

Deuteronomy 10:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

Analysis

This verse presents a comprehensive summary of covenant obligation, asking the rhetorical question *ma YHWH Elohekha sho'el me'imakh* (מה יהוה אלהיך שאל מעמך, 'what does the LORD your God require of you'). The answer encompasses five interrelated duties. First, *liyro et-YHWH* (לירא את יהוה, 'to fear the LORD')—reverent awe recognizing God's holiness and authority. Second, *lalechet bekhol-derakhav* (ללכת בכל־דרכיו, 'to walk in all His ways')—comprehensive obedience to divine paths. Third, *le'ahavah oto* (ולאהבה אותו, 'to love Him')—wholehearted devotion and covenant loyalty. Fourth, *la'avod et-YHWH* (לעבוד את יהוה, 'to serve the LORD')—active worship and dedicated service. Fifth, *bekhol-levavkha uvekhol-nafshekha* (בכל־לבבך ובכל־נפשך, 'with all your heart and with all your soul')—total commitment without reservation.

The verse parallels Micah 6:8 ('what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God') in presenting covenant faithfulness not as burdensome legalism but as clear, comprehensive devotion. The integration of fear, walking, love, and service shows that true religion engages intellect (fear), conduct (walk), affection (love), and action (service). Jesus similarly summarized the law as loving God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40), demonstrating continuity between testaments.

Historical Context

Moses spoke these words following the golden calf apostasy (Deuteronomy 9-10), his intercession for Israel, and the renewal of covenant tablets. This context emphasizes grace—despite Israel's rebellion, God renewed His covenant, demonstrating that covenant relationship flows from divine initiative and mercy, not human merit. The rhetorical question 'what does the LORD require?' echoes ancient Near Eastern suzerain-vassal treaties where the great king specified vassal obligations, but differs in demanding not merely external tribute but internal heart-allegiance.

The five requirements synthesize Deuteronomy's core message, preparing Israel for Canaanite settlement where they would face constant temptation toward compromise. Unlike surrounding nations whose religions focused on appeasing capricious deities through ritual, Israel's faith demanded total life orientation toward one God who is both transcendent (requiring fear) and immanent (inviting love). This balance of reverence and intimacy, obedience and affection, distinguishes biblical faith from both cold legalism and presumptuous familiarity. Later prophets would echo this call for comprehensive devotion rather than empty ritualism (Isaiah 1:11-17; Hosea 6:6).

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does the integration of fear, love, and obedience challenge reductionist approaches to faith that emphasize only one aspect?

2. What does it mean to serve God 'with all your heart and soul' in ordinary daily activities?
3. How does understanding covenant requirements as response to grace (following the golden calf forgiveness) differ from legalistic rule-keeping?
4. In what ways might we compartmentalize faith rather than allowing it to encompass 'all' of life as verse 12 demands?
5. How does this comprehensive requirement anticipate Jesus' summary of the law in Matthew 22:37-40?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	מַעֲמֶךָ	שֶׁאֵל	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	יְהוָה	מָה	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְעַתָּה
	H5973		H7592		H4100	And now Israel	H6258
					H3068	H3478	
בְּכָל	לֵל כֶּת	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	יְהוָה	אֶת	לְ יִרְאָה	אִם	
	H1980		H430		H853	of thee but to fear	H518
					H3068	H3372	
אֱלֹהֶיךָ	יְהוָה	אֶת	וְלָעֲבֹד	אֵת	וְלָאֲהָבָה	דְּרָכָיו	
	H853		H5647		H853	in all his ways	H1870
					H157	and to love	
נַפְשְׁךָ	וּבְכָל	לְבָבְךָ	בְּכָל				
	H5315		H3605			with all thy heart	H3605
						H3824	

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 6:5 (Love): And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Micah 6:8 (Love): He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

Deuteronomy 5:33 (References God): Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.

Luke 10:27 (Love): And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

Deuteronomy 11:13 (Love): And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,

Matthew 22:37 (Love): Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

Hebrews 12:28 (References God): Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

Deuteronomy 4:29 (References God): But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Zephaniah 3:9 (References Lord): For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

Psalms 34:9 (References Lord): O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.