

Deuteronomy 22:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate:

Analysis

The father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity (betulim, בְּתוּלִים)—the physical evidence preserved from the wedding night. **Unto the elders of the city in the gate**—Israel's judicial system operated through local elders (zeqenim, זָקְנִים) who adjudicated disputes at the city gate, the public forum for legal proceedings.

The parents' active role demonstrates family solidarity and the communal nature of marriage. They defend their daughter's honor by presenting evidence they had carefully preserved. The betulim likely refers to the bloodstained cloth from the consummation night, proving the bride's virginity. This public legal process— involving elders, evidence, witnesses, and testimony—ensures justice through transparent proceedings rather than private vengeance or arbitrary judgments.

Historical Context

The city gate functioned as ancient Israel's courthouse where elders heard cases, rendered judgments, and executed sentences (Ruth 4:1-12; Proverbs 31:23). These weren't professional judges but respected community leaders chosen for wisdom and integrity. The preservation of physical evidence reflects ancient legal practices requiring material proof beyond mere testimony. The parents' involvement underscores that marriage joined families, not just individuals, and that families shared responsibility for their children's conduct and vindication.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does the requirement for physical evidence and public proceedings protect against false accusations and ensure justice?
2. What does the parents' role in defending their daughter teach about family loyalty and the responsibility to protect the vulnerable?

Interlinear Text

וְלֹא	יְאַבֵּ	בְּנֵךְ	וְאֶת	וְהַזְּבֵחַ	אֶת
take	Then shall the father	of the damsel	and her mother	and bring forth	H853
H3947	H1	H5291	H517	H3318	

בְּתוּלָה	בְּנֵךְ	אֶל	בְּעֵיר	בְּשַׁעַרְתָּה:	
virginity	of the damsel	H413	unto the elders	of the city	in the gate
H1331	H5291		H2205	H5892	H8179

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