

Deuteronomy 1:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

Analysis

Moses' charge to the judges establishes principles of righteous judgment: hear cases impartially ('between every man and his brother'), extend justice to foreigners ('the stranger'), avoid partiality regardless of social status ('not respect persons'), and fear God alone. The command 'ye shall not be afraid of the face of man' addresses the temptation to pervert justice due to intimidation or favoritism. 'The judgment is God's' means judges act as God's representatives, accountable ultimately to Him. Hard cases were to be brought to Moses, acknowledging the limitations of human wisdom.

Historical Context

This judicial code predates similar principles in other ancient Near Eastern law codes by emphasizing impartiality toward strangers and the poor. Most ancient legal systems favored citizens over foreigners and the wealthy over the poor. Israel's law reflects God's character—He 'is no respecter of persons' (Acts 10:34) and defends the vulnerable. The New Testament applies these principles to church leadership and conflict resolution (1 Timothy 5:21; James 2:1-9).

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the principle that 'judgment is God's' shape your approach to making decisions and resolving conflicts?
2. In what areas of life are you tempted to 'respect persons' rather than act with impartial justice?

Interlinear Text

לֹא תַּכְרִיב יְרֻאָה מִפְנֵי הַמִּשְׁפָּט כַּלְעֵט |
H3808 Ye shall not respect of the face for the judgment the small
H5234 H6440 H4941 H6996

פְּנַדֵּל וְשִׁמְעָתִים לֹא תִּירְאָה מִפְנֵי כַּלְעֵט
as well as the great but ye shall hear H3808 ye shall not be afraid of the face
H1419 H8085 H1481 H6440

אֲשֶׁר וּפְנַדֵּר הָאָהָר לְאֱלֹהִים בְּמִשְׁפָּט כִּי אֲשֶׁר
of man H3588 for the judgment is God's H1931 and the cause H834
H376 H4941 H430 H1697

וְשִׁמְעָתִים אֵלֶיךָ מִקְרָב וְמִקְרָב הַקְרָבָה
that is too hard H4480 for you bring H413 but ye shall hear H8085
H7185 H7126

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 18:26 (Judgment): And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

Deuteronomy 16:19 (Judgment): Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

James 2:9 (Parallel theme): But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.

Proverbs 24:23 (Judgment): These things also belong to the wise. It is not good to have respect of persons in judgment.

Leviticus 19:15 (Judgment): Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

2 Chronicles 19:6 (Judgment): And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.

Exodus 18:22 (Judgment): And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

Proverbs 29:25 (Parallel theme): The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

1 Thessalonians 2:4 (References God): But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

Deuteronomy 10:17 (References God): For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: