



[Ezekiel 20:12-13](#)

(12) Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I *am* the LORD who sanctifies them. (13) Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, 'which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them'; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them.

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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

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to separate itself from the social and religious practices of other nations. *Israel failed as a nation because it failed to be holy!*

— Charles Whitaker

To learn more, see:

[Searching for Israel \(Part Twelve\): The Sign](#)

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