

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 sheimos. 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.