

Deuteronomy 5:17 & 19:1-13. Murder vs Killing.
Among the commands to which I need you to listen is: "You shall not murder."

When Yahweh, your God, however has destroyed the nations whose land He is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns & houses, set aside three centrally located cities. Build roads to them and divide the lands surrounding them into three parts so anyone who kills someone may escape there.

Here's the purpose of the cities—if one kills another unintentionally, without evil thought in advance, they can flee there to escape retribution by the victim's relatives. For example, when cutting wood and the axe falls off the handle—it kills a person standing by. That person can flee to one of these cities to save his own life.

Otherwise, the victim's avengers might kill him even though he's not deserving death. He did it accidentally; that's why I command you to set aside three cities.

Now, if Yahweh enlarges your territory because you've listened and followed all these laws—especially to love Yahweh God Almighty and to walk in His ways, then set aside three more cities. Do this so that innocent blood will not be shed.

But, listen up! If one hates his neighbor, lies in wait to beat him up, kills him and then flees to one to these cities... The town council will send for him, and hand him over to the victim's avenger to die. There is no pity to be shown for such individuals. Purge the guilt of shedding innocent blood so that all may go well with you.

- Q To what extent were these cities club-medes for manslaughter criminals? Flying axe heads are at most caused by negligence, if not mere random chance, are they not?
- Q If a person dies, should there not be "an eye for an eye?"
- Q What is the special problem with "shedding innocent blood?" Why does our definitions of justice need to be refined? Why should we be especially concerned about "justice?"

DEUTERONOMY 5:17 & 19:1-13

You shall not murder. [Deuteronomy 5:17]

When the LORD your God has destroyed the nations whose land he is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns and houses, ²then set aside for yourselves three cities centrally located in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

³Build roads to them and divide into three parts the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, so that anyone who kills a man may flee there.

⁴This is the rule concerning the man who kills another and flees there to save his life--one who kills his neighbor unintentionally, without malice aforethought. ⁵For instance, a man may go into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and as he swings his ax to fell a tree, the head may fly off and hit his neighbor and kill him. That man may flee to one of these cities and save his life.

⁶Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage, overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbor without malice aforethought. ⁷This is why I command you to set aside for yourselves three cities.

⁸If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he promised on oath to your forefathers, and gives you the whole land he promised them, ⁹because you carefully follow all these laws I command you today--to love the LORD your God and to walk always in his ways--then you are to set aside three more cities. ¹⁰Do this so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land, which the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance, and so that you will not be guilty of bloodshed.

¹¹But if a man hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him, assaults and kills him, and then flees to one of these cities, ¹²the elders of his town shall send for him, bring him back from the city, and hand him over to the avenger of blood to die. ¹³Show him no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you.

Deuteronomy 19:14-21. *Court Rules*. Besides not moving your neighbor's boundary markers to make your land bigger, here are some rules of jurisprudence to improve the search for justice:

1. Conviction must have at least 2 witnesses.
2. If a witness perjures themselves, the priests and judges must thoroughly investigate; if the witness has lied, then the penalty must equal what would have happened to the person who the false witness lied about.

You must purge such evil from among you; other people will hear about this, be afraid, and such an evil thing will never be done.

3. Show no pity in such cases; the penalty should fit the offense—a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

DEUTERONOMY 19:14-21

Do not move your neighbor's boundary stone set up by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

15 One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

16 If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse a man of a crime, 17 the two men involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. 18 The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against his brother,

19 then do to him as he intended to do to his brother.

You must purge the evil from among you. 20 The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. 21 Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Q What are some instances of boundary stone shifting today?

Q What is the pragmatic value of insisting upon *two* witnesses to convict?

Q Why is perjury so critical to a system of justice? (See the 9th commandment of the Decalogue.)

Q Why is perjury/obstruction of justice often more serious than the crime in question?

Q Where do you see our system failing to provide penalties fitting the offense? 15 years for drug distribution; 5 years for manslaughter. 150 years for stealing (Madoff); 2 years for grand larceny of a car.