

Exodus 22:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.

Analysis

If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep.

Restitution exceeds theft—'five oxen for an ox' (כַּמְשָׁה וְקָרְבָּן, chamishah vaqar) means 500% repayment for oxen, 400% for sheep. Why the difference? Oxen are working animals; stealing one damages victim's livelihood more. The restitution is restorative justice—victim is made whole plus penalty discourages theft. This contrasts with retributive systems (punishment without restitution). Zacchaeus offers fourfold restitution (Luke 19:8), applying this principle. The gospel is ultimate restitution—Christ pays infinitely more than we stole (His life for our sin). Where sin increased, grace abounded more (Romans 5:20).

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern law codes varied on theft penalties. Hammurabi required 30-fold for temple theft, 10-fold for palace theft, or death if unable to pay. Israel's graduated restitution (4-5x) was humane while deterring theft.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. Why does restitution exceed the theft (400-500%)—what principles of justice does this teach?
2. How does Christ's payment for sin exemplify ultimate restitution—paying infinitely more than we owe?

Interlinear Text

מִכָּר וְאֵל וּבְכָחַ וְאֵל יִגְנֶב כִּי
H3588 shall steal If a man an ox for a sheep and kill H176 H176 H2873 H4376
H1589 H376 H7794 H7716 H2873 H4376

צָא נְאָרְבָּעַ הַשְׁוֹר תְּחִתְּ בְּקָר חַמְשָׁה
five oxen it he shall restore H8478 an ox and four sheep H2568 H1241 H7999 H7794 H702 H6629

הַשְׁהָה: תְּחִתְּ
H8478 for a sheep H7716

Additional Cross-References

Luke 19:8 (Parallel theme): And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

2 Samuel 12:6 (Parallel theme): And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

Proverbs 6:31 (Parallel theme): But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his house.

Numbers 5:7 (Parallel theme): Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth part thereof, and give it unto him against whom he hath trespassed.

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