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The Blasphemer
24: 10-23

The blasphemer DIG: Define blasphemy. Why is this such a serious offense? What lesson do you think the people learned from this event? In what sense do the mitzvot for collecting damages and disputes limit vengeance? Maintain a correct relationship with ADONAI?

REFLECT: When are you tempted to use curses that invoke God's Name? How can you let the LORD be your avenger? How has the sin of blasphemy changed for B'rit Chadashah believers today? What is the "unforgivable sin" today? How does this relate to your eternal security?

Whoever curses his God will bear the consequences of his sin.

The Torah leaves the long chapters of mitzvot for a brief return to the narrative. Shortly after the commandments to **sanctify God's Name** (**to see link click Du – Sanctifying the Name of God**), we are given an example of just the opposite. Providing a contrast to the theme of **holiness**, the narrative formed a solemn warning to **Isra'el** that **the Name** of **the LORD** was **their** sacred trust. This warning came in the context of the calendar of sacred festivals.[477]



The blasphemer (24:10): The Torah describes how the son of an **Egyptian** father and **Israelite woman** got into a fight with another man (apparently the child of

Israelite parents). **There was a man who was the son of a woman of Isra'el (His mother's name was Shlomit the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan) and an Egyptian father. He went out among the people of Isra'el, and this son of a woman of Isra'el had a fight in the camp with a man of Isra'el (24:10).** In the midst of the struggle the half-**Egyptian man blasphemed the Name of God** with **a curse**, **uttering the Name [Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh] in a curse.** Of course, we are not told what the exact **curse** was. The Torah will not dirty our minds with it. But, we can be certain it was heinous and unspeakable, originating from **the father of lies (John 8:44)**.

The background (24:11-12): They would have known **blaspheme** was wrong **(Exodus 22:28)** and would have been able to reason that, if **an Israelite** who **cursed his parents** was to be **put to death (Exodus 21:17)**, the same would apply to **an Israelite** who **cursed ADONAI**. But in this case, **the offender** was of mixed ethnic heritage. Since decent was usually traced through the father **(Deuteronomy 25:5-6)**, and since this **man's mother** was **an Israelite** but **his father** was **an Egyptian**, it seems **he** was not considered a native-born **Israelite** (**verse 16**, however, makes it clear that this mitzvah applied to **the resident alien**). In the story, **all those who heard the man blaspheme** were to **lay hands upon on his head**, either as a witness against **him** or to rid **themselves** of any guilt incurred in merely hearing **the blasphemy**.[478] At any rate, **they brought him to Moshe. The Israelites put him under guard until YHVH would tell them what to do (24:11-12).**

The verdict: **ADONAI** begins **His** response to **Moses** with the verdict. First, **He said to Moshe, "Take the man who cursed outside the camp.** This is where executions were carried out **(Numbers 15:35)**, undoubtedly because dead bodies were ritually defiling **(Numbers 19:11)** and **the Israelite camp** was to be pure **(Leviticus 13:46; Numbers 5:2-4)**. Second, **everyone who heard him** were to **lay their hands on his head,** either as a witness against **him (Deuteronomy 17:6)** or to rid **themselves** of any guilt incurred in merely hearing **the blasphemy**. Third, **then the entire community stoned him. Then tell the people of Isra'el, 'Whoever curses his God will bear the consequences of his sin; and whoever blasphemes the name of ADONAI must be put to death; the entire community must stone him. The foreigner as well as the citizen is to be put to death if he blasphemes the Name" (24:13-16).**

The principles (24:17-22): These verses make it clear that justice applies equally to all. Three principles are identified. First, crimes against humans are far more

serious than crimes against property. **Anyone who strikes another person and kills him must be put to death. He who kills an animal is to make restitution, but he who kills another person is to be put to death.** Second, penalties must be appropriate to the crimes. **If someone injures his neighbor, what he did is to be done to him — break for break, eye for eye, tooth for tooth — whatever injury he has caused the other person is to be rendered to him in return** (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy Do – Life for Life, Eye for Eye**)**.** Third, the penalty must not only fit the crime, it must also be applied equally to all, whether **resident alien** or **native citizen**, and by implication, whether rich or poor, slave or free. **You are to apply the same standard of judgment to the foreigner as to the citizen, because I am ADONAI your God.**[479]

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that **You** are always a righteous and fair **God**! **Your** judgment and love extend to all – both **Isra'el** and **foreigners**, and **You** discipline all in fairness **(Romans 2:3, 9-11). You** judge with wise discernment so that those who have heard **Your Tora**h and are knowledgeable about **Your** mitzvot, are judged by what they have heard and know **(Romans 2:11-16 and James 1:22).** In **Your** fair judgment **You** look beyond what is done. **You** see and judge by **the heart's attitude** as to why the deed was done. Our actions are important to show that we have moved beyond mere mental knowledge of who **You** are, into loving and desiring to follow **You**, as in the example of both **Abraham** and **Rahab**, **(James 2:21-25).** I praise **You** that **You** always are fair and accurate as **You** look at **the heart**. **For man looks at the outward appearance, but ADONAI looks into the heart (First Samuel 16:7c).***

*Deeds may be many and great that are done in your name, but the reward is based on the heart attitude. **Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear. For the Day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test each one's work – what sort it is. If anyone's work built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. (First Corinthians 3:12-14)**. If **the heart** is full of pride, then the reward for deeds will be burned up, even if **the miracles themselves** were great. It is **the heart** of love that **You** are looking for. How sad it will be for those who have done **miracles** in **Your** name to be told by **You** that **You** have never known **them**. **Not everyone who says to Me, "Lord, Lord!" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord,***

didn't we prophesy in Your name, and drive out demons in Your name, and perform many miracles in Your name?" Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you. Get away from Me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matthew 7:21-23)!

