

Leviticus Chapter 24 Continued

Verses 10-23

The law regarding the penalty for blasphemy (cursing God), is unique because it was demonstrated with a story.

The penalty of “death” fit the crime because blasphemy insults a holy and perfect God (Exodus 22:28).

Verses 10-14, 23

“And the son”:

Here is another historical example of blasphemy along similar lines as the Nadab and Abihu account (10:1-2).

The blasphemer was one of the many other people.

The people transferred the guilt of them all to him.

Leviticus 24:10 "And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father [was] an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish [woman] and a man of Israel strove together in the camp;"

Whose name, and the name of his mother, are afterwards given.

"Whose father was an Egyptian"

This circumstance seems noted, partly to show the danger of marriages with persons of wicked principles.

And partly by this severity against him who was a stranger by the father, and an Israelite by the mother.

To show that God would not have this sin go unpunished among his people, whatsoever he was that committed it.

"Went out among the children of Israel":

Went out of Egypt with them, according to the Targum of Jonathan.

And so was one of the mixed multitude, which came from thence with them, which is not improbable.

Some say he went out of Moses's court of judicature; but it is more likely that the meaning is, he went out of his tent, so Aben Ezra, Into the midst of the camp, to claim his rank and place among the people of Israel.

Though the Jewish writers, as Jarchi and Aben Ezra, take this phrase, "among the children of Israel", to signify that he was a proselyte, and became a Jew, or had embraced the Jewish religion in all respects.

"And this son of the Israelitish woman and a man of Israel strove together in the camp":

Which man of Israel, according to the Targum of Jonathan, was of the tribe of Dan, as was the mother of the man he disagreed with.

What they fought about is not easy to say.

Leviticus 24:11 "And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name [of the LORD], and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name [was] Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:)"

“Blasphemed the name of the LORD, and cursed”:

The verb translated “blasphemed” actually means “to pierce” with the intent of debilitating a person.

The word cursed means to declare someone to be “contentless” or without significance, and thus to deny that he has any power.

The guilty person here did not pronounce a curse in our sense of the word, but rather attacked the LORD’s holy nature and declared Him to be without content or significance.

He was apparently one of the “mixed multitude” (Exodus 12:38; Num. 11:4).

God warned His people over and over, not to marry those who were not Israelites.

This man was not allowed to be one of the congregation, because his father was not an Israelite.

The regulation was in effect until the third generation.

This set this young man aside as an outcast from the beginning.

You could easily see how he would get into an argument with this man of Israel.

There is however, no excuse for him blaspheming the name of the LORD and cursing.

We possibly can see here that he did not believe in the God of Israel.

It is good to notice that blaspheming and cursing were two different things.

To blaspheme God, is possibly the worst sin a person could commit.

At the time that this happened, the law had not been given concerning this, and Moses did not know exactly what the punishment for this crime should be.

Just because his mother was of the tribe of Dan, would not save him.

The Scripture does not say whether this man was taught in the ways of God or not.

If he were not taught in the ways of God, part of the blame for this sin would be his mother's.

We do know that she displeased God, when she married a man from Egypt.

God did not want His people mixing and marrying with worldly people.

Leviticus 24:12 "And they put him in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be showed them."

"And they put him in ward":

There were no jails in Israel since incarceration was not a penalty for crime.

They had merely restrained him, probably in a pit of some sort, until they could establish his punishment.

Punishments were corporal, banishment, or, in severe cases, death.

Those who lived through the punishment worked to secure restitution for those they had violated.

Moses knew that this was a terrible sin, but he did not know just how God wanted him punished.

He had them to hold him under arrest, until he could hear from God.

Moses never presumed things pertaining to God.

He waited, so that the punishment of this man would be pleasing unto God.

Leviticus 24:13 "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,"

From off the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies, where he had promised to meet him and commune with him about anything he should inquire of him, as he did at this time.

"Saying":

As follows.

Leviticus 24:14 "Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard [him] lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him."

"Lay their hands upon his head":

By this act, the people transferred to him whatever guilt might have accrued to the community.

His subsequent death then atoned for his own and his hearers' sin.

The sinner bears full personal responsibility (verse 15).

These that heard him curse and blaspheme God are eye witnesses.

The reason they are to lay their hands on his head, is to place the blame upon him.

This stoning by the entire congregation shows their utter disapproval of what he has done.

The punishment for this crime was not set by Moses, or the witnesses, or the congregation, but by God Himself.

