Leviticus 24(Keep the Fire Burning)

The Lamps

Lev 24:1 The LORD said to Moses,

Lev 24:2 "Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually.

Lev 24:3 Outside the curtain that shields the ark of the covenant law in the tent of meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the LORD from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.

Lev 24:4 The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD must be tended continually.

Bread for the Tabernacle

Lev 24:5 "Take the finest flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf.

Lev 24:6 Arrange them in two stacks, six in each stack, on the table of pure gold before the LORD.

Lev 24:7 By each stack put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be a food offering presented to the LORD.

Lev 24:8 This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant.

Lev 24:9 It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in the sanctuary area, because it is a most holy part of their perpetual share of the food offerings presented to the LORD."

Punishment for Blasphemy

Lev 24:10 Now the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father went out among the Israelites, and a fight broke out in the camp between him and an Israelite.

Lev 24:11 The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name with a curse; so they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri the Danite.)

Lev 24:12 They put him in custody until the will of the LORD should be made clear to them.

Lev 24:13 Then the LORD said to Moses:

Lev 24:14 "Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him.

Lev 24:15 Say to the Israelites: 'Anyone who curses their God will be held responsible;

Lev 24:16 anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD is to be put to death. The entire assembly must stone them. Whether foreigner or native-born, when they blaspheme the Name they are to be put to death.

An Eye for an Eye

Lev 24:17 "'Anyone who takes the life of a human being is to be put to death.

Lev 24:18 Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution--life for life.

Lev 24:19 Anyone who injures their neighbor is to be injured in the same manner:

Lev 24:20 fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The one who has inflicted the injury must suffer the same injury.

Lev 24:21 Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a human being is to be put to death.

Lev 24:22 You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the LORD your God.'"

Lev 24:23 Then Moses spoke to the Israelites, and they took the blasphemer outside the camp and stoned him. The Israelites did as the LORD commanded Moses.

This chapter breaks down into three core sections with distinct symbolic and practical meanings:

1. The Lampstand and the Showbread (Leviticus 24:1–9)

- **The Pure Olive Oil (Verses 1–4):** Aaron and the priests must keep the lamps on the golden lampstand burning continually from evening until morning using pure, beaten olive oil. This symbolizes steady obedience, God's persistent presence, and prefigures Christ as the light of the world.
- **The Bread of the Presence (Verses 5–9):** Twelve fine-flour loaves are arranged in two piles with pure frankincense on the gold table and replaced every Sabbath day, with the old loaves eaten by the priests. This represents reliance on God's sustaining provision (Jesus as the Bread of Life).

2. The Blasphemy Incident and the Name of God (Leviticus 24:10–16)

- **The Conflict (Verses 10–12):** The son of an Israelite woman and an Egyptian man quarrels in the camp and curses the Name of God. He is placed in custody while Moses seeks God's judgment.

- **The Penalty (Verses 13–16):** God commands that the offender be taken outside the camp, where the witnesses lay hands on his head and the community stones him to death.

- **The Meaning:** The passage highlights the severe holiness of God's name, warning against treating sacred things with casualness, profanity, or contempt. In Christian interpretation, the event also forms a sharp contrast with Jesus, who was falsely accused of blasphemy and suffered outside the camp for others.

3. Laws of Retributive Justice (Leviticus 24:17–23)

- **Proportional Equity (Verses 17–22):** God establishes civil standards for the community: life for life (murder), an animal for an animal (property destruction), and bodily injury settled by proportional harm ("eye for an eye, tooth for tooth").
- **Equal Application (Verse 22):** These laws applied impartially to both the native-born Israelite and the foreign sojourner (stranger) living among them.

1. The Tabernacle Lamps and Jesus as the "Light of the World"

- **The Old Testament Practice:** Leviticus 24:1–4 details the command for pure beaten olive oil to keep the golden lampstand (*menorah*) burning continually in the Tabernacle.
- **The New Testament Fulfillment:** Jesus identifies Himself as the light of the world in John 8:12 ("I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness..."). The continual light points forward to Christ, who brings unceasing spiritual illumination to His people.
- **John 8:12** When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

2. The Showbread and Jesus as the "Bread of Life"

- **The Old Testament Practice:** Leviticus 24:5–9 describes the 12 loaves of showbread (or "Bread of the Presence") arranged in two rows on a pure gold table, representing the 12 tribes of Israel in ongoing fellowship with God, replaced every Sabbath.
- **The New Testament Fulfillment:** Jesus calls Himself the "bread of life" in John 6:35, stating that whoever comes to Him will not grow hungry. Just as the showbread provided sacred communion and sustenance in the presence of God, Jesus provides true spiritual nourishment and communion under the New Covenant.
- **John 6:35** Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

3. Proportional Justice ("Eye for an Eye") vs. New Testament Grace

- **The Old Testament Law:** Leviticus 24:19–20 outlines the principle of "fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." In the ancient Near Eastern context, this was designed as a *limitation* on punishment, preventing blood feuds or disproportionate, runaway vengeance by capping civil penalties to match the exact damage done.
- **The New Testament Teaching:** In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38–42), Jesus references this civil/judicial formula ("You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person..."). Jesus is not annulling the moral foundation of justice or the role of civil government, which Romans 13:1–4 affirms. Instead, He forbids His disciples from using judicial retribution as an excuse for *personal* retaliation, calling them instead to radical grace, patience, and love for enemies.
- **Mat 5:38** "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'
- Mat 5:39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.
- Mat 5:40 And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.
- Mat 5:41 If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.
- Mat 5:42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

- **Rom 13:1** Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.
- Rom 13:2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.
- Rom 13:3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended.
- Rom 13:4 For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.