

### DEUTERONOMY

#### Lesson 10 - Chapters 6 and 7

We'll finish up chapter 6 and move into chapter 7 in our study of Deuteronomy today.

Last week we took another look at the **Shema**, the Hear O Israel, that is both the spiritual and national credo of the Hebrew people.....and it is most certainly the central tenet of Christianity as well, its just that it has been presented (over the centuries) as a NT doctrine that had never before existed. We finished up by looking at the middle part of Deuteronomy 6 in which a warning was issued for two main temptations Israel would entertain: 1) moving into the Promised Land with it's wonderful abundance and (for that day) its easy living, and then forgetting the God who did it all for them. The warning is that Israel should remember that they didn't build the cities and villages where they would live, nor did they plant the vineyards and orchards from which they would eat. Rather the Lord TOOK it from the Canaanites and GAVE it to Israel as their inheritance.

Thank about that for a second; although the word "inheritance" is usually only used in our society as something we receive when our parents die, in fact it carries with it an important underlying meaning. And that meaning is to receive something of value that somebody else worked to achieve. It is a thing that we have in no way earned; it is achieved only by birthright or by the grace of someone else.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> warning is that the redeemed people of Israel who have now inherited (by means of grace) abundance **and** the privilege of a special relationship with the God of the Universe should not adopt and consort with the gods of the people among whom they will live. And if the Hebrew does NOT heed this warning, destruction will be the consequence.

I spent some time last week connecting the real meaning of idolatry (which is the chasing after other gods) with what the actual God-principle is behind this warning. And that principle is that idolatry speaks of the pursuit of anything that holds a place in one's life that is equal to, or greater than, Yehoveh. There has been so much allegorical teaching within our Christian faith that it is easy to chalk this principle off to allegory as well; but that is clearly not the case here. The Lord speaks of the seeking after wealth and power and land and other things, as being "idolatrous" if it's place is held too high for us.

If we ponder it for a moment, we'll see that in a certain way the "worshipping of other gods" is kind of a Biblical oxymoron. The worshipping of other gods is itself ONLY an act of intent and of the evil inner self, because in reality there ARE no other gods. There are no other Yehoveh-like beings.....not even any inferior ones.... so we can send up the worship of these things all day long, but we are in effect worshipping to nothing. The problem is not that God is concerned that some other rival spiritual being is getting the glory that He should rightly hold; its that our carnal and evil minds and hearts choose to disregard Him and make something else.....anything else.....the ultimate (or even shared) goal of our lives. Today when we hear the word "idolatry" and tend to focus on little wooden idols or clay objects that people of old made prayers to misses the point. ANYTHING that holds a place as high as, or above the Lord God, Yehoveh calls idolatry; and I really don't think He is interested in our logical counter arguments. Our wife, our children, our wealth, our health, our retirement, our jobs, our safety and security, our hobbies all have the potential to become "gods". And these gods are indeed the gods of "other peoples". Moses says as redeemed people Israel is not to adopt these gods; they are for the non-redeemed people. Well, so it is with us; the chasing after money, sex, pleasure, safety and security at any cost, and so on are not for Believers. Its not that some proper level of these things are prohibited; its that we must constantly examine ourselves to see if we deny the Lord His due place in our lives because these other things get in the way.

### RE-READ DEUT. 6: 16 - end

Starting in Deuteronomy 6:16 Moses tells Israel what they should NOT do. After Moses has explained that the Lord will meet ALL of Israel's needs (and so there is no purpose for them to worship other people's god idols nor should they chase after the idolatrous goals of the Canaanites such as wealth and power and pleasure), Moses now explains what Israel SHOULD do. And what Israel SHOULD do is to obey God and not to test Him. And by means of demonstration and example Moses points to an incident that happened very early on in the Exodus, the incident at Massah. Now, really, the vast majority of the people he is talking to did NOT have this experience at Massah because they were either not born or they were but young children. Yet it must be that this infamous happening had become part of the standard tales that parents told their children because Moses makes no attempt to reiterate the circumstances; the mere mention of the name Massah was enough for his audience to fully understand his point.

