

# Joshua 23:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them:

## Analysis

**That ye come not among these nations, these that remain among you; neither make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause to swear by them, neither serve them, nor bow yourselves unto them.** Joshua issues four prohibitions governing Israel's relationship with remaining Canaanite populations. The command "come not among" (lev le-viltibole, לִבְלִתִּיבוֹא) demands separation—not isolation from all contact but avoidance of religious and social integration that compromises covenant loyalty.

The escalating prohibitions trace the path of apostasy:

1. "make mention of the name of their gods" (tazkiru be-shem eloheihem, תִּזְכְּרוּ בְּשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיהֶם)—even speaking pagan divine names invites mental familiarity
2. "cause to swear by them" (tashbiu, תִּשְׁבְּעוּ)—invoking false gods in oaths acknowledges their authority
3. "serve them" (ta'avdum, תַּעֲבֹדוּם) from avad (עָבַד), the same word for serving Yahweh—giving loyalty and worship
4. "bow yourselves" (tishtachavu, תִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ)—physical prostration in worship, complete submission.

This progression mirrors the Ten Commandments' jealous exclusivity: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

The phrase "make mention of the name" deliberately contrasts with calling on Yahweh's name (Genesis 4:26; Psalm 116:13, 17). What we speak reveals and shapes heart allegiance. Jesus taught that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). Refusing even to name false gods protects covenant purity.

## Historical Context

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Canaanite religion centered on Baal (storm/fertility god), Asherah (mother goddess), and various local deities. Worship involved ritual prostitution, child sacrifice, and sympathetic magic aimed at manipulating divine powers for agricultural and human fertility. These practices directly contradicted Yahweh's moral character and covenant demands. Israel's temptation to syncretism—combining Yahweh worship with Canaanite practices—proved overwhelming, dominating the Judges period and eventually bringing exile.

Archaeological discoveries, including the Ras Shamra texts from Ugarit (Syria, 14th-12th centuries BCE), illuminate Canaanite mythology and religious practices. These texts describe Baal's sexual exploits, violent conflicts with other deities, and seasonal death-and-resurrection cycles tied to agricultural fertility. Such mythology sacralized immorality and naturalized violence, corrupting those who embraced it.

Joshua's prohibition against even naming false gods reflects ancient Near Eastern understanding that names carried power and significance. Speaking a deity's name acknowledged its existence and potential influence. Modern parallels exist in avoiding profanity or refusing to repeat blasphemies—recognizing that speech patterns shape thought patterns, and thought patterns shape behavior.

## Related Passages

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**Ephesians 2:8** — Salvation by grace through faith

**Romans 10:9** — Confession and belief for salvation

## Study Questions

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1. What modern equivalents to "naming false gods" might Christians need to avoid—entertainment, ideologies, or cultural practices that subtly compete with Christ's lordship?
2. How does the progression from speaking about false gods to fully worshipping them parallel subtle compromises that gradually lead believers into serious sin?
3. In what areas of life might you be "coming among" the world's values in ways that threaten your distinct identity as Christ's covenant people?

## Interlinear Text

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לְבַלְתִּי H1115	בוא H935	בְּגוֹיִם H1471	הֵיאֵלָה H428	הַנִּשְׁאָרִים H7604
	That ye come	not among these nations		these that remain
הֵיאֵלָה H428	אֶתְכֶם H854	וּבִשְׁם H8034	אֱלֹהֵיהֶם H430	לֹא H3808
		of the name	of their gods	
	תִּזְכְּרוּ H2142	וְלֹא H3808	תִּשְׁבַּע יְעוֹ H7650	וְלֹא H3808
	among you neither make mention		nor cause to swear	
תַּעֲבֹד וּם H5647	וְלֹא H3808	תִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ וְ H7812	לָהֶם: H0	
by them neither serve		them nor bow		

## Additional Cross-References

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**Exodus 23:13** (References God): And in all things that I have said unto you be circumspect: and make no mention of the name of other gods, neither let it be heard out of thy mouth.

**Psalms 16:4** (References God): Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

**Jeremiah 5:7** (References God): How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses.

**Exodus 23:33** (References God): They shall not dwell in thy land, lest they make thee sin against me: for if thou serve their gods, it will surely be a snare unto thee.

**Proverbs 4:14** (Parallel theme): Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

**Ephesians 5:11** (Parallel theme): And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

**1 Corinthians 15:33** (Parallel theme): Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.

**Joshua 23:12** (Parallel theme): Else if ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations, even these that remain among you, and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you:

**Zephaniah 1:5** (Parallel theme): And them that worship the host of heaven upon the housetops; and them that worship and that swear by the LORD, and that swear by Malcham;