



## **"Reading the Bible Together"**

**Issue 5.**

**Book of Numbers (cont'd) and the Book of Deuteronomy:**

**The journey of a nation continues.**

**June 2009.**

### **How's it going?**

One last book of rules and regulations to go! But before we throw our hands up in horror the Book of Deuteronomy, which we shall move into this month, has some of the most lasting and memorable verses in Scripture. Not just does Deuteronomy record the words of the central prayer of the Jewish faith, "the Shema" – "Here O Israel, the LORD our God, the Lord is One..." but these words and prayers inform so much of the thought and culture of both Jesus and the New Testament as a whole. For instance, we find the words of the Shema on Jesus' own lips when He's asked what is the whole point of the Law, and so He is quoting from Deuteronomy as His proof text. So read on, discover the depth of love expressed here, perhaps in a very different way than perhaps we would choose to express it and perhaps therefore not easily visible at first sight, but love nonetheless, both of God for His people and also in His call to His people to love Him. And that, however we look at it, includes us.

### **What about if I've fallen behind?**

If all this legalism is getting you down and you long once again for narrative and story then perhaps, before you pass over Deuteronomy as a whole, read and meditate, if nothing else upon "the Shema," which in Hebrew means both "to hear," and "to obey." It is the key central prayer of the Jewish faith to this day. What does it mean to love God "with our whole heart" – traditionally the place in Hebrew thought of our intellect? "With all your soul" – traditionally the place of our feelings and our emotions? "And with all our strength" – meaning with all our possessions and our whole outworking of life? Thereby we seek to love God with our whole life, and for our whole life in response to the fact that He first chose to love us.

### **Background to the month and the Book of Deuteronomy:**

The name Deuteronomy, in Greek means "second" or "copy." And in many ways that is a good way to see this rich book. Some commentators talk of Deuteronomy as a re-invention or restatement of the Law as given by Moses in the Books of Exodus and Leviticus. For me a better understanding is to see it as a renewing of the covenant promises made to and by Moses whilst Israel was in the wilderness, this time now as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. We are told that Moses made the three great speeches that form the body of the text whilst in Moab, which is on the border between the Jordan and the Dead Sea and so we get a sense of expectation and poignancy as they look to their future but they do so knowing Moses will not be coming with them. And so Moses love for the people echoes that of God.

And love is the key to this book, God's love for the people –see especially early on, in Chs 1-4. But also then God's call for His people to also be faithful and love Him (the rest of the Book). The key theme really is in terms of answering the question, 'how do you love God?' Answer, according to Deuteronomy (Ch 10 onwards), "by being faithful and keeping the commands, the Law, not just by the letter but, at its best, in true spirit."

There is a second chapter also to this story. When these writings were lodged away in the Temple in Jerusalem after the Israelites arrival and when Solomon eventually was build the Temple, they were lost in the annals of time for hundreds of years, only to be discovered again when a young king, Josiah was seeking to complete some work on the Temple as an expression of a renewed commitment to God by His people, around the year 622BC. Josiah took this

book to heart, had the people sit down and listen to it read aloud in its entirety. He then took it and placed it at the very heart of his political and religious reform. And we are told Josiah was one of the greatest of kings in Israel.

The book emerged for a third time after the exile of the southern kingdom into Babylon and was very much formative in the renewal and reshaping of Israel when they returned home under Ezra and Nehemiah, which is roughly the time the Old Testament was finally being shaped into the form we know have it.

At its very heart this book is meant to convey love, covenant love, the love of a lover for his beloved, not legality or contract. Deuteronomy may express such love in a way very different to our own, but nonetheless it helps us to understand then that when we see Jewish people, then, and today seeking to obey the commands of God, which to us may seem ritualistic or 'legalism,' they do so not out of duty, or because simply they believe they have to, but as an expression of true devotion and love.

I hope you enjoy reading it and discovering some familiar phrases that have been handed down to us from generation to generation.

### Scheme of Reading for June:

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Reference:</u>	<u>Date:</u>	<u>Reference:</u>
Mon 1 <sup>st</sup> June	Num 18:1 – 18:32	Thurs 18 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 35:1 – 36:13
Tues 2 <sup>nd</sup> June	Num 19:1 - 19:22	Fri 19 <sup>th</sup> June	Deut 1:1 – 1:46
<b>Wed 3<sup>rd</sup> June</b>	<b>Num 20:1 – 20:29</b>	Sat 20 <sup>th</sup> June	Deut 2:1 – 2:37
<b>(Morning Bible Together Meeting – 9.00am in Church)</b>		Sun 21 <sup>st</sup> June	-----
Thurs 4 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 21:1 – 21:35	Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup> June	Deut 3:1 – 3:29
Fri 5 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 22:1 – 22:41	Tues 23 <sup>rd</sup> June	Deut 4:1 – 4:49
Sat 6 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 23:1 – 23:30	Wed 24 <sup>th</sup> June	Deut 5:1 – 5:33
Sun 7 <sup>th</sup> June	-----	<b>Thurs 25<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>Deut 6:1 – 6:9 (The Shema)</b>
Mon 8 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 24:1 – 24:25	Fri 26 <sup>th</sup> June	Deut 6:10 – 6:25
Tues 9 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 25:1 – 26:65	Sat 27 <sup>th</sup> June	Deut 7:1 – 7:26
Wed 10 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 27:1 – 27:23	Sun 28 <sup>th</sup> June	-----
Thurs 11 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 28:1 – 28:31	Mon 29 <sup>th</sup> June	Deut 8:1 – 8:20
Fri 12 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 29:1 – 29:40	Tues 30 <sup>th</sup> June	Deut 9:1 – 9:29
Sat 13 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 30:1 – 30:16	Wed 1 <sup>st</sup> July	Deut 10:1 – 10:22
Sun 14 <sup>th</sup> June	-----	Thurs 2 <sup>nd</sup> July	Deut 11:1 - 11:32
Mon 15 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 31:1 – 31:54	Fri 3 <sup>rd</sup> July	Deut 12:1 – 13:18
Tues 16 <sup>th</sup> June	Num 32:1 – 32:42	Sat 4 <sup>th</sup> July	Deut 14:1 – 15:23
<b>Wed 17<sup>th</sup> June</b>	<b>Num 33:1 – 34:29</b>	Sun 5 <sup>th</sup> July	-----
<b>(Evening Bible Together Meeting – 8.00pm in Church)</b>		Mon 6 <sup>th</sup> July	Deut 15:1 – 16:20