

Deuteronomy 5:32

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.

Analysis

After reciting the Ten Commandments, Moses commands: 'Ye shall observe to do therefore as the LORD your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.' The phrase 'turn aside to the right hand or to the left' means total obedience without addition or subtraction, without legalism (adding) or antinomianism (subtracting). The 'way which the LORD your God hath commanded you to walk' presents covenant obedience as a path—not static rules but dynamic relationship requiring daily faithfulness. Walking this path leads to life, length of days, and prosperity in the land.

Historical Context

This command comes as Israel prepares to enter Canaan, where they'll encounter Canaanite religious practices and cultural pressures. The command not to turn right or left anticipates the temptation to syncretism—blending worship of Yahweh with Baal worship or adopting Canaanite practices. Israel's history (judges, kings, exile) demonstrates tragic consequences when they 'turned aside' from God's commands. This verse is quoted by Joshua (Joshua 1:7; 23:6) and referenced throughout the prophets.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What 'right hand' or 'left hand' deviations from God's Word are you tempted toward—legalism or license?
2. How does viewing obedience as a 'path to walk' change your understanding of the Christian life?

Interlinear Text

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|--|--|--|--|-------------------|
| וְשִׁמְרָתְךָ מִלְעָשֶׂךָ רְצִי הָנְצִחּוֹן | מִלְעָשֶׂךָ רְצִי הָנְצִחּוֹן | וְשִׁמְרָתְךָ מִלְעָשֶׂךָ רְצִי הָנְצִחּוֹן | | |
| Ye shall observe | to do | hath commanded | therefore as the LORD | |
| H8104 | H6213 | H834 | H6680 | H3068 |
| אַל תַּשְׁמַר מִצְרָאָתְךָ מִלְעָשֶׂךָ רְצִי הָנְצִחּוֹן | |
| your God | H853 | H3808 | you ye shall not turn aside | to the right hand |
| H430 | | | H5493 | H3225 |

וְשִׁמְרָתְךָ מִלְעָשֶׂךָ רְצִי הָנְצִחּוֹן:
or to the left

H8040

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 4:27 (Parallel theme): Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

Joshua 23:6 (Parallel theme): Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left;

Joshua 1:7 (Parallel theme): Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

Deuteronomy 17:20 (Parallel theme): That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Deuteronomy 28:14 (References God): And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Deuteronomy 24:8 (Parallel theme): Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do.

Deuteronomy 11:32 (Parallel theme): And ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day.

Deuteronomy 12:32 (Parallel theme): What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Deuteronomy 8:1 (References Lord): All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.

Ezekiel 37:24 (Parallel theme): And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them.