others, be sure to honour it [v. 21–23]. If a neighbour was gracious enough to open his vineyard and cornfield to you, be not greedy and take advantage of his generosity.

In our present world and in our depraved state, we are often tempted to treat others unfairly. We prostitute ourselves with uncleanness. We lend expecting return, even asking ourselves, “What can I gain from this transaction?” We lie habitually and treat vows carelessly. We make use of every opportunity to win the best for ourselves, often at the expense of others.

These instructions in Deuteronomy serve to remind us to consider our ways.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

HAGGAI I
2 CORINTHIANS II

THOUGHT

**Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity,
than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool. –
Proverbs 19:1**

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 24:1–13

LESSON

Protecting the weak and needy

VERSE 13

In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

The verses in Deuteronomy 24 share one common theme: protecting the interest of the weak and needy. In fact, this is also a common message in the whole Bible. The instructions in this chapter include: (a) the writing of a bill of divorcement to a woman so that she could marry again [v. 1–4]; (b) the exemption from war for a year for a newly-wedded man so that he could spend time with his wife [v. 5]; (c) the limits on the kind of things one could take as pledges for money loaned [v. 6–7]; (d) the actions to be taken in a plague of leprosy [v. 8–9]; and (e) the manner in which pledges for loans were taken [v. 10–13].

The teachings laid out in verses 10–13 carry great lessons for us to learn. When we lend a brother any thing and need a pledge, we should wait for the brother to fetch the pledge from his house instead of going into the brother’s house to take it [v. 10–11].

This protects the dignity of the brother. To borrow something is already something difficult, but to have your lender come into your house and take something as a pledge (in front of your family) would be demeaning.

If verses 10–11 show respect, then verses 12–13 show compassion. If the pledge is a cloak, God’s instruction is for the cloak to be returned to the borrower for the cold night. Verse 13 contains the wisdom therein. By doing so, you win the heart of a brother, who will praise the Lord for your kindness.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
HAGGAI 2
2 CORINTHIANS 12

THOUGHT

Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men. – 2 Corinthians 9:13

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 24:14–22***LESSON****Also a bondsman****VERSE 18**

*But thou shalt remember
that thou wast a bondman
in Egypt, and the LORD thy
God redeemed thee thence:
therefore I command thee
to do this thing.*

The rest of Deuteronomy can be divided into three parts and, again, they all deal with the protection of the weak and needy. It starts with a warning against the oppression of a hired servant [v. 14–15]. We should pay our workers on time, be they our brothers or foreigners, and especially when they are poor and dependent on every day's wages to feed themselves and their families. The curse that comes from not doing so is held in great contrast with the blessings [v. 13].

Then it goes to protection of the innocent from having to suffer for the sins and crimes of their loved ones [v. 16]. Every man should be answerable to his own sins. No one should take the punishment of another.

Lastly, the text addresses the interest of the stranger, the fatherless and the widow [v. 17–22]. God always takes care of this group of people, especially the widow. Note also that a lender cannot take the cloak of the widow even for the day as pledge [v. 17; Deuteronomy 24:12–13]. Furthermore, we read in these verses three ways how God caters for the provision of food for these people: from the harvests, the olive trees and the vineyards.

The instruction for the Israelites to have compassion on the weak and needy is based not only on theological command and moral grounds. Their history also causes them to fully understand the plight of the poor and helpless, for they were also once bondsmen in Egypt. Their oppression should prepare them for understanding and their deliverance should teach them love.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 1
2 CORINTHIANS 13

THOUGHT**Give much, for you have been given much.**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 25:1–16***LESSON****Providing for ministers
who feed us****VERSE 4**

*Thou shalt not muzzle the
ox when he treadeth out the
corn.*

This passage carries instructions with regard to: (a) the just punishment of the guilty by whipping not exceeding forty stripes; (b) the ox that treads out the corn is not to be muzzled; (c) the ordinance concerning marrying the wife of a brother who has died childless; (d) the case of the woman who acts indecently in succouring her husband when striving together with another; and (e) false weights and measures.

The command not to put a muzzle upon the ox when threshing is no doubt proverbial in its nature. Once the grain had been gathered [Deuteronomy 24:19], the sheaves were spread out upon a hard, beaten piece of ground, the threshing floor, about five feet square. An ox would then tread it down to separate the grain from the chaff with its hooves, after which it would be tossed up into the prevailing wind to complete the separation. The grain would fall to the ground, and the lighter chaff would be blown away.

