

Parsha Plug: Emor

Vayikra 24:10-23	ויקרא כד:י-כג
<p>10 Now, the son of an Israelite woman and he was the son of an Egyptian man went out among the children of Israel, and they quarreled in the camp this son of the Israelite woman, and an Israelite man. 11 And the son of the Israelite woman pronounced the [Divine] Name and cursed. So they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shlomit the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan. 12 They placed him in the guardhouse, [until his sentence would] be specified to them by the word of the Lord. 13 Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 14 Take the blasphemer outside the camp, and all who heard [his blasphemy] shall lean their hands on his head. And the entire community shall stone him. 15 And to the children of Israel, you shall speak, saying: Any man who blasphemes his God shall bear his sin. 16 And one who blasphemously pronounces the Name of the Lord, shall be put to death; the entire community shall stone him; convert and resident alike if he pronounces the [Divine] Name, he shall be put to death. 17 And if a man strikes down any human being he shall be put to death. 18 And one who slays an animal shall pay for it [the value of] a life for the life [he took]. 19 And a man who inflicts an injury upon his fellow man just as he did, so shall be done to him [namely,] 20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Just as he inflicted an injury upon a person, so shall it be inflicted upon him. 21 And one who injures an animal shall pay for it. And one who strikes a person shall be put to death. 22 One law shall be exacted for you, convert and resident alike, for I am the Lord, your God. 23 And Moses told [all this] to the children of Israel. So they took the blasphemer outside the camp and stoned him, and the children of Israel did just as the Lord had commanded Moses.</p>	<p>י וַיֵּצֵא בֶן־אִשָּׁה יִשְׂרָאֵלִית וְהוּא בֶן־אִישׁ מִצְרַיִם בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּנְצְרוּ בַּמַּחֲנֶה בֶן הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית וְאִישׁ הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִי: יא וַיִּקַּב בֶּן־הָאִשָּׁה הַיִּשְׂרָאֵלִית אֶת־הַשֵּׁם וַיִּקְלַל וַיָּבִיאוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל־מֹשֶׁה וְשֵׁם אִמּוֹ שְׁלֹמִית בַּת־דְּבָרִי לְמַטֵּה־דָן: יב וַיִּנְיֻקְהוּ בַּמִּשְׁמֶר לְפָרֵשׁ לָהֶם עַל־פִּי ה': יג וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל־מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: יד הוֹצֵא אֶת־הַמְּקַלֵּל אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וְסָמְכוּ כָל־הַשְּׂמֹעִים אֶת־יְדֵיהֶם עַל־רֹאשׁוֹ וְרָגְמוּ אֹתוֹ כְּלַהֲעֵדָה: טו וְאֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל תְּדַבֵּר לֵאמֹר אִישׁ אִישׁ כִּי־יִקְלַל אֱלֹקָיו וַנִּשְׂאָה הַטָּאוֹ: טז וַנִּקַּב שֵׁם־ה' מוֹת יוֹמַת רָגוּם וְרָגְמוּ־בּוֹ כְּלַהֲעֵדָה כְּגַר כְּאִזְרָח בְּנִקְבוֹ שֵׁם יוֹמַת: יז וְאִישׁ כִּי יַכֶּה כְּלַגְנָפֶשׁ אָדָם מוֹת יוֹמַת: יח וּמַכֶּה בְּפֶשֶׁת־בַּהֶמָּה יִשְׁלַמְנָה בְּפֶשׁ תַּחַת בְּפֶשׁ: יט וְאִישׁ כִּי־יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּעַמִּיתוֹ כְּאִשֶּׁר עָשָׂה בּוֹ יַעֲשֶׂה לוֹ: כ שֹׁבֵר תַּחַת שֹׁבֵר עֵינָיו תַּחַת עֵינָיו שֵׁן תַּחַת שֵׁן כְּאִשֶּׁר יִתֵּן מוֹם בְּאָדָם בּוֹ יִנְתֵּן בּוֹ: כא וּמַכֶּה בַּהֶמָּה יִשְׁלַמְנָה וּמַכֶּה אָדָם יוֹמַת: כב מִשְׁפֹּט אֶחָד יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כְּגַר כְּאִזְרָח יִהְיֶה כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם: כג וַיְדַבֵּר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיּוֹצִיאוּ אֶת־הַמְּקַלֵּל אֶל־מַחוּץ לַמַּחֲנֶה וַיִּרְגְּמוּ אֹתוֹ אֲבָן וּבְנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשׂוּ כְּאִשֶּׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶת־מֹשֶׁה:</p>

