

That the Coming Generation Might Praise the Lord

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GOD'S PURPOSE TO COVER THE DRY LANDS WITH HIS GLORY

Adam's job was to rule and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). This seems to mean that his task was to expand



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the borders of Eden until the whole earth was like Eden, a place where God was present, known, served, worshiped, and uniquely present. Adam sinned and was expelled from Eden, but God did not give up his plan to cover the dry lands with his glory.¹ God promised to raise up a seed from the woman who would crush the head of the serpent, defeating evil.² Later he made promises to Abraham that he would overcome the curses that resulted from sin.³ These promises were passed through Isaac to Jacob and then to the tribes of Israel.⁴ Having brought Israel out of Egypt, God brought them into a new Eden, the land of promise. Then God gave Adam's task to Israel: to expand the borders of the realm in which Yahweh is present, known, served, and wor-

shipped (cf. Num 14:21; Ps 72:19). Israel sinned just as Adam had, and Israel was exiled from the land just as Adam was exiled from Eden.⁵ Through the prophets, God promised that he would restore Israel and accomplish his purpose of covering the lands with his glory as the waters cover the sea (Isa 6:3; 11:9; Hab 2:14). Eventually God sent Jesus, who recapitulated Israel, withstood temptation, conquered the land, overcame death by dying and rising, and has commissioned his followers to make disciples of all nations.⁶ When the full number of the Gentiles has been gathered, Israel will be saved (Rom 11:25–27), and Jesus will cover the dry lands with the glory of Yahweh.

The purpose of this article is to explore what the Old Testament tells us about how the family factors into God's purpose to cover the dry lands with his glory. Asking this question does not shift our focus from either God's purpose or the promised seed of the woman through whom it would be accomplished. Rather, the seed of the woman came from a carefully traced line of descent—a family. God's instructions indicate that the family of the king was to be a model for all other families in Israel, and though that family failed, God kept his word and raised up Jesus from their line. The focus

of this article will be on the instructions for fathers and kings in Deuteronomy 6 and 17 before looking at the way King Solomon obeyed those instructions in Proverbs 3.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR FATHERS AND KINGS IN DEUTERONOMY 6 AND 17

Even before the instructions given in Deuteronomy 6, God was preparing fathers in Israel to teach their children as he outlined the celebration of the Passover. Exodus 12:26–27 and 13:14 instruct fathers to celebrate Yahweh’s power and mercy to Israel whenever their children ask about the meaning of Passover. These particular instances are generalized and made more comprehensive as Moses prepares the people for life in the land in Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 1–11 Moses seeks to motivate Israel to keep the laws of God. The Ten Commandments (Deut 5:6–22) function as a kind of summary of God’s instructions; the commandments, statutes, and judgments in Deuteronomy 12–28 explicate the Ten Commandments.⁷ The book then closes with a last will and testament from Moses (Deuteronomy 29–34).

The instructions that Moses gives to fathers come in a section of the book that urges Israel to keep the Torah when they enter the land (Deut 1–11). The instructions for kings come in a section of the book (Deut 16–18) that expounds the fifth commandment, “Honor your father and your mother” (Deut 5:16, ESV). The fifth commandment is like an umbrella instruction covering the way that Israel is to embrace the God-ordained authority of judges, kings, priests, and prophets.

Instructions for Fathers in Deuteronomy 6

Israel was to go into the land and conduct itself according to God’s instructions for God’s glory. If they lived the way God instructed them to live, their lives would be blessed and their enemies would be defeated. The boundaries of Israel would expand. They would rule over the earth and subdue it. Their inheritance would not only be the plot of ground allotted to them in the land of promise, but the nations (Ps 2:8). The glory of Yahweh would cover the dry lands as the waters cover

the seas (cf. Deut 4:6; 6:25; see also Num 14:21; Isa 6:3; 11:9; Hab 2:14; Ps 72:19). For Israel to accomplish this purpose, they had to keep the Torah. Moses makes clear that fathers of households are responsible to see that this happens. These instructions from God through Moses to fathers in ancient Israel are set forth in Deuteronomy 6:4–9:

Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is one.

You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (modified ESV).

