

## Profane (chol, chalal) 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 meaning of 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.

8 Now YHVH spoke to Aharon, saying: 9 Wine and intoxicant, do not drink, you and your sons with you, when you enter the Tent of Appointment, so that you do not die- a law (practice) for the ages, throughout your generations:  
10 and so that there be-separation between the holy and the profane (**ulahav'dil Beyn haqodesh ubeyn hachol** וְלֹהֲבַדִּיל בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין הַחֹל), between the tamei and the pure, 11 and so that (you) might instruct the Children of Israel in all the laws that YHVH spoke to them through the hand of Moshe.

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

Chol = Profane

Qodesh = Sacred/Holy

Let's take a minute to discuss qodesh (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 surprised that as it is used in the Tanakh it simply refers to something as being set apart. Made not ordinary. Qodesh is reference number 6944.

Let's look at some examples of this.

Shemot (Exodus) 3:5

5 He said: Do not come near to here, put off your sandal from your foot, for the place on which you stand-it is **holy (qodesh קֹדֶשׁ)** ground!

What is being expressed here is ground that is not ordinary it is different. Thus, requiring different actions.

Shemot (Exodus) 16:23

23 He said to them: It is what YHVH spoke about: tomorrow is a Sabbath/Ceasing, a **Sabbath of Holiness (Shabbat qodesh שַׁבַּת־קֹדֶשׁ)** for YHVH. Whatever you wish to bake-bake, and whatever you wish to boil-boil; and all the surplus, put aside for yourselves in safekeeping until morning.

Here we see the Shabbat is set-apart as a day that is different than the rest of the days.

Shemot (Exodus) 28:36-38

36 You are to make a plate of pure gold and are to engrave on it signet engravings: Holiness for YHVH (**qodesh laYHVH לַיהוָה קֹדֶשׁ**). 37 You are to place it on a thread of blue-violet, that it may be on the turban; on the forefront of the turban is it to be. 38 It is to be on Aharon's brow. So Aharon is to bear the iniquity of the holy-offerings (**haqadeshim הַקֹּדֶשִׁים**) that the Children of Israel **offer-as-holy(yaq'dishu יִקְדִישׁוּ)**, all **their** gifts of **holiness (qad'sheyhem קֹדְשֵׁיהֶם)**; it is to be on his brow regularly, for (receiving) favor for them, before the presence of YHVH.

From these we can see that without going really deep into all the verses where qodesh is found we see it 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 let's look at another place where this is found.

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

<sup>23</sup>The word of YHVH 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 (vay'chalelu וַיַּחֲלִילוּ)** what is sacred to Me, **they have not distinguished between the sacred (set-apart) and the profane (beyn qodesh lechol lo hav'dilu בֵּין־קֹדֶשׁ לְחֹל 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 וְאֶחֶל) 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 Adonai YHVH,” when YHVH 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 Adonai Yehovah.

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

Let us look at one more place where these word appear to be opposite of each other. Again in Yechez’qel (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 Adonai YHVH. <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 amiy yoru beyn qodesh lechol וְאֶת-עַמִּי יֹרֶוּ 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 (set-apart).

We see that indeed Chol and Kodesh are opposite to each other. Now let's 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 Qodesh.

Let's 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 חִלְלֵתָּ) in the dust.

Eykhah (Lamentations) 2:2

<sup>2</sup>YHVH has laid waste without pity All the habitations of Yaaqov; He has razed in His anger Fair Yehudah's strongholds. He has brought low in **dishonor** (Chillel חִלְלֵל) The kingdom and its leaders.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 21:2-4

1 YHVH said to Moshe: Say to the priests, the Sons of Aharon, say to them: For a (dead-)person among his people, one is not to make oneself tamei, 2 except for his kin, one near to him: for his mother or for his father, or for his son, or for his daughter or for his brother, 3 or for his virgin sister, near to him, who has never belonged to a man, for her he may make himself tamei. 4 He is not to make himself tamei (as) a husband among his people (does), to **profane himself** (lehechallo לְהַחֲלוֹ).

This shows the only time the Kohen may cause himself to be Tamei (unclean/impure) and thus it indicated that in the Tamei state may equal that of chol (profane).

Bereshit (Genesis) 49:4

3 Re'uven, my firstborn, you, my might, first-fruit of my vigor! Surpassing in loftiness, surpassing in force! 4 Headlong like water-surpass no more! For when you mounted your father's bed, then **you defiled it** (chillel'ta חִלְלֵתָּ)-he mounted the couch!

Here we see that Re'uven defiled his father's couch by sleeping with his father's wife who was not his mother.

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** (uv'chillelo וּבְחַלְלֵהוּ) 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>YHVH of Hosts planned it—**To defile** (lechilel לְחַלְלֵהוּ) all glorious beauty, To shame all the honored of the world.

