

LEVITICUS

Lesson 36 - Chapter 24

Leviticus chapter 24 presents us with a somewhat diverse collection of ordinances and rules about various subjects. The first few verses deal with matters concerning the Sanctuary of Yehoveh that is for this era of Leviticus the mobile tent called the Wilderness Tabernacle, and later will be the Temple located in Jerusalem. The last half of Leviticus 24 deals primarily with a crime of a very serious nature: Blasphemy, and secondarily about justice in general.

Now much of what we will read we have heard about before. In some cases the information is generally repetitive; in other cases it adds additional information that is important. The Sages and Rabbis struggled with this section of Leviticus by the way, and I'll show you the area of disagreement and concern when we get to it.

READ LEVITICUS 24 all

Just to remind us, verse 1 tells us that what we are reading is what Yehoveh communicated to Moses. And also just to remind us, almost to a fault we can replace every instance of the word "Lord" (when it is referring to the divine), and every instance of the word "God" in our O.T.'s, with the word "Yehoveh"..... the name of God. Why can we rightly do this? Because we are simply **restoring** the original by that substitution. I do not mean to drive this subject into the ground but I keep finding more reasons, day by day, as to why it is important to restore God's name to our Scriptures. And 99% of the time.....quite **literally** 99% of the time.....we see the words "Lord" and "God" in our Bibles, in the O.T., the original Hebrew was yud-heh-vav-heh.....Yehoveh. This is not conjecture or reverse engineering it is simply fact. We have not only the Masoretic texts in Hebrew, dating to the 800's A.D., we now have the Dead Sea Scrolls that have most of the O.T. books among them for comparison and they date at least to the time of the birth of Christ and probably a century earlier. And in all cases it is very rare that we find the Hebrew terms for "God" or "Lord" used in reference to Yehoveh; rather His personal name is used more than 6000 times just as it used her to start off Leviticus 24.

Yehoveh instructs the Israelites that they are to use clear, pure olive oil for fueling the Menorah.....the large, golden lamp stand that resides in the Holy Place of the Sanctuary. I'm going to show you some things that I think are very significant but are often lost in translation. I want first to remind you of a key verse in the N.T., which correlates the Torah with the Messiah. Jesus, Yeshua, says this: **NAS John 5:46 "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. 47 "But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"**

So much of the Torah sets up patterns and types and shadows that describe the coming and the purpose of the Messiah. And here, hidden in this 2nd verse of Leviticus, is a tiny piece to the puzzle. We know that the Menorah is associated with the Messiah as He is the light of the world. And the book of Revelation, in particular, directly makes that connection for us; we don't have to guess about it. Well the Menorah requires something to be burned as fuel to provide the light; and that something is described as pure olive oil. Other things were available at that time and regularly used to burn and thus create light: animal fat, dried animal dung, oil from sea creatures, wax, even petroleum that bubbled up naturally through small fissures in the earth. But Yehoveh required that ONLY olive oil be used in the Menorah. We find all through the Bible that a connection is made between the olive tree and Israel; eventually the olive tree will come to symbolize Israel in the Scriptures.

There were many ways to process the olives to extract the oil. Usually they were pressed.....smashed and smushed..... to squeeze the oil out. But here in Leviticus we have an unusual Hebrew word used to describe the REQUIRED process to obtain the olive oil fuel when it is to be used for the Menorah; the Hebrew verb is *kathith*, and it means, "beaten". The olives must be struck, hit, beaten, not pressed to take the oil out. I'm sure the Hebrews had little clue as to why this was necessary. Rashi has commented on the use of this word and was himself at somewhat of a loss as to why the olives specifically were to be beaten. It was much quicker and easier to simply crush the olives with mortar and pestle, the standard way, and later that an olive press be employed. But we have with hindsight the ability to understand that Yeshua, the Messiah, would be severely beaten, struck harshly. Yet Messiah would NOT be crushed, His bones would not be broken or pulverized. This olive oil process of the olive being beaten rather than crushed and pressed for use in the Menorah sets up a type and pattern.

