

Deuteronomy 20:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

Analysis

That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God—The reason for herem: preventing idolatrous **abominations** (תֹּוֹבֶת, to'evot, 'detestable practices') from infecting Israel. Canaanite worship included child sacrifice (**they burnt their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods**, Deuteronomy 12:31), cultic prostitution, and divination. Exposure meant adoption: **they teach you** (לִמְדָתָם, lemadtem, instructing, training).

The warning proved prophetic. Israel learned Canaanite practices: **They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood** (Psalm 106:37-38). God's preventative judgment (destroy them first) became necessary corrective judgment (exile, 586 BC). The principle stands: **Evil company corrupts good habits** (1 Corinthians 15:33, NKJV). Tolerating sin's presence guarantees sin's dominance. Paul commands: **Abstain from all appearance of evil** (1 Thessalonians 5:22).

Historical Context

Archaeological discoveries at Canaanite sites (Gezer, Megiddo, Hazor) revealed infant remains in foundation walls (sacrifice), cultic prostitution facilities, and brutality confirming biblical descriptions. These weren't innocent cultures but systems of organized evil requiring divine judgment.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What 'abominations' (cultural practices, entertainment, philosophies) are you tolerating that could 'teach' (gradually train) you away from God?
2. How did Israel's failure to execute herem result in adopting the very practices God sought to prevent?
3. What 'appearances of evil' must you avoid—not because they're inherently sinful but because exposure leads to adoption?

Interlinear Text

כָּל־עַשׂ אֲתֶכָם יְלִימָד אֲשֶׁר לֹמַד עַל־
H3605 H6213 H853 That they teach H3925 H4616 H834 H3808

אֲלֹהִים: עַשׂ אֲשֶׁר תְּעוֹבַת מִ
unto their gods which they have done after all their abominations
H430 H6213 H834 H8441

אֲלֹהִים: לִיהְיוֹת הַמִּתְּפָאָת מִ
unto their gods against the LORD so should ye sin
H430 H3068 H2398

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 23:33 (Sin): They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

Ephesians 5:11 (Parallel theme): And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Exodus 34:16 (References God): And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods.

1 Corinthians 15:33 (Parallel theme): Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

2 Corinthians 6:17 (References Lord): Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,

Joshua 23:13 (References God): Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

2 Thessalonians 3:14 (Parallel theme): And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.