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The Expression 'to Take God's Name in Vain':
a History of its Interpretation submitted
by Peniel for the Rabbi Maurice M. Mazure
Bible Prize.

"Peniel" is pseudonym
for
Walter Jacob

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ref. S.H. Blank.

Introduction

This paper will attempt to fulfill the requirements of this essay to the best of the author's ability. It is mainly limited to Jewish interpretations up to the period of modern Biblical criticism, then all available explanations are included. The restriction of the scope of the paper is due to the author's inability to read either Greek or Latin, the languages to which the writings of Christianity^{are} confined through the Middle Ages; little of this vast literature is available in translation. Within this narrowed field, the writer has endeavored to include the interpretations available to him through the volumes of the Hebrew Union College Library and the Drury College Library. Explanations which are only mentioned incidentally to other matters by scholars of minor significance are not presented in the essay as they would add to its length, but not to its quality.

The decalogue has played an important part in the history of both Judaism and Christianity, so it is not suprising to find its commandments interpreted in a variety of ways through the ages. Th third commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain," has lent itself to a number of explanations as the real meaning of this brief statement is not clear and is not clarified elsewhere in the Bible.

The scholarship of ancient times took it as its task to explain this commandment in the setting of its age; scholars were not concerned with the original meaning of the words; perhaps they believed that their interpretation was the original one. In modern times much emphasis has been placed on the attempt to discover the true meaning of this phrase at the time of its composition. Recent commentators /have also felt the need of presenting all possible explanations which could be discovered while adding little of an original nature to the suggestions of the past; scholars of previous centuries, on the other hand, stated the interpretations which appeared correct to them and did not concern themselves with the thoughts of previous ages.

This essay will attempt to deal with the ancient and modern interpretations of the third commandment. It will

treat the explanations topically and chronologically; several modern scholars will appear under several topic headings as they have expressed a number of different points of view. The fact that a number of commentators who held similar opinions are treated together does not necessarily signify that they influenced each other; the dependence of one author upon another would often be difficult to prove. A simple phrase as the one of this commandment can only be interpreted in a limited number of ways, so it may be impossible for later scholars to add really original explanations. In reality almost every suggestions which has been offered already finds its counterpart in Tanaitic or Midrashic literature.

It will first be necessary to discover whether the text of this statement as it has been transmitted to us is correct in so far as modern scholarship is able to deal with this problem. An ancient copy of the third commandment discovered in recent times show that the verse was written in a slightly different manner; the variants are, however, orthographic and do not effect the consonantal structure of the words. The manuscript as quoted by Gall demonstrates that the text may have read as follows:^{1.}

(p k ke) k kē

(p e) ' kē kē (k ' kē kē)

יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה

1. Gall, A. F., "Ein neuer hebraischer Text der Zehn Gebote und des Schma'", Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, 1903, vol. 23, p. 348.

אלהים אחד (אלהים אחד) אלך

The same version has been described by Peters; he deals with the manuscripts in greater detail and attempts to date them in the second century of our era². The minor differences between this version and our own can have no influence at all on the interpretation of the meaning of the statement.

Various attempts have been made to establish a more concise text as the original one of each of the ten commandments. Whatever small validity such efforts may possess, they generally agree that the division in this case should stand between the first and second half of the verse at the point of the *asnach* in the Hebrew text; the division is usually made at this point with each of the commandments³. The two portions of the verse may be assigned to different strata of the Pentateuch according to the theological whims of the author, so Bacon⁴ ascribes the first portion of the verse to the Deuteronomic redactors while he traces the remainder to the Elohist. Meisner⁵ also states that whatever original version may be found must be limited to the first portion of the verse, but he further claims that the whole statement is a part of the

2. Peters, N., Die älteste Abschrift der Zehn Gebote der Papyrus Nash, Freiburg, 1905, p. 15.

3. Nowack, W., "Der Erste Dekalog", Abhandlungen zur Semitischen Religionstheorie und Sprachenwissenschaft für Grafen von Baudissin, (Festschrift), Giessen, 1918.

Deuteronomic document. He writes that a different JE version may have existed, but that it is no longer possible to discover that text. He would therefore agree with Delitzsch whom he quotes, "Die Urgestalt des Dekalogs ist vollstandig zum X geworden." It therefore appears quite clear that modern scholarship can do little more than deal with the present text of this commandment as being correct; it cannot prove one portion to be older than another.

The major effort of modern research has been that of establishing the original import of the words "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Among the most original suggestions has been that of Paton who⁶ would render these words in the following manner: "Thou shalt not cry aloud the name of Yahwe, thy God when thou bringest nought." He would connect the meaning of this verse with Ex. 23:34 which states that "none of you must appear before me empty handed." This novel explanation would give the verse a rather narrow ritualistic meaning.

Many modern investigators claim that the commandment originally directed itself against the magic or superstitious use of the name of Yahwe; Dillman⁷, Keil⁸, Kahana⁹,

Kohler, L., "Der Dekalog", Theologische Rundschau, 1929, vol 1.
 4. Bacon, B. W., The Triple Tradition of the Exodus, Hartford, 1894, p. 113.
 5. Meisner, O., Ursprungs Form des Dekalogs, Halle, 1893, p. 76.
 6. Paton, L. B., "The Meaning of Exodus 20:7", Journal of Biblical Literature, 1903, vol. 22, p. 201- 210.

Powers^{10.}, Schneider^{11.}; Baentsch^{12.}, Junker^{13.}, and Park^{14.} would give this as a possible interpretation. Park would summarize this point of view by stating that the "magic use was frowned upon as part of a campaign to banish superstitious ideas and practices from the people (see Nu. 23:23, Is 28:9)." Rylaarsdam^{15.} states that this was also directed against the invocation of the dead. Each of these scholars adds other explanations to those expressed here. Moehlman^{16.} is one of the few investigators who accepts the suggestion given by Paton, although he too acknowledges that this is only speculation; he would add to this that the original meaning implied a prohibition of sorcery. Bietenhard^{17.} claims that Biblical times were filled with magic and superstitious usages as the papyri testify, so this commandment was designed to bring an end to these practices among Jews. Reider^{18.} and Gressman^{19.} believe that it also prohibited the use of the name of God in a curse, but neither explains this interpretation further.

Several commentators declare that the name of the deity was an independent entity, that it had become hypostatized.

7. Dillman, A., Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus, Leipzig, 1897.

8. Keil, C. F., Biblischer Commentar über die Bücher Mose, Leipzig, 1878, vol. 1.

9. Kahana, דברי תורה, Kiev, 1913.

10. Powers, E., A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, London, 1953.

11. Schneider, "Exodus", Die Heilige Schrift in Deutscher Uebersetzung, Würzburg, 1952.

12. Baentsch, B., "Exodus", Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, Göttingen, 1903.

Procksch²⁰ claims that the name dwelled in the Temple and that it gained in importance as no cult-image was permitted in Israel. Another scholar, Jacob²¹, rejects this type of interpretation and states that hypostatization is strange to the Bible. Beer and Galling in their commentary²² would not be quite so radical, but state that the use of the name of the deity gave certain powers into the hands of the user; frequent use of this power diminished its effectiveness. ^{the one named} They state that the boundary between religion and magic was still somewhat fluid during early Biblical times and that old low religious practices which are similar to magic continued, so the commandment could be directed against necromancy, magical uses, as well as the false oath. Mc Fayden²³ assumes the magic use of the name from Amos 6:10; he writes that this law is a portion of the anti-superstitious tendency expressed in Deuteronomy 18:9-11 by the Deuteronomic redactors.

Several modern investigators reject these explanations altogether; they state that this verse never concerned itself with magical uses of the name of the deity; among them may be

13. Junker, H., "Deuteronomium", Die Heilige Schrift in Deutscher Uebersetzung, Wurzburg, 1952.

14. Park, J. E., "Exodus", Interpreters Bible, New York, 1952, v.1

15. Rylaarsdam, J. C., "Exodus," Ibid.

16. Moehlan, C. H., The Story of the Ten Commandments, New York, 1928, p. 113.

17. Bietenhard, H., Die himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spätjudentum, Tübingen, 1951, p. 80.

18. Reider, J., Deuteronomy with Commentary, Philadelphia, 1937.

19. Gressmann, H., Die Schriften des Alten Testaments, Göttingen, 1910, vol. 2, part 1, p. 240.

20. Procksch, O., Theologie des Alten Testament, Gättersloh, 1950, p. 86.

found Driver^{24.}, König^{25.}, and Jacob^{26.}. The latter states that the magical use of the name of the deity was common among the Egyptians throughout their history, but not among the Jews. The interpretation given by the Alexandrian Jewish community which lived in an Egyptian environment has given rise to this explanation. He states that other groups, as the Essenes, the Samaritans, and the early Christians, were influenced by the Greeks and Egyptians in regard to the magical use of the name of the deity. It was through the influence of all these parties that a magical interpretation has been assigned to the Biblical commandment which was originally not at all concerned with these matters; this only testifies to the "Abstand zwischen dem NT und zB dem Deuteronomium." He states that the magical use of the name was prevalent in Talmudic times and even more common in the middle ages and so such an interpretation would be meaningful in those periods.

Several scholars have given this verse a novel interpretation; they would state along with Nelson^{27.} that the vain usage is that of assigning the names and titles which belong to the

21. Jacob, B., Das zweite Buch der Tora Exodus übersetzt und erklärt, (manuscript microfilm), p. 821-826.

22. Beer, G. and Gallig, K., "Exodus", Handbuch zum Alten Testament, Tübingen, 1939.

23. Mc Fayden, J. E., "The Mosaic Origin of the Decalogue", The Expositor, Series 8, vol. 12, p. 313-314.

24. Driver, S. R., "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy", International Critical Commentary, New York, 1895.

25. König, E., "Deuteronomium", Kommentar zum Alten Testament, Leipzig, 1917.

26. Jacob, B., Im Namen Gottes, Berlin, 1903, p. 110.

27. Nelson, S., Anti-deistische Bibel, (tr. from English by Panzer) Erlangen, 1766.

true God to an idol, although Nelson suggests this explanation, he prefers that of prohibiting false, vain oaths or perjury. He concludes by stating that this is a crime which is not often punished by men and that therefore the concluding section of the verse which speaks of divine punishment is necessary. Jacob²⁸ has also presented this interpretation; he claims that *lilē* refers to false gods. In this manner the first three commandments are shown to be closely related; this commandment protests against the easy going syncretism which must have been current during the early settlement in Canaan. He also states that the false oath was not considered as a griveous sin by the early Jews, but was only considered so by the Greeks. In his later extensive commentary to Exodus Jacob adopts a more traditional interpretation, but the reason for the change is not given. The meaning given these words by Staples²⁹ is somewhat similar; he states that "the third commanment tacitly recognizes the presence of idols and warns the people not to consider these idols to be representations of Yahwe. It is a commandment which protests against any attempts at syncretizing Yahwe with the local baalim." This type of explanation would leave the verse with the same sense of the concrete as the remainder of the decalogue and would not suddenly transport us into the realm

28. Jacob, B., Im Namen Gottes, p. 23.

29. Staples, W. E., "The Third Commandment", Journal of Biblical Literature, 1939, vol. 58, p. 325-329.

of the abstract.

It has often been stated by modern commentators that the commandment was taken by the Jews to prohibit the use of the name of God in an oath and even to forbid the pronunciation of the name of the deity. Those who would follow this interpretation do not say that this was the original meaning of the verse, but they claim that these consequences must have developed from it naturally through the centuries. Mackenzie³⁰ asserts that the Jews feared the abuse of the name to such a degree that they refrained from its use altogether. Bietenhard³¹ suggests that Judaism forbade the use of the divine name during very early times, while Kautzsch³² carries the matter further and utilizes this commandment to explain the frequent occurrence of Jk in place of the Tetragrammaton in names, as the latter was prohibited, the former became more frequent. He writes that the prohibition against the general use of the Tetragrammaton can be seen as early as 300 B. C. E. as the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, and later the New Testament do not use it, but prefer the expression of "the Lord". After this date the divine name was only pronounced in the Temple ritual. He claims that the original fear of the use of God's name stemmed from the dread of a wrathful deity as may be shown through Amos 6:10 and 8:3. Moehlman³³ who speculates a little

30. Mackenzie, R. A. F., "Deuteronomy", A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture, London, 1953.

31. Bietenhard, H., Op. cit., p. 80.

32. Kautzsch, K., Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments, Tübingen, 1911, p. 44, 91.

33. Moehlman, C. H., Op. cit., p. 116.

in regard to the original meaning of the verse, attempts to date the prohibition of the pronounciation of the name of God from the time of Ezra; he would also connect this matter with this statement. Up to the time of Ezra only its careless use was forbidden, but thereafter the divine name was to be avoided in both ^{the} written and spoken word; this explains the fact that translations of the Bible translated the name and did not transliterate it. This view is also held by Marti^{34.}, Kalisch^{35.}, and Kuhn^{36.}; none of these scholars attempt to date the prohibition as precisely as those given above.

This particular interpretation of the third commandment was been very vigorously rejected by other modern scholars. Jacob^{37.} and others point out that swearing by the name of the deity was a common practice and was not found to be offensive; Biblical verses are brought forth to prove this assertion by Jacob and also by Schultz^{38.}, who denied the validity of this explanation. Ehrlich^{39.} demonstrates that this is a purely Christian explanation, that it has never been suggested in any of the rabbinical writings whether they be early or late. He asserts that the care taken in the pronounciation of the Tetragrammaton is already taken for granted by the Bible and therefore need not be explicitly stated; he attempts to prove this through the ~~dark~~ of the divine name in Ecclesiastes. The

34. Marti, K., Geschichte der Israelitischen Religion, Strassburg, 1903, p. 60.

35. Kalisch, M., Exodus, London, 1855.

36. Kuhn, K. J., "Die rabbinischen Gottesbezeichnungen", in Kittel, G., Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, Stuttgart 1950, vol. 3, p. 93.

term 'אֱלֹהִים' was only useful when 'יהוה' led a pantheon of gods, but when he became established as the sole deity, no proper name was necessary. Gen. 4:26 would further corroborate this statement, as that verse was placed into this early chapter by a later redactor as an explanatory remark. Ehrlich would claim that the proper name of the deity was only not totally removed from the literature as it was too solidly embedded in it. The modern theories which lead to the connection of the prohibition of the use of the Tetragrammaton with Ex. 20:7 are as erroneous, according to him, as those which would link it to Lev. 24:16.