Let me also take a moment to clear something up. Only rarely do English translations directly bring across the word Menorah; usually it is translated as Lamp Stand or Golden Lamp Stand. Understand: when you see the word Lamp Stand or Golden Lamp Stand used (and this includes the New Testament) it is referring to the Temple Menorah.

Recall this well-known saying of Jesus in Revelation:

NAS Revelation 2:5 'Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place-- unless you repent.'

If you have the Complete Jewish Bible, the word lampstand has correctly been replaced with the word Menorah. The importance is that analogies of the work of Messiah are directly tied to sacred and holy things like the Temple Menorah and this is so we can see that connection.

The olive tree is the symbol of Israel and the purest olive oil represents Yeshua, the purest Israelite. Yeshua embodied the heavenly ideal of Israel....what Paul (for lack of words) called the "True Israel". ***True Israel*** is the spiritual counterpart of the earthly and physical nation of Israel (our Reality of Duality at play, once again). And it is Yeshua that is the purest fuel that provides or the purest light (or better, enlightenment) for a dark world. WE as His disciples are

to emulate Him; we are to be pure and clean fuel for the light as well. We will never attain in these bodies the purity of our Savior, but we are to strive for purity. In a few minutes I'll show you another place where the ministry of the Messiah is woven into this 24th chapter of Leviticus.

The next couple of verses also straighten out some things about just how the Menorah is to be attended to. For instance the last few word of verse 2 are typically translated as "to cause the lamps to burn continually". Some versions will say, "to cause the lamps to burn ALWAYS or FOREVER". That causes a problem because the very next verse, verse 3, says that the lamps are to burn from evening to morning, which is quite different than "always". What gives?

The Hebrew word that has been typically translated as "continually" or "always" is **tamid**. When **tamid** is used as an adjective or an adverb (as it is here) it does NOT mean continually or always. Rather it means "regularly". In our case, in this context, the word "daily" probably is the best translation. Therefore the verse should read, "to cause the lamps to burn **daily**".

Look now at verse 3; it says the lamps shall burn from "evening to morning" and then, rather oddly, appears to add the word "continually". That is most Bibles say, "from evening to morning before the Lord **continually**" (which frankly doesn't make a lot of sense.....how can it be only during the hours of darkness and continually at the same time?) I have even read commentaries saying that the Menorah burned night and day BECAUSE the Bible supposedly says they should burn continually. Wrong. And of course that is done to make it match with the translation for the previous verse that also is translated as "continually" or some such other word meaning the same thing. Again the Hebrew word is **tamid**, which means regularly NOT continually. So the problem is rather easily resolved. And, BTW, the verse actually reads, "from evening to morning before **Yehoveh** regularly".

As one would imagine the Menorah ONLY burned during the hours of darkness. And what great symbolism there is in that; the Messiah, represented by the Menorah, the Golden Lampstand, was consumed on earth for a specific purpose; to be fuel to put light into a dark place..... the world. When He comes back to rule He will not be fuel that is consumed; He will be King that rules over a place of light, not darkness. As we're told in Revelation there will be no Sun and no Moon, and no need for lamps; for Yehoveh will be our light. The way PHYSICAL light is produced in our Universe is by something being consumed as fuel. In our Universe light results from the conversion of matter to energy whether it is olive oil, wood, petroleum, gasoline, or hydrogen that fuels the stars including our Sun. While Yeshua was here physically the ONLY way He could produce light was by His being consumed. Folks that is the ONLY way WE can produce light.....by our being consumed. Our lives must be used and used up....consumed... for Him if we're going to produce light. A conversion of matter to energy must occur. We can be a container full of pure olive oil (one who holds Jesus in our hearts), but until the fire is lit the oil is not consumed. Until we put action (energy) into what we have no light emits. Knowledge of the truth, sitting around feeling warm and fuzzy and peaceful, does NOT produce light. We must use up our time, our resources, and our lives for Him..... otherwise we're just kidding ourselves and we're liable to be among those many who, when the Lord returns runs out to meet Him and greets Him with, "Lord, Lord!!"; to which Yeshua replies, "...I never knew you". Let me state clearly, though, that is not our consumption for Him that brings

salvation; rather, our consumption is **a result** of understanding our Salvation and allowing it to take it's natural course in our lives.

