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The Reading of Deuteronomy
31: 9-13

The reading of Deuteronomy DIG: What use would there be in the scroll of Deuteronomy being accessible to all (30:11-14) if it were lost, forgotten, or otherwise became unknown? What arrangements were made for its regarding? For whom, when, and why was Deuteronomy read in public?

REFLECT: How have you set about a regular, systematic, reading and listening to God's Word? Is this satisfying to you? Why or why not? Any adjustments ahead? Do you fear ADONAI? In what ways? What ceremonies are most meaningful for you to remember God?

ADONAI did not preserve the scroll of Deuteronomy for the political elite, but for all of His people.

The day before Moses died.



As **Moses** approached death, **he** gave a series of instructions to **the people (31:1-6)**, to **Joshua (31:7-8)**, and to **the priests (31:9-13)**, each concerned in some way with the maintenance of **the covenant**. Here we see **Moses** handing

over **Deuteronomy** in written form to **the priests and elders** so that **YHVH's Word** might be preserved for future generations**.**

Instructions to the priests: It was normal practice at the conclusion of a secular treaty for the suzerain to hand a copy of the treaty to the vassal to be lodged in the sanctuary of the vassal under the care of the priests and under the eye of their gods. Again, on the death of the vassal, his successor was approved by the suzerain, but was required to ratify the treaty himself (**to see link click Ah – Treaty of the Great King**).[659] **Moses wrote down** the scroll of **Deuteronomy and gave it to the cohanim, the sons of Levi who carry the Ark of the Covenant of ADONAI, and to all the elders of Isra'el (31:9).**



In secular treaties also, directions were given for the reading of the treaty to **the** vassal **people** at regular intervals. **Then Moses commanded them** saying: **At the end of every seven years, in the set time of the year of cancelling debts** (see **Cy – The Year of Release**)**, during the feast of Sukkot, when all Isra'el comes to appear before ADONAI your God in the place He chooses, you are to read the book of Deuteronomy before them in their hearing (31:10-11). The rabbis teach that once Solomon's Temple was built, the king would sit in the Court of the Women to read the book of Deuteronomy before the people.** It was rare for an individual to possess a copy of the Scriptures. A person gained knowledge of the Scriptures by being taught by their parents, the priests, and through its public reading at times like this. So, the public reading of **Deuteronomy** was of great significance.[660]

More than all the other required feasts, **the feast of Sukkot** would remind all **Israelites** that **Ha'Shem** delivered **them** from bondage in **Egypt** and chose **them** to be **His** servant-nation **(Leviticus 25:43)**. As a celebration of an abundant

harvest, **Sukkot** involves great joy and thanksgiving. Since this reading of **Deuteronomy** to **the nation** occurred during the same **time of year** when all **debts** were **canceled**, it contained vivid memories of historical redemption and the joyous celebration of **YHVH's** abundant provision.[661]

The ceremony described in these verses was not, in the strict sense, a renewal of **the covenant**. It was more like a regular remembrance of **the people's blessings** and responsibilities of **their** intimate **covenantal** relationship with **YHVH**. For **the** older **people** in **the covenant** community, the educational value of the ceremony would lie in remembering **the covenant** with **ADONAI**, and in renewed dedication to the **God** of **the covenant**. The younger generation, however, would learn, for the first time, the full meaning of **the covenant**. Although they would probably know about it beforehand, its significance would fully dawn on them only as they left their homes and villages and heard the public reading of the scroll of **Deuteronomy** in the presence of **all Isra'el**. There, in the presence of the greater community of which they were a part, they too would learn to **fear YHVH**. And as each generation learned to **fear ADONAI** and to obey **Him**, so would the continuing community of **Isra'el** ensure their lasting possession of **the** Promised **Land**.[662]

Gather the people – the men and women and little ones, and the outsider within your town gates – so they may hear and so they may learn, and they will fear ADONAI your God and take care to do all the words of Deuteronomy. One other special value of such a ceremony was that **the children**, at least once during **their** childhood years, and possibly twice, could stand with a considerable congregation and share in the celebration of **the covenant**.[663] **So, their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear ADONAI your God – all the days you live on the Land you are about to cross over the Jordan to possess (31:12-13).**

ADONAI did not preserve the scroll of **Deuteronomy** for the religious or the political elite, but for all of **His people**. **He** wanted every **Israelite** to be aware of, and understand, **His** expectations of **them**. The Bible only records two occasions on which **Isra'el** carried out this requirement, when **Ezra** read **it** upon **his** return to Jerusalem from the exile (see the commentary on **Ezra-Nehemiah Bm – Ezra Reads the Scroll of Deuteronomy**), and during **Josiah's** revival (see the commentary on **Jeremiah Ai – Josiah Ruled For 31 Years from 640 to 609 BC**) when **he** read the scroll of **Deuteronomy (Second Kings 23:1-3)**.[664]

*Dear wise and loving Heavenly **Father**, Thank **You** for **Your** love and wisdom which*

*guides us as we read **Your** Holy Word. Praise **You** for **Your** careful watching over of your children. **I will lift up my eyes to the mountains – from where does my help come? My help comes from ADONAI, Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip. Your Keeper will not slumber. Behold, the Keeper of Isra'el neither slumbers nor sleeps. ADONAI is your Keeper. ADONAI is your shadow at your right hand. The sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. ADONAI will protect you from all evil. He will guard your life. ADONAI will watch over Your coming and Your going from this time forth and forevermore (Psalm 121:1-8).***

*How important it is to make time to read and meditate on **Your** Word, our guiding light to help and protect **Your** children**. His delight is in the Torah of ADONAI, and on His Torah he meditates day and night. He will be like a planted tree over streams of water, producing its fruit during its season. Its leaf never droops – but in all he does, he succeeds (Psalm 1:2-3).** I delight in meditating on **Your** greatness, **Your** love, grace and power. Praise **You** for being so wonderful that meditating on **Your** Word is encouraging to see how **You** can take what looks like an impossible situation and turn it to your eternal glory. I worship **You**! In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*