

Lev. 20:10 If a man commits adultery with a married woman, committing adultery with another man's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall be put to death. ¹¹ If a man lies with his father's wife, it is the nakedness of his father that he has uncovered; the two shall be put to death—their bloodguilt is upon them [דְּמֵי דָם]. ¹² If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall be put to death; they have committed incest—their bloodguilt is upon them [דְּמֵי דָם]. ¹³ If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death—their bloodguilt is upon them [דְּמֵי דָם]. ¹⁴ If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is depravity; both he and they shall be put to the fire, that there be no depravity among you. ¹⁵ If a man has carnal relations with a beast, he shall be put to death; and you shall kill the beast. ¹⁶ If a woman approaches any beast to mate with it, you shall kill the woman and the beast; they shall be put to death—their bloodguilt is upon them [דְּמֵי דָם].

RASHI: His bloodguilt is upon him. This phrase is used here to indicate what it indicates wherever it is used: he is to be killed by stoning. This we learn from v. 27. But the straightforward sense of the phrase is as in Josh. 2:19, “his blood will be on his head”: no one is punished for his death but he himself, for he caused himself to be killed.

RASHBAM: His bloodguilt is upon him. His blood is on his own head. He has condemned himself to death.

GERSONIDES: His bloodguilt is upon him. Literally, “his blood is in him”—he must not live long enough for nourishment to produce more blood; all the blood that is in him now is all there will ever be.

Lev. 20:9 If anyone insults his father or his mother, he shall be put to death; he has insulted his father and his mother—his bloodguilt is upon him [דְּמֵי דָם].

Lev. 20:27 A man or a woman who has a ghost or a familiar spirit shall be put to death; they shall be pelted with stones—their bloodguilt shall be upon them [דְּמֵי דָם].

Baruch Levine, *Leviticus* (JPS Torah Commentary)

9. his bloodguilt is upon him Hebrew *dam*, “blood,” and the plural *damim* often connote the death penalty. (See further in vv. 11–13, 16, 27.) In Deuteronomy 18:18 [*recte* 17:8, דְּמֵי דָם], a case involving murder is referred to simply as *dam*.

27. A man or woman who has a ghost or a familiar spirit The insertion of this verse at the conclusion of chapter 20 is rather puzzling, since it seems to be an afterthought. Its addition here may have been occasioned by the omission of the death penalty from the earlier reference to this subject in verse 6. [6 And if any person turns to ghosts and familiar spirits and goes astray after them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from among his people.]

Baruch Schwartz, “Leviticus,” *Jewish Study Bible*

20.1–27: Molech worship and sexual crimes. A single speech, introduced in v. 1 and divided into four parts: (1) penalties for Molech worship (vv. 2–5); (2) exhortation (vv. 7–8); (3) a series of prescribed penalties for sexual and other crimes (vv. 9–21); (4) exhortation (vv. 22–26). Two appendices, dealing with conjuring up the spirits of the dead, have been placed at the conclusions of sections (1) and (4), respectively (vv. 6 and 27).

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9: *Insults*, Heb “curses.” *His bloodguilt is upon him*: This phrase, here and in the following vv., emphasizes that although the crime was not one of bloodshed, the guilty parties have indeed incurred the death penalty and the executioners are not accountable.

6: *Ghosts and familiar spirits*, see 19.31 n. In v. 27 the death penalty is prescribed for those who “have” ghosts and familiar spirits. Thus the “providers” are punished by death, and the “consumers” are punished by “karet.”

Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus* (Anchor Bible)

9. *his bloodguilt is upon him. dāmāyw bō*. This idiom is attested only in this chapter and in Ezek 18:13. It is synonymous with *dāmō bēro šō*, literally “his blood is on his head” (Josh 2:19; 1 Kgs 2:37; Ezek 33:4). The latter idiom uses the singular *dām* and implies that the metaphor is probably based on the primitive belief that the blood of the illicitly slain refuses burial, but encircles the head of the slayer, as if to call out: “This is the murderer.” The former idiom, however, uses (but not always, cf. 17:4) the plural *dāmīm*, which may indicate an attempt to alter the concrete notion of blood to the abstract concept of bloodguilt (Reventlow 1960). Koch (1962), however, maintains that the concrete meaning is intended. The fear of automatic retribution persists: the blood of the slain (and presumably the slain’s spirit) will hound the murderer until he, too, is slain.

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Finally, this idiom also implies that the death penalty will befall the miscreant whether or not the elders put him to death. The death sentences prescribed in vv. 9–16 are therefore parallel to that explicitly stated for Molek worship (vv. 4–5): unless the authorities execute the convicted party, God will. Crüsemann (1996: 317) also includes the intervening case, inquiry of the dead (v. 6), in this category. However, the specified penalty is *kārēt*, and human action is, by implication, forbidden.

A stylistic note. This idiom is found in the capital cases specified in vv. 11, 12, 13, and 16, but it is missing in vv. 10, 14, 15. In the latter, however, the *môt yūmāt* clause is followed by a rationale. This is not true in our verse: *môt yūmāt* is also followed by the rationale *‘ābîw wē’immō qillēl* concluding with *dāmāyw bō*. A possible reason is that this initial case sets the pattern for those that follow: even where a rationale seems to have replaced the *dāmāyw bō* clause, the latter is understood. All executioners of the court’s death penalty should have no fear of human or divine retribution.

Ezek. 18:13 has lent at advance interest, or exacted accrued interest—shall he live? He shall not live! If he has committed any of these abominations, he shall die; he has forfeited his life [דָּמָיו בּוֹ יָהִירָה].

Hos. 12:15 “Ephraim gave bitter offense, And his Lord cast his crimes upon him [דָּמָיו עָלָיו יָטוּשׁ].

2 Sam. 1:16 And David said to him, “Your blood be on your own head [דָּמָיִךְ [דָּמָיִךְ] עַל-רֹאשְׁךָ]!”

1Kings 2:32 The LORD will bring his blood guilt down upon his own head [אֶת-דָּמוֹ עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ].

Ex. 22:2 If the sun has risen on him, there is bloodguilt in that case [דָּמִים לּוֹ].

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