

PUT TO DEATH

To Kill or NOT to Kill

Foreword

I have been puzzled for many years that there appears to be such a stark contrast between the character of God as portrayed in the Old Testament and as portrayed by Christ in the New Testament. If the portrayal of God's character in the Old Testament is in error, then why would God not have corrected this in order to remove any doubt that HE is in fact, a loving God?

As you read the following article, you will see that there really is no inconsistency in the Word of God as to His character. What you will see though, is God allowing His character to be encrypted within the human language so that only those who are sincere and thoughtful will be edified by the Holy Spirit as to the real nature of His holy character.

May you be blessed as you sincerely allow the Holy Spirit to reveal these eternal truths, as explained here.

Dale R.

Put to death, or cast away/separated?

Consider the following passage of scripture:

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people, (Exo 31:14).

Is there anything in this text that would possibly make you uncomfortable? It made me uncomfortable when I read it in June of 2021. Does this text suggest that Sabbath keeping is NOT based on our free will? And if a person, for some reason or another, decides to not keep it holy, then that person should be put to death? It surely sounds that way, doesn't it?

What kind of response could we anticipate if we, during our evangelistic meetings, started quoting the above text? Maybe there is a reason why we normally do not use this text as our Sabbath keeping proof text!

As I read this text in the summer of 2021, it stood out in my mind in clear contrast with the ministry of Christ. Remember what His response was to James and John when they were refused hospitality by the Samaritans? "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" And what was the response of their Master? "But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them," (Luke 9:54-56).

Another illustration popped into my mind (in contrast to Ex. 31: 14), and this was when Christ told His disciples to go and preach the gospel. He told them, that if a village does not receive you, just shake the dust off your shoes and go on (see Matt. 10:14).

Do you see the contrast? On one hand—force; on the other—freedom! On one hand—no choice (or death as another option); on the other hand—do as you wish!

Is this a contradiction? Did God command us to keep the Sabbath holy based on fear of death, or do we keep the Sabbath because we love Him? We know there are NO contradictions in the Word of God!

Here is what the messenger of God wrote in the Introduction to the book The Great Controversy:

And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there **may appear**, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the **underlying harmony** (page vii, emphasis added).

There are no contradictions in the scriptures, but only an appearance of it!

So, having this principle in my mind, I prayed to the Father in Heaven for understanding! I was guided to look at the Hebrew text (I used E-Sword) and this is what jumped at me at the first glance:

Ye shall keepH8104 (H853) the sabbathH7676 therefore; forH3588 itH1931 is holyH6944 unto you: every one that defilethH2490 **it shall surely be put to death: H4191 H4191**_forH3588 whosoeverH3605 doethH6213 any workH4399 therein, thatH1931 soulH5315 shall be cut offH3772 from amongH4480 H7130 his people.H5971, (Exo 31:14, emphasis added).

The phrase “it shall surely be put to death” has two identical Strong’s numbers (H4191, the Hebrew word *moot*, which does mean *to die*). My question instantly was, how can this phrase, with 7 different English words be translated with two Hebrew words of the same primitive root?

I knew I needed another prayer! As I prayed, this is what our Father in Heaven breathed into my mind: “My son, where do you find the very same Hebrew combination in the Bible for the very first time?” And He gives me a clue! My excitement grew every second! The clue was: the TREE!

But of the treeH4480 H6086 of the knowledgeH1847 of goodH2896 and evil,H7451 thou shalt notH3808 eatH398 ofH4480 it: forH3588 in the dayH3117 that thou eatestH398 thereofH4480 **thou shalt surely die H4191 H4191**, (Gen 2:17, emphasis added).

Wow! What a revelation! Now I knew, I owed God a prayer of thanksgiving! And I prayed!

The “first mention” principle

What we see in Genesis 2: 17 is the same Hebrew word “*moot*” being doubled by Moses. But in this verse, which is the very first time God/Moses used this combination, the translators chose to translate it quite differently. So, is it possible that this (the very first mention of the doubled “*moot*”) is the correct one and simply means that the death will be sure (or die for sure)?