The humane measure of keeping the animals unmuzzled at that time gave them an opportunity to pick up food whenever they became hungry. Herein God taught them humanity and kindness, even to the beasts that served them [Proverbs 12:10], and much more to their servants.

Paul made excellent use of this passage to teach that it is the duty of the people to provide properly for their pastors and teachers [1 Corinthians 9:9–10; 1 Timothy 5:17–18], especially for those who labour in the Word and doctrine, and are employed for the good of our better part, that they may attend upon the Lord without distraction.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 2
GALATIANS 1

THOUGHT

For if we have been made partakers of their spiritual things, our duty is also to minister unto them in material things.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 25:17–19***LESSON****God's righteous
judgement****VERSE 19**

*Therefore it shall be, when
the LORD thy God hath
given thee rest from all
thine enemies round about,
in the land which the LORD
thy God giveth thee for an
inheritance to possess it,
that thou shalt blot out the
remembrance of Amalek
from under heaven; thou
shalt not forget it.*

This passage shows God's command, calling for the extermination of the Amalekites. Earlier, a full account was given on how the Amalekites first made a hostile attack upon the Israelites and endeavoured to interrupt their journey to the Promised Land [Exodus 17:8–16]. It is plain that the Amalekites were the descendants of Esau [Genesis 36:12] and hence it follows that they were both sprung from the same ancestor, Isaac.

They could not have failed to know of God's will with reference to Israel. For the promise given to Abraham and Isaac could not be unknown to them. But since Esau, the founder of their race, had fallen from the right of primogeniture, they had attempted to bring God's covenant to nought out of wicked and sacrilegious jealousy.

In the Book of Esther, Haman the Amalekite managed to get a law passed through the King of Persia, according to the law of the Medes, saying that every Jew on earth would be brutally murdered and all of their property given as booty to the king of Persia. This was the real spirit of Amalek; and this was the reason why God united them with the reprobate nations unto the same destruction.

The Law taught God's hatred of sin and of rebellion against Him by enjoining the destruction of the obstinate sinner. Only repentance and faith in Christ may reverse the sentence. If the sinner is obstinate, the doom will fall as certainly as in the case of Amalek.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 3
GALATIANS 2

THOUGHT

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. – 2 Thessalonians 1:7–8

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 26:1–11***LESSON****Joyful giving in worship****VERSE 10**

And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God.

The people, when they inherited the Promised Land, had to offer their firstfruits to God. Of the firstfruits, the Israelite was to take a portion, and placing it in a basket, bring it to the place of the sanctuary, where it was to be received by the attendant priest.

The offerer was to accompany his presentation with an oral avowal of divine mercy, “I profess this day unto the Lord thy God, that I am come unto the country which the Lord swore unto our fathers for to give us.” The priest set the basket down before the altar and the offerer made confession and prayer, gratefully acknowledging the divine favour shown to Israel in choosing them to be a great nation, in delivering them out of Egypt, and in bringing them into a rich and fertile land. Along with this, his bounty to the individual would now present the firstfruits of his land unto the Lord.

This being done, they could then rejoice before the Lord their God in the sacrificial meal that followed, in the companionship of friends invited to share with them the joy of harvest, and in the after-use of the bounties of God’s providence.

It is the will of God that we should be cheerful, not only in our attendance upon His holy ordinances, but also in our enjoyment of the gifts of His providence. Whatever good thing God gives us, we should make the most comfortable use of it, still tracing the streams to the fountain of all consolation.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 4
GALATIANS 3

THOUGHT

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. – James 1:17

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 26:12–19

LESSON

Exchanging vows

VERSE 17

Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgements, and to hearken unto his voice.

This passage shows the third year's tithing to be given to the Levites and the poor, and the form of confession to be used on this occasion. The Israelites are to take Jehovah for their God, and to keep His testimonies, and Jehovah is to take them for His people, and make them high above all the nations of the earth.

Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God ... And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be His peculiar people [v. 17–18]. What a wonderful sight! Israel and God exchanging pledges, 'avouching' fidelity each to the other. The sign of Israel's vow is his obedience to God and His revealed will; and Jehovah's is to make Israel His peculiar people, and to make them high above all nations which He has made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that they may be a holy people unto the Lord their God, as He has spoken.

