

Exodus 23:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause.

Analysis

Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause.

'Wrest judgment' (לֹא תַּפְאֵר מִשְׁפָט, lo tatteh mishpat) means 'don't pervert justice.' The rich often oppress the poor through legal manipulation—expensive lawyers, bribes, intimidation. This command protects 'thy poor' (אֶת-יְמִינְךָ, evyonkha)—'your poor,' covenant brother. Courts must not favor rich over poor (nor poor over rich, Leviticus 19:15). Impartial justice regardless of economic status is rare historically and presently. Prophets repeatedly condemn justice-perversion (Isaiah 10:1-2, Amos 5:12). James warns against favoritism toward the wealthy (James 2:1-9). God champions the poor; His people must ensure they receive just treatment.

Historical Context

Ancient courts often favored wealthy litigants who could afford bribes or influence. God's law demanded impartial justice regardless of economic status—revolutionary in the ancient world and still challenging today.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. How do modern legal systems sometimes 'pervert the judgment of the poor'?
2. What practical steps can Christians take to ensure the vulnerable receive justice in society?

Interlinear Text

בְּרִיבּוֹן אֶחָד מִשְׁפָּט תִּשְׁפַּט הַנִּצְעָד לֵא
H3808 Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of thy poor in his cause
H5186 H4941 H34 H7379

Additional Cross-References

Malachi 3:5 (Judgment): And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

Jeremiah 5:28 (Judgment): They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper; and the right of the needy do they not judge.

Ecclesiastes 5:8 (Judgment): If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

Deuteronomy 27:19 (Judgment): Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Deuteronomy 16:19 (Judgment): Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Leviticus 19:15 (Judgment): Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment: thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty: but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.

