

The Cambrian Peshar

A Voice of the Desposyni to the Dispersion

Peshar for the Feast of the Octave

January 1, 2024

Beloved Friends:

THE SHEMA OF ISRAEL

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. (Jesus, Mark 12:29 Gr. NT)

Hear, O Israel, Yehowaha our Elohim is one Yehowaha. (cf. Deuternomy 6:4 Heb.)

*Hear, O Prince of El, The Infinite Yah, our polytheon, is a singular Infinite Being.
(Targumist/Desposynic)*

On the Meaning of "God" in the Original Languages

It must first be understood that the words which we ascribe to deity in the classical languages were never used to describe an infinite being by the ancients. "Theos" descends to us from the Greek language and was always used by the Greeks as a word to describe a member of their pantheon in a polytheistic system. Although enjoying supernatural powers, there is no hint that these beings - at least during the "classical" period of the poets (e.g. Homer) - enjoyed infinite attributes unique to the deity of Judaic and Christian theology.

As for the Latin, by the time it became the *lingua franca* of theological discourse during the Middle Ages, "deus" had been defined by Church dogma. And the same can

be said of the Northern European languages. Upon their conversion to Christianity, the Anglo-Saxons' "God" and German, "Gott," were redefined to follow the same scholastic tradition.

While Latin is the language of the transmission of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek are the languages of its composition. The Hebrew word "El" and its plural, "Elohim," is the word for "God" in the Older Testament. Like "Theos", it too on occasion is applied to finite beings, including men and angels. The very First of the Ten Commandments presupposes such: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3, KJV).

This use of "El" may come as a surprise to some churchmen, but anyone familiar with Near Eastern archaeology should know that the use of "El" - certainly in the dominant Canaanite and Mesopotamian cultures which predate any proto-Hebraic one - referenced a similar pantheon as did the Greeks. The works of Dr. Michael Heiser on the "Divine Council" (e.g. *Reversing Herman; The Bible Unfiltered*, et al), may be consulted on this point. Although he painstakingly tries to draw a distinction between the raw polytheism of the Canaanites, for example, and contrasts it with the proto-monotheism of the Biblical Patriarchs such as Abraham, the fact remains that the use of this nomenclature, left to itself, does not support a doctrine of an infinite being in its etymology. When the Patriarchs used the term, they plainly used it as did their contemporaries to include less than infinite beings.

[Dr. Heiser is a scholar of some controversy and I do not necessarily embrace his "ghost and goblin" approach to the spiritual realm. However, as a master of Semitic languages, he successfully discredited the formidable Zachariah Sitchen and for that achievement alone must be respected.]

Supernatural or not, infinite or not - in all cases, ascribing someone with the name of "El" meant that such a being was a legitimate object of homage, worship, and certainly obedience (more below).

It does no good to argue, as some have done, that the Jews clarified the monotheistic position during the Intertestamental Period. Making their ancestors, such as Abraham, to match their strict "monistic" monotheism does not add to our understanding. Certainly for Christians, we cannot follow such revisionism because Jesus Himself used the terms in reference to mortal men (see below). Consequently, we cannot use "El" or "Theos" in this way.

The Ineffable Name

In formal logic, we know things by the summation of their attributes. We assign a name to something when we see the evidence of unique attributes. Through the identification of attributes, we can distinguish between a "cow," an "insect," and a "man." A cow does not share in all the same attributes as an insect. An insect may have legs as does the cow, but a cow has other attributes which are unique to mammals, for example. Likewise, man is a mammal, but because he is a "sentient" being, that is an important attribute which separates him from the cow.

We discover that Adam "named" the animals in the Creation Story of Genesis. Presumably, he was able to observe the appearance and behavior of these creatures and assign a name unique to the species which they represented.

As for a being which we call "God," it is entirely true that an infinite being can be called "God," just as a man can be called a mammal. Such an infinite being would certainly be an "El" or a "Theos," but He would have to be more than that. Those terms refer to a limited quality of attributes which can be ascribed to Him but also to finite beings, such as men and angels. As an infinite being, He will have others and their magnitude, of course, would be without limit.

Because a finite being can also be called an "El" or a "Theos" - even if by our understanding they may exhibit supernatural abilities (i.e. angels) - it remains that in the biblical languages, these are not the words by which an infinite being can be known. We surmise, that as the serpent tempted Eve - "Ye shall be as gods (elohim), knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5) - that "El" and "Theos" refer to beings which possess a greater wisdom and moral power, and because of that, they enjoy a moral and judicial exaltation. Theologians believe that moral awareness or discretion is what is being alluded to in this story and is expressed by such terms as "free will" and "moral agency." Finite beings, such as men and angels, appear to be endowed with the capacity for moral choice, and in this limited sense, can be called "gods." Beings which are not "gods" - who do not possess this superior wisdom and moral autonomy - are subservient humans who must defer to those of the greater power.