When God, therefore, is here said to avouch Himself to be the Lord God of Israel, it is that in Christ that God promises to bless His people, and to accept them in Him. And His people avouch God to be their God in Christ, depending upon the fulfilment of all His promised covenanted mercies in Him.

It did so under the Law. It does so with the Gospel. May it be your happiness and mine to do as Israel did, avouch God to be our God, and may He avouch us to be His people.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 5
GALATIANS 4

PRAYER

Lord, grant me grace this day to avouch myself, with all I have, and all I am, to be Thine forever.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 27:1–10***LESSON****Law and grace****VERSE 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.

Moses commanded the people to write the Law upon stones when they went into the Promised Land. They had to set up these stones on Mount Ebal, and to build an altar of uncut stones. They had to offer on it burnt offerings and peace offerings of worship to Yahweh, thereby committing themselves to Him as their Lord. The words were to be written plainly, and the people to be exhorted to obedience.

But why on Mount Ebal (mount of cursing) and not Mount Gerizim (mount of blessing)? Had there been a law that could give life? “Verily,” the Apostle Paul says, “righteousness should have been by the law” [Galatians 3:21]. But the truth is the law could not give life. Unless perfect obedience is fulfilled, it could only condemn. Its principal function is not to bless but to give “knowledge of sin” [Romans 3:20]. Hence the stones were planted on the mount of cursing.

As the Law testified to sin, so the sacrifices testified to grace. Burnt offerings and peace offerings, as well as the sin offerings, spoke of propitiation or atonement. These all testified in faith to the one and final Sacrifice, the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus, Who takes away the sin of the world.

Side by side, the records of a law that demands perfect righteousness; the altar and its sacrifice thereon, speaking to the people of a divine provision for forgiving the penitent. The penitent is set free from the curse of the Law, that he may ever after obey God in honouring the Law from whose curse he has been redeemed.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 6
GALATIANS 5

THOUGHT

For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. –John 1:17

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 27:11–26***LESSON****Curses of disobedience****VERSE 26**

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

Having set up the Law and renewed the covenant in Canaan, Israel was to proclaim upon the land the blessing and the curse of the Law, as already commanded [Deuteronomy 11:29]. For this purpose, six tribes were to station themselves on Mount Gerizim, and six on Mount Ebal, the former to pronounce the blessing, and the latter, the curse.

The curses to be pronounced were 12 in number. Each of the first 11 curses was directed against some particular sin already denounced in the Law. The twelfth curse was directed generally against all breaches of the Law, against those who fail or refuse to set up the whole law and follow it as the rule of life and conduct.

The Law was read in the people's hearing, and the people were to declare themselves ready to brand sin with their curse, as God branded it with His. In a word, they were in a glorious league with the great King of heaven and earth, that, whatever He disapproved, they would combine to brand with the infamy of eternal shame. As Israel was expected then to be in league with God in denouncing wrong, so are Christians expected by Christ's death on the Cross to swear eternal war against sin (Pulpit Commentary).

As an actually working system, the Mosaic economy, while availing itself of the Law to awaken consciousness of sin and to keep men in the path of virtue, drew its strength for holiness, not from the Law, but from the revelations of redeeming love and saving grace (in Christ) which lay within and behind it.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

ZECHARIAH 7
GALATIANS 6

THOUGHT

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. – Galatians 3:13a

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 28:1–14

LESSON

The blessings for obedience

VERSE 12

The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.

The children of Israel were camped beside the Jordan River, preparing to enter the Promised Land. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, God promised them blessings on the condition that they must fully obey the Lord and carefully follow all His commandments. Obedience is the one condition that has to be met for us to receive the blessings of God.

An obedient believer will receive:

- Blessings of leadership and superiority: he will be set high above all nations of the earth; made the head and not the tail; set above and not beneath [v. 1, 13–14]
- Blessings of fruitfulness and abundance: in childbearing, increase in livestock and daily necessities as well as prosperity [v. 4–5, 11–12]
- Blessings of protection in his coming in and going out [v. 6]
- Blessings of victory over all enemies [v. 7]
- Blessings of labour, work and employment: he will experience purpose, achievement and fulfilment [v. 8]
- Blessings of spiritual growth: establish as his holy people that he may be a strong testimony and witness for the Lord [v. 9–10]

The wonderful blessings of God conclude with a strong charge. Believers must obey and follow God's commandment, never straying towards false gods and false worship.

