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God's Chosen People
4: 32-40

God's chosen people DIG: Isra'el the chosen people. If YHVH is known by His attributes and actions, what did the Israelites know about Him? Why does ADONAI choose Isra'el (verses 35 and 37)? In what ways do His actions fit His motive? Do you think God provided enough evidence to demonstrate His great love? Why or why not? What responses and results are expected (verses 39-40)? What suggestions does Moses give to parents to influence their children in a godly direction? Which of these, if any, do you most need to work on?

REFLECT: What events in your life do you see as God's choosing of you? What Egypt has He taken you out of? What Mount Sinai has He spoken to you from? If God is known by His actions, what have you come to know about Him? What further evidence (of His love or your election) are you looking for? What do you believe the LORD wants from you? Why would He choose you? How are you demonstrating God's greatness to the surrounding unbelievers in your life? What can you do this day to embrace God's choice of you?

Moses returns to the need of Isra'el to obey ADONAI's commandments wholeheartedly, and the motivation behind that obedience: who YHVH is and what He has done for them. He recalls for Isra'el the distinctiveness of their God, and reminds them why they were His chosen people.

In order to challenge **Isra'el's** appreciation for and understanding of **her God, Moses** asks **four rhetorical questions** concerning **ADONAI's** activity on **her** behalf.

First, indeed, ask now about the former days that were before you, from the day that God created man on the earth, and ask from one end of the sky to the other. Has there ever been such a great thing as this, or has anything like it been heard (4:32)? The invitation is thus to explore the whole

panorama of human history to see if anything similar to **Isra'el's** experience of **God** had been known before. Notice that **Moses** is not just saying that nothing *greater* has happened before, but that nothing *like this at all* has happened before!

Second, have people ever heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard – and lived (4:33)? Moses was not asking, "Has anyone **heard the voice of God** and **lived** to tell about **it**?" Rather, **he** was emphasizing that **no other nation** had ever received direct revelation from its god **(Psalm 147:19-20)**.

Third, for what great nation is there that has gods so near to them, as ADONAI our God is whenever we call on Him (4:7)? The only possible answer could be "No."

And fourth, or has any god ever tried to come to take for himself a nation from within a nation – by trials like the ten plagues, by signs and wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great terrors – like all that ADONAI your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes (4:34)? What **YHVH** did in and through the events of **the Exodus** and the revelation of **His Torah** on **Mount Sinai** were unprecedented and unparalleled. Was this all done so that later **YHVH** would reject and replace **her**? Heaven forbid!

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being such a Mighty, Awesome and loving **Father**! When we think of **Your** wisdom in creating all land creatures on the sixth day **(Genesis 1:24-26)** by **Your** Word: the huge dinosaur and the tiny bunny rabbit, the swift cheetah and the slow turtle, and man with all his intricate internal systems! Praise **Your** Great power over fire by speaking out of a fiery bush that you kept from burning up! How Awesome **Your** Mighty power to take **Your** people out of the greatest power on earth at that time by judgment on their gods in the 10 Plagues **(Exodus 12:12)!** Praise **You** for always being near **Your** people **(Hebrews 13:5).** There is no god like you and we bow in reverent worship. In **Your** Holy **Son's** name and power of the resurrection. Amen*

Paul brings out the same argument in his letter to the church at Rome: **Who are the Israelites? To them belong the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Torah, and the Temple service, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs – and from them, according to the flesh, the Messiah, who is over all, God, blessed forever. Amen (Romans 9:4-5).** Has **Isra'el's** position changed? Not at all. Paul uses the present

tense here, **who *are* the Israelites**. Not **who** *were* **the Isrealites**. These **promises** still belong to **the Israelites** today. Thus, the Hebrew Roots movement (see the commentary on **Galatians, to see link click Ak – The Hebrew Roots Movement: A Different Gospel**), and Replacement Theology are heretical.

It is interesting that Paul was already confronted with this heresy during his day. And his argument was especially strong in **Galatians** where he makes a distinction between the election of **Isra'el** that is eternal in the Abrahamic Covenant, and the Mosaic Covenant, which was temporary. **What I am saying is this: Torah, which came 430 years later after God's** promise to **Abraham** was confirmed to Jacob, was an addition and **does not cancel the covenant previously confirmed by God, so as to make the promise ineffective. For if the inheritance is based on the legal part of the Torah,** which is *the halakhah*, or the rules governing Jewish life (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ei – The Oral Law**), **it is no longer based on a promise;** therefore, **it no longer comes from a promise. But God gave [the covenant] to Abraham by means of a promise (Galatians 3:17-18 CJB).** Paul makes a great distinction here. Just because **Isra'el** is in the diaspora does not mean that **God** has rejected **her**. This was **Moshe's** argument in **Deuteronomy** and **Paul's** argument in **his** letters. These were two **Jews** who prayed earnestly, and were concerned with the welfare of **their people**.[133]

The powerful point here is not simply that **YHVH** is one, or a belief in monotheism (as important as that might be). Rather, **Moses** proclaims that **ADONAI** , **the God of Isra'el**, is the exclusive, one-and-only true **God**. **You were shown, so that you might know that ADONAI is God – there is no other besides Him (4:35). Moshe** then circles back to remind **God's chosen people** of **their God's** greatness and what **He** has done for **them**.[134]

The two features of **ADONAI's love** for, and election of, **Isra'el** are stressed here. **They** are **God's chosen people**. **From the heavens He made you hear His voice to instruct you, and on earth He caused you to see His great fire – you heard His words from the midst of the fire. Because He loved your fathers, He chose their descendants after them. Then He brought you out from Egypt with His presence, by His great power – to drive out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is this day (4:36-38). This land refers to the land of Sihon and Og which were already in Isra'el's possession** (see **At – Isra'el's Conquest of the Transjordan**).

Based on all the wonderful things **the LORD** had done for **them** already. **God's chosen people** are urged to acknowledge **His** utter uniqueness and obey **His statutes** (Hebrew: *hachukkim*, meaning *to write into law permanently*) and **ordinances** (Hebrew: *hammishpatim*, meaning *a judgment of the court*), with the result that this current generation, and all future generations, would experience **YHVH's** abundant blessings. Thus, **Moshe** pleads on behalf of **Isra'el**, and **he** does it in the very same way that Paul does in **Romans 9, 10** and **11**.

When **Moses** gave **the Torah** to **their** parents at **Mount Sinai**, the emphasis was on the fear of **Ha'Shem (Exodus 19:10-25)**, but **his** application of **the Torah** to this **new generation** magnified **God's love** for **Isra'el** and the importance of **the Israelites** obeying **God's statutes** and **ordinances** out of **love** for **Him**.[135] **So, you will know today and take to heart that ADONAI, He is God, in the heavens above and on the earth below – there is no other.** The word **heart** is mentioned more than forty times in **Moshe's** speech, and the **Sh'ma** (see **Bw – The Sh'ma**) also emphasizes **love** for **ADONAI**. **You must keep His statutes and His ordinances, which I am commanding you today, so that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and so that you may prolong your days in the land that ADONAI your God is giving you for all time (4:39-40).**

As seen in **4:1**, **Moshe** is not simply holding before **Isra'el** the hope of a permanent home in **the** Promised **Land** as a bribe or incentive. Granted, **Isra'el's** obedience or disobedience to the covenant, and **God's** expectations of **them**, did affect whether **they** would remain in **the Land** of Promise. Nevertheless, **YHVH** intended that Canaan would serve as a platform for **His chosen people** to demonstrate **His** greatness to the surrounding pagan nations for the undetermined future.[136]