

Deuteronomy 6:16-19

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Moses commands Israel to trust and obey the LORD, and not put Him to the test.

In the previous section (6:10-15), Moses commanded Israel to display an attitude of gratitude to the LORD for what He has done and for who He is. Also to fear Him and the adverse consequences of breaking their responsibilities in the covenant. In this section, Moses is going to urge them to trust and obey God so that it might go well with them and that they may continually possess the Promised Land.

Moses stated, “*You shall not put the LORD your God to the test.*” Jesus quotes this verse in answer to Satan’s second temptation, daring Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple, and test whether God would fulfill His promise to deploy His angels to protect Him ([Matt 4:5-7](#)). Moses reminded Israel of an example of testing God when he said, “*as you tested Him at Massah,*” an incident recorded in the book of Exodus. In each case, the basic attitude was to demand from God rather than to trust God.

In [Exodus 17:1-7](#), the Israelites lacked drinking water during the wilderness wandering. Instead of petitioning and trusting God to provide for them, as He had done in the past ([Exodus 16](#)), the people stated a demand in the form of a test, saying “Is the LORD among us, or not?” ([Exodus 17:7](#)). In other words “We will know if God is present by whether He does as we demand.” God had already demonstrated conclusively that He was present. The people are now shifting their relationship with God such that they can demand that He perform for them. God will become their genie in a bottle. Moses here commanded the people to avoid such a behavior in the Promised Land.

Now rather than testing God and doubting His power, the Israelites were commanded to trust and obey God. Moses declared, “*You should diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you.*” Three different words describe God’s precepts. The word “commandment” refers to the laws and rules, that is, the whole legal corpus. The term used for testimonies (‘ēdôt) denotes covenant stipulations upon which the contracting parties agree. The term “statutes” (“ḥuqqîm” in Hebrew) refers to something prescribed by an

authority. As such, it could be translated as “prescriptions,” or “decrees.” The use of these three terms together highlights the significance of the whole decree of God for Israel as a covenant partner. Thus, to enjoy the fellowship with the covenant partner, Israel (as vassals) needed to show complete obedience and trust.

Moreover, Moses told the Israelites to “*do what is right and good in the eyes of the LORD,*” that is, to obey God wholeheartedly by keeping His commandments and by pleasing Him in every situation. Here Moses introduced two purpose clauses which served to motivate Israel to keep the precepts of God. The first speaks of Israel’s wellness and the second speaks of the conquest of the land of Canaan. Moses declared, “*that it may be well with you and that you may go in and possess the good land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers.*”

The LORD wanted Israel to possess the land of Canaan because He had promised it to Abraham ([Genesis 12](#)). In His faithfulness, God had granted the land to Abraham as a reward for faithful service ([Genesis 15:7-20](#)). Now Abraham’s descendants from the son of promise will possess the land, fulfilling God’s promise to Abraham. Nevertheless, while the grant of land was unconditional, obedience to God was required to enjoy all its benefits. Thus, in this verse, Moses reminded the people of their responsibilities to trust and obey the LORD.

The positive consequence *that it may be well with you* includes a number of facets. First and foremost, by obeying God’s law, the society will be based on mutual love and respect. People will serve one another rather than operating from envy. That means the communities will thrive. Additionally, God will protect them from their enemies. They will be preserved to be a holy nation of priests to the surrounding nations.

Finally, Moses told the people how the LORD was going to provide possession of the land to them. Since the land of Canaan was already inhabited by non-Israelites, Moses told Israel that God would give them possession of the land *by driving out all their enemies from before them*. This would happen just *as the LORD has spoken*. This reminds us once again that the LORD is the great warrior and a faithful God. He always keeps His promises. It also demonstrates a principle that securing the blessings of God’s promises requires obedience, and that obedience can require strenuous effort.

Biblical Text:

¹⁶ You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested *Him* at Massah. ¹⁷ You should diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and His testimonies and His statutes which He has commanded you. 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, ¹⁹ by driving out all your enemies from before you, as the Lord has spoken.