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Cherem

27: 28-29

Cherem DIG: What is a cherem vow? What is the difference between a cherem vow and korban? How does the story of Hannah dedicating Samuel illustrate a complete dedication? What motivates parents like Hannah to irrevocably give over their children to the LORD?

REFLECT: What Amalekites are you facing where you live? Do you want them to intermarry with your children and grandchildren for the sake of not offending anyone? What is something you have recently given to the Lord? Are you a Hannah, or a Sha'ul? Explain.

We should love what God loves and hate what God hates.

Until now we have been discussing people, property and possessions which a man might vow to **YHVH**. The Torah now takes an aside to discuss a different type of **vow** to **God**. Just as a person could **vow** something to **the LORD** as **holy**, he could **vow** it as **cherem**. Something **vowed** as **cherem** was completely unredeemable. It was completely surrendered to the priesthood. It was not a korban or sacrifice of any sort. **But nothing that a person owns and devotes to ADONAI - whether a human being or an animal or family land - may be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to ADONAI (27:28)**. A person who verbally declares some property or possession of his as **cherem** vow to **the LORD** is obligated to fulfill it according to the stringencies of the **cherem** status.⁵⁴⁹

No person devoted to destruction may be ransomed; they are to be put to death (27:29). When **Joshua** defeated Jericho, the city and all its inhabitants and possessions were regarded as **cherem**, or **devoted to destruction (Joshua 6:17-19)**. The word **cherem** speaks of a total dedication over to **God** - often for destruction. **Achan's** sin was a violation of the **cherem** status. As a result, everything **he** touched or owned was **devoted to destruction**. When found out, all of **Isra'el** took **Achan, the silver, the robe, the gold bar** that **he** had taken from Jericho, **his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor . . . Then all Israel stoned him, and after they had stoned the rest, they burned them. Over Achan they**

heaped up a large pile of rocks, which remains to this day. Then the LORD turned from his fierce anger. Thus, that place has been called the Valley of Achor ever since (Joshua 7:24-26).



Hannah, who was barren, desperately poured out **her** heart to **God** in prayer for **a son**. On one occasion **she** made a **cherem vow** that if **the LORD** would grant **her** request, **she** would completely surrender **her son Samuel** to **the priesthood** (First Samuel 1:11, 22, 28). Shortly after that, **she conceived** and in due time bore **a son** whom **she named Samuel** (meaning *heard of God*). After **Hannah** had **weaned her son**, **she** fulfilled **her** pledge and **took him to Shiloh**, where the Tabernacle and high priest were dwelling at that time, to offer **him to ADONAI** as a lifelong Nazirite. When **he** grew up, **Samuel** would become **a prophet and judge of Isra'el**, who played a key role in the transition from the biblical judges to the United Kingdom under **Sha'ul**, and again in the monarchy's transition from **Sha'ul** to **David**.

Ha'Shem demanded that all of **the Amalekites** be killed, including **their sheep and cattle**, and women and children, under **the cherem** judgment of holy war (see the commentary on **Deuteronomy**, [to see link click Ag - The Problem of Holy War in the TaNaKh](#)). But when **Sha'ul** saw the fatness of **the Amalekite sheep and cattle**, **he** considered **his** own glory and prestige in bringing **them** back, along with **Agag, king of Amalek**, as public exhibits of **his** leadership, but failed to honor the terms of **the cherem**. That mistake cost **him his** crown. Similarly, **King Ahab** violated the **cherem** ban when **he** spared the Syrian king **Ben-Hadad**. For that transgression, **Ahab** lost **his** life.

The merciless demands of the **cherem** judgment are difficult for us to understand today. It seems incongruous that a **God** who loves mercy and compassion would also want us, at times, to be ruthless.⁵⁵⁰ But there are things that **God hates**. **There are six things God hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to**

rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community (Prov 6:16-19). And if **He hates** them, we should also **hate** them. We need to be ruthless in defending our **Messiah** against a wicked society. We need to be ruthless in protecting our children against evil. We need to be ruthless in defending our **Lord** against the evil one. And we need to be ruthless in the defense of the Gospel.

How are you keeping yourself and your family from being contaminated by **the world**? **John** seems very ruthless about this topic when **he** says: **Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever (First John 2:15-17).** How ruthless are you?

*Dear Heavenly **Father**, Praise **You** for being both completely wise and totally loving! **Your** love is wise, not like a "sugar daddy" who gives in; but like the prodigal son's father who forgives when the son is remorseful for his sin and confesses it. **You** wisely hate evil for **You** are holy and **You** know that sin/evil will keep **Your** children from the good that **You** have for them.*

*Wisdom and patience go together in **Your** character for in **Your** omniscience (all-knowing-even the future) knew the time when the sin of **the Amorites** would be full and only then did **You** punish **them** for their sin. **Then in the fourth generation they [Abram's seed] will return here - for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete (Genesis 15:16).** Without light, there would be no darkness. Without hating evil, love would not be love.*

***You** are always holy and perfect in all **You** do. **Your** love is holy and pure and extends to all who love **You**. **Your** hate is righteous and is not in any way selfish; but hates all that is evil and would rob men and women of the eternal peace and joy that **You** have for them. Thank **You** for being so wonderful! In **Your** holy name and power of **Yeshua's** resurrection. Amen*