Now, then, if we take this (the very first mention of the Hebrew word “*moot*” and its translation) and apply it to Exodus 31:14, we will see the following:

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it **shall surely die...**(Exo 31:14, emphasis added).

Did it change the meaning of the verse? Yes, it did! Instead of being forced to keep the Sabbath, we now have an option and a condition! We are no longer threatened by death, but we are told what will be our end if we don't accept the everlasting covenant of God which the Sabbath was the sign of!

Now we have a choice to keep it if we want everlasting life, or not to keep it if we don't care about the life to come! No force, no threat, just a statement of fact!

BUT wait a second (some might say), what about the second part of the verse, which actually does support the original meaning of the verse, and perhaps clarifies the meaning:

... for whosoever doeth any work therein, that **soul shall be cut off** from among his people, (emphasis added).

Hmm... a very good point! But what does "cut off" mean? Let's take a look at the Hebrew word:

Kaw-rat – A primitive root; to cut (off, down or asunder); by implication to destroy or consume; specifically to covenant (that is, make an alliance or bargain, originally by cutting flesh and passing between the pieces): - be chewed, be con- [feder-] ate, covenant, cut (down, off), destroy, fail, feller, be freed, hew (down), make a league ([covenant]), X lose, perish, X utterly, X want. (E-Sword definitions)

The word cut off— *kaw-rat*

As we see, in Hebrew the word *kaw-rat* does not necessarily mean to *cut off*, but could also mean to *cut down* or *cut asunder*. Besides the most assumed definition of destruction, it can also be used as *making a covenant*, or *be freed*, etc.

We will consider several passages and see how Bible writers used the word *kaw-rat*. We will start with the very first use of the word *kaw-rat*, which is found in the story of the Flood, and also look at some other places as we go.

And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all **flesh be cut off** (*kaw-rat*) any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth, (Gen 9:11, emphasis added).

In the same day the LORD **made** a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates, (Gen 15:18, emphasis added).

And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be **cut off** from his people; he hath broken my covenant, (Gen 17:14, emphasis added).

And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land **perish** not through the famine, (Gen 41:36, emphasis added).

And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, **to destroy** the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only, (Exo 8:9, emphasis added)?

But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and **cut down** their groves, (Exo 34:13, emphasis added).

And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will **cut him off** from among his people, (Lev 20:6, emphasis added).

Ye shall not offer unto the LORD that which is bruised, or crushed, or broken, or **cut**; neither shall ye make any offering thereof in your land, (Lev 22:24, emphasis added).

And while the flesh was yet between their teeth, ere **it was chewed**, the wrath of the LORD was kindled against the people, and the LORD smote the people with a very great plague, (Num 11:33, emphasis added).

Let it rest on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and let there not **fail** from the house of Joab one that hath an issue, or that is a leper, or that leaneth on a staff, or that falleth on the sword, or that lacketh bread, (2Sa 3:29, emphasis added).

Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as **I have covenanted** with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man to be ruler in Israel, (2Ch 7:18, emphasis added).

For thus saith the LORD; David shall never **want (what about cut asunder or choose)** a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel, (Jer 33:17, emphasis added).

Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly **cut off**, (Nah 1:15, emphasis added).

The word *kaw-rat* is used 287 times in 279 verses throughout the scriptures. The above verses are just samples of the uses of the word, but even then, you can see that the word *kaw-rat* does not necessarily mean to destroy! The use of the word depends on the application of the verse!

But the question is, how can a word that means **to destroy (cut-off/cut-down)** also mean **to make a covenant or be freed**? The following passages might help us in the understanding of the language:

And what **agreement (or covenant)** hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore **come out (or cut asunder)** from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty, (2Co 6: 16-18, emphasis added).

