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The Corpse of an Executed Criminal

21: 22-23

The corpse of an executed criminal DIG: What positive and negative imagery did God use to teach His people to respect and obey His Torah? What do you think was the original purpose of declaring God's curse on criminals hung on a tree? How does this apply to Yeshua's death on a tree?

REFLECT: Do you think that criminals being executed for heinous crimes is a deterrent to others in your society from committing similar crimes? Why? Why not? What reminders or imagery help you to obey and follow the Lord?

A criminal's lifeless body would be hung publicly to call attention to breaking God's mitzvot, and to be removed before sunset so as not to defile the Land.

ADONAI used both positive and negative imagery to teach **His people** to respect and obey **His Torah**. On the positive side, the men wore **blue tassels** on the corners of their clothing to remind them that they belonged to **YHVH** and were privileged to have the **Torah** to obey (**Numbers 15:37-41**). The weekly **Shabbat** and the annual **feasts** were reminders of all that **the LORD** had done for **Isra'el**, and the presence of **God's** sanctuary kept **His** presence before **their** eyes. **The Levites** scattered throughout **Isra'el** were living reminders of **the Torah** of **God** and the importance of knowing it.

On the negative side, the offering of blood sacrifices was a vivid reminder that the basis of forgiveness and fellowship was the surrendering up of a life: **For the life of the creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your lives - for it is the blood that makes atonement because of the life (Leviticus 17:11)**. Whenever the community stoned someone **to death** who violated the covenant, it would cause the people to "hear and fear." Isolating lepers outside the camp, burning leprosy clothes, and tearing down leprosy-infested houses reminded the people that sin is like leprosy and must be dealt with. But the public exposure of an executed criminal's corpse would be an object lesson that few would forget.

A criminal found guilty of committing **a capital crime** was stoned **to death** in **Isra'el**. But if

the elders wanted to make the judgment even more grim, they would order **the body hanged** (or impaled) from **a tree** (pole) until sundown. It was customary in Semitic societies to expose corpses of men condemned **to death** by attaching them to a pole or even impaling them. There are several examples of this in the TaNaKh (**Numbers 25:4; Joshua 8:29, 10:26-27; Second Samuel 4:12, 21:5-9; Esther 7:9**). **If someone has committed a capital crime and is put to death, then hung on a tree (21:22)**. What an object lesson that would be! Besides the shame and degradation of this manner of **death**, the one so executed would be unable to fall to their knees as a final act of repentance before **God**, thereby implying that they were under the irrevocable **curse** of **Ha'Shem**.



The corpse of the executed criminal's **body was not to remain all night on the tree**. This was to be observed at all costs. The Hebrew syntax is very emphatic on this point. The reason was that **a person who had been hung on a tree had been cursed by God. He needed to be buried** before sundown so **that** the body would **not** decay any further and **defile the Land, which ADONAI had given to the Israelites to inherit (21:23)**. The presence of the corpse **hanging** up to public gaze, with **crime**, as it were, clinging to it, and **God's curse** resting upon it, might result in untold disasters for **Isra'el** if it left **a dead body hanging** for an extended period of time. Therefore, as soon as the necessary amount of publicity had been achieved, and other likely offenders had been warned (see the commentary on **the Life of David, to see link click [Bw - Sha'ul Takes His Own Life: The Desecration of the Bodies](#)**), the corpse was buried before sunset. This rather gruesome symbolic act reminded **the people** that **God cursed** people that committed **capital crimes**.

In his day, **Paul** drew upon this brief section of scripture to make an analogy. Just as the corpse of a condemned criminal carried **the curse of God**, so **Yeshua, hanging on a tree** as a condemned and executed criminal was publicly exhibited as one who bore the judgment

of **God. Messiah** bore the same shame as every executed criminal and was publicly exhibited as one who was **cursed of God**.⁴⁶⁸ **He** was *Talui*, or *ha'Talui*, which literally means *the Hanged One*, or contextually, *the Crucified One* (see the commentary on [Galatians Bk - Cursed is Everyone Who Hangs on a Tree](#)). To free us from **the curse of God**, **Yeshua, Himself**, had to be **cursed of God**. As Paul tells us: **He (God the Father) made the One who knew no sin (God the Son) to become a sin offering on [our] behalf, so that in Him (God the Son) we might become the righteousness of God (the Trinity) (Second Corinthians 5:21).**

*Dear Holy Heavenly **Father**, Praise **Your** great love that was willing to be our sacrificial sin offering as **the lamb or God (John 1:29)**. **You** endured awful pain and suffering that all who love **You** may have **Your** righteousness. **He made the One who knew no sin to become a sin offering on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (Second Corinthians 5:21)**. Our pains and trials are not worth comparing to all **You** went through as our **Creator God** being willing to be made in the form of man and to endure shame, betrayal, awful beatings and then crucifixion **(Philippians 2:6-11)**. I take my eyes off my pains and problems and look to heaven's joys. **For I consider the sufferings of this present time not worthy to be compared with the coming glory to be revealed to us (Romans 8:18)**. In **Yeshua's** holy name and **His** power of resurrection. Amen*