

**Deut. 12:1 ¶ These *are* the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.**

At this point Moses begins to explain in more detail the instructions God had given to govern how they lived. First and foremost he addresses getting their spiritual house in order. The Hebrew for the word *observe* is enlightening—“to hedge about (as with thorns), i.e. guard; generally, to protect, attend to, etc....be circumspect, take heed (to self)....” Moses is basically saying that living in obedience to God’s instructions will serve as a hedge of protection around them. It will keep them in a place of blessing and protect them from stepping into a place that will result in judgment. He also emphasizes that these instructions are to be embraced for “all the days” of their lives.

**Deut. 12:2 Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:**

**Deut. 12:3 And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.**

The first order of business is to completely destroy all the places connected with idol worship wherever they might be located. They are to destroy every item associated with that worship—altars (places of sacrifice), pillars (columns for holding idols), groves (the Hebrew indicates this is connected to the worship of the goddess Ashtoreth), graven images (the actual idol statues), and even the places that bear the names of these false gods. YHWH, The one and only True God, wants the land to be completely devoid of anything related to the worship of false gods.

**Deut. 12:4 Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.**

**Deut. 12:5 ¶ But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, *even* unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:**

**Deut. 12:6 And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:**

**Deut. 12:7 And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.**

Moses now goes on to give instruction regarding the proper worship of YHWH, the God of Israel. In contrast to the heathen places of worship, YHWH is going to choose a place in the land of one of the tribes as the acceptable place for worshipping Him as implemented with the making of the tabernacle and the establishment of the priesthood as revealed to Moses at Sinai. It will be at that place that the people are to come to make their offerings (freely offered acts of worship and thanks), sacrifices (offerings requiring the death of an innocent animal made to atone for sin or make clean), tithes (a tenth of all that God gives you), and vows (a solemn promise to God) before the LORD. At that place they will eat (of the fellowship and peace offerings) and fellowship before YHWH, the

God of Israel, with great cause to rejoice for the abundance with which God has rewarded their labor.

“the firstlings of the herds and flocks” – This is direct reference to God’s instruction as explained in Exodus. It is an ongoing reminder that their deliverance from Egypt to live as an independent nation is a direct result of God’s provision for them.

Ex. 13:12-15 That thou shalt set apart unto the LORD all that openeth the matrix, and every firstling that cometh of a beast which thou hast; the males *shall be* the LORD’S. And every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb; and if thou wilt not redeem it, then thou shalt break his neck: and all the firstborn of man among thy children shalt thou redeem. And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What *is* this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage: And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem.

**Deut. 12:8 Ye shall not do after all *the things* that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.**

This is an interesting section to me. It seems to indicate that the people were not following God’s instructions in spite of Moses’ leadership. Moses describes how they are living as doing “every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.”

I remember from previous reading in Joshua that they hadn’t been obedient to circumcise all those born in the wilderness. Previous reading in Exodus-Numbers revealed that the years of wandering had included times of rebellion and judgment, but I guess I would have thought that as that time drew to a close that the people would have been eager to please God in hopes of benefiting from His power and provision in conquering the land. I wouldn’t have thought they would be characterized in the same way I characterize the professing “church” today. Just as Israel needed a call to repentance and obedience, so the “church” needs today.

Because of my interest in the study of “end times,” I also couldn’t help but think of how this will apply to Israel in preparation to entering God’s eternal land of promise. A believing remnant will turn from being a people following what is right in their own eyes to becoming a nation totally committed to YHWH in faith and obedience and entering into the rest and inheritance referenced in the next verse.

**Deut. 12:9 For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.**

I read this over several times and finally started to look at the Hebrew when I noticed that there is no Hebrew showing until the word “come.” That actually made more sense to me; I just couldn’t make the connection with “for, since, when or because” as used in other translations. It was better to read it with a

clean break. Moses is saying things are going to be different when we cross over into the Promised Land that we are inheriting from God as promised to our fathers. Instead of serving in a nation of false gods in bondage and fear, Moses says (my paraphrase), "Come, let's enter into a land where we can experience rest as we submit to the Lordship of YHWH who has chosen to give us this land."

**Deut. 12:10 But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;**

**Deut. 12:11 Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:**

**Deut. 12:12 And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.**

I liked the wording of the NIV for verse 10.

But **you will** cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and **he will give you** rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety.

It's a statement of faith in God's promise. They are to recognize that truth and determine to worship God as He commands concerning where and how. This is the greatest thanks a child of God can give Him—obedience from a heart of love. They will have great cause to rejoice in having a safe land of their own to call home. I thought it was interesting that special address was made to the Levite who would inherit no land of his own. In spite of that lack, they have great cause for rejoicing in their privileged position of service before God and the provision that will be made for them through the sacrifices and offerings brought to God. They will lack nothing and will truly "rest" as God provides their every need through the obedience of others.

I couldn't help but think of the words of Jesus at this point.

**Matt. 11:29-30 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.**

**Deut. 12:13 Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:**

**Deut. 12:14 But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.**

Moses continues to distinguish between offerings made to idols and those made to Almighty God. God is unique and holy. The place He sanctifies as acceptable for the offerings made and the method by which they are offered to Him must be unique and holy according to His will and instruction. Again, Moses declares that God will choose a place in the land designated to one of the tribes.

