

Deuteronomy 6:1-3

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-6/deuteronomy-61-3/>

Moses urges the Israelites to observe God's precepts in order that they and their descendants might learn to fear the LORD their God all the days of their lives. To do so will bring them prolonged days.

After restating the Ten Commandments to the new generation of Israel, Moses now preaches a sermon of exhortation to expand on the meaning of the commandments. But just prior to his exposition, which starts in 6:4, Moses commanded the people once again to observe God's laws wholeheartedly so that they might be blessed in the Promised Land. He said, "*Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you.*" The word "now" links this chapter with chapter five where Moses restated the Ten Commandments originally given by God at Mount Sinai ([Exodus 20](#)). Thus, after narrating the past, Moses shifted his focus to the present to transmit the rest of the laws to the people of Israel.

Moses then used three words (*commandment, statutes and judgments*) to exhort the Israelites to take God's laws seriously. The word "commandment" refers to the laws and rules, that is, the whole legal corpus. The words "statutes" and "judgments," used synonymously here for God's commandments, have distinct meanings. In the strict sense, the term "statutes" ("ḥuqqîm" in Hebrew) refers to something decreed by an authority, like an ordinance. As such, it could be translated as "prescriptions," or "decrees." The term "judgments" ("mišpāṭîm,") refers to legal procedures, or commands issued by a judge. Hence, the use of these three words (*commandments, statutes and judgments*) is seen as a way of referring to the covenant stipulations (see 5:31).

By referring to the same terms used in 5:31, Moses demonstrated that he was giving the Israelites exactly what *the LORD their God has commanded him to teach* them. The Israelites needed to be taught God's principles repeatedly so *that they might do them in the land where they were going over to possess it.*

In verses 2-3, Moses states a positive consequence for obedience, *that your days may be prolonged, and that it might be well with you.* This makes it clear

that the Ten Commandments and the following laws that explain them are a conditional covenant. God had granted the land to Abraham and his descendants unconditionally in [Genesis 15](#). But God made a conditional covenant with Abraham in [Genesis 17](#), telling Abraham he would be “multiplied exceedingly” if he would “walk blameless.” This giving of the Ten Commandments and the explanatory laws is a similar mutual covenant. It does not define the relationship of Israel to God. God unconditionally chose them as His people. Rather it spells out how the people can enjoy fellowship with God, and experience the blessings of the possession God had granted.

The negative consequence is inferred, that their days would not be prolonged, and it would not be well with them. As we will see in the book of Judges, when the people did *fear the LORD* and cared for and served their neighbors, they prospered in the land. But when they became self-seeking and sought to be tyrants over their neighbors, God caused them to experience tyranny from outsiders that they might repent.

To believe that God would actually act upon and cause these consequences to come to pass was to *fear the LORD*. To believe He would actually do as He said. These commands were to be passed on to future generations as well, “*so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life.*” Such a fear of God, believing the consequences were real, would allow every generation of Israelites to keep God’s principles *all the days of their life*.

A primary benefit of keeping God’s laws was “*that your days may be prolonged.*” This could refer to long life for individuals in the land. It could also refer to living in the land for a long time. This promise has a practical cause-effect component. For example, many of God’s laws dealt with public sanitation and food safety, such as ensuring human waste is outside the camp and covered with dirt ([Deut 23:12-14](#)). We now know this would have prevented diseases that have a long and horrific history of bringing death to large populations.

It also had a corporate effect, creating a society of mutual benefit and respect. Where peace rather than violence would be the norm. Keeping God’s laws created both a physical as well as social environment that led to longevity.

The Promised Land was given by God to Israel via an unconditional grant, but obedience to the Suzerain (Ruler) God was required to enjoy and benefit from the grant. Failure to submit to God’s principles would cause the Israelites to

either die early in the land or to be removed from it ([Leviticus 18:24-30](#); [Deuteronomy 8:19-20](#)).

Finally, the remaining two purpose clauses speak of Israel's wellness and increased posterity in the Promised Land. Moses stated, "*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.*" The phrase "*milk and honey*" describes the fertility or richness of the land of Canaan.

God promises that the Israelites would enjoy full benefit of the fertility of the land if they kept the commands. This is a divine promise, but also makes pragmatic sense. By following the law the society would be full of people who honored each other's property, dealt with one another honestly, did not envy, steal, or harm one another. This would lay the foundation for a harmonious, self-governing community. Such a society would be absent violence of one citizen toward another. There would be no swindling or theft. Therefore, hard work and innovation would be rewarded, and trade of mutual benefit. It would cause the people to be *well* and *multiply greatly*.

Sadly, human history is more typically full of tyranny, where the strong coerce the weak. In these societies, it is futile to work hard or innovate since the fruits of one's labor will be taken away by someone who is stronger. So human energy is diverted from production to protection. With the Mosaic law, God is offering a path to exceeding blessings, but leaving the choice to the Israelites whether they walk in the path that leads to bounty.

Biblical Text

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded *me* to teach you, that you might do *them* in the land where you are going over to possess it, ²so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ³O 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.