

Exodus 21:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.

Analysis

And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death.

This judgment (mishpat) from the Book of the Covenant applies moral law to civil society. God's justice is comprehensive—addressing economic disputes, family relations, and community welfare. The case laws teach covenant people how to love God and neighbor practically. Through detailed ordinances, God shapes Israel as holy nation, distinct from pagan neighbors. These laws reveal God's character: just, merciful, concerned with details of everyday life.

Historical Context

The Book of the Covenant (Exodus 20:22-23:33) is Israel's foundational legal code, predating later expansions in Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It addresses civil, criminal, and ceremonial matters.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does this law reveal God's character—His justice, mercy, or holiness?
2. What New Testament principles build upon or fulfill this Old Testament regulation?

Interlinear Text

וְגַנֵּב ב	אִישׁ	וּמָכַר ו	וְנִמְצָא א	בְּיָד ו
And he that stealeth	a man	and selleth	him or if he be found	in his hand
H1589	H376	H4376	H4672	H3027
יָמָת:	יָמָת:			
be put to death	be put to death			
H4191	H4191			

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 24:7 (Parallel theme): If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.

1 Timothy 1:10 (Parallel theme): For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine;

Exodus 22:4 (Parallel theme): If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double.

Genesis 37:28 (Parallel theme): Then there passed by Midianites merchantmen; and they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmeelites for twenty pieces of silver: and they brought Joseph into Egypt.