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You Shall Not Give False Testimony Against Your Neighbor

20: 16

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor REFLECT: Have I lied about another person or hidden the truth to protect myself at another's expense? When I realize what I have done, how do I feel about it? Do I make amends? Has lying become a habit? What do I do about it?

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor (Exodus 20:16).

Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator (Colossians 3:9-10).



We live in a world full of **lies** and liars. Often lying is not even considered a vice, and some people think of it as a virtue, or at least an art. Advertisers **lie** to sell products, Politicians **lie** to get elected. Because of the relativism that has crept into our society today, most people believe that all **truth** is personal and nothing is absolutely true or false.

Against all of this stands the Word of **God**. In its original form, the ninth commandment probably involved a simple legal matter about not going to a court of law and lying about a **neighbor**. But the prophets, and later **Jesus** and the New Covenant writers, expanded and restated this commandment so that the Bible ultimately forbids every form of a **lie**. There's

a reason for this, the same reason we've discovered as the basis for all the other commandments. This commandment is founded on the very character of **God Himself**. He cannot tolerate sin or tell a **lie**. It is a vital part of **His** holiness.³⁹³

God is truth. The Son of **God** said: **I AM the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6)**. **Jesus** proclaimed the coming **Holy Spirit** as **the Spirit of truth (John 14:17)**. That is why the Scriptures place such a high value on **the truth**. **The Lord** said that one of the basic characteristics of Satan is that **there is not truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44)**. Therefore, because **God** is truthful **He** wants *us* to be truthful. In **First Peter 1:16**, **Peter** quotes from **Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2** and **20:7**, where **ADONAI** says: **Be holy, because I am holy**. Today we would say, "**Be truthful, because I am truthful**." That is why the B'rit Chadashah emphasizes our truthfulness. Who do you follow? **The father of lies** or **the Father the Spirit of truth?**

The ninth commandment and its restatement in the New Covenant forbid lying in three ways: telling a lie, spreading a lie and living a lie. There is no reason to believe that this commandment is exclusively limited to the judicial realm. It is a law that lays down fundamental principles; therefore, we would expect a wider application. It is likely that the commandment generally protects a person's name and forbids harming one's neighbor through slander and uncontrolled defamation. The Hebrew word *shaqer* means *to give an empty promise*. Thus, to **lie** about your neighbor is forbidden. Such things as gossip, slander and needless flattery are also to be avoided.³⁹⁴

First, it forbids telling a lie. **Proverbs 6:16-19** says **ADONAI** hates seven things and two items on that list are **a lying tongue** and **false witnesses who pour out lies**. In the book of **Revelation**, **John** concludes his overview of the New Heaven and New Earth with a serious and solemn warning. He describes those who will be excluded from any participation in the blessings of heaven - all unforgiven sinners. And the list in **Revelation 21:8** concludes with these words: **and all liars - their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur**. There are similar lists of the unredeemed in **Revelation 22:15**, **Romans 1:28-32**, **First Corinthians 6:9-10**; **Galatians 5:19-21** and **Second Timothy 3:2-5**.³⁹⁵ **Acts 5:1-10** tells the heartbreaking and frightening story of Ananias and Sapphira, who sold their land and told the apostles that they had given all of the money to the church. But in reality, they had kept some of it for themselves. Before their sudden deaths, **Peter** said to them: **How is it that Satan has filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit. You have not lied to men but to God.**

The LORD, whose very nature is **truth**, who speaks only **truth**, who loves **truth**, cannot tolerate our **lies**. Our **lies** separate us from Him and hurt our fellowship. To be honest about it, **lying** is a sin. Before, coming to **Christ**, many of us were habitual **liars**. **Lying** was as easy as falling off of a log and it took a great deal of **the Holy Spirit's** influence in our lives to finally break that stronghold and establish a pattern of telling **the truth**. You see, telling **the truth** is not a sometimes thing, it is an all the time thing. It is a habit. Some of us have **lied** so long that we don't know the difference between the **truth** and a **lie**. There is only one way to break the habit, as soon as **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** convicts you of **lying**, immediately tell the **truth** to the person you just **lied** to. It may be painful, but it works.

Second, the Bible forbids spreading a lie as well as telling one. In the final analysis, sins are marked by their effect on others. **God's** blueprint for living is not merely a list of rules, but a practical guide on how to get along with other people. Giving **false testimony against your neighbor** is a sin because it hurts someone. Being very honest, many followers of **Jesus** do not see the harm in this. People who would never think of murder, adultery or theft, gossip their brains out. We need to be extremely careful about what we say to others. That is why **James** warns us against spreading a **lie**, calling the tongue **a fire** and **a world of evil among the parts of the body (James 3:6)**. **Proverbs** also deals at length with the tongue because it's so capable of ruining a person's reputation. Once a **lie** starts spreading, it is impossible to take back. If you have ever done this, you owe it to your victim to go back to the people you have **lied to** and set the record straight.

Third, and this is perhaps the greatest meaning or the ninth commandment, we are not to live a lie. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us (**First John 1:6**). Therefore, when we live a **lie we deceive ourselves**. When what we say is proven false by our life, we are living a **lie**. **Jesus** was extremely familiar with people who lived a **lie**. The scribes claimed to have knowledge they didn't really possess. The Pharisees claimed to be righteous, but were not. False witnesses told stories of things they had neither seen nor heard. Judas was living a **lie** when he kissed **Yeshua**. And Pilate tried to wash his hands of the whole crucifixion, but ordered it nonetheless. You see, the greatest **lies** we tell are to ourselves. And the reason we do this is because of our pride.

For many people, the biggest **lie** is when they attempt to maintain a false image of themselves as sinless and not in need of salvation. They try to convince themselves that their **lie** is true and they try to persuade others that they are something we know they are not. This kind of living **lie** is described in **First John 1:5-10**, which ends by saying: **If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word has no place in our lives.** The tragedy is that when people tell this kind of a **lie** to themselves over and

over again, they tend to believe it. Once that happens it is very difficult to face **the truth**.

God faced **the truth** about you a long time ago. Maybe you're just beginning to admit the truth about yourself and see that it's not a pretty picture. Yet **ADONAI** knows everything about you and loves you anyway. All **He** wants you to do is admit **the truth**. Our sins don't keep us from **the LORD**, but our attempts to cover up our sins do.

As we stand before the cross, we realize **the truth** that we are bad enough to crucify **the Son of God**. That's **the truth** about the human heart. **ADONAI** has known it for a long, long time and perhaps now you know it also. Admit it to **Him**. Confess it. **If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (First John 1:9)**. The moment you do, the power of the **lie**, the hold of darkness over you, will be broken. Then **the Spirit of truth** can begin a miracle in your life, leading you away from **lying** and darkness to **truth** and light.³⁹⁶