

# CHAPTER 26

## INTRODUCTION TO DEUTERONOMY 26

This chapter treats of the basket of firstfruits to be brought and presented to the Lord, and the confession to be made along with it, (<sup><B301></sup>Deuteronomy 26:1-11); and of the declaration to be made on the third year, the year of tithing, and the prayer annexed to it, (<sup><B302></sup>Deuteronomy 26:12-15); and of the covenant made in a solemn manner between God and the people of Israel, (<sup><B306></sup>Deuteronomy 26:16-19).

**Ver. 1.** *And it shall be, when thou [art] come in unto the land*, etc.] The land of Canaan, which they were now on the borders of, and just entering into:

*which the Lord thy God giveth thee [for] an inheritance*; which is often mentioned, to observe that it was not through their merits, but his gift, that they should enjoy the land; and the rather here to enforce the following law concerning the basket of firstfruits:

*and possessest it, and dwellest therein*; not only had entered into it, but got the possession of it, and settled there. This shows as Jarchi observes, that they were not bound to the firstfruits till they had subdued the land and divided it; not as soon as they were in it.

**Ver. 2.** *That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth*, etc.] This oblation of firstfruits was different front the sheaf of the firstfruits brought at barley harvest in the time of the passover, and from the two wave loaves of wheaten flour, at wheat harvest, at Pentecost; and from the cake of the first of their dough; (see <sup><B330></sup>Leviticus 23:10,17 <sup><B452></sup>Numbers 15:21). They were of one sort only, these of various kinds; though, as Jarchi observes, not all firstfruits, or the first of all sorts of fruits, were to be brought; for all were not bound to firstfruits, but the seven kinds only, called here the fruit of the earth, and are particularly mentioned in (<sup><B388></sup>Deuteronomy 8:8); and their manner of observing, selecting, and gathering their firstfruits, as the same writer notes, was this;

“a man goes into his field, and sees a mature fig, he binds a rush about it for a sign, and says, lo, this is firstfruits: and so, if he sees a bunch of grapes, or a pomegranate, more mature than the rest, he does the same,”

as is observed in the Misnah <sup>f466</sup>:

*which thou shalt bring of thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*; and the land being given them, and such a fruitful one as it was, they needed not to grudge bringing the firstfruits of it to the Lord. The quantity they were to bring is not fixed; this was left to their generosity; but, according to tradition, they were to bring the sixtieth part; so says Maimonides <sup>f467</sup>,

“the firstfruits have no measure (no fixed measure) from the law; but from the words of the wise men, a man ought to separate one out of sixty:”

*and shalt put [it] in a basket*; for the more convenient carriage of them and for the more decent oblation and waving of them together, The rich brought their firstfruits in baskets of silver and of gold, the poor in wicker baskets of willows barked <sup>f468</sup>. The firstfruits of the seven several kinds were all put together in one basket, not into separate ones, or into as many as there were kinds; but then, as the last mentioned writer observes <sup>f469</sup>,

“they did not bring them mixed, but the barley (was put) beneath, or lowermost, and the wheat over that; and the olives above that, and the dates over them, and the pomegranates over them, and the figs uppermost in the vessel; and there was some one thing which separated between every kind, as leaves, and the like; and they put about the figs clusters of grapes without:”

*and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there*; which, as the event showed, was the city of Jerusalem; hither from all parts of the country were the firstfruits to be brought. All which may teach us, that we are to honour God with the firstfruits of our increase; that we are to be thankful in every thing, and for everything we have; and that our mercies should be acknowledged publicly in the place of public worship; and that all our sacrifices of praise should be offered in faith, which may be signified by the basket in which the firstfruits were brought, without which we cannot please God; and this being bore on the shoulder all the while, may denote reverence of God, and a sense of former

state and condition, as this might put the Israelites in mind of their carrying loads in Egypt.

