

Death Penalty Under the Mosaic Law

(Selected examples and verses)

- o Murder:* "Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death" (Ex 21:12; also Lev 24:17; 21; Num 35:16-21, 30-31; Deut 19:11-13)
- o Premeditated murder:* "But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death" (Ex 21:14)
- o Killing a slave:* "If a man beats his male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he must be punished" (Ex 21:18)
- o Causing a miscarriage and the baby dies:* "If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely...if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise" (Ex 21:22-25)
- o Unjustified killing of a thief:* "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed; but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed" (Ex 22:2)
- o Keeping a dangerous ox:* "If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull must be stoned and the owner also must be put to death. However, if payment is demanded of him, he may redeem his life by paying whatever is demanded" (Ex 21:29)
- o False witness in a capital case:* "The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against his brother, then do to him as he intended to do to his brother." (Deut 19:18-19) (example in Num 13:32,29-33)
- o Kidnaping:* "Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death" (Ex 21:16; also Deut 24:7)
- o Blasphemy:* "...anyone who blasphemes the name of the Lord must be put to death" (Lev 24:16)
- o Idolatry:* "Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed" (Ex 22:20; also Ex 20:4; Deut 17:2-7)
- o Sacrificing to a pagan god:* "Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the Lord must be destroyed" (Ex 22:20; Lev 20:1-5)
- o Sorcery:* "Do not allow a sorceress to live" (Ex 22:18; also Lev 20:6, 27)
- o False prophecy:* "But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death" (Deut 13:1-15; 18:20)
- o Showing contempt for a judge or priest:* "The man who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the Lord your God must be put to death" (Deut 17:12)
- o Striking one's father or mother:* "Anyone who attacks his father or mother must be put to death" (Ex 21:15)
- o Incurable son:* "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard.' Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death" (Deut 21:20-21)
- o Cursing one's father or mother:* "Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death" (Ex 21:17; also Lev 20:9)
- o Taking advantage of a widow or orphan:* "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless" (Ex 22:22-24)
- o Unlawful sexual relations:* Sexual relations (including adultery and incest) that result in being cut off from God's people and put to death (Lev 18:1-29; 20:10-18; Deut 22:22)
- o Prostitution by a priest's daughter:* "If a priest's daughter defiles herself by becoming a prostitute, she disgraces her father; she must be burned in the fire" (Lev 21:9; Deut 22:13-21)
- o Rape:* "But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die" (Deut 22:25)
- o Homosexuality:* "If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death" (Lev 20:13)
- o Sex with an animal:* "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must be put to death" (Ex 22:19; Lev 20:15-16)
- o Sex during menstruation:* "If a man lies with a woman during her monthly period and has sexual relations with her, he has exposed the source of her flow, and she has also uncovered it. Both of them must be cut off from their people" (Lev 20:18)
- o A wife falsely claiming to be a virgin:* "If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the girl's virginity can be

found, she shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death" (**Deut 22:20-21**)

o Priests drinking when serving at the Tent of Meeting: "You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die" (**Lev 10:9**)

o Anyone other than priests going near the tabernacle: "Whenever the tabernacle is to move, the Levites are to take it down, and whenever the tabernacle is to be set up, the Levites shall do it. Anyone else who goes near it shall be put to death" (**Num 1:51; 3:10,38; 4:15; 18:7**)

o Breaking the Sabbath: "...but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it must be put to death" (**Ex 35:2; also Ex 31:14; Num 15:32-36**)

o Eating the blood of an animal: "And wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people" (**Lev 7:26**)

o Summary of offenses deserving the death penalty:

- o Sorcery, witchcraft, worshiping false gods (1st and 2nd commandments)
- o Showing contempt for a judge or priest acting in the place of God (3rd commandment)
- o Dishonoring the holy things of God (3rd commandment)
- o Blasphemy (3rd commandment)
- o Performing work on the Sabbath (4th commandment)
- o Cursing a father or mother (5th commandment)
- o Rebellious son (5th commandment)
- o Premeditated murder (6th commandment)
- o Negligent care of an animal resulting in a death (6th commandment)
- o Sexual relations with an animal (7th commandment)
- o Variety of ungodly sexual relations (7th commandment)
- o Taking advantage of a widow or orphan (8th commandment)
- o Kidnaping (8th commandment)
- o False testimony concerning murder (9th commandment)
- o Eating blood (dishonoring the redemptive nature of blood)