

Exodus 21:34

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his.

Analysis

The owner of the pit shall make it good, and give money unto the owner of them; and the dead beast shall be his.

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

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

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

לְבָעֵל יְיָ לְבָעֵל יְיָ

The owner **of the pit** **shall make it good**

H1167

H953

H7999

כְּסֹף

money

H3701

יְשַׁלֵּם

and give

H7725

לְבָעֵל יְיָ

The owner

H1167

לְנֶם יְהִי וּבְמִתְ

of them and the dead

H4191

H1961

H0

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