

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 11

In this chapter, the exhortation to love the Lord, and keep his commands, is repeated and urged again and again from various considerations; as not only from the chastisement of Pharaoh and the wicked Egyptians, but of such Israelites who offended the Lord, and transgressed his law, (^{<6111>}Deuteronomy 12:1-7), from the goodness and excellency of the land they were going to inherit, (^{<6118>}Deuteronomy 11:8-11), from the blessing of rain that would come upon it, and be productive of all good things for man and beast, in case of obedience, and a restraint of it in case of disobedience, (^{<6112>}Deuteronomy 11:12-17), from the continuance of them and their offspring in the land, should they be careful to observe the commands themselves, and teach them their children, (^{<6118>}Deuteronomy 11:18-21), and from the extensiveness of their conquests and dominions, (^{<6112>}Deuteronomy 11:22-25) and from the different issue and effects of their conduct and behaviour, a blessing upon them if obedient, but a curse if disobedient, (^{<6126>}Deuteronomy 11:26-28) and the chapter is concluded with an exhortation to pronounce the blessing on Mount Gerizim, and the curse on Mount Ebal; the situation of which places is described when they should come into the land of Canaan, of which they are assured, (^{<6129>}Deuteronomy 11:29-32).

Ver. 1. *Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God,* etc.] Because he is so great and glorious in himself, and because he had done such great and good things for them, the Israelites, particularly in the multiplication of them, the last thing mentioned:

and keep his charge; whatsoever the Lord had charged them to observe, even what follow:

and his statutes and his judgments, and his commandments, always; all his laws, ceremonial, judicial, and moral; and that constantly and continually, all the days of their lives.

Ver. 2. *And know you this day,* etc.] Take notice of, and diligently attend unto, what is now about to be delivered:

for I speak not unto your children which have not known, and which have not seen, the chastisement of the Lord your God; who have no knowledge and experience of the chastisement of the Lord on themselves, or on their foes or friends; and with whom the argument drawn from it could not come with that force, and make that impression, as it might be thought it would, being used with them who had perfect knowledge of it. The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan render it doctrine, which, being children, they were not instructed so perfectly in as they were who were adult persons, to whom Moses directs his discourse:

his greatness, his mighty hand, and stretched out arm: the exceeding greatness of his power, displayed in the following instances.

Ver. 3. *And his miracles, and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt,* etc.] The miraculous works done there, the ten plagues inflicted on the Egyptians for refusing to let Israel go:

unto Pharaoh king, of Egypt, and unto all his land; for those plagues not only affected him and his court, and his metropolis, but all parts of the land, the inhabitants of it everywhere.

Ver. 4. *And what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots,* etc.] At the Red sea, when they pursued Israel in order to bring them back or destroy them, after they had let them go, which army was very numerous; (see ^{<24>}Exodus 14:7,9)

how he made the water of the Red sea to overflow them; “or to flow over their faces” ^{f100},

as they pursued after you; so that they could not see their way, nor steer their course after them; and not only so, but were covered with the waters of the sea, drowned in them, and sunk to the bottom of them: and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day; either continued to destroy them yet more and more by one means or another; or else the destruction made by the several plagues upon them, and particularly that of their army at the Red sea, which was the strength and glory of the nation, was so general and extensive, that they never recovered it to that day; and so were in no capacity of coming out against them, and attacking them, and doing them any hurt, all the forty years they had been in the wilderness; of which no doubt they had knowledge, and of their condition and circumstances there.

Ver. 5. *And what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came unto this place.*] Meaning not so much the good things he did for them in divers places, as the chastisements and corrections he had exercised them with for their murmurings, rebellions, idolatry, and uncleanness, as at Taberah, Kibrothhattaavah, on the coast of Edom, and plains of Moab; by fire, by sword, by plagues, and fiery serpents; the instances both before and after being of this sort.

Ver. 6. *And what he did unto Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben,* etc.] When they with Korah and his company quarrelled with Moses and Aaron about the priesthood, (^{CHAP}Numbers 16:1), how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up; the history of which see in (^{CHAP}Numbers 16:30-33)

and their households and their tents; not their houses and their tents, as the Septuagint and some other versions; for though the word signifies houses, and is often used for them, yet here it must signify families, their wives, and children; since they had no houses, but dwelt in tents, all which were swallowed up with them:

and all the substance that was in their possession; gold, silver, cattle, household goods, and whatever they were possessed of:

or was at their feet^{f101}; or which followed them, their living creatures; or was for them, as Aben Ezra interprets it; for, their use, service, and necessity: and this was done

in the midst of all Israel; openly and publicly, they beholding it, as follows; and therefore should be rendered, “before all Israel”^{f102}; and, besides, the tents of Dathan and Abiram, Reubenites, were not in the midst of Israel.

