

CHAPTER 31

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 31

Moses being old, and knowing he should quickly die, and must not go over Jordan with the people of Israel, acquaints them with it, and encourages them and Joshua to go over notwithstanding, and not be afraid of their enemies, since the Lord would go with them, and deliver them into their hands, (^{<6501>}Deuteronomy 31:1-8); and having written the law, he delivered it to the priests, and ordered that it should be read at the end of every seven years before all the people, that they and theirs might learn it, and fear the Lord, (^{<6509>}Deuteronomy 31:9-13); and whereas the death of Moses was very near, and the Lord foreseeing the people would quickly fall into idolatry, which would bring great calamities upon them, he directed Moses to write a song, which should be a witness for him, and against them, in ages to come; which Moses accordingly did, (^{<6514>}Deuteronomy 31:14-22); and Moses having given a charge to Joshua, and finished the writing of the law in a book, gave it to the Levites to put it in the side of the ark, (^{<6523>}Deuteronomy 31:23-27); and then ordered the chief of the tribes to be gathered together, that he might deliver the song, which by the direction and under the inspiration of God he had written, (^{<6528>}Deuteronomy 31:28-30); which song is recorded in (^{<6531>}Deuteronomy 32:1-43).

Ver. 1. *And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel.*] The following words, even to the whole body of the people summoned together on this occasion. It seems that after Moses had made the covenant with them he was directed to, he dismissed the people to their tents, and went to his own, and now returned, having ordered them to meet him again, very probably at the tabernacle; with which agrees the Targum of Jonathan, he

“went to the tabernacle of the house of doctrine;”

though, according to Aben Ezra, he went to the each tribes separately, as they lay encamped; his words are these,

“he went to every tribe and tribe, to acquaint them that he was about to die, and that they might not be afraid, and to strengthen their hearts;”

he adds,

“in my opinion he then blessed them, though their blessings are afterwards written;”

which is not improbable.

Ver. 2. *And he said unto them, I [am] an hundred and twenty years old this day*, etc.] Whether the meaning is, that that day precisely was his birthday, is a question; it may be the sense is only this, that he was now arrived to such an age; though Jarchi takes it in the first sense, to which are objected his words in (^{<f514>}Deuteronomy 31:14); yet it seems by (^{<f538>}Deuteronomy 32:48) that having delivered to the children of Israel the song he was ordered this day to write, on the selfsame day he was bid to go up to Mount Nebo and die: and it is a commonly received tradition with the Jews, that Moses died on the same day of the month he was born; (see Gill on “^{<f547>}Deuteronomy 34:7”).

I can no more go out and come in; not that he could no longer go out of his tent and return without great trouble and difficulty, being so decrepit; but that he could not perform his office as their ruler and governor, or go out to battle and return as their general; and this not through any incapacity of body or mind, both being vigorous, sound, and well, as is clear from (^{<f547>}Deuteronomy 34:7); but because it was the will of God that he should live no longer to exercise such an office, power, and authority:

also the Lord hath said unto me, or “for the Lord has said”^{f554}, and so is a reason of the foregoing; the Targum is,

“the Word of the Lord said:”

thou shalt not go over this Jordan: to which he and the people of Israel were nigh, and lay between them and the land of Canaan, over which it was necessary to pass in order to go into it; but Moses must not lead them there, this work was reserved for Joshua, a type of Christ; not Moses and his law, or obedience to it, is what introduces any into the heavenly Canaan only Jesus and his righteousness; (see ^{<f552>}Deuteronomy 3:27).

Ver. 3. *The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee*, etc.] This he said to encourage the people of Israel; that though he should die, and not go over with them, their ever living and true God, the great Jehovah, the Lord of

hosts, he would go before them, and fight their battles for them; so that they had nothing to fear from their enemies:

[and] he will destroy those nations from before thee; the seven nations which then inhabited the land:

and thou shalt possess them; their countries, cities, and houses, fields, and vineyards:

[and] Joshua, he shall go over before thee; as their general to fight for them, subdue their enemies, and put them into the possession of the land, and divide it to them:

as the Lord hath said; (^{<H33>}Deuteronomy 3:28).

