

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 6

In this chapter Moses proceeds on in his exhortations to the people of Israel, to attend to the commandments of God, that it might be well with them, (^{<RB0>}Deuteronomy 6:1-3), and begins with a principal and fundamental article of religion, which deserved their first and chief regard, the unity of God, and the love of him, (^{<RB0>}Deuteronomy 6:4,5), which they were carefully to instill in their children, and ever to be mindful of themselves, (^{<RB0>}Deuteronomy 6:6-9), and when they were come into the land of Canaan, and into a plentiful enjoyment of all good things in it, they are exhorted to be careful not to forget the Lord, their kind benefactor; but to fear him, serve him, and not go after other gods, since he is jealous of his honour and worship, (^{<RB0>}Deuteronomy 6:10-15) and not to tempt him, as they had done, but diligently keep, his commandments, that it might be well with them in that land, (^{<RB0>}Deuteronomy 6:16-19), and when their children inquired the reason and meaning of such testimonies, statutes, and judgments, that were enjoined them, they were to give them the history of their case in Egypt, their deliverance from thence, the wonders that were wrought for them, and the introduction of them into the good land of Canaan; and to let them know that these commands were some of them in commemoration of these blessings; and by these they were laid under obligation to regard them all, and the rather, since they were not only for the glory of God, but for their own good, (^{<RB0>}Deuteronomy 6:20-25).

Ver. 1. *Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments,* etc.] Not the ten commandments repeated in the preceding chapter, but all others, whether moral, ceremonial, or judicial, afterwards declared; for what Moses now did was only to give a repetition and fresh declaration of such laws as he had before received, and delivered to the people; and so the Targum of Jonathan thus paraphrases this clause,

“this is a declaration of the commandments, statutes, and judgments:”

which the Lord your God commanded to teach you; that is, which he commanded him, Moses, to teach them, though not fully expressed, as may be learned from (^(R00L)Deuteronomy 4:1,5 5:31)

that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it; this is often observed, to imprint upon their minds a sense of their duty, even of obedience to the laws of God, which they were carefully and diligently to perform in the land of Canaan they were going into, and by which they were to hold their possession of it.

Ver. 2. *That thou mightest fear the Lord thy God*, etc.] Being taught to know the greatness of his being, and the nature of his mind and will, and the manner of his worship; and not with a slavish fear, but with a filial one, a reverential affection for God; being instructed in their duty, as of children, to their God and Father; (see ^(R059)Deuteronomy 5:29)

to keep all his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee; not in his own name, but in the name, and by the authority of God, whose minister and messenger he was; and all, having the stamp of divine authority on them, were to be observed and kept, and not one to be neglected or departed from:

thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; a man and his children, and grandchildren; he was to take care that they kept all the commandments of the Lord as long as he lived, and had any concern with them:

and that thy days may be prolonged; long life being reckoned a very great outward mercy; a long enjoyment of, and continuance in the land of Canaan, is chiefly designed, which is usually expressed when this is observed; (see ^(R026)Deuteronomy 4:26,40 5:16,33).

Ver. 3. *Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it*, etc.] Or them, the commandments given them:

that it may be well with thee; in body and estate:

and that ye may increase mightily; not only in wealth and riches, but chiefly in numbers:

as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee; a promise of increase of numbers was frequently made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; as that their seed should be as the stars of heaven, and as the dust of the earth, and

the sand on the sea shore, innumerable; (see ^{<115>}Genesis 15:5 22:17 25:4 28:14) and this especially

in the land that floweth with milk and honey; a very common periphrasis of the land of Canaan, because of the plenty of good things in it; (see ^{<118>}Exodus 3:8).

Ver. 4. *Hear, O Israel*, etc.] These are the words of Moses, stirring up the people to an attention to what he was about to say of this great and momentous article, the unity of God, to prevent their going into polytheism and idolatry. From one of the words here used, the Jews call this section Kiriathshema, which they oblige themselves to read twice a day, morning and evening ^{f61}; the last letter of the first word in this verse, “Shema”, meaning “hear”, and the last letter of the last word in it, “Echad”, meaning “one”, are greater than ordinary; which seems designed to excite the attention to what is contained in this passage:

