

Numbers 5:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, If any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him,

Analysis

God addresses cases where 'any man's wife go aside, and commit a trespass against him.' The Hebrew 'satah' (go aside/turn away) and 'ma'al' (trespass/unfaithfulness) describe both physical and spiritual adultery. This law protected both accused wives from false accusations and husbands from genuine unfaithfulness. The jealousy offering (v.15) brought the matter before God for His judgment. This passage ultimately points to God's jealousy for His people's faithfulness (Ex 20:5, 34:14). Israel's covenant relationship with God was like marriage; idolatry was adultery (Jer 3:8, Ezek 16). Christ's relationship with the church continues this marriage imagery (Eph 5:25-32, Rev 19:7).

Historical Context

This unusual trial by ordeal (v.11-31) addressed suspicion of adultery without witnesses - impossible to prove or disprove through normal means. The woman drank bitter water mixed with dust from the tabernacle floor and words from a curse that were washed into it. If guilty, she would suffer physical consequences; if innocent, she'd conceive. Unlike pagan trials by ordeal (often designed to ensure guilty verdicts), this one protected innocent women while identifying guilt through divine intervention. The practice apparently fell into disuse before the New Testament era.

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does understanding God's jealous love for your exclusive devotion affect your relationship with Him?
2. What 'spiritual adultery' (worldly loves competing with God) needs to be brought before the Lord for judgment and cleansing?

Interlinear Text

דַּבֵּר	אֶל	בְּנֵי י	יִשְׂרָאֵל	וְאָמַרְתָּ	אֵלֶּה	אִישׁ	אִישׁ
Speak	H413	unto the children	of Israel	and say	H413	man's	man's
H1696		H1121	H3478	H559		H376	H376
כִּי	תִשָּׁטְ ה	אִשְׁתּוֹ	וּמָעַל ה	בּוֹ	מַעַל:		
H3588	go aside	wife	and commit	H0	a trespass		
	H7847	H802	H4603		H4604		