DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 29

*Renewal of the Covenant*

**These are the terms of the covenant the Lord commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb. 2 Moses summoned all the Israelites and said to them: Your eyes have seen all that the Lord did in Egypt to Pharaoh, to all his officials and to all his land. 3 With your own eyes you saw those great trials, those miraculous signs and great wonders. 4 But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands or eyes that see or ears that hear. 5 During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. 6 You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God. 7 When you reached this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out to fight against us, but we defeated them. 8 We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh. 9 Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. 10 All of you are standing today in the presence of the Lord your God—your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, 11 together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. 12 You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the Lord your God, a covenant the Lord is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, 13 to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. 14 I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you 15 who are standing here with us today in the presence of the Lord our God but also with those who are not here today. 16 You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. 17 You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. 18 Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the Lord our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison. 19 When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, “I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way.” This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. 20 The Lord will never be willing to forgive him; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. All the curses written in this book will fall upon him, and the Lord will blot out his name from under heaven. 21 The Lord will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law. 22 Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the Lord has afflicted it. 23 The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur—nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in fierce anger. 24 All the nations will ask: “Why has the Lord done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?” 25 And the answer will be: “It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. 26 They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them. 27 Therefore the Lord’s anger burned against this land, so that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. 28 In furious anger and in great wrath the Lord uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now.” 29 The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.**

**Ch 29** At Horeb (Sinai), Moses had been the mediator of a covenant between the Lord and Israel (Ex 24:3–8). Now, 40 years later, this covenant is renewed in Moab as the people are about to enter the Promised Land. This new generation replaces the one that died in the wilderness (Nu 14:22–35). Luther points out the importance of renewing the covenant, “lest [the new generation] think that the Law given to the fathers did not apply to them, and that they could disregard it” (AE 9:271) (TLSB)

**29:1** See notes on 5:2–3. (CSB)

**29:2** *Your eyes have seen.* Only those who were less than 20 years old (Nu 14:29) when Israel followed the majority spy report at Kadesh Barnea and refused to enter Canaan would have actually experienced life in Egypt before the exodus. But Moses is speaking to the people as a nation and referring to the national experience (see note on 5:3). (CSB)

**29:4** Quoted in Ro 11:8 and applied to hardened Israel. (CSB)

Israel lacked spiritual insight. This verse supports the teaching that the Holy Spirit “opens the mind and heart to understand the Scriptures and to listen to the Word” (FC SD II 26). People are spiritually blind until they have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, though they may also resist Him. (TLSB)

*heart*. Chem: “The Hebrews absolutely do not have in the Scriptures a word with which to designate the seat of knowledge, namely, the brain, but locate knowledge and intellect in the heart” (*LTh* 1:230). (TLSB)

**29:5–6** Moses is quoting the Lord, who revealed Himself to Israel by His providential care throughout their 40 years in the wilderness. (TLSB)

**29:8** *gave it as an inheritance.* See 3:12–17. (CSB)

**29:9–15** A clear summary of the nature of covenant reaffirmation. (CSB)

**29:10–11** Comprehensive list emphasizes that all Israel is bound by the covenant requirements, including the resident foreigners who labored among them. (TLSB)

**29:13** Existing covenant was ratified, and God confirmed that Israel was His people, based on His sworn promise to the patriarchs (26:18–19). (TLSB)

**29:15** *whoever is not here*. Future generations on whom the covenant conditions would also be binding. (TLSB)

**29:18** *root … that produces such bitter poison.* The poison of idolatry, involving the rejection of the Lord. (CSB)

Moses issues a strong warning, both to individuals and groups, against the sinful worship practices of other nations. Idol worship is compared to a root that grows into a plant producing fruit of bitter poison. The sinful action of a few spreads poison throughout the entire people (cf 1Co 5:6). (TLSB)

**29:19** *stubbornness*. Smug attitude betrays a false sense of security.

*moist and dry alike*. Likely proverbial; when punishment comes, both good and bad will be swept away. Community health depended on each individual. (TLSB)

**29:20** *The Lord will never be willing to forgive him.* Not to be taken as contradictory to 2Pe 3:9 (“not wanting anyone to perish”). Peter, too, says that those who deny the “sovereign Lord” bring “swift destruction on themselves” (2Pe 2:1). (CSB)

Jesus also teaches about an unforgivable sin (cf Mk 3:29). This Israelite’s spiritual arrogance (v 19) warranted a similar harsh verdict. (TLSB)

*this book.* See note on 31:24. (CSB)

*blot out his name.* See 9:14; Ex 32:32–33; Rev 3:5. (CSB)

**29:21** *Book of the Law.* See note on 31:24. (CSB)

Likely part or all of Dt. Cf 28:58; 30:10; 31:24, 26. (TLSB)

**29:22–28** *land*. Key word in these verses. (TLSB)

**29:22–24** Long and involved sentence poses two questions that “your children,” “the foreigner,” and “all the nations” might ask after observing the devastation of the land of Israel. (TLSB)

**29:23** *destruction of Sodom.* See Ge 19:24–25; see also notes on Ge 10:19; 13:10. (CSB)

Reminder of what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah, but may also refer to the practice of conquerors spreading salt on the soil to make it infertile. (TLSB)

*Admah* … *Zeboiim*. Cities named along with Sodom and Gomorrah as being in the Valley of Siddim (Gn 14:2–8). (TLSB)

**29:27** *this book.* See note on 31:24. (CSB)

**29:28** *as it is now.* This would be said when Israel was in exile (see v. 25). (CSB)

*uprooted* … *cast them into another land*. What would happen to Israel for serving other gods. (TLSB)

**29:29** *secret things.* The hidden events of Israel’s future relative to the blessings and curses; but the phrase can also have wider application. (CSB)

Lit, “hidden things.” Mysteries that only God knows. (TLSB)

*things revealed.* Primarily the “words of this law.” (CSB)

God clearly revealed the words of His Law to Israel at Horeb and in Moab for them and their children to do. (TLSB)

**Ch 29** In this farewell speech, Moses emphasizes several important truths: the Lord’s gracious care for every Israelite, the responsibility of each person to abide by God’s covenant, and the certainty that anyone who turns away from the Lord will be punished. Individual responsibility is highlighted. Though there are spiritual mysteries, God has revealed what each one of us needs to know for eternal salvation, from our helplessness because of our sins to the sending of His Son to suffer and die to save us from these. • Lord, thank You for revealing to me the way of salvation. Grant me a bold heart to share this blessed truth with others. Amen. (TLSB)