Ver. 7. *But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did;*] Even all before related, with many others; and therefore the instruction they should learn from thence should be as follows.

Ver. 8. *Therefore shall you keep all the commandments which I command you this day,* etc.] For the reasons before suggested, as well as for what follow:

that ye may be strong; healthful in body, and courageous in mind, for sin tends to weaken both; whereas observance of the commands of God contributes to the health and strength of the body, and the rigour of the

mind; both which were necessary to the present expedition they were going upon:

and go in and possess the land whither ye go to possess it; the land of Canaan, they were marching towards in order to possess it; and nothing would more inspire them with courage, and cause them to enter it manfully without fear of their enemies, than obedience to the commands of God; whose presence being promised them on that account, they might expect it, and so had nothing to fear from the inhabitants of the land.

Ver. 9. *And that ye may prolong your days in the land*, etc.] Not only enter it, and take possession of it, but continue in it long, which depended upon their obedience to the laws of God:

which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give unto them and to their seed; had promised with an oath, so that they might be assured of the enjoyment of it, though they could not be of their continuance in it, unless they obeyed the divine commands:

a land that floweth with milk and honey; abounds with all good things, whose fruits are fat as milk, and sweet as honey; so the Targum of Jonathan.

Ver. 10. *For the land whither thou goest in to possess it*, etc.] The land of Canaan they were about to take possession of:

[is] not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out; either the whole land of Egypt, or that part of it, Rameses, in which Israel dwelt, and which was the best of it, as Jarchi observes, and yet Canaan exceeded that; though the design of this passage is not so much to set forth the superior excellency and fertility of the land of Canaan to that of Egypt, which was certainly a very fruitful country; (see ¹⁰¹³⁰Genesis 13:10) but to observe some things in which they differed, whereby they both became fruitful, and in which Canaan had the advantage:

where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; as a gardener when he has sowed his seed, or planted his plants, waters them that they may grow, by carrying his water pot from bed to bed, which requires much labour and toil. In Egypt rain seldom fell, especially in some places it was very rare, though that there was none at all is a vulgar mistake; (see Gill on "³⁸⁴⁸Zechariah 14:18") ^{f103}. To supply the want of it the river Nile overflowed once a year, which not only moistened

the earth, but left mud or slime upon it, which made it fruitful; but this was not sufficient, for what through the river not overflowing enough sometimes, and so as to reach some places, and through the heat of the sun hardening the earth again, it was found necessary to cut canals from it, and by water from thence to water it, as a gardener waters his seed and plants; and it is to this watering that respect is here had, not to the overflowing of the Nile, for that was before the seed was sown; but to the watering of it out of the canals, which was done after it was sown; the former was without any trouble of theirs, the latter with much labour; the manner in which it is done is expressed by the phrase “with thy foot”, which the Targum explains “by thyself”, by their own labour and industry. Jarchi is more particular; “the land of Egypt had need to “have water brought from the Nile with thy foot; he seems to have understood the phrase to signify carrying water on foot from the Nile to the place where it was wanted; but the custom still in use in Egypt, when they water their fields, plantations, or gardens, will give us a clear understanding of this phrase; as a late traveller informs us^{f104}, the water is drawn out of the river (Nile) by instruments, and lodged in capacious cisterns; when plants require to be refreshed, they strike out the plugs that are fixed in the bottoms of the cisterns, and then the water gushing out, is conducted from one rill to another by the gardener, who is always ready as occasion requires to stop and divert the torrent by turning the earth against it “with his foot”, and opening at the same time with his mattock a new trench to receive it: and to the same purpose another learned person^{f105} has observed, that at other times (than the flowing of the Nile) they are obliged to have recourse to art, and to raise the water out of the river and some deep pits by the help of machines, which water is afterwards directed in its course by channels cut in the ground, which convey the water to those places where it is wanted; and when one part of the ground is sufficiently watered, they then stop that channel, by thrusting some earth into the entrance of it “with their foot”, and then also “with their foot” open a passage into the next channel, and so on: and Philo the Jew^{f106} speaks of a machine with which they used to water fields, and was worked with the feet by going up the several steps within, which gave motion to it.

