

Obedient Faith

Deuteronomy 4:1-8, 12-13

SS Lesson for 10/06/2019

Devotional Scripture: Heb 11:1-13

OUTLINE

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Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: Deut 4:2

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Listening to know God (1 John 4:6)

Listening to hear what God wants to tell us (Acts 10:30-33)

Listening to aid in obedience (James 1:22)

Listening to hear our destiny (1 Cor 2:7)

Listening because there is a blessing (Prov 8:33-34)

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Living God's Word because it is trustworthy and true (2 Peter 3:5-7)

Living God's Word because it has the power of God in it (Rom 1:16-17)

Living God's Word because it is the sword of the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:17)

Living God's Word because it is living and enduring (1 Peter 1:23)

Living God's Word because it revives the soul (Ps 19:7)

Wisdom through being an example (6)

Be an example of godly speech, life, love and purity (1 Tim 4:12)

Be an example of following the example of Jesus (1 Cor 11:1)

Be an example of God's patience and grace (1 Tim 1:16)

Be an example by doing good (Titus 2:7-8)

Be an example of perseverance in trials and persecutions (2 Thess 1:4)

Wisdom through being near to God (7)

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CONCLUSION AND OTHER THOUGHTS

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Trauma-based research has discovered that when children are exposed to chronic distress, their developing brains adapt by becoming more alert to deal with future threats. The brain constructs new neural pathways to allow the child to consistently scan his or her environment for impending danger. The amygdala, the part of the brain that manages the fight-or-flight response, is placed on permanent high alert. One of the prices of this self-protection is a decreased attention span. Focusing on a teacher's lesson or a book becomes difficult. This problem becomes semipermanent, tending to last into adulthood. Our heavenly Father is nothing like a dangerous parent who changes rules randomly on a whim. Scripture says there is no "shadow of turning" with God (James 1:17). Our history with God provides us with confidence in His current dealings with us. And through the gift of His Word, we are given clear instruction on how we can please Him. We face many anxious moments, but living with a capricious God is not one of them.

During their 400 years of slavery (Genesis 15:13), Abraham's offspring must have felt like spiritual orphans. Israel had been exposed to a myriad of deities, none of whom cared for them. These so-called gods were vested only in the fortunes of the Egyptians. Spiritual anxiety wasn't unique to these slaves. The ancient Near East was crowded with deities, each with his or her own temperament and character flaws. Sharing a world with unpredictable gods was a source of stress for those who seemed to be suffering without reason. For instance, an ancient Sumerian had fallen on dark days. In his desperate prayer, found by archaeologists, he pleads to know how he had offended which god and what could be done to appease the god. The book of Deuteronomy contains none of that cosmic angst. Moses wrote the majority of the book toward the end of his life, decades after God's character was revealed to Israel. The book is an anthology of Moses' sermons meant to remind the next generation of their history with God and what God expected of them. Moses alternated between narrative passages and exhortations that outline how Israel should respond to God in light of His faithfulness. One of the devices that Moses uses in his sermons is borrowing from the legal language of "suzerainty treaties." In the ancient Near East, a king would enter into a covenant (treaty) with his people by first outlining examples of his greatness. The king would then outline the terms of the treaty. He would offer the people his continuing protection and just rule. In return, the people would offer their loyalty, which was expressed through their obedience to the king's laws. Moses uses these treaties to teach Israel about the type of covenant loyalty God wanted with Israel. In Deuteronomy 1, Moses picked up Israel's history at a point of catastrophic failure: Israel refused to trust God and take the land, despite God's faithfulness to deliver them from Egypt. Moses then recounted the wilderness years, in which God's people wandered the desert until the disobedient generation passed away. He transitioned from recounting Israel's history (Deuteronomy 1-3) into an exhortation regarding the importance of Israel's keeping the terms of God's covenant (chapter 4). It's against the backdrop of Israel's continual struggle to trust God that Moses charges them to obey the covenant.