Ver. 4. *And the Lord shall do unto them as he did unto Sihon, and to Og, kings of the Amorites,* etc.] Deliver them up into their hands; see the history of this in (^{<Q10>}Numbers 21:10-35);

and unto the land of them whom he destroyed; put them into the possession of the land of Canaan, as they were now in possession of the land of those two kings he destroyed by them. This instance is given to encourage their faith, assuring them that what had been done to them would be done to the Canaanitish kings, and their subjects, and their lands.

Ver. 5. *And the Lord shall give them up before your face,* etc.] To ruin and destruction; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“the Word of the Lord shall deliver them up:”

that ye may do unto them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you; that is, utterly destroy them, make no covenant with them, enter into no alliances nor contract any marriages with them; but demolish their altars, cut down their groves, and break their images in pieces; of which last Aben Ezra interprets the words; but they are not to be restrained to that single instance; (see ^{<H10>}Deuteronomy 7:1-5).

Ver. 6. *Be strong and of a good courage,* etc.] The Septuagint version is,

“play the men, and be strong;”

be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, trusting and relying on him that goes before you; and so take heart, and be of good courage,

and act the manly part; the apostle seems to refer to this passage, (^{<4663>}1 Corinthians 16:13);

fear not, nor be afraid of them; their enemies, though so numerous, so mighty, and some of them of a gigantic stature, and their cities strong and well fenced:

for the Lord thy God, he [it is] that doth go with thee: in comparison of whom, numbers of men, their strength of body, and fortified places, signify nothing:

he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee; not fail to fulfil his promises to them, not leave them till he had given them complete victory over their enemies, put them into the possession of their land, and settled them in it. This promise, though made to literal Israel, belongs to the spiritual Israel of God, and is made good to every true believer in the Lord; (see ^{<5835>}Hebrews 13:5).

Ver. 7. *And Moses called unto Joshua*, etc.] Who might be at some distance from him, with the tribe to which he belonged. The Targum of Jonathan adds,

“out of the midst of the people:”

and said unto him, in the sight of all Israel; now assembled together, and what follows was said in their hearing, to make him the more respectable to them:

be strong and of a good courage; the same that is said to the people in (^{<6306>}Deuteronomy 31:6), and which was still more necessary in him, who was to be their general, and to go at the head of them, and lead them on to battle; and though Joshua was a man of courage and valour, as well as had military skill, as appears by his fight with Amalek, (^{<0709>}Exodus 17:9-13); yet such an exhortation was not needless, seeing he had so much work to do, and so many enemies to contend with:

for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them, and thou shalt cause them to inherit it; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“which the Word of the Lord hath sworn to give;”

the land of Canaan, thither he must go with them; this was the will and determination of God, and he must go alone without him, Moses, which would be a trial of his courage.

Ver. 8. *And the Lord, he [it is] that doth go before thee*, etc.] The Word of the Lord, his Shechinah, according to the above Targum, and so in the next clause; the same that brought Israel out of Egypt, had gone before them in the wilderness, and now would go before Joshua and them into the land of Canaan:

he will be with thee; to guide and direct, to assist and strengthen, to protect and defend, to give success to his arms, and victory over his enemies:

he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; not fail to give him counsel and direction, to afford him strength, and to fill him with courage, and to deliver his enemies into his hands; nor forsake him till he had finished the work he was to do, had made a complete conquest of the Canaanites, and settled the people of Israel in their land:

fear not, neither be dismayed; at the number and strength of the enemy, nor at any difficulties that might lie in the way of finishing so great an undertaking, since the Lord would be with him; (see ^{<RB>}Romans 8:31).

