

# Deuteronomy 34 Commentary

PREVIOUS

NEXT (Joshua

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Moses on Mt Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1+)  
 Listen to Mt Nebo, as you Ponder How Moses' May Have Felt

Deuteronomy by Irving Jensen- used by permission  
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Source: Ryrie Study Bible

## Deuteronomy

<b>Dt 1:1-4:43</b>	<b>Dt 4:44-26:19</b>				<b>Dt 27:1-34:12</b>		
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Dt 1:1-4:43 Looking Back	Dt 4:44-11:32 Exposition of Decalogue	Dt 12:1-16:17 Ceremonial Laws	Dt 16:18-20:20 Civil Laws	Dt 21:1-26:19 Social Laws	Dt 27:1-28:68 Ratification of Covenant	Dt 29:1-30:20 Terms of Covenant	Dt 31:1-34:12 Moses' Song, Blessing, Death

### Plains of Moab

ca. 2 Months  
Moses: Author  
(Except Dt 34)

**Deuteronomy 34:1** Now Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan,

- **Mount Nebo:** De 32:49 Nu 27:12 Nu 33:47
- **Pisgah:** Nu 21:20
- **showed him:** De 34:4 3:27 Nu 32:33-40 Eze 40:2 Rev 21:10
- **Dan:** Ge 14:14 Jos 19:47 Jdg 18:29

[Moses on Mt Nebo \(Deuteronomy 34:1+\)](#)  
Listen to [Mt Nebo](#) as you Ponder How Moses' [May Have Felt](#)

## SUPERNATURAL SCENE SHOWN TO HIS SERVANT

Now Moses went up from the [plains of Moab](#) to [Mount Nebo](#), to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan ([picture](#)) - Moses' ministry ends as it began—in the very presence of God (Ex 3:1-14+)! See [approximate location of Mt Nebo](#) in the **red triangle** on the map. As was typical of Moses, he obeyed God, this time even knowing he was going to his death. This is an illustration of a soul that is fully surrendered, one who is willing to die to self in the fullest sense! (cf Mark 8:34-39+) As far as Dan is the farthest point north (see [red dot in Wikipedia map](#)).

Deuteronomy 32:49 “Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, Mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession.

Numbers 27:12-13 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Go up to this mountain of Abarim, and see the land which I have given to the sons of Israel. 13 “When you have seen it, you too will be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother was;

**THOUGHT** - When your time comes to die, the important thing is not the grandeur of your funeral but the greatness of your life. In fact, how you live now will determine how you will die. Moses lived in the heights, and he died in the heights. He often met God on the mountain, saw His glory, and experienced His grace. **Keep your mind and heart “in the heavenlies” as you live on earth** (Col. 3:1-4+). Moses lived in God’s will and died in God’s will. You never have to fear life or death if you walk in obedience to the Lord. Moses died “the death of the righteous” (Num. 23:10) because he lived the life of the righteous. Finally, Moses lived with a forward vision, and he died with a forward vision as he viewed the Promised Land. The nation so often wanted to go back to Egypt, but he challenged them to go forward to the inheritance God prepared for them. It is good to plan your funeral, but it is also good to live your life in such a way that you will be missed when you are gone. (Warren Wiersbe)

**Pisgah** - Place name perhaps meaning, “the divided one.” Mountain in the [Abarim range](#) across the Jordan River from [Jericho](#). Some Bible scholars believe it was part of Mount Nebo; others think it could have been a separate rise, either en-Neba or near modern Khirbet Tsijaga. God allowed Moses to view the Promised Land from the heights of Pisgah (Deuteronomy 34:1) but would not let him cross into Canaan. Israel had camped near Pisgah (Numbers 21:20 ). Balak took Balaam to its height so the prophet could see Israel and curse them (Numbers 23:14 ). It was a limit of Sihon's kingdom (Joshua 12:23 ); Ashdoth-pisgah in KJV and also for the tribe of Reuben (Joshua 13:20 ). ([Holman Bible Dictionary](#))

**Plains of Moab** - 12v - Num. 22:1; Num. 26:3; Num. 26:63; Num. 31:12; Num. 33:48; Num. 33:49; Num. 33:50; Num. 35:1; Num. 36:13; Deut. 34:1; Deut. 34:8; Jos. 13:32

**Nebo** - 12v - Num. 32:3; Num. 32:38; Num. 33:47; Deut. 32:49; Deut. 34:1; 1 Chr. 5:8; Ezr. 2:29; Ezr. 10:43; Neh. 7:33; Isa. 15:2; Jer. 48:1; Jer. 48:22

**Pisgah** - 8v - Num. 21:20; Num. 23:14; Deut. 3:17; Deut. 3:27; Deut. 4:49; Deut. 34:1; Jos. 12:3; Jos. 13:20

"And the Lord showed him all the land So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died" Deuteronomy 34:1, 5

When I was a sixth grader, an elderly lady visited our one-room country schoolhouse to announce a community event. Though energetic and full of zest for life, she was somewhat stooped, her hair was white, and her face was lined with wrinkles. After she left, one of the boys loudly said,

"I never want to get old."

The teacher, a bitter unbeliever, countered with the words,

"Do you want to die young?"

"No," the boy replied.

"Well," came the sharp retort, "you will either die young or grow old and die. There are no alternatives."

These words made a deep impression on me. I was only a boy, but even young children think about death. The tone of utter despair in my teacher's voice sent chills down my spine. Without Christ the future is dismal indeed.

How different the prospect for the believer! For him old age can be a time of fullness and blessing, and death does not hold the same dread and fear. I like to think of Moses as he went calmly and serenely up the mountain where he knew he would die. Before God took him from this life, He graciously gave him a full view of the land his people would soon enter. He passed from this life full of faith and confident that the Lord's promises of a glorious future for both himself and his people would certainly be realized.

Another child of God, Dwight L. Moody, had a glorious and triumphant Home-going. In his final moments he exclaimed,

"Heaven opens before me! If this is death, it is sweet! There is no valley here. God is calling and I must go!"

"No," said a loved one, "you are dreaming."

Moody answered,

"No, I'm not dreaming. I have looked within the gates, and I have seen the children's faces. This is my triumph. This is my coronation day!"

Like Moses, Moody had seen the Promised Land — and then peacefully "fallen asleep" in the arms of God!

**Death need not trouble the Christian—his future is as sure as the promises of God!**

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### **The Best Is Yet to Come**

The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. Deuteronomy 33:27

Today's Scripture & Insight: Deuteronomy 34:1–12

Are the best days of your life behind or in front of you? Our outlook on life—and our answer to that question—can change with time. When we're younger, we look ahead, wanting to grow up. And once we've grown older, we yearn for the past, wanting to be young again. But when we walk with God, whatever our age, the best is yet to come!

Over the course of his long life, Moses witnessed the amazing things God did, and many of those amazing things happened when he was no longer a young man. Moses was 80 years old when he confronted Pharaoh and saw God miraculously set His people free from slavery (Ex. 3–13). Moses saw the Red Sea part, saw manna fall from heaven, and even spoke with God "face to face" (14:21; 16:4; 33:11).

Throughout his life, Moses lived expectantly, looking ahead to what God would do (Heb. 11:24–27). He was 120 years old in his final year of life on this earth, and even then he understood that his life with God was just getting started and that he would never see an end to God's greatness and love.

Regardless of our age, "the eternal God is [our] refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27) that faithfully carry us into His joy each day. By: James Banks Sign in to track your progress! ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

O Lord my God, I praise You for all You have done in the past. I look forward with thankfulness for all You will do in the future. And I thank You for today and all Your blessings.

When we walk with God, the best is yet to come.

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## The Great Awakening

God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 1 Thessalonians 4:14

Today's Scripture & Insight: Deuteronomy 34:1–8

I have a treasured memory of gatherings with family friends when our boys were small. The adults would talk into the night; our children, weary with play would curl up on a couch or chair and fall asleep.

When it was time to leave, I would gather our boys into my arms, carry them to the car, lay them in the back seat, and take them home. When we arrived, I would pick them up again, tuck them into their beds, kiss them goodnight, and turn out the light. In the morning they would awaken—at home.

This has become a rich metaphor for me of the night on which we “sleep in Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 4:14 kjv). We slumber . . . and awaken in our eternal home, the home that will heal the weariness that has marked our days.

I came across an Old Testament text the other day that surprised me—a closing comment in Deuteronomy: “Moses . . . died there in Moab, as the Lord had said” (34:5). The Hebrew means literally, “Moses died . . . with the mouth of the Lord,” a phrase ancient rabbis translated, “With the kiss of the Lord.”

Is it too much to envision God bending over us on our final night on earth, tucking us in and kissing us goodnight? Then, as John Donne so eloquently put it, “One short sleep past, we wake eternally.” By: David H. Roper ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Heavenly Father, because Your arms carry us, we can sleep in peace.

For death is no more than a turning of us over from time to eternity. —William Penn

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## Deuteronomy 34 Sunset Boulevard

Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical Sunset Boulevard tells the story of Norma Desmond, a former silent film star. When the talking movies came into fashion, she lost her audience. As an older woman, she longed for the glory of her past. In her mind, silent facial expressions alone made a good movie—not dialogue. In the song “With One Look” Norma sings:

With one look I can break your heart;  
With one look I play every part ...  
With one look I'll ignite a blaze;  
I'll return to my glory days.

Because Norma lived in the past, her life ended in tragedy.

It's been said that each life is like a book, lived one chapter at a time. If you think your most fruitful years are behind you, remember you're writing a new chapter now. Learn to live each day with contentment in the present.

Near the end of Moses' life, God showed him the Promised Land. Clearly, he had accomplished his mission in life. But he didn't long for the miracles of his “glory days.” Instead, Moses was content to obey God in the present. In his sunset years, he mentored Joshua to be his successor (Deut. 31:1-8).

Living contentedly in the present has a way of making us productive for a lifetime—for God's glory. —Dennis Fisher

I give my life to You, O Lord,  
And live for You each day;  
Grant me contentment as I strive  
To follow and obey. —Sper

**Living in the past paralyzes the present  
and bankrupts the future.**

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**QUESTION - [What is the significance of Mount Nebo in the Bible?](#)**

**ANSWER -** Mount Nebo in the Bible is a high mountain in Moab where Moses viewed the [Promised Land](#) before his death. Rising more than 4,000 feet above the Dead Sea, Mount Nebo is situated on the east side of the Jordan River opposite the city of Jericho.

During the final phase of Israel's journey to the Promised Land, the Israelites camped in Moab near Mount Nebo. Before Moses died, God called him to climb to the top of Mount Nebo: "On that same day the LORD told Moses, 'Go up into the Abarim Range to Mount Nebo in Moab, across from Jericho, and view Canaan, the land I am giving the Israelites as their own possession. There on the mountain that you have climbed you will die and be gathered to your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people. . . . You will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel'" (Deuteronomy 32:48–52). This same account at Mount Nebo is first mentioned in the Bible in Numbers 27:12–14.

God told Moses that [he would die](#) on Mount Nebo overlooking Canaan. Moses' prayer to see the Promised Land would be answered, but [he would not enter](#) the land because of what happened when he struck the rock at [Meribah Kadesh](#) (Deuteronomy 3:23–28). Moses and his brother Aaron had failed God that day with their anger, pride, disobedience, and lack of trust.

After seeing the Promised Land from this high vantage point, Moses died on Mount Nebo and was buried in the vicinity: "Then Moses climbed Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah, across from Jericho. There the LORD showed him the whole land—from Gilead to Dan, all of Naphtali, the territory of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Mediterranean Sea, the Negev and the whole region from the Valley of Jericho, the City of Palms, as far as [Zoar](#). Then the LORD said to him, 'This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, "I will give it to your descendants." I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it.' And Moses the servant of the LORD died there in Moab, as the LORD had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is" (Deuteronomy 34:1–6). Mount Nebo is also the likely site of the conflict between Satan and the archangel Michael over the body of Moses (Jude 1:9).

