

## Session 5: Deuteronomy 9-11

Dr. Cynthia Parker

This is Dr. Cynthia Parker and her teaching on the book of Deuteronomy. This is session 5, Deuteronomy 9 - 11.

### **Introduction: Deuteronomy 9-11: Math, Poetry and Calendar**

Okay, so in this lecture, we're going to do a little bit of math, a little bit of poetry. We're going to look at the calendar again and then talk about the proper response. I know you're so excited. Math and poetry, who doesn't love, right? So we're doing chapters 9 through chapter 11. I'm pulling things out of Deuteronomy that I think are going to be consistent with the thought of Deuteronomy, but we are going to frame it in terms of math and poetry and calendar work because it makes it a little bit more interesting and fun.

### **Deuteronomy 9: Our Righteousness = Victory [wrong]**

We're going to start first with Deuteronomy 9. So, Deuteronomy 9 is going to be our math section. Part of what Deuteronomy is doing, is something that we've already heard a little bit before, except now it's going to be a lot more explicit. There's a math equation that, in this sermon, Moses tells the people; this math doesn't add up. So here is what the people are thinking. I'm giving you the incorrect version formula, and then we are going to go and try to figure out what the correct formula actually is. In this sermon, Moses is saying, my righteousness or the righteousness of the people, plus the wickedness of the nations equals our victory when we go into the land. And that is what Moses says; this is not true at all.

So, I'm going to start reading Deuteronomy 9; the chapter begins with something that is already very familiar to us, Shema Israel, "Hear O Israel. You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations, greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, people, gardens, houses. This is what you're going into. Now, be careful because this formula is incorrect.

So I'm going to skip down to verse 4. "Do not say in your heart, when the Lord your God has driven them out before you, 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 dispossessing them before you. It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land. It is because of the wickedness of those nations that the Lord your God is giving them or is driving them out before you in order to confirm the oath which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness."

So, we've heard this repeated, and you go. Okay, yeah, yeah, okay. I get it. It's not because of us. And if that repetition that we've already heard three times isn't enough, Moses then goes into a big long discourse of "O, actually, yeah. Remember at Horeb, when I was at Mount Sinai, and I was up on top, and I'm actually receiving the covenant when we're in the process of becoming an official nation, and we're signing this contract with God, this marriage covenant with God. Remember that day? Yeah. Remember when I did that, and I came down, and you are already worshipping the golden calf? So, remember, it's not your righteousness that is allowing you to go in.

So this math formula is incorrect because if you rely on this math formula, then the euphoria of victory leads to this imagined self-sufficiency. And this is going to be problematic because when you go into the land, you'll end up

thinking you are self-sufficient. And if you are self-sufficient, it's everything based on your deeds, your actions, your strength, and your ability. So this math formula cannot be correct. It's not. It's the wickedness of the Canaanites, but that doesn't actually prove that you are righteous. So even though Deuteronomy keeps saying God is going to push the Canaanites out, God is going before you as the great warrior because they are wicked, it doesn't mean you are righteous just because you happen to be taking their place. So, you're going into the land doesn't mean your righteous.

So, keep in mind your own history; call to the forefront of your mind that you have made mistakes in the past, and yet God is faithful to his people.

So, what, then, is the actual correct math formula? Well, the correct math, according to Deuteronomy 9, is God's faithfulness. Then also it is the fact that the wickedness of the nations, that is why you get to have victory. So, chapter 9 calls the people to great humility. They may be going into the land they are going to go and possess something that has great potential to be a thriving and wonderful place for God to dwell with his people. But it is not because they deserve it. Now, they might still get it as a gift, but God is also going to call his people to be responsible for the gift that he has given them.

### **Deuteronomy 10:12 Poetry: What are These Laws For?**

So, with that, we're going to move into chapter 10. So, when we move to Deuteronomy 10, this is going to be our poetry section. I'm actually going to focus on just a few verses from 12 to 22 of chapter 10. I actually really like this part, and again, as someone like yourself, you are studying the book of Deuteronomy, and we're getting ready to go into the law code, and there are all these different laws. If we were to look at the Old Testament and say, can we boil it down to something? In the previous lecture, we looked at how we could

boil it down to the Shema, so "Hear O Israel, the Lord Our God, the Lord is one."  
We can boil it down to that.