But for our sake let me jog your memories; Massah was the name given to a place where the Israelites lacked water to drink and so they grumbled to Moses about it. Massah (with an "m") means "to tempt" and the idea is that the people doubted God's ability to provide for them. And this verse in Deuteronomy says (integrating some Hebrew), " Do not *nassa* God, as you did at the place called Tempting". *Nassa* (with an "n") means to put Him on trial, as a person accused of a crime would be put on trial. It does NOT mean to "try" God's patience, as it might seem to our minds in the typical rendering of this verse.

So after Moses admonishes the people to not EVER be so audacious as to actually put God on trial as the 1<sup>st</sup> generation of the Exodus did (with themselves as His judge), rather this new generation should do what is called out in verse 17: they should OBEY God. The idea is that Israel should not determine for themselves what right and wrong is, or whether God's laws and commands are optional or even fair and just; rather their job is not to question and decide but to LEARN and FOLLOW those laws. And this thought is fleshed out a little more when it says to always "do what is right in the sight of the Lord". This is as opposed to doing what is right in THEIR own sight. As we (followers of Christ) move along in both the OT and NT we're going to be exhorted on several occasions to "do what is right in the sight of God". Here in Deuteronomy 6 we get the definition of what is right in God's sight: and it is to obey Yehoveh's laws and commands. It has nothing to do with being nice, or tolerant, or pious looking, or happy according to our thoughts and philosophies.

And there is a divine reward for obedience; it is that Israel will possess the land and that God will drive out Israel's enemies, and thus things will go well for Israel. Resuming now the thought he started with in verse 7 (that it was critically important that the Law be taught to each succeeding generation), Moses says that the Hebrew children will eventually be curious about Israel's unique way of life and ask their parents WHY they should follow such laws and commands. Typically a child asks WHY something is done IF they have something else to compare it to (IF there seems to be another viable way). WHY do we gather in fellowship to worship God when all these other kids don't? WHY do I have to eat my vegetables when I'd rather just have a larger piece of that cake sitting over there? WHY do we study Torah and the Old Testament along with the New Testament when all my friends just read the Gospel stories about Jesus? It's the obvious differences that make for curiosity. So says Moses, when your children notice these differences between what they are required to do versus what the pagans are required to do, the Hebrew parents are to say the following to them: and it begins with saying, "we were slaves in Egypt and our God freed us from them". In other words, ***our history*** is what makes us so unique and as a result of this unique history that is based on our relationship with Yehoveh, this is why we follow the ways of the One who separated us away from all other peoples for Himself.

And Moses says that parents are to say that after God has established them as a separate and unique people, and after God has redeemed them and rescued them from slavery to an evil taskmaster, and after He sent them a land all their own, then the Lord COMMANDED them to observe His appointed times and festivals, to revere Him, and thus please Him. Therefore, says this great leader of Israel, "it will be to our credit" if we do what the Lord (who has done all these things for us) has ordained that we do; ALL of it.

Let me point out here that Moses' saying "to our credit" (or in other Bibles, "to our merit") means that obedience brings about goodness and well being towards us as a gift from God. The things that He would LIKE to give us He is able to give to us BECAUSE of our obedience. It is the opposite when we disobey, trespass against Him and thus incur guilt before God; in

that case His justice does NOT enable Him to give to us the shalom (the general well being) that He would so greatly desires to give to us. Instead, His unmatched holiness means has no choice but to deny us and discipline us.

Let's move on to Deuteronomy 7.

### READ DEUTERONOMY 7 all

There is an important principle that we MUST constantly refer back to when understanding the instructions that Yehoveh has given (and will give) concerning how Israel is to conduct the coming Holy War on Canaan. And it is that Israel is to proceed knowing that God is the God of ALL History, not just Israelite history. God is the God of all humanity, not just the Hebrews. That everyone **other** than Israel by definition worships false gods (the gods of their gentile culture that are non-existent) and therefore does not honor the true Creator God. Two key lessons must be noted here: 1) that God is indeed the God of everything does NOT mean that every god honored (by whatever name or characteristic he is known by) is on some level actually honoring Yehoveh. And 2), because Yehoveh is the God of everything and everyone, He has the right and authority to make the decisions and choices He is making. Yehoveh has the right to dispossess the Canaanites from their land and He has the right to transfer that land to whomever He chooses because it is His land in the first place.

