

Is 'ELOHIM' A Pagan Title?

The Hebrews referred to Yahweh as El. The Canaanites did the same to their mighty one. So who has rights to it – Yahweh or an idol?

It is no secret that the Sacred Name Yahweh has been disguised, supplanted, and removed from our English Bibles. This gross mistake lies with the translators who through ignorance or by design substituted *Kurios* and *Theos* for Yahweh's Name in the Greek texts.

They also translated the Hebrew titles "El" and "Elohim" to English as "god" and "God." Some believe that one must not use the terms El and Elohim in reference to the Heavenly Majesty because they are considered pagan.

But is the Hebrew word "El" or its plural "Elohim" so evil and wrong that we are condemned for employing it as a title to refer to Yahweh? If so, then why does the first verse in the oldest Hebrew manuscripts available refer to our Creator as "Elohim"? *In the beginning G-d* (myhla = Elohim) *created the heaven and the earth*, Genesis 1:1.

'Elohim' A Word Given by Yahweh

If Yahweh refers to Himself as Elohim in the very Book He inspired Moses to write, then is not Elohim a term sanctioned by Yahweh Himself? If the inspired texts – breathed from Yahweh's very own mouth – occasionally refer to Yahweh as "Elohim" (meaning "Mighty One"), how can it be wrong for us to refer to Yahweh as an Elohim?

How can one arrive, then, at such an absurd conclusion that it is wrong to use "Elohim"? One writer who does just that, appeals to the *Encyclopedia Judaica* to show that among the Canaanites, "El and Elyon" were originally distinct deities. From this he promotes a delusion, building a totally groundless case against using Elohim. The gist of his argument is simply that certain words like El and Elohim were used by pagans and then incorporated into the Hebrew language from the Canaanites.

This notion ASSUMES that the Canaanite language had certain words that the Hebrews later borrowed and integrated into their worship. It PRESUMES that El and Elohim are such secondhand terms. But are they?

The writer in question leaps to the erroneous conclusion that the "Canaanite" terms El and Elohim were accepted into the Hebrew language many years **after** the writings of the Holy Scriptures, basing his contention on Isaiah 19:18, which says, *In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to Yahweh of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction*. This, however, is a prophetic verse, referring to the FUTURE conversion of Egypt – with its people to speak Hebrew.

(Hebrew was called the "language of Canaan" because of all the Hebrew-speaking Israelites who settled in Canaan, Israel's Promised Land, as one authority notes.) This same writer has produced a Bible that changes Genesis 1:1, which was inspired by Yahweh to read, "In the beginning Elohim (plural) made..." The writer's new version reads, "In the beginning Yahweh made..." In the ancient text Yahweh's Name first appears a whole chapter later – Genesis 2:4. This man's version of the Bible violates the Scriptures by deliberately mistranslating "Elohim" to read "Yahweh" in order to support a false doctrine against the use of "Elohim." When he does use "el" he uses a "y" for the "e" and ends up with "yl."

Again, he does violence to the Hebrew, in essence substituting a *yod* (י) for the *aleph* (א) in "elohim," where no *yod* existed before. The pronunciation remains the same, however, and the word is virtually still the same. The folly of this is similar to the mistaken notion that capitalizing

the mere title "god" somehow puts it into the realm of a personal Name for Yahweh. God and god sound the same. But the word remains just a title. Similarly, whether you say "Israel" or "Israyl," you are still saying "el."

The Hebrews Spoke...Well, Hebrew!

Think a minute. What language did the Hebrews speak before coming into the Promised Land? It was Hebrew, not Canaanite! Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible BEFORE Israel even approached the Promised Land of Canaan because he died before Joshua led Israel in (Josh. 1:2). Moses was barred from entering, and therefore could not have been influenced by the Canaanites when he used the Hebrew terms El and Elohim in the Torah.

In fact, it was Yahweh Himself who inspired him to use El and Elohim. The Canaanites later seized the titles El and Elohim from the Hebrews, who used them first, and called their own deities by the titles El and Elohim.

