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QH 7.1 THE PROFANE NAMERS

I have tried for many months to avoid writing on this subject, but with a clear conscience can no longer do so. Normally, I just let others have their say on any topic and leave them alone, then hope they will do the same for me in my turn. We all have a right to believe and express our opinions and what we think is truth, and we should not reasonably expect others to always agree with us. “Live and let live,” you might say. But, when one camp among brothers constantly harps against another for no decent reason, and does so in a hypocritical and unloving way, not to mention one that flies in the face of truth and Torah, at some point I guess I must speak out, so I shall. It is my turn.

My camp is the one that believes in the exclusive use of the original scriptural name of the Creator as He Himself has given it in his own infallible Word. That name is YHWH – יהוה. Those of my camp are called “Sacred-namers” by our detractors, a term that I consider rude and needlessly insulting. In fact, that they even feel the need to constantly harp on and insult those of my camp by using such a term at all should tell you that there is possibly something not quite right with theirs. I will not give their names or the names of any ministries. That would be blatant *lashon hara*¹, in which I will not indulge. For the sake of contrast in this article, I will simply refer to them as “Profane-namers”, which is exactly the teaching they espouse. Recently, the Profane-namers have begun to continually write and speak out against Sacred-namers, and about their practices and beliefs. They waste no opportunity to weigh-in on the subject and give their “learned” opinions about it. And opinions are generally all they give, because there are no scriptures to legitimately back up what they say. These otherwise excellent teachers rely only on emotions, feelings and their own esteemed reputations when railing about our beliefs, not on any scholarship or Torah law. That is because there is no honest scholarship or any Torah law to support their views.

Usually, the Profane-namers’ weapon of choice is the “straw-man” argument. This is a style of argument that sets up a fictitious or extreme public target person – the straw-man – who holds an opposing viewpoint, then systematically attacks the straw-man’s position and views with every seemingly rational and sensible argument they can muster until the straw-man is destroyed. This supposedly leaves them the winner of any debate. The problem with this style of argument is that straw-men cannot fight back. They’re often not even real people at all, but only constructs of their user which are designed to present the most ridiculous and easily defeatable target possible. That, or they are representative of an extreme or uneducated segment of an opposing camp. Someone who relies on a bully-pulpit and straw-man arguments usually never wins anything in a fair scholarly fight.

I have read articles by Profane-namers who use, as a typical example, someone who has written to their ministry in good faith, excited about their new knowledge of the name *Yahusha*, *yahveh*, *yahu*, or some such. This is usually some poor fellow who has been taught an extreme doctrine by an enthusiastic but mistaken non-scholar. He is then used as a straw-man by the Profane-namer ministry in an article or paper to attack the beliefs and practices of typical and matter-of-fact Sacred-namers, like me and the

¹ Evil speech – gossip, slander

majority of people who simply refuse to use their profane names. This is disingenuous at best, because the Profane-namers who write these detracting articles using such examples know it is not typical. It is mean-spirited and unloving at worst, because there is no decent reason to embarrass such a poor, misled fellow who earnestly and trustingly writes to them by publicly hanging him out to dry for all to see.

One particular Profane-namer has an excellent teaching ministry that heavily promotes modest dress for both men and women. This is a wonderful goal and a very excellent ancient Hebraic tradition. But, tradition it is and not commandment. There is no Torah law or command of Messiah explicitly enforcing modest dress, yet this same teacher professes against exclusive use of the name, יהוה, which is commanded many times in the TaNaK. And he plainly states that it is okay to use the names of other deities in place of the name, יהוה, despite the clear command of Torah forbidding it. The man clings tightly to his tradition while setting aside the commandments of the Most High.

