

Deuteronomy 19:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days;

Analysis

Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD (וְעָמְדוּ שְׁנֵי־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר־לָהֶם קְרִיב לִפְנֵי יְהוָה, ve'amdu shnei-ha'anashim asher-lahem ha-riv lifnei YHWH)—both accuser and accused must appear **before the LORD**, emphasizing the sacred nature of judicial proceedings. This is not merely civil litigation but standing in God's presence, where lies are offenses against divine holiness.

The phrase **before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days** specifies the central sanctuary's judicial authority. When local courts couldn't resolve a case or suspected perjury, it escalated to the priesthood at the tabernacle/temple. This prevented corruption at local levels from going unchecked. The solemn context—standing before Yahweh's presence—was designed to inspire truth-telling through fear of divine judgment.

Historical Context

Deuteronomy 17:8-13 established a supreme court at the central sanctuary for difficult cases. When local elders suspected false witness or couldn't determine truth, they could refer cases to the Levitical priests and judges at the tabernacle (later the temple). This created a two-tier judicial system: local courts for routine matters, central court for complex or contested cases. The journey to the sanctuary and standing "before the LORD" added solemnity meant to deter false

testimony. During the monarchy period, the king sometimes served as final appeals judge (2 Samuel 15:2-4, 1 Kings 3:16-28), though this wasn't the Deuteronomic ideal.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does "standing before the LORD" reveal about the relationship between human justice and divine accountability?
2. How should awareness of God's presence affect Christians' speech and testimony in legal or formal settings?

Interlinear Text

וְעָמַד וְ	שְׁנֵי	הָאֲנָשִׁים	אֲשֶׁר	לִפְנֵי	
is shall stand	Then both	H376	H834	H1992	
H5975	H8147				
בֵּין	לִפְנֵי	יְהוָה	לִפְנֵי	הַכֹּהֲנִים	
between whom the controversy	before	the LORD	before	the priests	
H7379	H6440	H3068	H6440	H3548	
וְהַשֹּׁפְטִים	אֲשֶׁר	וְיָמֵינוּ	בְּיָמֵינוּ	הָהֵם:	
and the judges	H834	H1961	which shall be in those days	H1992	
H8199			H3117		

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 17:9 (Judgment): And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment:

Deuteronomy 21:5 (References Lord): And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried:

Malachi 2:7 (References Lord): For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.

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