

# Deuteronomy 4 Commentary

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## Deuteronomy

<b>Dt 1:1-4:43</b>	<b>Dt 4:44-26:19</b>				<b>Dt 27:1-34:12</b>		
<b>Moses' First Discourse</b>	<b>Moses' Second Discourse</b>				<b>Moses' Third Discourse</b>		
<b>Historical Review</b>	<b>Legal Exposition</b>				<b>Prophetical Promises</b>		
<b>Looking Back</b> 40 Years	<b>Looking Up</b> What God Expected of Israel				<b>Looking Ahead</b> What God Will Do for Israel		
Recapitulation of Wanderings	Rehearsal of Israel's Law				Ratification of Israel's Covenant		Historical Appendices
Remembrance of the past	Commandments for the Present				Dt 27:1-30:20 Blessing and Cursing		Dt 31:1-34:12 Death of Moses
Take Heed Don't forget	Ten Commands	Related Commands			Two Choices Affecting the Future		Moses' Parting Words
Dt 1:1-4:43 Looking Back	Dt 4:44-11:32 Exposition of Decalogue	Dt 12:1-16:17 Ceremonial Laws	Dt 16:18-20:20 Civil Laws	Dt 21:1-26:19 Social Laws	Dt 27:1-28:68 Ratification of Covenant	Dt 29:1-30:20 Terms of Covenant	Dt 31:1-34:12 Moses' Song, Blessing, Death
<b>Plains of Moab</b>							
<b>ca. 2 Months</b> <b>Moses: Author</b> (Except Dt 34)							

### Remembrances of the Past

(Deuteronomy 1:1-4:43)

[Jensen's Survey of Deuteronomy](#) scroll to p311

**Deuteronomy 4:1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.**

- **statutes:** Statutes, every thing that concerned morals and the rites and ceremonies of religion; judgments, all matters of civil right and wrong. De 4:8,45 5:1 6:1,2 8:1 11:1,32 Lev 19:37 20:8 22:31 Ps 105:45 Ps 119:4 Eze 11:20 36:27 37:24 Mt 28:20 Lu 1:6 Joh 15:14
- **so that:** Lev 18:5 Eze 20:11,21 Ro 10:5
- [Click to see Multiple Bible Versions on this verse](#) - to go to next verse click arrow (=>) at top of page
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Amplified** (classic) - Now listen *and* give heed, O Israel, to the statutes and ordinances which I teach you, and do them, that you may live and go in and possess the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you.

**Amplified** (2015) - "Now, O Israel, listen *and* pay attention to the statutes and the judgments (God's legal decisions) which I am teaching you to do, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land

which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 6:3-4+ "O Israel, you should **listen and be careful** to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. 4 "**Hear, O Israel!** The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!

Deuteronomy 9:1+ "**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,

Deuteronomy 20:3+ "He shall say to them, **Hear, O Israel,** you are approaching the battle against your enemies today. Do not be fainthearted. Do not be afraid, or panic, or tremble before them,

Deuteronomy 27:9+ Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, '**Be silent and listen, O Israel!** This day you have become a people for the LORD your God.



### [Are You Listening to the Master's Voice?](#)

## OBEDIENCE, THE SECRET OF BLESSING

It is fascinating that the second generation is now poised to possess God's promises and one would think that with his "dying words" (so to speak for they would be his last words) Moses would give them instructions on military strategies to assure victory over their strong enemies. Well, he does give instruction on how to conquer their strong adversaries, but that "strategy" is simply trust and obey. Moses knew the battle was the Lord's but for Israel to receive the blessing of the Lord they must obey the Lord. He would give them the victory. The same principle applies to our Christian life today. Obey the LORD, and fight in the strength of His Spirit and He will give us the victory over the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#) .

The "theme song" of this chapter could well be the great hymn [Trust and Obey](#)...don't just sing it but by grace from His Spirit, live it...

When we walk with the Lord in the light of His Word,  
What a glory He sheds on our way!  
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,  
And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise, not a cloud in the skies,  
But His smile quickly drives it away;  
Not a doubt or a fear, not a sigh or a tear,  
Can abide while we trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet.  
Or we'll walk by His side in the way.  
What He says we will do, where He sends we will go;  
Never fear, only trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way

To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Oh, Trust and obey, for there's no other way  
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

And 'Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,  
Just to take Him at His Word;  
Just to rest upon His promise,  
Just to know, "Thus saith the Lord!"

Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!  
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er;  
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!  
Oh, for grace to trust Him more!

Oh, for grace to trust You more!

**David Guzik** entitles this chapter - "**A Call to Obedience**"

**Moses 3 Sermons in Deuteronomy - a simple outline of Deuteronomy**

#### **Deuteronomy 1-4 Looking Back – Review of 40 yr.**

- Spies sent – Deut 1:19-41
- Wanderings & Defeat of Sihon the Amorite, king – Deut 2
- Defeat of Og, Land division, Moses forbidden to enter – Deut 3
- Obedience Commanded, Love the Lord – Deut 4
  - The intent and purpose of the law (Deuteronomy 4:1-8)
  - A review of the giving of the law (Deuteronomy 4:9-14)
  - An exhortation to proper conduct (Deuteronomy 4:15-24)
  - The prediction of dispersion (Deuteronomy 4:25-31)
  - The privilege of the chosen people (Deuteronomy 4:32-40)
  - The selection of the cities of refuge (Deuteronomy 4:41-43) (J. Hannah)

#### **Deuteronomy 4:44 through Deuteronomy 26 Looking Up – What God Expects (Review of the Law)**

- Commandments, feasts

#### **Deuteronomy 27-34 Looking Ahead – What God Will Do**

- Blessings & Curses

**Warren Wiersbe Outlines Deuteronomy 4**

- God speaks—**hear** Him (Deut. 4:1–2)
- God is holy—**fear** Him (Deut. 4:3–4)
- God is wise—**learn** from Him (Deut. 4:5–9)
- God alone is God—**worship** Him (Deut. 4:10–43)
- God is Lord of all—**obey** Him (Deut. 4:44–5:33)

**Sailhamer** - The chief ideas of Deuteronomy 4 are...

1. The Torah as wisdom (Dt 4:1-14),
2. Warning against idolatry (Dt 4:15-24),
3. The possibility of exile (Dt 4:25-31),
4. God's presence with Israel (Dt 4:32-40).

**Glen Martin - MAIN IDEA:** God blesses His people richly and reveals Himself to them in the expectation that they will become fully His in affections and behavior. **SUPPORTING IDEA:** High privilege creates high responsibility. Israel, which had seen great actions on God's part was to cleave to him in steadfast love. As Israel waited near the Jordan River across from the city of Jericho, the

moment of truth was about to arrive. One might suppose that God would brief the nation on military tactics and strategy, since they were about to begin a protracted military conflict. Instead, he addressed the people's spiritual condition. Israel needed, if it was to live and go in and take possession of the land, to hear what God had to say. His decrees and laws were about to be taught (the teaching will begin in ch. 5), and the people would be well advised to follow them. Since their future success (either in battle or elsewhere) would depend upon his blessing, they must pay close attention. ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

Israel's successful entrance into the Land of Promise will be contingent upon their obedience to the WORD OF LIFE (see [below for note](#) on Deut 32:46, 47)

**Constable** makes an excellent point that "Moses turned in his address from contemplating the **past** to an exhortation for the **future**."

**J Vernon McGee** - This chapter concludes Moses' review of Israel's wilderness journey. They have come up the east bank of the Jordan River and are near [Mount Nebo](#) as Moses gives his final instructions to the people. Only two of the people who made the entire journey stand there -- Joshua and Caleb. Most of the people are buried out there in the wilderness, or their bones are bleaching under the desert sun. The new generation is ready now to go into the Promised Land, but before they enter, Moses reviews the wilderness experiences and pleads with them to obey God who loves them. (Thru The Bible)

**A C Gaebelien** - They were to hearken and to do. Hearing and doing stand in the foreground of this section. The result of obedience is life and possession of the land. "That ye may live" does not mean the possession of eternal life, but a long earthly life in the promised land. See Deuteronomy 5:33; 6:2; 8:1; 11:21; 16:20; 25:15; 30:6, 16; 32:47. (The Annotated Bible)

**Now** - Dt 3:29+ ends with "So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor." Since that was the very spot Israel had miserably disobeyed Yahweh (Nu 25:1-5), it would be apropos to **NOW** speak to them of the need for **OBEDIENCE** in order to obtain **BLESSING** and **POSSESS** their **PROMISED POSSESSION** from Yahweh.

Full enjoyment of life was (AND STILL IS) based on full obedience to God's law.

This includes listening, observing, and doing in order to reach full potential and possess the **land** (**LIFE** for NT BELIEVERS) of promise.

-- John Maxwell

**POSB** - "**Now**"—in light of the lessons learned in the past—listen to God's laws and obey His laws. If you will listen and obey, you will not fall into sin and face the judgment of God as the first generation did. Rather, you will live a fruitful and productive life. Moreover, you will experience the power of God, conquering all the enemies who oppose you as you march into the promised land. You will be victorious and take possession of the promised land. You will know the spiritual conquest and rest of the inheritance promised by God. But note what Moses declared: to know such a fruitful and victorious life God's people must do three things. (1) They must not add to nor subtract from God's commandments, but simply obey them (Deut. 4:2)...(2. God's people must not commit the sins of Baal Peor, the sins of immorality and false worship....(3. God's people must obey God's law even after reaching the promised land. Even after they achieve the spiritual victory and rest of the promised land, they must still continue to obey God's law. There was to be no room for complacency or worldly comfort and rest. ([Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Deuteronomy](#))

**Grant** - There is a threefold significance in the use of the word "**Now**" at this point. **First**, it is to remind them of the lessons to be learned from the years leading up to "**Now**". At that time they had the events of the wilderness behind them and should now have been able to see the value of God's word. **Second**, the victories that had been gained must not give them self confidence and lead to them ignoring God's word. **Third**, they were standing at a critical point in their history and future success would depend on their willingness to obey His word. ([What the Bible Teaches](#))

**Eugene Merrill** - The end of the historical review proper leaves Moses and Israel at Pisgah and Peor, the setting for the delivery of Deuteronomy as a Mosaic address and its composition in essentially its present form. It also marks a major literary turning point, a transition from itinerary or historical narrative to [parenthesis](#). Having traced the course of Israel's forty years in the desert, Moses then drew conclusions from that experience and urged a course of action for the present and future. ([New American Commentary - Volume 4: Deuteronomy](#))

**O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform** - Moses gives a command (**listen**) not a suggestion to the children of Israel regarding how they are to live in the promised land (still filled with Canaanite influence). Listen means to hear so as to do! When the OT uses the command **listen** it is not to be as we say "**In one ear and out the other!**" **Listen** recalls the command of James to "**prove** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves **doers** ([poietes](#)) of the word, and not merely **hearers** ([akroates](#)) who delude themselves.." (James 1:22+) It is notable that this instruction is given 40 years and more than 1 millions corpses later! One would think they would be motivated to listen carefully. This generation to whom Moses speaks was at Mt Sinai but they were only children at that time, so Moses begins by recounting the awe filled terrifying scene lest they despise the holiness of Yahweh (Dt 4:10ff).

**Constable** - "Statutes" (v. 1) were the permanent basic rules of conduct whereas "judgments" (ordinances, v. 1) were decisions God revealed in answer to specific needs. The judgments set precedent for future action (e.g., the case of Zelophehad's daughters). ([Deuteronomy 4](#))

As noted **listen** (**shama**) is a command in Dt 4:1 and in the [Septuagint](#) is a command in the [present imperative](#), calling for continuing attention (see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#) this command). Keep on listening to the statutes and the judgments all the days of your life. Play and ponder the words of [Run Like Heaven!](#)

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, this is a good word for all believers of all ages! The implication is that it is necessary to keep listening because our hearts are so prone to forget and therefore prone to wander (Play [Come Thou Fount](#))

Prone to wander, Lord I feel it

Prone to leave the God I love

Here's my heart, oh take and seal it

Seal it for Thy courts above

(You need to watch this short [Life story of writer Robert Robinson](#))

**Grant** - It was necessary now for the generation then present to **hear** these terms as their fathers had done. The principle is one that pertains even up to this present day. Every generation must learn the truth of God for themselves. It is not sufficient to "know" truth merely as something believed and practised by a past generation. The continuing importance of this is recognised in that **every seventh year at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles the terms of the covenant were to be read by the priests** to "men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates" (see Dt 31:9-13 below). ([What the Bible Teaches](#))

Deuteronomy 31:9-13+ So Moses wrote this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. 10 Then Moses commanded them, saying, "**At the end of every seven years**, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, 11 when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, **you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing**. 12 "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. 13 "**Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God**, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

**THOUGHT** - Believing parents - you **MUST** pass on the truths of God's Word to your children.

**Now** (cf Dt 4:44) - This marks a new direction in Moses' discourse of instruction, exhortation and warning, which as discussed below is one that is based on the truths in the previous review of Israel's 40 year wilderness journey from Deuteronomy 1:6 to Deuteronomy 3:29 ("in the valley opposite Beth-peor"). In this discourse we see God's faithfulness and omnipotence to bring His possession (Dt 4:20, Ex 19:5) to the precipice of entering the Promised Land.

**John Thompson** notes that "The introductory word **And now** (wě'attâ - [06258](#)) refers back to the previous recitation. It is preparatory to the appeal to obey, as though one might say '*And now, in the light of God's acts of deliverance, you should obey his commandments*' (cf. Ex. 19:5; Dt. 10:12; Josh. 24:14, etc.). (Tyndale Bible Commentary - OT)

**Eugene Merrill** adds that "The connection between Dt 4:1–40 and what precedes it is clear from the introductory formula wě'attâ - [06258](#) (lit., "**and now**"), a use of the logical particle or adverb that builds the argument of the present passage on what has gone before. That is, the **exhortation** is not delivered in a vacuum but finds its orientation in the **historical review**. **What has already transpired is gone forever, but the lessons of history must not be forgotten and, in fact, must serve as the springboard for future thought and action.** (Ibid)

God's past faithfulness should encourage present obedience.

**David Larson** - The purpose of those (**Ed**: Like Moses) who share the "oracles of God" is not primarily to help people with their problems; it is to speak for God Who is ultimately the only Help (cp Ps 121:1-8+).

**Listen** (**shama** - here in Dt 4:1 a command not a suggestion) is a key word in Deuteronomy and is used 31x in 31v the first time in Dt 1:43 ("you would not listen") and the second in Dt 1:45 where God "would not listen" to Israel's pleas because of disobedience. Does the Lord listen to your prayers? Or are you in disobedience (Ps 66:18)? Confess (1 Jn 1:9-note) and He will give ear to your prayers. The best known use of "**listen**" is in the so-called "**Shema**" (after the first word in the verse below "shema" - hear) which is the very heart of Jewish confession and faith. When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment of all, he quoted this text (Mt 22:37–38).

**Hear** (a command!), O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. (Dt 6:4–5+)

**Listen** = 25x in Deuteronomy - Deut. 1:43; Deut. 1:45; Deut. 3:26; Deut. 4:1; Deut. 4:30; Deut. 6:3; Deut. 7:12; Deut. 8:20; Deut. 11:13; Deut. 11:27; Deut. 11:28; Deut. 12:28; Deut. 13:3; Deut. 13:4; Deut. 13:8; Deut. 13:18; Deut. 15:5; Deut. 18:14; Deut. 18:15; Deut. 18:19; Deut. 21:18; Deut. 23:5; Deut. 26:17; Deut. 27:9; Deut. 28:13;

Deuteronomy has 10 warnings Israel needed to hear (and heed) - Dt 4:1, 2, 6, 9, 13, 14, 15, 19, 23, 26

**Listen** (hear)...**perform** (do) - Hearing and doing (obeying) is the desired dynamic in both the Old and New Testaments. James writes

But **prove** ([present imperative](#)) yourselves **doers** of the word, and not merely **hearers** who delude ([paralogizomai](#) = literally reason beside = false reasoning) themselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; 24 for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. 25 But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:22-25+)

**The Word of God must penetrate our hearts  
and become a part of our inner being if it is to change our lives.**

-- Warren Wiersbe

**Wiersbe Warren** - The eminent Jewish scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote, "To believe, we need God, a soul, and the Word." Another Jewish scholar, the Apostle Paul, reached the same conclusion and wrote, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17, NKJV). The God who brought Creation into existence by speaking the Word (Ps. 33:6–9) has ordained that His people should live by hearing and obeying His Word...To the Old Testament Jew and the New Testament Christian, **hearing** the Word of God involves much more than sound waves impacting the human ear. Hearing God's Word is a matter of focusing our whole being—mind, heart, and will—on the Lord, receiving what He says to us and obeying it. The Word of God must penetrate our hearts and become a part of our inner being if it is to change our lives. That's what Jesus meant when He said, "Who has ears to hear, let him hear!" That statement is found at least eight times in the Gospels, so it must be important. (See also Dt. 29:4 and Ezek. 12:2.) Hearing and obeying the Word of God was Israel's very life (Dt. 4:1a). When God speaks, He sets before us life and death (Dt 30:15–20), and our response determines which it will be. "Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the Lord" (Lev. 18:5NIV). The emphasis in Deuteronomy 4:1–2 and Dt 4:5 is on commanding and teaching, for the Lord not only tells us what to do but He also explains the truth behind His commands. ([Be Equipped](#))

The pathway of life and the true secret of possession is simple obedience to the holy commandments of God.

-- C H McIntosh

**C H McIntosh** - "[Hearken](#)" and "**do**," that ye may "live" and "possess." This is a universal and abiding principle. It was true for Israel, and it is true for us. The pathway of life and the true secret of possession is simple obedience to the holy commandments of God. We see this all through the inspired volume, from cover to cover. God has given us His Word, not to speculate upon it or discuss it, but that we may obey it. And it is as we, through grace (**Ed**: enabled by the Spirit - Php 2:13NLT+), yield a hearty and happy obedience to our Father's statutes and judgments, that we tread the bright pathway of life, and enter into the reality of all that God has treasured up for us [in Christ](#). "He who has My commandments (cp Lk 4:4+) and **keeps** ([present tense](#) = speaks of the "general direction" of our life, not perfection. Emphasizes our CONTINUAL need to rely on the Spirit's enabling power!) them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose ([emphanizo](#) = let oneself be intimately known and understood) Myself to him." (Jn 14:21) (Moody's "Thoughts for the Quiet Hour")

**Now, O Israel, listen** - **Listen** means to hearken, to hear with reverence and obedient assent, to give undivided listening attention and is often translated "obey". Do not hear and ignore, but hear and do! Moses called the people to hear and obey the rules of conduct that God had given them to observe. Successful conquest ("that you may live and go in and take possession") and full enjoyment of life in the Land was based on submission to God's law. This was true in the life of Israel and is true in the life of every follower of Christ. Listen and obey not out of legalism, but because you love the LORD and desire to walk in a manner that is pleasing to Him. In some of his last words (**last words** are always worth listening to carefully!) to the children of Israel before he fell asleep in the Lord Moses warned...

**Take** (in context conveys sense of a command. Lxx = [prosecho](#) = turn and hold your mind on God's Word - continually = [present imperative](#)) to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall



command your sons to observe carefully, even all the **WORDS OF THIS LAW**. For **IT** (God's Word) is not an idle **WORD** for you; indeed **IT** (God's Word) is your **LIFE**. And by this **WORD** you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess." (Dt 32:46-47+)

**Comment** - There used to be a very popular television show called "[This Is Your Life!](#)" This title could aptly be written across the front cover page of our Bible "THIS IS YOUR LIFE!" Notice what Moses says about the importance of God's Word of LIFE (1 Jn 1:1<sup>+</sup>) - It is not idle, empty, vain, futile but equates with "LIFE" and enables us to possess our promised possessions (cp Josh 1:2-4 - note "I am giving...Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given!" = God has already promised the possession but they [and we] are responsible to possess it!). For Israel the promise was primarily a **LAND**, but for believer today it is a **LIFE** (cp 2 Peter 1:3-4<sup>+</sup>; Eph 1:3<sup>+</sup>)

#### Related Resource:

- [Are You Listening to the Master's Voice?](#)

**The statutes and the judgments** - **Statutes** are generally permanent rules for conduct fixed by the reigning authority, while **judgments** dealt more with judicial decisions which served as precedents for future guidance. Together these two terms refer to the entire body of the Law which Moses had taught the people and are frequent in this book (Dt 4:5, 8, 14, 45; 5:1, 31; 6:1, 20; 7:11; 11:1; 12:1) Many writers point out that this type of language (statutes and judgments) is characteristic of covenant literature, and reveals the stipulations of the covenant.

**Utley on statutes and judgments** - These include the collective revelations of God. It is all that God has revealed about Himself and His covenant requirements. It is similar in meaning to the word Torah (lit. "teachings," i.e., Mosaic legislation).

**NET Note** - These technical Hebrew terms khuqqim (**statutes**) and mishpatim (**judgments**) occur repeatedly throughout the Book of Deuteronomy to describe the covenant stipulations to which Israel had been called to subscribe (see, in this chapter alone, Dt 4:1, 5, 6, 8). The word khuqqim derives from the verb khoq ("to inscribe; to carve") and mishpatim from shaphat, ("to judge"). They are virtually synonymous and are used interchangeably in Deuteronomy. (Ed: But see above note)

Beloved believer, keep in mind as you study the poignant lessons in the life of Israel (the good, the bad and the ugly!), the behavior (and consequences of misbehavior) was meant to be examples and warnings. Centuries later Paul wrote

Now these things happened as **examples** for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved.  
11 Now these things happened to them as an **example**, and **they were written for our instruction**, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.(1 Cor 10:6, 11, cp Ro 15:4-[note](#))

The principle that **obedience** brings **blessing** is clearly taught in both testaments! Whereas Israel would be blessed with a **LAND** (and prosperity therein), believers in the NT will be blessed with a **LIFE** (full, abundant, victorious, etc). If we as NT believers are not experiencing the good hand of the LORD bestowing spiritual blessings on our life (cf Ezra 7:9-10+), then we probably need to look for the solution by looking at our obedience. And when I say "obedience" I am **not** speaking of a legalistic external keeping of a list of do's and don't's! I am speaking of internal heart obedience, obedience motivated by love and only made possible by the enabling power of the Holy Spirit. This is not "Let go and let God," but "Let God and let's go" (so to speak). We need to keep a mental list of our sins (relying on God's assistance to remind us - Ps 139:23, 24) and to confess quickly, at the same time asking God to grant us rapid repentance (cp Acts 5:31+, 2 Ti 2:25<sup>+</sup>). (See related discussion - [Obedience of faith](#))

See a discussion of how believers can and should daily strive to live in a manner pleasing to the Father - [Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#)"

**THOUGHT** - In 2 Peter 1:4<sup>+</sup> we see that believers have been granted God's '**precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.**' How do we partake of these precious promises. Do we just name them and claim them by faith? Not exactly. Remember genuine faith is linked with a heart motivated, Spirit enabled obedience. And it is Obedience leads to possessing the promises. The upshot is that there is always a reason to obey the Lord. And it should serve to motivate us to obey out of love, for Lord Lord Himself said "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (Jn 14:15) And if we obey, we will experience the incalculable blessing of greater and greater intimacy with Jesus for He said "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and **will disclose Myself to him.**" (Jn 14:21) If you don't feel close and/or intimate with Jesus, perhaps you need to review your obedience over the past days, weeks, months, or years. Do not believe the devil's lie that your sin is too great and your disobedience too habitual for God to ever accept you back again. That is a lie from the pit



of Hell! Jesus' story of the prodigal son gives us a picture of our Father in Heaven and perhaps you need to read those words of truth again to counter the lies of your adversary. Read Luke 15:11-32 and pay special attention to the words in Lk 15:17-19+, Lk 15:20-24+, cf 2 Ti 2:24-26+)

**Teaching** (instructing) ([03925](#))(**lamad**) conveys the idea of training as well as educating. While it is usually translated with the idea of to teach, it also is used with the sense of to learn (as in Dt 4:10+ below). Biblical teaching seeks to guide people to follow the will of God, not by offering mere human opinions or suggestions but by bringing "the authoritative declaration of the Word of God. The Lxx translates **lamad** with [didasko](#) (English ~ [didactic](#)) in the present tense indicating that the instruction by Moses had begun and was continuing. So foundational is **lamad** that one of its derivatives, *talmiyd*, which means "scholar" (1 Chr. 25:8), is the source of the word **Talmud**, the name for the commentaries written by the ancient rabbis on the Torah (Law). Further underscoring the pivotal place the teaching of the word of God has in the believer's life, *lāmaḍ* appears nine times in Ps 119:12, 26, 64, 66, 68, 108, 124, 135, 171). The first use of **lamad** in the OT is here in Deut 4:1 and it is a **key word** in chapter 4 - Deut. 4:1; Deut. 4:5; Deut. 4:10; Deut. 4:14. It is also a **key word** in the remainder of Deuteronomy - Deut. 5:1; Deut. 5:31; Deut. 6:1; Deut. 11:19; Deut. 14:23; Deut. 17:19; Deut. 18:9; Deut. 20:18; Deut. 31:12; Deut. 31:13; Deut. 31:19; Deut. 31:22;

**Teaching** implies those taught will be learners (cf meaning of disciple, [mathetes](#) = learners) who in turn become doers of what they are taught (Jas 1:22+). In Jesus' great commission we see the same principle

"Go therefore and **make disciples** ([aorist imperative](#) = [matheteuo](#) = make "learners") of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 **teaching** (same Greek verb used here in Lxx = [didasko](#) in present tense = continually teaching) them to **observe** (to be doers not merely hearers) all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Mt 28:19-20+)

Tragically the children of Israel as a nation failed to receive the Word implanted, rebelling again and again, until finally all 12 tribes were sent into exile. Jeremiah records the sad commentary from the LORD Himself...

They have turned their back to Me and not their face; though I **taught** (**lamad**) them, **teaching** (**lamad**) again and again, they would not **listen** ([shama](#)) and **receive** instruction ([musar](#) = idea of discipline, chastening, correction). (Jeremiah 32:33+)

**THOUGHT** - Sadly Israel could recite the [Shema](#), but they did not live out the truth of the [Shema](#)! Beloved, be careful of falling into the same deceptive trap of thinking that because you know the word, maybe even memorized the word, that you are "[A-Okay!](#)"

You are NOT **okay**  
Unless you **obey!**

Since the children of Israel were prone to forget (like we ALL are as the hymn says "Prone to wander!") the greatness and goodness of God, it is not surprising that the Book of Deuteronomy has more uses of the word "**forget**" than all the other books of the Pentateuch. God wanted His people to remember Him when they went into the promised land filled with temptations and idols of all shapes and sizes! **Forget** is found 9 times in Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 4:9 "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you **do not forget** the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

Deuteronomy 4:23 "So watch yourselves, that you **do not forget** the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you.

Deuteronomy 4:31 (God does not forget!) "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them (speaking of the Abrahamic Covenant).

Deuteronomy 6:12 then watch yourself, that you **do not forget** the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Deuteronomy 8:11 "Beware that you **do not forget** the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today;

Deuteronomy 8:14 then your heart will become proud and **you will forget the LORD your God** who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Deuteronomy 8:19 "It shall come about **if you ever forget the LORD your God** and go after other gods and

serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.

Deuteronomy 9:7 "Remember, **do not forget** how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

Deuteronomy 25:19 "Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; **you must not forget**.

Deuteronomy 32:18 "You neglected the Rock who begot you, **And forgot the God who gave you birth**.

**Brian Bell** - Moses gives a clarion cry, a passionate call to obey...based on 3 reasons: Because of their past; because of their future; because of the character of their God. Stated & implied examples of Israel's former unbelief. 1. Sexual idolatry at Baal-Peor (3). Nu.25:1-4. 2. The golden calf incident at Mnt Sinai (Dt 4:15-17). Ex.32:1-35. 3. The Rebellion in the wilderness of Zin (where even Moses tripped up) (Dt 4:21). Nu.20:2-13 ([Sermon](#))

**So that** (purpose clause) **you may live and go in and take possession of** (inherit) **the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you** - Notice God's sovereign promise ("giving you") is based on His faithfulness to His unconditional covenant to Abraham (the God of your fathers - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob). The successful possession of God's promise was based on Israel's obedience (statutes and judgments"...to perform" = to do, to obey). **Divine privilege (promise) always demands personal practice (obedience)**. All through the Bible we see this juxtaposition of God's sovereign provision and Man's responsibility. It is never "Let go and let God," but is more accurately phrased "Let God and let's go."

**God of your fathers** - cf Dt 1:11, 21; 4:1, 31, 37; 6:3; 12:1; 26:7; 27:3

**Key Word in Deuteronomy 4 - Possess/Possessions -**

Deuteronomy 4:1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take **possession** of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

Deuteronomy 4:5 "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to **possess** it.

Deuteronomy 4:14 "The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to **possess** it.

Deuteronomy 4:20 "But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own **possession**, as today.

Deuteronomy 4:22 "For I will die in this land, I shall not cross the Jordan, but you shall cross and take **possession** of this good land.

Deuteronomy 4:26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to **possess** it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed.

Deuteronomy 4:47 They took **possession** of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who were across the Jordan to the east,

**This truth begs the question dear follower of Christ** - Are you possessing your promised possessions in Christ "in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col 2:3+), "His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature (THE PROMISED LIFE), having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." (2 Pe 1:4+)?

Possession of their promised possession, the land of milk and honey, was directly linked to obedience (Dt 4:1,25-27,40; Dt 6:17-18; Dt 8:1; 11:8; Dt 30:15-20; Dt 32:46-47; Josh 10:40; 11:20,23; 23:9-13,15-16). Failure to obey would result in expulsion (Lev 26:27-35; Dt 28:58-68).

**THERE IS A REPEATED PATTERN FOR POSSESSION** – that is applicable to all of our lives and we see a similar pattern in Dt 4:5 and Dt 4:13

1. **HEAR GOD'S WORD –**
2. **OBEY GOD'S WORD – (WHY?)-**
3. **ENJOY SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY AND**

#### 4. POSSESSION OF PROMISED SPIRITUAL POSSESSIONS.

**Christopher Wright** describes God's part and Man's part this way - "Behind everything stands the unconditioned grace and faithfulness of God to the divine promise. The land would be given. But secure possession of it, long life, and enjoyment of it were dependent in each generation on the people's response of committed loyalty and obedience." ([Deuteronomy New International Biblical Commentary](#))

**So that** - Always pause to ponder this important [term of purpose](#). The purpose as noted above was so that Israel might fully experience the life in the land God had promised to them. If they did, they would serve as "lights in the land" drawing pagans to the one true God, Jehovah (see Dt 4:6-8). Sadly, they failed miserably to be "ambassadors" for Jehovah, primarily because they took their eyes off of Him and fixed them instead on the idols (so called gods) of the land, which ensnared them and led them into bitter bondage and death (unless they repented), which is always the end product of idolatry. The world's and devil's idols promise pleasure, which they do in fact sometimes give, but is always only a passing pleasure (Heb 11:25-[note](#)). These deceivers however fail to disclose the inevitable spiritual death that is not passing but eternal!

**Matthew Henry Concise** - Verses 1-23. The power and love of God to Israel are here made the ground and reason of a number of cautions and serious warnings; and although there is much reference to their national covenant, yet all may be applied to those who live under the gospel. What are laws made for but to be observed and obeyed? Our obedience as individuals cannot merit salvation; but it is the only evidence that we are partakers of the gift of God, which is eternal life through Jesus Christ, Considering how many temptations we are compassed with, and what corrupt desires we have in our bosoms, we have great need to keep our hearts with all diligence. Those cannot walk aright, who walk carelessly. Moses charges particularly to take heed of the sin of idolatry. He shows how weak the temptation would be to those who thought aright; for these pretended gods, the sun, moon, and stars, were only blessings which the Lord their God had imparted to all nations. It is absurd to worship them; shall we serve those that were made to serve us? Take heed lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God. We must take heed lest at any time we forget our Christian religion. Care, caution, and watchfulness, are helps against a bad memory.

**Brian Bell** - A man was discussing the fragility of many marriages with his girlfriend and posed the following question, "What if you wake up one morning and don't love me anymore?" She immediately responded, "There's always obedience." We often think of obedience this way, in the negative. 2. But obedience to God is always in the positive because He is One we can fully trust. He is One whom always is purposeful in every thing in which He asks of us. Peter T. Forsythe (1848-1921 Scottish theologian) was right when he said, "The first duty of every soul is to find not its freedom but its Master". We seem to always be trying to find our freedom of choice, freedom of will, freedom to do it our way. When we should be full throttle after our Master & His choices, His will, His way. C. Slide#4 Thomas a Kempis shares its seriousness, Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience. Whoever strives to withdraw from obedience, withdraws from Grace

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**Wiersbe** on the vital importance of knowing and believing and obeying (by the Spirit) God's Holy Word

Not only was Israel's life dependent on obedience to God's Word, but so was their victory over the enemy (Deut. 4:1b). Apart from faith and obedience, Israel couldn't enter the land and defeat the nations that were strongly entrenched there. How could the Lord go before His people and give them victory if they weren't following Him obediently? (Dt 1:30) The ten spies who failed to grasp the power of God's promises led Israel into discouragement, defeat, and death because of their unbelief (Nu 13-14). "And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4, NKJV); and that faith is generated by the Word (Rom. 10:17). Believers today must find their life and victory in God's Word. Unless we know what God commands, we can't obey Him; but if we know His commandments, believe them, and obey them, then His power goes to work in our lives. "And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3-[note](#)). Obeying the Lord becomes a joyful privilege when you realize that His commandments are expressions of His love, assurances of His strength, invitations to His blessing, opportunities to grow and bring Him glory, and occasions to enjoy His love and fellowship as we seek to please Him. God's Word is the open door into the treasury of His grace. ([Be Equipped](#))

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**JUMPING TO DEFY LAW** Jan Davis, sixty, a professional parachutist, was BASE jumping when she fell to her death. Her husband, who was filming the jump, and several reporters were stunned when Davis crashed onto the rocks. She was jumping off the thirty-two hundred foot granite cliff, El Capitan, in Yosemite National Park, California, when her chute failed to open. She and the other jumpers knew that BASE jumping was illegal in Yosemite Park. The law was passed because six people and numerous other had been injured in Yosemite due to BASE jumping. The five jumpers, including Davis, were protesting the park's restrictions by proving the sport is safe. They knew the law, but they deliberately chose to defy it. Davis paid for that disobedience with her life. **In a similar way, many people think they can deliberately violate God's law. Eventually they learn, sometimes the hard way, that God's**

## Neighbour - I. GOD'S STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS (Deut. 4:1, 2)

"Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you. Ye shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the Commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

1. Nothing must be added to God's Statutes and Commandments. This we read in our key text. In after years the Children of Israel were very prone to do this very thing. They were continually making additions to what the Lord had said. We read something of this in Matthew 23.

In our day we are just as much in danger of this sin, as were they. Let us not make void the Word of God by our traditions. When God says a thing, let us stand by it; never deviate from it. Beware lest we add to His statements.

The church of today is divided, into many varied sects, more, perhaps, than for any other reason, because saints have been followers of men and of the doctrines of men instead of the plain, positive Word of God.

2. Nothing must be subtracted. We have no right to lessen the full scope of the Word of God, any more than we have a right to add to it. Against this addition and subtraction to and from the Bible, and particularly to and from the words of Prophetic Scripture, there is a tremendous warning at the close of the New Testament. We read, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this Book: and if any man shall take away from the Words of the Book of this Prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the Book of Life."

God means everything that He says, and we must not penknife anything which He has written. This was done by one of the Old Testament kings to his sorrow. We want no "shorter Bible." We want a whole Bible; not the Bible plus, nor the Bible less. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," and no words of any man may by any means be added unto God's holy revelation

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## James Smith - A SOLEMN CHARGE. Deuteronomy 4:1-9.

"O Israel, thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (vv. 1, 2). This is a very clear evidence of inspiration. The statutes and judgments taught by Moses were the authoritative *words of God*. As Newberry points out, the I's of Moses here are emphatic in the Hebrew. He speaks in God's stead. This Paul declares in writing to the Hebrews (chap. 1:1). This solemn charge to keep the *words of God* comes loudly and urgently upon us to-day. Several reasons are given for this.

### I. Because they are Powerful. They—

**1. Bring Life.** "Do them, that ye may live" (Dt 4:1). Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. The words that I speak unto you they are spirit and they are *life*, *begotten* by the incorruptible Word of God.

**2. Secure an Inheritance.** "That ye may go in and possess. " It is by laying hold of His promise that the soul enters into the possession of the inheritance provided and offered. "Thy Word was found, and I did eat it, and it became the joy and rejoicing of my heart. " The hungry one must eat to be satisfied.

### II. Because they are Perfect (Dt 4:2). Nothing is to be—

**1. Added.** "Ye shall not add unto the Word. " The Law (Word) of the Lord is perfect. It is finished. We can no more add to the revelation of God than we can add to *the finished* work of Christ or the work of Creation, although man in his pride makes many attempts. We presume to *add* to the grace of God when we go about seeking to establish our own righteousness. "Add thou not unto *His words*, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar, for every word of God is pure" (Prov. 30:5, 6).

**2. Diminished.** "Neither shall ye diminish aught from it. " "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life" (Rev. 22:19). The Scriptures of truth *cannot be broken*, so that no repair is ever needed. To add or to diminish is only to mar the perfect *Man* of our counsel.

### III. Because they are Precious (Dt 4:4-9). Precious because they are—

**1. Unfailing.** "Ye that *did cleave* unto the Lord your God *are alive* every one of you this day. " Joshua and Caleb did trust the Word of the Lord, and they were *living* witnesses to His unfailing faithfulness (Num. 26:65). The living Christ is the eternal Word. He will not fail thee; be not faithless.

**2. Enlightening.** "Keep them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations. " "The Word of the Lord makes wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7). Apart from it, Israel would sink down to the level of the heathen nations around them. If His Word does not abide in us we, too, will fall back into a savourless state, good for nothing, or like a fruitless branch.

**3. Comforting.** "What nation is there so great who hath God so nigh unto them?" etc. (Dt 4:7). Israel as a redeemed people were distinguished for the *nearness* to which God came to them. This nearness was only enjoyed when they walked in obedience to His Word (2 Sam. 7:23). "The Lord is *nigh* unto all that call upon Him in *truth*" (Psa. 145:18). All who have *believed* are made nigh through the blood of Christ. *His nearness* is the distinguishing mark of all who live in the power of the Spirit of truth. The more we are *like* Christ, the more near will He be.

**4. Ennobling.** "What nation is there so great that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?" (Dt 4:8). What soul is there so great that hath the words of the living God dwelling richly within? His words are more to be desired than gold Moreover, in keeping of them there is great *reward* (Psa. 19:9-11). They do no iniquity that walk in His ways (Psa. 119:3). The incorruptible Word in the heart will beautify the whole character as the seed in the earth when it springs up beautifies the whole field with a comeliness not its own, yet not separate from it.

**5. Enduring.** "Take to thyself and teach them to thy sons, and thy sons' sons" (Dt 4:9). The words of God are enduring for us, and will be as effectual to our believing children and our children's children. Timothy knew the Scripture from his *youth*, and we need not wonder at it, when love for the Word of God dwelt in Eunice his mother and in Lois his grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5). The Word of the Lord endureth for ever. It has an enduring purity, suitability, influence, and faithfulness. "He that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life" (John 5:24). Believest thou this? (Handfuls on Purpose)

"A charge to keep I have,  
A God to glorify,  
A never failing Word to trust  
That lifts me to the sky.

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#### D A Carson's devotional on May 31 (Deuteronomy 4)

THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK OF Deuteronomy has many detailed parallels with ancient covenants or treaties that regional powers made with their vassal states. One of the components of such treaties was a kind of historical [prolegomenon](#)—a brief and selective recapitulation of the historical circumstances that had brought both parties to this point. That is the kind of thing one finds in Deuteronomy 1–3. As the covenant people of God make their second approach to the Promised Land, forty years after the Exodus itself (Dt 1:3) and with an entire generation gone, Moses urgently impresses upon the assembly the nature of the covenant, the greatness of the rescue that was now their heritage, the sorry history of rebellion, and above all the sheer majesty and glory of the God with whom they are linked in this spectacularly generous covenantal relationship.

The three chapters of selective history prepare the way for Deuteronomy 4. Here the historical survey is largely over; now the primary lessons from that history are driven home. Always review and remember what God has done. God does not owe you this amazing salvation. Far from it: "Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength" (Dt 4:37). But there are [entailments](#). "You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other" (Dt 4:35). "Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other" (Dt 4:39). "Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God" (see Dt 4:24 [note](#)). In other words, they are to serve God; but he alone is God. Every generation of believers must reckon with this truth, or face God's wrath.

Of the many lessons that spring from this historical recital, one relatively minor point—painful to Moses and important for us—quietly emerges. Moses repeatedly reminds the people that he himself will not be permitted to enter the land. He is referring to the time he struck the rock instead of speaking to it (Nu 20:9-12). But now he points out, truthfully, that his sin and punishment took place, he says, "because of you" (Deut. 1:37; 3:23–27; 4:21–22). Of course, Moses was responsible for his own action. But he would not have been tempted had the people been godly. Their persistent unbelief and whining wore him down. Meditate on a New Testament

**Bob Utley - SPECIAL TOPIC: TERMS FOR GOD'S REVELATION (using DEUTERONOMY and PSALMS)**

**I. "Statutes," "an enactment, decree, or ordinance"**

A. Masculine, חק Deut. 4:1, 5, 6, 8, 14, 40, 45; 5:1; 6:1, 24, 25; 7:11; 11:32; 16:12; 17:19; 26:17; 27:10; Ps. 2:7; 50:16; 81:4; 99:7; 105:10, 45; 148:6

B. Feminine, חקה Deut. 6:2; 8:11; 10:13; 11:1; 28:15, 45; 30:10, 16; Ps. 89:31; 119:5, 8, 12, 16, 23, 26, 33, 48, 54, 64, 68, 71, 80, 83, 112, 124, 135, 145, 155, 171

**II. "Law" "instruction"**

Deut. 1:5; 4:44; 17:11, 18, 19; 27:3, 8, 26; 28:58, 61; 29:21, 29; 30:10; 31:9; Ps. 1:2; 19:7; 78:10; 94:12; 105:45; 119:1, 18, 29, 34, 44, 51, 53, 55, 61, 70, 72, 77, 85, 92, 97, 109, 113, 126, 136, 142, 150, 153, 163, 165, 174

**III. "Testimonies" "divine laws"**

A. PLURAL, עדה Deut. 4:45; 6:17, 20; Ps. 25:10; 78:56; 93:5; 99:7; 119:22, 24, 46, 59, 79, 95, 119, 125, 138, 146, 152, 167, 168

B. עדות or עדות Ps. 19:8; 78:5; 81:6; 119:2, 14, 31, 36, 88, 99, 111, 129, 144, 157

**IV. "Precepts" "a charge"**

Ps. 19:8; 103:18; 111:7; 119:4, 15, 27, 40, 45, 56, 63, 69, 78, 87, 93, 94, 100, 104, 110, 128, 134, 141, 159, 168, 173

**V. "Commandments"**

Deut. 4:2, 40; 5:29; 6:1, 2, 17, 25; 8:1, 2, 11; 10:13; 11:13; 15:5; 26:13, 17; 30:11, 16; Ps. 19:8; 119:6, 10, 19, 21, 32, 35, 47, 48, 60, 66, 73, 86, 96, 98, 115, 127, 131, 143, 151, 166, 176

**VI. "Judgments/ordinances" "rulings" or "justice"**

Deut. 1:17; 4:1, 5, 8, 14, 45; 7:12; 16:18; 30:16; 33:10, 21; Ps. 10:5; 18:23; 19:10; 48:12; 89:30; 97:8; 105:5, 7; 119:7, 13, 20, 30, 39, 43, 52, 62, 75, 84, 102, 106, 120, 132, 137, 149, 156, 160, 164; 147:19; 149:9

**VII. "His ways" YHWH's guidelines for His people's lifestyle**

Deut. 8:6; 10:12; 11:22, 28; 19:9; 26:17; 28:9; 30:16; 32:4; Ps. 119:3, 5, 37, 59

**VIII. "His words"**

A. Deut. 4:10, 13, 36; 9:10; 10:4; Ps. 119:9, 16, 17, 25, 28, 42, 43, 49, 57, 65, 74, 81, 89, 101, 105, 107, 114, 130, 139, 147, 160, 161, 169

B. BDB 57

1. "word" Deut. 17:19; 18:19; 33:9; Ps. 119:11, 67, 103, 162, 170, 172

2. "promise" Ps. 119:38, 41, 50, 58, 76, 82, 116, 133, 140, 148, 154

3. "command" Ps. 119:158

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**John Blanchard - OBEDIENCE—Importance (from Complete Gathered Gold)**

Whoever strives to withdraw from obedience withdraws from grace. Thomas à Kempis

Becoming a Christian does not alter the fact that I am still a created being under obligation to obey. Richard Alderson

The evidence of knowing God is obeying God. Eric Alexander

Christ's sheep are marked in the ear and the foot; they hear his voice and they follow him. Anon.

Christianity is obedience. Anon.

If God has called you, don't spend time looking over your shoulder to see who is following. Anon.

The proof of real saving faith is a persistent mindset to obey what Jesus has taught us in his Word, the Bible. Anon.

When Christ takes the burden of guilt off a sinner's shoulders he places the yoke of obedience upon his neck. Anon.

Christian obedience is to be the response to our acceptance, not the reason for it. John Blanchard

Obedience is not the essence of a right relationship with God, but it is the evidence of it. John Blanchard

Obedience is the positive side of repentance. John Blanchard

The evidence of saving faith is not how much you believe but how well you behave. John Blanchard

Jesus has spoken; his is the Word, ours the obedience. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

One act of obedience is better than a hundred sermons. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Only he who believes is obedient; only he who is obedient believes. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

God does not give us his power so that we might feel good about ourselves; he gives us his power so that we can obey him for his sake, for his glory. Jerry Bridges

Just as obedience to the Lord is an indication of our love for him, so is it also a proof of our fear of God. Jerry Bridges

Every man obeys Christ as he prizes Christ, and no otherwise. Thomas Brooks

He who obeys sincerely endeavours to obey thoroughly. Thomas Brooks

No man obeys God truly who does not endeavour to obey God fully. Thomas Brooks

The obedience that springs from faith is the obedience of a son, not of a slave. Thomas Brooks

Love to God and obedience to God are so completely involved in each other that any one of them implies the other too. F. F. Bruce

No man will actually obey God but he who loves him. John Calvin

Nothing is more fatal to us than to refuse to give ourselves in obedience to God. John Calvin

Obedience is the end of our calling. John Calvin

The basis of true religion is obedience. John Calvin

We cannot rely on God's promises without obeying his commandments. John Calvin

God marks with sorrow the point in the history of any one of his servants where there is failure to yield him implicit, unquestioning, heroic obedience. Leslie Carter

Faith is the starting-post of obedience. Thomas Chalmers

The best measure of a spiritual life is not its ecstasies but its obedience. Oswald Chambers

The golden rule for understanding in spiritual matters is not intellect, but obedience. Oswald Chambers

The rugged obedience of the cross may still be seen in our creeds, but it is hard to find in our lives. Robert E. Coleman

It is not what we do that matters, but what a sovereign God chooses to do through us. God doesn't want our success; he wants us. He doesn't demand our achievements; he demands our obedience. Charles Colson

What God wants from his people is obedience, no matter what the circumstances, no matter how unknown the outcome. Charles Colson

To obey is the proper office of a rational soul. Michel E. de Montaigne

My gracious Lord, I own thy right  
To every service I can pay;  
And call it my supreme delight  
To hear thy dictates and obey.

Philip Doddridge

The scriptural doctrine of justification by faith alone, without any manner of goodness or excellency of ours, does in no wise diminish either the necessity or benefit of a sincere evangelical obedience. Jonathan Edwards



Obedience to God is the most infallible evidence of sincere and supreme love to him. Nathanael Emmons

Be obedient even when you do not know where obedience may lead you. Sinclair Ferguson

There is no such thing as genuine knowledge of God that does not show itself in obedience to his Word and will. Sinclair Ferguson

Faith that saves has one distinguishing quality: saving faith is a faith that produces obedience; it is a faith that brings about a way of life. Billy Graham

Understanding can wait. Obedience cannot. Geoffrey Grogan

One of the reasons people find it hard to be obedient to the commands of Christ is that they are uncomfortable taking orders from a stranger. Gary Gulbranson

Sacrifice without obedience is sacrilege. William Gurnall

Perfect obedience is God's right as God. Graham Heaps

God uses broken things: broken soil and broken clouds to produce rain; broken grain to produce bread; broken bread to feed our bodies. He wants our stubbornness broken into humble obedience. Vance Havner

What our Lord said about cross-bearing and obedience is not in fine type. It is in bold print on the face of the contract. Vance Havner

The opposite of ignorance in the spiritual realm is not knowledge but obedience. Howard Hendricks

Love is the root, obedience is the fruit. Matthew Henry

Those who would have the blessings of God's testimonies must come under the bonds of his statutes. Matthew Henry

God calls people to worship him with their obedience, and instead they try to fob him off with their religion. John Hercus

All moral obligation resolves itself into the obligation of conformity to the will of God. Charles Hodge

Obedience to legitimate authority is one of the fruits and evidences of Christian sincerity. Charles Hodge

God is not otherwise to be enjoyed than as he is obeyed. John Howe

Justification supplies the only efficient motive to obedience. Ernest F. Kevan

The strongest inducement for a Christian to obey the divine law is the fact that he has been graciously pardoned for having broken it. Ernest F. Kevan

God is a totalitarian Ruler who demands full allegiance from his subjects. R. B. Kuiper

To know God is to know that our obedience is due to him. C. S. Lewis

Evangelical obedience is fully a condition of justification but not a cause of justification. Sam Logan

I had rather obey than work miracles. Martin Luther

Obedience is the crown and honour of all virtue. Martin Luther

Don't throw God a bone of your love unless there's the meat of obedience on it. John MacArthur

Partial obedience is an argument of insincerity. Thomas Manton

There is no experience of sanctification which absolves us from the responsibility of day-to-day obedience. David McKee

Obedience is the best commentary on the Bible. Theodore Monod

The life of sanctification is the life of obedience. J. A. Motyer

The believer is not redeemed by obedience to the law but he is redeemed unto it. John Murray

Legal obedience was approved by justice; evangelical obedience is acceptable unto mercy. A. W. Pink

Not only does God require obedience, but an obedience which issues from, is animated by, and is an expression of, love. A. W. Pink

Sincere obedience, though it be not sinless, is acceptable unto God; if it were not, then it would be impossible for any of his children to perform a single act in this life which was pleasing in his sight. A. W. Pink

Love of the creature toward the Creator must include obedience or it is meaningless. Francis Schaeffer

It is our bounden duty to live in obedience, but it would prove our utter ruin to live on obedience. William Secker

We have been born under a monarchy; to obey God is freedom. Seneca

God's commands carry no RSVP—man indeed has the power to refuse the divine summons, but not the right. R. C. Sproul

A life under the rule of Christ can alone prove that we are the objects of our Lord's delight. C. H. Spurgeon

Believing and obeying always run side by side. C. H. Spurgeon

Faith and obedience are bound up in the same bundle. He that obeys God, trusts God; and he that trusts God, obeys God. C. H. Spurgeon

Obedience is the hallmark of faith. C. H. Spurgeon

Though the heavens should fall through our doing right, we are not to sin in order to keep them up. C. H. Spurgeon

It is the simplest things that are most difficult to understand and accept, and one of those which seems in my experience to have been most difficult for people to understand and accept has been the fact that the Lord demands of his servants, each and every one of them, to listen to him only and obey his will implicitly, irrespective of what it costs. William Still

Christ's lovers prove their love by their obedience. John R. W. Stott

Where the right is absolute, the obedience must not be conditional. George Swinnoek

God being who he is must have obedience from his creatures. Man being who he is must render that obedience, and he owes God complete obedience whether or not he feels for him the slightest trace of love in his heart. A. W. Tozer

Theological truth is useless until it is obeyed. The purpose behind all doctrine is to secure moral action! A. W. Tozer

To escape the error of salvation by works we have fallen into the opposite error of salvation without obedience. A. W. Tozer

True faith commits us to obedience. A. W. Tozer

Doers of the Word are the best hearers. Thomas Watson

Love without obedience is a satanic substitute for God's plan. John C. Whitcomb

**Deuteronomy 4:2 "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.**

- De 12:32 Jos 1:7 Pr 30:6 Ec 12:13 Mt 5:18,43 15:2-9 Mk 7:1-13 Ga 3:15 Rev 22:18-19
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Resources:

Deuteronomy 12:32+ "Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

Proverbs 30:6 Do not add to His words Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

**DO NOT ADD TO OR SUBTRACT FROM  
GOD'S INSPIRED WORD**

**You shall not add to the word** - God's Word is eternal, immutable and stands as His final and sufficient declaration to men. God's instructions to Israel through Moses were clear and not to be negotiated but [explicitly](#) obeyed (**keep the commandments**). If God's Word does not need any additions or subtractions, the implication is that it is fully sufficient for our time on earth. Peter says it this way...

(Christ's) divine power has granted to us **EVERYTHING** (Gk = pas = all without exceptions!) **pertaining to life and godliness**, through the true knowledge of Him (Implication? The better we know Him, the more we possess everything pertaining to life and godliness! And so Peter ends with a prayer - 2 Pe 3:18+) Who called us by His own glory and excellence. (2 Peter 1:3+)

Indeed in absolute assurance we can cry out in concert with the psalmist...

Forever, O LORD, Thy Word is settled (stands, is established) in heaven. (Ps 119:89, cp Mt 5:18+)

(Amplified 2015) Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven [standing firm and unchangeable].

**Spurgeon** - Jehovah's word is not fickle nor uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. Man's teachings change so often that there is never time for them to be settled; but the Lord's word is from of old the same, and will remain unchanged eternally. Some men are never happier than when they are unsettling everything and everybody; but God's mind is not with them. The power and glory of heaven have confirmed each sentence which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and so confirmed it that to all eternity it must stand the same, "settled in heaven, where nothing can reach it. In the former section David's soul fainted, but here the good man looks out of self and perceives that the Lord fainteth not, neither is weary, neither is there any failure in his word. The verse takes the form of an ascription of praise: the faithfulness and immutability of God are fit themes for holy song, and when we are tired with gazing upon the shifting scene of this life, the thought of the immutable promise fills our mouth with singing. God's purposes, promises, and precepts are all settled in his own mind, and none of them shall be disturbed. Covenant settlements will not be removed, however unsettled the thoughts of men may become; let us therefore settle it in our minds that we abide in the faith of our Jehovah as long as we have any being. ([Treasury of David](#))

**POSB** - Man is not to tamper with God's holy commandments, His Holy Word: Man must not add his own ideas or thoughts to God's Word nor the ideas and thoughts of other people. (**ED: THIS IS A WARNING TO ALL WHO PREACH AND TEACH - DO NOT USE THE WORD TO PROMOTE YOUR PERSONAL AGENDA AS I SAW ONE PASTOR DO WITH Pr 29:18+ STATING HE HAD A "VISION" FOR THE CHURCH WHILE TOTALLY IGNORING THE TRUE MEANING OF THE TEXT. WHAT WAS THE RESULT? THE CHURCH SPLIT ABOUT ONE YEAR LATER!**) Man must not take away from God's Word, must not omit any statement or requirement. ([Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Deuteronomy](#))

**Christopher Wright** on the maintenance of the integrity of God's Word - It was not to be treated like a menu from which one could select what suited one's taste, nor as a mere foundation for personal inventiveness. God's word must be taken whole in its overall meaning and thrust. It is not to be trifled or tampered with. Such a concern certainly underlies the canonical principle. ([UCBS Deuteronomy](#))

Precise divine instructions call for precise human obedience.

Ultimately of course "**precise human obedience**" is only possible by dependence on the Holy Spirit of God, for the most part external to God's saints in the Old Testament and of course internal, indwelling all God's saints in the New Testament.

**Grant** - There is always the danger of adding to or taking away from the Word of God. This practice is first found when the serpent spoke to Eve in the Garden of Eden. His opening words took away from the Word of God. The Lord had said, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it" (Gen 2:16-17). The serpent, however, stated, "Yea hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden" (Gen 3:1). He took away from the word of God by omitting, "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat", and the warning that the Lord had given—"for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die". He also added to it, for the Lord did not say, "Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden". (Ge 3:1+) The purpose on that occasion was to make the prohibition placed on Adam and Eve, which was for their good and to ensure their blessing, appear to be designed to limit them and deny them the enjoyment of Eden. Rather than enjoying the God of bountiful provision he sought to present Him as the God of limitations whose wish was to suppress the "potential" that is in man. Let all beware when he whispers into the ears, "Yea, hath God said", for his purpose today has not changed. ([What the Bible Teaches](#))

**MacArthur** - The Word that God had given to Israel through Moses was complete and sufficient to direct the people. Thus, this law, the gift of God at Horeb, could not be supplemented or reduced. Anything that adulterated or contradicted God's law would not be

tolerated (cf. 12:32; Pr 30:6; Rev 22:18, 19). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Martin** - Moses admonished Israel very sternly that they should avoid the standard blunders about divine instruction. On the one hand, they must not **add** to what he commanded by augmenting God's law with human additions. Legalism first adds to God's law and in time invalidates it (see Mark 7:13+). On the other hand, Israel must avoid the equally critical mistake that is made when people **subtract** from God's imperatives. Choosing not to obey what is valid in effect removes biblical teaching from its lofty status of divine authority. The believer's authority is God's Word—nothing less, nothing more, nothing else (see also Rev. 22:18-19+). ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

**Meredith Kline** - God's laws must not suffer amendment or abridgment through human legislation (cf. Dt 12:32; Rev 22:18 ff.). Man's whole obligation is to heed, and to the obedient Israelites was given the promise of life and rich inheritance ([Wycliffe Bible Commentary on Deuteronomy](#))

**Gene Getz** points out that the principle of not adding or subtracting to Scripture "does not mean that everything written in Scripture is directly applicable to us today. As we've seen, many of the laws included in the books of Moses were given exclusively to Israel. However, the Old Testament is indeed the inspired Word of God, and when viewed through New Testament revelation, we discover hundreds of principles that are authoritative in our lives today." Reflection and Response - How can we make sure we're interpreting Scripture accurately and making appropriate application to our lives? (Ed: My answer to that question after walking with Jesus in His Word for over 30 years is to learn [inductive Bible study](#) - It does require some effort but the "long range" benefits are "out of this world!") (Life Essentials Study Bible)

**Jack Deere** - Nor must Israel **subtract** anything **from it** to accommodate the willfulness or weakness of human nature. ([Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Utley** - This does not refer to scribes updating the text of the Law, but rather that you cannot add to the essence of the Law (cf. 12:32; Pro. 30:5–6; Eccl. 3:14; Jer. 26:2).

**Commanding...commandments...command** - The verb is tsavah (commanding...command - [06680](#)) from which the noun commandments (mitsvah - [04687](#)) is derived. In context these words refer to the whole body of the Mosaic Covenant regulations (cf. Dt 4:40; 5:10, 29, 31; 6:1, 2, 17, 25; 7:9, 11; 8:1, 2, 6, 11; 10:13).

**Grant** - The word "**command**" is used more often in this book, both in noun and in verb form, than in any other book in the Pentateuch. This again stresses the nature of these statutes and judgments. It is of interest to note that the first act of God to man was to bless the male and the female (Ge 1:28) and the second was to command the man (Ge 2:16). As with this covenant, the enjoyment of the Lord's blessing of man, from the beginning, was dependent on obedience to the word of God. ([What the Bible Teaches](#))

**Keep** (give heed, guard, kept, observe, watch) ([08104](#))(**shamar**) means to keep, watch, preserve, to guard, to be careful, to watch over, to watch carefully over, to be on one's guard. and is rendered in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with the Greek verb **phulasso** a vivid word calling for one to set up a watchman to guard and protect from enemy incursions.

**Shamar** is a Key Word in chapter 4 and is used in Deut. 4:2; Deut. 4:6; Deut. 4:9; Deut. 4:15; Deut. 4:23; Deut. 4:40;

Moses issues a clear warning against adding to or subtracting from the Holy Word of God, a warning repeated several other times in Scripture...

Deuteronomy 12:32+ "Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; **you shall not add to nor take away from it.**

Proverbs 30:6 **Do not add to His words** Or He will reprove you, and you will be proved a liar.

Jeremiah 26:2 "Thus says the LORD, 'Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak to all the cities of Judah who have come to worship in the LORD'S house all the words that I have commanded you to speak to them. **Do not omit a word!**

Galatians 3:15+ Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is only a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, **no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it.**

Revelation 22:18-19+ I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.**

This warning would have been especially important in ancient times for Scripture manuscripts were copied by hand. Sid Lidtke explains that..

The term “**transmission**” describes the ancient process of copying Hebrew and Greek manuscripts to preserve them for future generation and to distribute them for greater use. Since there were no copy machines, the texts had to be copied by hand. In this way they were “transmitted.”....The Masoretic scribes (A.D. 500-1000) in charge of the Old Testament manuscript copying used a very meticulous system of transcription and had a deep reverence for the text. God used their almost obsessive respect for the text to preserve the text’s accuracy. They had specific rules on the type of ink and the quality and size of parchment sheets. No individual letter could be written down without having looked back at the copy in front of them. The scribe could not write God’s name with a newly dipped pen (lest it blotch) and even if the king should address him, while writing God’s name, he should take no notice of him. They were so meticulous that they counted all the paragraphs, words and even letters, so they could know by counting, if they had done it perfectly. They knew the middle letter of each book so they could count back and see if they had missed anything. ([Read this interesting article](#))

In Jer 1:12 God says " I am watching over My word to perform it."

The tragedy of the Pharisees in Jesus’ day is that while they jealously guarded the Scriptures, they themselves were guilty of taking away from the Word of God with their traditions (Mark 7:1–13+).

THOUGHT - Let me ask you -- Are you daily taking in truth that the Spirit might use it to renew your mind? Remember what Moses said about the vital nature and importance of God's holy Word...

## **IT IS YOUR LIFE!**

### **Deuteronomy 32:47**

#### **Related Resources:**

- [Comparison of Bibles for literalness](#) - for serious study a more literal version is recommended
- [Beyond Reasonable Doubt: The Truth About the Bible](#)
- [Multiple articles on Bibliology \(What is Bibliology?\)](#)
- [How Can I Understand The Bible? - Principles for practical Bible study](#)
- [Can I Really Trust The Bible? - Evidence for the Bible's inspiration](#)
- [Studies In Contrast: Resolving Alleged Contradictions In The Bible](#)
- [How Can I Know God Through His Book? - Learning from its plots, characters, and moods](#)
- [What We Believe? - A summary of 10 important doctrines](#)
- [The Greatest Story Ever Told - A re-telling of God's story for man](#)
- [The Holidays Of God: The Fall Feasts](#)
- [The Holidays Of God: The Spring Feasts](#)
- [How Can We Trust A Bible That Tolerated Slavery?](#)
- [Better Than Gold- The Life-Changing Wisdom Of The Bible](#)
- [What does it mean that the Bible is God-breathed?](#)
- [Who wrote the Bible?](#)
- [What does it mean that the Bible is inspired?](#)
- [Is the Bible truly God's Word?](#)
- [Why should I believe the Bible?](#)
- [Who wrote the Bible?](#)
- [Is the Bible true?](#)
- [Why should I trust the Bible?](#)
- [What is the value of group Bible study?](#)
- [Why are there so many Bible translations, and which is the best?](#)
- [What are the different English Bible versions?](#)
- [How and when was the canon of the Bible put together?](#)
- [What is the canon of Scripture?](#)

Read: Deuteronomy 4:1-10 | You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God. —Deuteronomy 4:2

Kim Peek was a savant (a person with extraordinary memory) who memorized all of Shakespeare's plays. During a performance of Twelfth Night, Peek noticed that the actor had skipped a word from one of the lines. Peek suddenly stood up and shouted, "**Stop!**" The actor apologized and said he didn't think anyone would mind. Peek replied, "**Shakespeare would.**"

Words matter. But especially when they are the very words of God. Moses warned Israel, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God" (Deut. 4:2). Moses often reminded Israel of God's mercy and faithfulness to them in the past. But he also stressed the importance of obedience to God's commands as they prepared to enter the Promised Land. He told them that obedience would result in blessings of life and a rich inheritance (vv.39-40). Every command and regulation mattered to God. The value His people placed on God's Word showed their view of Him. By Marvin Williams ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Today, when we value God's Word, handle it with great care, and obey what it says, we give God the reverence He truly deserves.

God's Word needs no additions or subtractions.

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### David Reed - Deuteronomy 4:2 - [Mormons Answered Verse by Verse](#)

Revelation 22:18 warns: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book." When shown that verse by Christians objecting to the Book of Mormon, members of the LDS Church will often respond by turning to Deuteronomy 4:2 and say that if Revelation 22:18 rules out the Book of Mormon, Deuteronomy 4:2 rules out the remaining sixty-one books of the Bible that come after it.

However, these words in Deuteronomy do not rule out additional revelation from God; they simply forbid men from adding anything on their own to what God has inspired. When the command came from God to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book" (Jer. 30:2), it was proper for Jeremiah to comply. What would have been wrong would have been for Jeremiah to add on his own to what the LORD told him to write.

To see how this applies to the Book of Mormon and other latter-day scriptures of the LDS Church, see chapter 3, "Mormon Scripture," and chapter 6, "Verse-by-Verse Answers for Mormons—Book of Mormon." See also the discussion of Revelation 22:18.

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### Misquote

Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar. —Proverbs 30:6

Today's Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:1-14

Imagine the frustration of a mother as she tries to gather her family for supper. Her 8-year-old son comes through the door smuggling a dead bird behind his back. "Call Ann for dinner," says his mother. "Then wash your hands and come to the table."

A minute later the 4-year-old daughter comes running into the kitchen, sobbing uncontrollably. Her brother had just waved the stiff bird under her nose and told her that if she wasn't at the table in 17 seconds, Mom wouldn't let her go out and play for a whole week.

This story about a misquoted mother doesn't begin to capture the confusion that follows when we misquote the heavenly Father. Often we become preoccupied with our own ideas of how things should be, like Job's friends, who didn't speak rightly about the Lord (Job 42:7). The result is that we say more, or less, than God actually said in His Word (Deuteronomy 4:2). We need to make sure we know exactly where His words stop and our opinions begin. If we don't, we may misrepresent Him, and Proverbs 30:6 warns that we are then in danger of being found liars before God.

Let's take care that we don't express our opinions as if they were God's words. By: Mart DeHaan [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#)

Lord, grant us wisdom to discern  
The truth that You've made known,  
And may we never teach one word  
Beyond what You have shown.  
—D. De Haan

We must adjust our lives to the Bible—never the Bible to our lives.

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We asked a great soldier one day, the colonel of his regiment, "What is the chief asset of a soldier?" Immediately he said, "Obedience." "To obey is better than sacrifice." (1 Sa 15:22) (R Neighbour)

**Deuteronomy 4:3** "Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of [Baal-peor](#), for all the men who followed [Baal-peor](#), the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you.

- **what the:** Nu 25:1-9 31:16 Jos 22:17 Ps 106:28,29 Ho 9:10
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **DREADFUL WARNING: DEADLY CONSEQUENCES OF DISOBEDIENCE**

Now Moses gives Israel a dramatic reminder of the consequences of covenant violation where 24,000 souls died! Thus the very name "Baal-peor" should have struck terror in the hearts of the second generation for they had literally witnessed these death of their fellow Israelites who choose to disobey! This should have served to arrest their attention to hear and motivate them to heed and thereby to possess and to live in their promised possession. Moses' lesson for them (and us) is that disobedience ALWAYS brings disaster! Paul echoes this warning (one of God's promises we do not usually list in books entitled "God's Promises!") writing

**Do not be deceived** ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)), God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption ([phthora](#) = ruin, decay, decomposition like a dead body! cf Dt 4:16, 25), but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.(Gal 6:7-8+)

Father grant every soul reading Moses' and Paul's warnings would lay aside the old and put on the new and cease sowing once and for all to their rotten flesh and enabled by Your Spirit begin sowing to the Spirit all the remaining days of their (my) life, for Your glory. In Christ. Amen

**Your eyes have seen what the LORD has done in the case of [Baal-peor](#)** (see map) - Note carefully that this is not second hand information. The second generation listening to Moses had been alive and were eyewitnesses to the righteous wrath of the Holy God at [Baal-peor](#). In fact Moses was recalling this event adjacent to the very place it had transpired! (cf Dt 3:29+). It is likely that many had relatives or associates that died in that divine plaque! One would think that would have left an indelible impression in their minds, but such was not to be the case as subsequent events in the promised land would demonstrate.

**THOUGHT-** Forgetfulness is not a sin, but forgetfulness will often set one up for subsequent sins. The lesson is clear - remember the "Baal-peor's" in your life beloved, so that you do not repeat them!

[Peor](#) is the name of the location in Moab. [Baal](#) is the Hebrew word which means lord, owner, possessor, husband. It is interesting to note how many cities and people were name after Baal in the Old Testament. Keeping in mind that a name in the OT conveyed a sense of the attributes and character of the entity by that name, it is clear that the diabolical influence of Baal had saturated the Canaanite culture. And Israel was repeatedly "infected" by this virulent strain of idolatry!

