

Text: Dt 19.1-21

THEOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF DEUTERONOMY¹

1. **Consider:** a review of God’s faithfulness (1.6–4.40)
2. **Covenant:** an exposition of the law (5–26)

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3. **Commence:** preparations for renewing the covenant (27.1–28.68)
4. **Commit:** an exhortation to obedience (29.2–30.20)

I write my titles on Saturday when I am putting the bulletin together. Sometimes I find my Saturday impression doesn’t match my Wednesday study, but this week I think the title is apt, “Providing Justice” sums up Dt 19 well.

Identifying paragraph themes:

- (1-3) Organize your territories for administering justice
- (4-7) Defining the concept of a manslayer
- (8-10) Providing for more administrative justice centers
- (11-13) Defining the concept of murderer
- (14) Decreeing the sanctity of boundaries (establishing property rights)
- (15-21) Defining the concept of witnesses and due process

I. Israel was to plan for administering justice

- Build cities of refuge *and* roads to them
- Establish courts for ascertaining right and wrong

II. Israel was to be active in administering justice

- Discern between levels of crime (murder vs. manslaughter)
- Ascertain the truth of witnesses

III. Israel was to be impartial in administering justice

- You shall not pity the murderer (13) or the false witness (21)

¹ Adapted from an outline in Lawrence O Richards, *The Bible Readers Companion*, electronic ed. (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1991), 117.

“The word translated ‘avenger of blood’ is *gō’ēl*. A *gō’ēl* was essentially a ‘family protector.’ He was a ‘near kinsman’ (traditionally understood as the nearest male relative) responsible for redeeming (buying) a relative out of slavery (Lev. 25:48–49), for redeeming a relative’s property (Lev. 25:26–33), for marrying a relative’s widow and raising up children in the name of the deceased (Ruth 3:13; 4:5–10), and for avenging the death of a relative (Num. 35:19–28).”²

“So heinous was murder its penalty was to be inflicted without pity or compassion of any kind. The reason is that humankind is the image of God (cf. Gen 1:27; 9:6) and therefore murder was deemed to be an assault on God himself, an ultimate act of insubordination and rebellion (Gen 9:5–6).”³

The principle of impartiality is stated three times in the Law (in our passage, v. 21) and...

Ex 21.22-25 ¶ “If men struggle with each other and strike a woman with child so that she gives birth prematurely, yet there is no injury, he shall surely be fined as the woman’s husband may demand of him, and he shall pay as the judges *decide*.²³ “But if there is *any further* injury, then you shall appoint *as a penalty* life for life,²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

Lev 24.17-22 ‘If a man takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death.¹⁸ ‘The one who takes the life of an animal shall make it good, life for life.¹⁹ ‘If a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him:²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; just as he has injured a man, so it shall be inflicted on him.²¹ ‘Thus the one who kills an animal shall make it good, but the one who kills a man shall be put to death.²² ‘There shall be one standard for

² Jack S. Deere, “Deuteronomy,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 297.

³ Eugene H. Merrill, *Deuteronomy*, The New American Commentary, v. 4 (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 278.

you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the LORD your God.”

“This law was given to encourage appropriate punishment of a criminal in cases where there might be a tendency to be either too lenient or too strict.”⁴

Conclusion:

Crime is serious, and God’s people need to be equally serious in administering justice. It should not be up to an individual to take matters into his own hand, but to follow established legal procedures in seeking justice.

In countries or regions where justice is perverted by a corrupt justice system, this becomes more difficult. Nevertheless, God has not given us authority to take justice into our own hands. We can appeal to corrupt authorities, and we can always appeal to God.

⁴ Deere, “Deuteronomy in BKCOT,” 298.