

Profaning the Name of God by Our Actions

This weeks reading is from Parsahat Emor (*Vayikra / Leviticus 21:1-24:23*) the Lord speaks to the sons of Aaron to be careful not to defile themselves by touching a dead person among his people. The point that is being made here is that the High Priest has an additional level of sanctification, that he must not come in contact with a dead person because he is going before the Living God in the Tabernacle. In the Torah portion, we are also given the Mitzvah not to shave making baldness on our heads, and not to round the edges of our beards, not to make cuts in our flesh, or to tattoo our bodies. The Priests are not to take a woman who has profaned herself as a prostitute or to take a woman who is divorced from her husband (*21:7*). The priest that is anointed with oil shall not tear his cloths, uncover his head, or defile himself by a dead person, not even his nearest relative (*21:11*). The person who has a defect, who is lame, blind, or disfigured face or deformed limb, broken foot or hand, hunchback or dwarf, has a defect in his eye, or a skin malady, or crushed testicles, no one who has a defect in his body from the descendents of Aaron are to come near to offer the sacrifices before the Lord (*21:18-21*). Additional commands are given on who may and may not eat of the holy gifts. The entering into the sanctuary in uncleanness and eating of the food that is given to the Priests results in the bearing of the guilt of sin. The interesting aspect of these Scriptures are that the Lord has specific requirements for those who approach Him in the Mishkhan (Tabernacle), and that if we do not obey His commands, we profane His name by our actions. Today, is it possible to profane the Name of God by our actions?

ספר ויקרא פרק כב

לא ושמרתם מצותי ועשיתם אתם אני יהוה: לב ולא תחללו את-שם קדשי ונגד-דשתי בתוך בני ישראל אני יהוה מקדשכם: לג המוציא אתכם מארץ מצרים להיות לכם לאלהים אני יהוה:

Vayikra / Leviticus 22:31-33

22:31 'So you shall keep My commandments, and do them; I am the Lord. 22:32 'You shall not profane My holy name, but I will be sanctified among the sons of Israel; I am the Lord who sanctifies you, 22:33 who brought you out from the land of Egypt, to be your God; I am the Lord.' (NASB)

Do you think profaning God's Name is possible today through our actions? What does this have to do with sanctifying the Name of God in our lives? These are very important questions for us today in Yeshua the Messiah. Especially in light of what Yeshua says in *Luke 20:34 Jesus said to them, 'The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, 20:35 but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; 20:36 for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. 20:37 'But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. 20:38 'Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him.'* (NASB) Yeshua is speaking of the Olam Haba (the World to Come) and states *"but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead..."* His words here are very important, because in today's Christian theology we are told *"just believe in Jesus and you're good to go."* This theology is not exactly what was taught by Yeshua and his disciples. There remains the issue of one's faith with regard to one's actions, does the one measure up to the other, and visa-versa? Note that the Scriptures speak of Faith as being the composition of two things, (i) belief - in the Lord, in the Messiah, and in the Scriptures, and (ii) practice - we live what we believe. Faith is not authentic if these two things are not coupled together. This is what Yeshua meant when he said *"those who are considered worthy of taking part in the age to come and in the resurrection from the dead"* Yeshua did not say *"just believe in me and you will be saved."* He understood and taught that faith includes both belief and practice. True faith is that which is lived out, we are not to live two separate lives. If one has two separate lives, then be warned, based upon what Yeshua said in *Matthew 7*, there are those who come before Me on that great day and I will tell them, depart from Me I never knew you, worker of lawlessness (anomia).

The Apostle Paul spoke of the issue of one's actions with regard to profaning the Name of God according to *Romans 2:18-29*.