**Holman Bible Dictionary** on [Baal-peor](#) - In Numbers 25:3 , a Moabite deity that the Israelites worshiped when they had illicit sexual relations with Moabite women. The guilty Israelites were severely punished for this transgression, and the incident became a paradigm of sin and divine judgment for later generations of Israelites (Deuteronomy 4:3 ; Psalm 106:28 ; Hosea 9:10

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, we should not be too critical of Israel, for **our eyes have been allowed to see spiritual wonders** they never witnessed, and yet **we so quickly forget** how great and how good is our God. O God this describes every one of us reading this note. Forgive us and strengthen us with **power** ([dunamis](#)) in our inner being by Your Spirit (Eph 3:16+) to "**be** ([present imperative](#) = direction, not perfection, necessitates continual filling with, dependence on the Holy Spirit!) steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Cor 15:58+) and to "**Be on the alert, stand firm** in the faith, **act like men, be strong**. Let all that you do **be done** in love. (1 Cor 16:13-14+)

In order to emphasize the importance of obedience Moses calls them to remember the disastrous consequences for their compromise at Baal-peor. Obedience would be especially critical so that the nation would have God's blessing as they went to take the Promised Land from the strong pagan inhabitants. It seems that this warning to remember went in one ear and out the other. As Guzik says " Israel's first military loss in the Promised Land (at Ai, Joshua 7:1-26) came specifically because they had disobeyed



God. 36 men died at Ai (Ed: not to mention the perpetrator and his family! Josh 7:25, 26), because one man in Israel (Achan - Josh 7:20, 21) did not obey the command of the LORD."

The psalmist gives a vivid, appalling description of this terrible event

Psalm 106:28 ([see commentary](#)) They joined ([tsamad](#)) themselves also to Baal-peor, And ate sacrifices offered to the dead.

**NET Note** - Here "**the dead**" may refer to deceased ancestors (see Deut 26:14+). Another option is to understand the term as a derogatory reference to the various deities which the Israelites worshiped at Peor along with Baal (see Nu 25:2+ and L. C. Allen, Psalms 101–150 [WBC], 49).

We encounter the tragic episode of [Baal-Peor](#) in Numbers 25 and it is notable that spiritual harlotry (idol worship) is very often associated with sexual immorality in the Scripture (be careful beloved if you are "toying" with sexual immorality!...

While Israel remained at [Shittim](#), the people began to **play the harlot** (KJV = "commit whoredom")(HERE IS THE ROOT PROBLEM - A PROBLEM WITH THEIR HEART!) with the daughters of Moab. 2 For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods (ISRAEL NOW INVOLVED IN BLATANT IDOL WORSHIP! MEN, BE CAREFUL IF YOUR EYES WANDER BECAUSE THE STRANGE WOMAN WILL GIVE YOU SPIRITUAL AMNESIA AND YOUR ACTS WILL DENY WHAT YOU KNOW TO BE TRUE ABOUT GOD). 3 So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor (NIV = "joined in worshipping the Baal of Peor"), and the LORD was angry against Israel. 4 The LORD said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel." 5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Each of you slay his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor." 6 Then behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting. 7 When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation and took a spear in his hand, 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked. 9 Those who died by the plague were 24,000. (Numbers 25:1-9 - commentary)

**NET Note comments** - Numbers 25 tells of Israel's sins on the steppes of Moab, and God's punishment. In the overall plan of the book, here we have another possible threat to God's program, although here it comes from within the camp (Balaam was the threat from without). If the Moabites could not defeat them one way, they would try another. The chapter has three parts: fornication (Nu 25:1–3), God's punishment (Nu 25:4–9), and aftermath (Nu 25:10–18) The account apparently means that the men were having sex with the Moabite women. Why the men submitted to such a temptation at this point is hard to say. It may be that as military heroes the men took liberties with the women of occupied territories. (In Nu 25:2) the women who engaged in immoral acts with Hebrew men invited them to their temple ritual. What Israel experienced here was some of the debased ritual practices of the Canaanite people. The act of prostrating themselves before the pagan deities was probably participation in a fertility ritual, nothing short of cultic prostitution. This was a blatant disregard of the covenant and the Law. If something were not done, the nation would have destroyed itself. (Nu 25:3) The verb is "yoked" to Baal-peor. The word is unusual, and may suggest the physical, ritual participation...It certainly shows that they acknowledge the reality of the local god. The evidence indicates that Moab was part of the very corrupt Canaanite world, a world that was given over to the fertility ritual of the times. (Nu 25:4) The leaders who were guilty were commanded by God to be publicly exposed by hanging, probably a reference to impaling, but possibly some other form of harsh punishment. The point was that the swaying of their executed bodies would be a startling warning for any who so blatantly set the Law aside and indulged in apostasy through pagan sexual orgies. (Nu 25:8) Phinehas saw all this as part of the pagan sexual ritual that was defiling the camp. He had seen that the LORD himself had had the guilty put to death. And there was already some plague breaking out in the camp that had to be stopped. And so in his zeal he dramatically put an end to this incident, that served to stop the rest and end the plague.

**David Guzik** - At Baal Peor, Israel sinned by committing both sexual and spiritual immorality with the women of Moab. Moses warned the people of Israel that if they rejected God now as they did back then, the result would be the same. Many would die in the judgment of the LORD. ([Deuteronomy 4](#))

**Rich Cathers** writes that "[Baal-peor](#) was one of those "guy" kind of sins like pornography and prostitution are today. The men who

followed after this sin were destroyed."

#### Related Resources:

- Idolatry and Immorality - the relationship and the antidote
- See [in depth study on Baal](#)

**for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the LORD your God has destroyed them from among you** - 24,000 in Nu 25:9+ or 23,000 in 1 Cor 10:8+

**BAAL-PEOR** bāl pe' ôr (בַּלְעֵזֶבֶד פְּעוֹר, Baal of Peor). The god worshipped in Moab by Israel at the instigation of Balaam while the Israelites were encamped at Shittim (Nu 25:3ff.). All such worshipers were destroyed by God out of Israel (Deut 4:3). The heinous nature of their sin was not soon forgotten as both the psalmist and the prophet recalled it later to Israel (Ps 106:28; Hos 9:10). In the latter passage, the idol is called "shameful" and their action "abominable." Probably licentious practice with the women of Moab was involved in the worship. He was a local deity of Mt. Peor but presumably related to the Phoen. Baal.

**Destroyed** (demolish, exterminate) (08045)(**shamad**) is a verb meaning "be destroyed, decimated, perished, overthrown, exterminated, i.e., pertaining to being in a totally ruined state, which can include death of a person or extinction of an entity." (Swanson) This verb is most commonly used in Deuteronomy and Joshua and refer to Israel destroying the Canaanites and taking over the Promised Land. The destruction depicted by **shamad** usually involves a rather sudden catastrophe such as warfare or a mass killing. For example in Dt 6:15 God says He will "**wipe**" Israel off the face of the earth, so great was His anger against them! It is worth noting that the last OT use of **shamad** is one of the greatest for the nation of Israel, the prophet **Zechariah** recording "And in that day (WHAT DAY - Read Zechariah 12:1-14+) I (JEHOVAH/YAHWEH HIMSELF) will set about to destroy all (HOW MANY?) the nations that come against Jerusalem." (Zechariah 12:9+) **Anti-Semitism** will be obliterated! The prophet Isaiah gives a prophecy that should startle every person who is not a believer in the Messiah - "Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it." (Isa. 13:9+)

Deut. 1:27; Deut. 2:12; Deut. 2:21; Deut. 2:22; Deut. 2:23; Deut. 4:3; Deut. 4:26; Deut. 6:15; Deut. 7:4; Deut. 7:23; Deut. 7:24; Deut. 9:3; Deut. 9:8; Deut. 9:14; Deut. 9:19; Deut. 9:20; Deut. 9:25; Deut. 12:30; Deut. 28:20; Deut. 28:24; Deut. 28:45; Deut. 28:48; Deut. 28:51; Deut. 28:61; Deut. 28:63; Deut. 31:3; Deut. 31:4; Deut. 33:27;

**Deuteronomy 4:4 "But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you.**

- De 10:20 13:4 Jos 22:5 23:8 Ru 1:14-17 Ps 63:8 143:6-11 Isa 26:20 Eze 9:4 Joh 6:67-69 Ac 11:23 Ro 12:9 Rev 14:4 20:4
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### HERE IS THE REWARD FOR HOLDING FAST TO THE LORD

Note that **reward** rhymes (fairly close) with **LORD**. which is very apropos, for Jehovah is the Giver of every good gift (James 1:17+). The short version is "listen and live!"

**But** - Always pause to ponder this [term of contrast](#). Sin has a high price, but there is safety in obeying the Lord. **Robert Neighbour** adds that Dt 4:3-4 demonstrate a clear contrast of destinies based on different choices for Dt 4:3 describes "The bane of disobedience and Dt 4:4 "The blessing of obedience." Which road are you traveling on today beloved?

**Jamieson** - The allusion to that recent and appalling judgment was seasonably made as a powerful dissuasive against idolatry, and the fact mentioned was calculated to make a deep impression on people who knew and felt the truth of it. (A Commentary: Critical, Experimental, and Practical on the Old and New Testaments)

**Jon Courson** - Those who didn't listen were dead. Those who did were alive. How true that still is. When I don't listen to the Lord, I experience deadness, dearth, and drought in my soul. On the other hand, there is a liveliness and vitality about those who do indeed listen to the Lord. (Jon Courson's Application Commentary Old Testament)

**Merrill Unger** - Thus his point is made: Just as obedience to the Lord in the past resulted in life, so obedience in time to come

would guarantee ongoing life. Obviously the converse was equally true. Those who fell short of the Lord's expectations of them would die (cf. Dt 8:1; 30:19). (New American Commentary – Volume 4: Deuteronomy)

**But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today** - God was Israel's Husband (Isa 54:5, Jer 31:32+) and they were to "cling (**dabaq**) to Him" (Dt 10:20+, Dt 13:4+). And so they **held fast (dabeq)** to the words of His covenant even as a husband and wife cling (**dabaq**) to each other in the marriage covenant (Ge 2:24). They were holding fast and as a result God held them fast! How did they hold fast to the LORD? They didn't hold to Him physically, so it had to be spiritually. They held fast by faith to His **statues and judgments**. They had received them and their action of holding fast proved they believed them (cp the power of God's Word to perform its work in those who believe it = 1 Th 2:13+).

A NT parallel passage is found in Paul's letter to the saints at Philippi...

**Holding fast (present tense = continually)** the **word of life**, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain (Php 2:16-note)

In another passage Paul told Timothy to

**Retain** (hold) (**present imperative = keep holding in your possession = a command to make this the direction of your life, not possible by natural power but supernatural enabling by the Spirit)** the standard of sound (**hugiaino** - gives us English "hygienic") words which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (2 Ti 1:13-note)

**Comment** - Paul was saying "Timothy don't lose your grip on the standard." **Spurgeon** adds that "This is the main burden of the apostle's pleading with Timothy, "Hold fast." We have equal need of the same exhortation, for this is an evil day, and thousands hold everything or nothing as the winds of opinion may change." One of the best ways for saints today to **hold fast** God's word is to hide it in our hearts, memorizing ([See Memorizing His Word](#)) and meditating ([See Meditating on His Word](#)) upon it (Ps 119:9, 10, 11+).

Hold fast to God's sound words and they will hold you sound and fast!

**Held fast (01695)(dabeq** from **dabaq** = to cling) is an adjective indicating clinging to, holding fast to, remaining in close contact by being faithful and steadfast. Dabeq is used only 3x in the OT - Dt 4:4, 2 Chr 3:12, Pr 18:24. In Deut. 4:4 the picture is of one who remained faithful to Jehovah when others were drawn away by the lusts of the flesh. The Septuagint uses the verb *proskeimai* in the present tense (calling for continual action) which means maintaining allegiance to and adhering to God and His Word of truth.

2 Chronicles 3:12 The wing of the other cherub, of five cubits, **touched** (Lxx = *hapto* = to make close contact, as by touching or taking hold of) the wall of the house; and its other wing of five cubits was attached to the wing of the first cherub.

ESV 2 Chronicles 3:12 and of this cherub, one wing, of five cubits, touched the wall of the house, and the other wing, also of five cubits, was **joined to** the wing of the first cherub.

Proverbs 18:24 A man of too many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

Literally - "There is one who loves that clings more than a brother"

Amplified (2015) The man of *too many* friends [chosen indiscriminately] will be broken in pieces *and* come to ruin,

But there is a [true, loving] friend who [is reliable and] sticks closer than a brother.

[How can a friend stick closer than a brother?](#)

**Dabeq** is derived from the more frequently used verb **dabaq** (1692) which means to stick to, adhere to, cling to, join with, stay with, stay in close proximity to and which yields the noun form for "glue". **Dabaq** describes cleaving to one's wife (Gen. 2:24), Ruth clinging to Naomi (Ruth 1:14+). **Dabaq** describes something that sticks or clings to something else (Ezek 29:4 and Ezekiel's tongue to roof of his mouth Ezek. 3:26). **Dabaq** describes an attitude of loyalty or commitment. It is used in parallel with "love" in Ge 34:3; (in Solomon's sad saga in) 1 Ki. 11:2; Pr 18:24. Here are the uses of **dabaq** in Deuteronomy, some in a context similar to the present passage (clinging to God) and some with negative implications (Cling to Him and be blessed or disobey Him and He will make pestilence and disease cling to them).

Deuteronomy 10:20; "You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and **cling** to Him, and you shall swear by His name.

Deuteronomy 11:22 "For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and **hold fast** to Him, Dt 11:23 then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you.

Deuteronomy 13:4 "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and **cling to Him**.

Deuteronomy 13:17 "Nothing from that which is put under the ban **shall cling to** your hand (as it did with Achan - Josh 7:20, 21-26), in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers,

Deuteronomy 28:21 "The LORD will make the pestilence **cling to** you until He has consumed you from the land where you are entering to possess it.

Deuteronomy 28:60 "He will bring back on you all the diseases of Egypt of which you were afraid, and they **will cling to** you.

Deuteronomy 30:20 by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by **holding fast to Him**; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

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### **Facts of the Matter - Newell Hillis** - Devotional from February 7: **Clinging To The Lord Your God**

" You are to cling to the Lord your God." – These were Joshua's parting words to wayward Israel, just before his death. ( Joshua 23:8)

**CLING:** " To hold fast to something, as by grasping, sticking, embracing, or winding around". As a wet raincoat would CLING to your back. As a person on the verge of death would CLING to life. "To remain attached in thought or practice". " To follow close after, pursue hard; to resist separation".

Jesus put it this way: " If anyone wants to follow in my footsteps, he must give up all right to himself... and **keep close behind me.**" (Luke 9:23a+ – Phillips)

**CLINGING conveys the sense of desperation: That there is no other viable option**

**QUESTION: ARE YOU CLINGING TO CHRIST? Or to:**

- Your bank account?
- Your reputation?
- Your capabilities?

**SELF SUFFICIENCY** is the arrogant assumption that I can go it alone... without God. **CLINGING** is the humble acknowledgment that I must be intimately connected to God for life to make sense and to be worth living. In Joshua's admonition to CLING to God he gives this warning:

" If you ever go back and CLING to the rest of these nations (i.e. the world and its values)... (they) shall be to you as: A snare and a trap... A whip on your sides... Thorns in your eyes... until you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you." (Joshua 23:12)

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Are you CLINGING to Christ?
2. Or do you have it so together that you can go it alone?
3. If so, are you willing to pay the price of independence?

**Deuteronomy 4:5 "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it.**

- Dt 4:1 Pr 22:19,20 Mt 28:20 Ac 20:27 1Co 11:28 15:3 1Th 4:1,2 Heb 3:5

- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## MOSES AGAIN EMPHASIZES DOERS WILL BE BLESSED

**See** - This is a command to get the hearer's (reader's) attention. Moses had taught and now the people were to obey.

**I have taught** (instructed) (03925) (**lamad**) means to give information which calls for a proper response with regular action, implying acceptance of, or submission to the information taught. The [Lxx](#) translates **lamad** with an interesting verb **deiknuo** which means to make known the character or significance of something by visual, auditory, gestural, or linguistic means and can have the nuance of to teach something to someone (as in Acts 10:28+ Peter says "God has **shown** me".)

**Statutes and judgments** - This combination occurs 4 times in this chapter (Dt 4:1, 5, 8, 14), so clearly God wants to impress upon His people the importance of His Word of truth and life. And don't miss the fact that what Moses taught was the pure Word of God, a good pattern for all God's teachers to imitate. Are you a teacher of the Word? Are you studying the pure milk of the Word or are you studying books by men about the Word? There is a huge difference!

**Taught..do** - Once again Moses emphasizes that it is the doer of the law who will be blessed not those who just hear (James 1:22-24-[note](#)). James affirms this axiomatic truth...

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25-[note](#))

**Just as the LORD my God commanded me** - Moses obeyed God's command to teach. Moses asserts that he is teaching with divine authority. All of God's teachers should do no less!

**That you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it.** - The land was promised to Abram in a covenant but God's promises still need to be possessed. And they are possessed by faith and obedience -- trust and obey for there is no other way to be happy in Jesus than to trust and obey. The unconditional covenant did not negate Israel's personal responsibility. As **Alexander Maclaren** said "**Faith** is the hand that grasps. It is the means of communication, it is the channel through which the grace which is the life, or, rather, I should say, the life which is the grace, comes to us. It is the open door by which the angel of God comes in with his gifts. It is like the petals of the flowers, opening when the sunshine kisses them, and, by opening, laying bare the depths of their calyxes to be illuminated and coloured, and made to grow by the sunshine which itself has opened them, and without the presence of which, within the cup, there would have been neither life nor beauty. So faith is the basis of everything; the first shoot from which all the others ascend. (Read full sermon on [1Thessalonians 1:3](#))

On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I have given (past tense - not will give but have given = it is that sure and certain!) this land, From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite."(Ge 15:18-21-note)

**Entering to possess it** - Possession of the promises is a **key truth** in Deuteronomy 4 - Dt 4:1, 5, 14, 22, 26, 47

Too many Christians use the "dip and skip" method of Christian living.

-- Maxwell

**John Maxwell** - Forty-two times in the Bible we read that the blessings of God are contingent on our obedience. One of the many examples is Psalm 25:10. "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, / To such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." Too many Christians use the "**dip and skip**" method of Christian living. They **dip** into His promises and **skip** His commands. This type of living did not please God in the day of Moses and it does not please Him now.. ([Preacher's Commentary](#))

### REPETITION OF TIMELESS PRINCIPLE IN Dt 4:1 –

1. GOD'S WORD –
2. OBEDIENCE –
3. POSSESSION of the Promises.

**Wiersbe** writes that God's wisdom (Dt 4:6) "was the guarantee of their success in taking possession of the Promised Land (Deut. 4:5). When you read the Book of Joshua, you discover that God had the campaign all worked out and Joshua simply had to discern God's will and obey it. The two times Joshua didn't seek God's wisdom, the nation experienced humiliating failure (Josh. 7; Josh 9).

## Words To Live By

Read: Deuteronomy 4:1-9 | Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments . . . that you should act according to them. —Deuteronomy 4:5

For many years I've maintained a file folder labeled "Speaking." It has become thick with articles, quotations, and illustrations that might be useful. Recently I went through it to discard things that are out of date. I found it difficult to throw away many of the items, not because I haven't used them in a talk but because I haven't put them into practice. I closed the folder thinking, "These aren't words to talk about; these are words to live by."

After 40 years in the desert, Moses addressed the people poised to enter the Promised Land: "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you" (Deut. 4:1). Moses' repeated theme (Dt 4:1,2,5,6,9) is that God's commandments are to be kept. He said it well, "Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments . . . that you should act according to them" (Dt 4:5).

It is so easy to talk about doing more than we actually do and to speak about truth we're not living by. We can become bloated with words, yet starved for reality, forgetting that all of God's commands flow from His heart of love for us.

Help us, Lord, not to be just hearers of the Word;  
help us to be doers as well. Teach us to be honest  
with ourselves about who we really are. We want  
to walk in Your ways and to guide others to You.

The strength of our actions should match the strength of our words.

**INSIGHT:** Far from being a burden, the commands God gave to the Israelites were life-giving. They outlined a life lived in response to His love. In today's text, Moses reminded the Israelites that the commands were for their wisdom and understanding (Dt 4:6). The result of living by the words of the Lord would be that the nations around them would recognize the one true God (Dt 4:7-8).

By David McCasland ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

**Deuteronomy 4:6 "So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'**

- **this is your:** Job 28:28 Ps 19:7 Ps 111:10 119:98-100 Pr 1:7 14:8 Jer 8:9 2Ti 3:15 Jas 3:13
- **Surely:** 1Ki 4:34 10:6-9 Ps 119:99 Da 1:20 4:9 5:11-16 Zec 8:20-23 Mal 3:12
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passages:

Ps 111:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of **wisdom**; A good **understanding** have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever.

Pr 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of **wisdom**, And the knowledge of the Holy One is **understanding**.

James 3:13+ Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show by his good behavior his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

Isaiah 49:6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Acts 13:47+ "For so the Lord has commanded us, **I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.**"

**Comment** - Quoting Isa 42:6, Paul showed that he clearly understood God's intention for the Jewish nation to be a light to the Gentiles. Instead of quoting his own commission to the Gentiles given to him on the road to Damascus, he chose to quote God's commission of all Jews as found in the Old Testament.



## ISRAEL WAS TO BE A WITNESS OF GOD'S WISDOM

If Israel obeyed the covenant stipulations what would result is that their wisdom and understanding would be apparent to the pagan world! The same principle applies to us as believers, for our obedience will give us a Spirit enabled, Word centered wisdom and understanding that the pagan world does not have (and cannot even understand, but which might be attractive to some of the pagans living in the futility of their godless wisdom).

**Keep and do** - (keep = [shamar](#); Lxx = [phulasso](#) = guard, protect, watch over) Again we see the reiteration of the need to guard the truth and walk the talk (so to speak). One is reminded of Paul's last words to his young disciple Timothy "**Guard** ([phulasso](#) in the [aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) through the Holy Spirit Who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you." (2 Ti 1:14+) Not only would Israel's obedience assure God's blessing on their endeavor to possess the land, but His good hand of blessing on them would be like a megaphone shouting to the pagans "Our God the only true and living God, the omnipotent One, a truth that stands in dramatic contrast to your impotent, dead, deceptive idols." Is this the message your life "sounds forth" before the pagans in your circle? (cf 1 Th 1:8+, 2 Cor 2:14-16).

Jesus said "If you **know** these things, you are blessed if you **do** them." (John 13:17) How would the nations know the statutes and judgments unless they saw them lived out. It was true then and it is true today -- the pagans need to see authentic Christianity, but sadly, much of the professing church in America is so intermingled and entangled with the ways of the world that the world cannot see any distinction between their conduct and our conduct. This is tragic. If there are (as some suggest) up to 25% of American which are evangelical then why is there no significant impact on our culture? I think we know the answer! (See Are You Entangled?) As **Robert Neighbour** asks "What use is a pure creed when it is environed with bad conduct? Some of us live so carelessly that no one will pay attention to what we say." (Ibid) Jesus said "On the contrary, blessed are those who **hear** the word of God, and **observe** it." (Luke 11:28) Hearing and knowing God's Word **MUST** be shown to a skeptical, cynical world to be real by Spirit enabled doing and observing!

**That is your wisdom and your understanding** - "That will testify of your wise understanding." (NET) What is Moses saying? He is saying that to **keep** and **do** the statutes and judgments is a visual picture (if you will) to others of God's wisdom and understanding.

One of the ultimate purposes of God's wisdom is salvation

and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to **give you the wisdom** that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Ti 3:15+)

Contrast the world's wisdom -

For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS";(1 Cor 3:19+)

**POSB** Israel would "bear a strong testimony and witness to their neighbors. The law of God is full of wisdom and understanding. Any person who studies God's law clearly sees the wisdom lying behind the law, the impact the law would have upon human behavior. Any people who would adopt and obey the Ten Commandments would be declared a great nation, a wise and understanding people. This was exactly what God was declaring to the Israelites: **if they obeyed His law, they would bear a strong testimony and witness before the world.** The world would declare that they were a **great nation, a wise and understanding people.** Note that Israel's greatness was not to lie in military strength nor economic wealth; their greatness would lie in the great laws that governed their nation, even the law of God itself, in particular the Ten Commandments. ([Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Deuteronomy](#))

**Brian Bell** - Just obey and the other nations will think you're smart! 1. Don't be smart be obedient. And through your obedience He will give you wisdom & understanding.

**Eugene Merrill** comments that "the very essence of **wisdom** is conformity with the will of God. Even the pagan nations—by whom wisdom was prized and highly sought after—would see in Israel's covenant provisions a wisdom of a higher order, one to be eagerly emulated. This, of course, was part of the attraction of Israel by which they were to become a means of blessing the whole earth (cf. 1 Kgs 10:4, 7, 23–24). (Ibid)

**Wiersbe** - God's Word is the revelation of God's **wisdom**, and we need to know and follow His **wisdom** if our lives are to please and glorify Him. The world's wisdom is foolishness with God (1 Cor. 3:19), and those who follow it will be disappointed. In the Old Testament, the word "wisdom" has to do with character rather than human intelligence and describes the right use of knowledge. "Wisdom means being skillful and successful in one's relationships and responsibilities, observing and following the Creator's principles of order in the moral universe," says Dr. Roy Zuck. Practicing God's wisdom means you don't just make a living, you make



a life. ([Be Equipped](#))

**In the sight of the peoples** - Israel was "on mission" from God to the nations.

**THOUGHT** The pagans are always watching the people of God. They were watching Israel and they are watching Christ followers today. Does your life proclaim divine "statutes" to a godless culture? Those of us who possess "spiritual light" are to be light transmitters! As believers, we are to let our actions speak louder than our words. Our "Gospel" life should open doors of opportunity for our lips to speak the Gospel (cp 1Pe 3:15+). But first we must "speak" the Gospel with our lives so that it will validate the Gospel we speak with our lips! What is the "Gospel" your life is proclaiming to all you encounter?

**MacArthur** - Israel's obedience to God's law would provide a testimony to the world that God was near to His people and that His laws were righteous. One purpose of the law was to make Israel morally and spiritually unique among all the nations and, therefore, draw those nations to the true and living God. They were from their beginnings to be a witness nation. **Though they failed and have been temporarily set aside, the prophets revealed that in the future kingdom of Messiah they will be a nation of faithful witnesses** (cf. Isa 45:14; Zec 8:23). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Nelson Study Bible** - By living in obedience to God, Israel would become a countercultural force by its manner of life, government, and society (see Rom. 12:2). God's blessings on Israel would cause the nations to seek to learn about Him.

## YOU ARE LIKE A MOON WHO REFLECTS THE SON

**Who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'** - Israel's obedience to God's righteous standard would set them apart from the unrighteous standards and actions of the pagan nations and would give Israel a platform to proclaim the glory of their great God. Believers today have no less of a mandate for as Jesus said...

**"Let** your light **shine** ([aorist imperative](#) - command to do this now! God's commandments always come pre-packaged with His enablements, His indwelling and enabling Holy Spirit) before men in such a way (CRUCIAL QUALIFIER - we need to "get out of the way" so) that they may see your good works (YES THEY SEE THE WORKS, BUT THEY DON'T SEE US. THEY SEE SOMETHING SUPERNATURAL NOT NATURAL, NOT READILY EXPLICABLE), and glorify (GIVE A PROPER OPINION OF THE INVISIBLE GOD VIA OUR VISIBLE SUPERNATURAL WORKS) your Father who is in heaven. (Mt 5:16-[note](#)).

**MacIntosh** "Israel was to be a light to the nations (see Isa. 49:6), and part of its luminescence would become apparent through its own faithfulness to God's laws." ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

**R C Sproul** on **in the sight of the peoples** - Righteous living would have an evangelistic effect, because, as the nations admired the law and sought to find out more about it, they would be led to the God who gave the law (Dt. 4:6–8).

**Wiersbe** - People who live according to God's wisdom can't help but demonstrate to those around them that God is real and that following His wisdom brings blessing. Everything about Israel's religion was so far superior to that of the surrounding nations that the unbelieving pagans couldn't help but be impressed: the presence of God in Israel's sanctuary, the divine laws governing their life, the guidance of God, and the absence of cruelty and impurity. The tragedy is that Israel got so accustomed to these blessings that they began to imitate their neighbors and lost their witness. ([Be Equipped](#))

Israel was blessed to be a blessing to the nations of the world, Moses recording God's promise

And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And **in you all the families of the earth will be blessed**. Genesis 12:3+

**NLT Study Bible** - **Wisdom** is linked to obedience—obeying the Lord is the essence of wisdom (see Dt 10:12-13; Prov 1:7; 9:10; 15:33). If God's people were **wise and prudent** enough to keep the Lord's perfect covenant, all the world would marvel.

**Neighbour** - God's Laws and Statutes are altogether righteous. They are more than that. They are marvelously illuminating. Do we not remember how David said that he was wiser than all the ancients because he kept all God's Statutes? Do ye not know that the entrance of His Word gives light? It also gives understanding to the simple. David said, also, "Through Thy precepts I get understanding." Here is another statement, "Thou through Thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies." Have you ever wondered how Moses, Joshua, Daniel, and others, have stood out in such marvelous colors of wisdom and understanding? It was because God's Statutes were their meditation and their joy.

Israel was meant to be a light to the nations...

Isaiah 49:6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make **You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**"

### His Lamps

God's lamps we are,  
To shine where He shall say:  
And lamps are not for sunny rooms,  
Nor for the light of day;  
But for the dark places of the earth,  
Where shame and wrong and crime have birth,  
Or for the murky twilight grey,  
Where wandering sheep have gone astray,  
Or where the Lamp of Faith grows dim,  
And souls are groping after Him.  
And as sometimes a flame we find,  
Clear-shining through the night,  
So dark we do not see the lamp  
But only see the Light,  
So may we shine, God's love the flame,  
That men may glorify His Name  
--Annie Johnson Flint

**Deuteronomy 4:7 "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him?"**

- **what great nation:** Nu 23:9,21 2Sa 7:23 Isa 43:4
- **has a god so near to it :** De 5:26 Ps 46:1 Ps 73:28 Ps 145:18 Ps 148:14 Isa 55:6 Eph 2:12-22 Jas 4:8
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A GREAT GOD MAKES A GREAT NATION

**For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it-** This is what the pagans would see when Israel obeyed the Word of God. Another implication is that the Israelites always had access to the LORD God in prayer. In fact for 40 years they had a constant reminder of His presence in their midst symbolized by the tabernacle in the center of the camp, and by the pillar of cloud ([Shekinah glory cloud](#)) over the Tabernacle (Ex 40:34-38+) and later the ark of the covenant after they entered the land.

**Merrill** comments that "Admiration of Israel's spiritual sagacity (Dt 4:6) should naturally elicit the admiration of God, the source of such wisdom, especially in his [immanence](#) or relatedness (ED: THAT IS GOD'S INTIMACY WITH HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL SOMETHING PAGANS DO NOT EXPERIENCE WITH THEIR SO-CALLED "GODS"!)." ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))

**The LORD our God whenever we call on Him-** That is **whenever** we pray to Him. This speaks of Israel's intimacy with Yahweh which should be an encouragement to obedience.

**THOUGHT-** Do you call on Him regularly? Jeremiah 33:3+ should encourage you for the prophet quotes Jehovah's invitation to "Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and mighty things, which you do not know."

The psalmist attest to **a God so near**

Psalm 148:14 And He has lifted up a horn for His people, Praise for all His godly ones; Even for the sons of Israel, **a people near to Him.** Praise the LORD!

Psalm 73:28 But as for me, **the nearness of God is my good;** I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Your works.

**POSB** - Israel will have the presence and the power of God when they pray. Obedience will result in answered prayer. A personal, intimate relationship will be established with God. If a person kept the Ten Commandments, the presence and power of God would

be with him, looking after and taking care of him. ([Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Deuteronomy](#)) (cf Jn 15:7, 1 Jn 3:22, contrast Ps 66:18, Isa 59:2)

As **MacIntosh** points out "Pagan peoples engaged in the appeasement of remote and angry deities, but Yahweh was **near** to His people whenever they prayed to Him." ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

**Constable** (quoting Eliade) writes "The theology of the nations at large taught that the supreme gods were remote and inaccessible. Though they were perceived in highly anthropomorphic terms (see [Anthropomorphic Language](#)), they also were thought to be so busy and preoccupied with their own affairs that they could scarcely take notice of their devotees except when they needed them." ([Deuteronomy 4](#))

**Bible Background Commentary** - In Mesopotamia the laws were presented to the god of justice (Shamash) by the king as evidence that he was a just king. The king had been given the authority to make laws by the gods, the guardians of cosmic law. Law was seen as something inherent in the universe, and laws were supposed to somehow reflect that impersonal cosmic law. In Israelite thinking, however, law emanated from the character of God and he was seen as the source of the laws. Moses was not the lawmaker, Yahweh was. By proclaiming laws, the Lord is therefore revealing himself in an act that distinguished him from the other gods of the ancient world. This is the "nearness" that the text remarks on. ([The IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

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## Right Beside You

The Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him. Deuteronomy 4:7

Today's Scripture & Insight: Deuteronomy 4:5–8

Each day at a post office in Jerusalem, workers sort through piles of undeliverable letters in an attempt to guide each to its recipient. Many end up in a specially marked box labeled "Letters to God."

About a thousand such letters reach Jerusalem each year, addressed simply to God or Jesus. Puzzled by what to do with them, one worker began taking the letters to Jerusalem's Western Wall to have them placed between its stone blocks with other written prayers. Most of the letters ask for a job, a spouse, or good health. Some request forgiveness, others just offer thanks. One man asked God if his deceased wife could appear in his dreams because he longed to see her again. Each sender believed God would listen, if only He could be reached.

The Israelites learned much as they journeyed through the wilderness. One lesson was that their God wasn't like the other gods known at the time—distant, deaf, geographically bound, reached only by lengthy pilgrimage or international mail. No, "the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him" (Deuteronomy 4:7). What other people could claim that? This was revolutionary news!

God doesn't live in Jerusalem. He's close by us, wherever we are. Some still need to discover this radical truth. If only each of those letters could be sent the reply: God is right beside you. Just talk to Him. By: Sheridan Voysey

God's accessibility to us is a profound gift. How can you avoid taking it for granted? Who in your life needs to know of God's readiness to hear their prayer?

God, You are bigger than the universe yet closer than a breath. Thank You for being so interested in us, attending to every prayer.

## Deuteronomy 4:8 "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"

- Dt 10:12,13 Ps 19:7-11 119:86,96,127,128 147:19,20 Ro 7:12-14 2Ti 3:16,17
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passages:

Romans 7:12-14+ So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. 13Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful. 14For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.

1 Timothy 1:8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,

Psalm 19:9-11+ The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them Your servant is warned; In keeping them there is great reward.

Psalm 147:19-20+ He declares His words to Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances to Israel. 20 He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!

## THE PRIVILEGE OF HIS PRECEPTS

**Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today** - Other nations had law but God's law was different because it was **righteous**, a word that means at its root means conformed to an ethical or moral standard, in this case the standard being the perfect, holy God. Thus the pagan nations would see that Israel's law was distinctive, for its source was the Lord and His character was righteous. The fact that the **statutes and judgments** were **righteous** would encourage Israel to seek to obey them.

**POSB** - You will learn to cherish the law of God—all because the law was righteous and fair and just (Deut. 4:8). The law of God established fair and just treatment between neighbors. By obeying the law, every person will be treated fairly and justly. No partiality or favoritism will be shown; no lawlessness or violence will be tolerated; no unjust weight or treatment will be allowed. ([Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Deuteronomy](#))

**Ryrie** - The Mosaic Law was given to the nation Israel not to be a burden but to distinguish that people from all others by making her wise, great, and pleasing to a holy God. As a rule of life for God's people, the Mosaic code has been replaced for the Christian by the law of Christ (see 2 Co 3:11), though some of the specific commands of the old code are reincorporated as requirements of the new code (cf. Ro 13:9). As part of the inspired Scripture, the old as well as the new code is profitable to people of all times (cf. 1 Tim. 1:8-10; 2 Tim. 3:16). (Ryrie Study Bible)

**Henry Morris** - Many forms of government have been employed by tribes and nations throughout history, but the theocracy described by God through Moses would have been the best if it had ever been truly implemented. Our modern libertarian emphasis in government relations might recoil at the strictness and severity of God's law, as set forth in the Mosaic writings. It would however, truly have assured national righteousness, justice and happiness as no other system has ever done. (Defender's Study Bible)

**Righteous** (adjective) ([06662](#)) (**saddiq** from **sadaq** = to be just or righteous) is an adjective with describes one as upright or just. The Mesopotamian term comes from a river reed which was used as a construction tool to judge the horizontal straightness of walls and fences. God chose the term to be used metaphorically of His own nature. God' righteousness is the standard or ruler by which we are measured. He is the "straight edge" (ruler) by which all things are evaluated. This idea basically connotes conformity to an ethical or moral standard. And so **saddiq** pertains to a person being in accordance with a proper (right) standard (God's standard being the ultimate arbiter of what defines righteousness acceptable to God).

**Bible Background Commentary** - The laws are presented here as an evidence of wisdom and righteousness that will distinguish Israel from the other nations. In a number of the collections of laws known from the ancient Near East there is a prologue and epilogue explaining that the collection of laws will demonstrate how wise and just the king is. Likewise Solomon's wisdom was evidenced by how he was able to make just decrees and rulings. The kings of the ancient Near East usually counted on their collections of laws to convince the gods that they were wise and just rulers. Here the Lord is revealing his own wisdom and justice to his people and the world. ([The IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

**Gary Hall** - In the ancient Near East the kings bragged about giving out righteous laws, for the king was wise, not the people. But in Israel the people were wise and the law was **righteous** because it came from God, not the king. Righteousness assumed a natural standard to which all behavior and laws were to conform. For Israel that standard was God, and his standard was the highest of all (Ps 119:7,62,144,160,172). (College Press NIV Commentary – Deuteronomy)

**Henry Morris** - The critics of the early nineteenth century argued that the Mosaic law was far too advanced in moral structure and complexity to have been composed in Moses' time, and therefore dated from many centuries later. The discovery of other law codes, however, such as the Code of Hammurabi, the Hittite Code, and the Assyrian Code, all dating from the same period of history as the Mosaic Code, has made such views obsolete. (The Defender's Study Bible)

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### Common Standards

Read: Deuteronomy 4:1-10 | What great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments? —Deuteronomy 4:8

In the frenzied early days of the Internet, Web developers were making up their own rules. The result was confusion. Among the problems was that what looked good on one computer was unreadable on another. This caused developers to refer to the Internet as the wild, wild Web, an allusion to the days of the wild, wild West in the US when law and order were pretty much nonexistent. To bring order out of chaos, Web developers started calling for others to agree on common standards.

Their plea reminds us of why it was important for the Israelites to have laws to live by when they left Egypt (Deut. 4:1). Without them, there would be anarchy. With them, however, they would have a system that was so superior that it would demonstrate to other nations the greatness of their God (Dt 4:8).

Today, to bring order out of the chaos of our sinful, selfish world, believers submit to the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2), who Himself is the fulfillment of the law (Matt. 5:17). When we submit to the standard established by Christ and love others as God loves us, we will live in peace with one another and thus provide a witness to the world of how great God is.

Let us go forth, as called of God, Redeemed by Jesus' precious blood; His love to show, His life to live, His message speak, His mercy give. —Whittle

The world will know by our love for God and others that He is great.

By Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### R C Sproul - The Just Society (Deut 4:8)

As Moses brought to a close the historical prologue section of the covenant renewal, he reminded the people how they had heard the law of God on Mount Sinai. This provided a transition into the next section of the covenant, the actual law itself (Deut. 4:44–26:19). Moses told the people that, if they obeyed the law, they would be esteemed wise among all the nations. Righteous living would have an evangelistic effect, because, as the nations admired the law and sought to find out more about it, they would be led to the God who gave the law (Deut. 4:6–8). Surely the most valuable study of jurisprudence that could be undertaken today would be a close examination of the Old Testament law. We should study it diligently to gain societal wisdom. Unfortunately, we often have a false view of the Old Testament law. Too many people believe it too severe. A study of God's law however, reveals quite the opposite, for just as God is love, so his law is the expression of his love. Something is wrong with the church in our culture today. How do you think the average church member would react to learn that a study of Old Testament law was being undertaken to gain wisdom for modern life and society? Most Christians would shrink in horror at the idea. People say the law is cruel and bloodthirsty (implying that the God who gave it also must be cruel and bloodthirsty), but the Bible says the national laws God gave Israel were wise, righteous, and just. Part of the reason people react against Old Testament law is because they are misinformed. They have never read and studied the social laws in Exodus 21–23, Leviticus 19, and Deuteronomy 5–26. But another reason people react against the law is that they are estranged from God. They want a God of "love," as they define love. They don't want the biblical God of love, whose love is inseparable from justice, holiness, and righteousness. As Bible-believing Christians, however, we need only ask ourselves one question: Has ever any government had a law as just and righteous as the law God gave to Israel?

**Coram Deo** - The answer to that last question is obvious, and its implications are clear: If we want to have a just society we need to learn the wisdom and principles of the law of God in its social and national dimensions. We may have to change our thinking about some things. Consider state or federal laws that might need to change to conform to the principles of God's law and character. ( Before the Face of God)

**Deuteronomy 4:9** "Only **give heed** to yourself and **keep** your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

- **keep your soul diligently:** De 4:15,23 Pr 3:1,3 4:20-23 Lu 8:18 Heb 2:3 Jas 2:22
- **so that you do not forget:** Jos 1:18 Ps 119:11 Pr 3:1-3,21 4:4 7:1 Heb 2:1 Rev 3:3
- **make them known to your sons and your grandsons:** De 6:7 11:19 29:29 31:19 Ge 18:19 Ex 13:8,9,14-16 Jos 4:6,7,21 Ps 34:11-16 71:18 78:3-8 Pr 1:8 4:1-13 23:26 Isa 38:19 Eph 6:4
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Amplified** (2015) Only **pay attention** and **watch** yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your grandchildren [impressing these things on their mind and penetrating their heart with these

truths]

**Amplified** (Classic) Only **take heed**, and **guard** your life diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your [mind and] heart all the days of your life. Teach them to your children and your children's children—

**NET** Again, however, pay very careful attention, lest you forget the things you have seen and disregard them for the rest of your life; instead teach them to your children and grandchildren.

**NLT** But watch out! Be careful never to forget what you yourself have seen. Do not let these memories escape from your mind as long as you live! And be sure to pass them on to your children and grandchildren.

#### Related Passage:

Proverbs 4:23+ **Watch** over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 19:16 He who keeps the commandment keeps his soul, But he who is careless of conduct will die.

## WATCH YOURSELVES AND SET A GUARD OVER YOUR SOUL

**Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently** - (But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously = *Torah Translation*; you must be on your guard and watch your step = *Berkeley*) The same Hebrew verb **shamar** is used for both commands and the word **diligently** means exceedingly (**meod**) and is translated **might** in Dt 6:5. Moses clearly is making a strong emphasis on taking great care to not forget what they had seen lest it escape from their memory. There is an urgency in these commands and note both are focused on self (yourself and soul). We cannot watch out or be careful for others but we must do so for ourselves. The purpose is so we do not forget the things of God.

**Give heed** (**shamar**) in Deuteronomy - Deut. 2:4; Deut. 4:2; Deut. 4:6; Deut. 4:9; Deut. 4:15; Deut. 4:23; Deut. 4:40; Deut. 5:1; Deut. 5:10; Deut. 5:12; Deut. 5:29; Deut. 6:2; Deut. 6:3; Deut. 6:12; Deut. 6:17; Deut. 6:25; Deut. 7:8; Deut. 7:9; Deut. 7:11; Deut. 7:12; Deut. 8:1; Deut. 8:2; Deut. 8:6; Deut. 8:11; Deut. 10:13; Deut. 11:1; Deut. 11:8; Deut. 11:16; Deut. 11:22; Deut. 11:32; Deut. 12:1; Deut. 12:13; Deut. 12:19; Deut. 12:28; Deut. 12:30; Deut. 12:32; Deut. 13:4; Deut. 13:18; Deut. 15:9; Deut. 16:1; Deut. 16:12; Deut. 17:10; Deut. 19:9; Deut. 23:9; Deut. 23:23; Deut. 24:8; Deut. 26:16; Deut. 26:17; Deut. 26:18; Deut. 27:1; Deut. 28:1; Deut. 28:9; Deut. 28:45; Deut. 28:58; Deut. 29:9; Deut. 30:10; Deut. 30:16; Deut. 31:12; Deut. 33:9;

The adverb **only** (Heb = *raq*) conveys a restrictive force (prohibiting further negotiation - the following commands are not negotiable is the idea!) upon other elements in a passage.

**To yourself** - Give heed is in the Niphal which gives the verb a reflexive sense, the subject carries out the action and participates in the effects of the action. It makes this command more personal -- every person in Israel ("yourself") must give heed.

**Earl S Kalland** emphasizes that the original Hebrew phrasing "constitutes a very strong and urgent appeal. ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 3: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel](#))

The **Lxx** translates **give heed** with **prosecho** (**present imperative** = keep holding your mind on yourself) and **keep** with **phulasso** (**aorist imperative** - Guard your soul like a watchman). Why did Israel (and all believers) need to **heed** and **keep**? First, because the danger of drifting was continual. Second, if we drift we forget what the Lord has done in our past. This is not a problem of our not being mentally alert but a problem of being spiritually lax. Our fleshly tendency is to forget and to "spiritually drift" from God.

Paul gave a similar command to young Timothy in 1 Ti 4:16...

**Take heed** (**present imperative**) unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; **continue** (**present imperative**) in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. (KJV)

**Pay close attention** (**present imperative**) to yourself and to your teaching; **persevere** (**present imperative**) in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you. (NAS)

**The New Oxford Annotated Bible**: The paired injunctions not to **forget** the powerful experience of God's actions and to educate **your children**, so that the past becomes "present" also to them, represent a prominent aim of Deuteronomy: to overcome the distance of the past and maintain it as a source of identity (Dt 4:23, 25; 6:2, 7, 20-25; 8:11; 9:7; 31:13; 32:18).

It is notable that the essence of this warning is repeated again in Dt 4:15 and Dt 4:23 with addition of the command to "watch yourselves." Why? Because Israel (and we) need to hear this warning **over and over** to make sure we understand how important it



is to obey.

The charge to **watch, beware or be careful** is repeatedly sounded in Deuteronomy thus emphasizing our (wayward heart's) need for continual spiritual alertness lest we suffer the consequences of not being alert! Here are some of the parallel passages:

Deuteronomy 4:15 "So **watch** yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire,

Deuteronomy 4:23; "So **watch** yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you.

Deuteronomy 6:3 "O Israel, you should listen and **be careful** to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Deuteronomy 6:12 then **watch** yourself, lest you forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Deuteronomy 8:1 "All the commandments that I am commanding you today you shall **be careful** to do, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your forefathers.

Deuteronomy 8:11 "**Beware** that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today;

Deuteronomy 11:16 "**Beware** that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them.

Deuteronomy 11:32 and you shall **be careful** to do all the statutes and the judgments which I am setting before you today.

Deuteronomy 12:13 "**Be careful** that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every cultic place you see,

Deuteronomy 12:19 "**Be careful** that you do not forsake the Levite as long as you live in your land.

Deuteronomy 12:28 "**Be careful** to listen to all these words which I command you, in order that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 12:30 **beware** that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?'

Deuteronomy 12:32 "Whatever I command you, you shall **be careful** to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it.

Deuteronomy 15:9 "**Beware** that there is no base thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and your eye is hostile toward your poor brother, and you give him nothing; then he may cry to the LORD against you, and it will be a sin in you.

Deuteronomy 16:12 "And you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt, and you shall **be careful** to observe these statutes.

Deuteronomy 17:10 "And you shall do according to the terms of the verdict which they declare to you from that place which the LORD chooses; and you shall **be careful** to observe according to all that they teach you.

Deuteronomy 23:23 "You shall **be careful** to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised.

Deuteronomy 24:8 "**Be careful** against an infection of leprosy, that you diligently observe and do according to all that the Levitical priests teach you; as I have commanded them, so you shall be careful to do.

Deuteronomy 26:16 "This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore **be careful** to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 31:12 "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, in order that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and **be careful** to observe all the words of this law.



**Jon Courson** explains that "You've been blessed, but be careful because you can become so familiar with the Word that you no longer take heed to it. You've been given such a wonderful treasure in the Scriptures, but watch out lest it no longer be a priority for you, a passion within you to know the heart of God, the Word of the Lord."

Teaching is imperative, not optional, for the people of God. "Remembering" what God has done is of primary importance. Where teaching is neglected, spiritual amnesia sets in which leads to "apathy", which leads to "apostasy" which leads to "anarchy" (Pr 29:18, Amos 8:11, 12). Just as Satan (and our flesh) prepares pitfalls for the weak and floundering Christian, he also works against those who are growing and have good training. Pride, for example, can affect you, Self-sufficiency can replace your submissive dependence on the Holy Spirit. A critical spirit may develop as you see other Christians who function less skillfully and with less discipline than you. Now as always you need to have a learner's heart. You must be open to suggestions, criticism and instruction from others. It is not our natural inclination to be this way.

**Churchill** once said, "I like to learn, but I do not like to be taught." But to be continually learning and benefiting from others-without being resentful-is a sign of maturity.

## **THE GREAT DANGER TO GUARD AGAINST FORGETFULNESS**

**So that** - [term of purpose or result](#) - This is a critical purpose of giving heed to one's self and keeping one's soul which counters the natural human tendency toward forgetfulness (of God and His ways).

**ESV Study Bible** - Like all fallen humans, Israel's natural tendency is to ignore, **forget**, or disobey. Their failure in the past 40 years adds testimony to this warning.

Merrill - A nation that forgets its past is doomed to repeat its failures, and a people that fails to pass on its righteous principles has no right to expect a continuation of those principles in the life and experience of its descendants. ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))

**You do not forget** - Forgetfulness is the "default" mode of our fallen flesh (cf Joseph's situation - Ge 40:14, 23). This tendency to gravitate away from God is why we need to be daily reminded of God's goodness, grace and greatness by diving into His Word (Lk 4:4+, Mt 4:4+). **Forgetting** is a Key Word in Deuteronomy. In Dt 4:23 the warning is "not forget the covenant." In Dt 4:31 the assurance is that God will "not forget the covenant."

Deuteronomy 6:12 then **watch** (command) yourself, that you **do not forget** the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Deuteronomy 8:11 "**Beware** (command) that you **do not forget** the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today;

Deuteronomy 8:14 (A prophetic warning) then (When? See Dt 8:13) your heart will become proud and **you will forget** the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Deuteronomy 8:19 (A strong warning against idolatry) "It shall come about **if you ever forget** the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish.

Deuteronomy 9:7 "**Remember, do not forget** how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

Deuteronomy 25:19 "Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; **you must not forget**.

**THOUGHT:** Note that all of these warnings regarding forgetfulness apply to believers today! So what is our best preventative. Two things come to mind: (1) Daily [Quiet Time](#) and (2) [Memorization of His Word](#). How are you doing? If you are not disciplining yourself for godliness (1 Ti 4:7-8-note), then the alternative is gravitation toward ungodliness. There is no such thing as spiritual neutrality! We are all either progressing toward God or away from God. The choice is ours to make!

(Although this passage does not mention forgetfulness, it is relevant to this topic)

Deuteronomy 12:30 **beware** that you are not ensnared to follow them (pagan practices -- doing what the culture is doing saying "Well everyone is watching that show, even my pastors, so surely I can watch it!" Look

out! You are deceiving yourself!), after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?'

**Thompson** writes "The appeal to Israel 'to remember and not to forget' God's saving acts is made again and again in Deuteronomy, for they were the foundation to Israel's claim to be God's people and the basis on which God challenged Israel to enter into his covenant. The same principle applies in the New Testament, where the acts of God in Christ are absolutely fundamental for the church and lie at the basis of God's appeal to men to enter into a new relationship with himself. They too are to be taught to the children of believers." (Ibid)

**Forget** (07911)([shakach/shakah](#)) "indicates that something has been lost to memory, or a period of time has softened the memory of it...It is an especially important word with respect to God and His people: God never forgets them (Isa. 49:15); they are not to forget their God, His covenant, and His deeds (Dt. 4:9, 23, 31; 6:12; 8:11; 9:7; 25:19; 32:18). But God does not pass over, wink at, or forget the wickedness of His people (Lam. 5:20; Amos 8:7). Those who forget God wither away (Job 8:13), as well as all the nations who forget Him (**Ed**: O God send a revival to America! Amen). The helpless must not be left alone (Ps. 10:12). God's Law must not be forgotten (Ps. 119:61, 83, 93). Wisdom's teachings are not to be forgotten (Pr 3:1; 4:5)." ([Warren Baker - The Complete Word Study Dictionary: OT](#))

**Forgetting** God is just one step (misstep) away from **forsaking** God!  
(Dt 12:19, 28:20, 31:6, 16, 17)

**Grant** - How quickly Israel had forgotten the sight of the destruction of the Egyptian armies at the Red Sea. A few days after that triumph they were murmuring against Moses (Ex 15:24+), and this they continued to do (Ex 16:2; Ex 17:3). After the confident assertion, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex 19:8), it was not long before they made a golden calf with the declaration, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Ex 32:1). Their words betrayed what was in their hearts. There was no recognition of the God who had delivered them. It was "this Moses" who had taken them out of Egypt and then abandoned them in the wilderness. ([What the Bible Teaches](#))

**MacIntosh** has an interesting thought - When Israel later began a large-scale defection to the idolatry of Canaan, it was not because they had forgotten Yahweh's name, still less because they no longer felt he deserved their devotion. He had simply receded from the consciousness at the moment that their defection began. Once it was under way, they were so distracted with the passing pleasures of sin that they did not give him a moment's thought. Godly living is a process that must be renewed each day. ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

**Criswell** - Though the Hebrews had never seen God, they had seen what He had done for them—the "seeing" of religious experience. (Believer's Study Bible)

**David Guzik** - One of Satan's great strategies is to **make us remember what we should forget** and **forget what we should remember**. If we don't remember our past sins and rebellions against God, we can easily repeat them, falling into the same sinful patterns and traps: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands **take heed** ([present imperative](#)) = continually, speaks of direction not perfection, requires continual reliance of enablement by the Spirit) lest he fall." (1 Corinthians 10:12+) ([Notes](#))

**And they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life**- Forgetting is equated with departing from the heart. This is an interesting thought for it suggests we can have head knowledge that fails to affect our heart. Stated another way the forgetfulness Moses warns about is not a mental problem as much as it is a spiritual problem! The **heart** is your control center and if God's Truth departs from your heart, be careful for you are on a potentially perilous path. The Lxx translates **depart** ([sur](#) - turn away, turn aside) with the Greek verb [aphistemi](#) which means fall away, even to become apostate. The Septuagint is a command to not let them depart from your heart.

**MacIntosh** comments that "When Israel later began a large-scale defection to the idolatry of Canaan, it was not because they had forgotten Yahweh's name, still less because they no longer felt he deserved their devotion. He had simply receded from the consciousness at the moment that their defection began. Once it was under way, they were so distracted with the passing pleasures of sin (**ED**: cf Moses in Heb 11:25+) that they did not give Him a moment's thought. Godly living is a process that must be renewed each day." ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

Notice the phrase **all the days of your life** which clearly indicates we need to remain vigilant to maintain ongoing reflection on the awesome nature of God every day of our life, for the rest of our life! (cf Dt 4:10; 6:2; 12:1; 16:3). There is **no furlough** when it comes to guarding our heart! This is another motivation for all God's children to seek to have a daily quiet time in the pure milk of God's Word of Truth (not books or devotionals about the Word as good as they might be). We don't want to be legalistic about a

daily quiet time, because it is not about "perfection" ("I never miss a day!") but about "direction." If your "quiet time" is too "quiet" below are a couple of resources that might help to jump start your morning time with God.

- [Quiet Time: 7 Minutes With God](#)
- [Thoughts on the Quiet Time.](#)

**Heart** (03824)(**lebab**) sometimes refers to a literal heart (Ex 28:29, 1Sa 25:37, 2Ki 9:24), but most often is used figurative to refer to what I term the "control center" of our being (Dt 4:11 is an exception). Think of an Air Traffic Controller and how dysfunctional, even destructive it is when the controllers fail to function as they should.

**Heart** is a **keyword** in Deuteronomy - 49x in 45v - Deut. 1:28; Deut. 2:30; Deut. 4:9; Deut. 4:11; Deut. 4:29; Deut. 4:39; Deut. 5:29; Deut. 6:5; Deut. 6:6; Deut. 7:17; Deut. 8:2; Deut. 8:5; Deut. 8:14; Deut. 8:17; Deut. 9:4; Deut. 9:5; Deut. 10:12; Deut. 10:16; Deut. 11:13; Deut. 11:16; Deut. 11:18; Deut. 13:3; Deut. 14:26; Deut. 15:7; Deut. 15:9; Deut. 15:10; Deut. 17:17; Deut. 17:20; Deut. 18:21; Deut. 20:8; Deut. 24:15; Deut. 26:16; Deut. 28:28; Deut. 28:47; Deut. 28:65; Deut. 28:67; Deut. 29:4; Deut. 29:18; Deut. 29:19; Deut. 30:2; Deut. 30:6; Deut. 30:10; Deut. 30:14; Deut. 30:17; Deut. 32:46

**Utley on heart** - In Hebrew psychology the emotions are centered in the bowels. The heart is the center of the intellect (especially memory) and personality. God is saying, "Do not forget the law!" (See [Special Topic on Heart](#) below)

**But** - Whenever you encounter a [term of contrast](#), pause to ask "What is being contrasted?" In this context instead of drifting from the Word, disciple with the Word! Consider the "**5P's**" - Pause to **P**onder the **P**assage then **P**actice it in the **P**ower of the Spirit

**Criswell** - Not only were the people themselves to remember what God had done, but also they were to teach this to their children. Preparation of the next generation is one of the themes of Deuteronomy (cf. Deut 6:7). The covenant made with Abraham and passed on through the great patriarchs was sufficient, but its efficiency depended upon obedience on the part of the people. (Believer's Study Bible)

**Make them known to your sons and your grandsons** - Parents are responsible for their children's spiritual education (Dt 4:9-10) Not only are parents responsible, but so are grandparents! Tell them the great and mighty deeds of the LORD which you have seen, those events in your life that can only be credited to a work of God! This responsibility to pass on one's experiences with God is repeated several times in Deuteronomy.

Deuteronomy 6:7 "You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 6:20 "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the LORD our God commanded you?'

Deuteronomy 11:19 "You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Deuteronomy 31:13 "Their children, who have not known, will hear and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

Deuteronomy 32:46 he said to them, "Take to your heart all the words with which I am warning you today, which you shall command your sons to observe carefully, even all the words of this law.

**THOUGHT** - Dear parent/grandparent how are you doing? Are you passing on spiritual truth to those who follow you? If you have children or grandchildren let me encourage you pause a moment and listen to **Steve Green's** stirring, convicting ballad "[Find Us Faithful?](#)" Every time I listen to it, I am convicted as a dad of 4 and granddad of 8, that I have been given a privilege and a responsibility by God to pass on the baton. Indeed, my prayer for all us parents is "May all come behind us find us faithful; may the fire of our devotion light their way; may the footprints that we leave, lead them to believe and the life we live inspire them to obey. In the Name of Jesus. Amen"

**Utley on Make them known to your sons** - This is a recurrent theme in Deuteronomy (cf. Dt 4:10; 6:7, 20–25; 11:19; 31:13; 32:46; and note Ex. 10:2; 12:26; Ex 13:8, 14). If believers do not teach their children about God, **they are failures as parents** (biblically speaking)! Faith runs through families (cf. 5:10; 7:9)! (**THOUGHT** - ARE YOU TEACHING THE BIBLE TO YOUR CHILDREN?)

**Cawdray** - As Alexander the Great attained to have such a puissant army, whereby he conquered the world, by having children born

and brought up in his camp, whereby they became so well acquainted and exercised with weapons from their swaddling clothes that they looked for no other wealth or country but to fight; even so, if thou wouldst have thy children either to do great matters, or to live honestly by their own virtuous endeavors, thou must acquaint them with painstaking in their youth, and so bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

**Thomas Fuller** - "Let Mothers drop instruction into their children with their milke, and teach them to pray when they beginne to prattle." [spelling as in original, milke beginne]

**Life Application Study Bible** makes a good point that telling one's children "helped parents remember God's faithfulness and provided the means for passing on from one generation to the next the stories recounting God's great acts. It is easy to forget the wonderful ways God has worked in the lives of His people. But you can remember God's great acts of faithfulness by telling your children, friends, or associates what you have seen Him do."

**Robert Neighbour** - The only way that the faith is to be transmitted to succeeding generations is by its faithful proclamation in word and deed to each child of the present generation. Remember that the faith that was in Timothy was first in his grandmother and his mother (2 Ti 1:5-[note](#), 2 Ti 3:14-15-[note](#)). (Wells of Living Water – Volume 3: Numbers 9 thru First Samuel 3)

**Warren Wiersbe** - Surrounded as they were by heathen people, Israel was always one generation short of losing God's blessing, and so it is with the church today (2 Tim. 2:2). If we don't teach our children about God and His Word, the day will come when a generation will arise that doesn't know the Lord, which is what eventually happened to Israel (Judges 2:7-15). "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8, nkjv) How can believing parents best influence their children to trust the Lord and live by His wisdom? Moses gives the adults three suggestions: be examples to your children; don't let God's Word slip from your minds and hearts; remember what the Lord has done for you in the past and share these experiences with your children. Every Jewish child in Moses' day was supposed to know the story of the Exodus (Deut. 6:20-25; Ex. 10:1-2; 12:24-28; 13:1-16), and in the future, every child was supposed to know the significance of Israel's crossing the Jordan River (Josh. 4:1-7, 21-24). It's the responsibility of the older generation to instruct the younger generation and be an example and an encouragement to them (Deut. 6:1-3; 32:44-47; Pss. 34:11; 44:1; 71:17-19; 78:1-8; Titus 2:1-8). Parents must not turn this responsibility over to Sunday School teachers or Bible club leaders, as important as those ministries are; for dedicated Christian parents are God's first choice as teachers of their children. The sins of parents—especially spiritual neglect and bad example—may be imitated by the children and produce sad consequences later in life (Dt. 5:8-10; Ex. 20:5-6; Nu 14:17-18). ([Be Equipped](#))

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**Bob Utley's [Special Topic - Heart](#)** - The Greek term [kardia](#) is used in the Septuagint and NT to reflect the Hebrew term *lēb*. It is used in several ways (cf. Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 403–404):

1. the center of physical life, a metaphor for the person (cf. Acts 14:17; 2 Cor. 3:2–3; James 5:5)
2. the center of spiritual (moral) life
  - God knows the heart (cf. Luke 16:15; Rom. 8:27; 1 Cor. 14:25; 1 Thess. 2:4; Rev. 2:23)
  - used of mankind's spiritual life (cf. Matt. 15:18–19; 18:35; Rom. 6:17; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:22)
3. the center of the thought life (i.e., intellect, cf. Matt. 13:15; 24:48; Acts 7:23; 16:14; 28:27; Rom. 1:21; 10:6; 16:18; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18; 4:18; James 1:26; 2 Pet. 1:19; Rev. 18:7; heart is synonymous with mind in 2 Cor. 3:14–15 and Phil. 4:7)
4. the center of the volition (i.e., will, cf. Acts 5:4; 11:23; 1 Cor. 4:5; 7:37; 2 Cor. 9:7)
5. the center of the emotions (cf. Matt. 5:28; Acts 2:26, 37; 7:54; 21:13; Rom. 1:24; 2 Cor. 2:4; 7:3; Eph. 6:22; Phil. 1:7)
6. unique place of the Spirit's activity (cf. Rom. 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6 [i.e., Christ in our hearts, Eph. 3:17])
7. The heart is a metaphorical way of referring to the entire person (cf. Matt. 22:37, quoting Deut. 6:5). The thoughts, motives, and actions attributed to the heart fully reveal the type of individual. The OT has some striking usages of the terms:
  - Gen. 6:6; 8:21, "God was grieved to His heart" (also notice Hosea 11:8–9)
  - Deut. 4:29; 6:5, "with all your heart and all your soul"
  - Deut. 10:16, "uncircumcised heart" and Rom. 2:29
  - Ezek. 18:31–32, "a new heart"
  - Ezek. 36:26, "a new heart" vs. "a heart of stone"

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Tom Haggai touches a sensitive nerve when he suggests: "Life would be more pleasant if we could forget our troubles as easily as

we forget our blessings."

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**A Day Wasted?** - In *The Effective Father*, Gordon MacDonald wrote: "It is said of Boswell, the famous biographer of Samuel Johnson, that he often referred to a special day in his childhood when his father took him fishing. The day was fixed in his mind, and he often reflected upon many things his father had taught him in the course of their fishing experience together.

"After having heard of that particular excursion so often, it occurred to someone much later to check the journal that Boswell's father kept and determine what had been said about the fishing trip from the parental perspective. Turning to that date, the reader found only one sentence entered: 'Gone fishing today with my son; a day wasted.' "

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When I was at Buckingham Palace last year, Prince Philip asked me, "What can we do about crime here in England?" I replied, "Send more children to Sunday school."

He thought I was joking. But I pointed out a study by sociologist Christie Davies, which found that in the first half of the 1800s, British society was marked by high levels of crime and violence, which dropped dramatically in the late 1800s and early 1900s. What changed an entire nation's national character?

Throughout that period, attendance at Sunday schools rose steadily until, by 1888, a full 75 percent of children in England were enrolled. Since then, attendance has fallen off to one-third its peak level, with a corresponding increase in crime and disorder. If we fill the Sunday schools, we can change hearts and restore society.

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**Forgetting** - Three sisters, ages ninety-two, ninety-four, and ninety-six, lived together. One night the ninety-six-year-old drew a bath. She put one foot in and then paused. "Was I getting in the tub or out?" she yelled.

The ninety-four-year-old hollered back, "I don't know; I'll come and see." She started up the stairs but stopped on the first step, shouting, "Was I going up or coming down?"

The ninety-two-year-old was sitting at the kitchen table having tea, listening to her sisters. She shook her head and said, "I sure hope I never get that forgetful," and knocked on wood for good measure. Then she yelled, "I'll come up and help both of you as soon as I see who's at the door."

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**My Legs Didn't** - One day my three-year-old granddaughter, Beverly, was playing with her toys. Her mother, who was folding laundry across the room, noticed Beverly's shirt was dirty and needed to be changed," After calling two times with no response her mother gave her the full three-name call: "Beverly Elizabeth Provost, did you hear me?" Beverly answered, "Yes, Mama. My ears did, but my legs didn't."

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### **Scripture Comes in Handy**

Michelle attempts to teach her children the "please and thank you" of polite society. She also helps them memorize Scripture. One day, her 4-year-old son, John, was tussling and wrestling with his mom in a good-natured contest. Losing the battle, he wanted to be released. "What's the magic word?" encouraged Michelle, ready to comply with his wish. "Let my people go... Exodus 8:1" came the reply.

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**Statistics on Church Attendance** - A study once disclosed that if both Mom and Dad attend church regularly, 72% of their children remain faithful. If only Dad, 55% remain faithful. If only Mom, 15%. If neither attended regularly, only 6% remain faithful. The statistics speak for themselves—**the example of parents and adults is more important than all the efforts of the church and Sunday school.**

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**Know Your History** - There is an aphorism: He who forgets his own history is condemned to repeat it. If we don't know our own history, we will simply have to endure all the same mistakes, sacrifices, and absurdities all over again. —Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

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A little girl followed her father in newly planted clumps of St. Augustine grass. She stepped exactly where he stepped. She said, "Daddy, if you don't get mud on your feet, I won't get any mud on me!"

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One of the most moving poems in the English language is Rudyard Kipling's "Recessional." It was written for the second jubilee of Queen Victoria. Everyone expected a poem of praise for the Queen. Instead, Kipling called the nation to remember things forgotten. He wrote, "Lo all our pomp of yesterday is one with Nineveh and Tyre." In every stanza the same refrain is repeated, "Lest we forget! Lest we forget!"

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In raising children, all you can do is your best. Take care of the possible and leave the impossible to God. (AND TELL THEM WHEN HE DOES THE IMPOSSIBLE!)

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Statistic: Reading to Children

Percentage of fathers who say they read to their kids: 61.

Percentage of kids who agree with this figure: 28.

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The German dramatist G. E. Lessing (1729-1781) wrote, "Yesterday I loved, today I suffer, tomorrow I die, but I still think fondly today and tomorrow of yesterday."

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When the intelligence gathering ship, the U.S.S. Pueblo, was captured by North Korea, the crew was imprisoned. The North Koreans would not permit their captives to have Bibles. The men of the Pueblo put together a Bible from memory. Each recalled what verses he could. They wrote them on bits and pieces of paper. If your only Bible consisted of the verses you can remember, how much would you have?

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### A Good Word from John Bunyan - Forgetful Green - Pilgrim's Progress

**Samuel:** Now, as they went on, Samuel said to Mr. Great-Heart, Sir, I perceive that in this valley my father and Apollyon had their battle; but whereabouts was the fight? for I perceive this valley is large.

