

# Deuteronomy 24:7

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/deut/deut-24/deuteronomy-247/>

*Moses warns the Israelites against kidnapping their countrymen. Anyone who kidnaps his brother shall die in order to purge the evil from among the Israelite community.*

Having asked the Israelites to respect certain essential properties such as a handmill or an upper millstone belonging to fellow Israelites when securing pledges, Moses went on to command the people of God to respect human life. He addresses the situation wherein *a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel* (v. 7).

The term *kidnapping* (Heb. “gōnēb nephesh”) is literally “stealing a soul” in the Hebrew language. The word *soul* (Heb. “nephesh”) is translated frequently in the Bible as “person” or “self.” The word *countryman* is literally a “brother” who was one of *the sons of Israel*.

In this scenario, the Israelite kidnapper would take an Israelite brother for one of two reasons. The first one was when he (the kidnapper) *deals with him violently*. This phrase is a translation of the Hebrew verb “āmar” and means to use a person as a slave or to treat a person with brutality. This probably means that the kidnapper was using this person cruelly as his personal slave. Or secondly, the kidnapper *sells him* and profits monetarily. Either way, a person’s life had been stolen, because their freedom was taken by force.

Any person guilty of kidnapping should be considered a *thief* and therefore needed to *die*. The act of stealing somebody’s life deserved the death penalty since it deprived the person of his freedom and his dignity as being made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). Such behavior was to have no place within the covenant community, so executing the kidnapper was the way they were to *purge the evil from among* them.

Members of such a community were to show love and care for one another, not to try to steal someone’s life to gain some profits and to deprive the person from his freedom. Therefore, anyone kidnapping his brother was to *die*.

A similar law was given to the generation leaving Egypt and can be found in Exodus 21:16, which says “He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death.” The only difference between the two texts is that in Deuteronomy the law identifies the kidnapper as a fellow countryman or a brother of his victim.

As stated in previous chapters in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses placed much emphasis on his fellow Israelites living righteously before their Suzerain (Ruler) God. This could be done by fulfilling the law in Leviticus 19:18, “...you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.”

And just as the Israelites were to care for one another in love, New Testament believers are to do the same (Matthew 5:43; Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14; James 2:8). Of course, a society where even the poor are treated with dignity will be a society that values human life, and elevates human dignity. The practical consequence will be a flourishing of human creativity and productivity. A substantial part of God’s blessing is that in following His ways we gain great mutual benefit simply through the reality of the way God has constructed cause-effect within His creation.

#### **Biblical Text:**

**<sup>7</sup> If a man is caught kidnapping any of his countrymen of the sons of Israel, and he deals with him violently or sells him, then that thief shall die; so you shall purge the evil from among you.**