

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 8

In this chapter Moses repeats the exhortation to observe the commands of God, and urges the Israelites to it, from the consideration of the great and good things God had done for them in the wilderness, and even in those instances which were chastisements, and were of an humbling nature, (^{<R80>}Deuteronomy 8:1-6), and on the consideration of the blessings of the good land they were going to possess, (^{<R80>}Deuteronomy 8:7-9) for which blessings they are exhorted to be thankful, and are cautioned against pride of heart through them, and forgetfulness of God, and of his goodness to them while in the wilderness, and when brought into the land of Canaan, which they were to ascribe to his power and goodness, and not their own, (^{<R80>}Deuteronomy 8:10-18), and the chapter is concluded with a warning against idolatry, lest they perish through it as the nations before them, (^{<R80>}Deuteronomy 8:19,20).

Ver. 1. *All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do*, etc.] It is repeated over and over again, to impress it on their minds, and to show the importance and necessity of it, how greatly it was expected from them, and how much it was incumbent on them:

that ye may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers; for their temporal life, and the mercies and comforts of it, the multiplication of their offspring, and of their substance, their entrance into the land of Canaan, possession of it, and continuance in it, all depended on their obedience to the commands of God; (see ^{<R80>}Deuteronomy 19:20).

Ver. 2. *And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness*, etc.] For this was now the fortieth year of their coming out of Egypt into the wilderness, into which they quickly came after their departure from thence, and had been in one wilderness or another ever since, in which God went before them in a pillar of cloud and fire, and directed their way; and now they are called upon to remember all the occurrences in the way, what favours and mercies had

been bestowed upon them, what provisions had been made for them, what enemies they had been delivered from or overcome, as well as what afflictions and chastisements had attended them: and so the people of God should call to mind how they were brought to see their wilderness state and condition by nature; how they were brought out of it, and stopped in their career of sin, and turned from their evil ways, and led to Christ; what gracious promises have been made to them; what light has been afforded them; what communion they have had with God; what pleasure in his ordinances; what food they have been fed with; what temptations have befallen them, and how delivered out of them; and what afflictions have been laid upon them, and how supported under them, and freed from them:

to humble thee; under the mighty hand of God, to bring down the pride of their hearts and hide it from them; to lay them low in their own eyes, and clothe them with humility, that the Lord alone might be exalted: and

to prove thee; whether they would be obedient to his laws, or how they would behave towards him both in prosperity and adversity, and to try their graces, their faith and patience, fear and love:

to know what was in thine heart; that is, to make it known to themselves and others; for God knew all that was in it, the wickedness of it, the unbelief, rebellion, and frowardness of it, and needed not any ways and means to get into the knowledge of it; (see ^{<1423>}2 Chronicles 32:31),

whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no; which they had in such a solemn manner promised to do; (^{<1877>}Deuteronomy 5:27-29).

Ver. 3. *And he humbled thee*, etc.] Or afflicted thee with want of bread:

and suffered thee to hunger; that there might be an opportunity of showing his mercy, and exerting his power:

and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; a sort of food they had never seen before, and when they saw it, knew not what it was, but asked, what is it? (^{<1665>}Exodus 16:15). Thus the Lord humbles his people by his Spirit and grace, and brings them to see themselves to be in want, and creates in them desires after spiritual food, and feeds them with Christ the hidden manna, whose person, office, and grace, they were before ignorant of:

that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only; which is the stay and staff of life, and which strengthens man's heart, and is the main support of it, being the ordinary and usual food man lives upon, and is put for all the rest:

but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live: not so much by the food he eats as by the blessing of God upon it, and who can make one sort of food as effectual for such a purpose as another; for every creature of God is good being received with thankfulness, and sanctified by the word and prayer; and particularly he could and did make such light food as manna was to answer all the purposes of solid bread for the space of forty years in the wilderness; the Targum of Jonathan is,