Key Verse: Deut 4:2

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

4:1-2. The words **Hear now** introduce the practical conclusions to be drawn from Israel's experience in the wilderness. Because of the Lord's faithfulness, mercy, and judgment displayed in her recent history, the nation was responsible to obey His **decrees and laws** unconditionally. "Decrees" may refer to permanent rules of conduct, statutory laws which are immutable, while "laws" may refer to case laws, decisions handed down by judges. It was crucial that Moses **teach** Israel this Law, for the motive clause **so that you may live and... take possession of the land** indicates that a full enjoyment of life is based on obeying God's Law. Israel must **not add to** it and thereby weaken its power, as the Pharisees and later Christian legalists would do. Nor must Israel **subtract** anything **from it** to accommodate the willfulness or weakness of human nature.

4:3-4. Moses referred to the incident at **Baal Peor** in Moab to illustrate from the Israelites' own history that their very lives depended on obeying God's Law. At **Baal of Peor** all the Israelites who entered into spiritual and physical adultery with the Moabite women were either put to death by the sword or died in a plague (24,000 died in the plague). On the other hand **all... who held fast to the LORD** lived. This incident is also mentioned in Numbers 25:1-9; Psalm 106:28-29; Hosea 9:10.

4:5-8. One purpose of the Law was to give the Israelites a full life as they obeyed God (vv. 1-4). In verses 5-8 another purpose of the Law is revealed: to make Israel morally and spiritually unique among all the nations and thereby draw other nations to **the LORD**. In contrast with all other nations Israel was not to be distinguished by her natural resources, wealth, or military might, but by her moral skill and close relationship to God, both of which would come from her obeying her moral constitution. If Israel would obey the Law she would be the envy of all nations. They would see her as (a) being **wise and understanding**, (b) having a **God** who is **near** her, and (c) possessing **righteous decrees and laws**.

4:9. The solemn admonition to **be careful** (an admonition that occurs numerous times in Deut.) and to **watch** implies that the Israelites constantly faced the danger of falling into a sin which would have brought them to the brink of annihilation as a nation. That sin was idolatry (vv. 15-31). The nation could become idolatrous in two related ways. The depravity of the human mind is so great that the great deeds of God for His people (e.g., the Exodus and giving of the Law at Horeb) might **slip from** their hearts if they did not constantly remind themselves of God's mighty works. Or second, through laziness or apathy parents might fail to **teach them to their children** and thus their children would become idolaters. Deuteronomy lays great stress not on the priests or other religious leaders, but on the parents as the ones responsible for their children's spiritual education (vv. 9-10; 6:7, 20; 11:19; 31:13; 32:46). God trusts His great events of revelation, such as His giving the Law at Sinai, to faithful stewards who must never **forget** them and who must pass them on to their children. (Not forgetting is another emphasis in Deut., occurring in 4:9, 23, 31; 6:12; 8:11, 14, 19; 9:7; 25:19.)

4:10-14. The experience at **Horeb** was designed to produce a fear of **God** in the hearts of **the people** so that a covenant between them and **the LORD** could be possible. In the Old Testament the fear of God is more than awe or reverence though it includes both. Fearing God is becoming so acutely aware of His moral purity and omnipotence that one is genuinely afraid to disobey Him. Fearing God also includes responding to Him in worship, service, trust, obedience, and commitment. That day on Horeb God's *omnipotence* was displayed in the **fire... black clouds... deep darkness**, and the voice of God that thundered from the heavens. His *moral purity* was displayed in His **Ten Commandments**, called **His covenant**. From this experience the Israelites should have learned to fear God as a Person who is *spiritual* (**you... saw no form**; cf. v. 15; **there was only a voice**) and as a Person who is *transcendent*. This latter point was pressed home by the fact that **He commanded** the Israelites **to follow** His commandments, **decrees, and laws** (which Moses would **teach** them, vv. 1, 14). The giving of the Law that day thus taught the nation that their God was a spiritual Person who could not be manipulated but instead imposed His moral will on *them*. They brought away no images of God from Horeb on that day; God gave only **two stone tablets** (probably each tablet was complete with all Ten Commandments, in keeping with ancient Near Eastern practice to have duplicates of such covenant documents). Thus in contrast with all the religions of the ancient Near East the Word of Israel's God became the foundation of their religion.

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Obedient Faith Brings Life (Deut 4:1-4)

1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you.

2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

3 Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor; for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor.

4 But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you.

Life through listening to God (1)

Listening to the Word of God (1 Sam 3:8-10)

8 The Lord called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me." Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. 9 So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."