Ver. 9. *And Moses wrote this law*, etc.] The book of Deuteronomy, or the Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, which he had now finished, and which all of them together are sometimes called the law, (^{<RB>}Galatians 4:21);

and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi; who were the teachers of the law, as Aben Ezra observes; (see ^{<RB>}Malachi 2:7); and therefore it was proper to put it into their hands, to instruct the people in it, and that the people might apply to them in any matter of difficulty, or when they wanted to have any particular law explained to them:

which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord; for though they were the Levites, and particularly the Kohathites, who in journeying carried the ark; (see ^{<RB>}Numbers 4:5-15 10:21); yet sometimes it was borne by the priests; (see ^{<RB>}Joshua 3:13-17 6:6 ^{<RB>}1 Samuel 4:4);

and unto all the elders of Israel; the judges and civil magistrates in the respective tribes; for as there were in the book of the law several things which belonged to the priests to perform, and all of them they were to

instruct in, so there were others which were to be the rule of judgment to judges, and all civil magistrates, and which they were to take care were put in execution; and therefore it was proper that they should have a copy of this law, and which must be here understood; for it cannot be thought that one and the same copy should be given both to the priests and to all the elders. The Jews say Moses wrote thirteen copies of the law, twelve for the twelve tribes, and one to be put into the ark, to convict of fraud or corruption, should any be made ^{f555}.

Ver. 10. *And Moses commanded them*, etc.] The priests and the elders, to whom the law was delivered:

saying; as follows:

at the end of [every] seven years; every seventh year was a year of rest to the land, and of remission of debts to poor debtors: at the close of this year or going out of it, according to the Misnah ^{f556}, even on the eighth year coming in, the following was to be done, namely, the reading of the law; and so Jarchi interprets it of the first year of release, the eighth, that is, the first year after the year of release; but Aben Ezra better interprets it of the beginning of the seventh year; for as he elsewhere observes on (^{<650>}Deuteronomy 15:1); the word signifies the extremity of the year, and there are two extremities of it, the beginning and the end, and the first extremity is meant; which is more likely than that the reading of the law should be put off to the end of the year, and which seems to be confirmed by what follows:

in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, or “in the appointed time” ^{f557}; of the year of release, of the release of debtors from their debts, (^{<650>}Deuteronomy 15:1,2); when the time or season appointed and fixed was come: moreover, what is here directed to being to be done at the feast of tabernacles, shows it to be at the beginning of the year, since that feast was in the month Tisri, which was originally the beginning of the year, before the coming of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and still continued so for many things, and particularly for the years of release ^{f558}; and this was a very proper time for the reading of the law, when all the increase of the earth and fruits thereof were gathered in; and so their hearts filled, or at least should be, with gladness and gratitude; and when there was no tillage of the land, being the seventh year, and so were at leisure for such service; and when all poor debtors were released from

their debts, and so were freed from all cares and troubles, and could better attend unto it.

Ver. 11. *When all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God,* etc.]

As all the males were obliged to do three times in the year, and one of those times was the feast of tabernacles, and so a proper season for the reading of the law; (see ^{<12314>}Exodus 23:14-17);

in the place which the Lord shall choose; the city of Jerusalem, and the temple there:

thou shall read this law before all Israel in their hearing; the book of Deuteronomy, as Jarchi, or it may be the whole Pentateuch: who were to read it is not expressly said; the speech seems to be directed to the priests and elders, to whom the law written by Moses was delivered, (^{<1630>}Deuteronomy 31:9); and who were either to read it themselves, or take care that it should be read. Josephus ^{f559} ascribes this service to the high priest; he says, standing in an high pulpit (or on an high bench),

“from whence he may be heard, he must read the laws to all;”

but the Jewish writers commonly allot this work to the king, or supreme governor, who at least was to read some parts of it; so Jarchi says, the king at first read Deuteronomy, as it is said in the Misnah ^{f560};