God wants to make a blessing out of you—in the field or in the city, rising up and sitting down, in your battles or in your storms, to become a lender and not a borrower, to be the head and not the tail. Today, will you let God make a blessing out of you?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 8
EPHESIANS 1

CHALLENGE

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. – Matthew 6:33

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 28:15–68***LESSON****The curses for disobedience****VERSE 15**

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.

By sheer number, the curses for disobedience are more than the promised blessings for obedience. The first set of curses is the result of refusing to listen to God [v. 15–46]. God declares to the disobedient sinner that wherever he goes, the curse of God follows. The promise of God to provide the necessities of life will no longer hold. Physical afflictions or illnesses and disasters will come upon him. All his enjoyment will be made bitter and he will be bereaved of all comfort and hope.

The second set of curses is due to a lack of service to God [v. 47–57]. Failure to serve God will result in serving the enemies, which will bring about affliction, starvation and degeneration of the mind. The sinner will live in constant doubt, fear and hopelessness.

The third set of curses is caused by a lack of fear and reverence for God [v. 58–68]. Failure to fear God is the height of pride and arrogance, insolence and disdain. Such a person will face prolonged disasters and lingering sicknesses. He will be exterminated, uprooted and scattered among all nations.

Let us be thankful that our Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law. He has borne the curse for us, and bearing in His own person all that punishment. This means if we simply trust and believe in Jesus, we will be saved from the curse of the law. God will accept us in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 9
EPHESIANS 2

THOUGHT

The curses for disobedience stand as a severe warning to all people of all generations. Moses warned the Israelites, and through them, he warns us all.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 29:1–9

LESSON

Why the covenant was needed

VERSE 9

Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 10
EPHESIANS 3

Moses declared that the covenant between God and man was needed because of these:

1. The salvation and works of God. The Israelites had experienced the saving power of God from the slavery of Egypt. This is a symbol of the believer saved from the enslavements of the world. Knowing the wonderful salvation and goodness of God, believers ought to renew their covenant with God.
2. The hardened hearts of the Israelites. They wanted to do and live as they pleased and refused to look and see the hand of God at work in nature and in the lives of people. Repentance of the hardness of your heart is needed so that God can open your mind, eyes and ears to understand His commandments.
3. The need for guidance and provision of God. God had led the Israelites day by day through their wilderness wanderings and provided for all their necessities of life: clothes, food and water. God will guide and provide for His people only if they obey the covenant.
4. The need to be victorious over all their enemies. Living a victorious life, a life that conquers, God's people have to renew themselves to the covenant.
5. The hope of the Promised Land. The Israelites looked to the promised land of Canaan. As believers, our Promised Land is the inheritance in Jesus Christ that we may love and enjoy Him forever.

Obedience to follow all the terms in the covenant is absolutely necessary to prosper throughout life.

THOUGHT

God has a Promised Land in store for all His children and He wants to see you enter into that covenant with Him.

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 29:10–29***LESSON****Judgement for breaking
the covenant****VERSE 20**

The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.

Picture the scene where all the Israelites stood together before God as Moses proclaimed the terms of the covenant to them. This was a special worship service where the people renewed their covenant with God. The people were responsible to obey God, and God would fulfil His part of the covenant. He would not fail in His obligations to the people. He would do exactly as He had promised. This covenant was also being confirmed with all future generations of believers [v. 14–15].

God's people are warned against idolatry and false worship of the world. You are also not to be a hypocrite, feeling that you are safe and immune from God's judgement. You are not safe. You will bring disaster upon yourself and everyone else.

The Lord will severely judge the violator, the idolater and the false worshipper. God will never forgive such a person and will blot his name out from under heaven. He will pour out upon him all the curses written in the Book of the Law. As a family or country, the people will be chastised. They will suffer calamities, diseases and destruction.