Now does taking a word that is from the start right, good, and proper, then perverting it and making it a common thing — does that make the word itself sinful? Does not man pervert, besmirch, smear, defoul, corrupt, and tarnish EVERY good thing he touches?

To take a title and apply this title to a pagan deity does not of itself make the title sinful. Man defiles virtually all that is good. Given the chance he will even corrupt Yahweh's own Name! Would that mean we should not call on Yahweh by His Name? Does applying the term "Sabbath" to Sunday "dirty" the seventh-day Sabbath?

Just because some have misused Scripture to uphold false worship does not mean that we throw the Scriptures out! The same holds true for "El," "Eloah," and "Elohim." Yahweh Himself used or influenced writers to use elohim in reference to pagan "deities," (Exod. 12:12, 20:3; Lev. 19:4). Yet, He still sanctifies the title for Himself. If it is okay with Him, it has to be acceptable for our use.

Oldest Hebrew Texts Use El, Elohim

Clearly, Yahweh inspired the use of El and Elohim, therefore, these titles are NOT borrowed from pagan peoples.

Hebrew was the language spoken by Yahweh Himself. The Hebrew terms found in the Bible show that it is still the same basic tongue used by Moses and the patriarchs down through history.

The Dead Sea Scrolls are the oldest Biblical manuscript texts in existence today. In his book, *The Temple Scroll*, Vol. 2, editor Yigael Yadin reconstructs the Book of Deuteronomy from the Scrolls' Hebrew text. Throughout this Deuteronomic Hebrew we find the word Elohim used. Remember, the Scrolls are the OLDEST extant Bible manuscripts and they use El and Elohim (for several examples, see Yadin's *The Temple Scroll*, Column LIV, Deut. 13:3, p.401).

So-called higher criticism suggests that Scripture originated from various source manuscripts like the J source, E source, and P source. Unlike the others, the J source "traced back the Name of Yahweh to the dim past," notes the *Anchor Bible* — implying that it is a more faithful rendition. Significantly, this reference also notes, "There is of course, nothing new in J's use of Elohim." (*Genesis*, Vol. 1, p.37).

No evidence exists that any terms other than El and Elohim were used for "mighty one(s)" in the original Scriptures.

We prefer the Hebrew titles El, Eloah, and Elohim over "G-d" as a reminder that we worship the Mighty One of the Hebrews — and we have a part in similar promises He made to them.

'El' in Names of Patriarchs and the Foremost Angelic Beings

Because the oldest Scriptures are in Hebrew, we must conclude that the Hebrew language was first spoken by the Creator when He began His work of creation. Hebrew was therefore also the first language spoken by mankind.

The names "Adam" and "Eve" as well as others in Genesis are decidedly Hebrew names. And so are "EliYah, Eliezer, Israel, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel, and many more that contain the Hebrew **EL**. If El is a pagan term, why is it found in the names of these and many other righteous men and in the names of the great archangel Michael (a name meaning, "who is like El") and Gabriel ("man of El")?

"El" could not have come from paganism if it is found in the names of angelic beings who existed BEFORE the world was.

Moses is credited with writing the first five books of the Bible. These all have been recorded for us in Hebrew. Names of places and expressions are Hebrew, clearly revealing a Hebrew source. Many of these employ "el."

The Bible plainly demonstrates that Hebrew was the language of the heavenly messengers. Whenever celestial beings spoke to mankind, it was to those familiar with Hebrew. Angels did not speak Canaanite, Chinese, Greek, Latin or English. They spoke to those humans who knew and understood Hebrew. Therefore, when they spoke of the Father or the Son, they used the Hebrew names Yahweh and Yahshua.

Hebrew, the Mother Tongue

McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature comments on the Shemitic (Semitic) languages: "The Hebrew language takes its name from Abraham's descendants, the Israelites, who are ethnographically called Hebrew..."

"In the Old Testament it is poetically called the language of Canaan, Isaiah 19:18, emphatically the language of the holy land consecrated to Yahweh as contrasted with that of the profane Egypt. In its earliest written state it exhibits in the writings of Moses a perfection of structure which was never surpassed."

