

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

“The Name of the Lord”

What is your Name?

Ex 3:1-15

- 1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.
 - 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up.
 - 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight — why the bush does not burn up."
 - 4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am."
 - 5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."
 - 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.
 - 7 The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering.
 - 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey — the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites.
 - 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.
 - 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."
 - 11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"
 - 12 And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."
 - 13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"
 - 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"
 - 15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers — the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob — has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.
- (NIV)

Steven, in Acts 7, says that when Moses was forty he supposed that the Israelites knew that God would deliver them by his hand. Now, forty years later when God makes this very offer to him, Moses says, “Who am I?”

God is not really concerned about Moses’ inferiority complex. After all, God knows that Moses is inferior, He being the Supreme Being of the universe! His answer is simple. “Forget who you are Moses. I’m going with you. Everything will work out fine.”

This answer does not satisfy Moses in the least, to say nothing of getting him off the hook of his cush shepherd job in the desert. “That’s fine and dandy,” he says, “I’ll go to Egypt and tell Jacob’s kids that their father’s God sent me. Then they’ll ask, ‘What’s his name?’ What am I supposed to do about that?” His problem at first was, “Who am I?” His next complaint was, “Who are you?” Why did Moses ask for the name of God?

Again, Stephen gives us a clue, for he says that he was instructed in “all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). As an adopted son of the royal family, this education would have included religious training in what we call “occult” arts. The pagan belief was that if one possessed the true name of a god, he also possessed the true being of the god and could bind it to do his bidding. God does not give Moses an answer he could grasp so firmly. “I AM WHO I AM, I AM hath sent you, YHWH elohim has sent you.” The importance of this from the biblical perspective is that the Lord knew and pronounced Moses’ name; Moses, by contrast, only managed to obtain from Him the ritual incantation “I am who I am”. Henceforward, therefore, the prophet was bound to answer to God and do His bidding.¹

What does YHWH mean? Following is a modern, Jewish commentary on this most holy name.

*“What is its mystery? First, it has no vowels. Without vowels . . . it is impossible to pronounce a word. But Y-H-W-H also has no real consonants! Y, H, and W really are blowing sounds, rushings of air through the mouth. There is nothing hard or concrete about them . . . The point is one of *elusiveness* or abstraction. The name of God is so subtle it could slip away from you. Y-H-W-H is not a God you can grab hold of and be sure you’ve got firmly in your mental ‘grasp.’”²*

This same author says that the best meaning of the name is “Is-Was-Will-Be.” The essence of God’s revelation to Moses was that He needed to be to accomplish His purposes on the earth. This is not the first time this name was revealed. It has been God’s covenant name from the beginning.

*Genesis 1:1 through Genesis 2:3 is the first section of Genesis documenting the creation. The name used for God in this section is **elohiym**, which is the plural form of **elowahh** (Hebrew for deity). From this use, we understand that the word **elohiym** signifies God as creator. But a switch in form occurs at Genesis 2:4.*

Gen 2:4

This is the account [*Hebrew – toledot*] of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens — (NIV)

*Genesis 2:4 begins the first of 11 **toledot** sections in the book. They, with the account of creation, made the 12 divisions of the book. For the first time the name YHWH appears, and this primarily in relation to man and the covenant the Lord made with Adam.*

¹ See *The and the seal*, by **Graham Hancock**, New York, NY 1192, p. 296-99

² *These are the WORDS: A vocabulary of Jewish Spiritual Life*, **Arthur Green**, Jewish Lights Publishing, woodstok, Vermont, 1999, p. 3

Gen 2:15-17

15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

16 And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; 17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." (NIV)

*YHWH is the covenant name of God. When the Bible talks about "the Name" or when Jews refer to "the Name", it is to this name they refer. To this day, Orthodox Jews will not even speak it, reading **adonai** instead when YHWH is found in Scripture. So holy was this name held in Judaism that it was only uttered by the high priest on the Day of Atonement.*