After instructions for the Menorah, verses 5-9 deals with what is typically called the Shewbread. These are 12 very large loaves of bread.....leavened bread.....that sit on a table inside the Holy Place and they are to be placed in two rows. As we know the approximate dimensions of the table (a little over 2 feet square) we know that the loaves had to be stacked...piled.....on top of each other.

Each loaf required about 2 ¼ liters (about 5 pints) of semolina flour. Each loaf would have weighed nearly 4 lbs. Now laying out bread or other food in a temple of the gods was very usual and customary in Middle Eastern society of that day, and in Egypt as well. But here among the Hebrews, God makes it clear that the food is NOT for Him. This food is to be the priests' portion.

The symbolism of the 2 rows, or stacks, or Shewbread coincided with the two large stones that were part of the High Priest's Ephod; upon these two stones were written the names of the 12 tribes of Israel.....6 names on each stone. But the fact that the 12 are divided into two groups and that there are two stones with the 12 names of Israel divided between the two, tells me that the symbolism takes one more step: that in the near future (from the day of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai), Israel would be divided into TWO parts, two houses. Of course neither Moses nor the Israelites would have guessed such a thing was near.

Verse 7 needs a little straightening out; normally, the translations say that Frankincense was to be place UPON the loaves of Shewbread. So the picture we get is that the fragrant and super expensive spice Frankincense is to be sprinkled on top of each loaf. Frankincense is certainly fragrant, but how well it tastes is quite another matter.

In fact the Hebrew preposition '**al**', which is usually translated **upon** (making the Frankincense put UPON the bread) is incorrect. '**Al**' does NOT mean upon it means next to, or beside, or near, or together with. So what occurred was the Frankincense was put into two incense burners BESIDE the Table of Shewbread and then burned as incense.

We only get a couple of off-handed types of references to the Shewbread as used in the Temple in the N.T.; the more notable one being when Jesus was defending the use of His healing power on the Sabbath. **NAS Matthew 12:1 At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath through the grainfields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. 2 But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." 3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; 4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread (the Shewbread), which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?**

So this practice of displaying the Shewbread in the Temple and attesting that it was only meant for eating by the priests, Yeshua fully confirms here in the N.T. by admitting that David technically was breaking the Law to eat it. His point was that Sages and Rabbis had no

problem with David helping himself to that Shewbread; it was understood that when life and well-being came into play that sometimes it had to be weighed against the strictest interpretation of the Law. Yeshua was employing the well-known rabbinic method of debate called Kal V'omer; the weighing of light versus heavy. So He is basically saying that if they had no problems with David feeding men who were hungry using sacred bread, why should they have a problem with Him feeding his hungry disciples on a sacred Sabbath?

The Shewbread was replaced once per week for each new Shabbat with the priests getting what was removed.

Verse 10 begins to deal with the law against Blasphemy and other serious crimes. I have noted on a number of occasions that it was a mixed multitude that came up out of Egypt. And here we are given one example of an Israelite woman who had married an Egyptian man, and produced this "mixed" son. We can assume there were thousands and thousands of families of some type of mix similar to this one that had followed Israel out of Egypt. The point is made that the "half-Israelite" got into a fight with a full-blooded Israelite and during the heat of battle the half-Egyptian pronounced the NAME (that is, the Shem, of God, Yehoveh) in blasphemy.....in modern day language, he said a swear word.....he used God's name in vein.

Exodus 22:27 sites the law concerning the careless use of God's name: **NAS Exodus 20:7** ***"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.***

Here we see the punishment for such an act: death. The context of this whole affair is sort of like the presenting of a case before a judge. That is a fairly detailed example of a crime is given, and then the penalty is prescribed.

