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DEUTERONOMY 26:1 It shall be, when you have come in to the land which the LORD your God gives you for an inheritance, possess it, and dwell in it,

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First-fruits must be offered to God, Deu 26:1, Deu 26:2. The form of confession to be used on the occasion, Deu 26:3-11. The third year's tithe to be given to the Levites and the poor, Deu 26:12, and the form of confession to be used on this occasion, Deu 26:13-15. The Israelites are to take Jehovah for their God, and to keep his testimonies, Deu 26:16, Deu 26:17. And Jehovah is to take them for his people, and make them high above all the nations of the earth, Deu 26:18, Deu 26:19.

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DEUTERONOMY 26:2 that you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you shall bring in from your land that the LORD your God gives you. You shall put it in a basket, and shall go to the place which the LORD your God shall choose, to cause his name to dwell there.

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Verse 2

Thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit, etc. - This was intended to keep them in continual remembrance of the kindness of God, in preserving them through so many difficulties and literally fulfilling the promises he had made to them. God being the author of all their blessings, the first-fruits of the land were consecrated to him, as the author of every good and perfect gift.

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DEUTERONOMY 26:3 You shall come to the priest who shall be in those days, and tell him, "I profess this day to the LORD your God, that I have come to the land which the LORD swore to our fathers to give us."

DEUTERONOMY 26:4 The priest shall take the basket out of your hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD your God.

DEUTERONOMY 26:5 You shall answer and say before the LORD your God, "My father was a Syrian ready to perish. He went down into Egypt, and lived there, few in number. There he became a great, mighty, and populous nation.

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Verse 5

A Syrian ready to perish was my father - This passage has been variously understood, both by the ancient versions and by modern commentators. The Vulgate renders it thus: Syrus persequatur patrem meum, "A Syrian persecuted my father." The Septuagint thus: Συριαν απεβαλεν ο πατηρ μου, "My father abandoned Syria." The Targum thus: לבן ארמאה בעא לאובדא ית אבא Laban arammaah bea leobada yath abba, "Laban the Syrian endeavored to destroy my father." The Syriac: "My father was led out of Syria into Egypt." The Arabic: "Surely, Laban the Syrian had almost destroyed my father." The Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel: "Our father Jacob went at first into Syria of Mesopotamia, and Laban sought to destroy him."

Father Houbigant dissents from all, and renders the original thus: Fames urgebat patrem meum, qui in Aegyptum descendit, "Famine oppressed my father, who went down into Egypt." This interpretation Houbigant gives the text, by taking the ' yod from the word ארמי arammi, which signifies an Aramite or Syrian, and joining it to יאבד yeabud, the future for the perfect, which is common enough in Hebrew, and which may signify constrained; and seeking for the meaning of ארם aram in the Arabic arama, which signifies famine, dearth, etc., he thus makes out his version, and this version he defends at large in his notes. It is pretty evident, from the text, that by a Syrian we are to understand Jacob, so called from his long residence in Syria with his father-in-law Laban. And his being ready to perish may signify the hard usage and severe labor he had in Laban's service, by which, as his health was much impaired, so his life might have often been in imminent danger.

DEUTERONOMY 26:6 The Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and imposed hard labour on us.

DEUTERONOMY 26:7 Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers. the LORD heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression.

DEUTERONOMY 26:8 the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs, and with wonders;

Verse 8

With a mighty hand, etc. - See on Deu 4:34 (note).

DEUTERONOMY 26:9 and he has brought us into this place, and has given us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

DEUTERONOMY 26:10 Now, behold, I have brought the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, the LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God, and worship before the LORD your God.

DEUTERONOMY 26:11 You shall rejoice in all the good which the LORD your God has given to you, and to your house, you, and the Levite, and the foreigner who is in your midst.

Verse 11

Thou shalt rejoice - God intends that his followers shall be happy; that they shall eat their bread with gladness and singleness of heart, praising him. Those who eat their meat grudgingly, under the pretense of their unworthiness, etc., profane God's bounties and shall have no thanks for their voluntary humility.