“but by all which is created by the Word of the Lord is the life of man;”

which seems to agree with ^{<5048>}1 Timothy 4:3,4 for the meaning is not that the Israelites in the wilderness, and when come into the land of Canaan, should not live by corporeal food only, but by obedience to the commands of God, by means of which they should continue under his protection, which was indeed their case; nor that man does not live in his body only by bread, but in his soul also by the word of God, and the doctrines of it, which is certainly true; spiritual men live a spiritual life on Christ, the Word of God, and bread of life, and on the Gospel and the truths of it, the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus, and are nourished up with the words of faith and sound doctrine, by means of which their spiritual life is supported and maintained; but this is not what is here intended.

Ver. 4. *Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee*, etc] They wanted not clothes all the forty years they were in the wilderness; which some account for by the rising generation being supplied with the clothes of those that died in the wilderness, and with the spoils they took from Amalek, (^{<0170>}Exodus 17:1) and others, as Aben Ezra observes, remark that they brought much clothes with them out of Egypt, which no doubt they did; (see ^{<0125>}Exodus 12:35) and he adds, as worthy of notice, that the manna they lived upon did not produce sweat, which is prejudicial to clothes; but be it so, that they were sufficiently provided with clothes, it must be miraculous that these clothes they wore should not wax old. This, in a spiritual sense, may denote the righteousness of Christ, which is often compared to raiment, the property of which is, that it never waxes old, wears out, or decays; it is an everlasting righteousness, and will never be

abolished, but will answer for the saints in a time to come; (see ⁽²⁵¹⁶⁾Isaiah 51:6,8 ⁽²⁰⁹⁴⁾Daniel 9:24) neither did thy foot swell these forty years; or puff up like paste, as Jarchi explains it, which is often the case in long journeys; the Septuagint version is, “did not become callous”; a callousness or hardness is frequently produced by travelling; in (⁽¹⁶²⁵⁾Deuteronomy 29:5) it is explained of the shoes on their feet not waxing old; so Ben Melech, and the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, and the Syriac and Arabic versions here, “thy feet were not naked”, were not without shoes; these were no more wore out by travel than their clothes upon their backs, and this was equally as miraculous: the Gibeonites, pretending to come from a far country, and to have travelled much and long, put on old garments and old shoes, to make it probable and plausible, (⁽¹⁶⁹⁵⁾Joshua 9:5,13). This may be an emblem of the perseverance of the saints in faith and holiness: shoes upon the feet denote a Gospel conversation, which is very beautiful, (⁽²⁷⁰¹⁾Song of Solomon 7:1) the feet of saints being shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; which, as shoes to the feet, guides and directs the Christian walk, strengthens and makes fit for walking, keeps tight and preserves from slipping and falling, and protects from what is harmful, accompanied by the power and grace of God.

Ver. 5. *Thou shalt also consider in thine heart*, etc.] Frequently think of, and meditate upon, revolve in their thoughts, well weigh in their minds, and take into thorough and deliberate consideration in their hearts; it being a matter of great moment and importance to them for their peace and comfort and the glory of God, namely, what follows:

that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee; that they stood in the same relation to God as a son to a father, and therefore happy and honourable; that all their afflictions came from God, were appointed, sent, directed, and overruled by him for his own glory and their good; that these were the chastenings and corrections of a father, and were not done in wrath, but in love, and therefore should be patiently endured; and it became them to consider well from what hand they came, and in what manner, and for what ends and purposes, how they ought to behave under them, and what they should do, as follows.

Ver. 6. *Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God*, etc.] Not only because they are the commands of God, and of a covenant God and Father, which are reasons sufficient for the observance of them; but because the Lord had dealt so bountifully with them, in providing food

and raiment for them in the wilderness, which always continued with them; and because, when he afflicted them, it was a fatherly chastisement, with great tenderness and compassion, and for their good; all which laid them under obligations to keep the commands of God, whatsoever he had enjoined them, whether of the moral, ceremonial, or judicial kind:

to walk in his ways, and to fear him; to walk in the ways he directed, to be under an awe of his majesty, a fear of offending him, and a reverential affection for him, such as children have to a father.

