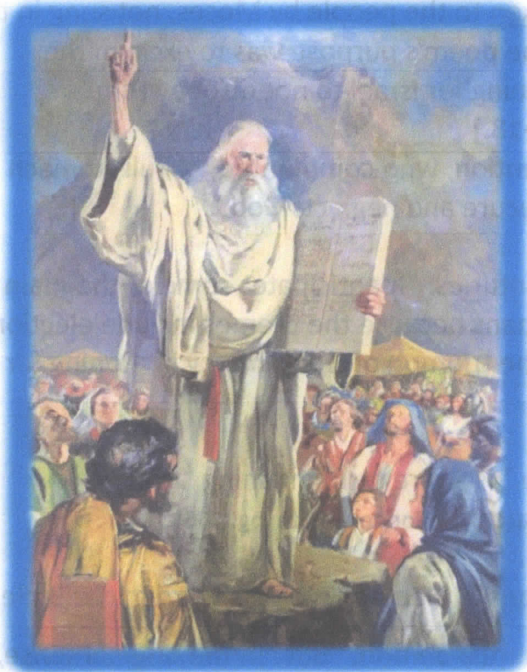


## Last Acts of Moses

Deuteronomy 31-34

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Trinity Sunday School, HPC



DT 31 summary—Moses knows that he's now too old to lead effectively and must die soon, but he doesn't want to leave his people leaderless. Joshua, a prophet and Moses' assistant, is announced as Israel's new leader. He has already proven himself to be one of Israel's top military generals in the early days of the Promised Land conquest.

[READ EX. 17:8-9].

**Moses' 120-year lifespan<sup>1</sup> is divided into three major 40-year sections:**

Birth to 40 years old	40-80 years old	80-120 years old
Born & raised in Egypt --basket floating in river --raised in Pharaoh's household	As a shepherd in Midianite territory --burning bush call from God	Leader of the Exodus --wanders in the Wilderness for 40 years

DT 31:3-6---Holy War is declared.

v. 4---Sihon and Og were small Amorite kingdoms which Joshua had conquered earlier.

v. 9---Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests for safe keeping in the Ark of the Covenant. It was to be read to all of the people every seven years so that they can "learn to fear the Lord your God" and follow

**"this law,"—**

**but** we don't know exactly what "this law" entailed. It could mean the central section of our Book of Deuteronomy (chap. 12-26), or it could mean the "righteous decrees and statutes" Moses mentions in DT 4:8.



<sup>1</sup> In Egypt a lifespan was deemed to be 110 years old.

DT 32--- "The Song of Moses" was spoken to the people by Moses, not sung in the sense that we know singing. Overall, the poem's purpose was to exclaim the greatness of God, but it was also a warning for Israel to not disobey Him.

[READ DT 32:15-18.]

These verses drew Martin Luther's attention, who commented, "A full stomach does not promote piety, for it stands secure and neglects God."<sup>2</sup>

The Song of Moses has endured the centuries: "It anticipates some of the main ideas of Paul's theology in the book of Romans because the themes include election, judgement, outreach to the nations, and the triumph of God's mercy in atoning for sin (Rom 9-11)."<sup>3</sup>

[READ DT 32:15-18]

v. 15---*Jeshurun*, meaning "the upright one," is a rare term meaning "Israel."

Here, however, *Jeshurun* is used sarcastically. (Zondervan, fn. pg. 366)

v. 17---"They sacrificed to demons..." Demons is a rare word in the Bible.

This is how most of us picture a demon. But "in the original sense, demons (*sēdim*) may be defined as an anonymous god."<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew

language uses the word *sēd* to mean a mischievous imp, good or bad. "In spite of the translations, there is no word in Hebrew equivalent to the English word 'demon,' nor any word that communicates the same meaning that the term communicates in English...."<sup>5</sup>

Our concept of a nasty creature from hell was gradually developed in NT times, but the devil-horned demon we picture comes from the Middle Ages, originating in what used to be called Assyria. These creatures were mainly griffins who guarded the realm of their mythological gods.

The Song of Moses ends on a positive note ...if you are an Israelite. (v. 43).

? But why wouldn't God simply destroy this ungrateful gaggle of Israelites?

<sup>2</sup> Thompson, pg. 300.

<sup>3</sup> Zondervan, fn. to DT 31:30-32:47, pg. 365.

<sup>4</sup> *Interpreter's*, "Demons, Demonology," vol. 1, pg. 817.

<sup>5</sup> Bratcher, *Demons*



**Moses prepares for death--- DT 32:48 - 33:29**

32:48-52 God tells Moses to climb Mount Nebo, where he can get a glimpse of the Promised Land. He says that both Moses and his brother Aaron "broke faith with Me in the presence of the Israelites ...and did not uphold my holiness...therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter...."

- We do not know the exact offense God mentions, but it lessened His authority.



33:1-29 is Moses' blessings to the Israelites, the people he loved. Unfortunately, this entire chapter is filled with awkward and archaic wording<sup>6</sup>, very much out of place. In the past few decades biblical archeologists have discovered many ancient variations of this text, indicating that our version of these verses have been badly preserved.

**Death of Moses---DT 34**

v. 1---Moses climbs Mt. Nebo, then on to Mt. Pisgah, which is across from Jericho. He dies there, within eyesight of his goal. But God never promised this land to Moses; He promised it to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (v4)

vs. 7-9---Moses was in old age but vigorous. "His eyes were not weak nor his strength gone." Yet he knew his time had come as he passed the leadership reins to Joshua.

vs. 10-12---Moses' final evaluation:

He was the greatest of Israel's prophets, rulers, judges, and priests. Most importantly, he has continued to be one of God's most influential spokespersons down through the ages.

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<sup>6</sup>For example, the tribe of Dan is shown to be in the north (Jdg. 18), though it was located in the south at this time. The tribe of Simeon is not mentioned, and the tribe of Reuben seems to be in trouble. Also, the Hebrew words and linguistics used here are from a time hundreds of years into the future. This chapter is a picture of an Israel that is much more settled, probably @11<sup>th</sup> century BC.

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**Answer:** In the Song of Moses God tells us why:

v. 26: "I said I would scatter them and blot out their memory from mankind,

v. 27: but I dreaded the taunt of the enemy, lest the adversary misunderstand and say,

"Our hand has triumphed; the Lord has not done all this.'"