

DEUTERONOMY

Chapter 7

A Chosen People

“When the LORD your God brings you into the land that you are entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than you, 2 and when the LORD your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them. 3 You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, 4 for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. 5 But thus shall you deal with them: you shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their Asherim and burn their carved images with fire. 6 “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. 7 It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, 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. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, 10 and repays to their face those who hate him, by destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. 11 You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today. 12 “And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. 13 He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock, in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you. 14 You shall be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock. 15 And the LORD will take away from you all sickness, and none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you knew, will he inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you. 16 And you shall consume all the peoples that the LORD your God will give over to you. Your eye shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you. 17 “If you say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I. How can I dispossess them?’ 18 you shall not be afraid of them but you shall remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, 19 the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand, and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So will the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. 20 Moreover, the LORD your God will send hornets among them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you are destroyed. 21 You shall not be in dread of them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God. 22 The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little. You may not make an end of them at once, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you. 23 But the LORD your God will give them over to you and throw them into great confusion, until they are destroyed. 24 And he will give their kings into your hand, and you shall make their name perish from under heaven. No one shall be able to

stand against you until you have destroyed them. 25 The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. 26 And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction[c] like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction.

7:2 destroy them totally. God calls for the total annihilation of the Canaanites, knowing that their apostasy may easily spread among the Israelites and lead them astray. (TLSB)

7:3 You shall not intermarry. God’s protection against the allure of cult worship. It is best not to deliberately seek a marriage partner who is outside the faith. (TLSB)

7:4 turn your sons ... to serve other gods. The Lord’s command against intermarriage with foreigners was not racially motivated but was intended to prevent spiritual contamination and apostasy (see, e.g., 1Ki 11:1–11; Ne 13:25–27). (CSB)

7:5 altars ... sacred stones ... Asherah poles. Cult objects of Canaanite idolatrous worship. (CSB)

God is not tolerant of other religions that would separate people from Him. But God is just, and He gave the idolaters in Canaan centuries to repent. They refused. Sadly, many individuals today continue as the Canaanites did and persistently reject the work of the Holy Spirit. (TLSB)

7:6 holy. Separated from all corrupting people or things and consecrated totally to the Lord. The ground was not holy by nature but was made so by the divine presence (see, e.g., Ge 2:3). Holiness involves being consecrated to the Lord’s service and thus being separated from the commonplace.). (CSB)

God declared the Israelites holy. Their lineage would produce the world’s Messiah, Jesus Christ. (TLSB)

chosen ... His treasured possession. God formed the nation of Israel for Himself, so they might proclaim His praise (Is 43:21) and lead other people to the Lord. (TLSB)

7:7–8 God selected Israel as His holy people by grace alone in fulfillment of His promise to Adam and Eve (Gn 3:15), Abram (Gn 12:3, 7), Isaac (Gn 26:3–6), and Jacob (Gn 28:13–15). (TLSB)

7:7 chose...because – Israel might have asked: Did the Lord choose us because we were bigger or greater than other nations? The Lord’s choice wasn’t grounded in any quality found in Israel; it arose instead from a quality found in God. The old poem, “How odd of God to choose the Jews,” underscores how unexpected and unmerited that choice was. That’s what we call grace, God’s remarkable mercy and faithfulness toward sinners who don’t deserve either one. (PBC)

C. S. Lewis once observed that there’s something unscrupulous about the grace of God; He doesn’t choose men and women to be His because of what He hopes to obtain from them. There’s a little voice inside each of us that wants to boast about the Lord’s choice. Jesus, however, told His disciples, “You did not choose me but I chose you” (John 15:16), and St Paul added: “[God] chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ” (Eph. 1:4-5) (PBC)

He keeps them at the rightful use of the Law by wholly removing boasting and trust in works, and he calls them to trust in grace alone, saying: “Not because all the nations, etc.” as though he were saying: “The fact that God uses your sword does not happen because He needs your power or because He cannot do it without you, since you are very few in number. The glory of the work is not yours, but His, who by using your small number destroys such a great multitude. Otherwise, if He had wanted to conquer with a multitude, He would not have chosen you but other peoples who are much more numerous than you. What, then, is left in this work about which you can boast? Nothing of yours; but “because the Lord [he says] chose you and kept His oath, etc.” (Luther)

treasured possession. The equivalent phrases used of Christians in 1Pe 2:9 are “chosen people” and “people belonging to God.” (CSB)

