

Deuteronomy 22:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

Analysis

Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die—the death penalty for proven premarital unchastity, executed at the father's house to symbolize familial shame. Saqal ba-'avanim (סָקַל בְּאַבְנִים, "stone with stones") was Israel's standard capital punishment method, requiring community participation and public witness.

Because she hath wrought folly in Israel—nevalah (נֶבֱלָה, "folly") denotes morally outrageous conduct, covenant-breaking wickedness that threatens community integrity (Genesis 34:7; Joshua 7:15). **To play the whore in her father's house**—liznot (לִזְנוֹת, "to play the whore") emphasizes the sin occurred while under parental authority, compounding the offense. **So shalt thou put evil away from among you**—bi'arta ha-ra' (בִּיעַרְתָּ הָרָע, "purge the evil") is Deuteronomy's repeated formula for capital punishment, emphasizing communal holiness through removing covenant-breakers.

Historical Context

This severe penalty reflects several realities:

1. premarital sex violated covenant standards of sexual purity symbolizing Israel's exclusive relationship with Yahweh
2. the deception entering marriage under false pretenses broke covenant faith
3. the father's household bore responsibility for the daughter's conduct
4. communal holiness required removing persistent covenant-breakers.

The New Testament's mercy toward the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11) doesn't nullify God's hatred of sin but reveals Christ bearing the penalty sinners deserve, fulfilling the law's demands through substitutionary atonement. Modern Christians rightly emphasize redemption over execution while affirming the law's testimony to sin's seriousness.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does the severity of this punishment reveal the seriousness of sexual sin as covenant-breaking rather than mere private behavior?
2. How does Christ's mercy toward sexual sinners (John 8:1-11) fulfill rather than contradict the law's demand for holiness?

Interlinear Text

וְהוֹצִיאוּ	אֶת	הַנַּעֲמָה	אֶל	פֶּתַח	בֵּית
Then they shall bring out	H853	the damsel	H413	to the door	house
H3318		H5291		H6607	H1004
אֶבְיָהּ	וְסָקְלוּהָ	אִנְשֵׁי	עִירָהּ	בְּאֲבָנִים	וְמָתָהּ
in her father's	shall stone	H376	of her city	her with stones	that she die
H1	H5619		H5892	H68	H4191
H3588					
עָשָׂתָהּ	נָבִלָה	בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל	לָזֶנֶת	בֵּית	
because she hath wrought	folly	in Israel	to play the whore	house	
H6213	H5039	H3478	H2181	H1004	
אֶבְיָהּ	וּבְעֵרָתָהּ	הָרָע	מִקִּרְבָּהּ:		
in her father's	away	evil	from among		
H1	H1197	H7451	H7130		

Additional Cross-References

Genesis 34:7 (References Israel): And the sons of Jacob came out of the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done.

Deuteronomy 13:5 (Evil): And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

Judges 20:6 (References Israel): And I took my concubine, and cut her in pieces, and sent her throughout all the country of the inheritance of Israel: for they have committed lewdness and folly in Israel.

Deuteronomy 17:7 (Evil): The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

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 19:19 (Evil): Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.

Leviticus 21:9 (Parallel theme): And the daughter of any priest, if she profane herself by playing the whore, she profaneth her father: she shall be burnt with fire.

Judges 20:10 (References Israel): And we will take ten men of an hundred throughout all the tribes of Israel, and an hundred of a thousand, and a thousand out of ten thousand, to fetch victual for the people, that they may do, when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, according to all the folly that they have wrought in Israel.