**Mr. Great-Heart:** Your father had the battle with Apollyon at a place yonder before us, in a narrow passage, just beyond **Forgetful Green**. And indeed that place is the most dangerous place in all these parts. For if at any time pilgrims meet with any brunt, **it is when they forget what favours they have received, and how unworthy they are of them.** This is the place also where others have been hard put to it. But more of the place when we are come to it; for I persuade myself that to this day there remains either some sign of the battle, or some monument to testify that such a battle there was fought. ([The Fifth Stage](#))

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### C. E. Tisdall - [The spiritual benefits of retrospection](#)

It is to be feared that to many (so habitually unmindful are they of what they have been permitted to witness, both in the wider sphere of public and the more contracted one of private life) experiences are somewhat like the stern (the rear part of a ship) lights of a ship, which serve to illumine only that part of the water over which she has just sailed. It is far otherwise when, through the agency of supernatural grace communicated in answer to the prayer of faith, experience is sanctified, for it then becomes strongly conducive to spiritual health. If it be the province of Hope to paint the bow of promise upon the cloud, it is that of Memory to gather rays of the light of direction from the past, and to cause them to shine upon the path of religious duty, which is beset by so many temptations that every encouragement is needed, lest the travelers "faint because of the way." Now, in directing your attention to some of the functions which a religiously disciplined memory performs in connection with the life of faith—

I. I would first ask you to observe that it is one of its offices to teach Christians to keep a more accurate register of their mercies than they are naturally disposed to do; to train them in resistance of the dangerous tendency to dwell with circumstantial precision, and often even selfish exaggeration, upon their trials. It is Memory's office to embalm their blessings, to preserve them from the decay to which time and the influence of an evil world would otherwise subject them.

II. Memory has also functions of momentous importance in connection with the true repentance to which we are called by Him who alone can enable us to "sorrow after a godly sort." It is the office of a rightly trained memory to remove the concealments by which we seek to hide our delinquencies from ourselves, to dwell with emphasis upon passages in our history from referring to which we would naturally desire to escape, to keep the unwelcome but wholesome truth of our unworthiness before us that we may really feel our need of pardon and earnestly seek it where alone it can be found. In cases, too (which it is to be feared are very far from uncommon), in which spiritual declension has begun—cases of "backsliding in heart"—the memory of the past has much to effect in connection with the restoration of those who have so declined. The contrast which memory would lead them to institute between the comparatively happy time when they kept in the way of duty and the troublous time when they forsook it has been one which, rendered practically influential by the operation of the Spirit of Grace, has led them back to tread that path in which only rest can be found for the soul. Scripture is replete with testimony to the value of the past in preparing us for doing God's will in that portion of the future which may be granted us, teaching those who are to take our places when we are called away by the inevitable summons to be in their time ready to "serve their generation according to that will." To this consideration, namely, that of the responsibility which rests upon us to do all that lies in our power to bring up "the rising generation" in the service of Christ, we are led by the words of the final clause, "Teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons." If those addressed in the words of the text could refer their children to the



past for lessons of spiritual wisdom, they who are living under the new and better covenant cannot fail to find counsels in the retrospect of their experience to impress upon youthful minds. They may tell how they have seen evidences, how the fond hopes of religious parents can be blighted by the ungodliness of children, how they have seen health shattered by intemperance, brilliant prospects clouded by yielding to the allurements of a world at enmity with God! They may tell how they have witnessed exemplifications of the truth of those words quoted by an inspired Christian teacher from an heathen author, "Evil communications corrupt good manners." Or they may turn from painful to pleasurable reminiscences. They may tell of instances of the beneficial results of "the nurture and admonition" in which children were brought up to live for Christ. They may speak of homes lightened by the joy imparted to souls influenced by the grace of God. (Biblical Illustrator – Old Testament)

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## Story Stewards

Read: Deuteronomy 4:1-9

Take heed . . . lest you forget the things your eyes have seen . . . . And teach them to your children and your grandchildren. —Deuteronomy 4:9

Many people take great care to make sure their resources are used well after they die. They set up trusts, write wills, and establish foundations to guarantee that their assets will continue to be used for a good purpose after their life on earth is done. We call this good stewardship.

Equally important, however, is being good stewards of our life story. God commanded the Israelites not only to teach their children His laws but also to make sure they knew their family history. It was the responsibility of parents and grandparents to make sure their children knew the stories of how God had worked in their behalf (Deut. 4:1-14).

God has given each of us a unique story. His plan for our lives is individualized. Do others know what you believe and why? Do they know the story of how you came to faith and how God has worked in your life to strengthen your faith? Do they know how God has shown Himself faithful and has helped you through doubts and disappointments?

The faithfulness of God is a story that we have the privilege to pass on. Record it in some way and share it. Be a good steward of the story that God is telling through you.

How great, O God, Your acts of love!  
Your saving deeds would now proclaim  
That generations yet to come  
May set their hope in Your great name. —D. DeHaan

A life lived for God leaves a lasting legacy.

INSIGHT: In today's passage, Moses reminded the people of Israel that—unlike the nations around them—they were the only ones privileged to have intimate fellowship with God (v.7) and the only nation given God's law (v.8). If they faithfully obeyed His law, God would make them a great and wise people (vv.6,8-9). By Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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## A Hunger for God

Read: Deuteronomy 4:9-14

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. 2 Timothy 3:16

A-poe-la-pi is an elderly member of the Akha, a hill tribe people who live on the mountain ranges of Yunnan Province in China. As we visited him on a recent missions trip, A-poe-la-pi told us that he had missed the weekly Bible study because of heavy rains. So he implored us, "Could you share God's Word with me?"

A-poe-la-pi can't read, so the weekly gathering is vital to him. As we read the Bible to him, he listened intently. His earnest attitude reminded me that when we listen carefully to the story of the inspired Scriptures, we honor the Lord.

In Deuteronomy 4, Moses urged the Israelites to listen carefully to the rules and regulations he was teaching them (Dt 4:1). He reminded them that the source and inspiration behind the teaching was none other than God Himself, who had spoken to them "out of the fire" of Sinai (Dt 4:12). Moses said, "He declared to you his covenant . . . which he commanded you to follow" (Dt 4:13).

May A-poe-la-pi's hunger to hear God's Word encourage a similar desire in us. As the apostle Paul reminds us in 2 Timothy 3:15-



16, the inspired Scriptures have been given for our good and growth—to make us wise in the salvation and ways of God.

Lord, give us a hunger to hear and understand the truth of Your Word. Help us show Your love to others by faithfully living out its instructions for us.

To know Christ, the Living Word, is to love the Bible, the written Word.

INSIGHT: Verses 11-12 of today's passage refer to one of the most critical events in Israel's history—the giving of the law at Mount Sinai. After the Israelites left Egypt, where they had been enslaved for over 400 years and then rescued by God's intervention, they were led by Moses through the Red Sea and made their way to Mount Sinai. There the people met the God who had rescued them, and His power was displayed in remarkable ways (Ex. 19:16-19). This meeting between God and His chosen people was the first step in turning this large extended family (the twelve tribes of Israel) into a nation with laws—also provided by their rescuing God. - Poh Fang Chia ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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### David Jeremiah - INVESTING IN OUR CHILDREN

DEUTERONOMY 4:9 Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen.... And teach them to your children and your grandchildren.

The values that we instill in our children are the values by which they will raise their families. And so the life of our investment is not just one generation, it is generation after generation. The key issue is not only what our children are now, but what they will become after internalizing the values we have passed on to them. And the clearest evidence of what they have internalized is what they pass on to their own children. A parent's influence on his child will have a long-term, lasting impact. Just as a seed takes time to germinate in the ground and bring forth fruit, so our teaching and influence on our children takes time to bear fruit as well. But it will bear fruit, for better or for worse. The parent who wonders if the stress and strain of raising children—going against the flow of the culture, teaching them biblical values, spending the necessary time and money to give them the best opportunities—is really worth it need only to remember the Law of Deposit and Return. That which is sown today will bear fruit in the years to come. (Sanctuary)

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### John Barry - April 3: Your Inner Self

Deuteronomy 4:1–49; 2 Corinthians 1:17–24; Psalm 32:1–11

“Did I leave the burner on?” “Did I lock the door?” “I feel like I'm forgetting something.”

**Forgetfulness** is a syndrome we all experience at one time or another. Many of our forgetful moments end up being minor inconveniences. But there is one thing we should never forget: **God and His instructions.** As the Israelites prepared to enter the promised land, Moses offered them a string of commandments, including this: “Take care for yourself and watch your inner self closely, so that you do not forget the things that your eyes have seen, so that they do not slip from your mind all the days of your life” (Deut 4:9). In watching ourselves closely, we remember what we're meant to do and who we're meant to be. And this isn't just a value added to our lives and our relationship with God. Moses went on: “And you shall make [the commandments] known to your children and to your grandchildren” (Deut 4:9). Moses knew that God had chosen the Israelites to carry out His work in the world. He also knew that forgetting God's commandments could jeopardize that work and even their very lives. He tells them to be certain about who they are—to keep themselves in line with God. It's precisely this point that Paul emphasizes about God's plan in 2 Cor 1:17–24: God is about the resounding “yes.” Yes, God has affirmed us. Yes, God has chosen us. Yes, we are the receivers of His salvation. We are called—not some of us, but all of us. And in this we should rejoice, for we can claim, as the psalmist does, “I will confess concerning my transgressions to Yahweh, and you [Yahweh] took away the guilt of my sin” (Ps 32:5). The best way to make your “yes” be a yes and your “no” be a no is to align yourself with God's great calling upon your life. Commandments only get us so far; identity in Christ and the Spirit's work in us will take us where we need to go. What can you do to constantly remind yourself of God's will, your identity in Him, and His work in your life? ([Connect the Testaments](#))

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### G Campbell Morgan - Lest thou forget.—Deut. 4.9.

Having surveyed the history of the Divine guidance and governance of the people from Horeb to Beth-peor, Moses exhorted them to obedience. He based his appeal upon the greatness of their God, and the perfection of His law. He challenged them to put their God and His commandments into comparison with all others. He reminded them that their existence' and history as a nation were centred in a spiritual ideal. No visible form of God had been granted to them, even amid the solemn and majestic manifestations of Sinai. In the midst of this discourse he warned them, as indeed he did upon more than one occasion, not to forget. What a necessary warning this ever is! It is most strange how prone man is to forget. It is true that, while some things can never be actually forgotten, they nevertheless are constantly forgotten in the sense of being of any value. We forget the law of God, we forget the deliverances of God, we forget the disciplines of God, we forget the very love of God, in so far as memory serves us as an inspiration to true

conduct, to trust, to amended life, to the loyalty which love demands. Such forgetfulness is not an aberration of intellect; it is a definite wrong done to God, a sin against Him. Memory is a non-moral function of the soul. If it is either to help or hinder it must be trained and used. When it is employed to keep certain great facts in the mind, so that they may influence the will, it is one of the greatest forces for good. (Life Applications from Every Chapter of the Bible)

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### Going Nowhere Fast

Read: Deuteronomy 4:1-10 | Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen.—Deuteronomy 4:9

I walked as fast as possible. Worked up quite a sweat, in fact. After about a mile, I broke into a jog and then ran as hard as I could. Finally, after about 25 minutes, I stopped. My heart was pounding. My shirt was soaked. But I had gone nowhere. I had just done 2.5 miles on the treadmill.

After I cooled off, I sat down with my Bible. I was following a reading schedule and the selection for the day was from the book of Numbers. I read some of it slowly and some faster, but I felt at times that I wasn't getting anywhere—like I was back on the treadmill. Censuses were taken. The long journey was recapped. The tribes were listed and relisted. The next day, I moved into Deuteronomy. More wanderings. More about the Israelites and their land.

But when I got to chapter 4, I was told why all that recapping was important. Moses told the people not to “forget the things your eyes have seen . . . . Teach them to your children” (4:9). The previous reading was not about Israel going nowhere fast. It was about training, about a lesson in using God's past workings as instruction for future godly living.

All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God. So even when it may seem unimportant—keep reading. Sometimes we have to be patient to realize its full purpose --By Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Search the Scriptures' precious store—  
As a miner digs for ore,  
Search, and you will surely find  
Treasures to enrich the mind.  
—Anon.

God speaks to us through His Word; take time to listen.

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### Don't Forget!

Read: Deuteronomy 4:15-27 | Take heed to yourself, . . . lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. —Deuteronomy 4:9

You would think the people of ancient Israel would never forget God. Not only had God brought them through the Red Sea, but each day in the wilderness He fed them with [manna](#). He saw to it that their clothes didn't wear out (Dt 8:4). And He brought them into a land filled with lavish resources.

**Everywhere they looked, the Israelites saw God at work** Yet they turned to other gods and forgot the One who had led them and cared for them. That memory loss proved fatal.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Russian philosopher, said,

“More than half a century ago, while I was still a child, I recall hearing a number of older people offer the following explanation for the great disasters that had befallen Russia: ‘Men have forgotten God. That's why all this has happened.’ Since then I have spent well-nigh 50 years working on the history of our revolution. . . . If I were asked today to formulate as concisely as possible the main cause of the ruinous revolution that swallowed up some 60 million of our people, I could not put it more accurately than to repeat: ‘Men have forgotten God. That's why all this has happened.’”

Must that happen to us today? Let's pray that it doesn't. Let's take time to remember what God has done for us and then give Him the love and devotion He deserves. By Haddon Robinson ([Our Daily Bread. Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

As we all enjoy God's blessings,  
Oh, may we not forget

Our Lord, from whom all good gifts come—  
In Him our needs are met.  
—Fitzhugh

**The first step on the road to ruin is to forget God.**

**Deuteronomy 4:10** *"Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'*

- **the day:** De 5:2 Ex 19:9,16 20:18 Heb 12:18,19,25
- **fear me:** De 5:29 Ex 20:20 1Sa 12:24 Ec 12:13 Lu 1:50 Rev 19:5
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Amplified** (Classic) Especially how on the day that you stood before the Lord your God in Horeb, the Lord said to me, Gather the people together to Me and I will make them hear My words, that they may learn [reverently] to fear Me all the days they live upon the earth and that they may teach their children.

**Amplified** (2015) *especially* the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb (Mount Sinai), when the Lord said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me and I will let them hear My words, so that they may learn to fear Me [with awe-filled reverence and profound respect] all the days they live on the land, and so that they may teach their children.'

**NET** You stood before the LORD your God at Horeb and he said to me, "Assemble the people before me so that I can tell them my commands. Then they will learn to revere me all the days they live in the land, and they will instruct their children."

**NLT** Never forget the day when you stood before the Lord your God at Mount Sinai, where he told me, 'Summon the people before me, and I will personally instruct them. Then they will learn to fear me as long as they live, and they will teach their children to fear me also.'

**CSB** The day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people before Me, and I will let them hear My words, so that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth and may instruct their children.'

**ESV** how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'

#### **Related Passages:**

Ps 34:11 Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

Ps 86:11 Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.

### **A DAY WORTH REMEMBERING!**

*Remember* - Added by the translators. NLT has "never forget."

**MacIntosh** - Merely abhorring the tendency to forgetfulness (Dt 4:9), however, is not enough. If spiritual reality is to be passed from one generation to the next, it must be positively remembered. To underscore this point, Moses called on the nation to remember the day they stood before the Lord at Mount Sinai. ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

NIV Study Bible - The divine call to Israel to remember the Lord's past redemptive acts—especially how he delivered them from slavery in Egypt—is a common theme in Deuteronomy (5:15; 7:18; 8:2, 18; 9:7, 27; 11:2; 15:15; 16:3, 12; 24:9, 18, 22; 25:17) and is summarized in 32:7: "Remember the days of old."

**Utley** - Remembering God's great acts of deliverance (i.e., exodus) is a recurrent theme (cf. Dt 5:15; 7:18; 8:2, 18; 9:7, 27; 11:2; 15:15; 16:3, 12; 24:9, 18, 22; 25:17; 32:7).

**The day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb - [Mount Horeb](#) = [Mount Sinai](#)** - This was one of the supreme experiences that were to be passed on to the next generation, **the day** when God revealed Himself to Israel on the mountain.

Exodus 19:8-9+ All the people answered together and said, "**All that the LORD has spoken we will do!**" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. The LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that the people may hear when I speak with you and may also believe in you forever." Then Moses told the words of the people to the LORD.

**Grant** - One would wonder that the significance of such a day could ever be forgotten, but certainly, although the historical facts might have been remembered, their real significance would be lost to the majority of the nation. Yet the seeds of this were seen to be present even on that day. Their declaration that they would do all that the Lord commanded revealed "sheer flippancy, betraying utter ignorance of the badness of the flesh and the holiness of the One with whom they had to do" ([What the Bible Teaches](#))

Exodus 19:16+ So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that **all the people who were in the camp trembled**.

**Grant** - When faced with the evidences of the mighty power and glory of the Lord they reacted in the way that men do when they encounter powerful forces beyond the capability of anyone to create or control. But what they saw was much more than that. It was a revelation of the fact that the power, majesty, and glory of the Lord are far beyond the ability of any individual to understand. ([What the Bible Teaches](#))

Exodus 19:20+ The LORD came down on Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain; and the LORD called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up.

Hebrews 12:18; 19+ For you (JEWS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT) have not come to a mountain that can be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, 19 and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which sound was such that those who heard begged that no further word be spoken to them.

**That I may let them hear My words** - (More literally "I will make them hear") **That** (so that) introduces purpose for their being assembled. In Dt 4:13 **My Words** is The Ten Commandments which is literally "the Ten Words." ("[decalogue](#)", cp Dt 5:22+) The purpose of assembling them was to **hear from God** which should be the goal of every church that assembles on Sunday. Not to hear the music, not even the pastor's eloquence and alliteration, etc, but to **hear from God!** That is every soul's greatest need! Dear pastor, it is sad if hear from you and fail to hear from God! The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **may let them hear** as a command "**Let them hear!**" Indeed, it is not a suggestion, not an optional "elective course" for God's children (then or now)! It is a must! And then Moses gives two reasons the hearing of God's words are so important (1) to learn to fear Him and (2) to teach the next generation.

## **FEAR OF THE LORD IS LEARNED**

**So (SO THAT - PURPOSE) they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth** - As noted the purpose of this self-revelation by Yahweh at Mt Sinai was two fold. The first purpose of the mountain appearing as a "consuming fire" was to generate a holy fear, a holy reverence for God. In Ex 20:20+ Moses said "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin." Moses' point was that Israel was to have a holy **fear**, but not a holy **terror** or **dread** of Yahweh. The second purpose of the [theophany](#) was that the eyewitnesses might pass on this awesome testimony to their children that they too might have a reverential awe of the great and mighty God.

Note that reverential **fear** of God should be part of our heart and mind every day of our life for the rest of our life. The modern church is in desperate need to have a revival of healthy, holy fear of the LORD! I have heard some believers say "We do not need to fear God today." In the sense of not fearing His wrath that is true (cf Ro 8:1+) but in terms of having a reverential awe of Him (or a fear that we might behave in a manner displeasing to Him) they are wrong.

**Learn** ([03925](#)) ([lamad](#)) primarily means to learn but in the Piel (intensive) stem it means to teach. **Lamad** conveys the idea of learning and teaching in the sense of educating and training. The first use of **lamad** in the OT is in Dt 4:1+ which emphasizes its importance (because Israel was being given instructions prior to entering the promised land). Biblical teaching seeks to guide people to follow the will of God, not by offering mere human opinions or suggestions but by bringing "the authoritative declaration of the Word of God. Most of the uses of lamad are in the book of Deuteronomy and the Psalms. **Lamad** can be used for training animals (Hos 10:11) where it refers metaphorically to Ephraim "a trained (lāmad) heifer."

**THOUGHT** - Notice also that reverential, awe inspiring fear of God does not come naturally but **must be learned**. Paul describes humanity's default mode - "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (Ro 3:18, cp Ps 14:3+, Ps 36:1, Ge 20:11). Solomon writes that men "did not choose the fear of the LORD." (Pr 1:2-+), indicating it does involve a personal choice and personal responsibility. The basic sinful condition of men and of their spiritual deadness is evidenced by the fact that, for the unsaved, there is no fear of God before their eyes. Fear of the LORD can be refused and calls for one to make a conscious choice, a seeking if you will (see Pr 2:4-5+).

**Grant** writes regarding the need for a holy fear that "To lose sight of this is not only a sign of a severely limited appreciation of God, it also results in a high opinion of self. A low appreciation of the greatness, holiness, power, and majesty of God brings about a low appreciation of sin. The fact that this is the day of grace, and that the Lord Jesus became a man, does not allow an unbecoming familiarity with Divine Persons. John, who had leaned on the breast of the Lord Jesus, fell at His feet as dead when he saw Him on the isle of Patmos (Rev 1:17+)." ([What the Bible Teaches](#))

In light of the importance of the **Fear of the LORD**, in the "second giving" of the Law preparatory to possessing their promised possessions, God repeatedly emphasized the need to **learn to fear the LORD** (THE PHRASE "**LEARN TO FEAR**" IS ONLY IN DEUTERONOMY)

Deuteronomy 14:23+ "You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, **so that you may learn** (Heb = [lamad](#); Lxx = [manthano](#)) **to fear the LORD your God always.**

Deuteronomy 17:19+ "It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, **that he may learn** (Heb = [lamad](#); Lxx = [manthano](#)) **to fear the LORD his God**, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes,

**Comment:** Notice that while fearing the LORD is a mindset (heart attitude), it affects one's footstep (so to speak). In other words fear of the LORD is intimately associated with obedience to the LORD (His will revealed in His Word). For example observe the opening description in what many think is the oldest book in the Bible "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, **fearing God**, and **turning away** (In Lxx [apecho](#) = present tense = continually choosing to turn away) from evil." (Job 1:1) In context, why did Job turn away from evil?

- "The **fear of the LORD** is to hate evil" (Pr 8:13)
- "The **fear of the LORD** prolongs life." (Pr 10:27)
- "The **fear of the LORD** is a fountain of life, That one may avoid the snares of death." (Pr 14:27) "And by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil." (Pr 16:6)
- "The **fear of the LORD** leads to life" (Pr 19:23)

Notice that even in the NT fear of the LORD is still described - "So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, **going on in the fear of the Lord** and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase." (Acts 9:31+)

Therefore, having these promises (WHAT PROMISES? 2 Cor 6:14-16), beloved, (EXHORTATION BASED ON PREVIOUS TRUTH) **let us cleanse** ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness **IN** (LOCATIVE OF SPHERE) the **fear of God**. (2 Cor 7:1+)

If ([FIRST CLASS CONDITIONAL](#) = SINCE = ASSUMED YOU DO THIS) you (present tense - continually) address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) yourselves **IN** (LOCATIVE OF SPHERE) **FEAR** during the time of your stay on earth (WHICH IS VERY SHORT BELOVED - James 4:14+); (1 Peter 1:17+)

**Shortness of our lives:** Job 7:6-7 Job 9:25, 26 Job 14:1-2 Ps 37:2 Ps 39:5-6 Ps 90:4-6, 9, 10 Ps 102:3, 11, Ps 103:15-16 Ps 144:4 Isa 38:12,13 Isa 40:6,7 Jas 1:10, 11 Jas 4:14 1Pe 1:24 2Ki 19:26 (THEREFORE - Redeem the Time!)

**Utley** on 1 Peter 1:17 - God will call into account not only those who have never known Him, but also those who claim to know Him (cf. 4:5, 17-18; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). Those to whom much is given, much is required (cf. Luke 12:48)! If we call Him Father, then we should reflect the family characteristic, as does the eldest Son! Our Father, the Holy One, is also an impartial judge (cf. Deut. 10:17; 2 Chr.

19:7; Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Gal. 2:6; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17). Human beings have a choice (cf. Deut. 30:15–20; Josh. 24:15; Ezek. 18:30–32) in how they will relate to God. He can be a loving Father if they trust in Christ (cf. John 1:12; Rom. 10:9–13) or He can be a holy judge if they rely on their own merits or performance of religious rites, rules, and procedures (cf. Matt. 25:31–46; Col. 2:20–23). Do you want mercy or justice?

And fear is even described in heaven "And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great." (Rev 19:5-±) In fact the last worldwide proclamation of the Gospel in Revelation 14:6-7-± is a call to the earth to "**Fear God, and give Him glory.**" So clearly a proper **fear of the LORD** is part of the Gospel!

Deuteronomy 31:12+ "Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and **learn** (Heb = [lamad](#); Lxx = [manthano](#)) **and fear the LORD** your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law.

Deuteronomy 31:13+ "Their children, who have not known, **will hear and learn** (Heb = [lamad](#); Lxx = [manthano](#)) **to fear the LORD** your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."

#### **Related Resource:**

- The Fear of the Lord

**Eugene Merrill** on fearing God - The most important thing for Israel to remember was the decisive moment when Yahweh made covenant with them at Horeb (or Sinai; see note on 1:2). This was decisive because in this experience Israel learned two important lessons: To fear God and to know his will (4:10). To fear God primarily communicates the notion of reverence and not stark terror, but here both ideas come into view. Instruction in the covenant would instill a proper regard for the awesomeness and holiness of God (lit., "I will make them hear... so that they will learn to fear me," 4:10), but the encounter at Sinai was itself a cause of overwhelming terror (4:11), a point clearly made in the original narrative (Exod 19:16). The awful display of celestial and terrestrial upheaval testified to both God's transcendence and his immanence (Barth 1991:120-122). ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))

**Thompson** on **fear of God** - It is God-given and enables a man to reverence God's person, to obey his commandments and to hate evil (Jer. 32:40; Heb. 5:7). It is the beginning of wisdom (Ps. 111:10), the secret of uprightness (Prov. 8:13), the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13). It is given as one of the characteristics of the Messiah (Isa. 11:2, 3). God's people in every age were urged to cultivate the fear of the Lord and to walk in it (Ps. 34:11; Jer. 2:19; Acts 9:31; 10:2; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:12). Gentile adherents of the synagogue were called 'God-fearers' (Acts 10:2; 13:16, 26). In Deuteronomy in particular the verb occurs at 4:10; 5:29; 6:2, 13; 8:6; 10:12, 20; 14:23; 17:19; 28:58; 31:12, 13, etc. (Ibid)

**That they may teach their children** (cp Dt 4:9 Make them known to your sons and your grandsons) -Remember at this time in history, Israel had no pocket Bibles of the Pentateuch and thus had to personally pass on these awesome experiences to the next generation. Israel was always only one generation from losing contact with the Word of God and apostasizing. It is no different today Christian parent - you must pass on the Word of Truth to your children and not depend on others to do it. Sunday Schools are fine but God gives the primary responsibility not to Sunday Schools but to the parents and we will be held responsible for this stewardship! Do you have any times during the week where you review the Word of God with your children? Do you have a "family altar?" A relatively simple method parents can participate in with their children (I wish I had done this more regularly) is memorization of verses together, making it a fun competition (grace not law) to spur each other on to love and good deeds.

- See also Al Troester's short discussion of a [Family Altar \(Bible Time\)](#) (including purpose, practical suggestions and methods).

**Allan M Harman** - The knowledge of God's covenant was to be transmitted from generation to generation. Later Israel was to sing that 'the things... we have heard and known, things our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done' (Ps. 78:3-4). (Focus on the Bible Commentary – Deuteronomy: The Commands of a Covenant God)

**J Vernon McGee** - The greatest undertaking of any nation is the education of the young. Probably the greatest failure of any nation is the failure in education. Look at America today and see the dismal failure we are making in this matter of education. Now I am not blaming the colleges and the schools. Do you know where the problem lies? It is right in the home. God tells these people, "I want you to teach your children and your grandchildren." The failure to teach is the failure of Mom and Dad in the home. This was the great responsibility which God placed upon every father and mother in Israel. Friend, if you are going to bring a child into this world, you are responsible for that child. Our problem today is not foreign affairs or national economy; our problem is the home. God will



hold divorced and preoccupied parents responsible for the vagrants of the world today who never knew the instruction and the love and the concern and the communication from parents. What a responsibility parenthood is! God makes this very clear to Israel. When that nation failed, it failed in the home, and God judged it. (Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee

**Eugene Merrill** rightly concludes that the "nation that forgets its past (**Ed**: O my, please revive America and set pulpits aflame across the land for They Name's sake. Amen) is doomed to repeat its failures, and a people that fails to pass on its righteous principles has no right to expect a continuation of those principles in the life and experience of its descendants. ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))

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### **Norman Geisler - When Critics Ask -**

DEUTERONOMY 4:10–15—Was the law given at Horeb or at Mt. Sinai?

PROBLEM: Exodus 19:11 affirms that Moses received the Law at "Mt. Sinai" (cf. v. 18). But here in Deuteronomy 4:10 it claims that Moses got it "in Horeb." Which was it?

SOLUTION: There are several possible explanations of this discrepancy. Some scholars believe Sinai may be the older and Horeb the later name for the same place. Others hold that Horeb may be the general name of the mountain range and Sinai the particular peak. Still others believe Sinai is the name of the entire group of mountains, while Horeb refers to one specific mountain. Or, the two names could be interchangeable. In any event, the biblical authors, many centuries closer to the original event than we are, saw no problem in using both names. Horeb is used 17 times and Mt. Sinai 21 times in the OT. Employing two different names is not uncommon. Mt. McKinley in Alaska, the official name of the highest peak in North America, is called Denali by native Americans and many others.

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### **God-Paved Memories**

Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me. Deuteronomy 4:10

Today's Scripture & Insight: Deuteronomy 4:3–10

When my grown son faced a difficult situation, I reminded him about God's constant care and provision during his dad's year of unemployment. I recounted the times God strengthened our family and gave us peace while my mom fought and lost her battle with leukemia. Highlighting the stories of God's faithfulness stitched into Scripture, I affirmed He was good at keeping His word. I led my son down our family's God-paved memory lane, reminding him about the ways He remained reliable through our valley and mountaintop moments. Whether we were struggling or celebrating, God's presence, love, and grace proved sufficient.

Although I'd like to claim this faith-strengthening strategy as my own, God designed the habit of sharing stories to inspire the future generations' belief in Him. As the Israelites remembered all they'd seen God do in the past, He placed cobblestones of confidence down their divinely paved memory lanes.

The Israelites had witnessed God holding true to His promises as they followed Him (Deuteronomy 4:3–6). He'd always heard and answered their prayers (v. 7). Rejoicing and reminiscing with the younger generations (v. 9), the Israelites shared the holy words breathed and preserved by the one true God (v. 10).

As we tell of our great God's majesty, mercy, and intimate love, our convictions and the faith of others can be strengthened by the confirmation of His enduring trustworthiness. By: Xochitl Dixon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Reflect & Pray

Who's invested in your spiritual growth by sharing what God has done in their lives? What creative ways can you share His faithfulness and love across generational lines?

Sovereign God, thank You for empowering me to walk with sure-footed faith that crosses generational lines.

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### **Pass It On**

Lest you forget the things your eyes have seen . . . teach them to your children and your grandchildren. —Deuteronomy 4:9

Today's Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:5-10

One day as my wife was baby-sitting our granddaughter, she shared an old, familiar friend with her. With Eliana in her arms, Sue picked up a well-worn book that we had read to our daughter when she was a little girl. It's a book called The Bible in Pictures for Little Eyes, a staple in our efforts to share God's truth with our children.



So now it is Eliana's turn to begin to learn about God's creation, His goodness, His plan, and His salvation. It's time for her to be told about what we have seen and experienced in our walk of faith. As Deuteronomy 4:9 says, "Teach [God's statutes] to your children and your grandchildren."

Back in the days of Deuteronomy, the people were being handed a gift from God—"the statutes and the judgments" (v.1) that would allow them to live properly in the land of God's promise. Along with those laws came an admonition for the people to share with their progeny the lessons God taught them on the way. They were told not to "forget the things your eyes have seen" (v.9) and to teach God's words to their children and grandchildren.

We have a similar legacy to convey to the next generation. As followers of Christ, we take this as one of our greatest responsibilities. Pass it on. By: Dave Branon ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Begin to train them early  
To fear and love the Lord,  
To carry on life's pathway  
God's lamp, His holy Word.  
—Fennema

If children are to find their way to God, we must point the way.

**Deuteronomy 4:11 "You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom**

- **stood:** De 5:23 Ex 19:16-18 Ex 20:18,19
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries



**Mt Sinai by Eizen**

**You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain and the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom** - What Israel saw was a manifestation (and only a small one at that) of Yahweh's omnipotence.

Exodus 19:16-18+ records the scene....

So it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunder and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. 17 And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. 18 Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently.

The Hebrew word **came near** ([qarab](#)) is translated in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with the verb [proserchomai](#) which means to draw near and is used seven times in the book of Hebrews once in Heb 12:18-[note](#) describing the events in Exodus - "you **did not draw near** to a mountain (Mt Sinai ~ the Law)". Now because of the Self sacrifice of our sinless Great High Priest we can actually approach the

same God Who made the Israelites tremble and fearful of dying in His presence! Do we really grasp the preciousness of our privilege as priests of God (1 Pe 2:9-note)?

Hebrews 4:16-note **Let us therefore draw near** with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 7:25-note Therefore He is able also to save forever **those who draw near to God through Him**, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Hebrews 10:19-22-note Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, **let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith** having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

**Burned with fire** - The Lord's speaking out of the fire reminds us of God's calling of Moses. **Utley** - Fire is a symbol of God's presence (cf. Exod. 19:18; Deut. 5:23; 9:15; Heb. 12:18). It may symbolize purity

The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush; and he looked, and behold, the bush was burning with fire, yet the bush was not consumed. 3 So Moses said, "I must turn aside now and see this marvelous sight, why the bush is not burned up." 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, **God called to him from the midst of the bush** and said, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." (Ex 3:2-4+).

**Thompson** writes that "Human words are quite inadequate to describe the glory and the awful majesty of God. The best we can do is to make use of symbolic expressions. The present passage may be translated alternatively, The mountain was ablaze with flames to the very skies, dark with densest clouds (JPSA)." (Ibid)

**McIntosh** - Clearly, God intended that this dramatic scene should make an impression on them, and it did. For many years afterward, the leaders of Israel reminded them of these events: "The earth shook, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel" (Ps. 68:8; see also Deut. 33:2; Jdg. 5:5; Hab. 3:3). ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

**Darkness, cloud and thick gloom** - This entire atmosphere produced "shaking" fear in the people and spoke of the [omnipotence](#) of God.

Moses describes the effect of this awesome encounter with Yahweh...

All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, **they trembled and stood at a distance**. Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but **let not God speak to us, or we will die.**" (Ex 20:18-19+).

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**Utley - Darkness, cloud and thick gloom - YHWH's physical presence can be understood in two ways:**

1. volcanic activity—Exod. 19:18; Ps. 68:7–8; 77:18; 97:2–5; Jdgs. 5:4–5; 2 Sam. 22:8; Isa. 29:6; Jer. 10:10
2. storm—Exod. 19:16, 19; Ps. 68:8; 77:18; Jdgs. 5:4; Isa. 29:6; Nahum 1:3

Therefore, the deep darkness (cf. 5:22; 2 Sam. 22:10; 1 Kgs. 8:12; 2 Chr. 6:1) might be:

1. ash clouds
2. rain clouds

This covering was for Israel's protection (cf. Exod. 19:18). They thought that if humans looked upon God they would die (cf. Gen. 16:13; 32:30; Exod. 3:6; 20:19; 33:20; Jdgs. 6:22–23; 13:22).

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**Utley's [SPECIAL TOPIC: FIRE](#)**

**Fire has both positive and negative connotations in Scripture.**

**A. Positive**

1. warms (cf. Isa. 44:15; John 18:18)
2. lights (cf. Isa. 50:11; Matt. 25:1–13)

3. cooks (cf. Exod. 12:8; Isa. 44:15–16; John 21:9)
4. purifies (cf. Num. 31:22–23; Prov. 17:3; Isa. 1:25; 6:6–8; Jer. 6:29; Mal. 3:2–3)
5. holiness (cf. Gen. 15:17; Exod. 3:2; 19:18; Ezek. 1:27; Heb. 12:29)
6. God's leadership (cf. Exod. 12:21; Num. 14:14; 1 Kgs. 18:24)
7. God's empowering (cf. Acts 2:3)

## B. Negative

1. burns (cf. Josh. 6:24; 8:8; 11:11; Matt. 22:7)
2. destroys (cf. Gen. 19:24; Lev. 10:1–2)
3. anger (cf. Num. 21:28; Isa. 10:16; Zech. 12:6)
4. punishment (cf. Gen. 38:24; Lev. 20:14; 21:9; Josh. 7:15)
5. false eschatological sign (cf. Rev. 13:13)

## C. God's anger against sin is expressed in fire metaphors

1. His anger burns (cf. Hos. 8:5; Zeph. 3:8)
2. He pours out fire (cf. Nah. 1:6)
3. eternal fire (cf. Jer. 15:14; 17:4)
4. eschatological judgment (cf. Matt. 3:10; 13:40; John 15:6; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:7–10; Rev. 8:7; 13:13; 16:8)

## D. Like so many metaphors in the Bible (i.e., leaven, lion) fire can be a blessing or a curse, depending on the context.

**Deuteronomy 4:12 "Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form--only a voice.**

- **the LORD:** De 5:4,22
- **you saw no form.:** De 4:15 Nu 12:8 Isa 40:18 Col 1:15
- **only a voice,** De 4:33,36 Ex 20:22 1Ki 19:12,13 Isa 30:21 40:3,6 Mt 3:3,17 17:5 Joh 12:28-30 2Pe 1:17,18
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### Related Passage:

John 4:24+ (SAW NO FORM) God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

1 Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, **invisible**, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Colossians 1:15 He (JESUS) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.

**The LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire you heard-** Even though the first generation had died in the wilderness journey, Moses says to the next generation that they **heard** God speak. Perhaps some were small children at the time. One writer has suggested that even if they were only in the parents loins, they effectively entered into the Mosaic Covenant because of their parents' oaths.

**But you saw no form--only a voice-** He allowed Moses to see His "afterglow" in Ex 33:23+ but He desires no physical representation because of fallen mankind's tendency toward idolatry (Dt 4:15–19).

**THOUGHT** - How does God reveal Himself to us today? The same way as He did to Israel. He spoke to them. Today He speaks to us from His Holy Word. Hebrews 1:1-2+ says "God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."

**ESV Study Bible** has an interesting note on **you saw no form** - The emphasis here, and in the second commandment (Dt 5:8-9), is that worship of an image is prohibited, since God's self-revelation was audible, not visible. Despite this, notice "**your eyes have seen**" in Dt 4:3, 9, and "**before your eyes**" in Dt 4:34.

One can deduce from this fact that since they did not see an image of God, that it would be difficult to make a created image of Him for it would be nothing but the product of their futile imagination. (cf Ro 1:21-23+) To say it another way **Idolatry** inherently confines the

Lord to the artist's imagination." (NLT Study Bible). In fact any idol intended to resemble God would be a sinful misrepresentation of Him. This statement also alludes to the fact that God is [Transcendent](#). Practically speaking, Moses is preparing Israel for his warning against making anything in the form of God.

**Wiersbe** - The people heard God speak the word but they didn't see any form of God. The Lord was making it very clear that Israel would be a people of the word, hearing their God speak but not beholding any form that could be copied and then worshiped (Deut. 4:12, 15). "He who can hear can see," said a Jewish sage; and he was right. ([Be Equipped](#))

**Merrill** comments on **fire** and **form** - From the fire He spoke, just as He had spoken to Moses from the burning bush (Ex 3:1-6), but his **openness** to the people was balanced by his **hiddenness**....This tension of divine accessibility and inaccessibility is a major theme of biblical theology (cf. Ex 33:17-23; 1 Ki 19:9-14), one that reaches its climax in the incarnation of our Lord who, as the God-man, bridged the two ideas (**Ed**: Cp Jn 1:1-[note](#) with Jn 1:14-[note](#) where the some ethereal "Word" became tangible "flesh").

**Form** ([08544](#))(**temunah**) is translated form (7x) and likeness(3x). The first use of temunah is in the Second Commandment from God in which He states "You shall not make for yourself an idol or any **likeness**" (Ex 20:4) In Job 4:16 it describes a nocturnal apparition of a spirit without discernible form. Moses did behold "the **form** of the LORD" (Nu 12:8) where temunah is translated in the Lxx with [doxa](#) which is a manifestation of light (radiance, brightness, splendor), a manifestation of God's excellent power (glory, majesty) which would parallel the description in Ex 33:22 where God promises "My **glory** (Heb = [kabod](#); Lxx = [doxa](#)) is passing by." From this the "**form**" that Moses saw in Nu 12:8 is more accurately described as a manifestation of God's glory. And how could men even begin to make a manifestation of God's incomprehensible glory! David alludes to the resurrection from the dead declaring he would see God's "**likeness** when" he awakes, the glorious time that John says "we shall be like Him." (1 John 3:2[note](#)).

**Temunah** is a key word in this section Deut 4:12-25 where we encounter 5 of the 6 uses in the entire book.

Exodus 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any**likeness** of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

Numbers 12:8 With him I speak mouth to mouth, Even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the **form** of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid To speak against My servant, against Moses?"

Deuteronomy 4:12 "Then the LORD spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form-- only a voice.

Deuteronomy 4:15 "So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire,

Deuteronomy 4:16 so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

Deuteronomy 4:23 "So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you.

Deuteronomy 4:25 "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger,

Deuteronomy 5:8 'You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth.

Job 4:16 "It stood still, but I could not discern its appearance; A form was before my eyes; There was silence, then I heard a voice:

Psalms 17:15 As for me, I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.

**Eugene Merrill** explains that "Moses's argument is [a fortiori](#): Since the people of Israel saw no form (temunah) of God in his most glorious self-revelation at Sinai (Dt 4:15), why should they think they could capture his essence in any kind of image ([pesel](#); cf. Dt 4:16-[note](#))?"

**McGee** - The Lord Jesus stated it very clearly: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). People were never to have any likeness of God whatsoever. The Lord Jesus became a man, but the Bible does not give us any physical description of Him. Now you will probably think I am picayunish, if you haven't already come to that conclusion, but I do not believe in pictures of Jesus. I know that many lovely people feel that a picture of Jesus helps them to worship Him. Let me tell you what was said by an old Scottish commentator: "Men never paint a picture of Jesus until they have lost the presence of

Him in their hearts." We need Him in our hearts today, not in color on a canvas. These are tremendous and eternal truths which God is giving us in this chapter. The instructions which were given to Israel in that day are great principles for us to carry over for ourselves today, because truth is eternal. (Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee)

**Deuteronomy 4:13 "So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments (Heb - dabar = words); and He wrote them on two tablets of stone.**

- **So He:** De 5:1-21 Ex 19:5 Ex 24:17,18 Heb 9:19,20
- **Ten:** De 10:4 Ex 34:28
- **He wrote:** De 9:9-11 10:1-5 Ex 24:12 31:18 34:28 2 Co 3:7 Heb 9:4
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## GOD GAVE ISRAEL THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

**So He declared** (revealed, proclaimed - [nagad](#)) **to you His covenant** - This is the first use of covenant or [beriyth](#) in Deuteronomy. In context he is referring to the "Ten Commandments" given at Mt Horeb (Mt Sinai).

**Covenant** ([01285](#))([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) is a treaty, compact, agreement between two parties (first use in God's covenant with Noah - Ge 6:18, 9:9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17). Etymologically, **beriyth** derives from the notion of linking or yoking together. **Beriyth** describes a compact made by passing between pieces of flesh. Covenant is a solemn, binding arrangement between two parties and entails a variety of responsibilities, benefits and penalties depending on the specific covenant which is being studied. OT covenants were made between God and man (eg, God with Noah - Ge 6:18, with Abram - Ge 15:18) or between men (Abraham and Abimelech - Ge 21:27, Isaac and Abimelech - Ge 26:28, Jacob and Laban - Ge 31:44) (**For summary of covenants see - [Covenant in the Bible](#)**).

**Beriyth** - Used 26 times in Deuteronomy out of 265 OT uses - Deut. 4:13; Deut. 4:23; Deut. 4:31; Deut. 5:2; Deut. 5:3; Deut. 7:2; Deut. 7:9; Deut. 7:12; Deut. 8:18; Deut. 9:9; Deut. 9:11; Deut. 9:15; Deut. 10:8; Deut. 17:2; Deut. 29:1; Deut. 29:9; Deut. 29:12; Deut. 29:14; Deut. 29:21; Deut. 29:25; Deut. 31:9; Deut. 31:16; Deut. 31:20; Deut. 31:25; Deut. 31:26; Deut. 33:9

**He commanded you to perform** - These were not 10 "suggestions." Once again we see truth is not just to be known but to be obeyed. At Mt Sinai in the cutting of the Mosaic Covenant, Israel agreed that they would obey but their subsequent behavior proved their words to be (for most of the nation) a profession only. Notice what Israel said...

Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and **all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!"** 4 Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and **they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"** 8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." (Exodus 24:3-8+)

And so with their lips Israel entered into the covenant but with subsequently with their lives they repeatedly disobeyed the covenant.

**The Ten Commandments** (read Ex 20:1-17+) - In Hebrew this is literally "The Ten Words ([dabar](#))." ("[decalogue](#)") The first four **words** regulate relationship with God, while the last six **words** regulate human relationships.

**Grant** - As consideration is given to that day it is worth remembering that the people could not approach the Lord as did Moses. Bounds had been set and beyond these bounds they could not come. To do so would mean death. The Law kept man at a distance! It revealed the sinful heart of mankind and taught that such sinfulness is a bar to entering His presence. What a contrast this is with the day of grace that is enjoyed now. Compare the events recorded in Exodus 19:1-20:26 with the exhortation in Hebrews 4:16: ([What the Bible Teaches](#))

**And He wrote them on two tablets of stone** - Moses describes this later in this book writing "When I went up to the mountain to



receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD had made with you, then I remained on the mountain forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water. 10 "The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God (an anthropomorphism - [see article by Utley](#)); and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. 11 "It came about at the end of forty days and nights that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.(Dt 9:9-11)

**THOUGHT** - Today we should write them not on stone or on paper but on our heart. Pr 3:3+ "Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, **Write them on the tablet of your heart.**" (How? Memorize!) Ps 37:31 "The law of his God is in his heart; His steps do not slip." AsG **Campbell Morgan** paraphrased it...

**"The best Book, in the best place, for the best purpose!"**

**Charles Swindoll:** "I know of no other single practice in the Christian life more rewarding, practically speaking, than memorizing Scripture...No other single exercise pays greater spiritual dividends! Your prayer life will be strengthened. Your witnessing will be sharper and much more effective. Your attitudes and outlook will begin to change. Your mind will become alert and observant. Your confidence and assurance will be enhanced. Your faith will be solidified."

**Howard Hendricks:** "One of the most important Christian disciplines is Scripture memory. If I had it my way, every student would know 500 verses word perfect with the references before leaving Dallas (Theological Seminary)". And for what purpose?...

Not smarter sinners, but more like our Savior.

**Jon Courson** - He wrote the commandments not on an Etch-a-Sketch but in stone because they're not suggestions. They're nonnegotiable, irrevocable, everlasting commands.

**Merrill** on why **two tablets** - It is likely, as some scholars argue, that the tablets were duplicates, one copy for Israel and the other, as it were, for Yahweh (Kline 1972:117-121). As in any legal transaction, both parties to the arrangement should have a copy of the instruments of agreement for future reference.

**NLT Study Note** - All legal documents, including covenant texts, were copied for the benefit of all involved parties. God had his copy (the stone tablets) laid inside the ark of the covenant in the sanctuary (see Ex 25:16, 21; 31:18; 40:20; cp. Deut 31:26); Israel's copy was written in the books of Exodus (Ex 20:1-17) and Deuteronomy (Dt 5:6-21).

**Declared** (05046)(**nagad**) means to be conspicuous, to report, to make known, to explain, to be reported. The root idea of the word and the causative form in which it is used is to declare something. The manner and context in which this is done creates the various shades of meaning of the verb.

**Strong's** = "properly to *front*, i.e. stand boldly out opposite; by implication (causative), to *manifest*; figurative to *announce* (always by word of mouth to one present); specifically to *expose*, *predict*, *explain*, *praise*, certify, declare (-ing), denounce, expound, x fully, messenger, plainly, profess, rehearse, report, shew (forth), speak, x surely, tell, utter."

**Vine - The first emphasis** of the word is "to tell." This especially means that A (frequently a messenger or some other person who has witnessed something) "tells" B (the one to whom the report is made) C (the report). In such instances B (the one told) is spatially separated from the original source of the information. So, in Gen. 9:22, Ham (A) saw his father naked and went outside the tent and "told" his brothers (B) what he had seen (C). **In another group of passages** *nāgad* represents the reporting of a messenger about a matter of life-or-death importance for the recipient. So a fugitive "came ... and told Abram" that Lot had been captured and led away captive (Ge 14:13). A note of this emotionally charged situation is seen in Jacob's message to Esau: "I have sent to tell my lord, that I may find grace in thy sight" (Gen. 32:5). Although not a report from a messenger from afar, Gen. 12:18 uses the verb of a report that is of crucial importance to the one addressed. Pharaoh asked Abram: "Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?" Gen. 12:17 reports that because Pharaoh had taken Sarai into his harem to become his wife, God had smitten his household with great plagues. **Finally, *nāgad* means "to explain or reveal"** something one does not otherwise know. In Ge. 3:11 (the first biblical occurrence of the word) God asked Adam: "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" This was information immediately before them but not previously grasped by them. This usage appears in Ge. 41:24, where Pharaoh said of his dream: "... I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me." Similarly, David made certain there were no survivors from the Philistine cities he looted so no one would "tell" it to Achish (1 Sa 27:11). This word sometimes has a more forceful significance, God told the prophet to

"show my people their transgression" (Isa. 58:1).([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

([Complete Biblical Library](#)) The primary meaning of this verb, attested principally in the Hiphil stem, is "to inform." It can simply refer to disseminating previously unknown information (e.g., Ru 3:16), or it can have the more emphatic nuance of "to announce" (e.g., Isa. 41:22) or "to proclaim" (42:12). An extension of this nuance is "to praise," found in a number of Psalms (Ps 30:9, Ps. 19:1). The participle can denote a herald (2 Sa 15:13). It can have the nuance of "to answer" questions (2 Chr. 9:2). Nagad can have a **LEGAL** nuance - denotes proof in the claim of the Jews to have both royal permission and funding to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 2:59), to denote legal cases in the private realm as well (Lev 5:1). Nagad can refer to legal accusations (Jer. 20:10) and legal claims needing confirmation (Job 31:37). **DIVINE REVELATION** - Divine revelation of information such as tablets of the Old Covenant (Deut. 4:13). Dreams are a mode of divine enlightening of humans (Ge 41:25). Prophecy is conveyed by nāghad (Ge 49:1).he inability to convey information is a proof of the absurdity of religions based upon idols (Isa. 41:22ff).

In Dt 4:13 the Lxx is [anaggello/anangelo](#) which means means to bring back word and later to announce, to report. To rehearse, to show, to declare or tell of things done. In the 14 NT uses of **anaggello**, notice that most report or announce something that has to do with God, including His works and/or purposes.

Nagad - 370x in 342 verses - answered(3), another(1), certainly told(1), confess(1), confront\*(1), declare(46), declared(13), declares(6), declaring(4), denounce(2), describe(1), disclosed(1), display(1), explain(3), fully reported(1), give evidence(1), indeed tell(1), inform(3), informed(1), informs(2), know(1), known(1), made known(4), make...known(1), messenger(2), related(2), remind(1), report(2), reported(10), reported\*(1), show(2), shown(2), surely report(1), surely tell(1), tell(101), telling(2), tells(3), told(131), told plainly(1), uttered(1).Gen. 3:11; Gen. 9:22; Gen. 12:18; Gen. 14:13; Gen. 21:26; Gen. 22:20; Gen. 24:23; Gen. 24:28; Gen. 24:49; Gen. 26:32; Gen. 27:42; Gen. 29:12; Gen. 29:15; Gen. 31:20; Gen. 31:22; Gen. 31:27; Gen. 32:5; Gen. 32:29; Gen. 37:5; Gen. 37:16; Gen. 38:13; Gen. 38:24; Gen. 41:24; Gen. 41:25; Gen. 42:29; Gen. 43:6; Gen. 43:7; Gen. 44:24; Gen. 45:13; Gen. 45:26; Gen. 46:31; Gen. 47:1; Gen. 48:2; Gen. 49:1; Exod. 4:28; Exod. 13:8; Exod. 14:5; Exod. 16:22; Exod. 19:3; Exod. 19:9; Lev. 5:1; Lev. 14:35; Num. 11:27; Num. 23:3; Deut. 4:13; Deut. 5:5; Deut. 17:4; Deut. 17:9; Deut. 17:10; Deut. 17:11; Deut. 26:3; Deut. 30:18; Deut. 32:7; Jos. 2:14; Jos. 2:20; Jos. 7:19; Jos. 9:24; Jos. 10:17; Jdg. 4:12; Jdg. 9:7; Jdg. 9:25; Jdg. 9:42; Jdg. 9:47; Jdg. 13:6; Jdg. 13:10; Jdg. 14:2; Jdg. 14:6; Jdg. 14:12; Jdg. 14:13; Jdg. 14:14; Jdg. 14:15; Jdg. 14:16; Jdg. 14:17; Jdg. 14:19; Jdg. 16:6; Jdg. 16:10; Jdg. 16:13; Jdg. 16:15; Jdg. 16:17; Jdg. 16:18; Ruth 2:11; Ruth 2:19; Ruth 3:4; Ruth 3:16; Ruth 4:4; 1 Sam. 3:13; 1 Sam. 3:15; 1 Sam. 3:18; 1 Sam. 4:13; 1 Sam. 4:14; 1 Sam. 8:9; 1 Sam. 9:6; 1 Sam. 9:8; 1 Sam. 9:18; 1 Sam. 9:19; 1 Sam. 10:15; 1 Sam. 10:16; 1 Sam. 11:9; 1 Sam. 14:1; 1 Sam. 14:33; 1 Sam. 14:43; 1 Sam. 15:12; 1 Sam. 15:16; 1 Sam. 17:31; 1 Sam. 18:20; 1 Sam. 18:24; 1 Sam. 18:26; 1 Sam. 19:2; 1 Sam. 19:3; 1 Sam. 19:7; 1 Sam. 19:11; 1 Sam. 19:18; 1 Sam. 19:19; 1 Sam. 19:21; 1 Sam. 20:9; 1 Sam. 20:10; 1 Sam. 22:21; 1 Sam. 22:22; 1 Sam. 23:1; 1 Sam. 23:7; 1 Sam. 23:11; 1 Sam. 23:13; 1 Sam. 23:25; 1 Sam. 24:1; 1 Sam. 24:18; 1 Sam. 25:8; 1 Sam. 25:12; 1 Sam. 25:14; 1 Sam. 25:19; 1 Sam. 25:36; 1 Sam. 25:37; 1 Sam. 27:4; 1 Sam. 27:11; 2 Sam. 1:4; 2 Sam. 1:5; 2 Sam. 1:6; 2 Sam. 1:13; 2 Sam. 1:20; 2 Sam. 2:4; 2 Sam. 3:23; 2 Sam. 4:10; 2 Sam. 6:12; 2 Sam. 7:11; 2 Sam. 10:5; 2 Sam. 10:17; 2 Sam. 11:5; 2 Sam. 11:10; 2 Sam. 11:18; 2 Sam. 11:22; 2 Sam. 12:18; 2 Sam. 13:4; 2 Sam. 14:33; 2 Sam. 15:13; 2 Sam. 15:28; 2 Sam. 15:31; 2 Sam. 15:35; 2 Sam. 17:16; 2 Sam. 17:17; 2 Sam. 17:18; 2 Sam. 17:21; 2 Sam. 18:10; 2 Sam. 18:11; 2 Sam. 18:21; 2 Sam. 18:25; 2 Sam. 19:1; 2 Sam. 19:6; 2 Sam. 19:8; 2 Sam. 21:11; 2 Sam. 24:13; 1 Ki. 1:20; 1 Ki. 1:23; 1 Ki. 1:51; 1 Ki. 2:29; 1 Ki. 2:39; 1 Ki. 2:41; 1 Ki. 10:3; 1 Ki. 10:7; 1 Ki. 14:3; 1 Ki. 18:12; 1 Ki. 18:13; 1 Ki. 18:16; 1 Ki. 19:1; 1 Ki. 20:17; 2 Ki. 4:2; 2 Ki. 4:7; 2 Ki. 4:27; 2 Ki. 4:31; 2 Ki. 5:4; 2 Ki. 6:11; 2 Ki. 6:12; 2 Ki. 6:13; 2 Ki. 7:9; 2 Ki. 7:10; 2 Ki. 7:11; 2 Ki. 7:12; 2 Ki. 7:15; 2 Ki. 8:7; 2 Ki. 9:12; 2 Ki. 9:15; 2 Ki. 9:18; 2 Ki. 9:20; 2 Ki. 9:36; 2 Ki. 10:8; 2 Ki. 18:37; 2 Ki. 22:10; 1 Chr. 17:10; 1 Chr. 19:5; 1 Chr. 19:17; 2 Chr. 9:2; 2 Chr. 9:6; 2 Chr. 20:2; 2 Chr. 34:18; Ezr. 2:59; Neh. 2:12; Neh. 2:16; Neh. 2:18; Neh. 7:61; Est. 2:10; Est. 2:20; Est. 2:22; Est. 3:4; Est. 3:6; Est. 4:4; Est. 4:7; Est. 4:8; Est. 4:9; Est. 4:12; Est. 6:2; Est. 8:1; Job 1:15; Job 1:16; Job 1:17; Job 1:19; Job 11:6; Job 12:7; Job 15:18; Job 17:5; Job 21:31; Job 26:4; Job 33:23; Job 36:9; Job 36:33; Job 38:4; Job 38:18; Job 42:3; Ps. 9:11; Ps. 19:1; Ps. 22:31; Ps. 30:9; Ps. 38:18; Ps. 40:5; Ps. 50:6; Ps. 51:15; Ps. 64:9; Ps. 71:17; Ps. 71:18; Ps. 75:9; Ps. 92:2; Ps. 92:15; Ps. 97:6; Ps. 111:6; Ps. 142:2; Ps. 145:4; Ps. 147:19; Prov. 12:17; Prov. 29:24; Eccl. 6:12; Eccl. 8:7; Eccl. 10:14; Eccl. 10:20; Cant. 1:7; Cant. 5:8; Isa. 3:9; Isa. 7:2; Isa. 19:12; Isa. 21:2; Isa. 21:6; Isa. 21:10; Isa. 36:22; Isa. 40:21; Isa. 41:22; Isa. 41:23; Isa. 41:26; Isa. 42:9; Isa. 42:12; Isa. 43:9; Isa. 43:12; Isa. 44:7; Isa. 44:8; Isa. 45:19; Isa. 45:21; Isa. 46:10; Isa. 48:3; Isa. 48:5; Isa. 48:6; Isa. 48:14; Isa. 48:20; Isa. 57:12; Isa. 58:1; Isa. 66:19; Jer. 4:5; Jer. 4:15; Jer. 5:20; Jer. 9:12; Jer. 16:10; Jer. 20:10; Jer. 31:10; Jer. 33:3; Jer. 36:13; Jer. 36:16; Jer. 36:17; Jer. 36:20; Jer. 38:15; Jer. 38:25; Jer. 38:27; Jer. 42:3; Jer. 42:4; Jer. 42:20; Jer. 42:21; Jer. 46:14; Jer. 48:20; Jer. 50:2; Jer. 50:28; Jer. 51:31; Ezek. 23:36; Ezek. 24:19; Ezek. 37:18; Ezek. 40:4; Ezek. 43:10; Dan. 2:2; Dan. 9:23; Dan. 10:21; Dan. 11:2; Hos. 4:12; Amos 4:13; Jon. 1:8; Jon. 1:10; Mic. 1:10; Mic. 3:8; Mic. 6:8; Zech. 9:12

**Deuteronomy 4:14 "The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it.**

- Ezek 21:1-23:49 Ps 105:44,45
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Psalm 105:44; 45 He gave them also the lands of the nations, That they might take possession of the fruit of the peoples' labor, 45 So that they might keep His statutes And observe His laws, Praise the LORD!

## HOW TO POSSESS YOUR POSSESSIONS

**The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it.** - Notice the pattern of how to possess your possessions -**teach** God's truth, **obey** God's truth, **possess** God's promises. This pattern for possession of God's promise is repeated in Dt 4:1 and Dt 4:5.

**THOUGHT** - This pattern is not just pertinent to possession of God's promises in the OT, but is important for NT believers so that they might lay hold of God's precious and magnificent promises (2 Pe 1:4+). If you feel like you are not laying hold of His promises, do a self-examination regarding your obedience. Are you overtly disobeying God? Are you partially obeying God? If you want motivation, notice that Peter says that "by them



you may become partakers of the divine nature." Do you want to be more like Jesus (a partaker of His divine nature)? Then enabled by His Spirit, flee from evil things man or woman of God and "**pursue** ([present imperative](#)) see [our desperate need to continually depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness." (1 Ti 6:11+, cf Heb 12:14+)

**Teach...statutes and judgments...perform** - Here we have the juxtaposition of hearing the Word and doing the Word. If one truly believes the word (has faith) he or she will obey the word. This reminds us of James who writes "But someone may well say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." (James 2:18+)

Uteley emphasizes that "It is not enough to know God's will for your life, but to do it (cf. Dt 4:1, 2, 5, 6; Luke 6:46; James 2:14-20)"

**To possess it** - And once again we see the basic principle of obedience to God linked with possessing one's possessions. Their life in the land would be dependent on their obedience to the teaching .

**Deuteronomy 4:15 "So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire,**

- **watch yourselves:** De 4:9,23 Jos 23:11 1Ch 28:9,10 Ps 119:9 Pr 4:23,27 Jer 17:21 Mal 2:15
- **any form:** De 4:12 Isa 40:18 2Co 4:4-6 Heb 1:3
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**ESV** Therefore watch yourselves very carefully. Since byou saw no form on the day that the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire,

## **WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY Deuteronomy 4:15-24**

**So** (therefore - ESV) - Based on the fact that they are going into pagan lands filled with idolatry, God gives a clear, strong command.

**So watch yourselves carefully** - KJV more literally says "take ye therefore good heed." Why? The next phrase explains. Septuagint says in essence "greatly watch/guard your soul." **Septuagint** has "guard exceedingly your soul." (cf Pr 4:23+ - heart, 1 Pe 2:11+- soul) which is closer to the literal Hebrew which says "give great care to your souls."

**Thompson** observes that Dt 4:15-31 "is a detailed commentary on the second commandment. (Ex 20:4)"

**Christopher Wright** - the contrast is not between visible and invisible, or between spiritual and material, but between the **visible** and the **audible**. Idols have "form" but do not speak. Yahweh has no "form," but he decisively speaks. Idols are visible but dumb. Yahweh is invisible but eloquent, addressing his people in words of promise and demand, gift and claim. **This introduces a fundamentally moral distinction into the contrast between the faith of Israel and surrounding visual polytheism. What sets Yahweh apart is not that he looks different, but that he calls for a people who will look different, with a different way of life, a different social order, and a different dynamic of worship.** It is these powerfully redemptive and ethical qualities that burst the limits of language in verses 32ff. At this point, all that matters is that Israel should beware of cheap but attractive alternatives. ([UCBS Deuteronomy](#))

**Watch** ([08104](#)) is the verb **shamar**, used 7x in this chapter (twice in v9) - Dt 4:2, 6, 9, 15, 23, 40. The Lxx uses **phulasso** which means to guard yourself like a sentry to protect from enemy attack or guard from theft. Clearly God is trying emphatically to gain Israel's attention with the truth that watching ourselves is urgent and vital, in the present context the warning being specifically against idolatry, a direct violation of God's first two commands (Dt 4:16-19, cp Dt 5:7-10).

**Merrill** - The warning here is not about the worship of other gods but about the misguided attempt to represent Yahweh himself by means of forms or statues.

**McIntosh** - When man worships anything less than his Creator, he loses touch with that which provides him with dignity and purpose. Since God created humanity to have fellowship with him, to pretend satisfaction in a relationship with a creature robs both man and God of the majesty that they ought to possess. Israel was not to become like the nations, because their God was greater than the gods of those nations. ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

**Carefully** (meod) conveys the sense of much or in excess (we cannot watch ourselves too much because the lust of our flesh is always active (Gal 5:17+) and very seductive [James 1:14+], our hearts are very deceitful and desperately sick (Jer 17:9) and sin itself is very deceitful [Heb 3:13+]

- [How should Christians view statues of Jesus?](#)

**Since you did not see any form on the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire** It would be difficult/impossible to make a material representation of God if He was never seen. The point is don't do it!

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## Unseen Majesty

Read: Deuteronomy 4:15-31 | You shall not make for yourself a carved image. —Exodus 20:4

The Encyclopedia Britannica describes Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BC) as "Rome's greatest scholar." He wrote more than 600 books on many subjects. Among his writings is this statement:

**"They who first introduced images of the gods removed fear and added error:"**

This profound statement helps us understand why Moses reminded Israel at Sinai, "You saw no form when the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire" (Dt. 4:15). It also underscores the reason behind God's command prohibiting any physical representations of Him.

We cannot love and serve the Lord in an acceptable manner unless we have an accurate understanding of His character. Any physical portrayal, however, whether with pictures, icons, or statues, distorts our perception of His true character and lessens a healthy respect for His awesome holiness and power.

If Rome's greatest secular scholar, guided only by the light of nature and reason, could see the dangers of misrepresenting deity, how much more should we who have special revelation carefully attend to every word God has spoken.

Let's ask the Lord to instill in us a healthy respect of Him and help us grow in our knowledge of His character. By Dennis J. De Haan

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,  
In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,  
Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,  
Almighty, victorious—Thy great name we praise.  
—Smith

God made us in His image, don't try to make Him in yours.

**Deuteronomy 4:16 so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female,**

- corrupt (KJV): De 4:8,9 Ex 20:4,5 32:7 Ps 106:19,20 Ro 1:22-24
- the likeness (KJV): Such as Baal-peor, the Roman Priapus; Ashtaroth or Astarte, the Greek and Roman Venus, and many others. De 4:23 Isa 40:18 Joh 4:24 Ac 17:29 20:4,5 1Ti 1:17

## IDOLATRY CORRUPTS AND BRINGS RUIN

**So that** - Always be alert to this [term of purpose](#) asking for example in this case what is the purpose of watching themselves carefully (Dt 4:15)? Clearly the purpose is that they do not fall into ruin (act corruptly).

**You do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves-** (NIV = "do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol") In other words, acting or becoming corrupt and making idols are equated. The corollary is that the way to be ruined is to make idols. These principles are timeless! This is exactly what the first generation of Israelites did at Mt Sinai

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt, **have corrupted** ([shachath](#)) themselves.(Exodus 32:7+)

HOW DID THEY CORRUPT THEMSELVES? BY MAKING THE GOLDEN CALF TO REPRESENT GOD! =

"**This is your god**, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt" (Ex 32:4+)

**Utley**- This is a reference to the golden calf (cf. Exod. 32) related to YHWH's incorporeality. The Israelites were not to represent YHWH by anything physical (cf. Dt 4:16–18, 23, 25; 5:8; Ex. 20:4).

**Wiersbe** qualifies this prohibition against images - In the tabernacle and the temple, God did permit the Jews to have copies of various things in nature, but these were there to bring beauty to God's house and **not** as objects of worship. God doesn't prohibit the making of artistic things as such, for He's the Author of beauty, but only the making of things that become gods to us. See [Art and the Bible by Francis A. Schaeffer \(Be Equipped\)](#)

**Act corruptly** (also Dt 4:25-note)(07843)(**shachath**) means to decay, to go to ruin, to corrupt, to destroy (Sodom and Gomorrah = Ge 13:10, Ge 18:28, 31-32), to lay waste (Egypt from swarms of flies -Ex 8:24). **Shachath** is used of Israelites who worshiped the golden calf (Ex 32:7; Dt 9:12; 32:5, Hos 9:9 = "They have gone deep in **depravity!**"). God warned He would **destroy** Israel if they were turned away from following Him (Nu 32:15). **Shachath** describes Israel's behavior as being even more **corrupt** after a judge had died (Jdg 2:19-note).

The [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translates **shachath** here in Dt 4:16 with the verb **anomeo** (found only in the Lxx not the NT, used in Lxx of Ex 32:7 = "corrupted themselves," Isa 24:5 = "polluted") which means to act lawlessly.

The first 3 uses of **shachath** are very instructive for they resulted in a worldwide flood, even as Israel's corruption would result in worldwide dispersion and shame at her ignominious defeat by godless pagans...

Now the earth was **corrupt** (**shachath**; Lxx = **phtheiro** = cause loss of soundness, ruin, destroy, kill. Note that corruption is activated/energized by "the lusts of deceit" Eph 4:22+) in the sight of God (cp Pr 15:3+), and the earth was filled with violence. 12 And God looked on the earth, and behold, it was **corrupt** (**shachath**; Lxx = **kataphtheiro** = "rotten!") for all flesh had **corrupted** (**shachath**; [Septuagint - Lxx](#) = **kataphtheiro**) their way upon the earth. 13 Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth. (Ge 6:11-13)

**Graven image** (idol) (06459)(**pesel** from **pasal** = to hew, cut as in Ex 34:1) is a noun that refers to something carved (graven) or cast image - normally carved from wood or chiseled from rock, but it can also be poured or cast (Isa 40:19; 44:10). Isa 40:19 describes the "casting" of an idol that is then plated or overlaid with gold. In sum, this kind of **image**, then, is one manufactured from wood, stone, or metal.