Fortunately, biblical revelation provides for us a word, or a name, by the use of which we can call this infinite being with a recognition of His infinite attributes. And calling Him by this name, we single Him out as the one and only worthy to be the true "god." That name, of course, is that of *Jehovah* (Yahweh) and its variants used some 6000 times throughout the Old Testament.

We are first introduced to the word in the Genesis narrative when "men began to call upon the name of the LORD" (YHWH). But the meaning of this Tetragrammaton (i.e. the four letters) as a name which is reserved only for an infinite being is first revealed to us in Moses and his encounter with the "Angel of the Lord" in the burning bush. Moses asks the deity what is His name so that he might announce Him to the Israelites.

He tells him, "I AM THAT I AM" and to tell the Israelites that "I AM" hath sent thee. (Exodus 3:14).

Scholars usually interpret this saying as "I WILL BE WHATEVER I WILL BE" or "I AM THE SELF-EXISTENT ONE." With these renderings, we are to understand that Moses has encountered an infinite being not limited by anything or anyone. This Being is not merely "God" or "El" or "Theos." He is "I AM" (Heb. *Ha-Yah*).

Ha-Shema: The Name

In the Hebrew language, the word for "name" is "shem." "Ha-shema" means "The Name" and would sometimes be spoken by the ancients in the stead of YHWH. In the *usus loquendi*, we discover that the Jews would refrain from using the Tetragrammaton and in the course of time, would substitute YHWH with "Adon," or "Lord" (Greek: *kyrios*) when reading it aloud in Synagogue. Certainly in the Greek Septuagint, they found there was no Greek equivalent and the translators thought it would risk profanity to teach the Gentiles the name of their deity.

It is not my desire in this writing to descend into a discussion over the correct pronunciation of YHWH (although we think that all four letters should be pronounced). Nor do I think it was impious for the translators of the Septuagint to substitute it with "Theos" and "Kyrios," assuming as they did that true proselytes, in the course of time, would learn Moses (Act 15:21) and develop a sound monotheistic understanding. The Septuagint was the inspired text of the New Testament writers for the Hellenistic world.

Duplicitous Jewish scholars have argued that I AM THAT I AM should not be translated as a name at all, that it should be translated as a divine deflection not to answer Moses' question. Instead they claim that it is simply a restatement of the promise: "I will always be with you; you don't need to know my name."

Of course, this interpretation is based upon the Masoretic texts, while for Christians, it is the Septuagint upon which we rely. It is rendered *I AM THAT I AM* in the Septuagint.

William Whiston, the translator of Josephus, patristic scholar and colleague of Isaac Newton, observed that the Septuagint had been accepted by world Jewry for almost three centuries as a valid and faithful translation of the Hebrew. He noted that it was the received text upon which the New Testament Church relied, e.g. St. Stephen (cf. Peshier for St. Stephan's Day, 2021, "The Cult of the Dead"). It was not until Christians began to use it to prove that Jesus was the Messiah that a partisan movement within Rabbinic Judaism arose to discredit it and to substitute a new collection of Hebrew translations. These became the Masoretic texts which in turn became what is called today, the "Tanakh."

However, Josephus can be cited in support of the Septuagint on this question,

Moses having now seen and heard these wonders that assured him of the truth of these promises of God, had no room left him to disbelieve them; he entreated him to grant him that power when he should be in Egypt; and besought him to vouchsafe him the knowledge of his own name; and, since he had heard and seen him, that he would also tell him his name, that when he offered sacrifice he might invoke him by such his name in his oblations.

Whereupon God declared to him his holy name, which had never been discovered to men before; concerning which it is not lawful for me to say any more.

"Antiquities of the Jews", 2.12.4, Whiston (emphasis added)

Whiston's commentary on Josephus' account is worth mentioning:

This superstitious fear of discovering the name with four letters, which of late we have been used falsely to pronounce Jehovah, but seems to have been originally pronounced Jahoh, or Jao, is never, I think, heard of, till this passage of Josephus; and this superstition, in not pronouncing that name is continued among the rabbinical Jews to this day (though whether the Samaritans and Caraites observed it so early, does not appear). Josephus also durst not set down the very words of the ten commandments, as we shall see hereafter, Antiq. 3.5.4; which superstitious silence, I think, has yet not been continued even by the rabbis. It is however no doubt but both these cautious concealments were taught Josephus by the Pharisees; a body of men at once very wicked and very superstitious.

The Complete Works of Josephus, Unabridged, (Hendrickson, 1987, p. 71, fn)

[It should be added that the Samaritan Pentateuch also supports this translation as it stands in our English Bibles.]

