

The Kyrios Question

by Frank Selch

The word Greek *kyrios* is frequently assumed to be the equivalent to the Hebrew form YHWH, the sacred name of God. Convention usually renders *kyrios* in English as LORD in the T^enakh, but as Lord [in lower case, but capital L] in the New Testament.

The ‘*kyrios* –LORD – master’ issue, however, is a terrible deception that has confused untold numbers of people because the conflict is indiscernible from the vernacular versions of the Bible. So, it is commonly assumed that whenever the term *kyrios* is used it translates the sacred four-letter name of God – YHWH. *Kyrios* is used to translate the word ‘master’, which is applied to persons of superior position and it occurs at least twice in the plural (*kyrioi*) — one of which is rendered as ‘archer’ (Gen. 49:23 — in Hebrew ‘*a master of the arrow*’). In the second instance Lot addresses the messengers at Sodom as *kyrioi* and bows down to them. In Gen. 39:5 it is written that ‘*the LORD (kyrios) blessed the house of the Egyptian on account of Joseph*’, but in v. 7,8,16 & 19 Potiphar is also referred to as *kyrios*.¹ And, Joseph himself is eventually addressed as *kyrios* by his servants and his own brothers (Gen.42:10; 44:7 et al). Throughout the entire T^enakh the term is applied to God, kings, High Priests and other rulers alike.

Without a knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, however, the deception is almost impossible to discern! It is difficult for me not to ask why do we have errors of such nature when we can spaceships to the extremes of our Universe?² However, the error comes to light when the Hebrew, Greek and vernacular versions of the Scriptures are placed side by side.

A comparison of that nature would also bring to light that the Tetragrammaton is such an incredibly unique term that no equal can be found anywhere. Is that by chance, or did God fully intend to provide the Hebrews with a name for Himself that is unlike any other? Men have tried to do that term justice, but it cannot be translated— irrespective how sincere one might be. For that reason the Hebrews substituted the Divine Name with the simple term *HaShem* long ago, to safeguard that very sanctity. They chose not to follow the Gentile convention, which rendered the Tetragrammaton as LORD, which eventually led to an overly familiarization in recent times through the use of the term Yahweh and its application to Jesus. For several centuries, the term *Jehovah* embedded itself in Christianity, especially among certain Evangelical groups. One denomination even chose to identify themselves as his witnesses only to cause the sacred name to be blasphemed by many outside the sect.

A similar principle applies to the word Torah, which the Greeks translated as *nomos* and the English, etc. as *law*. Although Torah essentially means instruction, there is no adequate

¹ The use of the word *kyrios* is akin to the application of *nomos* (law) in the NT. However, whereas the translators differentiate in the use of *kyrios* in the OT, the same rules, or practice. Does not appear operative in the NT with either *nomos* or *kyrios*.

² I absolutely marvel that the human race spares no efforts for the sake of the economy or science, but cannot see any value in investing in eternal issues!

terminology that would give us the true meaning— because it is a matter of the heart embedded in absolute justice.

God is the Master of the human race, but the term Master is unfitting for Him because He is someone no human being can ever hope to emulate in full. The Eternal One also said, *'My glory I will not give to another...'* (Isa.42:8; 48:11), which makes the Greek *kyrios* an unfitting title for the Sovereign of the Universe, because it is a title that can be applied to virtually anyone as the Bible has demonstrated. The term YHWH is unique, it is absolutely holy, because it belongs to One alone and He alone is the *Asher Ehye Asher Ehyeh* (Exod. 3:14) Who defined Himself as YHWH for all eternity. That term also cannot be adequately translated into Greek or any other language. None of these titles that God set apart for Himself are meant to be translated, because once they are, they will lose their intrinsic and absolute holiness that is reserved for the Only ONE Who Is ONE!

Therefore, if we have a document that confuses the identity of the Eternal One with other beings, or lowers its sanctity through indiscriminate usage, such a document needs to be seriously questioned and brought under careful re-examination of its veracity and fitness to serve as a guide to lead gullible humans to their eternal home.

In summary I want to say that, although the LXX may have had some usefulness in its earliest days to keep the Hebrew faith alive in the Diaspora among the Exiles, etc. it cannot EVER have the same significance because of the Name. It may be a special translation since it was the first ever, but that is all it can ever be.³ If we ascribe special inspiration to the Greek text, where will it stop? Strictly speaking, if a Greek translation is divinely inspired, and the others are not, then it is only the Greek people who are in possession of the only divinely inspired text of God's Word. Following that logic, it must be them who should be the true teachers of the Word and it is to them we ought to listen!

However, there is a component missing from that equation!

The Bible teaches that it was the Jewish people to whom God gave the Covenants, the Promises, the Ordinances, the Commandments, the Precepts and the Testimony— not the Greeks!

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³ Not strictly true – Aramaic was the first Targum in the days of Ezra. The LXX gained an initial significance through the spread of the Greek language and the popularity of Greek culture in Egypt and eventually through the rise of Christianity; especially in Greek speaking parts of the Eastern Roman Empire.