
DEUTERONOMY 4:1 Now, Israel, listen to the statutes and to the ordinances, which I teach you, to do them; that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, gives you.

Exhortations to obedience, Deu 4:1. Nothing to be added to or taken from the testimonies of God, Deu 4:2. The people are exhorted to recollect how God had destroyed the ungodly among them, Deu 4:3; and preserved those who were faithful, Deu 4:4. The excellence of the Divine law, Deu 4:5, Deu 4:6. No nation in the world could boast of any such statutes, judgments, etc., Deu 4:7, Deu 4:8. They are exhorted to obedience by the wonderful manifestations of God in their behalf, Deu 4:9-13. Moses exhorts them to beware of idolatry, and to make no likeness of any thing in heaven or earth as an object of adoration, Deu 4:14-20. He informs them that he must die in that land as God had refused to let him go into the promised land, being angry with him on their account, Deu 4:21, Deu 4:22. Repeats his exhortation to obedience, Deu 4:23, Deu 4:24. Predicts the judgments of God against them, should they turn to idolatry, Deu 4:25-28. Promises of God's mercy to the penitent, Deu 4:29-31. The grand and unparalleled privileges of the Israelites, Deu 4:32-40. Moses severs three cities on the east side of Jordan for cities of refuge, Deu 4:41, Deu 4:42. Their names, Deu 4:43. When and where Moses gave these statutes and judgments to Israel, Deu 4:44-49.

Verse 1

Hearken - unto the statutes - Every thing that concerned the rites and ceremonies of religion; judgments - all that concerned matters of civil right and wrong.

DEUTERONOMY 4:2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Verse 2

Ye shall not add - Any book, chapter, verse or word, which I have not spoken; nor give any comment that has any tendency to corrupt, weaken, or destroy any part of this revelation.

Neither shall ye diminish - Ye shall not only not take away any larger portion of this word, but ye shall not take one jot or tittle from the Law; it is that word of God that abideth for ever.

DEUTERONOMY 4:3 Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baal Peor; for all the men who followed Baal Peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you.

DEUTERONOMY 4:4 But you who were faithful to the LORD your God are all alive this day.

DEUTERONOMY 4:5 Behold, I have taught you statutes and ordinances, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do so in the midst of the land where you go in to possess it.

DEUTERONOMY 4:6 Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who shall hear all these statutes, and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

 Verse 6

Keep - and do them; for this is your wisdom - There was no mode of worship at this time on the face or the earth that was not wicked, obscene, puerile, foolish, or ridiculous, except that established by God himself among the Israelites. And every part of this, taken in its connection and reference, may be truly called a wise and reasonable service.

The nations - and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people - Almost all the nations in the earth showed that they had formed this opinion of the Jews, by borrowing from them the principal part of their civil code. Take away what Asia and Europe, whether ancient or modern, have borrowed from the Mosaic laws, and you leave little behind that can be called excellent.

DEUTERONOMY 4:7 For what great nation is there, that has a god so near to them, as the LORD our God is whenever we call on him?

DEUTERONOMY 4:8 What great nation is there, that has statutes and ordinances so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

DEUTERONOMY 4:9 Only be careful, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes saw, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your children and your children's children;

Verse 9

Only take heed to thyself - Be circumspect and watchful.

Keep thy soul diligently - Be mindful of thy eternal interests. Whatever becomes of the body, take care of the soul.

Lest thou forget - God does his work that they may be had in everlasting remembrance; and he that forgets them, forgets his own mercies. Besides, if a man forget the work of God on his soul, he loses that work.

Lest they depart from thy heart - It is not sufficient to lay up Divine things in the memory, they must be laid up in the heart. Thy word have I hidden in my heart, says David, that I might not sin against thee. The life of God in the soul of man can alone preserve the soul to life everlasting; and this grace must be retained all the days of our life. When Adam fell, his condition was not meliorated by the reflection that he had been once in paradise; nor does it avail Satan now that he was once an angel of light. Those who let the grace of God depart from their hearts, lose that grace; and those who lose the grace, fall from the grace; and as some have fallen and risen no more, so may others; therefore, take heed to thyself, etc. Were it impossible for men finally to fall from the grace of God, exhortations of this kind had never been given, because they would have been unnecessary, and God never does an unnecessary thing.

But teach them thy sons - If a man know the worth of his own soul, he will feel the importance of the salvation of the souls of his family. Those who neglect family religion, neglect personal religion; if more attention were paid to the former, even among those called religious people, we should soon have a better state of civil society. On family religion God lays much stress; and no head of a family

can neglect it without endangering the final salvation of his own soul. See the note at the conclusion of Gen 18:32 (note), Gen 19:38 (note), and Deu 6:7 (note).

