

Deuteronomy 13 Commentary

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Moses on Mt Nebo (Deuteronomy 34:1+)
Listen to [Mt Nebo](#) as you Ponder How Moses' [May Have Felt](#)

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deut

Source: Ryrie Study Bible

Deuteronomy

Dt 1:1-4:43	Dt 4:44-26:19		Dt 27:1-34:12	
Moses' First Discourse	Moses' Second Discourse		Moses' Third Discourse	
Historical Review	Legal Exposition		Prophetical Promises	
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Recapitulation of Wanderings	Rehearsal of Israel's Law		Ratification of Israel's Covenant	Historical Appendices
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Dt 1:1-4:43 Looking Back	Dt 4:44-11:32 Exposition of Decalogue	Dt 12:1-16:17 Ceremonial Laws	Dt 16:18-20:20 Civil Laws	Dt 21:1-26:19 Social Laws	Dt 27:1-28:68 Ratification of Covenant	Dt 29:1- 30:20 Terms of Covenant	Dt 31:1-34:12 Moses' Song, Blessing, Death
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Plains of Moab

ca. 2 Months
Moses: Author
(Except Dt 34)

Deuteronomy 13:1 "If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder,

- **a prophet:** 1Ki 13:18 Isa 9:15 Jer 6:13 Jer 23:11 Eze 13:2,3,23 Zec 13:4 Mt 7:15 24:11 Lu 6:26 2Pe 2:1 1Jn 4:1
- **a dreamer:** Jer 23:25-28 Jer 27:9 Jer 29:8,24 Zec 10:2
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

Related Passages:

Isaiah 9:15 The head is the elder and honorable man, And the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail.

Isaiah 20:3 (TRUE PROPHET) And the LORD said, "Even as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot three years as a sign and token against Egypt and Cush,

Jeremiah 6:13 "For from the least of them even to the greatest of them, Everyone is greedy for gain, And from the prophet even to the priest Everyone deals falsely.

Jeremiah 23:11 "For both prophet and priest are polluted; Even in My house I have found their wickedness," declares the LORD.

Ezekiel 13:2; 3; 23 "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who prophesy, and say to those who prophesy from their own inspiration, 'Listen to the word of the LORD! 3 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "Woe to the foolish prophets who are following their own spirit and have seen nothing. 23 therefore, you women will no longer see false visions or practice divination, and I will deliver My people out of your hand. Thus you will know that I am the LORD."

Zechariah 13:4 "Also it will come about in that day that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive

A "PROPHETABLE" WARNING

Deere introduces Deuteronomy 13 - After the general prohibition against involvement in pagan worship (Dt 12:29–31) Moses discussed three ways in which the temptation to idolatry was likely to come: through a false prophet (Dt 13:1–5), a loved one (Dt 13:6–11), or "revolutionaries" who had been successful in leading an entire town into apostasy (Dt 13:12–18). (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament](#))

Coakley - The focus of placing these instructions here would be to expand on the second commandment (have no other gods before me, Dt 5:7) since that is certainly what these false prophets would be calling the people to do. (See context in [The Moody Bible Commentary](#))

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign (oth; Lxx - semeion) or a wonder (mopheth; Lxx - teras) - Moses was a prophet about whom it is written "Since then no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." (Dt 34:10) as was his brother Aaron, who was a prophet for Moses (Ex 7:1).

THOUGHT - From context this is clearly not a true Spirit filled, Word centered, God glorifying prophet but a false prophet. That said, note clearly that a false prophet can give a sign or a wonder. Yes, that was then, but this is now. Could a false prophet still give a sign or a wonder? Yes. Paul's words therefore apply to NT believers - 1 Th 5:20 **Do not despise** prophetic utterances ([present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)). 21 But examine ([dokimazo](#) in [present imperative](#) see [our need to depend](#)

[on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good; 22 abstain from every form of evil.

True prophets were described in Numbers 11 "So a young man ran and told Moses and said, " Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders. And **when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied**. But they did not do it again. 26 But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. And the Spirit rested upon them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp. **Eldad and Medad are prophesying** in the camp." 28 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, "Moses, my lord, restrain them." 29 But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!" (Nu 11:25-29+)

Teachers/prophets must be tested - cf. Deut. 18:20–22; Matthew 7; 24:24; 1 John 4:1–6; 2 Pet. 3:15–16.

Wiersbe - God raised up prophets in Israel during those times when the people needed to be called back to the faithful worship of the Lord. It has often been said that prophets weren't just "foretellers"; they were primarily forth-tellers who declared the Word of the Lord in the name of the Lord. The faithful prophet spoke in God's name and gave only God's message for God's glory and for the good of God's people. The key phrase in Deuteronomy 13 is, "Let us go after other gods" (vv. 2, 6, 13). (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

TSK on a **prophet** - That is, one pretending to the divine inspiration and authority of the prophetic office, or a dreamer of dreams, one who pretends that some deity has spoken to him in the night season, and giveth thee a sign, {oth,} what appears to be a miraculous proof of his mission, or a wonder, {mopheth,} some portentous sign, such as an eclipse, which he, who knew when it would happen, might predict to the people, who knew nothing of the matter, and thereby accredit his pretensions. But no pretended miracles must be admitted as a proof that the people might violate the first and great commandment.

Utley - dreamer of dreams - Divination (cf. Dt 18:14–15) or the attempt to understand, foreknow, or effect the will of god/gods was common in the ancient Near East. There were many ways to divine: dreams/trances (mental states), lots, sticks (man-made items), clouds/storms/droughts (weather), birds (flight of and type of), events in the sky (movement of constellations, comets, eclipses, etc.), condition of sheep's liver (other sacrificial animals) (See [Deuteronomy 13](#))

Guzik - Dreams can be from God (as in Numbers 12:6, or in Genesis 37:5–11), or they can be false prophesies (as in Jeremiah 23:25–26). We must be careful to not put too much stock in dreams, and instead allow God to bring confirmation to any dream we believe brings a message from Him. It would be very unusual for God speak alone through a dream, without other confirmation.

NET Note - Heb "or a **dreamer of dreams**" (so KJV, ASV, NASB). The difference between a **prophet** (נָבִיא, navi') and one who foretells by **dreams** (אִלְמוּד, 'o kholem) was not so much one of office—for both received revelation by dreams (cf. Nu 12:6)—as it was of function or emphasis. The prophet was more a proclaimer and interpreter of revelation whereas the one who foretold by dreams was a receiver of revelation. In later times the role of the one who foretold by dreams was abused and thus denigrated as compared to that of the prophet (cf. Jer 23:28). **Show a sign and wonder** - תּוֹט אוֹ מוֹפֵת ('ot 'o mofet) became a formulaic way of speaking of ways of authenticating prophetic messages or other works of God (cf. Deut 28:46; Isa 20:3). The NT equivalent is the Greek term σημεῖον (sēmeion), a sign performed (used frequently in the Gospel of John, cf. Jn 2:11, 18+; Jn 20:30–31). They could, however, be counterfeited or (as here) permitted to false prophets by the LORD **as a means of testing his people**.

THOUGHT - DON'T MISS THAT LAST PHRASE IN THE NET NOTE ABOVE (AND verse 3 below) -- SUPERNATURAL SIGNS/WONDERS COULD BE A **TEST**. THIS EMPHASIZES WHY THEY MUST ALWAYS BE TESTED WITH THE PLUMB-LINE OF GOD'S WORD, ALWAYS WITH A "BEREAN-LIKE" MINDSET - Acts 17:11+. SUPERNATURAL PHENOMENA WILL BE PREVALENT IN THE LAST DAYS! - SEE Matthew 24:24+).

Sign (0226) ('oth) means a signal, a mark a miracle and is used to describe amazing events such as God bringing Israel out of Egypt (Ex 4:8, 9, Nu 14:22) or a sign serving to authenticate the message as from God (1Sa 2:34, 10:7, 9) in contrast to the signs from false prophets (Dt 13:1, 2). King Hezekiah received a **sign** from Jehovah that He would add fifteen years to his life (Isa 38:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; Gideon - Jdg 6:17-note) As an aside, while the Bible does record individuals asking for signs of divine approval or affirmation, this process is not to be the norm. In other words, it is usually not best to test God by asking Him for signs! Perhaps better is the prayer of the sick boy's father in Mark (Mk 9:24)!

QUESTION - [What was a prophet in the Old Testament?](#)

ANSWER - A prophet in the Old Testament was someone who was used by God to communicate His message to the world.

Prophets were also called “[seers](#)” because they could “see,” spiritually speaking, as God gave them insight (1 Samuel 9:9). The prophets can be divided into the “writing prophets” such as Isaiah, Daniel, Amos, and Malachi; and the “non-writing prophets” such as Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29), Micaiah (2 Chronicles 18:7), and Elisha (1 Kings 19:16). There are also some anonymous prophets in the Old Testament, such as the unnamed prophet in Judges 6:7–10.

The prophets came from a variety of backgrounds, spoke to different audiences, possessed unique styles, and used assorted methods. Most of the Old Testament prophets’ messages concerned the people of Israel; if other nations were mentioned in the [oracles](#), it was usually in connection to those nations’ dealings with Israel. Most prophets of God were men, but the Old Testament also mentions prophetesses such as Miriam (Exodus 15:20ESV), Deborah (Judges 4:4ESV), and Huldah (2 Kings 22:14ESV). All prophets shared some characteristics that made their ministries “prophetic.”

A prophet was called by God to be a prophet. Isaiah and Ezekiel were given visions of God’s glory (Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1). God told Jeremiah that he had been picked out prior even to his birth: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, / before you were born I set you apart; / I appointed you as a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). A common description of the source of the message is that “the word of the Lord came” to the prophet (Jeremiah 1:2; Ezekiel 1:3; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Jonah 1:1; Micah 1:1; Zephaniah 1:1; Haggai 1:1; Zechariah 1:1). Another description is that the prophet received an “oracle,” that is, a special revelation from God (Isaiah 13:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Numbers 24:16ESV).

A prophet was required to deliver God’s message accurately. The prophet Micaiah put it well: “As surely as the Lord lives, I can tell [the king] only what the Lord tells me” (1 Kings 22:14). Those who, like Jeremiah, tried to keep silent found they could not (Jeremiah 20:9). Those who, like Jonah, tried to avoid their responsibility were corrected (Jonah 1:3–4). Others, like the unnamed prophet from Judah who directly disobeyed the divine command, lost their lives (1 Kings 13:15–24).

A prophet sometimes had a unique appearance. Elijah was known for wearing “a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist” (2 Kings 1:8). Elijah’s mantle that he left for Elisha was also seen as a symbol of the prophetic office (2 Kings 2:13–14). God told Ezekiel to shave his head and beard (Ezekiel 5:1). Other prophets were set apart in other ways: Jeremiah, for example, was told he could not marry (Jeremiah 16:2); Hosea was told to marry a prostitute (Hosea 1:2). All prophets were recognized as those through whom God spoke (even if their message was not welcome).