the Lord our God is one Lord; the doctrine of which is, that the Lord, who was the covenant God and Father of his people Israel, is but one Jehovah; he is Jehovah, the Being of beings, a self-existent Being, eternal and immutable; and he is but one in nature and essence; this appears from the perfection of his nature, his eternity, omnipotence, omnipresence, infinity, goodness, self-sufficiency, and perfection; for there can be but one eternal, one omnipotent, one omnipresent, one infinite, one that is originally and of himself good; one self, and all sufficient, and perfect Being; and which also may be concluded from his being the first cause of all things, which can be but one; and from his relations to his creatures, as their King, ruler, governor, and lawgiver. And for this purpose these words are cited in (^{<112>}Mark 12:29,30) but then they no ways contradict the doctrine of a trinity of persons in the unity of the divine essence, the Father, Word, and Holy Spirit, which three are one; the one God, the one Jehovah, as here expressed; (see ^{<117>}1 John 5:7) and so the ancient Jews understood this passage. In an ancient book of theirs it is said ^{f62} Jehovah, Elohenu, Jehovah (i.e. Jehovah, our God, Jehovah); these are the three degrees with respect to this sublime mystery; “in the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth”; and again ^{f63}, Jehovah, Elohenu, Jehovah, they are one; the three forms (modes or things) which are one; and elsewhere ^{f64} it is observed, there are two, and one is joined to them, and they are three; and when the three are one, he says to (or of) them, these are the two names which Israel heard, Jehovah, Jehovah, and Elohenu (our God) is joined

unto them; and it is the seal of the ring of truth, and when they are joined they are one in one unity; which is illustrated by the three names the soul of man is called by, the soul, spirit, and breath; and elsewhere they say ^{f65} the holy blessed God, and his Shechinah, are called one; (see ~~ARB~~ John 10:30).

Ver. 5. *And thou shalt love the Lord thy God*, etc.] Which is the first and chief commandment in the law, the sum and substance of the first table of it; and includes in it, or at least has connected with it, knowledge of God, esteem of him, delight in him, faith and trust in him, fear and worship of him, and obedience to him, which when right springs from it. God is to be loved because of the perfections of his nature, and the works of his hand, of nature, providence, and grace; and because of the relations he stands in to men, and especially to his own people; and because of his peculiar love to them; and, indeed, he is to be loved by all men for his care of them, and blessings of goodness bestowed on them; the manner in which this is to be done follows:

with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might; with a superlative love, above all creatures whatever; with the whole of the affections of the heart, with great fervency and ardour of spirit, in the sincerity of the soul, and with all the strength of grace a man has, with such love that is as strong as death. Jarchi interprets loving God with all the heart, that is, with thy heart not divided about God, a heart not divided between God and the creature; “all thy might” he interprets of mammon or substance; and, indeed, that is one way in which men may show their love to God, by laying out their substance in his service, and for the support of his cause and interest in the world. Aben Ezra by “the heart” understands knowledge, and by the “soul” the spirit of man that is in his body, and by might perfect love in the heart.

Ver. 6. *And these words, which I command thee this day*, etc.] To hearken to, observe, and take notice of, that God is one, and is to be loved in the strongest manner that possibly can be:

shall be in thine heart; on the table of the heart, as the Targum of Jonathan; (see ~~ARB~~ 2 Corinthians 3:3), be cordially received, have a place in the affections of the heart, and be retained in mind and memory.

Ver. 7. *And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children*, etc.] Care and diligence are to be used, and pains taken, to instruct children, as soon as they are capable, in the knowledge of God, and of his commandments;

that they are to love him, fear him, serve, and worship him; this is to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, (⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾Ephesians 6:4), it may be rendered “thou shalt whet or sharpen them”^{f66}, the words or commandments; it is expressive of diligence and industry in teaching, by frequent repetition of things, by inculcating them continually into their minds, endeavouring to imprint them there, that they may be sharp, ready, and expert in them:

and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house; at the time of meals, or at leisure hours, or even when employed in any business in the house which will admit of it; every opportunity should be taken to instil the knowledge of divine things into their tender minds: *and when thou walkest by the way*; in a journey, and any of his children with him; or for diversion, in the garden, field, or vineyard; occasion may be taken on sight of any of the works of creation to lead into a discourse concerning God, his nature, perfections, and works, and the obligations his creatures lie under to love, fear, and serve him: and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; at the time of going to bed, and rising from it; which, as they are seasons of prayer to God, may be improved in instruction of children.

Ver. 8. *And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand*, etc.] As a man ties anything to his hand for a token, that he may remember somewhat he is desirous of; though the Jews understand this literally, of binding a scroll of parchment, with this section and others written in it, upon their left hand, as the Targum of Jonathan here interprets the hand:

and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and which the same Targum interprets of the Tephilim, or phylacteries, which the Jews wear upon their foreheads, and on their arms, and so Jarchi; of which (see Gill on ⁽⁴⁰⁵⁾Matthew 23:5”).