To make beauty something plain or ordinary.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 28:30

30 A woman you will betroth (brides price paid), but another man will lie with her, a house you will build, but you will not dwell in it, a vineyard you will plant, but you will **not put-it-to-use** (v'lot t'chaleeynu וְלֹא תַחַלְלֵנּוּ),

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

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 20:6

6 And who is the man that has planted a vineyard **and has not (yet) made-common-use of it** (v'lo chchilelo וְלֹא חֲחַלְלֵהוּ)? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man make-common-use-of it!

It is the same usage here and the common use of it is what we are seeing that Chol and Chalal are. Let's look at the rule for harvesting from a tree.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 19:23-25

23 Now when you enter the land, and plant any-kind of tree for eating, you are to regard its fruit (like) a foreskin, a foreskin. For three years it is to be considered-foreskinned for you, you are not to eat (it). 24 And in the fourth year shall all its fruit be **a holy-portion** (set-apart/qodesh קֹדֶשׁ), (for) jubilation for YHVH; 25 in the fifth year may you eat its

fruit, to add for you its produce (lehosiyf lakhem tevuato לְהוֹסִיף לָכֶם

תְּבוֹאֲתוּ), I am YHVH 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 because it ceases to be qodesh.

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 וַחֲלִילוּ).

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 Qodesh could be profaned.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 21:13-15

13 And he-(only) a woman in her virginity may he take-in-marriage; 14 a widow or a divorcée, **or one profaned** (vachalalah וַחֲלָלָהּ) (by) whoring, these he is not to take-in-marriage; rather, a virgin from his people he is to take as a wife, 15 **that he not profane his seed among his people, for I am YHWH, the one-who-hallows him!** (velo-yechallel zar'u be'amayv kiy ani YHVH meqadesho

וְלֹא־יַחַלֵּל זָרְעוֹ בְּעַמּוּי כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדְּשׁוֹ:

We see here that because YHVH makes the Kohen set-apart he is not to make his seed (children) common or not set-apart. Any Israelite may take a wife of any of these but the Kohen is not to.

Shemot (Exodus) 20:22

22 But if a slaughter-site of stones you make for me, you are not to build it smooth-hewn, for if you hold-high your iron-tool over it, **you will have profaned it** (vatechalleh

וַתַּחַלֵּלָהּ).

Putting a tool to the stones makes it common like all other construction.

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

10 Now the priest that is greater than his brothers, who has had poured on his head the oil of anointing and has been mandated to dress in the garments: his head he is not to bare, his garments he is not to tear; 11 (the presence of) any dead persons he is not to enter, for (even) his father or his mother he is not to make himself tamei, 12 from the Holy-shrine he is not to go out- **that he not profane the Holy-shrine of Elohayv (velo yechallel et miqdash elohayv וְלֹא יַחַלֵּל אֶת מִקְדָּשׁ אֱלֹהֵיוּ)**, for the sacred oil of anointing is upon him, I am YHVH!

21 Any man that has in him a defect, from the seed of Aharon the priest, is not to approach to bring-near the fire-offerings of YHVH, a defect is in him, with the food of YHVH he is not to approach, to bring-it-near. 22 The food-offerings of Elohayv from the holiest holy-portions, or from the holy-portions, he may eat; 23 however, the curtain he is not to enter, the slaughter-site he is not to approach, for a defect is in him, **he is not to profane my holy-shrines (velo yechallel et-miq'dash וְלֹא יַחַלֵּל אֶת-מִקְדָּשַׁי)**; for I am YHVH, the one-who-hallows them.

In both cases, we see that the Kohen is not to make himself tamei or have a defect that would cause the miqdash (sanctuary) to become challel (common).

Yechez'qel (Ezekiel) 7:1-4, 21-22

1 The word of YHVH came to me: 2 You, O mortal, [say:] Thus said Adonai YHVH to the land of Israel: Doom! Doom is coming upon the four corners of the land. 3 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. 4 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 YHVH.

21 I will give them as spoil to strangers, and as plunder to the wicked of the earth; **and they shall defile them (v'chillelulu וְחַלְּלוּהוּ)**. 22 I will turn My face from them, and My treasures **shall be defiled (v'chillel וְחַלְּלָהּ)**; ruffians shall invade it **and defile it (vechillelu'ah וְחַלְּלוּהָ)**.

In the exile, the nations will cause us to be defiled or be like they are common and not a set-apart people.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 48:11

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

YHVH acts to ensure that his name is not made common and thus not set-apart. It would bring him down to the lo-elohim.

Malakhi (Malachi) 2:11

<sup>11</sup>Yehudah has broken faith; abhorrent things have been done in Yisrael and in Yerusalayim. For Yehudah has **profaned** (**chillel** חִלְלֵל) what is holy to YHVH—what He desires—and espoused daughters of alien gods

Here taking hold of alien elohim is profaning or making common YHVH and placing him at the lo-elohim level.

