REFERENCES

• Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture by David DeSilva

• Semeia Issue 68: Honor and Shame in the World of the Bible

• New Revised Standard Version
HONOR AND DISHONOR

• Culture of the 1st century was built on foundational social values of honor and dishonor

• Each sub-group had its own honor/dishonor value system with which it evaluated those inside and outside the group.
  • These values were much more articulated by the groups than in our own “conformity” world

• Shame can be used for positive means – shame of adultery, fleeing battle, etc.

• In the Greco-Roman world, there were a wide variety of cultures, thus there was heavy competition for which group you or your children would follow.
Honor Words

- Glory (doxa)
- Reputation (doxa)
- Honor (tima)
- Praise (epainos)
- Blessed (makarios)
DISHONOR/SHAME WORDS

• Dishonor (aischunē)
• Reproach (oneidos)
• Scorn (kataphronēsis)
• Slander (blasphēmia)
• Woe (ouai)
THINGS THAT BRING HONOR/SHAME

Person’s parentage/lineage (Sirach 3:11)

- House of David
- Spawn of snakes (Matt 3:7)
- “your father, the devil” (Jn 8:44)
- Samaritan (Jn 8:48)
- Adoption into an honorable house*
Virtue in one’s dealings

- “Building up a name”
  - Praising, sanctifying, or making God’s name “known” are expressions for giving God honor (Mt 6:9, Jn 17:6, Rom 9:17)
  - Doing something “in the name” of Yeshua invokes Yeshua’s honor
- Challenge and riposte (social game)
  - Gain honor at someone’s expense by publicly posing a challenge that cannot be answered*
- Luke 13:10-17
- Gifts from social equal and reciprocity
THINGS THAT BRING HONOR/SHAME

Maintaining proper arena

- Men occupy public space
  - Male as the “head” of wife (1 Cor 11:2-16)
- Women directed towards home and market
  - Thucydides and Plutarch state the most honorable woman is least talked about by men
    - Plutarch (45-120AD) “a woman’s words are for her husband’s ears, not the public ear”
  - Women silent in public (Sirach 26:13-18, 1 Cor 14:34-35, 1 Tim 2:11-12)
THINGS THAT BRING HONOR/SHAME

Physical body

- Head of a king crowned or anointed
- Wearing blue tzitziyot
- Slap to the face (Mt 5:39, m. Baba Qamma 8.6)
- Beating, mutilation, death

Orientation of the body

- King sits on elevated level
- Bowing deeply to the ground*
- Enemies at the feet of the victor* (1 Cor 15:24-28)
- Best seats in the synagogue (Mt 23:6-7)
- Sitting at the right hand of the king (Psa 110:1)
GROUP HONOR/SHAME

Culture oriented towards approval/disapproval of others, people strove to embody qualities and perform behaviors held honorable by the group and avoid acts of dishonor.

- Both fallen soldier and living veteran are honorable
- Deserter is a reproach
- Generosity from wealthy citizens for public works
GROUP HONOR – GRECO-ROMANS

- Adultery (married woman + other man)
- Cowardice
- *Pax Deorum* – honor gods
- *Pax Romana* – honor the ruler(s)
- Ingratitude towards the generous (wealthy)
- Physical looks (*circumcision = barbaric mutilation*)
- Civic unity and participation in city life (religious festivals, business guilds, banquets, etc)
  - Suspicious and hatred of those who did not conform
  - *1 Peter 4:3-4*
GROUP HONOR - JEWS

• Torah-observant piety
  • Traditions of the elders vs. written Torah
  • Traditions developed to preserve culture and its values
• Torah-observance in the face of punishment/death
  • Especially after Maccabean era
  • Circumcision, Shabbat, kosher
• Giving alms and pursuit of justice (Prov 21:21)
• In diaspora, difficult to maintain due to ridicule and be confirmed honorable by the majority of the dominant surrounding culture.
MAINTAINING HONOR IN THE GROUP

Dishonoring a brother or sister is in fact dishonoring yourself

- Phil 2:1-4
- 3 John 9-11
- 1 Cor 12:23-26**
METHODS OF SHAMING

Intended to pressure into returning to the conduct that the group approves:

- Insult
- Reproach/social isolation
  - Shunning (Mt 18:15-18, 1 Cor 5:9-11, 2 Thess 3:6, 14-15)
- Physical abuse
  - Lake of Fire, 2 Thess 1:6-10
- Confiscation of property
- Execution*
HONOR AND SHAME IN THE NT

• Much of the NT is devoted to insulate their congregations from the shaming techniques, showing them to be granting honor in God’s eyes towards the final verdict.

• In Greco-Roman literature, “humility” did not appear as a term of commendation. It was considered abject and unworthy.
“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man.” (Lk 6:22)
COMBATTING SHAMING TECHNIQUES

• Matt 10:34-37
• Matt 19:29
• Romans 1:28-32
• 2 Cor 6:3-10
• Phil 3:17-20
• “we are all sinners”
SHAMING TURNED TO HONOR IN NT

• Plutarch “How to Profit by One’s Enemies”*
• Mark 9:33-35
• Acts 5:40-41
• Heb 10:32-34
• 1 Pet 3:16
• 1 Pet 4:12-16
FOCUS ON HONORABLE CONDUCT IN NT

• **Matt 5:3-12**
• **John 5:39-47**
• **James 1:22-25**
• **1 Peter 2:12**
• **Romans 12:9-21***
Tolerance of deviance and transgression becomes a blot not merely on the honor of the transgressor, but on the whole group, which is censured for not exercising its responsibility to help all of its members remain true to God’s standards.

- **James 5:19-20**
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
YESHUA’S CRUCIFIXION TURNED TO HONOR

- 1 Cor 1:22-25, 27-29
- Matt 27:17-18 (dishonorable reason)
- Acts 2:36
- Hebrew 12:2
HONOR AND SHAME TODAY

Societies honor system

- Wealth and prestige = honor
- Religion in public places = shame
- LBGT = Honor   Disagreement with LBGT = shame
- Physical strength and sexual conquest
- *Islamic countries*: torture, burning churches, burning bibles, eviction, *jizya* tax, registration
Rooted in Torah ministries

Shabbat Shalom!

Rooted-in-Torah.com