Ver. 11. *But the land whither ye go to possess it is a land of hills and valleys,* etc.] And so could not be watered by the overflow of a river, and by canals cut out of it, and in the manner Egypt was; which was for the most part a plain and flat country, but not so Canaan, in which were many

hills and mountains, as those about Jerusalem, Carmel, Tabor, Lebanon, and others; and plains and valleys, as the valley of Jezreel, etc. and which made it more delightful and pleasant for prospects; (see ^{<6887>}Deuteronomy 8:7) and drinketh water of the rain of heaven; by which it was watered, refreshed, and made fruitful; not by means of men, but by the Lord himself, and so with much more ease to men, and without the toil and labour they were obliged to in Egypt, as well as it was both more healthful and pleasant; for the damps that arose from the overflow of the Nile were sometimes prejudicial to health; and during the season of its overflow, which was in the summer, they were obliged to keep in their houses, and could not walk abroad for weeks together; to which inconveniences the land of Canaan was not subject; but then, as its fertility depended on rain from heaven, the Israelites would be under the greater obligation to observe the commands of God, who could give and withhold it at his pleasure, and as they conducted themselves; which seems to be the general drift of this passage.

Ver. 12. *A land which the Lord thy God careth for*, etc.] In a very particular and special manner; otherwise he has a general care of the whole world, and all the parts of it; for as the earth is his, and the fulness thereof, his providential care reaches everywhere; but as this spot was what he had chosen for his own residence, and the place of his worship, and for an habitation for his peculiar people; he exercised a more peculiar care over it, to make it fruitful, commodious, and pleasant; or which “he seeketh” ^{f107}; that is, the good of it, and to make it convenient, useful, and delightful to his people; yea, which he sought for and desired for his own habitation, (^{<4923>}Psalms 132:13,14),

the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year; his eyes of providence, to give the former and the latter rain, and that there be seedtime and harvest in their seasons, and that the fruits of it be produced at their proper time; some at the beginning, others at the end of the year, and others in the intervening months, and all wisely suited to the good of the inhabitants of it.

Ver. 13. *And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day*, etc.] In the name, and by the authority of the Lord, the only lawgiver:

to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul; (see ^{<6102>}Deuteronomy 10:12). Jarchi interprets this of prayer;

but it is not to be restrained to that only, but includes the whole service of God, in all the parts of it, performed from a principle of love to him, and in sincerity and truth.

Ver. 14. *That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season*, etc.] Such a quantity of it as the land required, a sufficiency of it to make it fruitful, and that in proper time:

the first rain and the latter rain; the former rain in Marchesvan, the latter rain in Nisan, as the Targum of Jonathan; the first fell about our October, which was at or quickly after seedtime, to water the seed that it might take root, and grow and spring up; and the latter fell about March, a little before harvest, to ripen the corn, and swell and plump the ears of it, and make them yield more and better; (see Gill on “²⁰²³Joel 2:23”),

that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil; which were the principal things the land afforded for the sustenance of men; bread corn, the stay and staff of human life, and which strengthens man’s heart, and makes him fit for labour; wine, which is his drink, and makes the heart of man glad and cheerful; and oil, which in these countries was used instead of butter, and was fattening, and made the face to shine, (¹⁹⁴¹⁵Psalm 104:15). The ingathering of these fruits were at different times; the barley harvest first, the wheat harvest next, and after that the vintage, and the gathering of the olives; and by means of rain in due season they were favoured with each of these.

Ver. 15. *And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle*, etc.] By giving plentiful showers of rain at proper times, to cause it to spring up and grow, that so there might be food for the cattle of every sort, greater or lesser; (see ¹⁹⁴¹³Psalm 104:13,14 ^{3801E}Zechariah 10:1),

that thou mayest eat and be full; which refers to the preceding verse as well as to this; and the sense is, that the Israelites might eat of and enjoy the fruits of the earth to satiety; namely, their corn, wine, and oil; and that their cattle might have grass enough to supply them with.

Ver. 16. *Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived*, etc.] By observing the influence of the heavens upon the fruitfulness of the earth, and so be drawn to the worship of the host of them, the sun, moon, and stars; or by the examples of nations round about them; and by the plausible arguments they may make use of, taken from the traditions of ancestors,

from antiquity, and the consent of nations, and the great numbers of worshippers, and the like:

and ye turn aside; from the true God, and the worship of him; or from the law, as Jarchi, which directs to the worship of one God, and forbids idolatry, or the worshipping of images:

and serve other gods, and worship them; other gods than the one only living and true God; gods that made not the heavens and the earth, and which cannot give rain, nor any blessing and mercy of life, nor help and deliver their worshippers when in distress.

