



Portion:

Title:

SCRIPTURES

- Numbers 4:21-7:89
- Acts 6-8, 18-21
- Matthew 5:17-37
- Ecclesiastes 5:2-7

VOWS AND VANITY

- Vows
- Make Your Oaths to Yahweh
- Vanity
- Forgetting Yahweh's Name

It's always something. Week after week, as we dive deeper into the Word of God, we get a glimpse of how far we've strayed from the truth. It's not difficult to completely change the meaning of Y'shua's teachings by strategically leaving out a few words here and there. You think I'm exaggerating? I challenge you; look up Matthew 5:33-34 in any English translation of the Bible and tell me if you don't conclude that you are no longer to swear an oath to God!

*Take a look: "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, '**You shall not swear falsely**, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' But I say to you, **do not swear at all...**" Now, notice a completely different message when we add back the original language: "Again you have heard what was said to those of long ago: You shall not swear **by my name** falsely, but you shall return to*

the Lord your oath. But I say to you not to swear **in vain** in any matter...”

Do you see it? Y’shua never instructed us to NO LONGER take oaths to God, but rather to end your futile thinking that you can leave Yahweh’s name out of your promises. That is what Y’shua called “swearing in vain!” Leave out the phrases “by my name” and “in vain” and you have an utterly different message.

“You have heard that it was said...” and then Y’shua quotes Leviticus 19:12; “And you shall not **swear by My name falsely**, nor shall you **profane the name** of your God: I am Yahweh.” And the vanity reference was to bring you right back to the third commandment in Exodus 20:7: “You shall not take the name of Yahweh your **God in vain**, for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” I’ll let you in on a little secret. Vanity is not a reference to curse words, but rather the devastating practice of forgetting His name, or in other words, leaving His name out of your life! That is why you are warned to never exclude His name from an oath!

It makes more sense now, doesn’t it? You see, what they were doing back then is swearing on all sorts of things, while they crossed their fingers behind their backs. No big deal, as long as you leave out God’s name. That’s how far they had fallen. And we, as the

church, just shot all the way to the other end of the deception spectrum. We simply stopped making oaths altogether!

So, let's make it simple. Just do what you say you will do, as if your entire life is dedicated to Yahweh. I like to say it like this..." Freedom is when you have no other options!" Think about it the next time you make a promise!

THEME: MAIN SCRIPTURE(S) THAT HAS INSPIRED MESSAGE

"Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering **to take the vow of a Nazirite**, to separate himself to the LORD, he shall..." Numbers 6:1-2 NKJV

OUTCOME: MAIN TAKEAWAY(S) I AM HOPING FOR PEOPLE

"Do not be rash with your mouth, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool's voice is known by his many words.

When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed— **Better not to vow than to vow and not pay**. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. **Why should God be angry at your excuse** and destroy the work of your

hands? For in the multitude of dreams and **many words there is also vanity.** But fear God.” Ecclesiastes 5:2-7 NKJV

Let's Set the Scene: Portion in a blurb

1. This Torah portion picks up with the census of the Gershonites and the Merarites, from thirty to fifty years old, and details their specific duties. It then finishes the census of the Levites that was underway at the end of the last portion. It goes on to discuss the purification of the camp, the ritual for a woman suspected of adultery, the laws of the Nazirite vow, the priestly benediction, and the offerings of the heads of the twelve tribes brought for the dedication of the altar.

Numbers 4

2. The service of the families of the Gershonites includes (assigned by Aaron and his sons): carrying the curtains and covering of the tabernacle, and the screen for the door and the gate of the court, plus all the hangings around the tabernacle and the altar and furnishings for the service. Their duties shall be under the authority of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.
3. The service of the families of the Merarites includes (assigned by Aaron and his sons): they must carry the boards of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, and the pillars around

the court with their sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service. And very specifically, each man (by name) is assigned what items he must carry.

