

Deuteronomy 27:19

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Analysis

Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow—The Hebrew *matteh mishpat* (טַעַתֵּיךְ מִשְׁפָּט) means to twist or pervert justice for three particularly vulnerable groups: *ger* (stranger/sojourner), *yatom* (fatherless), and *almanah* (widow). These categories lacked natural advocates—no family connections, legal standing, or economic power to defend their rights.

This triad appears repeatedly throughout Scripture as God's special concern (Deuteronomy 10:18, 24:17-21, 27:19; Psalm 68:5, 146:9; Isaiah 1:17; Jeremiah 7:6; Zechariah 7:10; James 1:27). Perverted judgment includes biased legal verdicts, denial of rights, economic exploitation, and withholding care. God Himself acts as their defender (Exodus 22:22-24, Psalm 68:5), making oppression of the vulnerable a direct challenge to divine justice.

The New Testament extends this principle through the Church's responsibility toward widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16), hospitality toward strangers (Hebrews 13:2), and care for the fatherless (James 1:27). Pure religion involves justice, not merely piety.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern societies routinely exploited those without male family protectors. Widows lost property rights, orphans were disinherited or enslaved, and foreigners faced discrimination and violence. Israel's law was radically

counter-cultural in establishing legal protections and requiring positive care. The prophets repeatedly condemned Israel for violating these protections (Isaiah 1:23, 10:2; Jeremiah 7:6, 22:3; Ezekiel 22:7), showing that this curse was tragically often deserved.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. Who are the modern equivalents of 'stranger, fatherless, and widow' in your community—those lacking advocates and vulnerable to exploitation?
2. How does your church's budget, time allocation, and ministry priorities reflect God's concern for the vulnerable, or does it mirror society's neglect?

Interlinear Text

אָר וֹר	מִטָּה	מִשְׁפָּט	גֵּר	יָתוֹם
Cursed	be he that perverteth	the judgment	of the stranger	fatherless
H779	H5186	H4941	H1616	H3490
וְאַלְמָנָה	וְאַמֵּר	כָּל	הָעָם	אָמֵן:
and widow	shall say	And all the people	Amen	
H490	H559	H3605	H5971	H543

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 10:18 (Judgment): He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

Deuteronomy 24:17 (Judgment): Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

Proverbs 17:23 (Judgment): A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.

Malachi 3:5 (Judgment): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Proverbs 31:5 (Judgment): Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted.

Exodus 23:2 (Judgment): Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment:

Micah 3:9 (Judgment): Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.