Shemot (Exodus) 31:12-15

<sup>12</sup>And YHVH 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.

12 Now YHVH said to Moshe: 13 And you, speak to the Children of Israel, saying: However: my Sabbaths you are to keep! For it is a sign between me and you, throughout your generations, to know that I, YHVH, **hallow you** (**meqadish'khem** מְקַדְּשֶׁכֶם).

14 You are to keep the Sabbath, **for it is holiness for you whoever profanes it** (**kiy qodesh hi lakhem mechal'ley'ah** כִּי קֹדֶשׁ הוּא לָכֶם מְחַלְלֵיהָ), is to be put-to-death, yes, death! For whoever makes work on it- that person is to be cut off from among his kinspeople. 15 For six days is work to be made, but on the seventh day (is) Sabbath, Sabbath-ceasing, holiness (qodesh) for YHVH, whoever makes work on the Sabbath day is to be put-to-death, yes, death! 16 The Children of Israel are to keep the Sabbath, to make the Sabbath-observance throughout their generations as a covenant for the ages; 17 between me and the Children of Israel a sign it is, for the ages, for in six days YHVH made the heavens and the earth, but on the seventh day he ceased and paused-for-breath.

Here we see that the Shabbat which is Holy/set-apart can be made common. Working on this day makes it common or the same as any other day.

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 (challel et-shem qodesh חַלְלֵ אֶת־שֵׁם קֹדֶשׁי).**

We can make his name common and not set apart. Our actions can do this.

Yermiyahu (Jeremiah) 34:16

<sup>16</sup>**But now you have turned back and have profaned My name (vatashuvu va**

**techallelu et-shemiy וַתָּשֻׁבוּ וַתַּחֲלִלוּ אֶת־שְׁמִי**); each of you has brought back the men and women whom you had given their freedom, and forced them to be your slaves again.

Not releasing our brother's and sister's debts and imposing servitude on them after the time of release causes us to make his name common and not set apart.

Yechez'qel (Ezekiel) 36:16-23

<sup>16</sup>The word of YHVH 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 (vayechallelu et-shem**

**qad'shiy וַיַּחֲלִלוּ אֶת־שֵׁם קֹדֶשִׁי**), in that it was said of them, “These are the people of YHVH, 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 Adonai YHVH: Not for your sake will I act, O **House of Israel, but for My holy name, which you have caused to be profaned**

**(chilleluhu beyt Yisrael חַלְלוּהוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל)** 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 (beyt Yisrael kiy im-**

**leshem-qadesh asher chillal'tem bagoyim asher-ba'tem sham בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי**

**אִם־לְשֵׁם־קֹדֶשִׁי אֲשֶׁר חַלְלִתֶם בַּגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־בְּאֶתְּמֶם שֵׁם**). And the

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

We being among the nations causes his name to be made common. Thus, staying in the Galut/Diaspora does not show obedience to YHVH.

Tehillim 89:35

<sup>35</sup> **Not I make common My covenant (lo-achallel beriytiy לֹא־אֶחַלֵּל בְּרִיתִי),** or change what I have uttered.

His covenant with use is set-apart to us.

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

Vayiqra (Leviticus) chapters 18 –19 lists many things we can do to make that which is set-apart as common.

Some examples:

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 18:21

21 Your seed-offspring you are not to give-over for bringing-across to the Molekh, **that you not profane the name (velo techallel et-shem וְלֹא תַחַלֵּל אֶת־שֵׁם)** of Eloheykha, I am YHVH!

Offerings to other lo-elohim cause us to make his name common.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 19:5-8

5 Now when you slaughter a slaughter-offering of shalom to YHVH, for your being-accepted you are to slaughter it. 6 At the time of your slaughtering it, it is to be eaten, and on the morrow (as well), but what remains by the third day is to be burned in fire. 7 Should it be eaten, yes, eaten on the third day, it is tainted-meat, it will not be accepted; 8 those who eat it-his iniquity must he bear, **for the holy-offering of YHVH he has profaned (kiy-et-qodesh YHVH chillel כִּי־אֶת־קֹדֶשׁ יְהוָה חִלֵּל),** cut off shall that person be from his kinspeople!

Eating the offering on the third day causes it to be become ordinary or common and causes the offering to no longer to be set-apart. It also causes one to be cut-off.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 19:12

12 You are not to swear by my name falsely, **thus profaning the name (vechillal'ta et-shem וְחִלַּלְתָּ אֶת־שֵׁם)** of Eloheykha- I am YHVH!

Swearing falsely by his name make his name not-set-apart or common.

Today, we have looked at chol and challel and have seen that they are opposites to qodesh and qadesh. Chol and challel are what is common whereas, qodesh and qadesh is set-apart. We also learned the Kohanim (Priests) are tasked now and in the future to teach us these things. We also see that we have control over making something set-apart as common.