

Common GROUND

by Joseph Tkach

“In the land of the Bible, it’s ‘eye-for-eye’ justice once again in yet another round of attack and reprisal in the Middle East.” So began an evening news report about the latest cycle of Mideast violence.

Much of the violence in the Middle East is in direct retaliation for prior violence. And often, the perpetrators of such violence invoke the ancient “eye-for-an-eye” principle in order to justify their acts.

What they ignore is the fact that this principle was *never* meant to be applied in such a ruthless and barbaric fashion!

You may be surprised to learn that the original intent of this Old Testament law was to *limit* retaliation, not to encourage it. It mandates that the penalty must fit the crime, not go beyond it in wild revenge.

One eye—not two—for an eye. *One* life—not a whole family’s or town’s—for a life. Random and indiscriminate retaliation against innocent men, women and children was never permitted by this law. Only the individual perpetrator himself was punishable. The eye-for-eye principle was designed to control bloodshed and unrestrained violence.

So don’t blame the Bible for the endless cycle of retaliatory violence in the Mideast. If applied as intended, the eye-for-eye principle would diminish the level of violence.

What’s more—“eye-for-eye” has been superseded by a new and higher standard. For those with the moral courage to break the cycle, Jesus showed another way—the law of *love*, *forgiveness* and *peace*.

Unfortunately, that principle remains largely untried. □

