

# Deuteronomy 20:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.

## Analysis

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**And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her?**

(מִי־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר־אָרֹשׁ אִשָּׁה)—The fourth exemption involves aras (betrothed)—legally bound but not yet consummated in marriage. The betrothal period could last a year, during which the couple were legally married but living separately. To die in battle before the wedding night would leave the woman in legal limbo and deny the man his anticipated joy.

This law appears verbatim in the curse of Deuteronomy 28:30: "Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her." What God graciously exempts in chapter 20, He threatens as covenant curse in chapter 28—underscoring that these aren't arbitrary rules but expressions of God's desire for His people's flourishing.

## Historical Context

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Betrothal in ancient Israel was legally binding—breaking it required divorce (as with Mary and Joseph, Matthew 1:18-19). These exemptions show God's law regulated warfare humanely, unlike surrounding nations that conscripted without regard for personal circumstances. Gideon later applied this principle by reducing his army from 32,000 to 300 (Judges 7:2-7).

## Related Passages

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**Matthew 25:31** — Final judgment

**Revelation 20:12** — Judgment according to deeds

## Study Questions

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1. How does God's concern for completing life transitions before taking on spiritual battles inform your sense of calling and timing?
2. In what ways might God be calling you to "reduce your army" by releasing those not fully committed rather than pressuring reluctant service?

## Interlinear Text

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וְיָמִי H4310	וְאִישׁ H376	אֲשֶׁר H834	אֵבֶשׁ H781	אִשָּׁה H802	וְלֹא H3808
	And what man		is there that hath betrothed	a wife	
	וְלֹא H3947	יָלַךְ H1980	וַיָּשֹׁב H7725	לְבֵיתוֹ H1004	פֶּן H6435
	and hath not taken		and return	unto his house	lest he die
	בַּמִּלְחָמָה H4421	וְאִישׁ H376	אֲחֵר H312	וְלֹא H3947	יָלַךְ H1980
	in the battle	And what man	and another	and hath not taken	

## Additional Cross-References

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**Deuteronomy 24:5** (Parallel theme): When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

**Deuteronomy 28:30** (Parallel theme): Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof.

