

# Deuteronomy 16:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt:  
and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.

## Analysis

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**And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt**—The Hebrew vezacharta ( וַזְכַּרְתָּ ) commands active remembrance, not passive recollection. Israel's slavery experience ( עֲבַדְתָּ הוּא יְיָ , eved hayita, 'you were a slave') must shape present ethics. This motive clause grounds inclusive feast hospitality in experiential solidarity: 'You know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers' (Exodus 23:9).

**Thou shalt observe and do these statutes**—The twin verbs veshamarta ve'asita ( וְשָׁמַרְתָּ וַעֲשֵׂה , 'guard and do') stress careful obedience. Memory of redemption demands ethical action. This verse links Egypt's memory directly to feast inclusion (v. 11), making compassion for the marginalized a redemption-driven obligation. Christians similarly root ethics in Christ's redemption: 'Be kind...forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you' (Ephesians 4:32).

## Historical Context

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Egypt's bondage (circa 1876-1446 BC per conservative dating) defined Israel's identity. The Exodus was God's paradigmatic redemptive act, referenced throughout Torah to motivate obedience. The command to remember slavery appears repeatedly (5:15, 15:15, 24:18, 24:22), especially regarding treatment of servants, strangers, and the poor. Remembering oppression cultivates empathy and prevents Israel from oppressing others. This principle of redemption-shaped ethics permeates Scripture.

## Related Passages

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**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

## Study Questions

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1. How should remembering your own spiritual slavery (to sin) before redemption shape how you treat others?
2. In what ways does God's past deliverance serve as both motivation and pattern for present obedience?

## Interlinear Text

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<b>וְזָכַרְתָּ</b> And thou shalt remember H2142	<b>כִּי</b> H3588	<b>עָבָדְתָּ</b> that thou wast a bondman H5650	<b>הָאֵלֹהִים יְיָ</b> H1961	<b>בְּמִצְרָיִם</b> in Egypt H4714
<b>וְשָׁמַרְתָּ</b> and thou shalt observe H8104	<b>וַעֲשֵׂה יְיָ</b> and do H6213	<b>אֵת</b> H853	<b>הַחֻקִּים יְיָ</b> these statutes H2706	<b>הָאֵלֹהִים:</b> H428

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 15:15** (References Egypt): And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.