It would be difficult to overstate the significance of the monotheistic declaration of Deuteronomy 6:4. Israel is summoned to hear and heed. Yahweh is their God. Yahweh is one. Deuteronomy 6:4 is known as the *Shema*, and the word *shema* is the imperative form of the word “Hear!” that opens verse 4. The emblematic declaration that Yahweh is Israel’s God and that Yahweh is one in Deuteronomy 6:4 is explicated in Deuteronomy 6:5–9. That Yahweh is the sole deity means that he is to be loved (Deut 6:5), obeyed (6:6), remembered verbally in the household (6:7), seen as the criterion for interpreting life (6:8), and memorialized on doorposts and gates (6:9). Deuteronomy 6:4–5 makes it clear that these items in 6:6–9 are not simply about the laws but about the one who gives the laws.

The call to recognize Yahweh alone as God in Deuteronomy 6:4 is followed by what Jesus identified as

the first and greatest commandment in 6:5—to love Yahweh with all that one is and has (Matt 22:37–38). Heart, soul, and strength are to be exerted to the point of exhaustion out of sheer love for Yahweh. This can mean nothing less than that everything one thinks, does, and feels is to be focused on loving God. The Bible gives no indication that one is to separate oneself from the natural course of life in order to fulfill this command. Rather, obedience to every other command has to be energized by this one.

The realities in verses 4 and 5 lead naturally to the exhortation in verse 6. If Yahweh alone is Israel's God, and if Israel owes him whole-hearted life-pervading devotion, then Yahweh's commands will be on their hearts, which is exactly what Deuteronomy 6:6 stipulates. The Bible does not use a separate Hebrew word for what we call in English the "brain," so the figurative expression "on the heart" means that each Israelite is to consider these commands, to interpret the world in light of these commands, to regulate emotions by these commands, and to have desires that are shaped by these commands. The connection between loving Yahweh and having his commands on the heart in Deuteronomy 6:5–6 anticipates the words that Jesus would later speak in John 14:15: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (ESV).

We should pause here and take stock of the enormous significance of what Moses announces in Deuteronomy 6:4–6: Yahweh alone is God; Israel is to love Yahweh; his commands are to be on the heart. What Moses says next will undoubtedly be of great significance. What will he say next? Something about kings or armies or economics? Or is there something more fundamental than those things? Perhaps something that will produce righteous kings? Something that will teach soldiers that there are things worth more than peace and more than life? Something that will ensure economic stability? And what might accomplish all that?

The high and beautiful truths that Yahweh is the only true and living God who is to be loved and obeyed (Deut 6:4–6) will be followed by something of equal significance: a specified approach to passing on the knowledge of this one true God to the generations that will follow. If Yahweh alone is God, he deserves

to be worshiped, loved, and obeyed even after the current generation dies. To ensure the ongoing worship of Yahweh, to guard the minds of coming generations, to guarantee their wellbeing, to teach them what to love and what to obey, Moses writes in Deuteronomy 6:7, "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (ESV). Before examining what Deuteronomy 6:7 entails, we must observe that only those who believe that Yahweh alone is God (6:4) will do this; only those who live to love Yahweh in everything they are and do (6:5) will do this; and only those on whose hearts his commands are (6:6) will do what Deuteronomy 6:7 commands.

The first phrase of Deuteronomy 6:7 could be translated as follows: "And you shall repeat them to your sons and you shall talk about them." There is nothing complicated here. The verbs "you shall repeat" and "you shall talk" are second person masculine singular forms. Unlike English, which does not distinguish between masculine and feminine forms of the second person pronoun "you," Hebrew has a masculine form for "you" and a feminine form for "you." The fact that these forms are masculine singular means that as Moses addresses the nation of Israel, he gives this responsibility to teach the "sons" directly to the fathers of those sons. The fact that the form is singular urges the conclusion that Moses is not giving this responsibility to some abstract group of fathers in the community but to each individual father. It doesn't take a village; it takes a father.

Every father with a son is commanded to repeat these "words" to his son. The words that Moses commands are to be on their hearts (Deut 6:6), and they are to repeat those commands to their sons (6:7). Fathers in Israel were commanded to embrace the theological confession of faith that Yahweh alone is God (Deut 6:4). They were to love him (6:5), know his word so they could obey (6:6), and then they were to repeat these words to their sons.

Notice that Deuteronomy 6:7 not only calls each individual father to repeat the words to his sons, it calls him to "talk about them." At the very least, this means that once the words have been restated, the father tells

his sons what they mean. Explaining what the words mean seems designed to open up discussions of why the words say what they do—because Yahweh alone is God (Deut 6:4); discussions of how obstacles to keeping the words can be overcome—by loving God with all one’s heart, soul, and strength (6:5); and discussions of how to avoid inadvertent transgression—by keeping the words on one’s heart (6:6).

