

Deuteronomy 11

December 20, 2023

Verse 10 says *For the land that you are entering to take possession of it is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it, like a garden of vegetables.* What is translated “irrigated” here is literally “water it with your foot.” This likely refers to stamping out irrigation canals along the Nile.

In ancient times, before dams were built, the flooding of the Nile followed an unvarying pattern. Monsoons in the Ethiopian highlands would send cascades of water down the Nile river for two weeks in late summer. The Egyptians built reservoirs to catch the high water. Then over the course of the dry season they would pull from the reserves through shallow canals to irrigate their crops. The process was laborious but occurred every year like clockwork. It made the Nile a ribbon of green in the vast desert. Egypt was known as the breadbasket of the Roman Empire and here is called a garden.

Now the Lord tells His people that their new land

will be different. The land of Israel does have rain but not as consistently and predictably as the annual Nile flood. It will yield a faithful provision of food but not the overabundance they had seen in Egypt.

Why would the Lord parcel out life giving water in fits and starts to His people instead of putting it on a timer as He did in Egypt? Perhaps because the intermittent rains would have the children of Israel always looking to the sky, searching for clouds. Then their thoughts would turn to their God beyond the sky, and to how they might please Him. Verses 13-17 confirms that He will send the rain at His pleasure. But verse 12 assures them that they will always be in God’s care and under his watchful eye.

Notes:

11:24 The eastern boundary of the land extends to the Euphrates river. This probably does not refer to the lower Euphrates but the upper stretch where it flows out of Turkey into Syria.

Questions:

1. Read verse 2. Who is the Lord speaking to?
2. What are the blessings the people are to remember? What are the judgments?
3. What does the Lord tell the people about the land they will inherit, and why?

4. What are the promised rewards in verses 14-15? What do the people have to do to earn them?
5. How long will Israel possess the land, according to verse 21?
6. Look at a map and trace out the boundaries of the promised land.
7. When is verse 29 literally fulfilled?
8. Many blessings of the children of Israel depend on their obedience. Is that also true for us?