

Numbers 5:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled:

Analysis

The spirit of jealousy introduces the subjective element—the husband suspects, whether rightly or wrongly. The law addresses both scenarios: when the wife is actually defiled and when she is innocent but suspected. This demonstrates divine wisdom in legislation that protects both the sanctity of marriage and the dignity of the falsely accused. The procedure that follows will vindicate the innocent and expose the guilty, showing that God's justice is perfect even when human judgment fails.

Historical Context

Jealousy in the biblical sense includes both legitimate concern for covenant faithfulness and the potential for unfounded suspicion. The law treats both possibilities seriously, providing a means for resolution without granting the husband arbitrary power over his wife.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does this law balance the husband's rightful concern for marital faithfulness with protection against false accusation?
2. What does God's provision for addressing both real and imagined unfaithfulness teach about His justice?
3. In what ways should Christian communities handle accusations of sin that cannot be easily verified?

Interlinear Text

עֵל יוּ	עָבָר	רוּחַ	קִנְיָה	וְקִנְיָ אֵל	אֶת
come	H5921	And the spirit	of jealousy	upon him and he be jealous	H853
H5674		H7307	H7068	H7065	
רוּחַ	עֵל יוּ	אֵל	נְטָמָאָה:	וְהָ וָא	אִשְׁתּוֹ
And the spirit	H5921	come	and she be defiled	H1931	of his wife
H7307		H5674	H2930		H802
לֵא	וְהָ יָא	אִשְׁתּוֹ	אֶת	וְקִנְיָ אֵל	קִנְיָה
H3808	H1931	of his wife	H853	upon him and he be jealous	of jealousy
		H802		H7065	H7068
					נְטָמָאָה:
					and she be defiled
					H2930

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 6:34 (Parallel theme): For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance.

Song of Solomon 8:6: Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

1 Corinthians 10:22 (Parallel theme): Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?

Numbers 5:30 (Spirit): Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law.

Zephaniah 3:8 (Parallel theme): Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the LORD, until the day that I rise up to the prey: for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy.

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