

Deuteronomy 31:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it.

Analysis

And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear—focused attention on the next generation who lacked direct experience of covenant formation or God's saving acts. **And learn to fear the LORD your God**—children must be intentionally taught reverence for Yahweh; it doesn't develop automatically. **As long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it**—generational faith continuity was essential for sustained land tenure under the covenant.

God's concern for children's spiritual formation pervades Deuteronomy (4:9-10, 6:7, 11:19, 32:46). The septennial reading ensured every child heard the law during formative years. Moses recognized that Israel's future depended on successfully transmitting faith to subsequent generations. Psalm 78:5-7 echoes this mandate: 'He commanded our ancestors to teach their children... so the next generation would know... and they in turn would tell their children.' Failure in generational transmission explains Israel's repeated apostasy and eventual exile.

Historical Context

Spoken circa 1406 BC to a generation born in the wilderness who would be parents in Canaan. Their children—the third generation from Egypt—would face unique temptations: prosperity breeding complacency, Canaanite neighbors promoting syncretism, and no living memory of Egyptian bondage or Sinai

revelation. Without deliberate instruction and regular law-reading, covenant faith would evaporate within generations. Judges narrates this tragic pattern: 'After that whole generation had been gathered to their ancestors, another generation grew up who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel' (Judges 2:10).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does deliberate generational transmission of faith differ from assuming children will automatically adopt parents' beliefs?
2. What's the connection between knowing God's saving acts (Exodus, Christ's resurrection) and ongoing faithfulness?
3. Why have many Western churches failed at generational discipleship, and what would recovery require?

Interlinear Text

וּבְנֵיהֶם	אֲשֶׁר	לֹא	יָדְעוּ	יִשְׁמְעוּ			
And that their children	H834	H3808	which have not known	any thing may hear			
H1121			H3045	H8085			
וְלִמְדוּ	לִירָאָה	אֶת	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֵיכֶם	כָּל	הַיָּמִים	אֲשֶׁר
and learn	to fear	H853	the LORD	your God	H3605	as long as	H834
H3925	H3372		H3068	H430		H3117	
אֶת	חַיִּים	עַל	הָאָדָמָה	אֲשֶׁר	אֶת	עֲבַר יָם	אֶת
H859	ye live	H5921	in the land	H834	H859	whither ye go over	H853
	H2416		H127			H5674	
יִרְדּוּ	שָׁמָּה	לְרִשְׁתָּהּ:					
Jordan	H8033	to possess					
H3383		H3423					

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 11:2 (References God): And know ye this day: for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the LORD your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm,

Deuteronomy 6:7 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.