Here in chapter 10, Deuteronomy is giving us another option. What can we boil it down to? What is the heart of God? What are all of these laws for? What is the purpose behind it? Well, we get this in chapter 10, verse 12.

"Now Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you?" Fair question. And the answer is "to fear the Lord your God to walk in all of his ways. Love him and serve the Lord your God, with all your heart and with all your soul."

That sounds very similar to the Shema in chapter 6. It is this idea, what is it if we boil it all down? What is it that God wants? Fear him, love him, and do.

So, verse 13 says, "And keep the Lord's commandments and his statutes, which I am commanding you today for your good."

### **The Majestic God Chooses to Love Them (Deut. 10:14-15)**

Now here's what I'm loosely calling poetry; it's more parallelism that we see. So, when we look at Hebrew, and we're reading Hebrew, what are the things that you work with the language that's really quite nice is there's this great repetition. In repetition, you find the key heart of what the author is trying to communicate. So, repetition is not boring. Repetition is solidifying the heart of the message. So, we're finding this parallelism in repetition here in chapter 10. Follow this with me. So, if you're familiar with even how we do poetry in English, sometimes we divide up lines. We'll say there is line a, b, and c. And then maybe the fourth line has a very similar concept to the first line, "a." And so, we will say "a," but it's not the exact same word for word, so we'll say, it's "a'." That's what we're going to find here. So, follow along with me, and I'll try to make it very obvious up on the screen.

So, in verse 14, we get, "Behold, to the Lord your God, belongs heaven, and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it." It is very majestic. It is to God, the God of the heavens and the heavens of the heavens. How much more majestic and big can we get? And it's not just the heavens of the heavens, but the earth and everything in it. It's this all-inclusive. God sits over the top of all of that. So, it's a very majestic way of describing God. So, with this description of who God is, the heavens, and the heavens beyond the heavens, what does this God do in verse 15? And yet, this majestic God, "Yet on your fathers did the Lord set his affection to love them, and he chose their descendants after them, even you above all people as it is this day."

So, the God who is beyond the heavens, the heavens in the heavens of the heavens and the earth and everything on it, what did this majestic God do? He chose you. He chose your forefathers. And if you are the recipient of that hesed, the loving-kindness, the persistent, inconvenient love that God does all the time. He's given that to you. So, he has put his affection on Israel.

The Response to God's Hesed Love (Deut. 10:16) – Circumcision of the Heart

So, what is the response? The response comes in verse 16. And so, because God has chosen Israel, "circumcise your heart and stiffen your neck no longer." So, circumcision, of course, has covenantal undertones to it. Circumcision is a mark of the covenant with God. But it's not just physical circumcision; it's removing the harder layer around your heart to be responsive to God. So, in these first three verses that we're looking at, we get the God, who is of the heavens and owns the earth. He has put his affection on Israel. This majestic God chose Israel, and so their response should be to circumcise their heart.

**Deuteronomy 10:17**

Now we're going to start to get the parallel thought. So, when we keep reading, we get to verse 17. "For the Lord, your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, the awesome God, who does not show particularity, nor take a bribe." Well, some of these words, things like "God of gods, Lord of lords," this is very common, ancient Near Eastern titles. Kings used to take these titles for themselves. They would think of their pantheon of gods, and there would be a god of gods; kings would be lord of lords, right? It's the one, the only, the most majestic. So, you can see now we have "a." We're not quoting God, who is of the heavens in the highest heavens, but we are still thinking of a very majestic ruler, a dynamic type of language for God. God is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, great, mighty, awesome. So again, very full, rich, powerful language for who God is.

**Deuteronomy 10:18 God's justice for the Widow, Orphan, and Alien**

So, our second thought where in the first couple of verses, we get a description of God and an action of God; we have another description of God. We're going to go into another action of God.

So, verse 18, "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow and shows his love for the alien by giving him food and clothing." What a majestic God, and what does he do with that? Where the ancient Near Eastern kings would pull that power into themselves. God has that same kind of title, but what does he do? But he protects the people on the perimeter, the people in society who cannot protect themselves. So, you can have the orphan, the widow, and those who fall outside the normal way society is functioning. The alien, the foreigner who is in your midst, give him food and clothing, providing basic necessities.

## **Response: Deuteronomy 10:19**

So, if we're following the pattern from the earlier, we have a description of a very majestic God in action. Now comes a response. We've had another description of God, a very majestic ruler kingly titles with his action, which is full of humility and care. And so, what is your response to that?

