



## [Ezekiel 20:12-13](#)

(12) Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy. (13) " Yet the people of Israel rebelled against me in the desert. They did not follow my decrees but rejected my laws—although the man who obeys them will live by them—and they utterly desecrated my Sabbaths. So I said I would pour out my wrath on them and destroy them in the desert.

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Verses 23-24 go on to indicate the consequence of Israel's refusal to become sanctified by obeying God's laws: [God](#) says He "lifted [His] hand in an oath, . . . that I would scatter them among the Gentiles and disperse them throughout the countries, because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths. . . ." If Israel insisted on acting like the nations of [the world](#), God says He would physically place them among those nations; Israel would become separated from God and the land He promised them. They would become "sifted" (see [Amos 9:9](#)) among the Gentile nations.

[Leviticus 18:24-30](#) outlines the inevitable separation that a nation (or an individual) will undergo as a result of commandment-breaking: "The land vomits out its inhabitants" (verse 25). This is the national consequence of breaking the commandments. God states the result to individuals in verse 29: "Whoever commits any of these abominations, the persons who commit them shall be cut off from among their people." Vomiting and cutting-off are both metaphors for separation.

Nationally and individually, commandment-breaking always yields the same ultimate punishment: *separation* from God. That separation may come slowly, as [Ecclesiastes 8:11](#) points out, but always surely.

The history of the children of Israel proves the point. God wanted Israel to be a special, sanctified nation; a holy one. He promised to bestow incredible blessings on it *if* it acted to separate itself from the social and religious practices of other nations. *Israel failed as a*

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*nation because it failed to be holy!*

— Charles Whitaker

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