

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 7

In this chapter the Israelites are exhorted to destroy the seven nations of the land of Canaan, when they entered into it, and to make no alliances with them of any kind, nor suffer any remains of idolatry to continue, (^{<R101>}Deuteronomy 7:1-5) to observe which, and other commands of God, they are urged from the consideration of their being freely chosen of God above all other people, and of their being redeemed out of the house of bondage, and of the Lord's being a covenant keeping God to them, (^{<R106>}Deuteronomy 7:6-11) and it is promised them, for their further encouragement to keep the commands of God, that they should have an increase of all temporal good things, and no evils and calamities should come upon them, (^{<R102>}Deuteronomy 6:12-16), and, lest they should be disheartened at the numbers and might of their enemies, they are put in mind of what God had done for them in Egypt, and of what he had promised to do for them now, (^{<R107>}Deuteronomy 7:17-20) and they are assured that the nations should be cast out before them by little and little, until they were utterly destroyed, (^{<R121>}Deuteronomy 7:21-24) and the chapter is concluded with an exhortation to destroy their images, and not admit anything of that sort to be brought into their houses, (^{<R125>}Deuteronomy 7:25,26).

Ver. 1. *When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it*, etc.] The land of Canaan they were just now going into to take possession of; their introduction into which is here, as in many other places, ascribed not to themselves, or their leaders, but to the Lord as their covenant God:

and hath cast out many nations before thee; even all that were in it, the seven following:

the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites; the Canaanites were a particular nation in the land of Canaan, which had their name from Canaan himself; the rest were called from different sons of his; (see

<1005>Genesis 10:15-17), the country of the Gergesenes, the same with the Gergashites, continued its name unto the times of Christ, (<4188>Matthew 8:28),

seven nations greater and mightier than thou; more in number, and more robust in body, some being of a gigantic stature; there were ten of these nations in Abraham's time, three of them were since sunk or swallowed up among the rest, the Kenites, and Kenizires, and the Rephaim; for instead of the Kadmonites the Hivites are here put, which seem to be the same.

Ver. 2. *And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee*, etc.] Into their hands:

thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; men, women, and children; which was ordered not merely to make way and room for the people of Israel to inherit their land, but as a punishment for capital crimes they had been guilty of, such as idolatry, incest, murder, etc. wherefore though they were reprieved for a while for Israel's sake, till their time was come to possess the land, they were at length righteously punished; which observed, abates the seeming severity exercised upon them:

thou shalt make no covenant with them; to dwell in their cities and houses, and enjoy their lands and estates, on any condition whatever; and though they did make a league with the Gibeonites, that was obtained by fraud, they pretending not to be of the land of Canaan, but to come from a very distant country:

nor show mercy unto them; by sparing their lives, bestowing any favours upon them, or giving them any help and assistance when in distress: the Jews extend this to all other Heathen nations besides these seven; wherefore, if an Israelite, as Maimonides^{f72} says, should see a Gentile perishing, or plunged into a river, he may not take him out, nor administer medicine to a sick person. Hence Juvenal^{f73} the poet upbraids them with their unkindness and incivility; and says that Moses delivered it as a Jewish law, in a secret volume of his, perhaps referring to this book of Deuteronomy, that the Jews might not direct a poor traveller in his way unless he was one of their religion, nor one athirst to a fountain of water; and which led Tacitus^{f74}, the Heathen historian, to make this remark upon them, that they entertained an hostile hatred against all other people.

Ver. 3. *Neither shalt thou make marriages with them*, etc.] Unless they became proselytes, as Rahab, who was married by Salmon, and so those of

other nations, as Ruth the Moabitess, and so any captive taken in war; otherwise it was not lawful, bad consequences have followed upon it, which it is the design of this law to prevent; that is, being snared and drawn aside into idolatry, which was the case of Solomon:

thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son; for, according to the Targum of Jonathan, whosoever marries with them, it is as if he married with their idols: and this law, according to the Jewish writers^{f75}, is binding with respect to other nations besides the seven; and whosoever marries any Heathen, of whatsoever nation, is to be beaten.

