

Exodus 20:7

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/exod/exod-20/exodus-207/>

In the 3rd commandment, the LORD prohibits the association of God's holy name to something that is common. He promises that the offender would be punished.

The third commandment dictates that no one should *take the name of the Lord your God in vain*. To *take* (Heb. “nasah”) means to “to lift up.” The phrase translated here *in vain* is also used in [Exodus 23:1](#), where it is translated “falsely.” The book of Deuteronomy also repeats this commandment, and also includes an instance of the word translated “in vain” that is translated “falsely” ([Deuteronomy 5:20](#)). So the essence of this prohibition seems to forbid speaking of God or representing God in a manner that is false.

This interpretation is supported by the prohibition against prophets speaking falsely in God's name, which required the death penalty ([Deuteronomy 13:1-5](#)). It also is supported by the admonition throughout the New Testament to judge the lives of teachers to identify and reject false teachers, as well as the higher standard that God will apply to those who teach ([James 3:1](#); [Matthew 7:15-20](#)).

The word *name* is more than what a person is called. In the Bible, it can refer to one's nature, character, and being ([Isaiah 48:9](#); [Jeremiah 7:12](#)). So, in this context, associating the character of the LORD with anything untrue was strictly prohibited.

There were consequences to anyone who violated this commandment: *the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain*. Notice that the LORD does not describe the nature of the “punishment,” leaving open the possibility that the punishment could come in any form. Notice also that the phrase *in vain* is used twice in this verse, underlining the importance of not degrading the character of the LORD. If the LORD's character is misrepresented and therefore misunderstood, it would likely lead to a breach of the covenant between God and Israel, since the covenant is founded upon the character and nature of God.

Biblical Text:

⁷“You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not leave him unpunished who takes His name in vain.