The judgement of God is sure: the wrath of God will be executed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, in particular against those who hold the truth in unrighteousness. When you accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour, you make a covenant with God to follow and obey Him. You must do just what you have promised: obey, follow and walk after Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

ZECHARIAH 11:1–3
EPHESIANS 4

PRAISE

Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine. – Exodus 19:5

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 30:1–10***LESSON****The promise of forgiveness****VERSE 10**

*If thou shalt hearken
unto the voice of the
LORD thy God, to keep his
commandments and his
statutes which are written
in this book of the law, and
if thou turn unto the LORD
thy God with all thine
heart, and with all thy soul.*

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

ZECHARIAH 11:4–17
EPHESIANS 5

Sometimes we face decisions in life that are very difficult to make. Difficult decisions often involve health, personal difficulty, family, marital, work and business or even world issues. There are events that happen in life that are impossible to predict. At other times an event occurs because we have made a wrong choice, as we could not see into the future. This is not the case with God. He knows the future, even to the most minute detail. In fact, He is the One Who has ordained everything that comes to pass.

The wonderful promises of forgiveness and restoration to be given to those who rededicate and renew their covenant with God are spelt out here. However, to be forgiven and restored before God, one must repent and turn to the Lord to follow Him wholeheartedly. This is a decision you have to make.

God promises the repentant believers that they can lay claim again to their inheritance and walk victoriously to the Promised Land of God. The Lord will make them more prosperous and numerous than ever before. He will remove their sins and enable them to love Him completely. He will transfer the curses of His judgement upon those who ridicule, mock and persecute them. God will stir the hearts of the repentant sinner to obey all His commandments. He will bless their lives, work and property, making them prosperous and successful.

These promises are conditional. You must confess and repent of your sins, and turn to the Lord with your whole heart and soul.

THOUGHT

The final call for decision is to make a sharp break from the past and do as the Lord commands. Grace is free, but it is not cheap.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 30:11–20

LESSON

Love and obey the Lord

VERSE 16

In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgements, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

The call to obey God is not unreasonable or impossible. The commandments of God are not in some inaccessible place like up in the heaven or beyond the sea. Instead, God has revealed His Holy Word to us, telling us how to live, how to find God and how to have assurance of victorious living forever. The Word of God is near, in fact, very near—right at our fingertips.

The decision to love and obey God will result in the most wonderful life. A person living in the Lord will live a full and fruitful life and be wonderfully blessed by Him [v. 16].

Yet the final warning against breaking the covenant was again issued in this passage. Believers must not turn away from God and be disobedient. They must guard against idolatry and false worship. Anyone who does not follow and obey God will surely perish and be utterly destroyed [v. 17–18].

You have a choice to make: life or death, blessings or curses. Choose life. “That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey His voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto Him: for He is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them” [v. 20]. Choose life so that you and your children will live full and victorious lives over all the trials, temptations and enemies of this world.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 12
EPHESIANS 6

THOUGHT

God has not only given us the written Word, which is the Holy Bible but He has also given us the Living Word, which is our Lord Jesus Christ.

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 31:1–23

LESSON

**God and His Word never
change**

VERSE 6

*Be strong and of a good
courage, fear not, nor be
afraid of them: for the LORD
thy God, he it is that doth
go with thee; he will not fail
thee, nor forsake thee.*

Everything on earth will change. Soon Moses would no longer be on this earth but would be with God permanently in Heaven. God is the only One Who will never change. His words and His promises can be trusted till eternity because they too remain unchangeable.

The people and the generations to follow were on the mind of Moses and he knew that it was important to have an earthly leader after him because, as humans, our faith needs to be enforced by sight. For this reason, God picked Joshua to be the successor of Moses.

Just like the qualities of any good leader, Moses had God-given visions, communication skills, persistence and organisation capability. The time had come for Moses to pass these skills to Joshua to lead the people to the Promised Land. Joshua had lesser experience but he was trained and went through the difficulties and challenges as the Israelites. He was a good example by his faith and obedience both to divine and human authority. He was ‘trouble free’. He was of a new generation that would reach the Promised Land. Joshua was to take over the lonely position at the top (this is true even for today).