So, we go to verse 19. "So, show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." So, what should you be doing in response? You also care for the foreigner who is in your midst. Now, this is really interesting to me because if we look at the two action points. So, the very first one in the first half of this parallelism in chapter 10, the first half is to circumcise your own heart so that you can be sensitive to the word of God, so that you can be sensitive to the relationship with God so that you can respond to God the way that he wants you to respond.

And what's the second thing you should do? Do you take care of the people who are on the perimeter of society? God has done it, justice for the poor. You should do it as well.

So, we start with these majestic descriptions of God. The actions of God, God has chosen Israel, but he also cares for the people and the poor people and gives them justice. So, you should have a tender heart and mimic God. Do the same thing that God is doing and follow his example, and also take care of the poor.

## **Deuteronomy 11 and the Agricultural Calendar**

So, with that in mind, let's move into chapter 11. As we move to chapter 11, we're going to look once more at the calendar. So, in a previous lecture, we talked about the agricultural calendar. So, the land where the people live follows

a very particular type of flow. It has a rhythm to the year. And so, while we think of time as being very linear, they thought of time as being cyclical because the cycle of the land, it repeats itself every year.

As we enter chapter 11 and we think about the calendar, we're looking again at how the power of God shown to the people should evoke a response of love. And we're going to remember that God sustained people in the wilderness, and those memories are powerful. We talked about remembering and forgetting. So, we're going to bring this into chapter 11 with us, for that is also going to be very important here.

And in verses 8 and 9, in chapter 11, "Keep the commandments in order to conquer the land in order to prolong your days in the land." These are all familiar to you now. You have started to hear some of these themes before.

Let's continue, so I'm going to start. This was the introduction to chapter 11, but let's continue through 11 and read some more verses and see what we can pull out of it.

### **Deuteronomy 11:10 – Water with the Foot in Egypt**

In verse 10, it says, "For the land into which you are entering to possess, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came. Where you used to sow your seed and it with your foot like a vegetable garden." Now I love this one. When I have all my students in class, I have everyone read different versions of English, versions of the Bible because there is lot of variety in how the Hebrew of this verse is translated. So again, mine says, when it describes the land of Egypt, says, "Egypt is a place where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden." Well, that sounds confusing. I don't know how many of you water your gardens with your feet, but it sounds like a very odd and unusual thing.



What is interesting about this is, again. This is where place matters, where understanding the location and imagery that the biblical writers are using matters. Because this makes a lot of sense if you go down to Egypt and if you look at the way that they did gardening and agriculture.

Now I took a group of students down to Egypt, and we were driving along the Nile. And all of a sudden, I saw this field. And I yelled for the bus driver to stop. And it scared him and startled him. And he stopped the bus, and I jumped out, and I took this picture. He was so confused as to why I was taking this picture. But for me, I was like, this is Deuteronomy 11. Because what happens is in fields and because agriculture is very easy in Egypt, just like it was in ancient times. So they haven't; not all farmers have made modern technological advances because it's still pretty easy to grow food if you're doing just a small plot of land. So, if you remember, in one of the previous lectures, I talked about how Egypt is a riverine community. So there's lots of agriculture right along the Nile River because the Nile floods every year and pulls up and deposits large amounts of very fertile, wonderful soil. Well, the picture that I'm showing you on this screen is filled with soil that is dark and black and rich. It's the soil from the Nile River.

Well, if you look at the picture, you'll see that this particular farmer has made a grid of his agricultural area. So, he has small squares and then has planted them in rows within the squares. But there's a very deep trench between each of these rectangles or squares, plots of land.

Now, this particular farmer has his land right next to the Nile. And so to water this area, he actually just goes to the Nile and is able to dump water into the trenches, and then the water fills these deep trenches. When he wants to water one section of the field, all he has to do is go through and, with the heel of

his foot, break through the wall, this mud wall in the trench. Then all the water floods into this rectangle and waters his fields. When he's done watering it, he just pushes the mud wall back up, the water continues to flood down, and then he can irrigate, or he can water a different section of his field.

So, watering with your foot actually starts to make sense once you see the way that it was actually done in history, in reality. Even now, this is how portions of Egyptian farmers are still gardening.

