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You are a Stiff-Necked People

9: 1-6

You are a stiff-necked people DIG: What are the enemies like who live in this Land? How are they to be conquered? What role is Isra'el to play? What role is ADONAI to play? Why does God select the Israelites? What does this reveal about Him? In what way were the Israelites a “stiff-necked people?” What was the formula that Isra'el thought would bring her victory? But what was the formula in reality?

REFLECT: In what ways do you feel like underdog Isra'el? How has God used you, despite the odds, to further His Kingdom? How does this make you feel? When are you most likely to forget that your victory is from God? Is it not also true of us, that all we are, and everything we are able to accomplish, is due to the mercy and grace of YHVH? What will happen to us if we fail to acknowledge this reality in our lives?

God's provision of victory over the Canaanites is totally unrelated to Isra'el's righteousness. Isra'el inherits the Land because ADONAI had promised it to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Hear, O Isra'el! This cry is heard five times in **Deuteronomy (4:1, 5:1, 6:4, here, and 20:3)**, and each time these words **called the people** to consider something very serious, something that would challenge the very survival **of their nation**. **The Jews** couldn't see **their God**, but **they** could **hear Him**; while **their** pagan neighbors could see **their** gods, but couldn't **hear** them. Here, **Moshe** reminded **the people** that **their** conduct since leaving Egypt had been anything but exemplary, in spite of the long-suffering **grace of ADONAI**.²⁵²

A. To drive them out (9:1-3): You are about to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself - cities great and fortified up to the heavens. The people are great and tall, sons of the Anakim. You know them, and you yourselves have heard, “Who can stand before the sons of Anak?” But you will know today that ADONAI your

God is the One who is crossing over before you as a devouring fire. He will destroy them, and He will bring them down before you, so that you may drive them out and make them perish quickly, as ADONAI has promised you (9:1-3). The task ahead was formidable. **The cities** and nations that had induced such fear in the exodus generation were still there and the next generation knew all about them. **Moses** even recites the list of superior attributes of **the sons of Anak** that the spies had brought back. But **his** strategy was not to counter the fear of **the enemy** with false propaganda, but rather, to strengthen faith in **Isra'el's** one great ally – **YHVH their God. He** would go before **them. The devouring fire** that **they** had feared so much at **Sinai (4:24 and 5:25)** would be turned against **their enemies. Ha'Shem** is the one who would **destroy** and **bring them down.**²⁵³

B. It is not because of your righteousness (9:4a): How would **Isra'el** interpret such a victory? **After ADONAI your God has driven them out from before you, do not say in your heart, “It is because of my righteousness that ADONAI has brought me in to possess this Land” (9:4a).** **Moshe** makes it clear to **God's chosen nation** that all **they** are, and everything **they** are able to accomplish, is due to the mercy and **grace of YHVH.** None of these things is based on **their** own merit or worth. It appears that **the Israelites** thought: **our** victory = **our righteousness** + **their wickedness. They** correctly understood the moral condition of **the Canaanites,** but were utterly wrong in **the** estimation of **themselves.**²⁵⁴

A. To drive them out (9:4b-5): **The wickedness of the Canaanites** did not prove **the righteousness of Isra'el.** Far from the victory being *because of their righteousness,* it was actually *in spite of their* stubborn resistance to **His mitzvot. It is because of the wickedness of these nations that ADONAI is driving them out from before you. It is not by your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you are going in to possess their land. Rather, because of the wickedness of these nations, ADONAI your God is driving them out from before you, and in order to keep the word ADONAI swore to your fathers - to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob (9:4b-5).** Since **Isra'el** had been chosen to fulfill the purpose of **YHVH,** the fulfillment of that purpose would require a victory.²⁵⁵



B. It is not because of your righteousness (9:6): So, you should understand that it is not because of your righteousness that **ADONAI** your God is giving you this good Land to possess - for you are a **stiff-necked people**, stubborn and unresponsive (9:6). It was only by **God's grace** (and the intercession of **Moses** in 9:18-29) that **Isra'el** was not destroyed along with the other **pagan nations**. Therefore, in reality, the correct calculation was: **our** victory = **God's** promise **to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob** + **the wickedness of the enemy**. These verses in the TaNaKh are comparable to the arguments made by Paul in **Romans Chapters 1-3**. **Isra'el** had many advantages and blessings that were undeniable, but they were all based on **God's** election. When it comes to a moral standing before **Ha'Shem**, to matters of guilt or innocence, there was, and is, fundamentally no difference between **Isra'el** and **the goyim**, between **Jews** and **Gentiles: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).**²⁵⁶

Is it not the same for us today? **For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not from yourselves - it is the gift of God. It is not based on deeds, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).** The emphasis here is on **the grace of God**, not the goodness of **God's people**, and this emphasis is needed today (**Titus 2:11-3:7**). When we forget **the grace of God**, we become proud and start thinking that we deserve all that **YHVH** has done for us. Then, **ADONAI** has to remind us that we are blessed, not because we are good, but because **He** is good! That reminder might be very painful. That's the theme of the next part of **Moshe's** message.²⁵⁷

Dear Great Heavenly **Father**, How Merciful **You** are! All praise and glory for any victory won goes to **You**, not to us. Though we may have used our mind or physical strength to get the victory - it is **You** who so skillfully crafted our minds and body by just **Your** spoken word. **You** are amazing (**Genesis 1:26-27**)! It is a joy that when a battle comes, we do not have to trust in our own strength or wisdom, but we can lean into you for **Your** help and guidance. **But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all without hesitation and without reproach; and it will be given to him. (James 1:5).** **You** are always right there near us to help and to guide us. For **God Himself** has said, **"I will never leave you or forsake you," (Hebrews 13:5c).** We love to worship **You**. In **Yeshua's** holy name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen