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### "Thou Shalt Not Kill": What Kind of Killing Is Forbidden? Is All Killing Forbidden? (Exodus 20/13; Deuteronomy 5/17)

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# Memory, Meaning & Faith

[Main](#)

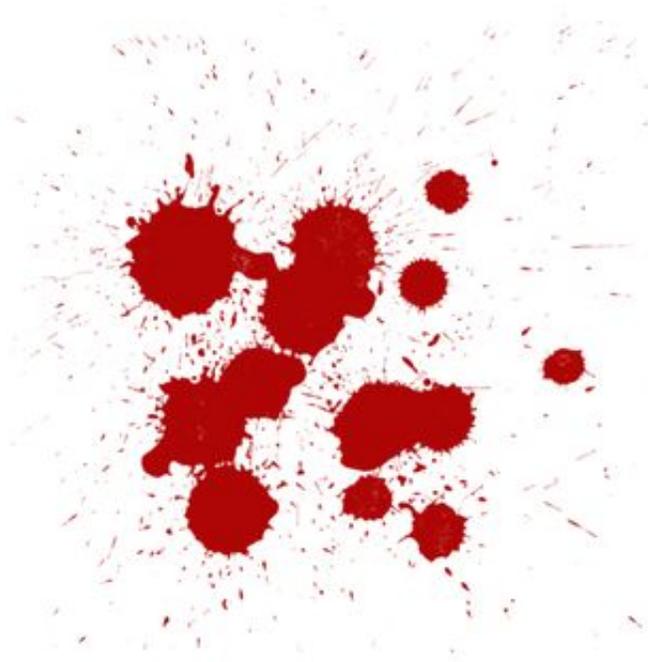
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May 15, 2011

## "Thou Shalt Not Kill": What Kind of Killing Is Forbidden? Is All Killing Forbidden? (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17)

By Dr. James J. North, Jr.\*



This study is an effort to establish what kind of killing is and is not included under the 6th commandment. Based on views passed on from generation to generation, many Seventh-day Adventists (SDAs) have considered the Commandment to prohibit murder, killing in war, suicide, killing in self- and family-protection, etc . . . We have used the commandment to frown on, if not to prohibit, the bearing of arms, guns, as instruments of war, of law enforcement, and of hunting. Many would not have a weapon/gun in their homes as an instrument of self and family protection for fear of a home intrusion that might cause them to kill the intruder.

The commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," is translated into English from the original Hebrew in two texts in the OT, [Exodus 20:13](#) and [Deuteronomy 5:17](#). They are both statements of the 6th Commandment, given initially by God from Mt. Sinai ([Exodus 20:1-17](#)) and repeated by Moses ([Deuteronomy 5:1-21](#)).

### Reminders

The principal translation that brought the Bible and the Commandments in English to us is the [King James Version](#), the translation authorized by [King James I. of England](#), completed in the year 1611. The phrase, "Thou shalt not kill" is the 1611 (KJV) English translation of the original Hebrew language of the 6th Commandment.

So we start with a gentle reminder that the Word of God in English was preceded by and sprung from the Word of God in Hebrew. Thus the meaning of the English must be first and foremost interpreted by the meaning of the Hebrew.

A second reminder and beginning point in this study is that our understanding of Scripture is not static. A number of factors

have caused and will cause us to adjust our understanding of the Bible—archeological discoveries, studies of the ancient languages, historical research, and systematic Bible study. “The path of the just is as a shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Proverbs 4:18). (see JPST—“The path of the righteous is like radiant sunlight, ever brightening until noon.”). Difficult as it may be, we must be willing to adjust our understanding of Scripture when exegetical, historical, and contextual study corrects our views, even when these views have been handed down to us by revered leaders and writers. This was the experience of our SDA pioneers, who grew as they studied and restudied Scripture. They learned and changed. This has been our history and it will be our future.

### **Three Hermeneutical Principles**

A third reminder has to do with hermeneutics, how we interpret Scripture. Three well proven principles of Biblical interpretation are particularly relevant to this study. The first is that the Bible interprets itself. “The classical understanding for the self-interpretation of Scripture is the famous Protestant principle of *sola scriptura*—‘the Bible only’—often referred to as the Scripture principle. The Scripture principle—the formal affirmation of the position that the Bible is its own interpreter—is based on its divine-human origin.” (Hasel, Gerhard F. “Principles of Biblical Interpretation”, in *A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics*, ed. By Gordon M. Hyde. Washington, DC: Review and Herald Pub Assoc, 1974, p. 167.)

A second hermeneutical principle is that all related texts dealing with the topic/word must be considered. Basing a conclusion on a single text or on a partial number of the texts seriously risks a skewed view.

A third hermeneutical principle is that context is vital in understanding the meaning of the text. In this case, one context, the immediate context, is the Decalogue itself. But in this case a broader context is needed—all the texts that contain the word in question.