While we must accept the possibility that "Ha-Yah" and I AM THAT I AM are themselves substitutes for THE NAME, nevertheless, it is the one which has been given to us by special revelation for how we are to know this Infinite Being.

The Teachings of Jesus

The Jewish "El" and the Greek "Theos," acquired a meaning which was applied to the infinite being, exclusively, as a sort of scholarly shorthand for theological discourse. In this scheme, the "gods" of the pagans were referred to as "false gods" or *pseudo-gods*, not real deities.

This is the second thing which must be known: this theological shorthand was not used by our Lord. **For Him, these words were not reserved exclusively to describe the Infinite Being.**

While in our Gospel accounts, Jesus used "El" and "Theos" freely to refer to Jehovah - translated as "God" - He did not do so exclusively.

That is why the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy. It was their unique dogma that to call yourself "the Son of God" (Theos) you were calling yourself the "El" who was the "I AM" of the burning bush theophany. Just as we might say that among men, sons are equally human as are their fathers, Jesus corrected His accusers by citing Psalm 82:6:

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?

(cf. John 10:33)

He could only have said this if it was true that in His lexicon as the Great Prophet, "El" and "Theos" were words which could be applied to finite beings because they are not intended to comprehend the doctrine of infinite attributes, but rather as a reference to moral or judicial autonomy, as explained above.

For Christians, we must follow the nomenclature used by our Lord. And indeed, the New Testament writers, especially for the Johannine and Desposynic literature, such is the case.

Jesus used "El" and "Theos" as **titles** to describe certain attributes which YHWH possesses, but which finite beings might possess, as well, even if by pretension. It is not a name which separates "God" from all lesser beings. This is important. While the Jews might have come to use these words in their theological discourse to refer exclusively to

the great "I AM," it led to a distortion in doctrine because the practice left unanswered such anomalies (and there are many) in the original Hebrew texts. How could we understand these words to refer only to an infinite being while it is obvious that they are also applied to finite beings?

This confusion has introduced mysticism into Christian doctrine resulting in a persistent plethora of heresies and cults through the many centuries since.

Jesus was correcting His listeners to defend against the charge of blasphemy. "El" is a title which ascribes sovereignty, as in the right to self-rule and dominion. The serpent told Eve, that she would become an "El" discerning good and evil. The possession of wisdom and the power of moral discernment seems to be the fundamental meaning of El in terms of attributes, but not as an entitlement of worship (as will be explained shortly).

And lest we suppose that we should not use these words of the serpentine deceiver to base our doctrine, keep in mind that the Elohim so interpreted it as well, when it was said,

Behold the man has become as one of us. (Genesis 3:22)

While Jesus said on numerous occasions that He was not God, and named the Father in Heaven as the one and only God, He did not say so as a denial of His own divinity, but rather to that of His own sovereignty and autonomy. He merely affirmed that the Father alone possesses sovereignty and the autonomy of a despot. The Son defers to the will of the Father, which in the Western theological tradition, is a reference to an economic subordinationism (*economic*, meaning "household law"), but not an "ontological" subordinationism. Jesus Christ defers to the wisdom and sovereignty of the Father (economic), but in terms of His being, He is ontologically of the same substance. Just as a man may defer to the will of his father, yet that act does not diminish his humanity, so it is true of Christ.

Again, for the Jews, perhaps, "El" and "Theos" were terms which they misapplied to describe the Infinite Being of biblical revelation, exclusively, but for Jesus, they were not.

This is an important point. When Jesus declared the Father to be the "one and true God" (John 17:3) and elsewhere to say to his disciples - "I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God" (John 20:17) - He does so to declare the sovereignty of the Father and the relationship sons have to that sovereignty.

And when He declares the Father to be the "Logos," as introduced to us in the Fourth Gospel (14:24), one must consult how that term was used by Jewish scholars of the day, e.g. Philo. Jesus was saying that the Father was the only source of Truth ("the Light"), and that He, in his humanity, was the incarnation and revelation of that Truth. It was an epistemological statement, not an ontological one.

Thus, it is a radical misreading of Scripture to say that Jesus denied His own divinity or that as the Incarnate Divine Logos he was anything less than a being which shared in the infinite attributes of the Father. His very name, "Yashua," means "Yahweh saves."

While in itself His name does not prove that He is divine - especially considering that it can be merely a pious acclamation, as was the name of another Yashua, (i.e. Joshua), from the Old Testament (certainly a mere man) - nevertheless, the Gospel accounts are quite clear that JESUS was so named **because He was Yahweh Incarnate**.

Therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

- Luke 1:35

And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God.

- John 1:34

Jesus so understood Sonship to be the equivalence of deity and invited the wrath of His detractors for saying so:

Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.

