

## Profane (chol, chahal) Study

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In the Tanakh, when we see the word profane what comes to our minds. Is it ruin, desecrate, or making something not holy. Today we will be looking at how this is used in the Tanakh and whether it matches what we might believe. To start we must realize that to gain the meaning of this word we must understand what is the Hebrew this word comes from.

Lets look at the Hebrew word chol (Chet – Lamed), which for those who want to look it up in the BDB is reference number 2455 and it is found on page 320. It is a masculine noun.

### 1. Contrasting Profane and Sacred

Let look at Vayiqra (Leviticus) 10 starting in verse 8.

<sup>8</sup>And Yehovah spoke to Aaron, saying: <sup>9</sup>Drink no wine or other intoxicant, you or your sons, when you enter the Tent of Meeting, that you may not die. This is a law for all time throughout the ages, <sup>10</sup>**for you must distinguish between the sacred and the profane (ulehav'dil Beyn hadodesh ubeyn hachol וְלֹהֲבַדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֹל)**, and between the unclean and the clean; <sup>11</sup>and you must teach the Israelites all the laws which Yehovah has imparted to them through Moses

In verse 10 the priest are commanded to distinguish between the Profane and the Sacred. The words used here are:

Chol = Profane  
Kodesh = Sacred

Lets take a minute to discuss kodesh (Kof-dalet-shin). When you see holy or sacred what do you think of? Is it something untouchable? Something more righteous or greater than we are? Would you be surprise that as it is used in the Tanakh it simply refers to something as being set apart. Made not ordinary. Kodesh is reference number 6944.

Lets look at some examples of this.

Shemot (Exodus) 3:5

**5** And He said, “Do not come closer. Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you stand is **holy (qodesh קֹדֶשׁ)** ground.

Shemot (Exodus) 16:23

23 he said to them, “This is what Yehovah meant: Tomorrow is a day of rest, a **holy sabbath (shabbat qodesh שַׁבַּת־קֹדֶשׁ)** of Yehovah. Bake what you would bake and boil what you would boil; and all that is left put aside to be kept until morning.”

Shemot (Exodus) 28:36-38

36 You shall make a frontlet of pure gold and engrave on it the seal inscription: “**Holy to Yehovah (qodesh layehovah קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה)**.” 37 Suspend it on a cord of blue, so that it may remain on the headdress; it shall remain on the front of the headdress. 38 It shall be on Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may take away any sin arising from **the holy things (haqadeshim הַקֹּדְשִׁים)** that the Israelites consecrate (yiq’dishu יִקְדִּישׁוּ), from any of **their sacred (qad’sheyhem קֹדְשֵׁיהֶם)** donations; it shall be on his forehead at all times, to win acceptance for them before Yehovah,

From these we can see that without going really deep that qodesh is set-apart. It is Vayiqra 10: 8-10 that these two words appear to be the opposite of each other. But we should not rely on one reference so lets look at another place where this is found.

Let us look in Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 22 verses 23 - 31 (focusing on verse 26).

<sup>23</sup>The word of Yehovah came to me: <sup>24</sup>O mortal, say to her: You are an uncleansed land, not to be washed with rain on the day of indignation. <sup>25</sup>Her gang of prophets are like roaring lions in her midst, rending prey. They devour human beings; they seize treasure and wealth; they have widowed many women in her midst. <sup>26</sup>Her priests have violated My Teaching: **they have profaned (vaychalelu וַיַּחֲלִלוּ)** what is sacred to Me, **they have not distinguished between the sacred and the profane (beyn qodesh lechol lo hav’dilu בֵּין־קֹדֶשׁ לְחַל לֹא הִבְדִּילוּ)**, they have not taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have closed their eyes to My sabbaths. **I am profaned (vaechol וַאֲחַל)** in their midst. <sup>27</sup>Her officials are like wolves rending prey in her midst; they shed blood and destroy lives to win ill-gotten gain. <sup>28</sup>Her prophets, too, daub the wall for them with plaster: They prophesy falsely and divine deceitfully for them; they say, “Thus said Adoni Yehovah,” when Yehovah has not spoken. <sup>29</sup>And the people of the land have practiced fraud and committed robbery; they have wronged the poor and needy, have defrauded the stranger without redress. <sup>30</sup>And I sought a man among them to repair the wall or to stand in the breach before Me in behalf of this land, that I might not destroy it; but I found none. <sup>31</sup>I have therefore poured out My indignation upon them; I will consume them with the fire of My fury. I will repay them for their conduct—declares Adoni Yehovah.

