

Numbers 35:24

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments:

Analysis

Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood (הַעֲדָה, ha-edah)—the assembly, Israel's judicial body, adjudicated disputed cases. This prevented the go'el ha-dam from acting as judge, jury, and executioner. Community involvement ensured impartial justice: witnesses testified, evidence was examined, and intent was discerned.

According to these judgments (מִשְׁפָטִים, mishpatim)—the ordinances detailed in verses 16-23. Biblical justice wasn't arbitrary but codified, transparent, and rooted in divine revelation. The congregation applied God's mishpatim, not human sentiment or tribal loyalty.

Historical Context

The 'congregation' (edah) served as Israel's judicial assembly, particularly for capital cases requiring communal validation (Leviticus 24:14-16). This system, established at Sinai (1446 BC), prevented vigilante justice while involving the community in upholding God's law.

Related Passages

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Study Questions

1. Why did God require the congregation, not just the avenger of blood, to judge —what safeguards does community justice provide?
2. How does the phrase 'according to these judgments' establish the rule of law rather than rule by passion or revenge?

Interlinear Text

וְשָׁפֹט	וְעַד	בֵּין	בֵּין	בֵּין
shall judge	Then the congregation	H996	between the slayer	H996
H8199	H5712		H5221	
וְאֵל	עַל	בֵּין	הַמְשֻׁפֵּט יְמִ	בְּאֵלָהּ:
and the revenger	of blood	H5921	according to these judgments	H428
H1350	H1818		H4941	

Additional Cross-References

Joshua 20:6 (Judgment): And he shall dwell in that city, until he stand before the congregation for judgment, and until the death of the high priest that shall be in those days: then shall the slayer return, and come unto his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled.

Numbers 35:12 (Judgment): And they shall be unto you cities for refuge from the avenger; that the manslayer die not, until he stand before the congregation in judgment.