

For the Sake of His Name

By Matthew Day

So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them.

(Numbers 6:27 ESV)

What does it mean for God to put His name upon us? The Hebrew idea of a name is not just a word by which you are called—it is one's character and reputation. When God puts His name upon Israel, He is placing His character and reputation in His people. That is, when the world sees us, they should see our Father within us. This is the central idea I want to get across here. Now, let's take a deeper look and see how this fits with the rest of Scripture.

I would have said, "I will cut them to pieces; I will wipe them from human memory," had I not feared provocation by the enemy, lest their adversaries should misunderstand, lest they should say, "Our hand is triumphant, it was not the LORD who did all this."

(Deuteronomy 32:26-27 ESV)

Ezekiel 20 is quite a humbling passage. I encourage you to go read it for yourself. Were it not for the sake of God's name, He would have destroyed us. We have done nothing to deserve His mercy. It's because of the Promise He made to Abraham that our Father has always preserved a remnant. It's so that the nations would know that He is able to deliver Israel. In Exodus 32:7-14, Moses argues with God about Israel. God was about to destroy them all! Why did He relent? For the sake of His promise to Abraham and so that the Egyptians would not say "He is not able." It was so that the world would know His character and reputation—His name.

If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

(John 14:14 ESV)

This is a scripture that is easy to take out of context. This obviously doesn't mean we can ask for just anything as that would contradict God's character. Notice that here and almost every other place this concept is mentioned, there appears the phrase "in my name." This doesn't mean to say "in Jesus' name" at the end of every prayer. It means to make sure your requests are within the character and reputation of God. A question I like to ask people is "Is it ok to argue with God?" Moses did it—we just saw that in Exodus. But why did he do it? For the sake of God's name. When we ask for things out of our own desires and selfishness, it is not in His name (see James 4:2-3). It's when we ask for those things that will proclaim who God is to the world, that we are truly asking in His name. The Psalms contain several examples of this: Psalm 23:3; 25:11; 79:9, 109:21; 115:1, 143:11.

Everything we do reflects on God's name—how the world sees our King. When we do our own thing and carelessly cast off God's commands, we are profaning His name. When our works do not match the faith we proclaim, we are profaning His name. But when we walk in His ways and uphold His commands and show His love, then we are upholding the name of God. Matthew 5:16 says to let your light shine forth so that others may see your good works and glorify God. As Isaiah 29:23 and 1 Corinthians 10:31 say, we should sanctify the name of God in everything that we do. It's all about YHVH.

Before I leave the subject about God's name, I want to bring one more aspect of this to

your attention.

*Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there, and I chose no man as prince over my people Israel; but **I have chosen Jerusalem that my name may be there**, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.*

(2 Chronicles 6:5-6 ESV)

Jerusalem has God's name on it. Just as it is our duty to uphold God's name in our daily lives, it is our duty to uphold Jerusalem.

Midrash Newsletter
October 2009