Another Profane-namer who leads a famous teaching ministry and professes against the exclusive use of the name, יהוה strongly promotes rabbinical teachings from the Talmud, and even calls himself “Rabbi.” Most of the pictures and quotes in his materials are of non-believing Orthodox Jews who hate Yeshua and consider belief in him to be idolatry. The Talmud, while a valuable source of history and tradition, rejects all believers in “Yeshu”. Our beloved Messiah himself specifically said we should not under any circumstances be called “Rabbi.” This man, too, clings to his traditions, and yet tells his readers it is okay to use profane names when speaking of or giving worship to יהוה.

Don’t get me wrong, I consider both of these men and many others like them to be great teachers and ministry leaders who have done tremendous jobs of educating, inspiring and ministering to thousands of needy and hungry believers for many years. Their entire lives are devoted to serving the Most High and His people. They have and deserve my respect and friendship, as they should also have yours. But even great men have flaws and make mistakes. Even the best and brightest do not know everything and have weak spots. This recent fixation they seem to have on demeaning and teaching against those whom they call Sacred-namers is apparently one of them.

Did I mention hypocrisy? It is a well-hidden secret of these and other Profane-namer ministries that roughly half of their members, supporters and subscribers are in fact Sacred-namers. I doubt they want you to know this. I suppose that must gall them and maybe it’s part of the reason they won’t leave us alone about our beliefs, though I wish they would. Unless they have something against the name of יהוה, I can see no decent reason why it should bother or offend them when others wish to use it. On the other hand, I, personally, can see plenty of decent reasons why Sacred-namers are offended at Profane-namers’ use of the names of other and false deities to refer to יהוה, *baruk Hu, uvaruk sh’mo* (blessed be He, and blessed be His name).

The first and foremost of these reasons is that it treats Him as, well, profane – as common. He is anything but that. For example, most Profane-namers tend to primarily use the name “God” to address or refer to the Creator of all things. But that is not His name or who He is. *God* was a common false deity who was worshiped in ancient times by many nations other than Yisrael. In fact, Scripture says that some people forsook יהוה for *God*. Of these, יהוה says that they are “smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all day.” He says that they provoke Him to His face and are stubborn. He says that He will repay them to their bosom, allot them to the sword, and put them to death. You can read for yourself about it in Yeshayahu, chapter 65. Hearing such a name used for יהוה that is so offensive to Him surely ought to offend any of His children who love His name and listen to Him.

“But you are those who forsake יהוה, who forget my set apart mountain, who prepare a table for *God*, and who fill a drink offering for *Meni*.”

Yes, I know that some will say that this is written as *Gad*, not *God*. Look, the original Hebrew had no vowel-pointing. It was written “גד”, or in our lettering system, “GD.” And even the Masorettes, who

finally did vowel point the Hebrew text, rendered the name in this verse with a *patach*, giving it an “ah” sound. Any encyclopedia will tell you that the origin of the modern name, *God*, comes from that same ancient deity, regardless of the vowel you choose to place in the middle of its name.

Others will say that the name, *Gad* (or *God*), will be written on one of the twelve gates of the final Temple at Yerushalayim (Chazon 21:12), and so it is permissible to pronounce it. This is true – it is permissible to pronounce the name, “GD”, when referring to that tribe of Yisrael, but not as a deity or in reference to יהוה. That name means fortune, or luck. The name, יהוה, means *He who exists*. There is an infinite difference between the two. In fact, the difference between the name of יהוה and that of any other supposed deity is infinite. If I have to explain this to you, I doubt you are going to get it anyway.

The Torah says:

“When your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter, or the wife of your bosom, or your friend who is as your own being, entices you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other mighty ones’ – which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers, of the mighty ones of the people which are all around you, near to you or far off from you, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth – do not agree with him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pardon him, nor spare him or conceal him, but you shall certainly kill him. Your hand is first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people, and you shall stone him with stones until he dies, because he sought to entice you away from יהוה your Elohim, who brought you out of the land, from Mitzrayim, from the house of bondage. And let all Yisrael hear and fear, and not again do any such evil matter as this in your midst.”