Here we see that the Priest did not distinguish between the Profane (Chol) and Sacred (Kodesh).

Let us look at one more place where these word appear to be opposite of each other. Again in Yehezkel (Ezekiel) 44: starting in verse 15 and ending in verse 24.

<sup>15</sup> But the levitical priests descended from Zadok, who maintained the service of My Sanctuary when the people of Israel went astray from Me—they shall approach Me to minister to Me; they shall stand before Me to offer Me fat and blood—declares Adoni Yehovah. <sup>16</sup>They alone may enter My Sanctuary and they alone shall approach My table to minister to Me; and they shall keep My charge. <sup>17</sup>And when they enter the gates of the inner court, they shall wear linen vestments: they shall have nothing woolen upon them when they minister inside the gates of the inner court. <sup>18</sup>They shall have linen turbans on their heads and linen breeches on their loins; they shall not gird themselves with anything that causes sweat. <sup>19</sup>When they go out to the outer court—the outer court where the people are—they shall remove the vestments in which they minister and shall deposit them in the sacred chambers; they shall put on other garments, lest they make the people consecrated by [contact with] their vestments. <sup>20</sup>They shall neither shave their heads nor let their hair go untrimmed; they shall keep their hair trimmed. <sup>21</sup>No priest shall drink wine when he enters into the inner court. <sup>22</sup>They shall not marry widows or divorced women; they may marry only virgins of the stock of the House of Israel, or widows who are widows of priests.

<sup>23</sup>**They shall declare to My people what is sacred and what is profane (v'et ami yoru beyn qodesh lechol** **וְאֶת־עַמִּי יֹרֻוּ בֵּין קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל**), and inform them what is clean and what is unclean. <sup>24</sup>In lawsuits, too, it is they who shall act as judges; they shall decide them in accordance with My rules. They shall preserve My teachings and My laws regarding all My fixed occasions; and they shall maintain the sanctity of My sabbaths.

Notice now that this is a future time where the priest will teach the people to distinguish between profane and sacred.

We see that indeed Chol and Kodesh are opposite to each other. Now lets look at verb form of the same word, which is Chalal. (Chet-Lamed-Lamed) It is reference number 2490 and found on page 320 in the BDB.

2. Is Chalal similar to Chol in the meaning of Profane as an opposite of Kodesh.

Lets look at some everyday usages for Chalal.

Tehillim (Psalms) 89:39-40

<sup>39</sup>Yet You have rejected, spurned, and become enraged at Your anointed. <sup>40</sup>You have repudiated the covenant with Your servant; You have **dragged his dignity** (Chillal'ta **חִלַּלְתָּ**) in the dust.

Eykhah (Lamentations) 2:2

<sup>2</sup>Yehovah has laid waste without pity All the habitations of Jacob; He has razed in His anger Fair Judah's strongholds. He has brought low in **dishonor** (**Chilel** חִלַּל) The kingdom and its leaders.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 21:2-4

None shall defile himself for any [dead] person among his kin, <sup>2</sup>except for the relatives that are closest to him: his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, and his brother; <sup>3</sup>also for a virgin sister, close to him because she has not married, for her he may defile himself. <sup>4</sup>But he shall not defile himself as a kinsman by marriage, and so **profane** (**lehechallo** לְהַחֲלִיף) himself.

Bereshit (Genesis) 49:4

<sup>3</sup>Reuben, you are my first-born, My might and first fruit of my vigor, Exceeding in rank And exceeding in honor. <sup>4</sup>Unstable as water, you shall excel no longer; For when you mounted your father's bed, You brought **disgrace** (**chillel'ta** חִלַּלְתָּ) —my couch he mounted!