These are the explanations which modern scholars have sought to establish as the original meaning of the phrase "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." A considerable amount of variety is found among these interpretations; some appear to have some basis in fact, but many seem to be the product of a fertile imagination combined with the ingenuous selection of data which might lend credulity to the proposed theories. With our present fund of knowledge of Biblical times and of the Bible we cannot hope to present a solidly established explanation of the initial meaning of the commandment; we can only speculate about it.

37. Jacob, B., Im Namen Gottes, p. 111.

38. Schultz, F. W., Das Deuteronomium, Berlin, 1859, p. 265-267.

39. Ehrlich, A. B., Randglossen zur Hebraischen Bibel, Leipzig, 1908, vol. 1.

The remainder of the paper will concern itself with those men who were concerned with the meaning of this commandment for their own time; they were not interested in the original meaning of these words and were often not even influenced by the thoughts of the previous generation on the subject. One of the most popular interpretations which has been utilized throughout the centuries would have the verse refer to a prohibition against any false statement made in connection with the divine name, against any type of false oath.

In order to deal with this point of view, it will be necessary to demonstrate that the word *קע* means 'to swear'; the Talmud attempts to prove this through the use of the analogy (*קע קע*); various different verses are found for this purpose. In one source⁴⁰ it is attempted with the verse *קע קע* from Lev. 19:12. In another, R. Kattina⁴¹ quotes Is. 3:7 and states that the verb *קע* must mean 'to swear' as it has that meaning in E. 20:7. Several discussions which deal with the punishment to be meted out for various types of prohibitive legislation show in the deliberation that

קע קע is thought to be parallel to *קע קע*⁴²: A number of Talmudic authorities as R. Levi, R. Kattina, R. Jose

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40. וְיִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה
וְיִשְׁבַּח וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה
41. וְיִשְׁבַּח וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה
וְיִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה
42. וְיִשְׁבַּח וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה
וְיִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה

R. Johanan, R. Hiyyah and others not specifically mentioned are known to have interpreted the Biblical verse in this manner. This explanation is also found in a commentary by Joseph Ibn Caspi (1297-1340),⁴³ the French scholar famous for his ethical wills; it is to be understood as the basis for numerous other medieval commentaries whose authors do not think it necessary to explain this matter at the outset.

The authorities of the Talmud desired to make the exact nature of this commandment very clear; they therefore distinguished the oath (שׁוּבָה) from the vow (קַרְבָּן) through the use of Biblical verses. The rabbis state that the oath is⁴⁴ more rigorous than the vow because of the severe penalty which is attached to the third commandment. This distinction enables them to define both terms with greater precision.

The majority of the commentators believe that *קִרְבָּן* means 'to swear'; only the modern scholars prove this through a few Biblical verses. These men state that the word *קִרְבָּן* has the meaning of 'false'; this is an explanation which has its roots in Josephus, the Talmud, the Targum, as well as the Peshitah. Josephus⁴⁵ writes that this verse states that "we

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42. *שׁוּבָה וְקַרְבָּן* *שׁוּבָה וְקַרְבָּן*
43. Joseph Ibn Caspi, *שׁוּבָה וְקַרְבָּן*, Cracow, 1906, vol. 2
44. *שׁוּבָה וְקַרְבָּן*
45. Josephus, F., *Antiquities of the Jews*, Book III, chap. 5, par. 5, (tr. Whiston, W.), Philadelphia, 1829.

Why not a modern edition?

must not swear by God in a false manner." Both R. Johanan in the Palestinian Talmud⁴⁶ and R. Joshua b. Levi in the Babylonian Talmud⁴⁷ interpret the verse in a similar manner. The Aramaic translation commonly known as the Targum of⁴⁸ Jonathan b. Uziel translates the word /וַיִּשְׁבַּע/ into /דא/ which has the meaning of 'false'. This free translation is generally thought to have been compiled during the Arabic period of Jewish history, but many of its sections are undoubtedly much older. Among early Christian scholars we find a denunciation of oaths by Justin, Irenaeus, Basil, Chrysostom, and Augustine⁴⁹. A Midrashic source⁵⁰ states that God becomes jealous when His name is taken in vain through the oath of the suspected adultress who is guilty of that crime. R. Johanan is quoted as stating in the name of R. Meir in the *תרגום יבנות*⁵¹ (ca. 845) that the verse of Ex. 20:7 refers to the false oath; on the previous page of the same work, R. Hiyyah⁵² shows that a progression of evil deeds leads directly from stealing, through deceiving, to swearing by the name of God in connection with a false oath. The

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46. יבנות יבנות יבנות.
47. גב גב גב.
48. תרגום יבנות.
49. Kalisch, M., Exodus, London, 1855.
50. גב גב גב גב גב.
51. תרגום יבנות.
52. גב גב גב גב גב.

? holds a similar view.⁵³ (ca. seventh century). This manner of reasoning is also utilized by the Zohar which states that he who steals will assuredly also swear falsely.⁵⁴

Two of the great medieval Jewish philosophers, Saadiah (882-942)⁵⁵ and Albo (d.1495)⁵⁶ explain the verse in this manner. The thirteenth century commentator Hezekiah b. Menoah cautions his readers to refrain from the use of the name even with a true statement as general employment in this way will soon lead to its connection with a false oath.⁵⁷ Seforno, who lived a little later than Albo appeals to his readers in the following manner at the conclusion of his commentary

אמר אינה אקייס ענין אמת
האדם יקייס אף על דבר אמת 58.

The explanation has been popular in later times also, so we find that Schmidt⁵⁹, living in the eighteenth century, states, "Ihr solt bey dem Namen eures Gottes, Jehovas keinen falschen Eid thun." Rosenmueller⁶⁰ makes this prohibition the equivilant of Leviticus 19:12 and explains it in a similar manner. He states that prohibitions gainst the false oath are to be found in other ancient literature and cites some

53. .ג"ק, כהנא 277 אהר"ם
54. .3' ק' מנחם 177, 178
55. Saadiah, as quoted in Cook F. C., Exodus, New York, 1874, p. 332.
56. Albo, J., Ikkarim, essay 3, perek 18, Philadelphia, 1946.
57. Hezekiah b. Menoah, שו"ת 177, 178, 1559.
58. Seforno, Obadyah b. Jacob, שו"ת 177, 178.
59. Schmidt, J. L., Die gottlichen Schriften, Wertheim, 1735.

references to Greek works. Several of the early Judeo-German and German translations of the Pentateuch explained the verse in this manner; among them are the versions of Salomon⁶⁰, Arnheim⁶¹, Zunz⁶², Loewenstein⁶³, Herxheimer⁶⁴, and others. Among Christian commentators this interpretation has also found wide acceptance, so we find Wellhausen⁶⁵, Junker⁶⁶, and several others hold to this point of view. Gordon⁶⁷ and Davidson⁶⁸, among Jewish writers of this century also hold this to be the correct meaning. Eerdmans⁶⁹ points out that even today the Oriental mistrust in a statement is eased through the use of an oath with the name of a deity. Guillaume⁷⁰ states that it is almost certain that the commandment refers to false swearing. Goldstein⁷¹ would go a little further in his very prosaic attempts at originality; he speaks of the lies between the nations of the world and of the vain treaties which are made today. Chadwick⁷² is not satisfied

