

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 285

RIGHTEOUS STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS

A Covenant Deep Dive into Deuteronomy 4:8 — *chukkim u-mishpatim tzaddiqim*
(righteous statutes and judgments)

What Does Moses Claim for the Torah, What Makes a Law Righteous, How Does the Claim Stand Beside the Laws of the Nations, Why Is the Righteous Law Joined to the Nearness of Yahweh, and What Does the Verse Ask of the Covenant Believer Today? — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	✡ ISLAM
When the Torah scroll is lifted in the synagogue the congregation says, <i>“And this is the Torah which Moses set before the children of Israel”</i> (Deuteronomy 4:44), the sequel to this verse. Rashi explains <i>tzaddiqim (righteous)</i> as <i>“proper and acceptable.”</i> The Talmud takes the wisdom of Deuteronomy 4:6 to be the calculation of seasons and constellations (Shabbat 75a), and Maimonides argues from the same verse that every statute has a reason the nations can recognize (Guide for the Perplexed III:31). The verse itself points to the whole Torah, kept and done.	Paul writes that <i>“the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good”</i> (Romans 7:12) and that Israel was <i>“entrusted with the oracles of God”</i> (Romans 3:2). Yet Hebrews calls the first covenant <i>“obsolete”</i> (Hebrews 8:13), and the Westminster Confession teaches that Israel’s judicial laws <i>“expired together with the State of that people”</i> (19.4). The Tanakh’s own question stands first: what nation has statutes and judgments as righteous as all this Torah?	The Qur’an says, <i>“We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light”</i> (Q. 5:44), and asks why any would seek another judge <i>“while they have the Torah, in which is the judgment of Allah”</i> (Q. 5:43). Its word on nearness echoes Deuteronomy 4:7: <i>“I am near; I answer the call of the caller when he calls upon Me”</i> (Q. 2:186). Where Islamic teaching holds that the Torah’s text was altered and its law replaced, the Tanakh’s own claim for <i>“all this Torah”</i> is the measure.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to one verse, **Deuteronomy 4:8**, and to the five questions it raises: what Moses claims for the Torah, what makes a law righteous, how the claim stands beside the laws of the nations, why the righteous law is joined to the nearness of **Yahweh**, and what the verse asks of the covenant believer today. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh books and personal names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in bold italic with their English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English version; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Scripture is rendered in a literal working translation from the Hebrew. Each finding is graded under the two-or-three-witness standard as **Corroborated** (two or more independent Tanakh witnesses), **Single witness**, or **Not in the text**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Rabbinic commentary, New Testament texts, church teaching, and the Qur'an appear only in the three-religion table, the Comparative Texts table, the Three-Religion

Audit, and the Corrections section, as historical and comparative reference — not as binding authority. The law collections of the ancient nations and the later law-books built on the Torah are cited in Sections V and VII-D as historical record only; they are not witnesses under **Deuteronomy 19:15**, and no finding of doctrine rests on them. The teaching sections rest on the Tanakh alone. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy	The verse and its setting; the promise of a great nation; the marks of a righteous law in the statutes and judgments themselves
Nevi'im (Prophets)	Joshua, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, Zechariah, Malachi	The nations who said it under Solomon; the Torah applied by a king; the witness lost when the Torah was forsaken; the nations who will yet come to learn
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, 2 Chronicles	The righteous judgments praised; nearness and Torah joined; the Torah seen as wisdom in foreign courts

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
New Testament	Matthew 5:14–19; Romans 2:23–24; 3:1–2; 7:12; 2 Corinthians 3:7; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 7:18–19; 8:13; James 1:25	The law called holy and righteous, and the law called obsolete
Qur'an	Q. 2:75; 2:143; 2:186; 3:110; 4:46; 4:135; 5:8; 5:13; 5:43–45; 5:48; 6:115; 6:154; 62:5	The Torah as guidance and judgment; nearness; the claims of alteration and replacement
Rabbinic literature	Rashi on Deuteronomy 4:8 ; Talmud Shabbat 75a; Mishnah Bava Kamma 4:3; Talmud Bava Kamma 38a; Maimonides, Guide for the Perplexed III:31	How the verse has been read; one ruling tested against the Torah's single judgment

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Church teaching	Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> I–II, question 104, article 3; Westminster Confession 19.3–4; Thirty-Nine Articles, Article VII	The division of the Torah into moral, ceremonial, and judicial law
Ancient law collections	Laws of Ur-Namma (prologue); Laws of Hammurabi (prologue, epilogue, and laws 6, 8, 16, 21, 22, 117, 196–199, 210, 229–230, 250–252); the collections of Lipit-Ishtar, Eshnunna, the Hittites, and Middle Assyria named	The laws of the nations in the world of Moses (Section V)
Later law built on the Torah	The law-book of Alfred of Wessex (late ninth century); the Fundamental Agreement of New Haven (1639); the Massachusetts Body of Liberties (1641); the Plymouth laws of 1636	Nations that heard the statutes after the Tanakh closed (Section VII-D; Section XI)
Modern scholarship	Moshe Greenberg, <i>Some Postulates of Biblical Criminal Law</i> (1960); Martha T. Roth, <i>Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor</i> (1997)	The comparison of the Torah with the cuneiform collections

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION — ONE VERSE, FIVE QUESTIONS

I-A. The Verse

Deuteronomy 4:8 is a question. Moses asks it and does not answer it. He leaves it for Israel, and for every nation that will ever hear these statutes.

וּמִי גּוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר-לוֹ חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים צְדִיקִים כָּל הַתּוֹרָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי נֹתֵן לְפָנֶיכֶם הַיּוֹם

u-mi goy gadol asher lo chukkim u-mishpatim tzaddiqim, ke-khol ha-torah ha-zot asher

anokhi noten lifneikhem ha-yom

“And what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as all this Torah, which I am setting before you this day?” (Deuteronomy 4:8)

The verse raises five questions, and this study takes them in order.

First: what does Moses claim for the Torah, and what does he not claim?

Second: what makes a statute or a judgment righteous?

Third: does the claim hold when the Torah is set beside the laws of the nations of its own day?

Fourth: why does the verse before it join the righteous law to the nearness of **Yahweh**?

Fifth: what does the verse ask of the covenant believer today?

I-B. Where the Verse Stands

Moses speaks these words in the fortieth year, east of the Jordan, to the generation about to enter the land (**Deuteronomy 1:3, 5**). For three chapters he has told them their history.

In chapter 4 he turns to the charge: *“And now, Israel, listen to the statutes and to the judgments which I am teaching you to do, that you may live”* (**Deuteronomy 4:1**).

Two guards are set before the verse is reached. The first is in the text: *“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it”* (**Deuteronomy 4:2**).

The second is from their own memory. At Baal Peor the men who went after another god died, and Moses says, *“But you who held fast to Yahweh your Elohim are alive, every one of you, this day”* (**Deuteronomy 4:3–4**; compare **Numbers 25:1–9**).

Then come four verses that belong together (**Deuteronomy 4:5–8**), and after them the warning not to forget (**Deuteronomy 4:9**). The verse studied here is the last line of that unit.