DEUTERONOMY 4:10 the day that you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb, when the LORD said to me, "Assemble the people to me, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children."

DEUTERONOMY 4:11 You came near and stood under the mountain. The mountain burned with fire to the heart of the sky, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness.

DEUTERONOMY 4:12 The LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire: you heard the voice of words, but you saw no form; you only heard a voice.

DEUTERONOMY 4:13 He declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even the ten commandments. He wrote them on two stone tablets.

DEUTERONOMY 4:14 The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that you might do them in the land where you go over to possess it.

DEUTERONOMY 4:15 Be very careful, for you saw no kind of form on the day that the LORD spoke to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,

Verse 15

Ye saw no manner of similitude - Howsoever God chose to appear or manifest himself, he took care never to assume any describable form. He would have no image worship, because he is a Spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in Spirit and in truth. These outward things tend to draw the mind out of itself, and diffuse it on sensible, if not sensual, objects; and thus spiritual worship is prevented, and the Holy Ghost grieved. Persons acting in this way can never know much of the religion of the heart.

DEUTERONOMY 4:16 lest you corrupt yourselves, and make yourself an engraved image in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

Verse 16

The likeness of male or female - Such as Baal-peor and the Roman Priapus, Ashtaroth or Astarte, and the Greek and Roman Venus; after whom most nations of the world literally went a whoring.

DEUTERONOMY 4:17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky,

Verse 17

The likeness of any beast, etc. - Such as the Egyptian god Apis, who was worshipped under the form of a white bull; the ibis and hawk, among the fowls, had also Divine honors paid to them; serpents and the crocodile among reptiles; besides monkeys, dogs, cats, the scarabaeus, leeks, and onions! See this explained at large, Exo 20:4 (note).

DEUTERONOMY 4:18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth;

DEUTERONOMY 4:19 and lest you lift up your eyes to the sky, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, even all the army of the sky, you are drawn away and worship them, and serve them, which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole sky.

Verse 19

When thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars - The worship of the heavenly bodies was the oldest species of idolatry. Those who had not the knowledge of the true God were led to consider the sun, moon, planets, and stars, as not only self-existing, but the authors of all the blessings possessed by mankind. The knowledge of a rational system of astronomy served to destroy this superstition; and very little of it remains now in the world, except among a few Christian and Mohammedan astrologers; those miserable sinners who endeavor, as much as possible, to revive the old idolatry, while vainly professing to believe in the true God! Nor is it to be doubted that God will proceed with them as he has done of old with the worshippers of the host of heaven. Sound philosophy is next in importance to sound divinity; and next to the study of the work of grace is that of the operations of God in nature; for these visible things make known his eternal power and Godhead.

DEUTERONOMY 4:20 But the LORD has taken you, and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be to him a people of inheritance, as at this day.

Verse 20

Out of the iron furnace - From this mention of the word iron furnace there can be little doubt that the Israelites were employed in Egypt in the most laborious works of metallurgy. Digging, smelting, and forging of iron in so hot a climate must have been oppressive work indeed.

DEUTERONOMY 4:21 Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I should not go over the Jordan, and that I should not go in to that good land, which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance;

Verse 21

The Lord was angry with me - And if with me, so as to debar me from entering into the promised land, can you think to escape if guilty of greater provocations?

DEUTERONOMY 4:22 but I must die in this land. I must not go over the Jordan; but you shall go over, and possess that good land.

DEUTERONOMY 4:23 Be careful, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make yourselves an engraved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you.

DEUTERONOMY 4:24 For the LORD your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God.

Verse 24

Thy God is a consuming fire - They had seen him on the mount as an unconsuming fire, while appearing to Moses, and giving the law; and they had seen him as a consuming fire in the case of Korah, Dathan, Abiram, and their company. They had, therefore, every good to expect from his approbation, and every evil to dread from his displeasure.

DEUTERONOMY 4:25 When you shall father children, and children's children, and you shall have been long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make an engraved image in the form of anything, and shall do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, to provoke him to anger;

DEUTERONOMY 4:26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from off the land which you go over the Jordan to possess it. You will not prolong your days on it, but will utterly be destroyed.

Verse 26

I call heaven and earth to witness against you - A most solemn method of adjuration, in use among all nations in the world. So Virgil, *Aen.*, lib. xii., ver. 176, etc.