60. Rosenmueller, E. F. K., Das alte und neue Morgenland, Leipzig, 1818.

60. Salomon, G., Deutsche Volks und Schul-Bibel, Altona, 1837.

61. Arnheim, C. H., דַּיָּקָה - דַּעַן תּוֹרַת, Glogau, 1840.

62. Zunz, L., Pentateuch, Berlin, 1857.

63. Loewenstein, L. H., דַּיָּקָה תּוֹרַת, Roedelheim, 1847.

64. Herxheimer, S., Pentateuch, Bernburg, 1854.

65. Wellhausen, J., Die Composition des Hexateuchs, Berlin, 1899, p. 89.

66. Junker, H., "Deuteronomium," Op. cit.

67. Gordon, S. L., דַּיָּקָה תּוֹרַת, Warsaw, 1920.

68. Davidson, F., "Exodus", The New Bible Commentary, London, 1953

69. Eerdmans, B. D., The Religion of Israel, Leiden, 1947, p. 28.

with either the explanation of $\chi\iota\rho$ as 'Vain' or as 'false oath'; he believed that the true meaning lay between these two alternatives. He cited scriptural verses to prove that both meanings are possible; he concluded by stating that the verse was most similar to Lev. 19:12. He sermonized a bit about the topic of oaths and stated that an oath may and should be used by good Christians whenever it might be necessary, but a hypocrite must not use it as it would only represent a hollow statement. The infrequent use of oaths today pointed out to Chadwick the irreligious age in which we live. He stated the fact that Christ himself swore by an oath when required to do so, therefore it may be done today whenever a good cause requires it. Charles⁷³ would include a false oath in the prohibition of this commandment, but he would not limit the meaning to such narrow terms.

Several exegetes were not satisfied with the limitation of the third commandment to the false oath; its scope was further narrowed to include only the false oath when used with the Tetragrammaton. This interpretation is already

70. Guillaume, A., Prophecy and Divination, London, 1938, p. 130.

71. Goldstein, H. S., Bible Comments for Home Reading - Exodus, New York, 1930.

72. Chadwick, G. A., "The Book of Exodus", Expositors Bible, New York, p. 302-305.

73. Charles, R. H., The Decalogue, Edinburgh, 1926.

clearly stated in a Midrash⁷⁴ which specifies that only the אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה יהוה is included by the commandment; only in this case will the drastic punishment which is mentioned in the concluding portion of the commandment take place. Maimonides⁷⁵ also holds this view. Rashi⁷⁶ states in his explanation of Lev. 19:12 that this verse differs from Ex. 20:7 only in regard to the dire punishment which is visited upon those who misuse the אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה. Solomon Ephraim ben Aaron (1550-1619),⁷⁷ a popular preacher of Lublin, assigns the verse a slightly wider scope; he also limits it to specific divine names, but includes יהוה, יהוה, and יהוה among them. He interprets the commandment to refer to both false swearing and to any vain use of the names of God. Kuhn⁷⁸ follows those interpreters who limit the effect of the commandment to the Tetragrammaton; he claims that the use of the divine name was restricted to ritual matters long before Christian times.

There are those who would limit the commandment to perjury; in this they follow one explanation of Philo⁷⁹. He stated that if one must swear it must not be taken lightly as it is an appeal to God as a witness; "to call Him as a witness to a lie is the height of profanity." One would not dare to ask a friend to do this, so how could one require it

74. אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה יהוה
 75. Maimonides, M., אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה, New York, 19.
 76. Rashi, אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה.

of God? Philo states that the commandment also refers to those who misuse the name of the deity in their daily speech and speak the name of God in a place where they would not mention the names of their parents. The relationship of the first two commandments to the third is that of a shadow to the body, "for the name always stands second to the thing which it represents. So speaking first about the existence of the Ever-living and the honor due to Him as such, He follows it at once in orderly sequence by giving a commandment on the proper use of His title, for the errors of men in this part of their duty are manifold and multiform." This is a point of view which has been held often by modern scholars, so Kalisch writes that perjury^{80.} has been considered as the most hideous sin by many ancient people; the Egyptians thought it so as it broke the bonds between men and also denied God; the Persians took the matter so seriously that they refused to swear to their conqueror Alexander the Great. It is said that they told him, "We swear only by keeping our word." Kalisch maintains that modern orientals still retain this attitude toward perjury. This is also the cause for Matt. 5:34-37 and James 5:4. ^{ref?} Hengstenberg in his commentary on Ps. 24:4^{81.} and Solomon^{82.}

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77. Solomon Ephraim ben Aaron, _____, Amsterdam, 1767.
 78. Kuhn, K. J., Op. cit.
 79. Philo Judaeus, "The Decalogue", The Loeb Classical Library, (tr. Colson, F. H.) Cambridge, 1937, vol. 7, para. 92-95, sec. 19.
 80. Kalisch, M., Op. cit.
 81. Hengstenberg, E. W. in Schultz, F. W., Op. Cit.

present a similar interpretation. Solomon stated that the term לֵבַי may signify 'vain', but here it undoubtedly has the connotation of שָׁוְיָהּ ; he realizes that the Talmud presents an interpretation of useless oath, among others, and that it states that this type of oath would readily lead to false swearing, but he prefers his own definition. Lange⁸³ makes perjury "the culmination of this sin." Mc Afee⁸⁴ and Thilo⁸⁵ also claim that the literal meaning of the verse refers to perjury. Gressmann⁸⁶; Junker⁸⁷ and Schneider⁸⁸ mention the explanation of perjury among others. Murphy⁸⁹ also includes this explanation, but his general interpretation is broader.

Another group of Biblical exegetes sought to give the verse a much broader meaning and desired to include all vain swearing under its heading. Such an interpretation is given by the Septuagint, the Vulgate, Theodoret, Augustine, and Aquila⁹⁰. It is especially emphasized by Ibn Ezra⁹¹ who dwells at great length on this matter although he mentions other items as also included in the prohibition. He states that we

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82. Solomon, G., Pentateuch, Krotoschin, 1869, vol. 2.
 83. Lange, J. P., Commentary on Holy Scripture, New York, 1876.
 84. Mc Afee, C. B., The Mosaic Law in Modern Life, New York, 1906.
 85. Thilo, M., Das Alte Testament ausgelegt für Bibelleser, Gütersloh, 1947.
 86. Gressmann, H., Op. cit.
 87. Junker, H., Op. cit.
 88. Schneider, Op. cit.
 89. Murphy, A., A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Exodus, Philadelphia, 1869.
 90. Cook, C. F., Exodus, New York, 1874.
 91. Ibn Ezra, M., שְׁוֵיָהּ לֵבַי 18 172

have few occasions upon which to commit the other sins which are mentioned in the decalogue and which are of a more or less violent character, but it is very simple to habitually use the name of God for no good purpose, even in our daily conversations; one may swear by His name as one would use an exclamation mark and so speak the name in vain hundreds of times during a single day. He writes that this becomes an unconscious habit of which the person does not even derive any pleasure. He states that if this were the only sin of which Israel were guilty it would be sufficient to prolong the suffering⁹² of the Exile. Jacob b. Asher⁹² (1269-1343) gave this as the plain and simple meaning of the commandment; he adds other explanations to this one. Samuel b. Meir (1080-1158)⁹³ held this view also.