This study builds on earlier work in the Library and does not repeat it. **Doc 270** listed **Deuteronomy 4:6** among the reasons the Tanakh gives for keeping the commandments. **Doc 271** examined **Exodus 19:5–6**, the calling of Israel among all peoples. **Doc 219** examined **Deuteronomy 6:25**, where keeping the commandments is called righteousness for the one who keeps them. **Doc 221** compared the written law with human civil law. **Doc 142** and **Doc 215** examined the nations coming up to learn the Torah in **Isaiah 2** and **Micah 4**. *The Government of the Hebrew Nation*, Part 13, quoted this passage. The present document studies the verse itself and corrects several points in the earlier material (Section XI).

Every finding below is graded. A finding is **Corroborated** when two or more independent Tanakh witnesses carry it (**Deuteronomy 19:15**). It is **Single witness** when only one text carries it. It is **Not in the text** when it is taught but the Tanakh does not say it.

II. THE WORD STUDY — WHAT THE HEBREW SAYS

The four verses use a small and exact vocabulary. The table sets out the terms this study relies on.

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>chok (statute)</i> , חֹק; plural <i>chukkim (statutes)</i> , חֻקִּים	H2706	A fixed decree; from <i>chaqaq (to cut in / engrave)</i> , H2710. What has been inscribed and does not move	Deuteronomy 4:1, 5, 6, 8
<i>mishpat (judgment)</i> , מִשְׁפָּט; plural <i>mishpatim (judgments)</i> , מִשְׁפָּטִים	H4941	A ruling that sets a matter right between parties; from <i>shaphat (to judge)</i> , H8199	Exodus 21:1; Deuteronomy 4:8
<i>tzaddiq (righteous / just)</i> , צַדִּיק	H6662	In the right; conforming to the standard. Used of persons and of Yahweh ; used of laws in this verse	Deuteronomy 4:8; 25:1; 32:4
<i>tzedeq (righteousness / what is right)</i> , צֶדֶק	H6664	The standard itself: the right measure, the right ruling	Leviticus 19:36; Deuteronomy 16:20
<i>torah (instruction / teaching)</i> , תּוֹרָה	H8451	Direction given by a teacher; here the whole instruction Moses sets out	Deuteronomy 1:5; 4:8, 44
<i>goy (nation)</i> , גּוֹי, with <i>gadol (great)</i> , גָּדוֹל	H1471 / H1419	A people as a body with land and government; <i>goy gadol (great nation)</i> is the promise made to Abraham	Genesis 12:2; Deuteronomy 4:6, 7, 8
<i>am (people)</i> , עַם; plural <i>ammim (peoples)</i> , עַמִּים	H5971	A people as kin; here the peoples who watch and hear	Deuteronomy 4:6
<i>chokhmah (wisdom)</i> , חִכְמָה, and <i>binah (understanding)</i> , בִּינָה	H2451 / H998	Skill in living and in judging; discernment between one thing and another	Deuteronomy 4:6; Job 28:28
<i>chakham (wise)</i> , חָכָם, and <i>navon (understanding / discerning)</i> , נָבוֹן	H2450 / H995	The pair used of those who are fit to govern and to judge	Genesis 41:39; Deuteronomy 1:13; 1 Kings 3:12
<i>qarov (near)</i> , קָרוֹב	H7138	Near in place, in kinship, or in help	Deuteronomy 4:7; Psalms 145:18
<i>qara (to call)</i> , קָרָא	H7121	To call out; to call upon	Deuteronomy 4:7; 1 Kings 8:52

HEBREW TERM	STRONG'S	CORE MEANING	KEY TEXT
<i>natan lifnei (to set before)</i> , נתן לפני	H5414 / H6440	To place in front of someone, in open view, for his choice	Deuteronomy 4:8; 11:26; 30:15
<i>limmed (to teach)</i> , למד	H3925	To teach; to train by practice	Deuteronomy 4:1, 5, 10
<i>shamar (to keep / guard)</i> , שמר, and <i>asah (to do)</i> , עשה	H8104 / H6213	To guard as a trust, and to carry out	Deuteronomy 4:6

Four lexical observations govern what follows.

First, *tzaddiq (righteous / just)* is a word for persons. In Deuteronomy it describes the man who is in the right before the court (**Deuteronomy 16:19; 25:1**) and it describes **Yahweh: “righteous and upright is He” (Deuteronomy 32:4)**.

Only here does the book use it of laws. Moses gives the statutes and judgments the adjective that belongs to an upright man and to Yahweh Himself. The claim is that the laws have the character of the One who gave them. The word is written here without its second *yod* (צַדִּיקִים), a spelling that does not change the meaning.

Second, the pair *chakham (wise)* and *navon (understanding / discerning)* is the Tanakh’s vocabulary for governing and judging. Pharaoh says to Joseph, “*there is none so discerning and wise as you,*” and sets him over Egypt (**Genesis 41:39–40**).

Moses tells the tribes to choose “*wise and understanding and known men*” as their heads (**Deuteronomy 1:13**).

Solomon asks for a heart to judge the people and is given “*a wise and understanding heart*” (**1 Kings 3:9, 12**).

In **Deuteronomy 4:6** the same pair is given to a whole people, and the reason is that they keep and do the statutes.

Third, in the words “*for that is your wisdom*” the pronoun is feminine singular, *bi (that / it)*, written הִיא. “*Statutes*” and “*judgments*” are masculine plural, so the pronoun does not point to them. It points most naturally to the keeping and doing just commands. **The wisdom the peoples see is the Torah carried out.**

Fourth, “*which I am setting before you*” is *noten lifneikhem (setting before you)*. Deuteronomy uses the same phrase of the blessing and the curse (**Deuteronomy 11:26**) and of life and death (**Deuteronomy 30:15, 19**). A law that is “set before” a people is laid in open view for their choice. It

is not kept in a palace or reserved for a priestly class. The book later commands that it be read aloud to everyone (Deuteronomy 31:10–13).

III. THE VERSE IN ITS SETTING — DEUTERONOMY 4:5–8

III-A. Taught as Commanded (4:5)

רֵאֵה לִמַּדְתִּי אֶתְכֶם חֻקִּים וּמִשְׁפָּטִים כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוֵּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם
בָּאִים שָׁמָּה לְרִשְׁתָּהּ

*re'eh limmadti etkhem chukkim u-mishpatim, ka-asher tzivvani Yahweh Elohai, la'asot ken
be-qerev ha-arets asher attem ba'im shammah le-rishtah*

“See, I have taught you statutes and judgments, as Yahweh my Elohim commanded me, to do so in the midst of the land which you are entering to possess.” (Deuteronomy 4:5)

Two things are fixed before any praise of the law is spoken.

Moses is not its author: he taught “as Yahweh my Elohim commanded me.” And the law is for doing “in the midst of the land.” These statutes are meant to order the fields, the courts, the markets, and the households of real people.

III-B. Wisdom in the Eyes of the Peoples (4:6)

וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם וַעֲשִׂיתֶם כִּי הוּא חֻכְמַתְכֶם וּבִינְתְּכֶם לְעֵינֵי הָעַמִּים אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְעוּן אֶת כָּל־הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה
וְאָמְרוּ רַק עַם־חָכָם וְנָבוֹן הַגּוֹי הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה

*u-shmartem va-asitem, ki bi chokhmatkhem u-vinatkhem le-einei ha-ammim, asher
yishme'un et kol ha-chukkim ha-elleh, ve-amru: raq am chakham ve-navon ha-goy ha-gadol
ha-zeh*

“And you shall keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the eyes of the peoples, who will hear all these statutes and say, Surely a wise and understanding people is this great nation.” (Deuteronomy 4:6)

The wisdom is in the keeping and the doing (Section II, third observation). A person that only owns the scroll has not yet shown the people anything.