“ . . . the high priest pronounced the name JEHOVAH, and, as he spoke it, those who stood near cast themselves with their faces on the ground, while the multitude responded: ‘Blessed be the Name; the glory or His kingdom is for ever and ever.’ Formerly it had been the practice to pronounce the so-called ‘Ineffable Name’ distinctly, but afterwards, when some attempted to make use of it for magical purposes, it was spoken with bated breath, and, as one relates who has stood among the priests in the Temple and listened with rapt attention to catch the mysterious name, it was lost amidst the sound of the priests; instruments, such as the accompanied the benediction of the people.”³

The Lord promised to reveal himself to Moses in a way that He had not revealed himself as of yet.

Ex 6:2-5

2 God also said to Moses, "I am the LORD.

3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name the LORD I did not make myself known to them.

4 I also established my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens.

5 Moreover, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are enslaving, and I have remembered my covenant. (NIV)

Gen 17:1-2

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me and be blameless.

2 I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers." (NIV)

Gen 28:3-5

3 May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples.

4 May he give you and your descendants the blessing given to Abraham, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien, the land God gave to Abraham."

³ Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services, Updated Edition*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Massachusetts, 1994, pp. 247-248

5 Then Isaac sent Jacob on his way, and he went to Paddan Aram, to Laban son of Bethuel the Aramean, the brother of Rebekah, who was the mother of Jacob and Esau. (NIV)

Gen 35:10-15

10 God said to him, "Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel." So he named him Israel.

11 And God said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will come from your body.

12 The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you."

13 Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him.

14 Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God had talked with him, and he poured out a drink offering on it; he also poured oil on it.

15 Jacob called the place where God had talked with him Bethel. (NIV)

In saying that by the name of YHWY they did not know Him, the Lord is not saying that they didn't know the name YHWH. He is telling Moses that they didn't understand the full import of that name as it related to God's covenant keeping character and this intimate revelation of his person bound up in the name YHWH. When one examines the record, Abraham (Gen. 17:1-2), Isaac (28:3-5), and Jacob (35:10-15) all relate to God as El Shaddai, God Almighty. His power, protection, and providence (blessing) were the characteristics most prevalent in his revelation of himself to them. As the Almighty, he had Sarah bear a child at the age of 90. As the Almighty, he increased Isaac's seed one hundred fold. As the Almighty, he watched over Jacob's life and blessed him at Bethel.

Now the Lord promises Moses that he will reveal a deeper aspect of Himself in the name YHWH. As YHWH, he will bring his children out of bondage and into their inheritance. It is in this name that we receive the third commandment.

Ex 20:7

"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. (NKJV)

In the Old Testament, God's covenant name is combined with different attributes that tell us of his character. These are usually referred to as the redemptive names of God. They are:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------------------|------------------|
| ◆ Jehovah-Jireh | - | The Lord sees and provides | (Gen. 22:14) |
| ◆ Jehovah-Rapha | - | The Lord who heals you | (Ex. 15:26) |
| ◆ Jehovah-Nissi | - | The Lord is my banner | (Ex. 17:15) |
| ◆ Jehovah-Mekaddishkem- | | The Lord who makes you holy | (Ex. 31:13; Lev. |
| 20:8; 22:32; Ezek. 20:12) | | | |
| ◆ Jehovah-Shalom | - | The Lord is my peace | (Judg. 6:24) |
| ◆ Jehovah-Ra'ah | - | The Lord is my shepherd | (Ps. 23) |
| ◆ Jehovah-Tsidpenuw | - | The Lord our righteousness | (Jer. 23:6) |
| ◆ Jehovah-Shammah | - | The Lord is there | (Ezek. 48:35) |

To this traditional list may be added:

- ◆ *Jehovah-Zeba'oth* - *The Lord of hosts* (1 Sam. 17:45; James 5:4)
- ◆ *Jehovah-'elyown* - *The Lord most high* (Ps. 7:17)
- ◆ *Jehovah-Shabbat* - *The Lord of the Sabbath* (Matt. 12:8)

One can see the relational advantages of knowing God is the fullness of his YHWH names. Surely God is almighty. But almighty for what? Almighty to provide, to heal, to cover, to sanctify, to bring peace, to shepherd His people, to make righteous; ever-presently there to lead the armies of God as the most High into His resting place! Glory be to His Name forevermore!