Martin Luther⁹⁴ translates according to this point of view, but his further commentary includes some specific misemployments of the name; there he states that "Wir sollen Gott furchten und lieben, dass wir bei seinem Namen nicht fluchen, schworen, zaubern, lügen oder trügen, sondern denselbigen in allen Nothen anrufen, beten, loben, und danken."

In modern times Mendelssohn⁹⁵ favors the interpretation of 'any vain usage'; he quotes Rashi, Onkelos, and Talmudic sources which partially substantiate his point of view, and which point out the other possibilities to the reader.

92. Jacob b. Asher, דברי יום אש"ר, Hannover, 1838.
 93. Samuel b. Meir, דברי יום מ"ר, Breslau, 1881.

Several other commentators, especially among those of the last century, favored this explanation; Cosman⁹⁶, Meklenburg⁹⁷, and Heidenheim⁹⁸ hold this view; the latter places the same emphasis upon this injunction as Ibn Ezra. Jonah⁹⁹ also utilizes this interpretation. Philippson¹⁰⁰ states that the name of the deity must be kept holy; although *kier* is at times used parallel to *קדש*, its meaning here is broader. Philippson quotes several tales from the Midrash in his commentary on this verse. Hirsch¹⁰¹ also states that the commandment refers to the false oath, but he believes that the interpretation given it must be more inclusive than that. He cites the categories of Maimonides (which will be given later) and quotes some aggadic passages.

Schultz¹⁰² proves at great length that *kier* is not equivalent to *קדש*, although an occasional use is parallel. He would therefore include anything which might detract from the holiness of the deity under the heading of this commandment. Oehler¹⁰³ states that the name is used in vain whenever it is employed through word or deed in a manner which suggests that it is nought and powerless.

94. Luther, M., "Die zehn Gebote", Der kleine Catechismus, New York, 1854, p. 7.

95. Mendelssohn, M., _____ *קיר* 720 _____, Sulzbach, 1837.

96. Cosman, קדש קדש קדש קדש, Königsberg, 1852.

97. Meklenburg, קדש קדש קדש קדש, Königsberg, 1852.

Keil^{104.}, Cowles^{105.}, Cook^{106.}, Driver^{107.}, Dillman^{108.}, and Mc Neile^{109.} take this to be the correct meaning of the Biblical verse. Cook states that this is the preferred meaning although he also quotes the interpretation of 'false oath' and shows that many scholars have held that point of view. Driver attempts to show that the word should be translated as 'insincerity'; he quotes Biblical passages to prove this translation. Dillman points out that the term *קֵרַן* does not mean 'to carry' or 'to lift', but 'to pronounce for emptiness'. *קֵרַן* is not the equivalent of 'false', but only contains that meaning among others. He emphasizes the need of keeping the name holy. Mc Neile presents the broad interpretation of not using the holy name for any sinful purpose and then lists matters which might be included in this category. Ewald^{110.} also gives this interpretation.

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98. Heidenheim, *שְׁמֵן מִיָּדָי*, Roedelheim, 1818.
 99. Jonah, M. J., *שְׁמֵן מִיָּדָי מִלְּפָנֶיךָ יְיָ*, 1888.
 100. Philippson, L., *Pentateuch*, Frankfurt a. M., 1859.
 101. Hirsch, S. R., *Pentateuch*, Frankfurt a. M., 1869.
 102. Schultz, F. W., *Das Deuteronomium*, Berlin, 1859.
 103. Oehler, G. F., *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, Tübingen, 1873, p. 193.
 104. Keil, C. F., "Exodus", *Biblischer Commentar über die Bücher Mose's*, Leipzig, 1866.
 105. Cowles, H., *The Pentateuch*, New York, 1874, p. 241.
 106. Cook, C. F., *Exodus*, New York, 1874.
 107. Driver, S. R., *Op. cit.*
 108. Dillman, A., *Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus*, Leipzig, 1897.
 109. Mc Neile, A. H., "The Book of Exodus", *Westminster Commentary* London, 1908.

Holzinger^{111.}, Kautzsch^{112.}, and Baentsch^{113.} agree with this usage; the latter states that the commandment includes Lev. 19:12. A vast number of other exegetes have also adopted this interpretation which has been the most generally accepted one through the centuries; many add minor qualifications to the general explanation. Among these men we find Bennet^{114.} and Gordon^{115.} who quotes traditional Jewish commentaries to support his view. Kahana^{116.} lists this as one of many possible interpretations. Hehn^{117.} states that this was the attitude expressed by peoples throughout the Near East toward their deities. The Buber-Rosenzweig translation render the commandment in the following manner^{118.}: "Trage nicht SEINEN deines Gottes Namen auf den Wahn...." König^{119.} prefers to render the Hebrew word *kier* as 'inner deceit' which is similar to this interpretation. Smith^{120.} states that the commandment in Deuteronomy is a balance to the later passage of 6:13 and other verses as Jer. 4:2, 12:16, Ps. 63:11, etc. which permit the use of the name of the deity for the purpose of an oath.

110. Ewald, G. H. A., Geschichte des Volkes Israel, 1859, p. 152.

111. Holzinger, H., "Exodus", Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, Tübingen, 1900.

112. Kautzsch, E., and Bertholet, A., Die Heilige Schrift, Tübingen, 1922.

113. Baentsch, B., "Exodus", Handkommentar zum Alten Testament, Göttingen, 1903.

114. Bennet, W. H., "Exodus", The New Century Bible, New York, 1907.

He points out that this frequent use could easily lead to a vain usage of the name of God as is so common among the present day Arabs.

Moehlman¹²¹. gives this as one of his interpretations. Moffat¹²². and Meek¹²³. translate the verse to read in this fashion; Meek translates, "..not invoke the name for evil intent.." Rylaarsdam¹²⁴. concentrates upon this explanation; he declares that the name of the deity describes the characteristics and power of the deity; therefore any use of the name with something which lacks reality, "that which is not an expression of divine character", is to use His name in vain. Cassuto¹²⁵ protests against the numerous interpretations which stress the fact that the commandment forbids only false swearing; he states that any vain usage is to be included and that the false oath may be one example of misuse, as one might also include, divination, magic, etc. Jacobson¹²⁶; Junker¹²⁷., and Jacob¹²⁸. also place their main emphasis upon this interpretation although each presents others as well.