### **Text Study of the Hebrew Word *ršh***

With these several points in mind, let us plunge into a study of the Scriptural meaning of “kill” as derived from a study of the use of the Hebrew word *ršh*. The Hebrew wording of Ex 20:13 and Deut 5:17 is identical. The commandment in Hebrew consists of two words. The first takes two English words to express, “do not.” The second is *ršh*, “kill”, or “murder.”

The Hebrew lexicon/dictionary defines *ršh* as “to murder, kill, crush.” (Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, or *Lexicon of Old Testament Words*, 907).

Keeping in mind our three hermeneutical principles, particularly since the 6th commandment carries no explanation, and the rest of the commandments does not provide any context to ascertain the scope of the commandment, we must look at all of Moses’ uses of the word and all the uses in the rest of the Old Testament.

*ršh*, in its verb, participle, and noun forms, is used a total of 47 times in the Old Testament. These uses are summarized here:

- The commandments (Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5) -- 2 times;
- Numbers 35 -- 20 times
- Deuteronomy 4, 19, and 22 -- 6 times;
- Joshua 20 and 21 -- 8 times;
- The rest of the OT -- 11 times.

### **Cities of Refuge**

We start with an overview of Numbers 35, the fullest description of the cities of refuge and the most uses of *ršh*. This chapter is entirely devoted to God’s mandate to Moses to specifically designate as Cities of Refuge 6 of the 48 cities assigned as inheritance cities for the tribe of Levi (Num 35:6-8). The purpose of the 6 cities of refuge was so that someone called a “slayer” or “manslayer” (the Hebrew word is *ršh*) could escape and find sanctuary there (35:6). In these verses *ršh* is used as a noun, a participle, and a verb. It is translated “slayer,” “manslayer,” and “murderer” as a noun or participle and “slay,” “kill,” or “murder” as a verb (RSV).

The terms “slayer” or “manslayer” are defined in vv. 11 and 15 as someone who kills a person without intent. The Cities of Refuge were selected, so an unintentional killer might not die at the hand of an “avenger of blood” until he was judged or tried by his peers (the congregation, v.12). This provision included Israelites, strangers, and sojourners (v. 15). Deut 19:1-3, 7-

10 and Joshua 20:1-6 repeat and expand this information, as Moses reminded Israel of the divine provision and Joshua executed the land apportionment mandate. Unintentional killing is further defined as killing someone without having been at enmity with the person in the past (Deut 19:4, 6; 4:41, 42).

In two passages God gives very concrete examples of unintentional killing or manslaying (killing unintentionally or unwittingly and without previous enmity – Joshua 20:3, 5).

Num 35: 22-25:

- stabbing someone suddenly without enmity
- hurling an object without lying in wait
- casting a stone on someone without seeing him.

In each of these cases the slayer must not have been the slain person's enemy and the slayer was not seeking the victim's harm.

Deut 19:4-6:

- In cutting wood, an axe head slips off an ax handle and kills a neighbor.

Inspiration is quite clear that although the slayer has killed, he is innocent of murder and does not deserve to die because he was not at enmity with his neighbor. Yet, because life is irreplaceable, there is responsibility, and the slayer must outrun the avenger to a city of refuge to be safe (Deut 19:6).

God instructs Joshua further in 20:1-6 that, upon arriving at the gate to a city of refuge, the manslayer must there explain his case to the elders, who must take him into the city, where he must remain. If an avenger is pursuing him, the elders shall not hand him over to the avenger. But the slayer must remain in that city until the current high priest dies. He is then free to return to his own home and the avenger cannot kill him. Num 35:24, 25 indicates that the congregation should judge between the slayer and the avenger, and in this case they shall restore him to the city of refuge, where he must live until the high priest's death. If the slayer should venture from the city of refuge and the avenger finds him, the avenger may kill him and not be guilty of blood, that is, guilty of murder (Num 35:26-28).

### **Intentional Killing**

6 examples of intentional killing are clear, as is the penalty.

Num 35:16-21:

- striking someone and causing death
- - with an instrument of iron
- - with a stone in hand
- - with a wood weapon in hand

Each of these statements is followed by the instruction, "he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death." The set of cases is followed by the instruction, "the avenger of blood shall himself put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death."

The last 3 examples of intentional killing are:

- stabbing someone from hatred
- hurling at someone from lying in wait
- striking someone in enmity with one's hand.

The last case is followed by the instruction, "he who struck the blow shall be put to death; he is a murderer; the avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death, when he meets him." In every case "murderer" is *rsh*.

Deuteronomy 19:11-13 gives the case of a murderer who flees to a city of refuge.

A man hates his neighbor, ambushes him, and mortally wounds him, and then flees to a city of refuge. The instruction is, "The elders of his city shall send and fetch him from there, and hand him over to the avenger so that he may die". No pity is to

be shown. The guilt of innocent blood is to be purged from Israel . . .” (RSV).

In a single instance in Num 35:27, *ršh* is used of the avenger of blood, the next of kin to the deceased, who is legally permitted/instructed to *kill* the one convicted of murder and not be guilty of murder himself.