Rashi on Vayikra 24:10	רש"י ויקרא כד:י
<p>The son of an Israelite woman...went out: From where did he go out? Rabbi Levi says: "He went out of his world". Rabbi Berechiah says: "He went out of the above passage." He mocked and said, "'Each... Shabbat, he shall set it up.' But surely it is the practice of kings to eat warm fresh bread every day! Perhaps cold bread, nine days old?" he said in astonishment. The Baraita states: He "went out" of Moses' court guilty. He had come to pitch his tent within the encampment of the tribe of Dan. So the</p>	<p>ויצא בן אשה ישראלית: מהיכן יצא, רבי לוי אומר מעולמו יצא. רבי ברכיה אומר מפרשה שלמעלה יצא. לגלג ואמר ביום השבת יערכנו, דרך המלך לאכול פת חמה בכל יום, או שמא פת צוננת של תשעה ימים, בתמיה. ומתניתא אמרה מבית דינו של</p>

<p>tribe of Dan said to him, “What right do you have to be here?” Said he, “I am of the descendants of Dan,” (claiming lineage through his mother). They said to him, “But the Torah states (Num. 2:2): ‘The children of Israel shall encamp each man by his grouping according to the insignias of his father’s household.’” He entered Moses’ court and came out guilty. Then, he arose and blasphemed. The son of an Egyptian man: The Egyptian whom Moses had slain.</p>	<p>משה יצא מחוייב. בא ליטע אהלו בתוך מחנה דן, אמרו לו מה טיבך לכאן, אמר להם מבני דן אני. אמרו לו (במדבר ב) איש על דגלו באותות לבית אבותם כתיב. נכנס לבית דינו של משה ויצא מחוייב, עמד וגדף: בן איש מצרי: הוא המצרי שהרגו משה:</p>
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<p>Midrash Tanchuma Emor 24:1</p>	<p>מדרש תנחומא אמור כד:א</p>
<p>Rebbe Levi said, “He was clearly a mamzer. How? Taskmasters were from Egypt, and the officers were from Israel. The taskmaster was in charge of ten officers, and the officer was in charge of ten Israelites. So the taskmaster was in charge of a hundred and ten Israelites. Once a taskmaster met an officer. He said to him, ‘Go gather your groups of ten.’ When he had gone, he entered his house and raped Shlomit, the officer's wife. When her husband returned, he found him leaving his house. When the taskmaster knew that her husband noticed him, he beat him every day and said to him, ‘Toil properly, toil properly.’ The holy spirit was kindled in Moses. He raised his eyes to the sky. He said, ‘Was it not enough for this wicked man to rape his wife, but that he should return and beat him?’ Immediately, ‘he smote the Egyptian and hid him in the sand’ (Shemot 2:12)”.</p>	<p>רבי לוי אָמַר, מַמְזֵר בְּרוּר הִיָּה. כִּי־צַד, נוֹגְשִׁים הָיוּ מִשְׁלַל מִצְרַיִם, וְהַשׁוֹטְרִים מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. הַנוֹגֵשׁ הָיָה מִמִּנְהָ עַל עֲשָׂרָה שׁוֹטְרִים, וְהַשׁוֹטֵר הָיָה מִמִּנְהָ עַל עֲשָׂרָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. נִמְצָא, הַנוֹגֵשׁ מִמִּנְהָ עַל מֵאָה וְעֲשָׂרָה מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל. חָד זָמַן קָדְמוּ נוֹגֵשׁ לְשׁוֹטֵר. אָמַר לִיה: זֵיל כְּנֵשׁ עֲשָׂרִיּוֹתַיךְ. כְּמוֹ שֶׁהֵלַךְ הַשׁוֹטֵר לְדַרְכוֹ, נִכְנַס הַנוֹגֵשׁ לְבֵיתוֹ שֶׁל שׁוֹטֵר וְקִלְקַל עִם שְׁלוֹמִית אִשְׁתּוֹ שֶׁל שׁוֹטֵר. חָזַר בְּעֵלָה, מוֹצֵא יוֹצֵא מִבֵּיתוֹ. כִּי־וָן שֶׁהִרְגִישׁ בוֹ, הָיָה מַחִי לִיה כֹּל יוֹמָא, וְאָמַר לִיה: לִיעֲנֹת טַבָּאוֹת, לִיעֲנֹת טַבָּאוֹת. נִצְנָצָה רוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּמִשְׁחָה. תִּלְהָ עֵינָיו לְמָרוֹם, אָמַר, לֹא דִי לְרִשְׁעָה זֶה שְׁעֵנָה אֶת אִשְׁתּוֹ, אֶלָּא חוֹזֵר וּמַכֶּה לְבַעֲלָהּ. מִיָּד נִיךְ אֶת הַמִּצְרִי וַיִּטְמְנֵהוּ בַחֹל (שְׁמוֹת ב, יב).</p>

