

Numbers 5:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband, and if thou be defiled, and some man have lain with thee beside thine husband:

Analysis

The specific accusation—'thou hast gone aside to another instead of thy husband'—defines the offense clearly. Adultery is not merely a personal choice but a going aside from the covenant relationship. The phrase 'instead of thy husband' emphasizes the substitution and betrayal involved in adultery. This reflects the biblical understanding that sexual union creates a one-flesh bond; adultery therefore violates the exclusive covenant of marriage.

Historical Context

Marriage in Israel was a covenant relationship, not merely a social contract. Sexual fidelity was commanded not just for social stability but as part of covenant faithfulness before God. Adultery violated the covenant and made the woman ceremonially unclean.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does describing adultery as going aside from the covenant inform our understanding of sexual sin?
2. What does the exclusive nature of marriage teach about God's jealousy for His people's faithfulness?
3. In what ways is adultery a form of idolatry—substituting another for the rightful covenant partner?

Interlinear Text

אַתָּה	וְאֵת	שְׁתִּית	תִּתְחַת	אִישָׁרָה:	אִישָׁרָה:
H859	H3588	But if thou hast gone aside	H8478	and some man	H3588
		H7847		H376	
נִטְמַם אַת	וְאֵת	אִישָׁרָה:	בֶּרֶת	אַת	שְׁכַבְתָּה
and if thou be defiled	have	and some man	H0	H853	lain
H2930	H5414	H376			H7903
מִבְלָעֵד	אִישָׁרָה:				
with thee beside	and some man				
H1107	H376				

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