4. Then a census of Levites who are of age for service (30-50 years old) is taken (Total 8580 priests).
5. We see the census broken down specifically into three family lines: the Kohathites, the Gershonites and the Merarites.
 - a) Kohathites (2750 priests who are of age for service)
 - b) Gershonites (2630 priests who are of age for service)
 - c) Merarites (3200 priests who are of age for service)

Numbers 5

6. **Ceremonially Unclean Persons:** anyone unclean for any reason needs to be isolated outside the camp.
7. **Confessions and Restitution:** Anyone who sins must confess and make restitution (and add one fifth and give it to the one he has wronged.) If there is no one to give it to, then bring it to the priests (for Yahweh), plus a ram for atonement. In that case the priest shall own what is given.
8. **Unfaithful Wives:** If a spirit of jealousy comes upon a man as if his wife has been unfaithful, whether she has been or not, he is to bring an offering to the priest. The woman will come before the priest, she shall hold the offering in her hands, and drink water mixed with some dust from the floor of the tabernacle

(bitter water). The priest will write the words of the curse in a book and scrape them into the water. She shall swear an oath of purity and drink the water. If she is lying, her belly will swell and her thigh rot and she will become a curse among the people. The husband will be free and the woman will bear her guilt.

Numbers 6

9. The Law of the Nazirite (a Nazirite Vow):

- a) This is voluntary oath for a man or woman to consecrate themselves for a set period time
- b) During that time of separation:
 - (1) They may drink nothing fermented nor eat of the fruit of the vines used to make wine or vinegar
 - (2) They may not shave at all
 - (3) They shall not go near a dead body (even for a father or mother)
 - (4) If they do contact a dead body because there is a sudden death nearby, they must shave their heads, bring an offering to the priest, and start their time of separation all over again from day one and complete the number of days of the original commitment.
- c) When the days are complete they must do this:

- (1) Come to the tabernacle, present specific offerings (a burnt offering, a sin offering, a peace offering), and shave their head at the door of the tabernacle. They then take their hair and put it under the fire of the peace offering.
- (2) The priest puts part of the offering in the hands of the Nazirite and makes a wave offering to the Lord. At this point the vow is complete and they may resume drinking wine.
- (3) At that time, the one making the vow must also offer to Yahweh whatever else they had committed voluntarily to give (expenses) at the time they made the vow.

10. **The priestly Blessing:** *“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: “The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’ “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.””* Numbers 6:22-27
NKJV

Numbers 7

11. Numbers 7 is a lengthy chapter (89 verses) all dedicated to the offerings made by the twelve leaders of Israel (heads of their father’s houses who were assigned in the census).

12. These offerings were made after Moses finished setting up the tabernacle.
13. **Total quantity of offerings:** six covered carts (one per two leaders) and twelve oxen (one per leader).
14. These offerings were for the priests to use for the work of the tabernacle. They would be distributed according to each family line's specific service.
 - a) Two carts and four oxen went to the sons of Gershon
 - b) Four carts and eight oxen went to the sons of Merari
 - c) Nothing went to the sons of Kohath because they were to carry the holy things on their shoulders
15. The leaders then offered a dedication offering for the altar, one leader each day for twelve consecutive days. (The offerings and their names by tribe from days one to twelve are described in Numbers 7:12-88.)
16. **The voice of Yahweh:** *"Now when Moses went into the tabernacle of meeting to speak with Him, he heard the voice of One speaking to him from above the mercy seat that was on the ark of the Testimony, from between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him."* Numbers 7:89 NKJV
17. You can see last year's teaching on this portion here: [Counted In For Kingdom Business...Take a Vow](#)

VOWS

1. Make Your Oaths to Yahweh!

A. The Nazarite Vow

(1) “**You shall** fear **Yahweh** your God and serve Him, and shall **take oaths in His name.**” Deuteronomy 6:13

