–Save This Page as a PDF–

Capital Punishment and Other Grave Crimes 20: 1-27

Chapter 20 supplements and reinforces **Chapter 18**, emphasizing the punishments for various offenses. Whereas the commandments in **Chapters 18** and **19** are addressed to would-be offenders and prohibit specific actions. Those in **Chapter 20** are addressed to the covenant community and explain the punishments for specific crimes. Except for **verses 19-21**, the crimes identified in this chapter receive **the death penalty** (see the commentary on **Exodus, to see link click Ea – A Life for a Life, an Eye for an Eye**). Though seemingly harsh, this was essential to prevent **sin** from infecting the community life of **God's people**.



The gravest public **sins** against life, religion, and the family were those which carried the maximum penalty of **death**, such a premeditated **murder (Exodus 21:12; Numbers 35** and **Deuteronomy 19), kidnapping (Exodus 21:16** and **Deuteronomy 24:7), adultery (Leviticus 20:10** and **Deuteronomy 22:22), homosexuality (Leviticus 20:13), blasphemy (Leviticus 24:13-16** and **23), idolatry (Deuteronomy 13:6-10)** and **persistent disobedience against**

authority (Deuteronomy 17:12 and **21:18-21).** The method of inflicting **capital punishment** is given twice as **stoning (Leviticus 20:2 and 27)**, and once as **burning (Leviticus 20:14), understood by Jewish tradition as hot lead being poured down the throat!** The most severe expression of the death penalty, however, is found in **verses 3, 5-6,** and **17-18,** the guilty person would be **cut off** from the covenant community.[344]

The basic principles of **the Ten Commandments** (see the commentary on the **Deuteronomy Bk – The Ten Words**) are incorporated into **Chapters 18** through **20**, though not in the same order and not always with the same emphasis.

The Ten Commandments	**Leviticus**
1-2 No other gods	**18:2** and **19:4**
3 Misuse the Name	**19:12**
4 Observe Shabbat	**19:3b**
5 Honor father/mother	**19:3a**
6 Do not murder	**19:16b**
7 No adultery	**18:20** and **20:20**
8 Do not steal	**19:11a**
9 No false witness	**19:16a**
10 Do not covet	**19:18**