

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

DEUTERONOMY 9-11

A son was visiting his elderly parents as he noticed his dad using very intimate and tender, *terms of endearment*, for his mother. The ole boy would call his wife, “Baby,” “Sweetie,” “Honey,” “Darling,” “Sugar.”

The son was impressed that after sixty years of marriage his dad still called his mom by these nicknames. That evening, while mom was out of the room, he complemented his dad, “It’s wonderful how you still speak to mom, calling her these pet names.”

A troubled look came over the old man’s face. He said, “Son, I’ve got no choice. The last few months I haven’t been able to remember her *real* name.”

Memory loss can be troublesome. It can harm a relationship... especially our relationship with God.

Forget *the lessons God taught us, the blessings He bought us, the miracles He’s brought us* - and you’re headed for trouble. This is the theme of Deuteronomy.

The term “Deuteronomy” means “*second law*.” And in it Moses reminds Israel of the words and ways of God.

Moses wants the second generation of Israelites who’ll enter the Promised Land to **remember** the experiences of the generation of Hebrews who exited Egypt and journeyed through the desert for forty years.

Chapter 9 begins, “Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?’” Israel is given a tall order - a huge challenge. They have their work cut out for them.

At the time, a race of head-toppers - a horde of incredible hulks - lived in Canaan’s fortified cities. Canaan was like a Flowery Branch - full of NFL type, super-sized people. *You don’t realize how big human beings can actually be.* And such were the Anakim. A later version was Goliath of Gath, David’s giant foe.

And these giants had a reputation. No invader had toppled them. verse 2, “*Who can stand before (them)?*”

“Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you...” Israel was definitely overmatched, but they had a difference maker. Canaan had their

giants, but Israel had a gigantic God - a God greater than their enemies.

It reminds me of the elderly lady accosted in the parking lot by a huge, mean man. The old woman was no match for this brute... Until this lady reached into her purse and pulled out her trusty *Grandma Glock*.

Suddenly, the tables turned. There was a difference maker the attacker didn't see... Israel too had a secret weapon. God was with them as "*a consuming fire.*"

And this is still how God works. He challenges His people with tasks that go beyond our abilities, and missions impossible to tackle on our own. He creates scenarios where *if He doesn't come through the Church is destined to fail*. This forces us to rely on Him!

Verse 3, "*So you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.*" God had a quick annihilation in mind for the Canaanites. They were so perverse He knew they would influence Israel in negative and corrupting ways if given any time.

In his writings, famous archaeologist William Albright describes the lewd culture of ancient Canaan. He says of the hundreds of idols found from this period most were of nude females in sexually suggestive postures. Others were male idols associated with homosexual cults. The Canaanites were deeply immoral people.

God promises to drive out the enemy, yet He warns Israel of a resulting pride!... Moses says, "*Do not think in your heart...*" And notice before a boast comes off the lips, pride brews in the heart... "*Do not think in your heart after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from before you.*" God will prosper Israel not because she's moral, but because the Canaanites were evil. He worked more *in spite of them* than *because of them*. He's using Israel to judge.

Verse 5, "*It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*" Remember 400 years earlier God told Abram his people would dwell in Egypt, until "*the iniquity of the Amorites was complete.*" Israel inherits this land for two reasons, *and neither has to do with them...* God was *judging the evil Canaanites* and He was *fulfilling a promise He made four centuries previously to Abram*.

“Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people. *“Stiff-necked”* means *“obstinate or stubborn.”*”

And then he says, verse 7, *“Remember!”* Again, *to remember* is a chief responsibility we have in our relationship with God. *Why is it, when God teaches us a lesson we forget it so quickly?* It’s said, *“Memory is what tells a man his wedding anniversary was yesterday.” A bad memory that is...* God wants us to recall His Words, His works, His ways, *and our wrongs.*

Verse 7, *“Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.”* It’s easiest to forget our own indiscretions.

