

# Deuteronomy 29:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;

## Analysis

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**Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God** (פֶּן-יִשְׁכַּן אַתָּה אֶלָּא אֱלֹהָה)—The comprehensive list—individual (ish, ishah), nuclear family (mishpachah), tribal unit (shevet)—covers every social level. Apostasy can infiltrate anywhere.

**Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood** (שָׁרֶשׁ פָּרָה רָאשׁ וְלָעֵנָה)—The agricultural metaphor depicts idolatry as poisonous vegetation. Rosh ("gall") and la'anah ("wormwood") are bitter, toxic plants symbolizing divine judgment (Jeremiah 9:15, 23:15). A single shoresh ("root") of unfaithfulness, if undetected, spreads corruption throughout the covenant community. Hebrews 12:15 cites this warning against bitterness defiling many.

Moses warns against gradual apostasy—the heart (lev) "turning away" (sur) suggests subtle defection, not sudden rebellion. This insidious departure from Yahweh to serve foreign gods produces bitter fruit affecting generations. The phrase "this day" (hayyom) emphasizes present commitment's urgency.

## Historical Context

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Moses addresses corporate covenant responsibility—Israel must police itself against internal corruption. Ancient Israel lacked religious freedom in the modern sense; idolatry threatened national survival because covenant breaking invited divine judgment on all. The Achan incident (Joshua 7) illustrates one man's sin bringing corporate consequences. This communal accountability reflects ancient Near Eastern covenant theology where the entire vassal nation bore treaty obligations.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**James 2:17** — Faith and works

**1 John 4:8** — God is love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. How can we identify spiritual 'roots' of bitterness or idolatry before they spread in our church communities?
2. What does corporate responsibility for individual sin look like in the New Testament church (1 Corinthians 5)?

## Interlinear Text

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אִ	אָשָׁ	הַ	וְ	שָׁ	בְּ	כָּמָ	אֵ	וְ	אָזֶ	וְ	אָשָׁ	הַ	וְ	אָזֶ		
H6435	<b>Lest there should be</b>	H0					<b>among you man</b>	H176	<b>or woman</b>	H176						
	H3426						H376		H802							
וְ	מִשְׁפָּחָ	הַ	לְבָבָ	וְ	פָּנָ	הַ	מִעֵם	הַיּוֹם								
or family	H176	or tribe	H834	whose heart	H3824	turneth away	H6437	this day	H5973							
H4940		H7626						H3117								
לְ	כָּתָ	אֱלֹהִ	וְ	לְעַבְדָּ	וְ	אֱלֹהִ	וְ	גָּדוֹ	וְ							
from the LORD	H1980	our God	H1980	and serve	H5647	our God	H430	of these nations	H1471							
H3068		H430														
לְ	עַנְהָהָ	רַ	אָשָׁ	שְׁ	רַ	שְׁ	פָּרָ	הַ								
gall	and wormwood	H3939	<b>Lest there should be</b>	H0	<b>among you a root</b>	H8328	<b>that beareth</b>	H6509								
H7219			H3426													
רַ	אָשָׁ															

## Additional Cross-References

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**Hebrews 12:15** (References God): Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;

**Jeremiah 9:15** (References God): Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

**Hebrews 3:12** (References God): Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

**Acts 8:23** (Parallel theme): For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.

**Amos 6:12** (Parallel theme): Shall horses run upon the rock? will one plow there with oxen? for ye have turned judgment into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into hemlock:

**Hosea 10:4** (Parallel theme): They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field.

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