

Numbers 35:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer: the murderer shall surely be put to death.

Analysis

Or if he smite him with an hand weapon of wood, wherewith he may die (וְנִזְבַּח, keli ets-yad)—literally 'a wooden instrument of the hand,' referring to clubs, staffs, or other hand-wielded wooden implements capable of causing death. The trilateral repetition (iron-v.16, stone-v.17, wood-v.18) covers the three primary materials used for weapons in Bronze/Iron Age warfare.

The legal precision exhaustively categorizes murder scenarios, preventing clever evasion: 'I didn't use iron, merely wood.' God's law closes loopholes, demanding true justice. Yet for the accidental killer, the city of refuge remained open—law tempered with mercy.

Historical Context

Wooden weapons included olive-wood clubs (1 Samuel 17:40), oak staffs, and acacia rods. While less durable than metal, hardwoods like oak could easily crush a skull, making them deadly instruments when wielded with malicious force during the tribal period (1400-1050 BC).

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

Study Questions

1. Why does the law meticulously catalog weapon types—what does this reveal about God's commitment to comprehensive justice?
2. How does the threefold repetition (iron, stone, wood) ensure no murderer escapes through technicalities?

Interlinear Text

הַ	כֵּ	הַ	וְ	יּ	וּמְ	תִּ	אֵ	לִ	בְּכָלִ	עַ	בְּכָלִ	וְ	אֵ	לִ			
H176	weapon	of	wood	him	with	an	hand	H834	and	he	die	H0	Or	if he smite			
H3627		H6086		H3027				H4191				H5221					
תִּ	וְ	יּ	וּמְ	תִּ	וְ	יּ	וּמְ	תִּ	וְ	יּ	וּמְ	תִּ	וְ	יּ			
רָצֶ	מְ:	רָצֶ	מְ:	רָצֶ	מְ:	רָצֶ	מְ:	רָצֶ	מְ:	רָצֶ	מְ:	רָצֶ	מְ:	רָצֶ			
and	he	die	he	is	a	murderer	H1931	and	he	die	and	he	die	he	is	a	murderer
H4191		H7523					H1931	H4191		H4191	H4191	H7523					

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