

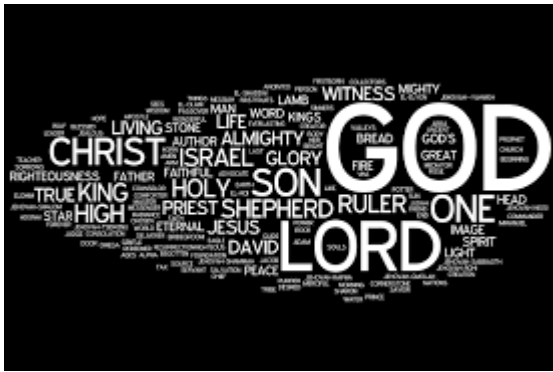
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You Shall Not Misuse the Name of the LORD Your God 20: 7

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God REFLECT: Do I use God's name in contexts other than prayer, worship, teaching or evangelism? Has God's name become separated from His person in my everyday life?

You shall not misuse the name of ADONAI your God, for ADONAI will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses His name (Exodus 20:7).

This, then, is how you should pray. "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9).



What's in a **name**? Plenty! **God's name** is comprised of the four Hebrew letters that in English are **YHWH**. It was this **name** that was explained to Moses at the burning bush (**3:13-22**). The Jewish scribes would take extraordinary precautions when writing **His name**. They would never dip their pen in the ink in the middle of writing **His name**. If even the king spoke to them while writing the name of **YHWH**, the scribe would ignore him. In fact, the Jews took this commandment so seriously that they refused to pronounce **God's name** so they wouldn't accidentally **misuse the name of YHWH**. For that very reason, the exact pronunciation of **God's name** has been lost. Even today, many Jews make no attempt to use or even pronounce the **name**, referring to **God** simply as **Ha'Shem**, Hebrew for **the name**.³⁶⁸

Some view this third commandment as merely a prohibition against using **God's name** as a swear word. **The Israelites themselves** took it as such. **Leviticus 19:12** says: **Do not swear falsely by My name and so profane the name of your God. I am ADONAI.** But there is a lot more to this commandment than that. The word **profane** comes from the Latin word *pro*, which means *in front of*, and *fane*, which means *the temple*. Those who **profane the name of God** have taken the holy out of *the temple* and permitted their hearts, minds and mouths to be put in the gutter out *in front of* it. Do you know anyone who loves **God** and is close to **Him** that thinks **His last name** is damn? Of course not. **God** will hold us responsible if we profanely use **His name**.

On another level, this third commandment is a ban against dishonesty of speech, perjury, false promises and the breaking of our word. Early in human history people came to lie so often that no one could trust a person's common word. In order to be believed one had to call upon god to witness to the truth. We think the cover-ups and evasions going on today in the political arena and elsewhere are modern phenomena, but the problem is really as old as civilization. The idea also surfaced that if you didn't **swear** by **God**, then you didn't have to tell the truth. But slowly people became such liars that even that didn't help. People felt that unless they took a certain elaborate oath they were not required to tell the truth.

By the time **Jesus** was born the situation was much worse. People used many different kinds of oaths but still lied. It became impossible to tell if they were telling the truth or not, even though they used **God's name** in an oath. That's why **Jesus** said: **Do not swear at all, simply let your "Yes" be "Yes" and your "No" be "No" (Matthew 5:34 and 37).** His point was that we shouldn't have to use **God's name** to be believed. As believers, our lives should be our witness. We are united **in Christ (Ephesians Chapter 1)**, meaning we belong to **Him**. We take **His name** as our **name** and we should never **profane** it by breaking our word, or using **His name** for selfish or evil purposes (**Psalm 139:20; Deuteronomy 5:11**).³⁶⁹ Not that we are perfect, but honoring God all the time including all we say, should be the desire of our hearts.

This third commandment has an even deeper meaning. The third commandment also warns us against the misuse of **God's** power. In both the TaNaKh and the B'rit Chadashah a person's **name** was thought to be an extension of their character. Similarly, throughout the Bible **ADONAI's** name represents the nature and character of **God Himself**. So to speak for **ADONAI** is to speak in **His name (Deuteronomy 18:19-20)**. To praise **God** is to praise **His name (Psalm 96:2, 100:4)**. To worship **God** is to call upon the name of **ADONAI (Genesis 4:26; Isaiah 84:7)**. To serve **God** is to love **His name (Psalm 5:11)**. The Temple of **God** was **the place ADONAI chose . . . to put His Name (Deuteronomy 12:5)**. The

Bible teaches that **those who know ADONAI'S name will trust in Him (Psalm 9:10)**. Therefore, to know the name of **ADONAI** is in some way to know the **power of God**.

Acts 4:7 tells how the religious leaders questioned **Peter** and **John** about their healing of a lame man, asking: **By what power or what name did you do this?** And **Peter** answered: **It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth . . . (Acts 4:10)**. Eventually the high court angrily let them go, warning the apostles **not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18)**. You see, **God's name** includes **His** character, **His** will, and **His power**. That's why we are to pray in the **name of Christ** and why **God's name** has special **power** and meaning for us. It is as if the third commandment is saying, "Be very careful. Don't use the **name of God** for your own selfish ends. Don't attempt to use **God's power** for your own will and your own ways. Don't try to cosign **God's name** to a lot of things in your life that are totally unworthy of **His name**."³⁷⁰

In this age of grace, the believer is encouraged *not* to swear by any oath. Echoing what **Yeshua** had said earlier, **James** said: **Above all, my brothers, do not swear, not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your "Yes" be yes, and your "No" be no, or you will be condemned (James 5:12)**. We need to exhibit truth on all occasions and should not need the name of **God** to verify our life style of telling the truth.³⁷¹

What's in a **name**? Everything. Does you life **profane His name** or honor **His name**? Can **God** sign **His name** to your body? How about your money? Does **ADONAI** co-sign **His holy name** to your checkbook? What about your home, your habits, your mood, your manners, your work, your disposition? Can **God** sign **His name** to your life? If so, you are keeping the third commandment.³⁷²