

punishments described in ch. xx., against the sins here prohibited, it will be found that a distinction is made in the degrees of guilt. One, the larger class is to be capitally punished (in one case even the bodies of both parties are to be burned), while in the other class the penalty is simply that 'they shall be childless.' It cannot be supposed that a perpetual miracle was to be maintained through all the ages of Israel's history, but the meaning evidently is, that the children of such marriages should be reckoned not to their actual father, but to the former husband of the woman. In the strong feeling of the Israelites in regard to posterity, this penalty seems to have been sufficient."

In this manner, has the phrase "they shall die childless" been explained by many modern writers. The Rabbinical interpreters, on the contrary, explain the phrase, either that they shall remain childless, or if they have children, that they will prematurely die. And this view is also adopted by many of our modern commentators. Dr. Kalisch, for example, says: "It is evidently meant as a heavenly and supernatural retribution; and the term childlessness is to be taken literally, implying that such an union will not be blessed with offspring." (Com. on Lev. p. 450.) Keil and Delitzsch merely explain, that "God would reserve the punishment to Himself." (Com. vol. ii., p. 428.)

We do not generally lay so much stress upon the opinions of commentators—especially as orthodoxy is not always the order in our days—but rather place our chief reliance upon the usage of words in Scripture. If a word in a certain passage presents any difficulty as to its proper meaning, we generally endeavour to trace the force of it by comparing other passages in which it occurs, thus making Scripture as it were its own interpreter. In the present case, we fear, however, we cannot obtain much assistance from that