The younger people whom Joshua would lead would be more challenging as they have not witnessed first-hand the dividing of the Red Sea. Neither had they experienced the anxiety and fear of being chased by the Egyptian army. They had not tasted the hardship of working as slaves.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

ZECHARIAH 13:1–6
PHILIPPIANS I

THOUGHT

**Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art
the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the
day. – Psalm 25:5**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 31:24–30***LESSON****Encouraging your leaders****VERSE 26**

*Take this book of the law,
and put it in the side of
the ark of the covenant of
the LORD your God, that it
may be there for a witness
against thee.*

Moses walked close to God and had the desire for the Jews to also draw nigh to the Lord. However, he knew that his people would need repeated reminders to stay holy. From a human standpoint, Moses carried the burden alone all along (of course, God was with him at all times).

It can be very disheartening to the leader when your people go wayward. Moses was fully aware that Joshua would have to shoulder this demanding and lonely responsibility. It is man-like to go along with the people, to drift with popular demands. But it is God-like to stay on course and obey the commandments of God, no matter what.

Noah was alone when he built the ark (except that his family supported him). His friends and neighbours laughed at his preaching. Abraham wandered and worshipped alone; his nephew, Lot deserted him for the bright lights. Daniel ate and prayed alone. Elijah and Jeremiah prayed, prophesised and wept alone. Jesus was alone when trouble came. His disciples fled and He wept alone. Jesus also went to the Cross alone. Thank God that we are encouraged by the strength of these leaders (and that of our Saviour).

While we may be alone in staying closer to God, eventually He gives the victory. Though man may leave us, God is always with us and He never leaves us alone. Moses knew that his people would one day turn against God but he wished everyone could remember the Word of God and stay holy. He instructed that the Book of the Law be put into the Ark of the Covenant.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

ZECHARIAH 13:7–9
PHILIPPIANS 2

THOUGHT

**Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west. –
Isaiah 43:5**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 32:1–47***LESSON****Grace greater than all our sins****VERSE 7**

*Remember the days of old,
consider the years of many
generations: ask thy father,
and he will shew thee; thy
elders, and they will tell
thee.*

God chose the Israelites, remained faithful and always remembered them, yet the Israelites had gone to follow other gods and soon forgotten the goodness and grace of God.

People today are still ungrateful to God and have taken God's kindness as weakness. They believe in old tales of superstition and prefer human theories of how the world came about naturally and how man was evolved from apes. Despite having a written record in the Bible, people choose to follow other teachings and deny God. Yet God, in His mercy, grace and love, has chosen to send Jesus to redeem us. He has kept the remnant minority in His fold because of their faith in Him.

Moses reminded the people how they, as slaves in Egypt, had called out for help to be delivered. God responded to their cries and solely by His hand set them free. He performed miracles to show both the Egyptians and the Jews that He is the Almighty God and there is none beside Him. The people were grateful but their memory was also short in that once out of trouble, they forgot God. They turned to worship idols and sacrificed to the devil [v. 17].

It would be perfectly justifiable for God to totally destroy the people. Vengeance is of the Lord. Yet at the slightest repentance of the people, God withheld His anger. He turned His face once again to the Jews and blessed them. What a wonderful, loving God we have! All glory to His Name!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
ZECHARIAH 14
PHILIPPIANS 3

THOUGHT

But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth. – Psalm 86:15

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 32:48–52***LESSON****The consequences of sin****VERSE 52**

*Yet thou shalt see the land
before thee; but thou shalt
not go thither unto the land
which I give the children of
Israel.*

Sin not only causes us difficulties in life but it also brings hurt to others. When sin entered the world, humans were banished from the Garden of Eden and we need to toil for a living. Childbirth becomes a pain; we distrust each other. These are but some of the consequences of sin.

Moses, though obedient and had walked close to God, sinned too. As a result of his sin, he was not allowed into the Promised Land. It was recorded that God commanded Moses to speak to a rock in order to bring forth water to quench the thirst of the people who were grumbling against him and Aaron [Numbers 20:1–13]. Moses disobeyed God by striking the rock twice instead [Numbers 20:11]. Anger also drove him to answer the people with arrogance, suggesting that it was he and his brother who had brought forth the water instead of God [Numbers 20:10].

God is holy and there is no place for sin in heaven where He dwells. He loves us and likes us to be in heaven. We are sinful and this cannot be tolerated in heaven. There are thus two ways to deal with us. Either we go to heaven without sin or we go to hell with our sins. God wished for all to go to heaven.

