

# Numbers 35:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Or in enmity smite him with his hand, that he die: he that smote him shall surely be put to death; for he is a murderer: the revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him.

## Analysis

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**Or in enmity smite him with his hand** (בְּאֵיבָה, b'eivah)—enmity (from oyev, 'enemy') denotes ongoing hostility, not momentary anger. Even bare-handed killing qualified as murder if driven by sustained hatred. The law penetrates beyond the weapon to the will: murder resides in enmity, not merely in the instrument.

**The revenger of blood shall slay the murderer, when he meeteth him**—this refrain (cf. v.19) establishes the go'el's right and duty. The repetition throughout verses 16-21 creates a legal drumbeat: willful murder demands capital justice. Yet verse 22 introduces the merciful alternative for accidental homicide.

## Historical Context

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The distinction between sinah (hatred, v.20) and eivah (enmity, v.21) reflects nuanced Hebrew legal terminology developed during Israel's wilderness period (1446-1406 BC). Later rabbinic interpretation required witnesses to testify specifically about the killer's prior hostility.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## 1 John 4:8 — God is love

### Study Questions

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1. Why does God's law require capital punishment for murder—what does this reveal about the sanctity of human life created in God's image?
2. How does the emphasis on enmity (*eivah*) versus sudden passion distinguish degrees of culpability in biblical justice?

### Interlinear Text

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א ו	בְּאֵיבָה	הַמֶּכֶה	בְּיָדוֹ	יָמַת יֵת	
H176	Or in enmity	he that smote	him with his hand	be put to death	
	H342	H5221	H3027	H4191	
	יָמַת יֵת	יָמַת יֵת	הַמֶּכֶה	הַרֹצֵחַ	ה וְאֵל
	be put to death	be put to death	he that smote	for he is a murderer	H1931
	H4191	H4191	H5221	H7523	
ל גֹּאֵל	הַדָּם	יָמַת יֵת	אֶת	הַרֹצֵחַ	בְּפָגְעוֹ
the revenger	of blood	be put to death	H853	for he is a murderer	when he meeteth
H1350	H1818	H4191		H7523	H6293
בּוֹ:					
H0					

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