



Deuteronomy - Chapter Seven

II Deuteronomy 4:44-11:32 - Moses' Second Speech: General Covenant Stipulations (continues)

Summary of Chapter Seven

The people are being prepared to enter the Promised Land and are instructed that God will sweep away seven nations before them but it is up to the Israelites to see they are totally destroyed, especially their articles of pagan worship. In addition, Israel is warned they must not form alliances with the other nations nor must any of them intermarry. This is because they are God's chosen people, not because of anything they have done but because it was his will to release them from Egyptian slavery and bring them to this land.

If the people remain faithful to God then he will bless them immensely. The land will be blessed, as will their livestock and he will keep them free from sickness and disease.

They are also not to fear the nations they are about to take on in battle. God has already demonstrated his awesome power in Egypt and in their battles east of Jordan. He will do the same to the seven nations in Canaan but he will do it slowly, at a pace the people can manage to keep up with.

II.f Deuteronomy 7:1-26 - Exclusive Relationship Worked Out in Conquest and Worship

The emphases on the incomparability of the Lord and the demand for exclusive allegiance to him are now applied to Israel's conquest.

II.f.i Deuteronomy 7:1-11 - A Chosen People

God has chosen Israel out of all the nations to be his people. Because of this he has brought them out of Egypt and given them the Promised Land. It will be God who

will go before them to drive out the seven nations. Israel is to ensure that it has nothing to do with these people; they are to be destroyed along with their religious artefacts that God finds so abhorrent.

For a parallel to Deuteronomy 7:1-6, refer to Exodus 34:11-16.

¹ When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you are about to enter and occupy, and he clears away many nations before you – the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations mightier and more numerous than you – ² and when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them. Make no covenant with them and show them no mercy.

Deuteronomy 7:1-2

When the Lord your God. Israel was not in the land yet, but Moses still instructed them as if it were a certainty. This was based on the faithful promise of God, but it was also according to his principle of preparation. God always prepares his people before he brings them into a place.

The Hittites are not the same group as those in Anatolia Turkey, but are those descended from Noah's son Ham, like the other peoples listed in this verse: <<**The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan**>> (Genesis 10:6), and: <<**Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites. Afterwards the families of the Canaanites spread abroad**>> (Genesis 10:15-18).

The Amorites were already an adversary of the Israelites and they had defeated their kings Sihon and Og in the Transjordan already.

The Canaanites were descendants of Canaan. As noted from Genesis above he was the ancestor of the other tribes and therefore the land was often called Canaan to cover the region where the other tribes lived also.

The Perizzites are associated with Canaanites, seemingly sharing the same lands: <<**and there was strife between the herders of Abram's livestock and the herders of Lot's livestock. At that time the Canaanites and the Perizzites lived in the land**>> (Genesis 13:7), and: <<**Then Judah went up and the Lord gave the Canaanites and the Perizzites into their hand; and they defeated ten thousand of them at Bezek. They came upon Adoni-bezek at Bezek, and fought against him, and defeated the Canaanites and the Perizzites**>> (Judges 1:4-5).

The Hivites lived around Shechem, in Gibeonite territory and in the north, near Mount Hermon.

The Jebusites were based in Jerusalem. Compare the lists in Deuteronomy 20:17, which omits the Gergashites). They would remain in control of the city until David finally conquered many generations later: <<*The king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites, the inhabitants of the land, who said to David, 'You will not come in here, even the blind and the lame will turn you back' – thinking, 'David cannot come in here'*>> (2 Samuel 5:6).

Seven nations mightier and more numerous than you. “Sure,” Moses said, “the Canaanite nations are greater and mightier than you. But they are not greater and mightier than God.” God brought Israel to face a challenge that was impossible in their own strength, but entirely possible in him. Jesus confirms this: <<*Jesus looked at them and said, 'For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible'*>> (Mark 10:27).

When the Lord your God gives them over to you. It is not if, but when. God could be counted on to deliver on his promises.

And you defeat them. Yet, God would not do it all for them. The extent of the work would depend on their faithful response to what God would do.

You must utterly destroy them. This principle of battle until absolute victory is the key also to the Christian victory as they take the Promised Land of blessing and peace God has for them in Jesus. They should show no mercy to their enemies in the land, but they destroy them utterly. Many of them, truth be told, simply do not want to completely destroy the sins which keep them from God's Promised Land of blessing and peace, they want to weaken them, and have some control over them, but they do not want to utterly destroy them.

Make no covenant with them. Israel's covenant with God is exclusive, and thus covenants with other nations are prohibited.

Show them no mercy. The listed nations in v.1 inhabit Israel's land promised by God. They are being punished for their sins: <<*And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete*>> (Genesis 15:16); the God of justice is using Israel as his executioner; and any mercy shown to those whom God is judging will not only compromise God's punishment but will also make Israel vulnerable to follow their evil ways (v.16).

It should be remembered that one of the reasons God had brought Israel into Egypt for 400 years was to keep them separated from the nations in Canaan and the negative influence that would have while they grew into a strong nation that could then emerge and take the land. The Egyptians had nothing to do with the Israelites socially and therefore did not influence them in that way.

