

# Honor and Shame in Scriptures

The Gospel of the Suffering Servant

# Honor and Shame

- N. America, Europe, and Australia are *guilt and innocence* based cultures
- The rest of the world (i.e. majority) are *honor and shame* based cultures.
- Example: Japanese business failure, Muslim honor killings.
- The **pivotal value of the Roman, Greek, and Jewish culture.**

# Comparing the Two

## Honor & Shame

- Honor is based on **social value** and **perception**
- Concerned with maintaining honor
- Honor is gained and lost in **public**.
- Zero-sum economy

## Innocence & Guilt

- Based on **inner conviction of right and wrong**
- Concern for justice being served
- Stimulates a **fear of punishment**

# Zero-Sum Economy

- **Limited commodity**
- If **one member** of a group **increases in honor**, another or all others must **decrease in honor**
  - “He must increase, but I must decrease” John 3:30
- **Envy of success**
  - Matt 27:18, Wisdom 2:23, Cain and Abel (and other brothers)
  - Saul envied David over 10,000’s (1 Sam 18:7-9)

# Honor Competition

- Within the **family**
- Within the clan, community, city, **religious sect**, or ethnicity.
- Between the “**gods**”
  - “Mi Kamocha ba’elim Adonai” (Exod 15:11)
  - Plagues of Egypt **against the Egyptian Gods**
  - Elijah vs. Ba’al (1 Kgs 18:20-46)
  - Honor is the one thing that humans **CAN actually give to God!**
    - Temple, sacrifices, worship, praising, loyalty, obedience

# Ascribed Honor/Shame

- **Lineage**

- Matt 1:1, Sirach 3:11, business meeting starts with family lineage
- “Your father the devil (Jn 8:43)

- **Ethnicity**

- Samaritan (Jn 8:48), Gentile

- **Family name, reputation, and wealth**

- Giving honor to great men - Sirach 44:1-15
- Isn't he the son of a carpenter? - Matt 13:55

# Ascribed Honor/Shame

- **Adoption into an honorable family**
  - Adopted as sons of God
  - Disowning of a son brings shame
- **Your teacher or patron**
  - Paul trained by Gamaliel (1 Cor 1:12)
- **Public office**
  - Tax Collector (shame)
  - Governor, king, priest, high priest, rabbi
  - Yeshua presented with kingship and glory (Dan 7:13-14)

# Ascribed Honor/Shame

- **Ritual impurity was a source of shame**
  - Especially true of a skin-diseased person since this was visible to the public. Also the shame of banishment.
  - Good Samaritan parable, ritual impurity issue - Luke 10:30-37

# Acquired Honor/Shame

- **Must be acquired in a public setting**
- **Challenge and Riposte** (Luke 13:10-17)
  - Honor claim is made
  - Challenge is made to that honor in the form of a question
  - Riposte is a quick, often witty, response to the question
  - Public determines who gains honor and who loses honor

# Acquired Honor/Shame

- **Public praise and recognition**

- Praising or sanctifying “the name” or making one’s (or God’s) **name “known”** (Babel)
- Blaspheming (slander) of the “name”
  - Our actions honor or shame God - **Rom 2:24**, Eze 36:20-23
  - Blasphemy vs. repentance - Rev 16:9

- **Public rebuke**

- Honor your mother and father (public)
- Public mocking and ridicule

# Acquired Honor/Shame

- **Reciprocal gift giving**

- Choicest parts of the sacrifices offered to YHWH to honor Him (1 Sam 2:29)
- “Those who honor Me, I will honor...” (vs 30)
- Offering a perfect offering - Mal 1:7-8
- Shelamim for fulfillment of a vow

# Acquired Honor/Shame - Physical Body

## Honor

- Crowning or **anointing** the head
- **Elevation** of the body
- Best **seats**
- **Sitting next to**, especially the right hand
- Receiving **clothing** of honor
- Adornment with **jewelry**

## Shame

- **Exposure** of genitals (stripping person naked)
- Putting opponent “**under your feet**” (1 Cor 15:20-28)
- **Tearing** of the clothing
- Imprisonment or **exile** (Songs of Isaiah)
- Physical abuse and mutilation - see next slide

