

Deuteronomy 22:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found;

Analysis

If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed—this case differs from verses 23-27 because the woman is not betrothed, hence not under covenant obligation to another man. **Lay hold on her** (tapas, שָׁמַךְ) can mean seize but lacks the violent overtones of chazaq (verse 25), suggesting this may involve seduction rather than forcible rape. **And they be found** implies discovery by others, creating public knowledge requiring resolution.

The ambiguity of this scenario (somewhere between consent and force) requires different remedy than the clear-cut cases above. The absence of betrothal means no third-party covenant rights are violated, but the woman's marriageability and family honor are damaged. The remedy (verse 29) protects her future through mandatory marriage and bride price.

Historical Context

In ancient patriarchal society, loss of virginity outside marriage severely damaged a woman's prospects and family reputation. Without legal protection, such a woman might face destitution. The law's requirement that the man marry her and pay fifty shekels (substantial sum) without right of divorce provided economic security and social restoration.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does this law balance consequences for wrongdoing with protection for those whose reputation and future have been damaged?
2. What principles of restorative justice can guide Christian responses to sexual sin that damages both parties' futures?

Interlinear Text

לֹא	אָשָׁר	בַּתּוֹלָה	תַּעֲבֹר	אִישׁ	וְנִמְצָאוּ	כִּי
H3588	find	If a man	a damsel	that is a virgin	H834	H3808
	H4672	H376	H5291	H1330		
אֲכַשֵּׁה	וַיַּחַטֵּף	בָּהּ	וַיַּשְׁכַּב	וְנִתְפַּשֵּׁה	הָנָם	עַמְּדָה
which is not betrothed	and lay hold	on her and lie			H5973	find
H781	H8610	H7901				H4672

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