What the people hear is “all these statutes.” The word is *chukkim* (statutes), the fixed decrees, the class of law whose reasons are least often stated. Moses does not say the people will admire the easy parts. He says they will hear all of it.

What the peoples say begins with *raq* (only / surely), רַק. They find nothing else to call this nation but wise and understanding. The verse tells what the people will hear and say. It does not say that they will

keep these statutes. That belongs to a later promise, when the nations say, *“He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths”* (Isaiah 2:3).

III-C. Two Questions, One Greatness (4:7–8)

Moses then asks two questions built the same way. Each begins *mi goy gadol (what great nation)*. The first asks about a near **Elohim** (Deuteronomy 4:7; Section VI). The second asks about a righteous law (Deuteronomy 4:8). With verse 6, the words *goy gadol (great nation)* stand three times in three verses.

That phrase is the promise to Abraham:

“I will make of you a great nation” (Genesis 12:2).

When Yahweh repeats it, He joins it to justice: Abraham will become *“a great and mighty nation,”* and he will command his household *“to keep the way of Yahweh, to do righteousness and justice”* (Genesis 18:18–19).

Moses now tells Israel what the greatness is. It is not numbers. *“You were the fewest of all peoples”* (Deuteronomy 7:7). **The nation is great because Yahweh is near to it and because its law is righteous.**

The measure is *ke-khol ha-torah ha-zot (as all this Torah)*. Moses does not point to a few admired commandments. He points to the whole body of instruction he is setting out, the same *“this Torah”* he began to explain in Deuteronomy 1:5 and which the book sums up:

“And this is the Torah which Moses set before the children of Israel” (Deuteronomy 4:44).

The claim does not stand on this verse alone.

The psalmist says, *“He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. He has not done so for any nation; and His judgments, they have not known them”* (Psalms 147:19–20).

The Levites confess, *“You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven, and gave them upright judgments and true instructions, good statutes and commandments”* (Nehemiah 9:13).

Finding — what Moses claims: the statutes and judgments of the whole Torah are righteous, they were given to Israel by Yahweh and not devised by Moses, and no other nation was given the like. Corroborated (Deuteronomy 4:5, 8; Psalms 147:19–20; Nehemiah 9:13). The wisdom the peoples see is the Torah kept and done, not the Torah possessed (Deuteronomy 4:6; Section VIII-B).

IV. WHAT MAKES A LAW RIGHTEOUS? — SEVEN MARKS FROM THE TORAH ITSELF

Moses does not leave the word *“righteous”* undefined. The statutes and judgments he goes on to set out show what he means. Seven marks recur, and each is carried by more than one witness.

IV-A. First Mark: The Lawgiver Is Righteous

“The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice; an Elohim of faithfulness and without iniquity, righteous and upright is He.” (Deuteronomy 32:4)

The law is righteous because of whose it is.

The Psalms say so directly: *“Righteous are You, Yahweh, and upright are Your judgments”* (Psalms 119:137), and *“the judgments of Yahweh are truth; they are righteous altogether”* (Psalms 19:9 [Hebrew 19:10]).

A law takes its character from its source. A king’s law carries the king’s interests.

The Torah carries the character of Yahweh, *“who shows no partiality and takes no bribe”* (Deuteronomy 10:17).

IV-B. Second Mark: One Judgment for Native and Stranger

“You shall have one judgment; as the stranger, so shall the native be; for I am Yahweh your Elohim.” (Leviticus 24:22)

The phrase is *mishpat echad* (one judgment), מִשְׁפָּט אֶחָד. It closes the law of bodily injury (Leviticus 24:19–22), the very place where other nations set different prices on different classes of men (Section V).

Numbers repeats it: *“One Torah and one judgment shall be for you and for the stranger who sojourns with you”* (Numbers 15:16).

Moses gave the same charge to the judges: *“judge righteously between a man and his brother and his stranger... you shall hear the small as the great”* (Deuteronomy 1:16–17).

IV-C. Third Mark: No Bribe and No Favor, to Rich or to Poor

“You shall not pervert judgment; you shall not show partiality; and you shall not take a bribe, for the bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. Righteousness, righteousness you shall pursue.” (Deuteronomy 16:19–20)

The Torah closes the door on favor in both directions.

“You shall not favor the poor nor honor the great; in righteousness you shall judge your neighbor” (Leviticus 19:15).

“Nor shall you favor a poor man in his dispute” (Exodus 23:3), and three verses later, *“You shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute”* (Exodus 23:6).

A court may not lean toward the powerful, and it may not lean toward the weak out of pity. It is to find what is right. The same standard reaches the marketplace: *“just balances, just weights”* (Leviticus 19:36; compare Deuteronomy 25:13–16).

IV-D. Fourth Mark: The Weak Are Guarded by Name

“You shall not wrong a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict him at all, and he cries out to Me, I will surely hear his cry.” (Exodus 22:21–23 [Hebrew 22:20–22])

The stranger, the widow, the fatherless, the poor, and the hired worker are named again and again (Deuteronomy 10:18–19; 24:14–15, 17).

The worker is to be paid the same day, *“lest he cry against you to Yahweh, and it be sin in you”* (Deuteronomy 24:15).

The righteousness of the Torah reaches past the citizen to those with no power to demand it, and past people to the servant’s rest, the working animal, the nesting bird, and the fruit tree (Deuteronomy 5:14; 25:4; 22:6–7; 20:19). Doc 266 examined the unmuzzled ox.

IV-E. Fifth Mark: Each Answers for His Own Sin

“Fathers shall not be put to death for children, nor shall children be put to death for fathers; each man shall be put to death for his own sin.” (Deuteronomy 24:16)

This statute was applied. When Amaziah of Judah executed the men who had murdered his father,

“he did not put to death the children of the murderers, according to what is written in the book of the Torah of Moses” (2 Kings 14:6).

Ezekiel states the same rule: *“The soul that sins, it shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father”* (Ezekiel 18:20).

In a Torah court no one may be punished in place of another.

Life is also set apart from property. A murderer cannot buy his way out:

“You shall take no ransom for the life of a murderer” (Numbers 35:31).

And a thief does not pay with his life; he pays back double, fourfold, or fivefold (**Exodus 22:1–4** [Hebrew 21:37–22:3]).

The Torah does not put a price on a life, and it does not take a life for goods.

IV-F. Sixth Mark: Proof Is Required and the Penalty Is Measured

No one may be condemned on one person’s word: *“One witness shall not rise against a man for any iniquity... at the mouth of two witnesses or at the mouth of three witnesses shall a matter stand”* (**Deuteronomy 19:15**; compare **Deuteronomy 17:6**; **Numbers 35:30**). A false witness receives what he meant to do to his brother (**Deuteronomy 19:16–19**).

The penalty is bounded. A guilty man may be beaten, but *“forty he may strike him; he shall not add, lest... your brother be degraded in your eyes”* (**Deuteronomy 25:1–3**). Even the condemned man is still called *“your brother.”* The rule of *“eye for eye”* (**Exodus 21:23–25**) is the same principle of measure: the penalty may not exceed the wrong. The Library’s earlier study of that law treats it.

IV-G. Seventh Mark: The Ruler Is Under the Law, and the Law Is Read to All

“He shall write for himself a copy of this Torah on a scroll... and he shall read in it all the days of his life... that his heart may not be lifted up above his brothers, and that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right or to the left.” (**Deuteronomy 17:18–20**)

The king of Israel does not make the law. He copies it, reads it, and obeys it. And the law is not his private knowledge.

