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Lesson 69--Deut 31:1-29 Inauguration of Joshua with Divine Testimony
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I. INTRODUCTION & REVIEW

1:1-5	Introduction to God's spokesman, the 1 st Prophet Moses
1:6-4:40	1st Exposition of the Torah = <i>motivation</i> to obey from (1) <u>past gracious actions</u> of Yahweh and (2) sovereign <u>destiny</u> of the nation (<u>future gracious actions</u> of Yahweh)
4:41-49	Editorial comment on context of 2 nd Exposition of the Torah
5:1-26:19	2nd Exposition of the Torah = <i>proper response</i> to Yahweh in heart and soul
27:1-29:1	3rd Exposition of the Torah = <i>inauguration of the covenant</i> in the land
29:2-30:20	4th Exposition of the Torah = prophetic fore view of <i>covenant performance</i>
	29:2-29:29 Israel's past, present and (near) future
	30:1-20 Moses' closing challenge
31:1-34:12	Handover procedures from Moses to Joshua and the new generation
	31:1-29 Inauguration of Joshua with Background Divine Testimony

II. INAUGURATION OF JOSHUA WITH BACKGROUND DIVINE TESTIMONY (Deut 31:1-29)

Unusual manner of leadership transfer that emphasizes the [contractual] relationship between Yahweh and Israel

A. Moses' Directives (31:1-13)

Moses provides for continuity in leadership which good leaders do.

1. General address to Israel (31:1-6)

31:1 then Moses spoke these words to Israel

A new speech, the first of three concerning the transition in leadership:

31:2 120 years. . .you shall not cross. . . .

Longevity reported in the biblical narrative is another feature of many others that defy reconciliation with contemporary natural history.

God disciplined Moses which should have served as a revelation of God's integrity in personal relationships.

31:3 Yahweh Himself. . . Joshua himself. . .

Remaining two "leaders"--NET Bible translates it "as for the LORD your God. . . as for Joshua"

31:4 do as He did

Continuity in God's character that can be remembered only by remembering history.

31:5 give them. . .that you may do

Holy War: Yahweh's war, not Israel's.

31:6 be strong. . . He will not leave you

Each challenge will call upon them to trust Yahweh (assuming they haven't violated His commands)

2. Address to Joshua (31:7-8)

31:7 in the sight of all Israel

Theocratic leadership required: (1) [divine] approval [e.g., prophetic "king-makers"]; and (2) [popular] approval as recognition of the prior divine approval.

Same thing with Jesus Christ: divinely approved but throughout the Church age there has been a historic stream of popular approval in many different people groups faced with many different challenges.

31:8 do not fear. . .

Cf **Josh 1:1-9** when Yahweh repeated Himself.

3. Address to Levites and Elders (31:9-13)

31:9 wrote. . .delivered. . .to Levites who bore the Ark. . .and elders

Ark contained the Tablets because it was God's Throne under the theocracy--i.e., His "sacred space".

Levites were the "spiritual" leaders; the elders, the "civil" leaders.

31:10 at the end of seven years. . .Feast of Tabernacles

Feast of Tabernacles:

- (1) celebrated the fall harvest of God's climate & economic blessings upon the theocracy
- (2) prophetically looks forward to the Millennial Kingdom's beginning.

The Kingdom of God has ethical structure dictated by God so MK will have [global] law.
in the year of release

Deut 15 (see Sessions 35-26).

- 7th year of release expressed the "sabbatical principle", i.e., (1) that labor was designed from creation to be purposeful and to result in a finished product; (2) thus showing what a "complete salvation work looks like"; and (3) was deliberately stopped in order to expose God's providential grace so often hidden in the everyday work/wealth "cause-effect".
- Revealed the spirit behind the 4th and 8th commandments.
- Complete release of all zero-interest charitable loans and thus any debt-slavery = "redemption"
- The Year of Jubilee would follow after seven 7-year cycles and title to land would become operational again (release from business loans against the family estate)

[North quote]

"For a newly released bondservant, the reading of the law would have reminded him of the importance of obedience. He had fallen into debt through no moral fault of his own, at least in the opinion of his creditor. The way to avoid future debt bondage was to remain obedient to God's law, for the law promised external blessings for obedience. The Mosaic law was read to a nation of free men. It provided the guidelines for remaining free." North, Deuteronomy

31:11-13 all Israel. . .men, women, little ones. . .stranger. . .children not known it

- Note that strangers had to attend so this is for all living in the land, not just the male leaders.
- The trip was costly--every family member had to attend.

- This ceremony every 7th year reveals what "living under law" rather than "living under tyrants" looks like--an [informed] citizenry is the greatest restraint against tyrants.

so long as you live in the land

Repetition required

B. Yahweh's prophetic revelation at the tabernacle to Moses and Joshua (31:14-23)

This is a theophany to emphasize God's interest in the leadership transition and in ensuring that both Moses and Joshua aren't under illusions about Israel's character.

31:14 Yahweh said. . .that I may inaugurate him

Yahweh is selecting Joshua, not the people. This is after Moses' public inauguration in **31:7-8**

31:15 Yahweh appeared at the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud

Physical manifestation of His Presence--much like Ascension of Jesus Christ

31:16 said to Moses

Moses is senior to Joshua, but Joshua hears.

break my covenant

31:17 hide my face

national discipline

31:18 turned to other gods

Again note: the key sin is idolatry, not immorality.

Every nation has some religious faith underlying its major concepts.

31:19 write down this song for yourselves. . .teach it. . .a witness. . .

Referring to chap 32

31:20 when I have brought them. . .and they turn. . .

Again the value of a contractual relationship, a relationship with an enduring set of standards.

31:21 this song will testify. . .will not be forgotten. . .

Later prophets apparently kept this song alive because it reappears in their writings as we will see in chapter 32

I know the inclination of their behavior today

Very convicting revelation

31:22 wrote and taught

Editorial note to "bridge" to chapter 32

31:23 inaugurated Joshua

God is the subject so the beginning and end of this [pericope] deal with Joshua's inauguration, but in the context of this prophetic declaration of the sin of Israel

C. Deposit of the Contract Testimony (31:24-29)

Deposit of treaty documents is a known procedure of the ANE. Two copies--one for vassal king; one for suzerain king. Here both tablets in Ark and now complete copy of the Torah will be with the Ark. This was the "standard text" which the later kings would have to copy from.

31:24-25 completed writing. . .Levites. . .

Note this was a [written scroll]--contrary to old liberalism that on the basis of their evolutionary model of civilization.

31:26-27 witness against you

Moses indicts the Levites who would be the spiritual leadership of the nation.

how much more after my death?

Sarcasm here.

31:28 gather. . .all the elders of your tribes and your officers

Includes the "civil" leaders, too.

31:29 provoke Him to anger through the works of your hands

Emphasis upon the behavior--presumably idolatry.

V. CONCLUSION