Ver. 9. *And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thine house, and on thy gates.*] To put them in mind of them when they went out and came in, that they might be careful to observe them; this the Jews take literally also, and write in a scroll of parchment this section with some passages; and, as the Targum of Jonathan here, fix them in three places, over against the bed chamber, upon the posts of the house, and on the gate at the right hand of it; and this is what they call the Mezuzah; and the account given of it is this. In a parchment prepared for the purpose, they write the words in (⁽⁴⁰⁰⁾Deuteronomy 6:4-9 11:13-20) and then roll up the parchment, and write on it “Shaddai”; and put it either into a cane (or reed), or else into a

like hollow piece of wood, and so fasten it to the wall on the posts of the door at the right hand of entrance; and thus, as often as they go in and out, they make it a part of their devotion to touch this parchment, and kiss it ^{f67}.

Ver. 10. *And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land,* etc.] The land of Canaan, on the borders of which they now were, and were just going into:

which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee; of his own free favour and good will, without any merit and desert of theirs, and in which would be found

great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not; large and capacious, delightfully situated, well built, and strongly fortified, without any pains or expense of theirs; all ready for them to take possession of, and dwell in; and so should no longer reside in tents or booths, as they had for forty years past, but in spacious and noble cities.

Ver. 11. *And houses full of all good things which thou filledst not,* etc.] Not only full of good, convenient, and rich household furniture, but of the fruits of the earth, of corn, and wine, and oil, and also, perhaps, of gold and silver:

and wells digged which thou diggedst not; which in those hot and dry countries were in much esteem, and of great worth; (see ^{<0268>}Genesis 26:18-22),

vineyards and olive trees which thou plantedst not; which Canaan abounded with much more than Egypt, where there were but few vines and olive trees, though of both these there were more where the Israelites lived than elsewhere; (see Gill on "^{<0471>}Genesis 47:11") and these therefore might be such as they had seen in Egypt, in that part of it in which they dwelt, Goshen, which was in the Heracleotic nome, and that Strabo ^{f68} says only produced perfect olives, and fruit bearing trees, but the rest of Egypt wanted oil; and this home is the same which the Arabs now call the province of Fium, of which Leo Africanus ^{f69} says, it produces a large quantity of olives; so that this might be observed for the encouragement of the Israelites:

when thou shalt have eaten and be full; having such plenty of good things the land would furnish them with.

Ver. 12. *Then beware lest thou forget the Lord*, etc.] To love, fear, and worship him, and keep his commands; creature enjoyments being apt to get possession of the heart, and the affections of it; (^{410B}Proverbs 30:9)

which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; into a land abounding with all the above good things, and therefore under the highest obligations to remember the Lord and his kindnesses, and to serve and glorify him: (^{410C}Exodus 20:2).

Ver. 13. *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him*, etc.] Serve him through fear; not through slavish fear, a fear of hell and damnation; but through filial fear, a reverential affection for that God that had brought them out of a state of bondage into great and glorious liberty, out of Egypt into Canaan's land, out of a place of misery into a land of plenty; and therefore should fear the Lord and his goodness, and from such a fear of him serve him, in every part of worship, public and private, enjoined; this passage Christ refers to (^{410D}Matthew 4:10)

and shalt swear by his name; when they made a covenant with any, or were called to bear a testimony for the decision of any controversy which could not be otherwise finished; or whenever they took an oath on any account, which should never be taken rashly or on any trivial account, and much less falsely; it should be taken not in the name of any idol, or of any other but the true and living God; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“in the name of the Word of the Lord, in truth ye shall swear.”

Ver. 14. *Ye shall not go after other gods*, etc.] To serve and worship them, and swear by them; and which indeed are no gods, only nominal and fictitious ones; idols which are nothing in the world, and ought to have no veneration and adoration given them; to go after them is to worship them, and this is to depart from the true God, and go a whoring after false deities:

of the gods of the people which are round about you; the gods of the Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, Philistines, and Egyptians; all of which had their peculiar deities.

Ver. 15. *For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you*, etc.] He was near to them, in the midst of them, his tabernacle being placed between their camps; and was a God jealous of his honour and glory in matters of worship, and would resent any affront given him in that way:

lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee; there being nothing more apt to stir up his wrath than idolatry:

and destroy thee from off the face of the earth; suffer them to be carried captive out of their own land, and to be scattered among the nations of the world, and be utterly destroyed.

Ver. 16. *Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God*, etc.] By striving with him or against him, by murmuring at or complaining of his providential dealings with them, or by requiring a sign of him, or miracles to be done by him; this is another passage used by Christ to repel the temptations of Satan, (^{<4047>}Matthew 4:7),

as tempted him in Massah; a place so called from the Israelites tempting the Lord there, (^{<4077>}Exodus 17:7), the Targum of Jonathan adds, with ten temptations; (see ^{<41421>}Numbers 14:21).