Divrei Ha Yamim Aleph (1 Chronicles) 5:1

The sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel. (He was the first-born; but when he **defiled** (**ubchilelo** וּבְחִלְלוֹ) his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so he is not reckoned as first-born in the genealogy;

Think about the relationship of a man and woman. If a woman is bedded by another man then she ceases to be set apart for the husband. In this case, Reuben caused her to be profaned/common to men.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 23:9

<sup>9</sup>Yehovah of Hosts planned it—**To defile** (**lechilel** לְחַלֵּל) all glorious beauty, To shame all the honored of the world.

To make beauty plain.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 28:30

<sup>30</sup>If you pay the bride-price for a wife, another man shall enjoy her. If you build a house, you shall not live in it. If you plant a vineyard, you shall not **harvest** (**v'lot t'chaleleynu** וְלֹא תִחַלְּלֵנוּ) it.

In this verse the word chalal is shown as something, which is used commonly. It is shown as to harvest or to use.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:6

<sup>6</sup>Is there anyone who has planted a vineyard but has never harvested it? Let him go back to his home, lest he die in battle and another **harvest** (v'lo chchilelo וְלֹא חָצַיְתוּ) it.

It is the same usage here. Lets look at the rule for harvesting from a tree.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 19:23-25

<sup>23</sup>When you enter the land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten. <sup>24</sup>In the fourth year all its fruit shall be **set aside** (qodesh) for jubilation before Yehovah; <sup>25</sup>and only in the fifth year may you use (**harvest**) its fruit—that its yield to you may be increased: I Yehovah am Eloheykha.

While the use of chalal is not here we see the pattern of how a tree is used. Thus while qodesh in the 4<sup>th</sup> year in the fifth year it becomes common to use.

Yermiyahu (Jeremiah) 31:5

<sup>4</sup>I will build you firmly again, O Maiden Israel! Again you shall take up your timbrels And go forth to the rhythm of the dancers. <sup>5</sup>Again you shall plant vineyards On the hills of Samaria; Men shall plant and live to **enjoy them** (v'chilelu וְחִלְּלוּ).

We can see that Chalal has a positive aspect to it in that it is used to describe our ability to enjoy the use of something like the harvest of the tree or vineyard.

3. Chalal as used to show where something Kodesh could be profaned.

Vayiqra (leviticus) 21:13-15

<sup>13</sup>He may marry only a woman who is a virgin. <sup>14</sup>A widow, or a divorced woman, or one who is degraded by harlotry—such he may not marry. Only a virgin of his own kin may he take to wife—<sup>15</sup>that he may not **profane** his offspring among his kin, for I Yehovah have sanctified him.

Shemot (exodus) 20:22

<sup>22</sup>And if you make for Me an altar of stones, do not build it of hewn stones; for by wielding your tool upon them you have **profaned** them.

Vayiqra (leviticus) 21:10-12, 21-23

<sup>10</sup>The priest who is exalted above his fellows, on whose head the anointing oil has been poured and who has been ordained to wear the vestments, shall not bare his head or rend his vestments. <sup>11</sup>He shall not go in where there is any dead body; he shall not **defile** himself even for his father or mother. <sup>12</sup>He shall not go outside the sanctuary and profane the sanctuary of Elohay, for upon him is the distinction of the anointing oil of Elohay, Mine Yehovah's.

<sup>21</sup>No man among the offspring of Aaron the priest who has a defect shall be qualified to offer Yehovah's offering by fire; having a defect, he shall not be qualified to offer the food of Elohay. <sup>22</sup>He may eat of the food of Elohay, of the most holy as well as of the holy; <sup>23</sup>but he shall not enter behind the curtain or come near the altar, for he has a defect. He shall not **profane** these places sacred to Me, for I Yehovah have sanctified them.

Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 7:1-2, 21-22

The word of Yehovah came to me: <sup>2</sup>You, O mortal, [say:] Thus said adoni Yehovah to the land of Israel: Doom! Doom is coming upon the four corners of the land. <sup>3</sup>Now doom is upon you! I will let loose My anger against you and judge you according to your ways; I will requite you for all your abominations. <sup>4</sup>I will show you no pity and no compassion; but I will requite you for your ways and for the abominations in your midst. And you shall know that I am Yehovah.

