

Exodus 22:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods.

Analysis

If the thief be not found, then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods.

Theft laws emphasize restitution over retribution—restoring victims exceeds merely punishing thieves. The graduated penalties (200-500% depending on circumstances) deter theft while providing for victim's losses. This restorative justice model contrasts with purely punitive systems. The principle: sin has consequences requiring repayment. Gospel application: Christ paid infinitely more than our debt, providing ultimate restitution for sin's theft of God's glory.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern theft penalties varied widely—some death, some forced labor, some restitution. Israel's approach balanced deterrence with restoration, protecting both victim and perpetrator.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

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

בַּבְּתָם אָמַר אָמַר לֹא אָמַר
H518 be not H4672 found H1590 If the thief
H3808 H4672 H1590 shall be brought H7126
H1167 H1004 then the master of the house

אֵל אָמַר לֹא אָמַר לֹא אָמַר
H413 unto the judges H430 H518 be not H3808
H430 H4672 H1590 to see whether he have put H7971
H3027 his hand

בְּמַלְאָכָת רְשָׁעָה
goods unto his neighbour's
H4399 H7453

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 22:28 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people.

Exodus 21:6 (Judgment): Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever.

Deuteronomy 16:18 (Judgment): Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.