

Deuteronomy 25:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number.

Analysis

If the wicked man be worthy to be beaten—not all crimes required death penalty; the verb hakkot (הָכּוֹת, to strike/beat) provided proportional punishment for lesser offenses. **The judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face**—judicial oversight prevents excessive punishment or vigilante justice. The judge's presence (le-fanav, לְפָנָיו, before his face) ensures accountability and restraint.

According to his fault, by a certain number (ke-dei rish'ato be-mispar)—punishment must be proportional (ke-dei, כִּדְּעֵי, sufficient/proportional) to the offense. This principle of measured justice appears throughout Torah (Exodus 21:23-25, "eye for eye") and contrasts with ancient codes allowing arbitrary brutality.

Historical Context

Corporal punishment was common in ancient Near East, but Mosaic law regulated it carefully. Limits on beating (40 stripes maximum, verse 3) protected human dignity and prevented judges from acting tyrannically. Paul received this punishment five times from synagogue courts (2 Corinthians 11:24), showing its continuation in Second Temple Judaism.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does proportional punishment reflect both God's justice (appropriate consequences) and mercy (limited severity)?
2. What principles of measured discipline apply to church discipline and parenting in light of this passage?

Interlinear Text

וְהָיָה הָאָדָם H1961 H518	בְּיָד הַמַּשְׁפָּט H1121	וְהָיָה הוּא H5221	הַרָשָׁע ע H7563
shall cause him to lie down	that the judge	and to be beaten	before his face
H5307	H8199	H5221	H6440
כִּדּוּם H1767	רְשָׁעוֹתָ H7564	בְּמִסְפָּר: H4557	
according	to his fault	by a certain number	