The above passage was, of course, written in Greek, but we can see the idea there that the Hebrew word *kaw-rat* (or commonly translated as *cut-off*) can be used as *making of the covenant* BY separating from the heathen nations. In other words, *to make a covenant* means *to be cut asunder (separated)* from the heathen.

But I would like to bring out another use of the word *kaw-rat* (cut-off), which is to be freed (see Joshua 9:23):

Now therefore ye are cursed, and there shall none of you **be freed** from being bondmen, and hewers of wood and drawers of water for the house of my God, (Joshua 9:23, emphasis added).

In this verse we clearly see the meaning of being *set apart*.

Now, how can we know when the word *kaw-rat* has a meaning of *destruction* and when does it have a meaning of *freeing or setting apart*? The context will have to make it clear!

When God is setting us apart from the heathen (and makes a covenant with us) we are freed from among them! But when people refuse the covenant and break it, God will set these people apart from Himself, and this will lead to death eventually. Why? Because God is the life-Giver! There is no life apart from Him!

Not cut-off, but set apart or freed

So then let's go back to our original text, Ex. 31:17 and replace the phrase *cut-off* with the phrase *set apart or freed*:

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that **defileth it shall surely be put to death (or shall surely die)**: for whosoever doeth any work therein, **that soul shall be cut off (or set apart/freed)** from among his people, (Exo 31:14, emphasis added).

Is it possible then, that God is simply telling us (in the above text) that the Sabbath is for our own benefit, and it is up to us to decide either we want eternal life or eternal death? Christ shared the same principle in the words: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath (Mark 2:27)".

In the Book of Deuteronomy God tells us that keeping of the law is for our own good; we don't keep the law for His sake, but for ours:

To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good, (Deut. 10:13).

Here are some quotes from the Spirit of Prophecy that will support the above conclusions:

The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; **His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan**. – Desire of Ages, p. 22 (emphasis added).

It is not God's purpose to coerce the will. Man was created a free moral agent. – Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 331

In striking contrast to the wrong and oppression so universally practised were the mission and work of Christ. Earthly kingdoms are established and upheld by physical force, but this was not to be the foundation of the Messiah's kingdom. In the establishment of his government **no carnal weapons were to be used, no coercion practised; no attempt would be made to force the consciences of men. These are the principles used by the prince of darkness for the government of his kingdom**. His agents are actively at work, seeking in their human independence to enact laws which are in direct contrast to Christ's mercy and loving-kindness.

Prophecy has plainly stated the nature of Christ's kingdom. **He planned a government which would use no force; his subjects would know no oppression.** The symbols of earthly governments are wild beasts, but in the kingdom of Christ, men are called upon to behold, not a ferocious beast, but the Lamb of God. Not as a fierce tyrant did he come, but as the Son of man; not to conquer the nations by his iron power, but "to preach good tidings unto the meek;" "to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;" "to comfort all that mourn." He came as the divine Restorer, bringing to oppressed and downtrodden humanity the rich and abundant grace of Heaven, that by the power of his righteousness, man, fallen and degraded though he was, might be a partaker of divinity. --- Review and Herald, August 18, 1896 par. 2, 3 (emphasis added).

Not a call to judgement but a call to repentance

But this was not the end of the surprises for me on that summer Sabbath day of June 2019. It was then that the Father put another question in my mind: Where else in the Bible can we find this combination of the doubled Hebrew word *moot* (H4191 or *to die*)? And to my surprise, there are some of them found in the Book of the Covenant that Moses wrote right after God gave the Ten Commandments. Let's consider a few of them:

He that smiteth a man, so that he die, **shall be surely put to death**, (Exo 21:12, emphasis added).

And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, **shall be surely put to death**, (Exo 21:15, emphasis added).

And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, **he shall surely be put to death**, (Exo 21:16, emphasis added).

And he that curseth his father, or his mother, **shall surely be put to death** (Exo 21:17, emphasis added).

