

Deuteronomy 20:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it.

Analysis

And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? (מִי־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־צָבָע כֶּרֶם)—The third warfare exemption addresses nata (planted) a vineyard but not yet enjoyed its fruit. Under Leviticus 19:23-25, fruit was forbidden for three years, dedicated to God in year four, and available to the owner in year five. To die before enjoying God's blessing on one's labor would be tragic.

This exemption reveals God's compassion for human joy and completion. Holy war required wholehearted focus—a soldier preoccupied with unfinished business would fight halfheartedly. The principle: God wants fully committed warriors, not distracted conscripts forced into service while longing for home.

Historical Context

These exemptions appear in the context of holy war legislation (Deuteronomy 20:1-9), delivered by Moses on the plains of Moab before entering Canaan. Unlike ancient Near Eastern armies that conscripted brutally, Israel's army excused those with legitimate life concerns, trusting God for victory rather than sheer numbers.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What unfinished desires or incomplete projects might distract you from wholehearted service to God's present calling?
2. How does God's provision of these exemptions challenge modern assumptions about religious duty overriding all personal circumstances?

Interlinear Text

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|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| וְאֵשֶׁר | נָטַע | בְּגַם | אֵל |
| H4310 And what man | H834 is he that hath planted | H3808 a vineyard | |
| H376 | H5193 | H3754 | |
| וְאֵשֶׁר | לְבִתְהַלֵּל | פָּנִים | ימונות |
| וְאֵשֶׁר | בֵּן | לְבִתְהַלֵּל | לְבִתְהַלֵּל |
| and hath not yet eaten | H1980 and return | H1004 unto his house | H6435 lest he die |
| H2490 | H7725 | H4191 | |
| וְאֵשֶׁר | בְּמָלְתָם | וְאֵשֶׁר | וְאֵשֶׁר |
| in the battle | H376 And what man | H312 and another | H2490 and hath not yet eaten |
| H4421 | | | |

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