

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

וְבָנָיו מִ	רְאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר	לֹא יְדַעַּ	וְיָשְׁמַעַו
And that their children	H834	H3808	which have not known
H1121			any thing may hear
		H3045	H8085
וְלֹא יְמַד וְ	לִרְאָה הָאֵת	יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהִים	אֲשֶׁר בְּתַم יָמָן
and learn	to fear	the LORD	as long as
H3925	H3372	H853	H3117
		H3068	
		H430	
		H3605	
		H834	
אַתָּה מִן הָעָרָה	אֲתָּה מִן הַאֲדָמָה	אֲתָּה מִן הַבָּשָׂר	אֲתָּה מִן הַמִּזְבֵּחַ
ye live	in the land	as thou livest	whither ye go over
H2416	H127	H834	H5674
		H859	
		H5674	
לְרַשְׁתָּתָהּ שְׁמָה בְּרִיךְ	to possess		
Jordan	H8033		
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.