(a) “Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘**When either a man or woman consecrates an offering to take the vow of a Nazirite, to separate himself to the LORD**, he shall **separate himself from wine and similar drink**; he shall drink neither vinegar made from wine nor vinegar made from similar drink; neither shall he drink any grape juice, nor eat fresh grapes or raisins. **All the days of his separation** he shall eat nothing that is produced by the grapevine, from seed to skin. ‘**All the days of the vow of his separation no razor shall come upon his head; until the days are fulfilled for which he separated himself to the LORD**, he shall be holy. Then he shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow. All the days that he separates himself to the LORD he **shall not go near a dead body**. He shall not make himself unclean even for his father or his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die, because his separation to God is on his

head. All the days of his separation he shall be holy to the LORD. 'And **if anyone dies very suddenly beside him**, and he defiles his consecrated head, then **he shall shave his head** on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it. Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the tabernacle of meeting; and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned in regard to the corpse; and he shall sanctify his head that same day. **He shall consecrate to the LORD the days of his separation [from the beginning all over again]**, and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering; **but the former days shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.** 'Now this is the law of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting. **And he shall present his offering to the LORD:** one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering, a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened

wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings. Then the priest shall bring them before the LORD and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering; and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering. **Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire** which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering. 'And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put them upon the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated hair, and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before the LORD; they are holy for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering. After that the Nazirite may drink wine.' **"This is the law of the Nazirite who vows to the LORD the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide; according to the vow which he takes,**

so he must do according to the law of his separation.””

Numbers 6:1-21 NKJV

(2) The Law of the Nazirite (Outline)

(a) This is voluntary oath for a man or woman to consecrate themselves for a set period time.

(b) During that time of separation:

1. They may drink nothing fermented nor eat of the fruit of the vines used to make wine or vinegar
2. They may not shave at all
3. They shall not go near a dead body (even for a father or mother)
4. If they do contact a dead body because there is a sudden death nearby, they must shave their heads, bring an offering to the priest, and start their time of separation all over again from day one and complete the number of days of the original commitment.

(c) When the days are complete they must do this:

1. Come to the tabernacle, present specific offerings (a burnt offering, a sin offering, a peace offering), and shave their head at the door of the tabernacle. They then take their hair and put it under the fire of the peace offering.

2. The priest puts part of the offering in the hands of the Nazirite and makes a wave offering to the Lord. At this point the vow is complete and they may resume drinking wine.
3. At that time, the one making the vow must also offer to Yahweh whatever else they had committed voluntarily to give (expenses) at the time they made the vow.

B. Paul makes a Nazarite Vow

- (1) It seems that prior to Paul's arrival in Jerusalem in Acts 21 (see below), he had already committed to a Nazirite Vow. Let's take a look at why this is likely by carefully examining the narrative in Acts 18.
 - (a) **"Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat.** But Gallio took no notice of these things. So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. **He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow."** Acts 18:17-18 NKJV
- (2) Why did he cut off his hair? Let's go back and look at the the various reasons one would shave his head as such?
 - (a) He could be completing a Nazarite Vow

1. "Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When either a man or woman consecrates an offering **to take the vow of a Nazirite**, to separate himself to the LORD, he shall..."
"Now this is the law of the Nazirite: **When the days of his separation are fulfilled**, he shall be brought to the door of the tabernacle of meeting...**Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head** at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering." Numbers 6:1-2, 13, 18 NKJV
- (b) But, it seems that he was not yet at the point of completion of his days of separation. That, as we see, took place in Jerusalem in Acts 21.
 1. "Therefore do what we tell you: **We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them**, and **pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads**, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law." Acts 21:23-24 NKJV

2. “Then Paul took the men, and the next day, **having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, *at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.** Acts 21:26 NKJV

a) ***The final piece at the end of a Nazarite Vow:**

““This is the law of the Nazirite who vows to the LORD the offering for his separation, and **besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide; according to the vow which he takes,** so he must do according to the law of his separation.””

Numbers 6:21 NKJV

(c) So why might he have shaved his head in advance? *“He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.”* Acts 18:18 NKJV

1. “When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, **“This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”** And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. But if it is a question of words

and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters. " And he drove them from the judgment seat. **Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat.** But Gallio took no notice of these things." Acts 18:12-17 NKJV

a) Notice two things here:

(1) Paul is being falsely accused: **"This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."** (This accusation will follow Paul all the way to the grave...Remember, this is exact sin he took part in when he had Stephen stoned for —USING FALSE WITNESSES (See Acts 6-8 before Paul's conversion in Act 9.)

