



[Deuteronomy 13:6-11](#)

(6) “If your brother, the son of your mother, your son or your daughter, the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own soul, secretly entices you, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, (7) of the gods of the people which *are* all around you, near to you or far off from you, from *one* end of the earth to the *other* end of the earth, (8) you shall not consent to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him or conceal him; (9) but you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. (10) And you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. (11) So all Israel shall hear and fear, and not again do such wickedness as this among you.

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If someone tried to draw another person away from [God](#) and entice him to serve other gods, the penalty was death. Whole cities could be destroyed for this (verses 12-18). The same principle is at work with the Canaanites, just on a much larger scale. Being stronger and more numerous than Israel ([Numbers 13:31](#); [Deuteronomy 9:1](#); [20:1](#)), it required an entire *army* to enforce God's law against idolatry rather than just a local judge or magistrate. Every able-bodied, non-Levite above the age of 20 had to participate in carrying out God's justice in the land He had given them.

This action was not at all synonymous with a man murdering another because of the evil intent of his heart. It is about God executing wrath on evildoers, commissioning Israel to be the governing authority to carry out His justice. This is not to say that Israel was above reproach—far from it. Israel was simply the tool God used to carry out His law.

God did not tell Israel to wage war on the idolaters *beyond* their borders. He did not tell them to take the army back to Egypt and “finish the job” or to march on Babylon or Assyria and wipe them out, even though those nations were great idolaters, too. Rather,

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He told them to carry out His law *within the borders that He had set*. Due to the size of the job, an army was required. God's command to Israel to go to war was to enforce God's law, not because there is any variableness in Him!

— David C. Grabbe

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