A prophet often led a hard life. Isaiah was sent to a people “ever hearing, but never understanding” (Isaiah 6:9), and (according to tradition) he was eventually murdered for his efforts. Ezekiel ministered to “a rebellious people” (Ezekiel 12:2). The queen of Israel sought to take Elijah’s life (1 Kings 19:2). Jeremiah was thrown into a cistern, where he “sank down into the mud” (Jeremiah 38:6). Jesus spoke of Jerusalem as those “who kill the prophets and stone those sent” to them (Luke 13:34), and, speaking to the Jewish leaders of his day, Stephen asked this condemning question: “Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute?” (Acts 7:52).

Often, a prophet in the Old Testament predicted the future. Sometimes, the prophecies concerned events that were soon to happen; for example, Joseph predicted seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine in Egypt, events that occurred within the next fourteen years (Genesis 41:25–36). Many other prophets foresaw things in the distant future; for example, many of Daniel’s and Zechariah’s prophecies concern the second coming of Christ and other end-times events (Daniel 12:1; Zechariah 12:10).

The Old Testament also mentions false prophets. These were liars who claimed to speak for God but were intent upon deceiving the people or serving their own interests. Ahab had nearly four hundred such false prophets in his employ (1 Kings 22:6, 23). Nehemiah’s work was opposed by several false prophets and one false prophetess (Nehemiah 6:14). The test of a prophet was 100 percent accuracy in what he said (Deuteronomy 18:22). If a prophet’s predictions did not come true, then he could not have been speaking for God, since God never lies (Numbers 23:19).

The role of Old Testament prophet reached its consummation in the person of John the Baptist, who was predicted in Malachi 4:5 (cf. Luke 7:26–27); and in Jesus Christ, who was the Prophet “like Moses” predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15 (cf. Acts 3:22). [↓ GotQuestions.org](#)

Related Resources:

- [What are prophetic dreams? Does God give prophetic dreams to people today? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [What is a prophet in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [How many prophets are in the Bible? | GotQuestions.org](#)
- [Was Jesus a prophet? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Deuteronomy 13:2 and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after

- De 18:22 Ex 7:22 1Ki 13:3 Jer 28:9 Mt 7:22-23 Mt 24:24 2Co 11:13-15 2Th 2:9-11 Rev 13:13-14
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

Related Passages:

Matthew 7:22-23+ "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, **did we not prophesy in Your name**, and in Your name cast out demons, and **in Your name perform many miracles?**' 23 "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you (NOT GENUINE BELIEVERS!); **DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.**'

Matthew 24:24+ "For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.

1 Kings 13:3 Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, "This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, 'Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.'"

Revelation 13:13-14+ (FALSE PROPHET OF REVELATION) He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. 14 And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who *had the wound of the sword and has come to life.

2 Thessalonians 2:9-11+ (THE ANTICHRIST) that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, 10 and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. 11 For this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they will believe what is false,

Deuteronomy 18:21-22 "You may say in your heart, 'How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?' 22 "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

TRUE WONDERS FROM FALSE WORKERS

and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve (Heb - [abad](#); Lxx - [latreuo](#)) them - Notice that the prophet's message comes true but is followed by a false message! The accuracy of his prophecy would be a bit like a lure on a fish hook, and would serve to entice others to go after idols. To reiterate, false prophets can perform true signs and wonders! Do not be deceived! Moses gives the "test" of a prophet. Remember the word prophet means means to speak forth and true prophets are like mouthpieces so to speak for the true God. False prophets serve as the mouthpiece of Satan and/or his demons. Note also that first you go after (Hebrew is imperfect - continually going after) them and then you end up serving them, worshipping them. The phrase other gods whom you have not known hearkens back to the "Shema" and why it is so critically important to always remember to "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" (Dt 6:4+)

Signs don't test truth.

Truth tests signs!

The warning not to **Go after** ("let us follow" - NET) a is repeatedly given - Dt 6:14; 8:19; 11:28; 13:2, 6, 13; 28:14; 29:18, 26. Similarly the warning not to **serve** idols is repeated in Dt 5:9; 7:4, 16; 8:19; 11:16; 13:2, 6, 13; 17:3; 28:14, 36, 64; 29:18, 26; 30:17; 31:20.

Those who are immediately convinced at the sight of supernatural power or reality are in danger of great deception.

-- David Guzik

Deere - Miracles happen in many religions because Satan uses false religions and false prophets to deceive the world (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15; Eph. 6:11; Rev. 12:9). So Moses warned the people that the standard for truth must never be a miraculous sign or wonder (or other areas of human experience). The standard of truth is the Word of God. (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament](#))

The converse of this is described in Dt 18:22+ "When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if the thing does not come about

or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him." Deuteronomy 18:22 tells what to do with a prophet who speaks a word and it does not come to pass. But this passage tells what to do with a prophet who speaks a word and it comes to pass, but they then speak against what God has already revealed in His word.

Did Israel hear and heed this warning? Read Jeremiah 25:3-10 (addressed to the Southern Kingdom, the Northern Kingdom having already been taken into exile by Assyria in 722 BC)

3 "From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, even to this day, these twenty-three years the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken to you again and again, but you have not listened. 4 **"And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the prophets again and again, but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear,** 5 saying, 'Turn now everyone from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and dwell on the land which the LORD has given to you and your forefathers forever and ever; 6 and **do not go after other gods to serve them and to worship them,** and do not provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands, and I will do you no harm.' 7 **"Yet you have not listened to Me,"** declares the LORD, "in order that you might provoke Me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm. 8 "Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Because you have not obeyed My words, 9 behold, I will send and take all the families of the north,' declares the LORD, 'and I will send to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them and make them a horror and a hissing, and an everlasting desolation. (THIS WAS FULFILLED FULLY IN 586 BC).

QUESTION - [What does the Bible say about false prophets?](#)

ANSWER - A false prophet is a person who spreads false teachings or messages while claiming to speak the Word of God. In the Bible, false prophets also spoke on behalf of false gods. False prophets functioned in their prophetic role illegitimately or for the purpose of deception. The Bible denounces false prophets for leading people astray.

In the Old Testament, the actual term *false prophet* does not occur, but references to false prophets are evident and abundant. In the book of Jeremiah, we encounter a clear description of false prophets: "Then the LORD said to me, 'The prophets are prophesying lies in my name. I have not sent them or appointed them or spoken to them. They are prophesying to you false visions, divinations, idolatries and the delusions of their own minds'" (Jeremiah 14:14; see also Jer 23:21–33; Zechariah 10:2).

The primary difference between men like Jeremiah—a true prophet of God—and false prophets was their source of information. Rather than speak the Word of the Lord, false prophets delivered messages that originated in their own hearts and minds: "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD'" (Jeremiah 23:16; see also Jer 14:14; 23:25–32; Ezekiel 13:1–7). God distances Himself from all false prophets: "I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied" (Jeremiah 23:21).

Another difference between true prophets and false prophets in the Bible is motivation. True prophets are motivated by loyalty to God above all else, whereas false prophets are motivated by self-interest and a desire to be popular among the people (1 Kings 22:13–14). While Jeremiah foretold the grim truth of coming desolation upon Jerusalem (Jeremiah 4), the false prophets promised peace (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11). Naturally, the people of Judah preferred the pleasant messages of the false prophets: "Don't tell us what is right. Tell us nice things. Tell us lies" (Isaiah 30:10NLT).

Often false prophets were hired for payment or spoke their messages for financial gain: "Her leaders judge for a bribe, her priests teach for a price, and her prophets tell fortunes for money. Yet they look for the LORD's support and say, 'Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us'" (Micah 3:11; see also Nehemiah 6:12–13; Jeremiah 6:13–14; Ezekiel 13:19; 2 Peter 2:1–3).

Israel could not always discern the difference between a true and false prophet. In 1 Kings 22:1-53, King Jehoshaphat of Judah sought counsel from the Lord before he and King Ahab of Israel embarked on their mission to retake the city of Ramoth in Gilead. Jehoshaphat heard the predictions of victory from Ahab's 400 counselors but suspected that these men were false prophets who did not have the mind of the Lord. Jehoshaphat's suspicions were correct: they were Ahab's "yes men," false prophets who had no concern for relating the true Word of God. They merely said what the king wanted to hear and collected their salary from the royal treasury.

Jehoshaphat asked if there was another prophet who could give a second opinion. Ahab called for the prophet Micaiah, albeit reluctantly: "I hate him," Ahab complained, "because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad" (1 Kings 22:8). True to form, Micaiah prophesied that Ahab would be killed in the battle and Israel would be "scattered on the hills like sheep without

a shepherd” (1 Ki 22:17). Micaiah, whose words came to pass, proved to be the true prophet of God. None of the false prophets in Ahab’s court could keep the king alive.

The punishment specified for false prophets in the Old Testament was severe: “If any prophet dares to speak a message in My name that I have not commanded to speak, or to speak in the name of other gods, that prophet must be put to death” (Deuteronomy 18:20).

In the New Testament, Jesus taught about false prophets in His Sermon on the Mount: “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit” (Matthew 7:15–18).

Jesus went on to explain the grave consequences of being a false prophet: “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:19–23).

The Bible describes false prophets as adulterous (Jeremiah 23:14), treacherous (Zephaniah 3:4), drunkards (Isaiah 28:7), wicked (Jeremiah 23:11), liars (Jeremiah 14:14; 23:14), and associated with divination and witchcraft (Jeremiah 14:14; Ezekiel 22:28; Acts 13:6). Scripture teaches believers to be diligent in faith and devotion to Christ’s teachings so that they will be able to spot false prophets and false teachers quickly (2 Peter 1:10; 1:19–2:1; 1 John 4:1). Thankfully, the Bible outlines foolproof tests for recognizing a false prophet. The key is to know what a true prophet is like:

- A true prophet’s words will be fulfilled (Deuteronomy 18:21–22; Jeremiah 28:8–9).
- A true prophet’s teachings are consistent with Scripture (2 Peter 1:20–21; Revelation 22:18–19).
- A true prophet’s teachings will encourage righteous behavior and provide spiritual benefit (Deuteronomy 13:1–4; Jeremiah 23:13–14, 32; Ezekiel 13:17–23; 14:4–8; Lamentations 2:14).
- A true prophet’s life will reflect a divine call (Isaiah 28:7; Jeremiah 23:10–11, 14; 29:9; Zephaniah 3:4; Matthew 7:15–20).
- A true prophet will acknowledge Jesus Christ as divine (1 John 4:1–6). [| GotQuestions.org](http://GotQuestions.org)

Deuteronomy 13:3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

- **listen:** Isa 8:20 Ac 17:11 Eph 4:14 1Jn 4:1
- **test:** De 8:2 Ps 66:10 Ps 81:7 Mt 24:24 1Co 11:19 2Th 2:11 1Jn 2:19 4:4 Rev 13:14
- **love the Lord your God:** De 6:5 2Co 8:8
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 8:2-6+ - You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, **testing you, to know what was in your heart**, whether you would **keep His commandments or not**. 3 “He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. 4” Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. 5 “Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. 6 “Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him.

You shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams- Listen means to hear and do, not simply passively to hear. Having tested their proclamation with the Word of truth, their proclamation to pursue other gods is clearly false regardless of what signs accompany the proclamation. Mose says don't even listen to them!

THOUGHT - Godly discernment will always carefully examine the message of a spiritual leader, instead of the spiritual experiences which may surround him or her. (Guzik)

For - Term of explanation, explaining why the Almighty would even allow these false prophets and dreamers. They could do nothing

unless the sovereign God allowed them.

the LORD your God is testing you to find out if you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul! So while God is not the source of evil, He can and will use evil people to test His people. The test is regarding their hearts. If they love the LORD they will obey the LORD and not listen to the false prophets/dreamers even if they perform miraculous signs.

THOUGHT - all your heart and with all your soul (Dt 6:5; 7:9; 10:12; 11:1, 13, 22; 13:3; 19:9; 30:6, 16, 20) is God's call for total devotion to Himself, not "half-hearted" devotion! Beloved, how would you describe your devotion to the Lord? Do you have one foot in the church (especially on Sunday) and one foot in the world? James 4:4+ clearly states "You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." John adds "**Do not love** (STOP THIS - [present imperative with a negative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. ." (1 Jn 2:15-17+)

Utley - God puts humans in situations of testing or temptation in order to know and strengthen their faith/trust/obedience in Him (cf. Gen. 22:1–12; Exod. 15:25; 16:4; 20:20; Deut. 8:2, 16; Jdgs. 2:22; 3:1, 4; 2 Chr. 32:31). (See [Deuteronomy 13](#))

Wiersbe - The test is not the person's ability to perform miracles, for even Satan can do that (2 Cor. 11:13–15; 2 Thess. 2:9–12), but his or her fidelity to the truth of God. Any leader who tempts us away from the Lord and His Word is an enemy and must be rejected. (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

NET Note - The verb אָהַב ('ahav, "to **love**") in this setting communicates not so much an emotional idea as one of covenant commitment. To love the LORD is to be absolutely loyal and obedient to him in every respect, a truth Jesus himself taught (cf. John 14:15). The concept of love here is not primarily that of emotional affection but of commitment or devotion. This verse suggests that God chose Israel to be his special people because he loved the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and had promised to bless their descendants. See as well Deut 7:7–9.

Deuteronomy 13:4 "You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him.

- **follow the LORD:** De 6:13 2Ki 23:3 2Ch 34:31 Mic 6:8 Lu 1:6 Col 1:10 1Th 4:1,2
- **keep His commandments:** Jer 7:23
- **cling to Him:** De 10:20 30:20 Ro 6:13 1Co 6:17
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 6:13+ "You shall **fear** ([yare](#)) only the LORD your God; and you shall **worship** ([abad](#)) Him and **swear** by His name.

Deuteronomy 4:4+ "But you who **held fast** to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you.

Deuteronomy 11:22+ "For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and **hold fast** to Him,

Joshua 23:8+ "But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day.

Acts 11:23+ Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;

Romans 12:9+ Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; **cling** to what is good.

STICK LIKE GLUE TO YAHWEH!

You shall follow the LORD your God and fear Him; and you shall keep His commandments, listen to His voice, serve Him, and cling to Him - Beginning with the verb love in v3 note the list of verbs that flow out of a heart that loves God - **follow...fear...keep...listen...serve...cling to Him**. All are imperfect tense which generally describes actions that are not completed

(but are to keep on).

Cling (1692) **dabaq** means to stick to, adhere to, cling to, join with, stay with, stay in close proximity to and which yields the noun form for "glue". Dabaq describes something that sticks or clings to something else (Ezek 29:4 and Ezekiel's tongue to roof of his mouth Ezek. 3:26). It is interesting that one of the most concentrated uses of "dabaq" in the OT is found in this short story of Ruth (Ru 1:14, 2:8, 2:21, 23-see **notes** [Ru 1:14](#); [2:8](#); [21](#); [23](#)) -- Ruth 2:8 "stay here with my maids"; Ruth 2:21 "You should **stay close** to my servants"; Ruth 2:23 "So she **stayed close** by the maids of Boaz"

Cling is translated in Lxx with [kollao](#) meaning to be joined closely together, to be a follower (Acts 17:34), to be "glued" together, adhering and cleaving to Yahweh.

Facts of the Matter - Newell Hillis - Devotional from February 7: Clinging To The Lord Your God

" You are to cling to the Lord your God." – These were Joshua's parting words to wayward Israel, just before his death. (Joshua 23:8)

CLING: " To hold fast to something, as by grasping, sticking, embracing, or winding around". As a wet raincoat would CLING to your back.As a person on the verge of death would CLING to life. "To remain attached in thought or practice". " To follow close after, pursue hard; to resist separation".

Jesus put it this way: " If anyone wants to follow in my footsteps, he must give up all right to himself... and**keep close behind me.**" (Luke 9:23a+ – Phillips)

CLINGING conveys the sense of desperation: That there is no other viable option

QUESTION: ARE YOU CLINGING TO CHRIST? Or to:

- Your bank account?
- Your reputation?
- Your capabilities?

SELF SUFFICIENCY is the arrogant assumption that I can go it alone... without God. CLINGING is the humble acknowledgment that I must be intimately connected to God for life to make sense and to be worth living. In Joshua's admonition to CLING to God he gives this warning:

" If you ever go back and CLING to the rest of these nations (i.e. the world and its values)... (they) shall be to you as: A snare and a trap... A whip on your sides... Thorns in your eyes... until you perish from off this good land which the Lord your God has given you." (Joshua 23:12)

QUESTIONS:

1. Are you CLINGING to Christ?
2. Or do you have it so together that you can go it alone?
3. If so, are you willing to pay the price of independence?

Deuteronomy 13:5 "But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall purge the evil from among you.

- **prophet:** De 18:20 1Ki 18:40 Isa 9:14,15 28:17,18 Jer 14:15 28:15-17 Jer 29:21,22 Zec 13:3 Rev 19:20
- **seduce you from the way:** De 13:10 7:4 Jer 50:6 Ac 13:8 2Ti 4:4,5
- **purge the evil** De 17:7 19:19 22:21,24 24:7 1Co 5:13 Heb 12:14,15
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

**PURGING EVIL
PROPHETS**

But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death- No counseling, no compromise.

Utley - YHWH is concerned with the pollution of His worship as Deuteronomy 12 clearly shows. If the worship of YHWH had become polluted here, the NT would not be a reality. God was concerned that His people perform their worship in the exact way He commanded (cf. Dt 4:2; 12:32). If it was not pure worship, the consequence was death, which included Canaanites and false prophets within Israel (cf. Dt 13:5, 9, 15). Seduction was possible for individuals within the community (cf. Dt 4:19; 13:5, 10). (See [Deuteronomy 13](#))

Later Israel did not apply capital punishment to false prophets except in rare situations (1Ki 18:40)

because he has counseled rebellion against the LORD your God- Rebellion ([sarah](#)) has the root idea of turning aside and comes from another Hebrew word meaning to be stubborn, both of which give a good picture of the effect of the counsel of false prophets which might cause defection or apostasy (cf Jer 28:16, 32). God is a jealous God and the prophet who seeks to try to pull His possession Israel away from Him pays for it with their life.

The teaching in Dt 7:26+ helps understand why the false prophet deserved the death penalty - "You shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban (THAT IS UNDER DESTRUCTION); you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned." In other words if the false prophet led them to bring abominations into their house, they themselves would be an object of divine wrath, so their destruction of the prophet was proper.

Who brought you from the land of Egypt and redeemed ([padah](#); Lxx = [lutroo](#)) **you from the house of slavery, to seduce you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk** - Israel needed to remember what God did for them, paying a price to release them from bondage (the blood of a spotless lamb). He did not extract them from slavery to the Egyptians to be made slaves to false gods. **Seduce** means to be misled and was used in Dt 4:19+ in the warning to Israel to not look at the stars and **be drawn away** ([nadach](#)) to worship and serve them!

Seduce ([05080](#))([nadach](#)) meaning to banish, to drive away, to scatter. It is used in various ways to indicate the idea of forcefully removing, impelling, or driving out: of the dispersion, the **scattering of Israel into exile** (Dt. 30:1, 4; Jer 23:2, 3, 8, 9, Jer. 40:12; 43:5; 46:28; Mic. 4:6, Da 9:7 **have driven** them", Isa 56:8 = "**dispersed** of Israel"); of driving out something in a figurative sense (Job 6:13); Zion herself was considered an outcast, one driven out (Jer. 30:17). Dt. 22:1 = "your countryman's ox or his sheep **straying away**". It means to be impelled to do something, e.g., by the lure of idolatry and false gods (Dt. 4:19; 30:17); Pr. 7:21 = "With her many persuasions she **entices** him".

Utley says nadach "means "thrust." These false prophets (Dt 13:1) and supposedly covenant members (Dt 13:6) were trying to impel believers away from YHWH to other national gods. Nadach (cf. Dt 13:5, 12; 4:19; 2 Ki 17:21) is parallel to "entice" of Dt 13:6. It is interesting that this same Hebrew root is used to describe the exile (i.e., scattering).

Vine - "to drive out, banish, thrust, move." This word is found primarily in biblical Hebrew, although in late Hebrew it is used in the sense of "to beguile." Nādaḥ occurs approximately 50 times in the Hebrew Old Testament, and its first use is in the passive form: "And lest thou ...shouldest be driven to worship them..." (Deut. 4:19). The implication seems to be that an inner "drivenness" or "drawing away," as well as an external force, was involved in Israel's potential turning toward idolatry. Nādaḥ expresses the idea of "being scattered" in exile, as in Jer. 40:12: Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven...." Job complained that any resource he once possessed no longer existed, for it "is ... driven quite from me" (Job 6:13). Evil "shepherds" or leaders did not lead but rather "drove away" and scattered Israel (Jer. 23:2). The enemies of a good man plot against him "to thrust him down from his eminence" (Psa. 62:4, rsv).

