

## Living in the Word

Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates ....  
(Deut. 11:18-20)

### Battle for the Mind

Whether we know it or not, we are in \_\_\_\_\_; and, ultimately, it is a battle for our minds. On the one side stands the Lord God, who provides us with the truth we need. On the other side stand the powers of darkness, who endlessly lie to us. The path to victory goes through \_\_\_\_\_. Victory belongs to the one who learns this.

### The Blessings of Obedience (Deut. 11:1-32)

- **Deut. 11:1-7. Remember:** if we are to live faithful lives, it is critical that we remember that we were once slaves and that God has set us free. **Lasting ruin:** The Pharaoh of the Exodus may have been Ramses the Great; Egypt declined after him and never regained its former glory. **Dathan and Abiram:** Two rebels whom God punished by having the earth swallow them up in an earthquake. (Num. 16)
- **11:8-17.** Most of **Egypt** is flat, and its life depends on an extensive series of irrigation canals drawn from the Nile River. Israel is mostly hilly and depends on rainfall. God's promise is that the rain will come if Israel is obedient. In this sense, the land of Israel is under God's care, rather than under the care of canal workers. **All your heart and soul:** God wants our love, not just our rituals. If you love God, it is not a burden to serve Him (1 John 5:3). We are not slaves, but children of a benevolent Father.
- **11:18-21. Symbols:** Israel was to build their lives around the Word of God. Orthodox Jews take this text literally, binding Scriptures on their foreheads and wrists (phylacteries) and attaching them to their doorframes (mezuzahs). Christians adopt the *precept* behind this *statute*: we commit Scriptures to our minds, to the work of our hands, to our homes, and to all we do.
- **11:22-25. Territory:** Israel would have inherited the entire Levant if it had been obedient—all the way from the Sinai Peninsula to the Euphrates River. Though it came close to occupying this entire stretch in the days of Solomon, Israel never really reached its intended borders because of persistent disobedience.
- **11:26-32. Gerizim and Ebal:** Two tall hills in the northern part of the central mountains. Gerizim has a dozen springs on it and is still the headquarters of the Samaritan religion—hence the mount of blessings. Ebal is dry, barren and still largely uninhabited—hence the mount of curses.



Mezuzah at the door of a Jewish house. The **ש** is the first letter of Deut. 6:4ff—the most important text in Judaism, called the Shema, “hear” (Pretoria Travel, [https:// commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org))



Mt Gerizim (left) and Mt Ebal (right), with Shechem in the middle (<https://medomed.org>)

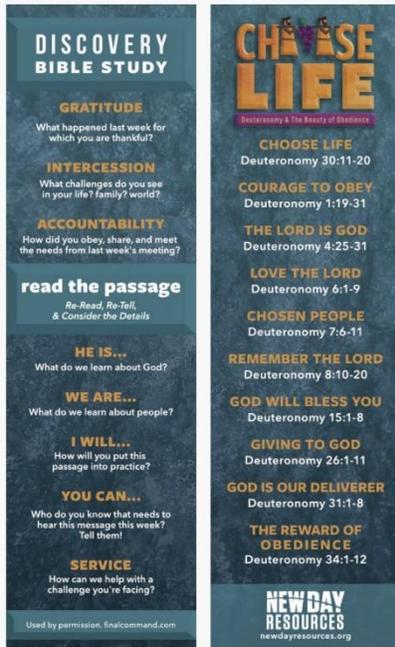
### Living in the Word of God

1. Realize that everyone you know is engaged in a life and death battle with spiritual forces (Eph. 2:1-2; 6:12). Some will win, others will lose, but there won't \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Recognize that the evil one's power lies in his ability to deceive. When the devil lies, he is \_\_\_\_\_.  
\_\_\_\_\_ (John 8:44; 2 Cor. 4:4; 1 Tim. 4:1)