<p>Rav Amnon Bazak, <i>The Law of the Blasphemer: Emor</i></p>
<p>Apparently it was specifically the blasphemer's complicated parentage that lay behind the initial uncertainty that led <i>Benei Yisrael</i> to place him in custody. Ramban (on verse 10) discusses the national status of the man, raising several possibilities: <i>"The fact that we are told in Torat Kohanim (parasha 14,1) amongst Benei Yisrael, meaning that he converted, does not mean that he required conversion, but rather that – like any other Jew who entered the covenant of 'berit mila' and immersion and having his blood accountable, at the time of the giving of the Torah (Keritut 9a). But they meant to say that he followed his mother and became part of Israel... not his father, to be Egyptian. And the French [Jewish commentaries] say that the reason for this conversion was because it took place prior to the giving of the Torah, such that his status should have followed that of his father, in accordance with the teaching (Yevamot 78b), "Among the (non-Jewish) nations, the lineage follows the father." When this man was born, he was not circumcised, since he was considered an Egyptian, but when he grew up he converted of his own free will, and was circumcised. But I do not concur: since the</i></p>

time that Avraham was circumcised, Israelites were distinguished, and were not considered like the other nations..." The very existence of this discussion, in any event, proves that the status of the Egyptian's son was not clear. As a result of this complex status, then, it was not immediately obvious that he should be punished for his sin as any regular Israelite would be. For this reason, God emphasizes, in the response to Moshe, that the death penalty for blaspheming applies to any person dwelling in the Israelite camp: "One who blasphemes will surely be put to death, the whole congregation shall stone him. STRANGER AND NATIVE BORN ALIKE; when he blasphemes, he shall be put to death" – just as all the laws of inter-personal relations apply to him as well: "There shall be one law for you, IDENTICAL FOR THE STRANGER AS FOR ONE WHO IS NATIVE BORN, for I am the Lord your God."

