

Exodus 21:33

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein;

Analysis

And if a man shall open a pit, or if a man shall dig a pit, and not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein;

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

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

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

בְּ רֹא אֵישׁ יִפְתַּח עַל־יְצִיּוֹן
H3588 **shall open** And if a man a pit H176 H3588 **shall dig** And if a man a pit
H6605 H376 H953 H3738 H376 H953

עַל־אֲלֵל אֲלֵל יַכְפֵּת כֵּן יַכְפֵּל מִתְמֻורָה אֵין שׁוֹר שּׁׁמֶה יַנְפֵּל
H3808 **and not cover** fall H8033 it and an ox H176 or an ass
H3680 H5307 H7794 H2543

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