

Deuteronomy 22:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her;

Analysis

If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her—this case addresses consensual sexual relations with a betrothed woman, indicated by the location (בָּאֵר, ba-ir, in the city) where help was available. The verb matsa (מִתָּאַת, to find) combined with the city setting implies opportunity, not force.

Betrothal (me'orasah, מֵעָשָׂה) in ancient Israel was legally binding, equivalent to marriage except for cohabitation. Sexual relations with a betrothed woman violated both her future husband's rights and the covenant structure protecting family integrity. The assumption of consent (she did not cry out) distinguishes this from verse 25.

Historical Context

Betrothal in ancient Near Eastern culture was a formal contractual arrangement, typically involving bride price (mohar) paid to the father. Unlike modern engagement, betrothal created legal obligations enforceable by death penalty for sexual infidelity. This law protected both the woman's family honor and the stability of covenant marriage.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's design for covenant faithfulness in marriage reflect His own covenant faithfulness to His people?
2. What does this law reveal about the seriousness with which God views sexual purity and covenant commitment?

Interlinear Text

וְמִצְאָה	הָ	אֵ	יָשָׁ	מִאָרֶשׁ	הָ	בְּתוּלָה	הָ	תְּאַרְבֵּת	יְהִיָּה	כִּי
H3588	H1961	If a damsel	that is a virgin	be betrothed	and a man	find				
		H5291	H1330	H781	H376	H4672				

וְ	מִצְאָה	הָ	אֵ	יָשָׁ	מִאָרֶשׁ	הָ	בְּתוּלָה	הָ	תְּאַרְבֵּת	יְהִיָּה	כִּי
and a man	her in the city	and lie									
H376	H5892	H7901									

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