

July 7: 34:1-12

Verses 1-8: the death of Moses

Verses 9-12: The Epitaph for Moses

I. Verses 1-8: the death of Moses

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,² and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea,³ and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar.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."⁵ So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord.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.⁷ Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated.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.

- a. Verse 1-3: in these verses Moses is seeing many of the cities, it says "as far as the western sea" which would be the Mediterranean sea. Imagine Moses walking up there, ready to die.
- b. About the geography the IVP Bible Backgrounds Commentary of the Old Testament shares: **Abarim range and Mount Nebo:** *The Abarim range extends east of the mouth of the Jordan River and on around the northern end of the Dead Sea (see Deut 32:49). It forms the northwestern rim of the Moabite plateau. The specific peak in this range from which Moses will view the Promised Land is Mount Nebo, 2,740 feet in height. Pisgah and Nebo are identified as the two peaks of Jebel Shayhan, about five miles northwest of Medeba and about a mile and a half apart. They stand about ten miles from the Jordan River.*¹
- c. *At this point the Mediterranean Sea is about sixty miles west, but it cannot be seen because the hills on the west side of the Jordan obscure the view. On a clear day one can see Mount Hermon, about a hundred miles to the north, the mountains to the northwest that flank the Jezreel Valley (Tabor and Gilboa), the mountains of the central hill country (Ebal and Gerizim) and to the southwest as far as Engedi.*²
- d. *Even though the land has not been distributed yet, this viewing of the land is described partially by tribal territories, to be distinguished from the geographical descriptions*

¹ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 32:49.

² Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 34:2–3.

given in Deuteronomy 1:7. The description moves from Moses' point toward the north and then counterclockwise through the land.³

- e. David Jeremiah: *Moses may have not cared as much about the promised land because he was face to face with the promised one. He was with Jesus at the transfiguration.*
- f. I grew up about 6 hours from the Great Smoky Mountains and so I have been there a lot. Recently, the EFC-ER Pastor's Conference was there. I took the family up to Clingman's Dome. One website says this about Clingman's Dome:
 - a. *At 6,643 feet, Clingmans Dome is the highest point in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It is the highest point in Tennessee, and the third highest mountain east of the Mississippi. Only Mt. Mitchell (6,684 feet) and Mt. Craig (6,647), both located in Mt. Mitchell State Park in western North Carolina, rise higher.*
 - b. *On clear days views expand over a 100 miles. Unfortunately, air pollution often limits viewing distances to under 20 miles.*
 - c. *Supposedly, you can see 7 states from Clingman's Dome.*
- g. Now, Moses is climbing a mountain to see the promised land.
- h. Imagine being an Israelite in the Old Testament reading this. All these locations mentioned people knew those locations. Later on, people could easily think, "I know of Jericho." "I know of Naphtali, Ephraim and Manasseh." People could imagine these locations as these words are read.
- i. Deut. 11:24 shows that the promised land was to go to the Mediterranean sea.
- j. Verse 4: The ESV Study Bible points out: Deut. Begins and ends with the theme of the land promised by God.
- k. Verse 4 reminds him of the promises and the covenant. This land was promised to Abraham (beginning in Gen 12), Isaac and Jacob.
- l. The New American Commentary shares: *All that Moses could see in the panorama before him was promised by covenant oath to the patriarchs (v. 4a). It was Yahweh's pledge based on the royal grant he had first made with Abraham, an unconditional act of grace as sure of fulfillment as the very character of God himself (cf. Gen 12:1, 7; 13:15; 15:18; 26:3; 28:13; Deut 1:8, 21, 25). In line with the original geographical parameters of the land as described to Abraham—"from the river of Egypt [i.e., the Wadi el-Arish] to the great river, the Euphrates" (Gen 15:18)—the reaffirmation to Moses included a territory of more than four hundred miles from southwest to northeast and on both sides of the Jordan. The only time in Old Testament history that this ideal ever reached realization was in the heyday of the United Monarchy under David and Solomon (cf. 2 Sam 10:19; 1 Kgs 4:24). Ezekiel's eschatological vision also anticipated a day when the promise to Abraham would find a geographical fulfillment of such a vast extent (Ezek 47:13–48:29).⁴*
- m. God is allowing Moses to see the land with his eyes, but he cannot go there.

³ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 34:1–3.

⁴ Eugene H. Merrill, [Deuteronomy](#), vol. 4, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 452.

- n. Verse 5: Moses is called “the servant of the Lord.”
- o. Moses died there “according to the Word of the Lord.”
- p. In Joshua 1:2 we see the Lord telling Joshua that Moses is dead.
- q. Verse 6, no one knows the place of his burial.
- r. Dr. Constable quote Merrill stating: “*Most likely the sepulchre remained hidden precisely to prevent the Israelites from taking Moses’ body with them to Canaan, thus violating the divine command to disallow Moses entry there.*”³⁶²⁵
- s. Moody Bible Comemntary: *Clear support exists for the view that the human author of the entire Pentateuch was Moses. But several clues indicate that this specific account of Moses’ death was added later by someone other than Moses. First, Moses would have had to write down details prophetically regarding his burial spot even before he died. Another clue is that the mention of Dan (34:1) in the northern part of Israel would signal at least an editorial updating sometime after the tribe of Dan migrated northward to Laish (Jdg 18). The last clue is the phrase “to this day” (34:6), signaling that some time had passed between the time of Moses’ actual death and the time when that comment was added to the account.*⁶
- t. The IVP BBC OT shares about **Baal Peor**: *The Wadi Ayun Musa at the foot of Mount Nebo is generally considered to be the Valley of Beth Peor, with the site Khirbet Ayun Musa as probably the town.*⁷
- u. Jude 9 references the burial of Moses’ body in a dispute between Michael the archangel and the devil.
- v. The IVP BBC OT: **apocryphal literature concerning the death of Moses.** *Jude 9 speaks of a dispute over the body of Moses, and apocryphal and rabbinic literature speculated about it in a number of places, particularly in The Assumption of Moses (of which manuscripts are no longer known) and The Testament of Moses (known from one Latin manuscript from the sixth century a.d.). The former speaks of Moses ascending directly to heaven, while in the latter it is implied that he dies a natural death. Deuteronomy makes it very clear that he died, and there is nothing remarkable in the account. The text leaves it somewhat ambiguous who buried Moses, but it is clear that the grave site is unmarked and unknown.*⁸
- w. Keil and Delitch: *The burial of Moses by the hand of Jehovah was not intended to conceal his grave, for the purpose of guarding against a superstitious and idolatrous reverence for his grave; for which the opinion held by the Israelites, that corpses and graves*

³⁶² 362. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, p. 453.

⁵ Tom Constable, [Tom Constable’s Expository Notes on the Bible](#) (Galaxie Software, 2003), Dt 34:1.

⁶ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 12055-12060). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

⁷ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 34:6.

⁸ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 34:7–8.

defiled, there was but little fear of this; but, as we may infer from the account of the transfiguration of Jesus, the intention was to place him in the same category with Enoch and Elijah. As Kurtz observes, "The purpose of God was to prepare for him a condition, both of body and soul, resembling that of these two men of God. Men bury a corpse that it may pass into corruption. If Jehovah, therefore, would not suffer the body of Moses to be buried by men, it is but natural to seek for the reason in the fact that He did not intend to leave him to corruption, but, when burying it with His own hand, imparted a power to it which preserved it from corruption, and prepared the way for it to pass into the same form of existence to which Enoch and Elijah were taken, without either death or burial."—There can be no doubt that this truth lies at the foundation of the Jewish theologoumenon mentioned in the Epistle of Jude, concerning the contest between Michael the archangel and the devil for the body of Moses.⁹