Every seventh year it is read aloud to *“the men and the women and the little ones, and your stranger who is within your gates, that they may hear and that they may learn”* (**Deuteronomy 31:10–13**). Jehoshaphat told his judges, *“you do not judge for man but for Yabweh”* (**2 Chronicles 19:6**). Doc 221 examined the law of the king.

IV-H. The Seven Marks Together

#	MARK OF A RIGHTEOUS LAW	KEY WITNESSES	GRADE
1	The Lawgiver is righteous	Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalms 19:9; 119:137	Corroborated
2	One judgment for native and stranger	Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 15:16; Deuteronomy 1:16–17	Corroborated

#	MARK OF A RIGHTEOUS LAW	KEY WITNESSES	GRADE
3	No bribe and no favor, to rich or to poor	Deuteronomy 16:19–20; Leviticus 19:15; Exodus 23:3, 6	Corroborated
4	The weak are guarded by name	Exodus 22:21–23; Deuteronomy 10:18–19; 24:14–17	Corroborated
5	Each answers for his own sin; life is not traded for property	Deuteronomy 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; Ezekiel 18:20; Numbers 35:31	Corroborated
6	Proof is required and the penalty is measured	Deuteronomy 19:15; 25:1–3; Numbers 35:30	Corroborated
7	The ruler is under the law, and the law is read to all	Deuteronomy 17:18–20; 31:10–13; 2 Chronicles 19:6	Corroborated

Finding — what makes a law righteous: in the Torah’s own terms a righteous law comes from a righteous Lawgiver, gives one judgment to every person before it, cannot be bought, protects those who cannot protect themselves, holds each person to his own guilt, demands proof, limits punishment, and binds the ruler. Corroborated on every point.

V. THE CLAIM TESTED — THE LAWS OF THE NATIONS

V-A. What Has Survived

For most of history a reader could not test Moses’s question, because the laws of the nations around Israel were lost. That changed in the winter of 1901–1902, when a stone pillar inscribed with the laws of Hammurabi, king of Babylon (about 1754 BCE), was found at Susa. Other collections have been recovered since: the laws of Ur-Namma of Ur (about 2100 BCE), of Lipit-Ishtar of Isin (about 1930 BCE), of the city of Eshnunna (about 1770 BCE), the Hittite laws (from about 1650 BCE), and the Middle Assyrian laws (about 1100 BCE). All of these come from the world in which Israel lived.

These collections are historical records. They are cited here as reference only. They are not witnesses under **Deuteronomy 19:15**, and no doctrine of this Institution rests on them. They are set beside the Torah because the verse itself invites the comparison: *“what great nation is there...?”*

V-B. Where the Nations Agree With the Torah

The nations were not without a sense of justice, and the comparison should begin by saying so. Ur-Namma’s prologue says the orphan was not delivered up to the rich man, nor the widow to the

mighty man. Hammurabi says he wrote his laws so that the strong might not oppress the weak, and to give justice to the orphan and the widow. The collections are written in the same form as many of the Torah’s judgments (*“If a man...”*), and some cases are close. Hammurabi’s laws 250–252 treat the ox that gores, as **Exodus 21:28–32** does.

Tanakh expects this. Abimelech, king of Gerar, pleads,

“will You slay even a righteous nation?” and Elohim answers, *“I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this”* (Genesis 20:4, 6).

Abraham calls Yahweh *“the Judge of all the earth”* (Genesis 18:25). So Moses is not asking who else has any law at all. He asks what nation has statutes and judgments as righteous as all this Torah.

V-C. Where They Differ

The table sets the laws of Hammurabi, the fullest of the surviving collections, beside the Torah at six points. The numbers are the standard law numbers.

MATTER	THE LAWS OF HAMMURABI	THE TORAH
Injury and rank	An eye for the eye of a man of the upper class, and a bone for his bone (196–197). A payment of silver for the eye of a commoner (198). Half his price for the eye of another man’s slave (199).	<i>“One judgment”</i> for the stranger and the native (Leviticus 24:19–22). A slave whose eye or tooth his master destroys goes free (Exodus 21:26–27).
Who pays for a death	If a house falls and kills its owner, the builder is put to death; if it kills the owner’s son, the builder’s son is put to death (229–230). If a man strikes a woman and she dies, his daughter is put to death (210).	<i>“Each man shall be put to death for his own sin”</i> (Deuteronomy 24:16), applied in 2 Kings 14:6 .
Theft	Death for stealing temple or palace property (6), for breaking into a house (21), for robbery (22), and for the thief who cannot pay the multiple restitution (8).	Restitution of double, fourfold, or fivefold; the thief who cannot pay is sold for his theft, not killed (Exodus 22:1–4 [Hebrew 21:37–22:3]). Death is for stealing a human being (Exodus 21:16).
The runaway slave	Death for the man who shelters a runaway slave and does not bring him out (16).	<i>“You shall not hand over to his master a slave who has escaped from his master to you”</i> (Deuteronomy 23:15–16 [Hebrew 23:16–17]).

MATTER	THE LAWS OF HAMMURABI	THE TORAH
The source of the law	The king. Hammurabi calls the laws his own words, inscribed on his own monument, and curses any later king who alters them.	Yahweh. Moses teaches “ <i>as Yahweh my Elohim commanded me</i> ” (Deuteronomy 4:5). The king must copy the Torah and obey it (Deuteronomy 17:18–20).
Who hears the law	A pillar set up in a temple. The wronged man is invited to come and have the inscription read to him.	Read aloud to men, women, children, and strangers every seventh year (Deuteronomy 31:10–13), and taught to children at home (Deuteronomy 4:9–10; 6:7).

The differences run in one direction. Where the nations graded a man’s injury by his rank, the Torah gives one judgment. Where they could take a son’s life for a father’s fault, the Torah forbids it. Where they took life for property, the Torah takes restitution. Where the law was the king’s word, the Torah puts the king under the word. These are the marks of Section IV, and they show most clearly beside the laws that lacked them. Modern scholars of ancient law have drawn the same contrasts; the comparison here follows their work and adds no claim of its own to it.

V-D. The Limits of the Comparison

Three cautions keep the comparison honest.

First: the Torah itself is not without distinctions of standing. The servant is treated differently from the free man in **Exodus 21:20–21** and **21:32**. Even there the Torah moves against the custom of the nations: the master who kills his servant is to be avenged (**Exodus 21:20**), and the servant who is maimed goes free (**Exodus 21:26–27**). The Library’s study of servitude in the Tanakh treats these laws.

Second: the comparison does not favor the Torah on every line. Hammurabi’s law 117 releases a debt-servant in the fourth year; the Torah releases him in the seventh (**Exodus 21:2; Deuteronomy 15:12**). The Torah adds that he must not be sent away empty (**Deuteronomy 15:13–14**) and forbids the interest that creates such debts (**Exodus 22:25** [Hebrew 22:24]), but the shorter term is Babylon’s.

Third: how far the Babylonian collection governed real cases is debated. Records of Babylonian court cases seldom if ever cite it. It may show what a king wished to be remembered for more than what his judges did.

