

# 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

---

**Or in enmity smite him with his hand** (בְּאִיָּה, 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

---

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

---

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

## Study Questions

---

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 (<em>eivah</em>) versus sudden passion distinguish degrees of culpability in biblical justice?

## Interlinear Text

---

וְאֵת בְּאֵת הַמַּכְתֵּב בְּיָדָו יְמִינָה  
H176 Or in enmity H342 he that smote H5221 him with his hand H3027 be put to death H4191

וְאֵת יְמִינָה בְּמַכְתֵּב בְּיָדָו קָרְצֵן הַמְּרָצֵד  
be put to death H4191 be put to death H4191 he that smote H5221 for he is a murderer H1931

גָּאַל גְּדֹד בְּמַכְתֵּב אֶת קָרְצֵן בְּגַעַן  
the revenger H1350 of blood H1818 be put to death H4191 for he is a murderer H853 when he meeteth H6293

בָּן

H0