Ver. 7. *For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land*, etc.] The land of Canaan, abounding with good things after enumerated, a land flowing with milk and honey, having in it plenty of everything both for convenience and delight; which is another reason why they were under obligations to serve the Lord, to walk in his ways and keep his commandments:

a land of brooks of water; rivers and torrents, such as Jordan, Jabbok, Kishon, Kidron, Cherith, and others:

of fountains; as Siloam, Gihon, Etam, the baths of Tiberias, and others:

and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; deep waters, caverns, wells, and lakes, which had their rise from such places, of which there were many. With this agrees the account of it by our countrymen, Mr. Sandys^{f79}, as it was in the beginning of the last century; that it was adorned with beautiful mountains and luxurious valleys, the rocks producing excellent waters, and no part empty of delight or profit.

Ver. 8. *A land of wheat and barley*, etc.] There were two harvests in it, one a barley harvest, which began at the passover, and the other a wheat harvest, which began at Pentecost: instances of the great plenty of these might be observed in the vast quantities consumed in the times of Solomon, in his household, and in the yearly distribution he made to Hiram, (^{<102>}1 Kings 4:22,28 5:11 ^{<420>}2 Chronicles 2:10), yea, there was such plenty of wheat in this land, that it not only supplied the inhabitants of it, but even furnished other countries with it; with this the merchants of Israel and Judah traded at the market of Tyre, (^{<377>}Ezekiel 27:17 ^{<423>}Acts 12:20). According to the Jewish writers, the best fine wheat flour was at Mechumas and Mezonichah, and the next to them was Chephraim, or Ephraim, in the valley^{f80}:

and vines; with which this land abounded everywhere; the places most noted were Lebanon, Eshcol, Engedi, Ashkelon, Gaza, and Sarepta; according to the above writers ^{f81}, Cerotim and Hatolim were the first for wine, and the second to them were Beth Rimah and Beth Laban in the mountain, and Caphat Sigmah in the valley; the wine of Sharon is also highly commended by them ^{f82}

and fig trees and pomegranates: according to Josephus ^{f83}, the country of Gennesaret furnished with the best grapes and figs for ten months without intermission, and the rest of fruits throughout the whole year. Figs and pomegranates, the spies brought with them when they returned from searching the land, as well as grapes, are a specimen of the fruits of it, (^{<40133>}Numbers 13:23)

a land of oil olive; the mount of Olives was famous for olive trees, and had its name from thence; the whole land abounded with them, and though oil was so much in common use with the Jews, they supplied their neighbours with it: (see ^{<1161>}1 Kings 5:11 ^{<1420>}2 Chronicles 2:10 ^{<3571>}Ezekiel 27:17). It was usual also, as we are told, for the ten tribes to send oil into Egypt ^{f84}; according to the Jewish doctors, Tekoah was the first place for oil, and the second, Ragab, beyond Jordan ^{f85}; very probably the same with Argob, (^{<4894>}Deuteronomy 3:4).

and honey; besides the great quantities of honey produced by bees in this country, there was much of another sort that dropped from trees, called wild honey, the food of John the Baptist in the wilderness, (^{<4004>}Matthew 3:4). Pliny ^{f86} speaks of a sort of honey which he calls “eloomeli”, or oil honey, which is said to flow from the olive trees in Syria; but this honey here is generally thought by the Jewish writers to be an honey which was made of the fruit of palm trees, frequent in this country, and especially about Jericho; of which Josephus ^{f87} says, that the palm trees about Jericho, the fatter of them (i.e. of the fruit of them) being pressed, emit a large quantity of honey, scarce exceeded by any; and Maimonides ^{f88} says, that the honey spoken of in the law, particularly in this place, is honey of palm trees, so Ben Melech; and it was not unusual for people of other nations to make honey of the fruit of them. Herodotus ^{f89} reports, that the Babylonians made honey out of palm trees; so the Arabs call honey of palm trees “dibs, dibis, dipso” ^{f90}, the same with the word here used; agreeably to which both the Targums of Jonathan and Jerusalem paraphrase the words,

“out of whose palm trees honey is made.”