In extrabiblical Jewish literature, the prophet Jeremiah is said to have hidden the ark of the covenant, the tent of meeting, and the altar of incense in a cave on Mount Nebo. According to 2 Maccabees 2:4–8, Jeremiah received a revelation to take the tabernacle and the ark to a cave on the mountain and seal the entrance. The cave would then remain undiscovered until God gathers all His people together.

Mount Nebo, located today in in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, still offers comprehensive views of the Dead Sea, the Jordan River, the West Bank, and, on clear days, even Jericho and Jerusalem. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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## THE DEATH OF MOSES Deuteronomy 34 - James Smith

"A change from woe to joy, from earth to Heaven,  
Death gives me this; it leads me calmly where  
The souls that long ago from mine were riven  
May meet again; death answers many a prayer.  
Bright day shine on! be glad; days brighter far  
Are stretched before my eyes than those of mortals are."—NICOLL.

When Moses stood on the top of Pisgah it was not as "a trembling candidate for God's compassion," but as a servant who had found great favour with Him, as one whose work was finished before his strength and vigour were exhausted Like the law which he represented, he was set aside before his natural force was abated. There are some things about this unique departure of Moses that suggest characteristics which belong to the death of every saint. It was—

I. A Going Up. "And Moses went up to the top of Pisgah" (v. 1). Going up to die. What a thought! Mounting up in spirit to the gate of Heaven that we might depart and be with Christ. "Like Enoch, he was not, for God took him." In dying the body departs to the earth, but the spirit to God, who made it and saved it. Those who live on the hill top of communion with the Father have not far to go when the home-call comes.

II. Lonely. Moses was alone with God on the mount (v. 6). With regard to the friendships of earth, every man is alone when he meets God. Over this Jordan no human hand can guide. But the dying servant of God does not feel any loss at the absence of the kinsman according to the flesh; they are so filled with the glory of His presence that they forget the things which are behind. Alone, but without any feeling of loneliness. At home with God.

III. Full of a Satisfying Vision. "The Lord showed him all the land" (v. 1). This vision of the land of promise had been before him for many years, but now the Lord caused him to see it (v. 4). If he did not enter into it, he did in spirit enter into the rest that comes through trusting in a faithful God. Moses is not alone in his seeming failure here. Are there not many spiritual privileges into which we have failed to enter because of our unbelief? Yet, blessed be the God of all grace, the vision of His mercy and faithfulness in Christ will satisfy the soul while in its last pantings on earth. "I shall be satisfied when I awake in His likeness."

IV. In the Presence of the Lord. "The Lord said unto him," etc. (chap. 10:4). To die in His presence is to die into His presence, and to be for ever with the Lord. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord. Yea, saith the Spirit" (Rev. 14:13).

“It is not death to die when He is near.”

No, it is only entering into a fuller possession of the life of God. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me” (Psa. 23).

V. According to His Word. “So Moses the servant of the Lord died, according to the word of the Lord” (v. 5). It is still so with the saints of God, His Word is, “He that believeth in Me shall never die.” Be it unto me according to Thy Word. “O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” In His victory death is swallowed up (1 Cor. 15:54–57).

VI. While His Faculties were Unimpaired. “When he died his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated” (v. 7). We have no reason to expect that physically it shall be so with us when the hour of our departure comes (Psa. 90:10). But the new man created after Christ Jesus, his eye shall not be dim, nor his force abated. “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but they that wait upon the Lord shall exchange strength, and mount up with wings as eagles” (Isa. 40:30, 31). Those who die in the Lord die in His strength. In Him the eye of our hope need never grow dim, nor the natural force of our faith ever abate.

VII. Followed by a Unique Funeral. “He buried him, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day” (v. 6). It is no real loss although no man may know where a servant of God lies buried, God knows. He superintends the funeral of every servant of His. In the resurrection not a member will be left behind. The devil contended with Michael about the body of Moses (Jude 9). Did he wish to claim it because Moses had killed an Egyptian, or because he had failed to sanctify the Lord in the wilderness of Zion? (Num. 20:10–13). The body is the Lord’s as well as the spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Is the Lord not contending for our bodies even now? (Rom. 12:1), and is not the devil still disputing this?

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### Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask - DEUTERONOMY 34:1ff—How could Moses have written this chapter which records his own death?

**PROBLEM:** Deuteronomy 34 is a record of the death of Moses in the valley of Moab. However, the Book of Deuteronomy has traditionally been held to be the work of Moses. How could Moses have written this chapter that records his own death and burial?

**SOLUTION:** First, it is not necessary to conclude that Moses could not have written his own obituary. It is entirely within the power of God to reveal the future in minute detail (cf. Daniel 2; 7; 9; 12). It is not unreasonable to believe that the Spirit of God, through Moses, penned this final chapter. Whether we take this chapter as from the pen of Moses or from the pen of Joshua or some other author, it does not at all imply that Moses was not the author of the text of Deuteronomy or the other four books of the Pentateuch.

Second, it is entirely reasonable to assume that someone, perhaps Joshua, added this final chapter to the books of Moses as a fitting conclusion to the life of this great man of God. It is not at all an uncommon practice for someone to add an obituary to the end of a work by a great man. This would be similar to the practice of one author writing a preface to the work of another author.

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### Deuteronomy 34:2 and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea,

- De 11:24 Ex 23:31 Nu 34:6 Jos 15:12



and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea - See the map for the vista Moses beheld. The western sea of course is the Mediterranean Sea.

### Deuteronomy 34:3 and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.

- the city of palm: Jdg 1:16 3:13 2Ch 28:15
- Zoar: Ge 14:2,8 19:22 Nu 34:3

View from Mt Nebo toward [Zoar](#) (HCSB)

and the [Negev](#) and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as [Zoar](#) - The Negev "is a [desert](#) and [semidesert](#) region of southern [Israel](#). The region's largest city and administrative capital is [Beersheba](#) (modern pop. 209,687), in the north. At its southern end is the [Gulf of Aqaba](#) and the [resort city](#) of [Eilat](#)." Another name for [Jericho](#) is the [city of palm trees](#).

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#### QUESTION - [What is the significance of Jericho in the Bible?](#)

**ANSWER** - Jericho is believed to be one of the oldest cities in the world. In the Bible, Jericho is best known as the location of an astonishing miracle God performed. Jericho was the first city conquered by Israel after crossing the Jordan River and occupying the Promised Land (Joshua 5:13—6:23).

Jericho's location was key to its significance. The city was situated in the lower Jordan Valley, just west of the Jordan River and about ten miles northwest of the Dead Sea. It sat in the broadest part of the Jordan plain more than 800 feet below sea level and nearly 3,500 feet below Jerusalem, which was only 17 miles away. This geographical detail explains why Jesus said in His parable that the good Samaritan "went down from Jerusalem to Jericho" (Luke 10:30).

In dramatic contrast to its desert surroundings, Jericho thrived as a fertile, spring-fed oasis. In the Old Testament, it was often called the "City of Palms" for its abundance of palm trees (Deuteronomy 34:3; Judges 1:16; 3:13; 2 Chronicles 28:15). Strategically located as a border city, ancient Jericho controlled important migration routes between the north and south, and the east and west. Eventually, the town became part of the allotment of the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:12, 21).

After the death of Moses, God selected [Joshua, son of Nun](#), to lead the people of Israel. Under the Lord's direction, they entered Canaan and began to take possession of the land. The first city standing in Israel's way was Jericho, a secure fortress with high, formidable walls. Joshua sent spies to investigate the city. [Rahab the harlot](#), knowing that Israel's God was going to overthrow Jericho, hid the spies and later helped them escape (Joshua 2).

Before the battle of Jericho, God gave Joshua specific instructions for the men of war to march in silence around the city once each day for six days. The priests were to walk with them, blowing ram's horns and carrying the ark of the covenant as a sign of God's presence among them. On the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times. At the appropriate signal, the priests were to blow their trumpets, and the people were to give a mighty shout. They did exactly as Joshua commanded, and on the seventh day the [walls of Jericho crumbled](#). The soldiers went in and took the city, destroying it completely. Only Rahab and her family were spared.

As the first city to fall in the conquest of Canaan, the whole of it was devoted to the Lord (Joshua 6:17). The people of Israel were to take no spoils of war; Joshua gave a clear command that "all the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron are sacred to the Lord and must go into his treasury" (verse 19). In this way, Jericho was a "tithing" to the Lord who gave them the victory. God's people were to honor Him with the firstfruits of the conquest. [Achan](#) violated this order and brought ruin on himself and his family.

After the destruction of Jericho, Joshua placed a curse on anyone who might rebuild the city (Joshua 6:26). Jericho remained unoccupied until the time of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, about 500 years later. Then Joshua's word was fulfilled when Hiel of Bethel rebuilt the city, at the cost of the lives of two of his sons (1 Kings 16:34).

Jericho is mentioned briefly in the book of Judges, which says that Jericho served as a provincial outpost for Eglon the King of Moab who held Israel under tribute for 18 years (Judges 3:13). In 1 Chronicles 19:5, King David sent word for his mistreated delegates to remain in Jericho until their beards regrew. In 2 Kings 2:4–18, Jericho appears to have been the home of a "school of the prophets."

Also reported at Jericho was Elisha's miraculous purifying of a spring (2 Kings 2:19–22). During the reign of Ahaz, a group of

prisoners was spared, clothed, fed, and cared for at Jericho (2 Chronicles 28:15). The final Old Testament mention of events in Jericho was the capture of King Zedekiah after fleeing the Chaldean army (2 Kings 25:2–7; Jeremiah 39:5; 52:8).

Ezra 2:34 and Nehemiah 7:36 report that the number of Jericho's inhabitants after the return from exile under Zerubbabel was 345. These "son of Jericho" participated in the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem.

Jericho played a minor role in the ministry of Jesus. The Lord healed [two blind men](#) near the city of Jericho (Matthew 20:29–34). He also encountered Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector, while passing through Jericho (Luke 19:1–10). When Jesus dined in the home of [Zacchaeus](#). He was probably visiting one of the finest houses in Jericho. The gospels seem to indicate that Jericho, an affluent city in Christ's day, had many beggars (Matthew 20:29–34; Mark 10:46–52; Luke 18:35–43).

The Jericho of New Testament times was built by Herod more than a mile to the south of the Old Testament location, at the mouth of the Wadi Qilt. Today, the modern city of Jericho includes both sites. [GotQuestions.org](#)

**Deuteronomy 34:4 Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there."**

- land: Ge 12:7 13:15 15:18-21 26:3 28:13 Ps 105:9-11
- I have caused: De 3:26,27 32:52 Nu 20:12 Joh 1:17

### **YAHWEH REAFFIRMS THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT**

**Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there."**

#### **Hard Sayings of the Bible - F F Bruce, et al - Deut 34:5–8 Prewritten Posthumous Writing?**

If Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy, indeed even the Pentateuch itself, how could he have written of his own death? What is more, he would have needed to describe not only his own death, but also the general location of his burial plot, with the added knowledge that no one knew where it was "to this day," whatever that would mean from the standpoint of Moses having written it, along with the mourning process that took place after that. How was all of this possible?

Few will be willing to debate the thesis that Moses was not the author of this last chapter of Deuteronomy. There are just too many expressions that make little or no sense if placed in Moses' mouth. For example, the phrases "to this day" (Deut 34:6), "since then, no prophet has risen" (Deut 34:10) and "for no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel" (Deut 34:12) just do not seem naturally attributed to Moses. On the contrary, such expressions must be put along with the other "post-Mosaic" such as Numbers 12:3 and treated as additions which were added by a later writer under the inspiration of the Spirit of God or as early glosses that were brought into the text under divine approval.