What would it mean to take up this name in vain? The Hebrew word translated "vain" in the KJV means to deceive or falsity, also emptiness. It is synonymous with the word used for "false" in the ninth commandment, "thou shalt not bear false witness." Many times, the word used for "vain" is used to mean an idol; vain, worthless, and empty. In Leviticus 24, we find an obvious (and unfortunately in our day, a common) misuse of the name of the Lord.

Lev 24:10-16

- 10 Now the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father went out among the Israelites, and a fight broke out in the camp between him and an Israelite.
- 11 The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name with a curse; so they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri the Danite.)
- 12 They put him in custody until the will of the LORD should be made clear to them.
- 13 Then the LORD said to Moses:
- 14 "Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him.
- 15 Say to the Israelites: 'If anyone curses his God, he will be held responsible;
- 16 anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death. (NIV)

Knowing this should make you cringe the next time you hear someone utter the name of God as a curse! It is the most obvious misuse of the name of the Lord. If you are in the habit (and I hope not) of this kind of thing (even is anger and pain), you need to repent and move on to a right use of the name of the Lord.

The next level of misuse is seen in Psalm 139.

Ps 139:19-20

- 19 If only you would slay the wicked, O God! Away from me, you bloodthirsty men!
- 20 They speak of you with evil intent; your adversaries **misuse** your name. (NIV)

This type of vain use of the Lord's name can run the gambit from the character of God to saying things about God that aren't true. These later would be people like Job's friends to whom God said, "I am angry with you . . . because you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has." (Job 42:7)

Mal 3:13-18

- 13 "You have said harsh things against me," says the LORD. "Yet you ask, 'What have we said against you?'"
- 14 "You have said, 'It is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?'"
- 15 But now we call the arrogant blessed. Certainly the evildoers prosper, and even those who challenge God escape."
- 16 Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. [KJV-that thought upon his name]
- 17 "They will be mine," says the LORD Almighty, "in the day when I make up my treasured possession. I will spare them, just as in compassion a man spares his son who serves him.
- 18 And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not. (NIV)

Have you ever been there? Have you ever asked yourself, what's the use? Have you ever looked at the unrighteous and seen them prosper and been tempted to think that God didn't care? The remedy for this ailment is in verse 16:1) fear the Lord, 2) talk with others who also fear the Lord, 3) think on his name. The more you realize the worth of something, the less likely you will be to misuse it. For instance, if one did not appreciate or understand a good hunting knife, one could use it as a pry bar or a screwdriver. But once you understand the use (and cost) of the knife, you will more than likely not use it in such a damaging fashion. How are we to discover the worthiness of the name of the Lord? We must think on it, meditate on its redemptive attributes. Worship Him for who he has revealed himself to be in his name. As we do that, its preciousness and value will increase and our likelihood to misuse it will decrease.

Years ago, when my relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ was primarily intellectual (I knew about Him more than I knew Him), it seemed a light thing to me to speak his name in vain. As he has revealed himself to me and my relationship with him has grown spiritually and emotionally (I know Him), I tremble at the thought of what I had done. Praise God that his love and mercy endures forever. Our God is a forgiving God. But forgiveness must be received through confession and repentance (1 John 1:9-10).

Though using God's name as a curse (or worse yet, cursing God's name), slandering Him, or speaking falsely about him are serious trespasses, they are more common to the world than they are to the Church. In the Church, the misuse of the Lord's name takes on two subtler forms. The first one applies to charismatic church in particular, the second to all Christians everywhere.