³ Do not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for that would turn away your children from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly.

Deuteronomy 7:3-4

Do not intermarry with them. The prohibition of intermarriage would be unnecessary if all the Canaanites were destroyed. Intermarriage with those of other religions is the issue, not interracial marriage or ethnic cleansing. Israel is vulnerable to turn away from God; refer especially to the effect it had on Solomon in 1 Kings 11:1-8. That is far more likely than Israelites converting their non-Israelite spouses to the Lord: <<*Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Beliar? Or what does a believer share with an unbeliever?*>> (2 Corinthians 6:14-15).

⁵ But this is how you must deal with them: break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire.

Deuteronomy 7:5

Break down their altars, smash their pillars, hew down their sacred poles, and burn their idols with fire. All the paraphernalia of Canaanite religion is to be totally destroyed or it will be a snare to Israel. This radical, complete destruction was important because of the depraved nature of the worship of the Canaanites, who worshipped male and female gods of sex and who practiced human sacrifice with their own children. Yet Israel would fail to comply, which would lead to their apostasy: <<*The Israelites did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, forgetting the Lord their God, and worshipping the Baals and the Asherahs*>> (Judges 3:7).

The pillars were made of stone.

Their sacred poles were wooden poles adorned with female fertility symbols. Asherah may function as both the divine name for a particular goddess or refer to sacred wooden poles called Asherim erected at places where she was worshipped.

⁶ For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Deuteronomy 7:6

For. This verse provides the reason for the preceding commands.

Holy to the Lord. At its heart, holiness means being exclusively separated to God. Hence Israel must have no association with pagan religion.

God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth. Israel was holy in their standing before God before they were holy in their conduct. They were set apart unto God by his choosing, and were then called to live as chosen people: <<*Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, 'Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you'*>> (Isaiah 49:7).

His treasured possession. God could have chosen any nation but he had called Abraham to be the patriarch of his chosen people and it is Abraham's descendants who are special in God's sight: <<*Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites*>> (Exodus 19:5). This privilege now falls upon the church for they are the spiritual descendants of Abraham: <<*For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us)*>> (Romans 4:16), <<*He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds*>> (Titus 2:14), <<*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light*>> (1 Peter 2:9).

⁷ It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you – for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ It was because the Lord loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8

It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the Lord set his heart on you and chose you. As much as anything, their election meant the Lord set his love on them. Their motivation for such a total obedience was to be that they knew they were loved by God. This is the great motivation for

obedience: knowing and walking in the love of God. When people really believe God loves them, and live with that belief as a conscious fact, they find it so much easier to obey, and to utterly destroy anything that would damage that relationship of love.

The Lord's love for Israel derives from his love for their ancestors, the patriarchs: <<*And because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants after them*>> (Deuteronomy 4:37a), and: <<*You will show faithfulness to Jacob and unswerving loyalty to Abraham, as you have sworn to our ancestors from the days of old*>> (Micah 7:20), and not from their own merits. Refer also to Deuteronomy 9:4-5.

⁹ Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, ¹⁰ and who repays in their own person those who reject him. He does not delay but repays in their own person those who reject him. ¹¹ Therefore, observe diligently the commandment – the statutes and the ordinances – that I am commanding you today.

Deuteronomy 7:9-11

The faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty. Unlike people, who continually fail to remain loyal to God in all they do, he remains faithful in all that he does and says: <<*For the word of the Lord is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness*>> (Psalm 33:4), and: <<*Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah still walks with God, and is faithful to the Holy One*>> (Hosea 11:12).

Unlike Deuteronomy 5:9-10, there is no mention here of visiting iniquity to the third or fourth generations. Rather, God repays to their own person those who reject him: <<*A jealous and avenging God is the Lord, the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and rages against his enemies*>> (Nahum 1:2). Over many generations the Canaanites had demonstrated their hatred for God, Now, using Israel as his instrument, God will repay them with judgement.

II.f.ii Deuteronomy 7:12-26 - Blessings for Obedience

Here, God's love and blessing is conditional, not on him but on the obedience of the people. They are to observe the law and make God's ways their ways. The blessing will be on the people, on the land and on their livestock. However, they must destroy the other nations completely if they are to be successful.

They are not to fear these native nations that stand before them for God is with them and they have already witnessed his awesome power in defeating their enemies in Egypt and during their wanderings.

¹² If you heed these ordinances, by diligently observing them, the Lord your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; ¹³ he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, in the land that he swore to your ancestors to give you.

¹⁴ You shall be the most blessed of peoples, with neither sterility nor barrenness among you or your livestock. ¹⁵ The Lord will turn away from you every illness; all the dread diseases of Egypt that you experienced, he will not inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you.