Ver. 4. *For they will turn away thy son from following me*, etc.] From the pure worship of God, his word, statutes, and ordinances:

that they may serve other gods; worship their idols; that is, the daughters of Heathens, married to the sons of Israelites, would entice them from the worship of the true God to idolatry; so the Targum of Jonathan; as Solomon's wives drew him aside: or "he will turn away thy son"^{f76}; meaning, as Jarchi observes, that the son of an Heathen, that marries the daughter of an Israelite, will turn away the son born of her to idolatry, called here the grandfather's son; though Aben Ezra says this respects the son mentioned in the preceding verse, that is, the son married to an Heathen woman, and not to a son born in such marriage:

so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly; by some immediate judgment striking dead at once; there being nothing more provoking to God than idolatry, that being directly contrary to his being, nature, perfections, honour, and glory, of which he is jealous.

Ver. 5. *But thus shall ye deal with them*, etc.] The inhabitants of the land of Canaan:

ye shall destroy their altars; on which they sacrificed to their idols:

and break down their images; of their gods, and the statues and pillars erected to the honour of them:

and cut down their groves; sacred to idols, which were usually planted on hills, and about Heathen temples, and under which idols were placed to be worshipped. The Targum of Jonathan calls them trees of their adoration, under which they worshipped; though there was a worship paid to them,

not indeed directly to them, or for their sakes, but for the sake of the idols they were sacred to, or were placed under them; so Maimonides¹⁷⁷ says, a tree which at first was planted to be worshipped is forbidden of any use (or profit); and this is the *hr̥ṣa*, or “grove”, spoken of in the law, a tree planted and lopped, of which a graven image is made for an idol; and so the tree that has been worshipped, though the body of it is, not forbidden, all the shoots and leaves, and the branches, and the fruits it produces all the time it is worshipped, are forbidden to be used: though the word here used sometimes seems to signify, not a grove of trees, but some image itself, since we read of it in the temple, (¹²⁰⁷2 Kings 21:7 23:6),

and burn their graven images with fire; distinguished from their molten images, which may be meant in a preceding clause, and which are particularly mentioned as to be destroyed as well as these, (¹⁸⁸²Numbers 33:52).

Ver. 6. *For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God*, etc.] Not sanctified in a spiritual sense, or having principles of grace and holiness in them, from whence holy actions sprang, at least not all of them; but they were separated from all other people in the world to the pure worship and service of God in an external manner, and therefore were to avoid all idolatry, and every appearance of it:

the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth; for special service and worship, and to enjoy special privileges and benefits, civil and religious; though they were not chosen to special grace here, and eternal glory hereafter; at least not all of them, only a remnant, according to the election of grace; yet they were typical of the chosen people of God in a special sense; who are chosen out of the world to be a peculiar people, to be holy here and happy hereafter; to enjoy communion with God in this life and that to come, as well as to serve and glorify him now and for evermore.

Ver. 7. *The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you*, etc.] He had done both, and the one as the effect and evidence of the other; he loved them, and therefore he chose them; but neither of them,

because ye were more in number than any people; not for the quantity of them, nor even for the quality of them:

for ye were the fewest of all people; fewer than the Egyptians, from whence they came, and than the Canaanites they were going to drive out and inherit their land, (^{<B01>}Deuteronomy 7:1). Those whom God has loved with an everlasting love, and as a fruit of it has chosen them in Christ before the world began to grace and glory, holiness and happiness, are but a small number, a little flock; though many are called, few are chosen; nor are they better than others, being by nature children of wrath even as others, and as to their outward circumstances the poor of this world.

Ver. 8. *But because the Lord loved you*, etc.] With an unmerited love; he loved them, because he loved them; that is, because he would love them; his love was not owing to any goodness in them, or done by them, or any love in them to him, but to his own good will and pleasure:

and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers; the promise he had made, confirmed by an oath:

hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand; out of the land of Egypt:

and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen; where they were bondmen to the Egyptians:

from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; who detained them, and refused to let them go.

Ver. 9 *Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God*, etc.] The only true and living God, and not the idols of the Gentiles, who are false and lifeless ones, and therefore not the proper objects of adoration:

the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy; as appeared by fulfilling the promise made to their fathers, in bringing them out of Egypt, and now them to the borders of the land of Canaan given them for an inheritance:

with them that love him, and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; (see ^{<B01>}Exodus 20:6) which are not the causes or conditions of his covenant and mercy, nor of his keeping them, but descriptive of the persons that enjoy the benefit thereof.

Ver. 10. *And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them*, etc.] Openly, publicly, and at once, they not being able to make any resistance. Onkelos interprets it in their lifetime, and so Jarchi which agrees

with the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem: “or to his face”;^{f78} the face of God; that is, he will punish them that hate him to his face, who are audacious, bold, impudent sinners; sinners before the Lord, as the men of Sodom were, (^{Q13B}Genesis 13:13),

he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face; not defer the execution of his judgment and vengeance, which may seem to slumber and linger, but will quickly and openly bring it upon the sinner; this also the Chaldee paraphrases explain as before.

