

OT Laws Concerning Violence Exodus 21:12-19,22-25; etc.

I. Laws Concerning Homicide

- A. The general principle is that those who kill other people should have their life forfeit (Exodus 21:12; Leviticus 24:17)

¹² "He who strikes a man so that he dies shall surely be put to death. Exodus 21:12 (NASB)

- B. If the death was accidental and not premeditated, the person could flee for protection to a City of Refuge (Exodus 21:13; Numbers 35:6-34; Deuteronomy 4:41-43; 19:4-13).

1. The six Cities of Refuge were inhabited by Levites (priests)- Numbers 35:6,11,13-15
2. The accused lived there until he was tried by the congregation- Numbers 35:12,24-25
3. If the manslayer was innocent he must remain in the City of Refuge until the death of the High Priest- Numbers 35:25
4. If the manslayer left the City of Refuge before the death of the High Priest, the avenger of blood could kill him- Numbers 35:26-28
5. If the manslayer was guilty the elders of his city would remove him from the City of Refuge- Deuteronomy 19:12

- C. Premeditated murder required execution (Exodus 21:14).

1. If a person planned the attack it was premeditated murder.
2. If a person was struck with an iron object, stone, or wooden object it was premeditated murder (Numbers 35:16-18).
3. A prior motive of hatred was deemed to constitute premeditated murder (Num. 35:20-25)
4. The avenger of blood put the murderer to death (Numbers 35:19).
5. Conviction required two or more witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). Malicious false witnesses to this crime were themselves to be put to death at the decision of the priests and judges (Deuteronomy 19:16-20).

- D. The shedding of innocent blood polluted the land (Numbers 35:33-34).

³³ ~'So you shall not pollute the land in which you are; for blood pollutes the land and no expiation can be made for the land for the blood that is shed on it, except by the blood of him who shed it. ³⁴ ~'You shall not defile the land in which you live, in the midst of which I dwell; for I the Lord am dwelling in the midst of the sons of Israel.'" Numbers 35:33-34 (NASB)

II. Laws Concerning Assault

- A. A child who assaulted his parents was to be put to death (Exodus 21:15,17)

¹⁵ "He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. Exodus 21:15 (NASB)

¹⁷ "He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. Exodus 21:17 (NASB)

B. Kidnappers were to be put to death (Exodus 21:16)

C. Someone who injured another person in a fight compensated them for loss of time and took care of them (Exodus 21:18-19).

¹⁸ "If men have a quarrel and one strikes the other with a stone or with *his* fist, and he does not die but remains in bed, ¹⁹ if he gets up and walks around outside on his staff, then he who struck him shall go unpunished; he shall only pay for his loss of time, and shall take care of him until he is completely healed. Exodus 21:18-19 (NASB)

D. Someone who injured another person in a fight was punished to the extent of the harm he caused (Leviticus 24:19-21)

¹⁹ ~'If a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: ²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him. ²¹ ~'Thus the one who kills an animal shall make it good, but the one who kills a man shall be put to death. Leviticus 24:19-21

E. Someone who injured a pregnant woman and caused premature birth was punished to the extent of the actual harm he caused (Exodus 21:22-25).

²² "If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman's husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges *decide*. ²³ "But if there is *any further* injury, then you shall appoint *as a penalty* life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise. Exodus 21:22-25 (NASB)

III. Some key ideas to consider.

- Incarceration was not used as a form of punishment. Capital punishment, restitution/compensation, Cities of Refuge, and comparable injuries were used.
- Capital punishment is a valid form of punishment for certain crimes.
- Conviction for murder required two trial hearings and multiple witnesses to the crime.

- The legal system was designed to accomplish punishment and restitution, not rehabilitation.

IV. Personal application.