The first use of **pesel** is Ex 20:4 (Lev 26:2, Dt 5:8) which is God's command "You shall not make for yourself an idol." In the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) the Greek word used for **pesel** in Ex 20:4 is **eidolon** (from **eidos** = that which is seen, what is visible, figure, appearance) is primarily a phantom, form, image, shadow or likeness. Note that other uses of **pesel** are translated with a word found only in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#), the adjective **gluptos** which means a thing carved or a graven image. (Used in Lxx of Lev 26:1, Dt 4:16, 23, 25). **Pesel** is used 31x in the OT and translated (NAS) as carved image (2x), graven image (14x), graven images (1x), idol (10x), idols (3x), image(1x).

Here in Dt 4:16, the result of **acting corruptly** (lawlessly as if God had given them no law!) is that Israel would **make** idols. In Dt 4:23 the result of forgetting the Mosaic covenant is that they make a graven image. Dt 4:25 is a prophecy saying Israel would make idols. In Dt 27:15 God says the man who makes an idol is cursed!

The concentration of uses of **pesel** in Judges 17:1-13 ([note](#)) and Judges 18:1-33 ([note](#)) shows the defiling, abominable effect of forgetting the LORD their God (Judges 3:7-note). The evil king Manasseh even became so depraved (sin will take you further than you ever dreamed you'd go beloved!) that he brazenly "set the carved image of **Asherah** that he had made, in the house of which the LORD (the HOLY TEMPLE!)" (2Ki 21:7, 2Chr 33:7) The most concentrated use of **pesel** is found in Isaiah (9x) where we see men will "be utterly put to shame who trust in idols," (Isaiah 42:17, 44:9) instead of the only Trustworthy God! Isa 44:17 says men will worship idols and vainly call on them for deliverance and salvation (Isa 45:20).

**Form** (08544)(**temunah**) see above.

**The likeness of male or female** - Practically this would include loving another person more than God. "The worship of people. Far too often a person admires, loves, and becomes attached or devoted to another person more than to God. Hero worship is a common form of idolatry. " (POSB)

**Utley** - Mankind's tendency has been to make God like a man or woman. If we put God in a human form, we have put Him into a form which we can manage.

**Christopher Wright** - "The list of possible "shapes" that idols might take (Dt 4:16–19) is given in an order that precisely reverses the order of the creation narrative: human beings, land animals, birds, fish, the heavenly bodies. The point, probably being made deliberately through this literary feature, is that idolatry not only corrupts God's redemptive achievement for God's people (v. 20), but perverts and turns upside-down the whole created order. (Ibid)

**Likeness** ([08403](#)) (**tabnith**) is used in Dt 4:16, 17, 18 and means pattern, figure (e.g., Moses was instructed to make the Tabernacle according to the **pattern** God showed him - Ex 25:9, 40). The Lxx translates **likeness** in all 3 uses here in chapter 4 with **homoíoma** (from **homoios** = similar) means resemblance or similitude (correspondence in kind or quality = a visible likeness, a thing or sometimes a person that is like or the counterpart of another). Correspondence in details.

**Jon Courson** makes an interesting observation - When the Law was given, the children of Israel heard the Word, but saw nothing physical or tangible of God's Person. Therefore, they were not to make any images to represent Him. And because of this, of all cultures of antiquity, the Jewish people are the only culture without artistic treasures or monuments. Instead, they directed their energies elsewhere, which partially explains the fact that, although they constitute less than one-half of one percent of the world's population, the Jewish people as an ethnic group have won almost twenty-five percent of all Nobel prizes. (**Ed**: I would qualify this statement with the fact that some in Israel made and worshiped idols. It is just that the idols they made seem to have been destroyed.)

**THOUGHT - Why would anyone make an image of God?** Ostensibly (assuming the purist of motives) it would be that we would think since I can "see Him" now, I can know Him better and worship Him more fully. But that is false reasoning for the best way to know and worship Him is to recall what He has already said in His Word and to believe and obey His Word. In John 14:21 Jesus gives us the Biblical "formula" for knowing God better declaring "He who **has** My commandments (EITHER READING THEM DAILY AND/OR MEMORIZING THEM SO THAT THEY ARE ALWAYS ACCESSIBLE) and **keeps** (OBEDIENCE) them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and **will disclose Myself to him.**" Trust and obey for there is no better way to know Jesus than to trust and obey. It is not images, nor songs, nor devotional, etc. It is attention to and obedience to His Word of Truth. If you are reading His Word in the AM and go out into the world committing blatant disobedience (anger, off color jokes or words, etc) you are short-circuiting the Holy Spirit's desire which is to glorify Jesus to you through His Word.

**Warren Wiersbe** on the foolishness and futility of idolatry - The nations around Israel worshiped many gods and goddesses, but Israel was to worship only the one true God. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord" is the first and basic tenet in the Jewish confession of faith, "The Shema" (Dt 6:4-5); and the first of the Ten Commandments is, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Dt 5:7). Why? Because all other "gods" are only the creations of sinful imaginations and aren't gods at all (Ro 1:18ff). To worship other gods is to worship nothing and become nothing (Ps. 115:8). One of the Hebrew words for "idols" means "vanity, nothingness."...It was when Israel began to imitate the other nations and worship their detestable gods that Israel ceased to be a nation devoted wholly to the Lord. Because they forgot their distinctive privileges, they lost their distinctive blessings. The church today can learn a lesson from this. We're called to be a separated people who are not conformed to this world (2 Cor. 6:14–7:1; Rom. 12:1–2), and yet the trend today is for churches to pattern ministry after what the world is doing. The philosophy is that the church will attract more people if the lost feel more comfortable with the services. The tragedy is that the sanctuary becomes a theater and "ministry" becomes entertainment. But Scripture and church history make it clear that what Campbell Morgan said is true: "The church did the most for the world when the church was the least like the world." Jesus didn't compromise with the world and yet He attracted sinners and ministered effectively to them (Luke 15:1–2). Unless we are a separated people, devoted wholly to the Lord, we can never follow His example." ([Be Equipped](#))

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**QUESTION - [Why is idol worship such a powerful temptation?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Ultimately, the answer to this question is "sin." It is the sin nature of man that causes us to [worship modern idols, all of which are](#), in reality, forms of self-worship. The temptation to worship ourselves in various ways is a powerful temptation indeed. In fact, it is so powerful that only those who belong to Christ and have the Holy Spirit within them can possibly hope to resist the temptation of modern idolatry. Even then, resisting the worship of idols is a lifelong battle that is part of the Christian life (Ephesians 6:11; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:3).

When we hear the word **idol**, we often think of statues and objects reminiscent of those worshiped by pagans in ancient cultures. However, the idols of the 21st century often bear no resemblance to the artifacts used thousands of years ago. Today, many have replaced the "golden calf" with an insatiable drive for money or prestige or "success" in the eyes of the world. Some pursue the high regard of others as their ultimate goal. Some seek after comfort or a myriad of other passionate, yet empty, pursuits. Sadly, our societies often admire those serving such idols. In the end, however, it doesn't matter what empty pleasure we chase after or what idol or which false god we bow down to; the result is the same—separation from the one true God.

Understanding contemporary idols can help us to understand why they prove to be such a powerful temptation. An idol can be anything we place ahead of God in our lives, anything that takes God's place in our hearts, such as possessions, careers, relationships, hobbies, sports, entertainment, goals, greed, addictions to alcohol/drugs/gambling/pornography, etc. Some of the things we idolize are clearly sinful. But many of the things we idolize can be very good, such as relationships or careers. Yet Scripture tells us that, whatever we do, we are to "do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31) and that we are to serve God only (Deuteronomy 6:13; Luke 16:13). Unfortunately, God is often shoved out of the way as we zealously pursue our idols. Worse yet, the significant amount of time we often spend in these idolatrous pursuits leaves us with little or no time to spend with the Lord.

We sometimes also turn to idols seeking solace from the hardships of life and the turmoil present in our world. Addictive behaviors such as drug or alcohol use, or even something like excessive reading or television viewing, may be used as a means of temporarily "escaping" a difficult situation or the rigors of daily life. The psalmist, however, tells us that those who place their trust in this behavior will, essentially, become spiritually useless (Psalm 115:8). We need to place our trust in the Lord "who will keep [us] from all harm" (Psalm 121:7) and who has promised to supply all of our needs when we trust in Him. We also need to remember the words of Paul, who teaches us not to be anxious about anything, but rather to pray about everything so the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, can guard our hearts and our minds (Philippians 4:6–7).

There is another form of idolatry prevalent today. Its growth is fostered by cultures that continue to drift away from sound biblical teaching, just as the apostle Paul warned us, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:3). In these pluralistic, liberal times, many cultures have, to a large degree, redefined God. We have forsaken the God revealed to us in Scripture and have recast Him to comply with our own inclinations and desires—a "kinder and gentler" god who is infinitely more tolerant than the One revealed in Scripture. One who is less demanding and less judgmental and who will tolerate many lifestyles without placing guilt on anyone's shoulders. As this idolatry is propagated by churches around the world, many congregants believe they are worshiping the one, true God. However, these made-over gods are created by man, and to worship them is to worship idols. worshiping a god of one's own making is particularly tempting for many whose habits and lifestyles and drives and desires are not in harmony with Scripture.

The things of this world will never fully satisfy the human heart. They were never meant to. The sinful things deceive us and ultimately lead only to death (Romans 6:23). The good things of this world are gifts from God, meant to be enjoyed with a thankful heart, in submission to Him and for His glory. But when the gift replaces the Giver or the created replaces the Creator in our lives, we have fallen into idolatry. And no idol can infuse our lives with meaning or worth or give us eternal hope. As Solomon beautifully conveys in the book of Ecclesiastes, apart from a right relationship with God, life is futile. We were created in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and designed to worship and glorify Him as He alone is worthy of our worship. God has placed "eternity in man's heart" (Ecclesiastes 3:11), and a relationship with Jesus Christ is the only way to fulfill this longing for eternal life. All of our idolatrous pursuits will leave us empty, unsatisfied, and, ultimately, on the broad road that most people take, the one that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13). [GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

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#### **QUESTION - [Is religious iconography considered idolatry? What is an icon?](#)**

**ANSWER** - Broadly speaking, religious iconography is the artistic depiction of religious figures, often using symbolism. In Christianity, iconography features subjects such as Christ, Mary, or the saints. An icon is an image, usually painted on wood, that is to be venerated as a sacred object. Icons can also be engravings, mosaics, or embroideries. Although people who use icons in their worship would deny that they are practicing idolatry, it is difficult to see how "venerating" an object as "sacred" is different from idolatry.

Although Catholics also venerate religious images, iconography is most often associated with the [Eastern or Orthodox Church](#), which teaches that the use of icons during prayer helps the worshiper know God, be united with the holy saints, and develop the fruit of the Spirit. When an Orthodox Christian enters his church, he lights a candle, makes the sign of the cross, and then kisses the icons of Christ, the [Theotokos](#) (Mary), and the saints. The church sanctuary will contain many other "Holy Icons," as they're called. Orthodox Christians are to have icons at home, too, and the place where the icons are kept is where family prayers are offered. Icons are seen as an illustration of the Incarnation of Christ, who left His spiritual abode to dwell in a material world. The devout also believe that an icon is a window into heaven, and their veneration passes straight to heaven, where it is received by the person depicted in the icon. Some claim that icons have facilitated miracles.

John Calvin and the other Protestant Reformers were [iconoclasts](#); that is, they demanded the removal of icons from churches and homes. According to the Reformers, the veneration of icons and other religious artifacts was idolatry, and they were right. Any kissing of, bowing down before, or praying toward an icon is certainly idolatrous. Members of the Orthodox Church insist that they are not worshiping the paint and wood, but they admit that they give veneration, adoration, and reverence to the saints and Mary depicted in the icons. They pray to men and women; they ascribe to the icons a spiritual power that it does not possess. This is



unbiblical.

There is nothing wrong with producing or enjoying religious art, per se. Viewing a painting of a biblical scene in an art gallery and admiring the artist's technique cannot be considered idolatry. Having a picture of Jesus or of angels in one's home may not be idolatry, either. Iconography can be studied as an art form, and icons can be viewed as fascinating examples of historical religious art. But using icons to aid one's worship or viewing them as a "window to heaven" is definitely idolatry.

The Bible strictly forbids idolatry (Leviticus 26:1; Deuteronomy 5:9). God alone deserves to be bowed down to and worshiped. Icons are not intercessors before the throne of grace, and neither are the saints they represent. People in heaven do not have the power to hear our prayers or grant our requests. Only Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit can intercede for us before the Father (Romans 8:26–27, 34). We should stay as far away as we can from anything that could possibly lead to [idolatry](#) .[GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Related Resources:

- [What is ministry idolatry? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the definition of idolatry? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What are some modern forms of idolatry? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why is idol worship such a powerful temptation? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is the true meaning of the second commandment? | GotQuestions.org](#)

#### Deuteronomy 4:17 the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky,

- In these verses there is an evident allusion to the idolatrous worship in Egypt. Among the Egyptians, almost everything in nature was the object of their idolatry; among beasts were oxen, heifers, sheep, goats, lions, dogs, monkeys, and cats; among birds, the ibis, crane, and hawk; among reptiles, the crocodile, serpents, frogs, flies, and beetles; all the fish of the Nile, and the Nile itself; besides the sun, moon, planets, stars, fire, light, air, darkness, and night. These are all included in the very circumstantial prohibition in the text, and very forcibly in the general terms of Ex 20:4, the reason of which prohibition becomes self-evident, when the various objects of Egyptian idolatry are considered.
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### ANIMAL AND BIRD IDOLS FORBIDDEN

Clearly this warning is needed because some 40 years earlier Israel had corrupted their worship by making a golden calf (Ex 32:1-35), not to mention the disastrous results of the idolatry that had just occurred at Baal-peor. Stephen adds a commentary on Israel's worship in the wilderness...

'YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF [MOLOCH](#) AND THE STAR OF THE GOD [ROMPHA](#) (cf [Kiyyun](#) in Amos 5:26), THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.' (Acts 7:43+, cf Lev 18:21 Lev 20:2-5 1Ki 11:7 2Ki 23:10 Jer 32:35)

**POSB** - Scripture declares that God is Spirit; therefore, no form, no image or idol, is ever to be made to represent God. God created man; man does not create God. Therefore, man must not devise false gods nor false worship. (The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Deuteronomy)

As Jesus taught years later

"God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:24+)

Notice that the **likeness** descends from the highest (man made in the image of God - Dt 4:16) to the lowest creeping things (Dt 4:18) and then shifts to inanimate objects of God's creation - sun, moon, stars. This declension from making a likeness of the highest life form to making a likeness of an inanimate creation reflects the downward spiral of sin. Dearly beloved, if you "toying" with idols (including "secret sins") first, beware that your sin will find you out (Nu 32:23) and second sin is deceptive.

Sin will take you further than you ever wanted to stray!  
Cost you more than you ever dreamed you would pay!  
Keep you longer than you ever thought you would stay!

The danger for God's people was (and always is) that we become like the godless people around us. And so Paul described the downward spiral of rejection of the natural revelation of God

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools 23 ([note](#)) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1:19-25-[note](#))

**Layman's Bible Commentary** - Idolatry is by no means a problem for Old Testament Israel only. It is a constant danger to God's people still today. By our very nature, we all worship something. It is in our nature to give our allegiance to something or someone. God made us this way so that we might worship and serve Him. Sin has corrupted this tendency, but it did not remove or destroy it. If a man or woman will not worship the living God, then he or she will worship someone or something else. The Bible takes full account of the fact that one can be an idolater in many other ways than by bowing down to figurines representative of an imaginary god. An idol is anything which claims from us the loyalty and the service we owe to God alone. Today, as in former times, many people worship many idols at the same time: pleasure, power, money, fame, political ideas, and so on. The church is likewise crammed full of idolaters. Every time we give loyalty to something else over God, we are idolaters.

**Deuteronomy 4:18 the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth.**

- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**The likeness of anything that creeps on the ground** - Moses continues to warn Israel against worship of the creation rather than the Creator. Here he warns against worship of serpents! This is exactly what the great serpent (Ge 3:1ff-note, Rev 12:9-[note](#)) the [devil](#) has always desired (Luke 4:5-8-note)

**Peter Craigie on anything that creeps on the ground** - If Egypt still provides the background, however, it is possible that this prohibition is against the equivalent of the Egyptian scarab. The [Scarab beetle](#), formally, was a representation of the "dung-beetle," but it could be used for a number of purposes. A common function of the scarab was to act as an amulet and as such it was considered to have certain magical qualities. It was not strictly an image, but its supposed magical qualities could easily result in its being treated with special awe. Alternatively, however, the creeping thing may refer to a snake, which could symbolize the power of an Egyptian goddess. (It is interesting to note that in the Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions, there are four references to a goddess known as the "Serpent Lady"....)

**Utley** - "creeps on the ground" This possibly refers to the Egyptian [Scarab beetle](#) which was holy to them.

**K A Kitchens** on serpents - In Canaanite, Mesopotamian, Anatolian and Egyptian mythology and cults, serpent deities are known, and serpents in various contexts are symbols of protection (Egyptian uraeus), of evil (e.g. Egyptian 'Apep or Apopis), of fecundity (Egypto-Canaanite goddesses of sex; ANEP, figs. 471-474), or of continuing life (symbolized by repeated shedding of its skin, cf. A. Heidel, The Gilgamesh Epic and Old Testament Parallels, 1949, p. 92, n. 212) (New Bible Dictionary)

In one of the more despicable descriptions of Judah's apostasy, the prophet Ezekiel is transported from Babylon back to Jerusalem when he witnesses and describes the unbelievable corruption of the elders occurring within the Holy Temple in Jerusalem...

Then He said to me, "Son of man, raise your eyes now toward the north." So I raised my eyes toward the north, and behold, to the north of the altar gate was this idol of jealousy (an idol which invoked God's jealousy - see Dt 4:24 [note](#)) at the entrance. 6 And He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations which the house of Israel are committing here, so that I would be far from My sanctuary? But yet you will see still greater abominations." 7 Then He brought me to the entrance of the court, and when I looked, behold, a hole in the wall. 8 He said to me, "Son of man, now dig through the wall." So I dug through the wall, and behold, an entrance. 9 And He said to me, "Go in and see the wicked abominations that they are committing here." 10 So I entered and looked, and behold, **every form of creeping things and beasts and**



**detestable things, with all the idols of the house of Israel, were carved on the wall all around.** 11 Standing in front of them were seventy elders of the house of Israel, with Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan standing among them, each man with his censer in his hand and the fragrance of the cloud of incense rising. 12 Then He said to me, "Son of man, do you see what the elders of the house of Israel are committing in the dark, each man in the room of his carved images? For they say, 'The LORD does not see us (a clear indication of their degree of self-deception and total loss of reverential fear of God - Pr 15:3-note); the LORD has forsaken the land.'" (Ezekiel 8:5-12-note)

**Deuteronomy 4:19 "And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.**

- when thou (KJV): De 17:3 2Ki 23:4,5,11 Job 31:26,27 Jer 8:2 Eze 8:16 Am 5:25,26
- the host (KJV): Ge 2:1 2Ki 17:16 21:3 Jer 19:13 Zep 1:5 Ac 7:42 Ro 1:25
- which the Lord (KJV): Ge 1:16-18 Jos 10:12,13 Ne 9:6 Ps 74:16,17 136:7-9 148:3-5 Jer 31:35 33:25 Mt 5:45
- divided (KJV): or, imparted
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NET** When you look up to the sky and see the sun, moon, and stars— the whole heavenly creation— you must not be seduced to worship and serve them, for the LORD your God has assigned them to all the people of the world.

**KJV** And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

**CSB** When you look to the heavens and see the sun, moon, and stars-- all the array of heaven-- do not be led astray to bow down and worship them. The LORD your God has provided them for all people everywhere under heaven.

**ESV** And beware lest you raise your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, you be drawn away and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

**NLT** And when you look up into the sky and see the sun, moon, and stars-- all the forces of heaven-- don't be seduced into worshipping them. The LORD your God gave them to all the peoples of the earth.

**GWN** Don't let yourselves be tempted to worship and serve what you see in the sky—the sun, the moon, the stars, or anything else. The LORD your God has given them to all people everywhere.

**NAB** And when you look up to the heavens and behold the sun or the moon or any star among the heavenly hosts, do not be led astray into adoring them and serving them. These the LORD, your God, has let fall to the lot of all other nations under the heavens;

**NIV** And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars--all the heavenly array--do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshipping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.

**NJB** When you raise your eyes to heaven, when you see the sun, the moon, the stars -- the entire array of heaven -- do not be tempted to worship them and serve them. Yahweh your God has allotted these to all the other peoples under heaven,

**YLT** 'And lest thou lift up thine eyes towards the heavens, and hast seen the sun, and the moon, and the stars, all the host of the heavens, and thou hast been forced, and hast bowed thyself to them, and served them, which Jehovah thy God hath apportioned to all the peoples under the whole heavens.

## **SOLAR, LUNAR AND ASTRAL WORSHIP FORBIDDEN**

**Beware** - Not in the Hebrew but added by the NAS translators. Here the warning is not so much against making an image of the

sun, moon and stars as in worshiping the heavenly cosmos. What a perversion of the purpose of the heavenly bodies as proclaimed by David

The heavens are telling of the glory of God; And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands. - Psalm 19:1

The danger of godless culture is to imitate their practices. In Israel's case the ever present danger was to follow their Near Eastern neighbors in worshiping the sun, moon, and stars.

**Craigie** writes that "In all the Near Eastern religions, the sun and the moon, and to a different extent the stars, were thought of as divine and worthy of praise, and hence the temptation at this point was very dangerous. It should be noted that in the previous verses (Dt 4:17–18), the warning was against making an image, but in this verse (19), the warning is against a more subtle danger, that of taking something within the created universe (e.g., sun) and making it divine and the object of worship. The more sophisticated Egyptians and Canaanites no doubt understood that their physical images were not in themselves divine, but only representations of divinity. However, the sun (in Egypt, e.g.) was itself so awe-inspiring as to induce worship in its own right. In more sophisticated forms, the tendency to make the physical world divine and the object of worship is still present and constitutes a real danger to the Christian faith (**Ed**: The [New Age Movement](#), see also "[Mother Nature, Mother Earth or Mother Gaia](#)" - subtle forms of these false beliefs have "crept in unnoticed" [Jude 1:4+] into the Church!). These false forms of worship...would be antithetic to the revelation of Israel's true religion. (NICOT-Deuteronomy)

**Utley**- The ancients, as well as the moderns (horoscope), felt that the stars represented forces or powers that control the lives of humans. The worship of astral bodies seems to have started in Babylon (Genesis 1 may represent a reaction to this type of idolatry, as Exodus 20 represents a reaction to Egyptian idolatry). Israel is to vigorously reject this kind of idolatry!

**Meredith Kline** - The worship of the visible and creaturely was characteristic of the Gentile nations whom God had abandoned to their perverse folly (v. 19b; cf. Dt 29:26; Ro 1:21ff.). ([Wycliffe Bible Commentary on Deuteronomy](#))

**Thompson** - The Hittites regularly included astral deities among lists of deities who were invoked in their treaty documents to act as guarantors of the treaty.

Nothing created can create the Creator,  
but everything created points to the Creator!

**Doug McIntosh** makes a good point regarding the various forms of idolatry - Nothing that is created can picture the Creator, although everything that is created testifies in some way to his greatness. As a result, God had forbidden visual metaphors for Himself, even if the person who worshiped somehow could recognize that the true God was not present in the artifact itself....There is an element in man that concludes that whatever is distant and unattainable must be worthy of adoration. Moses warned Israel that they were to resist this tendency ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

Beloved we can mark it down in indelible ink that....

### False gods lead to fake worship.

Continuing from the description in Dt 4:18, we read

Then He brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house. And behold, at the entrance to the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs to the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east; and they were prostrating ([shachah](#)) themselves eastward toward the sun. (Ezekiel 8:16+)

**Be drawn away** - (NIV = "do not be enticed"; NET = "you must not be seduced"; "do not be led astray" CSB) The Hebrew word **nadach** speaks of an action of forcibly driving or pushing something away. The Lxx translates **nadach** with **planao** = misled, caused to wander, cause to be deceived. **Planao** is in the passive voice which means this deception comes from outside the subject (probably from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes- 1 Jn 2:16-[note](#))

Notice the progression "**look** (lift...eyes) > **see** (sun, etc) > **be drawn away** (deceived) > **worship** (creation rather than Creator) > **serve** (the creation, the idols!)"

**Comment:** We see a similar progression in Achan's sin - "when **ISAW** among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I **COVETED** them and **TOOK** them; and behold, they are **CONCEALED** (cf Pr 28:13+) in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it." (Joshua 7:21) Our sins do not "just happen" but are usually a product of a process that begins

with lust.

The antidote to this progressive corruption and distortion of worship should have been focus on God's righteous statutes and judgments. When Israel took their spiritual eyes off of Jehovah, they were in grave danger of idol worship for God has so created man that he needs to worship -- if it is not the Creator, by default it will be the creation. In our modern world this would include money, sex, power, "toys", and the list goes on and on. Anything that comes between the spiritual eyes of our heart and the One Who created our heart. That is an idol! And if you need further support that IDOLATRY is alive and well in cultured societies here is Paul's definition of idolatry - "Therefore **consider** the members of your earthly body as **dead** to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and **greed**, which amounts to **idolatry**.." (Col 3:5+) Did you see it? **GREED!**

**Jack Deere** - The **sun** was worshiped as the god **Ra** or **Aten** in Egypt, and in the new land to which the Israelites were going astral worship was also common. (E.g., the city of Jericho was dedicated to the worship of the moon god) (Ed: cp [Yarikh](#)) ([Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Worship** ([shachah](#) - same verb used here in Ezek 8:16-[note](#)) them and serve them, those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

- Take a moment to worship in spirit and in truth - Play "[All Creation Worship You](#) (God)"

**And serve them** ([05647](#))([abad](#)) means to work, to be a slave (as Israel did in Egypt - abad in Ge 15:14+ and Ex 1:13-14+, as Esau would serve Jacob - Ge 25:23, as Jacob served Laban 7 years - Ge 29:18). This servitude is the antithesis of what God desires for His people Israel (and us in the NT) where **abad** is used by God repeatedly charging Pharaoh to let His people go "**that they may serve me**" (Ge 7:16, 8:1, 20, 9:1, 13, 10:3, 7).

The great passage Deuteronomy 10:12-13 sums up God's charge to Israel (and us in the NT)

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to **fear** the LORD your God, to **walk** in all His ways and **love** Him, and to **serve** (**abad**) the LORD your God **with all your heart and with all your soul**, and to **keep** the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?

**Bob Dylan** was theologically "spot on" when he sang "[You Gotta Serve Somebody](#)" and if we don't serve God, we will serve idols! (cp Mt 6:24-[note](#))

As **Merrill** says "from humankind through the lowest life forms (Dt 4:16-18) and even to inanimate creation (Dt 4:19a) all...are physical, material, and created. How can they possibly capture the essence of the invisible, [ineffable](#) Creator? Thus, all creation—whether terrestrial or celestial—is off limits in terms of making likenesses for worship.

**Astral worship.** (note on Dt 17:3) The worship of the celestial bodies (sun, moon, planets, stars) was common throughout the ancient Near East. One of the principal gods of Assyria and Babylonia was a sun god ([Shamash](#)), and a moon god ([Thoth](#) in Egypt; Sin in Mesopotamia; Yarah in Canaanite religion) was widely worshiped. During most of their history the Israelites would have been familiar with and heavily influenced by Assyrian culture and religion (see Deut 4:19; 2Ki 21:1–7; 2Ki 23:4–5). These forbidden practices continued to be a source of condemnation during the Neo-Babylonian period, as Israelites burned incense on altars placed on the roofs of their houses to the "starry hosts" (Jer 19:13). Because worship of the elements of nature diminished Yahweh's position as the sole power in creation, they were outlawed. However, the popular nature of this type of worship continues to appear in prophetic literature and in Job (see Job 31:26–28; 38:7). (From Note on Dt 4:19) - The celestial gods (sun god, moon god and Venus particularly; in Babylonia, Shamash, Sin and Ishtar respectively) were primary in most ancient religions. **Controlling calendar and time, seasons and weather, they were viewed as the most powerful of the gods.** They provided signs by which omens were read, and they looked down on all. Yahweh has now warned the Israelites against fertility worship (Dt 4:3), magic and manipulation (idolatry, Dt 4:16–18), and omens and linking deities to cosmic phenomena (Dt 4:19), all the major characteristics of the pagan polytheism of the ancient world. ([IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

**Those which the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven-** In other words the creation is made to serve man not man to serve creation. That is inversion and perversion of God's righteous order. And so even in the beginning God declared Creation's purpose...

"Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so. (Ge 1:14-15)

**Related Resources:**

- [Should a Christian consult horoscopes? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What does the Bible say about astrology and the zodiac? Is astrology something a Christian should study? | GotQuestions.org](#)

**Deuteronomy 4:20 "But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.**

- **the iron:** 1Ki 8:51 Jer 11:4
- **a people:** Dt 9:26,29, Dt 32:9 Ex 19:5,6 Ps 28:9 Ps 33:12 Ps 135:4 Isa 63:17,18 Eph 1:18 Tit 2:14 1Pe 2:9
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

1 Kings 8:51 (for they are Your people and Your inheritance which You have brought forth from Egypt, **from the midst of the iron furnace**),

Jeremiah 11:4 which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, **from the iron furnace**, saying, 'Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God,'

Isaiah 48:10 "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; **I have tested you in the furnace of affliction**

Dt 7:6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for **His own possession** out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

Dt 14:2 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for **His own possession** out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

### ISRAEL'S RESCUE FROM THE EGYPTIAN FURNACE OF AFFLICTION

In this passage we see two reasons for God's prohibition against idolatry - (1) He redeemed them from slavery in Egypt and (2) He owns them as His possession.

Notice also that in preceding context Moses had just mentioned **all the peoples under the whole heaven** (Dt 4:19b). Here Moses reminds them that God brought Israel out of the world (as symbolized by Egypt) to be a distinctive, separated, holy people to the unholy world. The moment they began to intermingle with the pagan world, they began to lose their distinctive character as the possession of God! This principle of separation is repeatedly emphasized in both testaments...

Leviticus 11:44+ 'For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth.

1 Peter 1:14-16+ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, 15 but like the Holy One who called you, **be** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) holy yourselves also in all your behavior; 16 because it is written, "YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY."

**THOUGHT** - The question one must ask is "Has the church in America lost her distinctiveness, her sense of being in the world but not of the world, her charge to be salt to preserve a morally crumbling society and her charge to be light to demonstrate holiness to an unholy world?" It was Spurgeon who said that "A holy church is an awful weapon in the hand of God."

**Brought you out of the iron furnace from Egypt** - This "redemptive refrain" echoes throughout the Old Testament...

Deuteronomy 9:26+ "I prayed to the LORD and said, 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people, even **Your inheritance**, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have **brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand**.

Deuteronomy 9:29+'Yet they are Your people, even **Your inheritance**, whom You have **brought out by Your great power and Your outstretched arm**.'

**THOUGHT** - This truth recalls a NT passage from Col 1:13-14+ "For He **rescued** us from the domain of darkness, and **transferred** us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, 14in whom we have redemption, the

forgiveness of sins."

**Bob Utley on iron furnace from Egypt** - A furnace takes unusable ore, heats it and makes it usable metal. This is an analogy of what God did to Israel in Egypt (cf. 1 Ki. 8:51; Jer. 11:4 and the same metaphor in Isa. 48:10).

**Jack Deere** - Another reason Israel was to denounce all forms of idolatry is that she was taken **out of Egypt**, an idolatrous land where the images of dozens of false gods were worshiped. (The fact that Israel was taken out of Egypt is mentioned about 20 times in Deut.) In slavery to Egypt, Israel's condition was like being in an **iron-smelting furnace**. But **now** Israel was God's **inheritance**, that is, His own unique possession (cf. Dt 9:26, 29; Ps 28:9; 33:12; 68:9; 78:62, 71; 79:1; 94:14; Joel 2:17; 3:2; Micah 7:14, 18). ([Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** - A fire was used to heat iron sufficiently to be hammered into different shapes or welded to other objects. The **iron furnace** here suggests that Israel's time in Egypt was a period of ordeal, testing, and purifying for the Hebrews, readying them for usefulness as God's witness nation. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Wiersbe** - God proved Himself greater than all the gods of Egypt, so why worship them? (A RHETORICAL QUESTION! ANSWER - DON'T!) ([Be Equipped](#))

**Bible Background Commentary on furnace** - The ancient world did not have the blast furnace, which is used today to produce cast iron. Iron has a melting point of 1,537 degrees C., a temperature that could not be consistently achieved with ancient technology. But once the iron is heated beyond 1,100 degrees C., it takes a spongy, semisolid form that can be forged. The furnace was usually fueled by charcoal to provide the carbon necessary for the chemical process. The strength of the steel is dependent on the amount of carbon it is able to absorb. The lower the temperature, the more often the process has to be repeated in order to get rid of enough slag to achieve a usable product. While a furnace can certainly be a metaphor of oppression, the fire of the smelting furnace is not destructive but constructive. It is the furnace that transforms the malleable ore to the durable iron product. The exodus experience transformed Israel into the covenant people of God. ([The IVP Bible Background Commentary](#))

**Earl S Kalland on furnace** - "The earliest "furnaces" were holes in the ground into which the ore and charcoal were placed. This mixture was set afire and superheated through blow pipes. Such pipes were later replaced by bellows.....The use of metal by heating certain ores and then hammering the metallic residue or welding it to other parts while still hot may have appeared in the Near East in the first half of the third millennium B.C., but the manufacture of iron objects (usually weapons) was very limited till 1500 B.C. and later. Though the 'furnaces' of the OT world could not be heated sufficiently to make molten iron, artisans had learned to use bellows to make the hottest fire then known; and they knew that the hottest fire they could produce was necessary for their iron productions. '**Out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt**' does not mean to imply that iron-smelting furnaces were in Egypt at that time. Rather, bringing Israel out of Egypt was like bringing her out of an iron-smelting furnace-the heavy bondage of Egypt with its accompanying difficulties and tensions being likened to the hottest fire then known." ([The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 3: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel](#))

**POSB** - Egypt is a symbol of the enslavement of the world. Being enslaved is a terrible experience: it is just like living in an iron furnace. But God had saved His people out of enslavement, saved them to be His very special people, His very special inheritance and possession.

**Furnace** ([03564](#)) (**kur**) means kiln, furnace, smelter's furnace for the refining of metal. All uses refer to a figurative furnace - testing of hearts (Pr 17:3), analogous to the test of praise (Pr 27:21), refined by affliction (Isa 48:10), land of Egypt as place Israel was subjected to affliction (Dt 4:20, 1 Ki 8:51, Jer 11:4)

**Kur** is "cognate to Akkadian *kuru* and, like it, refers not to a source of heat but to a crucible in which precious metals were melted down and freed of their impurities. Egypt was such a crucible, a place God used to purify his people and make them more fit for servanthood (cf. Gen 15:13-16; 50:19-21; 1 Kgs 8:50-51)." (Merrill)

"The term is a metaphor for intense heat. Here it refers to the oppression and suffering Israel endured in Egypt. Since a crucible was used to burn away impurities, it is possible that the metaphor views Egypt as a place of refinement to bring Israel to a place of submission to divine sovereignty." (NET Note)

**John Oswalt** - Three times **kur** is used of Egypt, from which Israel was delivered (Deut. 4:20; 1 Kings 8:51; Jeremiah 11:4). In these references there seems to be no stress upon refinement, but merely on the heat symbolizing affliction. On the other hand, the furnace of the exile is definitely depicted as one of refinement (Ezekiel 22:18, 20, 22) from which Israel will once more emerge as God's chosen (Isaiah 48:10). (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)

**Gilbrant** on kur - Occurring nine times in the Hebrew Bible, the noun *kûr* has cognates meaning "hearth" (Arabic, Christian Palestinian Aramaic, Syriac) and "smelting furnace" (Akkadian, Old South Arabian, Ethiopic,

Middle Hebrew and Targumic). The latter is the meaning of this noun in the Hebrew Bible. Kur refers to a furnace which is used exclusively to process metallic ores. It is never used in a narrative sense, but instead as a simile or metaphor.

Three times kur is found in construct with the noun "iron" (Deut. 4:20; 1 Kings 8:51; Jer. 11:4). In each case, it refers to the act of Yahweh in freeing the Israelites from "Egypt, from the iron furnace." The syntactical construction demonstrates the function of the furnace, rather than its construction. Furnaces were made of brick or stone. The same type of linguistic construction is found in Isa. 48:10, as the prophet explains the political calamities which were to befall Judah as a refining process, a way to extract dross, in which Yahweh "tried [them] in the furnace of affliction." The metaphor is indeed appropriate, as the people were defiled, unworthy of being in Yahweh's presence. This is akin to the concept of ritual purification, as any hint of corruption must leave the individual who approached the Temple or lived in the desert camp.

Ezekiel uses the noun in the course of a simile repeatedly in Ezek. 22. All of the house of Israel had become dross in the furnace in the eyes of Yahweh (Ezek 22:18). Yahweh's wrath would fuel the furnace to purify the people (Ezek 22:20, 22). ([Complete Biblical Library - Incredible Resource](#))

#### **Kur** - 9v in the OT all translated **furnace**

Deuteronomy 4:20 "But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, from Egypt, to be a people for His own possession, as today.

1 Kings 8:51 (for they are Your people and Your inheritance which You have brought forth from Egypt, from the midst of the iron **furnace**),

Proverbs 17:3 The refining pot is for silver and the **furnace** for gold, But the LORD tests hearts.

Proverbs 27:21 The crucible is for silver and the **furnace** for gold, And each is tested by the praise accorded him.

Isaiah 48:10 "Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the **furnace** of affliction.

Jeremiah 11:4 which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron **furnace**, saying, 'Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God,'

Ezekiel 22:18 "Son of man, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; all of them are bronze and tin and iron and lead in the **furnace**; they are the dross of silver.

Ezekiel 22:20 'As they gather silver and bronze and iron and lead and tin into the **furnace** to blow fire on it in order to melt it, so I will gather you in My anger and in My wrath and I will lay you there and melt you.

Ezekiel 22:22 'As silver is melted in the furnace, so you will be melted in the midst of it; and you will know that I, the LORD, have poured out My wrath on you.'"

**THOUGHT** - These truths about the **iron furnace** beg the question beloved - "Are you in God's crucible of affliction or trial?" Dr Wiersbe has one of my favorite descriptions to help understand why God's children must go through the "furnace of affliction"...

When God puts His own people into the furnace, He keeps His eye on the clock and His hand on the [thermostat](#). He knows how long and how much. (If we rebel, He may have to reset the clock; but if we submit, He will not permit us to suffer one minute too long. The important thing is that we learn the lesson He wants to teach us and that we bring glory to Him alone.) We may question why He does it to begin with, or why He doesn't turn down the heat or even turn it off; but our questions are only evidences of unbelief. (Job 23:10-[note](#)) is the answer: "But He knows the way that I take; when He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold" (NKJV). Gold does not fear the fire. The furnace can only make the gold purer and brighter." (Wiersbe, W. Be Patient. An Old Testament study) (For more on Why God tests His beloved children see notes on 1 Peter 1:7)

**(One more illustration) ARE YOU IN GOD'S "POUNDER ROOM"?** - The Most High God is in control of all the adverse and difficult circumstances of our lives. You may be going through an adverse experience as you read these notes. Let's call it, for illustration purposes, a "*STEINWAY EXPERIENCE*" (read on). If you had to name the most famous piano, the one that produced the most beautiful sound in the world which one would you name? Most people would say "Steinway". The Steinway piano has been preferred by keyboard masters such as Rachmaninoff, Horowitz, Cliburn, and Liszt and for good reason. It is a skillfully crafted instrument that



produces a phenomenal sound. Steinway pianos are built today the same way they were 140 years ago when Henry Steinway started his business. 200 craftsmen and 12,000 parts are required to produce one of these magnificent instruments. Most crucial is the rim-bending process, where 18 layers of maple are bent around an iron press to create the shape of a Steinway grand. Five coats of lacquer are applied and then hand-rubbed to give the piano its outer glow. The instrument then goes into the "Pounder Room", where each key is pounded 10,000 times to ensure quality and durability. Followers of Jesus Christ, much like the grand Steinway, are being "handcrafted" with all of the steps being watched over and directed by our Most High God, [El Elyon](#), the One Who is in sovereign control of every detail of this process often referred to as (progressive) "sanctification". We are being pressed and formed and shaped for a divine purpose, that we might "*become conformed* (molded with an inner and essential and not merely superficial conformity) *to the image of His Son*" (Ro 8:29-[note](#)). We are being polished, sometimes with what seems like excessive "rubbing of affliction", until we "glow." We are then being continually tested in the laboratory of everyday human experience. The process of sanctification is not always pleasant, but we can persevere with hope (absolute assurance of future good), knowing that our lives will increasingly reflect the beauty of holiness to the eternal praise of the Most High God. Amen.

Are you going through a Steinway Piano experience? Is the [Most High God](#) bending, shaping, or polishing you right now? Can I trust [El Elyon](#) Who is in control of circumstances, demonic spirits, life/death, kings & nations? Knowing the truth about His Name El Elyon can I thank Him even in the painful times?

Remember that He does not allow trials to provoke us or destroy us but to refine us & ultimately make us more like Jesus...Never forget the grand purpose for which He created you – to give Him glory.

God brought Israel out of Egypt, but could not get Egypt (and her idols) out of Israel.

Later Moses affirms that Israel belongs to God

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for **His own possession** (Hebrew = cegullah = treasured possession = valued personal property, what is owned by someone, which the owner has special affection or holds special value) out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Dt 7:6)

"For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for **His own possession** (Hebrew = cegullah - see above) out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Dt 14:2)

## **ISRAEL GOD'S TREASURED POSSESSION**

**Thompson** - The recognition of their high status in God's sight should have had profound consequences for their behaviour.

**THOUGHT** - Knowing who we are in Christ and who we will be in Him forever should be a strong motivator to godly living. E.g., see the hope (hope sure, not hope so) that we will be like Him is a purifying hope - "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. 3And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. " (1 John 3:2-3+)

**His own possession** - This truth is also described in terms of sonship several times in Deuteronomy. Inheritance language presupposes sonship, for the heir was the firstborn son, a description already used of Israel in Ex 4:22 where God describes them as "Israel is My son, My firstborn."

Deuteronomy 1:31 and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, **just as a man carries his son**, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place.'

Deuteronomy 8:5 "Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you **just as a man disciplines his son**.

Deuteronomy 14:1 "**You are the sons of the LORD your God** you shall not cut yourselves nor shave your forehead for the sake of the dead.

Deuteronomy 32:6 "Do you thus repay the LORD, O foolish and unwise people? **Is not He your Father who has bought you?** He has made you and established you.

**Utley on His own possession** - This was a special title for YHWH's covenant people (e.g., Ex 19:5; Dt. 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Titus 2:14; and 1 Pet. 2:9). They have a divine inheritance (YHWH and land) because YHWH had chosen them even before creation (cf. 32:8–9; Ps. 33:6–12; Jer. 10:16; 51:19) to represent Himself to the world. -

**Possession** (gift, heritage) (05159)(**nachalah** from **nāḥal** = signifies giving or receiving property which is part of a permanent possession and as a result of succession) means Inheritance, heritage, possession. A possession is any piece of property that passes by law to an heir on the death of the owner. It also speaks of God's promises to His people, such as the promise of the land to national (redeemed **remnant**) Israel.

**NET Note** - "to be his people of inheritance." The Lord compares his people to valued property inherited from one's ancestors and passed on to one's descendants. (ED: IS THIS NOT AMAZING GRACE!)

**Gilbrant on nachalah** - Land in Israelite society was understood as the possession of Yahweh, Who led the people into the land and conquered the territory for them. This land was then divided among the estates of the people of the day. This redistribution was understood to be permanent (Lev. 25:23). Thus, land could not permanently change hands (which explains the function of the Day of Jubilee, which insured that all land would return to those who had original access to the land). The point of this permanent division was to prevent the formation of large estates, which would necessarily create a subordinate landless peasantry. This same system reached the zenith early in the history of Babylon, its death witnessed by a genre of inscriptions known as kudurrus.

The result of laws about the land is that the land became non-transferable. The best illustration of this legal custom is attested in the account of Ahab's desire to obtain Naboth's vineyard (1 Ki. 21). Though Ahab was the king of the northern kingdom of Israel, his attempts to get Naboth's land were rebuffed, for the land was his *nachālāh*, and thus, not for sale. Only by falsely accusing Naboth of blasphemy did Ahab obtain the land, for it would be forfeited, as his estate and inheritance would be seized by the crown. After Naboth and his family were stoned as a result of this perjury, Ahab took possession of the land.

Redeeming of land was also allowed for within Israelite society. This was to keep land and persons within the tribal structure. A person who was closely related to an individual who was in dire financial straits was to pay to keep the land from being taken away from the kin group. Discretion was allowed in pursuing redemption (cf. Ruth 4). Thus, the land would remain distributed in a way to reduce gross imbalances in wealth. Indeed, Ezekiel's vision of the eschatological kingdom is a world in which even the resident-aliens have access to a *nachālāh* (47:22f).

Other possessions are denoted by this noun. For example, Israel is a people of inalienable possession for Yahweh (Deut. 4:20). Likewise, the Levites received no property as *nachālāh*, but instead had Yahweh as their inheritance (Num. 26:62). They had access to the wealth given to the Temple, as many of the offerings went to them rather than being consumed during the ritual activity.

*Nachālāh* also has non-legal nuances. An extension from the concept of inheritance, a relegated possession, is found in the concept of divine punishment. It is the inheritance of those who have done evil that they should have a perpetually horrible existence (cf. Job 20:29). Conversely a blessing will be given to the righteous (Ps. 37:18). Children (Ps. 127:3) were the *nachālāh* of the people from Yahweh. ([Complete Biblical Library - Incredible Resource](#))

**Leonard Coppes** - Involved in a study of this root is the extensive biblical teaching on "inheritance." Our summary will be grouped around the inheritance God gives the godly, the social and legal regulations governing the land. Jehovah's possession, and God as the inheritance/heritage of the godly.

The whole earth belongs to its Creator (Psalm 47:4 [H 5]) and he so governs all things that Israel received his special possession (Deut. 32:8f.; Exodus 15:17) the land fit for kings flowing with milk and honey (Deut. 31:20), the place representing true salvation (Deut. 12:9; Cf. Hebrews 3:17—4:13, and *nūah*). Thus, the Bible represents God as the great King (Judges 8:23; 1 Samuel 12:12), the feudal Lord (Deut. 32:8) who sovereignly partitions his land to man (cf. KD; Isaiah 49:8; Isaiah 57:13), and obligates his subjects to render personal services. As deVaux says, the widely spread ancient near eastern feudal idea was in Israel transferred to the theological plane (AI, p. 164). Hence, he promised (Genesis 12:7; Exodus 32:13), and gave Palestine (Joshua 21:43ff., etc.) to Israel as a perpetual inheritance (Exodus 32:13) contingent upon obedience to his law (e.g. Numbers 33:50-54). Little by little God would drive out the inhabitants of Canaan (Exodus 23:30). This gift, however, was to be conquered (Josh) by stages. Once inhabited, the land was to be recognized as God's, and was to be preserved as holy by cleansing it (Deut. 20:16),

keeping it cleansed (e.g. Deut. 21:23), and dedicating it to God (Deut. 26:1ff.). Disobedience was sovereignly punished (Jeremiah 16:9; Jeremiah 17:4). The eschaton will see reoccupation of the land which is conceived either literally or in its spiritual reality according to one's viewpoint about the millennium (KD; Ezekiel 47:14; Isaiah 57:13; cf. Hebrews 12:25-29).

The division of the land by lot prior to its conquest expressed divine sovereignty (Numbers 26:56) as well known in the ancient near east (AI, p. 165). For a brief summary of the laws governing the partition and inheritance of the land, cf. R. E. Nixon, "Inheritance," in NBD, pp. 562-63. For a treatment of the theological significance, see R. J. Rushdoony, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, Nutley, Craig Press, 1973. He treats of family economics (p. 174ff.), responsibility of firstborn including family responsibility to care for single women (p. 179f.; also D. Leggett, *The Levirate and Goel Institutions*, Cherry Hill: Mack 1974, limited primogeniture (p. 180f.), landmarks as representative of social, moral, and spiritual inheritance (p. 328ff.: Hosea 5:10), indeed, representative of life itself (pp. 166, 169: cf. KD: Deut. 19:14; Deut. 20:19-20).

God's special created, chosen heritage is the people of Israel (Deut. 4:20; Exodus 34:9; cf. Acts 15:16ff.: Ephes. 1:3-4). This blessed position (Psalm 33:12) was the basis for special petitions (Deut. 9:26, 29; Psalm 28:9) and confidence (Micah 7:14, 18; Psalm 94:14; cf. Psalm 37:18). Because God is their Lord they should not own/possess one another as property (Leviticus 25:47ff.; cf. KD; Isaiah 14:2; Zeph. 2:9). God also has special permanent rights over all the nations (Psalm 82:8; Psalm 2:8-9; cf. KD).

The true spiritual heritage of the godly (Psalm 111:6f.; Psalm 37:18; KD; Jeremiah 12:14-17) was especially and figuratively represented by Aaron, the priests, and the Levites who had no property to class on to their sons (however, note KD on Numbers 18:20f.), but who really had the greatest heritage of all—the Lord himself (Joshua 18:7; KD; Ezekiel 47:22). ([Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

**Nachlah** - 192 v - gift(1), give(1), hereditary(1), heritage(14), heritages(1), inheritance(197), inheritances(1), portion(1), possession(7).

Gen. 31:14; 48:6; Exod. 15:17; Num. 16:14; 18:20f,23f,26; 26:53f,56,62; 27:7ff; 32:18f,32; 33:54; 34:2,14f; 35:2,8; 36:2ff,7ff,12; Deut. 3:28; 4:20f,38; 9:26,29; 10:9; 12:9,12; 14:27,29; 15:4; 18:1f; 19:10,14; 20:16; 21:23; 24:4; 25:19; 26:1; 29:8; 32:9; Jos. 11:23; 13:6ff,14,23,28,33; 14:2f,9,13f; 15:20; 16:5,8f; 17:4,6,14; 18:2,4,7,20,28; 19:1f,8ff,16,23,31,39,41,48f,51; 21:3; 23:4; 24:28,30,32; Jdg. 2:6,9; 18:1; 20:6; 21:23f; Ruth 4:5f,10; 1 Sam. 10:1; 26:19; 2 Sam. 14:16; 20:1,19; 21:3; 1 Ki. 8:36,51,53; 12:16; 21:3f; 2 Ki. 21:14; 1 Chr. 16:18; 2 Chr. 6:27; 10:16; Neh. 11:20; Job 20:29; 27:13; 31:2; 42:15; Ps. 2:8; 16:6; 28:9; 33:12; 37:18; 47:4; 68:9; 74:2; 78:55,62,71; 79:1; 94:5,14; 105:11; 106:5,40; 111:6; 127:3; 135:12; 136:21f; Prov. 17:2; 19:14; 20:21; Eccl. 7:11; Isa. 19:25; 47:6; 49:8; 54:17; 58:14; 63:17; Jer. 2:7; 3:19; 10:16; 12:7ff,14f; 16:18; 17:4; 50:11; 51:19; Lam. 5:2; Ezek. 35:15; 36:12; 44:28; 45:1; 46:16ff; 47:14,22f; 48:29; Joel 2:17; 3:2; Mic. 2:2; 7:14,18; Mal. 1:3

Below are few representative uses

Psalm 2:8 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your (Messiah) **possession**.

Psalm 74:2 Remember Your congregation, which You have purchased of old, Which You have redeemed to be the tribe of Your **inheritance**; And this Mount Zion, where You have dwelt.

Psalm 78:55 He also drove out the nations before them And apportioned them for an **inheritance** by measurement, And made the tribes of Israel dwell in their tents.

Psalm 79:1 A Psalm of Asaph. O God, the nations have invaded Your **inheritance**; They have defiled Your holy temple; They have laid Jerusalem in ruins.

Psalm 94:14 For the LORD will not abandon His people, Nor will He forsake His **inheritance**.

Psalm 105:11 Saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan As the portion of your inheritance," (THE LAND TO ISRAEL NOT THE CHURCH)

Psalm 127:3 Behold, children are a **gift** of the LORD, The fruit of the womb is a reward.

Psalm 135:12 And He gave their land as a **heritage**, A **heritage** to Israel His people. (THE LAND TO ISRAEL NOT THE CHURCH)

Isaiah 54:17 "No weapon that is formed against you will prosper; And every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, And their vindication is from

Me," declares the LORD.

Isaiah 58:14 Then you will take delight in the LORD, And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; And I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Jeremiah 12:15 "And it will come about that after I have uprooted them, I will again have compassion on them; and I will bring them back, each one to his inheritance and each one to his land.

Ezekiel 48:29 "This is **the land** which you shall divide by lot to the tribes of Israel for an **inheritance**, and these are their several portions," declares the Lord GOD.

**Comment:** Given the fact that Ezekiel 40-48 describes the time of the [Millennium](#) (if the Bible is read and interpreted literally), it is notable that THE LAND is not specified as being divided by lot to the CHURCH. The land promise here in Ge 12:7-note are for national (redeemed [remnant](#)) Israel, not the Church.

**To be a people for His own possession, as today**- (NET - "His special people"; NLT - "His special possession," ESV - "a people for His own inheritance") When Israel was redeemed (symbolically by the blood of a lamb Ex 12:7, 12, 13, 14, cp 1 Cor 5:7, 1 Pe 1:18-19) they were no longer their own for they had been bought with a price (which is what redemption is = paying the ransom to set the slaves free) and had a new Lord or Master, a foreshadowing of the truth about believers in the New Testament...

## OLD TESTAMENT

Exodus 19:5-6 After God had 'Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be **My own possession** among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel."

Deuteronomy 32:9 "For **the LORD'S portion is His people**; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.

Psalms 135:4 For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself, Israel for **His own possession**.

Psalms 78:62 He also delivered His people to the sword, And was filled with wrath at His inheritance.

Psalms 78:71 From the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him To shepherd Jacob His people, And Israel His inheritance.

(See also - Dt 9:26, 29; Ps. 28:9; Ps 33:12; Ps 68:9; Ps 79:1; Ps 94:14; Joel 2:17; 3:2; Micah 7:14, 18).

## NEW TESTAMENT

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 [note](#) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that **you are not your own**? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

Titus 2:14 [note](#) (Christ) Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself **a people for His own possession**, zealous for good deeds.

1 Peter 2:9 [note](#) But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, **A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION**, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

**As today** - (CSB, NET - "as you are today", Amplified, ESV = "as you are this day." NLT = "which is what you are today") - Kalland has an interesting observation on this little phrase "**as today**" - In vv.15 and 23 Moses strongly exhorted the people to watch themselves very carefully (see [Notes](#) on v.9). Idolatry corrupts and the nature of that corruption is infidelity to the Lord. This infidelity is not consonant with their standing as the people of his inheritance, the citation of which is followed by the simple, common (but here delightful) phrase "as you now are." In the same way in the NT, the apostle John writes: "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! **And that is what we are!**" (1 John 3:1 [note](#)); the latter clause is missing in the KJV). Here in Deuteronomy it has just been said that Israel had been brought out of Egypt "**to be the people of his inheritance.**" "**As you now are**" says that the expectation had been realized. At that moment Israel was "the people of his inheritance" in actuality."([The Expositor's Bible Commentary – Volume 3: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel](#))

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## F B Meyer - Our Daily Homily

Deuteronomy 4:20 The Lord hath taken you to be unto Him a people of inheritance.

The Apostle prays that we may know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in his saints. God is our inheritance, and we are his. We are called to possess Him; He desires to possess us. His nature will yield crops of holy helpfulness to those who diligently seek

Him; and He demands crops of holy love and devotion from ours.

**What Sovereign Grace is here!** — There was nothing in us to distinguish us from others. We were but part of the great moorland waste, when He fenced us in, and placed us under his tillage and husbandry. It is by the grace of God that we are what we are. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved: in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

**What responsibility!** — Three times over in this chapter we are bidden to take heed to ourselves. It is no small thing to have been the subjects of God's special workmanship; because He is a jealous God, very quick to mark the least symptom of declension, and very searching in his dealing and discipline. As we learn here, our God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. (see Dt 4:24 [note](#))

**What Hope!** — We cannot derive much from ourselves, however we toil and strive. Self cannot discipline self to any advantage. The field is worked out. The Divine Husbandman must put into us what He would take out of us; He needs therefore to have almost infinite resources. But these are God's, and if we yield ourselves to Him, He can make all grace abound towards us, that we, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound unto every good work.

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## Ian Paisley - The Iron Furnace

- "But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day." Deuteronomy 4:20

God likened the sufferings and temptations of Israel in Egypt to the affliction of an iron furnace. And so it was

### I. The Iron Furnace of the Blight of Sin

Like Israel we too have been in Egypt and the iron furnace has been our awesome experience. How cruel and excruciating is the iron furnace blight of sin to our souls. So terrible was the blight of sin in the iron furnace of Egypt that Israel turned to the worship of devils, an abomination which pursued them during their wilderness journey. See Leviticus 17:7. How terrible is the blight of sin.

### II. The Iron Furnace of the Bondage of Slavery

Joseph in his imprisonment in Egypt was a prophetic type of the imprisonment of the nation of Israel in Egypt. Of Joseph in the bondage of Egypt we read these striking words, "he was laid in iron" Psalm 105:17. Again the bondage, the bondage of slavery, is described in Psalm 107:10 "Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron." It is from this iron furnace of the bondage of slavery in Egypt from which our God delivers us.

### III. The Iron Furnace of the Bitterness of Slaughter

Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. Pharaoh heated his iron furnace, like Nebuchadnezzar, seven times more, in order to slaughter all the male babes of Israel. He planned the total genocide of the race, ordering the midwives to strangle them all at birth and when that failed, the River Nile was to be the monster devouring every male child. What an iron furnace this really was.

But from it our God delivers! Hallelujah (A Text A Day Keeps the Devil Away)

**Deuteronomy 4:21 "Now the LORD was angry with me on your account, and swore that I would not cross the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance."**

- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## Related Passages: Moses' sin and consequences

Deuteronomy 1:37+ "The LORD was angry with me also on your account, saying, 'Not even you shall enter there.'

Deuteronomy 3:26+ "But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, 'Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter.'

Deuteronomy 31:2+ And he said to them, "I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross this Jordan.'

Numbers 20:12+ But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as



holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

Psalms 106:32; 33 They also provoked Him to wrath at the waters of Meribah, So that it went hard with Moses on their account; Because they were rebellious against His Spirit, He spoke rashly with his lips.

## **SO NEAR AND YET SO FAR!**

**Now the LORD was angry with me on your account, and swore that I would not cross the Jordan, and that I would not enter the good land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.** - **On your account** is not Moses saying he did not sin, but that he sinned because Israel sinned and their sin made him angry and he sinned! He calls it not the promised land but the "good land" here and in the next verse. Moses point was that if this was the judgment on him (to keep him out of the land), then what could a stubborn and rebellious people expect but to be removed from the land, which is exactly what happened! (Cp prophetic warnings in - Dt 28:21, Dt 28:63, prediction of Israel's idolatry - Dt 31:16, 20)

See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; 16 in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. 17 “But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I declare to you today that **you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land** where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. 19 "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, (Dt 30:15-19+)

**Wiersbe** - When Moses smote the rock instead of speaking to it, God graciously supplied an abundance of water for His thirsty people, but He disciplined His servant who glorified himself instead of glorifying the Lord. God alone is God, and He alone must be glorified. “I am the Lord; that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another” (Isa. 42:8). ([Be Equipped](#))

**McIntosh** - Moses thus became a picture of privileges lost by compromise. His relationship with God was fully functional. His sins were forgiven, and he was being used by God in worthwhile ministry. Still, his experience shows that our choices have enduring consequences that cannot be overcome even by godly sorrow and repentance. (Holman Old Testament Commentary – Deuteronomy)

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### **R C Sproul - The Sin of Moses**

- The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he solemnly swore that I would not cross the Jordan and enter the good land the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance. [Deut. 4:21]

We have seen that each time God renewed the covenant with his people, the first thing they did was to sin against him. Yet God remained faithful each time, renewing the covenant despite the sin. In the case of Israel, God initially removed himself from the camp when the people sinned at the golden calf, but after the tabernacle was built he moved back into their midst (Exodus 32–33, 40). The people sinned numerous times after this, but God forgave them again and again. Finally, when they refused to fight the giants and take the promised land, God cut them off. He declared that they had rebelled ten times (Num. 14:22–23) and that all of them would die in the wilderness. Their children would inherit the kingdom they had lost. Moses renewed the covenant with the children, telling them that he too would die in the wilderness. To understand why Moses was excluded from entering Canaan, we look at two incidents. In Exodus 17 it is told that Israel ran out of water soon after they came out of Egypt. They grumbled against Moses and put God on a kind of trial. God told Moses to take his rod of judgment and strike a rock in the presence of the law court of elders, and water would come forth. God put his glory cloud on the rock, and Moses brought the rod of judgment down on God and the rock, and water came out (Exod. 17:5–6). God was taking on the judgment the people deserved, and on that basis they were given water. A symbol is here shown to the people of an event they then could not understand, for it would be far in the future. One day the Messiah would be smitten on the cross, and water mixed with blood would pour from his side (John 19:34). A refreshing miracle for them has become a picture for us. Years later the congregation again needed water and God told Moses to take Aaron’s rod (the rod of prayer, not judgment) and speak to a rock, and water would come forth. The sins of the people angered Moses, however, and he lost his temper and struck the rock twice. God graciously gave water anyway, but he told Moses that, because he had failed to treat God as holy, Moses would not enter the land of promise (Num. 20:2–13).

**Coram Deo** - Read and meditate on Numbers 20:12. To Moses much had been given. The biblical principle seems to be operating here that from Moses much was required. God let the people off nine times, but Moses only did one thing wrong, and he received



the same punishment. Was this a “fair” punishment? What does Moses know about God’s holiness? What do you know about God? Read James 3 to get more insight into the principle involved.

**Deuteronomy 4:22** "For I will die in this land, I shall not cross the Jordan, but you shall cross and take possession of this good land.

- Dt 3:25-27 1 Ki 13:21,22 Am 3:2 Heb 12:6-10 2Pe 1:13-15
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**For** - Term of explanation. Moses is explaining the result of the the anger of the LORD.

**I will die in this land, I shall not cross the Jordan** - Earlier Moses had pleaded with God to let him enter the promised land

Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.' 26'But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, 'Enough! Speak to Me no more of this matter. 27'Go up to the top of [Pisgah](#) and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. (Dt 3:25-27+)

**I shall not cross the Jordan** - Moses could only see from a distance.

"Go up to this mountain of the Abarim, [Mount Nebo](#) (~[Mount Pisgah](#))([picture](#)), which is in the land of Moab opposite Jericho, and look at the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the sons of Israel for a possession. 50 "Then die on the mountain where you ascend, and be gathered to your people, as Aaron your brother died on Mount Hor and was gathered to his people, 51 **because you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel.** 52 "For you shall see the land at a distance, but you shall not go there, into the land which I am giving the sons of Israel." (Dt 32:49-52)

Then the LORD said to him, "This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants'; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there." (Dt 34:4+)

**THOUGHT** Beloved, let me encourage you to take a short break and listen to an instrumental song [Mt Nebo](#) by Twila Paris. And as you do, I think you will find yourself contemplating what Moses must have felt on that mountain as he took his last look over the **good land** he would not be allowed to enter. While Twila's song has no words, every time I listen to it, it moves me deeply, at times to the point of tears, because I imagine myself making my last ascent up the mountain. What will I feel as I contemplate that "heavenly good land?" More to point will I have regrets, sadness or sorrow -- is there someone I have sinned against and failed to seek forgiveness, is there unforgiveness (bitterness, anger, etc) in my heart against anyone, did I really lay aside every encumbrance and the sin that so easily entangled me, and the list goes on (you probably have your own personal list). (Another song to listen to is [When It's All Been Said and Done](#))

**Doug McIntosh on Moses' disobedience** - Moses thus became a picture of privileges lost by compromise. His relationship with God was fully functional. His sins were forgiven, and he was being used by God in worthwhile ministry. Still, his experience shows that our choices have enduring consequences that cannot be overcome even by godly sorrow and repentance. ([Holman Old Testament Commentary](#))

**Deuteronomy 4:23** "So **watch** yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything *against* which the LORD your God has commanded you.

- **So watch yourselves:** De 4:9,15,16 27:9 Jos 23:11 Mt 24:4 Lu 12:15 21:8 Heb 3:12
- **that you do not forget:** De 6:12 29:25 31:20 Jos 23:16 1Ch 16:15 Isa 24:5 Jer 31:22 Eze 16:59
- **make for yourselves:** De 4:16 Ex 20:4,5
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**Amplified** (2015) So be on your guard *and* watch yourselves, so that you do not forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He has made with you, and make for yourselves a carved *or* sculpted image in the

form of anything which the Lord your God has forbidden you.

**ESV** Take care, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make a carved image, the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you.

**NET** Be on guard so that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he has made with you, and that you do not make an image of any kind, just as he has forbidden you.

**NLT** So be careful not to break the covenant the LORD your God has made with you. Do not make idols of any shape or form, for the LORD your God has forbidden this.

## THE WARNING AGAINST IDOLATRY REPEATED

Compare similar strong warning in Dt 4:15-[note](#).

**So** - Term of conclusion. In light of what happened to Moses because of his disobedience.

**Watch yourselves** - Why does Moses warn then again? What has he just reminded them about his own situation? Moses the servant of God sinned and suffered the consequence of exclusion from the promised land. If God did not "wink" at the sin of His "servant" Moses, then neither will He "wink" if Israel sins, especially regarding the sin of idolatry which is emphasized in Dt 4:15-24.

**Watch** ([08104](#)) ([shamar](#)) means to guard yourselves and is a command not a suggestion. The Septuagint translates shamar here with [prosecho](#) which primarily means to hold one's mind toward something and then to give heed or pay close attention. [Prosecho](#) is in the [present imperative](#) which is a command to continually maintain a high state of spiritual alertness! No furloughs allowed!

**That you do not forget the covenant** - NLT paraphrases that Israel "not break the covenant." In context the antidote for forgetfulness is to continually watch yourselves! There is a NT parallel in the book of Hebrews...

For this reason (read Hebrews 1:1-14 for the reason) we must (verb = [dei](#) = not optional but mandatory to) **pay** much closer **attention to** ([prosecho](#) = same verb used in Lxx of Dt 4:23 and in [present tense](#) calls for continual alertness) what we have heard (parallels what Israel heard in Dt 4:1-22), (HERE IS THE DANGER) lest we drift away from it ([pararrhueo](#) = a gradual, almost unnoticed slipping away. In secular Greek it was used of a ship allowed to drift past harbor because a sailor failed to attend to steerage. It was used of a ring slipping from one's finger) (Hebrews 2:1+)

**Forget** ([07911](#))([shakach/shakah](#)) means to **forget**, ignore, to cease to care, (*Niphal*) to be forgotten, (*Piel*) to cause to forget, (*Hiphil*) to make or cause to forget, (*Hithpael*) to be forgotten. [Shakach/shakah](#) indicates that something has been lost to memory, or a period of time has softened the memory of it...It is an especially important word with respect to God and His people. The Septuagint translates **shakach** with the Greek verb [epilanthanomai](#) ([epí](#) = intensifies + [lantháno](#) = lie hidden or concealed) conveys 2 basic nuances in the NT, to **forget** (not recall information concerning something) or to **neglect** (give little attention to, to omit by carelessness or design). The [epi-](#) preposition intensifies the meaning as noted and thus the idea is not just forgetting but "completely forgetting." What a horrible thought -- that God's chosen people would completely forget their Maker and their Redeemer Who brought them "**out of the iron furnace from Egypt**." (Dt 4:20) It strikes me that one of the best impediments against forgetting the good that God has wrought in our lives is to continually maintain (enabled by the Spirit) an attitude of gratitude (1 Th 5:18+). It is difficult for thankful people to become forgetful people!

**Shakach** occurs 15 times in Deuteronomy - Deut. 4:9; Deut. 4:23; Deut. 4:31; Deut. 6:12; Deut. 8:11; Deut. 8:14; Deut. 8:19 (twice); Deut. 9:7; Deut. 24:19 (twice); Deut. 25:19; Deut. 26:13; Deut. 31:21;

**The covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you**- This refers to the Mosaic Covenant, the covenant of the Law, which as noted was in a sense a "marriage covenant" because God was Israel's husband (Isa 54:5) and the covenant stipulated commands calling for faithful obedience, even as a loving, loyal wife would be faithful to her loving, kind husband.

**Covenant** ([01285](#))([berit/berith/beriyth](#)) was the most solemn, binding agreement that could be made between two parties in the ancient world. In this context it was much like a marriage covenant for God was Israel's husband (Isa 54:5).

**And make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you:** God had given a clear prohibition in the Covenant, the "Ten Commandments"...

Exodus 20:4; 5+ "You shall not **make** for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 5 "You shall not **worship** them or **serve** them; for ([term of explanation](#)) I, the LORD your God, am a **jealous** God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

#### Deuteronomy 4:24 "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

- **Your God:** De 9:3 32:22 Ex 24:17 Ps 21:9 Isa 30:33 33:14 Jer 21:12-14 Na 1:6 Zep 1:18 Heb 12:29
- **a jealous God:** De 6:15 29:20 32:16,21 Ex 20:5 34:14 Ps 78:58 Isa 42:8 Na 1:2 Zep 3:8 1Co 10:22
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

### JEHOVAH IS A CONSUMING FIRE

For ([term of explanation](#)) - explains why Israel needed to continually **watch** themselves and guard against the abominable sin of idolatry.