It is interesting that it is made clear that the tribe this man came from....at least, his mother's tribe.....was the tribe of Dan. Dan would, not too long after entering the Promised Land, pull away from the other tribes of Israel and form a cult; the city of Dan in Northern Israel became the center of their cult. They built a Temple and an altar there, and practiced all sorts of abominable pagan rituals (one can visit the exact place to this day). So Dan would gain a reputation as the bad boys among the Israelites, and we'll find a number of cases where it is specifically mentioned that someone from the tribe of Dan did something wrong, and then the punishment is prescribed; and thus Dan was sometimes used as an object lesson.

I mentioned earlier that we find some hidden references to the Messiah in this chapter. I have demonstrated one and here we find another but we really only see it when we examine the Hebrew. In verse 11 where it states that the son of the Israelite woman "pronounced" or "blasphemed" (depending on your Bible version) the Name of God, the Hebrew word used is "**naqab**".

Earlier in our lesson we saw that the olives from which the holy olive oil was extracted to fuel the Menorah could NOT be crushed, rather they had to be beaten. Here we find that the Hebrew word **naqab** is used to describe the nature of the capital crime of taking God's name in vein. Literally, **naqab** means to pierce and it is usually translated to blaspheme. So **naqab**

means pierce as is in the sense of causing a piercing wound, causing harm.

We find then that in cursing by using Yehoveh's name, the ½ Israelite ½ Egyptian had **pierced** God's name; just as we found earlier that the olives used to provide fuel for the enlightenment of the world had to be **beaten**. If there are two dramatic characteristics often used in the New Testament to describe Christ's passion they are beaten and pierced. Indeed Moses spoke much of the Messiah (as Jesus said he did) and we could see it much clearer if only we would examine the Torah with all it's Jewishness restored rather than to declare it's supposed faultiness and irrelevance.

Verse 14 tells us that the "blasphemer" was to be taken outside the camp and executed. We've discussed the term **outside the camp** before; it means literally away from where the Israelites had erected their tents. Part of the reason for taking the condemned person outside the camp was to avoid the ritual uncleanness brought about by the presence of something he was about to become: a corpse. But even more it was both commanded and traditional to allow an execution **ONLY** outside the camp. We won't get into it right now but the fact that Jesus **HAD** to be executed outside-the-camp by Jewish Law, and that we're told in Hebrews that indeed He **was** executed outside-the-camp, gives us a clue as to where He probably was crucified; and further that almost certainly the traditional places that most Christian pilgrims to Jerusalem visit as the site of Calvary could not have been it for those sites were **WELL INSIDE** the "camp" boundaries of the city of Jerusalem in those days.

Verse 14 also tells us that the criminal was to be stoned to death by the whole community. Stoning was symbolic of the rejection of this person by the community as a whole, and an acknowledgment that his behavior was sinful. The laying on of hands before he was stoned is interesting; it does **not** mean the citizens of Israel grabbed him and roughed him up on the way to his stoning. Rather it symbolizes a very similar act as a worshipper who brings an animal to the priest for sacrifice and then lays his hands on the head of the sacrificial animal. When an animal is to be sacrificed, by means of the worshipper laying his hands on the head of the animal the ownership and authority over this animal is transferred to God. The worshipper is also, in a certain way, transferring his own sins from himself to the animal whose blood would be shed as a substitutionary atonement for the worshipper.

We're told that a specific group of people is commanded to be the ones who lay hands on the criminal; those who heard him speak the blasphemy. Many people would have **watched** the physical altercation occur; but many **MORE** would have **HEARD** the man shout out his blasphemy. By Bible standards one that **HEARS** is at least as good a witness as one who **SEES** (an important God-principle I think). By the community of witnesses collectively laying their hands on the criminal they were pronouncing that they were in agreement on the judgment against him; and that his blood was on his own head. Now this notion of "his blood was on his own head" carried a little different meaning than what gentiles typically think. When we hear those words our thought is usually that it means: **well, it was your fault, you knew better but did it anyway, so you're getting what's rightfully coming to you**. But that is **NOT** what the Hebrews' thought was.

