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Personal Responsibility

24: 16

Personal responsibility DIG: How does this mitzvah protect the vulnerable? In what way are individuals held responsible for their own sin? What was the difference between what Moses was saying in Leviticus, and what he is now saying in Deuteronomy?

REFLECT: Have you ever been punished for something that your parents, or brothers or sisters did? Do you remember the sense of injustice you felt? Did you ever get them in trouble for something that you did? That is what ADONAI is trying to avoid here?

The Torah continues to protect the vulnerable by declaring that individuals are responsible for their own sin.

Deuteronomy 19:1 to 26:15 (to see link click [DI](#) - The Social and Family Mitzvot) deals with individual mitzvot, and to today's readers they might appear irrelevant at first, but the very principles behind these commandments were the ones that have brought dignity to mankind. We need to examine these mitzvot in depth to discover the spirit in which they were given, so that we can still live in obedience to **God's Word** today. For example, in **Numbers 18, the Israelites** were to bring **their tithes** to the Tabernacle because **the priests** and **Levites** had **no inheritance**. But today we have no Temple and no priesthood; however, we bring our tithes to our place of worship. That is the spirit of the mitzvah.

From **23:15 to 26:15, Moses** deals with **twenty** real life situations that the nation would need to function in a godly manner, and valuable lessons for us today as well: **number thirteen.**

Though personal responsibility was the norm in the law codes of the ancient Near East, in some cases **a son** was **put to death** for his **father's sins**. Therefore, in the case where a careless builder caused a death of the son of the owner of the house when the house collapsed, the son of the builder was put to death (Code of

Hammurabi, Law 230). Moses, however, forbid such a practice.⁵³¹ This mitzvah is sometimes confused with the idea that **God’s** punishment **extends to the third and fourth generation (Exodus 20:5-6; Deuteronomy 5:9-10)**, but those statements do not have the court of law as their setting. The book of the Covenant (see the commentary on **Exodus Dv - The Book of the Covenant**) shows that **the sin of a father** will have bad effects on the next generation of **his** family, but does not actually involve them in **his** punishment (**Exodus 22:23**).⁵³²



Many crimes in **the Torah of Moses** were punishable by death. But **ADONAI** does not hold innocent people responsible for another’s **sin**. **Fathers are not to be put to death for children (24:16a)**. This mitzvah is concerned with protecting the vulnerable – in this case the relatives of one found guilty of a capital offense, who, though personally innocent, might be exposed to community anger or vengeance. This is a principle, as some have claimed, that does not come to light in **Isra’el** in a later period, but is fundamental to **their** earliest recorded mitzvot, such as the Book of the Covenant. This mitzvah, like that in **Exodus 21:31**, excludes “collective punishment,” or the execution of **parents** along with **their** guilty **children** in normal judicial proceedings.⁵³³

And children are not to be put to death for fathers - each one is to be put to death for his own sin (24:16b). Special praise was given in a later day to **King Amaziah**, when, in obedience to this mitzvah, **he** did not execute **the children of his father’s assassins**, as was the custom done by Near Eastern monarchs. **He** trusted **YHVH** to control those potential rebels. **Once the kingdom was established in his hand, he killed his courtiers who had assassinated his father the king. However, he did not execute the children of the assassins, keeping what is written in the Torah of Moses, where ADONAI commanded saying, “the fathers will not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but each one will be put**

to death for his own sin” (Second Kings 14:5-6).⁵³⁴

A **father’s** treachery can have far-reaching effects on succeeding generations, and people can experience the consequences of **sin** without having committed **the sin** that brought about those consequences. **Ha’Shem** holds individuals responsible **for their own sin**. An unfaithful response would bring godly discipline. **Deuteronomy** is the first book to introduce this concept. In **Leviticus**, **Moses** was saying, “Don’t do wrong, because **Ha’Shem** says not to.” However, in **Deuteronomy**, **he** is saying, “Don’t do wrong, because **Ha’Shem** will discipline you if you do.” A transition is made from the collective to individual discipline here in this verse.

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that though **You** do deal with nations as a whole for blessings and punishment (**Genesis 15:16, 18; Leviticus 26**), yet **You** have made the entrance into **Your** holy heaven an individual choice. **But whoever did receive Him, those trusting in His name, to these He gave the right to become children of God (John 1:12). For if you confess with your mouth that Yeshua is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart it is believed for righteousness, and with the mouth it is confessed for salvation (Romans 10:9-10). He who trusts in the Son has eternal life. He who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. (John 3:36).***

*Family and friends may laugh or persecute **Your** followers, yet it is well worth the times of trial to love and follow **You** by loving **You** and believing on **Yeshua’s** death and resurrection as the only way to enter **Your** holy heaven. **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).** These times will be over soon and for all who love **You**, an eternity of only joy awaits them. **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).** Looking forward to an eternity of peace and joy, praising and worshipping you forever! In **Yeshua’s** holy name and the power of **His** resurrection. Amen*