No, I am not suggesting we should begin stoning anyone who tries to teach us to use profane names. We are not in the land of Yisrael, nor is there any authoritative *Beyth Dyn* or Sanhedrin currently qualified or willing to try capital cases, that I know of. However, the spirit of this Torah command certainly indicates that we should not give heed to anyone who tries to persuade us to worship or serve any *elohym* but יהוה. And, anyone who does serve יהוה with a willing heart should consider the spirit of this Torah command before they go teaching their trusting flock to worship Him in the name of some other deity that the forefathers did not know. Especially one whom יהוה Himself held to be so despicable as he did *God* and those other false deities who were in open competition with Him throughout the pages of Scripture.

But I digress. Since those of the Profane-namer camp have chosen to speak out against the exclusive use of the blessed name of יהוה, I will take my turn to defend it and persuade otherwise. The following is from an article that we previously published, “Why You Should Use the Name of YHWH”, and I can think of no better defense than it.

Preface:

Many of the people I know think nothing of using the terms *God*, *Lord* or *HaShem* instead of speaking the true name of our Father YHWH. Since the time I first learned of my Father’s name, I ceased using anything else. I didn’t want to, nor did I see the need to. I’ve since realized that others do not see things the same way I do. I’ve mentioned this to some of my friends and have received varying responses as to why they continue to use these terms. But I never had the ability to explain to them why the majority of people use these terms or, more importantly, why we shouldn’t. That’s why I was elated when my husband had the opportunity to have this same conversation with our good friend, Jim.

Jim was a volunteer who used to go into the prison unit where my husband lived so that the Sabbath-keeping community there could gather for Sabbaths and holy days. Since there was so little time on Sabbaths for deep conversations, my husband wrote a letter to Jim about the use of YHWH’s name. He

wrote an excellent letter and one which so clearly explained both the Jewish and Christian history and traditions behind the use of the name, *God*. This letter made a difference in Jim's life.

I am sharing it with you in the hopes that it will make a difference in yours as well.

Shalom, Lisa

Dear Jim,

In the name of YHWH Avinu I wish you great peace, my friend.

Thanks for coming yesterday so we could have a service, and thanks for your counsel on my current troubles. I listened to you and appreciate your level-headedness. I enjoyed your message to us as well and am anxious to hear your continuation this coming Shabbath – a double blessing.

I'm sure you have already guessed the main reason for this letter, so let me get to it. I don't know how "loquacious" I can be, but I will try. Regardless of the result, you are my brother and you have my brotherly love – I cannot be moved from that position.

As you so aptly described yesterday, this is an issue of scripture and reason. It is a matter of Torah law – not of "feelings". Yesterday when I told you that some of the brethren had bridled at your use of "God", you flushed beet red. I had accidentally triggered strong feelings in you with my words. That mortified me. I felt so bad for you, that I had embarrassed or angered you, or caused you discomfort in front of brother Wooten. It was absolutely not my intent to do so. I apologize, Jim, and please forgive me. This issue, to me, is not one of feelings nor is it one of speculation. It is a clear issue of the commands of YHWH in Torah. As such, I am not free to explain or try to reason it away, no matter how I or anyone else might "feel" about it, and no matter the traditions or conventions of modern day society. Most of what believers in Yehoshua do is contrary to the world's comfort and traditions, and much of the way a true believer must live is seen as impractical or difficult (or foolish or impossible? 1st Cor. 1:18-19). That is no excuse for us to refuse doing so, if indeed we are his and profess to walk (halak) as he walked. We must obey the Torah whenever possible, just as he did, and interpret it primarily according to his halakha (the manner in which one does – "walks" – the Torah), regardless of our feelings or of what the world thinks and does.