Follow me on this because this is another interesting piece to the puzzle that is the ancient

Hebrew society that forms the context of the entire Holy Scriptures. When an animal was to be sacrificed the guilt of the worshipper was symbolically transferred to the animal by the worshipper placing his hands (laying hands) on the head of the animal. When the animal's blood was shed (when it was ritually killed) then the worshipper's sins were atoned for because the animal's life was a legal substitute for the worshipper's life. That is the worshipper should have rightfully experienced death as the wages for his sin and paid for his sin with his own blood. Instead an innocent animal died a substitutionary death in the worshipper's place; and this was not only acceptable to God the system was established by God. This is the entire basis of Yehoveh's justice system; it is the entire basis for Messiah's death on the Cross. If we say (as does the majority of the Church) that with the birth of Christ the Law was done away with, and since the sacrificial system based on atonement and substitution was at the center of the Law, then Jesus' death as a substitutionary atonement for us would have had no context or meaning.

By the executioners laying their hands on the criminal it was an indication that **no** substitution would be forthcoming....that the guilt of the criminal was his own and he (the condemned man) could NOT transfer his guilt to a sacrificial animal; rather, as the final act of his existence, the criminal would have to die for his own sins. Further it was the Hebrew belief that by being executed, the criminal indeed paid the price for his sins by his own blood AND THEREFORE his sin was (in some way) atoned for. Now exactly what this amounted to is not clear. Since life after death was a very fuzzy concept for the Israelites and since there was NO concept at all of dying and going to heaven until Yeshua came, it's hard to know if the idea in their minds was that the criminal was actually forgiven for his trespasses by means of the shedding of his own blood..... or what. If they thought it meant he was forgiven, then they were wrong; being executed was not an act that led to forgiveness it was an act that led to his permanent separation from God's community of Believers.

After the example of this particular criminal (the blasphemer) is given Yehoveh says, " and this is what will happen to anyone who is part of Israel.....citizen or foreigner.....anyone who blasphemes God's name will be stoned". Or, more literally, anyone who "pierces" God's name will be killed.

Note, please, just how serious it is to use Yehoveh's name improperly. Also note that in the N.T. we get the spiritual counterpart to the physical earthly act of blaspheming: **NAS Luke 12:10 "And everyone who will speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him."**

In Leviticus there was **neither earthly forgiveness nor** substitutionary atonement available for the one who blasphemes the Name of God; he loses his earthly life....he is executed. In Luke there is **no** forgiveness nor substitutionary atonement available (that is, one may **not** depend on the blood of Christ) for the one who blasphemes the Holy Spirit; in modern times he may not be executed by a court of law nor lose his physical life, but he **does lose** his **eternal** life. Do you want to know what "blaspheming" is? Then read Leviticus; the New Testament expects you to already know what it is. Blaspheming the Holy Spirit is to misrepresent Him, to speak against Him, or to use His name or characteristics improperly, or to dirty His reputation. To claim that the Holy Spirit has instructed you to do something, when you know full well (or

are simply being careless with your words) that He has not, is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit. To renounce the deity of Yeshua is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit of God because trust in Messiah is the prerequisite to receiving the Ruach HaKodesh. Besides, one of the names of God IS Ruach HaKodesh.

Next in verse 17 the penalty for murder is reiterated and it is linked to the trespass of blasphemy by being the next thing discussed because death to the violator is also prescribed. But note again with our Hebrew word “**naqab**”, meaning **to pierce**, that what is being illustrated here is that there IS no more violent crime that a man can commit **spiritually** against Yehoveh than to blaspheme his holy name, just as there is no more violent crime a man can commit **physically** against humanity than to murder a fellow human being. In fact by using the term **pierce, naqab**, the Scripture is saying that blaspheming is the spiritual equivalent of attempting to murder God. And I don't find any indication that the crime has been abolished for modern day Believers. Note as well that this goes for foreigners as well as for Israelites.

