

# 119

## MINISTRIES

*“The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below.”*

### **HaShem FAQ - Names of Other Gods – Exodus 23:13**

Have you ever heard anyone say that you are breaking Exodus 23:13 if you say, “God,” “Lord,” “Jesus,” etc.? Is that true? Are they right?

First, we would recommend our teachings:

- HaShem FAQ: Why It is OK to Say Lord
- HaShem FAQ: Why It is OK to Say God
- HaShem FAQ: Why It is OK to Say Jesus

The English words “Lord” and “God” are not the names of other gods. The transliterated name Jesus is also not the name of another god.

But here is the other problem that presents itself in attempting to understand this commandment.

So many things are named after other gods, the days of the week, the months of the year, brand names, the names of towns and many others.

Thursday is named after the god Thor.

January is named after the god Janus

Nike is the name of a god. Mars is a candy bar, and a false god.

And now we have just said many names of false gods. Are we breaking Exodus 23:13?

Let’s read Exodus 23:13

#### **Exodus 23:13**

[“Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor](#)

let it be heard on your lips.

With Exodus 23:13 in mind, can we say the names of other gods such as Molech or Ba'al,

Did we just break the Torah by breaking Exodus 23:13 again?

Let's find out...

Does, YHWH violate His own Torah? Here we have YHWH saying Molech...

#### **Leviticus 20:1-2**

The Lord (YHWH) spoke to Moses, saying, "Say to the people of Israel, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to **Molech** shall surely be put to death.

Did YHWH just sin by breaking Exodus 23:13?

There would be another problem here as well. YHWH just told Moses to repeat all of this to Israel, which would cause Moses to say Molech to Israel.

#### **Leviticus 20:1-2**

The Lord (YHWH) spoke to Moses, saying, "**Say to the people of Israel**, Any one of the people of Israel or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel who gives any of his children to **Molech** shall surely be put to death.

Did YHWH just command Moses to sin by breaking Torah in Exodus 23:13?

These are not the only verses to contend with. There are instances of YHWH and the prophets mentioning false gods all over the place.

Here are some more instances of YHWH, the prophets, or others, mentioning the names of other gods...out loud, in the presence of others...

#### **Judges 6:25**

That night the Lord (YHWH) said to him, "Take your father's bull, and the second bull seven years old, and pull down the altar of **Baal** that your father has, and cut down the **Asherah** that is beside it

#### **Judges 6:31**

But Joash said to all who stood against him, "Will you contend for **Baal**? Or will you save him? Whoever contends for him shall be put to death by morning. If he is a god, let him contend for himself, because his altar has been broken down."

#### **Ezekiel 8:14**

Then he brought me to the entrance of the north gate of the house of the Lord, and behold, there sat women weeping for **Tammuz**.

#### **Acts 19:35**

And when the town clerk had quieted the crowd, he said, "Men of Ephesus, who is there who

does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great **Artemis**, and of the sacred stone that fell from the sky?

Not only did YHWH and the prophets mention other gods by name, but sometimes, even everyday Hebrew words were, and are, also the names of other gods.

Consider the Hebrew word “*ba'al*” as an example.

The fact that the word “*ba'al*” referred to a deity did not deter people from using this same word when referring to husband 15 times in Scripture. Here is one example:

**Exodus 21:7**

They shall not marry a prostitute or a woman who has been defiled, neither shall they marry a woman divorced from her **husband** (*ba'al*), for the priest is holy to his God.

Clearly Exodus cannot mean what it appears to clearly say in the English.

What is going on?

How did ancient rabbis understand Exodus 23:13?

In the Kehati Commentary on the Mishnah this ruling is connected to Exodus 23:13. In this, they connect Exodus 23:13 to the context of not committing idolatry, to not worship other gods.

*“..e.g., he said “Konam, may all the produce in the world be (forbidden me) as a sacrifice in the name of such-and-such an idol,” or who swears in its name – i.e., he takes an oath in the name of the idol; according to another interpretation, another person prohibited him by vow for the sake of idolatry, and he fulfilled the vow (see Yad Ramah; Hameiri), transgresses a Torah prohibition – as it is written, “and make no mention of the name of other gods” (Exodus 23:13).”*

Why?

While the strict reading of the English translation could cause this confusion, the actual Hebrew is rather important to consider, as it is much more clear.

**Exodus 23:13**

“Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention (*zakar*) of the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips.

It is the Hebrew word “*zakar*” that is translated as “mention.”

Most Hebrew concordances understand “*zakar*” to mean “to remember” or “to invoke” or “to proclaim”

Other verses using the word (*zakar*) are also consistent with Hebrew concordance definitions.

**Isaiah 48:1 (NASB)**

“Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are named Israel  
And who came forth from the loins of Judah,

Who swear by the name of the Lord (YHWH)  
And **invoke** (*zakar*) the God of Israel,  
But not in truth nor in righteousness.

What does it mean to “invoke” a deity?

*call on (a deity or spirit) in prayer, as a witness, or for inspiration.*  
Dictionary.com

So, the word “zakar” does not simply mean mentioning or saying a false god...it is much more involved. As the ancient rabbis understood, it can contain a sense of worship, especially in the context of Exodus 23:13.