Whosoever lieth with a beast **shall surely be put to death** (Exo 22:19, emphasis added).

Now, let me ask a question: Is it possible (in light of what we discussed above), that the verses in Exodus chapters 21 and 22 (also see Leviticus chapter 20) are not the call to judgment by killing the guilty party, but a call to repentance?

Let's assume for a moment that Exodus 21:12 should be read as it appears in KJV Bible (*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death*). The question is, what about the story of Cain and Abel?

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him, (Gen 4:8).

So, if Exodus 21:12 is supposed to read, "*He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall be surely put to death*", then what should have been done to Cain for his act of murder? He would have to be put to death! But is that what took place? NO! In fact, God appealed to Cain by saying: "Where is Abel thy brother?" Just like God appealed to Adam: "Where art thou?" I believe that in both cases God's words were not a call to punishment but a call to repentance!

Did God, or Adam, or anybody else kill Cain? NO! In fact, the very opposite took place:

the LORD set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him (Gen. 4:15).

Was God playing favorites? Or does this story help us to understand Exodus 21:12 in the right way?!

From what we have seen above, Exodus 21:12 is NOT a call to punishment by death, but an appeal to repentance, or to be separated from God!

Breaking generational curses

Now please consider the following passages from Ezekiel 18: 19-23:

... doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he **shall surely live H2421 H2421 “khaw-yaw’ -- khaw-yaw’**, (Eze 18:19, emphasis added).

The soul that sinneth, it shall **die H4191 “moot”**. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him, (Eze 18:20, emphasis added).

But if **the wicked will turn from all his sins** that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he **shall surely live H2421 H2421 “khaw-yaw’ -- khaw-yaw’”**, he **shall not die H4191 “moot”**, (Eze 18:21, emphasis added).

All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he **shall live H2421 “khaw-yaw’**, (Eze 18:22, emphasis added).

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die H4191 “moot”? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and **live H2421 “khaw-yaw’**, (Eze 18:23, emphasis added)?

What do we see above? Does the prophet Ezekiel contradict the Law of the FATHER by sparing the lives of the wicked that supposedly should have been put to death? Or is the prophet clarifying the Word of the Father? How can the wicked repent if his destiny is death? There is MERCY with the Father!

Remember what GOD said about Himself to Moses:

And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, **merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**, and that will by no means clear the guilty; **visiting the iniquity** of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation, (Exo 34: 6-7, emphasis added).

What does “visiting the iniquity” mean then? Does it mean punishment? NO, NOT according to Ezekiel! So, what does it mean? It means that GOD is coming to those who are oppressed by the sins of their fathers to break the vicious circle of the curse and to restore the life of the oppressed! HE will lead them to salvation!

The second witness

According to the law of God every matter is established on the account of two witnesses. And there is another place in the Bible where translators translated the double *moot* combination the right away also. God always provides enough evidence for His truth! Praise God!

Hath given forth upon usury, and hath taken increase: shall he then live? he shall not live: he hath done all these abominations; **he shall surely die H4191 H4191**; his blood shall be upon him. (Eze 18:13, emphasis added).

The adulterous woman

I believe this is the time when we need to look at the story of the woman that was brought to Christ to be stoned to death. Here is the story in John chapter 8:

And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, **in the very act**. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that **such should be stoned**: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, **He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her**. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, **where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?** She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, **Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more**, (Joh 8:3, emphasis added).

Did Christ break the Law or fulfilled it in this story? He fulfilled it. He demonstrated the weightier matter of the law, HE showed MERCY! And MERCY led to REPENTANCE! This is why HE Himself said:

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live, (Eze 18:23, emphasis added)?

I will finish this small paper with the following words:

They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word; **they can honor Him only as they have a right conception of His character, government, and purposes, and act in accordance with them**. None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict (Great Controversy, p. 593, emphasis added).

May our loving Heavenly Father continue to pour His light upon us, His children, as we get closer to the end of the conflict of all ages!