Let's talk for just a moment about that first point. It has become increasingly popular in our day (even among some Evangelicals) to say that it doesn't matter whether a person worships the name of Buddha, Allah, Krishna, or whomever because what these people don't know is that they're actually all just worshipping Jesus. I don't know if it is from an insatiable desire for tolerance or peace at any cost, or just Scriptural ignorance, that this notion is born but that doctrine is so far from truth that it is hard to overlook it or overstate it. If we accept that view, then we have to wonder whether such a thing as idolatry can exist at all in our present age. Were the Canaanites actually worshipping the pre-incarnate Jesus when they were sacrificing their children to Ba'al? Were the Amorites merely worshipping Yehoveh when they performed ritual prostitution before the fertility goddess Ashtoreth? It's just that they didn't use the correct name?

Can you see the problem here? Part of the issue is even the misconception of the Hebrew word **shem** which is translated in English to "name" (as in God's name). The word **shem** means far more than simply the formal familial identity given to someone. It MORE means reputation, nature or characteristics. To the Hebrews names held great meaning because

embodied within a name was a set of attributes the person with that name would be known by and would be expected to uphold. So understand that when the Lord is ordering Israel NOT to worship other gods it's not only a matter of the Hebrews using an incorrect name to worship Him it's that the characteristics assigned to those false-gods are polar opposites from the characteristics that define Yehoveh.

This also means that WE modern day Believers have to be very careful when we willy-nilly define who God is and assign Him characteristics He doesn't have, or take away those divine characteristics that we'd prefer He didn't have. To make God a God who winks at sin but takes no longer takes action; or a God who accepts homosexuality and bestiality because He loves everyone and places that love above His laws and commands; or as a God who disciplines everybody except Christians is dangerous error. To do any of this is to essentially define a God who doesn't exist. And then to attach the name YHWH to that God who is created from our minds and fanciful doctrines is the purest definition of the meaning of idolatry.

I once knew a man who had been a Churchgoer for decades (he was in my Sunday School class). He came up to me after one particular lesson and said that he was offended and would never return. The issue was that I had spoken that day about the Lord's justice and judgment; and he told me that His God, Jesus, was a God of pure love and nothing else so we must be talking about two different gods. And true to his word he never came back to class.

Folks as much as we all love "love", and as much as we all recognize that perhaps the outstanding characteristic of Yehoveh is love, that hardly defines all of His characteristics. Among other things God is a God of light, of creation, salvation, mercy, judgment, wrath, fury and gentleness; He is a God who is near, yet is also not of our world or universe or even of our dimension. He is NOT a man, not even a super human; rather He is an entirely different being, totally unique. He will spark new life, preserve life, and yet destroy life according to His sovereign will and purposes. And what I'm listing here is embarrassingly inadequate to define even a fraction of who God is. But the Lord has also given us enough of His characteristics by means of His written Word, and has shown how these characteristics are in perfect proportion and balance, that for us to ever assign His name to another god whose characteristics are grossly different and infinitely inferior is an abomination of the highest order.

Therefore verse 1 says that YHWH your God is going to a) bring you (Israel) into Canaan, and b) expel the current inhabitants in order that you (Israel) will possess it. And then 7 nations are named that will be removed from the land and replaced with Israel.

Although we talked about this concept of "possessing" the land quite some time ago, let me briefly remind you that to "possess" does NOT mean "to own". When it comes to the Land of Canaan the term "possess" is used because that land had ALWAYS been set apart for special use by the Lord and will always be. Over and again the Torah and the remainder of the Bible

will inform us that Yehoveh is the sole and permanent owner of the Land of Canaan. Mankind is certainly allowed to own, buy, and sell chunks of real estate (there is NO Biblical injunction against this). Here in America, or in Europe and throughout most of the world, the concept of a man owning a piece of property is not only legal and foundational in virtually all of our earthly societies, but there is no Scriptural prohibition against such a concept. However this does NOT apply to one particularly well-defined piece of land in the Middle East that the Bible calls Canaan, and then eventually is called Israel because for **that** piece of land the Lord is only willing to lease and not sell. And the Lord retains all rights to revoke the lease on that land at any time He determines. Therefore Israel has NO right to sell land to one another let alone to a foreigner. This land is special, holy, set apart and reserved for God as the headquarters of His earthly kingdom.