Ver. 9. *A land wherein thou shall eat bread without scarceness*, etc.] That is, should have plenty of all sorts of provisions, which bread is often put for:

thou shall not lack anything in it; for necessity and convenience, and for delight and pleasure:

a land whose stones are iron; in which were iron mines:

and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass; both which are taken out of the earth and the stones of it, (^{xxx}Job 28:2) and were to be found in the land of Canaan, and particularly in the tribe of Asher, as seems from (^{xxx}Deuteronomy 33:25) and more particularly at Sidon and Sarepta, which were in that tribe; the latter of which seems to have its name from the melting of metals there, and the former is said in Homer^{f91} to abound with brass.

Ver. 10. *When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God*, etc.] For as the Lord would furnish them with plenty of food, they might eat of it liberally, provided they did not indulge to intemperance, as everyone may whom God has blessed with a fulness of good things; and this shows that we are to return thanks to God for a plentiful meal, as well as to ask a blessing on it:

for the good land which he hath given thee; which supplied them with such plenty, that they enjoyed full meals every day.

Ver. 11. *Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God*, etc.] The Father of mercies and fountain of goodness, the author and donor of every good and perfect gift. Plenty is apt to induce a forgetfulness of God, when on the contrary one would think it should keep him in continual remembrance, and engage to daily thankfulness to him:

in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day; gave a repetition of, and in the name of God afresh enjoined them, even laws moral, ceremonial, and judicial, which, when not observed, God is forgotten.

Ver. 12. *Lest when thou hast eaten and art full*, etc.] Not only once and again, but continually, day after day, being indulged with great plenty:

and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt [therein]; who for forty years had only dwelt in tents, moving from place to place in the wilderness.

Ver. 13. *And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply*, etc.] Having good pasture for them in so fruitful a land:

and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied; by trading with other nations:

and all that thou hast is multiplied; children, servants, and substance.

Ver. 14. *Then thine heart be lifted up*, etc.] As the heart is apt to be when riches increase; hence the advice in (^{<5067>}1 Timothy 6:17)

and thou forget the Lord thy God; from whom all good things come, and who can take them away when he pleases, and therefore should be ever kept in mind, for ever looked to and trusted in for the continuance of them; yet such is the evil heart of man, and such the stupefying nature of riches, that they bring on forgetfulness of the author of them, lead off from dependence on him and obedience to him; in order to prevent which, an enumeration is given of wonderful instances of divine goodness to Israel, as follows:

which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; into a land abounding with all the above good things, and therefore it must be the highest ingratitude to forget such a God, and disobey his commands.

Ver. 15. *Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness*, etc.] The wilderness of Paran, which was great and large, reaching from Sinai to Kadesh, eleven days' journey, and terrible to the sight, nothing being to be seen but dry rocks and barren mountains; (see ^{<6119>}Deuteronomy 1:19), and especially for what follows: wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions; fiery serpents, such as bit the Israelites, of which (see ^{<0216>}Numbers 21:6) and scorpions, a kind of serpents, venomous and mischievous, which have stings in their tails they are continually thrusting out and striking with, as Pliny says ^{f92}; and have their name from their great sting; for Aristotle ^{f93} says, this alone of insects has a large sting:

and drought where there was no water; a dry and barren place where no water was to be had; (see ^{<3515>}Psalms 63:1) or it may be rather another kind of serpents may be meant, which is called "dipsas"; and so the Vulgate Latin, Septuagint, and Samaritan versions render it; the biting of which produces such a thirst as proves mortal, and which must be intolerable in a wilderness where no water is; and from whence it has its name, which signifies thirsty, as does the Hebrew word here used:

who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; which was done both at Horeb and Kadesh, (^{<0276>}Exodus 17:6 ^{<0411>}Numbers 20:11) and was very extraordinary; by striking flint, fire is ordinarily produced, and not water. Dr. Shaw observes ^{f94}, that it may be more properly named, with other sorts of graphite marble here to be met with, “the rock of amethyst”, from their reddish or purple colour and complexion.

