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Cursed is Everyone Who Hangs on a Tree

Galatians 3:13-14

and Deuteronomy 21:22-23

Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree DIG: What does the word Talui mean? Did the Jews hang people on the tree? Where does it come from? Why and how do the Jews use it today? How is the word Talui ironic? How does the Talmud interpret the word “live” and why was that important to Paul? If anyone hung on a tree is accursed, why isn’t Yeshua accursed? How did Paul take this taunt and put a new spin on it?

REFLECT: How do you feel about Yeshua being *the Hanged One* for you? When you think of what He went through, both physically and spiritually, on the cross, how does that image motivate you to tell others about *Talui*? How would you explain the promised “Ruach” in verse 14 to a seeker? Do you believe, and practice, Romans 1:16? Which truth in Galatians 3:13-14 excites you the most?

Paul reinvents a popular anti-Yeshua taunt derived from Deuteronomy 21:22-23 to argue that Messiah’s suffering and death releases those who rely upon him from the curse of the Torah.

Within **Judaism**, **Yeshua of Nazareth** has often been known by the name *Talui*, or *ha-Talui*, which literally translated means *the Hanged One*, or contextually, *the Crucified One*. In old anti-Christian writings, this belittling name is sometimes combined with other unflattering descriptions, but in general *Talui* means *Yeshua, the crucified one*.

Ironically, the word *talui* is also a Hebrew word used in **the Talmud** that is still used today for *uncertainty*. Because it means *hanging*, it is used to express a matter *hanging in doubt*. For example, in English we sometimes speak of a *hung jury*. Something **hanging** swings back and forth, so **hanging** can mean *uncertainty*. In the days of the apostles, **Jewish** people offered a special kind of sacrifice called an *asham talui*, which literally means *a guilt offering hanging*. One who was in doubt as to whether he had committed a **sin** or not, brought a guilt offering of *uncertainty*. **The Talmud says that Bava ben Buta brought as ashram talui to the Temple every day because he thought, “Perhaps I have sinned**

and did not realize it.”

Today, the anti-missionaries contemptuously call **Yeshua**, *Talui*, meaning **the crucified one**, but ironically the name also implies *uncertainty*. Might **He** not be the promised **Messiah**? What if **His** claims are true? Even more ironic, **Isaiah 53:10** predicts that **the Messiah** will suffer on behalf of the nation **when His soul makes an offering for guilt** (*asham*). **Yeshua**, the crucified one (*talui*), went to the cross as an *asham talui*, so to speak.

However, those **Jews** who do not believe that **He** is **the Messiah** today, call **Him** *Talui* as an uncomplimentary taunt; but **the Ruach ha-Kodesh** inspired the human author **Isaiah** to record it in a positive light. The term comes from **the Torah**: **If a man is guilty of a sin with a death sentence and he is put to death, and you hang (*talita*) him on a tree. His body is not to remain all night on the tree - instead you must certainly bury him the same day, for anyone hanged (*talui*) is a curse of God. You must not defile your land that ADONAI your God is giving to you as an inheritance (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).**

The Torah says that if a corpse is **hung on a tree**, it is not to be left **hanging** overnight. Instead, the corpse must be taken down and buried that same day. This passage is relevant to **Messiah's death**. However, **the Torah** is not speaking of crucifixion. In **Tractate Sanhedrin 46b**, **the Talmud points out that the man hung on a tree in Deuteronomy 21:22 was not crucified. He was already dead prior to being hung on the tree.** In the ancient world, authorities sometimes **hung** the corpse of an executed man as a public warning to others (see the commentary on **the Life of David, to see link click Bw - Sha'ul Takes His Own Life: The Desecration of the Bodies**). Hopefully, those who saw the executed man's body on display would resolve not to commit the same crimes. **The Torah** does not actually demand such a grisly method of warning. Instead, **the Torah** aims to ensure the dignity of the corpse by requiring a timely burial.

