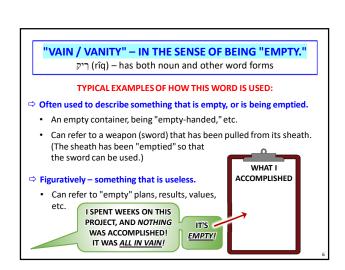


We can look deeper into the issue: Looking at the meanings of the words, examining similar passages, etc. Many helps are available that just about anyone can use – no need to know the original languages! Many are available as books or on the internet – often at low cost or even free. Many Bibles include marginal comments or verse references to related passages. Regarding the word "vain": We're going to look at Old Testament words that are often translated as "vain" or "vanity." Knowing the original languages is not a mandatory requirement for learning to follow the God of the Bible. But it may give us additional helpful insights. We will see that "vain" (as used in the Bible) can refer to things that are: ✓ empty, ✓ of limited value, ✓ worthless.



"Empty plans" against God will not succeed.

- They will achieve nothing. They are emptied of value.
- The New Testament quotes this passage (using the equivalent N.T. Greek word), in Acts 4:25-26.

Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together, against the LORD

and against His Anointed One: ... Psalm 2:1-2 (BSB); read the whole psalm!

Sometimes God's people may get discouraged.

• Emotionally, we may feel as though all our efforts have come up "empty." [We need to consider the final outcome - vs. 16-17.]

The N.T. reminds us that our labor in the Lord is "not in vain"

Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. Psalm 73:13 (NIV); read the whole psalm!

(using the equivalent N.T. Greek word), in 1 Corinthians 15:58.

"VAIN / VANITY" - LIKE A "BREATH" OR "VAPOR."

(hě·běl) – noun (occasionally a verb) הֶבֶל

TYPICAL EXAMPLES OF HOW THE WORD IS USED:

- Used to describe things that don't last, often contrasted to something that is permanent.
 - Efforts and activities that fail to have lasting value.
 - Relying on something that will prove to be unreliable or false.
 - Everything in this present life, because we lose it all when we die. (Much of it does have value; but it's only temporary, when compared to eternity.)
- ⇒ Figuratively, an idol.

• Used as a synonym for "idol," since idols are but a "puff of air," when compared to the true God. (The next Hebrew word we look at can also be figuratively used for an idol, but for a different reason.)

❖ An "idol" – a puff of air, when compared to the true God.

They have provoked My jealousy by that which is not God; they have enraged Me with their worthless id Deuteronomy 32:21a (BSB)

(KJV uses the word vanities."

This is Hebrew poetry. "That which is not God" parallels the concept 'worthless idols.'

· Idols are a mere "puff of air," when compared to the "weight" of God's glory, honor, power, greatness, majestic splendor, etc.



The book of Ecclesiastes – a "commentary" about life.

Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

Ecclesiastes 1:2 (ESV)

The word "vanity" is present about 35 times, though some translations may use the words: futility or meaningless.

- People often misunderstand the message of this book, and interpret it as "pessimistic," or "the best of human wisdom" (with God's wisdom presented in the last chapter).
- In reality, it tells us that things in this present life are temporary, and (therefore) have no lasting meaning. It is actually a positive message, because:
 - ✓ It reminds us to prepare for eternity.
 - ✓ It assures us that injustice will not last.
 - ✓ It tells us that things in this present world *can* have value (though it's only temporary).

In this life, good things and injustice are <u>both</u> temporary. Don't let either of them control your life!



We can praise God that injustice has no long-term meaning. It will not last forever!

There is something else **meaningless** that occurs on earth: the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve. This too, I say, is meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 8:14 (NIV)

We can heed God's reminder that temporary things are not to be our #1 priority!

Whoever loves money never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income.

This too is meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 5:10 (NIV)

We can praise God that it is good to enjoy life, when we can. We can do this, fully aware that we will someday die. (Other Scripture passages show us how to enjoy life in a God-honoring way.)

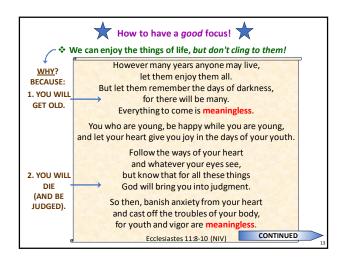
So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.

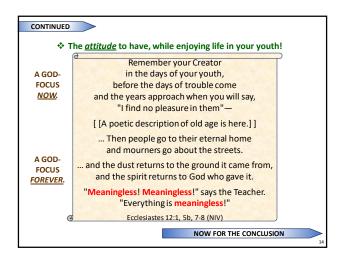
Ecclesiastes 8:15 (NIV)

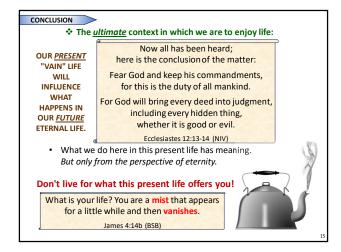
Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.