Deut 4:43 names three of the cities of refuge all six are named in Joshua 20:7-9 and 21:13, 21, 27, 32, 36, and 38. In these passages *ršh* is the slayer or manslayer who kills (*ršh*) unintentionally. It is clear that these cities are refuges only for persons who kill unintentionally.

### Survey of 12 Other Texts

Now we will complete this study with a survey of the other 12 texts, which are in other contexts than the cities of refuge.

1. Deut 22:26. Rape of a woman where her screams cannot be heard is analogous to murder. Only the man is to be put to death, for “this case is like that of someone who attacks and murders [*ršh*] a neighbor.”
2. Judges 19:4. An act of murder by a Levite or by Gibeonites. 400,000 armed soldiers ask, “How did this criminal act come about?” (20:3 NRSV). The Scripture refers to the Levite as “the husband of the murdered (*ršh*) woman . . .” The Scripture is not clear whether she died from the multiple rapes or from the Levite’s knife. In either case, her death is referred to as *ršh*, murder.
3. 1 Kgs 21:21. An act of murder attributed to Ahab. Naboth is executed by stoning based on Jezebel’s false charges so that Ahab can possess his vineyard. Elijah rebukes Ahab at God’s order (v. 21), “Have you killed (*ršh*), and also taken possession? . . .” Stoning, a legal form of execution, is here used illegally based on a false charge, and is thus a premeditated murder.
4. 2 Kgs 6:32. The king of Israel, intending to execute Elisha, is defined as a murderer. The King of Israel blames the prophet for infanticide (6:26-32) resulting from the siege by the King of Syria or Aramea, and sends a person to put Elisha to death. Elisha says to the elders before the messenger arrives, “Do you see how this murderer [*ršh*] has sent to take off my head?” Note also that the setting here is one of armed aggression by the Syrians (6:24), but *ršh* is used, not concerning the inter-tribal hostilities, but concerning an interpersonal conflict between two Israelites.
5. Job 24:14. The indigent are murdered because God is an absentee God. Job accuses, “The murderer [*ršh*] rises at dusk to kill the poor and needy, and in the night is like a thief.” Clearly he is referring to intentional killing.
6. Psalms 62:3. In spite of the murderous actions of his assailants, David trusts God. David, using the third person rather than the first person, questions those assaulting him, “How long will you assail a person, will you batter (*ršh*) your victim, all of you. . .? (NKJV). The New American Standard Bible translates *ršh* very literally, “How long will you assail a man, that you may murder (*ršh*) him, all of you . . .?”
7. Psalms 94:6. David prays divine vengeance on the wicked. He accuses, “They slay the widow and the sojourner; and murder (*ršh*) the fatherless” (RSV.)
8. Prov 22:13. Solomon characterizes the sluggard as excusing his laziness because man or animal will murder him. “The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside! I shall be slain (*ršh*) in the streets!” (RSV). This is the only time that *ršh* is attributed to an animal. Of course, the sluggard could be using personification.
9. Isa 1:21. Isaiah says that while Jerusalem was once the lodging of righteousness, murderers now inhabit the city. He mourns, “How the faithful city has become a harlot, she that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers (*ršh*).”
10. Jer 7:9. Jeremiah personifies Jerusalem as presumptuously committing murder, while facing God and saying, “We are delivered.” Clearly pointing out the sins, God says, “Will you steal, murder (*ršh*), commit adultery, . . . and then . . . stand before me . . . and say, ‘We are delivered!’—only to go on doing all these abominations?”
11. Hosea 4:2. Hosea states “ . . . the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or kindness, and no knowledge of God in the land.” V.2 continues, “There is swearing, lying, killing (*ršh*), stealing . . .” (RSV).
12. Hosea 6:9. Hosea describes the priests as banding together to commit murder. “As robbers lie in wait for a man, so the priests are banded together; they murder (*ršh*) on the way to Shechem . . .”

Several facts have become obvious: 1) In Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, in the context of the cities of refuge, *ršh* is principally used of only two types of violence—accidental or unintentional killing and intentional or premeditated killing of one individual by another. The former is termed manslaughter and the latter, murder—in today’s legal system, homicide. 2) Numbers 35:27 uses it to indicate that when the avenger of blood kills the manslayer outside a city of refuge, the avenger is not guilty of blood, that is, guilty of murder. The avenger is performing an appropriate act of vengeance. 3) In its other 12 occurrences, *ršh* refers to intentional killing or murder. 4) *Ršh* is never, in all of the 47 citations, used in connection with war or in relation to the killing that takes place in war. 5) *Ršh* is never used of any other kind of killing, such as animal sacrificing.

We might note at this juncture, that to institute a commandment to prohibit unintentional/accidental killing would be irrational. So God has made a clear distinction between manslaughter and murder. The 6th Commandment is a prohibition of intentional, premeditated, and malicious killing. *Ršh*, employed in the commandment, “Thou shalt not kill,” is thus more accurately translated, “thou shalt not murder.”