Ver. 11. *Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments,* etc.] The laws, moral, ceremonial, and judicial, urged thereunto both by promises and threatenings, in hopes of reward, and through fear of punishment:

which I command thee this day, to do them; in the name of the Lord, and by his authority; by virtue of which he made a new declaration of them to put them in mind of them in order to observe them.

Ver. 12. *Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep and do them,* etc.] Attentively listen to the declaration made of them, and be careful to observe them:

that the Lord thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers; to bring them into the land of Canaan, and continue them in it; yea, to send the Messiah to them, and bring him the salvation of Israel out of Zion; (see ^{Q16B}Luke 1:68-73).

Ver. 13. *And he will love thee,* etc.] As he has done, and rest in his love, and give further instances and proofs of it:

and bless thee, and multiply thee; that is bless thee with a multiplication of offspring, which was what was often promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that their seed should be as the stars of heaven, the dust of the earth, and the sand of the sea:

he will also bless the fruit of thy womb; not only give strength to conceive, but carry on the pregnancy, preserve the foetus, and prevent miscarrying:

and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil; which were the principal produce of it:

the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep: their larger and lesser cattle, oxen and sheep: in the land which he swore unto thy fathers to give thee; the land of Canaan, given in promise, and that established by an oath.

Ver. 14. *Thou shalt be blessed above all people*, etc.] Even with temporal blessings, besides those of a religious kind; they having the oracles of God, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises, (^{<B10>}Romans 3:1,2 9:4),

there shall not be male or female barren among you; which to be was reckoned a reproach, and the contrary a blessing, (^{<B12>}Luke 1:25 ^{<B13>}Psalm 127:5) (^{<B14>}Psalm 128:3,4)

or among your cattle; the Targum of Jonathan is, nor thy beasts barren of wool, and milk, and lambs.

Ver. 15. *And will take away from thee all sickness*, etc.] Bodily sickness and diseases, prevent the coming of them, or remove them when come:

and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt which thou knowest upon thee; meaning either the plagues that were inflicted upon them to oblige them to let the Israelites go, of which they had perfect knowledge; or else some noxious and nauseous diseases, which were common among, and peculiar to, the Egyptians, particularly what is called the botch of Egypt; see (^{<B15>}Exodus 15:26), likewise the leprosy; (see Gill on “^{<B16>}Leviticus 13:2”), (see Gill on “^{<B17>}Deuteronomy 28:27”).

but will lay them upon all them that hate thee; with which God sometimes punishes his and his people’s enemies; (see ^{<B18>}Judges 5:9 ^{<B19>}Revelation 16:10,11).

Ver. 16. *And thou shall consume all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee*, etc.] All the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, which the Lord should deliver into their hands; them they were not to spare, but utterly destroy men, women, and children:

thine eye shall have no pity upon them; (see Gill on “^{<B20>}Deuteronomy 7:2”),

neither shall thou serve their gods, for that will be a snare unto thee; which will bring into utter ruin and destruction; (see ^{<B21>}Exodus 23:33).

Ver. 17. *If thou shall say in thine heart,* etc.] Should have secret thoughts arise in the heart, misgivings of heart, fears and doubts there, which, though not outwardly expressed, might be inwardly retained:

these nations are more than I; seven to one, and perhaps anyone of them as powerful as Israel:

how can I dispossess them? of the land they inherit, and take possession of it.

Ver. 18. *Thou shalt not be afraid of them,* etc.] Neither on account of their number, nor their strength:

but shall well remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt; a people more numerous and potent than the Canaanites, among whom the Lord wrought such wonderful things by his power, which obliged them to let Israel go; and his power was now the same, he could do as great things to the Canaanites as he had to the Egyptians; and as he had delivered them out of the hands of the Egyptians, he could as easily deliver the Canaanites into their hands, and put them into the possession of their country.

Ver. 19. *The great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders,* etc.] The miracles wrought in Egypt; (see ^{<19>}Deuteronomy 4:34)

and the mighty hand, and stretched out arm, whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out; that is, out of Egypt, which was an instance and proof of his almighty power:

so shall the Lord thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid; not perform the same miraculous operations among them, but exert the same power in the destruction of them, and in dispossessing them of their land, as in destroying the Egyptians, and delivering Israel from among them.

