

## SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

**LEV. 24:10** And the son of an Israelitish woman, whose father *was* an Egyptian, went out among the children of Israel: and this son of the Israelitish *woman* and a man of Israel strove together in the camp;

**11** And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name *of the LORD*, and cursed. And they brought him unto Moses: (and his mother's name *was* Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan:)

12 And they put him in ward, that the mind of the LORD might be shewed them.

**13** And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

14 Bring forth him that hath cursed without the camp; and let all that heard *him* lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him.

**15** And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.

16 And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, *and* all the congre-

gation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name *of the LORD*, shall be put to death.

**17** And he that killeth any man shall surely be put to death.

18 And he that killeth a beast shall make it good; beast for beast.

**19** And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him;

20 Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth: as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him *again*.

**21** And he that killeth a beast, he shall restore it: and he that killeth a man, he shall be put to death.

22 Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country: for I *am* the LORD your God.

**23** And Moses spake to the children of Israel, that they should bring forth him that had cursed out of the camp, and stone him with stones. And the children of Israel did as the LORD commanded Moses.

### NOTES

# A Blasphemer Stoned

Lesson Text: Leviticus 24:10-23

Related Scriptures: Exodus 20:1-21; Deuteronomy 13:6-18;  
Matthew 12:30-32; Acts 5:1-11

TIME: 1445 B.C.

PLACE: Mount Sinai

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**GOLDEN TEXT**—"Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exodus 20:7).

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## *Lesson Exposition*

### **HOLINESS OF GOD'S NAME— Lev. 24:10-16**

**Fight in the Israelite camp (Lev. 24:10-11).** This week's lesson begins with a narrative that tells of a man who was half Israelite and half Egyptian. His mother, Shelomith, was from the tribe of Dan, but we know nothing about his father, except that he was Egyptian. Whether Shelomith's husband was a follower of the true God or whether he had even accompanied his wife and son when they left Egypt is unknown.

In later times, rabbinic law held that a child who had a Jewish mother and a Gentile father was considered a Jew. While the rabbinic law was much later than the time of Moses, perhaps this was the principle all along, although not yet established formally. In any case, this man was a part of the Israelite community and subject to their laws.

At the same time, being the product of a mixed marriage probably meant the man was not yet considered fully a part of the true "congregation of the Lord" (cf. Deut. 23:7-8) but was included in that group referred to as the "mixed multitude" (Ex. 12:38). These

were people who had left Egypt along with the Israelites at the time of the Exodus. Some had probably joined them because they genuinely feared the Lord; others presumably saw this as an opportunity to escape their own slavery. In fact, these people might have been motivated to leave with the Israelites for any number of reasons. As we will see, they created problems during Israel's journey (cf. Num. 11:4).

The half-Israelite man became engaged in a fight with an Israelite man for an unspecified reason, and during the scum he uttered blasphemy against the name of the Lord in a curse. He was immediately brought to Moses, as this was a clear violation of the law (cf. Ex. 20:7). The prohibition against cursing or blaspheming God's name had been clearly established, but the penalty for such an offense had not yet been given, so the man was brought to Moses to determine what his punishment would be.

In ancient times especially, a person's name was synonymous with the person himself and his character. To denigrate a person's name was to make an attack on the person himself.

God's name is holy just as He is holy. To curse His name is to curse God directly. It is a complete moral failure for a sinful human being to curse the name of God, who is righteous and holy.

**Waiting for God's will (Lev. 24:12).** When those who heard the man blaspheme the Lord's name brought him to Moses, the blasphemer was put in custody. The people did not take quick action themselves to punish the man but left the matter to God. After all, it was God whom He had offended, and without clear guidance on what to do, they were willing to wait for Him to instruct them on how to punish the man.

**The word from the Lord (Lev. 24:13-14).** The people waited to hear from the Lord, and soon, presumably, God did speak to Moses.

The first thing God told Moses was to take the man out of the camp. He was to be put to death, but to kill him inside the camp would have defiled the entire community with a corpse.

After taking him outside the camp, all those who heard the man blaspheme God were to lay their hands on his head. This was significant for at least two reasons. First, it served as testimony against the man as to his guilt and confirmed him as the guilty party. Second, the laying on of hands points back to the scapegoat, where the high priest laid his hands on the goat, signifying the transfer of the people's sin. The goat would then be sent away into the wilderness, symbolizing that the sins of the people were removed from their midst.

In this instance, the sin of the man was being returned onto his own head, outside the camp, and he would be punished for his offense. The fact that he cursed God meant that he had no reverence for the Lord.

Finally, all the people were instructed to execute the man by stoning him to death. The entire community was

responsible to root out the sin among them, but only at the clear direction of the Lord.

**Setting the precedent (Lev. 24:15-16).** To show that this was not a one-time punishment simply to set an example for the people regarding the holiness of God's name, the Lord stated that any future violators would also suffer the same penalty.

Since the whole congregation was to participate in this man's execution, it would no doubt serve as a reminder of what would happen to those who cursed God in the future. It would also serve as a deterrent against angry speech, since an irreverent word spoken against the Lord would result in a person's execution by the community.

This statute was the same for Israelites as it was for non-Israelites who lived among them. God's name is holy and is to be regarded as such by all who acknowledge Him.

