

Deuteronomy 19:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.

Analysis

And those which remain shall hear, and fear (וְהַנִּשְׁאָרִים יִשְׁמְעוּ וַיִּירָאוּ, ve-hanish'arim yishme'u ve-yira'u)—public justice serves both punishment and education. The verb shama (שָׁמַע, "hear") implies not just auditory reception but understanding and taking to heart. The verb yare (יָרָא, "fear") indicates healthy fear that produces behavioral change, not paralyzing terror.

And shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you (וְלֹא יוֹסִיפוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת עוֹד כַּדָּבָר הַרָע הַזֶּה בְּקִרְבְּכֶם, ve-lo-yosifu la'asot od ka-davar ha-ra ha-zeh be-qirbbekha)—the purpose of punishing perjury is deterrence. This same formula appears in similar contexts (Deuteronomy 13:11, 17:13, 21:21) regarding capital punishment for serious crimes. The assumption is that when people see justice executed, they will be deterred from similar wickedness. This presumes judicial transparency—punishments must be known and understood to deter.

Historical Context

Public execution of judgment served pedagogical purposes in ancient Israel. Unlike modern incarceration, which removes offenders from public view, ancient justice was often communal and visible. Stoning, for instance, required community participation (Deuteronomy 17:7), forcing witnesses to bear responsibility and teaching observers the seriousness of the crime. The emphasis on hearing and fearing suggests that judicial verdicts were publicly announced, perhaps at city gates where legal proceedings occurred. This communal approach to justice

reinforced shared values and maintained social cohesion through collective accountability.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How does the deterrent purpose of punishment relate to contemporary debates about criminal justice philosophy?
2. What role should "fear" (reverent caution) play in preventing sin among believers (cf. 1 Peter 1:17, Philippians 2:12)?

Interlinear Text

וְהַנִּשְׁאַר יִם	וְשָׁמַע ו	וְיִבְּ או	וְלֹא	יִס פו	לַעֲשׂ וְת
And those which remain	shall hear	and fear	H3808	and shall henceforth	commit
H7604	H8085	H3372		H3254	H6213
ע וְ	כְּדָב ר	הָ ע	הָ ה	בְּקִרְבָּנְךָ:	
H5750	no more any	such evil	H2088	among	
	H1697	H7451		H7130	

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 17:13 (Parallel theme): And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

Deuteronomy 21:21 (Evil): And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

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

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