

Exodus 22:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

Analysis

Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

'Revile the gods' (אֱלֹהִים לֹא תַקְלֵל, Elohim lo teqallel)—'gods' is likely judges/rulers (elohim can mean God, gods, or judges; Psalm 82:6). The parallel with 'ruler' (נָשִׂיא) supports this. Paul quotes this in Acts 23:5 regarding the high priest—even corrupt authority deserves respect for office's sake. The principle: honor authority even when disagreeing. Peter and Paul command respect for governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-17). We can critique policy without cursing persons. Daniel and his friends obeyed Babylon's king when possible, disobeyed when conscience required, but never 'cursed' him.

Historical Context

The Hebrew elohim is ambiguous—can mean God, gods, judges, or rulers. Context (parallel with 'ruler') suggests judges/magistrates. Respecting authority, even flawed authority, maintains social order.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How can Christians balance respect for governing authorities with prophetic critique of injustice?
2. What does Paul's application of this verse (Acts 23:5) teach about respecting even corrupt leaders?

Interlinear Text

תָּאֵרֶת לֹא אֱלֹהִים תְּקַלֵּל לֹא אֱלֹהִים
the gods H3808 Thou shalt not revile H3808
H430 H7043

תָּאֵרֶת לֹא בְּעִתָּבְךָ יְרֵשׁ יְרֵשׁ אֶלְעָזֶר
nor curse H779 of thy people H5971
H3808 H5387

Additional Cross-References

Acts 23:5 (Evil): Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.

Ecclesiastes 10:20 (Curse): Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

Jude 1:8 (Evil): Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

2 Peter 2:10 (Evil): But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

Exodus 21:17 (Curse): And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death.

Acts 23:3 (References God): Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?

Psalms 32:6 (References God): For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

Psalms 138:1 (References God): I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

1 Samuel 24:6 (Parallel theme): And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD.

1 Samuel 24:10 (Parallel theme): Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.

From KJV Study • kjvstudy.org