

GOD, OR G-D?

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“Names Above All Names”

Written By
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Question: Why do Orthodox Jews substitute G-D, for GOD?

Answer: In our local assembly is a person most everyone identifies as "Jewish". He wears a salt and pepper beard and, on special occasions, the small cap you commonly see worn by Jews. He also has a prayer cloth he sometimes brings to the services as well and he carries a Jewish Bible. Understandably, we look to him for information on Jewish history as depicted in the Old Testament.

One day I asked, "Brother, are you a true Israelite?"

"No." he replied. "I am not an Israelite, but I love Israel and I identify with them".

That was all fine and good, for we, the true Church of Jesus Christ bless Israel with our prayers, and many other forms of support. We are to pray for the "Peace of Jerusalem" on a daily basis, and one day Jesus will bring the entire nation of Israel back to Him, "...and they will mourn because of Him."

Curiously, this brother spells God...G-d, and he spells Lord... L-rd in all his writings. I often wondered exactly why and his explanation was basically, "That's the way Jews do it."

Since that conversation I've come to learn the practice is founded, not in Scripture, but in tradition. I've told you this much because I believe many modern day Christians, including those who are Messianic, have misunderstood just who they are in Jesus Christ and Who He is in them. Jesus does not want us to follow after the traditions of men, but rather be filled with the Spirit and manifest His perfect will in our daily lives.

Should we write God, G-D? I submit to you the following lesson taken from facts in the Encyclopaedia Judaica and Jewish history and you can decide for yourself.

HIS name was Hananiah ben Teradion. He was a Jewish scholar of the second century C.E., and he was known for holding open meetings where he taught from the Sefer Torah, a scroll containing the first five books of the Bible. Ben Teradion was also known for using the personal name of God and teaching it to others. Considering that the first five books of the Bible contain the name of God more than 1,800 times, how could he teach the Torah without teaching about God's name?

Ben Teradion's day, however, was a dangerous time for Jewish scholars. According to Jewish historians, the Roman emperor had made it illegal under penalty of death to teach or practice Judaism. Eventually, the Romans arrested Ben Teradion. At his arrest he was holding a copy of the Sefer Torah. When responding to his accusers, he candidly admitted in teaching the Bible, he was

merely obeying a divine command. Still, he received the death sentence.

On the day of his execution, Ben Teradion was wrapped in the very scroll of the Bible he was holding when arrested. Then he was burned at the stake. The Encyclopaedia Judaica says "in order to prolong his agony tufts of wool soaked in water were placed over his heart so that he should not die quickly." As part of his punishment, his wife was executed and his daughter sold to a brothel.

Although the Romans were responsible for this brutal execution of Ben Teradion, the Talmud (The Talmud is a compilation of ancient Jewish tradition and is regarded as one of the most sacred and influential written works of the Jewish religion.) states "the punishment of being burnt came upon him because he pronounced the Name in its full spelling." Yes, to the Jews, pronouncing the personal name of God was indeed a serious transgression.

The Third Commandment

Evidently, during the first and second centuries C.E., a superstition regarding the use of God's name took hold among the Jews. The Mishnah (a collection of rabbinic commentaries that became the foundation of the Talmud) states "one who pronounces the divine name as it is spelt" has no portion in the future earthly Paradise promised by God.

What was the origin of such a prohibition? Some claim the Jews considered the name of God too sacred for imperfect humans to pronounce. Eventually, there was a hesitancy even to write the name. According to one source, that fear arose because of a concern that the document in which the name was written might later end up in the trash, resulting in a desecration of the divine name.

The Encyclopaedia Judaica says "the avoidance of pronouncing the name YHWH ... was caused by a misunderstanding of the Third Commandment." The third of the Ten Commandments given by God to the Israelites states: "You must not take up the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain." (Exodus 20:7) Hence, God's decree against the improper use of his name was twisted into a superstition...a superstition based solidly on fear.

Surely, no one today claims that God would have someone burned at the stake for pronouncing the divine name! Yet, Jewish superstitions regarding God's personal name still survive. Many continue to refer to the Tetragrammaton as the "Ineffable Name" and the "Unutterable Name." In some circles all references to God are intentionally mispronounced to avoid violating the tradition. For example, Jah, or Yah, an abbreviation for God's personal name, is pronounced Kah. Hallelujah is pronounced Hallelukah. Some even avoid writing out the term "God," substituting a dash for one or more letters. For instance, when they wish to write the English word "God," they actually write "G-d; and Lord...L-rd."

A Practice in Conflict With God's Will

The widespread failure to use God's name is based strictly on human tradition and not on Bible teachings. "Nothing in the Torah prohibits a person from pronouncing the Name of God. Indeed, it is evident from scripture that God's Name was pronounced routinely," explains Jewish researcher Tracey R. Rich, author of the Internet site Judaism 101. Yes, in Bible times God's worshipers used his name.

