

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

The people are exhorted to obedience from a consideration of God's goodness to their fathers in Egypt, Deuteronomy 11:1-4, and what he did in the wilderness, Deuteronomy 11:5, and the judgment on Dathan and Abiram, Deuteronomy 11:6, and from the mercies of God in general, Deuteronomy 11:7-9. A comparative description of Egypt and Canaan, Deuteronomy 11:10-12. Promises to obedience, Deuteronomy 11:13-15. Dissuasives from idolatry, Deuteronomy 11:16, Deuteronomy 11:17. The words of God to be laid up in their hearts, to be for a sign on their hands, foreheads, gates, etc., Deuteronomy 11:18, taught to their children, made the subject of frequent conversation, to the end that their days may be multiplied, Deuteronomy 11:19-21. If obedient, God shall give them possession of the whole land, and not one of their enemies shall be able to withstand them, Deuteronomy 11:22-25. Life and death, a blessing and a curse, are set before them, Deuteronomy 11:26-28. The blessings to be put on Mount Gerizim and the curses on Mount Ebal, Deuteronomy 11:29, Deuteronomy 11:30. The promise that they should pass over Jordan, and observe these statutes in the promised land, Deuteronomy 11:31, Deuteronomy 11:32.

Verse 1

Thou shalt love the Lord - Because without this there could be no obedience to the Divine testimonies, and no happiness in the soul; for the heart that is destitute of the love of God, is empty of all good, and consequently miserable. See the note on Deuteronomy 10:12.

Verse 6

What he did unto Dathan, etc. - See the notes on Numbers 16 (note).

Verse 8

Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments - Because God can execute such terrible judgments, and because he has given such proofs of his power and justice; and because, in similar provocations, he may be expected to act in a similar way; therefore keep his charge, that he may keep you unto everlasting life.

Verse 10

Wateredst it with thy foot - Rain scarcely ever falls in Egypt, and God supplies the lack of it by the inundations of the Nile. In order to water the grounds where the inundations do not extend, water is collected in ponds, and directed in streamlets to different parts of the field where irrigation is necessary. It is no unusual thing in the East to see a man, with a small mattock, making a little trench for the water to run by, and as he opens the passage, the water following, he uses his foot to raise up the mould against the side of this little channel, to prevent the water from being shed unnecessarily before it reaches the place of its destination. Thus he may be said to water the ground with his foot. See several useful observations on this subject in Mr. Harmer, vol. i., pp. 23-26, and vol. iii., p. 141. For watering land an instrument called janta is often used in the north of Bengal: It consists of a wooden trough, about fifteen feet long, six inches wide, and ten inches deep, which is placed on a horizontal beam lying on bamboos fixed in the bank of a pond or river in the form of a gallows. One end of the trough rests upon the bank, where a gutter is prepared to carry off the water, and the other is dipped into the water by a man standing on a stage near that end, and plunging it in with his foot. A long bamboo, with a large weight of earth at the farther end of it, is fastened to that end of the janta near the river, and passing over the gallows, poises up the janta full of water, and causes it to empty itself into the gutter. This, Mr. Ward supposes, illustrates this passage. See Hindoo Customs, etc., vol. iii., p. 104. But after all, the expression, wateredst it with thy foot, may mean no more than doing it by labor; for, as in the land of Egypt there is scarcely any rain, the watering of gardens, etc., must have been all artificial. But in Judea it was different, as there they had their proper seasons of rain. The compound word x'x'x'x (beregel), with, under, or by the foot, is used to signify any thing under the power, authority, etc., of a person; and this very meaning it has in the sixth verse, all the substance that was in their possession, is, literally, all the substance that was under their feet, $\text{x'x'x'x}^{\text{TM}}\text{x'x}$ (beragleyhem), that is, in their power, possession, or what they had acquired by their labor.

Verse 14

The rain - in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain - By the first or former rain we are to understand that which fell in Judea about November, when they sowed their seed, and this served to moisten and prepare the ground for the vegetation of the seed. The latter rain fell about April, when the corn was well grown up, and served to fill the ears, and render them plump and perfect. Rain rarely fell in Judea at any other seasons than these. If the former rain were withheld, or not sent in due season, there could be no vegetation: if the latter rain were withheld, or not sent in its due season, there could be no full corn in the ear, and consequently no harvest. Of what consequence then was it that they should have their rain in due season! God, by promising this

provided they were obedient, and threatening to withhold it should they be disobedient, shows that it is not a general providence that directs these things, but that the very rain of heaven falls by particular direction, and the showers are often regulated by an especial providence.

