

# Remember

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## Deuteronomy 4

In Exodus, God (Yahweh) entered a Covenant with Israel after delivering them from 400 years of bondage in Egypt. This was a great deliverance and fulfillment of a divine commitment to them from the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Beyond deliverance, God promised to give them a 'promised land' in which to dwell.

This covenant was 'ratified' in Exodus 24. Moses, along with 70 representative elders of Israel, agreed to the terms of the covenant. **Exodus 24:3**, *Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do."* Following verbal agreement, the covenant was entered into by a blood oath (See **Exodus 24:4-8**)

Following Israel's rebellion (unbelief) and refusal to move into their promised land, God directed them to the wilderness for 40 years. Deuteronomy picks up at this historical intersection and records the covenant renewal between God and Israel.

### I. Understanding Ancient Eastern Covenants and the Old Testament.

- A. A Suzerain covenant was a formal, politically binding treaty where a great king (the Suzerain) imposed terms on a lesser king (the Vassal) based on blessing, benefits, and protections provided by the greater King. It defined loyalty, tribute (tax), and military obligations and threatened severe sanctions for disloyalty.
- B. The Parties to a Covenant:
  - 1. The Greater King – Yahweh God (**Deut 4:1, 2, 5, 10**)
  - 2. The Lesser King - Israel
- C. The Purpose of the Covenant:
  - 1. To secure Israel's (lesser King) loyalty and exclusive allegiance to the greater King. (In ancient eastern kingdoms, covenants would stabilize borders, ensure paid tribute, secure military support, and prevent the vassal from making rival alliances.)
  - 2. Allegiance of the Vassal was rooted in the Suzerain's prior benefactions, protections, and mercies.
  - 3. Vassal recognized its complete dependence upon the Suzerain.
- D. The Outcomes of the Covenant:
  - 1. Covenants had "teeth" that provided incentives & enforceable deterrents. (conditional promises).
  - 2. For loyalty: peace, protection, stability. For breach of covenant: famine, disease, invasion, collapse.
  - 3. Lists of witnesses signed the covenant (see **Nehemiah 10:1-27** as an example).

### II. The Instructions for Obedience & Blessing (Deut 4:1-2)

- A. Obedience is a response to the King's past grace, mercy, and provisions (**Deuteronomy 1:8, 21; 2:7, 25, 31, 33; 3:3, 18**)
- B. Obedience is defined by God (Great King) and not man (lesser king), & is unalterable (**cf. Mark 7:9-13**).

### III. The Promise of Blessing and Cursing (Deut 4:3-9)

- A. The Remembrance of the matter at Baal-peor (**Deut 4:3-4; Numbers 25:1-9**)
- B. The Promise of success through obedience (**Deut 4:5-9**)
- C. The Pledge of allegiance to God (**Deut 4:15-20**)

### IV. Light for your Path

- A. The Gospel assumes a covenantal relationship between God (the Greater) and His people (the lesser).
- B. God is bound by covenant to discipline His children for disobedience.
- C. The merciful Great King offers restoration (finite number).
- D. Our need for daily renewal by the word of God (**Joshua 1:6-8; Romans 12:1**)