Rambam Avodat Kochavim 2:10	רמב"ם עבודת כוכבים ב:י
<p>Whoever hears the blasphemy of God's name is obligated to rend his garments. Even the blasphemy of other terms used to describe God, one is obligated to rend his garments. The above applies when one hears blasphemy from a fellow Jew. Both one who hears the actual blasphemy and one who hears it from the witnesses is obligated to rend his garments. In contrast, one who hears a gentile blaspheme God's name is not obligated to rend his garments...Before execution, all the witnesses and the judges place their hands on the head of the blasphemer and tell him: "You are responsible for your death. You brought it upon yourself." Only a blasphemer, and none of the other offenders executed by the court, has the judges and witnesses place their hands upon his head, as the Torah states: "And all those who hear shall place their hands on his head."</p>	<p>כל השומע ברכת השם חייב לקרוע ואפילו על ברכת הכינויין חייב לקרוע והוא שישמענה מישראל אחד השומע ואחד השומע מפי השומע חייב לקרוע אבל השומע מפי העובד כוכבים אינו חייב לקרוע...כל העדים והדיינים סומכים את ידיהם אחד אחד על ראש המגדף ואומר לו דמך בראשך שאתה גרמת לך ואין בכל הרוגי בית דין מי שסומכים עליו אלא מגדף בלבד שנאמר וסמכו כל השומעים את ידיהם:</p>

Rav David Silverberg, S.A.L.T.- Parshat Emor 5776 (Friday)

The Gemara, in Masekhet Sanhedrin (56a), discusses the pragmatic issue of how the court hears testimony to such an offense. In order for the *Beit Din* to sentence an offender to punishment, they must hear clear and precise testimony of what occurred. In the case of blasphemy, of course, we do not wish to have the witnesses repeat verbatim the words which they heard. The solution, as the Gemara instructs, is that throughout the proceedings, the witnesses repeat the curse they heard with a *kinui* ("nickname"); that is to say, they substitute God's Name with a different name. (The example given by the Gemara is "Yossi.") This way, they are able to testify to having heard words of blasphemy without actually repeating them. However, even this does not suffice for the *Beit Din* to act upon the testimony. The Gemara teaches that after the court reached its decision to convict the alleged blasphemer, it would still not carry out the sentence until hearing the precise words that he spoke, without any distortion. The judges would therefore send everyone out of the courtroom, and ask one of

the witnesses to repeat precisely what he heard. Upon hearing the blasphemy, the judges would stand and rend their garments. The other witnesses would then say, "I, too, heard what he heard." The Tolna Rebbe noted the significance of the fact that *Halakha* requires the witness to repeat the words of blasphemy without any changes. This occurred at the end of the judicial process, after the *Beit Din* had thoroughly interrogated and cross-examined the witnesses, and after intensive deliberation. As we know, a *Beit Din* would not sentence a suspected violator to capital punishment if there was any question whatsoever surrounding the truth and accuracy of the witnesses' testimony. And thus by the time the judges reached the point of instructing one witness to repeat the curse verbatim, they were convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt of the blasphemer's guilt. Yet, this did not suffice. This thorough process of interrogation did not allow the judges to act upon their sentence until they heard the precise words without modification. *Halakha* demands the extraordinary measure of requiring a witness to repeat words of blasphemy, which then necessitated the judges' rending of their garments, because of the minuscule possibility that there was some mistake or misunderstanding. The Tolna Rebbe drew upon this fascinating *halakha* to underscore the importance of delaying judgment upon hearing negative information about others. If this is how far the Torah goes in considering the remotest possibility of a mistake, then certainly we should react skeptically to rumors and murmurings about other people. It is wrong to jump to conclusions about people based on hearsay or our impressions. We must always consider the possibility – even the remote possibility – that there was some mistake or misunderstanding, that the situation is not precisely as it was reported, or there are some mitigating factors involved. The Torah here teaches us of the need to view others favorably and find any basis we can to cast their actions and words in a positive light, and to avoid as much as possible assigning guilt and blame.

Rabbi Bernie Fox, *A Human Life is Irreplaceable*

According to Rav Soloveitchik, our passages equate murder and blasphemy. There are two messages in this equation. One message concerns the tragedy inherent in the loss of human life. Every person is created in the Divine image. This design endows us with individuality and renders every human being irreplaceable. The second message adds a new dimension to the sin of murder. Murder is more than an act against another human being. It is also an act of blasphemy against Hashem. When we disregard human life – created in the image of Hashem – we blaspheme Hashem