

Deuteronomy 4:9-14

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Moses reminds the Israelites of the manifestation of Yahweh's presence at Mount Horeb (Sinai) where He gave the Ten Commandments, so that the people may always fear Him and transfer His covenantal laws to their children.

In this section, Moses used another event to encourage the Israelites to remain loyal to God's covenant. He reminded them of their past commitments with God at Mount Horeb (Sinai) when they were given the Ten Commandments in a supernatural manifestation. The Israelites were to remember these ten commands in order to live in total obedience to Yahweh. Such an obedience would also lead them to *teach* these legal truths to *their children*.

Moses stated, "*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.*" The Israelites were to take great care not to *forget* what happened at Mount Horeb (Sinai), the place God chose to initiate this covenant relationship with His people. According to Moses, two important features characterized God's intervention at Mount Horeb: God made known His commandments to His vassals (Israel) to teach them to *fear* Him (vv. 10-11), and He did not reveal Himself in any physical form — *only a voice* (vv. 12-14).

At Mount Horeb (Sinai), the Suzerain LORD made Himself known to His vassals (Israel) using Moses as mediator. Thus, Moses commanded the people to *remember the day they stood before the LORD their God at Mount Horeb* to receive the Ten Commandments ([Exodus 19](#)). Before delivering the Ten Commandments to the Israelites, at Mount Horeb (Sinai), the LORD said to Moses, "*Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they teach their children.*"

God's primary purpose for gathering the Israelites at *Mount Horeb* (Sinai) was to teach them to *fear* Him. In the Bible, the verb "to fear" is used in at least two ways. On the one hand, it is used in the sense of an emotional act, such as

terror or a feeling of anxiety. This use of the verb can be traced to Adam after the Fall, when he responded to God by saying, “I heard the sound of You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked” ([Genesis 3:10](#)). Another example of this emotional fear is found in the burning bush account where God manifested Himself to Moses in a flame of fire. The text tells us that Moses “hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God” ([Exodus 3:6](#)).

On the other hand, the verb “fear” is used as an attitude of reverence and awe to God. To care most what He thinks, and whether He approves of our behavior. This is the way it is used here in [Deuteronomy 4:10](#). This use of the verb emphasizes complete obedience to the Suzerain God and is the basis of the believer’s walk of faith. The one who walks in the fear of God will be rewarded by being blessed beyond measure: the LORD “will instruct him in the way he should choose” ([Psalms 25:12](#)) and will have mercy on him ([Lk. 1:50](#)). The one who fears the LORD will avoid evil ([Proverbs 16:6](#)) and will “abide in prosperity” ([Psalms 25:13](#)). As such, he will never lack anything ([Psalms 34:9](#)).

God intended for Israel to *fear Him all the days they live on the earth* because He wanted them to be successful and to enjoy the privileges of the land of Canaan. Once the people learned how to fear the LORD, they were responsible to pass their knowledge on to their children to ensure that the next generation followed God’s orders as well. This responsibility was very important for the Israelites. For, as Moses clearly explained elsewhere, the LORD shows lovingkindness to those who “love” Him and “keep” His “commandments.” But He “visits the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Him” ([Exodus 20:5-6](#); [Deuteronomy 5:9-10](#)).

The second feature that characterized God’s intervention at Mount Horeb (Sinai) is that God did not reveal Himself to Israel in any physical form — *only a voice* (vv. 12-14). Moses reminded the Israelites that, as they *came near and stood at the foot of the mountain* to hear the divine truths, *the mountain burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens: darkness, cloud and thick gloom*. Then, *the LORD spoke to the Israelites from the midst of the fire*, as He has spoken to Moses earlier when He was commissioning him to redeem the Israelites from Egypt ([Exodus 3:1-6](#)). Moses emphasized that he and the Israelites did not see a physical form of God, because God is spirit ([John 4:24](#); [John 1:18](#)). Rather, Moses and the Israelites saw a blazing fire and that is why he told the people that they *saw no form — only a voice*. So, amid that blazing fire, God delivered the Ten Commandments written on *two tablets of stone* to Moses and commanded him to teach these laws to the people.

The purpose of this exercise at Mount Horeb (Sinai) was for Moses to teach Israel God's *statutes and judgments*. The purpose of the teaching was not just for head knowledge. It was for obedience, *that they might perform them in the land where they were going over to possess it*. This is similar to the Great Commission Jesus gave His disciples, telling them to "make disciples of all the nations," teaching them to obey all Jesus had commanded ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)).

Biblical Text:

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. ¹⁰Remember 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.’ ¹¹You 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. ¹²Then 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. ¹³So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, *that is*, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. ¹⁴The 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.”