We find this concept of possession versus ownership at the forefront of the Laws of Jubilee where land that has been “sold” has to be returned to the original owner. This law ONLY applies to the Holy Land. Or in more correct terms, the USE of the land that has been transferred to someone else is eventually terminated, and the USE of that land is ultimately restored to the person who was originally assigned it. In the Law the price a person charges for land is based only on what the land can produce between the time he leases it and the occasion of the next Jubilee, because it is only the **use** of the land that can be temporarily transferred. I hope you see the rather significant difference between OWN and possess, and why when Israel was exiled from the land the Lord was but revoking Israel’s **use** of the land as discipline, and also was only transferring the USE of the land to Israel’s conquerors for a set time, because these conquerors were God’s proxy for His punishment on His people. And it is also why this abomination called the Roadmap to Peace, or the defunct Oslo Accords, or any other so-called peace plan for the governments of men to force the transfer of ownership of portions of God’s land, or even to transfer possession of portions of that land from Israel to someone else, is disobedience and arrogance at the highest level and is just daring God to react. For a sizeable segment of the Church to back such plans is a painful thing for me to witness.

So what we have in Deuteronomy chapter 7 is Moses addressing a series of very specific issues that the Israelites will face as they invade Canaan. And in addition to the issue of land possession is that what to do about the people who currently live there must be dealt with. And the Israelites are told (in a nutshell) that they are to grant the Canaanites no terms and give them no quarter. They are not to intermarry (and this means no Hebrew sons marrying Canaanite women and no Hebrew daughters being given in marriage to Canaanite men). Further whatever Canaanites might remain in the land are to have their altars of sacrifice to their false gods torn down and destroyed, any kind of religious pillar or monument to one of their gods is to be smashed, and whatever idols or images of their gods that can be discovered are to be thrown into a fire and burned.

Now what exactly does this all this amount to? Is this about merciless genocide? First, giving the Canaanites no terms and no quarter means that no agreements or treaties are to be made

between Israel and the Canaanites that would allow them to remain their as sovereign societies. It means that Israel is NOT to essentially do what is ALWAYS done in these situations since time immemorial and that is to allow a foreign king to remain king over his people in return for taxes and tribute and labor paid to the conqueror (in this case, Israel). Further those Canaanites who refuse to bow down to the God of Israel are **not** to be allowed to remain in the land, rather they are to be forcibly expelled and if they instead insist on fighting to the death, they are to be accommodated.

Despite the thought that many Rabbis would like to leave us with, and the overly simplistic tales we've all been told about how the Hebrews did NOT intermarry and for long stretches of time stayed very pure in their gene pool, nothing could be further from either Biblical or historical reality. Hebrew men just could not seem to resist the charms of the various pagan women and constantly brought them home with them and integrated them into Hebrew society. In the book of Judges we see even the great Samson marry a Philistine woman. This, though, was just the tip of the ice burg. Because in Middle Eastern cultures (Israel included), a girl did NOT have much choice in whom she married. Her father made that determination and often it was based on how big of a gift a man might offer the father in return for his daughter's hand in marriage. That a father would offer his daughter to the highest bidder is bad enough; that an Israelite father would allow a non-Hebrew to be one of the bidders was forbidden but it happened regularly and (eventually) often. The problem with a Hebrew man marrying a foreign woman was that (except in rare cases) she would bring with her the pagan ways of her tribe and along with it the family pressure and influence from her kin for her Hebrew husband to at least be tolerant and respectful of her (and their) beliefs. We will eventually see the revered King Solomon marry literally hundreds of foreign wives, be openly tolerant of their worship of pagan gods, and even arrange for altars to be built so that they could sacrifice to those false gods.