Ver. 17. *And then the Lord's wrath be kindled against you*, etc.] For their idolatry, nothing being more provoking to him than that, it being contrary to his nature and being, as well as to his will, and to his honour and glory:

and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain; the treasures and storehouses of it there, or the windows of it, the clouds, which when opened let it down, but when shut withhold it; the key of rain is one of the keys which the Jews say ^{f108} the Lord keeps in his own hand, and with it he opens and no man shuts, and shuts and no man opens; (see ^{<682>}Deuteronomy 28:12 ^{<980>}Malachi 3:10)

and that the land yield not her fruit; which is unavoidably the case when rain is withheld:

and lest ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord giveth you; for if the land does not yield its fruits sufficient to support the inhabitants of it, they must in course perish.

Ver. 18-20. *Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul*, etc.] Treasure up the laws of God delivered to them in their minds, retain them in their memories, and cherish a cordial affection for them; which would be an antidote against apostasy, idolatry, and other sins, (^{<681>}Psalm 119:11)

and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes; of this and the two following verses, (See Gill on ^{<607>}Deuteronomy 6:7-9”).

Ver. 21. *That your days may be multiplied*, etc.] Long life being a very desirable blessing, and which is promised to those that obey and keep the law; (see ^{<609>}Deuteronomy 30:19,20 ^{<916>}Psalm 91:16)

and the days of your children; which are dear to parents, and the continuance of whose lives, next to their own, is most desirable, yea, as desirable as their own; and especially it is desirable that they might have a posterity descending from them, to enjoy for ever their estates and possessions; as it was to the people of Israel, that they might have a seed always to dwell

in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give them; the land of Canaan, so often spoken of as the promise, oath, and gift of God:

as the days of heaven upon the earth; that is, as long as the heavens and the earth shall be, and the one shall be over the other, as they will be to the end of time.

Ver. 22. *For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you to do them*, etc.] Observe and take notice of them, even all of them, and so as not merely to have a theory or notional knowledge of them, but to put them in practice:

to love the Lord your God; and show it by obeying his commands, and which is the end of the commandment, and the principle from which all obedience should flow:

to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him; (see ^{<5002>}Deuteronomy 10:12,20).

Ver. 23. *Then will the Lord drive out all those nations from before you*, etc.] By little and little, even all the seven nations which then inhabited the land of Canaan; and this he would do to make room for them, that they might inherit the land; (see ^{<6000>}Deuteronomy 7:1)

and ye shall possess greater nations, and mightier than yourselves; countries whose inhabitants were more in number, and greater in strength, than they; and therefore the conquest of them was not to be ascribed to themselves, but to the Lord; this is often observed; (see ^{<6000>}Deuteronomy 7:1 9:1).

Ver. 24. *Every place wherein the soles of your feet shall tread*, etc.] Meaning in the land of Canaan; though the Jews vainly apply this to every land, and country, and place therein, where any of them come; pleasing themselves with this foolish fancy, that all shall be theirs that the foot of any of them have trod upon, or they have dwelt in; but that it respects only

the land of Canaan appears by the following description of it and its boundaries:

from the wilderness; the wilderness of Paran, which lay to the south of it, where Kadesh was, from whence the spies were sent, and was the southern border of it:

and Lebanon; which was a range of mountains to the north of it; and was the northern border of the land:

from the river, the river Euphrates; which was the eastern border of it, when it was carried to its utmost extent, as in the days of Solomon, (^{<102>}1 Kings 4:21)

even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be: the Mediterranean sea, which was the western border of the land of Canaan, or “the hinder sea”, and so it is called (^{<348>}Zechariah 14:8), it lay at the back of them; for if a man stands with his face to the east, the south will be on his right hand, and the north on his left, and the west will be behind him, or at the back of him.

Ver. 25. *There shall be no man able to stand before you*, etc.] Meaning not a single man, such an one as Og, or any of the sons of Anak, the giants; because it could never be thought, imagined, or feared, that one man only should be able to stand against 600,000 fighting men, but any people or nation, though greater and mightier than they:

for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you, and the dread of you, upon all the land that ye shall tread upon: that is, upon all the land of Canaan, and the inhabitants of it; who should hear what wonderful things had been done for them in Egypt, and at the Red sea, and in the wilderness; and what they had done to Sihon and Og, and to their countries, and which accordingly was fulfilled, (^{<119>}Joshua 2:9-11)

as he hath said unto you; had promised them, (^{<125>}Deuteronomy 2:25) and which was prophesied of in the prophetic song at the Red sea; (see ^{<1514>}Exodus 15:14-16).

Ver. 26. *Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse*, etc.] Meaning the law of God, and the statutes, judgments, and commandments of it; which, if obeyed, blessings would be bestowed upon them; but if disobeyed, they would be liable to the curses of it, as the following words explain it; (see ^{<1515>}Deuteronomy 30:15-19) everyone of the Israelites were

called upon to see and consider this matter, it being an interesting one to them all.

