

Exodus 21:36

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own.

Analysis

Or if it be known that the ox hath used to push in time past, and his owner hath not kept him in; he shall surely pay ox for ox; and the dead shall be his own.

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

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

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

מִתְמַלֵּל	הָוּא	בְּנֵי	בְּשָׁרֶב	נָוֵךְ	עַזְבֵּן	וְאַתָּה
H176	Or if it be known	H3588	for ox	hath used to push	H1931	in time past
	H3045		H7794	H5056		H8543

וְשָׁלַשׁ מֵלָא יְשַׁמְּךָ כֵּן בָּעֵל יְהִי וְשָׁלַשׁ מֵלָא H8032 H3808 hath not kept and his owner him in he shall surely H8104 H1167 H7999

וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם	וְיַחֲלֹם
him in he shall surely	for ox	H8478	for ox	and the dead	H1961	H0					
H7999	H7794		H7794	H4191							

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