Listening to know God (1 John 4:6)

6 We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood.

Listening to hear what God wants to tell us (Acts 10:30-33)

30 Cornelius answered: "Four days ago I was in my house praying at this hour, at three in the afternoon. Suddenly a man in shining clothes stood before me 31 and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer and remembered your gifts to the poor. 32 Send to Joppa for Simon who is called Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the tanner, who lives by the sea.' 33 So I sent for you immediately, and it was good of you to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us."

Listening to aid in obedience (James 1:22)

22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Listening to hear our destiny (1 Cor 2:7)

7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

Listening because there is a blessing (Prov 8:33-34)

33 Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not ignore it. 34 Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.

Listening to gain wisdom (Prov 19:20)

20 Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.

Life through seeing what God has done (2-3)

Seeing to proclaim what God has done (Exodus 3:15)

15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.

Seeing to accept what God has done (Josh 24:14-22)

14 "Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. 15 But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." 16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! 17 It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. 18 And the Lord drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God." 19 Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. 20 If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you." 21 But the people said to Joshua, "No! We will serve the Lord." 22 Then Joshua said, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the Lord." "Yes, we are witnesses," they replied.

Seeing what God has done brings boldness (Phil 1:12-14)

12 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. 14 Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

Seeing to understand what God has given (1 Cor 2:12)

12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

Seeing to not forget what God has done (Ps 106:12-13)

12 Then they believed his promises and sang his praise. 13 But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel.

Seeing to witness about what God has done (Ps 66:16)

16 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

Life through obedience to God (4)

Obedience that delights God (1 Sam 15:22)

22 But Samuel replied: "Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.

Obedience that leads to righteousness (Rom 6:16)

16 Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

Obedience that leads to the praise of God by others (2 Cor 9:13)

13 Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else.

Obedience that keeps us remaining in God's love (John 15:10)

10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.

Obedience that leads to the reward of blessings (Deut 28:1-6)

1 If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. 2 All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God: 3 You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. 4 The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock — the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. 5 Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. 6 You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

Obedience that brings the reward of freedom (James 1:25)

25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it — he will be blessed in what he does.

Obedient Faith Brings Wisdom (Deut 4:5-7)

5 "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess.

6 Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

7 "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?"

Wisdom through living God's Word (5)

Living God's Word because it equips for every good work (2 Tim 3:16-17)

16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Living God's Word because it is trustworthy and true (2 Peter 3:5-7)

5 But they deliberately forget that long ago by God's word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water. 6 By these waters also the world of that time was deluged and destroyed. 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

Living God's Word because it has the power of God in it (Rom 1:16-17)

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Living God's Word because it is the sword of the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:17)

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Living God's Word because it is living and enduring (1 Peter 1:23)

23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

Living God's Word because it revives the soul (Ps 19:7)

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

Wisdom through being an example (6)

Be an example of godly speech, life, love and purity (1 Tim 4:12)

12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

Be an example of following the example of Jesus (1 Cor 11:1)

1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Be an example of God's patience and grace (1 Tim 1:16)

16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

Be an example by doing good (Titus 2:7-8)

7 In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.

Be an example of perseverance in trials and persecutions (2 Thess 1:4)

4 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring.

Wisdom through being near to God (7)

Near to God to be cleansed (James 4:8)

8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Near to God for assurance (Heb 10:22)

22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Near to God with committed hearts (Matt 15:6-9)

6 he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: 8 "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 9 They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men."

Near to God by Jesus' blood (Eph 2:13)

13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Near to God because we have called on Him (Ps 145:18)

18 The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.

Obedient Faith Brings Power (Deut 4:8, 12-13)

8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day?

12 And the Lord spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; you only heard a voice.

13 So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.

Power as an obedient nation (8)

A nation that has God near it (Deut 4:7-8)

7 What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? 8 And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

A nation that has been entrusted with the word of God (Rom 3:1-4)

1 What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? 2 Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. 3 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? 4 Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

A nation that is filled with God's people (2 Cor 6:16)

16 What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people."

A nation that is looking for a heavenly country (Heb 11:13-16)

13 All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. 14 People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. 15 If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

A nation that has been declared holy because of God's mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10)

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Power of God's Word (12)

Power to revive the soul (Ps 19:7-8)

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

Power to keep one's life pure (Ps 119:9-11)

9 How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. 10 I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. 11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

Power to save the believers (Rom 1:16)

16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Power as the sword of the Holy Spirit (Eph 6:17)

17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

Power to provide hope (Rom 15:4)

4 For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Power through God's covenants (13)

A covenant through God's promises (Acts 2:39)

39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off — for all whom the Lord our God will call."