*How wonderful it will be for all whose **hearts** are full of love for **You** and they showed it by their kind and gracious deeds to others. **You** will welcome them into **Your Kingdom**. **Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed by My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me. Then the righteous will answer Him, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You? Or thirsty and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger and invite You in? Or naked and clothe You? When did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?" And answering, the King will say to them, "Amen, I tell you, whatever you did to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 22:34-40).** Thank you for being such a wise, loving and discerning **Heavenly Father** who sees and judges by **the heart** attitude. In the power of **the One** who sits at **Your** right hand. Amen*

The punishment (24:23): This verse ties the whole story together: **the Israelites** sought **the LORD's** direction **(24:12), Moshe** passed it on to **them (24:13-22)** and **they** obeyed **Ha'Shem's** command: **So, Moshe spoke to the people of Isra'el, and they took the man who had cursed outside the camp and stoned him to death. Thus, the people of Isra'el did as ADONAI had ordered Moshe (24:23). He** was **stoned to death** not only for **his** own offense, but also on behalf of all **those** who heard **the blasphemy**. By such a severe punishment **YHVH** declared for all time the gravity of this offense.

There are some that would say that **Ha'Shem** was too strict for demanding the life of someone who **blasphemed His Name**. But **the Holy One Himself** stated **His** case quite clearly: **He who kills an animal is to make restitution, but he who kills another person is to be put to death (24:21).** Consequently, a person who **blasphemed God** was like a person who committed human murder. **YHVH** cannot be murdered, obviously. But, according to **Yeshua's** standard – which is the same standard reflected here in **24:21** – found in **Matthew 5:21**, **anyone who**

hates his brother/neighbor in his heart is guilty of murder. Thus, the one who **blasphemes God**, really hates **God** and is **His enemy (James 4:4)**.[480]

God's Grace: The story of **the blasphemer** made it very clear to **the Israelites** that those who reject **the LORD** will be rejected by **Him**. A point the B'rit Chadashah underscores when it states that those who reject **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh's** testimony about **Yeshua** will likewise be rejected. **Yeshua** reveals this to us when **He** declares: **And so I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter**; even if they speak **a word against the Son of Man. Sin** here represents the full gamut of immoral and ungodly thoughts and actions. **Son of Man** designates **the Lord's** humanity. **The lost** may have a faulty perception that may not allow **them** to see **Christ's** deity. If **they** come to that conclusion based on a faulty assumption and speak against **the Deliverer** in **His** humanness, such **a word against the Son of Man can be forgiven** if, after gaining fuller light, **they** then believe in the truth of **His** deity. In fact, **many** who denied and rejected **the Lord of Life** before the cross later saw the truth of who **He** was and asked forgiveness and were saved. **But, whoever blasphemes against the Ruach Ha'Kodesh will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Em – Whoever Blasphemes Against the Holy Spirit**)**.**

In an ironic twist in the Gospel narrative, the charge against **Yeshua** that sent **Him** to the cross was the charge of **blasphemy** (see **The Life of Christ Ek – It is only by Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons, That This Fellow Drives Out Demons**). In condemning **the Son of God** to **death**, **His** accusers were in fact guilty of **blaspheming**, and if they did not eventually repent, they would be separated from **Him** forever in **unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12)**.[481]

Haftarah Emor reading (Ezeki'el 44:15-31):
(see the commentary on Deuteronomy Af – Parashah)

The most **holy** must stay the most **holy** by living the most **holy** lives. The priests taught the people to separate the kodesh (**holy**) from the chol (common) and the tamei (impure) from the tahor (pure). The priests needed to set the example that they impart to others. Priests are to reserve the fat and blood from all sacrifices for **ADONAI** alone **(Eze 44:15)**. In fact, they must keep the linens in **the Holy Place**, lest the garments touch the people and consecrate them with **holiness (Eze 44:19)**. Nor could a priest drink wine while on duty. They needed to marry

consecrated women, whether widows or widows of other priests **(Eze 44:21-22)**. Priests who ate in **the holy Presence** of **God** needed to eat foods that were not only kosher, but also untouched by impure hands **(Eze 29-31)**. In short, the priests were to live lives completely saturated with **holiness**.

B'rit Hadashah reading (Luke 14:16-24):

The parable of the great banquet (see **The Life of Christ Hp – The Parable of the Great Banquet**) describes a grand banquet in the making. Formal invitations are sent and implicitly accepted. Afterward, extensive preparations are completed. The host sends his servant to inform the invitees, who then respond with refusals that need to have been communicated before preparations began. Understandably, these tardy excuses enrage the host, who suddenly faces the embarrassment of vacant seats. Thus, he invites new guests: the poor, crippled, lame and blind **(Luke 14:20-21)**. Empty seats remained, so invitations are extended a third time! Now the servant goes to the highways outside where the *ger* (*resident alien*) travels, and the hedges where the beggars search for food left in the corners of the vineyard **(Luke 14:23)**. The servant urges even strangers to attend, for the host insists on a full house for supper. Finally, the host declares: **I tell you, not one of those who were invited** (and declined) **will get a taste of my banquet (Luke 14:24).**[482]