

# Deuteronomy 9:4-6

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*Moses tells the Israelites that Canaan will be conquered to execute justice upon the inhabitants, and to fulfill His oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, not because Israel is righteous. Israel is a stubborn people, as they have demonstrated.*

Having encouraged Israel to dispossess the inhabitants of Canaan because Yahweh would lead the invading army as a *consuming fire* (vv. 1-3), Moses told the people that the conquest would be the outcome of the LORD's will, not of their righteousness. He declared *Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land.'* God is using Israel as an instrument to judge the unrighteousness and corruption of the peoples in the land of Canaan, as has been described ([Leviticus 18](#), for example).

God warned Israel against misinterpreting the victory God would give them over the inhabitants of Canaan. Although the LORD would lead Israel's army to destroy the enemy, the Israelites should not conclude that the LORD gave them the victory because they had some intrinsic superiority. God had chosen them as His own possession in spite of their frailties ([Deut 7:7-8](#)). But Israel still had to walk in obedience to secure the blessings of their relationship. Moses had already given this same basic warning to avoid believing they had some inherent superiority, and neglect to obey their Suzerain ruler ([Deut 6:10-15](#)).

Israel's possession of the land of Canaan was due to the unrighteousness of the people of Canaan. Moses declared, *But it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you.* The nations living in Canaan practiced all kinds of sins and wickedness. In [Leviticus 18](#), God warned the Israelites against repeating the sexual practices and other evil behaviors they would observe in the Promised Land. These practices included child sacrifice and a full range of immoral sexual conducts ranging from incest of every sort imaginable to sex with animals. Therefore, since the nations living in Canaan were wicked (unrighteous), the Suzerain (Ruler) God was going to destroy them through the instrument of His vassals (Israel).

Moses repeated the same terms (almost verbatim) to emphasize the LORD's reason for granting the land of Canaan to His vassals (Israel) in the next verse. He said, *It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you.* This repetition served to emphasize that Israel is not possessing the land of Canaan due to some inherent superiority. They are being used as an instrument to judge the wickedness of the nations living in Canaan. God had delayed judgment of these nations for over 400 years, giving them an opportunity to repent ([Genesis 15:16](#)). But the day of judgment had begun, and Israel was chosen to execute that judgment.

Although Israel has no inherent superiority, their Suzerain God chose Israel to serve a priestly function to bring the world to Him, by being a living example of righteousness ([Exodus 19:4-6](#)). But in order to serve that function, and the blessings that went with it, Israel would have to walk in obedience. Otherwise, they would be judged and dispossessed of the land as well ([Deut 6:15](#)). We see then that God's purpose in dispossessing the inhabitants of Canaan served three purposes: to judge the wickedness of the inhabitants, to set up Israel to serve a function to be a positive example to other nations, and *to confirm the oath which He swore to their fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

God made some unconditional grants to Abraham as a reward for the loyal service Abraham had rendered. An example is a covenant of grant to own the Promised Land in [Genesis 15](#). In [Genesis 15](#), The Suzerain (Ruler) God also promised to make of him a great nation. God reassured Abraham with these terms,

*Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete ([Genesis 15:13-16](#)).*

God's promised reward to Abraham for faithful service was now being fulfilled. Abraham had gone from being childless in [Genesis 15](#), to now having enough descendants to be a nation, and that nation was crossing over the Jordan to possess the Land that had been granted to Abraham long ago.

After four hundred years, God brought Israel out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, as promised. He led them through the great and terrible wilderness to ultimately lead them to the Promised Land ([Deuteronomy 8:15](#)).

In [Deuteronomy 9](#), Moses reminded the Israelites that the conquest of Canaan would display God's faithfulness to His word. God would grant the land of Canaan to Israel *in order to confirm the oath* which He *swore* to their fathers. The "iniquity of the Amorite" was also complete, and judgement on their iniquity would now begin.

### **Biblical Text:**

**Do not say in your heart when the Lord your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,' but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the Lord is dispossessing them before you. <sup>5</sup>It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the Lord your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.**