Verse 18

Therefore shall ye lay up these my words - See Deuteronomy 6:4-8 (note), and Exodus 13:9 (note).

Verse 24

From the river - Euphrates, which was on the east, to the uttermost sea - the Mediterranean, which lay westward of the promised land. This promise, notwithstanding the many provocations of the Israelites, was fulfilled in the time of Solomon, for he reigned over all the kings from the river (Euphrates) even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. See 2 Chronicles 9:26, and the note, Numbers 34:12 (note).

Verse 26

Behold, I set before you - a blessing and a curse - If God had not put it in the power of this people either to obey or disobey; if they had not had a free will, over which they had complete authority, to use it either in the way of willing or nilling; could God, with any propriety, have given such precepts as these, sanctioned with such promises and threatenings? If they were not free agents, they could not be punished for disobedience, nor could they, in any sense of the word, have been rewardable for obedience. A Stone is not rewardable because, in obedience to the laws of gravitation, it always tends to the center; nor is it punishable because, in being removed from that center, in its tending or falling towards it again it takes away the life of a man.

That God has given man a free, self-determining Will, which cannot be forced by any power but that which is omnipotent, and which God himself never will force, is declared in the most formal manner through the whole of the sacred writings. No argument can affect this, while the Bible is considered as a Divine revelation; no sophistry can explain away its evidence, as long as the accountableness of man for his conduct is admitted, and as long as the eternal bounds of moral good and evil remain, and the essential distinctions between vice and virtue exist. If ye will obey, (for God is ever ready to assist), ye shall live; if ye will disobey and refuse that help, ye shall die. So hath Jehovah spoken, and man cannot reverse it.

Verse 29

Thou shalt put the blessing upon Mount Gerizim, and the curse upon Mount Ebal - The etymology of these names may be supposed to cast some light on this institution. גרזים (gerizzim), from גרז (garaz), to cut, cut off, cut down; hence גרזים (gerizzim), the cutters down, fellers, and reapers or harvest-men, this mountain being supposed to have its name from its great fertility, or the abundance of the crops it yielded, which is a possible case. Of עבאל (ebal) or עבאל (ybal) the root is not found in Hebrew; but in Arabic (abala) signifies rough, rugged, curled, etc.; and (abalalo), from the same root, signifies white stones, and a mountain in which such stones are found; (alabalalo), the mount of white stones. See Giggeius and Golius. And as it is supposed that the mountain had this name because of its barrenness, on this metaphorical interpretation the sense of the passage would appear to be the following: God will so superintend the land, and have it continually under the eye of his watchful providence, that no change can happen in it but according to his Divine counsel, so that its fertility shall ever be the consequence of the faithful obedience of its inhabitants, and a proof of the blessing of God upon it; on the contrary, its barrenness shall be a proof that the people have departed from their God, and that his curse has in consequence fallen upon the land. See the manner of placing these blessings and curses, Deuteronomy 27:12, etc. That Gerizim is very fruitful, and that Ebal is very barren, is the united testimony of all who have traveled in those parts. See Ludolf, Reland, Rab, Benjamin, and Mr. Maundrell. Sychem lies in the valley between these two mountains.

That the land of Judea was naturally very fertile, can scarcely be supposed by any who considers the accounts given of it by travelers; with the exception of a few districts, the whole land is dry, stony, and barren, and particularly all the southern parts of Judea, and all the environs of Jerusalem, most of which are represented as absolutely incapable of cultivation. How then could it ever support its vast number of inhabitants? By the especial providence of God. While God kept that people under his continual protection, their land was a paradise; they lent to all nations and borrowed from none. What has it been since? A demi-solitude, because that especial blessing no longer descends upon it. No land, says Calmet, was more fertile while under the benediction of God; none more barren when under his curse. Its present state is a proof of the declaration of Moses, Deuteronomy 28:23: "The heaven over their head is brass; the earth under their feet, iron." The land itself, in its present state is an ample proof of the authenticity of the Pentateuch. Should facts of this kind be lost sight of by any who read the sacred writings?