**Deuteronomy 26:16–19**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-26/deuteronomy-2616-19/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-26/deuteronomy-2616-19/)

*Moses told the Israelites that this covenant renewal was a reminder of their special relationship with Yahweh and their special status among the nations of the earth.*

This paragraph concludes Moses’s exposition to the people of Israel gathered to hear him speak, in preparation to enter the Promised Land ([Deuteronomy 5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+5.1&t=NASB95)). In [Deuteronomy 5:1 – 26:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+5.1+%E2%80%93+26.15&t=NASB95) Moses spoke to the people gathered that “you may learn them and observe them carefully” ([Deuteronomy 5:1](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+5.1&t=NASB95)).

Now Moses concluded his exposition on the law in [Deuteronomy 5:1 – 26:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+5.1+%E2%80%93+26.15&t=NASB95), reminding them of the provisions they were to follow in their covenant with their supreme ruler, their Suzerain and God.  This would constitute a ratification and restatement of Israel’s covenant with God with this second generation to leave Egypt, after the first generation had died ([Deuteronomy 2:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+2.16&t=NASB95)). Moses asks the people to once again affirm God’s covenant with them, and the people agree, and reaffirm their contract with God. This occurs in [Deuteronomy 26:16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+26.16-17&t=NASB95).

Then Moses recounts that the people agreed with the covenant, and committed to follow God’s commands, and keep their part of the contract (or covenant) between God, as Israel’s Suzerain Ruler and gracious Provider ([Deuteronomy 26:18–19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+26.18%E2%80%9319&t=NASB95)).

This mutual commitment between the LORD (Yahweh) and the Israelites began with the voice of the speaker, Moses, encouraging the Israelites, saying, *This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances* (v. 16). The *statutes and ordinances* were discussed in Deuteronomy chapters 5 – 25. The phrase the *LORD your God* emphasized the fact that the LORD, their Creator, had chosen to be in a special covenant relationship with Israel, taking them as His own people among all the peoples of the earth ([Exodus 19:4–6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.4%E2%80%936&t=NASB95)).

This Suzerain Vassal treaty structure was common to the time.  In that structure, the superior ruler, the suzerain, contracted with an inferior king, and promised him blessings (rewards) for faithful service and cursings (punishments) if he was not faithful. God followed this same basic format in His agreement with Israel, but modified it in several material respects.  First, God’s choice of Israel to be His people was not dependent upon their behavior. His calling of them as His people was irrevocable ([Deuteronomy 7:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+7.7-9&t=NASB95); [Romans 11:29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+11.29&t=NASB95)). Second, God did not make His agreement with just the leader or leaders, as would normally be the case, as between a superior king and inferior rulers. God’s agreement was with the entire nation. Also, God was not making an agreement in order to expand His territory, as would have been the case for an earthly king; God already owns everything. Rather God’s intent was to make statutes that were commanded “for your good” ([Deuteronomy 10:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+10.13&t=NASB95)). God desired for His people to make life-giving choices.

God discloses at least two motivations for His choice of Israel to be His people. One was that He loved them ([Deuteronomy 4:37](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+4.37&t=NASB95), [7:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+7.8&t=NASB95)). The other was because He desired to make Israel a holy nation that served a priestly function in showing surrounding nations that loving one another is a better way to live ([Exodus 19:6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.6&t=NASB95)). When people choose to live in love and harmony, as God originally designed, they shut up God’s enemy ([Psalm 8:2](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Psalm+8.2&t=NASB95)).

This covenant between God and Israel was a special agreement that required the vassals (Israel) to obey the *statutes and ordinances* prescribed to them by their Suzerain Yahweh in order to gain promised benefits. The words *statutes* and *ordinances*, used synonymously here for God’s commandments, have distinct meanings. In the strict sense, the term *statutes* (Heb. “ḥuqqîm”) refers to rules of conduct. The term *ordinances* (Heb. “mišpāṭîm”) refers to legal procedures, or commands issued by a judge, or decisions revealed by the LORD about specific situations. Taken together, they refer to the whole legal corpus or the covenant stipulations (5:31; 6:1) that *the LORD* their *God commands* them *to do*. In other words, to remain loyal vassals, the Israelites needed to follow exactly what their Suzerain (Ruler) God demanded.

They were to*be careful to do them with all*their*heart and with all*their*soul*. The word *heart* describes the seat of intellect and will, including intent ([Genesis 20:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+20.5&t=NASB95)) and thoughtful consideration ([Deuteronomy 4:20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+4.20&t=NASB95), [39](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+4.39&t=NASB95)). It refers to the activities of the mind. It is also a seat of values, as in [Leviticus 26:36](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Leviticus+26.36&t=NASB95). The word *soul* refers to the invisible, spiritual part of man represented by breath ([Genesis 2:7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.7&t=NASB95)). It is the spirit of life housed within the body, the unique person that continues to exist past being housed in a physical body ([Genesis 35:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+35.18&t=NASB95)). These two words (*heart* and *soul*) emphasized complete obedience to God’s commandments and their love for the LORD with their entire being ([Deuteronomy 6:5](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+6.5&t=NASB95)).