115. Gordon, AL., 1022 P. 2, Jerusalem, 19--.

116. Kahana, A., Op. Cit.

117. Hehn, J., Die biblische und die babylonische Gottesidee, Leipzig, 1913.

118. Buber, M. and Rosenzweig, F., Das Buch Namen, Berlin, 1926.

119. König, E., "Deuteronomium", Kommentar zum Alten Testament, Leipzig, 1917.

120. Smith, G. A., "Deuteronomy", The Cambridge Bible, Cambridge, 1918, p. 102.

The explanation given this commandment by Calvin¹²⁹ is very near those given above. He states that we must do honor to God whenever we mention his name, not only in connection with an oath. It would be childish to restrict this prohibition to the mere name of the deity "as if God's majesty were confined to letters or syllables. God's name is not only taken in vain through perjury, but through any light or trivial use of it." He realizes that *kie* may mean 'falsehood', but he prefers to give the commandment a fuller meaning. The great German poet Goethe¹³⁰ gives the commandment a similar meaning when he states that "Die Leute traktieren den Namen Gottes, als wäre das unbegreifliche gar nicht auszudenkende hohe Wesen nicht viel mehr als ihresgleichen. Sie wurden sonst nicht sagen: der Herr Gott, der liebe Gott, der gute Gott. Er wird ihnen zur Phrase, zu einem blossen Namen, bei dem sie sich auch gar nichts denken. Waren sie aber durchdrungen von seiner Grösse, sie wurden verstummen und ihn vor Verehrung gar nicht nennen mogen. Vielleicht versteht man danach besser die angeßlich aberglaubliche jüdische Scheu, den Namen Gottes auszusprechen."

121. Moehlman, C. H., Op. cit.

122. Moffat, The Old Testament, New York, 1924.

123. Meek, T., The Complete Bible, Chicago, 1939.

124. Rylaarsdam, J. C., Op. cit.

125. Cassuto, U., פירוש תורה, Jerusalem, 1952.

126. Jacobson, J., אגדת התורה, Tel Aviv, 1953.

127. Junker, H., Op. cit.

A number of scholars interpret the third commandment as referring to blasphemy, thus making the term *kie* equal to *קען דיסן*. Wilson¹³¹. gives an ancient parallel to this form in the verse "O In-af serpent, who comes forth from the cemetery, I have not blasphemed against my local God;" this is taken from Egyptian literature. Gressman¹³². cites this as a possible meaning, but does not stress it. Another scholar, Holzinger, however specifically states¹³³ that this was not the meaning intended by the commandment.

Among modern Jewish commentators there are a few who prefer this explanation; among them are Weizel¹³⁴. and Weisc¹³⁵. The latter states that this Hebrew word *kie* is an abbreviation for the phrase *קען דיסן קען דיסן*; his commentary is written along mystical lines. Sorotzkin¹³⁶. also gives this interpretation..

Heinisch¹³⁷. states that the crime of blasphemy is

128. Jacob, B., Das zweite Buch der Tora Exodus übersetzt und erklärt, (manuscript microfilm), p. 821-826.
 129. Calvin, J., "The Third Commandment", Calvin's Harmony of the Four Last Books of Moses, Grand Rapids, 1950, pp. 408-410.
 130. Goethe, J. W., in Eckermann, J. P. Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens, Leipzig, vol. 1. 31.12.1823.
 131. Wilson, J. A., "The Protestation of Guiltlessness", 'The Book of the Dead', Ancient Near Eastern Texts, (Pritchard, J. editor), Princeton, 1951, p. 35.
 132. Gressmann, H., Op. cit.
 133. Holzinger, H., "Exodus", Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament, Tübingen, 1900.
 134. Weizel, K. F., 720 פ'קק, Dés, 1904.
 135. Weisc, J., 22 פ'קק, Buenos Aires, 1939.

Does this belong here or with pp. 4-11?

punishable by death as is shown by Lev. 24:11, 23, so this statement in the decalogue refers to this crime. He states that the Biblical passage indicates that the name of Yahwe means Yahwe himself; the passage specifically prohibits "profaning Yahwe's name".

There are a few sources which would interpret the term *hiv* as 'vain', but would have it refer to a specific vain usage, that of reciting a blessing in vain. This interpretation is given by R. Johanan and R. Levi¹³⁸, and by another Midrashic source¹³⁹, but it is given a place of prominence only by the Zohar¹⁴⁰ (13th century). There R. Simeon states that it is a grave sin to mention a blessing containing the name of God in a vain manner. As an example he cites the recitation of grace after a meal; this must not be done at an empty table, but a loaf of bread should be placed upon it at the conclusion of the meal. The person who has committed this great sin had better not been born at all. He further states that the name should only be utilized with prayers and benedictions, thus prohibiting all

136. Sorotzkin, Z., דברי ימינו, Jerusalem, 1953.

137. Heinisch, P., Theology of the Old Testament, Collegeville, 1950.

138. דברי ימינו.

139. דברי ימינו 612.

140. Zohar, "Jethro", part I, p. 87 B.

other employment. R. Jose states that the presence of the name in a blessing gives it significance, for the name is the source of blessing for the whole world; therefore, the Torah only mentions the name of God with the completed world. This concluding interpretation is also given by Sorotzkin.^{141.}

Several scholars discovered that there was no need to debate the question of assigning a broad or narrow meaning to the term *kie*. The problem was solved by them as they noted that the word appeared twice in the commandment; it was therefore, assigned a different meaning each time. This suggestion was already presented by the Targum Onkelos^{142.} (third century) which translated the word *kie* with *כינאן* 'vain' or 'nothing' on its first occurrence,^e and with *כיפאן*^{143.} 'false' the second time. The Talmud also uses this interpretation; as the word *kie* is used twice it must refer to *kie pavin* at one time and to *קפאן פאין* the second time. The discussion appears in passages which attempt to decide whether an earthly punishment should be meted out for this crime along with the heavenly penalty. A Midrashic source^{144.} presents this explanation also. Other Talmudic authorities^{145.} do not agree with this point of view and state that only

141. Sorotzkin, M., Op. Cit.

142. Targum Onkelos Exodus 20:7, Deuteronomy 5:11.

143. *כינאן*

144. *כיפאן*

145. *כינאן*

kie פִּטְוֵה may be derived from Ex. 20:7, while
רָפֵה פִּטְוֵה is to be taken from Lev. 19:12. Joseph
 Bekor Shor accepts this point of view¹⁴⁶.

The most famous Biblical commentator of the Middle
 Ages, Rashi (1040-1105),¹⁴⁷ accepts this dual interpretation.
 All of the commentators who accept this point of view would
 agree with Rashi that *?* is one who swears falsely
 about something which is known, as that a pillar of stone is
 made of silver; while a vain oath is the swearing without need
 about something which is known, as that a piece of wood is
 really a piece of wood. The famous Malbim, Meir Loeb b.
 Jehiel Michael (1809-1879), utilized this explanation in
 his commentary.¹⁴⁸ *יעב"ש* פ"ג.¹⁴⁹ presents a novel
 interpretation to a Talmudic passage which deals with this
 commandment; he asks why the rabbis state that the verse
 refers to *kie* רָפֵה. The word *רָפֵה* refers only to man,
 as it is only possible to make a false statement before man;
kie refers to God, as he knows all it is impossible to be
 false toward him; therefore any misuse of His name can be
 classified as *kie*.

A number of commentators were not able to make a

145. *א"ז :וּ נִיחָוֵה*.