Romans 2:18-29

2:18 and know His will and approve the things that are es-

essential, being instructed out of the Law, 2:19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 2:20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, 2:21 you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? 2:22 You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 2:23 You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? 2:24 For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' just as it is written. 2:25 For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 2:26 So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 2:27 And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? 2:28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. (NASB)

Notice how Paul states that those he is speaking to know God's will and approve of the things that are essential, because they have been instructed (learned) in the Torah (*וידעת הראוי ובהיותך מלמד בתורה תבין בין טוב לרע:*), suggesting that the people he is speaking to are attending the Synagogue services and hearing the reading of the Torah every week (see *Acts 15:21*). Paul continues saying having been instructed in the Torah, you are a guide to the blind and a light to those who are in darkness (*Romans 2:19*). He then speaks of being a teacher and instructor, of the foolish and immature, and those who teaching others. He asks the question, does the teacher teach himself to not steal, to not commit sexual immorality, and to not commit idolatry? Those he is speaking to boast in the Torah, however,

they also break the Torah, and because of this the Name of God is blasphemed by the Gentiles. In the Messiah we are called to strive for righteousness in our lives. Paul goes on to speak of the importance of obeying the command (righteousness) by drawing a parallel to circumcision. He asks, “*what is circumcision if one disregards the command of God?*” Paul is speaking of those who hold on to their heritage, their traditions, while presupposing that by their traditions they will be saved. They affirm the validity of the command, but do not live according to the command. Paul says that when one breaks the command he dishonors God and the name of God is blasphemed.

So, what does it mean to profane His Name by one’s actions? The rabbis have thought extensively on this question over 1700 years ago, and in the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 6:6* we find their guidance on this question.

Pirkei Avot 6:6

Greater is Torah than priesthood and kingship, for monarchy is obtained with thirty levels, and priesthood with twenty-four, and Torah is obtained with forty-eight things. And they are these: learning, listening of the ear, preparation of speech, understanding of the heart, reverence, awe, humility, happiness, purity, service of Sages, care in [selection of] friends, debate of the students, clarification, reading, learning, minimal commodities, minimal worldly occupation, minimal pleasure, minimal sleep, minimal conversation, minimal laughter, patience, generosity, trust in Sages, acceptance of suffering, knowing one’s place, gladness in one’s portion, erection of a fence to his words, lack of self-aggrandizement, loveliness, love of God, love of the creatures, love of the righteous, love of the upright, love of rebuke, distancing from honor, lack of arrogance in learning, lack of joy in teaching, lifting of a burden with one’s friend, judgment with the benefit of the doubt, standing for the truth, standing for peace, deliberation in study, questioning and responding, hearing and adding, learning in order to teach and learning in order to act, making his master wiser, focusing one’s words, citing the source, for it is taught that one who cites a source brings redemption to

the world, as it says (Esther 2:22): “Esther told the king in Mordekhai’s name.”

The rabbis begin with a comparison of the priesthood, kings, and Torah study. The comparison is described by the attributes of those who are priests, kings, and students of the Torah. The rabbis say that the attributes of the Torah are greater than those for the priesthood and kingship indicated by the Torah attributes being greater (48) as opposed to the priesthood (24) and kingship (30). The discussion then proceeds with the attributes of the Torah: (i) learning, (ii) listening, (iii) preparation of speech, (iv) an understanding heart, (v) reverence of God, (vi) humility, (vii) happiness, (viii) purity, (ix) service of the Sages, (x) care in selecting friends, (xi)debate, (xii) clarification, (xiii) reading, (xiv) minimal commodities, (xv) minimal work conversation, (xvi) minimal worldly occupation, (xvii) minimal pleasure, (xviii) minimal sleep, (xix) minimal laughter, (xx) patience, (xxi) generosity, (xxii) trust in Sages, (xxiii) acceptance of suffering, (xxiv) knowing one’s place, (xxv) gladness in one’s portion, (xxvi) building a fence to one’s words, (xxvii) lack of self aggrandizement, (xxviii) loveliness, (xxiv) love of God, (xxv) love of creatures, (xxvi) love of righteousness, (xxvii) love of uprightness, (xxviii) love of rebuke, (xxix) distance from honor, (xxx) lack of arrogance in learning, (xxxii) lack of joy in teaching, (xxxii) lifting a burden with one’s friend, (xxxiii) judgment with the benefit of doubt, (xxxiv) standing for the truth, (xxxv) standing for peace, (xxxvi) deliveration in study, (xxxvii) questioning and responding, (xxxviii) hearing and adding, (xxxix) learning in order to teach, (xxxx) learning in order to act (Maaseh Torah), and (xxxxi) focusing upon one’s words.