**THOUGHT** - Beloved, if they had to continually be on guard, so do we, for today "idols" come in all shapes and sizes and are just as seductive as were the idols of the ancient pagans. (cf definition of idolatry in Col 3:5+).

**The LORD your God** - "**Your God**" indicates God is their God. Israel is His possession (Dt 4:20). It is worth noting that this exact phrase (**the LORD your God**) occurs 286x in 246 verses in the book of Deuteronomy

Deut. 1:10,21,26,30ff; 2:7,30; 3:18,20ff; 4:2ff,10,19,21,23ff,29ff,34,40; 5:6,9,11f,14ff,32f; 6:1f,5,10,13,15ff; 7:1f,6,9,12,16,18ff,25; 8:2,5ff,10f,14,18ff; 9:3ff,16,23; 10:9,12,14,17,20,22; 11:1f,12f,22,25,27ff,31; 12:4f,7,9ff,15,18,20f,27ff,31; 13:3ff,10,12,16,18; 14:1f,21,23ff,29; 15:4ff,10,14f,18ff; 16:1f,5ff,10f,15ff,20ff; 17:1f,8,12,14f; 18:5,9,12ff; 19:1f,8ff,14; 20:1,4,13f,16ff; 21:1,5,10,23; 22:5; 23:5,14,18,20f,23; 24:4,9,13,18f; 25:15f,19; 26:1f,4f,10f,13,16,19; 27:2f,5ff,9f; 28:1f,8f,13,15,45,47,52f,58,62; 29:6,10,12; 30:1ff,9f,16,20; 31:3,6,11ff,26; Matt. 4:7,10; 22:37; Mk. 12:30; Lk. 4:8,12; 10:27

**Is a consuming fire** - Not "will be" or "was" but "is" -- This is clearly an eternal, immutable "attribute" (so to speak) of God's righteous and holy character. But even in this section Moses balances the truth that God is **a consuming fire** with the truth that "**the LORD your God is a compassionate God.**" (Dt 4:31-[note](#)).

INTERESTING WORD PLAY – He brought them out of an iron furnace but if they are not watchful they will fall into the fire of His wrath – a consuming fire.

**A consuming fire, a jealous God** - "The words **fire** and **jealous** provide a significant juxtaposition, for Dt 6:15 describes the Lord as a jealous God whose anger flares up like a destructive flame. To practice idolatry is to invite certain and devastating retribution." (Merrill)

**Jack Deere** - Like **a consuming fire** He would purify what is precious (just as fire purifies precious metals) and destroy what is worthless.....Therefore Israel needed to **b e** extremely **careful** to remember the **covenant** (cf. Dt. 4:9). ([Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Moses records the **Consuming Fire's** decree for breaking the covenant and worshiping idols

If there is found in your midst, in any of your towns, which the LORD your God is giving you, a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, by transgressing His covenant, **3 and has gone and served other gods and worshiped them, or the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, which I have not commanded,** 4 and if it is told you and you have heard of it, then you shall inquire thoroughly. Behold, if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, 5 then you shall bring out that man or that woman who has done this evil deed to your gates, that is, the man or the woman, and you shall stone them to death.(Deut 17:2-5)

**Consuming (0398)(akal)** means to eat or consume. **Akal** in this verse is translated in the Septuagint with the verb **katanolisko (katá intensifies + analisko = consume)** which means to consume wholly or utterly as by fire and figuratively means to destroy completely.

The picture of God as a consuming fire in Dt 4:24 is meant to be a strong warning against idolatry whereas in a later passage the same phrase is meant to be an encouraging truth, Moses recording

Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a **consuming fire**. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you. (Dt 9:3)

Here are all the other verses that have this exact phrase **consuming fire**

Exodus 24:17 And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a **consuming fire** on the mountain top.

Isaiah 29:6 From the LORD of hosts you will be punished with thunder and earthquake and loud noise, With whirlwind and tempest and the flame of a **consuming fire**.

Isaiah 30:27 Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place; Burning is His anger and dense is His smoke; His lips are filled with indignation And His tongue is like a **consuming fire**;

Isaiah 30:30 And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard, And the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger, And in the flame of a **consuming fire** In cloudburst, downpour and hailstones.

Isaiah 33:14 Sinners in Zion are terrified; Trembling has seized the godless. "Who among us can live with the **consuming fire**? Who among us can live with continual burning?"

Hebrews 12:29 for our God is a **consuming fire**.

The writer of Hebrews quotes from this passage

This expression, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, so that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; **for** ([term of explanation](#) - Explains why we should have reverence and awe!) our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:27-29-note)

**Stedman** sums up this fifth and final warning writing that "The proper attitude of Christians must be one of awe that a Being of such majesty and glory could find a way to dwell eternally with such sin controlled and sin-injured creatures as us. Since our "God is a consuming fire," we must cry with Isaiah, "Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who of us can dwell with everlasting burning?" (Isaiah 33:14). God's love is just such a fire, it destroys what it cannot purify, but purifies what it cannot destroy. In Jesus we have a relationship that cannot be destroyed (Ro 8:38, [39-note](#)). Our great king is leading us through trials and difficulties in order that we may at last cry with Job, "He knows the way that I take; when he has tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10KJV-note). ([Hebrews 12:25-29 Fifth and Final Warning](#))

**Wuest** - Expositor's says: "The fire and smoke which manifested His presence at Sinai (Heb 12:18) were but symbols of that **consuming holiness** that destroys all persistent inexcusable evil. It is God Himself Who is the fire with which you have to do, not a mere physical, material, quenched fire." The historical background of this last statement here is that of the apostate Jew who having left the temple sacrifices, and having made a profession of faith in Messiah as High Priest, now renounces that professed faith and returns to the Levitical system. To that person, **God is a consuming fire**. ([Wuest Word Studies - Erdman Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Spurgeon** - The Lord God who is to be served by us, even as our covenant God, is a **consuming fire**." In love He is severely holy, sternly just. We hear people say, "God out of Christ is a consuming fire," but that is an unwarrantable alteration of the text. The text is "Our God"—that is, God in Christ—"is a consuming fire." "Our God" means God in covenant with us; it means our Father God, our God to whom we are reconciled. He, even our God, is still a "consuming fire." Under the New Testament, God is not an atom less severe than under the old; and under the covenant of grace the Lord is not a particle less righteous than under the law. We are so saved by mercy that no sin goes unpunished: the law is as much honored under the gospel as under the law. The substitution of Jesus as much displays the wrath of God against sin as even the flames of hell would do. While the Lord is merciful, infinitely so, and His name is love, yet still our God is a consuming fire, and sin shall not live in His sight.

Adore and tremble, for our God  
Is a consuming fire!

His jealous eyes His wrath inflame,  
And raise His vengeance higher.  
-- Isaac Watts

One's interpretation of "**consuming fire**" depends on how one views God. If one sees Him with spiritual eyes of a blood bought, heaven bound believer this person will experience **awe and reverence** and there will be times when he (or she) is overwhelmed with God's majesty as our souls are engaged by the supremacy of God. If you are not a believer first note that you WILL ALSO SEE God, not with spiritual eyes, but with physical eyes (cp Rev 1:7-[note](#), Rev 20:11-15-[note](#)) and secondly you will be consumed by His righteous wrath. That does not mean you will be annihilated, which is wishful thinking by godless sinners! Paul gives us a preview of "coming attractions"

For after all it is only just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, 8 dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, (2 Thes 1:6-9)

**Comment:** The **Consuming Fire** will consign unbelievers away from His presence and in lake of fire where they will be tormented forever and ever but never actually consumed. This is a horrible thought to me, one I even have trouble writing, but it is the truth of every unbeliever who ever lived. This immutable truth should serve to stir our hearts with a Spirit enabled power which so that we desire to speak the Gospel boldly as we ought to do (cp Eph 6:19-20-[note](#)) with our lost relatives, neighbors, friends and co-workers...while today is still called today!

**Jon Courson** - For we who know Him, the fact that our God is a consuming fire should be anything but frightening, for anything fire touches soon becomes fire, too. Aren't you kind of sick of yourself? I'm so tired of me. Consequently, I find myself praying, "Consume me, Lord. Set me free from my fleshly inclinations. Make me burn bright and pure, holy and hot for You."

**Spurgeon** - He who prays without fervency does not pray at all. We cannot commune with God, who is **aconsuming fire** (Heb. 12:29), if there is no fire in our prayers.

- [What does it mean that God is a consuming fire? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Why is God a jealous God? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- F B Meyer - [Hebrews 12:29: GOD A CONSUMING FIRE](#)
- [Play the spiritual song - Refiner's Fire](#) - Sing it as your prayer, if you dare prayer!

## **BEWARE OF SPIRITUAL ADULTERY: JEHOVAH IS A JEALOUS GOD**

Jealousy is a demand for someone else's exclusive affection or loyalty. Our society normally considers jealousy a bad thing, but Jehovah's jealousy is good and right, for Israel is His wife by covenant (Isa 54:5) and thus she is His possession (Dt 4:20).

**Jack Deere** - As a **jealous God** (cf. Dt 5:9; 32:16, 21; Dt 6:15) He will not allow another to have the honor that is due Him alone (Isa. 42:8; 48:11). Therefore Israel needed to be extremely **careful** to remember the **covenant** (cf. Dt. 4:9). ([Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**Thompson** explains that in this context **jealous** "does not connote the same as the English word, but rather an active zealotness for righteousness which arose from Yahweh's holiness. Because of this Yahweh would not countenance Israel's allegiance to any other God. Thus idolatry in any form was forbidden." (TOTC)

**God will not permit His children to sin successfully!**

**Wiersbe** - He wants the very best for us, but when we deliberately go our own way, we grieve His heart and miss all He wants to do for us. ([Be Equipped](#))

**Jealous** ([07067](#))(**qanna** related to **qin'ah** from the verb **qana** = to jealous or zealous) is an adjective which means jealous. When it describes God it means He is fiercely protective of what is justly His possession and unaccepting of disloyalty. **Qanna** describes a very strong emotion whereby some quality or possession of the object is desired by the subject. Every use of this adjective has God as the subject. In fact His very **Name is Jealous** (Ex 34:14) which speaks of the essence of **His character as jealous**. Divine jealousy does not refer to a shallow, childish human emotion. To the contrary God's jealousy emphasizes that He will not tolerate a divided loyalty in our hearts. We owe it Him to honor Him as the one true God and give Him more than lip service.

**Webster's** defines **jealous** = intolerant of rivalry or unfaithfulness, hostile toward a rival, vigilant in guarding a possession

The Septuagint always translates **qanna** with **zelotes** (from **zeo** = to boil, be hot or glow) which describes one zealous (fervent and enthusiastically devoted) for or eagerly desirous of something. A **zelotes** is one who is earnestly committed to a side or cause and thus could be described as an enthusiast, an adherent, or a loyalist. Jehovah is zealous for those who belong to Him!

**Constable** - God's jealousy is His zeal for righteousness that springs from His holiness. He would not tolerate Israel's allegiance to any other god. The connotation of pettiness that is present in the English word "jealousy" is totally absent from the Hebrew idea. ([Deuteronomy 4](#))

- **Jealous** an attribute of God
- Spurgeon's notes on Jealousy of God

**Jealousy** is an emotion we often describe as seen between lovers. God was Israel's husband (Jer 31:32-note - God was in covenant with Israel, cp [Covenant: As It Relates to Marriage](#). Cp Ho 2:19, Isa 54:5, Jer 2:2, 3:14) and because of His love for His people He zealously (jealously) acted to maintain their **fidelity** (faithfulness). **Divine jealousy** is not the petty emotion so often seen in fallen men and women, but describes Jehovah's justifiable intolerance to any and every rival (especially idols, so-called gods). Jealousy is God's rightful demand for our exclusive affection or loyalty. In short, God's kind of jealousy is appropriate and good, for He is defending His word and His high honor. He makes a strong, exclusive demand on those who are His beloved. As such, we must treat only the Lord as God to the exclusion of all other people or things in all the universe!

- John Blanchard - God is jealous for the good of his redeemed people—but he can never be jealous of anything or anyone.
- John Blanchard - The jealousy of God is one of the Christian's greatest challenges—and comforts.
- Donald Grey Barnhouse - God, as a jealous God, is filled with a burning desire for our holiness, for our righteousness, for our goodness.
- John Calvin - The jealousy of God is nothing else but the vehemence and ardor of His paternal love.

**Qanna** - 7x in 6v -

Exodus 20:5 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a **jealous** God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

Exodus 34:14 -- for you shall not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is **Jealous**, is a **jealous** God--

Deuteronomy 4:24 "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a **jealous** God.

Deuteronomy 5:9 "You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a **jealous** God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me,

Deuteronomy 6:15 for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a **jealous** God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.

**The related word jealousy** ([07068](#))(**qin'ah**) was originally a burning, then the color produced in the face by a deep emotion, thus ardour, zeal, jealousy. The only use of **qin'ah** in Deuteronomy is Dt 29:20...

"The LORD shall never be willing to forgive him (the man "whose heart turns away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of those nations" = Dt 29:18-19), but rather the anger of the LORD and His **jealousy** (Lxx = **zelos** which strictly speaking means fervent in spirit and when used of God as in this passage speaks of the intensity of His righteous judgment) will burn against that man, and every curse which is written in this book will rest on him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven.

- Sermon by C H Spurgeon - [A Jealous God](#)
- Sermon by H Raikes - [The Jealousy of God](#)
- Sermon by R.M. Edgar [The Divine Jealousy of Graven Images](#)

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**Spurgeon - A JEALOUS GOD** - That is a very wonderful and suggestive expression—"a **jealous God**." See that it be engraven on your hearts. Jesus will not endure it that those of us who love Him should divide our hearts between Him and something else. The love which is strong as death is linked with a jealousy cruel as the grave, "the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most



vehement flame." The royal word to the spouse is, "Forget also thine own people and thy father's house; so shall the King greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him." Of course, beloved, the Master never condemns that proper natural affection which we are bound to give, and which it is a part of our sanctification to give in its due and proper proportion to those who are related to us. Besides, we are bound to love all the saints, and all mankind in their proper place and measure. But there is a love which is for the Master alone. Inside the **heart** there must be a [sanctum sanctorum](#), within the veil, where He Himself alone must shine like the Shekinah, and reign on the mercy-seat. There must be a glorious high throne within our spirits, where the true Solomon alone must sit; the lions of watchful zeal must guard each step of it. There must He, the King in His beauty, sit enthroned, sole monarch of the heart's affection. (Flashes of Thought)

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**NIV Study Bible** note on **jealous God** - God will not put up with rivalry or unfaithfulness. Usually His "**jealousy**" concerns Israel and assumes the covenant relationship (analogous to marriage - {**Ed**: cp Isa 54:5, Jer 31:32-note}) and the Lord's exclusive right to possess Israel and to claim her love and allegiance. Actually, jealousy is part of the vocabulary of love. The "**jealousy**" of God

(1) demands exclusive devotion to Himself (see Ex 34:14; Dt 4:24; 32:16,21; Jos 24:19; Ps 78:58; 1Co 10:22; Jas 4:5 and NIV text note),

(2) delivers to judgment all who oppose him (see Dt 29:20; 1Ki 14:22; Ps 79:5; Isa 42:13; 59:17; Eze 5:13; 16:38; 23:25; 36:5-6; Na 1:2; Zep 1:18; 3:8) and

(3) vindicates his people (see 2Ki 19:31; Isa 9:7; 26:11; Eze 39:25; Joel 2:18 and note; Zec 1:14 and note; Zech 8:2).

In some of these passages the meaning is closer to "**zeal**" (the same Hebrew word may be translated either way, depending on context).

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**Matthew Henry - For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.**- Did we consider what a God he is with whom we have to do, we should surely make conscience of our duty to him, and not dare to sin against him. Shall we forsake a merciful God, who will never forsake us, if we are faithful unto him? Whither can we go? Let us be held to our duty by the bonds of love, and prevailed with by the mercies of God to cleave to him. Moses urged God's authority over them, and their obligations to him. In keeping God's commandments they would act wisely for themselves. The fear of the Lord is wisdom. Those who enjoy the benefit of divine light and laws ought to support their character for wisdom and honor, that God may be glorified thereby. Those who call upon God shall certainly find him within call, ready to give an answer of peace to every prayer of faith. All these statutes and judgments of the divine law are just and righteous, above the statutes and judgments of any of the nations. What they saw at Mount Sinai, gave an earnest of the Day of Judgment, in which the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire. They must also remember what they heard at Mount Sinai. God manifests himself in the works of the creation, without speech or language, yet their voice is heard; but to Israel he made himself known by speech and language, condescending to their weakness. The rise of this nation was quite different from the origin of all other nations. See the reasons of free grace; we are not beloved for our own sakes, but for Christ's sake.

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### **Exodus 34:14 Our Jealous God**

Read: 2 Corinthians 11:1-4 | The Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. Exodus 34:14

In 2014 a University of California researcher used a stuffed dog to show that animals are capable of jealousy. Professor Christine Harris asked dog owners to show affection for a stuffed animal in the presence of their pet. She found that three-fourths of the dogs responded with apparent envy. Some tried to get attention with touch or a gentle nudge. Others tried to push between their owner and the toy. A few went so far as to snap at their stuffed rival.

In a dog, jealousy seems heartwarming. In people, it can lead to less admirable results. Yet, as Moses and Paul remind us, there is also another jealousy—one that beautifully reflects the heart of God.

God made us & rescued us to know & enjoy Him forever.

When Paul wrote to the church at Corinth, he said he was "jealous for you with a godly jealousy" (2 Cor. 11:2). He didn't want them to be "led astray from [their] sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (v. 3). Such jealousy reflects the heart of God, who told Moses in the Ten Commandments, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God" (Ex. 20:5).

God's jealousy is not like our self-centered love. His heart expresses His protective zeal for those who are His by creation and salvation. He made us and rescued us to know and enjoy Him forever. How could we ask for anything more than a God who is so zealous—and jealous—for our happiness?

Father, help me shun anything that distracts me from You, so that I may always find enjoyment in who You are and in Your plan for

me.

God loves every one of us as if there were but one of us to love. Augustine

INSIGHT: Paul's relationship with the church at Corinth was a turbulent one. Paul founded the Corinthian church and spent 18 months there (Acts 18:1-18). Then he returned for another 3 months at a later time (20:3). In spite of this significant investment of time and energy, the Corinthian believers appear to have struggled with Paul's authority and position as an apostle, as well as his correction of them. His letters to the church at Corinth are filled with evidence of his disappointment over their testy relationship. Still, Paul's love for them is evidenced by his desire that they not be led astray by false teachers. Bill Crowder

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**John Phillips** - It is God's holiness which is the basis of all punishment, for God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. His holiness is a consuming fire, a blazing quality that makes even the shining seraphim hide behind their wings and chant, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord."

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**Herbert Lockyer** - Jealousy is a part of the divine nature, "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" (Deuteronomy 5:9). James reminds us that the Holy Spirit indwelling us "loveth us to jealousy" (4:5 Revised Version).

There are, of course, two brands of jealousy—

- Divine jealousy—"I am jealous over you with godly jealousy" (II Corinthians 11:2). This is the jealousy of a true lover who will not brook a rival. And the Spirit is a possessive Lover, He wants us all for God, and is jealous to maintain His rights.

- Devilish jealousy—"Jealousy is the rage of a man" (Proverbs 6:34).

It is also as "cruel as the grave." Alas, there is too much of this wrong kind of jealousy among Christians! How grievous to the loving Spirit it must be when one believer is so conspicuously jealous of another! True jealousy guards what is its own—Envy covets what is not its own.

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#### **Vance Havner - GOD NEVER COMES NEXT**

Suffer me first.... Luke 9:59. Seek ye first.... Matthew 6:33.

The prospective disciple thought he must first take care of his father. "After that," he was saying in effect, "You will be next." But our Lord never comes next. He does not play second fiddle. God does not take second place. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Jesus is not only first but also last, Alpha and Omega. Attending early church services to celebrate the Lord's Day only to desecrate the rest of that day is not putting God first, it is only a way of getting rid of Him! God is a jealous God. Seek Him first and all else we need will be added.

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**Ray Pritchard** - God's description of himself: "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God." The word is very strong, having the idea of burning, passionate love. In fact, it is used of the love of a husband for his wife. Some of you may be put off by the idea of a jealous God, but jealousy in the right context is a very healthy emotion. I have every right to be jealous of my wife's affection and she has every right to be jealous for my undivided attention. Jealousy in marriage can be a very positive emotion because it means, "I am fully committed to you and I expect you to be fully committed to me." In that sense we might say that if you are not jealous for your husband/wife, you're probably not fully committed. True love is jealous. If the love is right, then the jealousy is right. So what is it that God is jealous for? Our undivided attention, our exclusive focus on him. Seen in that light, idolatry is a terrible sin because in reality it is a form of spiritual prostitution.

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#### **Good Turned to Evil "For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire"—Deut. 4:24**

A glass inkstand was placed on the table so that the sun's rays fell upon it. Brightly and cheerily, no doubt, they played upon its facets and angles; but that inkstand affected these beautiful sunbeams in such a way as to extract from them heat in sufficient force to set the table upon which it stood on fire, reducing it, and all it came in contact with, into ashes. What is there more beautiful than the sunbeams? How they cheer and cherish and inspire nature all around! yet there are some objects which can convert this thing of beauty and health and life into a consuming fire. So there are moral characters which extract death out of life; transform the loving, life-giving gospel into an instrument of destruction; in short, cause the God of love to become to them a consuming fire. (Clerical Library)

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**Kent Hughes on God a Consuming Fire** - Satan will always try to separate these two aspects of God's character in our thinking. If he can persuade us that the Lord is all love and mercy and will not judge anyone, he will do so. But the moment it becomes clear to us that there is indeed a reckoning for sin, Satan immediately switches tack and tries to push us in the opposite direction, to make us believe that the Lord is hard and judgmental and that there is no forgiveness to be found with him. As the Puritan Thomas Manton put it:

Satan labors to represent God by halves, only as a **consuming fire**, as clothed with justice and vengeance. Oh no! It is true he will not suffer his mercy to be abused by contemptuous sinners; he will not clear the guilty, though he waits long on them before he destroys them; but the main of his name is "his mercy and goodness."

The true fear of the Lord flows out of an understanding of the whole character of God as both holy and merciful. (Preaching the Word: Numbers)

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### **James Smith (in Handfuls of Purpose) - OUR GOD A CONSUMING FIRE**

Here are a few striking words used in Scripture to describe the essential character of God. (1) God is Spirit (R.V., margin). Herein is seen His indivisibility and greatness. (2) God is Love. This reveals His unfathomable and unchangeable goodness. What a privilege to dwell in such an abode (1 John 4:16). (3) God is Light. And this, because He is Love. In Him is no darkness at all. No uncertainty. No unrighteousness. (4) God is Fire. Not in figure, but in reality—a consuming fire. This solemn, dreadful, aspect of God's nature is frequently overlooked. Herein is the death of sin and self; herein is the life of holiness. This is the God with which we as Christians have to do. It was as fire God first appeared to His servant Moses; this made the place holy ground, and although the bush was not consumed, we may be assured that everything unclean within the bush would be burned up. We carry about with us daily the mystery of the burning bush "Know ye not that God dwelleth in you?" Yet the frail bush of our bodies is not consumed. We have this treasure in earthen vessels "that the excellency of the power may be of God.

#### **I. As a Fire our God Consumes.**

On the altar, the fire, as a symbol of God's presence, was ever burning. On the altar of our heart, as on the throne of our being, there still dwells the Spirit of burning. This holy fire cannot suffer the approach of that which is unclean. The Nadabs and Abihus of pride and self-conceit are instantly devoured (Num. 10). It was a self-crucifying revelation Paul received, when it pleased God to reveal His Son in him (Gal. 1:15, 16; 2: 20). The Holy of Holies was such, because the pillar of fire abode there. Hence there was no way of entrance without blood. May the Blood of Jesus so guard the way of access into our inmost soul, where the Holy Spirit dwells, and may this holy fire consume all that would approach without the blood.

#### **II. As a Fire our God Purifies.**

The presence of God was the purifying and the sanctifying of the Temple. It is true now, that when the Lord the Spirit suddenly comes into the temple of our body He is like a refiner's fire. "Who shall stand when He appeareth?" (Mal. 1:3). There must be no other authority when He appeareth; every power of our being must become subject to Him, and in the submitting they are purified. As every vessel of the Tabernacle was given to God, and claimed and used by Him, so the members of our body are to be yielded to Him as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13).

#### **III. As a Fire our, God Empowers.**

What a real power fire is. Think of the fire-driven engines that push the mighty ironclads like ploughshares through the deep. Wherever fire is, its power is felt. "Our God is a consuming fire." Can He be in us without a Divine power being seen and felt? When the disciples were baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire it could not be hid. "These men," they said, "are full of new wine." When the live coal touched the lips of the prophet, how quickly the power was seen in him. "Here am I, send me" (Isa. 6). The indwelling fire is the remedy for all formality and coldness in the Lord's service. It is the eternal enemy of the chilly, freezing breath of unbelief. "He shall baptise you with fire." Are you willing to be baptised with this baptism?

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### **Ian Paisley - Consuming Fire and Consuming Love**

When I open this Book I find out that God is a consuming fire. When I read on in this Book I find out that God is love. That seems to be a terrible contradiction, does it not? God—a consuming fire, God absolute unlimited, everlasting love!

If you are in Christ you will know the answer, for in Christ God is love. Outside Christ He is a consuming fire. That is the very heart of the Gospel. Oh, let me say to you that our God is love in Jesus Christ. There is nothing more wonderful, more majestic and more glorious than John's Gospel chapter three and verse 16, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.'

God is love! The Great, the Terrible, the Majestic God of Heaven loves men, loves women, loves boys and girls, loves the world.

That means that He loves you

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## Ray Pritchard - [Four Pictures of the Holy Spirit](#) - FIRE

- “They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them” (Acts 2:3).

Fire is one of the most frequent biblical images for God’s presence with His people. The connection is made in such passages as Exodus 3:1-5 (Moses and the burning bush); Exodus 13:21 (the pillar of fire); Leviticus 9:24 (fire from the Lord consuming the burnt offering); 1 Kings 18:24 (“The god who answers by fire-He is God.”); Isaiah 6:1-8 (coals of fire from the altar in heaven); Matthew 3:11 (“He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”); Acts 2:3 (“They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire.”); 1 Thessalonians 5:19 (“Do not put out the Spirit’s fire.”); and Hebrews 12:29 (“for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’ “).

God sent the “tongues of fire” on the day of Pentecost as a sign that He was about to pour out the Holy Spirit in a new and powerful way. Just as the fiery pillar represented God’s personal presence with His people, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in all believers. But now God’s presence will be personal and individual-thus the “tongues of fire” rested on each person individually. Whereas God’s presence came to the nation as a whole in the Old Testament, today each believer has the great privilege of having the personal presence of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And just as the fiery pillar gave clear direction outwardly, even so the Holy Spirit gives each believer inward direction. This represents a tremendous advance in God’s program for His people. Where once He worked primarily in and through a nation, now He works in and through individuals.

In reference to the Holy Spirit, fire represents:

- \* God’s presence with His people.
- \* God’s protection of His people.
- \* God’s cleansing of His people.
- \* God’s judgment of His people.
- \* God’s divine enablement of His people.
- \* God’s gracious activity in the assembly of His people.

### **The Holy Spirit spreads like a flame.**

Some applications quickly suggest themselves from this theme. First, the Holy Spirit is God’s divine cleansing agent, burning away the dross of sin and purifying us for service. Second, when we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit, He fills us with the fire of God’s presence. Third, during times of revival, the Holy Spirit spreads like a flame, igniting families, churches, communities, and entire nations. Finally, the Holy Spirit is the “fire” we need to let our light shine brightly for Jesus Christ.

When I was growing up, we often talked of being “on fire” for Jesus. It means to be so passionate about the Lord that he was constantly in our thoughts. Back then we would sing a song called Pass It On that began this way:

It only takes a spark to get a fire going,  
And soon all those around can warm up in its glowing.

The song then says “That’s how it with God’s love, one you’ve experienced it. You want to spread the love to everyone. You want to pass it on.” Though the song is not deep, it actually makes an important point. When the Holy Spirit begins to burn within, we will be caught up in a holy zeal to share Jesus with everyone we meet. A few days ago I spoke with a friend who ministers thousands of miles away, on the other side of the world, in a land where Christians are not always welcome. One week ago as he gathered with his congregation for a prayer meeting, a police officer came to the meeting and began to ask questions. “What are you doing here? Who is in charge?” Later he sent word that he wanted to meet with the pastor. So in a few days my friend will meet with the police officer. Is he afraid? He told me that recently God has given him a burden to share Christ with everyone he meets. “I have led 3 people to Christ since the Lord gave me this burden.” Speaking of the police officer he said, “I am not worried, not afraid. I want to go and share the gospel with him for I am not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.”

### **Have you ever thanked God for the Holy Spirit?**

If you stand back and look at these four pictures of the Holy Spirit, they all lead in the same direction.

As water, the Holy Spirit becomes a stream within us, overflowing to the people around us.

As wind, the Holy Spirit blows across the land, awakening people to God in every nation.

As wine, the Holy Spirit fills us with new power.

As fire, the Holy Spirit burns away the dross of worldliness and fills us with a holy zeal to let our light shine for Christ.

How simple it is. And yet how profound.

So we pray to know the Holy Spirit more deeply for He is . . .

Living Water,  
New Wine,  
Refreshing Wind,  
Blazing Fire from Heaven.

He brings Christ to us and gives us all that we need. Have you ever thanked God for the gift of the Spirit? Why not do it right now?

Gracious Father, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit. May streams of living water flow through us so that others may be thirsty to know you. Grant that the new wine of the Spirit would empower us today. May the wind of God blow through your church. Set us on fire, Lord, with holy passion for you.

Lord Jesus, fill us more and more with the Holy Spirit so that we can make your name famous throughout the earth. Amen.

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## **F B Meyer - "OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE"**

WHAT comfort there is in these words!

Once they only filled us with alarm: now they are the tidings of great joy.

It made a great difference, on the shores of the Red Sea, on which side of the cloud the hosts were placed. To be on the one side meant terror and dismay: "The Lord looked unto the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of the cloud, and troubled the host of the Egyptians." But to be on the other side meant comfort and hope: "It was a cloud and darkness to them; but it gave light by night to these." Similarly a great difference is made by our position towards God, as to whether the words at the head of this chapter will be a comfort or a cause of anxiety. If we are against God--enemies in our mind by wicked works, sinning against His gentle, Holy Spirit--we can look for little relief in considering the majestic symbolism of the passage. But if we are on His side, sheltered under His hand, hidden in the cleft of the Rock, conscious that we are in Him that is true--then we may rejoice with exceeding great joy that "our God is a Consuming Fire."

### **In Scripture FIRE is the invariable symbol of God's nature and character.**

It was as a lamp of FIRE that the Almighty passed between the pieces of Abraham's sacrifice. It was as FIRE, which need not the wood of the acacia-bush for its maintenance, that He appeared to Moses in the wilderness, to commission him for his life-work. It was as FIRE that HIS presence shone on Mount Sinai, in the giving of the law. The Divine acceptance of the sacrifices throughout the ancient ritual was betokened by the Fire that fell from heaven, and fed upon the flesh of slain beasts. Malachi said that Christ would come as a refiner's FIRE; and when the fore-runner announced His advent, he compared it to the work of the ruddy flame, which destroys and purifies: "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with FIRE." "He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable FIRE." It was, therefore, also in perfect harmony with the entire range of scriptural symbolism, that the Pentecostal descent of the Holy Ghost was accompanied by cloven tongues, like as of FIRE. Of course, we must not and would not, deny that there is a punitive and terrible side to all this. It is no light matter to persist in sin. "In flaming fire" He will take vengeance on them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. "He is terrible in His doing toward the children of men." Fire--which is our most useful ally; which labours for us day and night in our furnaces and fireplaces, is harmless and helpful, so long as we obey its laws and observe its conditions: but when once we disobey those laws, and contravene those conditions, that which blessed begins to curse, and leaps forth upon us, carrying devastation to all our works, so that the smiling fields become a blackened waste, and our palaces a heap of ruins. So it is with the nature of God. He is gentle, loving, and forbearing: but if a sinner persists in sin, shutting his eyes to the light, and closing his heart to the love of God, then he must needs discover that "with the froward He will show Himself froward." "Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little."

But let us turn now to some of those gracious thoughts, which are enshrined in this passage. Fire searches. Surely this is one of our greatest needs. There is so much of selfishness and sin in the very best of us. Sometimes we get a glimpse of what we are, and turn our thoughts swiftly away from the horrid spectacle. And what we ourselves dare not contemplate, we carefully hide from the gaze of our tenderest friends. Ah, what pride, what vanity, what self-conceit, are ours! fretful, if not sufficiently admired; jealous, if outshone; mean enough to take advantage of another, if only we can do it without being found out; capable of the same vile sins which flame out as beacon-lights in those who are not restrained by the same outward bonds as we are.

No malicious critic with biting words has ever touched the inveterate evil of our hearts, or said a tithe of the truth of us. We have never ourselves realized how bad we are. We need not be surprised at any further discoveries that may rise up to confront us with shame and agony. But it is well to be searched. The ancient motto bade men know themselves. The discovery of what we are will

drive us most quickly to God for His cleansing and grace. We need not wish to dwell upon our sins, as though health could come by considering disease; but we may gladly accept the searching of the fire of God. Let us know the evil things that are within us. Let us be taught how much wood, hay, and stubble, have been built on that foundation, which has undoubtedly been laid in our hearts. Let us submit to the discoveries of disease, which the stethoscope, the searching finger, the probing knife, will disclose. O God, who art as fire, search me and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts!

### **Fire cleanses.**

Yonder metal is mingled with many inferior ingredients: the earth, in which it has lain for centuries, clings to it; dross depreciates its value. But plunge it into the glowing furnace; raise the heat until the gleaming light is almost intolerable to the gaze; keep it in that baptism of flame: ere long the metal will be cleansed of its impurities; freed from alloy; and fitted for any mould into which you may desire to pour it. Is it not thus that God will deal with us? He is a consuming fire.

In the olden vision, when Isaiah lamented his uncleanness, there flew unto him one of the seraphim, who had taken a live coal from off the altar, which he laid upon his lips, saying, "Lo! this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." And will not God do as much for us again? We have been cleansed from the stains of our many transgressions: but do we not need this deep, this thorough, this fiery purification?

There are three agents in purification--the Word of God; the Blood of the Son of God; and the Fire of God, which is the Holy Ghost. We know something of the two former: do we know the meaning of the latter? We have been purified by the Water and the Blood: have we passed also through the Fire? "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." We cannot define, in so many words, the manner of this sacred operation--it is a matter for holy consciousness: but the heart knows when it has experienced it. It is not that temptation ceases to assail; or that there is no possibility of again yielding to sin; or that the evil tendencies of the old nature are eradicated: but that there is a burning up and consumption of evil things which had been too long permitted to hold sway, and to mar the glory of the work of God in the heart. There is deliverance, where there was bondage; there is purity, where there was corruption; there is love, where there was malice, envy, ill-will.

This blessed operation of the Holy Ghost may be experienced by those who will take no denial, and who by faith claim all that He waits to do for them. Let us then appropriate that expressive prayer of Wesley's hymn:

"Refining Fire, go through my heart!" ([Play the spiritual song - Refiner's Fire](#) -- sing it if you dare! It is a prayer!)

### **Fire transforms.**

That poker lying in your fender is hard, and cold, and black; but if you place it for a few moments in the heart of the fire, it becomes soft, intensely hot, and glowing with the whiteness of incandescence. Take it out again, and all its old qualities will re-assert themselves; but whilst in the fire, they cannot be manifested: the iron is transformed into the likeness of the flame in which it is bathed.

Thus is it with ourselves. By nature we too are hard and cold and black; and the tendency of our nature will always be in these directions; waiting to re-assert itself, when left to its own devices. But if only we can for ever dwell with the devouring fire, and dwell with the everlasting burnings of the Love and Light and Life of God--a wonderful change will pass over us; and we shall be changed into the same image, from glory to glory. No longer hard, we shall be moulded into any shape He selects. No longer cold, we shall glow with love to God and man. No longer black, we shall be arrayed in the whiteness of a purity, which is that of intensest heat.

Too long have we shrunk from the burning fiery furnace, which is not sorrow, or trial, or pain, but God. Let us get into God. Let us open our nature, that God, the Holy Ghost, may fill us: then shall we become like Himself; our grosser natures shall seem to ascend to heaven in horses and chariots of flame. In God's Fire we shall become Fire.

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### **Selwyn Hughes - The Consuming Fire**

Our God is a consuming fire.—HEBREWS 12:29

George MacDonald writes: "Nothing is inexorable but love, for love loves unto purity. Love has ever in view the absolute loveliness of that which it beholds. Where loveliness is incomplete, and love cannot love its fill of loving, it spends itself to make more lovely, that it may love more; it strives for perfection even that itself may be perfected—not in itself but in the object. Therefore all that is not beautiful in the beloved, all that comes between and is not of love's kind, must be destroyed. Our God is a consuming fire."

Powerful words.

The nature of God is so terribly pure that it destroys everything that is not as pure as fire. God desires us to worship Him in "the splendor of His holiness" (Ps 29:2). This means that He wants the purity in us to match the purity in Him. We cannot arrive at this purity by self-effort, of course, but the more we draw nigh to Him, the more the fire of His purity will burn out the dross within us.

"It is not the fire that will burn us up if we do not worship," said George MacDonald, "but the fire will burn us up until we worship." And



the fire will go on burning within us after everything that is foreign to it has been consumed, no longer with pain and a sense of something unwanted being consumed, but as the highest consciousness of life.

God is a consuming fire. He always was, and always will be—world without end.

Prayer

O God, I long with all my heart that my worship might be all You want it to be. May Your consuming fire burn out all the dross within me until everything that is foreign to Your nature is part of me no more. In Jesus' name I ask it. Amen. (Everyday with Jesus)

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Robert Neighbour - THE CONSUMING FIRE (Num. 16:34, 35)

1. Sin leads to fear. Verse 34 says, "And all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of them: for they said, Lest the earth swallow us up also." They knew that they had been joined with Korah in his rebellion against Moses. Therefore they trembled as judgment fell upon their leaders.

Men often laugh at destruction, but that is when they think themselves safe and far from its reach.

One old captain, when told by the doctor that he must die, said that he had faced death too many times on the battlefield, to be afraid. The doctor said, "But what of the judgment?" The captain paled as he said, "Ah, that is another thing."

2. God's wrath against sin and especially against the sin of rebellion. Verse 35 says that fire came out from the Lord and consumed the 250 men that offered incense.

In Hebrews we read "Our God is a consuming Fire." The Christian may say, "Well, that fire can never touch me." That depends whether you are sinning against Him. I grant that those redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ are safe from the fires of hell. Certainly they are. However, in I Corinthians the Spirit tells us pointedly that many saints will not alone have their works burned, but they themselves shall be saved "so as by fire" (I Cor. 3:15).

The Scripture in Hebrews which says, "Our God is a consuming Fire," also says, "And again, The Lord shall judge His people" (10:30).

It is "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Think not, dear believers, that you can wander from your Lord and yet escape His fiery indignation.

#### AN ILLUSTRATION

The wicked men who led the insurrection against Moses and Aaron placed their hopes on that which was of the flesh and not of God, As a result, they staked their all and lost it. The following incident suggests their folly:

Senor Severo, a member of the Brazilian Parliament, invested all his fortune in constructing an airship, which he named The Pax (meaning "The Peace"). Accompanied by an assistant named Sachet, he made his first ascent at Vaugirard, France, in the presence of his wife and friends. At the height of about 1000 feet, the balloon suddenly exploded and fell to the ground, both aeronauts being instantaneously killed. The greatest sympathy was expressed for the sad loss sustained by Senora Severo and her seven children. The Pax airship was the pride of the inventor; he had embarked in her his all, and as he wished his wife farewell and rose into the heavens all seemed bright. Twenty minutes later the whole affair was lying a complete wreck How different they who invest their all in Christ Jesus (Rom. 10:9, 10), for "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa. 40:31). They shall be "caught up."

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**I'm Afraid Of God** - Many times I have talked to people about our need to fear God. I've heard them respond something like this: "You're not really afraid of God, are you? I'd never believe in that kind of God."

Yes, I am afraid of God, and I'm not afraid to admit it. I also fear water. That doesn't mean I don't love to fish and swim. But I never want to forget the life-taking power of a river, a lake, or an ocean.

In a more personal way, I remember as a boy fearing my dad. I loved him and knew he loved me and was concerned for my good. But I respected his authority as my father, and I was afraid of the corrective measures he would take if I did wrong.

The same is true in my relationship with God. I stand in awe of Him and His holiness. And because I do, I love Him and want to be close to Him. I desire to love what He loves and hate what He hates. I want to live with the awareness that He is to be feared more than anyone. Satan and people may destroy the body, but God is "a consuming fire" who can "destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mt. 10:28).

Only as we fear God do we truly love Him. And only as that love grows will it guarantee that our fear of God is the right kind of fear. —Mart De Haan ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

To fear the Lord means giving Him  
Our reverence, trust, and awe,  
Acknowledging His sovereignty,  
Submitting to His law. --Hess

Fear God and you will have nothing else to fear.

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**He Is A Fire** - On December 5, 2002, the headline announced: *Ring Of Fire Encircles Sydney - A firestorm was raging outside the Australian city. Many people feared that this bushfire would prove to be Sydney's worst in decades. Fanned by strong winds, high temperatures, and low humidity, the fire jumped across roads and rivers, consuming everything in its path.* When we think about the destructive power of that kind of inferno, we gain a better understanding of the startling words of Hebrews 12:29, "Our God is a consuming fire." Why did the author of Hebrews use such graphic imagery to describe the Lord? In his letter he was dealing with spiritual life-and-death issues—what his readers believed and the reality of their faith. Their response would reveal whether they were investing their lives in the kingdom that will last forever, or in the one destined for destruction. We too need to remember that this world and all we possess are only temporary. If our faith and hope are in Jesus Christ, we are part of a kingdom that cannot be destroyed (v.28). Knowing that our days on earth are numbered and that "our God is a consuming fire," let us serve Him and invest in things that are imperishable.—Albert Lee ([Ibid](#))

Our God is a consuming fire  
And will destroy earth's temporal things;  
He seeks to purify our lives  
For service to the King of kings.  
—D. De Haan

Hold tightly to what is eternal  
and loosely to what is temporal.

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**Revelation And Response** - I tried to tell Felix about my faith. He was polite, but he said he would rather not discuss religion. His goal in life was to be a decent person and to find as much enjoyment as he could. He had concluded that death ends everything. He said he was happy with his beliefs.

Apparently Felix refused to think seriously about God's revelation of Himself in nature (Job 38; Ps. 19:1-6; Rom. 1:20) and within his own conscience (Rom. 1:18-21; 2:14-16).

God has revealed Himself in the created world, in our inner nature, and in the Bible. All people are responsible for what they do with God's self-disclosure. We can rationalize away His revelation in the created world. We can refuse the inner witness of our conscience. We can reject the Bible. But those responses lead to hell.

The best and most appropriate response to God's revelation is awe, acknowledgment of sin, and confession. This leads to forgiveness, inner peace, and everlasting life.

If you've rejected God's revelation of Himself, repent and turn to Him before it's too late. If you've decided to open your heart to Jesus Christ, you can be sure you'll be welcomed into His presence for all eternity. --H V Lugt ([Ibid](#))

The Lord reveals Himself to you  
In many different ways;  
So don't reject and turn away;  
Instead, give Him your praise.  
-Sper

**Sooner or later you'll have to face God.**

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**Living In The Fire** - Just before darkness settled, the Israelites who stood on the walls of Jerusalem saw with dismay the mighty Assyrian army surrounding the city. But at dawn the enemy camp was deserted, and thousands of dead soldiers lay scattered on the ground. What awe and gratitude must have filled the hearts of godly Israelites—but the wicked were terrified!

The prophet Isaiah portrays trembling sinners asking how they can live with "the devouring fire" and "everlasting burnings" (Isaiah 33:14). These phrases do not refer to hell, but to our holy God. Those hypocrites were really asking, "Who can live with Him?" Isaiah's answer was simple: "He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly" (v.15). It wasn't enough just to participate in religious ritual; Isaiah was reminding them that to live in the presence of the consuming fire they had to obey God.

Hebrews 12:29 reminds us that "our God is a consuming fire." How is it possible, then, to have a close relationship with Him? Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:23).

If we trust Jesus as our Savior and seek to please Him, we need not fear living in the fire of His holiness. —Herbert Vander Lugt ([lbid](#))

No sinner can endure God's fire,  
His holiness consumes all sin;  
But Jesus took our punishment—  
Now we can have His peace within.  
—D. De Haan

**God's holiness reveals what is good by consuming what is evil.**

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**Harry Ironside's Illustration** - One of the first gospel illustrations that ever made a real impression upon my young heart was a simple story which I heard a preacher tell when I was less than nine years old.

It was of pioneers who were making their way across one of the central states to a distant place that had been opened up for homesteading. They traveled in covered wagons drawn by oxen, and progress was necessarily slow. One day they were horrified to note a long line of smoke in the west, stretching for miles across the prairie, and soon it was evident that the dried grass was burning fiercely and coming toward them rapidly. They had crossed a river the day before but it would be impossible to go back to that before the flames would be upon them. One man only seemed to have understanding as to what could be done. He gave the command to set fire to the grass behind them. Then when a space was burned over, the whole company moved back upon it.

As the flames roared on toward them from the west, a little girl cried out in terror, "Are you sure we shall not all be burned up?" The leader replied, "My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has been!"

What a picture of the believer, who is safe **in Christ!**

**On Him Almighty vengeance fell,  
Which would have sunk a world to hell.  
He bore it for a chosen race,  
And thus becomes our Hiding Place.**

The fires of God's judgment burned themselves out on Him, and all who are in Christ are safe forever, for they are now standing where the fire has been. (H. A. Ironside, Illustrations of Bible Truth, Moody Press, 1945, pp. 34-35)

**Deuteronomy 4:25 "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger,**

- **Become the father:** De 31:16-18 Judges 2:8-15
- **Act corruptly:** De 4:16, 31:29 Ex 32:7 Ho 9:9
- **Do that which is evil:** 2Ki 17:17-19 21:2,14-16 2Ch 36:12-16 1Co 10:22
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **THE CORRUPTION AND CONSEQUENCES OF IDOLATRY**

Moses has given a strong warning against idolatry (Dt 4:15-24) and now follows with the stern consequences of failing to heed the warning (Dt 4:25-31). In this section Moses is speaking as God's prophet in the sense not of forth-telling (which he has been doing) but in the sense of forth-telling. . Recall that a [prophet](#) had the role of *forth*-telling and *fore*-telling.

**Daniel Block** observes that "While the first part of this section is dominated by a tone of doom (Deut 4:25–28), the second opens windows of hope (Deut 4:29–31). Here Moses the pastor describes the consequences of abandoning Yahweh and the covenant

relationship: the tripartite covenant relationship involving Yahweh, Israel, and the land will disintegrate. Although the mood is pessimistic, Moses ends on a positive note." (NIV Application Commentary)

**When you become the father of children and children's children** - Father of children and of grandchildren. Moses gave this prophecy about 1405 BC so by the time of the coming of the second generation (children's children) Israel would have been entering the times of the Judges (1381-1051 BC). This horrible time of Israel's history is summarized by this verse -- "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Jdg 21:25-note) These dark days lasted 300+ years. (See [Table of Timeline of Judges and Book of Ruth](#))

**The land** - Referring to the promised land of Canaan.

**When...you act corruptly** ([shachath](#)) - The **Omniscient God** (speaking through His "*mouthpiece*" Moses cp Deut 31:29) sees the future failure of His [Chosen People](#) Israel. He had just warned them when they entered the land to **'watch yourselves carefully.'** (Dt 4:15+) The Hebrew word for **'watch carefully'** is [shamar](#) (08104) which means to be on one's guard and is rendered in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) with the Greek verb [phulasso](#) a vivid word calling for one to set up a watchman to guard and protect from enemy incursions. It is fascinating that both [shamar](#) and [phulasso](#) are used in Genesis 2:15 where Adam was commanded by God guard ("keep") the garden against intruders! Adam failed to guard not only the Garden but also his wife and the rest is history!

In Deut 4:16+ Moses warned Israel to be on guard so that they would **'not act corruptly'** ([shachath](#)), so that they would not be spoiled, ruined, perverted, destroyed or wiped out. This same verb ([shachath](#)) describes the [corrupt](#), ruined (morally rotten) state of the world in Ge 6:11,12! In context the "corrupting agent" was idolatry and as Deut 4:25 teaches while idols may be "dead," they still exert a controlling effect on the human heart, resulting in evil in the sight of God thus provoking the "Refiner's Ire" and stoking the "Refiner's fire!" (cp Dt 32:16)

**Remained long in the land** - This speaks of time and as it passes we have a natural tendency to become forgetful.

As **Thompson** says "There was a danger that prolonged (**Ed**: The time = **"When you become the father of children and children's children"**) enjoyment of the blessings of the land might result in **forgetfulness** of the demands of the covenant, so that after many years Israel might turn to idolatry and vex Yahweh. If that happened (**Ed**: Which of course it did!) the curses of the covenant, here defined by national death (Dt 4:26), separation from the land (Dt 4:26) and scattering among the nations (Dt 4:27), would come into operation." (Tyndale OT Commentary - Deuteronomy)

Israel failed to heed the warnings Moses had just given and made graven images just as they were commanded not to do (Exodus 20:3-5)...

"Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, **lest you forget** the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons. (Deut 4:9+)

"So watch yourselves, **lest you forget** the covenant of the LORD your God (referring to the Mosaic Covenant, the Covenant of Law), which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the LORD your God has commanded you. (Deut 4:23+)

**Warren Wiersbe** - God made a covenant with His people and He expected them to keep it **Ed**: See [Covenant: Abrahamic versus Mosaic](#)). The word **"covenant"** is used at least twenty-seven times in Deuteronomy (**Ed**: Deut. 4:13, 23, 31; 5:2f; 7:2, 9, 12; 8:18; 9:9, 11, 15; 10:8; 17:2; 29:1, 9, 12, 14, 21, 25; 31:9, 16, 20, 25f; 33:9) and comes from the Hebrew word [beriyth](#) which some scholars say means "to eat bread." In the East, when people broke bread together, they formed a covenant or treaty that they would help and protect each other (see Ge 26:26-35) (**Ed**: See [Table Summary of Biblical Covenants](#)). When God established His covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, Moses and the Jewish elders ate before God on the mountain (Ex. 24:11+). The terms of the covenant were simple: if Israel obeyed God's laws, He would bless them; if they disobeyed, He would chasten them. He would show His love to them in both the blessing and the chastening, "for whom the Lord loves, He chastens" (Heb. 12:6+ NKJV). ([Be Equipped](#))

**Idol** (06459) see below for discussion of [pesel](#).

**John Butler** rightly reminds us that "Idolatry corrupts. It leads to low morals and cruel deeds. Corrupt creed leads to corrupt conduct. This explains the corruption that prevails in our country. Bad doctrine precedes bad deportment." (Analytical Bible Exposition) Have you done an "idol check" in your life lately? You might consider praying Psalm 139:23, 24 periodically.

**Do that which is evil** is more literally "the evil thing." Block notes that "this idiom commonly occurs with the article ("the evil") suggests a particular kind of evil; violating the Supreme Command ("You shall have no other gods before me," Dt 5:7) by manufacturing competing images of worship, which "provoke" Yahweh's ire." (Ibid)

**Brian Bell** - Tough Yet Tender - Every conscientious parent recognizes how difficult it is to exercise his God-given authority over his

children. The delicate balance of being tough yet tender is not easy to maintain. Many parents intensify a rebellious spirit by being dictatorial and harsh. Others yield when their authority is tested. When a strong-willed child resists, the pressure to give in for the sake of peace and harmony can become overpowering. I am reminded of the mother who wanted to have the last word but couldn't handle the hassle that resulted whenever she said no to her young son. After an especially trying day, she finally flung up her hands and shouted, "All right, Billy, do whatever you want! Now let me see you disobey THAT!" Actually, Billy can't disobey that. Because as Jonathan Edwards said in his great work on "The Will", we choose according to that which we desire most. Motives have a certain weight with you, motives for and against. a) Reading a book, for example, are weighed in the balance of your mind; the motives that outweigh all others, are what you indeed choose to follow. b) You, being a rational person, will always choose what seems to you to be the right thing, the wise thing, the most advisable thing to do at that moment. c) If you choose not to do the right thing, the advisable thing, the thing that you are inclined to do, you would, of course, be insane. (You would be choosing something that you did not choose).

**Deuteronomy 4:26 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed.**

- De 30:18,19 31:28 32:1 Isa 1:2 Jer 2:12 6:19 22:29 Eze 36:4 Mic 1:2 6:2
- **You shall:** De 29:28 Lev 18:28 26:31-35 Jos 23:16 Isa 6:11 24:1-3 Jer 44:22 Eze 33:28 Lu 21:24
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GOD CALLS THE UNIVERSE AS WITNESS! SEPARATION FROM THE LAND**

Deut 4:26 continues the proclamation of divine consequences, for the unfaithful behavior of Israel described in Dt 4:25. Moses acting as God's spokesman (prophet) begins this section with the solemn words "I call heaven and earth to witness" (they are the "witnesses" in the courtroom setting). Moses is acting the part of the judge over a trial reading the divine sentence against Israel because of her status as "Guilty as Charged!"

**I call heaven and earth to witness against you today** - "Moses invoked **heaven and earth as witnesses** because of their permanence and unchanging character in contrast with the fickleness of human hearts." (Deere)

**Driver** - **heaven and earth**, representing the unchangeable and ever-present fabric of the universe, are solemnly appealed to (Dt 30:19, Dt 31:28) as witnesses of the fact that the consequences of Israel's disobedience have thus been foretold to it (cf. Dt 8:19, Dt 30:17f.).

**Bratcher** on calling **heaven and earth** - the punishment that Moses is about to describe is so severe that he calls the whole universe to listen to what he is about to say. Among other peoples at that time it was common to call upon the gods to witness to what someone was about to say or do; here the whole world, as God's creation, is to be witness. (Handbook on Deuteronomy)

**Merrill** puts it this way stating that God's "wrath, in turn, will impel Him to bring Israel to trial on the charge of breach of (covenant) contract. The whole creation, having witnessed the establishment of the covenant in the first place (cf. Dt 30:19), will testify with one voice to Israel's perfidy. If convicted—as surely she will be, given such testimony—Israel will be sentenced to utter ruin and absolute destruction. The intensity suggested by the use of synonymous verbs and their infinitives is overpowering. God's judgment for idolatry will be swift and awful (Dt 4:26). ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))

**KJV Bible Commentary** on "**I call heaven and earth**" - (This) is in the accusative case, which means to give a witness against a person under oath. **Heaven and earth** are personified, not as the instruments of judgment if they disobey, but as witnesses that God had warned His people against idols.

**NET Note** - I invoke heaven and earth as witnesses against you. This stock formula introduces what is known form-critically as a רִיב ([riv or rib](#)) or controversy pattern. It is commonly used in the ancient Near Eastern world in legal contexts and in the OT as a forensic or judicial device to draw attention to Israel's violation of the LORD's covenant with them (see Dt 30:19; Isa 1:2; 3:13 = "The LORD arises to **contend**, And stands to judge the people."; Jer 2:9 = "Therefore I will yet **contend** with you," declares the LORD, "And with your sons' sons I will **contend**."). Since court proceedings required the testimony of witnesses, the LORD here summons **heaven and earth** (that is, all creation) to testify to His faithfulness, Israel's disobedience, and the threat of judgment.

**Eugene Merrill** - Though the full form is lacking here, the very phrase "I call heaven and earth against you this day" (v. 26) is sufficient to show that Moses was invoking, vestigially at least, the so-called "Rib-pattern" as a vehicle by which to communicate the formal process of dealing with covenant violation on the part of an indicted vassal. ([The New American Commentary: Deuteronomy](#)).

**Bob Utley on "I call heaven and earth to witness"** - This was part of the Suzerain Hittite Treaties (need for powerful spiritual witnesses, cf. Intro. to Book, VII). These are the two most permanent things in physical creation. They are often called on by God to act as witnesses. It also reflects the Israeli legal system's need for two witnesses in a court case (cf. Ex 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). The phrase is used often in connection with the ratification of the covenant with YHWH (cf. Dt 4:26; 30:19; 31:28).

**IVP Bible Background Commentary heaven and earth as witnesses.** In ancient Near Eastern treaties the gods are typically called to witness as ones who would be able to adjudicate any failures to adhere to the terms. Here **heaven and earth** are not understood as deified, but, representing the entire created universe, they signify that the agreement is intended to endure long beyond human life spans. A clearer indication of the implications can be seen in the fuller wording of Psalm 89:28–29, 34–37 (see also Jer 33:20–21).

**Treasury of Scripture Knowledge Notes** says this oath is "A most solemn method of **adjuration**, in use among all the nations in the world; God and man being called upon to bear testimony to the truth of what was spoken, that if there was any flaw or insincerity it might be detected, and if any crime, it might not go unpunished. Such appeals to God shew at once the origin and use of oaths."

**That you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it-** (Dt 7:4, 11:17, 28:20, Jos. 23:16) The divine sentence on guilty Israel is to be expulsion from the promised land that they had not yet even possessed!

## THE SENTENCE: ISRAEL WILL BE RUINED

**Will...Perish** (be lost, destroyed, ruined) (06)(**abad**; cp **abaddon**) is a verb meaning to perish, to be destroyed, to be ruined, to be lost, to in a state of ruin and destruction pertaining to an object, including the death (Ex 10:7). In particular, **abad** constitutes the inevitable fate of the Israelite people, who will perish in the process of being sent into exile (cf. Lev. 26:38; Dt 4:26; 8:20; 30:18; Jos. 23:13; Jer. 4: 9; 27:10; Eze. 25: 7). The people will also perish on account of their idolatry (cf. Dt 8:19; Jos. 23:16).

The **Septuagint (LXX)** translates **abad** in Dt 4:27 with the Greek verb **apollumi** ([see notes](#)) which speaks of destruction but **not** annihilation. Apollumi basically has to do with that which is ruined and is no longer usable for its intended purpose. All men and women are created in the image of God and have the potential to bring glory to God, but this is only possible if one is born again ("re-created" as it were in Christ). Only the redeemed can properly bring glory to their Creator. Isaiah speaks of this privilege believers have to bring glory to God writing that "Everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made." (Isaiah 43:7) If men fail to be born again by grace through faith they remain dead in their trespasses and sins and when they die, their soul will exist forever in a state of ruin (not annihilation). As one might expect, **apollumi** is the verb Jesus used to describe those who are thrown into hell (Mt 10:28). As He makes clear elsewhere, hell is not a place or state of nothingness or unconscious existence, as is the Hindu Nirvana. It is the place of everlasting torment, the place of eternal spiritual death, where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (see Mt 13:42, 50). All people are created by God for His glory, but when they refuse to come to Him for salvation they lose their opportunity for redemption and for becoming what God intends for them to be. They are then fit only for condemnation and eternal destruction. This tragic truth should motivate every believer to seek to present the Gospel with their life and then their lips to all around them who are still dead in their trespasses and sins.

**You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed-** He repeats the divine judgment to make sure Israel hears and is without excuse! **Not live long** or not prolong days (לא תאריבן ימים) upon it] is a favourite Deuteronomic expression = Dt 4:40, Dt 5:16, Dt 5:33 Dt 6:2, Dt 11:9, Dt 17:20, Dt 22:7, Dt 25:15, Dt 30:18, Dt 32:47.

**Utterly destroyed** (demolished, exterminated) (08045)(**shamad**) means ruin or waste and is a primary root which refers to a desolation caused by some great disaster, usually a result of divine judgment. This Hebrew verb is used in twice in Leviticus 26 to describe what God would do to faithless, idol worshipping Israel...

I will **lay waste** your cities as well and will make your sanctuaries desolate, and I will not smell your soothing aromas. I will make the land **desolate** so that your enemies who settle in it will be appalled over it. (Leviticus 26:31; 32-note)

**Deuteronomy 4:27 "And the LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the LORD shall drive you.**

- De 28:62-64 Ne 1:3,8,9 Eze 12:15 32:26



- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passage:

Deuteronomy 28:62-64+ "Then you shall be left few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, because you did not obey the LORD your God. 63 "It shall come about that as the LORD delighted over you to prosper you, and multiply you, so the LORD will delight over you to make you perish and destroy you; and you will be torn from the land where you are entering to possess it. 64 "Moreover, the LORD will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you shall serve other gods, wood and stone, which you or your fathers have not known.

### GOD'S PROMISE TO SCATTER IS SURE

**The LORD will scatter you among the peoples (Gentiles)** - Compare similar promises in Dt 28:64-67. This is one of those promises we don't usually see in a collection like ["God's Promises for Your Every Need."](#)

**Ryrie** - Here is Moses' first prophecy of Israel's removal from the land if she proved disobedient.

**Brian Bell** - Promised exile for disobedience. Like when Adam & Eve (Ge 3:24) & Cain (Ge 4:16) were exiled from their special lands. He now anticipated the future exile of Israel to Assyria & Judah to Babylon.

**The LORD will scatter you...the LORD shall drive you** - Note God's personal involvement in this punishment. Jehovah would use the Gentile nations to fulfill this promised punishment.

**Scatter** ([06327](#))([puts](#)) means to be dispersed and is used two more times in this book - Same verb used in Dt 28:64, Dt 30:3.

**You shall be left few in number among the nations**(Gentiles) (see the contrast in Dt 28:62) - Jews are located throughout the world today but their numbers are relatively small ([13.9 million in 2014](#)). The number of Jewish believers, while increasing in recent years, is still a small percentage of the population. However God had promised that there would always be a [remnant](#) of Jews who were genuine believers in the Messiah.

Israel's disobedience provoked the LORD's anger which brought His righteous punishment and the scattering of the nation among **the peoples** (the Gentile nations). The Hebrew verb **scatter** is translated in the Septuagint with the verb diaspeiro which means to scatter abroad which calls to mind the [Jewish diaspora](#). (see Greek word [diaspora](#) used in NT) This prophecy was first fulfilled when the 10 northern tribes were carried into exile in Assyria in 722BC (2 Kings 17:6) and the 2 Southern tribes, Judah and Benjamin, were taken into exile in Babylon in 586BC (2Chr 36:15-21 - note the tragic phrase "*until there was no remedy*" - no 'healing' in 2 Chr 36:16!, cp fall of Jerusalem - 2Ki 24:14ff, 2Ki 25:10ff). In addition, the nation of Israel was scattered from her land after her rejection of Christ, [this dispersion](#) occurring at the hands of the Romans.

**Constable** - The nation's present scattered condition as a result of her dispersion by the Romans is only one of several scatterings that Israel has experienced. ([Deuteronomy 4](#))

**Left** (remnant) ([07604](#))([sha'ar/sa'ar](#)) means to remain, be left over, to leave, to let remain. The first Biblical use of **sha'ar** is in the context of judgement, Moses recording that after the worldwide flood "only Noah was **left**" and was in essence a "**remnant**." (Ge 7:23; Lxx = [katalaipo](#)). The second use also describes God's judgment, this time on Sodom and Gomorrah stating that "those who **survived** fled to the hill country." (Ge 14:10; Lxx = [katalaipo](#)). **Sha'ar** describes Pharaoh's army = "not even one of them **remained**." (Ex 14:28; Lxx = [katalaipo](#)). **Sha'ar** in Deuteronomy - Deut. 2:34; Deut. 3:3; Deut. 3:11; Deut. 4:27; Deut. 7:20; Deut. 19:20; Deut. 28:51; Deut. 28:55; Deut. 28:62;

Deuteronomy 28:62 "Then you shall be **left** ([sha'ar/sa'ar](#)) few in number, whereas you were as numerous as the stars of heaven, (WHY?) because you did not obey the LORD your God.

**John MacArthur** sums up Deut 4:25-31 - In fact, this briefly outlined the future judgment of Israel, which culminated in the northern 10 tribes being exiled to Assyria (ca. 722 B.C.; 2 Ki 17:1-41) and the southern two tribes being deported to Babylon (ca. 605–586 B.C.; 2 Ki 24, 25). Although the Jews returned in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah (ca. 538–445 B.C.), they never regained their autonomy or dominance. Thus, the days of promised restoration and return look forward to Messiah's return to set up the [millennial kingdom](#). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - During the closing years of Solomon's reign, to please his many wives he introduced idolatry into the land (1

Kings 11:1-12) and this led to God's judgment and the division and deterioration of the nation (1 Kings 12:1-33). In 722 B.C., Assyria captured the ten tribes that formed the Northern Kingdom of Samaria, and Babylon took the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. From A.D. 70 until May 14, 1948, when the modern nation of Israel was recognized (Ed: [See summary of events leading to nationhood](#)), the Jewish people were **dispersed throughout the world** and had no national homeland. ([Be Equipped](#))

**J Vernon McGee** on Israel - That nation is still a witness to the world today, a witness in their disobedience. They are scattered over the world today. Why? Because they did the thing God forbade them to do. I know someone will point out that they are back in the land and they are a nation now. Yes, but they are in trouble, aren't they? When God brings them back into that land as He predicted, they won't be having the trouble they are having today. The nation of Israel is still under the judgment of God today because it has turned its back upon God. Judgment will come upon any nation which rejects Him. This is a tremendous lesson for us today.

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### **Stones of Adversity - Woodrow Kroll**

Deuteronomy 4:27-31, especially verse 30

#### **When you are in distress ...**

Introduction: Difficulty and adversity come to all of us, in small ways that nag at us like a pebble in our shoes and in large ways that overwhelm us like a rockslide. None of us is exempt just because we're Christians. You can be going along and things seem fine, then you go to the doctor and get a report you didn't want to hear. Or a phone call you didn't want to receive. Moses knew all about adversity, and that's why I find Deuteronomy 4:27-31 so comforting. If you think about the life of Moses and the Children of Israel, their lives parallel our lives in many respects; and we can learn from their examples. Today there are three principles I'd like you to know.

1. **Whatever You're Going Through, It's Not Necessarily Because of Sin in Your Life.** Sometimes adversity is associated with sin. David numbered the people, a display of pride on his behalf that resulted in significant trouble for him. Jonah ran from God, and his disobedience brought adversity. Does that automatically mean that when I have trouble I've sinned? No. Remember Job? He's a classic example of someone who faced adversity though there was no glaring sin in his life. Jesus observed that God sends the rain on the just and the unjust. You're not exempt because you're a Christian. When Paul wanted to encourage the believers of Asia Minor, he said: "We must go through many tribulations to enter the kingdom of God." Adversity comes to all and we should all expect it. If you're a Christian, don't expect God to keep you from tribulation.
2. **Whatever You're Going Through, God Has a Plan to Use It for Good.** God allows adversity in our lives because He wants to strengthen our character. Beethoven did most of his best work after he was completely deaf. Pascal learned his greatest lessons about life while bedridden with disease. There are things in your life that God allows to come because He knows the end from the beginning, and He knows what's good for you. In fact, He knows what's best for you. So if God allows adversity in your life, He does so because He knows it will lead to good. See Romans 8:28.
3. **Whatever You're Going Through, God Will Not Let You Face It Alone.** Jesus promised, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb. 13:5). God promises to always be with us in our adversity. See Psalm 94:12-14. He is very interested in you and will never let you go through adversity by yourself. As we learn the lessons of adversity we understand that it's necessary in our lives. We really can't have maturity in our Christian lives without some adversity. Some of us, even those who may be more mature in the Christian faith, sometimes nearly crack under adversity; but we must always remember that God has not abandoned us amid our problems. The great writer, W. T. Purkiser, said, "God does not offer us a way out of testings in life. He offers us a way through them, and that makes all the difference." Adversity teaches us many things about God and about what He wants to accomplish in our lives. For example, it teaches us something about the faithfulness of God. Erwin Lutzer remarked that God often puts us in situations that are too much for us so that we can learn that no situation is too much for Him. What I learn from adversity is that God is always going to be there, and He is always faithful to me. I am not sufficient in myself to overcome the adversities of my life, but through God's strength I am strong. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13).

Conclusion: Hey, listen. Sometimes I don't want adversity to come to my life. But as I mature in my faith, I understand that God allows adversity to come to my life, and it is not always because I have sinned. We're all going to face adversity. God allows it because He has a plan for us that is better than our plans for ourselves, and Jesus Christ has promised to be with us always, even in the valley of the shadow. In this world we will have tribulation, but we can be of good cheer for He has overcome the world.

