

Deuteronomy 22:30

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

Analysis

A man shall not take his father's wife—prohibiting marriage to one's stepmother, an act constituting both sexual immorality and dishonoring one's father. **Nor discover his father's skirt** (גָּלַה קְנָף אָבִיו, galah kenaf aviv)—literally 'uncover his father's wing/corner.' The idiom 'covering with the skirt' denoted taking someone in marriage (Ruth 3:9, Ezekiel 16:8), so 'uncovering' represented violating the father's marital rights.

This law appears in Leviticus 18:8 and 20:11 with more explicit penalties (death for both parties). Its placement here concludes chapter 22's sexual prohibitions, transitioning from pre-marital violations to forbidden relationships. Paul applied this principle in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, commanding the Corinthian church to discipline a man living with his stepmother—'a kind of immorality that does not occur even among pagans.'

Historical Context

Written circa 1406 BC as part of Moses's covenant renewal before entering Canaan. The Canaanite cultures Israel would encounter practiced various forms of incest and sexual perversion in their fertility religions. This law reinforced boundaries already established at Sinai, protecting family integrity and distinguishing Israel's sexual ethics from surrounding nations. Reuben's sin with Bilhah (Genesis 35:22) exemplified this violation, costing him his birthright.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why does God link sexual purity with honoring parents and family structure?
2. How does Paul's response in 1 Corinthians 5 inform the church's responsibility to maintain sexual ethics?
3. What modern sexual ideologies undermine the biblical protection of family boundaries?

Interlinear Text

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| לֹא | תִּקְרַב | לְבַגְדָּה | אַתָּה | אִישׁ | אִשָּׁת | אִם | אֶבְיוֹן | אֶבְיוֹן | אַתָּה | לֹא | תִּגְלַח |
| H3608 | H3947 | H376 | H853 | H802 | H1 | H3808 | H1 | H1540 | | | |
| shall not take | A man | | wife | his father's | | nor discover | | | | | |
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בְּגַדְתָּה אֶבְיוֹן אֶבְיוֹן

skirt his father's

H3671 H1

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 27:20 (Parallel theme): Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Leviticus 18:8 (Parallel theme): The nakedness of thy father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.

1 Corinthians 5:1 (Parallel theme): It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

Leviticus 20:11 (Parallel theme): And the man that lieth with his father's wife hath uncovered his father's nakedness: both of them shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them.

Ezekiel 16:8 (Parallel theme): Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine.

Ruth 3:9 (Parallel theme): And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.