Ancient Jews held that Joshua was the one whom the Spirit of God authorized to add statements such as appear in Deuteronomy 34 to the book Moses had left. The evidence generally cited for this view, which is also shared by a number of evangelical believers, is found in Joshua 24:26: "And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God" (a reference that many of us take to be pointing to the Pentateuch).

If this is a correct assessment of the situation, then Moses did not write Deuteronomy 34 as a prognostication of his death and the events that would surround it. Instead, it was his understudy, Joshua, who undertook the task at the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

**Deuteronomy 34:5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.**

- **Moses:** Jos 1:1 Mal 4:4 Joh 8:35,36 2Ti 2:25 Heb 3:3-6 2Pe 1:1 Rev 15:3
- **died there:** De 31:14 Dt 32:50 Jos 1:1,2

### **THE GREATEST TITLE THE SERVANT OF THE LORD**



**So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.**

**John Maxwell** - Moses then “died ... according to the word of the LORD” (v. 5). This phrase has been interpreted by the rabbis to mean that “he died by the kiss of the Lord.” This interpretation comes from the literal meaning of this phrase, which is “he died at the mouth of the Lord.” ([Preacher's Commentary](#))

**Henry Morris** - Although Moses wrote the book of Deuteronomy, it is probable that Joshua wrote its closing verses found in Deuteronomy 34:5-12. It is possible that Moses himself wrote his own epitaph by divine inspiration, but since no one knew his burial place (Deuteronomy 34:6), it would hardly be likely that he directly gave such a record to Joshua before he died. In some way Satan was also present at the scene, along with the archangel Michael (Jude 9), seeking to claim Moses' body for some unrevealed, but certainly nefarious, purpose.

**Believer's Study Bible** - Philo, Josephus, and some modern commentators have accepted this account of Moses' death and funeral as written by the lawgiver himself. Although this is certainly possible, there is no reason to reject the likelihood that Joshua or another prophet, acting editorially, appended these words concerning the author's death.

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## **A Longing in Stone**

I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it. Deuteronomy 34:4

Today's Scripture & Insight: Deuteronomy 34:1–5

“Ah, every pier is a longing in stone!” says a line in Fernando Pessoa’s Portuguese poem “Ode Marítima.” Pessoa’s pier represents the emotions we feel as a ship moves slowly away from us. The vessel departs but the pier remains, an enduring monument to hopes and dreams, partings and yearnings. We ache for what’s lost, and for what we can’t quite reach.

The Portuguese word translated “longing” (*saudade*) refers to a nostalgic yearning we feel—a deep ache that defies definition. The poet is describing the indescribable.

We might say that Mount Nebo was Moses’s “longing in stone.” From Nebo he gazed into the promised land—a land he would never reach. God’s words to Moses—“I have let you see it with your eyes, but you will not cross over into it” (Deuteronomy 34:4)—might seem harsh. But if that’s all we see, we miss the heart of what’s happening. God is speaking immense comfort to Moses: “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants’” (v. 4). Very soon, Moses would leave Nebo for a land far better than Canaan (v. 5).

Life often finds us standing on the pier. Loved ones depart; hopes fade; dreams die. Amid it all we sense echoes of Eden and hints of heaven. Our longings point us to God. He is the fulfillment we yearn for. By: Tim Gustafson ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

What are your unfulfilled longings? What places in life are you trying to satisfy with wrong things? How can you find true fulfillment in God alone?

The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing—to reach the Mountain, to find the place where all beauty came from. C. S. Lewis

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## **Poor Man's Evening Portion - Robert Hawker**

So Moses the servant of the Lord died.—Deut. 34:5.

My soul! close the month in contemplating the death of this highly-favoured servant of the Lord; and mark in him the sure event of all flesh—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” What a blessed account hath the Holy Ghost given of this man! “There arose not a prophet (we are told) like unto Moses, whom Jehovah knew face to face.” But, as if to draw an everlasting line of distinction between him and his Master, between the highest prophet and the Lord God of the prophets, the Holy Ghost was pleased, by the ministry of his servant the apostle, to state the vast distinction: “Moses verily was faithful (saith he) in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house are we.” (Heb. 3:5, 6.) Indeed, all the great and distinguishing events in the life of Moses became more or less brilliant, as they set forth in their typical representations, the person, work, or offices of the Lord Jesus Christ. Was Moses the Lord’s minister to bring the people out of Egypt; and what was this but a representation of the Lord Jesus, bringing his people out of the Egypt of sin, death, and hell? If Moses led the people through the Red Sea, and opened a path through the mighty waters; what was this but a type of the ever-blessed Jesus, bringing his redeemed through the red sea of his blood, and opening a new and living way into the presence of God? If Moses kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood through faith, what was the great object his faith looked at, but Christ our

passover, and the blood of his sacrifice? Did he bring the people through the wilderness; and is not Jesus bringing all his people through? Did he feed them with manna, and give them water from the rock; and what did the manna prefigure but Jesus, the bread of life; and what was the rock but Christ, the water of life, in all ages of the Church, to his people? In short, every thing momentous in the Church's history, wherein Moses ministered to the people, pointed, both in law and in sacrifice, to Jesus the Lamb of God, and his one all-sufficient sacrifice for the salvation of his redeemed. And even the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, over and above the event of death, common to all, had this peculiar signification annexed to it, that, as the great lawgiver to the people, it set forth the inefficacy of the law to bring into Canaan; this could only be accomplished by Christ, who "is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile." Farewell, Moses! thou servant of the Lord! Thou, when thou hadst served thy generation, wast gathered to thy fathers, and like all the patriarchs, didst see corruption; but Jesus saw no corruption—he ever liveth, and is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," Hail, thou glorious Mediator of "a better covenant established upon better promises!" Be thou the Alpha and Omega of thy word, thine ordinances, thy sanctuary, thy servants! To thee all ministered; from thee all come; in thee all centered; and to thine everlasting praise all terminate, in bringing glory to Jehovah, Father, Son, and Spirit, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

**Deuteronomy 34:6 And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day.**

#### Related Passage:

Jude 1:9+ But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Deuteronomy 3:29 "So we remained in the valley opposite **Beth-peor**.

Deuteronomy 4:46 across the Jordan, in the valley opposite **Beth-peor**, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out from Egypt.

Deuteronomy 34:6 And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite **Beth-peor**; but no man knows his burial place to this day.

Joshua 13:20 and **Beth-peor** and the slopes of Pisgah and Beth-jeshimoth,

### MOSES' SECRET BURIAL PLOT

**And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day-** As Dt 29:29 says "The secret things belong to the LORD our God." See [Map of possible site of Beth-peor](#) but realize this only gives us an approximation of where Moses' bones were laid. Moses had the ultimate private funeral service! And his "undertaker" was Yahweh!

**THOUGHT** - The moment he breathed his last breath, God Himself was there to transport his body to the grave. In the same way believers can rest fully assured that Jesus is there with us at the very moment we pass from time into eternity. We have nothing to fear beloved! We do not pass into the unknown but into the known, the presence of the One we have grown to know and love over the many years we have walked with Him! It simply does not get much better than that?

**Mattoon** on Beth-Peor in Dt 34:6 - This place will also be the place of the defeat of God's people who will be lured by the sexual seduction of beautiful Moabite women into the worship of Baal. Numbers 25:3+ "So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel."

**Ryrie** - Though Moses' exact burial place is unknown, it was in the area where the people were camped (Beth-peor, about 10 mi, or 16 km, E of the Jordan at its mouth; cf. Deut. 3:29; 4:46).

**Beth-Peor - (behth-pee' awr) Place name meaning, "house of Peor."** A temple for the god Peor or Baal Peor probably stood there. See Baal Peor. Town in whose valley Israel camped as Moses delivered the sermons of the Book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 3:29 ). It had belonged to Sihon, king of the Amorites (Deuteronomy 4:46 ). Moses died and was buried near there (Deuteronomy 34:6 ). It belonged to tribe of Reuben (Joshua 13:20 ). It was located at modern khirbet Uyun Musa, twenty miles east of the north end of the Dead Sea. Numbers does not use the place name, but evidently at least part of the shameful worship of Baal Peor (Numbers 25:1-5 ) occurred at Beth-peor. Hosea described the actions of Peor as a turning point in Israel's blissful honeymoon

with God (Hosea 9:10) . - Holman

**BETH-PEOR** . A city belonging to Reuben (Joshua 13:20), located most probably some four or five miles north of Mt. Nebo, near the Pisgah range. Just opposite to it, in the ravine (*Wādī Hesbāḥn* probably), the Israelites encamped (Deuteronomy 3:29; Deuteronomy 4:46). Moses was buried in the valley 'over against Beth-peor' (Deuteronomy 34:6). Conder suggests a site several miles to the S., near *'Ain el-Minyeh*, but the impression given by Numbers 25:1-8 is that the city was not so far distant from the plain of Shittim. - [Hastings](#).

**Beth-Peor** - beth-פֶּעוֹר ( בית פֶּעוֹר , bēth pe'ōr ; οἶκος Φογῶρ , oikos Phogōr ; in Joshua (Vaticanus), Βαῖθφογῶρ , Baithphogōr , or βεθ- , beth -): "Over against Beth-peor" the Israelites were encamped, "beyond the Jordan, in the valley," when Moses uttered the speeches recorded in Dt (Deuteronomy 3:29; Deuteronomy 4:46). "In the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor" Moses was buried (Deuteronomy 34:6). Beth-peor and the slopes of Pisgah (the King James Version "Ashdoth-pisgah") are mentioned in close connection in Joshua 13:20. According to Eusebius, Onomasticon, Beth-peor was situated near Mt. Peor (Fogor) opposite Jericho, 6 miles above Livias. Mt. Peor is the "top" or "head" of Peor (Numbers 23:28). Some height commanding a view of the plain East of the river in the lower Jordan valley is clearly intended, but thus far no identification is possible. "The slopes of Pisgah" are probably the lower slopes of the mountain toward Wādī 'Ayūn Mūsa. Somewhere North of this the summit we are in search of may be found. Conder suggested the cliff at Minyeh, South of Wādī Jedeideh, and of Pisgah; and would locate Beth-peor at el-Mareighāt, "the smeared things," evidently an ancient place of worship, with a stone circle and standing stones, about 4 miles East, on the same ridge. This seems, however, too far South, and more difficult to reach from Shittim than we should gather from Numbers 25:1. ([ISBE](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** - Dad began to calm down immediately when he knew with whom Mark was spending the afternoon. Many people grieve like the bereaved congregation of Israel, and in their sadness ask, "Where has my loved one gone?" Our comfort comes from knowing what God's Word teaches us about the death of one of His children. We do not know where they have gone, but we do know with whom they are. Frances Havergal, the songwriter, lived and moved in the Word of God. His Word was her constant companion. On the last day of her life, she asked a friend to read Isaiah 42 to her. When the friend read the sixth verse (Isa 42:6), "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, / And will hold Your hand; / I will keep You ...," "Miss Havergal stopped her. She whispered, " 'Called ... held ... kept.' I can go home on that." So could Moses. (And so can you beloved!)

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**QUESTION** - [Why are the circumstances of the death of Moses so mysterious?](#)

**ANSWER** - God has not chosen to reveal much to us about the circumstances of Moses' death. There are three references in the Bible to the death and burial of Moses, and each of them contributes to the mystery surrounding the story of the great prophet. We know that he was 120 years old when he died, "yet his eyes were not weak nor his strength gone" (Deuteronomy 34:7). Despite his age, [Moses](#) was still in his prime when he was called home.