**Ver. 3.** *And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days*, etc.] Whose course and turn it would be to minister before the Lord; though, according to the Targum of Jonathan, it was the high priest they were to apply to on this occasion; and so Aben Ezra observes, that this law is obligatory all the time there is an high priest, as if it was not binding when there was none, and all depended on him; who in this case was typical of Christ our high priest, to whom we must bring, and by him offer up, the sacrifice of praise, even the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to God for all his mercies:

*and say unto him*; what follows, and the basket of firstfruits all the while on his shoulder <sup>f470</sup>, even if a king:

*I profess this day*; it being done once in a year, and not twice, as Jarchi notes:

*unto the Lord thy God*; directing his speech to the priest:

*that I am come into the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers for to give us*; and not only come into it, but was in the possession of it, and in the enjoyment of the fruits of it; of which the basket of firstfruits he had brought on his shoulder was a token. The natural and moral use of these firstfruits to the Israelites, and the bringing of them, was hereby to own and acknowledge that God was the proprietor of the land of Canaan; that they had it by gift from him, and that they held it of him, the firstfruits being a sort of a small rent they brought him; and that he was faithful to his oath and promise he had made to their fathers, and which they professed with great humility and thankfulness. The typical use of them was to direct to Christ himself, the firstfruits of them that sleep in him, the first begotten from the dead, the pledge and earnest of the resurrection of his people; to the Spirit of God and his grace, which are the earnest of glory; and to the first converts among Jews and Gentiles, in the first times of the Gospel; to Christians in general, who are the firstfruits of God and of the Lamb, and to their sacrifices of praise and thankfulness they are to offer up to God through Christ, which are acceptable to him through him; and whereby they glorify him as the author of all their mercies, to whom they are to bring their best, and in the first place; (see ~~<450>~~ 1 Corinthians 15:20,23 ~~<482>~~ Romans 8:23 11:16 16:5 ~~<640>~~ Revelation 14:4 ~~<835>~~ Hebrews 13:15).

**Ver. 4.** *And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand,* etc.] To wave it, as Jarchi says, putting his hand under the hand of the owner, and so waving it; and this being waved to and fro towards the several corners of the earth, was an acknowledgment of the Lord being the proprietor of it:

*and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God;* that it might have some appearance of a sacrifice, and be a fit emblem of the spiritual sacrifice of praise, which is accepted upon the altar Christ, which sanctifies every gift.

**Ver. 5.** *And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God,* etc.] Speak with a loud voice, lifting up the voice, as Jarchi interprets it; or “answer”<sup>f471</sup>, to the question the priest will ask, saying, what is this thou hast brought? as Aben Ezra remarks; and this being said in the tabernacle, and before the priest of the Lord, and as in the presence of the Lord, is represented as said before him, which is as follows:

*a Syrian ready to perish [was] my father;* meaning Jacob, who though born in Canaan, his mother was a Syrian, and his grandfather Abraham was of Chaldea, a part of Syria; and Jacob married two wives in Syria, and all his children were born there but Benjamin, and where he lived twenty years; and sometimes persons are denominated, as from the place of their birth, so from the place of their dwelling, as Christ was called a Nazarene from Nazareth, where he dwelt, though he was born at Bethlehem, (<sup>4023</sup>Matthew 2:23); and Jether, though an Israelite, as Aben Ezra observes, is called an Ishmaelite, perhaps because he dwelt some time among that people, (<sup>1307</sup>1 Chronicles 2:17). Now Jacob might be said to be ready to perish when he fled for his life from his brother Esau, and was poor and penniless when he came to Laban; so the last mentioned writer interprets this phrase; to which may be added, that when in his service he was exposed to cold and heat, and had his wages frequently changed, and afterwards, when obliged to flee from Laban, was pursued by him with an intention to do him mischief, had not the Lord prevented him. The reason of this part of the confession was to show that it was not owing to the greatness of their ancestors from whence they sprung, whose condition was mean, but to the gift of God, and his goodness, that they enjoyed the land of Canaan. So every sensible soul, when he brings his sacrifice of praise to God for his mercies, especially spiritual ones, frankly acknowledges his lost perishing condition by nature, of which he is sensible; and that in order to magnify the riches of the grace of God in his

salvation, to endear Christ as a Saviour the more, and to keep humble, and make thankful:

*and he went down into Egypt*; not directly, but some years after his former afflicted circumstances; so the Targum of Jonathan expresses it,

“after these things he went down into Egypt;”

after he had been in perishing circumstances in Syria, and when he was sore pressed with famine in Canaan:

*and sojourned there with a few*; with seventy souls, as Jarchi:

*and became there a great nation, mighty and populous*; insomuch that the king of Egypt was jealous of them, lest through their strength and numbers they should get away from them, when any favourable incident happened; they being when they came out from thence six hundred thousand men able to bear arms, besides women and children.

