

The Ten Commandments

You shall not take the name of God in vain. —Exodus 20:7

Many Christians think the second commandment is a prohibition against cursing. But I believe the real meaning of speaking the name of God “in vain” is to speak God’s name casually or trivially, with a false presumption of understanding the Mystery—as if we knew what we were talking about!

Many Jewish people concluded that the name of God should not be spoken at all. The Sacred Tetragrammaton, *YHWH*, was not even to be pronounced with the lips! In fact, vocalizing the four consonants does not involve closing the mouth. A rabbi taught me that God’s name was not pronounceable but only breathable: *YH on the captured in-breath, and WH on the offered out-breath!*

We come from a very ancient, human-based, natural, biological, universally experienced understanding of God. God’s eternal mystery cannot be captured or controlled, but only received and shared as freely as the breath itself—the thing we have done since the moment we were born and will one day cease to do in this body. God is as available and accessible as our breath itself. Jesus breathes the Spirit into us as the very air of life (see John 20:22)! Our job is simply to both receive and give this life-breath. We cannot only inhale, and we cannot only exhale. We must breathe in and out, accept and let go.