Yehoshua is quoted in two places speaking and teaching his views of men's traditions and how they should affect our *halakha* (Matt. 15 & Mk.7). He does not condemn tradition and "oral Torah" unless men have twisted it to conflict with the clear meaning of the original written Torah. In fact, he says in another place that the leaders "sit in Moshe's seat", and that we should do as they say (or in the Hebrew – Matthew, "as he says"). His only qualification of this is when man's traditions and teachings are contrary to that of the Torah. That is the over-arching principle for determining the halakha of a believer in Yehoshua. A man cannot serve two masters. Throughout the history of Judaism (and Christianity), teachers, sages and rabbis have differed both between themselves and with outsiders in their opinions and instruction. This is accepted as inevitable. The solution for it has always been that each person should follow the main body of teaching for whichever sect they belong to, then give absolute primacy to the particular teacher or master they personally follow in details and practice of their faith. So, while we learn much from others and do our best to abide the teachings of mainstream and tradition, our Master and Teacher is Yehoshua and his halakha trumps all others.

That said, there are roughly four reasons why people use the name "God", instead of using the name YHWH.

1. The Catholic Church between approximately 700 A.D. – 1000 A.D. spread Christianity throughout Northern Europe and Scandinavia. The Vatican primarily used the word *theos* (Greek) or *deos* (Latin) for YHWH's name. The pagans and heathens of Northern Europe had a pantheon of deities, one of which was *Gott*. The Catholics, in subjugating these people and converting them, allowed them the syncretistic

method of transplanting that foreign deity's name into the religion of the Elohyim of Abraham, Itzhak and Yaakob. The Catholics interest was in power, money, and in conquering the dumb masses, not in linguistic or doctrinal purity. Do a Google search on *Gott, Gut, Gud, Gad, God*, and "history and etymology of pagan names", and see what you find. The Encyclopedia Britannica and Americana also have info on these. The Catholic church is big on this practice of blending religions for their own profit. I have seen videos and read articles on Catholic syncretism, especially in Central and South America. They bring dead bodies into the churches or sit in graveyards and give them booze, food, cigarettes and a party on the "Day of the Dead" (Oct.31st) each year. The Vatican allows this as long as they pay tithes. You would not condone this, would you? "God" is not a "title" when used in place of YHWH. It is the proper name of a Teutonic/Norse deity. Long before that, it was the name of an ancient Aramaic deity – one of many and not supreme. These two deities are actually one and the same. That is a fact, and the use of its name in place of YHWH was approved by the Roman Catholic Church. Neither time nor tradition change that fact.

2. "To call on His name means only to call on His authority", is another reason people cite for not using the name YHWH. First of all, this is only half true. As you so aptly pointed out yesterday, there is power in the spoken word. YHWH, (not God), created the universes not by a thought or gesture, but by a spoken word. Different spoken words have differing effects. When He said *Ehyeh Ohr*, light came to exist, not grass. He is the One who gave power and emphasis to spoken words and names. His name has a meaning. So does "God". To use one or the other has differing effects. In His Torah He specifically commanded us to "call on His name", and He identified that name very specifically as "יהוה" – YHWH. He said in audible words (to a man He called by name [Moshe] audibly) that this would be His memorial name to His people Yisrael forever. This is an unambiguous clear command of Torah which is repeated hundreds of times. We are physical beings that communicate with physical sound, in His image. When I speak and say, "Jim said you should..." or "The warden told me...", I speak in the authority of the one whose name I use. If I knowingly use the wrong name, I confer that authority onto someone else, or dilute it. Some names even insult the person we speak to or in the authority of. The name "God" is an insult to YHWH when applied to Him. He says so. Who am I to argue with Him? The name YHWH means, "He who exists". The name "God" does not. It means "Fortune," or "Chance."

There is also a logical absurdity in reasoning that a name is only a claiming of authority. In Exodus 32:4-5, Aharon and the people made a golden calf and worshipped it. You will agree that this was wrong, an abomination, and idolatry. But notice, in these two verses they said the calf was YHWH "who brought you out of the land of Mizraim (Egypt)." Tell me, Jim, think – what is the difference between using the name of YHWH on a thing of idolatry, and using the name of an idol ("God") on the personage (or authority) of YHWH in His essence? I can see none. Essentially, it is the same thing: $3 \times 10 = 30$. But $10 \times 3 = 30$ as well. The sequence in which you arrange the equation results in the same product. YHWH gave Yisrael His name specifically in order for them to use it and speak it in calling upon His authority, and there is no other name we are given to use. That is the Torah. To accept the traditions of men in exchange for His clear command is an abrogation of Yehoshua's *halakha* and authority. And it is idolatry.