# Acquired Honor/Shame

- **Physical Abuse**
  - Backhand (Matt 5:39) (m. Baba Qamma 8.6)
  - Beard disfigurement and spitting - Isa 50:6-8
  - Flogging - Acts 5:40-41
  - Mutilation - (1 Sam 17:51) (David beheads Goliath) (ANE slaves)
  - Shameful death, esp. crucifixion - Hebrews 12:2

# Acquired Honor/Shame

- **Works of Honor**
  - Winning a battle, funding public works, charitable donations
  - Torah observance
    - Beware of practicing before men - Matt 6:1-4
    - God's honor - Matt 5:16, 1 Peter 1:12

# Acquired Honor/Shame

- **Works of Shame**

- Fleeing from battle
- Adultery or lewd public behavior
- Murder, criminal activity, lying, etc.
- In this manner, shame was a means of social sanctions
  - Dealing with a brother's sin - Matt 18:15-17
  - Failure to be able to judge in the body - 1 Cor 6:1-7

# Words of Honor - Words of Shame

## Honor

- Honor/Glory - *kavod, doxa*
- Reputation
- Praise
- Name
- Blessed - *ashrei, makarios*
- Righteousness

## Shame

- Shame
- Disgrace
- Reproach/scorn
- Slander - *blasphemia*
- Woe - *hoy, Ouai*
- Wickedness

# God's Honor System

- Pursuit of **righteousness** and **covenant loyalty** (Prov 21:21)
- God rescues those who the **world considers shameful** (1 Cor 1:26-31)
- **No competition for honor** in the body of Messiah (1 Cor 12:22-26)

# God's Honor System

- The “greatest” must be the **servants of the others** (Matt 20:25-28)
  - Humility was considered abject and unworthy in Greco-Roman literature
  - Much of the NT is devoted to **insulating believers from shaming techniques.**
- Honor is ascribed when you are **shamed for righteousness sake** (Luke 6:22)
- **Our glory/honor should come from God, not from other men** (John 5:39-44)

# Honor Reversals

- To the sinner, paying the penalty or clearing the guilt was not important, it was **the restoration of one's honor that was paramount.**
  - “For all have sinned and **fallen short of the Glory of God**” - Rom 3:23
- Anselm of Canterbury (11th century AD)
- Honor reversals are found throughout Scriptures.

# Example of the Garden

- Adam & Chavvah's rebellious transgression shames God.
- Adam & Chavvah are stripped naked in shame. (*arum* vs. *eyrom*)
- Deflection of responsibility in attempt to maintain honor.
- **Honor reversal** by making garments of skin and clothing them.
  - Fig leaves would have worked, but skins represents re-adoption.
- Shame in exile

# Example of Yoseph

- Jacob honors Joseph with **special coat**, resulting in envy.
  - Joseph **dreams** of increased honor
  - Brothers **strip** him, throw him in pit, sell into slavery.
- **Honor reversal** -> head of Potipher's house.
- Shame of accusation of attempted adultery.
- Cupbearer fails to honor Yoseph
- **Honor reversal** -> Viceroy over land (Gen 41:40-45)
- Gen 50:20 -> Honor ascribed to YHWH.

# The Go'el (Redeemer)

- **Redeemer of the Childless Widow**
  - Restores lineage and land inheritance
- **Redeemer of the Impoverished**
  - Purchases from slavery or purchases sold land
- **Redeemer of Blood**
  - Kills the murderer or rapist
- What is the common connection? Restoration of honor to the family!

# Elijah vs. Prophets of Ba'al

- All Israel gathered to witness the event (1 Kgs 18:20)
- Challenge laid down based on calling on the “name” of God (vs 24)
- Elijah publicly mocks the prophets of Ba'al
- Elijah “built an altar in the name of YHWH”
- Honor reversal -> “Today let it be known that You are God in Israel and that I am Your servant and I have done all these things at your word” (vs 36-37)
- Vs 39 -> the people saw it and ascribed honor to YHWH.
- Prophets of Ba'al shamed with death

# David

- Started as the youngest son of a lowly shepherd
- David's honor slowly rises, Saul's honor slowly falls until...
- The story ends with David as the king of all Israel and Saul dying a shameful death.