3. Trust the Word of God to light up the room of your life. Through the Scriptures, we are able to make sense of the world and then to know what to do. The Scriptures can make us mature. (Deut. 8:5; Psalm 119:105; Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16-17)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ regularly from pagan media, entertainment, and ideas. Stop underestimating the power such media have. (Eph. 5:11; 1 Thess. 5:22; James 4:4)
5. Spend time every day meditating on and praying through the Word of God. TAWG (time alone with God) opens a place in our minds for God to bless us.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ on the Word all day long, interpreting your experiences in light of the Word. (Psalm 119:97) What does the Bible tell me about the things I am experiencing today?
7. Obey the Word. \_\_\_\_\_ is the best teacher. (James 1:22-23) The simple man who obeys the Bible understands it infinitely better than even the scholar who can read it in 16 languages but who doesn't obey it.



*A sister leading a DBS in a Muslim village in West Africa. A quiet revolution is underway in the Global South as people obey the Bible and experience its blessings (dmy)*



### *Discovery Bible Study (DBS): A Powerful Tool*

- DBS is an inductive Bible study that asks the same eight questions regardless of the chosen biblical text. It leads us to discover God's will for our personal lives. DBS can be used evangelistically, in classroom settings, in small groups, for training leaders, for private Bible study—in short, in any venue. Anyone can do DBS: it is simple enough to put on a bookmark, and even those who don't know Jesus can use it. *For more information, go to <https://northboulevard.com/teaching/discovery-bible-study>*
- The key to DBS is \_\_\_\_\_. Without this key, DBS is powerless. So when using DBS, expect obedience, and hold yourself and others accountable to it. God's blessings are reserved for those who obey, not for those who merely hear.

*"The Devil doesn't fear austerity but holy obedience."  
— Francis de Sales*

*Answers: the battle of our lives, the Word of God, be a tie, speaking his native language, fast, Chew, Obedience, obedience*

# CHASE LIFE

Deuteronomy & The Beauty of Obedience

## Life in Ancient Israel

*I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and olive oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. (Deut. 11:14-15)*

### Topography

Israel is about half the size of Middle Tennessee. Southern Israel is desert and largely uninhabitable. The coastal plain rises eastward into hills and up to the central mountains, with Jerusalem at around 2,500 feet in elevation. Just east of this ridge, the land drops drastically into the Jordan Valley, part of the Great African Rift, with the Jordan River linking the Sea of Galilee (at – 600 feet) with the Dead Sea (at – 1,200 feet). The fertile east to west Jezreel Valley divides the mountains of central Israel from Galilee in the north. The hilly Galilee is notably greener than southern Israel and rises to Mount Hermon, the tallest mountain in the Middle East and the source of the Jordan River. Though a small country, each region of Israel required significantly different lifestyles in biblical days.



### Cities

There were many cities in the Late Bronze and Iron Age in Canaan—populated by different people groups, often within eyesight of each other. Cities were either autonomous or confederated with other cities; until King David, there was no single state encompassing the land. A city was built around a water source, preferably on elevated land. Houses and cities were designed to catch and store water from rain in cisterns (deep water pits). Most cities were walled, the larger ones encompassing 30 acres or more. Many cities had forts or suburbs scattered outside the walls. The wealthy and government bureaucrats typically lived in the city, whose houses often shared walls. All others lived outside the city on surrounding lands that supplied goods: farms, manufacturing centers, etc. Public buildings were rare, so the gates of the city were used as markets and for public business, with the elders holding court there. Each city typically had its own king, its own temple, and its own local version of a major god. Cities were often destroyed, then rebuilt, creating layers of civilization. For example, Megiddo has 26 layers!