“he read from the beginning of Deuteronomy to (^{<1804>}Deuteronomy 6:4); hear, O Israel, etc. and then added (^{<18113>}Deuteronomy 11:13); then (^{<1642>}Deuteronomy 14:22); after that (^{<1682>}Deuteronomy 26:12); then the section of the king, (^{<16714>}Deuteronomy 17:14); next the blessings and the curses, (^{<16715>}Deuteronomy 27:15-26 28:16-68), with which he finished the whole section;”

and so we find that Joshua, the governor of the people after Moses, read all his laws, (^{<1885>}Joshua 8:35); and so did King Josiah at the finding of the book of the law, (^{<12312>}2 Kings 23:2), and Ezra, (^{<1888>}Nehemiah 8:3). The king received the book from the high priest standing, and read it sitting; but King Agrippa stood and read, for which he was praised.

Ver. 12. *Gather the people together, men, and women, and children,* etc.]

At the three grand festivals in other years, only males were obliged to appear; women might if they would, but they were not bound to it; but at this time all of every age and sex were to be summoned and assembled

together; and it is said ^{f561}, when the king read in the book of the law, all the people were obliged to come and bring their families, as it is said (~~f812~~ Deuteronomy 31:12); “gather the people”, etc. and as it could not be done when it happened on the sabbath day, the reading of the section was put off to the day following:

and thy stranger that [is] within thy gates; not only the proselyte of righteousness, but the proselyte of the gate that renounced idolatry, for his further conviction and thorough conversion to the religion of the true God; or, as the Targum of Jonathan expresses it, that they might see the honour and glory of the law. The end is more fully expressed as follows,

that they may hear; all the laws which God had given:

and that they may learn; and attain unto the true knowledge and right understanding of them:

and fear the Lord your God; serve and worship him internally and externally, according to these laws:

and observe to do all the words of this law; so take notice of them as to put them in practice; and reading them in such a solemn and reverent manner made them the more servable, and raised the greater attention to them, to the importance of them; otherwise they were read in their families, and on sabbath days in their synagogues; (see ~~f812~~ Deuteronomy 6:7) (~~f435~~ Acts 13:15 15:21).

Ver. 13. *And [that] their children, which have not known [anything]*, etc.] Of God and of his law and of their duty to God, to their parents, and the rest of their fellow creatures:

may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God; hear the law of God, learn the meaning of it, and so be brought up in the fear, nurture, and admonition of the Lord, and serve him their Creator in the days of their youth:

as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it; this being a means to continue the fear, service, and worship of God in their posterity, and so of their long continuance in the land of Canaan.

Ver. 14. *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] Either at the same time, or quickly after; rather, perhaps, the same day:

behold, thy days approach that thou must die; which does not necessarily imply that he had some days to live, though but few; but that the time of his death drew nigh, his last moments were approaching; the time of his death being, as every man's is, fixed by the Lord, with whom is the number of his years, months, days, and moments, beyond which he cannot pass, (^{<1846>}Job 14:5);

call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge; this looks as if the people had been dismissed after the above exhortations given; and now Joshua was called, and Moses with him, to have a charge given him:

and Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation; before the Lord. Aben Ezra says, Moses went from the camp of Israel where he was, to the camp of the Shechinah; the Jews pretend to know in what form they walked thither. Moses, they say ^{f562}, went on the left hand of Joshua; and they went to the tabernacle, and the pillar of cloud descended and separated between them.

Ver. 15. *And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of cloud*, etc.] As he was wont to do, (see ^{<1239>}Exodus 33:9); in which cloud there was a lustre, a brightness, a glory visible, which showed that he was there:

and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle; it seems to have appeared first in the tabernacle, and then it came out of it, and stood over the door of it, near to which Moses and Joshua were: the Targum of Jonathan adds,

“Moses and Joshua stood without;”

though the former clause, according to Noldius ^{f563}, should be “over the tabernacle”, or above where the cloud was wont to be.