- x. Verse 7 shares about Moses' great health. He was 120 years old but his eye sign was good. His heath was good. Many had weak eye sign at an old age: Gen 27:1; 48:10
- y. Verse 8: they had bereavement rituals back then. They wept for Moses 30 days until the days ended.
- z. Moody Bible Commentary: *The nation mourned for Moses 30 days (v. 8), much longer than the usual seven-day period (Gn 50:10). Joshua was then filled with the spirit of wisdom (v. 9), attributed to the laying-on-of-hands ceremony that Moses performed earlier (Nm 27:23; cf. Dt 31:23). Joshua was now the established leader of the nation, and the sons of Israel listened to him. Some debate surrounds the statement, Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. Although many suggest that Joshua was the author of the final section of Deuteronomy (chaps. 33–34), for several reasons, it is more likely that it was added significantly later, near the close of the Hebrew canon. First, in Dt 33:1, Moses is called "the man of God," whereas throughout the rest of the Pentateuch he was called "the servant of the LORD." The phrase "man of God" is not used anywhere else in the Pentateuch but is an exilic term for a prophet of God. Second, no one remembered where Moses was buried (34:5-6), indicating that a great deal of time had elapsed. Third, the clause no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses assumes that the time of prophecy in Israel had ceased. Therefore, it seems likely that Dt 33–34 serve as a postexilic inspired appendix to the original Mosaic composition (See Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?*, 62–63).*
- aa. *The significance of this postexilic addition to the Pentateuch is that at the time of Ezra, when the words no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses were added, the writer would have been able to look back at all the OT prophets and not find one as great as Moses. Therefore, the prediction of a prophet like Moses (Dt 18:15-19) remained unfulfilled, and the reader was being reminded to keep looking for its future fulfillment in the Messiah. Thus the book of Deuteronomy and the entire Pentateuch concludes with the prediction that at some point in the future (cf. 18:15-19) a prophet (the Messiah) would arise in Israel to rival Moses. Moses experienced an intimate face to face (v. 10)*

⁹ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, [Commentary on the Old Testament](#), vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 1021.

relationship with the Lord, unique among all prophets (Nm 12:6-8), that was never matched in the entire OT period. Furthermore, no nation had ever seen, nor had any prophet performed, such mighty signs and wonders as Moses did. Consequently, the Pentateuch ends with a hopeful expectation that someday the messianic prophet, greater in word and deed than Moses, would arise on behalf of the nation of Israel. The Pentateuch closes with this look forward, and the NT writers rightly see Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of this prophecy (see the comments on Dt 18:15-19; Ac 3:22; 7:37).¹⁰

- bb. Plains of Moab from the IVP BBC OT: *This is the broad plain or steppe region immediately north of the Dead Sea and east of the Jordan River, just opposite the “plains of Jericho” (Josh 4:13). Its location serves as the jumping-off point for entrance into Canaan. (See Num 22:1.)¹¹*

II. Verses 9-12: The Epitaph for Moses

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. ¹⁰ Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, 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, ¹² and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

- a. Joshua, the son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom.
- b. Moses had laid hands upon him.
- c. Verse 9 says the Israelites obeyed him. This is really important given he was taking over for Moses. They did as the Lord commanded Moses.
- d. Num 27:18, 23 are about commissioning Joshua.
- e. Verse 10: there was no prophet in Israel like Moses. This is because the Lord knew Moses face to face.
- f. There were great prophets throughout the Old Testament, but not until Jesus was there a prophet that knew the Lord face to face.
- g. Numbers 12:6-8: the Lord speaks to Moses face to face.
- h. Other cross reference: Ex 33:11; Num 12:8; Deut 5:4¹² In Ex. 33:11 it mentions Joshua staying with Moses.
- i. God did signs and wonders through Moses and these were against Egypt, Pharaoh and all of Pharaoh’s servants and the whole land.
- j. Moses displayed the Lord’s power.
- k. In the sign of all Israel.
- l.

¹⁰ The Moody Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 12062-12064). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

¹¹ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Dt 34:8.

¹² [New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update](#) (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995).