Hanging on a **tree** is not found as a means of delivering the **death** sentence in **the Torah**. Crucifixion was never a **Jewish** mode of execution and would itself be a violation of **Jewish** law. In Roman law, however, a person could be crucified for piracy, highway robbery, assassination, forgery, false testimony, mutiny, sedition, or rebellion. The Romans also crucified soldiers who deserted to the enemy and slaves who denounced their masters. A cross could be a **tree** or simply a post embedded in the ground. The condemned carried the crossbeam to the place of execution with the titulus (an inscription identifying his crime) **hanging** from his neck (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ls - Then They Brought Jesus to Golgotha, the Place of the Skull**). Rome introduced this cruel means

of execution in Judea as a way of punishing zealot rebels. Routine crucifixions had been going on for as long as three decades before the birth of **Yeshua**. Thousands and thousands of **Jewish** men died by crucifixion. **Josephus claims that by the end of the Jewish revolt, the Romans had cut down all the trees in Judea for crosses.**

The Romans did not observe **Deuteronomy 21:23-23**. The bodies of the crucified might be left **hanging** indefinitely. In the case of **Messiah's** execution, however, the **Jewish** authorities pleaded with Pilate **that the bodies should not remain on the execution stake during Shabbat** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lx - The Burial of Jesus in the Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea**). Regarding the commandment of taking down the body and not letting it **hang** overnight, **Rabbi Meir said, "There is a parable about this matter. To what can it be compared? It can be compared to two identical twin brothers. Both lived in a certain city. One was appointed king, and the other became a bandit. At the king's command they hanged the bandit. But everyone who saw him hanging there said, 'The king has been hung!' Therefore, the king issued a command and he was taken down" (Sanhedrin 46b).**

Deuteronomy 21:23 says: **Anyone hanged (*talui*) is a curse of God.** This passage explains why the name *Talui*, *the Crucified One*, *the Hung One*, became a common title for **Yeshua** in Judaism. As the **Jewish** people struggled under the attacks and persecution of the Church, the **Talui** nickname became an inside joke. Who is **Yeshua**? **He is Talui**. And what does **the Torah** say? **Talui is accursed of God.**

Anti-missionaries (the counter-proselytization of **Jews**) still use the passage today, and I suspect the joke goes all the way back for centuries and centuries. As the apostles proclaimed "**Messiah crucified**" within the **Jewish** community, the early detractors who resisted their message probably responded with **Deuteronomy 21:23. Talui is accursed of God. The Crucified One is Accursed of God!**

The most learned and most vicious anti-missionary who ever lived was **Sha'ul of Tarsus**. **Paul** knew this passage. **He** used it in **his** debates against the early believers in contempt of **Yeshua haTalui, the Crucified One**. Reflecting on this matter, **Paul** wrote to the church at Corinth: **I make known to you that no one speaking by the Ruach Elohim says, "Yeshua be cursed," and no one can say, "Yeshua is Lord," except by the Ruach ha-Kodesh (First Corinthians 12:3). He** brought it up again in the book of **Galatians**.

In **Galatians 3:13-14**, **Paul** returned to **his** old anti-**Yeshua**, *Talui*-attack and cited **Deuteronomy 21:22-23** in reference to **Messiah** again. This passage was always popular with the anti-**Yeshua** crowd. **But this time he put a new spin on it.** It was as if **Paul** was

warning the **God-fearing Gentiles** not to listen to what the Judaizers (see [Ag - Who Were the Judaizers?](#)) were telling them, saying, “Do not suppose that becoming **Jewish** is the easy ticket to salvation. In fact, it’s just the opposite. If you become **Jewish**, the standard goes up. You place yourself under responsibility to the whole **Torah**, all 613 commandments, and under a **curse** if you fail to obey them perfectly!”

According to **Paul’s** view, **the curse** for failing to keep the whole **Torah** extended beyond this world and into the next. **He** said: **The righteous shall live by faith (Galatians 3:11CJB)**. **The word live in the Talmud means *the olam haba*, and describes a time after the world is perfected under the rulership of Messiah. This term also refers to the afterlife, where the soul passes after death.** In that respect, to fall under **the curse** for disobedience is to forfeit the resurrection and ***the olam haba***. Like Moshe, **Paul** sets before **his** readers a choice of **blessing** and **cursing** for Jew and Gentile alike: **The faithful are blessed along with Abraham, the faithful one. [But] all who rely on the deeds of Torah are under a curse - for the Scriptures say, “Cursed is anyone who does not keep doing everything written in the scroll of the Torah” (Galatians 3:9-10).**

Messiah liberated [Jewish believers] from Torah’s curse because it was never given to **Gentiles**, it was only given to **Jews**. **Christ** didn’t merely die for our **sins**. **His death** was a penalty. Furthermore, **Yeshua Messiah** became **a curse for us**. **His death** was a penalty which **the Torah** required for breaking **it**. Now, obviously **Jesus** didn’t break any of the 613 commandments of the Torah. In fact, **He** was the only person who ever lived not to do so. **His death** was a substitutionary one. We deserved to die on **the cross**, but **He** took our place.

