

Deuteronomy 22:4

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.

Analysis

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again. Beyond returning lost property, this law requires helping neighbors in immediate distress. Seeing animals fallen under burdens demands active assistance, not indifference.

The repetition hide thyself again condemns willful blindness. God knows the human tendency to avoid inconvenient situations by pretending not to notice them. Covenant love requires engagement, not studied indifference.

The emphatic surely help him makes assistance mandatory, not optional. This is commanded neighborly love, not encouraged charity. Believers must actively aid those struggling under burdens, even at personal inconvenience.

Paul applies this principle spiritually - Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). Physical burden-bearing illustrates spiritual responsibility to help struggling believers.

Historical Context

Fallen animals carrying loads were common on ancient roads. Without assistance, animals could die from exhaustion or injury, and valuable cargo could be lost or damaged.

This law required cooperation between people who might otherwise be indifferent or even hostile, promoting community cohesion.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. What does required assistance to struggling neighbors teach about covenant love?
2. How does prohibition against hiding yourself address human tendency to avoid inconvenience?
3. Why is helping those under burdens commanded rather than merely encouraged?
4. How does Paul apply this principle spiritually to bearing believers' burdens?
5. What does physical burden-bearing teach about spiritual responsibility to help struggling brothers?

Interlinear Text

לֹא תִּרְאֶה צָמֵן וְרַא אֶת בֶּן אָחִיךְ שָׂוֵר אִזְרָעֵל נִפְלֵל יָמֶנְךָ
H3808 Thou shalt not see H853 ass H176 or his ox H5307 fall down
H7200 H2543 H251 H7794

בְּדַךְ רֹא וְהַתְעַלְּמָה מְלֵא יָמֶנְךָ
by the way and hide help him to lift them up again
H1870 H5956 H1992 H6965

נִפְלֵל יָמֶנְךָ
help him to lift them up again H6965 H5973

Additional Cross-References

Romans 15:1 (Parallel theme): We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

Matthew 5:44 (Parallel theme): But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

2 Corinthians 12:15 (Parallel theme): And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 (Parallel theme): Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

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