In the second half of Deuteronomy 6:7 Moses gives intensely practical instructions to every Israelite father about when they are to repeat and discuss the words he is commanding with their sons: all the time. Moses is specific: “when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise” (Deut 6:7b, ESV). If we start at the end of this statement we find that Moses wants fathers to repeat and discuss his words with their sons “when you rise.” This seems to mean that when a man rises from sleep he should seize the first moments of the morning to repeat and discuss God’s words with his sons. And what about “when you lie down”? At the end of the day, when you lie down to go to sleep, repeat and discuss the words that Moses commands. Rising and lying down happens at the opening and close of the day, and in between that there is walking by the way and sitting in the house.

At the beginning and end of the day, and at every opportunity throughout it, God’s word is to be repeated, pondered, explored, explained, and celebrated. The point of the statements in Deuteronomy 6:8–9 is not to bring about some perfunctory activity of attaching the law to one’s forehead or hand, doorpost or gates. In the Old Testament the “hand” is often a figurative reference to physical power or might, and the “eye” is the organ of perception. It may be that Deuteronomy 6:8 calls Israel to bind God’s word on their power and to make God’s word the filter for their perception. Verse 9 is similar: the writing of the words on doorpost and gate will accomplish nothing if Israel does not recognize that Yahweh alone is God (6:4), love him (6:5), obey his commands (6:6), and teach God’s word to their sons (6:7). House and gate are to be marked by the word of God as a reflection of the inward reality that Israel is devoted to Yahweh.

What about daughters and wives? Are they excluded

by these instructions to fathers and sons? By not mentioning them directly they are *more* included—not less—and *more* protected—not less—by these commands. Wives whose husbands obey these commands will constantly hear God’s word repeated and discussed. Daughters of fathers who heed these commands will scarcely be able to avoid the repetition and discussion of the word of God. And when fathers obey these commands and repeat and discuss the words to their sons, they ensure that other wives and daughters will be led by husbands and fathers who will do the same. The father is the key to the family, and a son is a future father.

Instructions for Kings in Deuteronomy 17

Who will create the culture in Israel where it is normal for fathers to do what Deuteronomy 6 tells them to do?⁸ Deuteronomy 17 answers that question. Deuteronomy 17:14–17 explains what the king must and must not be: he must be an Israelite (Deut 17:14–15); he must not return the people to Egypt so that he can acquire many horses (17:16); he must not multiply wives for himself lest his heart be turned away (17:17a); and he must not multiply silver and gold for himself in excess (17:17b). All of these instructions are about trusting Yahweh: Israel is to trust Yahweh even if a foreigner looks like he would make a more impressive king than an Israelite (17:15); Israel’s king is to trust Yahweh to deliver in battle not horses (17:16; cf. Ps 20:7); the king is to be like Abraham (with Sarah not with Hagar!) and to trust Yahweh to provide seed rather than trusting in a multiplicity of wives (17:17a); and the king is to believe that Yahweh will provide rather than trust in his own wealth (17:17b).

How will the king be able to trust Yahweh for his position (Deut 17:15), for his protection (17:16), for his posterity (17:17a), and for his provision (17:17b)? Deuteronomy 17:18–20 explains how:

And it shall be when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself in a copy of this Torah on a scroll, from before the Levitical priests.

And it shall be with him,

and he shall read in it all the days of his life,
in order to learn to fear Yahweh his God
to keep all the words of this Torah
and these statutes to do;
lest his heart be exalted over his brothers,
and lest he turn from the commandment to
the right or left;
in order for his days to be made long over
his kingdom, he and his sons in the midst of
Israel (author's translation).

The king must do three things with one purpose, and that purpose will result in five benefits for Israel. The three things the king is to do are: first, write out his own personal copy of the Torah scroll (17:18); second, keep it with him (17:19a); and third, read it all his days (17:19b). The one main purpose of these activities is “to learn to fear Yahweh his God” (17:19c). The study of the Torah is intended to produce a king who fears Yahweh.

