

Exodus 23:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

Analysis

They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

Canaanites must not dwell in the land—'lest they make thee sin' (פָּרַע יְתַחֲתֵיכֶם, pen-yachati'u). Tolerance of idolatry leads to participation. 'If thou serve their gods' (כִּי תַּעֲבֹד אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, ki ta'avod et-eloheihem)—not 'might' but 'if/when.' Coexistence with idolatry inevitably corrupts. 'It will be a snare' (וְיִהְיֶה לְבָבֶךָ לְמֹקֵשׁ, yihyeh lekha lemoqesh)—a trap, ensnaring. Israel's history proves this—they failed to expel Canaanites, adopted their practices, and apostatized (Judges 2:1-3). The New Testament applies this: 'bad company corrupts good morals' (1 Corinthians 15:33); 'be not unequally yoked with unbelievers' (2 Corinthians 6:14). Tolerating sin in the community invites spiritual compromise.

Historical Context

Israel's incomplete conquest and tolerance of Canaanites led to cycles of apostasy described in Judges. The prophets repeatedly condemned syncretism—adopting Baal worship, Asherah poles, child sacrifice—proving God's warning accurate.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does Israel's history confirm that tolerating idolatry leads to participating in it?
2. How do Christians apply 'they shall not dwell in your land' without ethnic cleansing—what's the principle?

Interlinear Text

ל	א	יְשַׁבֵּ	בְּאָרֶץ	פָּ	יְמַטֵּ	יְאַוֵּ	לִ	אָתַּה
H3808	They shall not dwell	in thy land	H6435	lest they make thee sin	H2398		H853	H0
	H3427	H776						
כ	ר	מְעַבֵּד	אֶת	אֵל	הֵיכֶם	כִּי	וְהִ	לְבָ
H3588	against me for if thou serve	H853	their gods	H3588	H430	H1961	H0	
	H5647							
לְמוֹצֵשׁ:								
it will surely be a snare								
H4170								

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 106:36 (Parallel theme): And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

Deuteronomy 7:16 (References God): And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee.

Exodus 34:12 (Parallel theme): Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee:

Joshua 23:13 (References God): Know for a certainty that the LORD your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the LORD your God hath given you.

Judges 2:3 (References God): Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you.

Deuteronomy 12:30 (References God): Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.

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