



5 Ways

to invoke God's name in daily life

Wherever we find ourselves in life—at home, the office, in the classroom, in the store or on a sporting field—there are small ways we can show that God is central to our lives. Share some of the ways you 'invoke the name of God' in the course of an ordinary day. Some examples from parishioners follow.

1. "Some tradesmen came to work on our house and one of them remarked on the lovely view of treetops from our kitchen window saying, 'Isn't God's creation marvellous.'"
2. "We always hold hands when we say grace at family dinner time. This is hard to do on a day when petty resentments reign; but I think it helps us to say sorry when we need to."
3. "I like to wear a religious emblem around my neck as a public sign that I believe in God. Sometimes it is even a conversation starter and a chance to share my faith with a stranger."
4. "'Why do you do this?' said the homeless man as we helped him to the outreach van for coffee and sandwiches. But before we could even think of a reply he announced, 'You do good so that someone else will believe in good.'"
5. "On the ledge above the kitchen sink we have two candles, an oil burner and a little print of Millet's *The Angelus*. It is a picture of prayer in the midst of work. After dinner my husband and I light the candles and make washing-up a reflective time."



Light of Torah
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Light of Torah

Ancient texts, through fresh eyes, alive for today.



Genesis 41:1—44:17

Miketz:
'at the end of'

Why reflect on Torah?

At Christmas time, we Christians celebrate that 'the Word became flesh, and lived among us' (John 1:14). In a fragile human body, family and cultural setting, our God came to dwell in human history.

Each time we open our bible we also make an act of faith that the Word of God 'dwells' in fragile human words; words that were first uttered upon the lips of our Jewish ancestors-in-faith... recorded and preserved through generations of faith.

Yes, God's Word comes to us humbly; and in humility we must be patient with our own awkward utterances. We need to learn how to receive God's Word and enter into loving, active conversation with our God who longs to speak with us, to be with us.

Light of Torah is a way to grow in our conversation-skills with God. It teaches us to treasure our sacred stories and storytellers, indeed to treasure the people through whom we received the scriptures: the Jewish people and their long history of biblical interpretation. Jewish insights can enrich our Christian journey as we appreciate the historical and spiritual links between the two faiths.



Torah Portion

From the Jewish calendar of Torah readings:

Genesis 41:1–44:17

The story of Joseph continues this week. In an earlier Torah portion, Joseph's dreams get him into trouble because of the envy of his brothers. In this week's portion his talent with dreams works for his benefit. Unlike the Egyptian magicians, Joseph is able to present a satisfying interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams. He wins the favor of Pharaoh, is released from prison and rises to power in the Egyptian court.

Here we look closely at the interaction between Joseph and Pharaoh in chapter 41.

Tasting Torah

Read aloud 41:14-36.

Pharaoh commands that Joseph, imprisoned in a dungeon, be brought out to interpret Pharaoh's dream. This is a critical moment for Joseph. So much is at risk! Will he find favor with Pharaoh and save his skin... or will he be returned to jail?

Can you sense the pressure of this moment? Have you ever been placed in a situation where your life, career or a relationship hung in the balance; a moment when your words and behavior could have dire consequences?

Touching Torah

Look carefully at Joseph's reply to Pharaoh in 41:16, 25-32. A repetitious theme threads its way through the text. Repetition catches the attention of traditional Jewish interpreters. In this case it leads some commentators to conclude that this is a fine moment in Joseph's life. Why? Because he stands in the midst of an antagonistic, pagan environment and courageously invokes the name of God. Can you pick the repetition?

Verse 16: "Not I," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "*God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer.*"

Verse 26 Joseph says: "*God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is going to do.*"

Verse 28: "*God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is going to do.*"

Verse 32: "...the event is *already determined by God*, and *God will shortly bring it about.*"

Clearly for Joseph, God is active and centre-stage. God is the one who *does*, who *reveals*, who *determines* and who *brings to pass*.

Depthing Torah

But is Joseph displaying his own robust faith or simply being a smart strategist? If we look back to last week's Torah portion we find our thread of repetition in other situations as well. To his master's wife who tries to seduce him Joseph says: "How could I do anything so wicked, and *sin against God?*" (39:9). And to his fellow prisoners who are troubled by their dreams he says, "Are not interpretations *God's business?*" (40:8). Joseph is a God-fearing Israelite, who chooses to openly proclaim the God of his people in the presence of Pharaoh.

Fortunately for Joseph, his reply meets with Pharaoh's favor ("Can we find anyone else endowed with the spirit of God, like him?" 41:38). It even brings Pharaoh to a certain recognition of the God of Israel, for he now approaches Joseph not simply as an expert on dreams but as a collaborator with God. ("Since God has given you knowledge of all this..." 41:39). The king of Egypt for the first time defers to the King of kings.

Doing Torah

Think about it: How difficult is it to bear witness to your faith, to your church, to be true to yourself, in a potentially hostile environment? Share an experience where you were faced with a 'Joseph before Pharaoh' moment.

What are some of the ordinary ways you 'invoke the name of God' in your daily life? (Refer to back page.)



Faith & life

For many a believer the cost of invoking God's name has been death. Said one priest appointed to a poor mountain village in South America vulnerable to terrorist attacks:

"I am no hero. I really don't want to die, not even for the Gospel. Trying to live for it is okay, but I'm not too pushed about dying for it, at least not for quite a while yet. That is the prayer I make to the Lord every day..."

So why does he stay in such a dangerous place when he could ask his superiors to move him?

"I am a willing member of a religious congregation that continually restates its solidarity with people in their suffering."

Bibliography: Leibowitz, *New Studies in Genesis* (NY: Lambda.); Goldstein, ed., *The Women's Torah Commentary* (Woodstock, 2000). Scripture: NJB.