The king's fear of Yahweh will produce five benefits in Israel. First, the king will “keep all the words of this Torah” (Deut 17:19d). Every Israelite will benefit from all the words of Torah being kept (Prov 29:2). The society will be just (Prov 29:4). Fraud and corruption will be punished (Prov 29:12). Faithfulness and honesty and righteousness will be rewarded (Prov 20:26). Second, the king will do the statutes (Deut 17:19), which like the keeping of Torah makes life good for everyone (Prov 20:8). Third, the king who fears Yahweh will be humble—his heart will not be exalted over his brothers (Deut 17:20). A just society is endangered by rulers who think they are superior to other human beings, and who may begin to think they are above God's law. The fear of Yahweh will produce humility in the heart of the king, preventing all manner of arrogant abuse of God's people (Prov 28:5). Fourth, the king who fears Yahweh will not turn from the commandment to the right or the left (Deut 17:20). It is easy to imagine how deviation from the balance of Torah will favor some and disadvantage others, but the king who fears Yahweh will neither cultivate nor allow such abuses. Fifth, the king who fears Yahweh will reign long in the land, doing all the law will entail obedience to the instruction of Moses

to teach the Torah to his sons, which will ensure future kings who will also seek what is righteous (Prov 20:28; 25:5; 29:14).

There are several significant points of contact between Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and 17:18–20. First, the verb used to describe the “repeating” of the words that fathers are to do in 6:7 is from the same root as the noun used to describe the “copy” of the Torah the king is to make. Fathers are to “repeat” the words to their sons, and the king is to make a “repeat” of Torah. Obviously, the content of what fathers will be repeating and what the king will be making a repeat of is the same: the word of God. Second, Deuteronomy 6:7 instructs fathers to repeat the words to their sons at the bookends of the days, and at every opportunity between those bookends. This kind of constant reference to the Torah is also in view in Deuteronomy 17:19's instructions for the king to keep his own repeat of the Torah “with him” and to read it “all the days of his life.” Third, the goal of Deuteronomy 17:18–20 is precisely what 6:6 described, for the word of God to be on the king's heart. Fourth, in the near context of Deuteronomy 6:4–9, fathers are exhorted in 6:2 to fear Yahweh with their sons and grandsons so that they may keep the law and lengthen their days in the land. This material in Deuteronomy 6:2 is repeated in 17:19, where kings are to fear Yahweh so that they will keep the Torah and lengthen their days and the days of their sons (cf. also 5:16).

Deuteronomy 6 and 17 have the same goal: to create a people on whose heart is God's Torah. Israel as a nation takes up Adam's role to cover the dry lands with Yahweh's glory, justice, mercy, goodness, truth, and righteousness. The king of Israel is the primary agent that Yahweh uses to accomplish this program. He leads Israel to become a just and good society by knowing God and God's word and cultivating a society in which Yahweh rules through his word. The king is an exemplar for the rest of the men of the nation.⁹ Every father in Israel is to follow the king's example of being a man who knows and loves Yahweh, on whose heart is Yahweh's word, and who is teaching Yahweh's word to those in his care. The king is like the father to the nation. He leads his family to love Yahweh by obeying his word, and all the fathers of Israel were to follow his example. We turn now to

the way Solomon lives out these principles, typifying a future king greater than Solomon.

SOLOMON'S EXAMPLE IN PROVERBS 3

Solomon is an example of obedience to Deuteronomy 6:7 and 17:18–20 in the book of Proverbs, which opens with the heading, “The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel” (Prov 1:1; cf. 10:1; 25:1). Solomon is constantly addressing his son or sons (e.g., 4:1) in the book of Proverbs, and he twice addresses his words to “my son” in Proverbs 3 (3:1, 21). The addresses to “my son” in 3:1 and 3:21 each open sections that have points of contact with Deuteronomy 6 and emphasize the blessing of living wisely in the fear of Yahweh as the Torah

teaches: 3:1–12 and 3:21–35. Between these two sections on the Torah are two sections on wisdom in 3:13–18 and 3:19–20. The passage has a chiasmic structure:

3:1–12: Embrace the Torah

3:13–18: Wisdom Gives Happiness

3:19–20; Yahweh Created by Wisdom

3:21–35: Live out the Torah

There are so many connections between Proverbs 3 and Deuteronomy 6 and 17 that I will simply list some of the most prominent examples in the order they appear in Proverbs 3:

