

Deuteronomy 24:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.

Analysis

If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you. Kidnapping and human trafficking merit capital punishment - stealing persons is far more serious than stealing property. Human beings created in God's image possess inherent dignity that their commodification violates.

The phrase maketh merchandise of him condemns treating people as tradable goods. Humans are not commodities to be bought and sold but image-bearers deserving respect and freedom. Reducing persons to economic assets fundamentally violates their created nature.

The death penalty for kidnappers demonstrates the severity of this crime. While property theft merits restitution, person-theft merits death. God values human freedom and dignity supremely.

The command put evil away from among you requires capital punishment not merely for retribution but for purging wickedness from the community. Some evils are so severe they must be eliminated to preserve covenant holiness.

Historical Context

Joseph's brothers committed this crime when they sold him into Egyptian slavery (Genesis 37:28). Though God providentially used this evil for good, the act itself merited death under God's law.

Ancient Near Eastern slave trade was extensive. This law prohibited Israelites from participating in kidnapping and trafficking fellow covenant members.

Related Passages

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What does capital punishment for kidnapping teach about the value of human freedom?
2. How does treating people as commodities violate human dignity and created nature?
3. Why is person-theft more serious than property theft?
4. What does 'put evil away' teach about purging severe wickedness from community?
5. How should this law inform Christian response to contemporary human trafficking?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	יִמָּצֵא	אִישׁ	גֵּנֵב	בְּכֶשֶׁל	מֵאֶחָיו	מִבְּנֵי י
H3588	be found	If a man	stealing	any	of his brethren	of the children
	H4672	H376	H1589	H5315	H251	H1121
לְיִשְׂרָאֵל	וְהִתְעַמֵּר	בּוֹ	וּמָכְרוֹ	וּמָת		
of Israel	and maketh merchandise	H0	of him or selleth	shall die		
H3478	H6014		H4376	H4191		
הַגֵּנֵב	הָהּ וְאֵל	וּבְעֵרְתָּ	הָרָע	מִקִּרְבָּהּ:		
him then that thief	H1931	and thou shalt put	evil	from among		
H1590		H1197	H7451	H7130		

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 21:16 (Parallel theme): And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.
