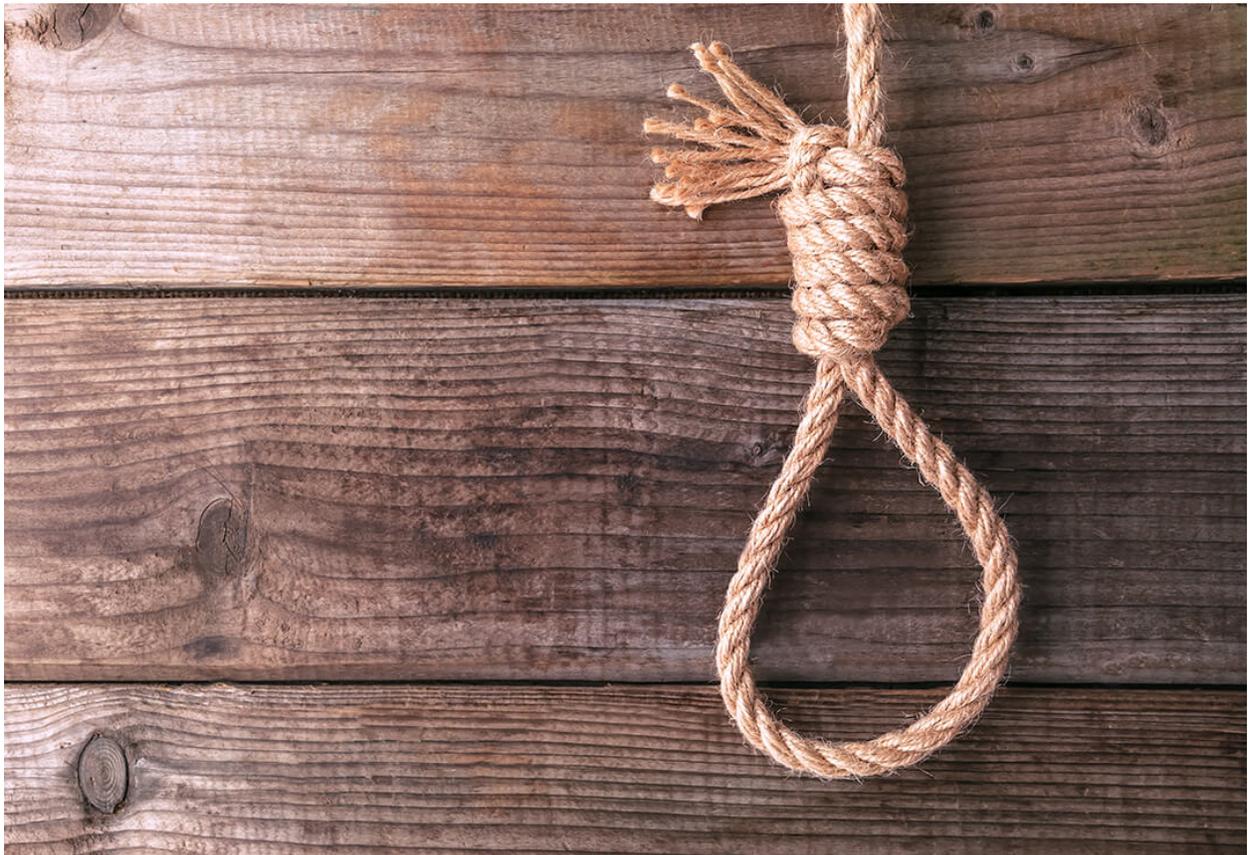


A PUBLIC HANGING

Deuteronomy 21:22-23

There can be no doubt that a public hanging draws a crowd. In the old Wild West, the whole town came out to watch. There is just something about the shock and all about it all that causes us to turn our heads in that direction. This is exactly why the news is constantly trying to shock us with "Breaking News" every five minutes or so. They know our attention span is low and a public hanging is the fastest way to turn people's heads and get their attention. The Creator knew this because He created us with this curiosity, so He created an instruction to prevent it from going too far. Let's take a look at these two verses and unpack them for today.



Deuteronomy 21:22-23

" And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:

His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day;

(for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."

In Israelite Hebrew culture, the community was the most important focus. Anything that endangered the fundamental structure or welfare of the community could not be tolerated. Sin is like cancer. It grows and duplicates its ugly and poisonous cells, and its end is the death of the entire body. So Yahweh created a capital offense section of His government that was punishable by death. The following is a non-exhaustive list of sins that carried a capital offense:

Murder, kidnapping, placing a curse on parents, profaning the Sabbath, child sacrifice, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, incest, blasphemy, rebellion, witchcraft, drunkenness, and worshipping other gods just to name a few.

