

Deuteronomy 19:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three:

Analysis

If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them (כִּי תִשְׁמֹר אֶת־כָּל־הַמִּצְוֹת, ki tishmor et-kol-hamitzvah hazot la'asotah)—shamar (keep) means guard, observe carefully. La'asot (to do) emphasizes active obedience, not mere intellectual assent.

To love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways reveals the heart of covenant obedience. It's not bare law-keeping but loving relationship issuing in consistent lifestyle. Ahavah (love) is covenant loyalty, choosing devotion, wholehearted commitment. **Then shalt thou add three cities more for thee**—expanding from six to nine cities of refuge would accompany territorial expansion. More land means more people, requiring more accessible justice and mercy. This provision was never implemented because Israel never fully obeyed. It stands as testimony to blessing forfeited through disobedience, yet also to God's gracious planning for obedience He desired but knew would not come.

Historical Context

The three additional cities were never established because Israel never fully possessed the expanded territory on a permanent basis. Even during Solomon's greatest extent, there's no record of implementing the nine-city refuge system.

This unfulfilled conditional promise parallels other Deuteronomic blessings conditioned on obedience that Israel never fully realized. The prophets later reinterpret land promises eschatologically, pointing to the new heavens and new earth where God's people will inherit forever.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does true obedience to God flow from love for Him rather than mere duty or fear?
2. What blessings might we forfeit when we fail to wholeheartedly obey and love God?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	תִּשְׁמֹר	אֶת	כָּל	הַמִּצְוָה	הַזֹּאת
H3588	If thou shalt keep	H853	H3605	all these commandments	H2063
	H8104			H4687	
לַעֲשׂוֹתָהּ	אֲשֶׁר	אֶנֶכִּי	מֵצִוְיָה	הֵמָּה	אֶת לְאַהֲבָהּ
to do	H834	H595	them which I command	ever	to love
H6213			H6680	H3117	H157
יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	וְלֹלָתָהּ	בְּדַרְכֵי	כָּל	וְיִסַּפְתָּ
the LORD	thy God	H1980	in his ways	H3605	then shalt thou add
H3068	H430		H1870	H3117	H3254
לְךָ	עוֹד	הַשָּׁלֹשׁ	עַל	עָרֵי	
H0	H5750	more for thee beside these three	cities	H5921	
		H7969	H5892		
הַשָּׁלֹשׁ	הָאֵלֶּה:				
more for thee beside these three	H428				
H7969					

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 12:32 (Parallel theme): What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.