Finding — the claim beside the laws of the nations: this is a finding of history and not of doctrine. On the evidence that has survived, the Torah differs from the law collections of its world at the points the Torah itself names as righteousness: one judgment for all, guilt that is personal, life not traded for property, protection for the fugitive, and a ruler under the law. The Tanakh witnesses that carry those marks are graded in Section IV. The historical comparison is offered as reference only.

VI. THE NEAR ELOHIM AND THE RIGHTEOUS LAW — WHY THE TWO QUESTIONS STAND TOGETHER

VI-A. The First Question

כִּי מִי־גוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ אֱלֹהִים קְרוֹבִים אֵלָיו כִּיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכָל־קְרָאֵנוּ אֵלָיו

ki mi goy gadol asher lo elohim qerovim elav, ka-Yahweh Eloheinu be-khol qor'enu elav

“For what great nation is there that has gods so near to it as Yahweh our Elohim is in all our calling upon Him?” (Deuteronomy 4:7)

The words are *elohim qerovim* (*gods so near*). The adjective is plural, so the phrase can be read of the many gods of the nations, or of *“a god so near.”* Either way the contrast is the same.

The nations had gods. Israel has Yahweh, who is near *be-khol qor'enu elav* (*in all our calling upon Him*). Solomon uses the same phrase when he dedicates the house: that Yahweh would listen to His people *“in all their calling to You”* (1 Kings 8:52).

VI-B. Near and Righteous: The Two Words Together

The two words of Deuteronomy 4:7–8, *qarov* (*near*) and *tzaddiq* (*righteous / just*), are joined elsewhere in the Tanakh.

Witness One — the psalm of David. *“Righteous is Yahweh in all His ways, and faithful in all His works. Near is Yahweh to all who call upon Him, to all who call upon Him in truth”* (Psalms 145:17–18). The two verses stand side by side, as the two questions of Moses do.

Witness Two — the psalm of the Torah. *“You are near, Yahweh, and all Your commandments are truth”* (Psalms 119:151). The nearness of Yahweh and the truth of His commandments are confessed in one line.

Witness Three — Moses himself. The same book says of the commandment what this verse says of Yahweh: *“the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it”* (Deuteronomy 30:14). The Elohim who is near has given a word that is near.

VI-C. The Law Rests on the Nearness

The two questions belong together because the Torah's justice depends on an **Elohim** who hears. When the widow or the orphan is afflicted, the statute does not point first to a police power. It says, *"if he cries out to Me, I will surely bear his cry"* (Exodus 22:23 [Hebrew 22:22]).

When a poor man's cloak is kept overnight: *"when he cries to Me, I will bear, for I am gracious"* (Exodus 22:27 [Hebrew 22:26]).

When the hired man is not paid, he may *"cry against you to Yahweh"* (Deuteronomy 24:15). The same is said of the brother refused a loan (Deuteronomy 15:9).

The nearness of Deuteronomy 4:7 is therefore the enforcement of Deuteronomy 4:8. The weakest person in Israel has direct access to the Judge. A law may be written well, but if no one hears the oppressed it remains only a monument. The Torah is a righteous law because the One who gave it also listens.

VI-D. The Gods Who Do Not Answer

The Tanakh shows the other side. On Mount Carmel the prophets of Baal called from morning until noon and past it, *"but there was no voice, and no one answered, and no one paid attention"* (1 Kings 18:26–29).

Isaiah says of the idol, *"one cries to it, but it does not answer, nor save him from his trouble"* (Isaiah 46:7). The question of Deuteronomy 4:7 was answered in front of all Israel when Elijah prayed and the fire fell (1 Kings 18:36–39).

VI-E. Nearness Is Not Possession

The verse does not say that **Yahweh** is in Israel's keeping.

He asks, *"Am I an Elohim near at hand, and not an Elohim far off?"* (Jeremiah 23:23).

He is near *"to all who call upon Him in truth"* (Psalms 145:18),

and Isaiah warns, *"your iniquities have separated you from your Elohim"* (Isaiah 59:2).

Proverbs ties the nearness directly to the law: *"He who turns his ear from hearing Torah, even his prayer is an abomination"* (Proverbs 28:9),

and *"Yahweh is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous"* (Proverbs 15:29).

The man who refuses the righteous law cannot expect the near **Elohim** to hear him.

Finding — why the two questions stand together: the Tanakh joins the nearness of **Yahweh** to the righteousness of His ways and commandments (**Psalms 145:17–18; 119:151; Deuteronomy 30:14**), grounds the Torah’s protection of the weak in His hearing their cry (**Exodus 22:23, 27; Deuteronomy 24:15**), and refuses the prayer of the one who will not hear Torah (**Proverbs 28:9**). **Corroborated.** That **Yahweh**’s nearness is Israel’s possession apart from obedience is **Not in the text**.

VII. IN THE EYES OF THE PEOPLES — DID THE NATIONS EVER SAY IT?

Moses said the people would hear and speak. The Tanakh records when they did, when they said the opposite, and when they will say it again.

VII-A. When the Torah Was Kept

Witness One — Solomon. When Solomon judged between the two women, *“all Israel... saw that the wisdom of Elohim was in him to do justice”* (**1 Kings 3:28**).

Then the nations came: *“from all the peoples they came to hear the wisdom of Solomon”* (**1 Kings 4:34** [Hebrew 5:14]).

Hiram of Tyre said, *“Blessed be Yahweh this day, who has given David a wise son over this great people”* (**1 Kings 5:7** [Hebrew 5:21]).

The queen of Sheba, who had heard of Solomon *“concerning the name of Yahweh,”* said, *“Because Yahweh loved Israel forever, He made you king, to do justice and righteousness”* (**1 Kings 10:1, 9**).

A foreign king and a foreign queen speak in the vocabulary of **Deuteronomy 4:6–8**: a wise ruler, a great people, justice and righteousness.

Witness Two — Jehoshaphat. He sent officials, Levites, and priests through Judah, *“and with them was the book of the Torah of Yahweh; and they went about through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people. And the dread of Yahweh was upon all the kingdoms of the lands that were around Judah”* (**2 Chronicles 17:9–10**). The nations took notice when the Torah was taught and kept.

Witness Three — Daniel in Babylon. Four young men kept the Torah’s food law in a foreign court (**Daniel 1:8**), and *“in every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better”* than all his own wise men (**Daniel 1:20**). The words are *chokhmah* (*wisdom*) and *binah* (*understanding*), the pair of **Deuteronomy 4:6**.

Witness Four — the king of Persia. Artaxerxes wrote to Ezra, *“according to the wisdom of your Elohim which is in your hand, appoint magistrates and judges”* (Ezra 7:25). A few lines earlier he had called the same scroll *“the law of your Elohim which is in your hand”* (Ezra 7:14). The letter is in Aramaic. A ruler of the nations calls the Torah wisdom, and he asks that judges be appointed by it.

VII-B. When the Torah Was Forsaken

The same promise has a reverse. Jeremiah quotes the people’s boast and answers it: *“How do you say, We are wise, and the Torah of Yahweh is with us?... Behold, they have rejected the word of Yahweh, and what wisdom is in them?”* (Jeremiah 8:8–9).

They had the scroll and did not keep it, and Jeremiah says no wisdom was left in them. This is **Deuteronomy 4:6** read from the other side.

Ezekiel is sharper: Jerusalem, set *“in the midst of the nations,” “has rebelled against My judgments for wickedness more than the nations”* and has *“not even done according to the judgments of the nations”* around her (Ezekiel 5:5–7).

Isaiah says Yahweh *“looked for justice, and behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, and behold, an outcry”* (Isaiah 5:7).

