

Question:

Why do many Israelites use the phrase “cut off from his people” when someone is seen acting contrary to the Torah? What does this phrase actually mean?

Leviticus 7:27 (ESV):

“If any person eats the blood of any flesh, that person shall be cut off from his people.”

Answer:

The phrase “cut off from his people” is a general expression indicating that the person will be separated from the community of Israel. This separation can take different forms depending on the nature of the offense.

There are three main types of being “cut off”:

1) Death

In some cases, being “cut off” meant the person was to be put to death. This punishment was sometimes carried out by God

Himself (Leviticus 20:3-6) and other times by human authorities. For example, anyone caught committing adultery faced the penalty of stoning to death.

Similarly, breaking the Sabbath was a capital offense:

Exodus 31:14 (ESV):

“You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.”

This shows how seriously God regarded obedience, especially regarding holy times and commands.

2) Exclusion from the Community

Another form of being “cut off” involved social and religious exclusion. The person was removed from the census of Israel, losing their right to participate in worship and communal activities.

Numbers 19:20 (ESV):

“But the person who is unclean and does not cleanse himself shall be cut off from the assembly; because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD, the water of purification has not been sprinkled on him; he shall remain unclean.”

This meant spiritual and social isolation, emphasizing the importance of holiness in the community.

3) Loss of Covenant Blessings

To be “cut off” could also mean losing the blessings of God’s covenant, including protection and promises.

Genesis 17:14 (ESV):

“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.”

Today, in the New Covenant, similar separation from God’s grace can occur when people persist in sin without repentance. This spiritual cutting off is serious.

Application in the New Testament and Today

- The church has authority to discipline unrepentant sinners by excluding them from fellowship, as Paul instructs in:

1 Corinthians 5:1-5 (ESV):

Paul instructs the Corinthian church to expel a man living in blatant sin to protect the community’s holiness.

- God also sometimes enacts judgment directly, as seen in the story of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to the Holy Spirit and were struck dead (Acts 5:1-11).
- Furthermore, Hebrews warns that willful, persistent sin after receiving knowledge of the truth risks a fearful judgment:

Hebrews 10:26-27 (ESV):

“For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment...”

Final Thoughts

The concept of being “cut off” was not just for ancient Israel but remains relevant spiritually today. We must not take sin lightly or assume God’s mercy will always hold back His judgment. Being “cut off” means losing fellowship with God and His people, which is a grave spiritual condition.

Let us live in holiness, repent quickly, and remain faithful to God’s covenant.

Shalom.

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What Does the Phrase “Cut Off from His People” Mean?
(Leviticus 7:27)

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