

Word's Mean Something . . .

When my kids were young I used to read them a bedtime story, and afterwards I sometimes asked them "So, what did you think of the book?" More often than not, the answer was a simple "Good."

I told them that the word "good" was banned. The book could be funny, boring, interesting, scary, lovely, awful, delightful, . . . or a combination of terms. Anything but good. It's time to give the old and tired words "good" and "bad" a well-deserved rest. (I was such a tough dad).

I think the same applies for people. Not that the old and tired need to be put to rest, but that people are rarely just good or bad. Somebody could be ebullient, which means Bubbling with enthusiasm or excitement; or they could be tremulous, if they are timid or nervous. Some people are pavid (you can look that one up).

I feel the same way about many other words. I will argue that the word "awesome" only applies to Yehoveh. Think of it. Awesome means: amazing: inspiring awe or admiration or wonder . . . that seems to describe Yehoveh quite well don't you think? I may appreciate Chicago, but I wouldn't say Chicago was "awesome."

Yehoveh (YHVH- יהוה, Yod Heh Vau Heh) is the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It's the name that Moses was told to use when referring to the God of the Exodus. Some people will argue that the Hebrew word, "El" means "God," as in El Shaddai, and that's true in the general sense, but it's a word denoting a title, a position--it's the title of many entities. It would be similar to saying "President." Well, which president are you referring to? Is it President Bush? Or President Clinton? Or President Washington?

If you use the Hebrew word, "El" in referring to God, which "god" are you referring to? Is it Ba'al? Is it Ashteroth; or maybe you're referring to Allah? Each name identifies the entity being referred to. Islam and many within the Church want you to believe that Allah and Yehoveh are two names for the same God. After all, Muslims will tell you that Allah means "God;" and, most are aware that our Bibles invariably call the God of the Bible "God." I've got news for you: the Egyptians also referred to many of their gods simply as "god," particularly when one of their gods was the family god.

We, Jews and Christians, have brought this problem on ourselves. If we hadn't replaced YHVH with the generic word "God" or Adonai (which is simply Hebrew for lord) so long ago, we wouldn't have a problem recognizing that Allah (which is the formal name of the god of Islam), can't possibly be the same god as Yehoveh (which is the formal name of the God of the Bible), because they are two entirely different names.

I wonder if my sons would like to be referred to as "Nickolas's son #1 or #2, or #3," instead of by Jonathan, or Christopher or Robert. I realize that if someone is talking to George W. Bush, they will call him "Mr. President," but that isn't his name. God, like the word President, is the title of an office: it's not the name of the person who holds that office. As of this writing, our current president is named "George W. Bush;" his name isn't "president." God's name is YHVH, not "God"-and certainly not Allah.

For reasons unknown to me, the bible translators consistently chose to use the word God or Lord whenever the word Yehoveh appeared. So, when we look at the original language texts

we see that the same people and nations who knew about the events in Egypt concerning Israel, also knew the name of Israel's God-Yehoveh. In that era knowing a god's name was important because the superstition was that if you knew the name of the god who lorded over some area of responsibility like the weather, or fertility, or prosperity, or battle, then by invoking that god's name, that god had to do what you requested.

Obviously, Muslims refuse to accept that Allah was already being worshipped at the Ka'ba in Mecca by Arab pagans before Muhammad came. Most Muslims will become angry when they're confronted with this fact. But history isn't on their side. Pre-Islamic literature has proved this. In his book, "The Muslim Doctrine of God," Samuel M. Zwemer wrote "But history establishes beyond the shadow of doubt that even the pagan Arabs, before Muhammad's time, knew their chief god by the name of Allah and even, in a sense, proclaimed his unity. Among the pagan Arabs this term denoted the chief god of their pantheon, the Kaaba, with its three hundred and sixty idols."

In fact, at first Mohammad didn't intend to establish a new religion, but rather to reform the belief in Allah which already existed, and to show what this belief truly signified and rightfully demanded.

What we need to understand is that Yehoveh has continually sought to reveal Himself. He began by making His essence known to the Patriarchs in a little different way than He revealed Himself to, for instance, Moses. What's the difference? Well, one difference is in the level of intimacy—it's like the difference between addressing me as the less personal "Mr. Hiemstra," than the more personal "Nickolas." Over time, God was making Himself more known, and more personal, and more accessible. Progressively-step-by-step, Yehoveh revealed Himself to mankind. We see this throughout the Word. While we get just an outline of God in Genesis, by the time we reach the end of Torah we have more information on God than we can humanly comprehend. The next to the last revealed manifestation of God that we read about in the Bible, is Yeshua. And, Jesus made the relationship between God and man almost as personal as it gets: He became one of us, walked among us, and shared the woes of fleshly human existence with us. I say "almost," because when Jesus left, we received the Holy Spirit: you can't beat that! God no longer walked among us, external to us, He took the next step, and has now set up living within us. In the most literal possible sense, God dwells with us. Internal to us.

I was discussing this with a fellow believer and his response was that this was my opinion. Well again, words mean something. If I told you that Neapolitan ice cream was better than Chocolate ice cream . . . I would be correct, but that would also be my opinion. But if I told you that the Earth was round and revolved around the Sun that would be scientific and historical fact, and not my opinion. By telling you that Yehoveh is the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and that Allah is the name of a god being worshipped at the Ka'ba in Mecca by Arab pagans before Muhammad came. That is also historical fact, and not my opinion.

My only wish is that when you're praying, you know who you are speaking to. Is it Yehoveh, Allah, or Bill Gates? (Just a geek joke).