

# Deuteronomy 32:7-9

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-32/deuteronomy-327-9/>

*Moses reminded the Israelites that the Suzerain (Ruler) God elected them and had taken them as His own inheritance.*

Moses continues writing the Song of Moses for the people to sing as a reminder, just before Moses dies and the people follow Joshua to cross over and enter the Promised Land.

Having spelled out Israel's ingratitude and rebellion in response to the LORD's graciousness and provision, Moses now described some of God's actions on behalf of Israel. He urged Israel to *remember the days of old* (v. 7); that is, to call to mind the things of the past to better live in the present. As they remembered the past, the Israelites were urged to *consider the years of all generations* (literally "generation and generation") and be reminded of the deeds of the Suzerain God (Deuteronomy 4:32).

If they had trouble remembering, Moses told to the people to *ask your father, and he will inform you, your elders, and they will tell you*. In ancient Israel, where oral culture was predominant, fathers and elders were responsible to keep track of history and to pass it on to their descendants (Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19). So, Moses encouraged the current generation of Israelites to consult with their *father* and *elders* to understand their history.

In vv. 8-9, Moses provided a bit of history that Israel was to remember. In verse 8, he told them that *when the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel* (v. 8). The term *Most High* (Heb. "‘elyōn") is a title for the LORD (Gen. 14:17-20). It expresses God's supremacy over the other divine beings. It also reflects His omnipotence and sovereignty.

Moses reminded Israel that God *gave the nations their inheritance*. This asserts that God is ultimately sovereign over all nations, as asserted in Romans 13:

“For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.”  
(Romans 13:1b)

God also established *the boundaries* of the people groups *according to the number of the sons of Israel*. Certainly God set forth the lands of Israel according to God’s predetermined purpose for the Israelites (Joshua 13-22). But this verse says that God established *the boundaries of the peoples*, which would refer to the nations of the earth, *according to the number of the sons of Israel*.

This could mean that God apportioned the population of the earth such that Israel would constitute a particular percentage of the people. Perhaps this reflects the principle of God’s people serving as salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14). Salt preserves meat even though it is a small percentage of the volume. Similarly, only a small point of light is needed in order to light up an entire room. Perhaps God apportioned Israel to be a percent of the population such that it could serve its function as a priestly nation, and preserve and light up the world (Exodus 19:6).

The motif for God establishing the boundaries of the people groups *according to the number of the sons of Israel* was because *the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance* (v. 9). Out of all the nations, the Suzerain God had chosen *Jacob* (i.e., Israel) as His treasured possession, His chosen *inheritance*. He did this because of His love (Deuteronomy 7:7-8). He appointed Israel to be a people that showed the ways of harmony and flourishing to all nations, that they might also benefit from knowing God’s beneficial ways through Israel’s priestly function to them (Exodus 19:6).

This was planned from the beginning. The Israelites had a special privilege to be in a covenant relationship with the Suzerain (Ruler) God, to know His ways, and benefit from His wisdom and instruction. God’s ways lead to life and harmony, and the world’s ways lead to death and exploitation. God’s ways are the ways of light, and the world’s ways the ways of darkness.

In summary, Moses encouraged the Israelites to remember the character of their God. They needed to be reminded of His sovereignty as seen in His past actions on Israel’s behalf. If needed, they were to ask their earthly fathers some questions about what their spiritual Father, Yahweh (LORD), had done for them. This knowledge would motivate Israel to live in complete obedience

to God. This level of obedience is one that would bring many blessings to Israel, including communal harmony, the gifts of the bounty within the Promised Land, and Israel's longevity to enjoy the fruits of the land.

**Biblical Text:**

**<sup>7</sup>Remember the days of old,  
Consider the years of all generations.  
Ask your father, and he will inform you,  
Your elders, and they will tell you.**

**<sup>8</sup>When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,  
When He separated the sons of man,  
He set the boundaries of the peoples  
According to the number of the sons of Israel.**

**<sup>9</sup>For the Lord's portion is His people;  
Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance.**