Beginning in verse 17 the subject changes; we are told that, unlike the standard practice of some cultures in the Middle East of that era, the Hebrews are not to take a human life in exchange for the life of a beast. In other words no matter what the circumstance, the killing of someone's animal does not warrant the death penalty to the human criminal.

What this verse is easing us into is what some scholars have called, in Latin, “lex talionis”; the law of retaliation. This is the area of Leviticus 24 those Rabbis and Sages and Christian scholars have really struggled with and have sharp differences of opinion. And we find that a kind of retaliation (when done lawfully) is indeed considered God's justice in this chapter and this principle is stated in verses 19-20. This is where we get the statement of an eye-for-an-eye, and a tooth-for-a-tooth. Yet it is a different kind of retaliation than was standard for that time, and centuries later in the time of Rome, which operated on the principle of lex talionis.

Let's camp here a little while since this ends the chapter anyway.

Since time immemorial many Hebrew sages have insisted that the intent of the words of verses 19-20 were NOT that if a man fractured another man's arm, that the perpetrator's arm should in turn be fractured. Nor that if a man knocked a tooth out of another man's head that the one who did it should have his own tooth knocked out (and their position certainly seems to have been validated by none other than Yeshua of Nazareth). Rather this was a call for proportional punishment; that the punishment should **not** be greater than the crime. In fact there is NO evidence that even **if** God HAD intended that the same physical damage that was done by an assailant should be done back to him that the Hebrews EVER, at any time, regularly practiced this principle in that way. Might some have done this in a fit of rage, vigilante style? Without doubt.

Rather (particularly as concerned harm to animals and often as concerned men) compensation was the preferred method of “retaliation”. Mutilation as a punishment was abnormal in the Hebrew system; yet apparently on rare occasions it did happen. In fact in Deuteronomy 25 we find a specific case of a requirement for a woman to have her hand removed for grabbing the genitals of man who was fighting with her husband. In another case that appears in the

Talmud, I read where there was a discussion about whether a criminal should have his eye plucked out for his crime. The argument centered on the fact that this criminal was already missing one eye; so to take his other eye would render him totally blind. And the resulting total blindness would have been a terribly inequitable punishment for the crime he had committed. We'll find a few other discussions in the Bible and dozens in various Jewish documents on this difficult subject.

No doubt some of the debates and discussions among the sages were hypothetical, but mostly they were real cases. But with rarest exception, monetary compensation of some kind was preferred over physical punishment; and physical mutilation was regarded with disgust (what the Lord's view on it is another matter).

In the end the sages and Rabbis and most Christian scholars could agree on one point, that equality was the issue in our case of Leviticus 24; meaning that not just the issue of the crime vs. the equitable penalty but also that the nationality of the criminal must not be cause for a different standard. Over and over in the Torah, as here in verse 22, it is stated that whether Israelite or foreigner there shall be one law for all (kind of shoots holes in the common Christian doctrine that there is one set of rules for Jews and another for gentiles, doesn't it?).

But there should also be left no doubt that God demands an equitable price to be paid for criminal activity. Our modern sensibilities, particularly in the West, are somewhat offended when we're told that long jail terms, capital punishment, even heavy fines, are retribution and not justice; but in fact it's hard to argue otherwise....we just don't like the sound of the word "retribution". Retribution basically means tit-for-tat. It's just that retribution **outside** of the enshrined Godly justice system is vigilantism, while retribution **inside** of it (when properly conducted and applied) is equitable justice. And, that certainly seems to be the Lord's viewpoint as expressed literally in the Scriptures as well. Nowhere, even in the N.T., is it said that a price is not to be paid for criminal acts. But the definition of what IS a criminal act and the price to be paid is set according to the principles behind the laws and ordinances set down by God in the Torah.....and not applied willy-nilly, nor without the governing tribal or national authority.