(2) Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, was beaten.

(d) Since he is not at the temple, and since we see the actually completion ceremony later in Acts 21, it seems he had taken the vow previously. So, why shave his head at this time? Is it possible that Sosthenes died from the beating? The Nazarite vow requires a "do over" if you are in contact with a dead body (even suddenly).

You must shave your head and start your days of separation all over again from day one.

1. ““And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, **then he shall shave his head** on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it.” Numbers 6:9 NKJV
2. “**He shall consecrate to the LORD the days of his separation [again!]**, and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering; **but the former days shall be lost [he must start over from day one!]**, because his separation was defiled.” Numbers 6:12 NKJV

C. By the way...

- (1) And by the way, while Paul was in the midst of a fruitful time of ministry in the synagogue, and he was asked to stay to continue, he rejected the offer...Why?
 - (a) “And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. **When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent**, but took leave of them, saying, “**I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem**; but I will return again to you, God willing.” And he sailed from Ephesus.” Acts 18:19-21 NKJV

(2) Does this sound like a man who is out to persuade men to worship God contrary to the law?

(a) Why does he reject the offer to stay? “I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem.”

1. **“Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year:** You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, **at the time appointed** in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before Me empty); and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field. **“Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD.”**

Exodus 23:14-17 NKJV

D. Paul completes a Nazarite Vow

(1) Now let's jump ahead and look at the details of Paul's completion of a Nazareth Vow in Jerusalem, in Acts 21. Keep an eye out for what special thing was asked of him in doing so, why that was so important, what his response was, and MOST IMPORTANTLY, what it means!

(2) Let's begin with a key prophesy over Paul's life before he gets to Jerusalem...

(a) "On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him. Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied. And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. When he had come to us, **he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'** "" Acts 21:8-11 NKJV *[Note: I personally believe all that Paul will suffer has a direct correlation to his oversight of Stephen's stoning in Acts 6-8 and under the accusations of false witnesses.]*

(3) I am ready to die for the name of the Lord Jesus

(a) "Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? **For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.**" So when he would not be

persuaded, we ceased, saying, “The will of the Lord be done.”” Acts 21:12-14 NKJV

(4) Paul arrives in Jerusalem, and completes his Nazarite Vow.

(Notice what he is asked to do and why! Notice what choice he makes and what it means!)

(a) “And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem. Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge. And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day **Paul went in with us to James**, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, “**You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. [*See Sub-point 1.]** What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for

they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: **We have four men who have taken a vow [a Nazirite Vow]. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads [The completion of a Nazirite Vow, but in this case James want Paul to pay their final expenses],** and that all may know **that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing [meaning that the accusation that you are teaching to: forsake Moses, not circumcise, and not keep the customs, is FALSE],** but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law **[you keep the law and teach others to do so!].** But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.”” **[**See Sub-point 2.]** Acts 21:15-25 NKJV

1. *Paul and False accusations (Swearing Falsely in Vain and reaping what he has sown)
 - a) **False Witnesses:** “And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people. Then there arose some from what is called

the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia), disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. **Then they secretly induced men to say, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” [Essentially the same accusation Paul is now facing as we saw in Acts 18 and now in Acts 21]** And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council. **They also set up false witnesses who said, “This man does not cease to speak blasphemous words against this holy place and the law [Like the present accusation against Paul: “*This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.*” Acts 18:13];** for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and **change the customs [Again!]** which Moses delivered to us.” And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel.” Acts 6:8-15 NKJV

b) **And it was Paul who was overseeing the entire vain trial! “Now Saul was consenting to his death.** At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. **As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.”** Acts 8:1-3 NKJV

c) **Note:** Never once in his defense does Stephen say a word against the Law of Moses (Read Acts 8)

2. ****James is referring to the ruling for the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. For an in-depth teaching about that ruling in see this teaching: [Blood, Law & Love](#)**

(5) Drumroll Please....What does Paul do? Does he do what James is asking, thus proving he is NOT teaching against the Law, or does he use this opportunity to tell the whole world that as a “Christian” we can get rid of all those rules!

