

Numbers 35:17

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Analysis

If he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die—a second category of murder: using projectile weapons capable of inflicting fatal injury. The phrase 'wherewith he may die' (בְּאַשְׁר־יָמַת בָּהּ, asher-yamut bah) indicates the stone's deadly potential was known to the assailant. This wasn't a pebble thrown in jest but a rock selected and hurled with lethal force.

The repetition **he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death** appears throughout verses 16-21, a liturgical refrain emphasizing that intent, not just outcome, determines guilt. God judges the heart's malice, not merely the hand's action (cf. Matthew 5:21-22).

Historical Context

Stone-throwing was common in ancient Near Eastern conflicts and judicial executions (Leviticus 24:16, John 8:59). The law's specificity regarding stone size and throwing distance reflects the casual availability of stones as weapons in Israel's rocky terrain.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 – Definition of faith

Genesis 1:1 – Creation of heavens and earth

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does the criterion 'wherewith he may die' demonstrate that biblical justice evaluates both means and motive?
2. What New Testament principle echoes this law's concern with the heart's intent behind outward actions?

Interlinear Text

וְאֵם	בְּאֵבֶן	יְד	אֲשֶׁר	יְמִתָּה	בְּהָיוּ	הַ
H518	a stone	him with throwing		H834	and he die	H0
	H68	H3027			H4191	H5221
יְמִתָּה	בְּרָצֶם:	הַ וְאֵ	יְמִתָּה	יְמִתָּה	בְּרָצֶם:	
and he die	he is a murderer	H1931	and he die	and he die	he is a murderer	
H4191	H7523		H4191	H4191		H7523

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