**Deut. 12:15 Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.**

Regarding the normal diet of the people, however, God has said that they may kill and eat meat according to their liking. The wording of the KJV is confusing, but I believe the other translations clarify that the instruction does not limit the person, whether clean or unclean, in the “clean” meat he consumes.

**Deut. 12:16 Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.**

There is one important instruction, however, regarding the consumption of meat. They are not to eat the blood; it is to be poured out on the earth like water. We learned previously that God declares the blood to represent the life of the flesh.

Lev. 17:11 For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood.

God’s word is careful and consistent in teaching that we are to value life. He is the giver of life and the only One with the authority to take life. Though He is allowing the people to eat meat, they are to remember that life is precious and can be taken only as instructed by God. They were even to “bury” the blood after pouring it out.

Lev. 17:13 And whatsoever man *there be* of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; **he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.**

I believe this was a sign of respect for the life that was sacrificed to provide your sustenance.

**Deut. 12:17 Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand:**

**Deut. 12:18 But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that *is* within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.**

Anything designated as belonging to God, such as tithes or the male firstborn of the flocks, or any offerings made to Him that allowed for the offerer to partake of the offering were to be brought to and transacted at the place designated as His choice. Why are they to rejoice at what they give to the Lord? Because it represents how bountifully they have been blessed by Him. It’s a public acknowledgement that they recognize Him as LORD and that all their blessings come from His hands.

I think it is also significant to note that no one in the community is to be left out; they are all to participate—sons, daughters, servants and Levites.

**Deut. 12:19 Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.**

Moses is very clear in addressing the status of the Levite as he instructs the people. To forsake the Levite would be to forsake God since they are His chosen servants. Their lives are not to be burdened with the distractions of everyday life. They should be allowed to give their full attention to serving the Lord. As long as the people obey God's instructions regarding tithes, firstborns, offerings and sacrifices, the Levites will have sufficient provision.

**Deut. 12:20 When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.**

**Deut. 12:21 If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.**

**Deut. 12:22 Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike.**

Moses now addresses the issue of distance and ability to travel as the Lord expands the borders of the land according to His promise. He is stating that God has no problem with their eating "clean" meat that is prepared according to His instructions, but they are not to make offerings or sacrifices except at the one place He designates. Again, no one is prohibited from eating meat.

I keep thinking I'm missing something here since this is so repetitive.

**Deut. 12:23 Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.**

**Deut. 12:24 Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.**

**Deut. 12:25 Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do *that which is right in the sight of the LORD.***

I think we can safely assume that repetition is an indication of the seriousness with which one should receive God's word. Again, Moses emphasizes that they are not to eat meat that has blood. The blood represents life, and they are to make sure the meat is totally without life. Obedience to this command is one way of ensuring God blessing upon your life. God always rewards obedience to His word.

I think it is also interesting that Moses references the fact that their actions are "in the sight of the LORD." Nothing we do escapes His attention. Just another amazing truth about the God we serve.

**Prov. 15:3 ¶ The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good.**

**Job 34:21 For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.**

And my favorite...

**Psa. 139:1-12 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art**

acquainted *with* all my ways. For *there is* not a word in my tongue, *but*, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. *Such* knowledge *is* too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot *attain* unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of the morning, *and* dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*.

**Deut. 12:26 Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose:**

**Deut. 12:27 And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh.**

**Deut. 12:28 Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest *that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.***

No matter the distance, there will be only one place from which God will accept their “holy things”—such as vows, offerings and sacrifices. All sacrifices are to be made upon the altar of God. This is so important because everything associated with the worship of God at the tabernacle/temple pointed to Christ. He would be the one perfect innocent sacrifice offered according to God’s choice and in the place where He establishes His name. His blood would be poured out as the only acceptable sacrifice for man’s sin. To accept that gift in faith makes one a partaker of the life that He gives in the Spirit after pouring out the life of His flesh.

Again, Moses gives the admonition that obedience results in blessing, and that their obedience never goes unnoticed by God.

**Deut. 12:29 When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land;**

**Deut. 12:30 Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.**

**Deut. 12:31 Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.**

This should be an unnecessary warning to God’s chosen people. After experiencing such amazing provision and miraculous displays of His power, how could His people ever even contemplate following false gods? Speaking as

God's representative before the people, Moses was inspired to include this warning; and the future will reveal that it was necessary but not heeded.

We humans have a sin nature that delights in drawing us to the forbidden. We just can't seem to be satisfied with what we know to be right when confronted with others who "seem" to have more or enjoy more or know more who are active in things forbidden by God. Curiosity is a good thing in the proper confines, but a very dangerous thing when it takes us outside the confines of God's revealed will for our lives. Later scripture records that God instructs the people to kill every man, woman and child as they take possession of the land. This instruction is intended to protect the people from this very temptation. They do not comply with this instruction. As a result, they end up becoming ensnared by the very idolatrous practices they were warned against. God hates everything associated with the worship practices of the heathen nations. Especially singled out is their practice of sacrificing their sons and daughters as burnt offerings.

**Deut. 12:32 What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.**

Point is made that God has given them clear commands concerning how to worship and how to live. They are not to add anything to or take away anything from His words. By the time of Jesus' day they had added so much to His words that to keep the law had become a tremendous burden on God's people. Not only had they added to, they had made keeping the letter of the law without regard to the heart of the law the primary focus. God had been positioned as an unfeeling tyrant rather than a loving protective Father.