Like the woman with the poor memory who said, *“Pretty soon I’ll be able to hide my own easter eggs.”*

Moses warns, *“Also in Horeb (the mountain range that included Mount Sinai) you provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry enough with you to have destroyed you.”* Moses is going to remind Israel of their colossal mistake - *the infamous incident with the golden calf... holy cow how could they forget!*

“When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water.” A human can survive forty days without food, but only eight days with no water. Moses’ fast must’ve been supernaturally empowered by God.

“Then the LORD delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.” The Ten Commandments written in stone.

And it came to pass, at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. Then the LORD said to me, *‘Arise, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly; they have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made themselves a molded image.’* Recall these were the same people who’d already witnessed miracle after miracle... The plagues on Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, manna from heaven, the evening quail, water from a rock. *Yet miracles yesterday don’t guarantee faith today!*

"Furthermore the LORD spoke to me, saying, 'I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people. Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than *they*.' Moses had also been frustrated with these people. And God had offered him a fresh start with a nation of his own. **Out with the Israelites - in with the Moses-ites.** Yet Moses loved Israel, and he begged God to spare them.

"So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God - had made for yourselves a molded calf! You had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you." They swapped a *miracle-working God* for a *medal calf*. While the mountain *burned with fire* the people *burned with lust*. The fire of a holy God was seen on the mountain, while the people embraced idolatry and the unholy acts that came with its worship.

Moses was angry! "I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes." In a righteous rage Moses broke the two stones.

A riddle: *Who is the only person in history to break all Ten Commandments at one time?* Answer: *Moses*.

Verse 18, "And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you committed in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger." No water or bread another forty days and nights, an even more amazing miracle!

"For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also.

And the LORD was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain." *Moses took two actions... First*, he crushed the golden calf and ground it to dust which showed the people the *total impotence of their idol...* And **second**, Moses threw the idol-dust into the water supply. It reminded a thirsty Israel *you become like what you worship...* It was all a fitting end to a *bunch of bull*.

Verse 22 begins Israel's march to the land of Canaan *and their rebellion continued to simmer...* "**Also at Taberah**" or "*burning*" - this is where God sent fire to judge the complainers... "**And Massah**" - this is where Israel grumbled over a lack of water. "**And**

Kibroth Hattaavah” or **“graves of craving”** - this is where the Hebrews longed for meat in place of manna... At all these sites they **“provoked the LORD to wrath.”**

Mount Sinai was just one chapter in a long story of rebellion, that finally climaxed at Kadesh. **“Likewise, when the LORD sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, 'Go up and possess the land which I have given you,' then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him nor obey His voice.”** Kadesh was the border town where they followed fear not faith, and refused to enter the land.

This was the pinnacle of their rebellion. Afterwards, God sentenced the first generation to die in the desert.

Faith takes courage. On the surface it involves taking a risk. God's best is attainable only if you're willing to leave behind the familiar. Yet instead of God's best and the challenges of possessing a new and occupied land, Israel chose the ease and familiarity of the wilderness.

And I believe there are folks here today who are more comfortable in the wilderness than having faith.

Israel managed a nice life in the wilderness... *manna in the morning, water from a rock, their clothes never grew threadbare, their feet never swelled...* And likewise, you too have *food to eat, your bills are paid, your kids have clothes.* You're also at ease in the wilderness. You live a life that's pretty comfortable...

There's just one problem... God's calling on your life is about *conquest* not *convenience*. His blessing involves battles. You know in your heart, God wants you to win victories not make compromises. Thus, you too have a choice to make... you can *survive* in the wilderness, or you can *thrive* in the Promised Land...

A Christian can *stay put or step up - we can pull back or press on - we can opt out or enter in...* Sadly, Israel chose ease over victory - *and ended up with neither!*

Israel's choice revealed what had been true from the outset. *In verse 24 Moses has biting words for his flock, “You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.” The truth stings. “Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you.” He kept at it!*

Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, lest the land from which You brought us should say, "Because

the LORD was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness. Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.'" Moses cared about God's reputation in Egypt. He didn't want the pagan nations to assume God was unable to finish what He'd started.

Chapter 10, "At that time the LORD said to me, 'Hew (or carve) for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark.' "So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the LORD commanded me." God will start over with these people, but He won't lower the standard. He rewrites the tablets that Moses had broken. His law is still enforce.

