

Holiness..... Continued

Leviticus is a book of laws. Instructions.

Chapter 24

Pure Oil and Holy Bread

The LORD said to Moses, ² “Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil of pressed olives for the light, to keep the lamps burning continually. ³ This is the lampstand that stands in the Tabernacle, in front of the inner curtain that shields the Ark of the Covenant.^[a] Aaron must keep the lamps burning in the LORD’s presence all night. This is a permanent law for you, and it must be observed from generation to generation. ⁴ Aaron and the priests must tend the lamps on the pure gold lampstand continually in the LORD’s presence.

⁵ “You must bake twelve flat loaves of bread from choice flour, using four quarts^[b] of flour for each loaf. ⁶ Place the bread before the LORD on the pure gold table, and arrange the loaves in two stacks, with six loaves in each stack. ⁷ Put some pure frankincense near each stack to serve as a representative offering, a special gift presented to the LORD. ⁸ Every Sabbath day this bread must be laid out before the LORD as a gift from the Israelites; it is an ongoing expression of the eternal covenant. ⁹ The loaves of bread will belong to Aaron and his descendants, who must eat them in a sacred place, for they are most holy. It is the permanent right of the priests to claim this portion of the special gifts presented to the LORD.”

An Example of Just Punishment

¹⁰ One day a man who had an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father came out of his tent and got into a fight with one of the Israelite men.¹¹ During the fight, this son of an Israelite woman blasphemed the Name of the LORD^[c] with a curse. So the man was brought to Moses for judgment. His mother was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri of the tribe of Dan. ¹² They kept the man in custody until the LORD’s will in the matter should become clear to them.

¹³ Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹⁴ “Take the blasphemer outside the camp, and tell all those who heard the curse to lay their hands on his head. Then let the entire community stone him to death. ¹⁵ Say to the people of Israel: Those who curse their God will be punished for their sin. ¹⁶ Anyone who blasphemes the Name of the LORD must be stoned to death by the whole community of Israel. Any native-born Israelite or foreigner among you who blasphemes the Name of the LORD must be put to death.

17 “Anyone who takes another person’s life must be put to death.

18 “Anyone who kills another person’s animal must pay for it in full—a live animal for the animal that was killed.

19 “Anyone who injures another person must be dealt with according to the injury inflicted— 20 a fracture for a fracture, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Whatever anyone does to injure another person must be paid back in kind.

21 “Whoever kills an animal must pay for it in full, but whoever kills another person must be put to death.

22 “This same standard applies both to native-born Israelites and to the foreigners living among you. I am the LORD your God.”

23 After Moses gave all these instructions to the Israelites, they took the blasphemer outside the camp and stoned him to death. The Israelites did just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

In reading this scripture I struggled with what this all meant. At first and second read with was not at all clear how these verses related to each other. Further, my Bible separated them into two parts; verses 1-10 and 11-23. So, I read different translations and commentaries to try to understand. This is my understanding. Let’s unpack the verses:

The Oil The lampstand (vv. 1-4)

The lamps in the tabernacle stood on the solid gold lampstand. This was the only source of light for the tabernacle. Therefore, it had to be tended to continually.

The Lord said to Moses that the lamp needed to be tended to so that the light did not go out. He said tell the people of Israel to bring the light oil or the pure oil to keep the Lampstand lite. The specific instructions were given about making the oil from olives. This is to be continual. So, the people had a lot of work to do. It would surely take a lot of oil to continually burn, the wick on the lampstand also had to be trimmed and replaced as needed, and someone had to sacrifice sleep to stay up all night and watch the light to make sure it did not go out. The Lord said that it must be Aaron and the priest responsibility to watch the light. Aaron was to be sure the lamps were placed on gold lamp stands in front of the Ark of the Covenant.

The Bread The showbread (vv. 5-9)

True to form, remember Leviticus is a book of instruction, The Lord is giving the instructions on how to make the bread. Just like the previous chapter, the exact measures are given as to how much and what kind of flour is to be used to make the bread, where and how to place the bread on the golden table. Additionally, there must be 12 loaves of bread. They were to be put on display, thus the term “Showbread”. In verse 7, the instructions are to place Frankincense next to each stack as a representative offering. This bread was to be laid out each Sabbath before the Lord. It is to be an ongoing expression of the eternal covenant. Aaron and his descendants were to eat it in the Holy place.

From a commentary I read, I learned that there is a lesson from the Lamp and the Loaves

These first two sections of scripture have several things in common. Both deal with matters pertaining to the tabernacle and the priestly ministry related to it. Both the lampstand and the table are made of gold. Both were placed in the holy place inside the tabernacle. Both were matters of regular maintenance, one was daily (the lamp), the other weekly (the loaves). In both cases, the entire congregation are involved in one way or another. The people had to provide both oil for the lamp and flour for the loaves.

The importance of maintaining the light in the lamp and the loaves on the table underscores a very important principle spiritual ministry requires physical support. Some people may look down on ministry which is “merely physical,” thinking that this is a kind of “second class service.” Our text shows such thinking to be false. You cannot separate physical ministry and spiritual ministry. (<https://bible.org/seriespage/lamp-loaves-and-loudmouth-leviticus-24>)

Ahh, it’s clear now how these two sections of scripture are connected in my Bible. After reading many times, it became clear that the bread and light was never to run out. It was to be continually replaced. The people were needed and required to ensure that the light and the Bread were continually available.

The Blasphemer (vv. 10-23)

These verses in scripture are very interesting. We are told of a young man who was born to multi-national parents. His mother was an Israelite and his father an Egyptian. His father was never named but his mother was, and her lineage was given as a descendent from the Tribe of Dan. This would suggest that the interbreeding was not acceptable. This young man got into an argument or fight with an Israelite man. During this fight he was accused of Blasphemy. The fact that his mother was an Israelite and the man the young man fought with was an Israelite was not lost on me. Either, this is pointed out to denote that the young man should have know better or that he didn't know because he was of mixed nationalities. Either way Blasphemy of God is serious.

What is Blasphemy you ask?

Blasphemy is, by word or deed, the defamation of God's character and glory.

There is no question about the fact that blasphemy was already forbidden. The prohibitions which the Israelites have already been given are:

"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" (Exod. 20:7).

"And he who curses his father, or his mother shall surely be put to death" (Exod. 21:17).

"You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people" (Exod. 22:28)

What is the penalty for blasphemy, and how is it to be carried out? Although blasphemy was prohibited by the law, Verse 12 suggests that they were not sure how to handle the young man. They kept him in custody until the Lord told them what to do. Also, since the young man was not a full-blooded Israelite, how did the law apply to him? Did it apply the same way as it did for an Israelite?

The Lord gave the specific answer. He told Moses to take the Blasphemer out of he camp and have him stoned to death. Verse ¹⁴ "Take the blasphemer outside the camp, and tell all those who heard the curse to lay their hands on his head. Then let the entire community stone him to death. ¹⁵ Say to the people of Israel: Those who curse their God will be punished for their sin. ¹⁶ Anyone who blasphemes the Name of the LORD must be stoned to death by the whole community of Israel. Any native-born Israelite or foreigner among you who blasphemes the Name of the LORD must be put to death.

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Verses 16 – 23 give the instruction of how to determine punishment. These verses state that the punishment should match the offense. Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth, and a life for a life.

Going back to my earlier thought about how this chapter holds together. I was again struggling. I understood how the oil for the continual light was connected to the continual supply of bread. But it took a while for me to see how that was connected to the young man who Blasphemed God.

As I kept reading and referencing the book of Leviticus, I was reminded that it is a book of law and instruction. And common sense told me there had to be a connection. Well, in verses 1-4 the theme is “continually”. The flame of the lamp was to be kept burning continually. In verses 5-9, it is the bread which must be continually kept on the golden table, freshly baked and changed every week. The lamp and the bread were both to be tended regularly, ritually, without interruption.

In the second section, entitled in my Bible as A Just Punishment, it appears that the Lord was giving us the instructions on how to determine justice as a matter of ritual. Looking at verses 10-33, God gave the instructions to the Israelites so that justice would be carried out consistently, the same way each time, without variation, without deviation, without cessation.

Pastor said that that we can find the instructions to Holiness in the book of Leviticus (my paraphrase). Chapter 24 gives the messages that rituals, consistency and continually following the Word of God is the path to Holiness.

May God give you and me the grace to develop righteous rituals in our lives, to develop and maintain routines which become habits of holiness, so that we may more faithfully serve Him. (excerpt from “The lamps, the Loaves and the Loud Mouth”. Bible.org)

<http://totallyhistory.com/leviticus-chapter-24/>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Leviticus+24&version=MSG>

<https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/leviticus-24/>

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lamp-loaves-and-loudmouth-leviticus-24>