The same word “zakar” is used in Hosea 2:17, often translated as “*remembered*” in this case.

### **Hosea 2:17 (ESV)**

For I will remove the names of the **Baals** from her mouth, and they shall be **remembered** (*zakar*) by name no more.

It is not about just mentioning or saying a name. If it was, how would the mentioning of Baals in the Word of God itself contribute to the prophecy of them not being remembered anymore? That would not make any sense.

What YHWH is trying to say is that YHWH wants His name to be remembered (*zakar*) not that of other gods.

It is about YHWH’s power and authority. That’s what it means to be remembered. It is about the worship of YHWH.

He wants and deserves our worship, praise, sacrifices and obedience. We are to proclaim His name and ascribe our prosperity to Him and Him alone.

We are not to do the same unto other gods.

In Exodus 20:24 remembering YHWH’s name is equated to bringing sacrifices.

### **Exodus 20:24**

‘You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be **remembered** (*zakar*), I will come to you and bless you.

We are instructed to remember (*zakar*) the Sabbath day. That means we are to proclaim it and observe it. It is not about just mentioning or saying the Sabbath day.

### **Exodus 20:8**

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

The tzittzit is a reminder (*zakar*) to us to keep YHWH’s commandments...

### **Numbers 15:39–40**

And it shall be a tassel for you to look at **and remember (*zakar*)** all the commandments of the Lord (YHWH), to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to whore after. So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God.

In Deuteronomy, we are commanded to remember (*zakar*) YHWH, not forget Him and serve other gods.

### **Deuteronomy 8:18–19**

You shall **remember (*zakar*)** the Lord (YHWH) your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the Lord (YHWH) your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish.

Hopefully reviewing these scriptures is accomplishing our intent. The word “*zakar*” can be much more than just casually mentioning or saying something.

So, let’s read Exodus 23:13 including a more Hebraic understanding of the Hebrew word “*zakar*.”

### **Exodus 23:13**

“Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and (*do not remember or invoke, as in worship*) the names of other gods, nor let it be heard on your lips (*in the form of worship*).

To further illustrate this point, and using scripture to interpret scripture, this commandment not to mention the names of other gods is repeated in Joshua, within the context of worship.

### **Joshua 23:7–8**

...that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you or make mention of the names of their gods or swear by them or serve them or bow down to them, but you shall cling to the Lord (YHWH) your God just as you have done to this day.

The word “mention” was again translated from “*zakar*.” Joshua stated that we are not to do unto the gods of the nations what we are commanded to do unto YHWH, as stated in Deuteronomy 10:20-21:

### **Deuteronomy 10:20–21**

You shall fear the Lord (YHWH) your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.

What about “being heard on your lips?”

### **Exodus 23:13**

“Pay attention to all that I have said to you, and make no mention of the names of other gods, nor **let it be heard on your lips.**”

In Psalms, we read what David said about this:

### **Psalms 16:4**

The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I

will not pour out or take their names on my lips.

The primary meaning of the word “take” here is to “lift up.”

David described how the sorrows of those who run after other gods will be multiplied and how he would not pour out drink offerings of blood, nor take their names upon his lips. Once again, the context is the worship of other gods. The word “*zakar*” has a much broader meaning than just to “mention” and we are to understand it in the context it was written.

We are certainly not trying to encourage you to pronounce the names of other gods, so please do not misunderstand our intent. Our goal is to properly interpret and apply the Torah, to not break Deuteronomy 4:2 lest we be no better than the Pharisees.

We are trying to show you that it is an extremist view to teach that we are not to even mention the name of another god.

We are to fear YHWH and that will imply that we don’t talk about other gods, especially in a positive light, but a situation sometimes necessitates the saying of the name of another god, for the sake of teaching or just to function in this world.

YHWH mentioned other gods...

Moses mentioned other gods...

The prophets mentioned other gods...

Mentioning other gods is obviously ok. What we do not want to do is remember those gods in the form of worshipping them.

So many things are named after other gods, the days of the week, the months of the year, brand names, the names of towns and many others.

When we say today is Monday, we are not worshipping the moon god. We are using a term that is common and understood by society to point to a specific day.

It may have been intended as a day to the moon, but it is now used in a completely different context. The ideal would be not to use these names, and rather refer to day two when we speak of Monday. This is possible to do when we speak to other believers and it is just fine to do so, but if you speak to a colleague and want to make an appointment with him, he won’t understand you when you say you would like to make an appointment on day two.

The extremist view is always easy, as there is comfort in extremism, but the ideal is to be balanced without compromising the Torah.

The goal of this teaching was to illustrate the proper intent of Exodus 23:13. We showed glaring contradictions if one chose to interpret Exodus 23:13 according to the literal English. We also revealed how the Hebrew wording and context demonstrates that Exodus 23:13 is about not worshipping other gods.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember,

continue to test everything.

Shalom

*For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at [www.testeverything.net](http://www.testeverything.net)*

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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