

Deuteronomy 17:13

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

Analysis

And all the people shall hear, and fear (וְכָל-הָעֵם יִשְׁמַע וַיִּרְאֹ) vechol ha'am yishme'u veyira'u)—public execution served a pedagogical purpose. Yare (fear) encompasses reverence, awe, and deterrent fear. The execution's publicity wasn't cruel spectacle but covenantal instruction, teaching that presumptuous defiance of God's judicial order destroys community.

Do no more presumptuously (zadon again) shows the death penalty's preventative function. Capital punishment for judicial contempt maintained the integrity of the entire legal system. Without enforceable supreme court decisions, law becomes mere suggestion. Israel's survival as a covenant people required respect for God's judicial mechanisms. This principle undergirds Romans 13:1-7, where governmental authority derives from God and resistance to legitimate authority is resistance to God's ordinance.

Historical Context

Ancient legal systems universally recognized that contempt of the highest court threatened social order. Israel's system was distinctive because the ultimate judge was Yahweh, and human judges were His representatives. Public punishment served educational purposes in oral cultures where community formation depended on shared witness to covenant enforcement. The phrase 'all the people shall hear' indicates that legal proceedings and their outcomes were matters of public knowledge, creating accountability and deterrence.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the fear of consequences serve as a legitimate motivation for obedience while not being the highest motivation?
2. In what ways does public accountability for violations of God's standards protect community integrity?

Interlinear Text

וְכָל־עַם־יִשְׁמַע־וְיִירְאֶת־אֶת־יְהוָה

H3605

And all the people

H5971

יִשְׁמַע

H8085

וְיִירְאֶת

H3372

H3808

H2102

וְלֹא־תַּעֲשֶׂה־כַּאֲنַךְ־לֹא־תַּעֲשֶׂה
and do no more presumptuously

H5750

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 13:11 (Parallel theme): And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

Deuteronomy 19:20 (Parallel theme): And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.