King Solomon models for the nation the pattern of all

Table: The Influence of Deuteronomy 6 and 17 on Proverbs 3

Proverbs 3	Deuteronomy 6	Deuteronomy 17
3:1 “My son”	6:2 “your son” 6:7 “young son”	17:20 “his sons”
3:1 “let your heart keep by commands:	6:6 “these words which I command you...on your heart:	17:19 “it shall be with him”
3:2 “length of days and years of life 3:16 “length of days”	6:2 lengthen your days”	17:20 lengthen days”
3:3 “bind them [love and truth] on your neck”	6:8 “bind them [these words] as a sign on your hand	
3:5 “trust in Yahweh with all your heart”	6:5 “love Yahweh with all your heart”	
3:6 “in all your ways know him” 3:17 wisdom’s “ways” are pleasant 3:23 “then you will walk safely in your way”	6:7 “talk about them... when you walk in the way”	17:19 “he shall read in it all the days of his life”
3:7 “Do not be wise in your own eyes”		17:19 “lest his heart be exalted over his brothers”
3:7 “fear Yahweh”	6:2 “fear Yahweh”	17:19 “fear Yahweh”
3:14 wisdom better profit than silver or gold		17:17 “silver and gold he shall not multiply for himself in excess”

3:21 “My son, do not let them [wisdom and discretion] depart from your eyes”	6:8 “they shall be as frontlets between your eyes”
3:23-24 “walk in your way...when you lie down...”	6:7 talk about them... when you walk in the way, and when you lie down”

good teachers in the book of Proverbs. He obeys God’s word. He reformulates the teaching of God’s word in new and memorable ways. He advocates the joys and blessings of obedience and illustrates the pain and anguish that will inevitably result from disobedience.

CONCLUSION

Moses did not summon Israel to obey because he was teaching a law-based religion. As in the New Testament, love for God is demonstrated by obedience. Neither are the laws of Moses a step-ladder into heaven. Many of these laws would not make sense to any earthly-minded person. Release debts in the seventh year, for example? That does not sound like good economic policy, but it is what Moses commands in Deuteronomy 15:1. In Proverbs 3:5–6, Solomon urges his son, and all Israel, to trust Yahweh rather than their own understanding when they confront such instances. In Deuteronomy 15:9–10, Moses warns Israel not to see the seventh year coming and stop making loans. In Proverbs 3:9 Solomon urges his son and Israel to honor Yahweh with wealth, and in 3:28 he teaches not to defer giving help to a neighbor to a more advantageous time. Solomon is obeying Moses by teaching Torah to his son in pursuit of a just society that shines with the very glory of God.

Supreme concern for Yahweh will prompt fathers to teach their sons, and the relationship cannot be reversed. Exalting sons over Yahweh would break the first commandment, with the result that teaching the commandments to sons would uncomfortably expose hypocrisy. Whole-life love for Yahweh will result in his commandments being on the heart, but this relationship cannot be reversed either. Devotion to the commandments divorced from love for Yahweh also breaks the first commandment, leading only to a condemning

sense of onerous duty. These laws can only be fulfilled by those who are dominated by the reality that Yahweh alone is God, consumed with a love for him that finds expression in desire to please him, commitment to obeying him, and the constant occupation of mind, heart, and imagination with the wonder of who he is. In short, only those who live to worship Yahweh as an expression of love for him—those who trust him more than what they see with their eyes—will have the law on their hearts, teach it to their children, bind it on their hands, frontlet it to their eyes, and write it on doorpost and gate.

The teaching of children in Israel was to result in coming generations worshipping the Lord for his strong hand of deliverance at the exodus from Egypt (Exod 13:14), for his righteousness (Ps 22:31), and for the glory of God on display in Jerusalem (48:13). As a result, generation after generation would be told the glorious deeds of Yahweh (78:4), that they might know him and sing his praise to their children (78:6), “so that a people yet to be created may praise Yahweh” (102:18).

ENDNOTES

¹James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010).

²James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10:2 (2006): 30–54.

³James M. Hamilton Jr., “The Seed of the Woman and the Blessing of Abraham,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 58 (2007): 253–73.

⁴T. Desmond Alexander, “Genealogies, Seed, and the Compositional Unity of Genesis,” *Tyndale Bulletin*

44 (1993): 255–70.

⁵Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2003), 67.

⁶G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004); and James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old and New Testaments*, NAC Studies in Bible and Theology (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2006).

⁷See Table 2.16, “Deuteronomy’s Exposition of the Ten Commandments,” in Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment*.

⁸See the definition of “culture” provided by David F. Wells (*God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994], 200): “the set of shared values that are held to prescribe what is normal in a society.”

⁹See Jamie A. Grant, *The King As Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy's Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms*, Academia Biblica (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004).