THE THIRD COMMANDMENT: Thou shalt not misrepresent Me

"You shall not invoke the name of HaShem your God in vain, for HaShem will not forgive those who carry / invoke His name in vain."

Previously, we presented two explanations of the third commandment. In short, we could say that the two explanations differ as to the translation (or extent) of the Hebrew word "TISA". First, we explored what is learned from the Third Commandment when we understand LO TISA as "You shall not 'invoke' the name of God in vain, in the context of an oath, promise, berakha, etc. Second, we explain LO TISA as "do not 'carry" the name of God in vain" and the responsibility that this mission demands (see here).

Following this same topic today, talking to my mom who lives in Buenos Aires, I heard some news of what is happening these days in Argentina, where many corruption cases from the previous government are finally unmasked. The last scandal involves a former government official who was found hiding 9 million dollars in a church. And today's news was about the complicity of some church ministers with this act of corruption.

When a CEO of a company defrauds his company, using the firm's funds for personal gain, he is deceiving his company, its partners, his customers and his employers. But when a religious leader uses public funds inappropriately or participates in an economic fraud, he is not just deceiving his "employers", but above all, he is hurting the religion he or she represents. In Argentina, the nuns allegedly helped that thief entering their church in the middle of the night and hiding the ill-gotten money there. If this is confirmed, then, first of all, we would have a sad but very real example,

although not within a Jewish context, of religious leaders who are using “in vain” or for material purposes the “prestige of a religious institution” that suppose to work in the name of God.

This, of course, can happen in any religion, and the effect of frustration and disappointment that these scandals can cause in the congregation is devastating. Those who represent God are supposed to set an example of honesty and moral integrity.

If something like this would have happened in a Jewish community, this will be considered Hillul HaShem, the desecration “of the name of HaShem” . And why is it called that way?

We Jews carry, bear, the name of HaShem in our personas, and we are therefore responsible for not defrauding or trivializing His name.

Imagine that you work for Federal Express. You wear the FedEx uniform, the cap and the badge that identifies you as Federal Express employee. Working for this company also means that you represent this company. If you treat customers with respect and effectiveness, customers are not going to say or write in Yelp that YOU treated them well, rather they will say that the Federal Express’s customer service is excellent. The credit goes mainly to the company, not to the individual. The same would happen if you treat the customers poorly: the company’s NAME and reputation is going to suffer a great damage.

In a similar manner, we Jews represent HaShem. We “work” (or maybe are His partners) in His company. We even wear a uniform that identifies us with HaShem: Kippa, Tseniut and above all, Tallit and tefillin. The latter represent a badge, with the actual name of the company CEO. As the pasuq say □□□□‘ □ □□ □□ □□□□ , the world is a witness that every Jew bears the Divine Name within him or her.

The third Commandment refers not only to the case in which by

our words we trivialize or desecrate the name of HaShem. Our actions have a much longer and intense effect in the prestige and reputation of the name of HaShem that every Jew carries.

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