

Exodus 21:28

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit.

Analysis

If an ox gore a man or a woman, that they die: then the ox shall be surely stoned, and his flesh shall not be eaten; but the owner of the ox shall be quit.

This case law addresses property damage and personal injury, establishing liability principles. The mishpatim (מִשְׁפָטִים, judgments) apply Decalogue principles to everyday situations, creating just society. Owner responsibility reflects broader biblical principle: we're stewards of possessions, accountable for harm they cause. The law balances justice (compensation for victims) with mercy (proportional rather than excessive penalties). These principles undergird modern tort law and demonstrate God's concern for social order.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern law codes (Hammurabi, Hittite) addressed similar property issues but often with class-based penalties. Israel's law applied more uniformly regardless of social status.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 – Confession and belief for salvation

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

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

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 21:32 (Parallel theme): If the ox shall push a manservant or a maidservant; he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.