Now Deuteronomy says one of the things about remembering is pulling to the forefront of your mind. In this case, it's pulling to the forefront of your mind, Egypt. And Deuteronomy is going to begin making a comparison. It's actually already been in process, but we are going to see it quite a bit, where Deuteronomy is aware of the fact that in Egypt, life can be pretty easy. So, in Egypt, you have soil, you have water. You can irrigate this farmland with your feet. You can have a vegetable garden with minimal effort of your own. You can sustain yourself. That image, that acknowledgment of the land of Egypt, is great, except for the place of Egypt; the bigger idea of Egypt is the house of slavery, this fiery furnace of oppression. The way the society worked, the way that the land worked with Pharaoh on top and all of these slaves at the bottom, that type of leadership structure, is opposite of what God wants.

So, there's going to be this Egypt held up as a place of comparison. It might have been easy for you, for human effort, to make it produce. And guess what, Israel, the land you're going into is nothing like this.

Deuteronomy 11:11 The Land Drinks Rain from Heaven from God

So, in comparison, verse 11 says, "But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of

heaven." So, the water for the land they are going into comes from rain. There is no reliable source like the Nile for the water to come from.

"The land from which the Lord your God cares. The eyes of the Lord, your God, are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year." If you remember the agricultural calendar, the picture that I showed you before. The beginning of the year begins with the early rains, and the end of the year ends with the olive harvest. So we have from the beginning, even to the end of the year, God's eyes are on it.

In verse 13, it says, "It shall come about if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all of your heart and all of your soul that he will give the rain for your land and its seasons, the early rain, and the late rain." The early rain allows for the ground to soften so that farmers can go through a break up the ground, all the way to the latter rains, which are the last rains that will fall, that will push the rest of the agriculture into fruition.

### **Agricultural Trilogy: Wheat, wine, and Oil**

"So that you can gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil." Okay, we saw in Deuteronomy 8 that the author is actually listing the very specific produce that comes out of the land in its agricultural cycle. So in chapter 8, we saw barley, wheat, grapes, figs, pomegranates, and olives.

Now, we're going to see a trilogy. We can summarize all of these by saying the cereal crops of barley and wheat. So, let's call all of that wheat--the cereal crops. We get the beginning of our summer fruits with grapes in August. So, we're going to call that wine. And at the very end of our harvest, we have the olives, which are pressed into oil. So, this wheat, wine, and oil is Deuteronomy's trilogy. It is a little shorthanded way of talking about "and everything."

So I'll repeat verse 14, So this is speaking of God, "he will give the rain for your land in its seasons the early and late rain that you may gather in your grain, your new wine and your oil. He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied." So, even the cattle are provided for by God.

### **Contrast with Egypt Versus Relying on God in the Land**

So, what is the contrast? The contrast is Egypt is a very easy place for you to put forth your own effort and survive and count on yourself and say my effort did this for me. The land the Israelites are going into is a good land with great potential, but this land relies on God. God provides the rain. God allows for the produce to come in every year. God gives the grass in the fields to the cattle.

So, it is demanding that as the people go into the land, they learn to rely on God the same way the land relies on God. So, their place matters. It's going to be a challenging place to be. But the land relies on God, and God provides for it. The People need to be like the land and rely on God as well.

So, of course, this has to come with a warning. "Beware that your hearts are not deceived and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them." We have heard this before too. It is the warning that when you go in, and God provides everything that you need, don't turn around and then attribute all of that benefit to some other god, or do not rely on yourselves and your own effort.

### **Pulling Back: Moses on the Plains of Moab**

Now, the end of chapter 11 is, is quite interesting because we get a break from this sermon. And then Moses says, you know what, I'm giving you instructions. This is something that you need to do. Once more, we are kind of pulled back; we've been imagining what the land looks like and what's going to

happen when we go in. We've made this really nice comparison between the easy life of Egypt, although the society is messed up and oppressive, to the difficult life the Israelites are going into, and yet, it's going to reflect God. So, we've done this Israel/Egypt comparison. We've cast a vision for what it could be like when the people go into the land.

Now once more, we've pulled back to Moses standing on the plains of Moab, talking to the Israelites and telling them, "When you go into the land, you need to ratify this covenant." In other words, go into the land and this covenant that you made with God at Mount Sinai, do it again for this next generation but do it inside the land.

