

Exodus 21:26

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.

Analysis

And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish; he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.

This provision regulates Hebrew servitude (עֶבֶד עִבְרִי, eved ivri), protecting indentured servants from exploitation. Unlike ancient Near Eastern chattel slavery, Israel's system limited bondage to six years with mandatory release, reflecting God's concern for human dignity. These laws temper economic necessity with compassion, ensuring even servants retain personhood and future hope. The regulations reveal God's heart for the vulnerable and point to ultimate redemption—Christ freed us from sin's slavery to serve Him voluntarily.

Historical Context

Debt-servitude in ancient Israel allowed impoverished persons to work off obligations while maintaining basic rights. These protections were revolutionary compared to surrounding nations' perpetual slavery systems.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this law reveal God's character—His justice, mercy, or holiness?
2. What New Testament principles build upon or fulfill this Old Testament regulation?

Interlinear Text

וְכִי	יִכָּה	אִישׁ	אֶת	עֵינָיו:	עַבְדּוֹ	אֹ	אֶת	עֵינָיו:
H3588	smite	And if a man	H853	his eye's	of his servant	H176	H853	his eye's
	H5221	H376		H5869	H5650			H5869
אֶת	וְשָׁחָתָהּ	לְחַפְּשׁוֹ	יִשְׁלַח	נָו	תְּ	חַת	עֵינָיו:	
of his maid	that it perish	free	he shall let him go		for	his eye's		
H519	H7843	H2670	H7971		H8478	H5869		

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