- (a) “Then Paul took the men, and the next day, **having been purified with them**, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, **at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.**” Acts 21:26 NKJV
- (b) There you have it! An emphatic statement! **ALL THOSE THINGS YOU ARE HEARING ABOUT ME ARE FALSE!**
- (6) But Paul...reaping what he has sown for what he did to Stephen who was falsely accused, now faces the very thing false accusations— “...*the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, “This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.*” Acts 18:12-13 (Back to Acts—chapters 21 and beyond!)
- (a) **Prophecy Fulfilled:** “Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him, crying out, “Men of Israel, help! **This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place [Crazy! They are still saying it, even after he just proved he was not];** and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple **[This he did, but not a true violation!]** and has defiled this holy

place.” (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, **seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut. Now as they were seeking to kill him,** news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them. And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done. And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks. When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, “Away with him!”” Acts 21:27-36 NKJV

- (b) **Paul’s own words...** “Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, “**May I**

“speak to you?” He replied, “Can you speak Greek? Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?” But Paul said, “I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people.” So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, **he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,”** Acts 21:37-40 NKJV

(c) **And what did he say?** ““Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.” And when they heard that he **spoke to them in the Hebrew language,** they kept all the more silent. Then he said:” Acts 22:1-2 NKJV

[Notice he gives an amazing defense, just as Stephen did in Acts 8—to no avail!]

1. The rest of the Book of Acts (Chapters 22-28) is the account of Paul’s trials and defense all the way until he winds up in Rome ready to face Caesar himself... every step of the way he defends being accused of speaking against the law!
2. **In the end...** “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to

him, **preaching the kingdom of God** and **teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ** with all confidence, no one forbidding him.” Acts 28:30-31 NKJV

Summary: VOWS

1. Make Your Oaths to Yahweh! The Law of the Nazirite (Outline)
 - (a) A voluntary oath to consecrate yourself for a set time
 - (b) Drink nothing fermented nor eat of the fruit of the vines.
 - (c) Cannot shave at all during the time of separation
 - (d) Stay away from the dead during the time of separation
 - (e) If you do contact a dead body you must shave your head and start all over again from day one.
 - (f) When the days are complete you must come to the tabernacle, present specific offerings, and shave your head—then take the hair and put it under the fire of the peace offering.
 - (g) When the time of separation is complete you must pay whatever else you had committed voluntarily to give (expenses) at the time you made the vow and you may resume drinking wine.
2. Paul suffered the consequences of being involved in the actions by false witnesses in the persecution of Stephen and he had to

deal with the same types of accusations against himself for the rest of his life.

3. Paul made and completed a Nazarite Vow, and he paid for others to complete theirs as definitive proof that he was not teaching against the laws of Moses.
4. In addition, even while Paul was in the midst of a fruitful time of ministry in the synagogue, when asked to stay to continue, he rejected the offer. Why? To keep the coming feast in Jerusalem. Does this sound like a man who persuades men to worship God contrary to the law?

VANITY

2. Forgetting Yahweh's Name

A. Let your yes be yes—but first, you've heard it said...

(1) Do not think...

- (a) **“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called**

great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:17-20 NKJV

(2) Murder begins in the heart

- (a) **“You have heard that it was said** to those of old, **‘You shall not murder,** and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ **But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother** without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. **And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’** shall be in danger of the council. But **whoever says, ‘You fool!’** shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **Agree with your adversary quickly,** while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.” Matthew 5:21-26 NKJV

(3) Adultery begins in the heart

- (a) **““You have heard that it was said** to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ **But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.** If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” Matthew 5:27-30 NKJV

B. Swearing Oaths

- (1) Y’shua Forbids Oaths????
- (a) **““Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. **But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.**” Matthew 5:33-37 NKJV**

(2) Shem Tob's Hebrew Gospel of Matthew

(a) **Shem Tob's Hebrew Gospel of Matthew** is the oldest surviving [Hebrew](#) version of the [Gospel of Matthew](#). It was included in the 14th-century work *Eben Boḥan* (*The Touchstone*) by the Spanish Jewish Rabbi [Shem-Tov ben Isaac ben Shaprut](#). [George Howard\[1\]](#) has argued that Shem Tov's Matthew comes from a much earlier Hebrew text that was later translated into Greek and other languages.