For a Hebrew woman to be married off to a foreign man was a terrible predicament for that woman because once she was wed to that foreigner she lost her status as an Israelite. Further the children that she bore would now be gentiles and apart from Israel. The redemption that she had as a birthright was gone, and the redemption her children could have had as a birthright was also gone. So the effect of disobeying the command not to intermarry with anyone of these 7 named people groups was far reaching.

Now as for these 7 nations of peoples listed here, I'm not going to try to carefully define them all, as it would be much too complex for our purposes. Most of them were but tribes descended from Canaan (grandson of Noah), and so could rightly be lumped altogether and given the general identity of Canaanites (as they often are) in the same way that a man from the tribe of Judah or Reuben or Benjamin could rightfully be called an Israelite because he was descended from Jacob (called Israel). However that was not the case for every nation of the 7 that were specifically mentioned. Some of these names are less about tribes and more about simply describing a region that they inhabited. Which is which isn't important for the moment.

What is important are the reasons for the drastic action being called for by God (the prohibition against peace treaties, against any form of tolerance, and against intermarriage). And it is that the Israelite children (meaning descendants) of future generations will be drawn away from Yehoveh and into idolatry. Please note: this statement is a statement of fact, not an idle threat or a hypothetical warning. That is the Lord is saying IF you do any of these things it is 100% certain that the result will be a falling away from the true religion and an adoption of paganism. Now please hear me: any of us who have lived long enough have at one time or another succumbed to this reality. There is absolutely no way that we can marry a non-Believer, or buy into the ways of the non-Believing world (worshipping their gods so to speak), or even get close enough to the ways of the world to gain the benefits while trying not to get sucked in, without some tough consequences. I've heard so many Christians say when they decide to venture down this dangerous path, "well, I know it's dangerous, but I'm strong in the Lord so it'll be OK." Good luck. The problem is that what we're saying when we either think that way or make that kind of statement is that we can do the very things the Lord says to not do, but that He will somehow honor it and make sure none of the bad consequences happen. Do we often go long periods of time where it seems we HAVE gotten away with it, and breath a sign of relief only to suddenly have the shoe fall and then we recognize the unchanging nature of YHWH and the immutability of His Laws? This is what God is telling Israel and telling ALL who intend to rely on Him.

In the end, the fundamental prerequisite for Israel's survival in Canaan was the exclusive worship of Yehoveh. Disobedience and idolatry would automatically bring divine calamity; the nature of that calamity would range from constant harassment coming from foreigners, to famines, to wicked Israelite Kings who were oppressive to their own people, and on a couple of occasions outright eviction from the land, exile. So Moses explains a couple of facts of life: first, don't get too big for your britches when you DO gain possession of the land because it isn't your might or military acumen, or overwhelming large numbers of soldiers that will win the day. It is ONLY because the Lord has favored Israel (and discriminated AGAINST the indigenous people of Canaan) that Israel is able to receive victory in such a monumental task. And second, this is really all about the fulfillment of an oath (a covenant) that God made to the Patriarchs that Israel is receiving Canaan as their sole possession. But, Moses warns, all of this can be reversed for a time if they fail to observe the Lord's commands.

Starting in verse 12 more reasons are given for Israel to be obedient. Sometimes these passages remind me of talks I've had with my children particularly when they were growing up. Most parents will reminisce and speak of talking to their kids "until they're blue in the face", trying to get a very important message across; of looking into those blank, disinterested faces with their far-away stares, saying the same thing in several different ways in hopes that the nuances of the message will finally hit home and that our beloved offspring will heed some sage advice and avoid serious trouble. Somehow I picture Moses looking into thousands of these faces knowing full well that almost as soon as the message is ended, the rebellion will begin.