3. The name is "ineffable", that is to say, unspeakable. Whereas the previous two reasons for not using His name are essentially Christian in origin, reasons three and four are purely Jewish ones. Obviously, literally taken, this statement is untrue. I can say His name. The statement about ineffability really intends me to understand that I should not. Why? Because I am unclean, unworthy and have no authority to do so. That is the implication. I disagree with that reasoning. Historically, the people of Yisrael all spoke His name until the return from Babylon, around 516 B.C. This is evidenced by the Psalms, Proverbs, and several books of the Prophets. These men used His name with care and reverence – as should we. In those books, all Yisrael are enjoined emphatically to "call upon the name of YHWH". In fact, in Yoel 2 we are told that this is a method of salvation. The traditional prohibition against speaking the name was

first begun in Babylon during the exile, and was (and still is) contested by many. The Karaite Jews and others still call upon His true name and no other. The “Great Assembly” under Ezra and those who came after him were apparently so scared that the nation of Israel would mess up and sin again, leading to another exile, that they forbade use of the name of YHWH by any except themselves. In that way, the world largely forgot His name for centuries. Jeremiah 23:26-27. Jim, I am a disciple of Yehoshua Hamashiach, washed clean in his own precious blood, made worthy by his sacrifice on my behalf, and given his authority to do righteous and wonderful acts on his behalf on this earth. If I deny this, I am not his. No one can take that cleanness, worthiness, and authority away except he himself or his Father. They have promised they won’t do that, and I believe them. No one on earth can convince me that I am not to speak my own Father’s name with His authority, when He Himself has commanded me to do so. It is not “ineffable” for me.

4. This last reason is rather esoteric and you probably don’t know it. Ironically, it is the original textual reasoning the rabbis used to begin this whole tradition of hiding the name. It is how Great Sages of Israel justified the prohibition, and later Christianity blindly followed along without ever questioning the practice. By the time of the Church Fathers and Constantine ‘The Great’, the use of Hebrew had fallen into disrepute and was considered “Judaistic,” its learning was forbidden by the church. So, this original reason for the prohibition itself was even forgotten.

In Exodus 3:15, Torah says, “...this is My name forever.” The word “forever” in this verse is *l’olam* (לעולם). Normally throughout scripture this word has an extra letter, a *vav* (לעולם), though there are a few instances like this in the most ancient parts of Torah where it is dropped. In this form, without the *vav* and with differing vowel points, the word can also mean “hidden.” So, in an attempt to keep evil and untaught people from inadvertently or deliberately profaning the name of the Most-High, the sages of the Great Assembly opined that the use of *olam* without a *vav* in Shemoth 3:15 actually means, “hide the name”, or “This is My name to be hidden”. In the Talmud (Shemos Rabbah 3:7; Peshachim 50a), it says that, “Based upon this verse, we never pronounce the name as written.” That is how this whole thing got started and is ultimately why you do not exclusively use the name YHWH today. It is that simple. It is a vile, though possibly well-intended, instance of the traditions of men being allowed to override the clear commands of YHWH. There is even a great Talmudic argument against the reasoning they used for their prohibition in this verse. It is accepted by both Jewish and Christian rules of scriptural exegesis that a treatment applied to one word or verse should also apply to the same words or similar verses similarly situated elsewhere in scripture. If you used this rule with every instance in scripture of *l’olam* that is missing the *vav*, you wouldn’t like the outcome – YHWH Himself would need to be deliberately and permanently “hidden” from the world – including instances of His power and miracles. For example, Exodus 15:18 (the Song of Moshe) would then read, “YHWH shall reign hidden forever” (heaven forbid!). This would be very bad. From a scholarly point of view, it is poor exegesis to suppose a missing *vav* alone, in a single word, would imply a thing clearly contradicted by the direct commands of Torah and, consistently applied to the same form of the word *l’olam* elsewhere in Torah, it would make it a mockery of YHWH Himself. The whole idea of this is untenable.