Then the nations say something else. *“All the nations will say, Why has Yahweh done thus to this land?... Because they forsook the covenant of Yahweh”* (Deuteronomy 29:24–25 [Hebrew 29:23–24]).

In exile *“they profaned My holy name, in that it was said of them, These are the people of Yahweh, and they have gone out of His land”* (Ezekiel 36:20).

The greater the gift, the greater the account: *“You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities”* (Amos 3:2).

There is also a hostile hearing. Haman told the king of Persia, *“their laws are different from every people”* (Esther 3:8). The nations notice a people that lives by these statutes. The Tanakh does not promise that every one of them will be pleased.

VII-C. When the Nations Will Say It Again

The prophets set the full answer in days still to come. *“Many peoples shall go and say, Come, let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh... that He may teach us of His ways, and we may walk in His paths. For out of Zion shall go forth Torah”* (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2).

“The coastlands wait for His Torah” (Isaiah 42:4).

“Torah shall go forth from Me, and My justice I will set as a light of the peoples” (Isaiah 51:4).

And Zechariah gives the sentence the nations will speak: ***“Let us go with you, for we have heard that Elohim is with you” (Zechariah 8:23).*** They have heard, as **Deuteronomy 4:6** said they would, and what they have heard is that **Elohim** is near, as **Deuteronomy 4:7** said He was. **Doc 215** found that this promise has not yet been fulfilled by its own terms.

VII-D. After the Tanakh — A Historical Note

History after the Tanakh adds a note, offered as record and not as witness. Nations that heard the statutes did build on them. Alfred of Wessex, in the late ninth century, opened his law-book with the Ten Words and the judgments that follow them in Exodus 20–23. The planters of New Haven agreed in 1639 that the Scriptures “do hold forth a perfect rule” for the government of families and commonwealths. The Massachusetts Body of Liberties of 1641 set Torah citations beside its capital laws.

Each of these took part of the Torah and joined it to its own customs and its own king. None took “all this Torah.” The warning that stands six verses before our text applies: ***“You shall not add to the word... nor take from it” (Deuteronomy 4:2).***

Finding — in the eyes of the peoples: when the Torah was kept and taught, rulers of the nations called Israel and its Torah wise (**1 Kings 5:7; 10:9; Daniel 1:20; Ezra 7:25**). **Corroborated.** When it was forsaken, the nations spoke of Israel’s ruin and the Name was profaned (**Deuteronomy 29:24–25; Jeremiah 8:8–9; Ezekiel 36:20**). **Corroborated.** That the nations will come to learn the Torah is promised and still awaited (Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2; Zechariah 8:23). **Corroborated.**

VIII. WHAT THE VERSE DOES NOT SAY

A verse this strong is easily made to say more than it does. Six limits are set by the Tanakh itself.

VIII-A. It Does Not Say That Israel Is Righteous

The adjective belongs to the statutes and judgments. Of the people, the same book says:

“Not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land... for you are a stiff-necked people” (Deuteronomy 9:5–6).

Israel was not chosen for size or merit (**Deuteronomy 7:7–8**). The verse praises what was given, and it gives the receivers no ground for pride.

VIII-B. It Does Not Say That Having the Torah Is Wisdom

“Keep and do them, for that is your wisdom” (Deuteronomy 4:6).

The Psalms agree: *“a good understanding have all who do them”* (Psalms 111:10).

Job says that *“to turn from evil is understanding”* (Job 28:28).

Jeremiah’s generation had the scroll and no wisdom (Jeremiah 8:8–9). A Torah on the shelf makes no one wise in anyone’s eyes.

VIII-C. It Does Not Say That the Nations Know Nothing of Right

Elohim says to Abimelech, *“I know that in the integrity of your heart you have done this”* (Genesis 20:6). Amos holds Damascus, Gaza, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab to account for cruelty, though none of them stood at Sinai (Amos 1:3–2:3). Yahweh says He brought *“the Philistines from Caphtor and Aram from Kir”* as He brought Israel from Egypt (Amos 9:7). The nations have enough light to be judged by. What they were not given is “all this Torah” (Psalms 147:20).

VIII-D. It Does Not Say That the Torah May Be Improved

The righteousness is claimed for the whole, *ke-khol ha-torah ha-zot (as all this Torah)*, and the chapter has already forbidden adding or taking away (Deuteronomy 4:2; compare Deuteronomy 12:32 [Hebrew 13:1]). A tradition that adds its own rulings with equal authority, or sets aside the statutes it finds hard, is no longer describing the thing Moses praised.

VIII-E. A Hard Text: Statutes That Were Not Good

One verse seems to say the opposite: *“And I also gave them statutes that were not good, and judgments by which they could not live”* (Ezekiel 20:25). It must be read in its chapter.

In that chapter the laws Yahweh gave at Sinai are always *“My statutes”* and *“My judgments,”* and three times it is said of them, *“which if a man does, he shall live by them”* (Ezekiel 20:11, 13, 21). Against these stand *“the statutes of your fathers”* (Ezekiel 20:18), and the verse that follows names the practice in view: they *“caused all that opens the womb to pass through”* (Ezekiel 20:26), which verse 31 calls making their sons pass through the fire.

Two readings are held. In the first, Yahweh gave a rebellious people over to the statutes they had chosen for themselves, as He says in the Psalms: *“So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk in their own counsels”* (Psalms 81:12 [Hebrew 81:13]).

In the second, the verse speaks with bitter irony of a commandment Israel had twisted into child sacrifice. On either reading the statutes *“not good”* are not the Torah of Moses. That Yahweh’s own

Torah contains unrighteous statutes is Not in the text; the chapter itself says the opposite three times.

VIII-F. It Does Not Say That Every Statute Is Easy

A modern reader will ask about the laws of servitude, of war, and of the death penalty. The verse does not ask him to pretend these are simple. It says the people will hear *“all these statutes”* and still call the nation wise (**Deuteronomy 4:6**). The Library has examined those laws in their own studies, on servitude in the Tanakh, on the law of *“eye for eye,”* and in **Doc 202** on the law of war, and it reads each of them by the marks set out in Section IV.

Where a reason is not given, *“the secret things belong to Yahweh our Elohim, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this Torah”* (**Deuteronomy 29:29** [Hebrew 29:28]).

Finding — what the verse does not say: it claims righteousness for the Torah and not for Israel (**Deuteronomy 9:5–6; 7:7–8**); it places wisdom in doing and not in owning (**Deuteronomy 4:6; Psalms 111:10; Jeremiah 8:8–9**); it does not deny the nations a knowledge of right (**Genesis 20:4–6; Amos 1:3–2:3**); and it allows nothing to be added or removed (**Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32**). Corroborated on each point.

IX. WHAT THE VERSE ASKS OF THE COVENANT BELIEVER TODAY

IX-A. Keep and Do

The first word of **Deuteronomy 4:6** is the application: *u-shmartem va-asitem* (*and you shall keep and do*). **Doc 270** set out which commandments can be kept as written today and which wait on the land, the priesthood, and the sanctuary that **Yahweh** has said He will restore. What can be kept is to be kept in ordinary life: the Sabbath, honest weights, wages paid on time, the stranger treated as the native, the poor not forgotten.

IX-B. Measure Every Law by This One

The verse gives the believer a standard for every other law he lives under. The Tanakh knows that a thing may be lawful and still unrighteous.

