

Exodus 32:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

Analysis

Moses delivers God's command beginning כֹּה־אָמַר יְהוָה (koh-amar Adonai, Thus says the Lord), the prophetic formula establishing divine authority. The threefold instruction (put on swords, go through the camp gate to gate, slay) is stark. The phrase אִישׁ אֶת־אָחִיו וְאִישׁ אֶת־רֵעֵהוּ וְאִישׁ אֶת־קָרְבוֹ (ish et-achiv ve-ish et-re'ehu ve-ish et-qerovo, every man his brother, companion, and neighbor) emphasizes the judgment would cut across all natural relationships. This wasn't random violence but covenant enforcement—like Phinehas later (Num 25:7-8), those who break covenant in capital ways deserve capital punishment. God's holiness permits no compromise.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern treaties included curse clauses for covenant violation. This execution was treaty enforcement, not genocide. The Levites' obedience demonstrated covenant loyalty exceeded tribal/family loyalty.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does God's holiness require severe consequences for covenant violation?
2. When does mercy become complicity with evil, and judgment become necessary?

Interlinear Text

שׁ יִמּוֹ	וְשָׂרָא ל	אֱלֹהֵי	יְהוָה	אָמַר	כֹּה	לָהּ מ	אָמַר
Put	of Israel	God	the LORD	And he said			And he said
H7760	H3478	H430	H3068	H559		H0	H3541
לִשׁ עַר	וְשׁ וּבּוֹ	עָבַר ו	יָרַח ו	עַל	חֶרֶב ו	וְאֵל יִשׁ	
from gate	in and out	and go	by his side	his sword		and every man	
H8179	H7725	H5674	H3409	H2719	H5921	H376	
אָחִי יוֹ	אֶת	וְאֵל יִשׁ	וְהָרַג ו	בְּמִחָנָה	לִשׁ עַר		
his brother		and every man	and slay	throughout the camp	from gate		
H251	H853	H376	H2026	H4264	H8179		
קָרְבּוֹ:	אֶת	וְאֵל יִשׁ	רֵעֵהוּ	אֶת	וְאֵל יִשׁ		
his neighbour		and every man	his companion		and every man		
H7138	H853	H376	H7453	H853	H376		

Additional Cross-References

Numbers 25:5 (References Israel): And Moses said unto the judges of Israel, Slay ye every one his men that were joined unto Baal-peor.

Luke 14:26 (Parallel theme): If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org