

Deuteronomy 27:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Analysis

Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast—This curse prohibits bestiality (shokev im behemah, שֹׁכֵב עִם בְּהֵמָה), a practice condemned in Exodus 22:19 and Leviticus 18:23, 20:15-16 with the death penalty for both human and animal. The phrase "any manner of beast" (kol-behemah) emphasizes absolute prohibition regardless of animal type.

Bestiality represents the ultimate degradation of human sexuality, crossing not just moral but creational boundaries established at Genesis 1-2. It violates the image of God in humanity, the ordained complementarity of male and female, and the distinction between humans and animals. Such practices characterized Canaanite depravity (Leviticus 18:24-25) that defiled the land itself, bringing divine judgment.

The progression in these sexual curses moves from household boundary violations (father's wife, sister) to species boundary violations (bestiality), showing how sexual sin escalates when God's creational design is abandoned. Paul's description of moral degradation in Romans 1:24-28 follows similar logic—rejecting God leads to "vile affections" and "against nature" practices.

Historical Context

Archaeological and textual evidence indicates bestiality occurred in ancient Near Eastern contexts, sometimes with ritual or magical associations. Israel's absolute

prohibition, backed by capital punishment, stood in stark contrast. The Canaanites' sexual practices—including bestiality, incest, cult prostitution—were so degrading that God declared the land "vomited out" its inhabitants (Leviticus 18:25), justifying Israel's conquest as divine judgment on extreme moral corruption.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the biblical concept of boundary-keeping in sexuality challenge modern notions of sexual autonomy and 'consenting adults'?
2. What does the escalation of sexual sins in Deuteronomy 27:20-23 teach about the progressive nature of moral compromise when God's standards are abandoned?

Interlinear Text

אָר וּר	שֶׁכַּ ב	עַם	כָּל	בְּהֵמָה	וְאָמַר	כָּל
Cursed	be he that lieth			with any manner of beast	shall say	
H779	H7901	H5973	H3605	H929	H559	H3605
וְכָל	אָמֵן:					
And all the people	Amen					
H5971	H543					

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 18:23 (Parallel theme): Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it is confusion.

Exodus 22:19 (Parallel theme): Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death.

Leviticus 20:15 (Parallel theme): And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death: and ye shall slay the beast.

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