Because of Moses' sin of disobedience at the waters of [Meribah Kadesh](#) (Numbers 20:12; Deuteronomy 32:51), Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. He brought the people of Israel to the very edge of Canaan, and he was given a look into the land, but he was not allowed to go in himself. At the end of Moses' life, God gave Moses a glimpse of the land he had left Egypt for. "Moses climbed [Mount Nebo](#) from the plains of Moab to the top of Pisgah. . . . There the LORD showed him the whole land" (Deuteronomy 34:1; cf. Numbers 27:12-13). Moses died there on the summit, "according to the word of the Lord." God buried him secretly, and no one knows to this day where his grave is (Deuteronomy 34:5-6).

One mystery involves Moses' grave. Scholars have suggested God buried Moses secretly and without a grave marker to prevent the grave from becoming a shrine or a place of worship. As the Israelites were prone to idolatry, this seems plausible. Others believe that there was no grave at all, and that Moses was translated in the manner of Enoch and Elijah. These scholars point to the appearance of Moses with Elijah on the Mount of the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-10). The problem with this latter view is that the Bible specifically says Moses "died" and "was buried" (Deuteronomy 34:7). If Moses were translated straight to heaven, there would be no death and burial. In any case, the circumstance of God personally burying someone and keeping the burial place secret is unique in all of Scripture.

Another mystery involves Jude 1:9, where we learn that, when Moses died, [the archangel Michael contended with the devil](#) over the body of Moses. This passing reference is not expounded on by Jude and has been a source of debate among biblical scholars. We are not told exactly when this angelic argument occurred, although it was likely at the time of Moses' burial. We also don't know why the devil and Michael would be arguing over the body. Perhaps Satan was opposed to the future resurrection of Moses, accusing him of the sin at Meribah and other sins. Perhaps Satan wanted to bury the body in a more accessible place and mark the spot to tempt the people to build a shrine. Whatever the reason for the dispute, Satan lost the battle.

In spite of the mysteries surrounding Moses' death and burial, we know some things for certain. One is that God's Word is true and

His prophecies always come to pass. Another is that sin brings the discipline of God, and no one is exempt. Also, God doesn't always explain the mysteries in His Word. But we have this truth: "Precious in the sight of the Lord / is the death of his faithful servants" (Psalm 116:15). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

**Deuteronomy 34:7 Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated.**

- **hundred and twenty years old** (KJV): De 31:2 Ac 7:23,30,36
- **his eye:** Ge 27:1 48:10 Jos 14:10,11

"The Wonderful One Horse Shay"

## MOSES DIED LIKE THE WONDERFUL ONE HORSE SHAY

**Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated** - Earlier we read "And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross this Jordan.' (Deut. 31:2) It seems clear that Moses did not die of any specific physical illness. God simply took his life.

**Henry Morris** - Moses had written that man's normal life span by his day had decreased to 70 or 80 years (Psalm 90:10), yet God allowed him 120 years. At his death he was at least 60 years older than any man in Israel (Numbers 14:29), except for Caleb and Joshua. Joshua died at age 110 (Joshua 24:29); Caleb outlived him but his age at death is not recorded.

Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died. Moses' life consisted of one hundred and twenty years, divided into three forties.

1. In the first forty years, he was learning to be somebody.
2. In the second forty years, he was learning to be nobody.
3. In the third forty years, he was proving what God could do with a man who had learned those two lessons.

Moses abrupt death reminds me of the old poem by [Oliver Wendell Holmes](#) of the "One Horse Shay" ([note](#)) that functioned perfectly (eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated) until the last day! Here is the old poem if you like poetry with a Biblical application. And may God grant each of us to live our lives like the old "One Horse Shay," fully functioning for Him until He removes our last breath (Da 5:23+) and last heart beat and we pass into His glorious presence forever (2 Cor 5:8+, 1 Jn 3:2+). In Jesus' Mighty Name. Amen. [Listen to this great reading of "The One Horse Shay"](#)

Have you heard of the wonderful [one-hoss shay](#),  
That was built in such a logical way  
**It ran a hundred years to a day,**  
**And then, of a sudden, it — ah, but stay,**  
I'll tell you what happened without delay,  
Scaring the parson into fits,  
Frightening people out of their wits, —  
Have you ever heard of that, I say?

Seventeen hundred and fifty-five.  
[Georgius Secundus](#) was then alive, —  
Snuffy old drone from the German hive.  
That was the year when Lisbon-town  
Saw the earth open and gulp her down,  
And [Braddock's army](#) was done so brown,  
Left without a scalp to its crown.  
It was on the terrible [Earthquake-day](#)  
That the Deacon finished the one-hoss shay.

Now in building of chaises, I tell you what,

There is always *somewhere* a weakest spot, —  
In hub, tire, felloe, in spring or thill,  
In panel, or crossbar, or floor, or sill,  
In screw, bolt, thoroughbrace, — lurking still,  
Find it somewhere you must and will, —  
Above or below, or within or without, —  
And that's the reason, beyond a doubt,  
A chaise *breaks down*, but doesn't *wear out*.

But the Deacon swore (as Deacons do,  
With an "I dew vum," or an "I tell yeou")  
He would build one shay to beat the taown  
'N' the keounty 'n' all the kentry raoun';  
It should be so built that it *could n'* break daown:  
"Fur," said the Deacon, "'t 's mighty plain  
Thut the weakes' place mus' stan' the strain;  
'N' the way t' fix it, uz I maintain,  
    Is only jest  
T' make that place uz strong uz the rest."

So the Deacon inquired of the village folk  
Where he could find the strongest oak,  
That couldn't be split nor bent nor broke, —  
That was for spokes and floor and sills;  
He sent for lancewood to make the thills;  
The crossbars were ash, from the straightest trees,  
The panels of white-wood, that cuts like cheese,  
But lasts like iron for things like these;  
The hubs of logs from the "Settler's ellum," —  
Last of its timber, — they could n't sell 'em,  
Never an axe had seen their chips,  
And the wedges flew from between their lips,  
Their blunt ends frizzled like celery-tips;  
Step and prop-iron, bolt and screw,  
Spring, tire, axle, and linchpin too,  
Steel of the finest, bright and blue;  
Thoroughbrace bison-skin, thick and wide;  
Boot, top, dasher, from tough old hide  
Found in the pit when the tanner died.  
That was the way he "put her through."  
"There!" said the Deacon, "naow she'll dew!"

Do! I tell you, I rather guess  
She was a wonder, and nothing less!  
Colts grew horses, beards turned gray,  
Deacon and deaconess dropped away,  
Children and grandchildren — where were they?  
But there stood the stout old one-hoss shay  
As fresh as on Lisbon-earthquake-day!

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED; — it came and found  
The Deacon's masterpiece strong and sound.  
Eighteen hundred increased by ten; —  
"[Hahnsun kerridge](#)" they called it then.  
Eighteen hundred and twenty came; —  
Running as usual; much the same.  
Thirty and forty at last arrive,

And then come fifty, and FIFTY-FIVE.

Little of all we value here  
Wakes on the morn of its hundreth year  
Without both feeling and looking queer.  
In fact, there's nothing that keeps its youth,  
So far as I know, but a tree and truth.  
(This is a moral that runs at large;  
Take it. — You're welcome. — No extra charge.)

FIRST OF NOVEMBER, — the Earthquake-day, —  
There are traces of age in the one-hoss shay,  
A general flavor of mild decay,  
But nothing local, as one may say.  
There couldn't be, — for the Deacon's art  
Had made it so like in every part  
That there was n't a chance for one to start.  
For the wheels were just as strong as the thills,  
And the floor was just as strong as the sills,  
And the panels just as strong as the floor,  
And the whipple-tree neither less nor more,  
And the back crossbar as strong as the fore,  
And spring and axle and hub *encore*.  
And yet, *as a whole*, it is past a doubt  
In another hour it will be *worn out*!

First of November, 'Fifty-five!  
This morning the parson takes a drive.  
Now, small boys, get out of the way!  
Here comes the wonderful one-hoss shay,  
Drawn by a rat-tailed, ewe-necked bay.  
"Huddup!" said the parson. — Off went they.  
The parson was working his Sunday's text, —  
Had got to *fifthly*, and stopped perplexed  
At what the — **Moses** — was coming next.  
All at once the horse stood still,  
Close by the meet'n'-house on the hill.  
First a shiver, and then a thrill,  
Then something decidedly like a spill, —  
And the parson was sitting upon a rock,  
At half past nine by the meet'n'-house clock, —  
Just the hour of the Earthquake shock!  
What do you think the parson found,  
When he got up and stared around?  
The poor old chaise in a heap or mound,  
As if it had been to the mill and ground!  
**You see, of course, if you're not a dunce,**  
**How it went to pieces all at once, —**  
**All at once, and nothing first, —**  
**Just as bubbles do when they burst.**

End of the wonderful one-hoss shay.  
Logic is logic. That's all I say.

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**F B Meyer - Deuteronomy 34:7 His eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.**

This was true of Moses as a man. He had seen plenty of sorrow and toil; but such was the simple power of his faith, in casting his

burden on the Lord, that they had not worn him out in premature decay. There had been no undue strain on his energy. All that he wrought on earth was the outcome of the secret abiding of his soul in God. God was his home, his help, his stay. He was nothing: God was all. Therefore his youth was renewed.

But there is a deeper thought than this. Moses stood for the law. It came by him, and was incarnated in his stern, grave aspect. He brought the people to the frontier of the land, but would not bring them over it: and so the Law of God, even when honored and obeyed, cannot bring us into the Land of Promise. We stand on the Pisgah-height of effort, and view it afar in all its fair expanse; but if we have never got further than "Thou shalt do this and live," we can never pass into the blessed life of rest and victory symbolized by Canaan.

But though the law fails, it in through no intrinsic feebleness. It is always holy, just, and good. Though the ages vanish, and heaven and earth pass away, its jots and tittles remain in unimpaired majesty. It must be fulfilled, first by the Son, then by his Spirit in our hearts. Let us ever remember the searching eye of that holy Law detecting evil, and its mighty force avenging wrong. Its eye will never wax dim, nor its natural force abate. Let us, therefore, shelter in Him, who, as our Representative, magnified the law and met its claims, and made it honorable.

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## **A Life-Long Issue**

The days of our lives are seventy years; and if . . . they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow. — Psalm 90:10

Today's Scripture: Psalm 90

Scientists predict that the average lifespan in the United States may reach 100 by the end of the 21st century. They say the genetics that control aging could be altered to extend life beyond the 70 to 80 years referred to in Psalm 90:10. Life's final chapter, however, will still read, "It is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Moses, who wrote those words, likened our existence to grass that flourishes in the morning and is cut down and withers in the evening (vv.5-6). Although he lived to be 120 (Deuteronomy 34:7), life's brevity was never far from his mind. That's why he prayed, "Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12).

D. J. De Pree, a longtime member of the RBC Board of Directors, took those words literally. He calculated the number of days from the date of his birth until he would turn 70. At the end of each day he'd reduce his total by one. To see that figure decline reminded him to make each day count for the Lord.

We are all part of a rapidly passing scene. That should sober us, but not discourage us. Moses affirmed God as his "dwelling place" (v.1). That's the way to face the life-long issue of our fleeting earthly existence. By: Dennis J. DeHaan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

To gain a heart of wisdom takes a lifetime,  
And we are told to seek it all our days;  
But whether life is long or too soon ended,  
God's lovingkindness fills our heart with praise.  
—Hess

A life lived for God will count for eternity.