Ver. 16. *And the Lord said unto Moses*, etc.] Out of the pillar of cloud:

behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; a phrase expressive of death, frequently used both of good and bad men, which serves to render death easy and familiar, and less formidable; and to assure and lead into an expectation of an awaking out of it, or a resurrection from it:

and this people will rise up; in their posterity; for not till after Joshua's death, and the death of the elders of Israel, did they revolt to idolatry, (^{<1243>}Joshua 24:31);

and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go [to be] amongst them; that is, after the gods of the Canaanites, who though at this time the inhabitants of the land, yet when the children of Israel became possessors of it, they were the strangers of it; and being suffered to continue contrary to the directions God had given to destroy them, would be a means of drawing them into the worship of their idols, expressed here by going a whoring after them, or committing whoredom with them. Idolatry in Scripture is frequently signified by fornication and adultery; and, as foretold, this was the case; (see ~~4965~~ Psalm 106:35-39);

and will forsake me: their husband, departing from his worship and service:

and break my covenant which I have made with them at Sinai; and now again in the plains of Moab, and which had the nature of a matrimonial contract; (see ~~4912~~ Jeremiah 31:32).

Ver. 17. *Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day,* etc.] As the anger of a man is against his wife who has treacherously departed from him: and jealousy, which is the rage of such a man, is very cruel; and much more the wrath and anger of a jealous God, who is a consuming fire:

and I will forsake them; withdraw his favours from them, and his protection of them:

and I will hide my face from them; take no notice of them in a providential way for good, nor hear their cries, to deliver them from evil:

and they shall be devoured; by their enemies, or by the sore judgments of God, by famine, sword, pestilence, and evil beasts, they and their substance:

and many evils and troubles shall befall them; both in their own land, and in other countries, where they would be, and have been carried captive:

so that they will say in that day, are not these evils come upon us, because our God [is] not amongst us? of which they would be sensible by their being exposed to their enemies for want of his protection, and by the evils upon them through his displeasure, and by their being deprived of the good things that came from him; but no intimation is given of their being sensible of their sins as the cause of all this.

Ver. 18. *I will surely hide my face in that day,* etc.] Which is repeated for the certainty of it, and that it might be taken notice of; that he was the

spring and source of all their good things, their sun and their shield, who being withdrawn from them, they would be deprived of every thing that was good, and be liable to all evil; and this he would do,

for all the evils which they shall have wrought; for all the immoralities they should be guilty of, every transgression of his law, whether of the first or second table, and especially idolatry:

in that they are turned unto other gods; to the worship and service of them, which of all evils would be the most provoking to God; and the way of speaking suggests as if all evils were included in idolatry, and sprang from it, or were committed with it.

Ver. 19. *Now, therefore, write ye this song for you*, etc.] Which was now dictated by the Lord, and given to Moses and Joshua to write, which is recorded in (^{<R31>}Deuteronomy 32:1-43):

and teach it the children of Israel; teach them by it, instructing them in the meaning of it: thus it was usual in ancient times to write things in verses, that they might be the more pleasingly attended to and regarded, and be longer retained in memory; and especially this practice was used with children, and still is:

put it in their mouths; oblige them to get it by heart, or lay it up in their memories, and repeat it frequently, that it may be familiar to them, and not be forgotten by them:

that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel; when in times to come they shall call to mind how in this song they were cautioned against such and such sins, and what they were threatened with should befall them on account of them, and how all things have come to pass exactly as foretold in it; which would be a testimony for God of his goodness to them, of his tender care of them, and concern for them, in the previous cautions he gave them; and of his foreknowledge of future events; and a testimony against them for their ingratitude and other sins.

Ver. 20. *For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear unto their fathers*, etc.] To give it to them, and put them into the possession of it, even the land of Canaan, often thus described, and as it is by the following character:

that floweth with milk and honey; aboundeth with all good things; (see ~~Exodus~~ Exodus 3:8);

and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; that is, after they have for a considerable time enjoyed the good things of the land, and they abound with them, and increase in them, and have great fullness of them:

then will they turn unto other gods: turn from the Lord who has brought them into all this plenty, from the fear, worship, and service of him, and turn to the worship of idols:

and serve them: the works of men's hands, and at most but creatures, and not the Creator; than which nothing can be more absurd and stupid, as well as wicked and ungrateful:

and provoke me: nothing being more provoking to the Lord than idolatry, it striking at his very nature, being, and glory:

and break my covenant; now made with them; this being foretold by the Lord, which exactly came to pass in numerous instances, proves his precise foreknowledge of future events, even such as depend on the inclinations, dispositions, and wills of men.