This is the reason Jesus had to die for our sins so that when we trust Him, all the penalties for our sins will have been paid for. This is the only way for us to go to heaven sinless.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI 1
PHILIPPIANS 4

THOUGHT

Where do you think we would be if Jesus had not died for our sins?

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 33:1–29***LESSON****God's blessing for all****VERSE 3**

*Yea, he loved the people; all
his saints are in thy hand:
and they sat down at thy
feet; every one shall receive
of thy words.*

Moses pronounced the benediction as it were before he died. He started by reminding the Jews about the history of how God had delivered them out of slavery in Egypt. God had demonstrated His power to the Jews by dealing severely with the Egyptians and all those who were rebellious. He divided the Red Sea and provided food and protection for His children in the wilderness.

God has shown that He truly loves the Israelites because they are His chosen people. He had blessings for every tribe. These are promises that were fulfilled to the letter. Of special attention is the blessing to the tribe of Judah [v. 7]. Jacob mentioned that the sceptre would not depart from Judah [Genesis 49:10]. This means that our Messiah (Jesus Christ) would come from Judah. Judah marched at the head of the tribes [Numbers 2:2–9]. They were the first to be in battle when the enemies attacked. He was their military defender.

Moses concluded with praises for God Who is the King of kings and whose leadership is beyond comparison. There is no equal! God gives victory over wars, over sins and over death. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, Who sent His son Jesus to be our Redeemer.

Jesus fights along with us and for us in our spiritual warfare. Victory is assured. Once we were slaves to sins, but Jesus has liberated us. He is with us beyond our final breath. The moment we leave this earth, we will be with Jesus in Heaven.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

MALACHI 2
COLOSSIANS 1

THOUGHT

**Who is like unto thee, O LORD, among the gods?
Who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in
praises, doing wonders? – Exodus 15:11**

BIBLE LESSON*Deuteronomy 34:1–8***LESSON****Only worship God the Creator****VERSE 4**

And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

Death was near for Moses and he knew it. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. Nevertheless, God was gracious to let him have a view of it. God had a much better destination for Moses. He would be in heaven with God soon. He had no regret but plenty of praises for God.

Moses was a great prophet and he spoke to God directly. He had seen God ‘face to face’. God’s glory was reflected on the face of Moses. Otherwise, it would be too much for the people to look at. Moses was requested to put on a veil.

Interestingly, it was recorded that God Himself buried Moses and no one knows where the burial place is. God knew that if Moses’ grave were made known, people would surely go to the grave and set up an altar to worship him. Moses was only a man, albeit a prophet. Worshipping him would be wrong. God knew too well the behaviour of man. He is our Creator!

Today, we witness people worshipping everything and anything—a tree, a stone, graven images, and even celebrities. People have been led astray to worship creatures and images that they have created with their own hands. Both the angels and Paul rejected worship from anyone. They directed people to focus on worshipping God instead. Only God is worthy of our worship. People may be defiant to the commandment of God but one day every knee would bow at the name of Jesus. Are you worshipping Jesus?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI 3
COLOSSIANS 2**

THOUGHT

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; – Philippians 2:10

BIBLE LESSON

Deuteronomy 34:9–12

LESSON

Praying without ceasing

VERSE 9

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

Moses died but his influence lives on. He had been faithful in carrying out the commandments of God, although some decisions might not be popular. These were not important to Moses, as he wanted only to please God and not the people. In fact, he wanted the people to please God, too. When he was alive, Moses instructed his successor well and shared with him on how to lead. Joshua learnt to stay close to God, too.

Jesus quoted the name of Moses in the New Testament. Moses led by example. “And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after” [Hebrews 3:5]. Our leaders of the past had shown us through their discipline in observing the Word of God. We too should teach our juniors, and we must live by our faith as an example to them.

Where did Joshua receive his spirit of wisdom? He must have done something to merit this. Yes he did something which we all can do as well and have the privilege to do today. We are better off because Jesus has already broken the barrier that separates us from our holy God. Obviously, Joshua prayed much.

The secret to success is through communing with God. Paul tells us to pray without ceasing. We ought to pray before we embark on any activity or journey. We pray as we progress. Then we give thanks in prayer for completion. He will draw close to us if we draw close to Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
MALACHI 4
COLOSSIANS 3–4

THOUGHT

Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.
– James 4:8a