And Moses is to put the tablets inside the Ark. The Ark was God's treasure chest, and what did He consider His treasure? *His Word! The commandments.*

The next few verses continue Israel's journey to the Promised Land. Along the way, Aaron the priest dies and is buried... the tribe of Levi is appointed to care for the Tabernacle and carry the Ark... and their portion in the new land will not be a parcel, but the Lord Himself.

Verse 10, "As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights; the LORD also heard me at that time, and the LORD chose not to destroy you. Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, begin your journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.'" Moses had successfully interceded for Israel. God was willing to give them another chance.

But in verse 12 God instructs His people, "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you..." This is the question we all would be wise in asking ourselves... **What does God require of me?**

We talk about **Ten Commandments**, but there were also **Five Requirements**. Here they are, "But to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to

serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good? Here are the Five Requirements God makes of His people... *both then and now...*

“To fear the Lord...” Do you respect and honor God?

“To walk in all His ways...” Have you altered your attitude, and changed your perspective on life and love and relationships to conform to His Word and ways?

“To love Him...” Is God the object of your affections?

“To serve the Lord with all your heart and soul” Are you passionate and thoughtful about doing His will?

And “To keep the Lord’s commandments...” Do you read, study, obey, and apply His Word to your life?

Here is what God requires of us today... To fear Him, walk with Him, love Him, serve Him, and obey Him! He wants *serious Christians with serious commitment*.

Verse 14, “Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it...” And God could’ve chosen any of earth’s inhabitants, but “The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.”

God chose Israel, the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob - these are His special people even today. Note, he chose not just the fathers, but their descendants! The Jews today are still His chosen people. *Don’t begrudge it!* He wasn’t hindered or blinded in choosing. It could’ve been anyone, but God picked the Jew.

“Therefore (Moses says to them) circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.” Male circumcision was the mark of membership in God’s family. Circumcision was *minor surgery* with *major symbolism*. The operation peeled back a fold of flesh, and symbolized a Hebrew’s humility before God.

For a Jewish male to be circumcised was to make himself weak, and vulnerable, and exposed, and dependent - and circumcision of heart is the attitude we all need to maintain a good relationship with God.

“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.” Here Yahweh is called “Lord of lords.” In Revelation 19:16 Jesus is referred to by the very same title. Obviously, there’s only one Lord of lords - which obviously means that Jesus and Yahweh are the same person... *a proof of Jesus’ deity*.

And our great God “administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves

the stranger, giving him food and clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” When you love a stranger, or help a widow or orphan you’re acting like God. *He is God of the underdogs!*

“You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. He is your praise, and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt with 70 persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.” Their population had grown from 70 to 2-3 million!

Deuteronomy 11, “Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments **always**...”

“Always” - this means at church, at home, at school, at work, at the ballpark, at the supermarket, at the restaurant - in the light of day and in the dark of night - on weekdays and weekends – with your buddies and before strangers - before 6:00 AM and after midnight - in the real world and in cyberspace... **“You shall love and obey the LORD your God **always**.”**

Verse 2, “Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the LORD your God, His greatness and His mighty hand and His outstretched arm...” God is not speaking to ignorant kids, He’s talking to eyewitnesses of “His signs and His acts which **He did** in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; what **He did** to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how the LORD has destroyed them to this day; what **He did** for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; and what **He did** to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel - but your eyes have seen every great act of the LORD which **He did**.”

Five times in these verses Moses uses the phrase in connection with God, **“He did...”** When men write history they focus on human achievement, but here Moses sees history revolving around what **God did**.

And think of the miraculous acts the Hebrews got to see firsthand and up-close. Israel had a bird’s eye view! They witnessed unprecedented miracles... And that’s why the *Israelites had no excuse*. They were spiritual beneficiaries of so much. As the old saying goes, **“With great privilege comes great responsibility!”**

"Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, '*a land flowing with milk and honey.*' For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden;" Egyptian farmers used foot pumps that lifted water from the Nile to irrigated crops.

