



[Malachi 3:16-17](#)

(16) Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another,
And the LORD listened and heard *them*;
So a book of remembrance was written before Him
For those who fear the LORD
And who meditate on His name.
(17) "They shall be Mine," says the LORD of hosts,
"On the day that I make them My jewels.
And I will spare them
As a man spares his own son who serves him."

[Exodus 19:5](#)

(5) Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine.
New King James Version

The English word translated as "jewels" in verse 17 is not entirely wrong, but it is not a precise translation of what the Hebrew word, *segullah* (*Strong's #5459*, transliterated in various ways), really means. The simplest usage of *segullah* is to indicate personal possession. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* expounds its meaning (remember that *we* are being described):

Cegullah signifies property in the special sense of a private possession one personally acquired and carefully preserves. Six times this word is used of Israel as God's personally acquired (elected, delivered from Egyptian bondage, and formed into what He wanted them to be), carefully preserved, and privately possessed people. . . .

This is not the first time this word appears in the Bible, which distinction belongs to [Exodus 19:5](#), "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant,

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then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for [all the earth](#) is Mine." *Segullah* is translated as "special treasure."

The *Keil and Delitzsch Commentary* explains:

This manifestation of the [love](#) of [God](#) to Israel formed only the prelude, however, to that gracious union which Jehovah was now about to establish between the Israelites and Himself. If they would hear His voice, and keep the covenant which was about to be established with them, they should be a costly possession to Him out of all nations. . . . *Cagulaah* does not signify property in general, but valuable property, that which is laid by, or put aside, hence a treasure of silver and gold. . . .

It is helpful to note how God emphasizes *segullah* to impress its importance on Israel—and now us—by saying, "For all the earth is Mine." This establishes a reference point, indicating that He could have considered any people on earth as His own personal and private treasure, but He did not. Just as a person carefully and discriminately chooses his personal jewelry according to his own criteria, so He chose Israel then and chooses us now.

In [1 Chronicles 29:3](#), *segullah* is again translated as "special treasure," but the context provides a clear use of the term. It involves the preparations [David](#) made for the building of the Temple so Solomon could construct it. David explains that from his own *personally obtained and set-aside treasure*, he gave so much gold and silver.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[A Priceless Gift](#)

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