

## The Right Hand or the Left

### Commentary for March 1, 2021 — ... King Josiah's Faithful Walk

This month's March 2021 article is about the early reign of King Josiah, Judah's last good king. Read the "[March 2021 Newsletter](#)" and then read the article, "Israel and Judah: 40. Josiah and Discovery of the Law."

The Law God gave to Israel through Moses had many blessings — if Israel was faithful. Near the end of the 40-year wilderness sojourn, Moses wrote a book reviewing what YHWH had done for Israel. It was the Book of Deuteronomy with 34 chapters. In Deuteronomy 5:6–21, Moses wrote of the time YHWH gave the Commandments to Israel. Later in verse 31, YHWH spoke to Moses. It was the first time "**to the right hand or to the left**" was used in Scripture:

<sup>31</sup> **But as for you, stand you here by me, and I will speak unto you all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which**

**you shall teach them, [why?] that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.**

<sup>32</sup> **You shall observe to do therefore as YHWH your God has commanded you:**

**you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.**

<sup>33</sup> **You shall walk in all the ways which YHWH your God has commanded you, [why?]**

[1] **that you may live, and**

[2] **that it may be well with you, and**

[3] **that you may prolong your days**

**in the land which you shall possess."**

• **Deuteronomy 5:31–33**

Obedience to God's commandments, statutes, and judgments would bring a multitude of blessings to Israel. But the people constantly disobeyed and rebelled. The sins and evils of Israel increased after the united kingdom was divided into two kingdoms.

Below are two verses that evaluate King Josiah's reign after his death, saying he was a king who was faithful to YHWH. Josiah was compared not with his predecessors, but with the founder of the dynasty of all the Kings of Israel and Judah, King David:

**He did what was upright in the eyes of YHWH and walked in the ways of his father David; he did not withdraw to the right or left."**

• **2 Kings 22:2 and 2 Chronicles 34:2**

What does that statement mean, "**he did not withdraw to the right or left**"? Well, it is like the idiom we use today in English, "walking the straight and narrow." The phrase in Kings and Chronicles is similar and has the same force as phrases in Deuteronomy 5:32 above. There are similar statements elsewhere in Deuteronomy and Joshua.

“... by no means to exalt his heart above his brothers and by no means to withdraw from the instruction, **either to the right or left**, so that he may prolong his days on the throne of his kingdom, he and his sons among Israel.”

• *Deuteronomy 17:20*

“In accordance with the law by which they shall direct you and according to the judgment that they shall deliver to you, you shall act. You shall not withdraw from the word that they shall tell you, **either to the right or left**.

... And **you shall not go aside** from any of the words which I command you this day, **to the right hand, or to the left**, to go after other gods to serve them.”

• *Deuteronomy 28:11, 14*

“But be steadfast and be very resolute to observe and to do according to the whole law that Moses My servant enjoined on you. **Do not withdraw from it to the right or to the left**, that you may proceed intelligently wherever you go.”

• *Joshua 1:7*

“Hence you will be very steadfast to observe and to do everything written in the scroll of the law of Moses, that **you may not withdraw from it to the right or to the left ...**”

• *Joshua 23:6*

### ***Josiah Fulfills God’s Command (Given to Moses) to Utterly Destroy ...***

You will read in this month’s article and the next one in the series, that Josiah worked hard to fulfill what YHWH told the people of Israel to do when they entered the land in Deuteronomy:

“These are the statutes and judgments, which you shall observe to do in the land, which YHWH God of your fathers give you to possess it, all the days that you live upon the earth.

- You shall **utterly destroy all the places**, wherein the nations which you shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And
- you shall **overthrow their altars**, and **break their pillars**, and
- [you shall] **burn their groves with fire**; and
- you shall **hew down the graven images** of their gods, and
- [you shall] **destroy the names of them** out of that place.”

• *Deuteronomy 12:1-3*

King Josiah did what few other kings of Judah did. He was faithful to this command and God rewarded him by **delaying** the punishment He would bring upon the people and land of Judah and Jerusalem. By the time of Josiah’s reign, Judah’s sins were their most horrible ever. YHWH declared through His prophets that the punishments, destruction, and exile ordained for the royalty, nobles, and people of Judah would happen. God’s judgment was certain.

YHWH postponed His judgment on Judah while Josiah lived. Like He required of Israel, God would not deviate “**to the right or to the left**” to impose His will and judgment on Judah.

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