

# Deuteronomy 16:11

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there.

## Analysis

**And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God**—The Hebrew *vesamachta* (וְשָׂמַחְתָּ) commands joy, making gladness a worship obligation, not optional sentiment. The phrase 'before the LORD' (לִפְנֵי יְהוָה) indicates the Jerusalem sanctuary, where God's presence dwelt. Feast joy happens in God's presence, not private celebration.

The inclusivity is striking: **thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite...and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow**. Seven groups encompass the entire covenant community—family (son/daughter), household workers (servants), clergy (Levites), and the vulnerable triad (stranger/orphan/widow). God commands egalitarian feast participation, erasing social hierarchy. The repeated 'and' (וְ) in Hebrew emphasizes each group's equal inclusion. This reflects God's concern for marginalized persons and anticipates the gospel's barrier-breaking inclusivity (Galatians 3:28).

## Historical Context

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This describes the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot/Pentecost), seven weeks after Passover, celebrating the wheat harvest. Celebrated in late spring (May/June), it required pilgrimage to Jerusalem (after settlement). The feast lasted one day (contrast Tabernacles' seven days). Jews later associated Shavuot with Sinai's covenant (Exodus 19), though Deuteronomy emphasizes harvest thanksgiving. New Testament Pentecost (Acts 2) occurred during this feast, when the Spirit created the new covenant community with radical inclusivity matching this command.

## Related Passages

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**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

**Romans 2:1** — Judging others

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's command to include the vulnerable in feast celebrations challenge economic inequality and social stratification?
2. What does mandated joy 'before the LORD' teach about worship being simultaneously duty and delight?

## Interlinear Text

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וּבִנְךָ	אֶתְּ הָ	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	יְהוָה הָ	לִפְנֵי יוֹ	וְשִׂמְחֶתָּ
thou and thy son	And thou shalt rejoice	thy God	the LORD	before	
H1121	H859	H430	H3068	H6440	H8055
אִשְׁרָךְ	וְהַלְוִי	וְאִמָּתְךָ	וְעֶבְדְּךָ	וּבִתְּךָ	
and the Levite	and thy manservant	and thy maidservant	and thy daughter		
H3881	H519	H834	H1323	H5650	
אִשְׁרָךְ	וְהָאֵלְמָנָה הָ	וְהָיְתָה אוֹם	וְהַגֵּר רָ	בְּשַׁעַר יְרֻכָּךְ	
and the widow	and the fatherless	and the stranger	that is within thy gates		
H490	H3490	H1616	H8179	H834	
אֱלֹהֶיךָ יְרֻכָּךְ	יְהוָה הָ	יָבִחָר	אִשְׁרָךְ רָ	בַּמָּקוֹם אוֹם	בְּקִרְבְּךָ
thy God	the LORD	hath chosen	you in the place	that are among	
H430	H3068	H977	H4725	H7130	H834
שְׁמוֹ:	שְׁמוֹ וְ	לִשְׁכָּן			
his name	to place				
H8033	H7931	H8034			

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 12:12** (References God): And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

**Deuteronomy 12:7** (References God): And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

**Deuteronomy 12:18** (References God): But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

**Isaiah 64:5** (Parallel theme): Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways: behold, thou art wroth; for we have sinned: in those is continuance, and we shall be saved.

**Romans 5:11** (References God): And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

**2 Corinthians 1:24** (Parallel theme): Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

**Deuteronomy 16:14** (Parallel theme): And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.

**Habakkuk 3:18** (References God): Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

**Philippians 4:4** (References Lord): Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.