#### **SACREDNESS OF LIFE— Lev. 24:17-23**

**The value of human life (Lev. 24:17).** God has always placed a high value on human life. Since He is the Creator of all life, only He has the right to determine who lives and dies, along with when and under what circumstances.

The reason human life is sacred is not only because God created us, but also because He created us in His image (Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1). Anyone who murders another human being is making an attack on God's sacred and unique creation, and the penalty for that is very steep (cf. 9:6).

**The value of animal life (Lev. 24:18).** The difference between the value of human life and animal life is clearly seen in verse 18. Human life is protected to the point that whoever takes a life must lose his own, whereas one who takes the life of someone's

animal must pay restitution.

This does not mean that animal life is unimportant, only that there is a great difference between animals and humans. Man is created in God's image, while animals are not. Contrary to the teachings of evolutionists and naturalists, man is not simply a highly evolved animal but rather the pinnacle of God's creation, who uniquely bears His image.

Killing an animal, in itself, was not forbidden, since animals were used for both food and sacrifice. In view here is the accidental or malicious killing of domestic animals owned by others.

**Laws of restitution (Lev. 24:19-20).** Generally, under the law anyone who brought harm to another person's being or property was to pay restitution (cf. Ex. 21:18—22:15). This concept is almost foreign to modern thinking and preaching. Much is said about repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration, but very little is taught today concerning restitution.

The notion that repentance involves only an acknowledgment of guilt is not biblical. Part of repenting is, whenever possible, to make things right with those whom we have offended. Thus, God's law called for a thief not simply to apologize to the one he had stolen from, but rather to repay or replace that which was stolen—and then some.

Under the Law, restitution was an important part of community life. Ancient Israel did not have any prisons, so it was especially necessary for lawbreakers to restore what they broke or stole.

The principle of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" set the standard for how to punish crime (Lev. 24:20). It did not demand punishment in kind but that the punishment must fit the crime. It removed the subjectivity of punishing crime as each individual saw fit and limited how punishments could be doled out.

**Same standard for everyone (Lev. 24:21-22).** The standard of justice is summarized by stating that whoever killed an animal should make restitution, but whoever killed another human being must be put to death. The rule was not limited to just the Israelites but also applied to all those living among them, just as with the blasphemer.

**Execution of the blasphemer (Lev. 24:23).** The chapter closes with the people doing what God had told them to do with the blasphemer. The people took him out of the camp and stoned him to death.

The Word of God is not something simply to be agreed with or studied. It is also to be obeyed.

—Robert Ferguson, Jr.

## QUESTIONS

1. What nationality was the man who is discussed in Leviticus 24:10?
2. Of what sin was this man guilty?
3. Why was this such a serious offense?
4. What did the people do with the man after he cursed God?
5. Why did they need to wait for God's direction?
6. Who was responsible for carrying out the final punishment God commanded?
7. Why is human life so sacred and valuable to God?
8. How is human life differentiated from animal life in God's law?
9. How were most cases involving injury to a person or his property resolved?
10. What safeguards were established by the principle of "eye for eye, tooth for tooth" (vs. 20)?

—Robert Ferguson, Jr.

## PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We must strive for unity within the church; division within God's people is an affront to God (Lev. 24:10-11).
2. We must always consult the Lord in difficult choices, especially in matters of punishment (vs. 12).
3. We should take seriously the costs of judgment on those who rebel against the Lord (vss. 13-14).
4. We can never pay the cost for sin against an infinitely holy God. Only Jesus can be our perfect Sacrifice (vss. 15-16).
5. God is just, so we should act justly toward our neighbors (vss. 17-21).
6. All men are equal in respect to God's law, and they have all violated it and deserve death (vss. 22-23).

—Megan Hickman.

## RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. Why is it important to be intentional about raising children in the ways of the Lord (Lev. 24:10-11)?
2. What steps can you take to ensure that you are using godly wisdom to make decisions? What are some resources God has given us to do so?
3. We obviously do not put people to death for blasphemy today. Why was it just for Moses to do this?
4. Why is it important for us to respect our church leaders when they have to make difficult decisions?
5. Should God's judgment bring comfort or fear to a believer?
6. In what way should you appeal to God's holiness while practicing evangelism?

—Megan Hickman.

## Golden Text Illuminated

**“Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7).**

The context of our golden text for this week is, of course, the giving of the Ten Commandments. Our verse is the third among the commandments and is echoed in the Lord's prayer, “Hallowed be thy name” (Matt. 6:9).

Although our verse is not taken from this week's lesson text, Leviticus 24:10 through 23, it definitely relates to it directly. In our lesson text, a man was heard to curse the name of Yahweh in the course of fighting with another man. This man was taken into custody until Moses had a chance to seek the judgment of Yahweh concerning the man's punishment. The verdict handed down from the very mouth of Yahweh was that the man must be taken outside the camp and stoned to death.

Now think about the way God's name is used and abused throughout our contemporary society; is blasphemy against the name of God considered a serious offense? In the various media, the abuse of God's holy name is commonplace, looked upon as merely a colorful form of verbal punctuation. In everyday speech among the unsaved, God's name is treated the same, or sometimes even worse. As cultural values shift away from Christianity, Christians are standing out more clearly than ever before.

The name of the Lord is still holy and must never be used vainly. Let us make sure that our own speech hallows that name at all times!

—John Lody.