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## **Deuteronomy 34:7; Luke 2:36–38 Gray Can Be Golden**

Quoting The People's Almanac, Parade Magazine listed a few people with major achievements after age eighty. Among them were David Eugene Ray of Tennessee, who at ninety-nine learned to read; twin sisters Kin Narita and Gin Kanie, who at ninety-nine recorded a hit single in Japan; and Paul Spangler, who at ninety-two completed his fourteenth Marathon. Advertisers are getting the elderly in focus. The cosmetic company Maybelline, Inc. targets older women by offering a Revitalizing line and Age-Denying makeup. McDonald's offers seniors a 25 cent cup of coffee and hires 40,000 of them in its restaurants. Schumacher and Company's Understanding Living Trusts has sold 150,000 copies since being issued in 1990. Modern Maturity, the publication of the American Association of Retired Persons has an annual circulation of 22.5 million copies. The 64 million people in America over 55 hold \$800 billion in their reserve—about 77 percent of the nation's assets—and most of them are willing to spend. With \$300 billion in ready cash, they buy over 40 percent of the new cars and half the luxury cars sold. Indeed, depending on our lifestyle, habits, diet, and exercise, old age need not be gloomy and disagreeable. Instead, we can say with Adam to Orlando in As You Like It, "Therefore my age is as a lusty winter. Frosty but kindly." Can the church afford to ignore these senior citizens? Aren't we compelled to make special efforts to evangelize and disciple those whose very age offers substantial advantages to God's kingdom? - Speaker's

### **Loins Girded - The Top of Pisgah Deut. 34:7**

Not everyone has the privilege to be kept free from the defects of age to the very end. Even where the eternal youth lives in the heart and God's grace is experienced in a great measure, we see the decay of strength start in due time, which makes the heart sombre. Our loved ones become so fragile and so weak with the climbing of the years, that our love for them multiplies and we try in faithful and differential care to take out of the way anything that might make their path more difficult and we seek to surround them with that which may make that way more plain.

Even though there are only few whose strength does not abate when they are called into eternity, in the spiritual sense they may still resemble Moses, and it be our prayer that all silvery heads amongst us may have an end like his. Moses died on top of Pisgah, a mountain peak that elevated itself well beyond the solidness of Nebo,—he was there, so to say, near heaven, it was only a single step to enter into glory. Is it not blessed if we at the deathbed of our loved ones may see something of the sanctity of height? If we may feel so clearly that there death is not a sinking down into the depth, but a rising to the eternal height of the invisible world? And if we can notice that the elevated mountain air plays around their temples when they exchange time for eternity?

Add to this, secondly, that Moses died there with a soul full of the peace of God. He knew his sin that excluded him from the land of promise. However, he knew also that this sin had been redeemed, and that, how greatly he had transgressed, the heavens would receive him. That be the privilege of all old aged ones amongst us. The older we get, the more heavily our guilt starts to weigh, and the more seriously we start to deal with the holiness and righteousness of God. Blessed is the man, however, who may boast at the brink of death in full assurance of faith that his sins have been forgiven, his unrighteousness covered, his transgressions redeemed.

Whoever leaves the earth in this manner, leaves her, be it in a slightly different manner, with the enlightened eyes of Moses. The Lord showed His servant, maybe in a vision, but maybe also by a miraculous improvement of the power of vision, across the Jordan the whole stretch of Canaan, the country of promise, from north to south, from east to west. How blessed it is for those of us to die in like manner, with an enlightened eye upon the heavenly Canaan,—the earth falls away from them, but they see from afar the great land of rest, a land flowing with milk and honey!

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**Finishing Strong Bob Gass - Fresh Word for Today** - Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. (Deuteronomy 34:7)

During his last years, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale wrote: "The longer I live, the more convinced I become that neither age nor circumstances need deprive us of energy or vitality. Although I have retired from my church, I occupy my working hours with Guideposts Magazine, speaking, and writing books. I go to bed as early as possible, and rise early. I try to eat sensibly, exercise regularly, and avoid bad habits of all kinds. I mentally repudiate physical, mental or spiritual decline and disability. I trust in the living God, and I recommend the same to anyone who desires a long and healthy life."

The Bible says, "The Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning" (Job 42:12). Your age is not a problem to God so long as your faith is strong. Noah didn't start building the ark until he was 500, went into it at 621, came out of it at 622, and helped to start the world all over again! So there's hope for you!

When someone told the 89-year-old poet Dorothy Duncan that she had lived a "full life," she replied sharply, "Don't you dare to 'past tense' me!" If you're not too old to learn, and if you haven't outlived your enthusiasm, then you can still "bring forth fruit in old age" (Psalms 92:14). It is up to you. If you can breathe—pray! If you can speak—encourage others! If you can recall—tell us where the "potholes" are and save us from paying twice for the same wisdom Remember creation?

IT'S WONDERFUL WHAT GOD CAN DO IN JUST ONE DAY—SO GIVE HIM ALL THE DAYS YOU HAVE LEFT.

**Deuteronomy 34:8 So the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses came to an end.**

- Ge 50:3,10 Nu 20:29 1Sa 25:1 Isa 57:1 Ac 8:2

#### **Related Passage:**

Numbers 20:29 When all the congregation saw that Aaron had died, all the house of Israel wept for Aaron thirty days.

**MOURNING FOR**



## MOSES

**So** (term of conclusion) **the sons of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days**- Just as they had for Aaron. Thirty days is a lot of tears. Was this real or ritual?

**Then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses came to an end**- The end of weeping at day 31 is strange, and certainly suggests it may have been more ritual than real.

**Deuteronomy 34:9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.**

- full of the spirit: Ex 31:3 Nu 11:17 1Ki 3:9,12 2Ki 2:9,15 Isa 11:2 Da 6:3 Joh 3:34 Col 2:3
- Moses: Nu 27:18-23 Ac 6:6 8:17-19 1Ti 4:14 5:22
- the children: Jos 1:16-18

## PASSING THE BATON TO JOSHUA

**Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom**- Joshua had the supernatural ability to see things from God's viewpoint. The Septuagint translates **wisdom** not with *sophos* the usual Greek word for "wisdom" but with [sunesis](#) which conveys the idea of putting together the pieces in a way that gives that person insight into the true meaning of the situation and how he should respond.

**for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.**

This verse reminds me of Paul passing the baton to his young disciple Timothy

The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2Ti 2:2+)

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### William MacDonald -Truths to Live By Deuteronomy 34:9

"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." (Deut. 34:9)

One important insight we gather from this verse is that Moses appointed Joshua as his successor, knowing that his own ministry would be coming to an end. In doing so, he set a good example for others who are in places of spiritual leadership. Some may think that this is too elementary to emphasize but the fact is that there is often gross failure to train successors and to turn work over to them. There seems to be an innate resistance to the idea that we are replaceable.

Sometimes this is a problem that faces an elder in a local fellowship. Perhaps he has served faithfully for many years, but the day is approaching when he will no longer be able to shepherd the flock. Yet it is hard for him to train a younger man to take his place. He may see young men as threats to his position. Or he may contrast their inexperience with his own maturity and conclude that they are quite unsuitable. It is easy for him to forget how inexperienced he was at one time, and how he came to his present maturity by being trained to do the work of an overseer.

This can also be a problem on the mission field. The missionary knows that he should train nationals to assume places of leadership. But he rationalizes that they cannot do it as well as he. And they make so many mistakes...and attendance at the meetings will drop if he does not do all the preaching. And anyway, they don't know how to lead. The answer to all these arguments is that he should look upon himself as being expendable. He should train the nationals and delegate authority to them until he works himself out of a job in that particular area. There are always unfilled fields elsewhere. He never needs to be unemployed.

When Moses was replaced by Joshua there was a smooth transition. There was no vacuum of leadership. The cause of God did not suffer trauma. That's the way it should be.

All God's servants should rejoice to see younger men raised up to places of leadership. They should count it a great privilege to share their knowledge and experience with these disciples, then turn the work over to them before they are forced to do so by the hand of death. They should have the selfless attitude that Moses displayed on another occasion when he said, "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets."

## Deuteronomy 34:10 Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,

- **risen:** De 18:15-18 Ac 3:22,23, Acts 7:37 Heb 3:5,6
- **the Lord:** De 5:4,5 Ex 33:11 Nu 12:6-8

### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 18:15-18 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. 16 "This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.' 17 "The LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. 18'I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

## MOSES KNEW YAHWEH FACE TO FACE!

**Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face-** This is quite a statement given the many great prophets who followed Moses. Of course Jesus was a "Prophet" like no other, so He is the exception to this declaration. And while Joshua was blessed with a spirit of wisdom, he still needed the priests' help in order to discover the will of God

So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; 19 and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. 20 "You shall **put some of your authority on him**, in order that (PURPOSE) all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him. 21 "Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, **who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD**. At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, both he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation."(Nu 27:18-21+)

Moses' personal interaction with Yahweh is recorded in these passages...

Exodus 33:11+ Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses **face to face**, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.

Numbers 12:8+ With him I speak **mouth to mouth, Even openly**, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?"

**Disciple's Study Bible** - To make Himself known to His people, God empowered human leaders to lead in historical acts and to interpret those acts as God's acts. God entrusted His revelation to human agents so other humans could identify with it, trust it, and witness to it. The greatest example of an historical agent of revelation for Israel was Moses, leader of the central event of Old Testament revelation--the Exodus.

**John Maxwell** - Upon final evaluation, the character of Moses also points to his greatness. He enjoyed a uniquely intimate fellowship with God (v. 10). It is not Moses' knowledge of God that is stressed, but rather God's knowledge of Moses! God had sought him out and appointed him to a particular task; over the years the relationship became intimate. Israel knew that Moses communicated personally with God. Moses was unequalled in the performance of signs and wonders (v. 11). Moses displayed awesome power among the people of Israel (v. 12). Sometimes at funerals we paint too beautiful a picture of the deceased; we make him or her out to be a far better person than he or she really was. All of the deceased's good works are magnified and, of course, all shortcomings are passed over. I am often reminded of Lincoln's remark at the burial of one of his generals: "If he had known he would get a funeral like this, he'd have died sooner." But the greatness of Moses has stood the test of time. The earthly kingdom of God, which Moses played an important part in founding, came to an end as represented by the independent state of Israel early in the sixth century B.C. The prophets who followed Moses began to point forward to a new covenant. It was in the formation of the new covenant that at last "a prophet like Moses" appeared again, but He was more than a prophet. Whereas Moses was a servant in the household of God, the coming Prophet was a Son, Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1-6). ([Preacher's Commentary](#))

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**QUESTION** - [If Moses met face to face with God, why, later, was he not allowed to see God's face?](#)

**ANSWER** - Before the official tabernacle was built, "Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away,

calling it the 'tent of meeting.' Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp" (Exodus 33:7). As Moses visited this [tent of meeting](#) to intercede for the people of Israel, "the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses" (verse 9). Moses' position of favor with God is evident in the fact that "the Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (verse 11).

However, later in the same chapter, Moses requests to see God's glory, and God replies, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. . . . But . . . you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:19–20). To protect Moses, God put him "in a cleft in the rock" and covered him with His hand as He passed by (verse 22). "Then," God promised, "I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen" (verse 23).

This passage prompts several questions. Does God really have a "hand," "face," and "back"? Why could Moses speak to God "face to face" in verse 11 but could not see God's "face" in verse 23? What is fatal about seeing God's "face"?

We know from Scripture (e.g., John 4:24) that God is spirit. Spirits do not possess physicality. So, when Moses spoke "face to face" with God in Exodus 33:11, there are only two possible ways to understand it: either Moses was speaking to the pre-incarnate Son of God (a [Christophany](#)); or the passage is using a figure of speech called [anthropomorphism](#), in which human qualities are applied to God. While a Christophany is certainly possible, it is probably better to view the chapter as using figures of speech. The terms *face*, *hand*, and *back* in [Exodus 33](#) should not be taken literally, and *face to face*, being idiomatic, is also metaphorical.