Jer 23:25-32

- 25 "I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!'"
- 26 How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds?
- 27 They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship.
- 28 Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" declares the LORD.

- 29 "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"
- 30 "Therefore," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from me.
- 31 Yes," declares the LORD, "I am against the prophets who wag their own tongues and yet declare, 'The LORD declares.'
- 32 Indeed, I am against those who prophesy **false**² dreams," declares the LORD. "They tell them and lead my people astray with their reckless lies, yet I did not send or appoint them. They do not benefit these people in the least," declares the LORD. (NIV)

We should never take lightly a "thus saith the Lord" spoken or heard. Whenever we say that we are speaking for the Lord, we had better be speaking for the Lord. If we are not, if we say "thus saith the Lord" and the Lord has not thusly said, we have broken the third commandment. I say this, not to dampen your prophetic fervor, but as an encouragement to hear God's voice distinctly.

The second subtle misuse of the name involves the connotation of vanity and falseness. Falsehood stands opposed to faithfulness. Faithfulness is a relational term, falsehood thus denotes "one's inability to keep faith" with what one has said or to respond positively to the faithfulness of another being.⁴ To not use the name of the Lord vainly, we must use it in faith, for

Heb 11:6

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (NKJ)

What name are we given that must be used in faith? The name of Jesus Christ!

John 14:11-15

- 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves.
- 12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.
- 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.
- 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.
- 15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. (NIV)

John 16:23-24

- 23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.
- 24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. (NIV)

Acts 3:16

⁴ from *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* in the definition for *sheqer*, which is a synonym for *shav'*.

By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. (NIV)

Rev 2:13

I know where you live-where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city-where Satan lives. (NIV)

The Lord has given us His name to use in faith. If we use the name without faith, the result is vanity, emptiness. It would be a vain use of the name above any other name.

Phil 2:9-11

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,

10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NIV)

Jesus is the Greek version of the Hebrew name Jehoshua, "Jehovah (YHWH) is salvation." The name was common enough, but when given to the Messiah the portent of its promise became reality. Jesus is YHWH working salvation for his people.

2 Cor 1:20

For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God. (NIV)

Rev 3:14

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. (NIV) [KJV-the beginning of the creation of God]

All of God's character revealed in the covenant redemptive names are answered by Christ (Messiah, anointed one). He is the yes to all of the promises of God, the faithful Amen.

Acts 2:32-36

32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.

33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

34 For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand

35 until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." '

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." (NIV)

In the name Lord Jesus Christ we have the fullest revelation of the Godhead. All of God's authority as Adoni is vested in Him as Lord; all of God's character, covenant, and promise as YHWH is fulfilled in Him as Jesus; the fullness of all Holy Spirit anointing is His as Christ

(Messiah), for God did not give the Spirit to Him by measure (John 3:34). Thus, Scripture declares that:

Col 1:19 "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him," (NIV)

Col 2:9 "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;" (NKJ)

The preeminence of our Lord's name over all other names exemplified by this simple questionnaire:

- ◆ Is it better to believe in God or be an atheist? If you believe in the existence of God, does this save you? No.
- ◆ Is it better to believe in Allah or Jehovah? If you believe in Jehovah as the true God (as Jews do), does this save you? No.
- ◆ Do you believe Jesus is Lord? If you do, and believe that God raised him from the dead and confess him as Lord, does this save you? Yes.

Thus: The name of Jesus is above every name, because:

Acts 4:12

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (NIV)

At the foot of Mt. Sinai, it is sufficient to not utter the name YHWH at all. In such a way, we are certain to never misuse the name. How can one use vainly that which one never uses? But we have not come to Sinai. We are citizens of Zion and entrance into that holy assembly required confession of the Name in faith. For us, it is not enough to refrain from saying the Name. We must proclaim the Name to a dying world and have it cover all we say and do, for "all we do, whether in word or deed, we are to in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the father through him."

Col 3:17

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (NIV)