

Deuteronomy 24:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

Analysis

But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence—The Hebrew *ve-zakharta ki eved hayita be-Mitsrayim* ("and you shall remember that a slave you were in Egypt") grounds ethical obligation in redemptive memory. Israel's slavery experience (*eved*, "slave/bondman") should create empathy for vulnerable workers. *Vayifde'kha YHWH Elohekha mi-sham* ("and YHWH your God redeemed you from there")—*padah* (redeem) means to purchase freedom, recalling the Exodus as God's redemptive act.

Therefore I command thee to do this thing—*Al-ken anokhi metsavvekha la'asot et-ha-davar ha-zeh* ("therefore I am commanding you to do this thing") links remembered grace to ethical action. Those who have received mercy must extend justice. This theological pattern appears throughout Deuteronomy (5:15; 15:15; 16:12)—experience of redemption obligates compassionate behavior toward the vulnerable.

Paul employs identical logic: "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Christian ethics flow from gospel indicatives: because God redeemed us from slavery to sin, we must show grace and justice to others.

Historical Context

This verse concludes a section on social justice laws (verses 14-18) covering day laborers, gleaning rights, and protecting the vulnerable. The Exodus memory—400 years of slavery followed by miraculous redemption—shaped Israel's national identity and ethical framework. Unlike surrounding nations whose laws primarily protected property owners' rights, Israel's law code consistently favored the poor, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan. This theological grounding distinguished biblical law: ethics derive from God's character and redemptive acts, not mere social utility.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does remembering your own spiritual slavery and God's redemption through Christ shape your treatment of those in economic or social vulnerability?
2. In what ways should the gospel pattern—experienced grace producing gracious action—inform Christian engagement with social justice issues like fair wages, immigrant rights, and care for the poor?

Interlinear Text

זָכַרְתָּ	כִּי	עָבָדְתָּ	הָאָרֶץ	בְּמִצְרַיִם		
But thou shalt remember	H3588	that thou wast a bondman	H1961	in Egypt		
H2142		H5650		H4714		
וּפָדָךְ	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	מִשָּׁם	עַל	כִּי	אֲנִי
redeemed	and the LORD	thy God	H8033	H5921	H3651	H595
H6299	H3068	H430				
מִצֵּרְךָ	לַעֲשׂוֹת	אֶת	הַדָּבָר	הַזֶּה		
thee thence therefore I command	thee to do	H853	this thing	H2088		
H6680	H6213		H1697			

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 5:15 (References God): And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

Deuteronomy 24:22 (References Egypt): And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

Deuteronomy 15:15 (Redemption): And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.

Deuteronomy 16:12 (References Egypt): And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.