

# Numbers 35:16

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

## Analysis

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**If he smite him with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer** (רַצֵּחַ, rotseach)—premeditated homicide using a deadly weapon. The distinction between murder (rotseach) and manslaughter hinges on intent and the weapon's lethality. Iron instruments demonstrated forethought, as iron required mining, smelting, and fashioning into tools—not items grabbed in sudden passion.

**The murderer shall surely be put to death** (מֵת יוּמַת יוּמָת, mot yumat ha-rotseach)—the infinitive absolute construction emphasizes certainty and divine mandate. No city of refuge protected the willful murderer; only accidental killers found asylum. This mirrors salvation: Christ receives those who flee from sin, not those who weaponize it.

## Historical Context

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In Iron Age Israel (1200-586 BC), iron weapons signified technological advancement and military power. Their mention here underscores premeditation—one doesn't accidentally carry forged iron implements. The law protected the innocent while ensuring capital justice for murderers.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. How does the distinction between murder and manslaughter illuminate God's concern for both justice and human intention?
2. What does the exclusion of willful murderers from refuge teach about presuming on God's mercy while continuing in sin?

## Interlinear Text

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וְאֵם	בְּכָל	בְּרִית	לְ	הַכְּהַלְמָה	יְמִתָּה
H518	him with an instrument	of iron	And if he smite	be put to death	
	H3627	H1270	H5221		H4191
בָּרָאֵם:	הַא	יְמִתָּה	יְמִתָּה	בָּרָאֵם:	
he is a murderer	H1931	be put to death	be put to death	he is a murderer	
	H7523	H4191	H4191		H7523

## Additional Cross-References

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**Leviticus 24:17** (Parallel theme): And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.

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