More from Dr. Kroll - When my mother was a little girl she once had a stone in her shoe. As she took it out, her father who was a very wise man, said, "Now, doesn't that feel good—once you got that stone out? If the stone had never been there, you would never know how good it felt afterward." If there were no adversity in your life, you may not be able to enjoy life. Sometimes God uses adversity as an opportunity to help you in your own life. A boy was ten years old when he ran away from home. His family had a soap manufacturing business, but he didn't like being in the business; so at age ten he decided to run away from home and go to

Chicago. The only thing he knew was soap, so he started to sell soap in order to keep body and soul together. He decided to make some incentive for people to buy his soap. Every bar of soap they bought, he gave them two free sticks of gum. He soon found out people loved the gum more than the soap, and soon he went into the gum business. His name was William Wrigley. It was the adversity of having to run away from home and trying to get away from his family that led him to the thing God obviously called him to—Wrigley's gum. Sometimes God will use adversity simply to bring you to the point where He can bless you. (Nelson's Annual Preacher's Sourcebook - 2007)

**Deuteronomy 4:28 "And there you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell.**

- **You will serve:** De 28:36,64 1Sa 26:19 Jer 16:13 Eze 20:32,39 Ac 7:42
- **Neither see:** Ps 115:4-7 135:15,16 Isa 44:9, 45:20, 46:7 Jer 10:3,9
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **GOTTA SERVE SOMEBODY! GOD OR IDOLS**

The title of this section comes from Bob Dylan's classic "[Gotta Serve Somebody!](#)"

It may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you gotta serve somebody!

**Driver** on vv 27-28 - They will be scattered among the nations, and dwindle in numbers; there also they will sink deeper in heathenism, until they become abandoned entirely to the worship of dumb idols.

**You will serve gods** - O the [irony](#) of "[poetic justice!](#)" What a pitiful description for God's Chosen People! By the way, this is another of the passages you won't find in God's book of promises! The truth of this passage applies to all men of all ethnicity. If man does not serve God, he will by default serve gods! Jesus made this quite clear when He declared

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You (absolutely) cannot serve God and mammon." (Matthew 6:24-[note](#))

**Henry Morris** on **serve other gods** - This is a prophecy remarkably fulfilled in later ages. Not only were the Israelites scattered among the nations of the world, but great multitudes of these apostates abandoned the faith of their fathers in favor of many forms--ancient and modern--of evolutionary pantheism. Modern Reform Judaism, for example, is little more than evolutionary humanism.

**Merrill** - Israel's exile would not immediately cure her of idolatry. In fact, Moses said, it would intensify and take even more reprobate form, for no longer would the lifeless idols of wood and stone represent Yahweh, but they would take his place (Dt 4:28). Presupposed here are the pantheons of deities of the pagan world that were worshiped in the guise of images made by human hands. Their pathetic impotence is seen clearly in their inability to exhibit even the human abilities of hearing, eating, and smelling (cf. Ps 115:4-8; Isa 44:9-17; Jer 10:6-16). But that would not mean the end for Israel, as hopeless as her apostasy might seem to be. ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))

**Serve** - The Jews were set free from the bondage of slavery in Egypt so that they might **serve Jehovah** (Ex 7:16, 8:1, 20, 9:1, 13, 10:3, 7) but they rejected Him as their Master and ended up being forced to **serve dumb idols!** It was as if God said, "You have chosen this path, now live with it." God says in essence "If you want idols, not Me, then I will give you what you want!" (cp Israel's cry for "meat" which God gave them along with "a wasting disease" = Nu 11:4, 33, Ps 106:14, 15)

**THOUGHT** - That is personally my greatest fear when I commit [presumptuous](#) ("[high handed](#)") sin against God (Ps 19:12-13-[note](#)) - that He may say "*Okay, you want it. Go for it!*" That would be horrible! The other point that this passage raises is you had better be careful what you "wish for" or you may end up like Israel who lusted for idols and were given over entirely to the object of their evil desire! Look out!

**The work of men's hands** 2 Ki 19:18 Isa 37:19, 2 Ch. 32:19 Ps. 115:4, Ps 135:15; Dt 27:15, Jer. 10:3 (מעשה ידי חרש) Hos. 14:4 Is. 2:8, Isa 17:8, Mic. 5:12.

**Wood and stone**, as Dt 28:36, 64, Dt 29:16, Ezek 20:32

**Which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell** - Ps 115:5-7, Ps 135:16-17. Driver adds "The same sarcasm on idols, made by the hands of men, and not even capable of the functions of animal life, also Hos. 8:6, 13:2, Is. 2:8, 20, 17:8, 30:22, Hab. 2:18f., Jer. 10:1-10, 14-15 (= Jer 51:17-18) Is. 44:9-20, 46:6f. (cf. Isa 40:19f, 41:7, 48:5): elsewhere in the Pent. only Lev. 26:30"

In **Jeremiah 16:13** there is a vivid picture of God's wrath casting Judah out of the land as someone would throw someone out their house:

So **I will hurl** (cp Isa 22:17, Jer 22:26, 28) **you out of this land** into the land which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers; and there **you will serve other gods day and night**, for I shall grant you no favor (Lxx translates with *eleos* = pity, mercy).

Gods, the work of man's hands...neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. The psalmist gives a similar description

Their idols are silver and gold, The work of man's hands. They have mouths, but they cannot speak; They have eyes, but they cannot see; They have ears, but they cannot hear; They have noses, but they cannot smell; They have hands, but they cannot feel; They have feet, but they cannot walk; They cannot make a sound with their throat. (Psalm 115:4-7)

In Isaiah 44:9 we read

Those who fashion a graven image (carved as from wood or chiseled from rock, but still dead!) are all of them futile, and their precious things are of no profit; even their own witnesses fail to see or know, so that they will be put to shame.

**Comment:** Notice these inanimate objects are futile (Hebrew *tohu*, 08414) which is used first in Ge 1:2 translated "formless," in Deut 32:10 translated "waste" and in Isa 24:10 translated "chaos!" All of these renderings would compose an apt description of idols!

**Block comments** - Exposing the folly of idolatry, Moses observes sarcastically how roles have reversed. (1) Instead of the creature worshiping the Creator, the creator worships creature: idols are the work of human hands. (2) Idolatry directly contradicts Yahweh's self-revelation (Dt 4:12, 15): lifeless and physical material replaces what is formless but living and spiritual. (3) These images have organs of perception and communication, but they are blind, deaf, and dumb. In effect, Yahweh says through Moses, "If idolatry is what you want, fine—but not in my land!" For their sin, the Israelites face a total disintegration of the deity—nation—land relationship that Yahweh had established for the sake of his mission to the world, and in Israel's interest. (Ibid)

**IVP Bible Background Commentary** Other passages that articulate this view are Isaiah 44; Jeremiah 10; and Psalm 115:4–8. On the beliefs about idols in ancient Near Eastern religious practice, see the comment on 4:15–18. It has long been of interest to scholars that the text does not refute mythology or the existence of the pagan gods but attacks their understanding of idols. In the end, however, it is very difficult to prove to someone that his gods do not exist. But it can be shown that the gods do not operate in the way they are believed to. To the biblical authors the "idol as fetish" aspect of pagan belief was the most vulnerable and the most ridiculous. If the gods were not manifest in their images, then many of the other aspects of the common worldview were also in jeopardy

**THOUGHT** - God mocks the idols in Isaiah 45:20 declaring an idol cannot save! As a Westerner you may not realize that there are literally millions of souls who have been deceived by the lie that their idols can bestow benefits (as well as curses) and can save them. Are you regularly praying for the hidden people groups who are in bondage to the dominion of Satan (Acts 26:18). I like two sites to guide my intercession for these souls ensnared by idolatry - [Global Prayer Digest](#) and [Joshua Project Unreached People Group of the Day](#).

Gather yourselves and come; Draw near together, you fugitives of the nations; They have no knowledge, Who carry about their wooden idol, And pray to a god who cannot save. (Isaiah 45:20)

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#### David Reed - Deuteronomy 4:28 - [Mormons Answered Verse by Verse](#)

Centuries after Moses recorded this prophecy, the nation of Israel was carried off captive to lands where people worshiped idols—gods of wood and stone. But some Mormons believe this verse applies also to the Catholic and Protestant churches. They believe that strange Gods of christendom are worshiped in those churches, "gods made by the hands of man"—by church leaders who apostatized from the true faith and invented a counterfeit theology (A Marvelous Work And A Wonder, by Mormon Apostle LeGrand Richards, 1979 edition, p. 12). "The false gods of Christendom bear the same names as the true Gods of the Bible. Beyond this they have little resemblance" (A New Witness for the Articles of Faith, by Bruce R. McConkie, p.55). The true God, according to Mormonism, is a former man who still has a humanlike body and who can therefore see, hear, eat, and smell with his eyes, ears, mouth, and nose. Anyone worshiping a God who is a spirit and therefore lacks those literal human body parts falls into the same category as the idolaters described in Deuteronomy, in the Mormon's view. They charge Catholics and Protestants with worshiping a God who can "neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell." Yet, God declares in the Bible, "I am God, and not man" (Hos. 11:9). Since "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" and said, "Let there be light: and there was light," it should be obvious that

he could see that light even before he formed any creatures having eyes (Gen. 1:1, 3). As the psalmist puts it, "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?" (Ps. 94:9). No, the God Christians worship is not "the work of men's hands" (Deut. 4:28). Nor is he a former man, like the gods of Mormonism. Rather, the true God is "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 106:48; 41:13). And, far from having the proportions of a man, he is so great that King Solomon prayed, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?" (1 Kings 8:27). For further refutation of the LDS claim that God the Father has a resurrected body of flesh and bones, see the discussions of Genesis 1:26, 27; 32:30; Exodus 24:10, 11; 33:11.

**Deuteronomy 4:29 "But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.**

- **But:** De 30:10 Lev 26:39-42 2Ch 15:4,15 Ne 1:9 Isa 55:6,7 Jer 3:12-14 Jer 29:12-14
- **With all:** De 30:1-3 1Ki 8:47,48 2Ki 10:31 23:3 2Ch 15:12 31:21 Ps 119:2,10 Ps 119:58,145 Jer 3:10 Joe 2:12
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## A BLESSED "BUT!" A FUTURE AND A HOPE FOR ISRAEL

**Driver** on Dt 4:29-31 - But Israel's alienation from its God will not be permanent. **Tribulation** will work a change in the heart of the nation; it will turn sincerely to Jehovah, and its penitence being accepted, will receive again the tokens of His favour.

**But** - Note this blessed [term of contrast](#)!!! This blessed contrast reminds us the wonderful "but God" in Ephesians 2:4-[note](#) where in the face of our spiritually dead condition, God, because of His rich mercy and great love, "made us alive together with Christ." (Ephesians 2:5-[note](#)). As Thompson says "Even in the predicament of exile God may be sought and found." (Ibid) To that we all say "Thank You Jesus!" as we all have those moments of "temporary exile" so to speak, wherein we forget God's goodness and go astray into sin, bowing down to and serving our "**idol du joir**" or "idol of choice" so to speak. And yet because of God's endless love and great mercy and kindness, we can still cry out to Him from the darkness of sin (cp 1John 1:9, Pr 28:13) and He picks us up and out of the miry clay and puts us on a rock...

He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay; and He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm. (Psalm 40:2)

**From there** - From where? From their worldwide dispersion.

**Seek the LORD** - Israel will experience again His grace and help = Ps. 32:6, Is. 55:6, Isa 65:1, 1 Ch. 28:9b, 2 Ch. 15:2, 4, Jer. 29:13 Do you see God's great covenant mercy, His abundant lovingkindness? No man, Jew or Gentile, seeks for God (Ro 3:11, Ps 14:2), so in order for the dispersed Jews **in the latter days** to seek for Him, God Himself (His Spirit - cp "the Spirit of grace" = Zech 12:10+) must put that desire in their heart. Of course, they still have the responsibility to follow through and "seek for Him" -- this is a great mystery - God's sovereign provision, man's responsibility.

Notice this phrase **the LORD your God** which shows that even though He will chastise Israel, even scattering them, He is still their God. Israel may have abandoned Him, but He will not abandon them.

**Seek** ([01245](#)) ([baqash](#)) is a verb meaning to seek, to require; to try to obtain. "It is used to describe subjects seeking or requiring various things for various reasons: a stolen object (Ge 31:39); persons (Ge 37:15, 16); someone's life (Ex. 4:19; 24); evil against someone (1 Sa 25:26) or good (Neh. 2:10; Ps. 122:9). It denotes seeking someone's presence, especially the Lord's (1 Ki 10:24; Hos. 5:15) or His word (Amos 8:12). Prayer was a means of seeking the Lord's will (Dan. 9:3). In the passive use of the verb, something is sought for (Jer 50:20; Ezek 26:21) or is examined (Esther 2:23). (Baker)

**Block** adds that in this passage "to seek" (bqš) Yahweh does not mean to look for Him as if He were lost, but to seek Him out, to approach Him humbly with renewed devotion, and plead for return of His favor." (Ibid)

**With all your heart and all your soul** - **Driver** writes "the words express the condition of Jehovah's being "found," His being sought for, viz. not from superficial or interested motives, such as the desire to escape from misfortune, but with a radical change of heart (Dt 4:30 "return"), and the devotion of the whole being." This speaks of total commitment not a "seeking" to simply have restored what they had lost. The danger for them (and all of us) is a longing to return to the land (or whatever place of blessing we were in) but not a sincere, heartfelt desire to return to the Lord. We want the "place" but not His presence. Complete devotion. This degree of commitment is repeatedly urged throughout Deuteronomy (see Dt 6:5; 11:13; 10:12-13; 30:1-3,10). Of course, there is only one way



they could keep this charge and that is as they were enabled by God's grace and His Spirit (yes the Spirit was clearly active in the OT, but just not continually indwelling believers). If God asked that of them then, why would He ask less of us today, especially in light of the truth that we have the empowering Holy Spirit indwelling us? But just try accomplishing this in reliance on your natural strength, the [Old Man](#)! It seems to me that this description is of a heart and soul which has been touched by God's grace and mercy (see Zech 12:10+ and experienced spiritual circumcision of the heart as in Dt 30:6+ = "Moreover the LORD your **God will circumcise your heart** (CLEARLY THIS IS SPIRITUAL CIRCUMCISION AND EQUATES WITH SALVATION IN THE NT [see Ro 2:28-29+] SO IT HAS TO BE BY GOD'S GRACE [HIS SPIRIT'S [INWORKING](#)] AND THE INDIVIDUAL'S FAITH) and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live." See Excursus on [Circumcision](#)). Ultimately one's heart condition is revealed by one's humble conduct.

The heart attitude described here is that shown by David as he expressed his sorrow after his sin with Bathsheba declaring "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; **A broken and a contrite heart**, O God, You will not despise." (Ps 51:17).

**Concordia Self Study Bible on all your heart and all your soul** - The phrase is applied not only to how the Lord's people should seek Him, but also to how they should fear (revere) Him, live in obedience to Him, love and serve Him (Dt 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 13:3; 30:6), and, after forsaking Him, renew their allegiance and commitment (Dt 26:16; 30:2, 10).

**With all thy heart, and with all thy soul**] a specially Deuteronomistic expression, implying the devotion of the whole being to God. It occurs besides Dt 4:29, Dt 6:5, Dt 10:12, 11:13, 13:4, 26:16, 30:2, 6, 10; Jos. 22:5, 23:14; 1 Ki 2:4, 1 Ki 8:48, 2 Ch. 6:38, 2 Ki 23:3, 2 Ch. 34:31 2 Ch. 15:12; Jer. uses it once, of God, Jer 32:41! **Driver** adds "The phrase **"with all the heart, and with all the soul,"** is characteristic of Dt. and a genuine expression of the spirit which animates the Writer. It denotes (substantially) the entire spiritual being of man, the **"heart"** being, in the psychology of the ancient Hebrews, the organ of intellect (see Jer. 5:21, Hos. 7:11 Job 12:24), and the **"soul"** being the organ of the desires or affections.

### **WITH ALL ONE'S HEART AND SOUL: SEEK, LOVE, FEAR, SERVE, RETURN & OBEY/TURN**

Deut 6:5 "And you shall **love** the LORD your God with **all your heart and with all your soul** and with all your might.

Deut 10:12 "And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to **fear** the LORD your God, to **walk** in all His ways and **love** Him, and to **serve** the LORD your God **with all your heart and with all your soul**,

Deut 11:18 "You shall therefore impress (Lxx says "cast into your heart") these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

**Comment:** How better to place the Word of God on your heart than to memorize it! **Do you need some motivation to begin to discipline yourself to memorize God's Word?** See [Memorizing His Word](#) and [Memory Verses by Topic](#).

Deut 11:13 "And 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 your heart and all your soul**,

Deut 13:3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you **love** the LORD your God with **all your heart and with all your soul**.

Deut 26:16; "This day the LORD your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore **be careful to do** them with **all your heart and with all your soul**.

Deut 30:2 and you **return** to the LORD your God and **obey** Him with **all your heart and soul** according to all that I command you today, you and your sons,

Deut 30:10 if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you **turn** to the LORD your God **with all your heart and soul**.

Deut 30:6 "Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart (spiritually - Ro 2:25-28-note, Ro 2:29-note; Col 2:11-note) and the heart of your descendants, to **love** the LORD your God with **all your heart and with all your soul**, in order that you may live.

**Comment:** This is an OT allusion to the New Covenant (see [Circumcision of the Heart](#)). Indeed the only way one can truly love the Lord with all one's heart and soul is by having a new power. The old nature



cannot do this. Exactly how this was effecting in OT believers is not clear to me as they did not have the indwelling Spirit as we do. However it is still most reasonable to postulate that although they did not have Him indwelling them, He was still available as their source of supernatural power.

**Wiersbe** - He also warned them that disobedience would bring chastening. God forgives His people when they repent (Dt 4:29–31), but read Hebrews 12:25–29 before making plans to disobey God. He is a merciful God (Dt 4:31), but He is also a jealous God (Dt 4:24 [note](#)); He will not permit His children to sin successfully. (With the Word Bible Commentary)

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### **Andrew Fuller - Great Sinners Encouraged to Return to God**

- Deuteronomy 4:29-31 But if from there you shall seek the LORD your God, you shall find him, if you seek him with all your heart and with all your soul....

THERE is a mixture of mercy and judgment in all the sacred writings. The New Testament contains some awful threatenings. "He that believeth not shall be damned."—"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maran-atha." On the other hand, the law of Moses is interspersed with mercy. As the whole passage has immediate respect to Israel, it doubtless refers to their sins, their captivity and troubles, and to God's great mercy to them in remembrance of the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And as mention is made of "the latter days," it seems to be not merely an encouragement to them to return, but a prophecy which has yet to be accomplished. Yes, when the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon them, it shall be fulfilled. But though it may specially refer to Israel, it is no less applicable to us Gentiles. We are sinners, and have brought innumerable miseries on ourselves, and there is but one refuge for us to seek to—and if we seek him with all our heart and soul, we shall find mercy; for the Lord our God is a merciful God.

**I. NOTICE A FEW CASES TO WHICH THIS LANGUAGE APPLIES.**—The description given of an impenitent people is—"No man spoke aright, saying, What have I done?" Were we to institute such an inquiry, and answer according to truth, what would the answer be?

1. One would say, I have gone great lengths in sin: I lived without restraint; I was a drunkard, a blasphemer, an injurious person to all I had to do with; and now God has brought me into troubles—I am hated and despised by my relations and neighbours—I cannot live long, and yet fear to die. Yet, "if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."
2. Another says, I was born of religious parents; I was long weary of religion, and wished to be free. At length my father died, and I gave myself up to evil; and now my troubles are come upon me, no one respects me, nor careth for my soul; I was undutiful to my parents, and now my children are so to me. But, "if from thence," &c.
3. Another may say, My conduct has been correct and orderly, so as to obtain the approbation of those about me; but I have valued myself upon it, have lived without God, and never sought mercy as a guilty creature; I have lived a Pharisee; and now I feel the want of something in which to appear before God. Well, "if from thence," &c.
4. Another—I have made a profession of religion and thought well of my state, and talked to others, and was thought well of by others; but I indulged first in little and secret sins, and after this they became greater and more exposed; and now I am an outcast—every one shuns me. Yet, "if from thence," &c.
5. Though I have not lost my character, yet I have lost my peace of mind; I have not walked with God, and God seems to have departed from me; I cannot pray, nor read, nor hear to profit: I can enjoy no pleasure in the world nor in religion; I feel myself a backslider in heart, and God has filled me with my own ways. But, "if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul."

### **II. OBSERVE THE GROUNDS ON WHICH THE ENCOURAGEMENT RESTS.**

1. The merciful character of God. Isa. 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his ways," &c. No sins are so great or numerous but that he can forgive them: "if—with all thy heart," &c.
2. The covenant which God made with the fathers, and much more with his Son. There is this difference between uncovenanted and covenanted mercy; the one has no promises, the other has many. God has pledged his perfections, that whosoever believeth in him shall be saved. No ground therefore to despair; whatever thy condition, how far soever from God, return to him through his dear Son, and you will obtain mercy.

**Deuteronomy 4:30** "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to

- **All these:** 1Ki 8:46-53 2Ch 6:36-39 Da 9:11-19
- **Have come upon you:** Hebrew = "have found you" De 31:17 Ex 18:8
- **In the latter days:** De 31:29 Ge 49:1 Nu 24:20 Jer 23:20 Da 10:14 Ho 3:5 Heb 1:2
- **You will:** De 30:10 La 3:40 Ho 14:2,3 Joe 2:12,13 Ac 3:19 26:20
- **Listen:** Isa 1:19 Jer 7:23 Zec 6:15 Heb 5:9
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

CSB When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, you will return to the LORD your God in later days and obey Him.

ESV When you are in tribulation, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, you will return to the LORD your God and obey his voice.

NLT "In the distant future, when you are suffering all these things, you will finally return to the LORD your God and listen to what he tells you.

### IN THE LATTER DAYS OF ISRAEL: "HERE COMES TROUBLE!"

**NOTE:** For a more detailed exposition of this passage, especially as it relates to **future prophecy for the nation of Israel** see the notes on one passage = [Deuteronomy 4:30 Commentary](#) (there is some repetition).

The prophetic promises in Dt 4:25-31 (especially the promise here in Dt 4:30) is echoed in Moses' prophecy in Dt 30: 1-6

So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you (WHEN IS WHEN? THIS REFERS TO THE TIME FULFILLMENT WHICH IS DESCRIBED IN THE PROPHECY IN Zechariah 12:10-note WHEN THE NATION (1/3 - Zech 13:8-9-note) REPENTS AND BELIEVES IN MESSIAH), the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him **with all your heart and soul** according to all that I command you today, you and your sons (BELOVED THIS HAS NOT YET HAPPENED FOR THE NATION OF ISRAEL! THIS HAS TO BE A FUTURE EVENT!), 3 then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. 4 "If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth (NOTE ALL OVER THE EARTH NOT JUST ASSYRIA AND BABYLON), from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. 5 "The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 "Moreover the LORD your God will **circumcise your heart** ([SEE EXPLANATION](#)) and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God **with all your heart and with all your soul**, so that you may live (CLEARLY THIS HAS NOT HAPPENED AND AWAITS THE RETURN OF THE MESSIAH AS PROPHESED in Zechariah 12:10+!).

**When** - Note Moses does not say "if" but "**when**" -- Israel will be "**in distress**" and then he gives the time frame **in the latter days**. This is a key time phrase! Notice it is made more specific by the phrase "**in the latter days**" - so this is a prophecy that speaks of the "end times" prior to Messiah's return. So the "**when**" makes two things clear - Israel will suffer in the future but Israel will repent in the future!

**When you are in distress** (KJV, ESV = **in tribulation**) - Israel will experience a time of national distress. Of course, as a general statement that **distress** could refer to many horrific events in Israel's history, including the unspeakable, inexcusable carnage wrought by the so-called [Crusades in the Middle Ages](#) (who slaughtered whole villages of Jews ostensibly in the name of Christ [see documentation here](#)) -- clearly these Crusaders were **ABSOLUTELY NOT** born again Christ followers but were manifesting a Satanically inspired Anti-Semitism! As an aside when you witness to a Jew, he may remind you of these "Christian Crusades" which you need to explain), the [Russian pogroms](#), the [Nazi holocaust](#), etc. The Jews have been in distress literally for millennia! But this time of distress is unique because of (1) Its timing = in the latter days and (2) Its result = return to God, describing national repentance, an event which has not transpired in world history and which therefore describes a future event. In the context of the Bible this will come to pass in [Daniel's Seventieth Week](#), specifically during the time of the [Great Tribulation](#) (Begins - Mt 24:15-note, named - Mt 24:21+), described by Jeremiah as the [Time of Jacob's Distress](#) (Jeremiah 30:7+), and described by Daniel as "a time of distress" - Da 12:1+.

**Distress** (ESV - **tribulation**) ([06862](#)) (for in depth word study click **tsar**) (See study of related noun [tsarah](#))

The word for **distress** in the [Septuagint \(Lxx\)](#) translation for some reason is placed as the last phrase of the Greek translation of the previous passage (en te thlipsei sou = "in your distress"). Dt 4:29 ends with "all your soul" not "in your distress." So more accurately the Greek phrase "in your distress" should be included in the Septuagint translation of Dt 4:30. This verse begins with "when you are in distress." Here's the point -- The Greek noun **thlipsis** translates "**distress**" and literally describes a pressing together, figuratively as used in this passage referring to trouble that inflicts **distress**. In this case it will **distress** on the entire nation of Israel.

**Thlipsis** is also used in the Septuagint translation of Daniel 12 which is clearly a reference to the **Great Tribulation** predicted by Jesus in Matthew 24..."Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people (Jews), will arise. And there will be a **time of distress** (Hebrew = [tsarah](#), cognate of tsar used here in Dt 4:30; Lxx = thlipsis) such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. (Daniel 12:1-[note](#))

**Thlipsis** is the word used in the Septuagint translation of the great prophecy in Hosea 5:15 "I will go away and return to My place (MESSIAH'S ASCENSION AFTER HIS CRUCIFIXION) Until (EVEN THIS WORD SIGNIFIES THERE WILL BE AN END TO ISRAEL'S UNBELIEF) they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; In their affliction (Hebrew - tsar; Greek - thlipsis) they will earnestly seek Me.

**Thlipsis** is used by Jesus to describe the **Great Tribulation** in Mt 24:21-[note](#) (*thlipsis megale*) where Jesus warned His Jewish audience "For then (When? He had just given them a crystal clear, unequivocal sign in Mt 24:15-note) there will be a **great tribulation**, (HOW GREAT?) such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will." (See Daniel's seventieth week where the last half or 3.5 years represents the actual Great Tribulation). The question is "WHEN IS THEN?" When does the alarm go off marking the beginning of this *never seen before and never to be seen again* Great Tribulation? As usual, it pays to check the context, and in the preceding passages (Mt 24:16-20) Jesus clearly describes a situation demanding a sense of urgency.

For more prophetic treatment of the **Great Tribulation** see the commentary on Zechariah 12-14.

So what is the sign that marks the beginning of this horrible time? In Mt 24:15 Jesus declared "Therefore **when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION** which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand)" (Mt 24:15-[see in depth analysis and commentary](#)).

Then Jesus calls for an urgent response upon seeing this sign because it was the beginning of the distress, the Great Tribulation, the "**time of Jacob's trouble**" (Jer 30:7-note), "**a time of distress** such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time" (Da 12:1-[note](#)).

**J Vernon McGee** on **distress** - This is the first mention of the Great Tribulation which is ultimately coming. "In the latter days" is a technical term in the Old Testament which refers to the Great Tribulation period. God sets up a condition: "If thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto His voice." (Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee)

**You will return to the LORD your God** (cf Hos 5:15) - The parallel description in Deut 30:2 adds Israel will return to the LORD "**with all your heart and soul.**" This is an important detail. Beloved there are some resources who do not interpret the time phrase **the latter days** to be a reference to the [eschaton](#) (e.g., the NET Notes which I highly respect says the "phrase is not used here in a technical sense for the [eschaton](#)"). I beg to differ and I think the clear teaching of the passage (and comparison with other uses of "[last days](#)") unequivocally favors a yet future, end time fulfillment in God's perfect timing! There is no time in Israel's past or current history when the nation can be identified as having returned to Yahweh with all their heart and all their soul. This simply has not been fulfilled for Israel as a nation! But it will be fulfilled in the [eschaton](#), **the last days**, for the apostle Paul promises that "all Israel will be saved (ALL THAT BELIEVE); just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER (MESSIAH) WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." (Ro 11:26-27+) That is the time when "the LORD your God will circumcise your (ISRAEL'S) heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. " (Dt 30:6) (See discussion of [Circumcision of the Heart](#))

**Listen (shama)**([08085](#)) implies not just hearing, but hearing with attention and thus obeying so KJV translates it "obey."

**Listen to His voice** - **NET Note** renders it "obey Him" and explains that "this expression (listen to His voice) is an [idiom](#) meaning "obey," occurring in Dt 8:20; 9:23; 13:18; 21:18, 20; 26:14, 17; 27:10; 28:1-2, 15, 45, 62; 30:2, 8, 10, 20.

**In the latter days** - (Greek = "*ep [eschaton](#) ton hemeron*" - [eschatos](#) - More literally this reads "**in the latter end of the days**") This is an important time phrase which most often conveys a prophetic (eschatological) significance as in this passage.

See also commentary regarding Israel's future in the latter days

- Jeremiah 31:27–34+
- Ezekiel 36:22–36+

It is fascinating that a number of resources **completely avoid making comments** on the phrase **the latter days** (e.g., ESV Study Bible, NIV Study Bible, John Currid - A Study Commentary on Deuteronomy, Christopher Wright - Deuteronomy - UBCS Dt, A. Fernando - Preaching the Word - Deuteronomy). I could be wrong, but there seems to be an inherent bias against interpreting passages literally (See importance of reading the Bible [Literally](#)) that are most fully fulfilled at the end of this age when Messiah returns and all of national Israel ("all" = all that believe in Messiah - Zech 12:10-14+) is saved as Paul taught in Ro 11:26-27-[note](#).

**Jack Deere - The later days** (Dt 4:30) may refer to any time after the initial dispersions, but the ultimate reference is to the time when the Lord Jesus will return to earth to establish His 1,000-year kingdom (Rev. 20:4). At that time a repentant Israel will finally seek the Lord... look for Him with all her heart and... soul and will obey Him (Dt 4:29). ([Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**John MacArthur** on **latter days** - Lit. "the end of days." Moses saw in the distant future a time when repentant Israel would turn again to the Lord and obey Him. Throughout the Pentateuch, "the latter days" refers to the time when Messiah will establish His kingdom (see Ge 49:1, 8–12; Nu 24:14–24; Dt 32:39–43). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**James Coakley** comments that the return of the Jews to listen to Jehovah is "a prediction of **the latter days** when Israel will return to the Lord and put their trust in Jesus their Messiah (see comments at Hos 3:5; Zech 12:10-14; Mt 23:37-39; and Ro 11:26). (The Moody Bible Commentary)

**Henry Morris** - This prophecy, given by Moses as Israel prepared to enter the promised land, apparently looks into the distant future, 3500 years or more, to **the latter days** when Israel will be in the "great tribulation" (Revelation 7:14). At that "time of trouble...thy people shall be delivered," (Daniel 12:1), and "immediately after the tribulation of those days...He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:29,31)." (Defender's Study Bible)

**Nelson Study Bible - The latter days** simply means "in the future." But the prophets developed this phrase into a more technical designation for a new era characterized by God's blessings, the age of Messiah.

**G K Beale** has a lengthy discussion of the significance of **latter days** in Dt 4:30 (he also includes Dt 31:29) of which this quote is only from his concluding words. And so Beale writes that "since Israel's restoration from Babylon after seventy years of exile did not eventuate in truly decisive and irreversible eschatological conditions of new creation, the end-time prophecy of Deut. 4 and Deut. 31 **still awaited a future time** when Israel would again do eschatological evil and then repent and turn to God. Accordingly, Israel's sin, exile, and restoration would become a historical pattern pointing to the true eschaton, a perspective that, as we will see, is taken up by NT writers." ([A New Testament Theology: The Unfolding of the OT in the New](#))

**The Pulpit Commentary - In the latter days**; in the afterward of days (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים; "end," Dt 11:12)—a phrase used sometimes to designate the times of the Messiah (Isa. 2:2; Hos. 3:5; comp. Acts 2:17; 1 Pet. 1:20; Heb. 1:1; 1 John 2:18); but here, as generally, it simply indicates futurity, the time to come (cf. Gen. 49:1; Numb. 24:14; ch. 31:29, etc.). **This, however, may include the far distant future, and so points to the time when Israel shall finally return to the Lord and be saved**, through the acknowledgment of Him Whom they despised and rejected when He came as the Messiah promised to the fathers. As St. Paul grounds the assurance of the final redemption of Israel, as a whole, on their calling of God (Ro 11:26–29), so Moses here sees in God's covenant the ground of the ever-watchful care and grace of God to Israel, and **the security of their final restoration as a nation**. (Bolding Added)

**Matthew Poole** (Puritan writer in mid-1600's) on the **latter days** - In the **latter days**; either in general, in succeeding ages and generations; or particularly, in the days of the Messias, which are commonly called in Scripture the latter, or last days, as Isa. 2:2; Hos. 3:5; Micah 4:1; Da. 2:44; Heb. 1:2; 9:26. And so **this may respect the conversion and redemption of the Jewish nation even in those times when their case seems most desperate, when they have forsaken their God and rejected their Messias for many ages, to wit, towards the end of the world**. (So Poole, clearly not a dispensationalist, interprets the text literally as applying to the nation of Israel in the end of this present evil age which he calls "the end of the world.")

**Paul Tanner** - This expression, "**the latter days**," occurs ten times in the Old Testament (Deut 4:30; Dt 31:29; Isa 2:2 (= Mic 4:1); Jer 23:20; 30:24; 48:47; 49:39; Ezek 38:16; Dan 10:14.). It more often has in view the far distant future involving the events just prior to the messianic era, as well as the days when Messiah rules in his kingdom (see esp. Deut 4:30; Isa 2:2; and commentary at Dan 2:28). ([Daniel: Evangelical Exegetical Commentary](#))

**Keil and Delitzsch** commenting on Genesis 49:1 includes Dt 4:30 in the "**Messianic Age of Consummation**" writing - As Isaac in his blessing (Gen. 27) pointed out prophetically to his two sons, by virtue of divine illumination, the future history of their families; "so

Jacob, while blessing the twelve, pictured in grand outlines the lineamenta of the future history of the future nation" (Ziegler). The groundwork of his prophecy was supplied partly by the natural character of his twelve sons, and partly by the divine promise which had been given by the Lord to him and to his fathers Abraham and Isaac, and that not merely in these two points, the numerous increase of their seed and the possession of Canaan, but in its entire scope, by which Israel had been appointed to be the recipient and medium of salvation for all nations. On this foundation the Spirit of God revealed to the dying patriarch Israel the future history of his seed, so that he discerned in the characters of his sons the future development of the tribes proceeding from them, and with prophetic clearness assigned to each of them its position and importance in the nation into which they were to expand in the promised inheritance. Thus he predicted to the sons what would happen to them "in the [last days](#)," lit., "at the end of the days" ( π' σχάτων τ ν μερ ν, LXX), and not merely at some future time. אַחֲרַיִת, the opposite of רִאשִׁית, signifies the end in contrast with the beginning (Deut. 11:12; Isa. 46:10); hence אַחֲרַיִת הַיָּמִים in prophetic language denoted, not the future generally, but the last future (see Hengstenberg's History of Balaam, pp. 465–467, transl.), **the Messianic age of consummation (Isa. 2:2; Ezek. 38:8, 16; Jer. 30:24; 48:47; 49:39, etc.: so also Num. 24:14; Deut. 4:30)**, like π' σχάτου τ ν μερ ν (2 Pet. 3:3; Heb. 1:2), or ν τα ς σχάται ς μέραι ς (Acts 2:17; 2 Ti. 3:1).

**Charles Ryrie** commenting on Genesis 49:1 associates Dt 4:30 with the end of the tribulation - **in the days to come** refers to Israel's future in dual perspective: the period of their occupation of Canaan, and the time of the coming of Messiah. Sometimes the expression refers to Israel at the end of the tribulation period (Deut. 4:30; Ezek. 38:16), sometimes to the history of Gentile nations (Da. 2:28), and sometimes to the present church age in its entirety (Heb. 1:2) or at its conclusion (2 Tim. 3:1; James 5:3). Jacob's pronouncements in Gen. 49 included both prophecy (Ge 49:1) and blessing (Ge 49:28).

[Jamieson, Fausset, Brown](#) (one of the more literal pre-1900 commentaries) on **the latter days** - either towards the destined close of their captivities, when they evinced a returning spirit of repentance and faith, or in the age of Messiah, which is commonly called "**the latter days**," and when the scattered tribes of Israel shall be converted to the Gospel of Christ. The occurrence of this auspicious event will be the most illustrious proof of the truth of the promise made in Deuteronomy 4:31.

Another older commentator **Matthew Poole** (1624–1679) on the **latter days** - "In the latter days; either in general, in succeeding ages and generations; or particularly, **in the days of the Messias**, which are commonly called in Scripture the latter, or last days, as Isa 2:2 Hos 3:5 Mic 4:1 Dan 2:44 Heb 1:2 9:26. And so this may respect the conversion and redemption of the Jewish nation even in those times when their case seems most desperate, when they have forsaken their God and rejected their Messias for many ages, to wit, towards the end of the world." (Bolding added)

**Robert Mounce** in his "Complete Expository Dictionary" has this note on the Hebrew adjective **rishon** (07223) which means first or former (used in Dt 4:32) - The "former days" are in contrast to the "latter days," **which are yet in the future** (Deut 4:30, 32)." So Mounce agrees that the "latter days" describe a time that is yet to come.

**Thomas Constable** commenting on Hosea 3:5 associates [last days](#) in Dt 4:30 with a yet to be fulfilled prophecy writing "They (Israel) would approach the Lord with a healthy sense of fear because of His rich blessings. This would happen "**in the last days**," namely, the days of Israel's national restoration (i.e., the [Millennium](#); cf. Deut. 4:30; Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1)." ([Deuteronomy 4](#))

**Carl Armerding** alludes to Dt 4:30 in his comments on the phrase "**in the days to come**" in **Genesis 49:1** - "**Keil** says that this "in prophetic language denotes not the future generally but the last future, **the Messianic age of consummation.**" According to Delitzsch the expression refers to "the future which forms the close of the course of history. The notion is eschatological, but limited by the horizon of the speaker." Gesenius refers to it as a "prophetic formula" which means "in the future time, in the [last days](#)."<sup>8</sup> It occurs also in Numbers 24:14, Deuteronomy 4:30 and 31:29, and about a dozen times in the Prophets. In each case the definitions given above would suit the context well. If, as Leupold remarks, "Jacob can see in one picture the occupation of Canaan and the Messiah's kingdom but hardly anything that lies between," we need not be surprised to find in the passage an intermingling of the near future with that which is more remote." ([Bib Sac 112:448 - Oct 55](#))

**Adrian Rogers** - There's going to be a time when these elect Jews are going to be delivered out of the Great Tribulation, but it's going to wait until the Great Tribulation. Now, if you're making notes, you also may wish to jot down Deuteronomy 4:29, 30, that tell you the same thing (Deuteronomy 4:29-30). But, I want to tell you, dear friend, that God gave to the Apostle John a vision of unspeakable horrors, and we call these horrors the opening of this seven-sealed book.

**Dwight Pentecost** includes Dt 4:30 in his discussion of the end times tribulation writing "The tribulation is primarily Jewish. This fact is borne out by Old Testament Scriptures (Deut 4:30; Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 20:37; Dan. 12:1; Zech. 13:8-9), by the Olivet Discourse of Christ (Matt. 24:9-26), and by the book of Revelation itself (Rev. 7:4-8; 12:1-2; 17, etc.). It concerns "Daniel's people," the coming of "false Messiah," the preaching of the "gospel of the kingdom," flight on the "sabbath," the temple and the "holy place," the land of Judea, the city of Jerusalem, the twelve "tribes of the children of Israel," the "son of Moses," "signs" in the heavens, the "covenant" with the Beast, the "sanctuary," the "sacrifice and the oblation" of the temple ritual—these all speak of Israel and prove that the tribulation is largely a time when God deals with His ancient people prior to their entrance into the promised kingdom. The many Old



Testament prophecies yet to be fulfilled for Israel further indicate a future time when God will deal with this nation (Deut. 30:1-6; Jer. 30:8-10, etc.) (Things to Come)

**Henry Morris** ([Defender's Study Bible](#)) on distress (KJV - "tribulation") - This prophecy, given by Moses as Israel prepared to enter the promised land, apparently looks into the distant future, 3500 years or more, to "the latter days" when Israel will be in the "great tribulation" ([Revelation 7:14](#)). At that "time of trouble ... thy people shall be delivered," ([Daniel 12:1](#)), and "immediately after the tribulation of those days ... He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" ([Matthew 24:29, 31](#)).

#### See related discussion

- [The Last Days](#)

**You will return** - NLT = "you will finally return to the LORD." **Has this happened to the Jews?** Not yet. Certainly not to the majority of the Jews. This prophecy awaits a future fulfillment. One might propose that **when you are in distress** was an allusion to the Babylonian exile, but the historical facts regarding the Jewish return would not perfectly fulfill this prophecy. Why? While some Jews did return to Jerusalem and rebuild the Temple, the majority of Jews remained in Babylon. This latter group could hardly be characterized as returning to the LORD with all their heart. Certainly in our modern day most of the hearts in Israel have NOT returned to the LORD. There is a remnant of believing Jews which (Praise Jehovah) appears to be increasing in recent years, but it is still only a remnant and would not fulfill Moses' prophecy. One other detail to analyze is Moses' statement that *"the LORD will scatter you among the peoples and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where the LORD shall drive you"* (Dt 4:27) When was Israel scattered among the nations? In the first exile, the divided nation was taken to Assyria and to Babylon. But after the destruction of the Temple in 70AD, and then the [Simon Bar Kochba revolt](#), the Jews were scattered throughout the nations of the world. And they are still in this scattered state. Clearly Moses' prophecy has not yet been fulfilled. See [Wikipedia article on the Diaspora](#) for more detail.

**John MacArthur** commenting on the prophecy in Zechariah 8:7-8 (specifically the phrases "the east...the west") adds that "The context (of Zech 8:7-8) assures that this return speaks of a worldwide regathering at the Second Advent of Christ. The return from Babylon cannot be in view also, **since Israel had not been scattered to the West until the diaspora engineered by the Romans in the first century A.D.**" ([MacArthur Study Bible](#)) (Bolding added)

**Return** (turn back) ([07725](#))(**shub/sub**) is a common verb (over 1000x) meaning to turn, to return, to go back, to do again, to change, to withdraw, to bring back, to reestablish, to be returned, to bring back, to take, to restore, to recompense, to answer, to hinder. The Lxx uses [epistrepho](#) which literally describes the physical movement of turning around, but here is used figuratively to describe a "moral" turnaround, synonymous with repentance. The picture is of a change of mind associated with a change of direction of one's life (godward instead of "downward"!).

The idea of **return** in this passage is to go back to a previous state of focusing on the true God, to be restored to fellowship with Him. This is the essence of repentance -- turning around from walking toward idols and walk toward God so to speak (see this depicted in the pagans who were born again in 1 Thes 1:9-[note](#)). This reminds one of Jesus charge against the church at Ephesus (**red** = commands)...

But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. **Remember** therefore from where you have fallen, and **repent** and **do** the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. (Rev 2:4-5-[note](#))

**Merrill** comments that "Repentance is obviously a matter of free will, but the biblical witness is unanimous that the impetus to repent is something God himself will plant within his people in order to encourage and enable them to return to him and to the land (cf. Lev 26:40–45; Deut 30:1–10; Jer 31:27–34; Ezek 36:22–31)." ([New American Commentary – Volume 4: Deuteronomy](#))

In another commentary **Merrill** writes - The outcome of this linkage of God's call and Israel's response is left in no doubt, however. At the end of the day, in the age of God's ultimate eschatological triumph (cf. Dt 31:29; Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Isa 2:2; Ezek 38:16; Dan 10:14; Mic 4:1), Israel unequivocally will return to Yahweh in covenant faithfulness (Dt 4:30). The basis for this certainty is not Israel's predictability or Godward tendency—far from it, for Israel's history was one of unremitting defection from the Lord. Rather, Israel's hope would be in Yahweh's mercy (Dt 4:31). The tender term used here (rakhum [TH 7349, ZH 8157]) is cognate to the Hebrew word for "womb" (rekhem [TH 7358, ZH 8167]; NIDOTTE 3.1093). The maternal concern Yahweh expresses here for Israel—concern founded on his covenant commitments—is echoed later by Isaiah: "Can a mother forget her nursing child? Can she feel no love for the child she has borne? But even if that were possible, I would not forget you!" (Isa 49:15).([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))



**Constable** - Moses predicted a turning back to the Lord (Dt 4:30). This has yet to take place during Israel's present dispersion, but it will happen (Zech. 12:10). ([Deuteronomy 4](#))

**Hindson**, et al - To the Jews, history consisted of two ages. The first was this present age, the age in which Israel was waiting for the coming of the Messiah. The second was the age to come, the age in which God would fulfill all promises and covenants, and Israel would enter into her promised blessings as a result of Messiah's coming. A time of judgment and devastation, leading up to the Messiah's advent and Israel's deliverance, was to terminate the present age and introduce the coming age. When we look at the Old Testament usage of end-times terms, we see that it does not refer to the church age. The Old Testament uses end-times language to refer to the Tribulation period—the time leading up to the coming of the Messiah to set up His kingdom on earth. A clear example of this is Deuteronomy 4:30, which says, "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice." The English word "distress" translates the Hebrew word for tribulation—in this context, the Tribulation—which means that this text equates the Tribulation with the "latter days." Thus, the "latter days" are the Tribulation period, which we are not currently living in but may be on the brink of entering. (The church will be raptured before the world enters the Tribulation.) Deuteronomy 31:29 also uses "latter days" as a reference to the Tribulation when it says, "Evil will befall you in the latter days." ([The Harvest Handbook of Bible Prophecy](#))

## SUMMARY OF INTERPRETATION OF DEUTERONOMY 4:30

In the **last days** prior to (and including) the return of Israel's Messiah, Israel will undergo a time of **distress** that Jesus referred to as the **Great Tribulation** in Matthew 24:21+. He explained in Matthew 24:15+ ([see excursus below](#)) a clear sign that would signal to the Jews the beginning of this time of **distress**, a time which would last for 3.5 years (1260 days, 42 months or "time, times, and half a time"). Jeremiah 30:7+ referred to this time period as the **'time of Jacob's trouble.'** Daniel 12:1+ said "there will be a **time of distress** such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your (Daniel's) people (in context clearly referring to Israel), everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued." Paul spoke of this "rescue operation" in Romans 11:26-27+ explaining that "all Israel will be saved (or "rescued" as in Daniel 12:1); just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER (Messiah) WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. "AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS." At that time Zechariah 12:10+ says "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me (Messiah) Whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born." So the reason these Jews in the latter days will mourn is because they have been given the Spirit of grace. No man seeks for God and they would not be broken if they had not received God's great grace! Nor would you or I dear fellow believer! Zechariah 13:8-9+ goes on to explain that in **the latter days** "it will come about in all the land (Israel)," Declares the LORD, "That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; But the third will be left in it. 9 "And I will bring the third part through the fire, Refine them (referring to the Jewish remnant who will be saved) as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested (cp Deut 4:30 "**a time of distress**"). They will call on My name (Why? Because they have received a Spirit of grace and supplication), And I will answer them; I will say, 'They are My people,' And they will say, 'The LORD is my God (This is clearly covenant language, and describes the remnant of 1/3 of the Jews in the latter days who will enter into the New Covenant by grace through faith).'"

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### **G K Beale - Deuteronomy 4:30; 31:29**

The next occurrences of the phrase "the latter days" are in Deuteronomy. After Israel commits idolatry, God will expel them from their land and scatter them throughout the nations, from where they will seek God (Dt 4:25–29). At this time, "When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days [bē'ahārīt hayyāmīm] you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice" (Dt 4:30). Here "the latter days" includes both the distress that is to come upon Israel and its returning to God as a result of that distress. The basis for Israel's return to God lies in that he will not "forget the covenant with your fathers which he swore to them" (Dt 4:31). This covenant, of course, is the covenant made with the patriarchs, the core of which, as I have argued earlier, is a repetition of Gen. 1:28. Thus, this covenant involves a mandate to the patriarchs and Israel to do what Adam should have done and a promise that their seed will ultimately carry this out to bless the world and spread God's glory throughout the earth. And, as I have also contended, the concluding fulfillment of this mandate in Gen. 1:28 is eschatological in nature, which is in mind in 4:30, as it refers to Israel "returning" in faith to fulfill this covenant.

Commentators sometimes do not see Deut. 4:30 as "eschatological." However, if I am correct in linking this verse with the pattern that begins in the early chapters of Genesis and is repeated, and if this pattern is eschatological, then Deut. 4:30 can be considered so. Other commentators consider Israel's restoration to the land in repentance to be eschatological because conditions inextricably linked with that restoration are a radical break with prior conditions.<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, Deut. 4:30 understands that Israel's judgment and exile for not fulfilling its part of the covenant and its return to begin to fulfill its covenantal obligations again are eschatological. This is why the repeated reference later in Deut. 31:29 is to be understood as part of an end-time process: "For I know that after my [Moses's] death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days [bē'ahārīt hayyāmîm], for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands." Although, more precisely, exile has been construed to be part of a de-creation pattern, it may be viewed also either as an eschatological-like judgment against violation of the Adamic mandate or a judgment anticipating the final judgment of exile from God's presence and the consummated form of the cosmos. This is the idea in Deut. 31:29, though likely an intense time of tribulation toward the end of exile may be the focus, so that the "latter days" there presumably overlap with the conclusion of the exilic period, when the "return" of Deut. 4:30 begins (cf. Ps. 107:6, 13). However, since Israel's restoration from Babylon after seventy years of exile did not eventuate in truly decisive and irreversible eschatological conditions of new creation, the end-time prophecy of Deut. 4 and Deut. 31 still awaited a future time when Israel would again do eschatological evil and then repent and turn to God. Accordingly, Israel's sin, exile, and restoration would become a historical pattern pointing to the true eschaton, a perspective that, as we will see, is taken up by NT writers. ([A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New](#))

**Deuteronomy 4:31 "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.**

- **LORD your God:** Ex 34:6,7 Nu 14:18 2Ch 30:9 Ne 1:5 9:31 Ps 86:5,15 116:5 Ps 145:8,9 Jon 4:2 Mic 7:18
- **Not forget:** Lev 26:42,45 Ps 105:8 111:5,9 Jer 14:21 Lu 1:72
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

## **IN THE MIDST OF WRATH GOD REMEMBERS MERCY**

For - [term of explanation](#)

**A compassionate God** (cp the "moral definition" of God in Exodus 34:6) - **Compassionate** is the adjective [rachum](#) (see in depth study of the noun [racham](#)). The picture of this great Hebrew word is that of the tender compassion of a mother toward her helpless infant. Indeed, in her own strength, Israel was helpless, and during the purging and refining time of the Great Tribulation, she will come to humbly acknowledge her helplessness and cry out to Jehovah (Zech 12:10)

The psalmist records this mercy filled description of the compassionate God...

But He, being **compassionate**, forgave their iniquity and did not destroy them;  
And often He restrained His anger  
And did not arouse all His wrath. (Psalm 73:38)

**He will not fail you** - The Hebrew verb here is rapah (07503) which means to become slack, to relax, to come weak, etc. The NET Note says that the Hebrew can be paraphrased "He will not drop you!" We occasionally may feel like we have lost our grip on God, but we can be sure that He never loses His grip on us! This reminds one of the precious picture in Deut 33:27 which says ""The eternal God is a dwelling place, And underneath are the everlasting arms." Spurgeon must have loved this passage as he preached 3 sermons on Deut 33:27. ([The Everlasting Arms](#), [Present Privilege and Future Favour](#), and [Underneath](#)). Quoting from this last sermon [Underneath](#)...

GOD surrounds His children on all sides—they dwell in Him. The passage before us shows that the Lord is above, for we read, "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven to help you, and in His excellence on the sky." Assuredly He is around them, for "The eternal God is your refuge." And He is before them, for "He shall thrust out the enemy from before you; and shall say, Destroy them." Here according to the text, the Lord is also under His saints, for "Underneath are the everlasting arms." "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations," and by You we are surrounded everywhere, as the earth is by the atmosphere—

"Within Your circling power I stand.  
On every side I find Your hand.  
Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,  
I am surrounded still with God."

## THE UNCONDITIONAL ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

**Nor forget the covenant** (see study on [forget - shakach/shakah below](#)) - Israel may forget covenant but Yahweh will not. He is a covenant remembering and a covenant keeping God. In the midst of a discussion of judgment, Jehovah gives this sure hope...

Yet in spite of this (Lev 26:41-43), when they are in the land of their enemies (cp Northern 10 tribes in Assyria, Southern 2 tribes in Babylon), **I will not reject them**, nor will I so abhor them as to destroy them, breaking My covenant with them (He is referring to the Abrahamic Covenant - see Lev 26:42); for (explains why He won't break it - Why? Because He is Jehovah which is His covenant Name signifying that He is a covenant keeping God!) I am the LORD their God. (Lev 26:44)

**That Jehovah will not forget Israel** is even more incredible in light of the description of Israel in Judges 3:7 (God had warned them this would happen - see Dt 8:14):

And the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, and forgot the LORD their God, and served the Baals and the Asheroth.

**Comment:** I believe we would call this **GRACE** - God giving them what they clearly don't deserve just as He did with every person who enters the New Covenant by grace through faith.

**The covenant with your fathers which He swore to them** - This is not the **conditional** Mosaic Covenant, the covenant of law which Israel promised to keep, but instead repeatedly broke. Instead this covenant refers to the unconditional **covenant** ([berith/beriyth](#)) which Yahweh **cut** ([karath](#)) with Abraham and then reaffirmed both to Isaac and then to Jacob ("with your fathers."). The New Covenant is in a very real sense an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant (**See [New Covenant in the Old Testament](#)**), which Abraham entered by faith in Genesis 15:6 and thus was reckoned as righteous, just as we were when we believed the Gospel and entered into the New Covenant (**See [Why the New is Better](#)**).

**With your fathers** - The covenant first cut by Jehovah with Abraham was reaffirmed with Isaac and Jacob - Read Ge. 15:18–21; 17:7–8; 26:3–5; 28:13–15; 35:12. God's faithfulness to keep His covenant should encourage those believers who struggle with the security of their salvation. If one is genuinely saved by faith, he or she cannot lose their salvation, not because they can "hold on" to it but because the faithful, covenant keeping God is holding on to them!

**Eugene Merrill** rightly reminds us that "Israel as the seed of Abraham constituted an indispensable element of the promise and for that reason could never fail to exist before God. For him to forget Israel would constitute a violation of the oath he swore to the fathers (Gen 15:12–21; 17:1–8). This, of course, is theologically inconceivable. But the conditional side of the Sinai covenant also must be stressed, for Israel's success in fulfilling its mandate as a kingdom of priests and holy nation is dependent on its covenant fidelity. The biblical resolution of the tension created by the unconditionality versus conditionality of the respective covenants lies always (as here) in the grace of God, who guarantees the wherewithal by which his people can meet the terms requisite to achieving his high and holy calling for them. ([Ibid](#))

**Jack Deere** writes that Jehovah "will not abandon His morally helpless children because He has the tender compassion of a mother and because He made an inviolable covenant with Abraham (**Ed: See [Covenant: Abrahamic vs Old vs New](#)**). ([Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

**MacArthur** - God mercifully, not because they deserve it, will fulfill the covenant He made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with repentant Israel in the future. God will not forget the Word that He has given to Abraham and his seed (cf. Ro 11:25–27). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Constable** - Yahweh is a holy judge who zealously yearns for the welfare of His chosen people (Dt 4:24), but if they turn from Him and He disciplines them He will have compassion on them (cf. Dt 6:5; 10:12; 11:13; 26:16; 30:2, 6, 10). The promise that God would not fail or destroy His people or forget His covenant with them indicates the extent of His love for Israel (Ro. 11:1).

**Nelson Study Bible** - The future of God's people depends on God's love. The emphasis on God's mercy in this verse is a necessary balance to the emphasis that Moses placed on God's refining wrath (Dt 4:24). not forsake ... nor forget: The Lord was free to scatter His people. But after His discipline, He would regather them and show them His favor. God was and is faithful to His promises. The covenant of your fathers is God's solemn commitment to fulfill the promises He made to the patriarchs (Gen. 17:6–8; 22:16, 17; Ex. 3:15–17).

**ESV Study Bible** has an excellent note - In Deuteronomy, mercy is grounded in the Lord's faithfulness to the Abrahamic promises (Dt 9:27; 30:5, 20). God will maintain his covenant with Abraham, even if Israel forgets it (Dt 4:23; see Rom. 3:3–4). God also swore

those promises under oath (Gen. 22:16; Heb. 6:13, 17–18). Cf. note on Deut. 1:8 [The promise of land was made first to Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 15:18–21), reiterated to Isaac (Gen. 26:4), and then to Jacob (Gen. 28:13; 35:12; cf. Deut. 6:10; 9:5; 29:13; 30:20; 34:4). The promises to the three patriarchs included land for their offspring after them.]

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### James Smith - BACKSLIDING: ITS CAUSE AND CURE. Deuteronomy 4:23-31.

"My Lord, I covet not the breath  
Of grand renown,  
But rather that which lies beneath  
A blood-bought crown.

Fain would I hold, if but small cup,  
To thirsty lips,  
Fain would I shine but to light up  
Some soul's eclipse. "

Whatever occupies the chief place in our hearts and lives takes the place of God and becomes our god. We are constantly in danger, as Israel was, of allowing visible things to usurp the place of the Eternal One, whom we see not. When the Lord spake out of the midst of the fire in Horeb no manner of similitude was seen (Dt 4:15). One of the reasons given is, "For the Lord thy God is a jealous God" (see Dt 4:24 [note](#)). Jealous of our faith, and the adoration of our hearts. Backsliding is always manifested by preferring some earthly thing to the Lord.

**I. The Cause.** To be forewarned is to be forearmed. They are here warned beforehand of how they may retrograde from a God-pleasing life. Circumstances may change, but in principle the causes are still the same.

**1. Forgetfulness.** "Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God" (Dt 4:23). Forgetting God's Word and forsaking the secret place of prayer. It is so easy to forget our own spiritual need amidst the rush of everyday life. Take heed to yourselves. To forget His promise is to lean on a paralysed arm of flesh.

**2. False Worship.** "Take heed lest ye make you a likeness of anything which the Lord thy God hath forbidden" (Dt 4:23). Forbidden images are sure to appear in the minds and thoughts of those who forget God, and the horror of it lies in this, that they are self-made; the deliberate work of a Christ-doubting soul.

**3. Self-Corruption.** "Ye shall corrupt yourselves" (Dt 4:25). When we turn away from the light we turn into darkness. When we cease to live by faith on the Son of God we begin to corrupt like a member severed from the body.

**II. The Effect.** Backsliding in heart will soon show itself in the life. There will be—

**1. Dispossession.** "Ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land" (Dt 4:26). Their days in the land and their enjoyment of it would not be prolonged if they turned from following the Lord. It is altogether impossible for any soul to enjoy the inheritance in Christ and to prolong their fellowship with Him who has departed from the Lord in their heart. As a matter of experience they shall soon be utterly cut off.

**2. Division.** "The Lord shall scatter you, " etc. (Dt 4:27). They were to be scattered among the nations and left few in number. Individual backsliding is always accompanied with division and separation. When they are not of us they will go out from us. When the Lord is dethroned from His true place in the midst of His people schism takes place in the Body of Christ—His Church.

**3. Weakness.** "Ye shall be few among the heathen" (Dt 4:27). Few in the midst of the heathen means terrible weakness and helplessness. Robbed of their aggressive power and distinguishing glory as the people of God, instead of a conquering army they become the slaves of their own lust and pride. What a picture of a backsliding Church, crying out about its fewness in number in the midst of an overwhelming and ever growing heathenism. This melancholy situation is doubtless the result of unfaithfulness to God.

**III. The Cure.** Thank God, that although we may have turned away from Him He has still left the door of restoration open.

**1. Confess.** "For the Lord thy God is a merciful God, He will not forget the covenant which He sware" (Dt 4:31). This declaration of His mercifulness and faithfulness in not forgetting His covenant is a powerful plea for those who have forgotten His covenant to confess their sins that they might be forgiven. If we confess, He is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse.

**2. Seek.** "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him" (Dt 4:29). But note that it is Himself that must be sought. It is Himself that we need. After our Lord rose from the dead He showed them Himself. What else could satisfy their troubled souls and meet all their need. Seek Him, and seek Him from thence, from just where you are, in all your false worship, divisions, and helpless weakness, and bondage. O backsliding Church, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help. Return, O wanderer.

**3. Obey.** "Thou shalt turn unto the Lord thy God, and be obedient unto His voice" (Dt 4:30). This is our security, to hold fast the Word of God. Giving heed to other voices can only lead into shame and hopeless failure. The mighty power of Jesus Christ lay in His obedience to the Father's voice and will, and shall it be otherwise with His disciples? To obey is better than sacrifice. This is My beloved Son. Hear ye Him.

Handfuls on Purpose

**Deuteronomy 4:32 "Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and inquire from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything been done like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it?"**

- **ask now:** Job 8:8 Ps 44:1 Joe 1:2
- **from the one:** De 30:4 Mt 24:31 Mk 13:27
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** Now search all of history, from the time God created people on the earth until now, and search from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything as great as this ever been seen or heard before?

**NET** Indeed, ask about the distant past, starting from the day God created humankind on the earth, and ask from one end of heaven to the other, whether there has ever been such a great thing as this, or even a rumor of it.

## **NOTHING LIKE THIS HAS EVER BEEN HEARD!**

While the previous passages (Dt 4:25-31) were focused on the future and prophecy, now Moses shifts to the past and to history. The previous section highlighted Israel's unfaithfulness to turn from the true and living God to worship and serve false, dead idols. The truths in this section (Dt 4:32-43) about the greatness of their God and their privileged position, served to make their prophesied unfaithfulness all that much more inexcusable.

**Driver** summaries Dt 4:32-40 - Israel has grounds for knowing that Jehovah is God alone, who will not permanently abandon His people (v. 32–36), and who has a claim upon Israel for its obedience (v. 37–40).

**Eugene Merrill** introduces this next section (Dt 4:32-40) - Having dealt with the matter of the nature of Israel's God (Dt 4:15–24) and what that means for Israel in terms of covenant relationship and responsibility Dt 4:25–31), Moses focused on **the uniqueness of the LORD**, a theme suggested already in Dt 4:28, where the contrast is made between Him and the gods of wood and stone. **The passage at hand is without comparison as a discourse on the doctrine of God.** Here in brief scope the character, attributes, and actions of God are clearly and logically spelled out as are the implications of all this for Israel, his people. ([New American Commentary – Volume 4: Deuteronomy](#))

**NET Note on people** - The Hebrew term אָדָם ('adam) may refer either to Adam or, more likely, to "man" in the sense of the human race ("mankind," "humankind"). The idea here seems more universal in scope than reference to Adam alone would suggest.

**Henry Morris on the day that God created man** - "The former days" to which Moses referred, "since the day that God created man upon the earth," had been some 2500 years (assuming no gaps in the received chronological genealogies of Genesis 5 and Genesis 11). That was a long time, of course, but was at least a reasonable point of reference to which the people could relate--nothing like the eternal evolutionary ages postulated by the Egyptians, Canaanites and other ancient pagan nations.

## **ISRAEL'S INCREDIBLE PRIVILEGES**

**Has anything been done like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it?** - A rhetorical question the answer to which is

clearly "No!" This should have begun to remind Israel how privileged she was. It should have served to stir emotions of gratitude and love toward their great and awesome God.

**Merrill** - The argument here was picked up centuries later by Isaiah, who also referred to the "former days" (yāmîm ri'sōnîm) or "former things" (ri'sōnîm alone) as providing examples from history of God's unique saving work (Isa 43:9, 18; 48:3) on the basis of which he would do even greater things in days to come (Isa 46:9). The best argument for who God is and what he can do is the historical argument, for that is empirically testable and verifiable. It also is a test, Moses said, of the alleged gods of the nations whose exploits and even very existence were shown to be devoid of historical evidence. (Ibid)

**Brian Bell** - So Moses ends his 1st sermon by calling Israel to obey simply because of who God is. He gives a series of rhetorical questions.

- God is totally & absolutely unique (32-34).
- No other god speaks audibly, w/o man-made form (33, 36)
- No other god redeemed a miserable people from slavery & forged them into a great and feared nation (34)
- No other god cares enough for people to discipline & love them (36-37)
- No other god in fact, even exists (35, 39) (1) For these reasons alone, Israel ought to respond with obedience.

### Deuteronomy 4:33 "Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived?"

- Dt 4:24-26 Dt 9:10 Ex 19:18-19 Ex 20:18-19 Ex 24:11 Ex 33:20 Jdg 6:22
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

#### Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 9:10+ "The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them were **all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain** from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.

Exodus 19:18-19+ Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the LORD descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently. 19 When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and **God answered him with thunder.**

Exodus 20:18-19+ All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. 19 Then they said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen; **but let not God speak to us, or we will die.**"

## MORE INCREDIBLE PRIVILEGES

**Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived?- NLT** Has any nation ever heard the voice of God speaking from fire-- as you did-- and survived? This question is rhetorical. The fact that Israel heard God speaking and was not consumed is a reflection of His grace toward her. They thought they would die but they did not (Ex 20:19). Not only did God condescend to speak with Israel, He also gave them a written copy in the form of a covenant, the most solemn, binding agreement that could be made. And how did Israel respond? "All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do!" And Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD." (Ex 19:8)

### Deuteronomy 4:34 "Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?"

- **take:** Ex 1:9 3:10,17-20
- **trials:** De 7:19 29:3 Ex 9:20,21 10:7
- **by signs:** Ex 7:3 Ps 78:12,48-53
- **by a mighty:** De 5:15 6:21 7:8,9 Ex 6:6 13:3 1Pe 5:6



- **and by great:** De 26:8 34:12 Ex 12:30-33
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** Has any other god dared to take a nation for himself out of another nation by means of trials, miraculous signs, wonders, war, a strong hand, a powerful arm, and terrifying acts? Yet that is what the LORD your God did for you in Egypt, right before your eyes.

**NETS Septuagint** - whether a god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of a nation, by trial and by signs and by wonders and by war and by a strong hand and a high arm and by great exhibits, like all which the Lord your God did in Egypt before you, as you were looking on

**Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?** - A rhetorical question which was meant to stir up Israel's remembrance of the great and marvelous deeds of Jehovah in their behalf. This "review" is calculated to demonstrate to Israel Yahweh's uniqueness (from Latin *unicus* unparalleled, from *unus* one - thus the quality of being One of a kind) Israel's God was ONE OF A KIND!

**Mighty hand** - Exod. 32:11; Deut. 4:34; Deut. 5:15; Deut. 6:21; Deut. 7:8; Deut. 7:19; Deut. 9:26; Deut. 11:2; Deut. 26:8; 1 Ki. 8:42; 2 Chr. 6:32; Ezek. 20:33; Ezek. 20:34; Dan. 9:15; 1 Pet. 5:6

**Outstretched arm** - Exod. 6:6; Deut. 4:34; Deut. 5:15; Deut. 7:19; Deut. 9:29; Deut. 11:2; Deut. 26:8; 1 Ki. 8:42; 2 Ki. 17:36; 2 Chr. 6:32; Ps. 136:12; Jer. 27:5; Jer. 32:17; Jer. 32:21; Ezek. 20:33; Ezek. 20:34

**NET Note** adds that "God's intervention in Israel's experience is unique in the sense that He has never intervened in such power for any other people on earth. The focus is on the uniqueness of Israel's experience." (And I would add the UNIQUENESS of their GOD!)

**Before your eyes** - Not just a select few but to everyone in the nation of Israel. This would leave all without excuse.

Sadly Israel failed to fully understand the significance of God's great deliverance

Deuteronomy 29:1-3 These are the words of the covenant which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the sons of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He had made with them at Horeb. 2 And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, "You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land; 3 the great **trials** (same word as Dt 4:34) which your eyes have seen, those great signs and wonders. 4 "Yet to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.

**MacArthur** explains that "In spite of all they had experienced (Dt 29:2, 3), Israel was spiritually blind to the significance of what the Lord had done for them, lacking spiritual understanding, even as Moses was speaking. This spiritual blindness of Israel continues to the present day (Ro 11:8-note), and it will not be reversed until Israel's future day of salvation (see Ro 11:25-27-note). The Lord had not given them an understanding heart, **simply because the people had not penitently sought it** (cf. 2Ch 7:14, Ed: compare Dt 4:29)." ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Trials** (04513)(**massah** from **nasah** = to test, try, put to the proof) means a test, a proving or a trial. The root verb **nasah** involves testing items or people to determine something about them. It was used by David when he tried Saul's armor and weapons just prior to the hand-to-hand combat with Goliath (1 Sam. 17:39). All 3 uses in their context convey the idea of sending a catastrophic event aimed at testing the Egyptians. All 3 OT uses of **massah** are accompanied by "signs and wonders" and all refer to Yahweh's mighty deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. The Septuagint translates **massah** in Dt 4:34 with the verb [peirazo](#) meaning to put to the test (as in Rev 2:2-note), and in the other two occurrences with the noun **peirasmos**, describing God's examination of men (as in 1Pe 4:12-note).

**NET Note** adds that **trials** refers to "the judgments upon Pharaoh in the form of plagues."

There are 2 other uses in the OT, both in Deuteronomy

Deuteronomy 7:19 the great **trials** which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

Deuteronomy 29:3 the great **trials** which your eyes have seen, those great signs and wonders.