Nadach - 53v - banish(1), banished(3), banished one(3), bring down(1), dispersed(1), drawn away(2), drive(3), driven(11), driven away(5), hunted(1), led...astray(1), outcast(2), outcasts(6), scatter(1), scattered(4), seduce(2), seduced(1), seduces(1), straying away(1), swinging(1), swings(1), thrust(1), thrust down(1), will not be cast out(1). Deut. 4:19; Deut. 13:5; Deut. 13:10; Deut. 13:13; Deut. 19:5; Deut. 20:19; Deut. 22:1; Deut. 30:1; Deut. 30:4; Deut. 30:17; 2 Sam. 14:13; 2 Sam. 14:14; 2 Sam. 15:14; 2 Chr. 13:9; 2 Chr. 21:11; Neh. 1:9; Job 6:13; Ps. 5:10; Ps. 62:4; Ps. 147:2; Prov. 7:21; Isa. 8:22; Isa. 11:12; Isa. 13:14; Isa. 16:3; Isa. 16:4; Isa. 27:13; Isa. 56:8; Jer. 8:3; Jer. 16:15; Jer. 23:2; Jer. 23:3; Jer. 23:8; Jer. 24:9; Jer. 27:10; Jer. 27:15; Jer. 29:14; Jer. 29:18; Jer. 30:17; Jer. 32:37; Jer. 40:12; Jer. 43:5; Jer. 46:28; Jer. 49:5; Jer. 49:36; Jer. 50:17; Ezek. 4:13; Ezek. 34:4; Ezek. 34:16; Dan. 9:7; Joel 2:20; Mic. 4:6; Zeph. 3:1

So you shall purge the evil from among you - As a pathologist I ran the Cancer conference and one thing that we would always

say is that the best way to cure cancer is to make sure it is completely cut out (if it is the type of malignancy that can be subjected to radical surgery). These prophets were evil and their evil leaven would spread if not completely obliterated. **Purge** means to consume (used of burning bush "not consumed" - Ex 3:2-3) and in the Septuagint is [aphanizo](#) meaning to cause to disappear, make invisible or unrecognizable.

Purge the evil is a **key phrase** only in this book, but one used repeatedly by Moses calling for Israel to be a "pure" nation - Deut. 13:5; Deut. 17:7; Deut. 17:12; Deut. 19:19; Deut. 22:21; Deut. 22:22; Deut. 22:24; Deut. 24:7

Wiersbe - Paul quoted it in 1 Corinthians 5:13+ with reference to discipline in the local church. We don't stone guilty people in our churches, but we should expel from the fellowship any that openly live in sin and refuse to repent and obey the Word of God. Why? For the same reason the idolater was removed (by death) from the nation of Israel: sin is like yeast and when it's not purged, it will spread and infect others (1 Cor. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9). Just as a surgeon removes cancerous tissue from a patient's body to keep it from spreading, so the local body of believers must experience surgery, no matter how painful, to maintain the spiritual health of the church. (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

NET Note - Heb "your midst" (so NAB, NRSV). The severity of the judgment here (i.e., capital punishment) is because of the severity of the sin, namely, high treason against the Great King. Idolatry is a violation of the first two commandments (Deut 5:6-10) as well as the spirit and intent of the Shema (Deut 6:4-5).

Deuteronomy 13:6 "If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom neither you nor your fathers have known,

- thy brother: De 17:2,3 28:54 Ge 16:5 Pr 5:20 18:24 Mic 7:5-7 Mt 12:48-50 2Co 5:16
- which is: 1Sa 18:1,3 20:17 2Sa 1:26
- entice: Job 31:27 Ga 2:4 Eph 4:14 Col 2:4 2Pe 2:1 1Jn 2:26,27 Rev 12:9 Rev 13:14 20:3
- which thou: De 32:16-18 Jdg 2:13 5:8 10:6 1Ki 11:5-7 2Ki 17:30,31
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

WARNING EXTENDS TO RELATIVES/FRIENDS WHO ENTICE

If your brother, your mother's son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom neither you nor your fathers have known - NET = "Suppose your own full brother, your son, your daughter, your beloved wife, or your closest friend should seduce you secretly and encourage you to go and serve other gods that neither you nor your ancestors have previously known" (Deu 13:6NET) **Secretly** is [cether/seter](#) which is translated in the Septuagint with **lathra** meaning to do something without others being aware.

Deere - "Perhaps the most tragic and painful of all situations which Moses could envision was a temptation to idolatry by a loved one. He showed he understood the depth of the tragedy as he deliberately described the various relationships involved with endearing terminology." (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament](#))

Wiersbe - what if the temptation is secret and the worship of the idol is also **secret**? As long as you maintained your public image as a worshiper of Jehovah, you might get away with being a secret Baal worshiper. But to this suggestion, Moses gave a resounding, "No!" Even if man's own wife enticed him to worship idols—King Solomon comes to mind (1 Kings 11:1-13)—the husband was not to shield her but was to take her to the authorities and even participate in her execution. The Jews were to love the Lord their God even more than they loved their own mates or family Jesus laid down a similar condition for discipleship (Luke 14:25-27+). (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

The phrase **whom neither you nor your fathers have known** has the verb [yada](#) which means speaks of intimacy and so the idea is not that the Israelites had never heard about the false gods but that they had never known them intimately or by personal experience.

NET Note - Heb "your brother, the son of your mother." In a polygamous society it was not rare to have half brothers and sisters by way of a common father and different mothers.

Secretly (05643) [cether/seter](#) is a masculine noun which has the root idea of "hide" with the subordinate thought of protection involved when one is hidden (eg, Jonathan's instruction to David so King Saul might not

kill him - 1Sa 19:2). **Secret** implies concealment on any grounds for any motive (good and bad). It is notable that sexual sin is frequently described as secret (cether) as in 2Sa 12:12 where David did committed his sin with Bathsheba "secretly", **Cether/seter** is used adverbially with the sense of "secretly" or "in secret" as in Dt 13: 6; 2Sa. 12:12; Ps 139:15; Pr 9:17; Jer. 38:16. Isa. 45:19; 48:16 declare that God's word is not spoken in secret.

Deuteronomy 13:7 of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end),

- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end)- NET = "the gods of the surrounding people (whether near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other)." Again the warning is against the pagan idols whether near or far, for they are all detestable to God and deadly to Israel's spiritual condition.

Uteley has an interesting comment - This text has several possible interpretations. The phrase can refer to: (1) the Canaanite gods, whether in the north or south of Canaan ("earth" = "land"), (2) foreign gods, whether in Mesopotamia or Palestine ("near you or far from you") or (3) particular caution against the worship of astral gods, whether the sun, moon, stars, planets, constellations, comets, shooting stars, novas, eclipses, etc. (things that rise and set) (See [Deuteronomy 13](#))

Deuteronomy 13:8 you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him.

- **you shall not yield** : Ex 20:3 Pr 1:10 Ga 1:8,9 1Jn 5:21
- **shall not pity him**: De 7:16 19:13 Eze 5:11 9:5,6
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

RESPONSE TO SEDUCTION

Here we see a list of five negatives of how one is to treat the person who is seeking to follow false gods.

you shall not yield to him or listen to him - The first response is don't **yield** (become willing, consent acquiesce, desire). Then don't even listen ([shama](#)) which conveys the sense of to hear and heed (or respond). These two responses are closely linked for if you **listen**, you might be tempted and if tempted you might **yield**.

Uteley comments on turning in a loved one to be stoned! - This is the heart of individual covenant responsibility. This is a radical statement in the context of the cultural structure where family was most important (cf. Matt. 10:34–39; Luke 14:25–27). (See [Deuteronomy 13](#))

and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him - The next responses are no sympathy, no sparing (from punishment) and no covering up for him. Do not let your human emotions affect your actions required by God. One might tend to show mercy and/or cover up if they were relatives, but were not to do so!

- Shall not pity - Deut. 7:16; Deut. 13:8; Deut. 19:13
- Not show pity - Deut. 19:21; Deut. 25:12

God's commands were to rule over human feelings.

- Jack Deere

Deuteronomy 13:9 "But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

- **But**: De 17:2-7 Mt 10:37 Lu 14:26

- **hand:** De 17:7 Joh 8:7 Ac 7:58
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

Related Passage:

Deuteronomy 17:7+ "The hand of the witnesses **shall be first against him to put him to death**, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.

EXECUTION OF RELATIVES OR FRIENDS WHO ENTICE

But - Stark term of contrast. Not compassion but execution!

you shall surely kill him - In Hebrew the verb for to **kill** is twice ("kill kill") for emphasis and is reflected in the translation "surely kill." **Kill him** is by stoning as shown in next passage. See similar penalty in Dt 17:2-7+. Imagine killing your relative with your own hand! This shows how sinister is the seductive influence seeking to draw them to worship false gods. It had to be totally eradicated.

Your (the accuser's) **hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people**- Imagine casting the first stone against your relative! But to do so was clear testimony that the accused was guilty for this stipulation would inhibit false testimony (cf Dt 5:20+). In other words a false accuser would not want to cast a stone at an innocent person (to do so they themselves would be guilty of premeditated murder!)The reason all the people needed to cast stones was to show they agreed with God's statutes against idolatry.

Deuteronomy 13:10 "So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

- **stone him:** De 21:21 Lev 20:2,27 24:14-16,23 Nu 15:35,36 Jos 7:25 2Ch 24:21
- **brought:** Ex 20:2
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

Related Passage:

Zechariah 13:3+ "And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, 'You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the LORD'; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies.

So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce (nadach) you from the LORD your God- Literally the Hebrew reads "Stone him with stones." Enticement of others to follow other gods was simply not tolerated and had to be completely exterminated because of its leaven like effect on the family or tribe. Stoning was the method of killing the offender for in this way all the adults could participate and in essence "cast their vote" against the worship of idols!

Utley - Stoning was a capital punishment which was done by the whole covenantal community (cf. Lev. 20:2, 27; 24:13–23; Num. 15:32–36; Deut. 13:10; 21:21; Josh 7:22–26). This is not the regular term used for judicial capital punishment. This term speaks of the urgency of immediate, radical purging of evil (cf. Exod. 32:27; Lev. 20:15, 16; Num. 25:5; Deut. 13:10; Ezek. 9:6). Persons were stoned by the community for: idolatry, Lev. 20:2–5 (also possibly 6–8); Deut. 13:1–5; 17:2–7, blasphemy, Lev. 24:10–23; 1 Kings 11–14; Luke 4:29; Acts 7:58 (both reflect Exod. 22:28); also note John 8:59; 10:31; 11:8, rejection of parental authority, Deut. 21:18–21 (possibly Lev. 20:9), marital unfaithfulness, Deut. 22:22, 23–27 (possibly Lev. 20:10–16, treason (known disobedience to YHWH), Joshua 7 (See [Deuteronomy 13](#); See [SPECIAL TOPIC: STONE TO DEATH](#))

Wiersbe - We must love truth more than we love people, no matter how painful our differences may be (Pr 1:10ff.). Either one person's sin affects the whole nation (Josh. 7), or the whole nation must deal with that one person's sin. (See context in [With the Word: The Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Handbook](#) or borrow [With the Word](#) - excellent resource for "pearls" when preaching or teaching)

NET Note- Execution by means of pelting the offender with stones afforded a mechanism whereby the whole community could share in it. In a very real sense it could be done not only in the name of the community and on its behalf but by its members (cf. Lev 24:14; Num 15:35; Deut 21:21; Josh 7:25).

