

Doctrine of Being Cut Off

1. Many passages in the Bible speak of someone or something being “karath” or “cut off”.
2. The Hebrew word karath (kaw-rath') means, to cut (off, down or asunder); by implication, to destroy or consume; specifically, to covenant (i.e. make an alliance or bargain, originally by cutting flesh and passing between the pieces).
3. The first reference to karath is found in Genesis 17:14, “*Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.*”
4. There were many offenses necessitating karath.

- Failure to sacrifice the Passover. *Numbers 9:13 But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the Lord in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin.*
- Eating leaven during Passover *Exodus 12:15 Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.*

Exodus 12:19 Seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that soul shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or born in the land.

- Working on the Sabbath. *Exodus 31:14 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.*
- Working on, or failing to fast on, Yom Kippur or the Day of Atonement. *Leviticus 23:29 For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. 30 And whatsoever soul it be that doeth any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people.*
- Eating or drinking blood. *Leviticus 7:27 Whatsoever soul it be that eateth any manner of blood, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.*

Leviticus 17:10 And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

Leviticus 17:14 For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.

- Eating suet or the fat of an organ. *Leviticus 7:25 For whosoever eateth the fat of the beast, of which men offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, even the soul that eateth it shall be cut off from his people.*
- Misuse of holy incense. *Exodus 30:38 Whosoever shall make like unto that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people.*
- Misuse of holy oil. *Exodus 30:33 Whosoever compoundeth any like it, or whosoever putteth any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people.*
- Eating sacrificial meat beyond the divinely appointed time. *Leviticus 7:18 And if any of the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings be eaten at all on the third day, it shall not be accepted, neither shall it be imputed unto him that offereth it: it shall be an abomination, and the soul that eateth of it shall bear his iniquity.*

Leviticus 19:8 Therefore every one that eateth it shall bear his iniquity, because he hath profaned the hallowed thing of the Lord: and that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

- Eating sacrificial meat while being unclean or impure. *Leviticus 7:20 But the soul that eateth of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, that pertain unto the Lord, having his uncleanness upon him, even that soul shall be cut off from his people. 21 Moreover the soul that shall touch any unclean thing, as the uncleanness of man, or any unclean beast, or any abominable unclean thing, and eat of the flesh of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which pertain unto the Lord, even that soul shall be cut off from his people.*
- Entering into a sacred area unauthorized. *Numbers 18:3 And they shall keep thy charge, and the charge of all the tabernacle: only they shall not come nigh the vessels of the sanctuary and the altar, that neither they, nor ye also, die.*

Numbers 4:15 And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath [Levites] shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation.

Numbers 4:19 But thus do unto them, that they may live, and not die, when they approach unto the most holy things: Aaron and his sons shall go in, and appoint them every one to his service and to his burden: 20 But they shall not go in to see when the holy things are covered, lest they die.

- Blaspheming or sinning with defiance. *Numbers 15:30 But the soul that doeth ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 31 Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.*

Leviticus 24:15 And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin.

- Neglecting circumcision. *Genesis 17:14 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.*
- Neglecting purification after corpse contact. *Numbers 19:13 Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him. 14 This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. 15 And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean. 16 And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. 17 And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: 18 And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: 19 And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. 20 But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean.*
- Idolatry (Molech worship). *Leviticus 20:2 Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. 3 And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. 4 And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: 5 Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.*

Ezekiel 14:5 That I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols.

- Involvement in the occult and necromancy. *Leviticus 20:6 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.*
- The unauthorized slaughter and sacrifice outside the sanctuary. *Leviticus 17:4 And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer an offering unto the Lord before the tabernacle of the Lord; blood shall be imputed unto that man; he hath shed blood; and that man shall be cut off from among his people:*

Leviticus 17:9 And bringeth it not unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, to offer it unto the Lord; even that man shall be cut off from among his people.

5. To be “cut off” could take various forms.

- Excision.
- Extirpation. The divine decree of ending of the family line. Those who commit crimes worthy of karath will, in a matter of generations, find their family line coming to an end.
- Excommunication.
- Extermination. The death penalty for the offender and his whole family.
- Extinguishing. No “gathering to the ancestors”; a denial of an afterlife.

6. While karath might include the death penalty, it was also distinct from it. The death penalty was carried out by witnesses of a crime and the rest of the people. Condemnation for the worship of Molech would be an example of a person incurring two penalties: the death penalty and karath.

- *Leviticus 20:2 Again, thou shalt say to the children of Israel, Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones. 3 And I will set my face against that man, and will cut him off from among his people; because he hath given of his seed unto Molech, to defile my sanctuary, and to profane my holy name. 4 And if the people of the land do any ways hide their eyes from the man, when he giveth of his seed unto Molech, and kill him not: 5 Then I will set my face against that man, and against his family, and will cut him off, and all that go a whoring after him, to commit whoredom with Molech, from among their people.*

7. Also distinct from karath is kherem or “The Ban”, which is the death penalty for a person’s family reflected in the story of Achan in Joshua 7, and the words of the psalmist.

- *Psalms 109:13 Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.*

8. Being cut off (*karath*) could happen naturally through death, and is not of necessity a divine penalty.
- *Ruth 4:10 Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be my wife, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance, that the name of the dead be not cut off from among his brethren, and from the gate of his place: ye are witnesses this day.*
9. While actions involving *karath* are grievous, they may be forgiven.
- *2 Chronicles 30:17 For there were many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one that was not clean, to sanctify them unto the Lord. 18 For a multitude of the people, even many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good Lord pardon every one. 19 That prepareth his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he be not cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary. 20 And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.*
10. During the days of Hezekiah, though the people of Israel violated the stern commands with the penalty of *karath*, and ate the Passover in impurity, though they have violated Leviticus 7:20-21, Numbers 9:13 and Exodus 12:15, 19, yet, when they repented. We read of God's infinite grace.
- *2 Chronicle 30:20 And the Lord hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people. 21 And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord Day by day, singing with loud instruments unto the Lord.*