

What Is in a Name Answer Key

Print out one copy for your use in reviewing the students' answers to the activity.

? **What names or places did you think of that include the el sound?** *Bethel (house of God); Peniel (face of God); Nathaniel (gift of God); Ishmael (God has heard); Israel (prince of God); etc.*

The *el* in these words is connected to various names in Scripture, but you would need to consult a reference to make sure. Just because the letters *el* occur in a Hebrew word (especially in English translations) doesn't mean it necessarily refers to God. Hagar called God *El Roi*, the God who sees, in Genesis 16:13. *El Shaddai*, Almighty God, is the name God used to refer to Himself in Genesis 17:1.

The *yah*, *jeh*, and *jah* sounds are connected to Yahweh and Jehovah as names for God. You may think of words like *hallelujah* which means "praise to God." The kings Jehoiachin and Jehoiakim, pronounced with a "y" in Hebrew, have the name of God in their own, but they rebelled against Him. Psalm 68:4 identifies Yah as a name to offer praises to.

In Exodus 20:7, God warns the Israelites to avoid using God's name in vain, or blaspheming. While there are many ways this command can be violated, one way is in using God's name in a loose way or in a way that brings reproach on the character of God. In Daniel 11:36, blasphemy is connected to exalting self or false gods above God. So, we can define blasphemy as acts or words that defame the name or character of God. *Consider reading the definition for blasphemy from the Bible dictionary you brought in or used online.*

? **How is the changing of the names of the Hebrew men blasphemous?** *Names that were intended to honor God were replaced by names to honor false gods, intending to bring reproach on God. It was believed that the Babylonian gods had conquered the God of Israel since the Israelites lost the war. Changing the names was a way to show this belief in superior gods.*

? **Let's think about some other examples of blasphemy in our culture and, possibly, in our own lives. Based on the definition of blasphemy we just used, how could the word hallelujah be used in a blasphemous way?** *Since the word is intended to offer praise to God, any time the phrase is used to recognize something that is evil or dishonoring to God would be a blasphemous use. Using the phrase in a sarcastic or ironic way could be blasphemous. Using it in a flippant way when you really did not intend to give honor or credit to God could be blasphemous. The motive for the use is important to consider, and we should be careful not to judge statements made by others.*

? **What other examples of blasphemous speech do you encounter (or commit) in our culture?** *Any vulgar phrases or curses which attach any of God's names to them could be considered blasphemous. These range from a careless use of the letters OMG in a text or Facebook post to calling God to damn someone for cutting us off in traffic. However, each of those phrases can be used appropriately to cry out to God—they aren't always blasphemous. Emphasize that the motives of the heart must be considered as we examine the words we speak.*

There are also many substitute phrases that people use in place of God's name. If you would not say "oh my God" in a casual way, then why would you say "oh my gosh" in a casual way? There are many of these substitute words that you may wish to think about and examine your heart concerning how you use them. *You may wish to draw out some examples: heck, darn, dang, geez, dadgum, gosh, etc.*

Let's consider some clear instruction from God through the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:29 and 5:3–4. *Read these two passages aloud.*

? **What examples of blasphemous actions do you encounter (or commit) in our culture?** *Any actions that a Christian commits that are contrary to the character of Jesus or clear commands of Scripture are blasphemous. From breaking the speed limit while there is a fish emblem on your bumper (or without one) to dressing immodestly to other actions that are not consistent with Scripture. All of these acts communicate the character of God to those watching and can be considered blasphemous.*