"But the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year." Egyptian farmers irrigated their fields with water from the Nile River, but Israel had no irrigation source. The Jordan River is more like a stream than a river. Canaan was dependent on the spring and fall rains.

The Nile watered Egypt, but God watered Canaan. And Israel would have to depend on God for the rain.

Verse 13, "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain (which came in October / November) and the latter rain (which fell in April), that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled."

If Israel obeys God, He'll see to it they receive ample rainfall, but... "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you." If they disobey, and turn to idols, God will turn off the rain. God will control the water spigot! He'll have a way to get Israel's attention within a few days.

This is true in Israel today. Rather than a huge body of water like the Great Lakes, or a mighty river like the Mississippi, *Israel's primary water source is the rain.*

Remember in the OT God's kingdom was an earthly one, and divine blessing was measured in rainfall amounts and crop production. But with the coming of Jesus, God changed tactics. In Matthew 5:45 Jesus says of God, "*He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.*"

No longer was rainfall or the lack of it a sign of God's blessing. Jesus says it rains on

the just and the unjust.

Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom, and to supply His people spiritual blessings, but spiritual blessings aren't measured in inches of rain, rather in outpourings of peace, love, and power. In the OT when Israel obeyed, God *blessed them with showers*. Today, He rains on His people *showers of blessing*. OT Israel produced *citrus fruit*, NT saints expect *spiritual fruit*.

Yet having said that, let me also say nothing should stop a believer in Jesus from praying for actual rain. God does bless us in tangible ways if we ask Him...

I read of a pastor in Iowa who did an experiment. He put dirt in two pie tins, and planted soybean seeds. He then asked the children of his church to pray specifically for the seeds in one of the two tins. The children prayed for the seed in the one tin. The other tin received no prayer... *And Guess which tin produced the most soybeans? The one that received the prayer!*

This prompted him to start a prayer chain for farmers. At one time 5000 Iowans prayed by name for 50,000 farmers. One skeptical farmer, Frank Livingood use to scoff at the prayers, until the day his son fell into a granary elevator and was miraculously delivered.

Today Livingood says of the prayer chain's efforts, *"I'm not laughing about it anymore. I think prayers are great!"* Just because it rains on the just and the unjust doesn't mean God can't direct a few showers now and then. God wants to bless us with tangible, as well as spiritual blessings - but first, He wants us to ask...

Verse 18, *"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth."* The idea is to surround yourself and your family with God's Word. Hey, we all need *spiritual surround sound*... We need God's Word to permeate our lives.

Jews today think they're obeying these verses by strapping leather pouches or phylacteries around their forearms and foreheads, and by touching the mezuzah on the door of their home. But this command is much broader! God wants His Word to influence our words, and our ways, and our walk - what we do in our **prime time** - our **down time** - our **free time** with our kids.

Keep the Word as your target - keep it between your eyes. Let it guide your hands and feet. Live out God's Word with your children. Write it all over your house and gates. Base your life on the living Word of God.

Chapter 11:22, "For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do - to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him - then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves."

Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea (or Mediterranean) shall be your territory." All the Middle East will be theirs. "No man shall be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you." God will give Israel an intimidation factor that will strike fear in the hearts of her enemies... Now fast forward 3500 years and after the recent pager attacks against Hezbollah and the bombing of Iran's nuclear reactor Israel's enemies today probably have that same dread.

Verse 28, "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known." If Israel obeys, God will bless. If Israel disobeys, He'll curse.

"Now it shall be, when the LORD your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are they not on the other side of the Jordan, toward the setting sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the plain opposite Gilgal, beside the terebinth trees of Moreh?" Gerizim and Ebal are twin peaks west of the Jordan River. Later Israel will camp on these two mountains, and listen as God's blessings and curses are shouted from their summits.

The blessings will be declared from "Gerizim" which means "fruitful harvest" - and also fittingly, the curses will ring from Mount "Ebal" which means "barrenness."

Chapter 11 closes with a prediction of success for Israel, "For you will cross over the Jordan and go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you will possess it and dwell in it. And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today." God will defeat the enemy and win victories, but in return, Israel will be careful to observe all that God has commanded.