**Deuteronomy 4:5-8**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-4/deuteronomy-45-8/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-4/deuteronomy-45-8/)

*Moses commands the Israelites to obey the statutes and judgments he is teaching them in order to correctly reflect their covenant partner, Yahweh, and to represent Him well before the other nations.*

In this section, Moses charged the Israelites to keep the commandmentshe was teaching them in order that they might reflect God’s holiness, that is, His absolute perfection. In verse 5, Moses used the twin nouns “ḥuqqîm” (statutes), and “mišpāṭîm” (judgments) he used in verse 1 to refer to the precepts of God. He stated, “*See, I have taught you statutes and judgments.”*Although the words “ḥuqqîm” (statutes), and “mišpāṭîm” (judgments) are used synonymously for God’s commandments, each one has a distinct meaning. The term “statutes” (“ḥuqqîm” in Hebrew) refers to something prescribed, like an ordinance. As such, it could be translated as “prescriptions,” or “decrees.” The second term (“mišpāṭîm”) refers to legal procedures, or commands issued by a judge. The use of these two terms together emphasizes the importance of obedience to all the precepts of God.

Moses moved on to tell the people that his teaching came from Yahweh, their covenant partner. He said, “*just as the LORD my God commanded me*.” By saying this, Moses reminded Israel that he simply acted as a mediator between the superior party, or suzerain, and the vassal (Israel). The Israelites were to observe the statutes and judgments *in the land where they* were *entering to possess it*.

In verse six, Moses added, “*So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples*.” This verse tells us that these *statutes and judgments* were to be followed closely because they would not only guarantee prosperity in the land (v. 1) but would also demonstrate the superiority of Israel’s *wisdom* (and *understanding*) before the world. Such a great wisdom would then serve as a reflection of Israel’s covenant partner, Yahweh. In other words, Israel’s life was supposed to be a testimony about God’s holiness, and it was designed to bring the world to God. Israel was supposed to be different among all the nations. So, the strict observance of these laws would elevate Israel’s *wisdom*to such a level that everyone who hears about it would simply say, “*Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.”*

That Israel’s life was intended to reflect the LORD’s holiness cannot be overemphasized. Early on, God had said to His people, “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” ([Exodus 19:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.5-6&t=NASB95)). The entire kingdom was to serve a priestly intercession between God and the entire world. But it was only by keeping these laws that Israel could reflect God’s wisdom and would represent Him well on earth.

Israel’s Suzerain Yahweh was not a distant ruler. The presence of God remained among His people. This is made evident in the rhetorical question Moses asked, “*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?”*The answer to this question is none. Israel was greater than the other nations because Yahweh was in their midst. Yahweh, the incomparable God, is “near to all who call upon Him”([Psalms 145:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalms+145.18&t=NASB95)). He is not like the powerless gods who are nothing but idols ([Psalms 115:4-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalms+115.4-8&t=NASB95)).

Moses asked a second question to emphasize Israel’s highest calling among the nations*: “Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”*The answer to this question is clear: no other nation had such righteous *statutes and judgments* as Israel did. The reason is because the gods of the other nations are not righteous. In contrast, Yahweh, the God of Israel, is righteous and upright ([Deuteronomy 32:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+32.4&t=NASB95); [James 1:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=James+1.13&t=NASB95)).

Since the Israelites possessed the true God and the righteous law, they were to be the light of the world through obedience to the statutes. Their good behavior in the land would demonstrate their wisdom and would set them apart as “a kingdom of priests, and God’s own possession among all the peoples” ([Exodus 19:5-6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.5-6&t=NASB95)). Interestingly, the Body of believers today has the same mission to fulfill. The book of 1 Peter describes our relationship to God and our mission on earth as follows: “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*”*([1 Pet. 2:9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Pet.+2.9&t=NASB95)).

**Biblical Text:**

**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. 6So 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.’ 7For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? 8Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”**