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THIS IS A WEEKLY LIST OF QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PORTIONS OF THE BIBLE READ BY JEWISH COMMUNITIES EVERY SABBATH, WITH COVER ART BY OUR FRIENDS. DO YOU LIKE OUR PROJECT? DO YOU HAVE MORE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS OR ANOTHER PARSHA? SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS AT: persnicketyfinicker@gmail.com

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Q1: Why is Moses so pessimistic about the future conduct of the Israelites? Why is it important for him to convey his pessimism to them?

Q2: Who are the wood-cutters and the water-drawers? Did you know that the Israelites of the desert had occupational histories?

Q3: What is the image of wet and dry being employed in 29:19? What is wet, and what is dry? Is it a part of the internal monologue of the wicked, or its consequence?

Q4: What is the force of imagining the wasteland of Israel through the eyes of a third party? Is it so they learn something, or so we learn something?

Q5: What kinds of secret things are known to God alone? What is the rhetorical purpose of emphasizing the limits of human knowledge at this specific point?

Q6: Moses reassures the people that once they are exiled, they will be able to return and enjoy God's blessing if they return to obeying God. But how can you follow a law from within exile? Or is there

another way to obey God, besides the laws given in this book?

Q7: Moses schedules a reading of the law for every seven years, on a holiday when everyone is living in temporary houses, and cultivation of the land is forbidden. Why do you think he chose that date?

Q8: In Chapter 29, we learned that Israel had been totally transformed by what Moses had told them, and what they had seen in the desert. But in Chapter 31, God is certain that they will begin to stray as soon as Moses dies. Was all that progress not enough? If not, what was it good for?

Q9: Are failure and exile an essential part of God's plan for the formation of the Jewish people? If so, why?

Q10: What kind of commandment is never far away, but always close to you wherever you are? What else is like that?

Q11: What can we learn about repentance, and obstacles to repentance, from this reading?