

Deuteronomy 27:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Analysis

Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly—the verb *nakah* (נָכָה, strikes/smites) can mean killing (as in murder) or injuring. The key term is *ba-seter* (בַּסֵּתֶר, in secret/in hiding), indicating premeditated violence done covertly to evade justice. This encompasses assassination, ambush, poisoning, or false witness leading to execution—any harm inflicted through deception rather than open confrontation.

Secret violence is particularly heinous because it perverts justice by preventing legitimate defense or legal recourse. The requirement for public 'Amen' meant the community bound itself to investigate suspicious deaths and bring hidden murderers to justice. Proverbs repeatedly condemns those who lie in wait for blood (Proverbs 1:11, 12:6), and Jesus intensified the standard by condemning even hateful anger as murder of the heart (Matthew 5:21-22).

Historical Context

Ancient Israel lacked modern forensic investigation, making secret murders difficult to solve. The law provided cities of refuge for accidental killers (Deuteronomy 19:1-13) while requiring execution for premeditated murderers. Secret violence was especially abhorrent because it denied victims the protection of Israel's justice system and showed contempt for the image of God (Genesis 9:6). This curse invoked divine investigation and judgment where human investigation failed.

Related Passages

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. How does God's curse on secret violence reassure victims that no injustice escapes His notice and judgment?
2. In what ways might you be 'striking your neighbor secretly' through gossip, slander, or harmful actions done beyond accountability?

Interlinear Text

אָר וּר	מִכֵּה	רֵעֵהוּ	בְּסֵתֶר	וְאָמַר	כָּל
Cursed	be he that smiteth	his neighbour	secretly	shall say	
H779	H5221	H7453	H5643	H559	H3605
וְכָל	אָמֵן:				
And all the people	Amen				
H5971	H543				

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 35:31 (Parallel theme): Moreover ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death: but he shall be surely put to death.

Leviticus 24:17 (Parallel theme): And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.