Moses put to the crowd the question of whether they were willing to ratify the covenant God had made with their forefathers, who had entered the covenant, then broken it ([Exodus 19:8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.8&t=NASB95); [Numbers 14:22-23](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Numbers+14.22-23&t=NASB95)).

The people agreed, for Moses stated they *have today declared the Lord to be your God*(v. 17). The word *today* probably refers to the day that this covenant renewal took place. At this time, they proclaimed that the LORD (Yahweh) was their God at the exclusion of all others.

Second, they committed to *walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice*. To *walk in His ways* means to conform one’s lifestyle to what the LORD says. To *listen to His voice* meant that they would obey other divine revelation the LORD would give in the future. So, the Israelites had accepted the terms of the covenant and devoted themselves to obeying those terms completely—*statutes, commandments, and ordinances*.

Verses 18 – 19 state what the Suzerain (Ruler) God committed to do in this covenant. *The Lord has today declared you to be His people*(v. 18). The word *today* refers to the day of this covenant renewal on the plains of Moab. The LORD promised to make the Israelites *a treasured possession, as He promised you*. God had made an unconditional promise to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through his descendants ([Genesis 12:3](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+12.3&t=NASB95); [22:18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+22.18&t=NASB95)). God chose Israel to be His people, not because they were anything special, but because He loved their fathers, and chose their descendants after them ([Deuteronomy 4:36-38](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+4.36-38&t=NASB95);[7:7-9](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+7.7-9&t=NASB95)).

God urged Israel to *keep all His commandments*. Here again in this covenant ratification, God renewed His commitment to Israel, and to remind them of all the blessings they would get if they lived in obedience to His laws. God gave His commands in order to benefit Israel, they were for their good ([Deuteronomy 10:13](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+10.13&t=NASB95)). Upon reflection, it seems fairly obvious that a society will be greatly blessed that chooses to follow the precepts of God’s law, loving and serving one another rather than exploiting one another (as was the norm in the world around them).

Verse 19 concentrates on Israel’s special status to the other nations in the world. The LORD promised to*set*Israel*high above all nations which He has made*. This exaltation included reasons *for praise, fame, and honor*. These three words were used elsewhere to express the highest level of respect ([Jeremiah 13:11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+13.11&t=NASB95)).

The fulfillment of this prophecy likely has not fully taken place, and seems to be yet in the future. It seems likely that such fulfillment will take place during the thousand year reign when Jesus restores the kingdom to Israel and sits upon the throne of David ([Revelation 20:4](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.4&t=NASB95); [Acts 1:6-7](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Acts+1.6-7&t=NASB95)).  Zechariah predicts a time when the geography of Israel is materially altered, likely due to Jesus’s return, setting foot on the Mount of Olives ([Zechariah 14:4-8](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+14.4-8&t=NASB95)). In that time “…any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts…” ([Zechariah 14:16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Zechariah+14.16&t=NASB95)). Thus Israel will be exalted among the nations, as predicted in [Deuteronomy 26:19](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Deuteronomy+26.19&t=NASB95).

Keeping His commandments would also result in them being *a consecrated people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken*.  To be consecrated is to be set apart for special service. This consecration made the Israelites a *kingdom of priests* ([Exodus 19:4 – 6](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+19.4+%E2%80%93+6&t=NASB95)). This was, and is God’s desire for His people. To be a priest is to serve an intermediary function between God and others. To have a *kingdom of priests*is for the entire nation to live in such a way as to testify to all other nations that following the Lord is a superior way to live. Any nation can be blessed by following after a godly example, having a society based on mutual cooperation and love of neighbor rather than a society of exploitation. This superior way of living provides immense benefit for all.

To sum up, this section is the offer and acceptance of Moses’ address concerning the exposition and application of the laws in the Mosaic Covenant (chapters 5 – 26). Moses offers for the people to ratify God’s covenant with Israel, and the people agree to its ratification.

It stresses the importance of obedience to the terms of the covenant (which is the will of the LORD) and that such obedience would result in great blessing for His people.

**Biblical Text:**

**16This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. 17You have today declared the Lord to be your God, and that you would walk in His ways and keep His statutes, His commandments and His ordinances, and listen to His voice. 18The Lord has today declared you to be His people, a treasured possession, as He promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; 19and that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, for praise, fame, and honor; and that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God, as He has spoken.**