

Deuteronomy 11:1-7

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Moses commands the Israelites to love their Suzerain God for who He is and what He has done.

Moses once again exhorted the Israelites to be loyal and faithful to the Suzerain God in order to maintain the covenant He had established with them. Moses said, *You shall therefore love the LORD your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments.*

To *love the LORD* is to obey all His precepts ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#), [10:12](#), [30:16](#); [John 14:15](#)). This love was to be the appropriate response to the Suzerain God, the One who spared the lives of His vassals and renewed His covenant relationship with them after they had turned away from Him to worship a molten calf ([Exodus 32 – 34](#); [Deuteronomy 9 – 10](#)).

That the LORD demanded total obedience from His vassals is made explicit by Moses when he used four different words (*charge*, *statutes*, *ordinances*, and *commandments*) to describe God's covenantal laws.

The first term, *charge* (Hebrew “mišmeret”), is used here for the first time in Deuteronomy. It refers to a judicial order (an obligation) that serves to restrain someone from beginning or continuing to do something that could potentially hurt others. Thus, to keep God's charge means to refrain from doing anything that could hurt Him.

The term *statutes* (Heb. “ḥuqqîm”) refers to something prescribed. As such, it could be translated as “prescriptions” or “decrees.”

The term translated as *ordinances* (Heb. “mišpāṭîm”) refers to legal procedures, or commands issued by a judge.

The term *commandments* (Heb. “miḥwâ”) refers to the laws and rules, that is, the whole legal corpus.

Moses used these four words to encompass all the covenantal legislation that the Suzerain God asked His vassals (Israel) to observe. In other words,

Moses emphasized the totality of God's authority and the importance of obeying the whole decree of God.

Moses then specified the audience to whom his message was addressed. He said, *Know this day that I am not speaking with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the LORD your God.* The generation of Israelites addressed on the plain of Moab was different from the old generation who had escaped from Egypt. The book of Numbers tells us that all the men who, after witnessing God's power at work in Egypt and rebelled in their unbelief, would not enter the Promised Land ([Numbers 14:22-23](#)). That judgment specifically applied to those who were twenty years old and upward, except for Caleb and Joshua ([Numbers 14:29-30](#)).

Thus, the new generation of Israelites assembled on the plain of Moab was composed of those who were under twenty years of age at the time of the exodus, as well as those who were born during the wilderness wandering. Moses made it clear that his message concerned the Israelites who were under twenty years of age, because they had been born in Egypt and had *known and seen the discipline of the LORD* manifested by His mighty acts. Such a discipline was meant to instruct the Israelites on the proper way of living in a covenant relationship with the Suzerain God ([Deuteronomy 8:5](#)).

The discipline of the LORD, which the Israelites witnessed with their own eyes, pertains to various mighty acts that demonstrate the kind of God that He is, specifically *His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm.* The LORD's *mighty hand* (a picture of His sovereign power) and *His outstretched arm* (demonstrating His overwhelming strength) was used to liberate Israel from slavery in Egypt ([Exodus 6:1](#); [Deuteronomy 5:34](#)).

The Israelites first saw the LORD's power in Egypt. The LORD clearly showed *His signs and His works which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land.* This is a reference to the ten plagues that the LORD performed in Egypt ([Exodus 7 – 12](#)).

In the book of Exodus, God asked Moses to go to Pharaoh to request the release of the Israelites from slavery so that they could go in and possess the land promised to them ([Exodus 9:1](#)). Pharaoh refused to listen to God's command. The LORD sent plagues (*signs and wonders*) to Pharaoh and the Egyptians ([Exodus 7-12](#)). After the tenth plague, in which the LORD struck dead all the firstborn of Egypt, Pharaoh and the Egyptians urged the Israelites to go out of Egypt in haste, for they said, "We will all be dead" ([Exodus 12:33](#)).

This act demonstrates the sovereign power of Israel's God, who rescued them with a *mighty hand* and an *outstretched arm*.

Moreover, the discipline of the LORD relates to His victory over the Egyptian army. This includes *what He did to Egypt's army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing the Israelites, and the LORD completely destroyed them*. This event is described in the book of Exodus.

In [Exodus 14](#), Pharaoh and his army followed the Israelites after they had agreed to let them go out of their land. The LORD parted the Red Sea for His people (Israel) so that they could cross over ([Exodus 14:21 – 22](#)). Then, He brought the Egyptian army into great confusion ([Exodus 14:24](#)). After the Israelites successfully crossed the Red Sea, the Egyptian army followed them and the LORD caused the sea to cover them ([Exodus 14:27 – 28](#)).

So, the LORD's *signs* and *works* were seen in His dealings with Egypt. In addition, God's *works* could also be seen in *what He did to you* (the Israelites). This was a reference to the LORD disciplining Israel *in the wilderness until they came to this place*, meaning the plain of Moab. The Israelites disobeyed their Suzerain (Ruler) God multiple times during their wilderness wandering, and were punished as a result.

But one incident is specifically mentioned here: *what He did to Dathan and Abiram* when they (and others) rebelled against Moses, God's appointed leader and covenant mediator. They were *the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben*. As described in [Numbers 16](#), the LORD judged them for their rebellion against the authority of Moses when *the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among all Israel*.

Thus, Moses asked the Israelites to remember what the Suzerain God *did to Dathan and Abiram*.

Therefore, since the adult Israelites had witnessed with their *own eyes all the great work of the LORD which He did*, Moses commanded them to live in a way that pleased God in order to have an enjoyable life in the land of Canaan. He commanded them to be self-governing, and treat one another with loving service, which would lead to a community that was safe and prosperous.

Biblical Text:

¹“You shall therefore love the Lord your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments. ²Know this day that I *am* not *speaking* with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the Lord your God—His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm, ³and His signs and His works which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land; ⁴and what He did to Egypt’s army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the Lord completely destroyed them; ⁵and what He did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place; ⁶and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among all Israel— ⁷but your own eyes have seen all the great work of the Lord which He did.