Scott - By this law, every Israelite was bound in conscience to inform against, to prosecute, and to assist at the execution of any

one, even the nearest relation or friend, who attempted to persuade him to idolatry; yet it is observable that parents and husbands are not expressly mentioned in the list of those who were thus publicly accused.

Deere has an interesting comment - This passage may have been in Jesus' mind when He demanded a similar commitment of His followers (cf. Matt. 10:34–39+; Luke 14:26+). (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament](#))

who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery - This is a repeated refrain - Ex. 13:3, 14; 20:2; Deut. 5:6; 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; 13:5. Israel is reminded that they were bought and brought with a price and belonged to one God, Yahweh. How tragic to be delivered from physical slavery and then be seduced into spiritual slavery.

Related Resource:

- [What does the Bible say about stoning? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Deuteronomy 13:11 "Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.

- De 17:13 Dt 19:20 Pr 19:25 21:11 1Ti 5:20
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

STONING A DETERRENT

Then - When is then? When the stones kill the one who seduces others away from Yahweh.

all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you - This is the ideal effect of the stoning. The news would spread and serve as a warning to anyone tempted to carry out this sin. See Dt 17:12–13; 19:15–21; 21:18–21; Ro. 13:4.

THOUGHT - In Acts Ananias and Sapphira were killed for lying about their contribution and Luke records "great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things." (Acts 5:11+) The inhibiting effect of God's righteous punishment had an impact on the church. Sadly, I am aware of a case where a married church leader developed HIV and died, but the truth of his secret life was never brought before the people. [Sweeping exposed, secret sin of church leaders under the rug](#) is never good for the purity of the body of Christ!

NET Note - Some see in this statement an argument for the deterrent effect of capital punishment (Deut 17:13; 19:20; 21:21).

Guzik - Many modern researchers and pundits say that capital punishment is no deterrent to crime. God says it is a deterrent (properly practiced, of course).

Wiersbe - The lesson for the church is, "Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20NKJV). During my years of pastoral ministry, I was occasionally contacted by heartbroken ministers who were unable to deal with flagrant sinners in the church because the offenders had relatives on the board or in the congregation. How sad it is when the testimony of a church is totally destroyed because of people who put their family ahead of God and His Word. "Peace at any price" isn't the biblical way to deal with problems, for "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable" (James 3:17). Unity that is based on hypocrisy will never last. On the other hand, I have seen godly people stand with the congregation in disciplining their own relatives who had brought disgrace to the name of Christ and the church. (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

Deuteronomy 13:12 "If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, anyone saying that

- Jos 22:11-34 Jdg 20:1,2-17
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

TALE OF AN "APOSTATE TOWN"

This last section deals with an entire town that would carry out seduction to other gods similar to actions describe for the false prophets and relatives/friends in Dt 13:1-11.

If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, anyone saying that The theme of counseling Israelites to leave the LORD, continues.

Deuteronomy 13:13 some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known),

- **some worthless men** Jdg 19:22 20:13 1Sa 2:12 10:27 25:17,25 2Sa 16:7 20:1 23:6 1Ki 21:10,13 2Ch 13:7 Joh 8:44 2Co 6:15 1Jn 3:10
- **gone:** De 4:19 2Ki 17:21 1Jn 2:19 Jude 1:19
- **Let us:** De 13:2,6
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

WORTHLESS SEDUCERS

Some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced ([nadach](#)) the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known) - KJV has "children of Belial." **NIV** = "wicked men have arisen among you and have led the people of their town astray." **From among you** indicates they are of the children of Israel, albeit they are **worthless!** Notice that it says they have seduced the inhabitants, not they might try to seduce them. The implication is that they successfully seduce the inhabitants of the city to sin against Yahweh and go after other gods.

Moses alluded to this problem in Exodus 23:2 **"You shall not follow the masses in doing evil,** nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice."

Wiersbe asks "How could an entire town in Israel turn away from the Lord and start worshiping false gods? By failing to deal with the first persons in the town who turned to false gods. The leaders didn't obey God's law and purge the evil from the town, so the sin easily spread from person to person and eventually infected everybody. When you remember that the land belonged to the Lord (Lev. 25:23), that He graciously allowed the Jews to live there, and that He alone had the right to lay down the rules, you can see that the idolatrous town was guilty of very serious sin." (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

Worthless ([01100](#))([beliyyaal](#) from **beli** + **ya'al**: "not, without" and "to be of use, worth, or profit.") A worthless person, good for nothing to himself or others, and capable of nothing but mischief. Some feel that the word **Belial** can be traced to the false god Baal, and is also a term for yoke (they cast off the yoke of decency), and a term for entangling or injuring. The LXX renders it according to the context by the terms *paranomos*, *anomia*, and *aphrōn*, i.e. "lawless, lawlessness, witless." By the NT time, Belial had become synonymous with Satan (cf. 2 Cor. 6:15+). There is one use we would all do well to ponder and in the power of the Spirit affirm or declare (or pray) to be true in our life from time to time...

I will set no **worthless** ([beliyyaal](#)) thing before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; It shall not fasten ([dabaq](#)) its grip on me. (Psalm 101:3+) (MARK IT DOWN - WORTHLESS IMAGES CAN BE VERY "STICKY" IN YOUR MIND'S EYE! I AM SPEAKING ESPECIALLY TO YOU MEN AS YOU KNOW TO WHAT I AM REFERRING!)

Walter Kaiser - "Usually it occurs in such expressions as "son(s) of Belial" (Deut. 13:14; Judges 19:22+; 1 Samuel 2:12; 2 Chr 13:7), a "daughter of Belial" (1 Samuel 1:16), "man or men of" (1 Samuel 25:25; 2 Samuel 16:7; 1 Kings 21:13; Proverbs 16:27), or a "worthless witness" (Proverbs 19:28). It appears alone in 2 Samuel 23:6 and Job 34:18. In Proverbs 6:12, the "worthless man" is equated with the "wicked man," 'ish 'āwen. He is a plotter of evil (Proverbs 16:27) as well as a counsellor of villainy" (Nahum 1:11) and a mocker of justice (Proverbs 19:28). In Psalms, *beli'ya'al* is used for torrents of perdition or destruction which overwhelmed the Psalmist (Psalm 18:5; cf. 2 Samuel 22:5), for the "deadly" thing (Psalm 41:9), or for anything base (Psalm 101:3). Many connect David's reference in Psalm 18:5 to the mythological motif of the Canaanite god of death, Mot with his open mouth, the "swallower" in the netherworld. If this is a proper connection it is only the verbiage which is borrowed in the context and not the ideology. The LXX more realistically understands the metaphor of "streams" or "waves" in Psalm 18:5 to be another of the frequent scriptural references to enemies rushing in like torrents. This concept of Belial became a proper name for the prince of evil, Satan, in the

pseudepigraphal literature, the Zadokite Document, and the War Scroll of the Dead Sea Scrolls. See also 2 Cor. 6:15 and 2 Thes. 2:3. ([Here is a link to the TWOT](#) which has no time limit on use and does allow copy and paste. Can be downloaded as PDF.)

W E Vine - "wickedness; wicked; destruction." The 27 occurrences of this noun are scattered throughout the periods of biblical Hebrew. The basic meaning of this word appears in a passage such as Jdg. 20:13+, where the sons of belīya'al are perpetrators of wickedness (they raped and murdered a man's concubine): "Now therefore deliver us the men, the children of Belial [nasb, "worthless fellows"] which are in Gibeah, that we may put them to death, and put away evil from Israel." In its first appearance the word represents men who lead others into idolatry: "Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have [seduced] the inhabitants of their city..." (Deut. 13:13). In Deut. 15:9 the word modifies Hebrew dābār, "word" or "matter." Israel is warned to avoid "wicked" words (thoughts) in their hearts. Belīya'al is a synonym for rāshā' ("wicked rebellious one") in Job 34:18. In Nah. 1:11 the wicked counselor plots evil against God. The psalmist uses belīya'al as a synonym of death: "The cords of death encompassed me, and the torrents of ungodliness [kjav, "floods of ungodly men"] terrified me" (Psa. 18:4, nasb). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#) - online)

beliyyaal 27x in 26v - NAS = base(1), destruction(1), rascally(1), scoundrels*(1), ungodliness(1), wicked(3), worthless(18), worthless one(1).; KJV = Belial 16, wicked 5, ungodly 3, evil 1, naughty 1 ungodly men 1; 27 Deut. 13:13; Deut. 15:9; Jdg. 19:22+; Jdg. 20:13+; 1 Sam. 1:16; 1 Sam. 2:12; 1 Sam. 10:27; 1 Sam. 25:17; 1 Sam. 25:25; 1 Sam. 30:22; 2 Sam. 16:7; 2 Sam. 20:1; 2 Sam. 22:5; 2 Sam. 23:6; 1 Ki. 21:10; 1 Ki. 21:13; 2 Chr. 13:7; Job 34:18; Ps. 18:4; Ps. 41:8; Ps. 101:3; Prov. 6:12; Prov. 16:27; Prov. 19:28; Nah. 1:11; Nah. 1:15

NET Note on **worthless men** - Heb "men, sons of Belial." The Hebrew term בְּלִיַּאֵל (belīyya'al) has the idea of worthlessness, without morals or scruples. Cf. NAB, NRSV "scoundrels"; TEV, CEV "worthless people"; NLT "worthless rabble."

Ryrie - Vs. 13:13-18 If a city was enticed to idolatry by worthless men, then it was to be completely destroyed. God places first priority on undivided loyalty to Himself.

Deuteronomy 13:14 then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. If it is true and the matter established that this abomination has been done among you,

- De 17:4 10:18 Nu 35:30 Isa 11:3,4 Joh 7:24 1Ti 5:19
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

CAREFUL INVESTIGATION OF ACCUSATIONS

Then - When? When they heard about worthless men advocating apostasy from the LORD.

You shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly - Three words to emphasize need for careful scrutiny verification of the accuracy of accusations before drawing conclusions. Why? Because here the fate of an entire town lie in the balance!

If it is true and the matter established that this abomination (toebah) has been done among you - If guilty the punishment is severe as described in next passage. **Abomination** in the Septuagint is [bdelugma](#) (from [bdelusso](#) = emit foul odor, turn away from something or someone on account of the "stench". A loathing or disgust, abhor in turn derived from bdeo = to stink;cf [bdekluktos](#)) which describes something foul, that which is extremely hated, disgusted, detested or abhorred.