Leviticus 24:15 "And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin."

On this occasion, and gave them some laws and rules concerning the above affair, and other things.

"Saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin":

Which some understand of anyone of another nation, that cursed the God he used to serve in his own country.

But it can hardly be thought that a law should be made by the one only living and true God, to preserve the honor and credit of false gods, when he is so jealous of his own glory.

And those are spoken of in Scripture with the greatest contempt, as dunghill deities, and are actually cursed (Jer. 10:11).

But they are rather to be interpreted of judges and all civil magistrates, who, as Aben Ezra observes, are sometimes called Elohim or gods (Psalm 82:1).

And the rather, as it is probable this man had cursed his judges, and so this is a distinct sin from what follows.

And not only the manner of expressing it, but the punishment of it, seem to be different.

For the phrase, "to bear his sin", is used where the punishment is not expressly declared.

And is by Jarchi and others interpreted of cutting off from his people, but in what way is not certain.

Whereas the punishment of a blasphemer of God is before and after clearly expressed (see Lev. 24:16).

Since there had not been a law given concerning this, the law was given right here to clarify the punishment for this offence.

Notice (whosoever), which covers strangers as well as Israelites.

Notice that verse 15 is separate in that the sin there was cursing God.

In the next verse, we see the penalty for blaspheming god.

Leviticus 24:16 "And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, [and] all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name [of the LORD], shall be put to death."

Or, "but he that blasphemeth", etc., from whence the Jews gather, that the name Jehovah must be expressed, or it is no blasphemy; so Jarchi.

But it is not using or expressing the word Jehovah that is blasphemy, but speaking ill and contemptuously of God.

With respect to any of his names, titles, and epithets, or of any of his perfections, ways, and works.

"He shall surely be put to death":

No mercy shall be shown him, no reprieve or pardon granted him.

Hence it is said, there is no atonement for it, by repentance, or chastisements, or the day of atonement.

So blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is not forgiven, neither in this world nor in that which is to come (Matt. 12:31).

"And all the congregation shall certainly stone him":

Shall have no pity on him, nor spare him, but stone him till he dies.

"As well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death":

Even a proselyte of the gate, a Gentile that sojourned among them, uncircumcised, and did not profess the Jewish religion, as well as a proselyte of righteousness, and an Israelite born.

Yet, if he blasphemed the God of Israel, was to lose his life without any mercy shown him.

For someone not to stone the person committing this terrible sin, would be as if they were condoning the sin.

God leaves no doubt at all that this is to cover everyone, even those who were not Hebrews among them.

This was done to remove those who would cause a falling away from God.

God requires total obedience.

Matthew 22:37-38 "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." "This is the first and great commandment."

Leviticus 24:17 "And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death."

With the sword, as the Targum of Jonathan adds.

Which restrains it to any man of the children of Israel, but wrongly.

For the original law respects any man whatever (Gen. 9:6); and so it does here (see notes on Exodus 21:12).

We see in this that a person who thought someone had blasphemed could not just go out and kill him.

The killing of the blasphemer by stoning was after several persons had been eyewitnesses and it was a punishment carried out by the entire congregation, not just by one person.

We see in this repeating of this law that killing or murder was punishable by death.

A life for a life.

Leviticus 24:18 "And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast."

Pay for it, give the value of it, or another as good as that instead of it, as follows.

"Beast for beast":

Or "soul for soul"; life for life.

That is, a living one for that the life of which is taken away, and one in every way as good as that.

This is speaking of another's beast.

When you kill someone else's animal, it must be restored.

Leviticus 24:19 "And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him;"

Does him any hurt or mischief, causes any mutilation or deformity in him by striking him.

"As he hath done, so shall it be done unto him":

Not that a like damage or hurt should be done to him, but that he should make satisfaction for it in a pecuniary way.

Pay for the cure of him, and for loss of time, and in consideration of the pain he has endured.

And the shame or disgrace brought on him by the deformity or mutilation.

Or for whatever loss he may sustain thereby (see notes on Exodus 21:18-19).

Leviticus 24:20 "Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him [again]."

Compare (Matt. 5:38).

This law of retaliation established the principle that the punishment should fit the crime, but not go beyond it.

"Eye for eye, tooth for tooth":

This is one of three passages in the Old Testament setting out the so-called *lex talionis* (compare Exodus 21:23-25; Deut. 19:21), a fundamental principle of biblical and Near Eastern law.

It means that punishment must be proportionate to the offense.

This phrase seems to have been just a formula.