Clearly, God's name is above all names. There is none like Him, nor will ever be. Knowing Him and having a close relationship with Him can be our first step in accepting His inspired and warm invitation: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you" (James 4:8).

Who is God? Let us count the names for you: *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever."* (Isaiah 9:6-7)

NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

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The name of Jesus is the name above all names because it is the only name that leads men to God. It is the name above all names because it is the only name that allows a human being not only to approach God but to partake of the grace, mercy love, power and benefits of God. There is only one name that makes satan bow and tremble. There is only one name that makes the principles and powers fall on their knees. You can wave the name of any religious denomination in the devil's face and he will walk up and spit at it. But if you will raise the name of Jesus, every principality and power and rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places, every seat of government of satan will fall and crumble to the earth..

In Genesis, He is the Seed of the Woman.

In Exodus, He is the Passover Lamb.

In leviticus, He is our High Priest.

In Numbers, He is the Pillar of Cloud by day and Pillar of Fire by night.

In Deuteronomy, He is the Prophet like unto Moses.

In Joshua, He is our Judge and Lawgiver.

In Ruth, He is our Kinsman Redeemer.

In I and II Samuel, He is our Trusted Prophet.

In Kings and Chronicles, He is our Reigning King.

In Ezra, He is the Faithful Scribe.

In Nehemiah, He is the Rebuilder of the Broken Down Walls of our Life.

In Esther, He is our Mordecai.

In Job, He is our Ever-Living Redeemer, "For I know my redeemer liveth."

"WHO IS THIS FOURTH MAN?"

In Psalms, He is our Shepherd.

In Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, He is our Wisdom.

In the Song of Solomon, He is our Lover and Bridegroom.

In Isaiah, He is the Prince of Peace.

In Jeremiah, He is the Righteous Branch.

In Lamentations, He is our Weeping Prophet.

In Ezekiel, He is the wonderful Four-Faced Man.

In Daniel, The Fourth Man in "Life's Fiery Furnaces."

"WHO IS THIS FOURTH MAN?"

In Hosea, He is the Faithful Husband, "forever wed to the backslider."

In Joel, He is the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost and Fire.

In Amos, He is our Burden-Bearer.

In Obadiah, He is the Mighty to Save.

In Jonah, He is our Great Foreign Missionary.

In Micah, He is the Messenger of Beautiful Feet.

In Nahum, He is the Avenger of God's Elect.

In Habakkuk, He's God's Evangelist, crying, "Revive Thy Works in the midst of the years."

In Zephaniah, He is our Saviour.

In Haggai, He is the Restorer of God's Lost Heritage.

In Zechariah, He is the Fountain opened up in the House of David for Sin and uncleanness.

In Malachi, He is the Son of Righteousness, rising with healing in His wings.

"WHO IS THIS FOURTH MAN?"

In Matthew, He is the Messiah.

In Mark, He is the Wonder-Worker.

In Luke, He is the Son of Man.

In John, He is the Son of God.

In Acts, He is the Holy Ghost.

In Romans, He is our Justifier.

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In I and II Corinthians, He is our Sanctifier.

In Galatians, He is our Redeemer from the Curse of the Law.

In Ephesians, He is the Christ of Unsearchable Riches.

In Philippians, He is the God Who supplies all our needs.

In Colossians, He is the Fulness of the Godhead Bodily.

"WHO IS THIS FOURTH MAN?"

In I and II Timothy, He is our Mediator between God and Man.

In Titus, He is our Faithful Pastor.

In Philemon, He is a Friend that Sticketh Closer than a Brother.

In Hebrews, He is the Blood of the Everlasting Covenant.

In James, He is our Great Physician, "The prayer of faith shall save the sick."

In I and II Peter, He is our Chief Shepherd Who shall soon appear with a Crown of Unfading Glory.

In I, II, and III John, He is love.

In Jude, He is The Lord coming with Ten Thousands of His Saints, and...

In Revelation, He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

He is Abel's Sacrifice, Noah's Rainbow, Abraham's Ram, Isaac's Wells, Jacob's Scepters, Balaam's Shiloh, Moses' Rod, Joshua's Sun and Moon that stood still, Elijah's Mantle, Elisha's Staff, Gideon's Fleece, Samuel's Horn of Oil, David's Slingshot, Isaiah's Fig Poltice, Hezekiah's Sun Dial, Daniel's Visions, Amos' Burden, and Malachi's Sun of Righteousness.

He is a Father to the orphan, husband to the widow. To the traveler in the night He is the Bright and Morning Star. To those who walk in the lonesome valley, He is the Lily of the Valley, the Rose of

Sharon, and the Honey in the Rock.

He is the Brightness of God's Glory, the Express Image of His Person, the King of Glory, the Pearl of Great Price, the Rock in the Weary Land, the Cup that runneth over, the Rod and the Staff that comforts..and the Government of our life is upon His shoulders.

He is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of the Living God, my Saviour, My companion, my Lord and my King.

PRAISE BE UNTO THY NAME!

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.."
(Jer. 29:11)