146. Joseph Bekor Shor, *עניני עניני*, (ed. Jellinek),
 Leipzig, 1856.

147. Rashi, Exodus 20:7.

148. Malbim, *עניני עניני*,

149. *יעב"ש* פ"ג, *פ"ג*, Warsaw, 1884.

decision between the two meanings given to the term *kip*; they generally gave both interpretations and let the reader choose whichever suited him. Bahya ibn Paquda (eleventh century)¹⁵⁰. states that the commandment may have reference to false or needless swearing; he advises his readers to refrain from swearing by the name of the deity altogether. Jacob b. Abba (1194-1258)¹⁵¹. and Isaac Arama (1420-1494)¹⁵². also present both interpretations. In modern times Johlson¹⁵³. and Herxheimer¹⁵⁴. discuss both possibilities; the latter seems to conclude by favoring the explanation of false oath. Schultz¹⁵⁵., Dykes¹⁵⁶., and Broda¹⁵⁷. discuss both the narrow and broad definitions and accept neither as conclusive.

Attempts have already been made in early times to define the commandment for legal purposes; these efforts are similar to those of Rashi previously described. The *קרא לפרק'ו*¹⁵⁸. states that the *kip* *פרש'ו* is an oath which is true, but which need not have been used, as swearing that a fig is a fig. Another Midrashic source¹⁵⁹. does not give the term such narrow limitations; it would include the following: One who swears falsely concerning something which

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150. Bahya ibn Paquda, *בחי' פאקודה*, "ענין פ'ו" 1107.
151. Jacob b. Abba, *קרא לפרק'ו*, Lyck, 1866. *פרש'ו*
152. Arama, I., *קרא לפרק'ו*, Pressburg, 1849.
153. Johlson, J., *Die heilige Schriften der Israeliten*, Frankfurt M., 1831.
154. Herxheimer, S., *Pentateuch*, Bernburg, 1854.

is known to man, as that a pillar of stone is of gold; one who swears to a matter which he is not able to carry out, as that he will fly in the air. One who testifies in a court concerning something which he has not witnessed. Whenever one of these matters is carried out intentionally, the commandment is transgressed.

A more strictly legal form was given to the prohibitions included in the third commandment by Maimonides in his great code שו"ת פ' 160; a similar classification may be found in the שו"ת יורה דעה by Caro¹⁶¹. Both of these works give a definite legal status to the commandment. According to Maimonides there are four categories of

הענין: 1. Swearing concerning something which is known, that it is something else, as that a man is a woman. 2. Swearing about something which is known to be so and which does not necessitate the use of an oath, as declaring by an oath that the heaven is the heaven. 3. Swearing to void a commandment, as stating that one will not wear the Ztitzis. 4. Swearing to an action which one is not able to execute, as that of fasting thirty days, which is simply physically impossible. Maimonides further states that

155. Schultz, H., Alttestamentliche Theologie, Frankfurt a. M., 1878, p. 319.
 156. Dykes, O., The Law of the Ten Words, London, 1884, p. 73-85.
 157. Broda, H., שו"ת יורה דעה, Lemberg, 1899.
 158. שו"ת יורה דעה.
 159. שו"ת יורה דעה.
 160. Maimonides, M., שו"ת פ' 160, New York, 1945.

the *קריאת*¹⁶² may be defined as a false oath of testimony, or false swearing regarding a deposit left with a party; these are also to be included in the third commandment. He further states that although a sacrifice is to be brought as atonement for these sins, this does not clear the party of guilt; the concluding portion of the commandment indicates to him that only a heavenly punishment can mete out the ultimate punishment in spite of any penalty exacted by an earthly tribunal.

Various commentators regards this commandment in an even more serious light; they state that it ^{is} concerned with atheism. Several Midrashim¹⁶³ claim that there is a continuous chain of events which leads directly from a broken vow to the denial of the deity. Another statement carries the matter one step further and declares that one who uses a false or vain oath is similar to one who practices idolatry.¹⁶⁴ Maimonides¹⁶⁵ does not agree with this point of view and states that although at time the name may refer to the essence, the reality of God, here

161. Caro, J., *קריאת* פסוקים ופסוקים.

162. Maimonides, M., *קריאת* פסוקים ופסוקים.

163. *קריאת* פסוקים ופסוקים.

164. *קריאת* פסוקים ופסוקים.

165. Maimonides, M., *קריאת* פסוקים ופסוקים.

165. Maimonides, M., *קריאת* פסוקים ופסוקים, Vienna, 1828.

the Name alone is to be understood. Jacob b. Asher (1269-1340)¹⁶⁶. cites this among many other explanations. Isaac Arama, the noted preacher, also stresses this interpretation in his sermon on the verse¹⁶⁷. Seforno¹⁶⁸. and Jacob b. Abba¹⁶⁹. also present this point of view. Nathan b. Samuel would state the matter in a different manner¹⁷⁰.; he claims that the commandment is directed against those who declare that the creation has been in vain. They doubt the validity of the work of the deity and so would doubt God as well.

In more recent times Kalisch¹⁷¹. cites this among many other opinions; according to him and Murphy¹⁷²., this statement is on the same level of importance and has the same meaning as the previous one; a violation of this commandment is a denial of the deity. Murphy states that that the verse directs itself against pantheism, naturalism, creaturism, etc. which have appeared as superstitions and as a "philosophy falsely so called. It consists in the ascription of either of divine attributes to a creature, or of a creature attributes to God. The latter is the form chiefly contemplated in the commandment, as it is addressed to those

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166. Jacob b. Asher, שו"ת אפר"ק, Hannover, 1838.
 167. Arama, I., אמרי אדם, Pressburg, 1849.
 168. Seforno, O., שו"ת ספר אור, Czernowitz, 1858.
 169. Jacob b. Abba, שו"ת אבבא, Lyck, 1866.
 170. Nathan b. Samuel, שו"ת נחמן, Livorno, 1840.
 171. Kalisch, M., Op. cit.
 172. Murphy, J. G., Op. cit.

whose God is the Lord. It tends to atheism." Charles^{173.}
also holds this view.

Isaac Caro (1445-1520)^{174.} gave an interpretation to this commandment which would answer one of the problems of his time. The philosophical trends of that age removed God from the scene of the world and its activities, so he stated that the third commandment prohibited this type of speculation; this interpretation was given through a literal translation of the word *קֵרַן*. He also states that the verse concerns itself with false swearing as well as the utilization of the name for vain purposes. Hayyim Arye Loeb^{175.} suggests a similar explanation; he writes that men think that God is too glorious to be concerned with their actions; he appears to be raised to such heights that his providence cannot effect man. This verse was given to negate such thoughts. *אֵלֹהֵינוּ נִשְׁתַּלְתַּלְתֵּנוּ*^{176.} would also translate the word *קֵרַן* literally; he, however, comes to the conclusion that the commandment prohibits man's speculation that he might know the essence of God.

Several commentaries present novel interpretations which have gained no further adherents. A Midrash^{177.} suggests that it prohibits transgressions when one is wearing the tallis or teffilin. A Talmudic passage^{178.}

173. Charles, R. H., The Decalogue, Edinburgh, 1926, p. 89-109.

174. Caro, I., דברי יצחק, Amsterdam 1708.

175. Hayyim Arye Loeb, אורח חיים, Bialistock, 1901.

176. *אֵלֹהֵינוּ נִשְׁתַּלְתַּלְתֵּנוּ*, אורח חיים, Odessa, 1898.

in its discussion of the atonement necessary before the transgression of this commandment will be forgiven lists a number of social wrongs which it seeks to include in this verse; the connection to this passage is always derived with great exegetical care. These wrongs count among them such matters as not paying the butcher promptly, etc. Another Midrash¹⁷⁹ translates the term *שופט* as 'judge' and states that the commandment warns against taking an office if one is not qualified for it. Knoller¹⁸⁰ demonstrates through a number of Biblical verses that God and the Torah are one, so this statement does not only refer to the vain or frivolous use of the name of the deity, but also to the vain use of the Torah. Asher¹⁸¹ writes that it warns against carrying out commandments in a vain manner, that is, in any manner other than for their own sake.