**Ver. 6.** *And the Egyptians evil entreated us*, etc.] Ordered their male children to be killed by the midwives, and by another edict to be drowned by the people:

*and afflicted us*; by setting taskmasters over them, who put heavy burdens upon them:

*and laid upon us hard bondage*; in mortar and brick, and all manner of field service, in which they made them serve with rigour, and whereby their lives were made bitter; (see <sup>(110)</sup>Exodus 1:9-22).

**Ver. 7.** *And when we cried unto the Lord our God*, etc.] As they did by reason of their hard bondage, (<sup>(112)</sup>Exodus 2:23);

*and the Lord heard our voice, and looked upon our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression*; with a look of pity and compassion, heard their cries, answered their petitions, and sent them a deliverer, (<sup>(115)</sup>Exodus 2:25 3:7,8).

**Ver. 8.** *And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt*, etc.] After some time: *with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm*; by his almighty power, of which full proof was given by what he then did, (<sup>(115)</sup>Deuteronomy 5:15);

*and with great terribleness*: to Pharaoh and his people, through the plagues that were inflicted on them, especially the last, the slaying of their firstborn; (see <sup><0064></sup>Deuteronomy 4:34);

*and with signs and with wonders*; wrought by the hands of Moses and Aaron, meaning the ten plagues, often so called.

**Ver. 9.** *And he hath brought us unto this place*, etc.] After forty years travel through the wilderness:

*and hath given us this land, [even] a land that floweth with milk and honey*; an usual description of the land of Canaan, because of the great fertility of it, and the abundance of good things in it; (see <sup><0068></sup>Exodus 3:8).

**Ver. 10.** *And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me*, etc.] Directing his speech not to the priest, but to the Lord himself; owning that the part of the land he had, and the fruits he enjoyed, were the gifts of God to him, and therefore, as in gratitude bound, brought him the firstfruits:

*and thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God*; these are the words of Moses, or of the law, directing the man what further he had to do; and this, as Jarchi thinks, shows that he took it after the priest waved it, and laid hold on it with his hand while he was reading (his confession), turning and waving:

*and worship before the Lord thy God*; bow before him in a reverend and humble manner, sensible of his obligations to him, and dependence on him.

**Ver. 11.** *And thou shalt rejoice in every good [thing]*, etc.] In all the blessings of goodness and mercies of life, which God in his kind providence had favoured them with:

*which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house*; to them and their families, by which they were comfortably provided for:

*thou and the Levite, and the stranger that [is] among you*; by which it seems that not only a basket of firstfruits was brought and presented to the Lord, which is the perquisite of the priest, but there were others also brought, or bought with their money at Jerusalem, and a sort of a kept, which the Levite, and stranger or proselyte, of along with the owner; (see <sup><0121></sup>Deuteronomy 12:11,12 16:10,11); though Jarchi understands it of the Levite and stranger being obliged to bring the firstfruits: the Levite, he

says, is bound to the firstfruits of the plants in the midst of his cities, though he had no part in the division of the land; and the same writer says, the stranger brings the firstfruits, but does not proclaim, because he cannot say, “which he sware to our fathers”, (<sup>(f472)</sup>Deuteronomy 26:3); but it is said <sup>f472</sup>, if his mother was an Israelitess he might proclaim; yea, Maimonides <sup>f473</sup> says, on account of what is said of Abraham, (<sup>(f473)</sup>Genesis 17:5); who is the father of the whole world; (see <sup>(f474)</sup>Romans 4:10,13); because mention is made of rejoicing; hence it is concluded, as Jarchi says, that the proclamation of the firstfruits was only made in the time of joy, from Pentecost unto the feast that a man gathers in his increase, and his fruits, and his wine, and his oil; though from that feast and onward he may bring, but not proclaim; to the same purpose, says the Misnah <sup>f474</sup>, from Pentecost to the feast of tabernacles a man may bring the firstfruits, and proclaim; and even from the feast of tabernacles to the dedication of the temple, he may bring, but not proclaim; the reason given in Siphri <sup>f475</sup> is, because proclamation is only to be performed in time of joy--and the joy of the year is finished at the end of the feast of tabernacles, as in (<sup>(f475)</sup>Leviticus 23:40).

