

Deuteronomy 32:34-35

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The Suzerain God pronounces judgment on Israel's enemies because they misinterpret His actions. They think they are powerful because they defeat Israel, but it is God who gives Israel over because of their disobedience. Vengeance belongs to God.

Moses continues to set forth the Song of Moses for Israel to sing and remember their covenant with Him. This is just prior to the time when Moses will die, and Joshua will lead the people across the Jordan into the Promised Land.

These two verses seem to be a message directly from the LORD, as He states *Is it not laid up in store with Me*. All actions of all peoples are recorded and remembered.

God's rhetorical question—*Is it not laid up in store with Me, sealed up in My treasures?* (v. 34) has an implied answer of "yes." The word *it* refers to a record of the wicked acts of Israel just described in the prior section, vv. 28-33.

The LORD stated here that He has been collecting a record of deeds and sealing them in a safe place for use later on. This record cannot be taken away because it is *sealed up* in God's *treasures* and protected by His power. This indicates that everything that occurs is recorded. We can see this in Revelation, where "the books" are opened to judge deeds, indicating that all deeds are recorded ([Revelation 20:12](#)). The point is that all things will be brought to right. God will see that justice reigns.

It would be inferred that the wicked deeds of Israel's enemies would also be remembered and recorded ([Deuteronomy 32:32-33](#)). The nations who were Israel's enemies had no fear of the true God. Their abuse of Israel was not from a sense of justice. For this reason, the Suzerain (Ruler) God would exercise justice upon them, even though they will be used as an instrument of God's to discipline Israel. This is a theme that runs through scripture, that God

visits upon humanity what they do for others. God rewards those who love others, and chastises those who exploit.

Prior to God revealing His plan, Israel's enemies thought they were powerful when they defeated Israel. However, it was God's sovereign plan for Israel to be defeated because they had disobeyed His covenantal laws. Israel's enemies were instruments to see that the treaty/covenant provision for disobedience was enforced ([Deuteronomy 8:19-20](#)). But since Israel belonged to God, He would avenge His enemy for their pride and arrogance. God used their hostile purpose against Israel to serve His purpose, but they will still be judged for invading Israel. They would also see justice.

The Suzerain God declared, *Vengeance is Mine, and retribution* (v. 35). The word *Mine* comes first in the Hebrew text, emphasizing that it was the LORD Who brought judgment upon His people using the nations. The nations might have thought that they chose to punish Israel, but it was the LORD's hand. Israel incurred the consequence of their own actions. They agreed to enter the treaty with Yahweh, their covenant God ([Exodus 19:8](#)). The treaty clearly spelled out that if they turned to the pagan ways of exploitation, rather than loving their neighbors, they would incur specific penalties, including falling to foreign nations ([Deuteronomy 8:19-20](#)).

However, because the LORD is a just and faithful Suzerain, in addition to bringing justice by enforcing the treaty provisions, He would also vindicate His covenant people against their enemies. This will be covered in the next section ([Deuteronomy 32:36-38](#)).

The word *vengeance* (Heb. "nāqām") has the idea of avenging a wrong. God's *vengeance* must be understood in light of His full character, including that God is the essence of justice. If the LORD did not execute *vengeance* on those guilty of evil, then His justice would be meaningless. Mercy and love would not exist if there was not also justice. They are two sides of a coin.

God would violate His own character if He ignored wickedness, and did not bring it to justice. God so loved the world that He sent His Son to die for the world ([John 3:16](#)). But the reason Jesus died was in order to pay the price for the sins of all, in order to satisfy justice ([Colossians 2:14](#); [Romans 3:20-26](#)). God is a God of mercy, but mercy requires that there be justice.

Also, *vengeance* belongs to God alone. In fact, the Bible prohibits a person from taking personal vengeance upon another person ([Leviticus 19:18](#)). This principle applies also to New Testament believers as seen in [Romans 12:19](#) and [Hebrews 10:30](#). Rather than person-on-person justice, God has delegated to human government to execute *vengeance* on His behalf.

God initially made this delegation after the flood, authorizing humans to take life as just due for those who murder. He did this in order to deter violence, that the world might not fill with violence again, as it had prior to Noah's flood ([Genesis 9:6, 6:11](#)). The New Testament book of Romans states that God has delegated to human authorities (government) to execute His wrath in order to punish evil ([Romans 13:1-7](#)).

It should be plain from this chapter, and other places in scripture, that even though God sometimes delegates to humans to execute justice on His behalf, when they do so unjustly, they will also be brought to justice. This is one of the primary points of the book of Habakkuk, when God makes clear that He always judges the proud, but gives grace to those who walk in faith ([Habakkuk 2:4](#)).

God states definitively that *in due time their foot will slip*. The slipping foot is a metaphorical expression meaning to become unstable and fall away from the path one wishes to take. This Song of Moses is mainly spoken of in past tense to show the inevitability that the prediction will come to pass. In this instance, this statement is made from the standpoint of a future prediction. Israel will disobey the treaty *in due time*, meaning "eventually." This song will remind each generation that there will eventually be a fall, but that they have the opportunity to decide that it will not be them; each generation can decide to be faithful to the treaty/covenant, and love rather than exploit their neighbor.

As a side note, part of [Deuteronomy 32:35](#) was used as a text for the famous sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"—"their foot shall slide in due time." Since this applies to God's people, the verse would be better applied to amplify the New Testament teaching that God disciplines His own people. An example is this verse:

"FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES,
AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES."
([Hebrews 12:6](#))

This verse from Hebrews quotes [Proverbs 13:11](#). So it is a principle that echos throughout scripture. It appears also from the mouth of Jesus in the book of Revelation:

“Those whom I [Jesus] love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent.”
([Revelation 3:19](#))

God makes clear here that He holds His people to a standard. If they will not live in a manner consistent with God’s command to love their neighbors and stand for what is true, then they will be chastised. This is consistent with the picture God gives us to understand His character, by calling Himself “Father.”

The discipline will be a *calamity*. And the time of *calamity* is always just around the corner, because it will surely take place when Israel decides to begin to walk in the pagan ways of exploitation: *For the day of their calamity is near*. This again has shifted from speaking in past tense (showing the certainty of this prophecy coming to pass) to speaking from the present about the future. The point is that God’s chastisement is imminent; it will come swiftly if Israel turns from following the terms of the treaty.

The statement *And the impending things are hastening upon them* says the same thing a different way, creating an emphasis of the certainty and swiftness of God’s judgement on Israel. It is interesting to note that centuries later, the prophet Habakkuk will ask God why He is delaying bringing justice upon Judah (southern Israel) because of their wickedness. This is consistent with a biblical theme that many things are imminent, but seem to be taking a long time. This applies to God’s judgement as well as the second return of Christ. The Apostle Peter addresses this, noting that in the last days people will say that Jesus is not coming back, since it has taken so long ([2 Peter 3:4](#)). Peter answers this by saying:

“But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”
([2 Peter 3:8-9](#))

Israel will most certainly incur judgment. But so will their enemies, as will be addressed in the next section.

Biblical Text:

³⁴ **Is it not laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up in My treasuries?**

³⁵ **Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,
In due time their foot will slip;
For the day of their calamity is near,
And the impending things are hastening upon them.**