Ver. 27. *A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God,* etc.] That is, a blessing should come upon them, even all temporal blessings they stood in need of; they should be blessed in body and estate, in their families, and in their flocks, in town and country; (see ^{<BXX>}Deuteronomy 28:1-6),

which I command you this day; afresh repeated to them, and enjoined them the observation of it in the name of the Lord.

Ver. 28. *And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God,* etc.] Accursed in body and estate, in basket and store; in their families, flocks, and herds; within doors and without; in city, and country; going out, or coming in; in this world, and that to come, if divine goodness prevent not; (see ^{<BXX>}Deuteronomy 28:15-20 29:20)

but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day; which the law he gave them, and repeated to them, directed them to walk in:

to go after other gods, which ye have not known; to serve and worship the gods of other nations, strange gods, which neither they nor their fathers knew anything of, or ever received any good thing from; and which indeed are no gods, and nothing in the world, as an idol is.

Ver. 29. *And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God hath bought thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it,* etc.] Which is often observed, as being near at hand; and when and where many things were to be done, which could not be done in the place and circumstances they now were, particularly what follows:

that thou shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim, and the curse upon Mount Ebal; that is, pronounce the one on one mountain, and the other on the other mountain, or at least towards them, or over against them. The Targum of Jonathan is

“ye shall set six tribes on Mount Gerizim, and six tribes on Mount Ebal; ((^{<BXX>}Deuteronomy 27:12,13)) blessing they shall turn their faces against Mount Gerizim, and cursing they shall turn their faces against Mount Ebal;”

with which agrees the account given in the Misnah;

“six tribes went to the top of Mount Gerizim, and six to the top of Mount Ebal; and the priests and the Levites, and the ark, stood below in the middle; the priests surrounded the ark, and the Levites the priests, and all Israel were on this and on that side of the ark, as in (^{<0833>}Joshua 8:33) then they turned their faces against Gerizim, they opened with the blessing, blessed is he that maketh not any graven or molten image, and both answered “Amen”; then they turned their faces against Mount Ebal, and opened with the curse, (^{<0275>}Deuteronomy 27:15) and both answered Amen ^{f109};”

see the performance of this command in (^{<0833>}Joshua 8:33,34).

Ver. 30. *Are they not on the other side Jordan*, etc.] Opposite to that where Moses now was in the plains of Moab, even in Samaria; so in the Misnah ^{f110} it is said,

“as soon as Israel passed over Jordan, they came to Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, which are in Samaria;”

but those mountains were not near Jordan nor Jericho, to which the people of Israel came first, but sixty miles from thence; though they were, as Moses says, on the other side from the place they now were:

by the way wherewith the sun goeth down; or, as the Targum of Jonathan,

“after the way of the sun setting;”

following that, or taking their direction from thence, signifying that they lay to the west of Jordan:

in the land of the Canaanites; of that particular tribe or nation which were eminently called Canaanites, for these dwelt by the sea by the coast of Jordan, (^{<0129>}Numbers 13:29) or as further described,

that dwell in the champaign over against Gilgal; in the plain open champaign country opposite to Gilgal; not that Gilgal Joshua encamped at before he came to Jericho, which in Moses’s time was not known by that name, but another, as Dr. Lightfoot ^{f111} observes, and he thinks Galilee is meant:

beside the plains of Moreh; near to Shechem, (^{<0126>}Genesis 12:6) and that Gerizim, one of these mountains, was not far from Shechem, is evident from (^{<0806>}Judges 9:6,7) and so in the Misnah ^{f112} it is said, that these

mountains were on the side of Shechem, which is in the plains of Moreh, as in (⁶¹³Deuteronomy 11:30 ⁶¹³Genesis 12:6) as the plains of Moreh here denote Shechem, so there: Benjamin of Tudela says ^{f113} there is a valley between them, in which lies Shechem; and in his time there were on Mount Gerizim fountains and orchards, but Mount Ebal was dry like stones and rocks. The Targum of Jonathan here, instead of Moreh, reads Mamre; (see ⁶¹³Genesis 13:18).

Ver. 31. *For ye shall pass over Jordan, to go in to possess the land Which the Lord your God giveth you,* etc.] They were now near it, and by this they are assured they should pass over it, in order to take possession of the land God had given them, and which gift of his was a sufficient title to it:

and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein: should not only take possession of it, but make their abode in it; they are assured hereby of continuance in it, on condition they obeyed the laws of God, as follows.

Ver. 32. *And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments,* etc.] Take notice of them, and heed unto them, so as to practise them:

which I set before you this day; repeated in order to them, on the observance of which depended their continuance in the land of Canaan; and therefore this is so often repeated and urged.