

Comments on Deuteronomy 8

This chapter recounts the Lord's gracious dealings with Israel (v. 1-10) and warns Israel not to forget the Lord (v. 11-20). Moses tells Israel they have been humbled and will now be blessed in the Promised Land, but must beware when blessed that they do not turn to pride. The chapter closes in v. 19-20 with an ominous threat: If Israel becomes like the Canaanites then they will be expelled just as were the Canaanites (cp. Deut. 9:5).

The chapter emphasizes the reality of the personal religious experience. Moses tells Israel to remember the interaction they each have had with the Lord, especially calling to mind the miraculous things wherein the Lord blatantly interceded (v. 2-6, 14-18). These are things done in their own seeing, things they themselves have experienced firsthand. It seems incredible Israel could forget about such blatant miracles and overt manifestations of the Lord's power and presence. But, let us remember our own lives, how quickly we forget the past when present cares are upon us. How many miracles in our own lives have been forgotten about?

Moses' argument is based upon Israel's absolute dependence upon the Lord for their survival for the past 40 years wandering in the wilderness. The Lord has supplied them bread daily in the form of manna and has oftentimes provided water and other food as well. He has been forced to chasten them repeatedly to encourage humility. Now, Israel will be entering a land where they will no longer be strictly dependent upon miraculous intervention on the Lord's part for their daily bread, and Moses warns them against attributing their abundance and prosperity to their own means. Once the daily dependence and persistent chastening ceases, Moses fears Israel will forget about the Lord and do what everyone else does.

The text of this chapter forms an inverted parallelism, as follows:

- A - (v. 1) That ye may live
- B - (v. 2-6) Humility through chastening, Remember
- C - (v. 7-10) Bless the Lord the God
- C - (v. 11-13) Beware that thou forget not
- B - (v. 14-18) Pride in comfort, Remember
- A - (v. 19-20) Ye shall perish

The purpose of the parallelism is to emphasize that the survival and well-being of Israel hinges upon their remembering the Lord. Especially note the tight repetition in v. 7-13 as follows:

Bounteous vegetation, iron, brass (v. 7-9)
When thou has eaten and are full (v. 10a)
Bless the Lord thy God (v. 10b)
Forget not the Lord thy God (v. 11a)
When thou hast eaten and are full (v. 12a)
Bounteous flocks, silver, gold (v. 13)

Moses' warning to Israel is they are to bless the Lord in their comfort and not forget him. This is a common Book of Mormon theme, cf. Jacob 2:12-13, Alma 4:6-10, Hela. 3:36, Hela. 6:17, Hela. 12:1-3, Hela. 13:20-23, 3 Ne. 6:10-14, 4 Ne. 1:43.

1 ALL the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.

2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, [and] to prove thee, to know what [was] in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no. 3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every [word] that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. 4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years. 5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, [so] the LORD thy God chasteneth thee. 6 Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.

7 For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; 8 A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; 9 A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any [thing] in it; a land whose stones [are] iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. 10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

v1-10 Moses tells Israel their key to life and prosperity is to keep the Lord's commands (v. 1). They must remember all of the things they have experienced wherein the Lord has had to chasten them to keep them humble and respectful of Him (v. 2-6). Now the Lord is bringing them into a land of comfort and bounty, and Israel needs to be thankful to Him for that (v. 7-9).

v2-4 These verses in combination with v. 15-16 recount the fundamental series of events which constitute Israel's national identity. These are the Lord's chosen people, whom He went out of His way to remove from Egypt and chasten and guide and so forth. This direct and interactive relationship with the Lord is

what separates Israel from the Gentiles, as is emphasized in v. 5.

v3 This verse is the original source for the physical food to spiritual food symbolic equation. Here, the parallelism is explicitly spelled out. The manna is symbolic of revelation, or in this specific case the Law of Moses, and is as essential to spiritual life as bread is to physical life. If one does not feed themselves spiritually, then they will die just as they will if they do not physically eat. From this point on the symbolism is employed universally in the Scriptures, cp. Isa. 28:7-8, Matt. 6:25, John 4:34, 1 Cor. 10:1-4, 2 Ne. 9:51, 2 Ne. 32:3.

11 Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: 12 Lest [when] thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt [therein]; 13 And [when] thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

14 Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; 15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, [wherein were] fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where [there was] no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; 16 Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end; 17 And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of [mine] hand hath gotten me this wealth. 18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for [it is] he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as [it is] this day.

19 And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. 20 As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

v11-20 Israel will be inheriting the Promised Land shortly so Moses warns them against forgetting about the Lord (v. 11). The blessings Israel will be enjoying there (v. 12-13) can lead to pride and forgetfulness (v. 14-18). If Israel forgets the Lord, they will be destroyed even as the current inhabitants are about to be destroyed (v. 19-20).

v19-20 A stern warning for the Lord's chosen people. If they behave no differently from the Gentiles, then they will be treated the same as the Gentiles.

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