**Wonders** - E.g., the opening of the Red Sea, allowing Israel to pass and then closing on Pharaoh's army. The psalmist writes

Psalms 78:12; 48-53 He wrought **wonders** before their fathers In the land of Egypt, in the field of Zoan. (48-53) He gave over their cattle also to the hailstones And their herds to bolts of lightning. 49 He sent upon them His burning anger, Fury and indignation and trouble, A band of destroying angels. 50 He leveled a path for His anger; He did not spare their soul from death, But gave over their life to the plague, 51 And smote all the firstborn in Egypt, The first issue of their virility in the tents of Ham. 52 But He led forth His own people like sheep And guided them in the wilderness like a flock; 53 He led them safely, so that they did not fear; But **the sea engulfed their enemies.**

**Deuteronomy 4:35 "To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him.**

- know (KJV): 1Sa 17:45-47 1Ki 18:36,37 2Ki 19:19 Ps 58:11 83:18
- none else (KJV): De 32:23 Ex 15:11 1Sa 2:2 Isa 44:6,8 Isa 45:5,18,22 Mk 12:29,32 1Jn 5:20,21
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** "He showed you these things so you would know that the LORD is God and there is no other.

### **GOD AFFIRMS HE IS THE ONLY GOD**

**To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God-** God's great and marvelous deeds performed in Egypt on behalf of His people were to demonstrate **beyond a shadow of a doubt** (this is the meaning of [oida/eido](#) which the Lxx uses for **know**) that [Jehovah](#) is [Elohim](#).

**There is no other besides Him** - In a word, He is [sovereign](#)! "There was no other power in the universe which could determine the destinies of men on earth." (Thompson) The other purpose of God's miraculous deliverance was that His people know Jehovah Alone was God. This would make the worship and serving of idols that much more ridiculous. They were not worshiping God when they worshiped idols, for He had clearly reminded them they saw no form and thus anything that man made to represent Him was futile and even debasing to His character for He is [transcendent](#).

God repeatedly declares He is God and there is no other God.

Isaiah 44:6 "Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: 'I am the first and I am the last, And **there is no God besides Me.** 8 'Do not tremble and do not be afraid; Have I not long since announced it to you and declared it? And you are My witnesses. **Is there any God besides Me, Or is there any other Rock? I know of none.**'"

Isaiah 45:5; 18; 22 "I am the LORD, and **there is no other; Besides Me there is no God** I will gird you, though you have not known Me; 18 For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), "**I am the LORD, and there is none else.** 22 "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; For **I am God, and there is no other.**

#### **Related Resources from Gotquestions**

- [Can monotheism be proven?](#)
- [Who is the one true God?](#)

**Deuteronomy 4:36 "Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.**

- De 4:33 Ne 9:13 Heb 12:18,25
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** He let you hear his voice from heaven so he could instruct you. He let you see his great fire here on earth so he could speak to you from it.

**Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you-** (CSB "to instruct you") God like a good Father instructed His

children.

**Discipline** (chasten, instruct) ([03256](#))(**yasar**) means to [chasten](#), [chastise](#), [admonish](#), discipline. Literally to chasten with blows or figuratively with words (instruct, correct, punish, reform, reprove). To punish, chasten or instruct in order to gain control or enforce obedience. The theological basis for discipline of Israel is grounded in the covenant relationship which Yahweh establishes with His people. It is a good thing to be disciplined by the Lord for as the psalmist says "Blessed is the man whom You **chasten**, O LORD, And whom You teach out of Your law." (Ps 94:12) Notice there that the discipline is not in a vacuum but is coupled with teaching, a good pattern! (cp similar pattern in Isa 28:26). God chastens individuals, Israel and the nations.

The **Septuagint** translates **yasar** here with [paideuo](#) from **país** = child) refers primarily to the training or discipline of children to bring them to maturity by teaching, instructing, educating or nurturing and also by utilizing correction and punishment if necessary (which it usually is for children) as a part of the training process.

Note 3 parallel terms in regard to God's loving correction

1. yasar/yacar [03256](#) = instruct, discipline
2. musar ([04148](#)) = discipline, instruction
3. yakach/yakah [03198](#) = rebuke, reprove, correct.

**Gilbrant** - Mainly found in the Piel (intensive) stem, yasar usually means "to instruct" (not Piel), "to rebuke" or "to chastise." Even the Qal usages, which essentially mean "to instruct," come to mean "to rebuke" in their respective contexts. Psalm 94:10 and Prov. 9:7 speak of "instructing" the godless, which would necessitate corrective measures. In Isa. 8:11, the Lord "instructs" Isaiah with a strong hand not to become afraid, as the people had, of the conspiracy against the small nation of Judah. Of the approximately forty instances of yasar, most directly communicate the meaning of "to chastise" or "to rebuke." Within these meanings, as generally with all occurrences, the idea of instruction is included (see especially, Deut. 4:36 and Prov. 31:1), rather than cursing or condemning. Although, sometimes mere punishment without concern for the individual is meant (1 Ki. 12:11). The rare Nithpaal stem (passive like the Niphal, but reflexive like the Hithpaal) means "to consider a warning" (Ezek. 23:48). In each case, a recourse is necessary, because the actions of someone will eventually lead to disaster. If the Israelites were not willing to listen to Yahweh, then seven times the correction would be needed later (Lev. 26:18). The elders of the community were responsible for "chastising" individuals who needed correction, so as not to allow a bad effect to spread (Deut. 22:18). The Lord chastens those whom He loves (Deut. 8:5; cp. Heb. 12:6f). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**Yasar** - 42x in 38v - Usage: admonished(2), chasten(5), chastens(1), chastise(4), chastised(2), correct(4), corrects(1), discipline(4), disciplined(4), disciplined me severely(1), disciplines(1), disciplining(1), gave instruction(1), instructed(2), instructs(2), punish(2), take warning(1), taught(1), trained(1), turned(1), warned(1).

Leviticus 26:18-note 'If also after these things you do not obey Me, then I will **punish** you seven times more for your sins.

**Comment** - In Lev 26:18, 28 yasar is used in the PROPHETICALLY SIGNIFICANT formula **then** (after 70 years of Babylonian exile) I will punish you seven times more for your sins" paralleling seven times in Lev 26:24 (naka "to beat, strike, hit"). God's corrective discipline seeks the reformation of the people (Lev 26:23). If after the 70 years in Babylonian exile Israel still did not obey, they would receive 7x more or 7 x 70 = 490 years which is described in Da 9:24-note, Da 9:25-note, Da 9:26-note, Da 9:27-note (E.g., the Amplified Version of Da 9:24 = "Seventy weeks [of years, or 490 years] are decreed upon your people and upon your holy city [Jerusalem],"! Cp Lev 26:21, 24, 28 [Daniel's Seventieth Week](#) being the fulfillment of this prophetic warning to Israel and terminating in the [Great Tribulation](#), the term Jesus applied to the last 1/2 of this 70th Week in Mt 24:15-note, Mt 24:21-note, Rev 7:14-note (See chart on "[Units of Seventy](#)")

Leviticus 26:23-note 'And if by these things you are not **turned** (do not allow yourself to be disciplined) to Me, but act with **hostility** against Me,

Leviticus 26:28-note then I will act with wrathful hostility against you, and I, even I, will **punish** you seven times for your sins (see note on Lev 26:18)

Deuteronomy 4:36 "Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to **discipline** you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire.

Deuteronomy 8:5 "Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was **disciplining** you just as a man **disciplines** his son.

Deuteronomy 21:18 "If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother,

and when they **chastise** him, he will not even listen to them,

Deuteronomy 22:18 "So the elders of that city shall take the man and **chastise** him,

1 Kings 12:11 "Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father **disciplined** you with whips, but I will **discipline** you with scorpions."

1 Kings 12:14 and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father **disciplined** you with whips, but I will **discipline** you with scorpions."

1 Chronicles 15:22 Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was in charge of the singing; he gave **instruction** in singing because he was skillful.

2 Chronicles 10:11 "Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father **disciplined** you with whips, but I will **discipline** you with scorpions."

2 Chronicles 10:14 He spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father **disciplined** you with whips, but I will **discipline** you with scorpions."

Job 4:3 "Behold you have **admonished** many, And you have strengthened weak hands.

Psalms 2:10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take **warning**, O judges of the earth.

Psalms 6:1 For the choir director; with stringed instruments, upon an eight-string lyre. A Psalm of David. O LORD, do not rebuke me in Your anger, Nor **chasten** me in Your wrath.

Psalms 16:7 I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; Indeed, my mind **instructs** me in the night.

Psalms 38:1 A Psalm of David, for a memorial. O LORD, rebuke me not in Your wrath, And **chasten** me not in Your burning anger.

Psalms 39:11 "With reproofs You **chasten** a man for iniquity; You consume as a moth what is precious to him; Surely every man is a mere breath. Selah.

Psalms 94:10 He who **chastens** the nations, will He not rebuke, Even He who teaches man knowledge?

Psalms 94:12 Blessed is the man whom You **chasten**, O LORD, And whom You teach out of Your law;

Psalms 118:18 The LORD has **disciplined** me severely, But He has not given me over to death.

Proverbs 9:7 He who **corrects** a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, And he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself.

Proverbs 19:18 **Discipline** your son while there is hope, And do not desire his death.

Proverbs 29:17 **Correct** your son, and he will give you comfort; He will also delight your soul.

Proverbs 29:19 A slave will not be **instructed** by words alone; For though he understands, there will be no response.

Proverbs 31:1 The words of King Lemuel, the oracle which his mother **taught** him:

Isaiah 8:11 For thus the LORD spoke to me with mighty power and **instructed** me not to walk in the way of this people, saying,

Isaiah 28:26 For his God **instructs** and teaches him properly.

Jeremiah 2:19 "Your own wickedness will **correct** you, And your apostasies will reprove you; Know therefore and see that it is evil and bitter For you to forsake the LORD your God, And the dread of Me is not in you," declares the Lord GOD of hosts.

Jeremiah 6:8 "Be warned, O Jerusalem, Or I shall be alienated from you, And make you a desolation, A land not inhabited."

Jeremiah 10:24 **Correct** me, O LORD, but with justice; Not with Your anger, or You will bring me to nothing.

Jeremiah 30:11-commentary 'For I am with you,' declares the LORD, 'to save you; For I will destroy completely all the nations where I have scattered you, Only I will not destroy you completely. But I will **chasten** you justly And will by no means leave you unpunished.'

**Comment** - This prophecy will be fully fulfilled at the end of this age when Messiah returns and 1/3 of Israel will not be cut off (Zech 13:8, cp Ro 11:26-27-[note](#)).

Jeremiah 31:18-commentary "I have surely heard Ephraim grieving, 'You have chastised me, and I was **chastised**, Like an untrained calf; Bring me back that I may be restored, For You are the LORD my God.

Jeremiah 46:28 "O Jacob My servant, do not fear," declares the LORD, "For I am with you. For I will make a full end of all the nations Where I have driven you, Yet I will not make a full end of you; But I will **correct** you properly And by no means leave you unpunished."

**John MacArthur** - Though Israel has been scattered to the nations, the nations will receive their judgments, and the Lord will restore Israel (repeated from Jer 30:10, 11-note) from dispersion to its own land (as in Jer 23:5–8; Jer 30–33). No matter what judgments fall on Israel, they will not be destroyed, as Paul reiterates in Ro 11:1, 2, 15, 25–27. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

Ezekiel 23:48 'Thus I will make lewdness cease from the land, that all women may be **beadmonished** and not commit lewdness as you have done.

Hosea 7:12 When they go, I will spread My net over them; I will bring them down like the birds of the sky. I will **chastise** them in accordance with the proclamation to their assembly.

Hosea 7:15 Although I **trained** and strengthened their arms, Yet they devise evil against Me.

Hosea 10:10 When it is My desire, I will **chastise** them; And the peoples will be gathered against them When they are bound for their double guilt.

MacArthur - Israel would receive a double portion of judgment for her multiplied iniquity (cf. Isa 40:2; Jer 16:18). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

#### Resources Related to Discipline:

- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [Discipline](#)
- Charles Buck Dictionary [Discipline \(1\)](#) [Discipline \(2\)](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Discipline](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Discipline \(2\)](#) [Discipline](#)
- King James Dictionary [Discipline](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Discipline](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Discipline](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Discipline of the Lash, or Scourge](#) [Discipline](#)

**Thomas E. Schmidt** - *The Old Testament Concept of Discipline*. The notion of the discipline of God, and eventually the concept of the community and its leaders effecting God's discipline, derives from the notion of domestic discipline (Deuteronomy 21:18-21 ; Proverbs 22:15 ; 23:13 ). God is portrayed as a father who guides his child (i.e., the nation, more rarely an individual) to do right by the experience of physical suffering (Deuteronomy 8:5 ; Proverbs 3:11-12 ). Key ideas include "chasten/chastise" (Leviticus 26:18 ; Psalm 94:12 ; Hosea 7:12 ), "discipline" (Leviticus 26:23 ; Deuteronomy 4:36 ; Proverbs 12:1 ), and "reproof" (Job 5:17 ; Proverbs 6:23 ). While God generally administers discipline to the nation, the community through its leaders is charged with the responsibility to administer the legal code for individuals. This code deals almost exclusively with severe offenses that require the "cutting off" (normally, education) of the offender and gives few details concerning lesser offenses and remedial disciplinary measures. Furthermore, because Israel does not yet perceive itself in the modern (or even New Testament) sense as a religious community within a larger society, it is difficult to detect religious discipline as distinct from the Old Testament legal code. The seeds of accountability among the faithful may be seen in several strands of the tradition: removal from the assembly for ritual impurity (Exodus 12:14-20 ;Leviticus 17:3-9 ); standards for the evaluation of prophets (Deuteronomy 13:1-5 ; 18:15-22 ); and admonitions to reprove other adults (Proverbs 5:12-13 ; 9:7 ; 10:10 ; 19:25 ). (Baker Evangelical Dictionary)

**He let....He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire-** (cp Moses' question in Dt 4:33) This refers of course again to God's revelation of Himself at Mt Horeb (Sinai) (Ex 19:9,19 Ex 20:18-22) when "The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud." (Ex 24:16) Notice that "He let" is repeated emphasizing that Israel would not and could not have seen and heard had God not chosen to allow them to see and hear. It was not because they deserved to hear Him or see the manifestation of His glory. It was because of His grace.

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**Deuteronomy 4:37 "Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power,**

- because: De 7:7-9 9:5 10:15 Ps 105:6-10 Isa 41:8,9 Jer 31:1 Mal 1:2 Lu 1:72,73 Ro 9:5
- brought: Ex 13:3,9,14
- in his sight (KJV): 2Ch 16:9 Ps 32:8 34:15
- with his (KJV): De 4:34 Ps 114:1-6 Ps 136:10-15 Isa 51:9-11 63:11,12
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NET** Moreover, because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants who followed them and personally brought you out of Egypt with his great power

**KJV** And because he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt;

**CSB** Because He loved your fathers, He chose their descendants after them and brought you out of Egypt by His presence and great power,

**ESV** And because he loved your fathers and chose their offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power,

**NLT** Because he loved your ancestors, he chose to bless their descendants, and he personally brought you out of Egypt with a great display of power.

**GWN** Because he loved your ancestors and chose their descendants, he was with you as he brought you out of Egypt by his great power.

**NAB** For love of your fathers he chose their descendants and personally led you out of Egypt by his great power,

**NIV** Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength,

**NJB** Because he loved your ancestors and, after them, chose their descendants, he has brought you out of Egypt, displaying his presence and mighty power,

**YLT** 'And because that He hath loved thy fathers, He doth also fix on their seed after them, and doth bring thee out, in His presence, by His great power, from Egypt:

**CHOSEN BY DIVINE LOVE  
DELIVERED BY DIVINE POWER**

**Because He loved your fathers** - This is an allusion to the covenant with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

**KJV Study Bible** - Here is electing **love**, the spontaneous expression of grace, bestowed apart from any merit in its object ("*Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.*" - Dt 9:6). This appeal is based on God's love manifested to the patriarchs.

**ESV Study Bible** - A key, and unique, theme of Deuteronomy is the **love** of God for the patriarchs (here and 10:15), or for His people in general (Dt 5:10; 7:9, 12–13; 23:5), and Israel's reciprocal love for God (Dt 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20).

"The concept of love here is not primarily that of emotional affection but of commitment or devotion. This verse suggests that God chose Israel to be his special people because He loved the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and had promised to bless their descendants. See as well Deut 7:7–9." (NET Note)

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 "The LORD did not **set His love** on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, 8 but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers (referring to the Abrahamic Covenant), the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

**Believer's Study Bible Note** - The verb hashaq (Heb.), translated "**set His love**," refers to a deep



emotional attachment; it is similar to the English expression "fall in love" (cf. Ge 34:8). It describes God's attitude of affection that prompted Him to choose Israel for a personal relationship (cf. Deut. 10:15 = also uses hashaq). This passage declares, however, that this divine attitude cannot be explained by any attractiveness -- potential or otherwise -- in the object of affection. The love ('ahav, Heb.) of God in Dt 7:8 is His commitment to seek the highest good for those with whom He has a covenant relationship. The love of God, then, toward the Christian as well as toward Israel, includes both affection and commitment, and is the result of grace, not merit (Eph. 1:4-6; Eph 2:4-10).

**Henry Morris** - Israel was not God's chosen people because it deserved to be, but "because He loved thy fathers." God had made an unconditional promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob because of their faithfulness, not that of their "seed after them." (Defender's Study Bible)

**Merrill** makes an interesting comment on **love** - Though the word for love is the one for ordinary interpersonal affection ('ahab [TH 157, ZH 170]), in the covenant context of Deuteronomy it usually is a synonym for "choose" or "elect" (bakhar). That is, for God to love Israel is tantamount to saying that he elected Israel as his special people (TDOT 1.114-116). The passage that best demonstrates this connection, perhaps, is Dt 7:7-8: "The Lord did not set his heart on you and **choose** you because you were more numerous than other nations.... Rather, it was simply that the Lord **loves** ('ahab) you." The difficult idea that God loved Jacob but hated Esau (Mal 1:2-3-note) is alleviated by understanding **love** to be choosing and hate to be not choosing. ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))

**Therefore He chose their descendants after them** - The Hebrew for chose is bachar which always involves a careful, well thought-out choice. It was used for men choosing wives (Ge 6:2), for Lot choosing the cities of the Plain (Ge 13:11), of kings and generals choosing soldiers for their prowess (Ex 17:9; Jos 8:3), of Israel choosing a king (1 Sa 8:18; 12:13), etc. Bachar in Dt 4:37 describes the fundamental idea is of God choosing Israel to be His peculiar people. The Lxx translates bachar with the verb **eklego** (**ek** = out, out of, out from + **légo** = select, choose) means literally to select out, single out or choose out of. **Eklego** means to choose out for oneself, **but not** implying rejection of those not chosen. **A H Strong** explained that "Election and sovereignty are only sources of good. Election is not a decree to destroy, it is a decree to save. When we elect a president, we do not need to hold a second election to determine that the remaining millions shall be non-presidents."

**See also:**

- [What does it mean that the Jews are God's chosen people?](#)
- [Why did God choose Israel to be His chosen people?](#)
- [When did the separation of humanity into Jews and Gentiles occur?](#)

**He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power** - The psalmist summarizes God's great deliverance of the Chosen People as "hands of". Notice the phrase "He **personally** brought you" -- In English the **personally** conveys the meaning of without the help or intervention of others.

Ps 136:10-15 To Him who smote the Egyptians in their firstborn, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 11 And brought Israel out from their midst, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 12 With a strong hand and an outstretched arm, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. 13 To Him who divided the Red Sea asunder, For His lovingkindness is everlasting, 14 And made Israel pass through the midst of it, For His lovingkindness is everlasting; 15 But He overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, For His lovingkindness is everlasting.

**Brian Bell** - Their loyalty to God should not be based on fear but on gratitude for His Great Goodness. B. "Do it...because I said so!" - sound familiar? This approach isn't very effective for parents to use with their children & it isn't used by God with His children either. a) God's approach is relational. He says, "I love you, I made you, I've done great things for you, & I care for you every day, so I also know what's best for you."

**Deuteronomy 4:38 driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in and to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today.**

- driving out: De 7:1 9:1-5 11:23 Ex 23:27,28 Jos 3:10 Ps 44:2,3
- as: Dt 2:31-37 3:1-16 8:18
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** He drove out nations far greater than you, so he could bring you in and give you their land as your special possession, as it is today.

**NET** to dispossess nations greater and stronger than you and brought you here this day to give you their land as your property.

**KJV** To drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day.

**CSB** to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you in and give you their land as an inheritance, as is now taking place.

**ESV** driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is this day,

**NLT** He drove out nations far greater than you, so he could bring you in and give you their land as your special possession, as it is today.

**GWN** He forced nations greater and stronger than you out of your way to bring you into their land and give it to you. This land is your own possession today.

**NAB** driving out of your way nations greater and mightier than you, so as to bring you in and to make their land your heritage, as it is today.

**NIV** to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today.

**NJB** dispossessing for you nations who were larger and stronger than you, to make way for you and to give you their country as your heritage, as it still is today.

**YLT** to dispossess nations greater and stronger than thou, from thy presence, to bring thee in to give to thee their land -- an inheritance, as at this day.

## **THE PROMISED LAND: NATIONS OUT AND ISRAEL IN**

**Driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you** - The point is that He has shown His faithfulness and His sovereign power up to this point with the implication that He will continue to demonstrate it as they go into the promised land. The Hebrew word for **mightier** (**atsum**) is translated in the Septuagint with the adjective **ischuros** which means strong, powerful, mighty (describes the Lord in Rev 18:2).

The Hebrew verb for **driving out** is **yarash** which means to take something from someone else and possess it for one's self (occupy, take possession of, dispossess, inherit). **Yarash** is translated in this verse in the Lxx with the verb **exolothreuo** (only Acts 3:23+ in NT) which means to utterly destroy, to eliminate by destruction, to root out, or to completely cut off. In other words the effect of God's power on Israel's behalf was to essentially "wipe out" the nations allowing Israel to take over their land.

**Mightier** (mighty)(06099) (**atsum** from verbal root **atsom** = to be strong, mighty or numerous) an adjective that means strong, mighty, numerous. **Atsum** describes the power and influence of a person, a people, a nation, or military forces. The first use in Ge 18:18 says "Abraham will surely become a great and **mighty** nation (as occurred in Ex 1:9)." In other contexts atsum emphasizes the size of a group as in Pr 7:26. Other senses include emphasise on the influence and power of individuals (Pr 18:18; Isa. 53:12). It is used of "exceedingly large number of livestock" (Nu 32:1); or indicates "strong and abundant waters of the Euphrates" (Isa. 8:7).

**Atsum** - great(1), large number(1), mightier(6), mighty(14), mighty men(1), mighty ones(1), numerous(1), strong(5), stronger(1). Gen. 18:18; Exod. 1:9; Num. 14:12; Num. 22:6; Num. 32:1; Deut. 4:38; Deut. 7:1; Deut. 9:1; Deut. 9:14; Deut. 11:23; Deut. 26:5; Jos. 23:9; Ps. 10:10; Ps. 35:18; Ps. 135:10; Prov. 7:26; Prov. 18:18; Prov. 30:26; Isa. 8:7; Isa. 53:12; Isa. 60:22; Dan. 8:24; Dan. 11:25; Joel 1:6; Joel 2:2; Joel 2:5; Joel 2:11; Amos 5:12; Mic. 4:3; Mic. 4:7; Zech. 8:22

**To bring you in** - God personally **brought** Israel **from Egypt** (Deut 4:37) to **bring** them **in** to the land He was giving them based on the stipulations of the Abrahamic Covenant.

**To give you their land for an inheritance** - God's gift of grace. At first glance this suggest God is being unjust, taking someone else's land and giving it to Israel. However, God is never unjust and since He is the Owner of the land and is sovereign over the

nations of the earth, He can do whatever He chooses to do. In this case, He has chosen a nation and is giving them the land, not because they deserve it, but because He is using the nation of Israel to accomplish His grand plan of redemption for the world. That is not injustice, but mercy!

**Inheritance** (05159)([nachalah](#)) was used in Dt 4:20 to describe Israel as God's possession and in Dt 4:21 to describe Israel's inheritance of the land.

**As it is today** - (CSB - "As is now taking place.") They are standing East of the Jordan opposite the land they will soon go in to possess.

**ESV Study Bible** on **as it is today** - Expressions like this occur regularly in Deuteronomy (Deut. 4:20, 38; 6:24; 8:18; 10:15; 29:28) to give Israel confidence in God's power and faithfulness.

**Nelson Study Bible** - The Scriptures have two different ways of regarding the size of the nation of Israel at the time of the Exodus. God is praised for the miraculous growth of Israel's family during their sojourn in Egypt (Ex. 1:7, 9, 10). On the other hand, the nation of Israel is described as small in number compared to the other nations around her. Hence, God deserves the glory for Israel's victories.

**Eugene Merrill** - A major element of the ancient Abrahamic covenant was the promise of land. God had told Abraham to "go to the land that I will show you" (Gen 12:1), the land of Canaan, as it turned out. There the Lord instructed the patriarch to "go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you" (Gen 13:17). Finally, God told Abraham in unmistakable terms, "I have given this land to your descendants, all the way from the border of Egypt to the great Euphrates River" (Gen 15:18+). The Exodus deliverance now made it possible for that aspect of the promise to come to fruition. Already, powerful nations (the Amorites and their kinsmen; cf. Dt 2:31-3:11) had been defeated and their lands possessed by Israel (Dt 4:38; cf. Dt 3:12-17). ([Cornerstone Biblical Commentary](#))

**Deuteronomy 4:39** "Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

- know: De 32:29 1Ch 28:9 Isa 1:3 5:12 Ho 7:2
- take it to heart: De 4:35 Jos 2:11 1Ch 29:11 2Ch 20:6 Ps 115:3 135:6 Da 4:35
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NET** Today realize and carefully consider that the LORD is God in heaven above and on earth below— there is no other!

**KJV** Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the LORD he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else.

**CSB** Today, recognize and keep in mind that the LORD is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other.

**ESV** know therefore today, and lay it to your heart, that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.

**NLT** "So remember this and keep it firmly in mind: The LORD is God both in heaven and on earth, and there is no other.

**GWN** Remember today, and never forget that the LORD is God in heaven above and here on earth. There is no other god.

**NAB** This is why you must now know, and fix in your heart, that the LORD is God in the heavens above and on earth below, and that there is no other.

**NIV** Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.

**NJB** 'Hence, grasp this today and meditate on it carefully: Yahweh is the true God, in heaven above as on earth beneath, he and no other.

**YLT** 'And thou hast known to-day, and hast turned it back unto thy heart, that Jehovah He is God, in the heavens above, and on the earth beneath -- there is none else;

## **GOD'S GREATNESS AND UNIQUENESS: A MATTER OF THE HEART**

**Know...and take** - Yes, know the truth about God in your head, but let it saturate your heart that it may control your life. Head knowledge without heart impact is arrogance at best, hypocrisy at the worst.

**Take to your heart** - The state of Israel's **heart** is repeatedly emphasized in Deuteronomy - Dt 4:9, 29, 5:29, 6:4-6; 7:17; 8:2, 5, 17; 9:4-5; 10:12, 16, 11:13, 16, 18, 13:3. In Malachi 2:2 God warned he would curse those who did not **take it to heart** and give honor to His Name, something He was in process of doing.

The English description "take to heart" is to pay attention to; to take seriously, to internalize or live according to something.

**Heart** (03820) (**leb** - note that this discussion also includes the closely related noun **lebab** 03824) sometimes refers to a literal heart (Ex 28:29, 1 Sa 25:37, 2 Ki 9:24), but most often is used figurative to refer to what I term the "control center" of our being. Think of an Air Traffic Controller and how dysfunctional, even destructive it is when the controllers fail to function as they should. Just as a healthy human heart is at the center of the body and absolutely essential for physical life and health, so too a healthy spiritual heart (intellect, emotion, will) is at the center of one's inner being (soul) and is vital for a healthy soul, serving as the "fountain" of all moral attitudes and actions. Our spiritual heart thus controls our **actions** and our actions determine our **habits**, which in turn determine our **character**. When God measures the "worth" of a man's life He puts the measuring tape around his heart, not around his head. Be a man after God's Own heart (Acts 13:22) We must continually "post a guard" at the doorway of our heart, so that every avenue for sin's entry is blocked.

**John MacArthur** - The "heart" commonly refers to the mind as the center of thinking and reason (Pr 3:3; 6:21; 7:3), but also includes the emotions (Pr 15:15, 30), the will (Pr 11:20; 14:14), and thus, the whole inner being (Pr 3:5). The heart is the depository of all wisdom and the source of whatever affects speech (Pr 4:24), sight (Pr 4:25), and conduct (Pr 4:26, 27). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** - God doesn't want His children obeying Him just to get blessings or to avoid chastening, but because they love Him from the heart. The word "**heart**" is mentioned more than forty times in Moses' speech, and the Shema (Dt 6:4-5) emphasizes love for the Lord. (See also Dt 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20.) When Moses gave the law to the older generation at Sinai, the emphasis was on the fear of the Lord (Ex. 19:10-25; 20:20), but his application of the Law to the new generation magnifies God's love for Israel and the importance of Israel loving the Lord. They were now to be a mature people who obeyed God from the heart. The Lord is a merciful God (Deut. 4:31), but we shouldn't tempt Him because He is also a jealous God (Dt 4:24). ([Be Equipped](#))

**He is God in heaven above and on the earth below** - He is God everywhere. There is no place for any other so-called God. He will not allow it. As such He can do what He pleases (Ps 115:3, 135:6).

Jos 2:11 (EVEN THE PAGANS RECOGNIZED HE WAS GOD OF ALL CREATION) "And when we heard it, our hearts melted and no courage remained in any man any longer because of you; for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.

**Walter Kaiser** - The acts and deeds of God on behalf of his people had opened a line of witness. If the Canaanites living in Jericho had gotten word of God's saving work on behalf of Israel, you can be sure the other nations around Israel had heard the same thing. This work of God demonstrated that he was "**God in heaven above and on the earth below.**" What could idols do that would match works such as these? This work called for repentance and a trust and belief in this Lord above any other gods or goddesses. That is what Rahab did; she believed, and thus she is in the hall of faith in Hebrews 11, where we read: "By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient" (Heb 11:31). James 2:25 agreed with this same point, as it too declared that she was considered righteous ("Rahab the harlot also justified by works") for what she did. Rahab had come to know the Lord God. (Mission in the OT)

1Ch 29:11 "Thine, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, indeed everything that is in the heavens and the earth; Thine is the dominion, O LORD, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all.

2Ch 20:6 and he said, "O LORD, the God of our fathers, art Thou not God in the heavens? And art Thou not ruler over all the kingdoms of the nations? Power and might are in Thy hand so that no one can stand against Thee.

Ps 115:3 But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

Ps 135:6 Whatever the LORD pleases, He does, In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps.

Dan 4:35+ (KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR AFTER BEING HUMBLLED DECLARED) "And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, What hast Thou done?"

**There is no other** - "The ability of Yahweh to instruct or discipline Israel (Dt 4:36), to love her fathers, to choose their descendants and to deliver them from Egypt (Dt 4:37), and to drive out the peoples of Canaan in order to give the land to Israel for an inheritance (Dt 4:38), leads to the conclusion that he is God in heaven and earth. No other has such powers." (Thompson)

The truth that **there is no other** is paralleled in Dt 4:35-[note](#) - "the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him." In Isaiah God declares...

Isaiah 45:5-6 "**I am the LORD, and there is no other**; Besides Me there is no God. I will gird you, though you have not known Me; 6That men may know from the rising to the setting of the sun **That there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other**,

Isaiah 45:21 "Declare and set forth your case; Indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the LORD? And **there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me.**

Isaiah 45:22 "Turn to Me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth;**For I am God, and there is no other**

As a young man Charles H Spurgeon "turned to" Him and acknowledged that He was God and there was no other.

Read "[Spurgeon's Testimony](#)"

Isaiah 46:9 "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me,

Joel 2:27 "Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, And that **I am the LORD your God And there is no other**; And My people will never be put to shame.

Acts 4:12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for **there is no other name under heaven** that has been given among men, by which we must be saved."

**June Hunt** on **there is no other** - Ultimately, whose opinion really matters? Do the opinions of skeptics really matter? Does my opinion really matter? Does yours? A bumper sticker reads, "God said it! I believe it! That settles it!" On the surface, that looks like a wise saying: God has declared, and the believer has accepted His declaration. However, it might be better to say, "God said it! That settles it!" What really matters is what God says about Himself. The reverential fear of the Lord is the starting point for understanding the God of the Scriptures. Only then can you answer questions such as, "What difference can God make in my life?" "Is God a personal God—does He even care?" "Can God be known?" The answers are worth pondering.

**Richards** writes "Moses concludes this preamble to the constitution of Israel with a call to reject all idols in favor of the living God. Like him we are to "acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth below" (Deut. 4:39).

**Mark Dever** - The book (of Deuteronomy) is replete with such references to God's uniqueness: "the LORD your God, who is among you, is a great and awesome God" (7:21). Or later: "There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand" (32:39). In Deuteronomy, God's uniqueness shines out. This book is about the only God who is.

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I acknowledge this day and take it to my heart  
that the Lord is God in heaven above and  
on the earth below;  
there is no other. (Deuteronomy 4:39)

O my soul, above all things and in all things always rest in the Lord, for He is the eternal rest of the saints.

Grant me most sweet and loving Jesus, to rest in You above every other creature, above all health and beauty, above all glory and honor, above all power and dignity, above all knowledge and precise thought, above all wealth and talent, above all joy and exultation, above all fame and praise, above all sweetness and consolation, above all hope and promise, above all merit and desire,

above all gifts and favors You give and shower upon me, above all happiness and joy that the mind can understand and feel, and finally, above all angels and archangels, above all the hosts of heaven, above all things visible and invisible, and above all that is not You, my God.

—Thomas à Kempis, The Imitation of Christ

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**Today in the Word** - In many jobs, it's difficult to imagine life without a photocopier. So it might be hard for you to believe that this vital piece of office equipment has been around less than fifty years. In 1959, Xerox introduced its 914 copier machine, the first to make copies on plain paper. The 914 was a quick success, and soon "Xerox" became a virtual synonym for "copy."

When it comes to worship, however, nothing but the "real thing" will do! The great "I Am" is the one true God, and all the idols of the nations are just cheap copies. As he concluded his first sermon (in today's reading), this was the key lesson Moses wanted Israel to learn from his historical review.

God is not any created thing--He is the Creator. He is transcendent. At Sinai, the nation had seen that they could not fashion anything into an image for worship, so they should not be deceived and drawn into the Canaanite religions.

God is also personal, and He had put Himself on display, so to speak, in His actions toward Israel. He rescued them from slavery. He made a personal covenant and was personally present with them. He sovereignly chose them, provided for their needs, and gave them holy laws.

His uniqueness is the most important truth the people were to remember and obey. This truth is spelled out in the verses just before the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:3, 4, 5, 6). The metaphor of a furnace conveys that the period of slavery in Egypt was a time of purification, or preparation, against the corruption of idolatry, to be the Lord's special inheritance (Dt 4:20; cf. Dt 8:2, 3, 4, 5). If they fail to do this--after all, that was the historical pattern--they'll be punished, but when they wholeheartedly repent and return to God, He'll show mercy.

TODAY ALONG THE WAY - Who is like unto our Lord? He and He alone is God! Respond to this truth from today's devotional with heartfelt worship. Seek out hymns and choruses that exalt God's greatness and lift up His name. We might suggest such songs as "O Worship the King," "Glorify Thy Name," "O Magnify the Lord," and "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." Singing these could be part of your personal worship time, or an experience you share with your family or small group.

**Deuteronomy 4:40** "So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

- keep (KJV): De 4:1,6 Dt 28:1-14 Lev 22:31 Lev 26:1-13 Jer 11:4 Joh 14:15,21-24
- it may go (KJV): De 5:16 6:3,18 Dt 12:25,28 22:7 Eph 6:3 1Ti 4:8
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NET** Keep his statutes and commandments that I am setting forth today so that it may go well with you and your descendants and that you may enjoy longevity in the land that the LORD your God is about to give you as a permanent possession.

**KJV** Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

**CSB** Keep His statutes and commands, which I am giving you today, so that you and your children after you may prosper and so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

**ESV** Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

**NLT** If you obey all the decrees and commands I am giving you today, all will be well with you and your children. I am giving you these instructions so you will enjoy a long life in the land the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

**GWN** Obey his laws and commands which I'm giving you today. Then things will go well for you and your descendants. You will live for a long time in the land. The LORD your God is giving you the land for as long as



you live.

**NAB** You must keep his statutes and commandments which I enjoin on you today, that you and your children after you may prosper, and that you may have long life on the land which the LORD, your God, is giving you forever."

**NIV** Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.

**NJB** Keep his laws and commandments as I give them to you today, so that you and your children after you may prosper and live long in the country that Yahweh your God is giving you for ever.'

## GOD'S FORMULA FOR PROSPERITY AND LONG LIFE

**So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today**- If you know...and take to your heart the magnificence of God, you should be motivated by love and reverential fear to obey Him without question or doubt.

**MacArthur** - Such gracious privilege, as remembered in Dt 4:32–39, should elicit obedience, particularly in view of the unconditional promise that the Land will be theirs permanently ("for all time") as is detailed in Deut 29, 30. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**You shall keep** (guard, observe, watch) ([08104](#))([shamar](#)) means to keep, watch, preserve, to guard, to be careful, to watch over, to watch carefully over, to be on one's guard. The first use of **shamar** in Ge 2:15 is instructive as Adam was placed in the garden (a perfect environment) and was commanded to "**keep**" it which in the [Septuagint](#) is translated with [phulasso](#) (which is the verb used here in Dt 4:40) which means to guard like a military sentinel would at his post. Clearly Adam did not do a good job at "keeping" the garden safe from intruders! And because of this failure he was cast out of the garden and angels stationed to "**guard** (Lxx = [phulasso](#)) the way to the tree of life" so that he would not eat of it (Ge 3:24).

**That** - [term of purpose or result](#)

**Keep...go well...live long** - The blessings are linked to Israel's obedience.

**It may go well with you and with your children after you** (CSB = "so that you and your children after you may prosper") When love of God motivate obedience, the blessing of God is His reward for us and our children.

**Go well** is the Hebrew verb *yatab* which is used in a prayer to God by David in Ps 51:18 "By Your favor **do good** to Zion; Build the walls of Jerusalem." David acknowledges that God is the source of all that is good and pleasing to mankind. In this verse we see God's doing good is linked to His children obeying well. Repeatedly in Deuteronomy God emphasizes this association of obedience that it may go well. Notice that every mention of **may be well** below is introduced by a [term of result](#) (usually the word "that") always the result of obedience. God has not changed the way He interacts with men and women, so if we desire it to go well with us, we must continually seek to lovingly obey Him (enabled by His indwelling Spirit).

Deuteronomy 5:16 'Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged and that it **may go well with you** on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

Deuteronomy 5:28 "The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. **They have done well** in all that they have spoken. 29 'Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, **that it may be well** with them and with their sons forever!

**Criswell** points out - The speaking of words does not always indicate a heart commitment. The reverence shown by the people at this point (Dt 5:28) may have been merely a response to the phenomena accompanying the revelation of God. They quickly forgot their loyalties in the ordinary course of life. God sought from His people reverence and honor, a devotion which would be eternal and all-inclusive, a heart bent on loving and obeying.

Deuteronomy 5:33 "You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live and that **it may be well with you**, and that you may prolong your days in the land which you will possess.

Deuteronomy 6:3 "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it **may be well with you** and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Deuteronomy 6:18 "You shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that **it may be well with you**

and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give your fathers,

Deuteronomy 6:25 "You shall not eat it (blood - Dt 6:23), in order that it **may be well with you** and your sons after you, for you will be doing what is right in the sight of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 12:28 "Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, so that **it may be well with you** and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 19:13 "You shall not pity him, but you shall purge the blood of the innocent from Israel, that **it may go well with you**.

Deuteronomy 22:7 you shall certainly let the mother go, but the young you may take for yourself, in order that **it may be well with you** and that you may prolong your days.

**Ajith Fernando** comments on **go well** noting that "Moses does not use the word **prosperity** here. Instead he says that the result of obedience is that it will "go well with" the people. This is better than just physical prosperity. Many rich people are very unhappy, because physical prosperity alone will not truly satisfy us. What we need is to know that everything is going well for us (**Ed**: Or like the Hymn Writer said it "It is well with my soul"). That is true prosperity. One of the huge challenges facing the church today is motivating Christians to be obedient to the Word when those around them live in ways so different from what is prescribed in the Bible. And some of them seem to be prospering more than we are! Our answer to this is that the way of obedience is the best way for us." (Preaching the Word – Deuteronomy: Loving Obedience to a Loving God)

When we obey God, no matter what transpires, enabled by His Spirit we can still sing [IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL](#) (by [Horatius Spafford](#) who lost 5 of his children)

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Refrain:

It is well with my soul,  
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ hath regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin—oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!—  
My sin, not in part but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:  
If Jordan above me shall roll,  
No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life  
Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,  
The sky, not the grave, is our goal;  
Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!  
Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;  
The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.

**And that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time**- NET = "that you may enjoy longevity in the land that the LORD your God is about to give you as a permanent possession"

**The UBS Handbook** note says "this is not primarily a matter of their living an unusually long time but of their keeping possession of the land of Canaan for many generations."

This promise is repeated in Deuteronomy...

Deu 5:16 Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, **that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with you** on the land which the LORD your God gives you.

Deu 6:3 "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, **that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly**, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.

Deu 6:18 "And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, **that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land** which the LORD swore to give your fathers,

Deu 12:28 "Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, in order **that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever**, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.

Here are NT parallels

Eph 6:1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 2 HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise) that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.

1Ti 4:8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

**For all time** - a short phrase with a big truth - God is giving Israel the land of Ge 15:18-20+ as a permanent possession.

**UBS Handbook** - the promise is made that the land of Canaan will belong to the Israelites for all time to come.

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**Faithful Dog:** How we admire the obedience a dog shows to its master. Archibald Rutledge wrote that one day he met a man whose dog had just been killed in a forest fire. Heartbroken, the man explained to Rutledge how it happened. Because he worked out-of-doors, he often took his dog with him. That morning, he left the animal in a clearing and gave him a command to stay and watch his lunch bucket while he went into the forest. His faithful friend understood, for that's exactly what he did. Then a fire started in the woods, and soon the blaze spread to the spot where the dog had been left. But he didn't move. He stayed right where he was, in perfect obedience to his master's word. With tearful eyes, the dog's owner said, "I always had to be careful what I told him to do, because I knew he would do it." What's the difference in this story between us & God? He would never give us wrong instructions. Thus, we can trust Him.

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## Singing Bowl

We therefore ought to . . . become fellow workers for the truth. —3 John 1:8

Today's Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:32-40

Artist and scientist Michael Flynn designed a singing bowl for display in ArtPrize, an international art competition held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The bowl requires no electricity but it does require something that is in short supply: cooperation.

As I observed people trying to make the bowl sing, I was surprised that none of them bothered to read the directions about rocking it gently. Instead, impatient to make music, they kept trying their own ideas. After a few minutes they walked away frustrated and disappointed, as if the bowl was defective.

How many times, I wonder, do we become frustrated that life isn't working the way we think it should? We keep trying ways that seem right, but things keep turning out wrong. Instead of following God's Word, we continue trying to find our own way.

The singing bowl reminds us that we can't expect life to go well if we ignore the instructions of the Designer (Deut. 4:40). Failing to obey divides us from one another and separates us from God. To fulfill His plan for the world and make the way of salvation known (Ps. 67:2), we need to follow His instructions about living and working peacefully together. When life doesn't go well, it may be that we've stopped following God's plan. By: Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Sure it takes a lot of courage to put things in God's hands,  
To give ourselves completely, our lives, our hopes, our plans;  
To follow where He leads us and make His will our own;

But all it takes is foolishness to go the way alone!

—Kline

Life is a beautiful song that God is teaching us to play.

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## Threats And Warnings

Read: Deuteronomy 4:32-40 | Keep His statutes and His commandments . . . that it may go well with you and with your children after you. —Deuteronomy 4:40

“God never threatens; the devil never warns,” declared Oswald Chambers. We sometimes use the words threat and warning interchangeably, but Chambers saw a principle that suggests a distinction. Threats are used to get people to do what is in our best interest. Warnings are issued to get people to do what is in their best interest. In other words, threats seek to preserve power, whereas warnings serve to protect people from danger.

Satan wants us to think of God’s loving warnings as mean-spirited threats, but he is wrong. According to Chambers, “A warning is a great arresting statement of God’s, inspired by His love and patience.” The evidence of this is found in the many commands that are coupled with phrases like “that it may go well with you” (Deut. 4:40; 12:28).

In loving relationships, people warn one another of the inevitable consequences of foolish behavior. In unhealthy relationships, people threaten one another with punishment if they fail to live up to unreasonable demands.

As we interact with others, it’s good to consider the nature of our counsel and commands. Do we use ultimatums to preserve our own well-being? Or do we lovingly warn others to keep them from harm? By Julie Ackerman Link ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

FOR FURTHER STUDY How can we take comfort from the love of God if we don’t feel loved? Read [How Has God Loved Us?](#) on the Web at [www.discoveryseries.org/q0102](http://www.discoveryseries.org/q0102)

Warnings are an expression of love; threats are an expression of control.

## Deuteronomy 4:41 Then Moses set apart three cities across the Jordan to the east,

- Nu 35:6,14,15 Jos 20:2-9
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** Then Moses set apart three cities of refuge east of the Jordan River

## THREE CITIES OF REFUGE SET APART Deuteronomy 4:41-43

**Then Moses set apart three cities across the Jordan to the east** - "This is an appropriate place for this list, as his 1st sermon dealt with the conquest & settlement of Transjordan by Israel. Joshua will designate 3 more cities of refuge in the land of Canaan (totaling 6). 3. By providing cities of refuge God showed Himself to be both gracious & just." (Brian Bell)

**MacArthur** on Deut 4:41-43 - These 3 verses are a narrative insertion at the end of Moses’ speech. The setting aside of 3 cities on the E side of the Jordan by Moses showed that Moses willingly obeyed the commandments God gave him. He was an example of the type of obedience that God was calling for in 4:1–40 (cf. Nu 35:14; Jos 20:18). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

This section is narrated in the third person.

**To the east** - Literally toward the rising of the sun.

**Pulpit Commentary** - A short historical notice is here inserted, probably because it was during the interval between the first and second addresses of Moses that he carried into effect the Divine command to appoint cities of refuge for the manslayer (Nu 35:9, etc.; cf. Ex 21:13). This notice, therefore, is here in its proper place in the order of the narrative. That Moses should, just at this stage, have made this appointment was fitting and proper, seeing he had been urging on the people obedience to the Divine statutes and commandments, and had represented their conquest of the territory of Sihon and Og as an earnest of their ultimate

possession of the whole land of the Amorites. By appointing these cities, Moses gave an example of obedience to God's injunction, and, at the same time, not only asserted on the part of Israel a right of proprietorship in this trans-Jordanic territory, but assumed as certain that, on the other side of Jordan also, the same right of proprietorship should be possessed and exercised by Israel in the fulfilling of the whole law concerning cities of refuge (cf. D 19:1, etc.)

**UBS Handbook** - In Hebrew the speech of Moses concludes at the end of verse 40. This new section is a narrative about choosing cities of refuge, and Moses is referred to in the third person. Instructions for choosing cities of refuge are given also in 19:1–13 and Num 35:9–34. In Josh 20:1–9 we read of the six cities that Joshua chose, three east of the Jordan and three west of the river. Section heading: TEV has "The Cities of Refuge East of the Jordan River," NIV has "Cities of Refuge," and CEV has "Safe Towns." Other possibilities are "Towns where people can escape to" or "Towns where people will be safe."

**Peter Craigie** on Dt 4:41-43 - These verses, which are not a part of the address of Moses, describe an action undertaken between the preliminary address (the Historical Prologue) and the subsequent address in which the Law is presented and expounded. They describe the allocation of three eastern cities of refuge, and the appointment of them at this point in the course of the narrative seems suitable. The historical prologue had described the experiences of the Israelites up to the present moment on the plains of Moab; that part of the address which follows has its specific focus on the future. Yet there was one bit of unfinished business relating to the past, the setting aside of cities of refuge for the two and a half tribes who had already been allocated land east of the Jordan. (NICOT)

We see in Numbers that there were a total of six cities of refuge...

Numbers 35:12 "The cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the manslayer to flee to; and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities.

**Ryrie Comment** - The Lord provided six cities of refuge, in which those guilty of accidental homicide might seek refuge from the avenger (the nearest relative of the murdered person) until they could be tried.

Numbers 35:14 'You shall give three cities across the Jordan and three cities in the land of Canaan; they are to be cities of refuge.

Numbers 35:15 'These six cities shall be for refuge for the sons of Israel, and for the alien and for the sojourner among them; that anyone who kills a person unintentionally may flee there.

**Matthew Henry Concise commentary** - Verses 41-49. Here is the introduction to another discourse, or sermon, Moses preached to Israel, which we have in the following chapters. He sets the law before them, as the rule they were to work by, the way they were to walk in. He sets it before them, as the glass in which they were to see their natural face, that, looking into this perfect law of liberty, they might continue therein. These are the laws, given when Israel was newly come out of Egypt; and they were now repeated. Moses gave these laws in charge, while they encamped over against Beth-peor, an idol place of the Moabites. Their present triumphs were a powerful argument for obedience. And we should understand our own situation as sinners, and the nature of that gracious covenant to which we are invited. Therein greater things are shown to us than ever Israel saw from mount Sinai; greater mercies are given to us than they experienced in the wilderness, or in Canaan. One speaks to us, who is of infinitely greater dignity than Moses; who bare our sins upon the cross; and pleads with us by His dying love.

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**Holman Bible Dictionary** on **City of Refuge** - A safe place to flee for a person who had accidentally killed another. The city provided asylum to the fugitive by sheltering and protecting him until a trial could be held to determine his guilt or innocence. If, in the judgment of the city elders, the death had occurred accidentally and without intent, the man was allowed to stay there without fear of harm or revenge by the dead man's relatives (Joshua 20:2-6 ).

Four major passages in the Old Testament describe the right of asylum and the sanctuary provided by a city of refuge (Exodus 21:12-14 ; Numbers 35:1-34 ; Deuteronomy 19:1-13 ; Joshua 20:1-9 ). A literal translation of the Hebrew phrase means "a city of intaking." This right of asylum was offered before the settlement of the Promised Land, but was available only to one charged with accidental manslaughter. Exodus 21:12 records that "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death." The passage continues, however, to promise that "if a man did lie not in wait," a place would be designated to which he could flee ( Exodus 21:13 ). Prior to the establishment of these cities, temporary safety could be gained by fleeing to a sanctuary and grasping the horns of the altar there. 1 Kings 1:50 and 1 Kings 2:28 record two examples of men seeking safety by clinging to the altar in Jerusalem. Neither Adonijah nor Joab were innocent, though, and later were executed.

Moses was commanded to establish six cities of refuge from the total of 48 given to the Levites (Numbers 35:6-7 ). Three were located on each side of the Jordan. In the east were Bezer in the territory of the Reubenites, Ramoth in Gilead, and Golan in the area of Bashan (Deuteronomy 4:43 ). On the west side of the Jordan were Kedesh in Galilee, Shechem in Ephraim, and Kirjath-arba or Hebron in the hill country of Judah (Joshua 20:7-8 ). Sanctuary was not limited to the people of Israel but was extended to the

stranger and sojourner among them (Numbers 35:15 ). ([Click for full article](#))

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### Torrey's Topic - City of Refuge

- Design of Exodus 21:13 ; Numbers 35:11 ; Joshua 20:3
- Names of Deuteronomy 4:41-43 ; Joshua 20:7,8

### REQUIRED TO BE

- Easy of access Deuteronomy 19:3 ; Isaiah 62:10
- Open to all manslayers Joshua 20:4
- Strangers might take advantage of Numbers 35:15

### THOSE ADMITTED TO

- Were put on their trial Numbers 35:12,24
- Not protected outside of Numbers 35:26,27
- Obligated to remain in, until the high priest's death Numbers 35:25,28
- Afforded no asylum to murderers Exodus 21:14 ; Numbers 35:16-21

### ILLUSTRATIVE

- Of Christ Psalm 91:2 ; Isaiah 25:4
- Of the hope of the gospel Hebrews 6:18
- (The way to,) of Christ Isaiah 35:8 ; John 14:6

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### QUESTION - [What were the cities of refuge in the Old Testament?](#)

**ANSWER** - The cities of refuge were part of the distribution of the Promised Land among the twelve tribes of Israel. Only one tribe, the Levites, was not given land to develop. Instead, they were to be the priests of the Lord and the overseers of the tabernacle and all its rites and furnishings. Only the Levites could carry and set up the tabernacle (Numbers 2:5-13). As the Levites were to have no territorial domain allocated to them like the other tribes in the conquest of Canaan, they were to be distributed throughout the land in certain cities appropriated to their use. Part of their inheritance consisted of forty-eight cities spread throughout the land (Numbers 35:6-7). Of these forty-eight cities, six were designated as cities of refuge. The cities were Kedesh, Shechem, [Hebron](#), Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan ([Joshua 20:7-8](#)).

The Mosaic Law stated that anyone who committed a murder was to be put to death (Exodus 21:14). But for unintentional deaths, God set aside these cities to which the murderer could flee for refuge (Exodus 21:13). He would be safe from the [avenger](#)—the family member charged with avenging the victim's death (Numbers 35:19)—until the case could go to trial. The congregation would judge to find if the attacker acted unintentionally. If he did, he would return to the city of refuge and live there safely until the death of the high priest who was in office at the time of the trial, at which point he could return to his property. If the attacker left the city of refuge before the death of the high priest, however, the avenger would have the right to kill him (Numbers 35:24-28).

The establishment of those privileged sanctuaries among the cities of the Levites is probably traceable to the idea that the Levites would be the most suitable and impartial judges, that their presence and counsels might calm or restrain the stormy passions of the blood avenger. By their consecration as priests, the Levites were mediators between the Israelites and God. As such, they would have been gifted to calmly mediate between the attacker and the victim's family, ensuring that no further bloodshed would occur.

The cities of refuge are types of Christ, in whom sinners find a refuge from the destroyer of our souls. Just as the guilty person sought refuge in the cities set up for that purpose, we flee to Christ for refuge from sin (Hebrews 6:18). We run to Christ to escape the danger we are in from the curse and condemnation of the law, from the wrath of God, and from an eternity in hell. Only Christ provides refuge from these things, and it is to Him alone that we must run. Just as the cities were open to all who fled to them for safety, it is Christ who provides safety to all who come to Him for refuge from sin and its punishment. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Deuteronomy 4:42 that a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live:**

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- De 19:1-10 Nu 35:6,11,12,15-28 Heb 6:18
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

NET Anyone who accidentally killed someone without hating him at the time of the accident could flee to one of those cities and be safe.

NLT Anyone who killed another person unintentionally, without previous hostility, could flee there to live in safety.

## ACCIDENTAL SLAYING WITHOUT PREMEDITATION OR HATRED

**That a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live** - Note this was protection for manslaughter, not murder.

**NET Note** on "time past" - Literally the Hebrew is "yesterday and a third (day)." The point is that there was no animosity between the two parties at the time of the accident and therefore no motive for the killing.

**HCSB Study Bible - Manslaughter** is qualified here as the killing of a person accidentally without previously hating him. If the accused hated the victim, there might be cause to suspect him of premeditated murder, in which case no refuge could suffice. Manslaughter today is defined similarly as accidental or "without malice aforethought."

**Unintentionally** - literally, in lack or want of knowing .e. unconsciously, not done with purpose or intent, by accident, not deliberate, pre-meditated or planned

**in time past** - literally, yesterday, three days since, i.e. formerly, previously (cf. Ge 31:2; Ex 5:8).

**Manslayer** (07523)(ratsach) means to murder or slay, all 47 uses (in 40v) speaking of one human being killing another and never of a person killing an animal. Ratsach is never employed in contexts of war, capital punishment, or self-defense. The taking of a human life is the primary concept behind this word. The first use is in the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." (Ex 20:13) **Ratsach** refers to premeditated murder (Deut. 5:17; 1 Kgs. 21:19; Jer. 7:9), accidental killing (Nu. 35:11; Josh. 20:3), an act of revenge (Nu 35:27) and death from animal attack (Pr. 22:13). "Provocatively, Hosea refers to the lewdness of the priests that led people astray as being equal to murder (Hos. 6:9)." (Baker)

**Gilbrant** - The verb rātsach, "to kill," "to murder," is not the common word used for "killing" in the OT, as it is only used forty-six times. Nineteen of these occurrences are in Num. 35, which refers to the "manslayer," or person who must be brought to court for causing someone's death. The trial for the manslayer was to determine whether the death was accidental or intentional. If it was not a case of murder, then the slayer was to be protected in a city of refuge against vengeance by the family. Thus, the word is used of the unauthorized taking of human life. God authorizes governments to execute capital punishment for murder and to use force to maintain safety for its citizens. Any other willful killing is unauthorized and must be punished. Rātsach, then, usually refers to murder. Thus, the NIV translates the word as "accused of murder" (e.g., Num. 35:12) when willfulness had not been determined. One time rātsach is used of authorized killing in describing that if a person is ruled a murderer, he must be put to death (Num. 35:30). It was probably used there to emphasize the justice of taking the life of one who willfully took someone else's life. Everywhere else rātsach refers to murder or one accused of it. The most well-known use of rātsach is in the Sixth Commandment (Exo. 20:13). Based on the above evidence from its usage, the term may sometimes be translated "to murder." It does not prohibit the taking of animal life, nor does it prohibit killing in war or in a situation calling for extreme police action. The taking of a human life is a serious act to God because all people are made in his image, and He alone has the authority to give and take life. The only punishment equal to the crime of murder that shows respect for the life of the victim and the authority of God is capital punishment (Gen. 9:5f; Num. 35:30-34). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

**Ratsach** - 46x in 40v - Usage: killed(1), kills the manslayer(1), manslayer(18), murder(7), murdered(2), murderer(12), murderer shall be put(1), murderers(1), murders(1), put to death(1), slew(1).

Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder.

Numbers 35:6 "The cities which you shall give to the Levites shall be the six cities of refuge, which you shall give for the manslayer to flee to; and in addition to them you shall give forty-two cities.

Numbers 35:11 then you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, that the manslayer

who has killed any person unintentionally may flee there.

Numbers 35:12 'The cities shall be to you as a refuge from the avenger, so that the manslayer will not die until he stands before the congregation for trial.

Numbers 35:16 'But if he struck him down with an iron object, so that he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Numbers 35:17 'If he struck him down with a stone in the hand, by which he will die, and as a result he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Numbers 35:18 'Or if he struck him with a wooden object in the hand, by which he might die, and as a result he died, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Numbers 35:19 'The blood avenger himself shall put the murderer to death; he shall put him to death when he meets him.

Numbers 35:21 or if he struck him down with his hand in enmity, and as a result he died, the one who struck him shall surely be put to death, he is a murderer; the blood avenger shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

Numbers 35:25 'The congregation shall deliver the manslayer from the hand of the blood avenger, and the congregation shall restore him to his city of refuge to which he fled; and he shall live in it until the death of the high priest who was anointed with the holy oil.

Numbers 35:26 'But if the manslayer at any time goes beyond the border of his city of refuge to which he may flee,

Numbers 35:27 and the blood avenger finds him outside the border of his city of refuge, and the blood avenger kills the manslayer, he will not be guilty of blood

Numbers 35:28 because he should have remained in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest. But after the death of the high priest the manslayer shall return to the land of his possession.

Numbers 35:30 'If anyone kills a person, the murderer shall be put to death at the evidence of witnesses, but no person shall be put to death on the testimony of one witness.

Numbers 35:31 'Moreover, you shall not take ransom for the life of a murderer who is guilty of death, but he shall surely be put to death.

Deuteronomy 4:42 that a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live:

Deuteronomy 5:17 'You shall not murder.

Deuteronomy 19:3 "You shall prepare the roads for yourself, and divide into three parts the territory of your land which the LORD your God will give you as a possession, so that any manslayer may flee there.

Deuteronomy 19:4 "Now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously--

Deuteronomy 19:6 otherwise the avenger of blood might pursue the manslayer in the heat of his anger, and overtake him, because the way is long, and take his life, though he was not deserving of death, since he had not hated him previously.

Deuteronomy 22:26 "But you shall do nothing to the girl; there is no sin in the girl worthy of death, for just as a man rises against his neighbor and murders him, so is this case.

Joshua 20:3 that the manslayer who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation, may flee there, and they shall become your refuge from the avenger of blood.

Joshua 20:5 'Now if the avenger of blood pursues him, then they shall not deliver the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor without premeditation and did not hate him beforehand.

Joshua 20:6 'He shall dwell in that city until he stands before the congregation for judgment, until the death of the one who is high priest in those days. Then the manslayer shall return to his own city and to his own house, to the city from which he fled."

Joshua 21:13 So to the sons of Aaron the priest they gave Hebron, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Libnah with its pasture lands,

Joshua 21:21 They gave them Shechem, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, in the hill country of Ephraim, and Gezer with its pasture lands,

Joshua 21:27 To the sons of Gershon, one of the families of the Levites, from the half-tribe of Manasseh, they gave Golan in Bashan, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands, and Be-eshterah with its pasture lands; two cities.

Joshua 21:32 From the tribe of Naphtali, they gave Kedesh in Galilee, the city of refuge for the manslayer, with its pasture lands and Hammoth-dor with its pasture lands and Kartan with its pasture lands; three cities.

Joshua 21:38 From the tribe of Gad, they gave Ramoth in Gilead, the city of refuge for the manslayer,

with its pasture lands and Mahanaim with its pasture lands,

Judges 20:4 So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said, "I came with my concubine to spend the night at Gibeah which belongs to Benjamin.

1 Kings 21:19 "You shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "Have you murdered and also taken possession?"' And you shall speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD, "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours.'"

2 Kings 6:32 Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And the king sent a man from his presence; but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, "Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold the door shut against him. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?"

Job 24:14 "The murderer arises at dawn; He kills the poor and the needy, And at night he is as a thief.

Psalm 62:3 How long will you assail a man, That you may murder him, all of you, Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?

Psalm 94:6 They slay the widow and the stranger And murder the orphans.

Proverbs 22:13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I will be killed in the streets!"

Isaiah 1:21 How the faithful city has become a harlot, She who was full of justice! Righteousness once lodged in her, But now murderers.

Jeremiah 7:9 "Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery and swear falsely, and offer sacrifices to Baal and walk after other gods that you have not known,

Hosea 4:2 There is swearing, deception, murder, stealing and adultery. They employ violence, so that bloodshed follows bloodshed.

Hosea 6:9 And as raiders wait for a man, So a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem; Surely they have committed crime.

#### **Deuteronomy 4:43 Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, and Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.**

- **Bezer:** Bezer is the same as Bozra, formerly a royal city of Edom. \See Note on "Ge 36:33"\. Jos 20:8
- **Ramoth:** Ramoth was a celebrated city in the mountains of Gilead, placed by Eusebius fifteen miles east from Philadelphia or Ammon, and by Jerome in the neighbourhood of Jabbok, and consequently north of Philadelphia. Jos 21:38 1Ki 4:13 22:3,4 1Ch 6:80
- **Golan:** This city gave name to the district of Gaulonitis, now called Djolan, which comprises the plain to south of Djedour or Iturea, and to the west of Haouran: its southern frontier is the Nahar Aweired, by which it is separated from the district of Erbad, and the Sheriat el Mandhour, which separates it from the district of El Kefarat: on the west it is limited by the territory of Feik, and on the north-west by Djebel Heish, or mount Hermon. Jos 21:27 1Ch 6:71
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

NLT These were the cities: Bezer on the wilderness plateau for the tribe of Reuben; Ramoth in Gilead for the tribe of Gad; Golan in Bashan for the tribe of Manasseh.

### **THREE CITIES OF REFUGE IN TRANSJORDAN**

These were cities on the eastern side of the Jordan River. More cities would be delineated on the western side.

#### **Bezer in the wilderness on the plateau for the Reubenites, and Ramoth in Gilead for the Gadites, and Golan in Bashan for the Manassites.**

**Bezer** - (bee' zuhr) Place name meaning, "inaccessible." - A city of refuge in tribal territory of Reuben (Deuteronomy 4:43 ; Joshua 20:8 ), set aside as a city for the Levites (Joshua 21:36 1 Chronicles 6:63 , 1 Chronicles 6:78 ). It may be Umm el-Amad, eight miles northeast of Medeba. Mesha, king of Moab about 830 B.C., claimed to have rebuilt Bezer as a Moabite city.

**Ramoth in Gilead** - ("Heights of Gilead.") A fortress commanding Argob and the Jair towns, occupied by Solomon's commissariat officer (1 Kings 4:13). Keenly fought for by the Israelites and their enemies the Syrians under Ahab and Joram (1 Kings 22:4; it had been seized by Benhadad I from Omri; Josephus Ant. 8:15, section 3. Ahab fell in attempting to recover it). Joram of Israel allied himself with Ahaziah of Judah (2 Chronicles 22:5-6), gained and kept Ramoth Gilead in spite of Hazael (2 Kings 9:14-15; Josephus

Ant. 9:6; section 1). Jehu from it started to seize the kingdom. 2 Kings 8:28 or Ramath Mizpeh in Joshua 13:26. The spot called by Jacob in his covenant with Laban, of which the pillar and stone heap was pledge, Galeed and Mizpah. **A city of refuge** in Gad (Deuteronomy 4:43; Joshua 20:8; Joshua 21:38). Now Es Salt, W. of Philadelphia, or else Jela'ad (Gilead) four miles N. of Es Salt, for Ramath Mizpeh is in the N. of Gad (Joshua 13:26), which Es Salt is not. The Arabic of Joshua 13:26 has Ramah el Jeresh or Ramah el Jerash(Gerasha).

**Golan** - A city of Bashan (Deuteronomy 4:43), allotted out of Manasseh to the Levites; one of the three cities of refuge E. of Jordan (Joshua 20:8; Joshua 21:27).

- Torrey's Textbook [Cities of Refuge](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary [City of refuge](#)
- Chabad Knowledge Base [Cities of refuge](#)
- CARM Theological Dictionary [Cities of refuge](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Cities of Refuge](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary [Cities of Refuge](#)
- Morrish Bible Dictionary [Cities of Refuge](#)
- Hawker's Poor Man's Dictionary [Cities of refuge](#)
- People's Dictionary of the Bible [Cities of refuge](#)
- Smith Bible Dictionary [Refuges Cities of](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary [Cities of Refuge](#)
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Cities of Refuge](#)
- Kitto Biblical Cyclopedia [Cities of refuge Refuge cities of](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [City of Refuge](#)
- The Nuttall Encyclopedia [Cities of Refuge](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Cities of Refuge](#)

#### Deuteronomy 4:44 Now this is the law which Moses set before the sons of Israel;

- De 1:5 17:18,19 27:3,8,26 33:4 Lev 27:34 Nu 36:13 Mal 4:4 Joh 1:17
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

NLT This is the body of instruction that Moses presented to the Israelites.

### INTRODUCTION TO THE MAIN DISCOURSE IN DEUTERONOMY

**Now this is the law which Moses set before the sons of Israel**- This introduces the next discourse by Moses to the second generation.

**ESV Study Bible** - Dt 4:44–11:32 Moses' Second Speech: General Covenant Stipulations. The first part of Moses' second speech largely consists of general covenant stipulations. More specific stipulations follow in chs. 12–16. Dt 4:44–49 are the Introduction to Moses' Second Speech. These verses provide the geographical and historical setting of the second speech.

**MacArthur** on Dt 4:44–28:68 - The heart of Deuteronomy is found in this long second speech of Moses. "Now this is the law" (Dt 4:44) which Moses explained to Israel (cf. Dt 1:5). After a brief introduction (Dt 4:44–49), Moses gave the people a clear understanding of what the law directed concerning their relationship with the Lord in the Land (Dt 5:1–26:19), then concluded by recounting the blessings or the curses which would come upon the nation as a consequence of their response to the stipulations of this law (Dt 27:1–28:68). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

#### Deuteronomy 4:45 these are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, when they came out from Egypt,

- These (KJV): De 6:17,20 1Ki 2:3 Ps 119:2,14,22,24,111
- statutes (KJV): De 4:1 Ps 119:5
- judgments (KJV): Ps 119:7

- [Map of Journey from Kadesh-Barnea to Plains of Moab](#) - includes defeat of Og and Sihon, Mt Nebo, Pisgah
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** These are the laws, decrees, and regulations that Moses gave to the people of Israel when they left Egypt,

## MOSES SPEAKS THE TESTIMONIES STATUTES AND ORDINANCES

**These are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, when they came out from Egypt,-** This law is the same as that given to the previous generation at Mount Sinai. Deuteronomy is a second delivery of the Law to those who would occupy the land.

**MacArthur on testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances** - God's instruction to Israel was set forth in: 1) the testimonies, the basic covenant stipulations (Dt 5:6–21); 2) statutes, words that were inscribed and therefore fixed; and 3) ordinances, the decisions made by a judge on the merits of the situation. This law was given to Israel when they came out of Egypt. Moses is not giving further law, he is now explaining that which has already been given. ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

**KJV Study Bible** - The "testimonies" denoted the covenant stipulations; the "statutes" were laws written down or inscribed on some suitable medium; and the "judgments" were the decisions of a judge (cf. Ps 19:7-9).