- John 5:18

You see how this illustrates the differences of meaning? When Jesus tells His disciples that they are the "sons of God" it does not mean that they are now co-equal with divinity. However, as it was used by the Jews, it did mean coequality.

Likewise, in the Gospel accounts cited above: "Son of God" refers to His Messianic ranking as the royal heir of David to his office, but it can also refer to a true divinity. As was explained above, it can point to an Infinite Being.

However, we need more.

The Creeds declare that Jesus was divine from conception and enjoyed the union of two natures - human and divine - in one person. He shared completely in the Father's infinite attributes of Being, while at the same time, shared fully in the humanity of the Incarnation.

While that may be inferred from the meaning of His name - JESUS - we need an open declaration from Him to establish the reason *why* the Angel commanded it. And indeed, we have it.

Jesus declared Himself to be YHWH, the I AM of the Old Testament record:

Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was I AM.

Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.

- John 8:57-59

There have been elaborate explanations offered by partisan hacks - usually duplicitous rabbis and confused Messianics - trying to explain away this statement to the effect that Jesus was not claiming to be the "I AM" of the burning bush theophany. They will compare the Greek Septuagint with the Greek rendering here in John to claim that Jesus was simply saying the usual "I am . . . (something)" as in "I am the true vine" or "I am the good shepherd" and so on.

Other than the fact that all scholars acknowledge that the Greek here is awkward (He should have said "I was" to match the tense, not "I am"), it suggests that Jesus was not allowed to finish his statement because the Jews "took up stones." The only rational completion of the statement would have been "I am . . . that I am" as an affirmation of His pre-existence which was the very point of controversy in this encounter (that Jesus pre-dated Abraham) and the very reason why the Jews were preparing to punish him for blasphemy. Remember, this occurred in the temple precincts and must be regarded as a definitive statement of public record:

The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.

- John 10:32

Remember, as explained above, the only "El" or "Theos" Jews were allowed to worship as the Infinite Being of their religion was Yahweh. But in declaring Himself the "I AM," Jesus left no ambiguity to His claims to divinity.

I AM = *HA-YAH* in the Hebrew. If Jesus were speaking in Aramaic in the temple (Greek being considered a profane language), then He would have said, "Before Abraham was *HA-YAH*."

His name is YAH. (Psalm 68:4).

The Shema of Israel

To complete our discussion, we must ask what Jesus meant by prefacing the Great Commandment with the Great Creedal Statement of the Shema of Israel.

The Shema, as was used by Jesus Christ would mean this:

Hear, O Prince of El, YHWH our autonomous ones is a united YHWH.

Or, as in our introduction,

Hear, O Prince of El, The Infinite Yah, our polytheon, is a singular Infinite Being.

(Targumist/Desposynic)

We use "polytheon" to conform to the creedal statements of divine "persons" or "godkind," implying a species of beings which share the same attributes but are distinct individuals.

The Feast of the Eight

And they called his name, JESUS. (Matthew 1:25; Luke 2:21)

The sons of the Abrahamic Covenant were circumcised on the eighth day after their birth. That was their naming ceremony. We do not know if little girls ever experienced a naming ceremony because they were not circumcised.

When Jesus was circumcised, He received His name. Seven days mark the creation. The Eighth Day marks the beginning of dominion.

Christians do not practice circumcision as a spiritual or legal ordinance. We baptize the child instead, boys and girls. We call it a christening and sometimes anoint the child with oil.

Names are important in the Bible. You will be called before the Almighty on Judgment Day when your name is announced. Your name needs to be found in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The Feast of the Octave is celebrated at Christmas time for Westerners on the first day of the New Year. The Season is a conflation of celebrations. As explained elsewhere, we do not believe Jesus was born at Christmas. But we do believe that the coming of the Wise Men from the East bearing gifts occurred then, and signified the weaning of Jesus from His mother's breast which was a thing to be celebrated in ancient Israel.

The tradition of the "Weaning" Feast was established by Abraham for Isaac, and usually occurred in the child's second year. This explains why Herod ordered the slaughter of the baby boys of Bethlehem who were two years or under.

Our Peshier for Christmas, 2024 will explain the significance of this ceremony in Christian doctrine.

A Servant of Jesus,

James

Collect for the Day:

*YHWH bless thee, and keep thee: YHWH make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: YHWH lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.
Hallalujah!*

And they shall put my name upon the children of God's Prince, and I will bless them. (Numbers 6:24-27)

The Cambrian Peshier is the pastoral epistle of the Cambrian Episcopal Church of the Grail, a fellowship and abbey adhering to a spiritual tradition from ancient Wales. We use the Authorized Version of the Bible (King James Version) as our default translation and the Book of Common Prayer of the Episcopalian Church for liturgical guidance. We are not an affiliate of any denomination.

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