

Exodus 23:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

Analysis

Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

'Raise false report' (לֹא תִשָּׂא שֵׁמָעַ שָׁוְיָ, lo tissa shema shav)—don't carry/spread empty rumors. This expands the ninth commandment from courtroom to conversation. 'Put not thy hand with the wicked'—don't partner with evil people for malicious testimony. Proverbs repeatedly warns against false witness (6:19, 12:17, 19:5, 25:18). Jesus warns 'every idle word' will be judged (Matthew 12:36). James says the tongue is a fire that defiles the whole body (James 3:6). The community that tolerates gossip and slander cannot maintain justice. Covenant people must be truth-tellers; our 'yes' must be yes (Matthew 5:37).

Historical Context

False witness in ancient courts could result in death sentences. Without forensic evidence, testimony was crucial. Deuteronomy 19:16-21 prescribes severe penalties for false witnesses—the punishment they sought to impose.

Related Passages

1 John 4:8 — God is love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. How does this command extend the ninth commandment from courtroom to everyday conversation?
2. In what ways do Christians 'raise false reports' through gossip, exaggeration, or social media?

Interlinear Text

ל א	תִּשָּׂא א	שֶׁ מַע	שֶׁ יֹא	אַל	תִּשָּׂת	יָדְךָ	עַם
H3808	Thou shalt not raise	report	a false	H408	put	not thine hand	H5973
	H5375	H8088	H7723		H7896	H3027	
בְּרָשָׁע	לְהִי ת	ע ד	חֲמָס:				
with the wicked	H1961	witness	to be an unrighteous				
H7563		H5707	H2555				

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 101:5 (Parallel theme): Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

Proverbs 19:5 (Witness): A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape.

Exodus 20:16 (Witness): Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Psalms 35:11 (Resurrection): False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.

Deuteronomy 5:20 (Witness): Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Leviticus 19:16 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people: neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour: I am the LORD.

Revelation 12:10 (Parallel theme): And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power

of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Proverbs 19:9 (Witness): A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall perish.

Romans 3:8 (Righteousness): And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just.

Psalms 15:3 (Evil): He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org