All through the ages it was thought that dire punishment would afflict those who transgressed this prohibition; it was often believed that the penalty would extend beyond the immediate offender. Therefore the Book of Jubilees states that "There will be plague upon plague, and curse

177. *שופט* *הוא* *הקדוש*.

178. *שופט* *הוא* *הקדוש*.

179. *שופט* *הוא* *הקדוש*.

180. Knoller, H., *שופט* *הוא* *הקדוש*, Przemyśl, 1883.

181. Jaoc b. Asher, *שופט* *הוא* *הקדוש*.

upon curse, and every judgement and plague and curse will come (upon him) or those who profane His holy name (then) will the whole nation together be judged for all the uncleanness and this profanation of this man."¹⁸².

*not
clearly
understood*

An expression which is frequently utilized to indicate the gravity of this commandment is that the whole world shook when it was initially given to the people at Sinai. This is stated in the Tosefta¹⁸³ which adds that for all other sins the sinner alone is punished, but for this transgression the whole world suffers. A Talmudic passage¹⁸⁴ declares that punishment for all other transgressions may be suspended for two or three generations if they merit such treatment, but in the case of this one punishment is immediate. The whole family of the sinner is punished with him. This statement is also found in a Midrash¹⁸⁵. Ibn Ezra¹⁸⁶ points out that no penalties are mentioned with the commandments of the decalogue with the exception of the second and third commandment; similarly no reward is named but with the fifth commandment. The Seder Elijah Rabbah states that anyone who speaks vain or false oaths habitually will not receive eternal life and

182. Charles, R. H., "Jubilees, 30:15" The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, Oxford, 1913, vol. 2.

183. ש"ס פ"ב בבבבב .

184. ש"ס פ"ב בבבבב .

will not gain the complete kingdom of heaven.^{187.}

Among medieval exegetes, Moses Alschich (1508-1600)^{188.} declares that the whole world was established through the name, whenever the name is misused the world may therefore return to למה למה. In this way the third commandment is more severe than the previous one; this is also the reason for the trembling of the earth when the commandment was first given to Israel. Alschich includes both false and vain oaths among misemployments of the name. Solomon Ephraim b. Aaron (1550-1619) also uses this Midrash as a portion of his interpretation; he elaborates upon it and adds numerous Biblical verses as further embellishment, but little which is really different is added by him.^{189.} The commentary חומת ארץ^{190.} mentions the fact that the family of the offender is to be punished with him, but it does not include the other matters stated above. In modern times Jacob^{191.} asserts that God rules over the whole world, so that no one, Jew or non-Jew may profane His name without receiving punishment.

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185. ש"ס משה (למה למה).
186. Ibn Ezra, M., ש"ס משה.
187. למה למה.
188. Alschich, Moses, חומת ארץ, Amsterdam 1777.
189. Solomon Ephraim b. Aaron, Op cit.
190. חומת ארץ, 1803.
191. Jacob, B., Das zweite Buch der Torah Exodus...

The severity of the penalty to be inflicted upon the offender in the case of this commandment is also an indication of the seriousness with which this commandment was considered. Several Midrashic sources indicate that the sinner is free from the atoning sacrifice, but not from the lashes to be inflicted by the court.¹⁹² Another Midrash¹⁹³ states that the transgressor is to receive lashes from the earthly tribunal, but that this does not mean that atonement will be granted to him by the heavenly tribunal; the punishment of that court must be faced in the future. A Talmudic passage declares that there is a controversy between the Tanaim¹⁹⁴ as to whether ——— ? refers to all negative commandments or only to that of this verse. Generally the point of view which stated that *לֹא יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף* refers only to this commandment remained as the accepted point of view.¹⁹⁵ One statement¹⁹⁶ asserts that repentance and all that goes with it may atone for small transgressions, but not for severe ones; this commandment is included among the severe sins along with matters which require the death penalty or for which the punishment of *כִּרְיִיקוּק* is prescribed. R. Judah¹⁹⁷ however, stated that for all these crimes atonement caused them to

192. אֲשֶׁר יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף.
 193. יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף.
 194. יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף יִשָּׂא כֶסֶף.

remain pending while the Day of Atonement enabled complete atonement to be made. A Talmudic reference^{198.} states that neither repentance, nor the Day of Atonement, nor suffering alone may procure complete atonement. All of these matters together may restrain punishment while the death of the sinner will finally enable his repentance to be fully accepted. Another Talmudic passage also declares that this commandment is to be listed with the most severe offenses, those requiring the death penalty or *כרת*.^{199.} Ibn Ezra^{200.} among many other commentators also stresses the serious nature of the transgression which this commandment prohibits.

In conclusion one might state that the interpretations of this commandment fall into two categories; the broad interpretation which states that any vain usage is prohibited by it, and the narrow interpretation which generally declares that only false oaths are forbidden through it. The majority of those scholars who attempted to find the original meaning claimed that it prohibited magical uses of the name, but this is speculation with little clear proof; the two common explanations, have, however, played a part in the moral life of men through the ages. The explanations

195. ל"ב ק"ל .
 196. ל"ב ק"ל ק"ל ק"ל ק"ל .
 197. ל"ב ק"ל ק"ל ק"ל ק"ל .
 198. ל"ב ק"ל .
 199. ל"ב ק"ל .
 200. Ibn Ezra, M., Op. cit.

which cannot be classified under these headings reflect the peculiar conditions of a period of history, show unusual imagination in the commentator, but such talent might have been put to better use, or are interpretations which are so redent that they have not as yet been fully evaluated by the scholarly world. A study as this one demonstrates that originality without the tendency toward the bizarre is a rare gift.

This essay has also made the author aware of the fact that there are few modern Jewish commentators who have written extensive commentaries on entire books or series of books of the Bible. Christian commentaries representing every point of view abound, but not many Jewish works are to be found, with the exception of a few Hebrew commentaries.

Appendix

Through an error in the copying of this paper, the following interpretations which were included in the original draft of this paper were omitted:

(To be inserted on page. 28; following footnote 137.)

201.
Blank would also classify this commandment as a prohibition against blasphemy and against mentioning the name of God at all. He states that "Lev. 24:16 is an extension and a sharpening of the other laws against cursing God, and it makes it a capital offense even to mention (*שם*) the name of God. It is apparently related to the "Third commandment" Ex. 20:7 (Deut. 5:11)."

(To be inserted on page. 36; following footnote 179.)

202.
A similar statement occurs in another Midrash which states that one shall not consider oneself a pious man, if one does not hold the qualifications for piety. This is suggested as an interpretation of the third commandment.

201. Blank, S. S., "The Curse, Blasphemy, the Spell, and the Oath", Hebrew Union College Annual, Cincinnati, 1951, vol. 23, part. 1, p. 84.

202. *שם* *שם* *שם* *שם* *שם*.

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