Ver. 20. *Moreover, the Lord thy God will send the hornet among them,* etc.] Not a single one, but several of them, and which may be understood of creatures so called, which resemble wasps, only twice as large, an insect very bold and venomous; (see ^{<20>}Exodus 23:28). Aben Ezra interprets it of the leprosy:

until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed; such of the Canaanites who escaped the sword of the Israelites, and hid themselves in holes and caverns of the earth; these the hornets would find out and sting them to death, until they were all destroyed. Thus God can make use of small creatures, even insects, to destroy nations the most populous and mighty.

Ver. 21. *Thou shall not be affrighted at them*, etc.] At their numbers, nor at their gigantic stature:

for the Lord thy God is among you: in the tabernacle, in the holy of holies, which was in the midst of them, and besides would give proof of his powerful presence among them, in protecting them, and destroying their enemies;

a mighty God and terrible; mighty to save his people, and terrible to others.

Ver. 22. *And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little*, etc.] Which is observed for their encouragement, who seeing that all were not destroyed at once, might fear the work would never be thoroughly accomplished; (see ⁽¹²³⁾Exodus 23:30),

thou mayest not consume them at once; though it was in the power of their hands to do it, there being some wise reasons for sparing them awhile, at least for not cutting them off all at once, and one follows:

lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee; through so many places being waste without inhabitants, and there being none to destroy these creatures; and who therefore in course would become more numerous, and so more troublesome and distressing to the Israelites. The Targum of Jonathan adds, by way of explanation,

“when they shall come to devour their carcasses,”

the carcasses of the slain Canaanites; who, if destroyed at once, would be so many, that they would lie unburied, which would invite the beasts of the field to come out of their lurking places to feed upon them, and which might lead them on to mischief among the Israelites.

Ver. 23. *But the Lord thy God shall deliver them unto thee*, etc.] Gradually, by little and little, until at length they should all come into their

hands: and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction until they be destroyed; even all of them.

Ver. 24. *And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand*, etc.] Who were very numerous, for though there were but seven nations, there were more kings, even one and thirty, (^{<612>}Joshua 12:9-24),

thou shall destroy their name from under heaven; not only destroy the name of the reigning kings, so as that they should not be remembered and made mention of any more, but put an end to the name and race of kings among them, so that they should never have any more, as they never had:

there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them; the nations and their kings.

Ver. 25. *The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire*, etc.] Which is repeated from (^{<615>}Deuteronomy 7:5), that it might be the more observed and strictly performed, and which unless done, they could not expect the utter destruction of their enemies, who were left in the land to try and prove them with respect to this very thing:

thou shall not desire the silver or gold that is on them: the raiment of gold or silver with which they were bedecked, or the plates of gold and silver with which they were covered, or any ornament about them, as chains and the like, that were of either of these metals; (see ^{<2616>}Ezekiel 16:16,17,18 ^{<2410>}Jeremiah 10:9),

nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein; nor take it into their possession, or bring it into their houses, as in the next verse, lest they should be under a temptation to worship it, or keep it as a superstitious relic:

for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God; not only the idol itself, being put in the place of God, and so derogatory to his honour and glory, but the gold and silver on it, being devoted to a superstitious and idolatrous use; and even the taking of it, and appropriating it to a man's own use, was an abomination, and resented by the Lord as such.

Ver. 26. *Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thy house*, etc.] An idol, so the Targum of Jonathan, the abominations of idols and their utensils, or what is ministered to them, with anything that appertains to them, or is used in the service of them, as well as the gold and silver upon

them; this care was taken as much as possible to prevent idolatry, and all appearance of it, and to show what might lead on and be a temptation to it:

lest thou be a cursed thing like it; as an idol is, and so is everyone that worships it; for what more exposes to the curse of God than idolatry, a breach of the first table of the law? and therefore subjects a man to the curse of it; nay, the bringing of an idol into a man's house brings a curse into it, and makes him liable thereunto; for if the curse enters into the house of the thief or perjurer, much more into the house of a man guilty of idolatry in any degree of it; (see ~~381B~~ Zechariah 5:3,4) but thou shalt utterly detest it; the Targum of Jonathan adds, as the pollution of an abominable thing:

and thou shalt utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed thing; devoted to destruction; and to have anything to do with it is the way to entail a curse, and bring to everlasting ruin and destruction; (see ~~621B~~ Revelation 21:8).