7:8 *because the LORD loved you.*† The “covenant of love” (vv. 9, 12) stems from God’s love for his people, as expressed in his covenant; it does not stem from the numerical greatness of the people or any virtue of theirs. His love must be reciprocated by his people (see vv. 9–10; 9:4–6; see also note on 6:5 – Love for God and neighbor (see Lev 19:18) is built on the love that the Lord has for his people (1Jn 4:19–21) and on his identification with them. Such love is to be total, involving one’s whole being.). (CSB)

You see that nothing is held out to human trust in any work but the undeserved love of God, by which He is moved to approach us with His Word and promise even before we are born. It is out of the question that He should requite anything after we are born or begin to serve Him. And this is the pure and unalloyed meaning of the First Commandment: We should deem ourselves to be nothing as regards our merit, but to have, receive, and find power to do everything only by His mercy and love, to His glory—mercy which He first promises by His Word and then also confirms afterward by a work which He does through us, as by a sign, just as here He cites the Exodus from Egypt and the destruction of the Canaanites. (Luther)

Therefore you will note that a great spirit is necessary to be able to destroy these things, adorned with the title of a divine name and worship, like the altars and observances of the Gentiles. Who would not be frightened or deceived when the divine name is presented? Yes, who would not become proud of that artificial piety? Certainly those Gentiles, as I have said, had not worshiped any God except the true one, but with a wrong worship and assumption invented by themselves, not prescribed by God. In truth it takes an even greater spirit not to glory in having ruined such worship, and not to set up an internal idol of a most empty trust in place of the external idol. So great a thing it is to know the true and only God purely, and to fear, worship, love, and believe genuinely in Him. Hence Moses has to use so many words to set forth the First Commandment. Therefore he repeats the words of the First Commandment here, saying: “Know that the Lord your God is a faithful God, keeping, etc.” (Luther)

Instead of saying, He hath chosen you out of love to your fathers, as in Deut 4:37, Moses brings out in this place love to the people of Israel as the divine motive, not for choosing Israel, but for leading it out and delivering it from the slave-house of Egypt, by which God had practically carried out the election of the people, that He might thereby allure the Israelites to a reciprocity of love. (KD)

7:9 *steadfast love.* Unlike sinful human beings, God fulfills each promise; He remains steadfast in His love toward those who love Him. (TLSB)

thousand generations. – In the treaty language of the ancient Near East the “love” owed to the great king was a conventional term for total allegiance and implicit trust expressing itself in obedient service. (CSB)

There are no time limits on God’s abundant mercy for those who love Him (Ex 34:7). (TLSB)

By this was Israel to know that Jehovah their God was the true God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant, showing mercy to those who love Him, even to the thousandth generation, but repaying those who hate Him to the face. This development of the nature of God Moses introduces from Ex 20:5-6, as a light warning not to forfeit the mercy of God, or draw upon themselves His holy wrath by falling into idolatry. (KD)

7:10 *repays to their face.* God promised to judge Israel’s enemies in this life. Sometimes God’s judgment comes as discipline (Ezk 5:13), while at other times it is everlasting condemnation (Heb 6:1–6). (TLSB)

7:12–16 The blessings God has poured into the lives of the Israelites have overflowed in their love for God and His commands. In response, God pours out even more blessings. (TLSB)

7:13 *grain...wine and your oil.* A common OT summary of the produce of field, vineyard and olive grove (see, e.g., 11:14; 14:23; 18:4; 28:51). (CSB)

7:16 *snare.* Failure to completely destroy the Canaanites would lead to idolatry. Such idolatry later caused Israel’s enslavement in Assyria and Babylon (cf 2Ki 17). God foretold the consequences of disobeying His command to destroy the Canaanites. Cf Dt 28:15–68. (TLSB)

7:19 *great trials.* God’s 10 plagues (Ex 7:14–12:30) tested Pharaoh’s unbelief. Only when God struck down Pharaoh’s son did he relent and release the Israelites from enslavement (Ex 12:29–32). Even then, Pharaoh’s heart remained hardened against God, and he remained in his sin of unbelief, sending troops after God’s people (Ex 14:5–9). (TLSB)

7:22 *God will clear out.* Joshua’s campaigns of conquest would last c six years (1406–1400 BC). The total defeat of the Canaanites extended over a longer period of time. (TLSB)

Ch 7 God’s hand is raised against the inhabitants of Canaan, whose sin has ripened before God, causing His action. God, not the Israelites on their own, will drive the Canaanites from the Promised Land. He plans to fulfill His promise to Israel’s greatest ancestors: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Today, through Jesus Christ, believers are led into the promised land of eternal life. Each time we look upon the empty cross, we are reminded of God’s promise of redemption fulfilled in Christ. • Lord of all creation, we thank You for the precious foretelling of deliverance made known to Your ancient people and delivered in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Grant us encouragement in Your precious Word. Amen. (TLSB)