

Deuteronomy 31:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law:

Analysis

Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates—comprehensive inclusivity: all ages, both genders, even non-Israelite residents. No demographic was excluded from hearing God's law. **That they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God**—the threefold purpose: auditory reception, intellectual comprehension, reverential response. **And observe to do all the words of this law**—the goal wasn't mere knowledge but obedience.

The progression is crucial: hearing leads to learning; learning produces fear (reverential awe); fear motivates obedience. This pattern appears in James 1:22-25: 'Do not merely listen to the word... Do what it says.' Including children and strangers demonstrated that covenant knowledge wasn't restricted to adult male Israelites—God's word addressed the entire community. The stranger's inclusion anticipated the Gospel's reach to all nations, fulfilling God's promise that through Abraham all peoples would be blessed.

Historical Context

Commanded circa 1406 BC for implementation in Canaan. Ancient patriarchal societies typically excluded women, children, and foreigners from religious

instruction, reserving sacred knowledge for male citizens. Israel's inclusivity was radical—everyone present during the feast, regardless of status, must hear the law. This reflected the universal human accountability before God and anticipated the church's message that in Christ 'there is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female' (Galatians 3:28).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why does God insist that women, children, and foreigners hear His law? What does this reveal about human dignity and responsibility?
2. How does the progression (hear, learn, fear, obey) inform effective Christian discipleship and teaching?
3. What barriers prevent 'everyone'—all demographics—from accessing God's word in contemporary churches?

Interlinear Text

וְהִטְרַבְתָּ אֶת־פְּקָדֶת לְ
Gather the people and women and children
H6950 H853 H376 H802 H2945

וְשִׁמְעָה תִּשְׁמַע וְלֹמַעַן בְּשַׁעַר יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־
and thy stranger that is within thy gates that they may hear
H1616 H834 H8179 H4616 H8085

וְלֹמַע וְלִמְדָה וְיִרְאָה אֶת־יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם יְהוָה הָ
and that they may learn and fear the LORD your God
H4616 H3925 H3372 H853 H3068 H430

פֶּזֶת הַתּוֹךְ הַדְּבָרִים כָּל־אֲתָת לְעַשׂ וְתִשְׁמַר וְ
and observe to do all the words of this law
H8104 H6213 H853 H3605 H1697 H8451 H2063

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 4:10 (Word): Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

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