Abomination (detestable, loathsome) ([08441](#)) [toebah](#) refers to an abominable custom or thing. Abomination. Loathsome. Detestable thing. Something or someone who is loathsome and abhorrent. When used with reference to God, this nuance of the word describes people, things, acts, relationships, and characteristics that are "detestable" to Him because they are contrary to His nature and totally devoid of holiness. Sometimes toebah is used as a synonym for idol, a repulsive thing, a worship object, with a focus that it is an item to be rejected (Dt 32:16; 2Ch 34:33; Isa 44:19, Jer 16:18; Eze 5:9; 7:20; 11:18, 21; 16:36). Toebah is even used for a specific pagan deity, as in 2Ki 23:13 where Milcom is called "the **abomination** of the Ammonites." And even prayer is an **abomination** when offered by one who refuses to obey God's Word (Pr 28:9).

Toebah in Deuteronomy - Deut. 7:25; Deut. 7:26; Deut. 12:31; Deut. 13:14; Deut. 14:3; Deut. 17:1; Deut. 17:4; Deut. 18:9; Deut. 18:12; Deut. 20:18; Deut. 22:5; Deut. 23:18; Deut. 24:4; Deut. 25:16; Deut. 27:15; Deut. 32:16

Deuteronomy 13:15 you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword.

- **destroying it utterly:** Dt 2:34 Dt 7:2,16 Ex 22:20 23:24 Lev 27:28 Jos 6:17-21,24 Jdg 20:48 Rev 17:16 18:18-24 19:2,3
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

Related Passages:

Deuteronomy 2:34 "So we captured all his cities at that time and **utterly destroyed the men, women and children of every city**. We left no survivor.

Deuteronomy 7:2 and when the LORD your God delivers them before you and you defeat them, then you shall utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them and show no favor to them.

Deuteronomy 7:16 "You shall consume all the peoples whom the LORD your God will deliver to you; your eye shall not pity them, nor shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

DESTRUCTION OF AN ENTIRE CITY

you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying [charam](#); Lxx - [anathematizo](#)) it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword- Surely strike is the same Hebrew verb repeated ("strike strike") for emphasis (just like "kill kill" in Dt 13:9). **NET** = "annihilate with the sword everyone in it, " "devoting it to destruction." (ESV) Basically they were to treat **that city** like a Canaanite city and utterly destroy it! The people of **that city** that harbored the seducing scoundrels and were seduced were also guilty.

Utley on utterly destroying - Its basic meaning is to devote something to God whereby it becomes too holy for human use and must be destroyed. It is regularly used in "holy war" contexts (cf. Dt 2:34; 7:2; Ex. 22:20; Josh. 6:17, 21) to assert that the victory and, thereby, the spoils belong to YHWH. In these conquest contexts the things devoted to God are Canaanites and their property. They are judged because of their abominable sins and unwillingness to repent (cf. Gen. 15:16; Lev. 18:24–26; Deut. 9:5). The same consequence meted out to pagans would be suffered by the Jews if they worshiped other gods. (See [Deuteronomy 3](#))

Wiersbe - Numbers do not determine truth (vv. 12–18). If an entire city turned away from God, that is no reason for us to do so. God will stand with us (Matt. 10:28–42). Our allegiance must be "to the law and to the testimony" (Isa. 8:20). (See context in [With the Word: The Chapter-by-Chapter Bible Handbook](#))

NET Note - Or "put under divine judgment. The Hebrew word (חֵרֶם, *cherem*) refers to placing persons or things under God's judgment, usually to the extent of their complete destruction. Though primarily applied against the heathen, this severe judgment could also fall upon unrepentant Israelites (cf. the story of Achan in Josh 7:21-24, 25).

Utterly destroy (destroy completely, devote)([02763](#)) [charam](#) to destroy, to doom, to devote. This word is most commonly associated with the Israelites destroying the Canaanites upon their entry into the Promised Land (Deut. 7:2; Josh. 11:20).

Surrendering something irrevocably to God = devoting to service of God, excluding it from use or abuse of man &/or putting it under a ban for utter destruction. [Dt 7:2, 20:17 - [see note](#)] Usually **haram** meant a ban for utter destruction, compulsory dedication of thing impeding or resisting God's work which is considered to be accursed before God. Thus the basic idea = setting something aside strictly for God's use. Whatever was set aside was considered most holy by God & could not be sold or redeemed by any substitutionary measure. Once invoked it was absolutely compulsory.

Walter Kaiser adds that "**Herem** (*charam*) is something devoted to God; however, it is not a voluntary but an involuntary dedication. It is now set apart to be banned from the earth and will totally come back to God. Thus a wall, as it were (cf. the king's wives, or harem, who were walled off from others), isolates the anathematized person, place, or thing from anyone touching, using, or benefiting from it ever again. Compare Achan's sin of taking the "devoted" items set apart for destruction in Josh 7:13." (See context in [The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis-Leviticus](#))

Charam - 51x in 47v - annihilate(1), covet(1), destroy them utterly(1), destroy utterly(1), destroyed them utterly(1), destroying(1), destroying them completely(2), destruction(2), devote(2), forfeited(1), set apart(1), sets apart(1), utterly destroy(11), utterly destroyed(22), utterly destroying(3) Ex 22:20; Lev. 27:28; Lev. 27:29; Num. 21:2; Num. 21:3; Deut. 2:34; Deut. 3:6; Deut. 7:2; Deut. 13:15; Deut. 20:17; Jos. 2:10; Jos. 6:18; Jos.

6:21; Jos. 8:26; Jos. 10:1; Jos. 10:28; Jos. 10:35; Jos. 10:37; Jos. 10:39; Jos. 10:40; Jos. 11:11; Jos. 11:12; Jos. 11:20; Jos. 11:21; Jdg. 1:17; Jdg. 21:11; 1 Sam. 15:3; 1 Sam. 15:8; 1 Sam. 15:9; 1 Sam. 15:15; 1 Sam. 15:18; 1 Sam. 15:20; 1 Ki. 9:21; 2 Ki. 19:11; 1 Chr. 4:41; 2 Chr. 20:23; 2 Chr. 32:14; Ezr. 10:8; Isa. 11:15; Isa. 34:2; Isa. 37:11; Jer. 25:9; Jer. 50:21; Jer. 50:26; Jer. 51:3; Dan. 11:44; Mic. 4:13

QUESTION - [What did it mean to be devoted to destruction?](#)

ANSWER - In Exodus 22:20, God commands, "Whoever sacrifices to any god, other than the Lord alone, shall be devoted to destruction" (ESV).

The Hebrew word used here is *charam*, meaning "to curse, annihilate, or destroy." The literal interpretation is that the Hebrew person who sacrificed to another god was to be put to death. Idolaters received capital punishment.

The use of the phrase "devoted to destruction" elsewhere in the Old Testament confirms this understanding. In Numbers 21:3 we read, "And the Lord heeded the voice of Israel and gave over the Canaanites, and they devoted them and their cities to destruction" (ESV). The NIV translates it as, "They completely destroyed them and their towns." The idea of being devoted to destruction included destroying these cities.

In Deuteronomy 2:34 we read a review of Israel's time in the wilderness. The narrative includes, "And we captured all his cities at that time and devoted to destruction every city, men, women, and children. We left no survivors" (ESV). In this case, "devoted to destruction" clearly indicates death. Deuteronomy 3:6 offers a similar use of this phrase: "And we devoted them to destruction, as we did to Sihon the king of Heshbon" (ESV); Sihon was a king they had previously put to death.

In Joshua 6:17, Jericho was devoted to destruction. We read, "And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction" (ESV). In Joshua 10:28 the same fate befalls the city of Makkedah.

Exodus 22:20 reveals that the punishment for Jews who sacrificed to any god other than Yahweh was that they be put to death under the Mosaic Law. However, in the time of the judges and the pre-captivity kingdom, idol worship among the Jews was a perennial problem. God had made it clear that idolatry was worthy of death. Yet many wicked people and leaders through Israel's history resorted to open idol worship in ways that brought God's judgment upon them from other nations.

The enforcement of this command can be found in 1 Kings 18. In this account, Elijah challenged King Ahab's 400 prophets of Baal to call down fire from heaven. The God who answered would be the true God. When the Lord God answered, Elijah commanded, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away! They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there" (1 Kings 18:40).

This command notes God's displeasure with the worship of other gods. He presents Himself as the one God who calls every person to worship Him and to believe in His Son Jesus for eternal life (John 3:16). GotQuestions.org

Henry Thorne has some thoughts on why God calls for these nations to be **utterly destroyed** -

When one nation or people goes to war with another nation or people there is naturally some reason for it. The Bible as a reasonable book fully states the causes which led to the destruction of the Canaanites and the reason why the Israelites were brought in to occupy this land. **The destruction of the Canaanites. Much false sympathy has been wasted upon the destruction of the Canaanites because the stress has been laid upon the driving them out and not upon their character, where it belongs and where the Scriptures place it. The abominations practiced in the name of religion were something awful ; every evil thing was worshiped.** We have had the testimony of the Bible to this fact, now comes the word of the monuments Lenormant in his manual of the Ancient History of the East (Vol. 3, p. 219) , has said that " no other nation has rivaled the Canaanites in the mixture of blood and debauchery with which they sought to honor the Deity." This heathenism was so foul that fifteen hundred years later its spread in Rome was bewailed by the Satirists of the day. (Juvenal Sat. 3. 62.) Sodom and Gomorrah, where ten righteous men could not be found, were fit types of this unholy land, Some of these abominations are described in Leviticus 18:21-31 ; Deut 12:30-32." The chief god was Baal-the sun-who was worshiped under different names in different places, Moloch, Chemosh , " but everywhere his worship was fierce and cruel. " His consort Ashtaroth, the Babylonian goddess, Istar, the goddess of love, worshiped as the morning star, Venus," fostered abominations in her worship almost inconceivable in our times ; it was , in one word, a **worship of impurity**. The driving out of the Canaanites is always represented in the Scriptures as a punishment for their sins. Lev. 18:24, 25. The destruction that has fallen upon all the ancient nations is represented by the prophets to be on account of sin. Even Israel, after repeated warning, was not spared. Jerusalem on account of her sins was finally devoted to an awful sack and ruin under the Romans. (See context in [Bible Study by Periods: A Series of Twenty-four Historical Periods](#))

A chief objection to the view that the God of the Old Testament is a God of love and mercy is the divine command to exterminate all the men, women and children belonging to the seven or eight Canaanite nations. How could God approve of blanket destruction, of the genocide of an entire group of people?

Attempts to tone down the command or to mitigate its stark reality fail from the start. God's instructions are too clear, and too many texts speak of consigning whole populations to destruction: Exodus 23:32–33; 34:11–16; and Deuteronomy 7:1–5; 20:16–18.

In most of these situations, a distinctive Old Testament concept known as *herem* is present. It means “curse,” “that which stood under the ban” or “that which was dedicated to destruction.” The root idea of this term was “separation”; however, this situation was not the positive concept of sanctification in which someone or something was set aside for the service and glory of God. This was the opposite side of the same coin: to set aside or separate for destruction.