This commentary states that the descendants of Shem indeed spoke Hebrew and other Semitic languages, of which they list 14 primitive dialects. A number of respected scholars assert that Hebrew is the mother of all languages, including Canaanite.

From Girdlestone's *Old Testament Synonyms* we learn, "The Hebrew language, though poor in some respects, e.g. in tenses, is rich in others; and probably no better language could have been selected for the purpose of preparing the way for [Messiah]," p.6.

Genesis 1:28 records the first spoken command given to mankind. *And Elohim blessed them, and Elohim said unto them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."* Yahweh communicated with Adam and Eve in Hebrew.

Many linguistic scholars agree that Hebrew is the basic language from which all others are derived. Isaac Mozeson's comprehensive book, *The Word*, goes into detail showing that Hebrew is the ultimate source of English. Joseph T. Shipley, author of *The Dictionary of Word Origins*, says of Mozeson's comprehensive study, "This work is a challenge to linguists...It calls for a re-examination of our etymologies."

Angels Spoke Hebrew

In examining the New Testament, we find again that whenever anyone was spoken to from the heavens, it was always in the Hebrew tongue.

In Luke chapter 1 we read of the priest Zacharias (Zachariah) performing his duties in the Temple. The angel of Yahweh appeared to him and related how Elizabeth ("El of the oath") was

soon to have a son who would be called John. Certainly a priest of the course of *Abiyah* would be addressed in his native Hebrew tongue! Later we learn that the virgin Miriam was also visited by Gabriel ("man of El") who proclaimed the soon-coming birth of Yahshua the Messiah.

Both Mary and Joseph were descended from the lineage of King David, the ruler of Israel of the tribe of Judah. We read in chapter two of Luke of Judea shepherds watching their flock by night when the celestial being came to them announcing the birth of the Redeemer of Israel. The language used to communicate was understandable to these uneducated, pastoral, Hebrew-speaking people.

Resurrected Messiah Spoke Hebrew

Acts 9 tells that the Apostle Paul was struck down on the Damascus road. Recounting this experience to King Agrippa (Acts 26:12-14), Paul says the voice that spoke to him from heaven did so in the Hebrew tongue, asking, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?" This was after Yahshua's death and resurrection. Yahshua told us that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob would be in the Kingdom (Matt. 8:11).

All of those resurrected people will be brought back to life in a country that even now is speaking Hebrew as its national language.

The Pure Language

It is at this time that Yahshua commences to take charge of world affairs and will rule with a rod of iron. He will set up His rule at Jerusalem and it will continue to expand until it eventually encompasses the world. *For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem, Micah 4:2. For then will I turn to the people a pure language [Hebrew], that they may all call upon the name of Yahweh, to serve Him with one consent, Zephaniah 3:9.*

All of those who will be in the Millennial rule will be speaking Hebrew and will be calling upon the personal, revealed Name of Yahweh and His dear Son, Yahshua.

To teach that the Hebrew nouns El and Elohim derive from paganism disregards the obvious fact that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew — the original language! And we are introduced to Yahweh's truth through the Hebrew language of the Old Testament, which uses the Hebrew terms El and Elohim abundantly.

When making His Covenant with His people, Yahweh begins by introducing Himself, "I, Yahweh, am your Elohim which have brought you out of the land of Egypt..." Now, If Yahweh refers to Himself as Yahweh your "Elohim," certainly we can boldly say, "Yahweh is my Elohim."

When hanging on the tree, our dying Savior cried out, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabbachthani," which meant, "My El, My El, why have you forsaken me?" The Hebrew-To-Greek-To-English translation preserves His words through TRANSLITERATION, proving that our own Savior Himself used the title El! Transliteration is the bringing of exact word sounds across language barriers.

Both El and Elohim are solid Hebrew words, originating from Yahweh's own mouth. If He inspired their use, and His Son used them, so can and so should we!

For additional information on the Heavenly Father's revealed, personal Name, read the ministudy, *Is His Name Jehovah or Yahweh?*

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