



## Finding principles for partnership development in Deuteronomy 8



**Deuteronomy 8 came as a surprise entry into my list of Bible passages that help me understand God, resources, God's**

**salvation plan, and our part in that.** Partnership development, we call it. The chapter is all about nourishing the people's relationship with God: developing reliance on him at all times and for all things. He reminds them of how he's met their needs before, and explains how he's got new plans for this coming up.

**God could have arranged things** so that the Israelites never felt hunger, given that he arranged things so that their clothes never wore out and their feet didn't swell during those forty hot, exhausting wilderness years. Wouldn't it have been simpler if they'd never needed to eat... or to defecate? Easier, and more practical for life in the desert.

But God's nature is to relate to and interact with his people. So instead, he "caused them to hunger" and *then* provided food to meet that need. He wanted to know them better – he's given them free will and now what will they do with it? (v2). He wanted to increase their reliance on him and to deepen their relationship with him (v3) which is brought into sharp relief for us as Jesus himself quotes these lines centuries later (Matt 4:4 and Luke 4:4). This is important!

He went over and above the normal (v4), solving problems for them that they'd brought on themselves by their disobedience, all for the sake of deepening the Father-relationship through hard times not just good. It's a blessing – though often not pleasant – to be given the opportunity to grow in holiness and righteousness and become more conformed to the Father's pattern.



**But now...** Now there's to be a fundamental change in the way in which God will provide. Obedience to God and reverence for him remains the number one priority (v6-9). But they will be, literally, in a different place, one where His provision won't stop, but where it will look very different. Now they must learn new skills in farming, mining and metal-working – it's all there, provided for them by God, but now they have to work for it. They have a new role in wealth-generation, and in time we see that some of them became very successful at it. God is very much aware of the dangers of that outcome, and gives some top tips for avoiding the pitfalls ahead.

Losing sight of God himself and then losing our concern to live lives that please him seem closely linked. And so vv10-11 are a powerful warning of the risk of self-satisfaction and leaving God out of the equation once things are a bit easier. The glory for God's provision must always be given to him. As Israel's creator, he knows what they're like, and specifically warns against pride in their own achievements (v12-14). As so often in Deuteronomy, God reminds them, "Remember!" Don't forget the Lord, don't forget what he's done. He's done miracles for you – don't forget! (v15-16). Many of us know how easy it is to forget even the miracles of God's provision, so this speaks clearly to us today. And remember that, even though you've worked for this, it still comes from him! (v17-18) When it's all going well, don't forget; satisfaction so quickly leads to self-satisfaction, leaving no room for God in the picture.

At the same time, God will soon institute a system whereby those he has called and appointed to ensure worship, the continued teaching of his Law, and the being of God's people before the surrounding nations, will be set free from farming, mining, metal-working and so on, so that they can focus fully on the role he's given them (10:8-9, 18:1-8 and others). Money and resources for life and ministry will clearly work differently for these people than for the rest of God's people. They are to work alongside the rest of his community, *all* bearing witness to the nations around them about the nature of God, each in the role he has given them, and *together* living out his plan for them. All of that carries many resonances for me with partnership development at its best.



Wherever the resources are coming from, we're all in it together. Don't forget that it's God who gives. And he is faithful, for the honour of his name (v18-20).

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