It is clear from the above list that each one of those sins was a direct threat to the well-being of the entire community. When you mess with the fundamentals of the family, you are messing with the entire house. Take a look at even the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the only one on this list that seems to not be like the others. But in reality, it is just as important as the entire family's weekly structure revolving around it or preparing for it. The Sabbath was also the staple commandment given by God to His people for their benefit and for the full blessing of the family. To break and ignore the Sabbath was to purposely bring a curse into your home, a curse that would eventually spread to the entire community. For if a family chose to not honor the Sabbath, they were in direct rebellion against Yahweh and threatening the entire structure of the whole community.

Again, we are not talking about accidentally breaking it or even breaking it once or twice. We are talking about purposely, maliciously, and consistently breaking the commandment with no regard for the damage that is being done in the family unit. This attitude goes beyond the mere breaking of the Sabbath and enters into rebellion, which is the sin of witchcraft. Enforcing the death penalty protected the entire community's future and blessings from Yahweh as well as prevent the sin, to begin with. If you knew you were going to be killed for adultery, you are likely to never do it, to begin with. A community that removes the death penalty has adopted a position of tolerance. And tolerance creates more sin, which removes more blessings from the community and causes the entire community to continue to slide down the slippery slope ending with the same destiny as Sodom and Gomorrah. This is exactly where America is heading in my opinion. But let's get back to the hanging.

Once an investigation has been opened and the biblical courts have been held and it is true that this person has in fact violated a law that leads to death, the execution takes place. From there, the ancient Israelite tradition was to then hang them in public for all to see. This was not hanging by the neck, but taking the corpse and impaling them on a pole or tree. This was to be done for one purpose....to send the message that this sin will not be tolerated in our society and if you do this sin, this is what will happen to you to. It was designed to instill the fear of God in people, and it worked. But this extremely humiliating experience was only allowed to happen for the afternoon and the body had to be taken down before sunset.

Galatians 3:13 *"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree)."*

In the case of Yeshua, his body also had to be taken down before sunset (John 19:31). Where the Romans could leave their corpses up for days, the Jews had a law that prevented them from doing so.

QUESTION: Why was the body to be taken down before sunset? Why could it not be kept up for longer than a day? What is the original intent and purpose in the mind of Yahweh?

The person is already dead, so who really cares? The original intent of public display, to begin with, is to deter others from this same sin. Humiliating a person is forbidden in God's kingdom. This is why all other sins are to be private and all consequences are to be between only the offending parties. This is why God condemns gossip so much because it creates such a stain on the reputation of the person that it paralyzes him from ever being a productive member of that society ever again. Only in the case of a capital offense is it acceptable to bring it to the public's attention. But even then, it can only be for just the afternoon. After the sun goes down, the body is taken down and the entire matter is finished and buried, literally.

Yahweh is not into humiliating. He is into correcting and preventing sin. This instruction becomes extremely relevant today because of several factors. Number one is because of the dawn of social media, we no longer leave the judging to those that are qualified and in the seat of authority. Everyone has become the judge, jury, and prosecutor of everything that they hear. Social media has become the **"tree"** to hang people on. We have become so used to "expressing ourselves", our thoughts, and every detail of our lives online that we have unknowingly created and have at times joined in on a "public hanging" without even realizing it.

According to scripture, the **"public arena"** is not to ever be used to defame, slander, gossip or humiliate anyone. It is only to be used for the purpose of informing the public that a capital offense has taken place and this person has been executed due to their unrepentant and perverse lifestyle. It is only to be done as a deterrent for the rest of the community. To expose a person's sins or even rumors online is not only a sin, it is a serious sin and is forbidden in scripture.

