

Deuteronomy 7:17-19

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Using the exodus experience as the basis of the reassurance, Moses commands Israel not to fear the inhabitants of Canaan, regardless of their numerical superiority.

In this section, Moses reassured the Israelites that their victory would not depend on their numbers, but on the LORD, the great warrior. Therefore, they did not need to fear the Canaanites. God said, *If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?' you shall not be afraid of them.* Moses raised this question in order to prepare Israel for the conquest, knowing that the numerical superiority of the Canaanites could cause hesitation. So, he said to Israel, *You shall not be afraid of them.* In the Bible, the verb “to fear” or “to be afraid” can be used in at least two ways. On the one hand, the verb can be used as a recognition of authority leading to submission (e.g. [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 ([Psalms 25:12](#); [Lk. 1:50](#); [Proverbs 16:6](#)). On the other hand, the verb “fear” is used in the sense of an emotional act, such as terror or a feeling of anxiety. This type of fear often occurs when someone feels like he/she is powerless and unable to overcome an obstacle. This is the use of the verb in the phrase *you shall not be afraid of them.* The Israelites might have felt that they were powerless in front of these many nations. That is why Moses called them to put their trust in God in order to *dispossess* the enemy. As a strong leader, Moses knew the people of God needed reassurance. He did just that. He encouraged them *not to be afraid.*

The rationale for such a reassurance was the exodus experience. The exodus marks God’s mightiest acts on behalf of His people in order to redeem them from bondage in Egypt. Moses exhorted them to *well remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out of Egypt.* This remembrance would lead to confidence that *the LORD* could deliver them again. Moses asserted that *the Lord your God* would *do* the same mighty acts of deliverance against *all the peoples of whom they were afraid.*

The Israelites were enslaved in Egypt for about 400 years. The LORD chose Moses to go to Pharaoh in order to redeem the Israelites ([Exodus 3](#)). Since Pharaoh refused to release the people, the LORD sent plagues (signs and wonders) to Pharaoh and the Egyptians ([Exod. 7-12](#)). After the tenth plague where the LORD struck dead all the firstborn of Egypt, Pharaoh allowed Israel to leave Egypt ([Exodus 12](#)). Then, God instituted His Passover-related regulations for His people concerning how they were to serve Him and also led them on their way ([Exod. 12-14](#)).

The LORD delivered the Israelites out of the hand of Pharaoh, and Israel witnessed God kill the Egyptian army by drowning them in the Red Sea as they pursued Israel to defeat them ([Exod. 14:26-31](#)). So, Moses told the people that the LORD would act likewise to give them victory over the Canaanites. He said, “*So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.*” Because of God’s faithfulness to and gracious love for Israel, Moses commanded the people to trust God again as they were ready to conquer the Promised Land.

Biblical Text:

¹⁷ If you should say in your heart, ‘These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?’ ¹⁸ you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: ¹⁹ the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the Lord your God brought you out. So shall the Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.