

Deuteronomy 5:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,

Analysis

The prohibition 'Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them' addresses worship posture and service. The Hebrew 'shachah' (bow down) and 'abad' (serve) indicate both external reverence and devoted service. The warning 'for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God' reveals divine intolerance of rivals. God's 'jealousy' (Hebrew 'qanna') is righteous zeal for His honor and His people's exclusive devotion. The threat of visiting 'iniquity of the fathers upon the children' demonstrates covenant solidarity—families and nations reap corporate consequences of idolatry. Yet judgment is limited ('third and fourth generation'), while mercy extends infinitely.

Historical Context

Idolatrous worship involved prostration before images, burning incense, offering sacrifices, temple prostitution, and child sacrifice. Canaanite Baal worship included ritual prostitution and child sacrifice to Molech (Leviticus 18:21). Israel adopted these abominations repeatedly, as prophets condemned (Isaiah 57:5, Jeremiah 7:31). God's jealousy manifested in exile—Assyrian captivity (722 BC) for Israel, Babylonian captivity (586 BC) for Judah, demonstrating multi-generational consequences of persistent idolatry.

Related Passages

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does God's 'jealousy' for His glory and His people's devotion demonstrate holy love rather than petty possessiveness?
2. What does the principle of generational consequences teach about the corporate nature of sin and the importance of godly family legacy?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	תִּשְׁתַּחַתְּ	הָ	לֹא	לֹבֶּם	תַּעֲבֹד	מִ	כִּי
H3808	Thou shalt not bow down	H7812	H0	H3808	thyself unto them nor serve	H5647	H3588
אֱנֹכִי	אֱנֹכִי	הָ	אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים	אֱלֹהִים
H595	them for I the LORD	H3068	H430	H410	thy God	H7067	H6485
עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל	עַל
the iniquity	of the fathers	H5921	upon the children	H5921	unto the third	H8029	H5921
H5771	H1		H1121	H5921			
רַבֵּעַ יִם	לְשֻׁתָּאָן						
H7256	H8130						

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 34:7 (Sin): Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the

iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.

Exodus 34:14 (References God): For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God:

Numbers 14:18 (Sin): The LORD is longsuffering, and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation.

Jeremiah 32:18 (Sin): Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name,

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