This satisfies the three rules of hermeneutics mentioned earlier: 1) The Scripture has interpreted its use of *ršh*; 2) The Hebrew word *RŠH* has a more limited scope of meanings than the English word “kill”; and 3) the contexts of the use of *RŠH* have determined and limited its meaning and scope. *\*\*Additionally there are numerous opportunities in the OT for *ršh* to be used in connection with war, as the OT is replete with war, but it is never used in this connection (see 2 Kings 6:32-7:20).*

### **Exodus 20:13 and the SDA Church**

We have taught, since the Civil War, that SDA persons who are drafted (under the Selective Service Law) should apply for a 1-A-O classification, which exempts them, in the military, from being required to train with or use a weapon at any time during their military service. 1-A-Os have been trained only in fields that do not require use of a weapon, e.g., the medical field. This stance is called “noncombatancy.” And we have strongly advised against volunteering for military service because those who voluntarily enlist must be trained in the use of firearms and must use them to kill the enemy when ordered to do so. One of the key texts used in support of noncombatancy has been Exodus 20:13, “Thou shalt not kill” (KJV), thus interpreting the commandment as a broad prohibition of killing, which the word *ršh* does not support. The translation of the commandment with the word “kill” has provided conveniently, but somewhat erroneously, a doctrine-like prohibition of military killing. If one is breaking a commandment in participating in military killing in war, that person is committing a grave sin, equivalent to breaking any of the other commandments—stealing, committing adultery, idolatry, and Sabbath breaking. Such offenses require ecclesiastical discipline – censure or removal from membership – which the Church in its General Conference sessions has never attached to any of the legal forms of arms bearing.

Much as we might dislike having to say so, Bible translations have been errantly influenced by the philosophical and theological views of the translators or by lack of proper information concerning the meaning of the original language. One notable example of this is what Jesus promised to the thief on the cross, who asked Jesus to remember him at His coming. We take a view that is not in agreement with the translators’ punctuation of Jesus reply. Every translation places the comma so that Jesus said, “I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). We oppose this unanimous translation on the grounds that it is inconsistent with the rest of Scriptural teaching on the condition of persons in death. We believe the Scripture should be punctuated, “I say to you today, you will be with me in paradise.”

So, it seems that in Exodus 20:13 and Deuteronomy 5:17 we must differ with the translation “Thou shalt not kill” on the grounds that it is too broad, and thus is inaccurate and inconsistent with all the contexts in which *ršh* is used in Scripture.

### **Conclusion**

We must study what the whole of Scripture contributes to our understanding of the topic. Presently, our teaching on noncombatancy has a basis comparable to that of vegetarianism. Based on Scriptural evidence and the health principles with which that evidence has been found to be consistent, we forbid the eating of unclean meats. The matter of whether to eat the clean meats or be vegetarian in diet is a matter of conscience. But we do teach that an appropriate vegetarian diet is a much more healthy diet than a non-vegetarian diet. There is no statement in Scripture prohibiting the eating of clean meats. In fact, Jesus and His disciples are clearly eaters of clean meats—lamb and fish, in particular.

So noncombatancy has also always been a matter of personal conscience and we need to consider whether the New Testament does or does not support that status.

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\*Born and raised in the Bronx, NY, James North graduated from Atlantic Union College (BA in Theology, 1960), Andrews University SDA Theological Seminary (M Div, 1963; D.Min. 1989). He pastored in the Oregon Conference when he accepted a General Conference call to the US Air Force Chaplaincy, where he served 20 years in different countries, including Viet Nam. About this time he writes: "During my year in Viet Nam, I learned first hand the awfulness of war and its intimate companions, killing and death. One of my regular chaplain visitation and ministry sites was the mortuary at Tan Son Nhut AB. I have seen the charred corpses of military persons killed in helicopter crashes; ministered to those with horrible wounds who were evacuated from battle to our Casualty Staging Unit before air evacuation to a major military hospital; felt the earth shaking vibrations and seen the distant flashes of B-52 bombings; fled to bunkers during rocket attacks, and shared with my fellow military persons the heart rending year-long separation from family. ... I spent 5 years at Arlington National Cemetery in AF funeral and burial ministry. So I have much personal ministry experience with grief and death related to military service."

Since 1988 James North teaches at the SDA Theol. Seminary, Andrews University as Professor of Pastoral Care and Chaplaincy, and serves there as Seminary Chaplain, sponsor of the Seminary Chaplains Club and Seminary Student Forum, and advisor to Seminarians entering military, health-care, correctional, and campus chaplaincy. In this last area, he is also a representative of Adventist

Chaplaincy Ministries (ACM) at the General Conference, in which position his work is also to give realistic advice and spiritual counsel to academy and college youth who are interested in or who have joined one of the US military services and to share the spiritual support that ACM provides to SDA military persons. He is married to Audrey and they have 3 daughters, a son and 6 grandchildren.

Posted by [Angelika Kaiser](#) on May 15, 2011 in [Biblical Backgrounds](#), [Church and Society](#) | [Permalink](#)

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## Comments

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Thank you. I agree with your understanding of "do not kill" as "murder." But I think this leads us to the question of a just war--in other words, if killing is allowed in matters of justice, how do we know if going to war with a particular country really is a matter of justice or some other reason? I suppose that's another post...