In verse 11 the idiom *face to face* can be simply understood to mean "intimately." Moses spoke with God familiarly, as a man speaks to a friend. In verses 20 and 23, *face* and *back* are in reference to God's "glory" and "goodness" (verses 18–19). Since God is spirit, and since glory and goodness are both intangibles, we can take *face* and *back* to signify varying "degrees" of glory. God's *hand* (verse 22) is an obvious reference to God's "protection."

In the Bible, God often communicates using terms easily understood in the human experience. God's use of anthropomorphism in Exodus 33 was a perfect way to describe what was happening. As humans, we know the importance of one's face. To readily identify someone, we study his or her face. It is also the face of a person that reveals the most information about his or her character, mood, and personality. However, if all we catch is a glimpse of a person from behind, we are left without a lot of valuable information. It is difficult to identify a person from behind; we know very little about a person if all we can see is a back view.

When God told Moses, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Exodus 33:20), He was saying that truly seeing God as He is, in the fullness of His glory, is more than mortal man can tolerate (cf. Isaiah 6:5). Therefore, to protect Moses, God was only going to reveal that portion of His majesty and power that was humanly possible to absorb. God communicated this plan to Moses in a way we can all understand: "You cannot look Me full in the face [it is impossible for you to know everything about Me], but I will allow you to see my back [I will reveal to you a small portion of My nature so as not to overwhelm you]."

All of this makes Jesus' words to Philip all the more amazing: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9). When Jesus walked this earth, His glory veiled, we could look Him in the face. "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Colossians 2:9). On one brief occasion, Jesus' glory was revealed in this world, at [the transfiguration](#) (Matthew 17:2). Interestingly, Moses was there, speaking to the glorified Lord, face to face (Matthew 17:3). [GotQuestions.org](#)

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## G Campbell Morgan - Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible - Deuteronomy 34:10

There hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.—Deut 34:10

In this last chapter of Deuteronomy we have the writing of another hand. It contains the story of the death of Moses, the equipment of Joshua for his work, and a last tender reference to the great leader and law-giver, beginning with these particular words. For the man who wrote them, they were true words; and they remained true through all the history of that wonderful people until One was born of the seed of David, Who was greater far than Moses. In his second discourse Moses had foretold his coming in the words: "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren like unto thee." Long centuries elapsed, but at last He came, and in His coming fulfilled all Moses had initiated under the Divine government; absorbed and abolished the law which came through him, in the grace and truth which He brought to men. All this does not detract from, but rather enhances our sense of the greatness of this servant of God. His passing was full of beauty. In the fact of his exclusion from the land toward which he had led the people, it was a punishment; but, like all the chastisements of God, it was wonderfully tempered with mercy. There had been no weakening of his force. Everything ended in full strength. He went up to die. Jehovah gave him a vision of the land, and then buried him in that unknown grave. It was an august and glorious ending to a great and dignified life. Thus ends the last book of the Pentateuch, the final section of the Law. Its supreme value is its revelation of the need for the Priest and the Gospel.

equal to him?

**PROBLEM:** This text claims that “since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses.” However, there were others, like Elijah and Elisha, who got revelations from God and performed miracles like Moses did (cf. 1 Kings 17:22; 2 Kings 1:10; 2:14; 4:34).

**SOLUTION:** First of all, this claim is qualified by the phrase “since then,” which refers to the time these words were written, possibly by Joshua, his immediate successor (see comments on Deuteronomy 34:1ff). Further, even if one extends the time to a much later period, there is still another qualification that makes Moses unique. It adds “whom the Lord knew face to face” (v. 10). This has not been true of any mere human prophet since Moses’ day. Moses was the great lawgiver, whom God spoke to directly and intimately, in a manner not repeated since Moses’ day until the coming of Jesus, who was face to face with God (John 1:1). ([Is there a Bible contradiction in Deuteronomy 34:10?](#))

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DEUTERONOMY 34:10—**Does this verse support the Muslim claim that Jesus could not be the predicted prophet (of Deut. 18:18)?**

**PROBLEM:** This verse claims that “there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses.” (KJV) Muslims argue that this proves that the predicted prophet could not be an Israelite, but was Mohammed instead.

**SOLUTION:** In response, several things should be noted. First, the “since” means since Moses’ death to the time this last chapter was written, probably by Joshua (see comments on Deut. 34:1ff). Even if Deuteronomy was written much later, as some critics believe, it still was composed many centuries before the time of Christ and, therefore, would not eliminate Him. Second, Jesus was the perfect fulfillment of this prediction of the prophet to come, not Mohammed (see comments on Deut. 18:15–18). Third, this could not refer to Mohammed, since the prophet to come was like Moses who did “all the signs and wonders which the Lord sent” (Deut. 34:11). Mohammed by his own confession did not perform signs and wonders like Moses and Jesus did (see Surah 17:90–93). Finally, the prophet to come was like Moses who spoke to God “face to face” (Deut. 34:10). Mohammed never even claimed to speak to God directly, but got his revelations through angels (cf. Surah 2:97). Jesus, on the other hand, like Moses, was a direct mediator (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 9:15) who communicated directly with God (cf. John 1:18; 12:49). ([Is there a Bible contradiction in Deuteronomy 34:10?](#))

**Deuteronomy 34:11 for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land,**

- Dt 4:34 Dt 7:19 Ps 78:43-58 Ps 105:26-38

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 4:34+ Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by **signs and wonders** and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

Deuteronomy 6:22 ‘Moreover, the LORD showed great and distressing signs and wonders before our eyes against Egypt, Pharaoh and all his household;

Deuteronomy 7:19+ the great trials which your eyes saw and **the signs and the wonders** and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

Deuteronomy 26:8 and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with great terror and with signs and wonders;

Psalms 78:43-58 When He performed His signs in Egypt And His marvels in the field of Zoan, 44 And turned their rivers to blood, And their streams, they could not drink. 45 He sent among them swarms of flies which devoured them, And frogs which destroyed them. 46 He gave also their crops to the grasshopper And the product of their labor to the locust. 47 He destroyed their vines with hailstones And their sycamore trees with frost. 48 He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones And their herds to bolts of lightning. 49 He sent upon them His burning anger, Fury and indignation and trouble, A band of destroying angels. 50 He leveled a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, But gave over their life to the plague, 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt, The first issue of their virility in the tents of Ham. 52 But He led forth His own people like

sheep And guided them in the wilderness like a flock; 53 He led them safely, so that they did not fear; But the sea engulfed their enemies. 54 So He brought them to His holy land, To this hill country which His right hand had gained. 55 He also drove out the nations before them And apportioned them for an inheritance by measurement, And made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents. 56 Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God And did not keep His testimonies, 57 But turned back and acted treacherously like their fathers; They turned aside like a treacherous bow. 58 For they provoked Him with their high places And aroused His jealousy with their graven images.

**For all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land,**

**Deuteronomy 34:12 and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.**

**and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.**

**NET Note** - The Hebrew text of v. 12 reads literally, "with respect to all the strong hand and with respect to all the awesome greatness which Moses did before the eyes of all Israel."

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### **James Hastings - MY SERVANT MOSES**

My servant Moses ... is faithful in all mine house.—Num. 12:7.

1. THE general impression left on our minds by the life and character of Moses, regarded as a whole, is unquestionably one of extraordinary, almost solitary, grandeur, dignity and elevation. Wordsworth's line describes it best:—

Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart.

There is not a single character in the Old Testament that will bear comparison with it—for purity, for elevation, for power, for pathos. There is only one character in the whole range of history that overtops it; and that is more than human—the character of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¶ The character of Moses is sketched, particularly in the earlier narratives of J and E, with peculiar vividness and force. He is represented not only as a man of deeply religious spirit, but also as endowed, in a pre-eminent degree, with singleness of aim, with nobility of mind, with dignity of demeanour, with unwearied and self-sacrificing devotion for the welfare of his people, and with that modesty of both word and demeanour which is observable in all the best characters of Old Testament history, and which was no doubt impressed upon them by the mellowing influences of the religion of Yahweh.

¶ Moses is incontestably the chief personage of the whole history of the Exodus. In the narrative, the phrase is constantly recurring: "The Lord spake unto Moses," "Moses spake unto the children of Israel." In the traditions of the desert, whether late or early, his name predominates over that of every one else: "The Wells of Moses" (Ayûn Mûsa) on the shores of the Red Sea, "The Mountain of Moses" (Jebel Mûsa) near the convent of St. Catherine, "The Ravine of Moses" (Skuk Mûsa) at Mount St. Catherine, "The Valley of Moses" (Wady Mûsa) at Petra. "The Books of Moses" are so called (as afterwards the Books of Samuel), in all probability from its being the chief subject of them. The very word "Mosaic" has been in later times applied, in a sense not used of any other saint of the Old Testament, to the whole religion of which he was the expounder.

¶ The debt owed to Moses by his fellow-countrymen can hardly be over-estimated. Lawgiver and judge, physician and priest, their leader in war and peace, where has there ever been the monarch who could compare with this marvellously gifted individual, founder of a religion, of a code, of a nation that has victoriously withstood all perils, and outlived the mighty empires by which it was overthrown and oppressed? Caesar, Charlemagne, and Haroun-al-Rashid, wise and powerful as they may have been, must each yield the palm to Moses, for their work has left no trace, the ideals to which they devoted their lives are but an empty name, whilst the Hebrew, born in servitude, has left his mark on the thought, the action, and the religion of the whole Gentile world, and made of the wretched tribes, whom he led forth out of bondage, a nation increasing daily in number and in strength, wealthy beyond all others, and rapidly spreading over the face of the earth.

2. An epithet is applied to Moses in the Bible hardly consistent with the view that he was a great leader of men. He is called "very meek" (Num. 12:3), the word used being generally applied in the Psalms to the poor and afflicted ones of the nation. Yet this

characteristic seems to have been one of the secrets of his success. Moses was able to endure the difficulties of his position in silence, and the unreasonable and childish conduct of the people never provoked him to abandon his task. He went on steadily day by day attending to their interests, hearing their disputes, doing justice between man and man, waiting patiently for signs of improvement which seldom, if ever, manifested themselves. Educated amid all the splendours of an Egyptian palace, he devoted his life to the government of a half-civilized and undisciplined horde, bearing with waywardness, folly, and ingratitude with unshaken constancy, and by his sublime endurance winning from posterity the fame of having been the "most enduring of men."

By all accounts Moses did not begin by being a meek man. The truth is, no truly meek man ever does so begin. It is not true meekness if it is found in any man at the beginning of his life. It may be sloth, it may be softness, it may be easiness, it may be indifference, it may be policy and calculation, it may be insensibility of heart, it may be sluggishness of blood, but true meekness it is not. True meekness it is not till it has been planted and watered and pruned and purified and beaten upon by every wind of God, and cut to pieces by every knife of God, and all the time engrafted and seated deep in the meekness and in the gentleness and in the humility of the Spirit of God and the Son of God. It would be far nearer the truth to say that Moses, to begin with, was the hastiest and the hottest and the least meek and the least longsuffering of men. It was but a word and a blow with young Moses. Thus it was that he had to pay with forty years' banishment for his sudden spring upon that Egyptian taskmaster, and for the life-long thanks of that delivered slave.