**Ver. 12.** *When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase*, etc.] Which, according to Maimonides <sup>f476</sup>, is to be understood of the feast, in which all tithes are finished, which is the feast of the passover:

*the third year, [which is] the year of tithing*; that is, the third from every seventh, when the land lay fallow. Every year a tithe was paid to the Levites; and besides that a second tithe, which was carried to Jerusalem and eaten there; and every third year it was eaten at home, in their towns and cities in the country instead of it, with the Levite, poor and stranger, and was called the poor's tithe; and hence the Targum of Jonathan here calls this year the year of the poor's tithe, as was also the sixth year, and was reckoned not complete till the passover in the following year, as the Jewish writers <sup>f477</sup> say:

*and hath given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow*; that is, the poor's tithe of the third year, which these were to eat of with the owner, (<sup>(f477)</sup>Deuteronomy 14:28,29); though the Jews commonly distinguish the Levite from the rest, and suppose that both first and second tithes are meant, the one to be given to the former, and the other to the latter; so the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi:

*that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled*: for this was a considerable entertainment, a sort of a feast, a full meal, however; hence it

is concluded, as Jarchi says, that they did not give less of corn to a poor man than half a kab of wheat, which was above three pints.

**Ver. 13.** *Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God*, etc.] Make the following declaration as in his presence; for this was not made in the tabernacle or temple at, Jerusalem, since the tithe was to be eaten with the poor in the gates of the owner, as in (<sup>f478</sup>Deuteronomy 26:12):

*I have brought away the hallowed things out of [mine] house*: which Aben Ezra and Onkelos interpret of the tithe; but it seems, besides that, to take in everything devoted to all holy uses, be they what they will, which were at this time to be separated from a man's own common goods, and applied to the purposes for which they were designed and devoted, and particularly what was to be given to the poor:

*and also have, given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me*; giving to each according as the law directs; which the Targum of Jonathan and Jarchi interpret as before, giving the first tithe to the Levites, and the second tithe to the rest:

*I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten [them]*: neither broken them wilfully, nor omitted them through carelessness, negligence, and forgetfulness, but was mindful to observe them punctually and exactly.

**Ver. 14.** *I have not eaten thereof in my mourning*, etc.] When in grief and sorrow on account of any afflictive circumstance, for these were to be eaten with joy, (<sup>f478</sup>Deuteronomy 16:11 26:11); and especially of the loss of relations by death, when holy things were not to be eaten by such persons; (see <sup>f478</sup>Leviticus 10:19); and particularly tithes, though it is said <sup>f478</sup>,

“What is doubtful of tithing (whether it has been tithed or no) might be eaten by a mourner;”

and a man was reckoned such an one until his dead was buried. So Maimonides <sup>f479</sup> observes,

“a mourner may not eat holy things, as it is written, (<sup>f478</sup>Deuteronomy 26:14); he is one whose relation is dead, when he is obliged to mourn; for he is called by the law a mourner as long as



the dead lies upon the face of the earth (above ground), or as long as he is not yet buried he is called a mourner; and so likewise on the day of burial:”

*neither have I taken away [ought] thereof for [any] unclean [use];* or common use, or any other use than it was designed for, and devoted to; or for any unclean person, who by the law might not eat thereof; or, as Jarchi interprets it, that he had not removed it, or taken it away from being eaten, on account of any unclean person, because I am unclean and he pure, or he pure and I unclean:

*nor given ought thereof for the dead;* for the necessities of the dead, as Aben Ezra; more particularly Jarchi, to make for him a coffin and grave clothes; and so the Targum of Jonathan interprets it of grave clothes for the dead; though that of Jerusalem of clothes for those that are polluted by the dead. It may have respect also to the parentalia, or funeral feasts made at the interment of the dead; though Aben Ezra says, there are some that say it was for idolatry, and so the person here speaking denies that he had made use of any of the holy things in honour of idols, of dead men deified; and some are of opinion that all the above things may have some respect to idolatrous practices <sup>f480</sup>:

*[but] I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, [and] have done according to all that thou hast commanded me;* observed his word, and kept close to it, and not swerved from it, but acted according to it in all things before referred to.