“Shall the throne of destruction be allied with You, which frames mischief by statute?” (**Psalms 94:20**).

“Woe to those who decree unrighteous decrees... to turn aside the needy from justice” (Isaiah 10:1–2).

“Those who forsake Torah praise the wicked, but those who keep Torah contend with them” (Proverbs 28:4).

The marks of Section IV are the test.

1. Does a law give one judgment to the citizen and the stranger?
2. Can its judges be bought?
3. Does it hold each person to his own guilt?
4. Does it bind those who make it?
5. Where a nation’s law meets these marks, the believer may give thanks for it.
6. Where it does not, he bears witness, as the prophets did.

He does not take up force to impose the Torah. **Doc 221** drew that line from the Torah’s own law of the king (**Deuteronomy 17:14–20**) and from the choice the covenant requires: *“choose life”* (**Deuteronomy 30:19**).

The Torah is “set before” a people. Moses set it before Israel for their choice, and the believer may not put it on others by force.

IX-C. Live in the Eyes of the Peoples

Most covenant believers today live among the nations, which is where **Deuteronomy 4:6** says the Torah is seen. What the neighbors observe is conduct:

1. a man who will not cheat on a weight or a wage (**Deuteronomy 25:15; 24:15**),
2. a household that rests and lets its workers rest (**Deuteronomy 5:14**),
3. a people that loves the stranger (**Deuteronomy 10:19**).

Daniel did not argue for the Torah in Babylon. He kept it, and the king drew his own conclusion (**Daniel 1:8, 20**). The believer’s part is to do the statutes. What the people say about it is not in his control.

IX-D. Call on the One Who Is Near

The two questions stay together in the believer’s life as they do in the text. He keeps the righteous law and he calls on the near **Elohim**.

“Seek Yahweh while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near” (Isaiah 55:6).

The promise is not limited to one people: Solomon asked that **Yahweh** would hear *“the foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel,”* when he prays toward that house, *“that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name”* (1 Kings 8:41–43).

IX-E. Do Not Forget, and Teach Your Children

The next verse after our text is its safeguard:

“Only take heed to yourself and guard your soul diligently, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen... and make them known to your children and to your children’s children” (Deuteronomy 4:9).

A law can be righteous and still be lost in one generation if it is not taught. The last of the prophets ends on the same charge and with the same pair of words as our verse:

“Remember the Torah of Moses My servant, which I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel, statutes and judgments” (Malachi 4:4 [Hebrew 3:22]).

Finding — what the verse asks today:

1. to keep and do what can be kept (**Deuteronomy 4:6**),
2. to measure every human law by the righteous one (**Psalms 94:20; Isaiah 10:1–2**),
3. to live it openly among the nations (**Daniel 1:8, 20; Deuteronomy 10:19**),
4. to call on **Yahweh** who is near (**Isaiah 55:6; Psalms 145:18**),
5. and to teach it to the next generation (**Deuteronomy 4:9; Malachi 4:4**). Corroborated.

X. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT — HOW EACH TRADITION RECEIVES THE VERSE

The table sets the three traditions against the Tanakh’s own findings. Comparative texts are cited as historical reference only, in keeping with the standing rule of this document.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	C• ISLAM
Teaching and practice today	The whole Torah is read aloud in the synagogue on a fixed cycle, and when the scroll is lifted the congregation recites Deuteronomy 4:44 . Psalms 147 , with its line <i>“He has not done so for</i>	Most churches divide the Torah into moral, ceremonial, and judicial law and hold that only the moral law still binds (Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae I–II, q. 104, a. 3; Westminster Confession	The Qur’an calls the Torah <i>“guidance and light”</i> (Q. 5:44) and says Moses was given the Scripture as <i>“a detailed explanation of all things”</i> (Q. 6:154). Islamic law is its own system: <i>“For each of you We have</i>

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☩ ISLAM
	<i>any nation,</i>” is said in the daily morning service. Rashi reads <i>tzaddiqim</i> (<i>righteous</i>) as “<i>proper and acceptable.</i>” The Talmud reads the wisdom of Deuteronomy 4:6 as the calculation of seasons and constellations (Shabbat 75a). Maimonides argues from the verse that all the statutes have reasons the nations can see (Guide III:31).	19.3–4; Thirty-Nine Articles, Article VII). The Westminster Confession says the judicial laws “<i>expired together with the State of that people.</i>” Hebrews calls the first covenant “<i>obsolete</i>” (Hebrews 8:13), and Ephesians speaks of “<i>abolishing the law of commandments</i>” (Ephesians 2:15).	<i>appointed a law and a way</i>” (Q. 5:48). Classical teaching holds that the earlier scriptures were altered (Q. 2:75; 4:46; 5:13) and that the Qur’an stands over them as guardians (Q. 5:48). Muslims are called “<i>the best community brought forth for mankind</i>” (Q. 3:110) and “<i>witnesses over mankind</i>” (Q. 2:143).
Covenant strength	The public reading keeps “<i>all this Torah</i>” before the people, as Deuteronomy 31:10–13 commands. Maimonides’s argument honors the plain sense of Deuteronomy 4:6: the statutes carry a wisdom that the nations are able to recognize.	Paul calls the commandment “<i>holy and righteous and good</i>” (Romans 7:12) and says Israel was “<i>entrusted with the oracles of God</i>” (Romans 3:1–2). Jesus says not the smallest letter will pass from the law (Matthew 5:17–19) and tells his hearers to let their light shine before men (Matthew 5:14–16), which is Deuteronomy 4:6 restated. James calls it “<i>the perfect law of liberty</i>” (James 1:25).	The Qur’an cites the Torah’s own measure of penalty (Q. 5:45; compare Exodus 21:23–25). Its word on nearness matches Deuteronomy 4:7: “<i>I am near; I answer the call of the caller</i>” (Q. 2:186). Its commands to “<i>stand firm for justice, even against yourselves</i>” (Q. 4:135) and not to let hatred of a people lead to injustice (Q. 5:8) match Deuteronomy 1:17 and 16:19.
Covenant departure	Shabbat 75a narrows the wisdom of Deuteronomy 4:6 to astronomy. The verse places it in keeping and doing the statutes. The oral law adds rulings and binds them with the authority of the written Torah, though	To call the law “<i>weak and useless</i>” (Hebrews 7:18) or “<i>the ministry of death</i>” (2 Corinthians 3:7) is to say of the Torah what Deuteronomy 4:8 and Psalms 19:7 [Hebrew 19:8] do not say.	The claim that the Torah’s text was altered, and the doctrine that its law has been replaced, set a later authority over the Torah Moses calls righteous as a whole. Deuteronomy 4:2 and Malachi 3:6 do not allow it.

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	C* ISLAM
	Deuteronomy 4:2 stands six verses before our text. One such ruling treats the ox of an Israelite and the ox of a gentile differently in damages (Mishnah Bava Kamma 4:3), against the “one judgment” of Leviticus 24:22. The Talmud itself records that Roman officials who studied the Torah praised it and objected to that one ruling (Bava Kamma 38a).	The three-part division is not the text’s own. Moses praises “all this Torah” and names its statutes and judgments, the very parts later declared expired. The teaching that the Church has replaced Israel as the great nation is Not in the text of Deuteronomy 4.	The Qur’an itself says, “None can alter His words” (Q. 6:115), and tells the Jews of its day that they have the Torah, “in which is the judgment of Allah” (Q. 5:43). Those two statements stand against the claim of alteration.
Covenant witness	The Talmud’s own account in Bava Kamma 38a is Deuteronomy 4:6 in practice: officials of the nations heard the statutes, called them true, and noticed the one place where a later ruling departed from the single judgment.	Paul writes, “You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For... the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you” (Romans 2:23–24). This is Jeremiah 8:8 and Ezekiel 36:20 restated: the witness of Deuteronomy 4:6 turned around.	The Qur’an likens those who were given the Torah and did not carry it to “a donkey carrying books” (Q. 62:5). Jeremiah 8:8–9 makes the same charge: having the scroll without keeping it is not wisdom.