**Brian Bell** - Wrap up: Every negative precept, for every Thou shalt not there are always 2 positive principles. 1. One, God gives them to protect us. Two, He gives them to provide for us. 2. He's not a cosmic killjoy who wants to take the fun out of life. a) A story of a high school guy who wanted to go swimming with his girlfriend at midnight. The neighbors down the block had a pool, and he knew it. So they ran down there and scaled the fence even though there were No Trespassing and Do Not Enter signs. Just as he hit the diving board, the girl yelled, but it was too late. There was only a foot of water in the pool. He broke his neck, and he's in therapy to this day. He didn't realize that the signs on the fence - the precepts - would have protected him. ([Sermon](#))

**Testimonies** ([05713](#)) ('edah from **ud** = return, do again) means testimony which in English is a solemn statement made under oath, an assertion offering first-hand authentication of a fact or something that serves as evidence. The origin of the idea of testimony from **ud** is that a witness is one, who by repetition (**ud** = "do again") emphatically affirms his testimony. A testimony can be a solemn statement made under oath or as part of a covenant. God's testimonies are what come forth from His heart to indicate His will.

God's testimonies are eminently practical as shown in the repeated uses in Psalm 119. Read and meditate on the uses in Psalm 119 and ask the Spirit to enable you to glean the practical aspects of God's testimonies. For example, the godly man or woman is blessed by keeping them and seeking God with all one's heart (Ps 119:2). Do you desire God's blessing on your life? Then hear and heed Ps 119:2. You can go through all 14 uses in Ps 119 to observe the truth and apply that truth to your life! Good stuff!

**Gilbrant** - Derived from the verb 'ûdh, "to surround," "to testify," 'fidhâh is the feminine form of the masculine noun 'fidh, "witness," "proof," "testimony." Animals, rocks or pillars were often set up as a testimony. Their function was to serve as tangible reminders of an agreement or covenant that had been made (Gen. 21:30; 31:52; Josh. 24:27). The noun is usually used of the commandments of the Lord that serve as a reminder of his steadfast devotion to Israel (Deut. 4:45; Ps 93:5; 119:2). This testimony is always defined within the confines of Israel's religion and its unique relationship with God. First, it is used as a designation for the "Ark of the Covenant of the Lord" (Nu 10:33). This religious object testified to Yahweh's presence among his people. Although forty years of waiting were required because of Israel's intransigence, some presumed to mount a military foray into Canaan anyhow. But God was not with them (the Ark remained in camp), and the expedition was an abysmal failure (Nu 14:44f). The manna was placed in a jar "in front of the testimony" (Ex 16:34; Lev. 16:13). Its location was just inside the veil, a hanging that served as a divider between the inner and outer rooms (Ex 26:33; 30:6; Lev. 24:3). Upon the Ark was a cover, which was one piece with the cherubim (Ex 15:22). Symbolized was Yahweh's presence, along with his desire to commune with his people and forgive their sins. Here He would meet with his people (Exo. 30:6, 36). Second, 'fidhâh refers to the written words of God (that is, his revelation). Moses came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony (Exo. 32:15). They were placed inside the Ark by Moses (Ex 40:21). At the direction of Jehoiada the priest, Jehoash was given both the crown (symbol of kingship) and testimony (2 Ki. 11:12). Israel's king was to have a copy in his possession, which he should study. Twice 'fidhâh occurs in superscripts to Psalms, "Lily of the Covenant" (Ps. 60; 80, NIV), possibly an allusion to the Covenant as written revelation. The exodus generation received

the Torah as "testimony" (Ps. 78:5). Third, the term is used with reference to the Tabernacle and all that it entails: its typology as reflected in its design and furnishings as well as all the cultic activities associated with it. Its care was entrusted to the Levites (Num. 1:50). Aaron and his descendants carried the responsibility of ministering at the Tabernacle (Num. 18:2). Care was to be taken that all duties be done properly. Only Aaron and his sons could serve at the altar, and within the veil (Num. 18:7). (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

This Hebrew word is divided into two main groups -

**'edâh I** (Not included with list below) Testimony, witness. Used only of things posited to establish permanence and unequivocal facts such as ownership (Genesis 21:30), an agreement (Genesis 31:52), and a covenant with God (Joshua 24:27).

**'edâh II** (Included in the list below) Testimonies. This noun is used only in the plural. It refers to the laws as given with divine warrant, especially in Psalm 119 (thirteen times). Possibly 'edâ is a variant pointing of 'edût. (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament)

**'Edah** - 22x in 22 verses - testimonies(21), testimony(1).

Deuteronomy 4:45 these are the **testimonies** and the statutes and the ordinances which Moses spoke to the sons of Israel, when they came out from Egypt,

Deuteronomy 6:17 "You should diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His **testimonies** and His statutes which He has commanded you.

Deuteronomy 6:20 "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What do the **testimonies** and the statutes and the judgments mean which the LORD our God commanded you?'

Psalm 25:10 All the paths of the LORD are lovingkindness and truth To those who keep His covenant and His **testimonies**.

Psalm 78:56 Yet they tempted and rebelled against the Most High God And did not keep His **testimonies**,

Psalm 93:5 Your **testimonies** are fully confirmed; Holiness befits Your house, O LORD, forevermore.

Psalm 99:7 He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; They kept His **testimonies** And the statute that He gave them.

Psalm 119:2 How blessed are those who observe His **testimonies**, Who seek Him with all their heart.

Psalm 119:22 Take away reproach and contempt from me, For I observe Your **testimonies**.

Psalm 119:24 Your **testimonies** also are my delight; They are my counselors. Daleth.

Psalm 119:46 I will also speak of Your **testimonies** before kings And shall not be ashamed.

Psalm 119:59 I considered my ways And turned my feet to Your **testimonies**.

Psalm 119:79 May those who fear You turn to me, Even those who know Your **testimonies**.

Psalm 119:95 The wicked wait for me to destroy me; I shall diligently consider Your **testimonies**.

Psalm 119:119 You have removed all the wicked of the earth like dross; Therefore I love Your **testimonies**.

Psalm 119:125 I am Your servant; give me understanding, That I may know Your **testimonies**.

Psalm 119:138 You have commanded Your **testimonies** in righteousness And exceeding faithfulness.

Psalm 119:146 I cried to You; save me And I shall keep Your **testimonies**.

Psalm 119:152 Of old I have known from Your **testimonies** That You have founded them forever. Resh.

Psalm 119:167 My soul keeps Your **testimonies**, And I love them exceedingly.

Psalm 119:168 I keep Your precepts and Your **testimonies**, For all my ways are before You. Tav.

Psalm 132:12 "If your sons will keep My covenant And My **testimony** which I will teach them, Their sons also shall sit upon your throne forever."

Here are general remarks by H. Douglas Buckwalter on **testimony** from the [Baker Dictionary of Evangelical Theology](#) -

The biblical concept of testimony or witness is closely allied with the conventional Old Testament legal sense of testimony given in a court of law. Linguistically, the biblical term principally derives from the Hebrew *yaad, ud*, *anah* [ הָאָדָה ] and Greek *marturein* [ μαρτυρέω ] word groups; conceptually, it broadly influences the thought patterns, truth claims, and theology of nearly all of Scripture.

Its validity consists in certifiable, objective facts. In both Testaments, it appears as the primary standard for establishing and testing truth claims. Uncertifiable subjective claims, opinions, and beliefs, on the contrary, appear in Scripture as inadmissible testimony. Even the testimony of one witness is insufficient—for testimony to be acceptable, it must be established by two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15).



Thus, within Scripture an inseparable bond exists between the message and its historical reliability on the basis of sound testimony. The message is as trustworthy as the events themselves. In the Old Testament, the truth claims have to do mainly with God and the revelation of himself to Israel; in the New Testament, this picture is greatly deepened with the additional revelation of Jesus Christ, and now to all the world.

*Testimony in the Old Testament . Testimony as the Revelation of God .* The idea of testimony is intrinsic to the idea of biblical revelation. The content of biblical revelation, whether general or special, stands as testimony to its Giver. Furthermore, God has unveiled divine truth to people within the matrix of secular history. This means that people were able to verify divine revelation. Paul proclaims that the coming of Jesus and the worldwide spread of the gospel were "not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26 ). These events were well observed by many. This assessment holds true for most of biblical revelation.

Concerning Old Testament general revelation, the psalmist praises the created order for revealing and bearing witness to God's glory and supremacy (Psalm 8:1-4 ; 19:1-6 ; 29 see Job 36:24-33 ; 37:1-13 ). The sun/moon and day/night cycles appear as eternally established faithful witnesses, affirming Yahweh as a promise-keeping God (Psalm 89:35-37 ; Jeremiah 33:20-21,25 ).

Concerning God's special revelation of himself to Old Testament Israel, the Ten Commandments are called the Testimony (Exodus 31:8 ); as the revelation of God's legislation, they testify to his person and work and to his expectations for Israel. The ark and the tabernacle are also occasionally called the ark of the Testimony (Exodus 25:22 ; Numbers 4:5 ; Joshua 4:16 ) and the tabernacle/tent of the Testimony (Exodus 38:21 ; Numbers 10:11 ; 2 Chronicles 24:6 ). In these instances, testimony more specifically refers to the revelatory self-witness of God to his people. Here, by the ark in the tabernacle, God testifies to his own existence in the act of revealing himself to Moses (Exodus 25:22 ; 33:9-11 ; Numbers 7:89 ) and to future generations (Exodus 29:42 ).

The Old Testament prophets also reveal God's mind and will when testifying against Israel (2 Chronicles 24:19 ; Amos 3:13 ) and the nations (Zephaniah 3:8 ). All instances of this kind of prophecy in the Old Testament of which there are many appear as divine testimony against unrepentant peoples. The content of the prophetic testimony is often directly inspired revelation. Its truth claim lies ultimately in its fulfillment. But the history of prophetic fulfillment also guarantees its reliability. ([Click for more discussion in full article](#)).

**Statutes** (02706)(**hoq** from **chaqaq** = to cut in or engrave in stone - hew a tomb in rock Is 22:16, draw picture on a brick Eze 4:1 or a wall Eze 23:14) is a masculine noun that means regulation, law, ordinance, decree, custom. The primary sense of hoq is an expectation or mandate prescribed by decree or custom - general decrees of God (Jer 5:22; Amos 2:4); statutes of God to Moses (Ex 15:26; Nu 30:16; Mal. 4:4); an [allotment](#) or lawful share (Ge 47:22; for the priests = Lev 10:13, 14), boundaries (Job 14:5; 26:10; of sea - Pr 8:29), prevailing cultural norm (Jdg 11:39), binding legislation of a ruler (Ge 47:26) of Passover to be observed (Ex 12:24). Hoq often refers to commands, civil enactments, legal prescriptions, ritual laws decreed by someone in authority whether human (Mic. 6:16) or Divine (Dt. 6:1). The Law of Moses includes commandments (miswah), judgments (mispat), and statutes (hoq) (Dt. 4:1–2). Israel was charged to obey God's statutes, and they had pledged to do so (Dt 26:16, 17). Accordingly, God's judgment was meted out against the Israelites when they disobeyed them (Amos 2:4; Ezek. 11:12; Mal. 3:7). [Statute](#) - Baker Evangelical Dictionary

**Jack Lewis** on **hoq** - It was a common practice among the ancients to engrave laws upon slabs of stone or metal and to set them up in a public place (e.g. the code of Hammurabi, engraved on diorite stone). But this root is not limited to the writing of laws on stone. The LXX chiefly used three words to render ḥōq: prostagma "order" or "injunction," dikaiōma "regulation" or requirement," and nomimon "commandment." The use of ḥōq in Qumran is similar to that in the OT.

ḥōq occurs in sequences with other words for law: debārîm (words), tōrâ (law), mishpāt (judgment), 'ēdût (testimony), and mišwâ (commandment). These words are used almost indiscriminately. In a few cases ḥōq and mishpāt are used as if intended to summarize two kinds of Israelite law (Exodus 15:25; Joshua 24:25; Ezra 7:10). But efforts to distinguish clearly between their connotations have not been entirely successful. Albrecht Alt has suggested such a distinction in his categories of casuistic and apodictic laws. But he admits that ḥōq is not limited to the apodictic form. More recent efforts to make ḥōq designate that to which men must respond in obedience is in general true, but fits only some of the cases.

As "rule" or "prescription" ḥōq may designate duties imposed by God (Exodus 18:16) or man (Genesis 47:26; 2 Chron. 35:25; Judges 11:39). In the case of the latter, it conveys the import of "statute" or "custom," as in the

phrase "statutes of your fathers" (Ezekiel 20:18; 1 Samuel 30:25). The verb most frequently used with ḥōq is shāmar "to keep," which stresses the concept that ḥuqqîm (plural) are precepts and rules to be obeyed. When used in connection with berît (covenant) it denotes the demands which God made upon his covenant people. The decree of the Lord gives the king his rights and duties over the people of God (Psalm 2:7).

ḥōq at times designates a legal right. Joseph gives Pharaoh a fifth of the land's produce (Genesis 47:26). Isaiah (Isaiah 10:1) alludes to iniquitous decrees by which the poor were legally fleeced. Even natural laws such as the "bound" of the sea (Proverbs 8:29) give the sea its right of sway. There are regulations for the heavenly bodies (Psalm 148:6), the rain (Job 28:26), and the sea (Jeremiah 5:22; Job 38:10).

ḥōq at times designates "privilege" or "due." The Egyptian priests had a right which exempted them from selling their land (Genesis 47:22). The priest's share in the sacrifice was a perpetual right (Exodus 29:28; cf. Leviticus 24:9), established by God's decree.

ḥōq as "custom" is demonstrated in the case of the memorial for Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:39). It is also seen in the demand that Israel not walk in the customs (ḥuqqâ) of Canaan (Leviticus 18:3, 30; Leviticus 20:23). ([Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament](#))

**Statutes** - 128x in 125 verses - Usage: allotment(5), boundaries(1), boundary(2), conditions(1), custom(1), decree(5), due(5), fixed order(1), limit(2), limits(1), measure(1), necessary food(1), ordinance(4), portion(3), portions(1), prescribed portion(1), rations(1), required amount(1), resolves(1), statute(9), statutes(79), thing...due(1), what is appointed(1). Ge 47:22; Gen. 47:26; Exod. 5:14; Exod. 12:24; Exod. 15:25; Exod. 15:26; Exod. 18:16; Exod. 18:20; Exod. 29:28; Exod. 30:21; Lev. 6:18; Lev. 6:22; Lev. 7:34; Lev. 10:11; Lev. 10:13; Lev. 10:14; Lev. 10:15; Lev. 24:9; Lev. 26:46; Num. 18:8; Num. 18:11; Num. 18:19; Num. 30:16; Deut. 4:1; Deut. 4:5; Deut. 4:6; Deut. 4:8; Deut. 4:14; Deut. 4:40; Deut. 4:45; Deut. 5:1; Deut. 5:31; Deut. 6:1; Deut. 6:17; Deut. 6:20; Deut. 6:24; Deut. 7:11; Deut. 11:32; Deut. 12:1; Deut. 16:12; Deut. 17:19; Deut. 26:16; Deut. 26:17; Deut. 27:10; Jos. 24:25; Jdg. 5:15; Jdg. 11:39; 1 Sam. 30:25; 1 Ki. 3:14; 1 Ki. 8:58; 1 Ki. 8:61; 1 Ki. 9:4; 2 Ki. 17:15; 2 Ki. 17:37; 1 Chr. 16:17; 1 Chr. 22:13; 1 Chr. 29:19; 2 Chr. 7:17; 2 Chr. 19:10; 2 Chr. 33:8; 2 Chr. 34:31; 2 Chr. 35:25; Ezr. 7:10; Ezr. 7:11; Neh. 1:7; Neh. 9:13; Neh. 9:14; Neh. 10:29; Job 14:5; Job 14:13; Job 23:12; Job 23:14; Job 28:26; Job 38:10; Ps. 2:7; Ps. 50:16; Ps. 81:4; Ps. 94:20; Ps. 99:7; Ps. 105:10; Ps. 105:45; Ps. 119:5; Ps. 119:8; Ps. 119:12; Ps. 119:23; Ps. 119:26; Ps. 119:33; Ps. 119:48; Ps. 119:54; Ps. 119:64; Ps. 119:68; Ps. 119:71; Ps. 119:80; Ps. 119:83; Ps. 119:112; Ps. 119:117; Ps. 119:118; Ps. 119:124; Ps. 119:135; Ps. 119:145; Ps. 119:155; Ps. 119:171; Ps. 147:19; Ps. 148:6; Prov. 8:29; Prov. 30:8; Prov. 31:15; Isa. 5:14; Isa. 10:1; Isa. 24:5; Jer. 5:22; Jer. 31:36; Jer. 32:11; Ezek. 11:12; Ezek. 16:27; Ezek. 20:18; Ezek. 20:25; Ezek. 36:27; Ezek. 45:14; Amos 2:4; Mic. 7:11; Zeph. 2:2; Zech. 1:6; Mal. 3:7; Mal. 4:4

**Ordinances** (04941) see discussion of [mishpat/mispat](#)

**Deuteronomy 4:46 across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon, whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out from Egypt.**

- **On this side:** De 4:47 1:5 3:29 Nu 32:19
- **over:** De 3:29
- **Moses:** De 1:4 2:30-36 3:8 Nu 21:21-32
- [Map of Journey from Kadesh-Barnea to Plains of Moab](#) - includes defeat of Og and Sihon, Mt Nebo, Pisgah
- [Map of Beth-Baal-Peor](#)
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** and as they camped in the valley near Beth-peor east of the Jordan River. (This land was formerly occupied by the Amorites under King Sihon, who ruled from Heshbon. But Moses and the Israelites destroyed him and his people when they came up from Egypt.



Israel Defeats Og and Sihon (ESV Study Bible)  
(Click to Enlarge)

**Across the Jordan, in the valley opposite Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites who lived at Heshbon -Beth-peor:** Beth-peor was a city which was situated, according to Eusebius, opposite Jericho, and six miles above Livias. As the name signifies "the house of Peor," it is probable that there was a temple to Peor, situated in this place, full in view of the people, while Moses was pressing upon them the worship of Jehovah alone; and perhaps the very temple where so many had sinned to their own destruction.

**Whom Moses and the sons of Israel defeated when they came out from Egypt-** This truth that our God is able to defeat all enemies is repeatedly stated. My favorite phrase describing our Great God is "He is able!" What is there in your life that you think is too difficult for Him? Take a moment and read the discussion [God is able](#).

**Deuteronomy 4:47 They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who were across the Jordan to the east,**

- [Map of Journey from Kadesh-Barnea to Plains of Moab](#)- includes defeat of Og and Sihon, Mt Nebo, Pisgah
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** Israel took possession of his land and that of King Og of Bashan-- the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan.

This is described in Numbers 21:33-35+ (cp Dt 3:1-14+, Dt 29:7-8+)

Then they turned and went up by the way of Bashan, and Og the king of Bashan went out with all his people, for battle at Edrei. 34 But the LORD said to Moses, "Do not fear him, for I have given him into your hand, and all his people and his land; and you shall do to him as you did to Sihon, king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon." 35 So they killed him and his sons and all his people, until there was no remnant left him; and they possessed his land.

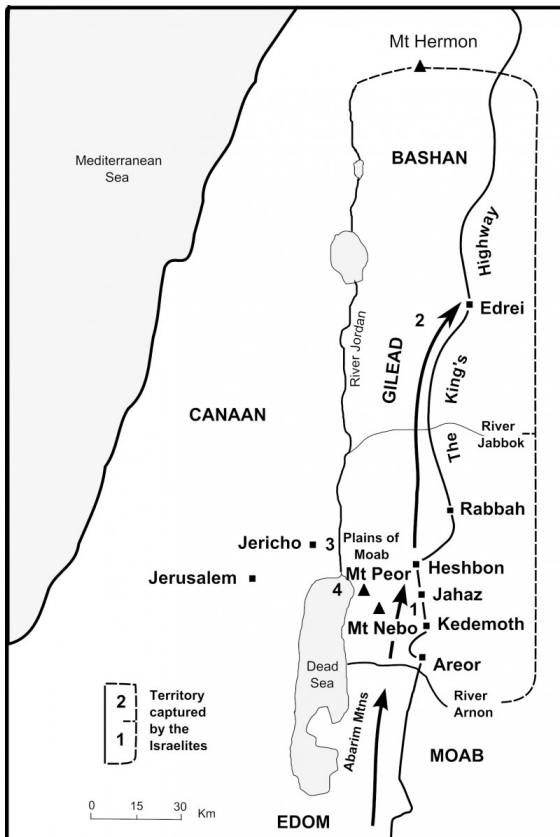
**Transjordan** is a term frequently used in commentaries to describe the land east of the Jordan River which was conquered by Israel under Moses.

**They took possession of his land and the land of Og king of Bashan, the two kings of the Amorites, who were across the Jordan to the east -** This land was given as a possession to the tribe of [Reuben](#), [Gad](#) and the half-tribe of [Manasseh](#).

**Deuteronomy 4:48 from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion (that is, Hermon),**

- **Aroer:** De 2:36 3:12 Jos 13:24-33
- **Sion:** De 3:9 Ps 133:3
- [Map of Journey from Kadesh-Barnea to Plains of Moab](#) - includes defeat of Og and Sihon, Mt Nebo, Pisgah
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** So Israel conquered the entire area from Aroer at the edge of the Arnon Gorge all the way to Mount Sion, also called Mount Hermon.



From Aroer to Hermon

## ISRAEL POSSESSED TRANSJORDAN FROM SOUTH TO NORTH

From Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, even as far as Mount Sion (that is [Hermon](#)) - From the southern most boundary to the northern most boundary.

[Transjordan](#) is a term frequently used in commentaries to describe the land east of the Jordan River which was conquered by Israel under Moses and then was given as a possession to the tribe of [Reuben](#), [Gad](#) and the half-tribe of [Manasseh](#).

[Aroer](#) - (uh roh' er) Place name meaning "juniper." 1. City on north rim of Arnon Gorge east of Dead Sea on southern boundary of territory Israel claimed east of the Jordan River (Joshua 13:9 ). It figured in territorial claims of Reuben (Joshua 13:16 ), though the tribe of Gad originally built it (Numbers 32:34 ). Compare Deuteronomy 3:12 . Sihon, king of the Amorites, ruled it prior to Israel's conquest (Deuteronomy 4:48 ; Joshua 12:2 ). Israel claimed a three hundred year history in the area (Judges 11:26 ). Jehu's sins brought God's punishment on Israel, including the loss of Aroer to Hazael of Damascus (about 840 B.C.) (2 Kings 10:33 ). Compare Isaiah 17:2 . Jeremiah asked Aroer to witness God's coming judgment on Moab (Jeremiah 48:19 ). The Moabites had gained control of Aroer under King Mesha, as his inscription on the Moabite Stone witnesses (about 850 B.C.). Spanish excavations show Aroer to have been more a border fortress than a major city. It is located at Khirbet Arair two and one-half miles east of the highway along the Arnon River. (Holman Bible Dictionary)

**Aroer** - 16x in 16v - Num. 32:34; Deut. 2:36; Deut. 3:12; Deut. 4:48; Jos. 12:2; Jos. 13:9; Jos. 13:16; Jos. 13:25; Jdg. 11:26; Jdg. 11:33; 1 Sam. 30:28; 2 Sam. 24:5; 2 Ki. 10:33; 1 Chr. 5:8; Isa. 17:2; Jer. 48:19

**Arnon** - (See map above)("swift, noisy".) The torrent; boundary between Moab and the Amorites on the N., and afterward between Moab and Reuben (Numbers 21:13-14; Numbers 21:24; Numbers 21:26; Deuteronomy 2:24; Deuteronomy 2:36). A branch of the Arnon (Seil es Saideh) flowing N.W. seemingly formed the eastern boundary of Moab (Judges 11:18; 2 Kings 10:33). Aroer was by its northern brink; the ruins still bear the name. Rising in the Arabian mountains (the branch Sell es Saideh in the mountains of

Gilead near Kalaat el Katrane), it flows through the wilderness and falls into the Dead Sea. Now the wady el Mojeb, flowing through a precipitous, rugged, gloomy ravine. The sides are of red and brown sandstone where it meets the Dead Sea; it is 10 feet; deep at that point. The Roman road between Rabba and Dhiban crosses it at two hours' distance from Rabba. (Fausset Bible Dictionary)

**Arnon** - 25x in 23v - Num. 21:13; Num. 21:14; Num. 21:24; Num. 21:26; Num. 21:28; Num. 22:36; Deut. 2:24; Deut. 2:36; Deut. 3:8; Deut. 3:12; Deut. 3:16; Deut. 4:48; Jos. 12:1; Jos. 12:2; Jos. 13:9; Jos. 13:16; Jdg. 11:13; Jdg. 11:18; Jdg. 11:22; Jdg. 11:26; 2 Ki. 10:33; Isa. 16:2; Jer. 48:20

**NET Note on Mount Sion** ([See map](#)) - Mount Siyon (the Hebrew name is **not to be confused with Zion** (tsiyon) and is another name for [Mount Hermon](#), also called Sirion and Senir (cf. Dt 3:9).

**Deuteronomy 4:49 with all the Arabah across the Jordan to the east, even as far as the sea of the Arabah, at the foot of the slopes of Pisgah.**

- De 3:17 34:1 Jos 13:20
- [Deuteronomy 4 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries

**NLT** And they conquered the eastern bank of the Jordan River as far south as the Dead Sea, below the slopes of Pisgah.)



**Land Given to [Reuben](#), [Gad](#), [Manasseh](#)**

**Arabah** ([See Map of Arabah](#)) ([Wikipedia](#)) (ar' uh bayh) Place name meaning, “dry, infertile area” and common Hebrew noun meaning desert with hot climate and sparse rainfall. The name given by the Hebrews to the whole of the great depression from the Sea of Galilee to the Gulf of Akabah. (For the part N. of the Dead Sea, see Jordan.) The name is now applied only to the southern part, extending from a line of white cliffs that cross the valley a few miles S. of the Dead Sea. The floor of the valley, about 10 miles broad at the N. end, gradually rises towards the S., and grows narrower, until, at a height of 2000 feet above the Dead Sea, nearly opposite Mt. Hor, the width is only about 1 / 2 mile. The average width thence to Akabah is about 5 miles. The surface is formed of loose gravel, stones, sand, with patches of mud. Up to the level of the Red Sea everything indicates that we are traversing an old sea-bottom. Apart from stunted desert shrub and an occasional acacia, the only greenery to be seen is around the springs on the edges of the valley, and in the wadys which carry the water from the adjoining mountains into the *Wād̄y el-Jaib* , down which it flows to the Dead Sea. The great limestone plateau, *et-Tāʾh* , the Wilderness of Paran, forms the western boundary, and the naked crags of Edom the eastern. Israel traversed the Arabah when they went to Kadesh-barnea, and again when they returned to the



south to avoid passing through the land of Edom ( Numbers 20:21 ; Numbers 21:4 , Deuteronomy 2:6 ).

**Arabah** - 28x in 24v - Deut. 1:1; Deut. 1:7; Deut. 2:8; Deut. 3:17; Deut. 4:49; Deut. 11:30; Jos. 3:16; Jos. 11:2; Jos. 11:16; Jos. 12:1; Jos. 12:3; Jos. 12:8; Jos. 18:18; 1 Sam. 23:24; 2 Sam. 2:29; 2 Sam. 4:7; 2 Ki. 14:25; 2 Ki. 25:4; Isa. 35:1; Isa. 35:6; Jer. 39:4; Jer. 52:7; Ezek. 47:8; Amos 6:14

**Sea of Arabah** - The Dead Sea

**Pisgah** ([See map](#)) - (pihss' guh) Place name perhaps meaning, "the divided one." Mountain in the Abarim range across the Jordan River from Jericho. Some Bible scholars believe it was part of Mount Nebo; others think it could have been a separate rise, either en-Neba or near modern Khirbet Tsijaga. God allowed Moses to view the Promised Land from the heights of Pisgah (Deuteronomy 34:1 ) but would not let him cross into Canaan. Israel had camped near Pisgah (Numbers 21:20 ). Balak took Balaam to its height so the prophet could see Israel and curse them (Numbers 23:14 ). It was a limit of Sihon's kingdom (Joshua 12:23 ); Ashdod-pisgah in KJV) and also for the tribe of Reuben (Joshua 13:20 )

**Pisgah** - 8 uses in Scripture Num. 21:20; Num. 23:14; Deut. 3:17; Deut. 3:27; Deut. 4:49; Deut. 34:1; Jos. 12:3; Jos. 13:20

## STUDY OF HEBREW WORDS FOR BAAL

Studies on Baal can be somewhat complicated because the same word **baal** can be either a verb ([01166](#)), a noun or a proper noun. Baal is also a component of many Hebrew names of places and persons.

1. [Baal](#) - as a verb
2. [Baal](#) - as a noun
3. [Baal](#) - as a proper name
4. [Baal](#) - used in combination of place names (see #7 below)
5. [Baal](#) - Baal-peor
6. [Baal](#) - Dictionary Description (most of this information is extra-Biblical)
7. See online 8 page detailed article on [Baal - in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible](#) - note that [on the following pages has all of the hyphenated names of Baal](#) (Baal Toponyms, Baal-Berith, Baal-Gad, Baal-Hamon, Baal-Hazor, Baal-Hermon, Baal-Judah, Ball-meon, Baal of Peor, Baal-Perazim, Baal-Shalisha, Baal-Shamen, Baal-Tamar, Ball-Zaphon, Baal Zebub). **Note** - NO CHARGE. But you must log in to borrow this book by creating a login account which asks for no information! Click picture of the person in right upper corner and set up your free login. Then you can read many excellent modern commentaries free of charge! After you have checked it out for an hour, in my experience you can usually check it out again which gives you sufficient time to read the section in which you are interested.

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**Baal** (verb)([01166](#))(**baal** בַּעַל) to marry, to rule over, to have dominion, to get a husband. In relation to marriage, it refers to marrying a woman (Dt. 24:1); or a woman to be married (Prov. 30:23). Figuratively, the verb **baal** refers at least 3 times to Jehovah's "marriage" to Israel (Isa 54:5, Jer. 3:14, Jer 31:32-note), and conversely to faithless Israel's pursuit of idolatry figuratively described as "**marriage** to the daughter of a foreign god" (Malachi 2:11-note). Baal is used to mean dominion over land ("ruled in Moab" 1 Chr. 4:22) and "other masters besides You have **ruled** us" (Isa. 26:13). Used as a participle, it means to be married to (Ge. 20:3). In 2 Kings 12:3 **baal** refers to "the **high** (baal) places."

**Waltke** says "The verb with its derivatives, not counting its usage in compounds or as proper names, occurs more than one hundred times. One may own (bā'al) a house (Ex 22:7), or rule over (bā'al) territory (cf. 1 Chr. 4:22). A man may take (lāqah) a wife and marry (bā'al) her (Deut. 24:1).

A focus on the verb bā'al from the theological standpoint leads to a consideration of marriage terminology employed by God in defining his relationship to His people (**Ed**: Israel). "For your Maker is your **husband** (ba'al), the Lord of hosts is his name" (Isaiah 54:5ff.). In Jeremiah the existing marriage relationship becomes a motivation for repentance: "For I am a **husband** unto you" (Jeremiah 3:14, ASV; RSV renders "I am your master"). In the justly famous new covenant passage the former covenant is described as a broken covenant, a situation which is the more sobering and shocking because "I was a husband (ba'al) to them, says Jehovah" (Jeremiah 31:32, ASV, RSV similar, cf. Malachi 2:11).

**Baal as a verb** ([01166](#)) - 18x in 16v - Usage: gets a husband(1), high(1), husband(3), married(4), married\*(2), marries(2), marry(1),



marrying\*(1), master(1), ruled(2).

Jeremiah 3:14 'Return, O faithless sons,' declares the LORD; 'For I am a **master** to you, And I will take you one from a city and two from a family, And I will bring you to Zion.'

**Amplified** - Return, O faithless children [of the whole twelve tribes], says the Lord, for I am **Lord and Master and Husband** to you, and I will take you [not as a nation, but individually]—one from a city and two from a tribal family—and I will bring you to Zion.<sup>(</sup>

**NET Note** - Or "I am your true husband." There is a wordplay between the term "true master" and the name of the pagan god Baal. The pronoun "I" is emphatic, creating a contrast between the LORD as Israel's true master/husband versus Baal as Israel's illegitimate lover/master. See Jer 2:23–25.

Genesis 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is **married** (literally "and she is owned by an owner")."

Deuteronomy 21:13 "She shall also remove the clothes of her captivity and shall remain in your house, and mourn her father and mother a full month; and after that you may go in to her and be her **husband** (literally "a woman married to a husband.") and she shall be your wife.

Deuteronomy 22:22 "If a man is found lying with a **married** ("a woman married to a husband") woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.

Deuteronomy 24:1 "When a man takes a wife and **marries** her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house,

Ruth 1:13-[note](#) would you therefore wait until they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from **marrying**? No, my daughters; for it is harder for me than for you, for the hand of the LORD has gone forth against me."

2 Kings 12:3 Only the **high** (baal) places ([bamah](#)) were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places ([bamah](#)).

**MacArthur** - As with most kings of Judah, Joash failed to remove these places of worship where, contrary to the Mosaic law, the people sacrificed and burned incense to the Lord (cf. Dt 12:2–7, 13, 14). The open-air, hilltop worship centers which the Israelites **inherited from the Canaanites** had been rededicated to the Lord; the **use of pagan altars had been forbidden** (Nu 33:52; Dt 7:5; 12:3). After the building of the Temple, worship at the high places was condemned (1 Ki 11:7, 8; 12:31; 2Ki 16:17–20; 21:3; 23:26). ([MacArthur Study Bible](#))

1 Chronicles 4:22 and Jokim, the men of Cozeba, Joash, Saraph, who **ruled** in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem. And the records are ancient.

Proverbs 30:23 Under an unloved woman when she **gets a husband**, And a maidservant when she supplants her mistress.

Isaiah 26:13 O LORD our God, other masters besides You have **ruled** us; But through You alone we confess Your name.

Isaiah 54:1 "Shout for joy, O barren one (referring to Israel in exile), you who have borne no child; Break forth into joyful shouting and cry aloud, you who have not travailed; For the sons of the desolate one will be more numerous Than the sons of the **married** woman," says the LORD (speaks of Lord's promise to do good to Israel in the future).

Isaiah 54:5 "For your **husband** is your Maker, Whose name is the LORD of hosts; And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, Who is called the God of all the earth.

**MacArthur** -The basis for forgetting past failures is Israel's relationship to the Lord as her husband (Isa 62:4, 5) and Redeemer (Isa 41:14). (([MacArthur Study Bible](#)))

Isaiah 62:4 It will no longer be said to you, "Forsaken," Nor to your land will it any longer be said, "Desolate"; But you will be called, "My delight is in her," And your land, "**Married**" (KJV = Beulah); For the LORD delights in you, And to Him your land will be **married**.

**NET Note:** Hebrew (beulah), traditionally transliterated "**Beulah**" (so KJV, ASV, NIV).

**Waltke** - The name of the land, Beulah (passive participle of bā'al), signifies both the intimacy and the joy of YHWH in conjunction with the land ('ereš,

**Comment** - From Beulah thus comes the phrase "Beulah Land"...it spoke of God's promise to Israel of a FUTURE LAND and A FUTURE HOPE. NT believers can use the term by way of application because they have been engrafted as wild olive branches into the rich root of the olive tree of the Abrahamic covenant. But Christians must be ever mindful of from whence they have come as Paul writes in Ep 2:11-13-[note](#) (...separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off...) lest they become ARROGANT. Lord keep us humble and ever mindful of the SOURCE of all blessing and our inability to ever merit Your grace and mercy. Amen.

Isaiah 62:5 For as a young man **marries** a virgin ("O Jerusalem"), So your sons **will marry** you; And as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you.

**NET Note:** In the context (Isa 62:4b, see also Isa 54:5–7) the Lord is the one who "marries" Zion.

Jeremiah 3:14 'Return, O faithless sons,' declares the LORD; 'For I am a master to you, And I will take you one from a city and two from a family, And I will bring you to Zion.'

**NET Note:** "I am your true husband." There is a wordplay between the term "true master" and the name of the pagan god Baal. The pronoun "I" is emphatic, creating a contrast between the LORD as Israel's true master/husband versus Baal as Israel's illegitimate lover/master. See Jer 2:23–25.

Jeremiah 31:32-note not like the (old) covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a **husband** to them," declares the LORD.

Malachi 2:11-note "Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem; for Judah has profaned the sanctuary of the LORD which He loves and has **married** the daughter of a foreign god.

**NET Note** - "has married the daughter of a foreign god." Marriage is used here as a metaphor to describe Judah's idolatry, that is, her unfaithfulness to the LORD and "remarriage" to pagan gods. But spiritual intermarriage found expression in literal, physical marriage as well, as Mal 2:14–16-note indicate.

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**Baal** (noun) ([01167](#))(ba'al) means lord, owner (Ex 21:22, 28, 29, 34, 36, et al), possessor, husband (Pr 12:4), master, leader (as of a city - Jdg 9:2, 51). This Hebrew word is often combined with another Hebrew word but the English translation only gives one word, so it can be confusing. E.g., in Pr 24:8 the word "schemer" is actually two Hebrew words - **possessor** (baal) of schemes. For this reason there are many notes on the 71 uses below.

**Baker** - A masculine singular noun meaning lord, husband, owner, possessor, the title of a Canaanite deity (Baal). It can also denote rulers and leaders (Isa. 16:8). Commonly, it refers to legally owning something such as an ox or bull (Ex. 21:28); house (Ex. 22:8[7]; or land (Job 31:38). The word can also describe possessing a quality, attribute, or characteristic like anger (Prov. 22:24); wrath (Prov. 29:22); hair (2 Kgs. 1:8); appetite (Prov. 23:2); wisdom (Eccl. 7:12). When Joseph is called a dreamer, he is literally a possessor of dreams (Gen. 37:19). Further, the word can connote husband as used of Abraham (Gen. 20:3) and elsewhere (Ex. 21:3; Deut. 22:22). (The Complete Word Study Dictionary:OT)

The phrase "riches being hoarded by their **owner (baal)** to his hurt" (Eccl 5:13) is interesting as it depicts this man as "lord" or "master" over his riches, but in the end the riches become (in a sense) the lord of the "owner" (cp 1 Ti 6:9, Mt 6:24).

**Baal** (noun) - Usage in NAS: allies\*(1), archers\*(1), bird\*(1), bound(1), bridegroom(1), captain(1), case\*(1), charmer\*(1), citizens(1), creditor\*(1), dominant(1), dreamer\*(1), due(1), husband(8), husbands(2), leaders(6), lords(1), man(3), married\*(2), master's(1), masters(1), men(14), owner(15), owners(2), possessors(2), relative by marriage(1), schemer\*(1), who has(1), who practice(1), wrathful\*(1).

**Baal** (noun) - 75x in 71 verses -

Genesis 14:13 Then a fugitive came and told Abram the Hebrew. Now he was living by the oaks of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and brother of Aner, and these were **allies** with Abram.

**Comment** - Allies is actually two words - "possessors (baal) of a treaty with (beriyth = covenant)."

Genesis 20:3 But God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night, and said to him, "Behold, you are a dead

man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is married."

**NET Note** - "and she is owned by an owner." Baal (noun - 01167) and Baal (verb - 01166)

Genesis 37:19 They said to one another, "Here comes this dreamer!

**NET** is more literal - "**master** (baal) of dreams!"

Genesis 49:23 "The archers bitterly attacked him, And shot at him and harassed him;

**Comment** - Archers is two Hebrew words - Baal (master, owner) + chets (arrows)

Exodus 21:3 "If he comes alone, he shall go out alone; if he is the **husband** of a wife, then his wife shall go out with him.

**NET Note** - The phrase says, "if he was the possessor of a wife"; the noun לְ;B; (ba'al) can mean "possessor" or "husband." If there was a wife, she shared his fortunes or his servitude; if he entered with her, she would accompany him when he left.

Exodus 21:22 "If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's **husband** may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges decide.

Exodus 21:28 "If an ox gores a man or a woman to death, the ox shall surely be stoned and its flesh shall not be eaten; but the **owner** of the ox shall go unpunished.

Exodus 21:29 "If, however, an ox was previously in the habit of goring and its owner has been warned, yet he does not confine it and it kills a man or a woman, the ox shall be stoned and its **owner** also shall be put to death.

Exodus 21:34 the **owner** of the pit shall make restitution; he shall give money to its owner, and the dead animal shall become his

Exodus 21:36 "Or if it is known that the ox was previously in the habit of goring, yet its **owner** has not confined it, he shall surely pay ox for ox, and the dead animal shall become his.

Exodus 22:8 "If the thief is not caught, then the **owner** of the house shall appear before the judges, to determine whether he laid his hands on his neighbor's property.

Exodus 22:11 an oath before the LORD shall be made by the two of them that he has not laid hands on his neighbor's property; and its **owner** shall accept it, and he shall not make restitution.

Exodus 22:12 "But if it is actually stolen from him, he shall make restitution to its **owner**.

Exodus 22:14 "If a man borrows anything from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its **owner** is not with it, he shall make full restitution.

Exodus 22:15 "If its **owner** is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire.

Leviticus 21:4 'He shall not defile himself as a **relative by marriage** among his people, and so profane himself.

**NET Note** - Heb "He shall not defile himself a husband in his peoples, to profane himself." The meaning of the line is disputed, but it appears to prohibit a priest from burying any relative by marriage (as opposed to the blood relatives of vv. 2–3), including his wife (compare B. A. Levine, Leviticus [JPSTC], 142–43 with J. E. Hartley, Leviticus [WBC], 343, 348).

Numbers 21:28 "For a fire went forth from Heshbon, A flame from the town of Sihon; It devoured Ar of Moab, The **dominant (baal)** heights ( of the Arnon.

**Comment** - Dominant heights is " baale bamoath" = lords of (the) high places; **Young's Literal** = "Owners of the high places"

Deuteronomy 15:2 "This is the manner of remission: every **creditor** shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because the LORD'S remission has been proclaimed.

**Comment: Creditor** = possessor (baal) + loan (mashsheh)

Deuteronomy 22:22 "If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who

lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel.

**Comment:** Married woman = "woman married (01166) to a husband (01167)."

Deuteronomy 24:4 then her former **husband** who sent her away is not allowed to take her again to be his wife, since she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the LORD, and you shall not bring sin on the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance.

Joshua 24:11 'You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the **citizens** of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Gergashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand.

Judges 9:2 "Speak, now, in the hearing of all the **leaders** of Shechem, 'Which is better for you, that seventy men, all the sons of Jerubbaal, rule over you, or that one man rule over you?' Also, remember that I am your bone and your flesh."

Judges 9:3 And his mother's relatives spoke all these words on his behalf in the hearing of all the **leaders** of Shechem; and they were inclined to follow Abimelech, for they said, "He is our relative."

Judges 9:6 All the **men** (leaders) of Shechem and all Beth-millo assembled together, and they went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar which was in Shechem.

Judges 9:7 Now when they told Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted his voice and called out. Thus he said to them, "Listen to me, O **men** (leaders) of Shechem, that God may listen to you.

Judges 9:18 but you have risen against my father's house today and have killed his sons, seventy men, on one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his maidservant, king over the **men** (leaders) Shechem, because he is your relative--

Judges 9:20 "But if not, let fire come out from Abimelech and consume the **men** (leaders) Shechem and Beth-millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem and from Beth-millo, and consume Abimelech."

Judges 9:23 Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the **men** (leaders) Shechem; and the **men** (leaders) Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech,

Judges 9:24 so that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood might be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the **men** (leaders) Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers.

Judges 9:25 The **men** (leaders) Shechem set men in ambush against him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who might pass by them along the road; and it was told to Abimelech.

Judges 9:26 Now Gaal the son of Ebed came with his relatives, and crossed over into Shechem; and the **men** (leaders) Shechem put their trust in him.

Judges 9:39 So Gaal went out before the **leaders** of Shechem and fought with Abimelech.

Judges 9:46 When all the **leaders** of the tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered the inner chamber of the temple of El-berith.

Judges 9:47 It was told Abimelech that all the **leaders** of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.

Judges 9:51 But there was a strong tower in the center of the city, and all the men and women with all the **leaders** of the city fled there and shut themselves in; and they went up on the roof of the tower.

Judges 19:22 While they were celebrating, behold, the men of the city, certain worthless fellows, surrounded the house, pounding the door; and they spoke to the **owner** of the house, the old man, saying, "Bring out the man who came into your house that we may have relations with him."

Judges 19:23 Then the man, the **owner** of the house, went out to them and said to them, "No, my fellows, please do not act so wickedly; since this man has come into my house, do not commit this act of folly.

Judges 20:5 "But the **men** (**Baal** - citizens, leaders) of Gibeah rose up against me and surrounded the house at night because of me. They intended to kill me; instead, they ravished my concubine so that she died.

1 Samuel 23:11 "Will the **men** (**Baal** - citizens, leaders) of Keilah surrender me into his hand? Will Saul come down just as Your servant has heard? O LORD God of Israel, I pray, tell Your servant." And the LORD said, "He will come down."

1 Samuel 23:12 Then David said, "Will the **men (Baal** - citizens, leaders) of Keilah surrender me and my men into the hand of Saul?" And the LORD said, "They will surrender you."

2 Samuel 11:26 Now when the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her **husband**. (for her lord)

2 Samuel 21:12 then David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the **men (baal** - leaders, lords) of Jabesh-gilead, who had stolen them from the open square of Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them on the day the Philistines struck down Saul in Gilboa.

Nehemiah 6:18 For many in Judah were **bound** by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

**Comment** - Bound by oath = "were lords of oath"

Esther 1:17 "For the queen's conduct will become known to all the women causing them to look with contempt on their **husbands** by saying, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought in to his presence, but she did not come.'

Esther 1:20 "When the king's edict which he will make is heard throughout all his kingdom, great as it is, then all women will give honor to their **husbands**, great and small."

Job 31:39 If I have eaten its fruit without money, Or have caused its **owners** to lose their lives,

**HCSB Note** = Lit or caused the breath of its tenants to breathe out

Proverbs 1:17 Indeed, it is useless to spread the baited net In the sight of any **bird**;

**Comment** - "bird" is two words and is literally "all of the possessors of wings."

Proverbs 1:19 So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; It takes away the life of its **possessors**.

Proverbs 3:27 Do not withhold good from **those** (baal - owners) to whom it is due, When it is in your power to do it.

Proverbs 12:4 An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, But she who shames him is like rottenness in his bones.

Proverbs 16:22 Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it, But the discipline of fools is folly.

**Comment** - "to one who has" (possesses),

Proverbs 17:8 A bribe is a charm in the sight of its **owner**; Wherever he turns, he prospers.

Proverbs 22:24 Do not associate with a **man (baal)** given to anger; Or go with a hot-tempered man,

**Comment** - "a man given to anger" is literally "possessor of anger."

Proverbs 23:2 And put a knife to your throat If you are a **man (baal)** of great appetite.

**Comment** - "man" = literally "possessor of"

Proverbs 24:8 One who plans to do evil, Men will call a schemer.

**Comment** - "schemer" is actually two words - possessor (baal) of schemes (mezimmah),

**NET Note** - Heb "possessor of schemes"; NAB "an intriguer." The picture of the wicked person is graphic: He devises plans to do evil and is known as a schemer. Elsewhere the "schemes" are outrageous and lewd (e.g., Lev 18:7; Judg 20:6). Here the description portrays him as a cold, calculating, active person: "the fool is capable of intense mental activity but it adds up to sin" (W. McKane, Proverbs [OTL], 399).

Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirs up strife, And a hot-tempered **man** abounds in transgression.

**Comment** - hot-tempered man is two words = possessor (baal) of wrath, rage (chemah)

**NET Note** - Heb "possessor of wrath." Here "wrath" is an attributive (cf. ASV "a wrathful man"; KJV "a furious man").

Proverbs 31:11 The heart of her **husband** trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain.

Proverbs 31:23 Her **husband** is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land.

Proverbs 31:28 Her children rise up and bless her; Her **husband** also, and he praises her, saying:

Ecclesiastes 5:11 When good things increase, those who consume them increase. So what is the advantage to their **owners** except to look on?

**NET Note** on owners (baal) - The form is plural in the Hebrew text, but the plural is one of intensification; it is used here to emphasize the owner's authority over his wealth

Ecclesiastes 5:13 There is a grievous evil which I have seen under the sun: riches being hoarded by their **owner** to his hurt.

Ecclesiastes 7:12 For wisdom is protection just as money is protection, But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its **possessors**.

Ecclesiastes 8:8 No man has authority to restrain the wind with the wind, or authority over the day of death; and there is no discharge in the time of war, and evil will not deliver those who **practice** it.

**NET Note** - "so wickedness cannot rescue the wicked." where "wicked" in Hebrew is "its owners" (or possessors).

Ecclesiastes 10:11 If the serpent bites before being charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.

**Comment** - charmer (NLT and NET have "snake charmer") is two words - master (baal) of the tongue (lashon)

Ecclesiastes 12:11 The words of wise men are like goads, and **masters** of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd.

Isaiah 1:3 "An ox knows its **owner**, And a donkey its master's manger, But Israel does not know, My people do not understand."

Isaiah 16:8 For the fields of Heshbon have withered, the vines of Sibmah as well; The **lords** of the nations have trampled down its choice clusters Which reached as far as Jazer and wandered to the deserts; Its tendrils spread themselves out and passed over the sea.

Isaiah 50:8 He who vindicates Me is near; Who will contend with Me? Let us stand up to each other; Who has a **case** against Me? Let him draw near to Me.

**Comment** - "who has a case against me" is two words - "lord" (baal) of my judgment (misphat)"

Jeremiah 37:13 While he was at the Gate of Benjamin, a **captain** of the guard whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah the son of Hananiah was there; and he arrested Jeremiah the prophet, saying, "You are going over to the Chaldeans!"

Joel 1:8 Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth For the **bridegroom** of her youth.

Nahum 1:2 A jealous and avenging God is the LORD; The LORD is avenging and **wrathful**. (baal) The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies.

**Comment** - wrathful = "possessor of wrath ()"

#### **Gilbrant** on **baal** as a masculine noun

It is used of the master or **owner** of a house (Judg. 19:22), **owner** of an animal (Isa. 1:3; Exo. 21:28), **owner** of a field (Job 31:39), **owner** of money (Deut. 15:2), other nations, i.e., conquerors (Isa. 16:8, used of the Assyrians).

Other major meanings are "**husband**" (Exo. 21:22, 23; 2 Sam. 11:26; Joel 1:8) and "**lords of a city**," i.e., inhabitants (citizens) of a city (Josh. 24:11; "**leaders**" - Jdg. 9:2; 2 Sam. 21:12; 2:4,5), i.e., not just rulers, but all the citizens (i.e., landowners) of the city. The terms "**possessor**" or "**lord**" of something also employ this term. Rare usages include possessor of horns (a ram) in Da 8:6, 20; of wings (a bird), Ecc. 10:20; of hair (hairy man), 2 Ki. 1:8; of dreams (a dreamer, Joseph), Gen. 37:19; one who has legal causes (Ex. 24:14); masters of covenant or oath (Gen. 14:13; Neh. 6:18); and master of the tongue, a charmer (Ecc. 10:11). "Prudence is a fountain of life to its owner," Prov. 16:22; 1:19; 17:8. A wicked person (Ecc. 8:8), and a needy person (Prov. 3:27), are interesting usages in the wisdom literature. (Complete Biblical Library Hebrew-English Dictionary)

#### **Bruce Waltke** on **ba'al** as a masculine noun

Ugaritic also has the double use of master and the name of a deity. The root in most semitic languages means



either "lord" or, when followed by a genitive, "owner."

In addition to ba'al as **owner** of things, the noun in the plural is used for **citizens** (ba'alim) of a city (Joshua 24:11). In Judges 9 where the noun occurs sixteen times, ASV consistently translates "men," but RSV in addition to "men" employs "citizens" (Judges 9:2) and "people" (Judges 9:46). ba'al can refer to **partner or ally** (Genesis 14:13). Idiomatically ba'al as **master of something** characterizes the person (e.g. **ba'al of wrath**, Proverbs 22:24; **of appetite**, Proverbs 23:2; **of dreams**, Genesis 37:19) or identifies occupation (e.g. officer, **ba'al of the guard**, Jeremiah 37:13). (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament.)

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**Baal** (as a proper noun) (01168) (**ba'al**) refers to the pagan god who was called by the name "**Baal**". Elijah contended with and exterminated the prophets of **Baal** (1 Ki 18:18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26, 40). One of the more incredible mentions of Baal is Jehu's eradication of them from the northern kingdom (see 2 Ki 10:18-28). Before God would use Gideon to deliver His people from the Moabites, He first had him tear down his father's backyard altar to **Baal** (Jdg 6:25, 28, 30-31-note). As a result Gideon was named Jerrubball ("Let **Baal** contend against him" - Jdg 6:32-note). Under Gideon Israel was set free from Moabite oppression, but apparently they people were not set free from the "seed" of Baal worship in their hearts for "Then it came about, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the sons of Israel again played the harlot (SPIRITUAL ADULTERY!) with the **Baals**, and made **Baal**-berith their god" (Jdg 8:33-note)! Wow! Our hearts are more deceitful than all else and are desperately sick (Jer 17:9)! In 1 Sa 7:4 we see that "Israel removed the **Baals** and the Ashteroth and served the LORD alone" but they must have backslide because we see their cry in 1 Sam 12:10! Beware of idols.

Idols need to be radically uprooted lest they revive and return!

Judges 2:11-13-note is a representative passage of the horrible choice of Israel...

Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the **Baals**, and they forsook the LORD (FORSOOK INDICATES THEY LEFT THE LIVING GOD IN A LURCH TO GO AFTER LIFELESS IDOLS! THEY HAD A "SPIRITUAL VACUUM" -- IF WE WILL NOT WORSHIP "THE" GOD, WE FOR SURE WILL WORSHIP "A" GOD!), the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them (WHAT WE BOW TO WE WILL END UP SERVING AS OUR MASTER -- MONEY, SEX, ETC); thus they provoked the LORD to anger. So they forsook the LORD and served **Baal** (REMEMBER "BAAL" MEANS LORD, MASTER, OWNER - SO THESE ISRAELITES WERE IN BONDAGE TO A LIFELESS IDOL!) and the Ashteroth.

2 Kings 17:6 records the exile of the Northern Kingdom of Assyria "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria" and 2 Kings 17:16 explains (in part - read the litany of charges in 2 Ki 17:6-15) why God allowed them to be taken into exile - "They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served **Baal**." The Southern Kingdom (and their kings) did not understand God's anger against the Northern Kingdom's idolatry and for 2 Kings 21:3 records that Manasseh "rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for **Baal** and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them." Later King Josiah burned the vessels used to worship **Baal** (2 Ki 23:4, 5, 2 Chr 34:4). Jeremiah 2:8 records that in Judah before the Babylonian exile "the prophets prophesied by **Baal**", they went "after the **Baals**" (Jer 2:23), offered "sacrifices to **Baal**" (Jer 7:9), "walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the **Baals**, as their fathers taught them (NOW THIS IS REAL "GENERATIONAL" SIN!)," (Jer 9:14), they even "built the high places of Baal to burn their sons in the fire as burnt offerings to **Baal**" (Jer 19:5), the prophets "prophesied by **Baal** and led My people Israel astray," (Jer 23:13), "their fathers forgot My name because of **Baal**" (Jer 23:27), ""They built the high places of **Baal** that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech" (Jer 32:35). Hosea 11:2 records a horrible thing - "The more they called them, The more they went from them; They kept sacrificing to the Baals And burning incense to idols."

**Baker** on Baal as a proper noun (01168) - A. A masculine proper noun naming the Canaanite god Baal; lord. Used with the definite article, it means the god Baal served by the Canaanites and Philistines, but Israel was caught up in worshiping this pagan god, too (Judg. 2:11, 13; 6:25; 28, 30; 1 Kgs. 18:18, 19, 21; 19:18; 2 Kgs. 3:2; 10:18-23; Hos. 2:8[10]). The word occurs in the plural, indicating the many manifestations of pagan polytheism (Judg. 2:11; 1 Sam. 7:4; 12:10; 1 Kgs. 18:18; Jer. 2:23; Hos. 11:2). It is used without the definite article as a name indicating, e.g., high places of Baal (Num. 22:41; NIV renders as Bamoth Baal). In construct with a following word, ba'al be'iyt, it means lord of the covenant (Judg. 8:33; 9:4).

B. A proper noun naming a city, Baal. It denoted a border city of the tribe of Simeon (NIV renders as Baalath with a note; 1 Chr. 4:33).

C. A masculine proper name, Baal. The name describes the immediate son of Reaiah but a descendant of Reuben, the firstborn of Jacob (1 Chr. 5:5).

D. A masculine proper name found as a descendant of Benjamin (1 Chr. 8:30) from the line that produced King Saul (1 Chr. 9:36). (Ibid)

**Baal** (proper noun) - Num. 22:41; Nu 25:3 Jdg. 2:11; Jdg. 2:13; Jdg. 3:7; Jdg. 6:25; Jdg. 6:28; Jdg. 6:30; Jdg. 6:31; Jdg. 6:32; Jdg. 8:33; Jdg. 10:6; Jdg. 10:10; 1 Sam. 7:4; 1 Sam. 12:10; 1 Ki. 16:31; 1 Ki. 16:32; 1 Ki. 18:18; 1 Ki. 18:19; 1 Ki. 18:21; 1 Ki. 18:22; 1 Ki. 18:25; 1 Ki. 18:26; 1 Ki. 18:40; 1 Ki. 19:18; 1 Ki. 22:53; 2 Ki. 3:2; 2 Ki. 10:18; 2 Ki. 10:19; 2 Ki. 10:20; 2 Ki. 10:21; 2 Ki. 10:22; 2 Ki. 10:23; 2 Ki. 10:25; 2 Ki. 10:26; 2 Ki. 10:27; 2 Ki. 10:28; 2 Ki. 11:18; 2 Ki. 17:16; 2 Ki. 21:3; 2 Ki. 23:4; 2 Ki. 23:5; 2 Chr. 17:3; 2 Chr. 23:17; 2 Chr. 24:7; 2 Chr. 28:2; 2 Chr. 33:3; 2 Chr. 34:4; Jer. 2:8; Jer. 2:23; Jer. 7:9; Jer. 9:14; Jer. 11:13; Jer. 11:17; Jer. 12:16; Jer. 19:5; Jer. 23:13; Jer. 23:27; Jer. 32:29; Jer. 32:35; Hos. 2:8; Hos. 2:13; Hos. 2:17; Hos. 11:2; Hos. 13:1; Zeph. 1:4

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## BAAL AS A COMPONENT OF OTHER HEBREW NAMES -

**Baal** was incorporated as parts of the names individuals and places. Notice especially in Joshua (as they were conquering the land) the propensity of the wicked, depraved Canaanites to name their cities after their god Baal! Gideon was named **Jerrubbaal** (Jdg 6:32, 7:1, 8:29, et al), Jezebel the daughter of **Ethbaal** king of the Sidonians (1 Ki 16:31) **Baal**-berith or "Baal of covenant" (Jdg 8:33-note), **Baal**-peor (Nu 25:3, Dt 4:3, et al), Bamoth-**baal** (Josh 13:17), **Baal**-meon (abode) (Nu 32:38), Baal-zephon (Nu 33:7), **Baal**-gad (Josh 11:17, 12:7, 13:5), Bamoth-**baal** and Beth-**baal**-meon (Josh 13:17), **Baal**ah (Josh 15:9, 10, 11, 29), Kiriath-**baal** (Josh 15:60, 18:14), **Baal**ath-beer (Josh 19:8), **Baal**ath (Josh 19:44), Mount **Baal**-hermon (Jdg 3:3, 1 Chr 5:23), **Baal**-tamar (Jdg 20:33) (As an aside I think it is very telling that even after conquering much of the Promised Land, Israel failed to change the idolatrous names of some of the cities -- beware if you fail to kill sin in your life, for to do so is to make provision for the lusts of your flesh and it just a matter of time before you are snared again! - cp Ro 13:14-note), **Baal**-perazim (2 Sa 5:20, 1 Chr 14:11), **Baal**e-judah (2 Sa 6:2), **Baal**-hazor (2 Sa 13:23), **Baal**-zebub (2 Ki 1:2 - Baal-Zebub meant "lord of flies," a derisive pun on the god's real name "Baal-Zebul," which meant "Baal the prince," or "lord of life." See use of this name by Jews accusing Jesus of casting out demons by this so-called god Luke 11:15), **Baal**-shalishah (2 Ki 4:42), **Baal**-hanan (1 Chr 1:49), **Baal**-meon (1 Chr 5:8, Ezek 25:9), **Eshbaal** (1 Chr 8:33), Merib-**baal** (1 Chr 8:34), **Baal**-hanan (1 Chr 27:28), Gur-**baal** (2 Chr 26:7), **Baal**-hamon (Song 8:11), Baalis (Jer 40:14), see also Ge 36:38-39, Ex 14:2, 9.

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**Baal-peor** ([01187](#)) is a masculine noun that refers to a proper name = Numbers 25:3,5; Deuteronomy 4:3 (twice); Ps 106:28; Hosea 9:10, Baal of Peor refers to Baal worshiped at Peor.

## Baal - Dictionary Description

- [Gotquestions.org - Who is Baal?](#)
- American Tract Society • [Baal](#)
- Bridgeway Bible Dictionary • [Baal](#)
- Baker Evangelical Dictionary • [Baal](#)
- CARM Theological Dictionary • [Baal](#)
- Easton's Bible Dictionary • [Baal](#)
- Fausset Bible Dictionary [Baal \(1\)](#) [Baal \(2\)](#)
- Holman Bible Dictionary • [Baal](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible • [Baal \(1\)](#) • [Baal](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT • [Baal](#)
- Watson's Theological Dictionary • [Baal](#)

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From the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia ([Reference](#))

### I. Name and Character of Baal

In Babylonia it was the title specially applied to Merodach of Babylon, which in time came to be used in place of his actual name. As the word in Hebrew also means "possessor," it has been supposed to have originally signified, when used in a religious sense, the god of a particular piece of land or soil. Of this, however, there is no proof, and the sense of "possessor" is derived from that of "lord." The Babylonian Bel-Merodach was a Sun-

god, and so too was the Can Baal whose full title was Baal-Shemaim, "lord of heaven." The Phoenician writer Sanchuniathon (Philo Byblius , Fragmenta II) accordingly says that the children of the first generation of mankind "in time of drought stretched forth their hands to heaven toward the sun; for they regarded him as the sole Lord of heaven, and called him Beel -samēn , which means 'Lord of Heaven' in the Phoenician language and is equivalent to Zeus in Greek" Baal-Shemaim had a temple at Umm el-Awamid between Acre and Tyre, and his name is found in inscriptions from the Phoenician colonies of Sardinia and Carthage.

## II. Attributes of Baal

As the Sun-god, Baal was worshiped under two aspects, beneficent and destructive. On the one hand he gave light and warmth to his worshipers; on the other hand the fierce heats of summer destroyed the vegetation he had himself brought into being. Hence, human victims were sacrificed to him in order to appease his anger in time of plague or other trouble, the victim being usually the first-born of the sacrificer and being burnt alive. In the Old Testament this is euphemistically termed "passing" the victim "through the fire" (2 Kings 16:3 ; 2 Kings 21:6 ). The forms under which Baal was worshipped were necessarily as numerous as the communities which worshiped him. Each locality had its own Baal or divine "Lord" who frequently took his name from the city or place to which he belonged. Hence, there was a Baal-Zur, "Baal of Tyre"; Baal-hermon, "Baal of Hermon" (Judges 3:3 ); Baal-Lebanon, "Baal of Lebanon"; Baal-Tarz, "Baal of Tarsus." At other times the title was attached to the name of an individual god; Thus we have Bel-Merodach, "the Lord Merodach" (or "Bel is Merodach") at Babylon, Baal-Melkarth at Tyre, Baal-gad (Joshua 11:17 ) in the north of Palestine. Occasionally the second element was noun as in Baal-Shemaim, "lord of heaven," Baalzebub (2 Kings 1:2 ), "Lord of flies," Baal -Hammān , usually interpreted "Lord of heat," but more probably "Lord of the sunpillar," the tutelary deity of Carthage. All these various forms of the Sun-god were collectively known as the Baalim or "Baals" who took their place by the side of the female Ashtaroth and Ashtrim. At Carthage the female consort of Baal was termed Penē -Baal , "the face" or "reflection of Baal."

## III. Baal-Worship

In the earlier days of Hebrew history the title Baal, or "Lord," was applied to the national God of Israel, a usage which was revived in later times, and is familiar to us in the King James Version. Hence both Jonathan and David had sons called Merib-baal (1 Chronicles 8:31 ; 1 Chronicles 9:40 ) and Beeliada (1 Chronicles 14:7 ). After the time of Ahab, however, the name became associated with the worship and rites of the Phoenician deity introduced into Samaria by Jezebel, and its idolatrous associations accordingly caused it to fall into disrepute. Hosea (Hosea 2:16 ) declares that henceforth the God of Israel should no longer be called Baali, "my Baal," and personal names like Esh-baal (1 Chronicles 8:33 ; 1 Chronicles 9:39 ), and Beelinda into which it entered were changed in form, Baal being turned into bōsheth which in Heb at any rate conveyed the sense of "shame."

## IV. Temples, Etc

Temples of Baal at Samaria and Jerusalem are mentioned in 1 Kings 1:18 ; where they had been erected at the time when the Ahab dynasty endeavored to fuse Israelites and Jews and Phoenicians into a single people under the same national Phoenician god. Altars on which incense was burned to Baal were set up in all the streets of Jerusalem according to Jeremiah (Jeremiah 11:13 ), apparently on the flat roofs of the houses (Jeremiah 32:29 ); and the temple of Baal contained an image of the god in the shape of a pillar or Bethel (2 Kings 10:26 , 2 Kings 10:27 ). In the reign of Ahab, Baal was served in Israel by 450 priests (1 Kings 18:19 ), as well as by prophets (2 Kings 10:19 ), and his worshippers wore special vestments when his ritual was performed (2 Kings 10:22 ). The ordinary offering made to the god consisted of incense (Jeremiah 7:9 ) and burnt sacrifices; on extraordinary occasions the victim was human (Jeremiah 19:5 ). At times the priests worked themselves into a state of ecstasy, and dancing round the altar slashed themselves with knives (1 Kings 18:26 , 1 Kings 18:28 ), like certain dervish orders in modern Islam.

## V. Use of the Name

In accordance with its signification the name of Baal is generally used with the definite art.; in the Septuagint this often takes the feminine form, αἰσχύνῃ , aischúnē "shame" being intended to be read. We find the same usage in Romans 11:4 . The feminine counterpart of Baal was Baalah or Baalath which is found in a good many of the local names.

*Baal* . Baal the most significant male deity of the Canaanites and his consort Asherah were the most alluring deities confronting Israel in the promised land following the conquest. The numerous references to Baal in the Old Testament indicate his attractiveness and influence on the Israelites. The Book of Judges chronicles the numerous times the people fell to the temptation to worship Baal. During the time of Ahab and Jezebel Baal was declared the official national deity. A temple and hundreds of officiants were established for Baal's worship in Samaria (1 Kings 16:29-34 ). A final chapter concerning Baal worship was written during the reigns of Jehu and Josiah, when the southern kingdom and its capital were purged of the worship of Baal (2 Kings 10 ; 23:1-30 ).

Baal's name derives from the Semitic word *ba'lu*, meaning "lord." He was assumed to fulfill several significant roles by the peoples who worshiped him. As god of the storm the roar of his voice in the heavens was the thunder of the sky. He was the god who both created and granted fertility. He was the deity slain by enemies who thus fell into the hands of Death. During the time that Baal was under the control of Death, the vegetation wilted or ceased and procreation stopped. He was the god of justice, feared by evildoers.

The Book of Kings recounts that Jezebel used the plan of the Baal temple in Sidon for the construction of a similar temple in Samaria. Ahab agreed with her to make Baal worship the royal religion of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 16:29-31 ). Baal, like Asherah, was also worshiped at high places.

The cult of Baal involved the offering of many animal sacrifices. Priests would officiate on behalf of the persons presenting sacrificial animals to the god. Some of the northern kingdom rulers even "made their sons pass through fire" offering their own sons as sacrifices to Baal. "Holy prostitutes" both male and female were available to worshipers, encouraging the fertility of both land and people.

*Baal-zebub, Beel-zebul* . Phoenician god worshiped at Ekron in Old Testament times (2 Kings 1:2-16 ). Original meaning of the name is unknown but the Old Testament form, Baal-zebub, means "Lord of the flies"; in Jesus' day this god is derisively called Beel-zebul (NIV Beelzebub), "lord of dung, " and identified with Satan, the ruler of demons (Matthew 12:24 ). Jesus' enemies accused him of casting out demons by invoking Beel-zebul (Mark 3:22 ) and even of being his embodiment (Matthew 10:25 ). Jesus, rejecting this calumny, pointed out that the expulsion of demons was Satan's defeat, heralding the arrival of God's kingdom (Luke 11:20-22 ).