

Deuteronomy 12:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

Analysis

Repetition for emphasis: 'If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock...and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.' The concession to distance ('too far') permits local slaughter while maintaining sanctuary exclusivity for sacrifice. The phrase 'to put his name there' reminds that sacredness derives from divine choice, not geography. Non-sacrificial meat consumption is permitted ('whatsoever thy soul lusteth after'), but sacred slaughter remains restricted. This practical accommodation prevents hardship while maintaining worship purity.

Historical Context

Israel's territory at maximum extent (Dan to Beersheba, ~150 miles) made Jerusalem travel burdensome for northern and southern extremes. Three annual pilgrimage feasts required presence (Deuteronomy 16:16), but daily meat consumption couldn't require travel. This law permitted daily life to continue while reserving worship for central sanctuary. After division, northern kingdom used distance as excuse for rival sanctuaries (1 Kings 12:27-28), though that violated worship centralization itself.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How do we distinguish legitimate practical accommodation from unauthorized innovation in worship?
2. What principles guide application of God's commands when circumstances make literal compliance difficult?
3. How do modern churches balance gathering requirements (corporate worship) with practical limitations (distance, health, work)?

Interlinear Text

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------|--------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| כִּי | יָרַח קָ | מִמָּוֶה | הַמָּקוֹם וְ | אֲשֶׁר רַ | יָבַח רַ | יְהוָה |
| H3588 | there be too far | H4480 | If the place | H834 | hath chosen | which the LORD |
| | H7368 | | H4725 | | H977 | H3068 |
| אֱלֹהֶיךָ | לֵשׁ וְ | שְׁמוֹ וְ | שָׁם | וְזָבַחְתָּ | מִבְּקָרְךָ | |
| thy God | to put | his name | H8033 | from thee then thou shalt kill | of thy herd | |
| H430 | H7760 | H8034 | | H2076 | H1241 | |
| וּמִצֹּאֲנֶךָ | אֲשֶׁר רַ | נָתַן | יְהוָה | לְךָ | בְּאֶשֶׁר רַ | |
| and of thy flock | H834 | hath given | which the LORD | H0 | H834 | |
| H6629 | | H5414 | H3068 | | | |
| צִוִּיתִי כִּי | וְאַכְלִיתָ | בִּשְׁעָרֵי יְרֵכְךָ | בְּכָל לַ | אֶת | | |
| thee as I have commanded | thee and thou shalt eat | in thy gates | H3605 | lusteth after | | |
| H6680 | H398 | H8179 | | H185 | | |
| בְּכֹל נַפְשְׁךָ: | | | | | | |
| whatsoever thy soul | | | | | | |
| H5315 | | | | | | |

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 12:5 (References God): But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

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