Tum pius Aeneas stricto sic ense precatur:

Esto nunc Sol testis et haec mihi terra vocanti -

Fontesque fluviosque voco, quaeque aetheris alti

Religio, et quae caeruleo sunt numina ponto, etc. "Then the great Trojan prince unsheathed his sword,

And thus, with lifted hands, the gods adored:

Thou land for which I wage this war, and thou

Great source of day, be witness to my vow! -

Almighty king of heaven and queen of air,

Propitious now and reconciled by prayer, -

Ye springs, ye floods, ye various powers who lie

Beneath the deep, or tread the golden sky, -

Hear and Attest!"

Pitt.

God and man being called upon to bear testimony to the truth of what was spoken, that if there was any flaw or insincerity, it might be detected; and if any crime, it might not go unpunished. Such appeals to God, for such purposes, show at once both the origin and use of oaths. See the note on Deu 6:13.

DEUTERONOMY 4:27 The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations, where the LORD will lead you away.

Verse 27

The Lord shall scatter you among the nations - This was amply verified in their different captivities and dispersions.

DEUTERONOMY 4:28 There you shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

Verse 28

There ye shall serve gods - wood and stone - This was also true of the Israelites, not only in their captivities, but also in their own land. And it may now be literally the case with the ten tribes who were carried away captive by the Assyrians, and of whose residence no man at present knows any thing with certainty. That they still exist there can be no doubt; but they are now, most probably, so completely incorporated with the idolaters among whom they dwell, as to be no longer distinguishable: yet God can gather them.

DEUTERONOMY 4:29 But from there you shall seek the LORD your God, and you shall find him, when you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Verse 29

But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord - God is longsuffering, and of tender mercy; and waits, ever ready, to receive a backsliding soul when it returns to him. Is not this promise left on record for the encouragement and salvation of lost Israel?

DEUTERONOMY 4:30 When you are in oppression, and all these things have come on you, in the latter days you shall return to the LORD your God, and listen to his voice.

Verse 30

When thou art in tribulation in the latter days - Are not these the times spoken of? And is there not still hope for Israel? Could we see them become zealous for their own law and religious observances - could we see them humble themselves before the God of Jacob - could we see them conduct their public worship with any tolerable decency and decorum - could we see them zealous to avoid every moral evil, inquiring the road to Zion, with their faces thitherward; then might we hope that the redemption of Israel was at hand: but alas! there is not the most distant evidence of any thing of the kind, except in a very few solitary instances. They are, perhaps, in the present day, more lost to every sacred principle of their own institutions than they have ever been since their return from the Babylonish captivity. By whom shall Jacob arise? for in this sense he is small - deeply fallen, and greatly degraded.

DEUTERONOMY 4:31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God. He will not fail you, neither destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which he swore to them.

DEUTERONOMY 4:32 For ask now of the days that are past, which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and from the one end of the sky to the other, whether there has been anything as this great thing is, or has been heard like it?

DEUTERONOMY 4:33 Did a people ever hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and live?

Verse 33

Did ever people hear the voice of God - It seems to have been a general belief that if God appeared to men, it was for the purpose of destroying them; and indeed most of the extraordinary manifestations of God were in the way of judgment; but here it was different; God did appear in a sovereign and extraordinary manner; but it was for the deliverance and support of the people.

1. They heard his voice speaking with them in a distinct, articulate manner.
 2. They saw the fire, the symbol of his presence, the appearances of which demonstrated it to be supernatural.
 3. Notwithstanding God appeared so terrible, yet no person was destroyed, for he came, not to destroy, but to save.
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DEUTERONOMY 4:34 Or has God tried to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, by war, by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

Verse 34

From the midst of another nation - This was a most extraordinary thing, that a whole people, consisting of upwards of 600,000 effective men, besides women and children, should, without striking a blow, be brought out of the midst of a very powerful nation, to the political welfare of which their services were so essential; that they should be brought out in so open and public a manner; that the sea itself should be supernaturally divided to afford this mighty host a passage; and that, in a desert utterly unfriendly to human life, they should be sustained for forty years. These were such instances of the almighty power and goodness of God as never could be forgotten.

In this verse Moses enumerates seven different means used by the Almighty in effecting Israel's deliverance.