### Climate and Agriculture

Israel is a fairly dry country, but it has two rainy periods: “the former rains,” in Sept/Oct and “the latter rains,” in Mar/Apr. As Israelites were mostly farmers, life was built around these rainy periods. Wheat,

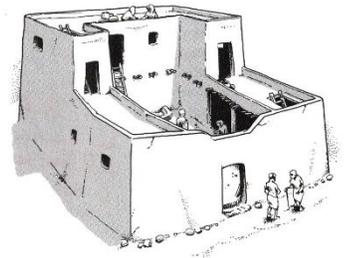


*The elaborate water system in ancient Beersheba—the people on the steps give a sense of the system’s size (dmy)*

barley, beans, and lentils were commonly grown and harvested in the spring. Olives, figs, fruits, and dates supplemented every diet and were harvested in the fall. Olives had a thousand uses and were fundamental to life. Wine was commonly used. Dates were often processed into a molasses-type syrup—the “honey” of Israel. Harvest was a time of celebration. Land had to be terraced, and many ancient terraces are still used in Israel to this day. Sheep and goats were especially suitable for the hills of Israel; cattle were also herded in the flatter areas. The milk of both goats and cattle was very important for cheese and curds. Israel was particularly vulnerable to droughts and pestilence, and a couple of bad years could cost thousands of lives.

## Economics

In the cities, a few controlled virtually everything. Most citizens were tenant farmers, serving on the land of the king or strongman. Even the people were considered the king's property. Taxes were high. Kings had a small guard, but other than that, there was no standing police force or army. Crime was dealt with by the city elders and the affected family members (blood revenge). Farmers produced enough to sell and barter for other goods. A small merchant class—often foreigners—served as middlemen providing all sorts of goods: leather goods, pottery, fabrics, spices, tools, farm implements, and luxury items such as jewelry. Trade routes were well established and widely used—goods travelled all over the Middle East. By Moses' time, bronze was widely used, and by David's time, iron. Mining was practiced in the south, often with slaves operating mines and smelting centers. Slavery was very common—as slaves were often POW's, criminals, share-croppers, or simply persons who bound themselves to others for social and economic security.



*Israelite Four Room House, Isserlin, The Israelites, p. 126.*

## Home Life

The standard Israelite house had four rooms, three of them covered and encircling one open room. The house was made of plastered stone, and averaged around 40'x25'. The roof served as an open second floor, with vines offering shade. Clothing was made of wool, or in the case of the wealthy, flax linen. In a harsh world, a large family with a strong head—the father—was necessary. Your clan took the role of both police and army. Monogamy was prevalent, but other forms of marriage offered more children and security for women. Men were responsible for everything outside the house (farm, business, city life, warfare, etc.). Women were responsible for everything inside the house (children, weaving, cooking, etc.), though responsibilities often overlapped. Families included extended members, servants, and others. The groom's father gave the bride's father a trust fund (dowry) to be given to the wife in the event that she lost her husband.



*Modern copy of 19<sup>th</sup> century BC mural from Beni Hasan, Egypt, illustrating Near Eastern clothing, hairstyles, travel (donkeys), music (lyre), and work (smelting and hunting). The Israelites of Moses' day would have looked something like this (dmy)*

Inheritance through the eldest son

(primogeniture) kept scarce resources from being divided to the point of irrelevance. Though God condemned it, many homes had small shrines in them with idols for private worship.

## Honor/Shame

The social values of the OT were not individualistic (as in America), but clan related and built on the duality of honor and shame. Social status often determined your fate, and your clan's honor was your most prized possession. Dishonoring others—especially those who outranked you—brought great costs. In honor/shame cultures, direct speech is avoided because it can dishonor others, so indirect speech was common, and people negotiated almost everything to avoid insult. For example, Lot offers his daughters to the mob of Sodom because allowing Sodomites to assault guests would be a public humiliation for Lot's entire clan. Offering his daughters was still wrong to Lot, but he considered it a "private" matter that would not shame the clan. (This is not a defense of his sordid offer—it is only an explanation of what he was thinking.) When Abraham tried to "bargain" with God over the fate of Sodom, he was speaking in common Near Eastern circumlocution designed to avoid insulting God. When Ephron offered Abraham a burial field for free, he was beginning an honor/shame negotiation. The field was never intended to be free. Honor/shame values can be hard for Americans to understand.