According to **Paul**, the final **curse** of **the Torah** is condemnation in the eternal court of judgment (see the commentary on [Revelation Fo - The Great White Throne Judgment](#)). Elsewhere, **he** points out that **the Torah brings about wrath (Romans 4:15)**. It does so because it defines **sin**. **He** said: **Now the Torah came in so that transgression** (meaning choose to **sin**, to intentionally and willfully disobey) **might increase (Romans 5:20)**. In other words, one of the functions of **the Torah** is that we would be made more aware of our **sin**. In fact, **Paul** identified **the Torah** as **the ministry of condemnation (Second Corinthians 3:9)**. When **Paul** spoke of **the curse of the Torah** here in **Galatians 3:13**, **he** referred to **the Torah’s condemnation** of **sin**.

Yet, **there is now no condemnation for those who** rely on the **faithfulness** of **Messiah Yeshua**. **For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free**

from the law of sin and death. For what was impossible for the Torah - since it was weakened on account of the flesh - God has done. Sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as a sin offering, He condemned sin in the flesh - so that the requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Ruach (Romans 8:1-4).

When **Messiah** came, he accomplished what **the Torah** could not accomplish. **Paul** reasoned that since **Messiah** was completely sinless, without spot or blemish as **the Lamb of God**, **He** had not earned **the condemnation (curse) of the Torah**. Still, **the Torah** clearly says: **If a man is guilty of a sin with a death sentence and he is put to death, and you hang (talita) him on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:22)**. Despite the fact of **His** innocence, **Yeshua** had committed no **sin**, much less a crime punishable by **death**, **the Master** was put to **death** and **hung on a tree**. The one who is **hanged** (talui) is **accursed of Ha'Shem**.

If **Yeshua** was **accursed of God** and yet had not earned that **curse** through **His** own **transgressions**, where did **He** acquire **the curse** of being **hung on** a cross made from a **tree**? **Paul** believed that **Messiah** took **the Torah's condemnation** for the **sins** of others upon **Himself**. **He** took upon **Himself the curse** due to **Jewish** believers, who were previously included under **the curse of the Torah**, and **He** also opened the **Abrahamic** blessing to the Gentiles.

Messiah liberated [the Jews] from Torah's curse, having become a curse for [them], for it is written, "Cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree." Yeshua Messiah's death satisfied every claim of Ha'Shem's holiness and justice so that He is now free to act on behalf of sinners in order that through Him the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, and also that [the Jews] might receive the promise of the Ruach through trusting faith (Galatians 3:13-14).

Paul took an old taunt, a taunt that he himself had probably used against believers in Talui . . . and turned it around. Our Master became, so to speak, accursed, in that He took upon Himself the accursedness of His people and suffered on behalf of all those under the curse of the Torah - and not only for the Jewish people, but for all who will believe in Him and rely on His faithfulness.⁸³

Dear Heavenly father, We love You! Praise You for satisfying sin's demand of death and in great power rising from the dead (First Corinthians 15:4) "Death is swallowed up in victory" . . . thanks be to God who keeps giving us the victory through our Lord Yeshua the Messiah! (First Corinthians 15:54c, 57).



You are our slain **Passover Lamb** (**John 1:29, First Corinthians 5:7**). How awesome to run to our strong daddy for protection, deliverance, and salvation for: **The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer, my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. (Psalms 18:2) I will say of ADONAI, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." (Psalms 91:2). He alone is my rock and my salvation; He is my fortress, I will never be shaken. (Psalms 62:2).**

Praise **You** for being our solid rock and fortress that we can always go to for protection from the storms of life. **Your** power is so great that **You** can still any storm (**Matthew 8:23-27, Luke 8:22-25, Mark 4:36-41**); or **You** may choose to allow the storm to howl, but we are safe in **You**, **For God Himself has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you," . . . "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear." (Hebrews 13:5c, 6b).** We love **You**! In **Jesus** holy name and power of resurrection, Amen.