But, it won't be for not trying, and the Lord lays out the mercy and abundance that is awaiting Israel under the conditions He has established. The women will be fertile. Israel's population will blossom. The soil will produce. The animals will thrive. Serious disease and pestilence will not be allowed to injure the Hebrews (but it will still strike down their enemies living right next door). The Lord will cause Israel to be greatly victorious in battle BUT this is so long as the Israelite warriors show their foes NO pity. Ouch. That really goes against the Christian grain, doesn't it? Well, just refer back to the God-principle I laid out at the beginning of this lesson: the Lord is the Lord of everyone and everything. The Canaanites are His creations just as much as Israel and what He decides is their fate is up to Him. It's just that we've been well schooled to think of the concept of loss and calamity more in terms of a shrinking bank account, or a home being repossessed, or our job eliminated, or perhaps even a loved one dying from a terrible accident or fatal disease. But here the Lord is talking about wiping out entire nations on wholesale basis to accomplish His will of giving the Land of Canaan, as He promised, to Israel.

This reality is what has led to this implied, if not outright stated, doctrine that the God of the OT is of a quite different nature from the God of the NT. I remind you, though, that the God of the NT is going to continue His Holy War upon people who are not His elect on a scale unimaginable to our human minds. The battle of Armageddon is going to be the bloodiest, most devastating ending to the Holy War that begins with Joshua at the helm, and hundreds of millions are going to die with no apologies from the Lord. And who is going to be leading that battle and causing the mega-death? Jesus. Yeshua. Our Messiah. The God of the NT. It is going to make what went on in Canaan 3000 years ago look like child's play.

Starting in verse 17 Moses addresses what he knows the people are thinking. How does he know it? Because he saw the same thing about 38 years earlier; it is that the people really like the idea of having a wonderful land of their own but they don't much like the part about having to fight and many losing their lives in battle in order to get it. Thirty-eight years ago the people were so afraid of war that they betrayed Yehoveh and the consequences are well known so Moses is trying to ward off the very natural fears this younger generation might have about conquering Canaan. Therefore he tells Israel to bear in mind what God did to Egypt and that He is going to do essentially the same thing to the Canaanites.

Then Moses tells them NOT to be concerned or upset when it takes a little longer than they hoped to conquer Canaan; because if too many Canaanites are killed too quickly, and the land is purged of them too fast, Israel won't even have the necessary time to establish security and so wild animals will move in. Hmmm. Does this sound a little like what we encountered in Iraq? What the Lord is doing in the instructions for attacking Canaan is very practical, even though it goes against human tendencies. In Iraq all now agree that although we invaded and won rapidly in almost miraculous fashion, it was actually too fast. We got bigheaded about it. We didn't take the time needed to conquer smaller zones and establish secure areas, and then move on and take another, do the same, and then another. We tried to swallow the elephant in one bite and it has come at great cost. The wild animals (Al Qaeda and other

terrorist organizations) moved in.

At the same time, just as God and Moses know that the people are going to be short sighted and impatient, so Moses is preparing the people for what will happen, (this is the identical reason that our government decided it could NOT go slow in taking Iraq because Americans want fast results and instant gratification). The best and most fruitful way of attacking Iraq would never have been accepted by an American (or world) public that wants a video-game conflict: over in an hour and nobody actually gets hurt. Believe me I'm not making a political speech; I'm just trying to use an illustration that most will easily recognize that is quite in parallel with what Moses faced.

However, says the Lord, don't let the slower speed seem to you as though maybe things aren't going well; rather, I will deliver the Canaanite kings up to you and throw the Canaanite armies into complete panic so that often they'll just run away. The victory will be so complete that, as it says in verse 24, not even the names of the kings and military leaders will be remembered.

Then Moses returns to the two aspects of idolatry that we've talked about on a few occasions: don't take their idols (because you're liable to worship them), and don't even take the gold and silver they're made of (because the desire for all that gold and silver is just as idolatrous as the idols themselves).

And, as the Lord says in verse 26, He utterly detests anything that Israel (or we) might bring into His presence that rivals Him. Therefore, whatever that thing that could be a rival to Him must be destroyed; not because God is a miser or curmudgeon and doesn't want us to have nice things or a comfortable life, it is because the danger to our relationship and harmony with Him is so great.

We'll start Deuteronomy chapter 8 next time.