Proverbs 11:13 *"A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter."*

Proverbs 17:9 *"He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends."*

Proverbs 10:12 *"Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins."*

1 Peter 4:8 *"And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love covers a multitude of sins."*

As you can see from the above scriptures, even when a brother or sister is found in sin, the body is to cover that person and protect them from further damage to their reputation while they are

being dealt with. The body is not the one that is to judge. It is those that are in authority over that person that has the right to judge. The body is to pray for that person and pray for their eyes to be opened, their healing, and restoration to the body. If you accidentally fall down and cut your backside, do you go around saying, "Hey everyone, look here! I cut myself on my backside!" No. That would be absurd. We cover it up and go to the doctor privately to deal with it. It is the same in the spiritual body. When a member of the body is found to be in sin or there are accusations of sin, that person is to be left to the governing spiritual authorities and is to be prayed for. Not a single exposing public statement of gossip is to be said about them. The body only has two responsibilities: **1.** To pray and cover the sick part of the body as if they were the ones in need of help, trusting the governing authorities to do their job according to the scriptural guidelines. **2.** To make sure that the proper biblical protocols are being followed to ensure that the person has received a fair trial for any accusations held against him.



This last point cannot be overemphasized as a fair trial is critical to the entire future of the person in question. All too often, because of social media, we have turned into a society that rushes to conclusions and judgments without having all the facts in our quest for blood. Remember, it was the religious that cried "Barabbas! Barabbas!" causing Yeshua to be crucified for no biblical reason. If the people would have required of their leadership a proper trial, instead of an illegal mock trial done in the middle of the night our Messiah might not have ever been killed. When governing authorities are not held accountable to the standard they espouse, tyranny is the result. Let's take a look at another scripture to see how serious this really is.

1 Timothy 5:17-22 *"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while it treads out the grain", and, "The laborer is worthy of his wages." Do not receive an accusation against an elder except from two or three witnesses. Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with*

partiality. Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins. Keep yourself pure."

Although the above scripture is specifically dealing with elders, it can by extension be used for everyone. The accusation of an elder is a very serious crime in the scriptures if it is false. Bearing false witness against your neighbor is bad enough. Bearing false witness against an elder is far worse because of the number of people that will be affected by that false testimony. This scripture in Timothy is clear that there must be at least **two or three** witnesses to even bring it to trial. It is understood here that it is not by the witnesses alone, but that through a proper trial that contains at least two witnesses, every matter can be established.

It is also clear from this scripture that when we hear accusations, we are to never act with prejudice or partiality, nor should we ever rush to judgment. For to do this is literally in the eyes of God to "share in other people's sins." The sin of premature judging is equal in the eyes of God to the accused sin itself.

Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCES** are we to ever "*expose*" someone in public, for that is the modern equivalent of "hanging them on a tree" forever since it cannot be taken down once it is put up. What happens if you find out later that the rumor was not true and you take your post down but it has already been shared hundreds of times and now there is no way to stop that sin from spreading? Did you know that every single person that falls into the sin of gossip due to your sin is counted against you on Judgment Day? That alone should give us serious pause about what we say in the "**World Wide Web**" of deception.

Virtually every leader out there has websites devoted against them for the sole purpose of trying to "uncover" their sins. Religious people are famous for eating their own. We are more concerned about "saving" others from those that we don't like and removing the speck from their eye that we don't even see in doing so we are creating a log in our own. These religious Pharisees do not have a God-given position of authority, so they create their own position of authority online all in the name of being a "watchman on the wall." Unfortunately, these people never realize that they are doing the bidding of HaSatan himself, uncovering a brother's sin, destroying another's reputation, and exposing the nakedness of a brother. Someone that is operating in hate exposes. Someone operating in love conceals the matter and prays for the individual. The spiritual take the position of, "Even if those accusations are true, I'm going to pray for that person and cover them while God works on them." They understand that if they further gossip and expose that person and that person eventually repents, they could have damaged their reputation beyond repair while causing others to sin in the process.

One of the best scriptures dealing with this subject comes out of Genesis chapter 6. Let's take a look at it.

Genesis 9:20-25 *"And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard. Then he drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment, laid it on both their shoulder, and went backward and covered the nakedness of their father. Their faces ere turned away, and they did not see their fathers's nakedness. So Noah*

awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. Then he said: "Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants he shall be to his brethren."

This section of scripture is "sobering" to say the least. The situation has Noah having a bit too much wine to drink and he gets drunk, ending up naked in his tent. Ham sees his father's nakedness and decides to expose his father by going "online" and telling everyone he knows about the sin of his father. Shem and Japheth on the other hand, seeing that their father is exposed, walk-in backward, refusing to even look upon their father's nakedness and cover his sin. That is what love does. It covers. Those with agendas are always exposed. **It's just that simple.**

The consequence of this sin is severe. Cursing Ham would have been enough. But Noah gave the worst possible curse. He cursed Ham's firstborn. What is remarkable about this story is that even though Noah was actually the one that sinned, the one that got cursed was the one that **EXPOSED** him! Yahweh backed the words of Noah and allowed the son of Ham to be cursed even though it was Noah that was the one that made the mistake! This is how serious this is folks and how seriously Yahweh takes public humiliation and exposing another's sins.