Posted by: [Prynne](#) | [May 16, 2011 at 11:50 AM](#)

for me the biggest issue is that God's people are in every country. how can i kill our own people? also how can i shoot at people who's salvation i am praying for?

Posted by: [-Shining](#) | [May 17, 2011 at 11:34 AM](#)

Greetings Shining, you are quite on target. In a war in which a Christian is an arms bearer, he/she would not know who they were wounding or killing. Some of the "enemy" might well be Christians or even fellow Seventh-day Adventists. What you are suggesting might fit well with my next paper on what the NT has to say to the issue. In the OT, all, I believe, of Israel's foes were non-Israelites, except under the divided kingdoms, where Israel and Judah fought against each other on occasion.

It is more than just shooting at fellow Christians/SDAs, we are talking about actually killing them, assuming they are on the "other side." It would seem to be most distasteful to God to have his remnant people killing each other, which probably happens in every war, since there are Christians and SDAs in a large number of nationalities.

Killing those we are praying for is a particularly distasteful thought.

Posted by: [James North, Jr.](#) | [May 17, 2011 at 12:32 PM](#)

Yes, the issue of "just wars" is a part of the larger issue and another post. However, I will say that the question of "just wars" brings in a number of problems. 1) In spite of "just war" theory, most wars are fraught with conflicting moral and political issues and national

interests. 2) Do we use St. Thomas Aquinas' standards or those contained in Geneva or Hague conventions? Is there a Biblical standard? 3) Since there is no US draft, US citizens can volunteer when they choose. However, once enlisted, it can be very difficult to opt out of a particular conflict based on Conscientious Objection. One's objection must be to all war, by Supreme Court decision, not a particular war. Is a Christian bound to discriminate over wars in which his/her government is involved? Or does Scripture, the NT in particular, forbid the Christian from all armed conflict? Yes Prynne, in this blog, I was dealing specifically with the issue of "killing" as used in the 6th Commandment. My next project is the issue of combatancy/noncombatancy and the NT. I think that the issue of the "just war," must be discussed both in the context of just war ethics and what Jesus and the apostles said that is related to interpersonal and international relationships and conflicts. I would be happy to hear what you have found or think along those lines.

Posted by: James North, Jr. | [May 17, 2011 at 12:34 PM](#)

I do have a few thoughts to add to this study, lest some think that because the Hebrew word  $r\dot{s}h$  is not connected with war in Scripture, either we are not accountable to man or God for the killing that happens in war or that making war is easily justified. Let us not be presumptuous with God. The 10 Commandments, in this case the last 6, are cosmic in scope and not limited to narrow, literal interpretations. This becomes clear in the Sermon on the Mount, particularly in Jesus' expositions on murder (Matthew 5:21-22) and on adultery (vv. 27-30). Fundamentally, murder is any wanton, deliberate, premeditated killing, whether by individual against individual or one group against another group. Thus we have several kinds of murder-homicide, genocide, infanticide, fratricide and several other "icides," or forms of group murder. These often happen in war. Sometimes they are known as massacres. Jesus teaches that it is not just the physical acts of murder and illicit sex that are covered in the Commandments, but the motives behind the acts. In fact, the motive or wish or intent is seen by God as equivalent to the action, and is at least just as sinful. So those who plan and execute wars and those who participate in them may well come under national and international judgement and under the condemnation of God. And the latter condemnation is the more serious, by far. For Jesus said (Matthew 10:28), "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

I am very deeply interested in any responses to this addendum to my original blog. James North, Jr

Posted by: James North, Jr | [May 24, 2011 at 01:32 AM](#)

i appreciate the post and follow up addendum. i guess that's the problem with writing, its impossible to include every issue that could possibly come up as a result of the written topic. i also appreciate the specificity and narrowness of scope and i look forward to the follow up article on the NT teaching.

i also appreciate how (pointing out that exo. 20:13 has a limited exegetical meaning and it may not be the best verse to use when supporting a noncombatant view) the paper still recognized the right of those who choose to be noncombatants on the basis of conscience.

Posted by: [Jonathanpeinado](#) | [June 01, 2011 at 10:44 AM](#)

Thanks Jonathan, We want our positions in doctrine and teaching to be exegetically sound. Our positions have sometimes been lacking in exegesis, e.g., our position on noncombatancy. Basing our beliefs on the KJV and English alone is not a good practice, because the English does not always reveal the meaning and intent of the original writers. Refining our beliefs as we study more widely and deeply is the "growing thing" to do.

Besides, the experiences of our "great cloud of witnesses" lead us to understand that as individuals we must think hard about laying our moral decisions at the feet of earthly authority, when we must answer to a Higher. Fundamentally we are accountable individually for our actions. Isn't this the focus of Ezekiel 18. Verses 4, 20 emphasize, ". . . The one who sins is the one who will die"(TNIV). Certainly those who make war are responsible for their motives and what they are sending soldiers to do, but is not the individual responsible for his own participation?

Posted by: James North, Jr | [June 02, 2011 at 03:44 AM](#)

Exodus 20:13 "you shall not murder <07523>.

