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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: Why It’s Okay to Say “God”

There’s a growing movement of believers seeking to return to the roots of their faith. They are seeing the value in YHWH’s commandments contained in the Torah, such as the Sabbath, feasts, and dietary instructions. They are seeking to know the Messiah in His historical context rather than reading their later denominational conceptions of Him into the Scriptures. They are even using the original Hebrew names for Jesus and the God of Israel—That is, Yeshua and YHWH.

These are all great things that we of course encourage believers to pursue. However, on the fringes of this growing movement are some strange ideas that are frankly unbiblical.

One of these ideas is that we shouldn’t say the word “God.”

The logic for this idea is similar to that of those who claim that we shouldn’t say the word “Lord,” which we address in our teaching, [Why It’s Okay to Say Lord](#). It is suggested that the word “God” is connected to the Canaanite deity, Gad. Therefore, when we say “God,” we are actually calling YHWH a “pagan name.”

One website that advocates for not using the word “God” even goes so far to argue that prayers said using the name God are “useless” and that YHWH doesn’t answer them. They also assert that saying “God” defiles YHWH’s name. [1]

These are quite serious charges. But like the claim that we shouldn’t say “Lord,” when we examine the logic of this claim and test it to Scripture, we can clearly see that it is flawed.

Before we begin, we want to recommend that you watch our teaching [HaShem Part 1 – What’s In A Name?](#), in which we unpack the meaning behind the commandment to not take YHWH’s name in vain.

The first thing we need to realize is that, while it’s true that YHWH is the name of our Father in heaven, He also has many other names and titles in the Scriptures. In the *TANAKH*—that is, the Old Testament—one of the most frequent titles used to refer to YHWH is *Elohim*, which is a word that conveys the idea of strength of power. This is the name used in the first verse of the Bible:

Genesis 1:1

“In the beginning, God [*Elohim*] created the heavens and the earth.”

Sometimes *Elohim* is shortened to *El* and used as part of a longer name, such as *El Shaddai*. In either case, *Elohim* and *El* are translated as “God.”

According to Merriam-Webster, God is defined as: “The Being perfect in power, wisdom, and goodness who is worshipped as creator and ruler of the universe.” Based on its definition, “God” is a fitting English word for *Elohim* as it concerns YHWH, and perhaps the only word that could be used.

So what’s the problem? The objection from those who oppose the word “God” is simply that it sounds too much like the word “Gad,” the Canaanite deity. This pagan god is actually mentioned in Isaiah:

Isaiah 65:11

“But you are those who forsake the Lord, Who forget my holy mountain, Who prepare a table for Gad, and who furnish a drink offering for Meni.

It is argued that since the English word “God” sounds similar to the Hebrew “Gad,” when we use the word “God” in reference to YHWH, we are actually calling YHWH by the name of a pagan deity! But as Daniel Botkin observes in his article, *Linguistic Superstition and the Sacred Name Movement*, this type of thinking is greatly flawed:

“SN [Sacred Name] believers imagine a linguistic connection between the English *God* and Hebrew *Gad* (“luck, fortune”). Because the pronunciations of these two words are very similar, SN believers claim that “God” is the god of good luck. However, the fact that two words in two different languages sound the same is not proof that the two words are cognates. On the contrary, such is usually not the case. For example, Spanish *con* (“with”) has no connection to English *cone*; German *nein* (“no”) has not connection to English *nine*; Hebrew *ki* (“because”) has no connection to English *key*; Yiddish *teler* (“plate”) has no connection to English *teller*; Russian *tut* (“here”) has no connection to English *toot*, etc., etc.

Furthermore, if YHWH was so offended by words that sound like “God,” there wouldn’t be a tribe of Israel by that name Gad.

Truly, if we take the logic of those who oppose the word “God” to its extreme conclusion, we wouldn’t be able to say anything. If you really want to, you can find something objectionable about any word in any language.

Like we mentioned at the beginning of this teaching, most people who advocate for these ideas are the same people who promote the original Hebrew name for our Messiah. That’s fine. But if we applied their logic to its ultimate end result, we wouldn’t even be able to say that name. For example, the middle of the name Yeshua sounds like “shoe.” Therefore, if you use the name Yeshua, you are calling our Messiah a shoe! How disrespectful!

As you can see, this can be taken in all kinds of crazy directions.

The English word “God” is simply the word used for the Hebrew *Elohim* in reference to YHWH in the Bible. The translators chose that word because it best reflects the meaning of the Hebrew. The fact that

some words sound similar to words in other languages doesn't mean that those words are somehow connected. Some choose to replace God in the Scriptures and say the original Hebrew of El or Elohim. That is just fine as well. We do the same in some of our teachings, particularly if we know the audience for a teaching likely already understands some Hebrew concepts. Our point is that one does not have to say Elohim in place of God, nor should one feel compelled to. It's okay to say "God."

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

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

[1] Heaven Awaits, "God, who is Gawd, who is Gad." www.heavenawaits.wordpress.com

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