Ever hear of the **"Seven Deadly Sins?"** They are found in Proverbs chapter six. Take a look at how many are actually connected to this subject.

Proverbs 6:16-19 *"These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies and one who sows discord among the brethren."*

Unbelievably, almost every single one of these is connected to publicly hanging people online. If the rumors are false they are lying, shedding innocent blood, running swiftly to evil, being a false witness, and sowing discord among the brethren. It has always amazed me how it is never the pagans that expose a Christian's sins. It is always a fellow Christian. This is like shooting your left foot with a gun when you are on the right foot! If you had a sister that fell into sin and committed fornication, would you shout it from the rooftops and humiliate your entire family in the process, killing the credibility of your own family name? No sane person would ever do such a thing. Yet those who profess Christ are supposed to all be a part of the same family and yet when one part of the body suffers or a family member is found in sin, we shout it from the rooftops? Do we realize that in doing so we are literally ruining our entire family (Yeshua's) name and the credibility that it is supposed to have? People are going to sin. Ministers are going to sin. Who is without sin? Should we not keep this within our own house at least for the sake of the name of Christ? Take a look at what Paul has to say about a very similar topic.

1 Corinthians 6:1-8 *When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? 2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! 4 So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? 5 I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to*

settle a dispute between the brothers, 6 but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? 7 To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers

This section is a profoundly obvious instruction that we are to keep family matters **FAMILY** matters because **FAMILY MATTERS!** If we are not to take brothers in Christ to court so as not to profane the name of Christ in front of pagans, how much **MORE** should we not expose the sins or even allegations of another brother in front of the entire world online? When we do so, no matter what our intentions, it hurts the entire body and drags the name of Yeshua through the mud.

In the end, we are all sinners and we all deserve death. Yahweh is more than capable of dealing with His servants and causing sin to be exposed without us helping Him. When we do so, we enter the door to the seven deadly sins and commit the sin of Ham. Yeshua did not say, "Whatever you do to the least of the good people, you do unto Me." He said, "*Whatever you do to the least of these, you do unto Me.*" This includes those that are in sin. How we treat others is how we are actually treating Yeshua. And by whatever measure we judge, we will be judged (Matthew 7). There is no doubt that we are all guilty of publicly hanging someone. You might think to yourself, "I have never done that." But have you ever remained silent while watching someone else publicly hang someone else online, reading all the comments but never intervening? This is exactly what the priest and the Levite did to the man that was beaten up and half dead on the side of the road that was being publicly exposed. They did nothing to cover him which is also the sin of Ham. Only the lowly Samaritan stopped the madness and cared for the one that was hurt without even knowing whether he was the bad guy or the good guy! Think about that for a moment. The good Samaritan helped this gentleman without even knowing if he deserved what he got and Yeshua called that Samaritan righteous.

If we consider ourselves followers of the Book and keepers of God's instructions, then it is our responsibility to not ever expose or publicly humiliate anyone. Gossip is murder and it does nothing but destroys. It is also our responsibility to not just sit there on our computer and read gossip and not comment. For that is the same as being the Levite and the priest who walked by the hurt man on the road. We are to correct, rebuke, and encourage with great patience and careful instruction, as it says in Timothy. A good Samaritan is not a good Samaritan until he actually does something about what he is observing.

So although we all are curious cats that love gossip and public hangings, the child of God that lives their life in love despises such atrocities and the public defaming of their Lord through such sins. A child of God that is walking in love covers and prays. It is the sinner that uncovers and preys, like a vulture over its victim that is already dead. May we all walk in love and cover one another, for we are all sinners in need of a Savior. Everyone needs a helping hand and love. Love is what came to this earth and died for the sinners. He didn't come to expose, them but to cover them with His blood. Are you willing to cover your enemies in your blood? If the Son of God was willing to cover His enemies with His own blood, how much more should we be willing to cover our brother with our own prayers? So the next time you see someone up on the cross, be

Joseph of Arimathea and ask for the body to be taken down right away so that the Lord of the Sabbath is not profaned.

Shalom,
Jim Staley