<sup>21</sup>I will give them as spoil to strangers, and as plunder to the wicked of the earth; and they shall **defile** them. <sup>22</sup>I will turn My face from them, and My treasures shall be defiled; ruffians shall invade it and defile it.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 48:11

<sup>11</sup>For My sake, My own sake, do I act— Lest [My name] be **dishonored!** I will not give My glory to another.

Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 22:14-16

<sup>14</sup>Will your courage endure, will your hands remain firm in the days when I deal with you? I Yehovah have spoken and I will act. <sup>15</sup>I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you through the lands; I will consume the uncleanness out of you. <sup>16</sup>You shall be **dishonored** in the sight of nations, and you shall know that I am Yehovah.

Malakhi (Malachi) 2:11

<sup>11</sup>Judah has broken faith; abhorrent things have been done in Israel and in Jerusalem. For Judah has **profaned** what is holy to Yehovah—what He desires—and espoused daughters of alien gods

Bereshit (Exodus) 31:12-15

<sup>12</sup>And Yehovah said to Moses: <sup>13</sup>Speak to the Israelite people and say: Nevertheless, you must keep My sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you throughout the ages, that you may know that I Yehovah have **consecrated** you. <sup>14</sup>You shall keep the sabbath, for it is **holy** for you. He who **profanes** it shall be put to death: whoever does work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his kin. <sup>15</sup>Six days may work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a sabbath of complete rest, holy to Yehovah; whoever does work on the sabbath day shall be put to death.

Amos 2:7

<sup>7</sup>[Ah,] you who trample the heads of the poor Into the dust of the ground, And make the humble walk a twisted course! Father and son go to the same girl, And thereby **profane** My **holy** name.

Yermiyahu (Jeremiah) 34:16

<sup>16</sup>But now you have turned back and have **profaned** My name; each of you has brought back the men and women whom you had given their freedom, and forced them to be your slaves again.

Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 36:16-23

<sup>16</sup>The word of Yehovah came to me: <sup>17</sup>O mortal, when the House of Israel dwelt on their own soil, they defiled it with their ways and their deeds; their ways were in My sight like the uncleanness of a menstruous woman. <sup>18</sup>So I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they shed upon their land, and for the fetishes with which they defiled it. <sup>19</sup>I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries: I punished them in accordance with their ways and their deeds. <sup>20</sup>But when they came to those nations, they caused My **holy** name to be **profaned**, in that it was said of them, “These are the people of Yehovah, yet they had to leave His land.” <sup>21</sup>Therefore I am concerned for My **holy** name, which the House of Israel have caused to be **profaned** among the nations to which they have come.

<sup>22</sup>Say to the House of Israel: Thus said adoni Yehovah: Not for your sake will I act, O House of Israel, but for My **holy** name, which you have caused to be **profaned** among the nations to which you have come. <sup>23</sup>I will sanctify My great name which has been profaned among the nations—among whom you have caused it to be profaned. And the

nations shall know that I am Yehovah—declares Adoni Yehovah—when I manifest My holiness before their eyes through you.

Tehillim 89:35

<sup>35</sup>I will not **violate** My covenant, or change what I have uttered.

4. What do we do to profane something in a Tanach sense?

Vayiqra 18 –19

Some examples:

Vayiqra 18:21

<sup>21</sup>Do not allow any of your offspring to be offered up to Molech, and do not **profane** the name of Elohaykha: I am Yehovah.

Vayiqra 19:5-8

<sup>5</sup>When you sacrifice an offering of well-being to Yehovah, sacrifice it so that it may be accepted on your behalf. <sup>6</sup>It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it, or on the day following; but what is left by the third day must be consumed in fire. <sup>7</sup>If it should be eaten on the third day, it is an offensive thing, it will not be acceptable. <sup>8</sup>And he who eats of it shall bear his guilt, for he has **profaned** what is sacred to Yehovah; that person shall be cut off from his kin.

Vayiqra 19:12

<sup>12</sup>You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of Eloheykha: I am Yehovah.

Vayiqra 19:23-25

<sup>23</sup>When you enter the land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden for you, not to be eaten. <sup>24</sup>In the fourth year all its fruit shall be **set aside** for jubilation before Yehovah; <sup>25</sup>and only in the fifth year may you **use** its fruit—that its yield to you may be increased: I Yehovah am Eloheykha.