

Deuteronomy 11:8-12

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Moses exhorts the Israelites to keep every commandment of God so that they may be strong to go in and possess the land of Canaan. To encourage the people, Moses contrasts the prosperous land of Canaan — which depends on God for irrigation — with the land of Egypt, a land whose fertility depends on the exploitation of water from the Nile through human effort.

After reminding the Israelites of the mighty acts of God in the past—how He rescued them from Egypt by performing signs and wonders before Pharaoh and how He dealt with Dathan and Abiram ([Deuteronomy 11:1-7](#))—Moses then exhorted the Israelites to follow God wholeheartedly for what He would do in the future. He said to them, *You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today.* The word *commandment* refers to the whole corpus of ordinances and statutes of God. Moses's emphasis on *every commandment* suggests that of the many commandments, not even one was negotiable. The Israelites were commanded to obey their Suzerain (Ruler) God in every respect.

As Moses exhorted the Israelites, he spelled out the purpose of keeping every divine commandment, saying, *so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it.* God wanted each individual Israelite to *keep every commandment* so that He could provide them with the strength needed to conquer the land of Canaan. Keeping God's commandments would ensure a number of things that would lead to great teamwork and collaboration: speaking what is true, wishing the best for others rather than acting in envy, and serving the best interest of others rather than exploiting them for selfish gain. Such teamwork would make for a strong fighting force as well as a wholesome and prosperous community.

But besides the strength He would give them to conquer Canaan, keeping every divine commandment leads to longevity in the land. Moses said: *so that you may prolong your days on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.* The Israelites were to obey the entire commandment of God in order to be blessed with a long life in the land God promised to the patriarchs. This makes it clear that living in the land is a condition to continued blessing, and in order to remain in the land the vassals will have to live in obedience to their

Suzerain God. If they are not fulfilling their priestly function of demonstrating the superiority of living in a self-governing manner, then God will remove them from the land.

The Suzerain (Ruler) Yahweh is the God who makes lasting promises. He gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and his “descendants forever” ([Genesis 13:15](#)). God chose Abraham’s descendants (Israel) to be His “own possession” and a “kingdom of priests” to represent Him on earth ([Exodus 19:4-6](#)). The Israelites were the ones who would inherit the land. However, in order to live in it and experience the blessings of their possession, they were required to be loyal to the Suzerain God and live in obedience to His commands.

Living in the land of Canaan was a special privilege because it was *a land flowing with milk and honey*, an expression describing the abundance of the land. In other words, Canaan was a prosperous land. God gave an excellent land to His covenant people so that they would enjoy their lives in submission to His will. Nevertheless, failure to submit to God’s covenantal laws would deprive Israel from all the benefits of the land because they would either be removed from it or die in it ([Deuteronomy 8:19-20](#)). The land was granted to them, but required obedience to enjoy the blessings of the grant.

Moses contrasted the wealth of Canaan with the land of Egypt, *For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden*. Their dependence upon God in Canaan will be quite tangible in that they will have to depend upon rain for their crops.

Little rain falls in Egypt every year. It is a desert whose fertility depends primarily on the exploitation of water from the Nile through human effort. That is why Moses reminded the people of Israel that they *used to sow their seed and water it with their foot* when they were in slavery in Egypt. However, this would not be the case for the land of Canaan. As Moses said, *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*.

The Suzerain God is the one who would provide irrigation for the land of Canaan through rain and dew. Canaan, Moses asserted, is a *land for 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*. The LORD cared much for the land of Canaan because that was the land He promised to give to Abraham and His descendants ([Genesis 13:15](#)). Therefore, the land of Canaan was

dependent upon the Suzerain God for its irrigation throughout the year. This will make God's continued blessing more tangible, as He will be required to bring the annual rainfall.

Biblical Text:

⁸ You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it; ⁹ so that you may prolong *your* days on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. ¹¹ 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, ¹² a land for 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.