God dedicated these things or persons to destruction because they violently and steadfastly impeded or opposed his work over a long period of time. This “dedication to destruction” was not used frequently in the Old Testament. It was reserved for the spoils of southern Canaan (Num 21:2–3), Jericho (Josh 6:21), Ai (Josh 8:26), Makedah (Josh 10:28) and Hazor (Josh 11:11).

In a most amazing prediction, Abraham was told that his descendants would be exiled and mistreated for four hundred years (in round numbers for 430 years) before God would lead them out of that country. The reason for so long a delay, Genesis 15:13–16 explains, was that “the sin of the Amorites [the Canaanites] has not yet reached its full measure.” Thus, God waited for centuries while the Amalekites and those other Canaanite groups slowly filled up their own cups of condemnation by their sinful behavior. God never acted precipitously against them; his grace and mercy waited to see if they would repent and turn from their headlong plummet into self-destruction.

Not that the conquering Israelites were without sin. Deuteronomy 9:5 makes that clear to the Israelites: “It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations.”

These nations were cut off to prevent the corruption of Israel and the rest of the world (Deut 20:16–18). When a nation starts burning children as a gift to the gods (Lev 18:21) and practices sodomy, bestiality and all sorts of loathsome vices (Lev 18:25, 27–30), the day of God's grace and mercy has begun to run out.

Just as surgeons do not hesitate to amputate a gangrenous limb, even if they cannot help cutting off some healthy flesh, so God must do the same. This is not doing evil that good may come; it is removing the cancer that could infect all of society and eventually destroy the remaining good.

God could have used pestilence, hurricanes, famine, diseases or anything else he wanted. In this case he chose to use Israel to reveal his power, but the charge of cruelty against God is no more deserved in this case than it is in the general order of things in the world where all of these same calamities happen.

In the providential acts of life, it is understood that individuals share in the life of their families and nations. As a result we as individuals participate both in our families' and nations' rewards and in their punishments. Naturally this will involve some so-called innocent people; however, even that argument involves us in a claim to omniscience which we do not possess. If the women and children had been spared in those profane Canaanite nations, how long would it have been before a fresh crop of adults would emerge just like their pagan predecessors?

Why was God so opposed to the Amalekites? When the Israelites were struggling through the desert toward Canaan, the Amalekites picked off the weak, sick and elderly at the end of the line of marchers and brutally murdered these stragglers. Warned Moses, “Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and cut off all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God” (Deut 25:17–18).

Some commentators note that the Amalekites were not merely plundering or disputing who owned what territories; they were attacking God's chosen people to discredit the living God. Some trace the Amalekites' adamant hostility all through the Old Testament, including the most savage butchery of all in Haman's proclamation that all Jews throughout the Persian Empire could be massacred on a certain day (Esther 3:8–11). Many make a case that Haman was an Amalekite. His actions then would ultimately reveal this nation's deep hatred for God, manifested toward the people through whom God had chosen to bless the whole world.

In Numbers 25:16–18 and 31:1–18 Israel was also told to conduct a war of extermination against all in Midian, with the exception of the prepubescent girls, because the Midianites had led them into idolatry and immorality. It was not contact with foreigners per

se that was the problem, but the threat to Israel's relationship with the Lord. The divine command, therefore, was to break Midian's strength by killing all the male children and also the women who had slept with a man and who could still become mothers.

The texts of Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6; 7:1–2 and Psalm 106:34 are further examples of the principle of ḥerem, dedicating the residents of Canaan to total destruction as an involuntary offering to God. ([Hard Sayings](#) - go to page 178)

QUESTION - [Why did God command the extermination / genocide of the Canaanites, women and children included?](#)

ANSWER - In 1 Samuel 15:2-3, God commanded Saul and the Israelites, "This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'I will punish the Amalekites for what they did to Israel when they waylaid them as they came up from Egypt. Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.'" God ordered similar things when the Israelites were invading the promised land (Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6; 20:16-18). Why would God have the Israelites exterminate an entire group of people, women and children included?

This is a difficult issue. We do not fully understand why God would command such a thing, but we trust God that He is just – and we recognize that we are incapable of fully understanding a sovereign, infinite, and eternal God. As we look at difficult issues such as this one, we must remember that God's ways are higher than our ways and [His thoughts are higher than our thoughts](#) (Isaiah 55:9; Romans 11:33-36). We have to be willing to trust God and have faith in Him even when we do not understand His ways.

Unlike us, God knows the future. God knew what the results would be if Israel did not completely eradicate the Amalekites. If Israel did not carry out God's orders, the Amalekites would come back to trouble the Israelites in the future. Saul claimed to have killed everyone but the Amalekite king Agag (1 Samuel 15:20). Obviously, Saul was lying—just a couple of decades later, there were enough Amalekites to take David and his men's families captive (1 Samuel 30:1-2). After David and his men attacked the Amalekites and rescued their families, 400 Amalekites escaped. If Saul had fulfilled what God had commanded him, this never would have occurred. Several hundred years later, a descendant of Agag, Haman, tried to have the entire Jewish people exterminated (see the book of Esther). So, Saul's incomplete obedience almost resulted in Israel's destruction. God knew this would occur, so He ordered the extermination of the Amalekites ahead of time.

In regard to the Canaanites, God commanded, "In the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them — the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites — as the LORD your God has commanded you. Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 20:16-18). The Israelites failed in this mission as well, and exactly what God said would happen occurred (Judges 2:1-3; 1 Kings 11:5; 14:24; 2 Kings 16:3-4). God did not order the extermination of these people to be cruel, but to prevent even greater evil from occurring in the future.

Probably the most difficult part of these commands from God is that God ordered the death of children and infants as well. Why would God order the death of innocent children? (1) Children are not innocent (Psalm 51:5; 58:3). (2) These children would have likely grown up as adherents to the evil religions and practices of their parents. (3) These children would naturally have grown up resentful of the Israelites and later sought to avenge the "unjust" treatment of their parents.

Again, this answer does not completely deal with all the issues. Our focus should be on trusting God even when we do not understand His ways. We also must remember that God looks at things from an eternal perspective and that His ways are higher than our ways. God is just, righteous, holy, loving, merciful, and gracious. How His attributes work together can be a mystery to us – but that does not mean that He is not who the Bible proclaims Him to be. [GotQuestions.org](#)

Related Resources: (all from [Gotquestions.org](#))

- [Does God killing people make Him a murderer?](#)
- [Why did God command the Israelites to completely destroy the Midianites in Numbers 31:17?](#)
- [Why did God condone such terrible violence in the Old Testament?](#)
- [Why did the Israelites take the Canaanites as slaves instead of destroying them as they were instructed?](#)
- [What happened during the conquest of Canaan?](#)

James Coakley on utterly destroy them -

God's call to exterminate all the people groups currently occupying the land has been thought of as unloving and severe. Several factors may help explain the reasons such a command was given. .

First, all people are sinners and are under God's judgment. Only by God's mercy are any people groups allowed to live.

Second, the context (Dt 7:10) implies that these nations hated the Lord, so they were not neutral toward the God of Israel.

Third, Ge 15:13 states that God had been patient with these nations for hundreds of years and had delayed their punishment until this exact point in history. God was giving the Canaanites as much time as was needed to become as wildly corrupt as possible. God's command to annihilate them is tied to this circumstance alone and should not be used as justification for any genocide.

(**ED COMMENT** - The patience of the Lord reminds me of the days of Noah - In Genesis 6:3 God gave man 120 years before the judgment of the flood would fall. cf 1 Peter 3:20+ and 2 Pe 3:15+ speaking of the delay in the return of the Lord thus providing an opportunity for men to repent. God provided righteous, tormented Lot as a witness and warning to Sodom before He destroyed them - 2 Pe 2:7-9+)

Fourth, if Israel let these nations live in their land, their pagan practices would be propagated and emulated by the people of God (Dt 20:17–18).

Fifth, the command to exterminate the Canaanite nations is mitigated somewhat by God's allowing individual non-Jewish women like Rahab and Ruth to enter into the messianic line. God always had a plan that included the nations (Ge 12:2–3), but He promised Israel they would occupy this land as gift from Him. Israel was actually to offer peace with any nation outside her borders (Dt 20:10–18), but to exterminate any pagan nation within its borders.

Even though not specifically mentioned here, extending annihilation to Canaanite children is an affront to modern sensibilities. The totality of this destruction is connected in this text (Dt 7:3) to the prohibition of assimilation to other nations. If these children were allowed to live they would become a snare for Israel. The killing of all Canaanites, including the children, served as a preventative measure against assimilating with the Canaanite way of life and as a stark reminder that Israel was to be set apart exclusively for God. (See context in [The Moody Bible Commentary](#))

Doug McIntosh has an excellent discussion of this difficult topic -

As Israel entered the land of promise, they were told, "When the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy" (Deut. 7:2). Few statements of Scripture have received harsher criticism than this one. It seems to conflict with repeated biblical commands to show mercy to others (see Zech. 7:9; Mic. 6:8; Mt. 23:23). What are we to make of this divinely announced policy of extermination?

In part, the policy represents God's own justice at work through Israel's weapons of war. God waited until this period of time to bring Israel into the land, at the moment Canaanite culture was at its most depraved (cp. Ge 15:16). The Canaanites needed to be judged, and Israel was God's instrument of judgment.

However, it should also be noted that extermination does not represent the standard policy that God commanded Israel to pursue. When describing Israel's behavior toward the inhabitants of Canaan, the normal imperative was not exterminate but drive out: "When you cross the Jordan into Canaan, drive out all the inhabitants of the land before you. Destroy all their carved images and their cast idols, and demolish all their high places" (Nu 33:51-52). Calls to expel or drive out far outnumber commands to kill the Canaanites.

The two commands are actually compatible when seen from God's perspective. He had two primary purposes in bringing Israel into Canaan. First, he wanted to give the land to Israel and fulfill his promises to the patriarchs. Second, he desired to provide Israel a homeland that was free of the temptations to moral depravity that were part of Canaanite religion. As a result, the culture had to be destroyed—an action as easily accomplished by expulsion as by extermination.

Israel's slow approach over a period of forty years was closely observed by the native peoples (cp. Josh. 2:9-11). Many of them must have left voluntarily as Israel drew near, particularly after the dramatic and early victory at Jericho. Those who held out and remained behind the walls of Canaanite cities would have been the people who had the most to lose by leaving: the civic and religious leaders most committed to the blasphemous and degraded Canaanite cult. God knew that if they survived they would prove enthusiastic evangelists for the twisted cult—and so they did.

Israel's greatest danger would come after the fighting was over, when they saw the survivors of the battles they fought. Their natural inclination would have been to bring those devotees to paganism into their own homes and to adopt their guests' immoral and destructive religious practices. Their most profound danger, in effect, came in showing mercy toward those who posed a lethal danger to them.

Regrettably, that danger became a reality. Because Israel refused to exterminate that hard core of survivors, God's people became infected with idolatry so deeply that they themselves eventually had to be driven from the land. Israel exhibited an

incomplete dedication to an important task. They thought so little of God's commands and their own spiritual lives that they permitted small pockets of wickedness to infect their nation.