A summary of these things, being humble, loving towards one another and the Lord, being contented with what we are given, and helping one another to lift their burdens, does this list sound reminiscent of the Apostolic Writings? If we live arrogant lives, would that be profaning the Name of God? If we did not have love for one another, do not help to lift one another burdens, are not humble, do you think these things would profane the Name of God? The Apostle Paul said in *1 Timothy 6:1 All who are under the yoke as slaves are to regard their own masters as worthy of all honor so that the name of God and our doctrine will not be spoken against. (NASB)* Paul has the same perspective, that if you find

yourself in the situation of slavery, to honor your master so that the Name of God and the teaching (doctrine) are not profaned. Paul also said that we are bond-slaves to Yeshua the Messiah. Paul says in Romans 6:16 *παριστάνετε ἑαυτοὺς δούλους εἰς ὑπακοήν* “yield yourselves as slaves for obedience,” where δούλος *doúlos* is used with the highest dignity in the sense that believers are to willingly live under Christ’s authority as His devoted followers in righteousness.

Based upon a comparison of the Mishnah, what Paul wrote to the Romans, and the Torah portion, a major thread in our lives is to live in a manner that is worthy as the children of God so as not to profane the Name of the Lord. The Torah states in *Vayikra / Leviticus 19:12* *‘You shall not swear falsely by My name, so as to profane the name of your God; I am the LORD. (NASB)* Paul is saying in *Romans 2:29* *But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God (NASB)* that when we read the Scriptures we need to hear God speaking. The Lord is speaking not just to the tribes of Israel through the Torah, the Prophet, and the Writings, but also to our very hearts and our lives! Do you think these things are important to our salvation in the Messiah Yeshua?

In Judaism the phrase *Chillul HaShem* (חילול השם) means “*desecration of the Name,*” and is a term used to describe any act or behavior that casts shame or brings disrepute to belief in God, any aspect of the Torah’s teachings, Jewish law (Mishnah), or to the Jewish community. The idea of *Chillul HaShem* is very broad. When Paul was speaking to the Romans and to Timothy, he was thinking on *Chillul HaShem*. The source text for *Chillul HaShem* is from *Vayikra / Leviticus 22:32*, *“And you shall not profane My holy name; but I will be hallowed among the children of Israel: I am the Lord who hallows you.”* The idea is that one may bring dishonor or shame to God’s name by an action or the lack thereof. According to Judaism, any behavior or action that disgraces, harms, or shames the Lord God and his Law is regarded as the desecration of God’s name. By this interpretation, *Chillul HaShem* is defined by every sin a person does. Examples given are (i) desecrating the Shabbat, (ii) non-kosher eating, (iii) stealing, and (iv) *lashon hara* (evil tongue), and the list could go on. The counter part to this is known as “*Kiddush HaShem*” (sanctification of the Name) which is defined by any action that brings honor, respect, and glory to God. Therefore, the obligation of Torah (obedience to the 613

mitzvot) is to refrain from the desecration of the Name. Whereas, to disregard the mitzvot is to shame or dishonor the Name of God. Within these concepts of obedience versus disobedience, we find the definition of the righteous as opposed to the unrighteous. By your actions, would the Lord consider you righteous or unrighteous? The rabbis have also discussed these differences between the righteous and unrighteous persons, and we find some of their opinions in the *Mishnah Pirkey Avot 5:19 and 6:1*.

Pirkei Avot 5:19

One who has these three things is of the students of our father Avraham. [One who has] three other things is of the students of Bilam the wicked. [One who has] a good eye, a low spirit, and a humble soul is of the students of our father Avraham. [One who has] an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a broad soul is of the students of Bilam the wicked. What is the difference between the students of our father Avraham and the students of Bilam the wicked? The students of our father Avraham eat in this world and inherit the World to Come, as it says (Proverbs 8:21): “That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and their treasures I will fill.” But the students of Bilam the wicked inherit Geihinam and go down to the pit of destruction, as it says (Psalms 55:24): “But You, God, will bring them down into the pit of destruction; men of blood and deceit will not live out half their days. As for me, I will trust in You.”