1. You may or may not wish to consider this credible, but the one thing that makes this very real to me is that in it, Y'shua's words demonstrate a significantly more accurate reference to the Old Testament verses He is quoting, than do the Greek translations!

³³ Again you have heard what was said to those of long ago: You shall not swear by my name falsely, but you shall return to the Lord your oath.
³⁴ But I say to you not to swear in vain in any matter, neither by heaven because it is the throne of God,
³⁵ nor by earth because it is the footstool of his feet, nor by (Jerusalem) because it is the city of God,
³⁶ nor by your head for you are not able to make one hair white or black.
³⁷ But let your words be yes yes or no no. Everything in addition to this is evil.

C. The issue was not the swearing; it was vanity!

- (1) Almost all English Translations say this...

(a) ““Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘**You shall not swear falsely**, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, **do not swear at all**: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne;” Matthew 5:33-34 NKJV

1. Not on heaven
2. Not on earth
3. Not on Jerusalem
4. Not on your own head
5. **But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’** For whatever is **more than these is from the evil one.**”

Matthew 5:37 NKJV

(2) But I say to you NOT TO SWEAR IN VAIN in any matter...

(a) “Again you have heard what was said to those of long ago: You shall not swear **by my name** falsely, but you shall return to the Lord your oath. But I say to you not to swear **in vain** in any matter, neither by haven because it is the throne of God...” Matthew 5:33-34

1. Not on heaven
2. Not on earth
3. Not on Jerusalem
4. Not on your own head

5. But let your word be yes yes or no no. Everything in addition to this is evil. Matthew 5:37
- (3) The precedent was well established...
- (a) “**You shall** fear Yahweh your God and serve Him, and shall **take oaths in His name.**” Deuteronomy 6:13 NKJV
- (4) Quoting Jesus quoting Torah! (*This is what Y’shua was referring to in Matthew 5:33-34. Notice the emphasis on Yahweh’s name and vanity!*)
- (a) ““You shall not **take the name of the LORD [Yahweh] your God in vain**, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” Exodus 20:7 NKJV (Also Deuteronomy 5:11)
- (b) “And **you shall not swear by My name falsely**, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD.” Leviticus 19:12 NKJV
- (5) Taking His Name in Vain! (What does this really mean?)
- (a) “For they speak against You wickedly; **Your enemies take Your name in vain.**” Psalms 139:20 NKJV
1. What exactly is taking the name of Yahweh in vain?
- (6) **Forgetting the Name of Yahweh!** The outcome when you insist on following the dictates of your own heart... [see teaching: [Mindful of the Prophets](#)]

(a) ““I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ **How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people forget My name** by their dreams which everyone tells his neighbor, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal.” Jeremiah 23:25-27 NKJV

1. **Note:** Baal means “the lord”. When you always ONLY refer to Yahweh or Y’shua as “lord” or even other titles like “God”, and never acknowledge their names...well, if you do that long enough, over enough generations, you just might forget they have names. Many people love “the lord” and love “god”! But who is their Lord and God?
2. “And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Ē’nošh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD [Yahweh].” Genesis 4:26 NKJV
3. ““You shall not **take the name of the LORD [Yahweh] your God in vain [Strong’s 7723]**, for **the LORD** will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.” Exodus 20:7 NKJV

- a) **Note:** [Strong's Hebrew 7723: 1) emptiness, vanity, falsehood 1a) emptiness, nothingness, vanity 1b) emptiness of speech, lying 1c) worthlessness (of conduct)]
- 4. **“I am the LORD [Yahweh], that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another, Nor My praise to carved images.”** Isaiah 42:8 NKJV
 - a) **“For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD [Yahweh] shall be saved.””** Romans 10:13 NKJV (from Joel 2:32)
 - b) **Note:** over 6800 times, the name of Yahweh was removed from your bible and replaced with the all caps word LORD. Why? Could this cause you to forget His Name?
- (7) Yes, let your yes be yes and your no be no, all else is evil!
 - (a) But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment.” James 5:12 NKJV
 - 1. **““You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”** Exodus 20:16 NKJV
- (8) Which is exactly what Paul did to Stephen!
 - (a) Again, see content above and read ACTS 6-8!