Deuteronomy 4:42 that a manslayer <07523> might flee there, who unintentionally slew <07523> his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live:

Deuteronomy 19:4 "now this is the case of the manslayer <07523> who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally, not hating him previously—

Joshua 20:3 that the manslayer <07523> who kills any person unintentionally, without premeditation, may flee there, and they shall become your refuge from the avenger of blood.

Joshua 20:5 'now if the avenger of blood pursues him, then they shall not deliver the manslayer <07523> into his hand, because he struck his neighbor without premeditation and did not hate him beforehand.

Chaplain North,

The above passages all employ the term for murder found in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. They do qualify the expression. The words "unintentional", "premeditation", and "not hating him in times past" are employed by English translators.

People do not kill others in war unintentionally, nor are the killings not premeditated.

An interesting and relevant passage is found here:

1 Kings 2:5 "Moreover you know also what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me, how he dealt with the two commanders of the armies of Israel, Abner son of Ner, and Amasa son of Jether, whom he murdered <02026>, retaliating in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war, and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist, and on the sandals on his feet (NRSV).

Other versions say Joab shed the blood of war in [a time of] peace.

I developed a great deal of respect for military chaplains after reading C.E.B. Cranfield's "Shorter Commentary on Romans."

Peace.

Posted by: [Hansen](#) | [August 10, 2011 at 12:29 PM](#)

well.. thank you for the study..

so The 6th Commandment is a prohibition of intentional, premeditated, and malicious killing.

But, I strongly disagree with your attempt to justify joining an army as combatant, even by the rules of Selective Service Law. Everyone know that joining a war as a combatant would actually expose you to a condition where you have to kill someone and doing so despite knowing the consequences has no difference from planning to murder..

Basically, joining and killing as a combatant in a war is just another murder act.

Posted by: [Andy Setiawan](#) | [September 02, 2011 at 10:05 PM](#)

I found it interesting but i have a question... What we say when someone ask me if God Him self did not KILL or MURDER

Posted by: [Ch. Manuela](#) | [September 22, 2011 at 06:19 PM](#)

Regarding Hansen's comment. What leads you to conclude that the words "murder," "premeditation," and "not hating him in times past," are employed by English translators? Are you meaning that these expressions are supplied and are actually not in the Hebrew text? The point of your succeeding comments is not clear. We know that the killing done in war is premeditated. What is your point-that killing done in war is patently murder by that definition? And what is the purpose of your observation about Joab's killing of Amasa? And I am happy that your respect for military chaplains has been raised to a high level.

Posted by: [James North, Jr.](#) | [September 24, 2011 at 11:48 PM](#)

Andy, I don't believe I justified voluntary enlistment in an army as a combatant. To join as a combatant is a personal decision. I have never encouraged anyone to enlist. I have confronted them with the realities of Sabbath observance difficulties and of military combatant training. Most, when confronted with those realities, decide against enlisting.

I do not agree that all killing in war is murder. Romans 13 will not allow that blanket judgment, when it says that a ruler "does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil" (v. 4). If the ruler is God's minister, then there is an appropriate use of war and the killing involved. Not that God favors war, but in a sinful world, some war may be necessary and appropriate. The question is whether Christian, specifically, the SDA, can participate as an agent of the government in the prosecution of justice, punishment, and the security of its citizens? So I respectfully disagree but recognize your right to believe as you do.

Posted by: [James North, Jr.](#) | [September 25, 2011 at 12:29 AM](#)

To Ch Manuela.

Your question is a very good one. We might ask it another way-Is God obedient to His own commandments? If you read my original blog, I showed that the 6th Commandment is inaccurately translated, "Thou shalt not kill." A much more accurate translation is, "Thou shalt not commit murder." Does God kill? Check Numbers 16:23-35; 1 Samuel 15:1-3; 2 Samuel 6:1-7; and Acts 5:1-10. Clearly, the Lord has killed individuals and masses of people. And there are many other such cases. But in every case it was in retribution of rebellious sin

and when one's cup of iniquity overflowed. And God is God--which means He can both give and take life at His discretion, but He never takes life carelessly or capriciously. It is always in justice and judgement. As for whether or not God commits murder--God's law is an extension of His character. Murder is sin. Can God sin? Can God violate His own character? Everything God does is done in righteousness. Besides, Jesus, in John 8:44 says that the devil "was a murderer from the beginning . . ." If the devil is a murderer, can God be a murderer? Psalm 119:137 says, "You are righteous, Lord." And twice in Jeremiah, 23:6 and 33:16, God is called, "The Lord our Righteousness." I hope these thoughts will help you if you are ever asked if God killed or committed murder. The answer is "yes" to the first, and a resounding "no" to the second.

Posted by: James North, Jr | [September 26, 2011 at 01:44 PM](#)

Ch. North, I was just offering a few passages that clearly make a distinction between intentional killing and unintentional. I didn't mean to suggest that there is no distinction in the OL.

Joab was condemned because he retaliated for blood shed in war in a time of peace.