A covenant through the death and bloodshed of Jesus (Heb 9:16-19)

16 In the case of a will, it is necessary to prove the death of the one who made it, 17 because a will is in force only when somebody has died; it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. 18 This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19 When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people.

A covenant through the indwelling Holy Spirit (Joel 2:28-29)

28 'And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

A covenant that is put into man's heart (Heb 10:16)

16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds."

A covenant that made peace between God and man (Eph 2:11-13)

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) — 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

A covenant that supplies an endless life (Heb 7:11-16)

11 If perfection could have been attained through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the law was given to the people), why was there still need for another priest to come — one in the order of Melchizedek, not in the order of Aaron? 12 For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law. 13 He of whom these things are said belonged to a different tribe, and no one from that tribe has ever served at the altar. 14 For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah, and in regard to that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. 15 And what we have said is even more clear if another priest like Melchizedek appears, 16 one who has become a priest not on the basis of a regulation as to his ancestry but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Thomas Constable

Verses 1-8

1. The appeal to hearken and obey (4:1-8)

Moses urged the Israelites to "listen to" (Deuteronomy 4:1) and to "obey" (Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 4:5-6) the Mosaic Law. "Statutes" (Deuteronomy 4:1) were the permanent basic rules of conduct whereas "judgments" (ordinances, Deuteronomy 4:1) were decisions God revealed in answer to specific needs. The judgments set precedent for future action (e.g., the case of Zelophehad's daughters).

Moses used the illustration of the recent seduction of the Israelites by the Midianites and God's consequent plague (Numbers 25:1-9) to warn the people of the danger of disregarding God's Law (Deuteronomy 4:3-4).

Moses' appeal rested on the promises of life (Deuteronomy 4:1) and possession of the land (Deuteronomy 4:1). He also referred to the praise that would come on the Israelites from other peoples for the Israelites' obedience (

Deuteronomy 4:6), their relationship of intimacy with God (Deuteronomy 4:7), and the intrinsic superiority of their laws (Deuteronomy 4:8).

"The theology of the nations at large taught that the supreme gods were remote and inaccessible. Though they were perceived in highly anthropomorphic terms, they also were thought to be so busy and preoccupied with their own affairs that they could scarcely take notice of their devotees except when they needed them. [Note: M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, pp27-31.] It was in contrast to these notions, then, that Moses drew attention to the Lord, God of Israel, who, though utterly transcendent and wholly different from humankind, paradoxically lives and moves among them." [Note: Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, p117.]

"In this exposition of the way of the covenant as the way of Wisdom of Solomon, the foundation was laid in the Torah for the Wisdom literature which was afterwards to find its place in the sacred canon." [Note: Kline, "Deuteronomy," p161.]

Moses turned in his address from contemplating the past to an exhortation for the future. This section is the climax of his first speech.

"The parallel between the literary structure of this chapter and that of the Near Eastern treaty is noteworthy. The author of the treaty is named (1, 2, 5, 10), reference is made to the preceding historical Acts, the treaty stipulations are mentioned, the appeal is made for Israel to obey, the treaty sanctions, blessing and cursing, are referred to, witnesses are mentioned (26), and the obligation to transmit the knowledge of the treaty to the next generation is stated (10). While these elements in the Near Eastern treaty are not set out in a rigid legal form, but are woven into a speech without regard for strict formality, they can be clearly discerned." [Note: Thompson, p102. Cf. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, p113.]

"Moses stresses the uniqueness of God's revelation to them and their responsibility." [Note: Samuel J. Schultz, *Deuteronomy*, p30.]

"He [Moses] would not enter the land and guide the people in God's Law, so he now gives them his explanation of the Law to use in his absence. His central purpose in this section is to draw out the chief ideas of the Sinai narratives, Exodus 19-33." [Note: Sailhamer, p433.]

These chief ideas are the Torah as wisdom (Deuteronomy 4:1-14), warning against idolatry (Deuteronomy 4:15-24), the possibility of exile (Deuteronomy 4:25-31), and God's presence with Israel (Deuteronomy 4:32-40).