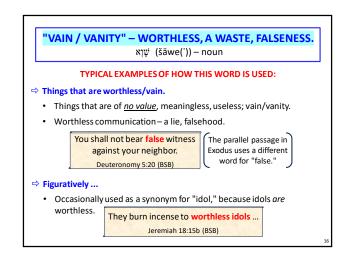
Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

Ecclesiastes 9:9-10 (NIV)









Many passages tell us something about false speaking (lies) – testimony, oaths, visions and dreams (of false prophets), etc. They speak mere words; They lie to one another; ... with false oaths they make covenants. Psalm 12:2a (BSB) Hosea 10:4a (BSB) My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and speak lying divinations. Ezekiel 13:9a (BSB) Others mention false or meaningless actions by people – values, activities, religious practices, attempts to avoid judgment, etc. Turn my eyes away from worthless things; revive me with Your word. Psalm 119:37 (BSB) In vain you [= Egypt] try many remedies, but for you there is no healing. Jeremiah 46:11b (BSB)

This is the word used to warn us to <u>not</u> "take God's name in vain" – to not use it in a meaningless way. 'You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.' Exodus 20:7 (NIV); also Deuteronomy 5:11. (Other translations: "Do not take his name in vain.") We need to realize that it doesn't tell us: "Don't ever use his name," but rather: "Just don't *misuse* it." • IF you do choose to <u>misuse</u> it ⇒ there is a consequence: When you stand before God Consequence: at the judgment day, do you Not left unpunished. want to *quarantee* that you Not considered guiltless. will be punished? Will be punished. Here's an easy way to do so!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE "LEFT UNPUNISHED" - to be considered INNOCENT?

נְקָה (nā·qā(h)) – verb (also noun and other forms)

⇒ In the Ten Commandments, this phrase is mentioned only here. But it's found in two other passages:

Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished; ...

Yet He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished; ...

Duite clearly, if you're *quilty*, God wants you to *know for certain* what to expect at the judgment: You won't remain unpunished!

Jesus can take your punishment in your place, and you can receive his righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21). But you need to be willing to humbly repent of your sin and trust God to change your heart and mind – including your attitude about using his name.

- ⇒ What other verses say about this "punishment" concept. (People don't like being punished; but there are only certain ways to avoid it.)
 - Conduct that cannot remain unpunished. There are many types, such as: adultery (Proverbs 6:29); any type of wickedness (Proverbs 11:21); pride (Proverbs 16:5); rejoicing in the misfortunes of others (Proverbs 17:5); lying (Proverbs 19:5, 9); being eager to get rich (Proverbs 28:20; see also 1 Timothy 6:9-10); etc.
 - This also applies to nations (prophetic passages about future punishment): Jeremiah 25:29; 30:11; 46:28; etc.

We're all guilty of something that deserves punishment. The only way to get out of it is to rely on God to change us.

THE RESULT?

Then I will be blameless. innocent of great transgression. Psalm 19:13b (NIV)

Don't live in denial, like Israel did: Jeremiah 2:35 (and context). It only increases your guilt.

- Some additional issues that this word group focuses on:
- People who are innocent; people who aren't.
- Injustice, especially when it involves innocent people.
- Innocent blood, especially when it's shed by wicked people.
- · Having "clean hands" i.e., innocent of wrongdoing (or else forgiven of wrongdoing).
- In this present life, we may often be discouraged (as in Psalm 73. especially v. 13). But if we focus on having "clean hands" there is a promise we can look forward to:

For Israel, this meant the temple in Jerusalem. Today, we have a much greater temple to look forward to - see Revelation 21-22.

Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?

The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.

Psalm 24:3-4 (NIV)

When we "take God's name in vain" – when we misuse it – what are we doing?

Of these 3 "vain/vanity" concepts, which applies to "taking God's name in vain"?

- We are NOT treating God's name as empty of meaning.
- We are NOT treating it as having temporary meaning or value.
- We are showing that we consider it <u>useless</u> or <u>unimportant</u>. And since God's name represents his person and power, we are showing that we consider God himself to be unimportant and powerless.

If we do this, God tells us that *punishment is guaranteed*.



Jesus Christ – and the Good News about him – is the *only* way out of our predicament.



Our MISSION!

We've learned some important things about attitude toward God and toward life:

The two are interrelated, though the concept of "vain/vanity" applies differently for each of them.

Let's make this our goal: To <u>honor</u> God (the opposite of taking his name in "vain"), in the way we live our lives in this temporary ("vain") world!

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