

Exodus 20:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Analysis

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

The first command governing human relationships addresses family—society's foundation. 'Honour' (כָּבֵד, kabbed) means 'give weight to,' treat with gravitas, respect. It's heavier than 'obey'—obedience is for children, but honor is lifelong. Adult children honor aging parents by providing care. Paul calls this 'the first commandment with promise' (Ephesians 6:2)—obeying brings blessing. 'Long days on the land' connects obedience to national survival—societies honoring family continuity thrive; those abandoning elders collapse. The land is gift ('which YHWH thy God gives thee')—tenure depends on covenant faithfulness. Christ rebukes using religious excuses to avoid parental support (Mark 7:10-13).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures valued parental honor, but Israel's command is unique in directly tying national longevity to family honor. Archaeological evidence shows ancient Israel's extended family structures supporting multiple generations.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does 'honor' differ from 'obey,' and why does honor extend beyond childhood?
2. What is the relationship between family stability and national flourishing—why does society's health depend on honoring parents?

Interlinear Text

כִּבֵּד	אֶת	אֲבִיךָ	וְאֵת	אִמְךָ	לְמַעַן	יִאָּרְכּוּ
Honour		thy father		and thy mother		may be long
H3513	H853	H1	H853	H517	H4616	H748
יָמֶיךָ	עַל	הָאָרֶץ	אֲשֶׁר	יְהוָה	אֱלֹהֶיךָ	נִתֵּן
that thy days		upon the land		which the LORD	thy God	giveth
H3117	H5921	H127	H834	H3068	H430	H5414
לָּךְ:						
H0						

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:20 (References Lord): Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

Deuteronomy 5:16 (References God): Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Mark 7:10 (Parallel theme): For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

Proverbs 30:17 (Parallel theme): The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.

Leviticus 19:3 (References God): Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the LORD your God.

Proverbs 20:20 (Parallel theme): Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.

Exodus 21:17 (Parallel theme): And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

Luke 18:20 (Parallel theme): Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

Exodus 21:15 (Parallel theme): And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death.

Matthew 19:19 (Parallel theme): Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.