Verses 9-14

2. God's appearance at Mt. Horeb (4:9-14)

"The abstract nature of God in the Israelite religion, and the absence of any physical representation of him, imposed great difficulties for a people living in a world where all other men represented their gods in visual, physical form. To counter this difficulty would require great care and so Moses urged such care, *lest you forget the things your eyes have seen* [Deuteronomy 4:9]. They had never literally seen their God, but they had seen what God had done." [Note: Craigie, *The Book . . .*, pp132-33. Cf. John 3:8.]

The emphasis in this section is on the supernatural character of the revelation of God's Law. Human beings did not invent Israel's Law. A holy God had revealed it. It was special revelation. Consequently the Israelites were to fear (i.e. have an awesome reverence for) God (Deuteronomy 4:10). In Deuteronomy Moses often reminded the parents that they, not the priests or other religious leaders, bore the primary responsibility for educating their children spiritually (Deuteronomy 4:9-10; cf. Deuteronomy 6:7; cf. Deuteronomy 6:20; Deuteronomy 11:19; Deuteronomy 31:13; Deuteronomy 32:46).

"The basic lesson for Israel to learn at Horeb was to fear and reverence God." [Note: Schultz, p31.]

"In the Old Testament the fear of God is more than awe or reverence though it includes both. Fearing God is becoming so acutely aware of His moral purity and omnipotence that one is genuinely afraid to disobey Him. Fearing God also includes responding to Him in worship, service, trust, obedience, and commitment." [Note: Deere, p269]

(Adapted from URL: <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/dcc/deuteronomy-4.html>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The three arguments that Moses made to persuade his people to obey the covenant apply to God's people today. First, Moses reminded Israel that God blesses obedience and punishes disobedience (see Deuteronomy 30:15-20). Similarly, Jesus described himself as the true vine. Believers who keep His commandments (John 14:15) are like fruitful branches, while those who will not abide in Him are like dry branches that are torn off and thrown into the fire (15:1-17). While obedience doesn't secure our salvation, it is evidence that we are redeemed (James 2:14-26). Moses' second argument was that obedience to the covenant made Israel special among the nations. The nations would see the way Israel prospered and discover that it was because of the righteous and just laws that God provided them. We all are familiar with personal testimonies of friends who were won over to Christianity because they observed a believer living with the conviction that God is real and that He has a knowable will. Conversely, we're all too familiar with stories of ministers whose actions have brought contempt to the name of Christ. It's vitally important that we keep God's law. By observing God's good laws, we draw attention to the author of those laws. Finally, we share Moses' conviction that we should obey God's laws because they are of divine origin (compare 2 Peter 1:20, 21). Because the commandments were authored by a holy and loving God, given to us for our benefit, our only faithful response is to bow our knees and submit to the gracious terms of the covenant that God has provided.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Preparing to Go into Canaan - Moses prepared the new generation to enter the Promised Land by first reminding them several times of their complaining, rebelliousness parents. If they remembered the past mistakes of their parents, they could have a different response to God, one of worshiping Him, recognizing His holiness, laws, and decisions. Then He would empower them to completely push out the present inhabitants of the land, no matter how powerful they were. The victory of God's nation depended on their obedience, hearing the Father's instructions, and carrying out what He said with precise accuracy.

Do Not Change the Law - Add nothing to God's law, Moses warned, nor take anything from it. Keep the commandments as they were written by the very finger of God. Moses strongly prohibited any form of idolatry. Remember Baal Peor, he said, where the Hebrew children began to worship a false god. This perversion led to fornication with the women in Moab. God destroyed 24,000 people because of that transgression (Num. 25:3-4). Similar devastation would take place if this generation followed suit. God's desired obedience for His people. This kind of holy reverence would force even the heathen nations to say that the God of Israel is indeed Lord over all.

Obedience Brings a Good Life - Moses recalled Mt. Sinai when God made a covenant with His people. When they followed His laws, they would enjoy a spiritually healthy life. For this nation, it also meant a promise of a long joyful life in the Promised Land.

Obedience Demonstrates God's Splendor - When Christians bring their daily activities and behaviors in line with biblical principles, they begin to mirror their Maker. Christians who do as God says, allowing the Holy Spirit to take control, make God shine. This is the lesson Moses attempted to relay to the Hebrew children, and it's still God's important message for His Church today.