

Deuteronomy 22:8

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-22/deuteronomy-228/>

Moses told the Israelites to make a parapet on their roof whenever they build a new house in order to protect the life of his neighbor.

Moses then continued with the series of laws by which the Israelites were supposed to live. This law was concerned with someone wanting to *build a new house* (v. 8). Here, the requirement was that the builder needed to *make a parapet for your roof*. The term *parapet* (Heb. “ma’āqeh,” used only here) refers to a protective barrier, and here it was to be placed around the edge of the roof to prevent people from falling off.

This *parapet* was much needed in ancient Israel because flat roofs were widely used, for instance, as a place for sleeping in warm seasons or as a place of recreation and relaxing ([Joshua 2:6](#); [1 Samuel 9:25](#); [2 Samuel 11:2](#); [16:22](#); [Isaiah 22:1](#); [Jeremiah 19:13](#)). So, the owner of a house would be putting the lives of his family members and visitors in great danger unless he built some sort of protective barrier. The idea is to invest in safety, to have regard for the welfare of others, to not put them in mortal danger.

This was important to do *so that you will not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it*. In other words, a person building a house without a *parapet* would be guilty of willful negligence that could be a cause of death. Therefore, the Israelites were commanded to construct a *parapet* as a protective barrier in order not to be held accountable should someone step off the roof and fall. In short, the construction of the parapet would relieve the house’s owner of the responsibility should a person fall from his roof.

The previous law (vv. 6 – 7) was designed to teach the LORD’s covenant people that He cares for and values the lives of the least of His creatures. In this verse, He wanted to teach His people the importance of preserving and protecting human life, i.e. those made in His image. This all fits within the sixth commandment, that elevates the sanctity of life.

Biblical Text:

When you build a new house, you shall make a parapet for your roof, so that you will not bring bloodguilt on your house if anyone falls from it.