¶ Every one will admit that the record of the life of Moses manifests a patience, meekness, and constancy, which is perhaps the most wonderful ever displayed by a man. We are told, indeed, of occasional outbursts of wrath that bore down all meekness; and men have pointed to them as proofs that Moses was not so wonderfully patient; but those very outbursts of anger seem to be the strongest proofs of his patience. For there is a kind of gentleness which belongs to men whose feelings are too placid to be stirred by injustice, and who maintain a mild calmness even in the presence of flagrant wrong,—that gentleness was not his, who, in his youth, fired at the sight of the oppression of his people, struck down the oppressor at the peril of his own life. There is an amiability of character which springs from the absence of powerful feelings, and which is seldom disturbed—that was not characteristic of him who, roused into fury at the people's murmurings, smote the rock in disobedience to his Lord. The nobler meekness is that which comes forth victorious from the struggle with strong emotion, and wins a glory from the passion it has subdued. And thus, that very indication of an impetuous, fiery nature in Moses only reveals the beauty of the meek patience which marked his life. If you can conceive a man who had hoped for forty years for the deliverance of his people, discovering that they had been careless, faithless, and sensual, and yet silently bearing their reproaches—a man with a passionate, impetuous spirit, enduring their daily murmurings, and after giving way to anger, praying for their success, till, worn with emotion, his strength gave way—a man enduring constant, ignorant, perverse unthankfulness, in the hope of leading the people into their own land, and then calmly surrendering that hope, and dying with it unfulfilled, you can form some idea of the sublime meekness that characterized the leadership of Moses.

In seeking to estimate the character of Moses as the historical narratives have made him live before us, we may consider him as (1) Leader, (2) Lawgiver, and (3) Prophet.

## I THE LEADER

Thou leddest thy people like a flock,  
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.—Ps. 77:20.

That the ancestors—or some of the ancestors—of the later Israelites were for long settled in Egypt, and in the end subjected there to hard bondage; that Moses was the leader who, after much opposition on the part of the Pharaoh, rescued them from their thralldom at a time when Egypt was paralysed by an unprecedented succession of national calamities, and led them through a part of the Red Sea usually covered with water, beyond reach of their recent oppressors; that he brought them afterwards to a mountain where Israel received through him a revelation which was a new departure in the national religion, and became the foundation both of the later religion of Israel and of Christianity; that he originated, or more probably adapted, customs and institutions from which the later civil and religious organization of the nation was developed; and that thus Israel owed to Moses both its national existence and, ultimately, its religious character—these, and other facts such as these, cannot be called in question by a reasonable criticism.

1. Had Moses the gifts of leadership? We are certainly impressed more by his silence and backwardness than by his speech. But the truth is that for leadership, in any disinterested cause, the outward gifts count for little compared with inward strength. So far as your true motive is personal ambition and display, take prudently the measure of your powers, and do not overstep your actual capacities. "Nature sets its just premium on reality." No eloquence or emphasis avails, if to those that hear you the expression seems somehow rather larger than the man. If you are called by the inner voice to some unselfish enterprise and service, the scale of it, the risk, the weight of the responsibility, the felt deficiency of gifts, need not hold you back, if only you will bring to it the veracity, the generosity of spirit, the trust in God, which gave to Moses power and place of leadership. "I am that I am"; cling fast to the eternal

and the true, and you need fear no exposure of human weaknesses: they will not bring you to discredit or to shame. And grudge not their gifts to any. If others should outshine you in charm or brilliance or power of inspiration, think not that they usurp your place, but say with Moses, "Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them!" You cannot covet influence too much. It is among God's choicest gifts. To every young man who is face to face with choice of his profession I would say, See that that finds its place in your scales of choice. As you choose between the law, medicine, the civil service, the army, the desk, the ministry, the school, bethink you well which offers you the field of influence most germane to your personal type. It is the thing most precious, most praiseworthy, the thing which most abides before the judgment-seat of God. But the longer you live and the more experience ripens, the more you will realize that it proceeds not from gifts, but from sincerity of life, unselfishness of aim, and fidelity to God. It is the least self-conscious of all powers. No sense of shortcoming impairs it. Moses, as history proves, possessed it in pre-eminent degree; but Moses, I doubt not, was to the last more conscious of failure than of success. "Meekest of men" became his epithet, and therefore the most staunch, the most enduring, the most impervious to defeat.

¶ In reading the early letters of men of genius I can recall my former self, full of an aspiration which had not learned how hard the hills of life are to climb, but thought rather to alight down upon them from its winged vantage-ground. Whose fulfilment has ever come nigh the glorious greatness of his yet never-balked youth? As we grow older, art becomes to us a definite faculty, instead of a boundless sense of power. Then we felt the wings burst from our shoulders; they were a gift and a triumph, and a bare flutter from twig to twig seemed aquiline to us; but now our vans, though broader grown and stronger, are matters of every day. We may reach our Promised Land; but it is far behind us in the Wilderness, in the early time of struggle, that we have our Sinais and our personal talk with God in the bush.

## 2. Notice other signs of leadership in Moses.

(1) He had a keen sense of wrong when witnessing the ill-usage of others, an indignation against injustice, a warm sympathy with the weak under the oppression of the strong. All people profess this sympathy, but in some it is a feeling which leads to action. It was such a feeling in Moses, as the very first act of his which we read of shows—when he saw one of the Israelites suffering wrong from an Egyptian, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian. The Israelites were a poor despised race in Egypt, and the Egyptians ill-treated them. Moses saw one of these cases of ill-usage, and it roused in him immediately this sympathy for the oppressed, and this indignation against oppression. So again in Midian, when he fled there, his first act was to stand up for the seven daughters of the priest of Midian who came to water their flocks at the well, and whom the violent and unmannerly shepherds drove away. They went home and told their father: "An Egyptian delivered us out of the hands of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock." This was the disposition of Moses, and therefore God chose him to be the deliverer of the children of Israel out of Egypt.

(2) At first rash and impulsive, Moses submitted to the Divine chastisement and discipline so thoroughly that a real change was produced in his character. This is a fact which arrests our attention. A real change in the temper of any man is a wonderful thing. We rarely see it, so rarely that we are sometimes tempted to doubt whether there is such a thing. People change particular habits; they learn to control particular bodily appetites and passions; they may give up drinking or gaming, or swearing; they may force themselves to do things; which they once neglected to do; even if there is a deep fault at the root of a man, such as pride, jealousy, meanness, we may often see that fault disguised, moderated in its outward expression, and made to look more plausible; yet how seldom do we see a really converted heart, a new-born man in the deepest and most vital parts of the character! The change in the disposition of Moses is revealed in such genuine acts that it ranks with the other great changes of heart in Scripture—the change in him who once would have called down fire from heaven to consume those who opposed themselves to the truth, and who afterwards became the preacher of love; the change in him who was once Saul and afterwards Paul.

(3) His sympathy for the people is deeper, keener than before. But now it is used to bear with them, plead for them, and when necessary denounce and resist them. He is thus the pattern of the good ruler, and stands in special contrast to the selfish ruler of the world's type. The successful ruler of the world's type is one who uses the weaknesses and the vices of mankind for his own personal advantage and exaltation. He maintains his own influence and position, not by curbing and restraining the follies and humours of the people, but by skilfully yielding and giving way to them; he quotes and misapplies the proverb of the oak and the sapling, one of which was uprooted by the storm because in its strength it withstood it; the other survived the storm because in its weakness it yielded to it. Thus by making himself convenient to man's corrupt wishes, he keeps up his place in the world; he does not really care for the people's good, but uses compliance with others only to secure the exaltation of himself. Power is a selfish prize in his eyes. A good ruler, on the other hand, cares for the good of the people, and for that good will run the risk even of losing his own power. Moses, in resisting the vices of his people, has set the pattern of such a ruler. He did not maintain his power by giving way to them. He resisted their sins, he rebuked them, he punished them, while he loved them, and because he loved them.

¶ It so happens that Moses has been interpreted to us by one of deeper insight than any critic or commentator, by a spirit as great and lofty as his own; and, above all, by one whose life, like that of Moses, was made bitter by the treachery, stupidity, and sensuality

of a generation among whom he towered up, a soul too great not to be misunderstood. Four hundred years ago there lived a man, sculptor, painter, poet, to whom God gave a mighty genius for art. His name we know as Michelangelo; and Michelangelo, in his divinest inspiration, sculptured the face and figure of Moses. "If among all the masterpieces of ancient and modern statuary there is one that stands forth without a parallel, the most impressive figure ever sculptured in stone or bronze, it is the statue of Moses by Michelangelo." And how does Michelangelo interpret the meekest of all the men that were upon the face of the earth? To say that the face of the sculptured Moses is strong, wise, majestic, is to fall short of the truth. It is almost terrible in its greatness and loftiness. The lines of care, and sorrow, and disappointment are deep in it; and yet they are lost and forgotten in the unconquerable power and wisdom of it. It is the face of a man who might move among his fellows as a kind of god. But according to the old Latin proverb, "The gods themselves are vanquished by stupidity"; and so the artist has left on the face of the Lawgiver, the shadow of that life-long struggle with the perverseness, the ignorance, and the degradation of the race of slaves whom he made into a nation.

When I do think on thee, sweet Hope, and how  
Thou followest on our steps, a coaxing child  
Oft chidden hence, yet quickly reconciled,  
Still turning on us a glad, beaming brow,  
And red, ripe lips for Kisses; even now  
Thou mindest me of him, the Ruler mild,  
Who led God's chosen people through the wild,  
And bore with wayward murmurers, meek as thou  
That bringest waters from the Rock, with bread  
Of angels strewing Earth for us! like him  
Thy force abates not, nor thine eye grows dim;  
But still with milk and honey-droppings fed,  
Thou ledest to the Promised Country fair,  
Though thou, like Moses, may'st not enter there!

## **II THE LAWGIVER The law was given by Moses.—John 1:17.**

1. That "the law was given by Moses" is the universal tradition of the Jewish Church. To what extent does modern scholarship confirm the truth of the tradition?

(1) It may fairly be questioned, says Ottley, whether the Decalogue in its present form can be ascribed to Moses. In the first place, what appears to be an older and widely different version of the "ten words" is found in the Book of Exodus (34:14–26); secondly, the Decalogue in its present form seems to be influenced by the teaching of the eighth-century prophets. It is also urged that an exclusively moral code is not consistent with the predominantly ritualistic character of early religions. Other arguments have been adduced which it is needless to consider in detail. The facts as they stand are perplexing, and justify a suspension of judgment. It is reasonable to suppose that the Decalogue in its present form bears traces of expansion in prophetic times; at the same time it lays down principles of morality which are so elementary as to be strictly consistent with what we know of the condition of Israel in Mosaic times. It is difficult to see what other precepts could have been better adapted to lift the Hebrews above the degraded nature-religion of their heathen neighbours, to teach them the true character of their Divine Deliverer, and to educate them in the rudiments of social justice and humanity. In short, the "ten words" as we have them in the Pentateuch may be a later prophetic summary of the great moral ideas contained in the religion of Moses; but there is every reason to suppose that in a brief and easily remembered form the primary moral precepts of the Decalogue constituted from the first the foundation of Israel's national development. It is indeed impossible otherwise to account for the vitality and vigour which gave to the Hebrews their physical and moral superiority over the inhabitants of Canaan. The Decalogue has in fact intrinsic credibility as a Mosaic utterance, and we may reasonably accept it as an authentic monument—at least in its main substance—of the period to which Hebrew tradition assigns it.