Ver. 16. *Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna*, etc.] Even all the forty years they were in it, (^{<0265>}Exodus 16:35) which thy fathers knew not; when they first saw it, (^{<0265>}Exodus 16:15)

that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee; they were kept humble, being dependent on God for their daily bread, having nothing in the wilderness to support themselves with; and this tried them, whether they would trust in God for their daily supply, and be thankful for it, or not:

to do thee good at thy latter end; that by living on such light bread, and this only and continually, his goodness might appear the greater, and be the sweeter to them, when they came into a land abounding with all good things; which is not to be understood of the latter end and last days of their commonwealth, as our version, with the Septuagint, Samaritan, Arabic versions, and others, and the Targum of Onkelos; but of time following nearer, and the phrase should be rendered “hereafter” ^{f95}; which better agrees with the promise of a divine blessing; though, come when it would, it was the more acceptable for the trial; as heaven will be the sweeter to the saints, through the afflictions, hardships, straits, and difficulties, which attend them here.

Ver. 17. *And thou say in thine heart*, etc.] These words are in connection with the former part of the (^{<0284>}Deuteronomy 8:14):

and thou forget the Lord thy God; the author and giver of all the good things enjoyed, and think within themselves, though they might not express it in words at length:

my power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth; so ascribing that to themselves, their labour, and diligence, which ought to be ascribed to the bounty and blessing of God; (see ^{<0288>}Hosea 12:8).

Ver. 18. *But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God*, etc.] That he was the author of their beings, the God of their lives and mercies; what great and

good things he had done for them in Egypt, and in the wilderness; and particularly in putting them into the possession of such a fruitful country, abounding with all that heart could wish for:

for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth; for though men may have seeming opportunities for getting wealth, may have capacities for the management of business for the acquisition of it, and may not be wanting in diligence and industry, yet may not attain it; it is the blessing of God that makes rich, and to that it should be imputed whenever it is enjoyed; (see ^{<BCTE>}Psalm 127:2 ^{<DIOZ>}Proverbs 10:22 ^{<DQDI>}Ecclesiastes 9:11 ^{<BQDZ>}1 Chronicles 29:12)

that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as [it is] this day; that he would give the land of Canaan to their seed, and make them a rich and flourishing people, as they would be and were when possessed of the land, which is supposed throughout this discourse.

Ver. 19. *And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the Lord thy God,* etc.] Either the mercies they received from him, not acknowledging they came from him, but ascribing them to themselves; or their duty to him, to whom they were so greatly obliged: and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them; which would be to forget him indeed, forsaking his worship, and giving homage and adoration to idols, which is what is intended by these expressions:

I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish; by one judgment and calamity or another, as the sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity; there being nothing more provoking to God than idolatry, which so much detracts from his honour and glory: and which besides, in such a people, so highly favoured of God, it argued the basest ingratitude.

Ver. 20. *As the nations which the Lord destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish,* etc.] Be cut off by the sword, or cast out as they were, the same sins, particularly idolatry, being committed by them. This is to be understood of the seven nations of the land of Canaan, which the Lord would be gradually destroying when Israel came into the possession of their land; and they might righteously expect the same treatment, should they be guilty of the same sins:

because ye would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God; expressed in his law, especially in the two first precepts of it, which require the worship of one God, and forbid the worshipping of idols; or to the

Word of the Lord, as the Targum of Jonathan, Christ, the essential Word, in whom the name of the Lord was, and whose voice Israel was to obey, (~~10230~~ Exodus 23:20-22).