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Limits for Corporal Punishment

25: 1-3

Limits of corporal punishment DIG: Whose welfare is being protected here? Why? What rights and punishment does the guilty have? Why are they spelled out here? What was the procedure? What might have happened to a guilty person before Deuteronomy had been written?

REFLECT: Paul was flogged five times in this manner (Second Corinthians 11:24). What type of punishment would any of us today endure for the Lord? This will give us the opportunity for ministry. O Lord, give us the strength to do what we must do when the time comes.

To beat a man excessively would be to treat him like an animal, thus degrading him. This mitzvah does not focus on preventing this person's death, but preserving his dignity.

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 fifteen**.

The Code of Hammurabi (Law 202) permitted 60 **lashes** and later Assyrian laws permitted between 40 and 50 **lashes**. **In the times of the B'rit Chadashah the Jews had settled on 39 lashes as a safeguard against going over the 40. The rabbis taught that the**

forty lashes corresponded to the number of days during which the Torah was communicated to Moshe. It has often been said that **Yeshua's** flogging consisted of 39 lashes, but since **He** was **flogged** by the Romans and not **the Jews**, **the number of lashes He** received is unknown. Sometimes, the Romans were excessively cruel in their **flogging**.⁵⁴³



This mitzvah assumes a scenario in which at least two men have a dispute that they have brought before the appointed **judges**. **The judges** will find one of them guilty and one of them innocent. If the guilty man deserves punishment, the judge will order a penalty of a certain number of **lashes**.⁵⁴⁴ Punishment by beating was customary (**Deuteronomy 22:18; Proverbs 10:13**), and could be severe (**Exodus 21:20-21**); even here the limitation of forty **lashes** suggests that the practice may have run to much more in the earlier days before **Deuteronomy** was written. The radical nature of the mitzvah lies in the fact that all were treated equally before the courts; the possibility of a separate kind of treatment for slaves, in particular, cannot be found.⁵⁴⁵ It is sad that in the popular perception of the TaNaKh is so often vilified for the severity of its punishments, whereas this mitzvah, with its careful limitations and its explicit protection of the rights and dignity of criminals, is overlooked.⁵⁴⁶

Suppose there is a dispute between people and they approach the court, the judges hear their case, and declare one righteous and the other guilty. Now if the guilty one deserves to be flogged, the judge is to make him lie down and be flogged before him, with the number of lashes in proportion to his guilt. The flogging must be carried out in the presence of **the judge**; in this way, **the judge** was able to see that the sentence was carried out properly, and that the offender was not treated too leniently or too harshly. The punishment must fit the crime. Forty **lashes** were not the required penalty, but the maximum penalty. **He may strike him 40 times but no more. Otherwise, he would beat him with too many a wound beyond these, and your brother would be degraded in your eyes (25:1-3).** This mitzvah envisions the restoration of an offending member of the covenantal community to a dignified place among his people.

As believers, we must be ready to face the persecution of the world. It is already happening in many parts of the world. The hatred for **the Jews**, for all believers, and **the Messiah** whom we worship is increasing daily. **Yeshua** said: **They will seize you and persecute you.** Although originally spoken to **the apostles**, this should get our attention today. **You must be on your guard.** **Must** means *to take precaution, lest persecution causes you to disavow the Messiah.* **John** said it like this: **Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; but whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son (Second John 1:8-9).** **The Jews will hand you over to the [Lesser] Sanhedrins** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Lg - The Great Sanhedrin**) **and put you in prison, and** secondly, the Gentiles **will bring you before kings and governors on account of My name. This will result in** an opportunity for ministry, for **you** will be **witnesses to them and bear testimony to Me (Mark 13:9; Luke 21:12-13).**

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** that though **You** have limitless power and could wipe out anyone who sins immediately, **You** are patient. **The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some consider slowness. Rather, He is being patient toward you - not wanting anyone to perish, but for all to come to repentance (Second Peter 3:9).** **You** draw all of mankind to **Yourself (John 6:44-45).***

*Your wrath will come; but only after we are raptured into heaven to be with **You**. **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).** How important it is to use the time you have given us on earth to love and follow **You** now, for there are no second chances after death. Death is final and seals our fate forever. **And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after this judgment, (Hebrews 9:27).** I love **You** and desire to wisely use my time, money, and thoughts to **Your** honor. In **Yeshua's** holy name and **His** power of resurrection. Amen*