

Deuteronomy 6:10-15

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Moses commands the Israelites to be diligent to continue an attitude of gratitude to the LORD for what He has done for them and for who He is to them. To not forget God's commands when circumstances become comfortable. To not forget God when the need to depend on Him is not as apparent.

After the introduction formula in verse 10 (*then it shall come about*), Moses opens this section with the conjunction “*when*” (ki, in Hebrew) to look at the future circumstances of Israel. This admonition is to prepare them to live well in the Promised Land, when their need for God is not so apparent as it was in the wilderness. He clearly brought to their attention that their well-being or prosperity in Canaan could cause them to forget God’s mighty acts and His uniqueness, as expressed in 6:4-9. So, he exhorted them to be diligent to remember their history, and not forget their need to depend upon God. It is dependence upon God that leads directly to obeying God’s laws, rather than deciding our own way.

In his exhortation, Moses began by reminding Israel of God’s grant of the land to their fathers, which they have now inherited. He stated, *Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you.* Here God makes it clear that the promise to the fathers included their descendants occupying the land.

And they will gain the land by conquest, and in the process gain great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant. Cities and cisterns take time and substantial effort to build. Vineyards take years before becoming productive. As do olive trees.

The land is already developed, and productive. The Israelites will step in to farming and enjoying the land’s bounty. Instead of relying each day upon God’s provision of manna, they will be able to eat and enjoy the bounty of their own land and labors. As a result, they will *eat and be satisfied*. It is at this point, when circumstances are comfortable, that they will have great peril. The peril is to forget God’s provision. Instead of depending upon God, they will

start depending upon themselves. In this era, self-dependence was cloaked in idolatry. People would petition a figurine, image, or aspect of nature that would “give them what they wanted.” This gave them a semblance of control and self-dependence.

God calls upon them to remember. To remember God’s mighty acts. To reflect on who God is, as He had revealed Himself. And to continue to depend upon and obey God. If they followed God they would then serve and love one another, and create a bountiful and prosperous society. They would have an external focus. But if they slipped in to a self-focus, they would become self-centered and demand from rather than serve others. They would become mini-tyrants. Which would result in poverty. A poverty that God would accelerate by bringing in external tyrants. We will see this cycle repeated multiple times in the book of Judges.

As the Israelites made their final preparations to enter and possess the Promised Land, Moses told them that they would find lots of Canaanite structures or treasures waiting for their possession. God’s people were to use these gifts as they saw fit, because they were provided by the Suzerain/Ruler God. However, God’s people were also warned not to forget the giver of these gifts.

God made unconditional promises to Israel, through Abraham (and later Isaac and Jacob), making the people of Israel His people, and granting them title to the land ([Genesis 12](#), 26, and 28). He also made a conditional, mutual agreement with Abraham promising to multiply Abraham exceedingly if he walked blameless ([Genesis 17](#)). In Deuteronomy, Moses expands the [Genesis 17](#) concept in giving the law. Israel will be His people. That was already granted unconditionally. The land is theirs. That was also granted unconditionally ([Genesis 15](#)).

But in order to fulfill their priestly function to live as a holy nation and be a witness of the great benefit of following God’s law, the people would have to choose to walk in obedience. Moses will remind the people of God’s faithfulness, but also of their responsibilities. In order to gain and keep the blessings of dwelling in their possession, the land, they would need to walk in obedience. They were required to fear and obey God, who commanded them to treat others in a loving and just manner.

In this section, these responsibilities are outlined as follows:

- (1) Remember God’s mighty acts (v. 12).

(2) Revere the LORD for who He is (v. 13).

(3) Refrain from following other gods (vv. 14-15).

Israel's first responsibility was to be grateful to God's mighty act of salvation from slavery in Egypt. Moses declared, "*Then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.*" Israel was enslaved for approximately 400 years under Pharaoh and the Egyptians ([Genesis 15:13](#); [Exodus 12:40-41](#)). But God delivered them from their bondage in Egypt and redeemed them "with an outstretched arm" ([Exodus 3:13-15](#); [Ex: 6:6-7](#)). Since the LORD alone redeemed the Israelites from bondage to Pharaoh, it is vital that they remember His mighty acts.

