

HaShem FAQ: Why It's Okay to Say "God"

Use with the full teaching and a Bible. Read or watch first, complete the questions, then discuss and apply. For family study, an adult can select suitable portions and accept spoken answers.

Test the teaching's explanations against the cited passages. Keep the answer key and facilitator notes separate when distributing learner pages.

[Open the full teaching](#)

Teaching summary

The study supports learning Hebrew names and titles while examining the claim that the English word God dishonors YHWH. The objection depends on connecting God with Gad, a deity named in Isaiah 65:11. Such a charge requires more than a resemblance in pronunciation.

Scripture uses Elohim and El in reference to YHWH. Genesis 1:1 uses Elohim for the Creator of heaven and earth. The English title God conveys the identity of the Creator and ruler and is therefore an appropriate translation in that setting. A personal name and other biblical titles can be used without competing with one another.

Two words in different languages may sound alike without sharing an origin. Examples such as Hebrew ki and English key expose the weakness of arguments based only on sound. The existence of the Israelite name Gad also challenges the claim that the sound itself is forbidden.

Using El or Elohim is acceptable, but believers should not be compelled to replace God on the basis of an unproven pagan connection. The meaning of a word in its language and context matters. Recovering Hebrew terminology should encourage understanding rather than unsupported accusations about prayer or blasphemy.

Summary points

- The study supports learning Hebrew names and titles.
- YHWH is also called Elohim and El in Scripture.
- Elohim is used in Genesis 1:1.
- God is an appropriate English rendering in reference to the Creator.
- The objection examined connects God with Gad.
- Isaiah 65:11 names Gad and Meni, rendered Fortune and Destiny in some translations.
- Sound similarity does not establish linguistic relationship.
- Gad is also an Israelite name.
- Using El or Elohim is acceptable.
- A preference for Hebrew should not be imposed as an unsupported requirement.

Fill in the blank

Use the teaching and the cited Bible passages. Equivalent wording is welcome when it expresses the same meaning.

Basic

1. The Hebrew title used in Genesis 1:1 is _____.
2. The shorter Hebrew title also translated God is _____.
3. The Canaanite deity used in the objection is _____.
4. Genesis 1:1 identifies God as the _____ of heaven and earth.
5. Words that sound alike do not necessarily share an _____.
6. The conclusion is that believers may use the English title _____.

Challenging

1. The passage mentioning Gad is Isaiah _____.
2. The other deity named alongside Gad is _____.
3. The Spanish word con means “_____.”
4. The German word nein means “_____.”
5. El appears in the longer title El _____.
6. Some opponents claim prayers using God are “_____,” a charge the study rejects.

Group discussion

Discuss respectfully and support answers from the passages. Use these lines for brief notes or a notebook for longer responses.

1. How does Genesis 1:1 support the use of a title for YHWH?

2. What evidence would be needed to establish a linguistic connection beyond sound?

3. How do the examples from other languages test the God/Gad argument?

4. Why is the Israelite name Gad relevant to the discussion?

5. How can a personal preference for Elohim remain a preference?

6. How should believers handle serious accusations that a word makes prayer unacceptable?

Answer key

For the leader or parent. Answers follow the teaching and the passages. Accept equivalent wording that expresses the same meaning.

Basic

1. Elohim

Genesis 1:1; teaching discussion of Elohim

2. El

Teaching discussion of El and Elohim

3. Gad (also: Fortune)

Isaiah 65:11; teaching statement of the objection

4. Creator

Genesis 1:1

5. origin

Teaching discussion of linguistic resemblance

6. God

Teaching conclusion

Challenging

1. 65:11

Isaiah 65:11

2. Meni (also: Destiny)

Isaiah 65:11

3. with

Teaching quotation of linguistic examples

4. no

Teaching quotation of linguistic examples

5. Shaddai

Teaching discussion of El and Elohim

6. useless

Teaching opening statement of the rejected claim

Facilitator notes

These responses give direction for discussion. They are not a test of identical wording. Invite participants to explain the passages and consider a faithful practical response.

1. The verse uses Elohim for the Creator. The teaching distinguishes the personal name YHWH from titles used for him, and regards God as an appropriate English rendering in this context.

Genesis 1:1; teaching discussion of Elohim

2. We would need attested historical forms, meanings, and a plausible path of linguistic development. Hearing a similar sound is a starting observation, not proof of a shared origin.

Teaching discussion of God and Gad

3. The words have different meanings despite the sound resemblance. The examples test the reasoning rather than establish every possible word history. Apply the same evidential standard to the claim about God and Gad.

Teaching quotation of linguistic examples

4. Scripture's use of Gad as an Israelite name challenges the idea that the sound itself is forbidden. Context and intended reference matter; saying a name is not automatically an act of worship.

Teaching discussion of the Israelite name Gad; compare Genesis 30:11

5. We can explain why we prefer a Hebrew title without requiring everyone else to use it. The teaching permits both the Hebrew terms and the ordinary English word in reference to YHWH.

Teaching conclusion

6. Ask for biblical and linguistic evidence, examine the accusation calmly, and avoid declaring someone's prayer useless on the basis of an unsupported sound connection. The teaching explicitly rejects that charge.

Teaching opening and conclusion

Put it into practice

Choose one response to the passages. What will we do, and when will we revisit it? Share only what you are comfortable sharing.