

in no way are you to pick up the Lord's name with less respect than it should have. The sense is not that there is a magical quality to the Lord's name: it is neither a good luck charm nor a mystical omen. But it cannot be worn or taken empty and maintain its character. To lift it up is to take it in any manner as part of your identification.

The phrase "in vain" suggests meaninglessness or emptiness. It also carries the thought of little worth. In this light the command reads: "You will not take my name to yourself as if it were nothing." The lesson is very clear: as we honor God's Reason and Worship, so must we honor His name. We must hold Him foremost in our affection, bow to Him alone, and speak of Him in reverence and trust.

An illustration of the abuse of the Divine name may be seen in Rehoboam's son, Abijah. His name, Abijah, meant "My father is the Lord." But his mother was of the Canaanite sea-worshipping peoples and he came to be known as Abijam "my father is the sea." The books of Kings, strict accounts of Israel's history, call him by this name (Abijam) while Chronicles, more concerned with covenant testimony, used the name Abijah. This unworthy king took his personal name and disgraced it in compromise with the sea gods and so dishonored the Lord's name as well. He, through his infidelity, bore the name of the Lord as if it were nothing.

Because a name may be used unthinkingly, some have imagined that the Lord would wink at this error. But the Scripture denies this. "The Lord will not hold him guiltless.." He will regard him as a sinner, one transgressing his law in this area. We are not told how the Lord will address himself to the cause but we are assured that He will. What it means is that great care is needed in any area where the name of the Lord is concerned. The best prevention is a thoughtful attitude towards God