

Deuteronomy 7:20-24

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-7/deuteronomy-720-24/>

Moses continues to reassure Israel of the enemy's total defeat by telling them that the LORD will use a powerful tool (hornet) as instrument to search out and destroy those Canaanites who would flee and hide themselves. Therefore, the LORD alone is the one who deserves to be feared.

After reassuring the people of Israel of their victory over the Canaanites (vv. 17-19), Moses now explains the instrument God would use to search out and eliminate those who would flee and hide themselves. Moses said, *"Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish."* God used the *hornet* three times in the Old Testament as an instrument to defeat enemies of Israel (the other occurrences are in [Exodus 23:28](#) and [Joshua 24:12](#)). God promises to use the *hornets* in such a way that the Canaanites would flee and *hide themselves*. Hence, those of the adversaries who were not destroyed directly by Israel would be caught by the *hornet*.

Some take the word *hornet* literally to mean swarms of ferocious insects. Others think the word is used figuratively for panic like that caused by ferocious insects. Whether the use is literal or figurative, the key point of the author is that God would use the *hornet* as a powerful instrument to assist the Israelites in conflict. This would ensure that all God's enemies are completely defeated and gone. Therefore, Moses called Israel to express confidence in the LORD because He was present with them. Moses said, *"You shall not dread them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God."*

The Israelites had no reason to *dread* the enemy or tremble before them, because the *LORD* their *God* was *in their midst*. The *LORD* is *a great and awesome God* and is always the one who fights for His people ([Deuteronomy 1:29](#); [Exodus 14:14](#)). Whereas the term "*great*" refers to the magnitude of God's power (all-powerful and above every other god), the word translated as "*awesome*" refers to something that is fearful or awful. Thus, the Israelites were to fear the *LORD*, to show reverence and obedience to Him, instead of fearing the Canaanites.

Moses told Israel that *the LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little*. God would not clear them all at once. It would be gradual. The LORD warns that Israel *will not be able to put an end to them quickly*. The reason God gives is that if the land was too empty, *the wild beasts would grow too numerous for you*. Clearly the land too quickly would pose environmental difficulties by causing an unusual increase of *wild animals*, which would pose a threat to the Israelites ([Exodus 23:29-30](#)). So, as the Israelites advanced toward the Promised Land, they needed to destroy the *nations little by little*. This tells us that the LORD was gradually working out every detail to ensure the safety and security of His chosen people.

Moses noted that *the LORD your God will deliver them before you, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed*. Perhaps God would use the *hornet* to confuse the enemy, or other means. In any event, Israel's victory was dependent upon the LORD. It was the LORD who would give the enemies over and inflict in them great panic and turmoil so that they could be confused and defeated.

Israel's victory over the Canaanites was to be complete. Even the Canaanite kings were supposed to be destroyed because "God is not one to show partiality" ([Acts 10:34](#); [Romans 2:11](#)). As Moses said, "*He [the LORD] will deliver their kings into your hand so that you will make their name perish from under heaven.*" Since Canaan was a country full of city-states ruled by individual kings, Moses said God would destroy all these kings in order to *make their name perish from under heaven*.

The expression "to make someone's name perish" means to leave no oral or written trace of that name on earth, thus, leaving the person with no descendants and no memorials. This is what the LORD was going to do to the Canaanite kings. As Moses told Israel, *No man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them*. Not only would kings who are powerful be defeated, so would everyone else. Israel's God is all-powerful; He is *a great and awesome God*. He is the one giving power to *kings* and can thus do as He pleases. Therefore, the Israelites simply needed to proceed to the Promised Land with faith and trust in the LORD.

Biblical Text:

²⁰ **Moreover, the Lord your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish.** ²¹ **You shall not dread them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God.** ²² **The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little**

by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, for the wild beasts would grow too numerous for you. ²³ But the Lord your God will deliver them before you, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. ²⁴ He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you will make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them.