Pirkei Avot 6:1

Rabbi Meir says: Anyone who involves himself in Torah for its own sake merits many things, and moreover the entire world is worthwhile for his sake; He is called “friend,” “beloved,” “lover of the Omnipresent,” “lover of [all] creatures,” “delighter of the Omnipresent,” “delighter of [all] creatures;” He is clothed in humility and reverence, and it prepares him to be righteous, devout, upright and trustworthy, and it distances him from sin, and draws him near to merit; We enjoy from him counsel and comprehension, understanding and strength, as it is said

(Proverbs 8:14): “Mine is counsel and comprehension, I am understanding, mine is strength;” It gives him kingship and dominion, and [the ability to] investigate in judgment, and the secrets of the Torah are revealed to him, and he becomes like an ever-strengthening spring, and like a river that does not stop; He is modest and long-tempered, and forgives insult to him; And it enlarges him and raises him above all [that God] made.

The rabbis say the one who has a good eye, a low spirit, and a humble soul, are the students of Abraham. Whereas, those who have an evil eye, a haughty spirit, and a broad soul, are the students of Bilam. The rabbis also say that the one who occupies himself in Torah, which is another way of saying, the one who occupies himself in righteousness, is “*called “friend,” “beloved,” “lover of the Ominpresent,” “lover of [all] creatures,” “delighter of the Ominpresent,” “delighter of [all] creatures;” He is clothed in humility and reverence, and it prepares him to be righteous, devout, upright and trustworthy, and it distances him from sin, and draws him near to merit; We enjoy from him counsel and comprehension, understanding and strength, as it is said (Proverbs 8:14)”* This sounds similar to what Paul says to the Galatians and the Colossians.

Galatians 3:26-29

3:26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 3:27 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 3:29 And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to promise. (NASB)

Colossians 3:10-12

3:10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him 3:11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all,

and in all. 3:12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; (NASB)

Notice how Paul says to the Galatians, you are the sons of God through faith in the Messiah, and being baptized in the Messiah have clothed yourselves with the Messiah. Note that the use of the word Messiah (Mashiakh) draws in a Torah context. In addition, baptism comes from the Mikvah, and based upon a Torah context, is coupled with repentance, Teshuva being a major factor in the Mikvah (baptism) process. Repentance is turning one's self from sin and towards the Lord in heaven and His ways. This is what Paul meant in *Colossians 3:10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him (NASB)* which is paralleled to the *Mishnah Pirkei Avot 5:19 and 6:1* the repentant are those who have good eye, a low spirit, and a humble soul, these are the putting on the "new self" as students of Abraham (faithful), and such a person is a "friend," "beloved," and "lover of the Ominpresent." Paul goes on to say that by these things, there is no difference between Jew and Gentile. Those who live repentant lives will be indistinguishable.

In addition, the rabbinic understanding of the ger toshav, and the **חסיד אומות העולם** "*Pious People of the World*" is most likely what Paul was thinking upon when he wrote what he did to the Galatians and the Colossians. (See *Tehillim / Psalms 67 Part 2 study*) Take for example what he wrote to the Colossians.

Colossians 2:20-3:9

2:20 If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 2:21 'Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!' 2:22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 2:23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. 3:1 Therefore if you have been raised up with

Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 3:2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3:3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. 3:5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 3:6 For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, 3:7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 3:8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 3:9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, (NASB)

In Colossians, Paul speaks of worshiping angels (idolatry), to fleshly indulgence (immorality), to not lie, or steal, etc. Again, he is drawing us back to the Torah command. While reading *Colossians 2:20-22*, it must be kept in mind that Paul is not speaking against the Torah command, rather, he is trying to say what good is the command if one lives with fleshly indulgence? We cannot live with partial obedience (3:6), all of one's life must be consistent in the sense that one does not have "*hidden sin*" for the eyes of God see all!

The point of the study is with regard to profaning the Name of God by our actions. According to the Scriptures, and from the rabbinic literature, the Lord reaches out to save men (people) from both Israel and the nations. According to Paul (*Galatians 3:26-29*) in the Messiah we are joined with Israel (*Romans 11*) in the covenant that has been made in Yeshua the Messiah. And being in the Messiah, it is important to strive for righteousness in the salvation that we have been given by faith. Therefore, even in the Messiah Yeshua, it is important to take hold of God's Salvation by faith, and then to live out our salvation by being obedient to His command (*John 10 and 14*).

