

QUESTION: What is the meaning of Exodus 21:23? Why does God seem so harsh?

ANSWER: First of all, we must **NOT** take **just one verse out of context**. READ THE ENTIRE CHAPTER. This whole chapter in Exodus is speaking about SOCIAL LEGISLATION, laws for CONDUCT in society. Laws are needed and must be enforced to keep order in any society, for the protection of human life and property. These are not "religious" laws relating to God, our worship of Him, or salvation. These are the equivalent of our CIVIL LAWS today, that our POLICE and GOVERNMENT must enforce (see Romans 13:1-7). In this chapter, God gives rules for making RESTITUTION when someone has been injured, or someone's property (livestock, slaves) is injured. Rather than God being HARSH, **He is LIMITING the VENGEANCE that a person could take on another person** for an injury. In other words, if someone got in a fight and poked someone's eye out, that person or his family was NOT to take vengeance or get retribution by KILLING the other person ("an eye for an eye"). If men got in a fight, and a woman nearby was injured so as to have a miscarriage, the men would have to pay a fine (similar to personal injury cases today, paying for medical expenses). However, if the woman was injured so as to be unable to have any more children, or if someone was killed, it became a capital crime. If someone committed a premeditated MURDER, he was to be EXECUTED! A life for a life! This is **CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, and it is absolutely NECESSARY** for the protection of innocent people in a society. Our present day society is full of violence and crime, innocent people are not even safe on the streets or in their own homes, because we have REFUSED to obey God and execute criminals when they commit such crimes. Not only do RAPISTS, MURDERERS, CHILD MOLESTERS, KIDNAPPERS, and ARMED ROBBERS get out of prison and COMMIT MORE CRIMES, but there is **no DETERRENT to others** by their example in being executed.