Deuteronomy 7:12-15

Although the covenant God made with Abraham had few conditions, Israel is obligated to keep the Sinai covenant laws for the Abrahamic covenant to remain in force: *<<I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed>>* (Genesis 12:2-3), and: *<<The Lord will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground in the land that the Lord swore to your ancestors to give you. The Lord will open for you his rich storehouse, the heavens, to give the rain of your land in its season and to bless all your undertakings. You will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow. The Lord will make you the head, and not the tail; you shall be only at the top, and not at the bottom – if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today, by diligently observing them>>* (Deuteronomy 28:11-13).

The fulfilment of the Abrahamic covenant is described in terms of blessing. Grain, wine, and oil represent the three main crops.

The dread diseases may refer to the plagues against Egypt in Exodus Chapters 7-14, or more generally the diseases that were common afflictions in Egypt.

¹⁶ You shall devour all the peoples that the Lord your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity; you shall not serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

Deuteronomy 7:16

For that would be a snare to you. As soon as people have other gods in their lives their relationship with God is broken, causing them damage: <<*but they mingled with the nations and learned to do as they did. They served their idols, which became a snare to them*>> (Psalm 106:35-36), and: <<*I found more bitter than death the woman who is a trap, whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters; one who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her*>> (Ecclesiastes 7:26).

¹⁷ If you say to yourself, ‘These nations are more numerous than I; how can I dispossess them?’ ¹⁸ do not be afraid of them. Just remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, ¹⁹ the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the Lord your God brought you out. The Lord your God will do the same to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

Deuteronomy 7:17-19

Israel is warned three times not to say to yourself certain things that express fear (v.17), or pride: <<*Do not say to yourself, ‘My power and the might of my own hand have gained me this wealth’*>> (Deuteronomy 8:17), and: <<*When the Lord your God thrusts them out before you, do not say to yourself, ‘It is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to occupy this land’; it is rather because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is dispossessing them before you*>> (Deuteronomy 9:4). The state of Israel’s heart is a key issue in Deuteronomy. The answer to each warning is to remember. The antidote to wrong fear is to remember what the Lord your God did. Their recollection of God’s faithfulness in the past would give them hope for their current struggle. Right fear means fearing God.

²⁰ Moreover, the Lord your God will send the pestilence against them, until even the survivors and the fugitives are destroyed.

Deuteronomy 7:20

The pestilence is most likely a further reference to the plagues God had wrought on Pharaoh and his people for their refusal to obey God’s instructions to let the people leave their lives as slaves.

²¹ Have no dread of them, for the Lord your God, who is present with you, is a great and awesome God. ²² The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to make a

quick end of them, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you.²³ But the Lord your God will give them over to you, and throw them into great panic, until they are destroyed.

Deuteronomy 7:21-23

God will clear away these nations before you little by little. This verse gives some theological interpretation to the Book of Joshua. While Joshua 10:42 envisages a rapid conquest: <<*Joshua took all these kings and their land at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel*>>, Joshua 11:18 acknowledges that Joshua's wars took a long time: <<*Joshua made war a long time with all those kings*>>.

You will not be able to make a quick end of them. God would go before Israel and fight for them (God, who is present with you) but he would not drive all the enemies out at once. Perhaps Israel wanted the land all cleared out before them, but God knew it was not best for the land or for them.

Otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you. The way easiest for Israel was for God to clear all Israel's enemies out at once. However, this easy way had consequences Israel could not foresee or appreciate. As well as the practical difficulties of setting up and administering a new land, God wanted Israel to grow spiritually in the process of taking the Promised Land.

Confusion and great panic are common features of holy war: <<*At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic*>> (Exodus 14:24), <<*And the Lord threw them into a panic before Israel, who inflicted a great slaughter on them at Gibeon, chased them by the way of the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah*>> (Joshua 10:10), <<*But after they had brought it to Gath, the hand of the Lord was against the city, causing a very great panic; he struck the inhabitants of the city, both young and old, so that tumours broke out on them. So they sent the ark of the God of Israel to Ekron. But when the ark of God came to Ekron, the people of Ekron cried out, 'Why have they brought across to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people?' They sent therefore and gathered together all the lords of the Philistines, and said, 'Send away the ark of the God of Israel, and let it return to its own place, that it may not kill us and our people.'* For there was a deathly panic throughout the whole city. The hand of God was very heavy there>> (1 Samuel 5:9-11).

²⁴ He will hand their kings over to you and you shall blot out their name from under heaven; no one will be able to stand against you, until you have destroyed them. ²⁵ The images of their gods you shall burn with

fire. Do not covet the silver or the gold that is on them and take it for yourself, because you could be ensnared by it; for it is abhorrent to the Lord your God. ²⁶ Do not bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be set apart for destruction like it. You must utterly detest and abhor it, for it is set apart for destruction.

Deuteronomy 7:24-26

Abomination or **abhorrent** is an important word in Deuteronomy. It denotes a significant sin, often with the sense of social or theological hypocrisy, and God's increased anger against it.

For it is set apart for destruction or **devoted to destruction**. As stated in the comment made on Deuteronomy 2:34-35, God is the victor and the spoils of battle belong to him and not to Israel; hence their destruction as an act of devotion to God. It also is a precursor of final judgement.