D. The issue was never the swearing of oaths; it was hypocrisy!

(1) The issue is hypocrisy not Moses (Follow Moses, just don't follow them!)

(a) "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

Therefore **whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their**

works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of

their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments." Matthew 23:1-5 NKJV

(b) The rest of Matthew Matthew 23:6-39... "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

(2) If you don't believe Moses...

(a) "Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; there is one who accuses you—Moses, in whom you trust. **For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote about Me.** But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?" John 5:45-47 NKJV

E. Let your yes be yes and your no be no; or keep your mouth shut!

- (1) Better not to vow than to vow and not pay
- (a) “**Do not be rash with your mouth**, And let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few. For a dream comes through much activity, And a fool’s voice is known by his many words. **When you make a vow to God**, do not delay to pay it; For He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed— **Better not to vow than to vow and not pay**. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. **Why should God be angry at your excuse** and destroy the work of your hands? For in the multitude of dreams and **many words there is also vanity**. But fear God.” Ecclesiastes 5:2-7
NKJV

- (2) Because...in many words there is also vanity!
- (a) “Again you have heard what was said to those of long ago: You shall not swear **by my name** falsely, but you shall return to the Lord your oath. But I say to you not to swear **in vain** in any matter, neither by heaven because it is the throne of God...” Matthew 5:33-34
- (b) Do you see it now?

F. After the Nazarite Vow comes the blessing

(1) The Priestly Blessing

(a) *“And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: “The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.” ’ “So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.””* Numbers 6:22-27 NKJV

(2) And...yes, you are all Holy Priests!

(a) *“But you are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood**, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;”* I Peter 2:9 NKJV

Summary: VANITY

1. Proper interpretations of Y’shua’s words in Matthew 5 reveals that He was not teaching against making oaths to Yahweh, but instead was warning us about leaving His Father’s Name out of our promises!
2. Consider swearing on anything as if swearing on His Name.
3. We learned that the issue of vanity is not about curses, but about forgetting God’s name.

4. Forgetting the name of God is a symptom of following the dictates of your own heart!
5. We learned that so many scriptures simply make no sense when we leave God's name out of them.
6. Over 6800 times, the name of Yahweh was removed from your bible and replaced with the all caps word LORD.
7. This could cause you to forget His Name!
8. You are better off not making a vow at all, than to make a vow and break it!

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

1. Making vows to Yahweh was an important part of life for the children of Israel:

- A. Discuss the different aspects and obligations of the Nazarite Vow in Numbers 6.

2. In Acts 21, upon arriving in Jerusalem, Paul is confronted with a significant challenge. Discuss the following ideas:

- A. Paul is accused of teaching that it is okay to forsake the laws of Moses. Be sure to include Paul's treatment of Stephen in Acts 6-8 in your answer.
- B. What specific way is Paul offered to answer to the accusation of teaching against the law?

- C. What does he choose to do?
- D. How does this relate to the Nazarite Vow in Numbers 6?
- E. What does this insinuate about the vow Paul had already taken as described in Acts 18:18?

3. Matthew 5:33-37 seems to teach that it is no longer appropriate to swear an oath to Yahweh.

- A. Why would you be led to that conclusion?
- B. What did you discover in this teaching to contrast that idea?
- C. What two key points in Y'shua's words do most English translations leave out?

4. Describe the critical relationship between the following verses:

- A. *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain."* Exodus 20:7 **And...** *"And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God: I am the LORD."* Leviticus 19:12
- B. What is the most accurate way to understand vanity in the context of these verses?
- C. How does this warning against vanity shed light on the true meaning of Matthew 5:33-37?

5. What is the primary warning in Ecclesiastes 5:2-7 about what increases the risk of vanity?