

# 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

**Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God** (פְּנִי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכֶם אִישׁ אוֹ-אִשָּׁה)—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** (שֹׁרֶשׁ פֶּהָה רָאֵשׁ וְלַעֲנָה)—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 shorish ("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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פֶּן	יֵשׁ	בְּכֶם	אִישׁ	אוֹ	אִשָּׁה	אוֹ	
H6435	Lest there should be	H0	among you man	H176	or woman	H176	
	H3426		H376		H802		
מִשְׁפָּחָהּ	אוֹ	יֵשׁ בָּט	אֲשֶׁר	לִבּוֹ	פָּנָה	הַיּוֹם	מֵעַם
or family	H176	or tribe	H834	whose heart	turneth away	this day	H5973
H4940		H7626		H3824	H6437	H3117	
יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	לְלֶכֶת	לְעֹבֵד	אֶת	אֱלֹהֵינוּ	הַגּוֹיִם	
from the LORD	our God	H1980	and serve	H853	our God	of these nations	
H3068	H430		H5647		H430	H1471	
מִן	יֵשׁ	בְּכֶם	שֹׁרֶשׁ	פֶּה	הַ		
H1992	H6435	Lest there should be	H0	among you a root	that beareth		
		H3426		H8328	H6509		
רֵאשׁוֹן	וְלִשְׁמֵרָהּ:						
gall	and wormwood						
H7219	H3939						

## 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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