Ver. 17. *You shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God*, etc.] Not only the ten commands, but all others:

and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee; those of a judicial and ceremonial kind.

Ver. 18. *And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord*, etc.] And what is such appears from the declaration of his mind and will in the commandments he has given, and obeying which is therefore doing what is right and good; for his commandment is holy, just, and good, being agreeable both to his nature and will, (^{<45712>}Romans 7:12) that it may be well with thee; as it is with those that fear God, and keep his commandments:

and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord sware unto thy fathers; to give to them and to their posterity, even the land of Canaan; but if they did not what was right and good in the sight of God, they might expect to be kept out of it, as their immediate parents were, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness.

Ver. 19. *To cast out all thine enemies from before thee*, etc.] This the Lord promised, and as it seems with an oath, that he would do for them; drive out their enemies, and make way for the settlement of them in their country:

as the Lord hath spoken; (see ^{<01518>}Genesis 15:18,19,20 22:17 ^{<0238>}Exodus 23:28).

Ver. 20. *And when thy son asketh thee in time to come*, etc.] Or “tomorrow”^{f70}; that is, in later times, as Jarchi interprets it; any time after this, and particularly after they were come into the land of Canaan, when the several laws, statutes, and ordinances appointed, would take place and be obeyed:

what [mean] the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord our God hath commanded you? what is the reason of the various rites, customs, and usages, the observance of which is directed to, such as the feasts of passover, pentecost, tabernacles, sacrifices, and other duties of religion?

Ver. 21 *Then shall thou say unto thy son*, etc.] In order to lead him into the spring and original of them, and to acquaint him with the goodness of God, which laid them under obligation to observe them:

we were Pharaoh’s bondmen in Egypt; were brought into bondage and slavery to Pharaoh king of Egypt, into whose country their ancestors came, and where they resided many years, and at length were reduced to the utmost servitude and misery:

and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; by the exertion of his mighty power, which the Egyptians and their king could not withstand, as a token of his care and kindness to us; by the ties of which we are bound in gratitude to observe his commands. The Targum of Jonathan is,

“the Word of the Lord brought us, etc.”

and it was Christ the Son of God that was from first to last concerned in that affair, even from the appearance to Moses in the bush to Israel’s coming out of Egypt.

Ver. 22. *And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore*, etc.] Meaning the ten plagues, which were signs of the power of God, marvellous works, great, above the power of nature, and very sore or “evil”^{f71}; very distressing to the Egyptians; for they came and lay heavy

upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes; upon the king, his courtiers, and the whole land, and which were done

publicly in the sight of the people of Israel, as well as the Egyptians; and there were some then living, though at that time when wrought under twenty years, who saw with their own eyes what were done to them, and could never forget them. Here also the Targum of Jonathan has it,

“and the Word of the Lord sent signs, etc”

Ver. 23. *And he brought us out from thence*, etc.] By means of those miraculous plagues, even out of a state of bondage and misery: and in order

that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers; to bring them into the land of Canaan, give it to them, and put them in the possession of it; and so fulfil his promise and his oath made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Ver. 24. *And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes*, etc.] Some of which were designed on purpose to commemorate the wonderful deliverance out of Egypt, as particularly the passover; and all of them they were obliged in gratitude to obey, in consideration of such great favours bestowed upon them:

to fear the Lord our God, for our good always: as it is always for the good of men, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, to fear the Lord; for there is no want to them that fear him, nor will the Lord withhold good things from them; (see ¹³⁴⁰Psalm 34:9,10),

that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day; in bodily health and strength, and in the enjoyment of the good land, and all the blessings and benefits of it.

Ver. 25. *And it shall be our righteousness*, etc.] Or a mercy, benefit, and blessing to us; or this shall be reckoned our righteousness, and that by which we shall be justified:

if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he hath commanded us; in order to have such a justifying righteousness, a man must keep all the commandments of God, not one excepted; and that perfectly, without the least breach of them in thought, word, or deed; and that before the Lord, in his sight, not as it may appear to a man himself, or to others, but as it appears to God, who sees the heart, and weighs all actions; and a man must keep them in the manner the Lord has

commanded, even with all his heart, soul, and strength, as in (~~REF~~ Deuteronomy 6:5) and this is not possible for a sinful man to do; and therefore righteousness cannot be by the law. Only Christ could thus keep all the commandments of God, and his obedience is our righteousness; and he only is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes, and to him we must seek for it.