Ver. 21. *And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them*, etc.] As did in the times of the judges, in the Babylonish captivity, and do now in their present exile:

that this song shall testify against them as a witness; which so clearly points at their sins, with all their aggravated circumstances, and describes so fully their calamities, distresses, and punishment for them:

for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed; which shows that it respects time to come, their later posterity, whose memory of this song would be conjured up by the evils that should come upon them for their sins; nor is it forgotten by them to this day, who acknowledge there are some things in it now fulfilled or fulfilling in them:

for I know their imagination which they go about even now: or are "making"¹⁵⁶⁴; forming and framing within themselves, there being a secret inclination in their minds to idolatry, which were working and contriving schemes to bring it about, and set it up; and this, God, the searcher of

hearts, knew full well, and that in process of time this evil imagination would break forth into act, in an open and flagrant manner:

before I have brought thee into the land which I swear; to their fathers, to give it to them for an inheritance, as is suggested in (^{463D}Deuteronomy 31:20).

Ver. 22. *Moses therefore wrote this song the same day,* etc.] The same day it was dictated to him by divine inspiration; he wrote it, as Josephus says ^{f565},

“in hexameter verse, which he left in the holy Bible or book (the Pentateuch), containing (as he adds) a prophecy of things future, according to which all things have been done, and are done; and in nothing of it has he erred from the truth;”

which is a very just account of it, and worthy of observation:

and taught it the children of Israel; instructed them in the meaning of it, directed them to repeat it frequently, to lay it up in their memories, and often meditate upon it; as being a divine composition, and of great importance, as the consideration of it will make appear.

Ver. 23. *And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge,* etc.] It may be a question who gave this charge, the Lord or Moses; according to the connection of the words with the preceding, it seems to be the latter; for the immediate antecedent to the relative he is Moses, and so the Septuagint interpreters understand it; but then they are obliged to read some following clauses different from the original, as, instead of “I swear”, they read “the Lord swear”; and the last clause they read, “and he shall be with thee”; but Aben Ezra gives the same sense without departing from the common and genuine reading, supposing that Moses gave the charge in the name and by the authority of the Lord; his words are,

“he gave charge by the commandment of the Lord, therefore he saith, “which I swear unto them;”

but it seems best to understand this of the Lord himself, since he ordered Moses and Joshua to present themselves before him, that he might give the latter a charge, (^{463I4}Deuteronomy 31:14); and the language of the following clauses best agrees with him:

and said, be strong and of a good courage; (see Gill on “⁽⁶³¹⁶⁾Deuteronomy 31:6-7”);

for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them; (see Gill on “⁽⁶³¹⁰⁾Deuteronomy 31:7”);

and I will be with thee; (see Gill on “⁽⁶³¹⁸⁾Deuteronomy 31:8”); the Targum of Jonathan is,

“my Word shall be thy help.”

Ver. 24. *And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book,* etc.] In this book of Deuteronomy, and which concluded the Pentateuch:

until they were finished; all the words of the law, and the whole five books of Moses, excepting some few verses, (⁽⁶³¹¹⁾Deuteronomy 34:1-12), which were added by another hand, Joshua or Ezra.