¶ While many of the enactments of the Book of the Covenant served but a temporary purpose, and passed away with the religion of Judaism, the Decalogue has been retained unchanged in the Christian Church. The Divinity of its origin and the excellency of its contents still give it a foremost place in the theology of every Christian community. There is nothing in it that is not valid for mankind. It is a universal code of morals. No compend of morality among ethnic religions can be compared with it. The ethical systems of Confucius, of Zoroaster, of Buddha, of the Greek moralists, are far behind it as a summary of human duty. All will admit that the Decalogue is cast in an archaic mould; and the negative form in which its commandments are addressed is in keeping with its primitive character. In the infantile life of a nation, as in child life, the early part of its moral training must always consist of concrete precepts, expressed in a prohibitory form. In the first portion of a child's life it has to be kept from harm by continual prohibitions; and the formation at that early stage of the habit of obedience to these simple prohibitory commands is essential to moral well-being. Thus it is thoroughly consistent with the youthful stage of the Beni-Israel, a horde of slaves newly enfranchised and little better than children, that this fundamental code of moral and religious duty should be one not of principles but of plain precepts. Children do not understand principles: they must at first receive simple, concrete directions as to what they shall do and not do. Truth must be



accommodated to the measure of their mind; and while they cannot comprehend the principles that lie at the basis of property, they understand the command "Do not steal." The first stage of moral education will be full of restrictions. And the form of the Decalogue is in keeping with the stage of Israel's progress in morality.

(2) Again, some forms of worship were doubtless observed in the wilderness, though it is impossible to point to any details of cultus prescribed by Moses himself. Some traditional usages seem to have been retained or regulated by the lawgiver. There certainly existed a primitive sanctuary, or "tent of meeting," designed to serve as the seat of the sacred oracle and as a shelter for the ark. In form this structure would resemble the ordinary shepherd's tent, having its outer and inner compartment, and standing in an enclosed court. The tent of meeting seems in Mosaic times to have been pitched outside the camp (Exod. 33:7; Num. 11:26, 12:4), and not, as was assumed in post-exilic times, at its centre. Sacrifices of some kind must have been offered during the wanderings, but we can only conjecture what their exact significance may have been. According to the primitive Semitic idea, sacrifice was the means of renewing or maintaining the bond which united the people to their god; and a ceremony like that described in connexion with the ratification of the covenant (Exod. 24) would probably be repeated on special occasions, e.g., before the tribes engaged in battle with their enemies. If Moses instituted a regular priesthood, possibly recruited from members of his own tribe (Levi), it is unlikely that its main function was that of sacrifice. The "holy" persons of Semitic antiquity were attached to the sanctuary and were its recognized guardians, but they were employed chiefly in consulting the oracle touching matters of difficulty. To the priesthood would naturally fall the task of continuing the work of Moses, i.e., imparting torah to those who asked for guidance, and giving judicial sentences (toroth) in matters of dispute. Thus a traditional and authoritative torah would gradually be formed, and there would be a tendency for the priesthood to become hereditary in certain families. The means by which Jehovah's will was ascertained was usually the casting of the sacred lot, and it is easy to understand how rapidly the priesthood would acquire a powerful influence over the mass of the people. The original torah given by Moses, and after his time by the priesthood, was oral; and the name "En-mishpat" ("well of judgment") at Kadesh, which was for a long period the religious centre of the tribes, indicates that the sanctuary was invariably the seat of justice, as well as the place of worship.

¶ Even on Wellhausen's own admissions, it may be urged that the Levitical Law, as we have it now, is but the codified form of the Torahs given by Moses. For that critic makes the Jews go from Egypt to Kadesh, as "the original object of their wanderings," and there spend "the forty years of their wanderings in the wilderness." "The legislation at the seat of judgment at Kadesh," he proceeds to say, "goes on for forty years, and consists in the dispensation of justice at the sanctuary, which he begins, and the priests and judges carry on after him according to the pattern he set. And in this way the Torah has its place in the historical narrative, not in virtue of its matter as the contents of a code, but from its form as constituting the professional activity of Moses. It is in history not as a result, as the sum of the laws and usages binding on Israel, but as a process." From this point of view Moses was the author of the Customary Law of Israel, which assumes a codified form in the Pentateuch, and the Law thus codified may not improperly be called the Law of Moses, as tradition has taught us to call it.

2. If we seek to know to what extent the Mosaic legislation is original, we need go no further than the Code of Hammurabi. Dr. C. H. W. Johns, in a very full examination of the Code of Hammurabi and its relation to the Mosaic legislation, in Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, v. 611, sums up in these words: "We may say that the Israelite legislation shows strong traces of Babylonian influence, and yet not destroy the independence of its origin. We cannot suppose that the author of any code set to work to draw up a comprehensive scheme of law. Each built upon the already prevailing custom. His attention would be directed chiefly to what was not matter of uniform treatment. The most characteristically Babylonian things in the current custom of the day in Israel may be just those which are not legislated for. The new legislation did not require to touch what was so firmly established. Other things of Babylonian origin may have been abrogated by the new laws—it would not be necessary to say what they had been, but merely by stating the new law to say they should be no longer. That any Israelite code shows marked differences from the Code of Hammurabi is enough to show an independent origin. The absence of any difference would show complete dependence. The co-existing likenesses and differences argue for an independent recension of ancient custom deeply influenced by Babylonian law. The actual Code of Hammurabi is a witness to what influence might accomplish. It cannot be held to be a creative source. The Code may only be itself a proof of the same influences. These may be called Semitic in preference to Babylonian. But that view calls for overwhelming proof that there was any source of civilization powerful enough to have this influence on both Israel and Babylonia. The presumption that Babylonia had a prominent influence on Palestine long before Israelite codes were drawn up is one that grows stronger as time goes on."

### III THE PROPHET

And there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.—Deut. 34:10.

1. To say that the history of Israel is a history of her prophets is to say that it is a history in which the moving and significant agent is Jehovah, whose mouthpiece and representative the prophets were: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret

unto his servants the prophets: the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:7); in other words, it is a history of revelation, for revelation implies that to certain individuals, and not immediately to the people at large, God makes Himself and His will known. The prophet is a man who, for clearness of insight, and purity of purpose, and knowledge of God, stands above the mass of his compatriots: and so, if Moses was a prophet, this is what we should expect him to be. And in the representations which we have of him, these are the qualities which we find. The writers to whom we owe his biography pictured him as a prophet, and described him accordingly. He speaks in Jehovah's name to Pharaoh; he uses the prophetic expressions, "Thus saith Jehovah," etc.; he leads Israel out of Egypt under a sense of God's directing hand; he hears inwardly God's words, and sees on Sinai manifestations of His presence; specifically prophetic teaching is communicated through him, or put into his mouth (Exod. 4:22, 6:7 (P), 15:26, 19:5–6, 33:19, 34:6–7, and elsewhere: Deut. passim); Jehovah is even represented as holding converse with him not by a vision or a dream, as with an ordinary prophet, but with some special and distinctive clearness (Num. 12:6, 8), "as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Exod. 33:11; cf. Deut. 34:10). Hosea, writing c. 740 B.C., expressly styles him a prophet (12:13).

2. In word and deed Moses showed himself an instrument of the Lord, unapproached by any other. He was the prophet without rival in respect of his intercourse with God and of what the Lord did and revealed by him. Of Moses it is said more frequently than of all other prophets together: "God talked with him," or "God spake to him." He is not only called "Servant of the Lord"—and, indeed, most frequently of all the men of God in the Old Testament,—"Servant of God," a designation used of him exclusively; but he is also called the greatest among the prophets on account of the intimacy and familiarity of the intercourse he enjoyed with God, and on account of the clear directness which in consequence distinguished the revelation given to him. Moreover, his mission consisted, not merely in being a channel of the Divine word, but in a unique, creative work—it was Moses who, through the Divine word, introduced the Divine rule in Israel.

¶ Popularly, Moses is known as the lawgiver. But, though he is called so by the Jews themselves, they never mean to imply that he was the fons et origo of the legislation to which his name is attached. There is no doubt that his Egyptian education specially prepared him for being the inspired medium of the Divine revelation. But it was not out of the resources of his own mind that the legislative code sprang. He was but a προφήτης, a spokesman for God. And it was not as a legislator like Solon or Justinian that he was said to have given the Law to Israel. Moses himself originated nothing. He was but the pen in the hand of the Almighty, communicating what he had already received.

3. Although, as already stated, it may not be possible to point to any special details of the cultus which can be certainly ascribed to Moses, there is no doubt that in two important points he laid the foundations of Israel's religious development.

(1) In the first place he grasped for himself, and taught his fellow-tribesmen, the true significance of the events connected with the departure of the tribes from Egypt. He understood the bearing of these events on the character of Jehovah: His "holiness" or separateness from nature, His power, His willingness to redeem. In the great deliverance was involved a revelation which was necessarily the starting-point of a higher religion. Accordingly the central principle of his system was devotion to Jehovah as a gracious Being who had mercifully intervened to deliver an enslaved people from bondage; who had manifested His lordship over nature and His superiority to the deities of the heathen; who had adopted Israel and brought it into a filial relation to Himself. The loosely organized tribes were in fact welded into a nation by their common relationship to their Deliverer; and it has been justly remarked that this adhesion of a group of tribes to a single deity marked a step in advance from mere "henotheism" or "monolatry" towards monotheism. But it is even more important to notice that in the Mosaic conception of Jehovah lay "the promise and potency," not of mere monotheism, but of the ethical monotheism of the great prophets of the eighth century. For Jehovah revealed Himself in the events of the Exodus as the God, not of a particular territory, but of a people. Throughout the wanderings He walked with them in a tent and in a tabernacle. He led them onwards through the toils of their pilgrimage and brought them into the Land of Promise. He manifested in deeds His hatred of oppression and injustice, His longsuffering, His compassion, His readiness to forgive, His sustaining power and grace. Thus by kindling and keeping alive Israel's faith in its deliverer, Moses gave the tribes a rallying-point and a bond of union which could never be altogether lost to view.

(2) In the second place Moses taught the supreme importance in religion of righteous conduct. The deliverance from Egypt formed the basis of a covenant between Jehovah and the ransomed people. The Hebrews became servants of Jehovah. Redeemed by Him they were henceforth bound to His service. At the very outset they were subjected to an elementary moral code, and were reminded that a special character was the condition of covenant-fellowship with Jehovah. The Moral Law was seen to be the supreme tie between God and man; the foundation was securely laid upon which future legislation could be built up, and the great ethical principles were enunciated which the prophets afterwards developed. In this ethical basis of Mosaism lies its claim to be an important factor in the development of a universal religion. What was of permanent significance in Mosaism was the paramount place of the Moral Law. By placing the ten commandments in its forefront it made good its claim to be an everlasting covenant; it taught and laid down the moral conditions of religious character, not only for its own time, but for all time. It was a step in religious history of which we can even now but imperfectly measure the greatness.

¶ Hebraism has its faults and dangers; still, the intense and convinced energy with which the Hebrew, both of the Old and of the New Testament, threw himself upon his ideal of righteousness, and which inspired the

incomparable definition of the great Christian virtue, faith,—the substantiation of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,—this energy of devotion to its ideal has belonged to Hebraism alone. As our idea of perfection widens beyond the narrow limits to which the over-rigour of Hebraising has tended to confine it, we shall yet come again to Hebraism for that devout energy in embracing our ideal which alone can give to man the happiness of doing what he knows. “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”—The last word for infirm humanity will always be that. For this word, reiterated with a power now sublime, now affecting, but always admirable, our race will, as long as the world lasts, return to Hebraism; and the Bible, which preaches this word, will for ever remain, as Goethe called it, not only a national book, but the Book of the Nations.

4. Let us sum up the character and life of Moses in the words of another grand and ardent soul, subdued, like his own, by the marvellous dealings with him of the Highest:—“This Moses, humble in refusing so great a service; resigned in undertaking, faithful in discharging, unwearied in fulfilling it; vigilant in governing his people; resolute in correcting them, ardent in loving them, and patient in bearing with them; the intercessor for them with the God whom they provoked—this Moses—such and so great a man—we love, we admire, and, so far as may be, imitate.