### **Ratification of the Covenant: Mt. Gerizim and Ebal**

So, as part of the instructions, I will show you another map. We get this little road map where Moses gets very specific directions. This is how you get to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim. So, you go across the Jordan, west of the way of the sunset. So, the sun is setting in the west. So, you head out west towards the sunset. In the land of the Canaanites opposite Gilgal, beside the oak of Moreh, that is where you're going to find Ebal and Gerizim.

So, if we say Moses and the people are here, these instructions push us off in this direction. So, I'm going to zoom in right to where Mount Ebal and Gerizim are located. On this map, this is the Rift Valley. This white area here is the Rift Valley. Moses and the people would be just off the map down off the bottom part of the map. I've two stars. This is Mount Gerizim here. This is Mount Ebal to the north. And this yellow line if you can see this on the video, the line travels this way. This is the primary road in the hill country. It's not an international road. You're not going to find big caravans of Egyptian travelers

going up and down this road. But for people who live in the hill country, this is a very significant north-south road.

So, the instructions to the Israelites are, when you go into the land, this is a brand new place for you. When you go into this place, go to these two mountains, and put the tribes half on Gerizim, half on Ebal, and ratify the covenant there.

Well, let me show you a picture if we were to actually go and stand there in person. This would be us coming up from the Rift Valley, looking at Gerizim to the south and Ebal to the north. So put the people, half of them on this mountain, and half on this mountain. Right on the flat plain area in front of the mountains is where the ancient road would have gone.

### **Significance of the Covenant Ratification: Place & Memory**

So, let's think for a moment about why this is a significant command for the people. Why do they have to go in? Why did I have to renew a covenant? Did they make the covenant at Sinai? Why do they need to do it again?

Well, let's consider for a moment the idea that place and memory are connected. Have you ever had the experience where you are maybe visiting a city that you haven't been in for several years? And you are walking down the sidewalk, and as you step off the sidewalk into the street, you have a flash memory and go, ha. The last time I made this walk, I was walking next to Shannon, and we were talking about this cafe that is three blocks over there. I wonder if that café is still there. Have you ever had that experience? Or I don't know, you can sometimes go to a place, and you'll smell something, and suddenly, the memory comes out of nowhere, and you've not been considering it, and all of a sudden, the memory's at the forefront of your mind is like, oh yes, I remember. This place kind of triggered something for me.

Well, this is a very purposeful combination. I mean, places, geography, and what we see around us hold and preserves memories of things that have happened there before. Now, when we think of the Israelites going into a land and we think of the fact that they're being told to remember. Remember who God is; remember what he has done. Humans are very forgetful beings until we need this constant; how are we going to remember these things? Well, places can become a very powerful way to help us remember.

And so, we have in the book of Deuteronomy in chapter 11, and we are trying to remember this covenant that we made with God, except Mount Sinai is very far away. Horeb is very far away. It's not in our immediate horizon line. We're not going to just run across it at some point in time. That place that holds that memory is far away from our field of experience.

The benefit of going to Gerizim and Ebal is it creates a very present memory, and so you have two mountains instead of one. But these two mountains are linking the experience of the covenant to the mountain at Mount Sinai, at Horeb. So, where the people made the original agreement with God at Horeb, they can come to stand on Gerizim stand at Ebal ratify the covenant, and now we have a place on our immediate horizon line that can act as a constant reminder of blessings and curses.

And so, these two mountains sit right on the primary road that goes north and south in the hill country for the Israelites. And as they're going up and down as they're trading goods with other people, the ideal would be to pass Gerizim and Ebal and see them standing up as very dramatic, distinct mountains and go, oh, right! I wasn't thinking about the covenant, but now I am thinking about the covenant, and I'm remembering. There are blessings and curses associated with this covenant. And so, it brings the experience of a past memory into the

experience of the present moment. So, it helps to bring in the memory, making the memory much more at the forefront of people's minds.

So the actual ceremony that is involved, actually how they go about doing this covenant, is a ratification ceremony. This will show up for us in chapter 27, but the directions to go in and remember and attach the covenant to this place is here first in chapter 11.

The next lecture that we're getting ready to do is going to be a little bit more complicated. We're jumping into chapter 12. And as we move into chapters 12 through 26, we're entering the bulk of the law code. This is when we're actually finally going to talk about the authorship and the purpose of the writing of the book of Deuteronomy. So that will be in the next lecture.

This is Doctor Cynthia Parker and her teaching on the book of Deuteronomy. This is session 5, Deuteronomy 9 - 11.