**Ver. 15.** *Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven,* etc.] This is a prayer of the person that makes the above declaration annexed to it, desiring that God would vouchsafe to look with an eye of love, complacency, and delight, upon him and upon all his people, from heaven his holy habitation, though they were on earth, and unholy persons in themselves, and especially if compared with him; (see <sup>-25715</sup> Isaiah 57:15 63:15);

*and bless thy people Israel;* with blessings temporal and spiritual:

*and the land which thou hast given us;* with fertility and plenty of all good things, that it might be

*as thou swarest to our fathers, a land flowing with milk and honey;* (see Gill on <sup>“(131)”) Deuteronomy 26:9”).</sup>

**Ver. 16.** *This day the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments,* etc.] These are the words of Moses, as Aben Ezra rightly observes, and refer not only to the laws last mentioned, but to all others which he had repeated, or the Lord by him had ordered to be observed, recorded in this book: and though it is very probable Moses had been several days repeating former laws, and acquainting them with new ones; yet this being the last day, in which the whole account was finished, they are said to be commanded that day, and though commanded that day were to be observed and done every day; for, as Jarchi says, every day was to be considered and reckoned as new, as if on that day they were commanded them:

*thou shall therefore keep and do them with all thy heart, and with all thy soul;* cordially, readily, willingly, sincerely, constantly, and to the utmost of their abilities.

**Ver. 17.** *Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God,* etc.] Said, affirmed, protested, and in the most solemn manner declared, that the Lord was their God, and him only; and that they would have no other God, nor worship, serve, or obey any other. The Lord is the God of all mankind, as he is the Creator and Preserver of them, and was of the people of Israel in a peculiar manner, they being chosen, redeemed, and privileged by him above all others; and especially is of his elect in Christ among all nations, whom he has loved and set apart for himself, and determined to save; whom he has adopted and regenerated; he provides for them, protects and preserves them, gives them grace here and glory hereafter: he is their God in Christ, and by virtue of the covenant of his grace made with them in him; and is known by them to be so in the effectual calling by the application of covenant blessings to them; and which is certified to them by the Spirit of God, upon which they claim their interest in him, and make profession of him as their God:

*and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice;* that is, this was then their resolution and determination, their protestation and declaration, to walk in all the ways of God, both in private and in public, he directed unto; and to observe all his laws, ceremonial, moral, and judicial, which he had given them as the rule of their walk and behaviour; and to regard whatsoever he should reveal by his prophets and ministers as his will; and a view of covenant interest in God lays all good men under the strongest

obligation in the strength of divine grace to attend to his will; nor can there be a greater motive to them than covenant love, grace, and mercy.

**Ver. 18.** *And the Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people*, etc.] Affirmed and declared them to be his special people, above all people on the face of the earth, and that they were looked upon and considered by him as his jewels, his peculiar treasure:

*as he hath promised thee*; on condition of their obedience to him, as he did in (<sup>(~~1005~~)</sup>Exodus 19:5);

*and that [thou] shouldest keep all his commandments*; at the same time declared this as his will, that they should observe all his precepts, to which they were laid under obligation by the special favour and peculiar privileges he bestowed upon them, (<sup>(~~1006~~)</sup>Deuteronomy 7:6,7). The Targums interpret both these verses of the people of Israel choosing and making the Lord their King, and of his being made King over them; and so it respects their peculiar form of civil government, being a theocracy. The Lord's people in Christ are a peculiar people; they are distinct from all people, and are peculiarly regarded by him; they are the objects of his peculiar love, and receive peculiar favours from him; and whom having chosen and redeemed, he calls by his special grace, and witnesses their special relation to him by his Spirit; which grace obliges and excites them to a cheerful obedience to his commands.

**Ver. 19.** *To make thee high above all nations*, etc.] None of them having the Lord to be their God and King in such sense as Israel, nor they his people in such a peculiar sense as they were; nor having such laws and statutes as he had given to them; these things gave them a superiority over all other nations:

*which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour*; that is, which nations he made praiseworthy, famous, and honourable, for their extent, wealth, riches, and number; and yet on the above accounts Israel was advanced higher than they:

*and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God, as he hath spoken*; the end of the Lord in being their God, and making them his people, was not only to make them high above all others, but to make them more holy than others; to set them apart for himself, as a people sacred to his worship and service, as he had both determined and declared, (<sup>(~~1007~~)</sup>Deuteronomy 7:6,7).