Peace

Posted by: [Hansen](#) | [October 07, 2011 at 11:24 AM](#)

Thank you for the additional information. The condemnation and execution of Joab is a very interesting and pertinent view in the war-filled annals of Israelite OT history. But I still do not understand two points you brought up: 1) "murder," "premeditation," and "not hating him in times past," are employed by English translators. Are you meaning that these expressions are supplied and are actually not in the Hebrew text? 2) We know that the killing done in war is premeditated. Is your point that killing done in war is patently murder by that definition?

Posted by: James North, Jr | [October 07, 2011 at 09:11 PM](#)

Hi Ch. North,

The following passages include the English words "premeditation" and "unintentional." These words were selected by the NASB translators. <01097> is a negative, When it is used with <01847> the word combination is translated "without premeditation or "unintentional."

The numbers are taken from the Online Bible, a free program which I enjoy.

All these passages are taken from narratives which discuss the cities of refuge.

If we define murder as "any" premeditated killing, then war would be defined as murder. I reject that definition because, among other things, executions would also be murder. I don't believe that to be the case.

God gave specific OT instructions regarding the execution of various criminals, including rebellious children. Killings of that nature were not murder.

Nu 35:11 then you shall select for yourselves cities to be your cities of refuge, that the manslayer who has killed any person unintentionally <07684> may flee there.

Nu 35:15 'these six cities shall be for refuge for the sons of Israel, and for the alien and for the sojourner among them; that anyone who kills a person unintentionally <07684> may flee there.

De 4:42 that a manslayer might flee there, who unintentionally <01847> <01097> slew his neighbor without having enmity toward him in time past; and by fleeing to one of these cities he might live:

De 19:4 "now this is the case of the manslayer who may flee there and live: when he kills his friend unintentionally <01847> <01097>, not hating him previously--

Jos 20:3 that the manslayer who kills any person unintentionally <07684>, without <01097> premeditation <01847>, may flee there, and they shall become your refuge from the avenger of blood

Jos 20:5 'now if the avenger of blood pursues him, then they shall not deliver the manslayer into his hand, because he struck his neighbor without <01097> premeditation <01847> and did not hate him beforehand.

Jos 20:9 these were the appointed cities for all the sons of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them, that whoever kills any person unintentionally <07684> may flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stands before the congregation.

David was not allowed to build the temple because he was a man of war (1 Ch 22:8, 28:3). Even so, Scripture says his heart was "perfect"

(KJV, ASV)all his days except in the matter of Uriah (1 Ki 15:3-5). I haven't figured out how David could be perfect and yet forbidden to build the temple because he was a man of blood. Do you know?

Take care.

Posted by: [Hansen](#) | [October 09, 2011 at 07:44 PM](#)

Ch. North,

Your article is very thoughtful, it is a wonderful article, it causes one to usefully reflect quite a bit, in my opinion. But frankly after reading it I came to conclusions that were somewhat different from yours - - and I did so precisely because of the very evidence you yourself cite.

You maintain in one of your replies above that,

"I showed that the 6th Commandment is inaccurately translated, "Thou shalt not kill." A much more accurate translation is, "Thou shalt not commit murder.""

Actually, I completely disagree that this is what you showed or proved at all with your research. (Pardon me if I sound blunt and annoying, I'm not trying to purposely be that way, it's just that I think the logic of your own research comes to a different conclusion than the one you are claiming.)

If anything, your statements clearly show that the actual Hebrew word, "rsh", used in stating the operative word "kill" in the 6th Commandment, was also be used in a variety of situations in the Bible that did not specifically mean the English word "murder" as we specifically and culturally understand that word today.

In fact, I was very surprised at the wide and somewhat nebulous definition, or should I say multiple analogical meanings, "rsh" takes in the Bible as I read your own words. If you ask me, the Lord could have easily meant much more than simply the specific and cultural meaning of the English word "murder" when he imparted the 6th Commandment - - and I am a LOT more convinced of that possibility after reading your statements above than I was before reading them.

Thanks to your article I have a terrific amount of debating ammunition to take issue with someone the next time it is confidently claimed to me that the 6th Commandment means simply "Thou shalt not murder" instead of the wider implications implied in "Thou shalt not kill". I have heard this claim more than once - - and I say that the evidence you yourself have presented clearly suggests to me that God wants us to truly spend time meditating on the meaning of the Commandment and it's possible implications - - as opposed to coming up with a limited interpretation of it that neatly fits into our own cultures' expectations.

One cannot serve both God and mammon. When God is presenting His own law it represents the highest and most holy ideal, and not necessarily the most convenient thought that allows us to refrain from really spiritually examining what we do, as we evaluate our human solutions regarding state conflicts, state punishments, termination-of-pregnancy decisions or any other mess we attempt to sort out. When we speak for God's law, when we decide to serve God above everything else, we should be speaking for that goal which is the most holy. And in my humble opinion and experience that goal does not always present itself, at first glance, as the most "pragmatic". In any event thank you for your research and your thoughtfulness! God bless you!

Posted by: [Avacadojoe](#) | [October 30, 2011 at 09:34 AM](#)

Greetings Avacadojoe, There is not much that I can say in response to your post except that obviously I do not agree. You are entitled to your opinion and I respect your opinion. God bless you, also.

Posted by: [James North, Jr](#) | [October 31, 2011 at 07:17 AM](#)

Dear Bro. Hansen, I guess I should be able to know exactly what you mean when you say that "premeditation" and "unintentionally" are supplied by the translators, but your statement causes a question in my mind. Do you mean that those two words are not in the Hebrew at all and that the translators added them to make the meaning clear? If that is the case I would expect them to appear in italics, as is normally the case with words that are not in the original text but are supplied by the translators to clarify the meaning. Is that the case? On what evidence does the Online Bible make this case?

Posted by: [James North, Jr](#) | [October 31, 2011 at 07:38 AM](#)

I much appreciated your article! I'm anxiously waiting for the 2nd part about NT.

This is an issue that I'm much interest to understand. Did Ms White say something about it?

Thanks for your work.

I like very much the works from you ppl from Andrews University.

I never liked the military career, but I have friends that works at military or police and I care a lot about them, and I'm always afraid that they need to kill someone, or be killed.

Posted by: [Wallace Ley](#) | [November 05, 2011 at 03:49 PM](#)

Ch. North, My Hebrew knowledge, which approximates that of a bar Mitzvah lad, tells me that there are Hebrew words in the texts which have been translated by the English words "without premeditation" and "unintentionally" as well as other ways such as "at unawares" or "unwittingly." It depends on which English version you choose.

If your Hebrew is weak, you can always check an interlinear translation or commentary to confirm what I have said.

The passages indicate that there was a difference between planned killings and accidents. Additionally, the manslayer had to appear before the priests to gain admission to the "city of refuge." If his story didn't pass the smell test, he would be excluded and subject to execution by the near of kin.

This does not address the issue of killing in time of war.

Posted by: [Hansen](#) | [November 15, 2011 at 06:00 AM](#)

Bro. Hansen, While I am not a Hebrew scholar, I am able to translate the Hebrew with the aid of a good lexicon. I did study Hebrew years ago when I was first attending Seminary, and I have kept some familiarity with it over the years. It makes little difference how the various versions of the Bible translate the Hebrew words, the fact is that the Hebrew words for "without premeditation" and "unintentionally" are actually in the Hebrew text. Various versions may use synonyms for these two words, but the meaning is there in the Hebrew text, that is, there are two Hebrew words in the Hebrew Bible that intrinsically are "unpremeditated" and "unintentional." "Without premeditation" and "unintentionally" have not been added or supplied at all because the Hebrew text has those words. I think you have drawn an inaccurate conclusion from what you have read in the Online Bible. "Unawares" and "unwittingly" are simply synonyms of the two words above that are also appropriate translations of the Hebrew words. I checked this in Koehler and Baumgartner's Hebrew/English Lexicon.

Posted by: James North, Jr | [November 15, 2011 at 05:38 PM](#)

Avocadojoe, I have been thinking about the fact that you have drawn opposite conclusions from mine, based on my arguments. Perhaps it would be helpful to me if you explain your thinking a bit more fully.

Posted by: James North, Jr | [November 15, 2011 at 05:42 PM](#)

Ch North, My post of Oct. 7 stated that my purpose in writing was to demonstrate that Scripture distinguishes between intentional killing and unintentional killing. My Nov. 15 post mentions that the Cities of Refuge motif does not address killing in a time of war. I'm not sure what my inaccurate conclusion might be.

I'll give you an example of something which might be inaccurate regarding the Iraq war.

The USA entered into a war because Iraq supposedly had WMD. Who were those weapons a danger to? Primarily, to Israel. They were not a danger to the USA; consequently, the US entered into a war to fight on behalf of Israel. I find this distasteful. It's a war, an unjust one, being fought on behalf of a renegade Anti-Christian nation by soldiers of the US military. Now that is a sin in which I would choose to not participate.

Some people believe that the US entered Viet Nam to protect the interests of Roman Catholicism in that country.

Now it is possible that I am wrong to believe that America's military is fighting wars on behalf of the Jews and the papacy.

I am not mistaken, however, about the limited scope of my posts regarding intentional killing and unintentional killing in the Cities of Refuge motif.

Posted by: [Hansen](#) | [November 25, 2011 at 08:12 PM](#)

Any kind of killing is unforgiven by God. God is not a man that lie and not a man that repent. Abortion is still killing. Venial sin is still killing. If someone kills a person even by accident or not, is still judged by God. God is a just and strict God who condemns such acts. God does not condone such acts. A baby is valuable as a person like an adult. It does not matter. Any man who kills bear his own sins and God will avenge of that man who slew the one. It does not matter. Some killings are righteous for example, the only one is to kill the killer. This is the commandment of God who has set up in the ancient or the Old testament. Killing is killing. There is no escape. He has to face the judgement of God.

Posted by: [Aleois](#) | [March 03, 2012 at 05:22 PM](#)

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