Ver. 25. *That Moses commanded the Levites,* etc.] These were not the common Levites, but the priests who were also Levites, to whom the law was given, (⁽⁶³¹⁹⁾Deuteronomy 31:9); and none but they might touch the ark, or go so near it as, they are bid to do, to put the law on the side of it; so Aben Ezra; it follows,

which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord; as the priests are said to do, (see Gill on “⁽⁶³¹⁹⁾Deuteronomy 31:9”); for though in journeying the Kohathites carried it, yet not until it was covered by the priests, for they must not touch it; as these must do when they put the law on the side of it, as they are ordered in (⁽⁶³¹²⁾Deuteronomy 31:26).

saying; as follows.

Ver. 26. *Take this book of the law,* etc.] Not Deuteronomy only, but the whole Pentateuch:

and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God; not in the ark, for there were nothing there but the two tables of stone with the ten commands on them, (⁽¹¹⁸⁹⁾1 Kings 8:9); but on one side of it; the Targum of Jonathan says, it was

“put in a chest (or box) on the right side of the ark of the covenant;”

which is very probable. Jarchi observes, that the wise men of Israel are divided about it in the Talmud^{f566}; some of them say there was a table (or ledge) that stood out from the ark without, and there it was put; others say it was put on the side of the tables of the law within the ark; the former are in the right:

that it may be therefore a witness against thee; when they fall into idolatry or any other sin, a transgression of any of the laws therein contained.

Ver. 27. *For I know thy rebellion and thy stiff neck*, etc.] How rebellious they were against the Lord and his laws, and how unwilling they were to admit the yoke of his commandments to be put upon them, and submit to it; this he had an experience of for forty years past:

behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; murmuring at his providences, (^{<0248>}Exodus 16:8,12 17:3), speaking against his ministers, (^{<0249>}Exodus 16:2 ^{<0411>}Numbers 12:1) (^{<0442>}Numbers 14:2 16:3,41 20:2); breaking his laws, particularly being guilty of idolatry, in making and worshipping the golden calf, (^{<0238>}Exodus 32:8); and even now, as in (^{<0521>}Deuteronomy 31:21), were imagining, forming, and framing in their minds something of the same kind, from the time of their coming out of Egypt unto this time they were now on the borders of Canaan; this had all along been their character; (see ^{<0507>}Deuteronomy 9:7,24);

and how much more after my death? When he would be no more with them to instruct and advise them, to caution and reprove them, and to keep them in awe by his authority.

Ver. 28. *Gather unto me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers*, etc.] The heads of the tribes, the princes, and all other inferior magistrates:

that I may speak these words in their ears; not the words of the law, but of the song which he was ordered to write, and is recorded in the following chapter:

and call heaven and earth to record against them; to bear witness of what he delivered to them, and to bear witness against them should they transgress the laws he gave them; and to bear witness that they had been faithfully cautioned against transgressing, and had been severely threatened, and the punishment plainly pointed out that should be inflicted

on them in case of disobedience, so that they were left entirely without excuse.

Ver. 29. *For I know that after my death,* etc.] Which was just at hand, some time after that, not immediately; this he knew by a spirit of prophecy, namely, what follows:

ye will utterly corrupt [yourselves]; their ways, works, and manners, and so themselves; corrupt the worship of God by making idols, and serving them, which is the corruption chiefly intended:

and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you: from the way of the commandments of God, which Moses had given them in his name, and in which they were directed to walk; but, as here foretold, would wander and swerve from them as they did:

and evil will befall you in the latter days; not only in the times of the judges, and in the time of the Babylonish captivity, but in their present captivity, as they call it; which shows that the following song has things in it which respect times at a great distance, and even the present ones, and yet to come:

because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands; their idols, idolatry being the evil chiefly designed, which is of all things the most provoking of the Lord.

Ver. 30. *And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel,* etc.] Not in the hearing of the whole body of the people, and every individual thereof; no man could be able to speak to such a numerous congregation, as that they should hear him; but in the hearing of their heads and representatives, the elders of their tribes and officers, ordered to be gathered together for this purpose, (⁴⁶³¹Deuteronomy 31:28);

the words of this song, until they were ended; which song is recorded in the following chapter, (⁴⁶³¹Deuteronomy 32:1-43).