XI. CORRECTIONS TO EARLIER LIBRARY MATERIAL

The Library’s rule is that its own earlier work is tested by the same standard as everyone else’s. Three earlier documents need correction or refinement. Under the standing rule of October 2, 2026, each correction is also to be made in the affected Google Doc.

Correction 1 — the verse reference in *The Government of the Hebrew Nation*, Part 13 (March 2026). The quotation headed **“Deuteronomy 4:5–8”** begins, **“Keep therefore and do them.”** That is verse 6. Verse 5 is not quoted. The reference should read **Deuteronomy 4:6–8**.

Correction 2 — the laws of Plymouth Colony, in the same study. Part 13 says the Plymouth Colony **“was explicitly governed by the Hebrew scriptures as its primary legal document.”** The

record does not carry that. Plymouth’s first written code (1636) joined English common law to laws drawn from Moses, and it took its rule of inheritance from English custom. The Mayflower Compact names its signers “*loyal subjects*” of King James. The colony that did resolve that the word of God should be “*the only rule*” in its government was New Haven, in 1639 (Section VII-D). The statement that the Torah’s laws, so far as Plymouth applied them, produced “*the most just and orderly community in early American colonial history*” is a judgment that the sources do not establish. Both lines are **Not corroborated** and should be revised.

Correction 3 — Doc 142 (June 2026), three points. (a) The table of books and the list of witnesses describe **Deuteronomy 4:5–8** as a “*Torah command to all peoples*” and say the Torah’s purpose “*was ALWAYS witness to all nations.*” The passage is spoken to Israel. The peoples in it hear and speak; they are not commanded (Section III-B). The nations’ own learning of the Torah is **Isaiah 2:3**. The description should read: Israel’s keeping of the Torah as its wisdom in the eyes of the peoples. (b) The word-study table in Section III says *nakhon (established)*, H3559, is used of the covenant oath in **Deuteronomy 19:15**. That verse has *yaqum (shall stand)*, from *qum (to rise / stand)*, H6965. *Nakhon (established)* appears in **Deuteronomy 13:14** [Hebrew 13:15] and **17:4**. (c) The books table cites “*Joel 3:1 (Hebrew 2:28)*” for the phrase *acharit ha-yamim (the latter days)*. The numbering is reversed: the Hebrew is 3:1 and the English is 2:28. The verse itself says *acharei khen (afterward)*, not *acharit ha-yamim (the latter days)*.

Correction 4 — Doc 221 (August 2026), two refinements. (a) Doc 221 compared the Torah with human civil law without citing **Deuteronomy 4:5–8**, the one place where the Torah makes that comparison itself. A cross-reference to this document should be added. (b) Its Section IX says the Tanakh’s record of the Torah as the law of a nation “*is not a success story.*” That is true of the end of the record and not of all of it. The Tanakh also records seasons when the Torah was kept and the result was as Moses said: the days of Joshua and the elders (**Joshua 24:31**), Jehoshaphat’s teaching of the Torah (**2 Chronicles 17:7–10**), Hezekiah (**2 Kings 18:5–7**), and Josiah (**2 Kings 23:25**). The line should read that the Torah was kept imperfectly, with seasons of faithfulness and blessing, and that the failure lay in the people and their rulers and not in the law.

XII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS ON THE RIGHTEOUS LAW

Per the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard, no doctrine may stand on a single text. Each declaration below draws on more than one witness.

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The statutes and judgments of the whole Torah are righteous. The verse claims this for the Torah and not for the people who received it.	Deuteronomy 4:8; 9:5–6; Nehemiah 9:13
II	The Torah is righteous because Yahweh , who gave it, is righteous. No other nation was given the like.	Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalms 19:9; 119:137; 147:19–20
III	A righteous law gives one judgment to native and stranger, takes no bribe, favors neither rich nor poor, and guards the weak by name.	Leviticus 24:22; 19:15; Deuteronomy 16:19–20; Exodus 22:21–23
IV	Under the Torah each person answers for his own sin, proof is required, the penalty is measured, and the ruler is under the law.	Deuteronomy 24:16; 19:15; 25:1–3; 17:18–20; 2 Kings 14:6
V	The righteous law and the near Elohim stand together. Yahweh hears the cry of those the law protects, and He refuses the prayer of the one who will not hear Torah.	Deuteronomy 4:7; Psalms 145:17–18; 119:151; Exodus 22:23; Proverbs 28:9
VI	The wisdom the peoples see is the Torah kept and done. When it was kept the nations said so; when it was forsaken the Name was profaned.	Deuteronomy 4:6; 1 Kings 10:9; Jeremiah 8:8–9; Ezekiel 36:20
VII	Nothing may be added to this Torah or taken from it, and the nations will yet come to learn it.	Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Isaiah 2:3; Micah 4:2; Zechariah 8:23

XIII. THE COVENANT RESPONSE — WHAT THE TANAKH SAYS TO THE ONE WHO ASKS

Two kinds of readers come to this verse. One has been told that the law of Moses was harsh, a burden for a primitive people, and he wants to know whether that is true. The other loves the Torah and is tempted to be proud that he has it. Tanakh's answer to both is fivefold.

First: hear the question as Moses asked it. He does not say, *“you are a righteous nation.”* He asks what nation has statutes and judgments as righteous as all this Torah (Deuteronomy 4:8). The praise is for what Yahweh gave.

Second: test it. Read the statutes themselves. One judgment for the stranger and the native (Leviticus 24:22). No bribe (Deuteronomy 16:19). No child punished for his father

(Deuteronomy 24:16). The king under the law (Deuteronomy 17:18–20). Then read what the nations of that day wrote, and judge whether the question of Moses was an idle one.

Third: do not boast. “*Not for your righteousness*” (Deuteronomy 9:5). The wisdom is in keeping and doing (Deuteronomy 4:6), and a scroll that is not kept leaves a man with no wisdom at all (Jeremiah 8:9).

Fourth: call on Him. The One who gave the righteous law is near “*in all our calling upon Him*” (Deuteronomy 4:7). He hears the widow, the orphan, the stranger, and the unpaid worker (Exodus 22:23; Deuteronomy 24:15), and He hears the foreigner who prays toward His house (1 Kings 8:41–43).

Fifth: let it be seen, and teach it. The Torah is wisdom “*in the eyes of the peoples*” only when it is lived in front of them (Deuteronomy 4:6). Teach it to your children and to their children (Deuteronomy 4:9), adding nothing and taking nothing away (Deuteronomy 4:2).

The verse ends with the words “*this day.*” Moses set the Torah before Israel on the plains of Moab, and it is set before every reader in the same way. The question he asked still waits for the nations to answer it.

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“For what great nation is there that has gods so near to it as Yahweh our Elohim is in all our calling upon Him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as all this Torah, which I am setting before you this day?”

Deuteronomy 4:7–8 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

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