

Deuteronomy 26:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:

Analysis

Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God—the rare Hebrew verb he'emarta (הִאֱמַרְתָּ) means to declare, affirm solemnly, or pledge. This verse and the next (26:17-18) form a bilateral covenant declaration: Israel affirms Yahweh as their God; Yahweh affirms Israel as His people. **And to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice**—Israel's pledge included obedience to the comprehensive covenant stipulations.

This mutual avowal represents the covenant's core structure—relationship creates obligation. Israel didn't merely acknowledge God's existence but committed to exclusive loyalty and obedience. The phrase 'walk in his ways' (Hebrew lalechet bidrachav, לָלֶכֶת בְּדֶרֶךְ) indicates lifestyle conformity to God's character and commands, not occasional religious observance. Covenant relationship demands total allegiance, which Jesus later intensified: 'No one can serve two masters' (Matthew 6:24).

Historical Context

Spoken circa 1406 BC as covenant renewal ceremony before entering Canaan. Ancient Near Eastern treaties between suzerains (overlords) and vassals (subjects)

followed similar bilateral declaration patterns: the vassal pledged loyalty, the suzerain pledged protection. Israel's covenant with Yahweh adapted this political form to express theological relationship—God as divine King, Israel as His covenant people. Unlike pagan treaties based on power politics, Israel's covenant originated in God's prior grace (redemption from Egypt), creating obligation rooted in love, not fear.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. What does it mean to 'avouch' or solemnly declare God as your God? How is this deeper than belief?
2. How does covenant structure (relationship creating obligation) differ from contract thinking (performance earning reward)?
3. What would publicly 'avouching' God as your God look like for Christians today?

Interlinear Text

את	ה	יהוָה	הָאמַרְתָּ	בַּיּוֹם	לְהִיּוֹת	לְבָ	לְאֱלֹהִים
H853		H3068	H559		H1961	H0	
the LORD	Thou hast avouched			this day			to be thy God
H317							H430
ולְשֵׁם	רֹ	בְּדָרְכֵךְ	יְ	עֲקָת	יְ	וּמְצֹוֹת	יְ
H1980		H1870	H8104	H2706		H4687	
in his ways	and to keep		his statutes		and his commandments		
H4941							
וּמְשִׁפְטֵת	יְ	וּלְשֵׁם	עַ	בְּקָלְנוֹ			
		H8085		H6963			
and his judgments	and to hearken		unto his voice				

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 12:2 (References God): Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

Exodus 24:7 (References Lord): And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient.

Isaiah 44:5 (References Lord): One shall say, I am the LORD'S; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.

Acts 27:23 (References God): For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

Exodus 20:19 (References God): And they said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die.

Romans 6:13 (References God): Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

2 Corinthians 8:5 (References God): And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

Deuteronomy 13:18 (Word): When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

Deuteronomy 15:5 (Word): Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day.

Deuteronomy 30:16 (Judgment): In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

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