USING GOD'S NAME IN VAIN

INTRODUCTION TO USING GOD'S NAME IN VAIN

Introduction to Using God's Name in Vain

You may use God's correct names and not the defective version (*Hashem*, Adoshem, Elokim...) whenever you are teaching, even if you are only quoting a partial *pasuk*. This is the *halacha*, even though many people have the custom of using only the defective versions.

USING GOD'S NAME IN VAIN: SPEAKING

Blessings and Using God's Name in Vain

You may not use God's name unless there is a positive purpose. Anyone may say any of God's names anytime when studying *Torah*, even a girl or woman who is reading the *Torah* with cantillation/*trop* where she might need to repeat God's name or other words in a line/*pasuk* and thereby not say the entire *pasuk* as it is written.

It is permissible to use God's name (and not an altered name such as "*Keil*" or "*Elokim*") in these cases:

- When reciting a sentence or phrase from the *Torah*.
- For any type of teaching of *Torah*, blessings, and prayers to children up to *bar/bat mitzva* age.
- In *Shabbat* songs/*zmirot*.

NOTE When singing *zmirot* on *Shabbat*, you should use God's correct name, since *zmirot* are a form of prayer.

USING GOD'S NAME IN VAIN: WRITING

Spelling God's Name Defectively

You may write God's name in any language. But you may not physically erase or throw it away, so write it defectively (for example, "G-d") to avoid future problems.

Erasing God's Name: Physical Media

You may not erase a name of God that is written in chalk or other concrete but non-permanent substance (and certainly not if written in a permanent substance).

However, you can ask a non-Jew to erase it using a non-conventional method (*shinu'i*); for example, he may pour water above the name so that when the water runs across the letters, they will be dissolved.

Erasing God's Name: Photo or Photocopy

You may not throw away even a photo or photocopy of one of God's names; it must be put into *sheimot*. You should be especially careful with children's school papers and homework!

Erasing God's Name: Electronic Media

You may delete any non-permanent form of God's names, such as in e-mails, but you may not destroy printed versions, including printed versions of www.practicalhalacha.com, with God's names.

© Copyright 2026 Richard B. Aiken | www.practicalhalacha.com