Anyway, now you know the foundational reasons for what you do regarding the name of YHWH, and why we refuse to use the name, *God*. It is, quite simply, forbidden and idolatrous.

For every positive (an *aseh*) command, there is usually a negative one (a *lav*). The negative command that is corollary to Exodus 3:15 is Exodus 23:13. One says what name we should call the Creator of the universe, and the other says what names we should not call Him, and indeed, that those other names should “not even be found in your mouth.” Quite obviously, this command is not about calling upon “only His authority”. Neither was I Kings 18:21-39 “only calling upon His authority”. Maybe you can read that scripture with new eyes.

There is an exegetical device used in scripture called a *kal v'chomer*. It is used several times in Torah, and Yehoshua our Messiah used it often. It means, “from lesser to greater” – if a thing is so in small issues, how much moreso in greater issues. So then, according to this rule, if “there is only one name given among men by which we can be saved” – Yehoshua HaMashiach, how much moreso would this be true of his Father’s name? He is absolutely One – *Echad*. And Jim, even if the whole world goes astray in this matter and rejects these truths, does that give us leave to follow? (Ex.23:2)

The above are the Torah on this subject, according to the halakha of Yehoshua. These are not based upon my “feelings”, but upon scripture and history. I can conceive of no counter-argument from Torah that would contradict this understanding without torturously twisting its clear meanings and commands. You said we must learn and obey Torah. I agree.

I have not written all of this to you expecting to persuade you. Does that surprise you? Neither have I written all of this to you in the hopes that, as you go on striving not to offend Christians and Jews by using the literal name of YHWH in their presence, you will also strive not to offend us here by using the name, *God*. I expect that you already have decided to appease us with that courtesy on your own. Thank you for that. I also haven’t written all of this because I have nothing else to do – I have loads of work to do, and I stay busy. I think I am compelled by YHWH’s Spirit to write this letter. I certainly hope so, and that it is not my own. Personally, I don’t expect your mind to change at present. No offense meant, Jim. Everyone is given the ability to accept only so much truth at a time, it seems. Some only accept Shabbath, or festivals, or names, or other things. A level of comfort is found, and to go beyond that level into other new things isn’t easy. From the flush on your face yesterday and from the arguments you presented (which I was surprised at, considering your extremely high level of intelligence and learning), I perceived that I had breached and exceeded your limits and comfort level. From experience, I don’t much expect positive results once these barriers have been reached and exceeded. But that is in YHWH’s hands, not mine. It is between you and He.

Again, please forgive me if I upset or embarrassed you in any way. I would never wittingly do that to you or anyone. I only meant to explain to you what I thought you needed to know before it became an issue with the community. Everyone really likes you here, Jim. When you leave, we speak about your next coming until you get here. We pray for you daily and hope good things for you. We are looking forward impatiently to next Shabbath and listening further to your teaching.

I think that this letter has said enough on the subject for now, and I have no wish or need to say further, except for one thing:

Those who use the so-called “Sacred Names” are doing no one any harm. Nor are they breaking any command of Scripture in doing so, but are only trying their best to keep them in a pleasing and esteeming way toward our Father in heaven. Please leave them alone on this issue. Don’t harangue them for their attempt at purity and obedience. They are not doing so to you. And if they have a zeal for the name of the Most High, be glad for them and show some forbearance. Consider the fact that while their use of His blessed name does not, I should hope, offend you, your constant use of a foreign deity’s name does offend them, and give them grace. They, and I, are your brothers still, and they deserve your charity and love. Be gentle with them.

YHWH Im’ka,
Ovadyah