Believers can make a similar mistake. We are to have no mercy on the sins that lie resident within us. We are persistently and without hesitation to drive them out of our lives, or they will become causes for spiritual stumbling. (See context in the [Holman Old Testament Commentary – Deuteronomy](#))

Deuteronomy 13:16 "Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt.

- **burn** : Jos 6:24
- **ruin**: Nu 21:2,3 Jos 6:26 8:28 Isa 17:1 25:2 Jer 49:2 Mic 1:6
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

A WHOLE BURNT OFFERING TO THE LORD

Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering (kalil) to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin(tel)(abandoned ruin - NET, "remain in perpetual ruin" - NRSB) forever (literally "it will be a ruins of eternity"). **It shall never be rebuilt** - The picture is of total annihilation of the city forever. This is an interesting stipulation for in most offerings the animals were to be blemish-free, but here the "blemish-filled" city was to be "offered."

Deere explains that "The fact that all its plunder was to be destroyed, and that it was never to be rebuilt, precluded any greedy or illegitimate motivations by those who were to carry out its destruction." (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Wiersbe - Human calculation would say that this was a great loss, but divine wisdom says it is a great gain, for a festering sore had been removed from the nation. (See context [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))

NET Note on **ruin** (abandoned ruin) - Heb "mound"; NAB "a heap of ruins." The Hebrew word תל (tel) refers to this day to a ruin represented especially by a built-up mound of dirt or debris (cf. Tel Aviv, "mound of grain").

Whole burnt offering (03632) **kalil** from **kalal** = to be complete) is an adjective meaning whole, entire, perfect, complete. **Kalil** refers to an offering that was entirely consumed (Dt. 33:10; 1Sa. 7:9). **Kalil** is used figuratively to refer to burning a whole town that worshiped other gods (Dt. 13:16). The ephod had to be all (kalil) blue (Ex. 28:31; 39:22); Isaiah prophesied of a day when idols would **completely** (kalil) vanish (Isa. 2:18). This word also referred to Jerusalem's perfect beauty (Lam 2:15; Ezek. 16:14). Ezek. 28:12 describes the king of Tyre as "**perfect** (kalil) in beauty," a passage that many take as a description of the beauty of Satan before he fell into sin, because this unusual "king of Tyre" was also "in Eden, the garden of God" (Ezek 28:13).

Kalil is translated in NAS as all(2), burned entirely(1), completely(1), entirely(1), perfect(3), perfection(1), pure(1), whole(2), whole burnt offering(2), whole burnt offerings(1). **Kalil** - 15v - Ex 28:31; 39:22; Lev 6:22f; Num 4:6; Deut 13:16; 33:10; Judg 20:40; 1 Sam 7:9; Ps 51:19; Isa 2:18; Lam 2:15; Ezek 16:14; 27:3; 28:12

Ruin (08510)(tel) refers to a mound. a "mound" or "heap of ruins" (the ruins left after a city has been destroyed) The word also means mounds, small or large man-made hills on which cities were repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt. Here in Dt 13:16 an unfaithful Israelite city was to be completely destroyed and left a heap of ruins. Joshua destroyed the cities of Ai and Hazor and left them in ruins (Josh. 8:28; 11:13). Jeremiah foretold that Jerusalem would be destroyed and left a heap of ruins, but that it would be rebuilt on the same mound (Jer 30:18). Jeremiah also foretold the destruction of the Ammonite city Rabbah (Jer 49:2).

Young - A **tel** (Akkadian tillu; Arabic tallu) is a large mound covering ruins, usually shaped like a truncated hill, representing the site of an ancient city (or succession of cities built on top of each other). Its characteristic appearance is caused by the collapse of walls and buildings and/or the construction (primarily in the Hyksos or Middle Bronze II B-C period, c. 1750-1550 b.c.) of enormous sloping fortifications technically known as a glacis. The landscape of the Middle East is dotted with thousands of tels that (under current excavating and interpreting procedures) will keep archaeologists busy for centuries as they attempt to reconstruct the history of the sites (see especially E. Yamauchi, *The Stones and the Scriptures*, pp. 146-66). In the OT, nearly all the occurrences of tel are in reference to the results of God's judgment on sinful people (Deut. 13:16 [H 17]; Joshua 8:28; Jeremiah 49:2; and, by implication, Jeremiah 30:18). During the exilic and postexilic periods, a few sites in Babylonia were already notable for their ruined condition, as their names demonstrate (Ezekiel 3:15; Ezra 2:59=Neh. 7:61). ([Here is a link to the TWOT](#) which allows copy and paste and can be

[Wikipedia on a tel](#) - In archaeology, a tell or tel (borrowed into English from Arabic: تل, tall, 'mound' or 'small hill'),^[1] is an artificial topographical feature, a species of mound^[a] consisting of the stratified debris from the accumulated refuse of generations of people who once formed a settlement and dwelt on the same site.^{[3][b]} A classic tell looks like a low, truncated cone with sloping sides^[5] and a flat, mesa-like top.^[6] They can be more than 43 m (141 ft) high.^[7]

Tel - 5v - Deut. 13:16; Jos. 8:28; Jos. 11:13; Jer. 30:18; Jer. 49:2

Related Resource:

- [What is a burnt offering? | GotQuestions.org](#)

Deuteronomy 13:17 "Nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand, in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers,

- **cling** : De 7:26 Jos 6:18 7:1
- **put under the ban** , Lev 27:28,29 1Co 16:22
- **Lord**: Jos 6:26 7:26 22:20 Ps 78:38
- **and show**: Ex 20:6 La 3:32
- **make you increase**: Eze 37:26
- **just as He has sworn**: Ge 22:16,17 26:4,24 28:14
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

Related Passage:

Leviticus 27:28+ 'Nevertheless, anything which a man sets apart ([charam](#) = to ban, devote to destruction) to the LORD out of all that he has, of man or animal or of the fields of his own property, shall not be sold or redeemed. Anything **devoted to destruction** ([charam](#)) is most holy to the LORD.

Nothing from that which is put under the ban ([herem](#) under judgment - NET) **shall cling to your hand** - The city would have booty, but it was dedicated to the LORD and no man could touch it or cling to it.

NET Note - Under the ban - Or "anything that has been put under the divine curse"; Heb "anything of the ban" (cf. NASB). See note on the phrase "divine judgment" in Deut 2:34. **Herem** "conveys the "basic meaning is the exclusion of an object from the use or abuse of man and its irrevocable surrender to God.

in order that (purpose clause) **the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion** ([racham](#)) **on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers** - The city and booty were like an offering to Yahweh that His anger might be appeased.

Ban (devoted to destruction) ([02764](#)) [herem](#) is something devoted unto divine service, and is under a ban. In some context as the present use, it describes a curse or extermination which implies total destruction (see Dt 7:26; 1Sa 15:18; Zech 14:11). MacKay says "The 'curse' is the ban, the utter devotion to destruction (Isa. 43:28 — and NIV footnote; Jer. 25:9) of what is an abomination in the LORD's sight." **Merrill** - The ban (**herem**) was the judgment of God on places, things, and hopelessly unrepentant people that resulted in the extermination of living beings and the destruction or appropriation by YHWH of the rest. Were God's people at last to remain in unbelief and rebellion, they must suffer the fate of those placed under **herem**, for they, too, would be under His everlasting curse. The whole earth would suffer similarly, for without the mediatorial ministry of Israel, the kingdom of priests, the program of YHWH for universal redemption would collapse and the design for a universal kingdom come to an end. (See [Malachi Commentary recommended](#))

Compassion (mercy)([07355](#)) [racham](#) from **rechem** = womb ~ suggesting a connection between the place of the developing child and the strong feelings of love a mother has toward her child) speaks a deep love of one for another rooted in some "natural" bond (cp rechem = womb). **Racham** manifests itself as an "emotional" response to one's needs. **Racham** means to feel another's pain so deeply that you are moved to do something about it. **Racham** means to have compassion, to have mercy, to find mercy. "The word pictures a deep, kindly sympathy and sorrow felt for another who has been struck with affliction or misfortune, accompanied with a desire to relieve the suffering. God remembers mercy in his wrath, as Habakkuk prayed that He would do (Hab. 3:2). He wants to

forgive and restore those who repent and turn to Him (Isa. 55:7). The Lord's compassion ultimately means He promises to reverse all the effects of sin for his people (Jer. 30:18). **Only other use in Deuteronomy** is Dt 30:3 "then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have **compassion** on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you."

Utley - Notice the flow of thought:

1. Idolatry deserves judgment (i.e., holy war, all that breathes, dies), Dt 13:12–15.
2. All the spoils of the city are given to YHWH as a whole burnt offering (i.e., in holy war, all valuables given to YHWH), Dt 13:16–17
3. Obedience brings blessing, Dt 13:17–18:
 - a. He turns from His burning anger
 - b. He shows mercy, cf. Dt 30:3
 - c. He has compassion
 - d. He brings abundance
 - e. He fulfills oath to the fathers
4. Blessing is conditional on obedience, Dt 13:18

Deuteronomy 13:18 if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God.

- **keeping:** De 12:25,28,32 Ps 119:6 Mt 6:33 7:21,24
- [Deuteronomy 13 Resources](#)

if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God - This is a conditional clause, the promise of the condition being in v17.

Guzik - This chapter asks an important question: What would it take to lead you away from God? Would signs and wonders do it? What if your mate forsook God, or all of your friends? What if culture, or nationalism, or ethnic ties called you away from Jesus? We must never such ties to come before our bond to Jesus. We must decide, as the song says, "Though none go with me, still I will follow."

Deere has a sad summary statement - For the most part Israel failed to apply the commands of this chapter. This failure resulted in both the Northern Kingdom and later the Southern Kingdom being exiled. The commands of this chapter are not directed to Christians, because they do not live in one nation ruled by God; that is, the New Testament church is not a theocracy. However, church discipline should be exercised (Matt. 18:15–17; 1 Cor. 5) and there is a sin that leads to death (1 John 5:16–17; cf. Heb. 10:26–31). (See context in [The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament](#))

Wiersbe adds "Unfortunately, Israel didn't obey these laws and idolatry multiplied in the nation during the reign of Solomon and after the kingdom divided. When Jeroboam became ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, he made idolatry official by setting up two golden calves for the people to worship, one at Dan and the other at Bethel. In this way, he encouraged the people not to go to Jerusalem to worship (1 Kings 12:25ff). Because of their idolatry, Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. and Judah fell to Babylon in 606–586 B.C. God would rather that the nation be scattered and the holy sanctuary be destroyed than that His people worship false gods. The people forgot that it was the Lord Jehovah who delivered them from Egypt and gave them their land (Deut. 13:5, 10)." (See context in [The Wiersbe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#))