If a slave lost an eye, he was given his freedom (Exodus 21:26).

The man who killed an ox had to pay its owner enough for him to buy another (verse 18).

Only in the case of premeditated murder was such compensation forbidden (Num. 35:16-21).

Then the principle of “life for life” must be literally enforced, because man is made in the image of God (Gen. 9:5-6).

God’s justice for sin demanded our death; this is the punishment that fits the crime (2 Kings 14:6; Rom. 6:23).

God did not do away with retributive justice to redeem us, but rather sent Christ to His death on the cross to be our substitute (Isa. 53:12; 2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus told His disciples to “resist not evil”,

but to reach out even to the wicked in patience, love, and forgiveness (Matt. 5:38-42).

This does not mean that punishments should no longer fit the crime, or that sin and wickedness do not have consequences for the offender in society.

What it means is that it was never right to use this verse in Leviticus to claim a right to personal revenge on one that has injured us.

These sins are less than murder.

The punishment is made to fit the crime.

Leviticus 24:21 "And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death."

The same as in (Lev. 24:18), which is repeated for the confirmation of it.

And that it might be observed, though Jarchi takes it to be a different law.

Before, he says, it speaks of him that kills a beast, here of him that makes any wound or bruise in it, which he must make good.

And it must be allowed that the manner of expression is different.

There it is, he that smites the soul of a beast so that it dies, here only he that smites a beast, though it dies not.

Yet having some damage done it, satisfaction must be made.

"And he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death":

Or he that smites a man, though he does not kill him, as Jarchi observes, only makes a wound or bruise in him.

Because it is not said, the soul of a man, as before.

But such damages did not require death, but satisfaction in another way, as in (Lev. 24:19).

The difference in the death of an animal and the death of a man is evident in the punishment.

Man was made in the image of God.

There is no way you can pay for a man's life.

The animal is property, or wealth of a man.

The main thing here would be to restore the loss he felt in the death of the animal.

Leviticus 24:22 "Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I [am] the LORD your God."

Respecting the above things, blaspheming of the name of God, taking away the life of man, or of any beast, and of doing damage to either.

"As well for the stranger as for one of your own country":

The above laws were binding upon proselytes as well as Israelites.

And proselytes of the gate as well as proselytes of righteousness, though the Jews commonly restrain it to the latter.

"For I am the LORD your God":

Whose name is holy and reverend, and ought not to be blasphemed.

And who is the Maker and preserver of man and beast, and made these laws respecting them, and expected they should be obeyed.

Especially by the children of Israel, whose covenant God and Father he was, and they under the greatest obligation to serve and obey him.

We see from this, that just because they were God's people did not give the Israelite any special privileges when he sinned.

The punishment was the same for the stranger as it was for the Israelite.

God is God of all.

The law was given at this time just to the Israelites, but God is God of all.

Leviticus 24:23 "And Moses spake to the children of Israel, that they should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones. And the children of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses."

As the LORD had commanded him.

"That they should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones":

Which were the instructions God had given to Moses upon inquiring his mind and will about this matter.

"And the children of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses":

They took the blasphemer, and led him out of the camp, put their hands on him, and stoned him with stones till he died.

As soon as the punishment for blaspheming and cursing God was given to Moses by God, Moses had the punishment carried out.

Remember the reason Moses had waited was because no law had been given to cover this situation.

Moses waited until God told him what the punishment should be.

We could learn a lesson from this.

We should not rush ahead to decide the outcome of something, before we hear from God.

Leviticus Chapter 24 Continued Questions

1. What nationality was the father of the son of the Israelitish woman?
2. What 2 sins did the son commit, while he was striving with the man of Israel?
3. Who did they take the man to, for sentencing?
4. From what tribe of Israel was the mother of this son who sinned?
5. Why was this man not allowed to be part of the congregation?
6. Are blaspheming and cursing different sins?
7. What is possibly the worst sin a person can commit?
8. Who was possibly partly to blame for the man's sin?

9. Why did Moses not pass sentence on the man immediately?
10. Why was it important for the ones who heard him curse to put their hands on his head?
11. Who was to stone him to death?
12. Who was to be killed for cursing God?
13. What was the punishment for killing a man?
14. What was the punishment for killing a beast?
15. What was the punishment for injuring others?
16. Why was there a difference between killing a man and killing a beast?
17. How did the law differ for a stranger?
18. When did they kill the man for blaspheming?
19. What lesson can we learn from all of this?