1. Temptations, **מַסּוֹת** massoth, from **נָסָה** nasah, to try or prove; the miracles which God wrought to try the faith and prove the obedience of the children of Israel.
2. Signs, **אוֹתוֹת** othoth, from **אָתָה** athah, to come near; such signs as God gave them of his continual presence and especial providence, particularly the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire, keeping near to them night and day, and always directing their journeys, showing them when and where to pitch their tents, etc., etc.
3. Wonders, **מוֹפְתִים** mophethim, from **יָפַת** yaphath, to persuade; persuasive facts and events, says Parkhurst, whether strictly miraculous, and exceeding the powers of nature, as Exo 7:9; Exo 11:9, Exo 11:10; or not, as Isa 20:3; Eze 12:6, Eze 12:11. It probably means typical representations: in this signification the word is used, Zac 3:8. Joshua, the high priest, and his companions were **אֲנָשֵׁי מוֹפֵת** anshey mopheth, typical men, raised up by God as types of Christ, and proofs that God would bring his servant The Branch. All the dealings of God with this people, and even the people themselves, were types - present signifiers of distant facts and future occurrences.
4. War, **מִלְחָמָה** milchamah, hostile engagements; such as those with the Amalekites, the Amorites, and the Bashanites, in which the hand of God was seen rather than the hand of man.
5. A Mighty Hand, **יַד חֲזָקָה** yad chazakah; one that is strong to deal its blows, irresistible in its operations, and grasps its enemies hard, so that they cannot escape, and protects its friends so powerfully that they cannot be injured. Neither stratagem nor policy was used in this business, but the openly displayed power of God.
6. A Stretched-Out Arm, **זְרוּעַ נְטוּיָה**, **מְרָא זְרוּעָה נְטוּיָה**, **mrA zeroa netuyah**; a series of almighty operations, following each other in quick astonishing succession. Let it be noted that in the Scriptures, 1. The finger of God denotes any manifestation of the Divine power, where effects are produced beyond the power of art or nature. 2. The hand of God signifies the same power, but put forth in a more signal manner. 3. The arm of God, the Divine omnipotence manifested in the most stupendous miracles. 4. The arm of God stretched out, this same omnipotence exerted in a continuation of stupendous miracles, both in the way of judgment and mercy. In this latter sense it appears to be taken in the text: the judgments were poured out on the Egyptians; the mercies wrought in favor of the Israelites.
7. Great Terrors, **מִוֵּרָאִים גְּדוֹלִים** moraim gedolim; such terror, dismay, and consternation as were produced by the ten plagues, to which probably the inspired penman here alludes: or, as the Septuagint has it, **ἐν ὀραμασιν μεγαλοις**, with great or portentous sights; such as that when God looked out of the cloud upon the Egyptians, and their chariot wheels were taken off, Exo 14:24, Exo 14:25. More awful displays of God's judgments, power, and might, were never witnessed by man.

DEUTERONOMY 4:35 It was shown to you so that you might know that the LORD is God. There is no one else besides him.

DEUTERONOMY 4:36 Out of heaven he made you to hear his voice, that he might instruct you. On earth he made you to see his great fire; and you heard his words out of the midst of the fire.

DEUTERONOMY 4:37 Because he loved your fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought you out with his presence, with his great power, out of Egypt;

DEUTERONOMY 4:38 to drive out nations from before you greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as at this day.

DEUTERONOMY 4:39 Know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath. There is no one else.

DEUTERONOMY 4:40 You shall keep his statutes, and his commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land, which the LORD your God gives you, forever.

DEUTERONOMY 4:41 Then Moses set apart three cities beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise;

Verse 41

Then Moses severed three cities - See the law relative to the cities of refuge explained, Num 35:11 (note), etc.

DEUTERONOMY 4:42 that the man slayer might flee there, who kills his neighbour unawares, and didn't hate him in time past; and that fleeing to one of these cities he might live:

DEUTERONOMY 4:43 Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, for the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, for the Manassites.

Verse 43

Bezer in the wilderness - As the cities of refuge are generally understood to be types of the salvation provided by Christ for sinners; so their names have been thought to express some attribute of the Redeemer of mankind. See them explained Jos 20:7-8 (note).

I Suppose the last nine verses of this chapter to have been added by either Joshua or Ezra.

DEUTERONOMY 4:44 This is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel.

DEUTERONOMY 4:45 These are the testimonies, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which Moses spoke to the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt,

DEUTERONOMY 4:46 beyond the Jordan, in the valley over against Beth Peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel struck, when they came out of Egypt.

DEUTERONOMY 4:47 They took his land in possession, and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who were beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise;

DEUTERONOMY 4:48 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of the Arnon, even to Mount Sion (the same is Hermon),

DEUTERONOMY 4:49 and all the Arabah beyond the Jordan eastward, even to the sea of the Arabah, under the slopes of Pisgah.