# Israel in Babylonian Captivity

- Just like the **shame** of an **adulterous bride**
- Israel transgresses and as a result, YHWH sends them into shameful captivity.
- After the length of their punishment is sufficient to shame them, they are allowed to return.
- Afterwards, YHWH reverses their shame:
  - Servant Songs of Isaiah 40-55

# Believers in Yeshua

- Adoption as sons of God - Galatians 4:5-7
- Part of the commonwealth of Israel - Ephesians 2:11-19
- Resurrection = removal of reproach - Isaiah 25:8

# The Suffering Servant

- Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12
- What is the **thematic** focus of the text?
- There is a greater focus on **shameful suffering** and **honor reversal!**
- Verse 5 - “**for** our transgressions” vs. “**from** our transgressions”
- Did Yeshua come to **appease an angry God** or to **restore the honor** of God who was **shamed by Israel?**
- Does the word ‘atonement’ (*kipper*) appear in the text?

# Yeshua Gives Honor to the Father

- Glorify your son so that **he may glorify you** - John 17:1-11
- I have come **in my Father's name** - John 5:39-44
- If I glorify myself... - John 8:52-56
- As I have kept my Father's commandments - John 15:8-10

# Crucifixion as Shaming

(Despising the Shame of the Cross: Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative by J. Neyrey)

- Used for slaves, bandits, prisoners of war, and **political revolutionaries**.
- **Public trials** served as a **status degradation ritual**, which labeled the accused as a shameful person.
- **Flogging** and **torture**, especially blinding and shedding of blood, generally accompanied the sentence. This was done front and back **in the nude**, with the person “befouling” themselves.
- The condemned were **forced to carry the cross beam**.

# Crucifixion as Shaming

(Despising the Shame of the Cross: Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative by J. Neyrey)

- The victim's property, normally **clothing is confiscated to shame them with nudity**
- **Loss of power** and thus honor by through pinioning of hands and arms **through nailing**.
- **Executions were public entertainment** where the crowd would mock the victims. Sometime the person would be affixed in an odd and whimsical manner.

# Crucifixion as Shaming

(Despising the Shame of the Cross: Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative by J. Neyrey)

- Slow and protracted death. **Powerless victim suffers bodily distortions, loss of bodily control, and erection.** No chance of vengeance.
- In many cases, victims were denied honorable burial; **corpses were left on display and devoured by birds and animals.**
- **Pain was not shameful** (as many warriors endured pain). However the **silence** of the victim during torture was a **mark of honor**

# Yeshua's Crucifixion

- **Spitting on him** (Mark 14:65/Matt 26:67)
- **Striking him in the face and head** (Mark 14:65/Matt 26:67)
- **Ridiculing him** (Mark 15:20, 31/Matt 27:29, 31, 41)
- **Heaping insults on him** (Mark 15:32, 34/Matt 27:44)
- **Carrying his cross beam**
- **Stripping his clothing**
- **Public crucifixion**

# Honor Reversal of the Cross

- Moses and the Prophets foretold of Messiah's suffering and subsequent glory/honor - Luke 24:26, cf. Acts 7:52
- Mankind as the causative agent of Yeshua's death, **God's action is to resurrects Messiah**
  - Acts 2:22-24, 36
  - Acts 3:13-18, 4:10, 27\*\*
  - Acts 5:29-32, 10:39-43
  - Acts 13:28-33
  - Romans 4:24-25
  - 1 Cor 15:12-17
  - Romans 10:9
  - Romans 3:21-26

# Suffering Together

- Make Moses into a great nation - Exodus 32:9-12
- Moses, “if not, blot me out” - Exodus 32:32
- “For I know their sufferings” - Exodus 3:7
- Suffer for the sake of righteousness - 1 Pet 3.16
- Sharing in Messiah’s suffering - 1 Pet 4.12-16

Next up -> Justice and  
Righteousness

# Anselm of Canterbury

According to Anselm of Canterbury, **it was not God's anger that required appeasement, but that His honor needed to be restored.**

In his essay "*Why did God become Human?*", he observed that in order for honor to be restored, **restitution must be initiated by those responsible for shaming the dishonored party.** This means reparations must be made from the human side, a virtual impossibility due to the depth and reach of sin. Only Christ, divine and human, could accomplish the restoration of God's honor and thus repair the breach between God and humanity.