

Deuteronomy 27:9-10

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Moses (joined now by the Levitical Priests) reaffirms God's covenantal relationship with Israel.

After providing general and specific details regarding how the altar of the LORD was to be built on Mount Ebal to prepare for the celebration (Deuteronomy 27: 1–8), Moses proceeded to remind the Israelites of their special relationship with God. In the previous section, Moses was accompanied by the elders (Deuteronomy 27: 1–8), but in this section, he is joined by the *Levitical priests*, the descendants of Levi who ministered before the LORD and offered sacrifices to Him on behalf of the entire community of Israel (Deuteronomy 10:8; 2 Chronicles 29:11; Ezekiel 44:15).

So, *Moses and the Levitical Priests spoke to all Israel, saying, Be silent and listen, O Israel!* (v. 9). The word for *be silent* (Heb. “sākat”) is used only here in the Old Testament and is a strong exhortation to “be quiet.” It stresses how solemn this occasion was and how important it was for the Israelites to *listen* intently. They were in the middle of receiving an important message from their Sovereign king and God.

The message was that *this day you have become a people for the Lord your God*. This does not mean that the people of Israel had not been the Suzerain's people up to this point, because earlier revelations said otherwise (Exodus 19:5–6; Deuteronomy 4:20; 7:6–7; 10:15). Rather, the statement served to reaffirm God's covenant relationship with His people, a reminder that was needed at some key moments in the history of Israel such as that of covenant renewal.

In other words, through this act of covenant renewal the new generation of Israelites learned that they, too, belonged to the Suzerain (Ruler) God. He was their master and they were His vassals. If they obeyed His commands, they would benefit from the promised blessings.

In response to being vassals, the people were to *therefore obey the LORD your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today* (v. 10). The word *today* emphasizes the current action of what is taking place. The writer of Hebrews used an emphasis on the word “today” (quoting Psalm 95) to emphasize immediacy.

In such a relationship of being His own possession among all the peoples of the earth (Exodus 19:4–6), covenant fidelity was required. The Israelites were to follow God's precepts wholeheartedly to live as loyal vassals (Deuteronomy 4:1). They owed Him their complete faithfulness and loyalty. The result of faithfulness will be great blessings upon them, their nation, and upon the surrounding nations and peoples.

Biblical Text

⁹ Then Moses and the Levitical priests spoke to all Israel, saying, “Be silent and listen, O Israel! This day you have become a people for the Lord your God. ¹⁰ You shall

therefore obey the Lord your God, and do His commandments and His statutes which I command you today.”