Thou, and the Levite, and the stranger - They were to take care to share God's bounties among all those who were dependent on them. The Levite has no inheritance, let him rejoice with thee. The stranger has no home, let him feel thee to be his friend and his father.

DEUTERONOMY 26:12 When you have made an end of tithing all the tithe of your increase in the third year, which is the year of tithing, then you shall give it to the Levite, to the foreigner, to the fatherless, and to the widow, that they may eat within your gates, and be filled.

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Verse 12

The third year, which is the year of tithing - This is supposed to mean the third year of the seventh or Sabbatical year, in which the tenths were to be given to the poor. See the law, Deu 14:28. But from the letter in both these places it would appear that the tithe was for the Levites, and that this tithe was drawn only once in three years.

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DEUTERONOMY 26:13 You shall say before the LORD your God, "I have put away the holy things out of my house, and also have given them to the Levite, to the foreigner, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all your commandment which you have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of your commandments, neither have I forgotten them.

DEUTERONOMY 26:14 I have not eaten of it in my mourning, neither have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor given of it for the dead. I have listened to the voice of the LORD my God. I have done according to all that you have commanded me.

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Verse 14

I have not - given aught thereof for the dead - That is, I have not consecrated any of it to an idol which was generally a dead man whom superstition and ignorance had deified. From 1Cor 10:27, 1Cor 10:28, we learn that it was customary to offer that flesh to idols which was afterwards sold publicly in the shambles; probably the blood was poured out before the idol in imitation of the sacrifices offered to the true God. Perhaps the text here alludes to a similar custom.

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DEUTERONOMY 26:15 Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel, and the ground which you have given us, as you swore to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey."

DEUTERONOMY 26:16 This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore keep and do them with all your heart and with all your soul.

DEUTERONOMY 26:17 You have declared this day that the LORD is your God, and that you would walk in his ways, and keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his ordinances, and listen to his voice.

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Verse 17

Thou hast avouched the Lord - The people avouch - publicly declare, that they have taken Jehovah to be their God.

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DEUTERONOMY 26:18 the LORD has declared this day that you are a people for his own possession, as he has promised you, and that you should keep all his commandments.

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Verse 18

And the Lord hath avouched - Publicly declared, by the blessings he pours down upon them, that he has taken them to be his peculiar people. Thus the covenant is made and ratified between God and his followers.

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DEUTERONOMY 26:19 He will make you high above all nations that he has made, in praise, in name, and in honour; and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, as he has spoken.

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Verse 19

Make thee high above all nations - It is written, Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people, Pro 14:34. While Israel regarded God's word and kept his testimonies, they were the greatest and most respectable of all nations; but when they forsook God and his law, they became the most contemptible. O Britain, even more highly favored than ancient Israel! learn wisdom by what they have suffered. It is not thy fleets nor thine armies, howsoever excellent and well appointed, that can ultimately exalt and secure thy permanence among the nations. It is righteousness alone. Become irreligious, neglect God's ordinances, profane his Sabbath, despise his word, persecute his followers, and thou art lost. But fear, love, and serve him, and thy enemies shall be found liars, thou shalt defeat their projects, and trample on their high places.

The form of confession when bringing the first-fruits, related Deu 26:4-10, is both affecting and edifying. Even when brought into a state of affluence and rest, they were commanded to remember and publicly acknowledge their former degradation and wretchedness, that they might be ever kept humble and dependent; and they must bring their offering as a public acknowledgment to God that it was by his mercy their state was changed, and by his bounty their comforts were continued. If a man rise from poverty to affluence, and forget his former state, he becomes proud, insolent, and oppressive. If a Christian convert forget his former state, the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged, he soon becomes careless, unthankful, and unholy. The case of the ten lepers that were cleansed, of whom only one returned to give God thanks, is an awful lesson. How many are continually living on the bounty of God, who feel no gratitude for his mercies! Reader, Is this thy state? If so, then expect the just God to curse thy blessings.