

Deuteronomy 17:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and enquired diligently, and, behold, it be true, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel:

Analysis

Due process requirements: **it be told thee** (formal accusation), **thou hast heard of it** (leadership awareness), **enquired diligently** (דָרַשׁ הַיּוֹם, darash hetev—'searched thoroughly'). No rushed judgment—investigation must establish facts.

Behold, it be true, and the thing certain (אָמֵת תִּכְרֹן הַדָּבָר, emet nakhon hadavar)—'truth, established, the matter.' Two confirmatory terms emphasize evidentiary certainty. **Such abomination is wrought in Israel**—only after thorough investigation proving guilt beyond doubt. This protects against false accusations while maintaining covenant purity. Proverbs 18:17 embodies this: 'The first to state his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.'

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern law codes (Hammurabi, Hittite) required investigation, but Israel's law uniquely emphasized thorough inquiry before capital punishment. This balanced community protection with individual justice. Later rabbinic law made capital punishment nearly impossible to carry out (requiring specific warnings, multiple witnesses to each element, etc.), showing Judaism's movement toward protecting accused.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 – Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this passage challenge 'trial by social media' or rushing to judgment based on accusations alone?
2. What does 'enquire diligently' require before confronting sin in the church (Matthew 18:15-17)?

Interlinear Text

וְיֹאמֶר	לְבָנָךְ	וְשָׁמַעַת	וְיָדְרַשְׁתָּ	בַּהֲיטָבֵד
And it be told	H5046	thee and thou hast heard	of it and enquired	diligently

וְהִנֵּה הַ	אָמֵת	כִּי	הַזְּבָרֶת	נִגְשָׁת הַ
H2009	and behold it be true	certain	and the thing	is wrought
H571	H3559	H1697		H6213

בִּשְׂרָאֵל בְּזִז אֶת הַקְּטוּעַ בָּהּ
in Israel H2063 that such abomination H3478 H8441

Additional Cross-References

John 7:51 (Parallel theme): Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

Deuteronomy 19:18 (Parallel theme): And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother;

