

## CAPITAL PUNISHMENT - 1959

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We believe it to be the task of the Jew to bring our great spiritual and ethical heritage to bear upon the moral problems of contemporary society. One such problem, which challenges all who seek to apply God's will in the affairs of Man, is the practice of capital punishment. The legal execution of a criminal is an anachronism in a society which has long since abandoned the primitive concept of an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." We believe that in the light of recent scientific knowledge and concepts of humanity, the resort to or continuation of capital punishment either by a state or by a national government is morally unjustifiable.

We believe there is no crime, however horrendous, for which society has the right through its judicial processes to order the taking of human life. Rather, it is the obligation of society to evolve other more effective and more humane methods in dealing with crime. We pledge ourselves to try to prevent crimes by removal of their causes, and to foster modern methods of rehabilitation of the wrongdoer in the spirit of the Jewish tradition of tshuvah (repentance).

We believe, further; that the practice of capital punishment serves no practical purpose. Experience in several states and nations has demonstrated that capital punishment is not effective as a deterrent to crime. Moreover, we believe that this practice is a stain upon an entire penal system and brutalizes the human spirit. We appeal to our members and to all who cherish God's mercy and love to join in efforts to eliminate this practice which lies as a blemish upon our civilization and our religious conscience.