Such a remembrance leads to the second responsibility which is the fear of the LORD. Moses declared, "*You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.*" The verb "*fear*" as applied to an authority, God as Suzerain or ruler in this case, can be thought of the same way we think of law enforcement. To fear the police means to put great weight upon the consequences you will experience from them if you break the law. It requires that 1) you understand the law, 2) you believe the law will be enforced, and 3) you believe the consequences of disobedience are not worth it ([Romans 13:3](#)). Such a fear would allow Israel to keep all God's principles *all the days* of their life.

Hence, instead of serving Pharaoh, as they did in Egypt, the Israelites will now *worship* the LORD *and swear by His name*. God is now their ruler, their King (1 Samuel 8:7). This treaty between Him and the nation will govern their relationship. It is vital that they remember their responsibilities under the treaty in order to avoid the adverse consequences of disobedience. To *swear by God's name* reemphasized that God was their final authority.

Finally, Israel's third responsibility was to give God exclusive worship. Moses declared, "*You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you.*" The statement prohibiting the worship of other gods was intended to acknowledge the LORD as the only true God because the other gods were merely idols who had no power ([Deuteronomy 32:21](#)). The Bible is clear that the LORD alone is "God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other" ([Deuteronomy 4:39](#)).

The LORD Himself said, "I am the first and I am the last, And there is no God besides Me" ([Isaiah 44:6](#)). Therefore, the belief in the existence of the other gods was simply an ancient Near Eastern worldview that was based on a

false conception of reality. Since the other deities were powerless and insignificant, Moses challenged His people to reject them because God alone redeemed His chosen people out of bondage ([Deuteronomy 5:6-7](#)). Therefore, the suzerain God had the right to demand exclusive loyalty from His vassals.

The practical application of this was to cause the people to be externally focused, serving one another, honoring one another's persons and possessions under the rule of law as given by God. Exclusive loyalty to God would cause Israel to thrive with mutual service and love toward one another. Additionally, many of God's laws would create other community benefits. Examples would be avoiding foods prone to carry diseases. The sanitation laws that required disposing of human waste in a sanitary manner ([Deut 23:12-14](#)). And avoiding contact with people that had communicable diseases ([Lev 13:45-46](#)).

Another reason for Israel to be loyal to the LORD was because *the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God*. The adjective "jealous" does not mean that God is envious of what belongs to others. This is impossible since God is the ultimate owner of everything ([Psalm 50:12](#)). Rather, it means that God demands loyalty from those who are in covenant relationship with Him. Like a husband or wife views their relationship with their spouse. In fact, God uses marriage to illustrate His relationship with His people throughout scripture ([Ezekiel 16](#), [Ephesians 5:28-32](#)). Since God as the ruler or suzerain wants to preserve and enforce His covenant relationship with His people, His anger can be fatal. As Moses warned Israel, "*The anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth.*" This statement reminds us of Moses's previous declaration in 4:24 that the LORD is a "consuming fire." The idea is that, just like fire can potentially destroy everything in its path, God also can destroy anyone.

God's relationship with New Testament believers mirrors His relationship with Abraham and his descendants. New Testament believers are said to be spiritually "grafted in" to Israel ([Romans 11:17](#)). New Testament believers are granted a gift of being righteous in the sight of God simply by believing ([Genesis 15:6](#); [Romans 4:1-4](#)). There is no further condition required. People become both children and servants of God simply by believing ([John 3:14-16](#)).

God still rewards obedience and disciplines disobedience of His children and servants ([Galatians 6:6-10](#); [Hebrews 12:29](#)). This sometimes includes physical death ([1 Cor 11:27-32](#); [Acts 5:1-10](#)). And, similar to the Mosaic covenant, much of the wrath of God is a natural consequence of poor choices, as in [Romans 1:18,24,26,28](#) where the wrath of God is poured out on

unrighteousness by God giving us over to our own fleshly lusts, to become its slaves (we might say “addicts”). The wrath of God there comes from giving us over to what we seek. We will see in many cases God’s chastisement of Israel will come from giving them over to what they seek. But here God is warning them to *fear* Him, that they might avoid the negative consequences.

Biblical Text:

¹⁰ “Then it shall come about when the Lord your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, ¹¹ and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, 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. ¹³ You shall fear *only* the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. ¹⁴ You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, 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.