



STUDY GUIDE

MY NAME IS GOD: Week 1 2.9.14

[WHAT'S IN A NAME?]

Sometimes a name can acquire a stigma for certain people. When you hear a certain name often a person or image pops up. If it is best friend's name, a movie star's name, or a family member's name it may have a good impression, but if it is a boss' name, an ex's name, or a childhood bully's name then it probably gives you a bad impression. It is certainly a name you would never name your child! What is that name for you? Why?

This week we began the "My Name is God" series where we are looking at the names of God and how that helps us know the one, true God.

[EVERYONE HAS AN ELOHIM, BUT WHICH ONE?]

In the Ancient Near Eastern cultures, a name was profoundly important. Indeed, your name often defined who you were. For example, Jacob means "he deceives" and Jacob from the Bible lived a life of deception (cf. Gen 25-27). It was later that God renamed Jacob to Israel, which means "he wrestles with God" after a night of wrestling with God. Abram ("great father") became Abraham ("father of many nations") after God promised to bless Abraham and Sarah with children (cf. Gen 17).

If comfortable, share with the group a nickname that followed you for years, whether a good or bad nickname. How did that impact the way you viewed yourself or others?

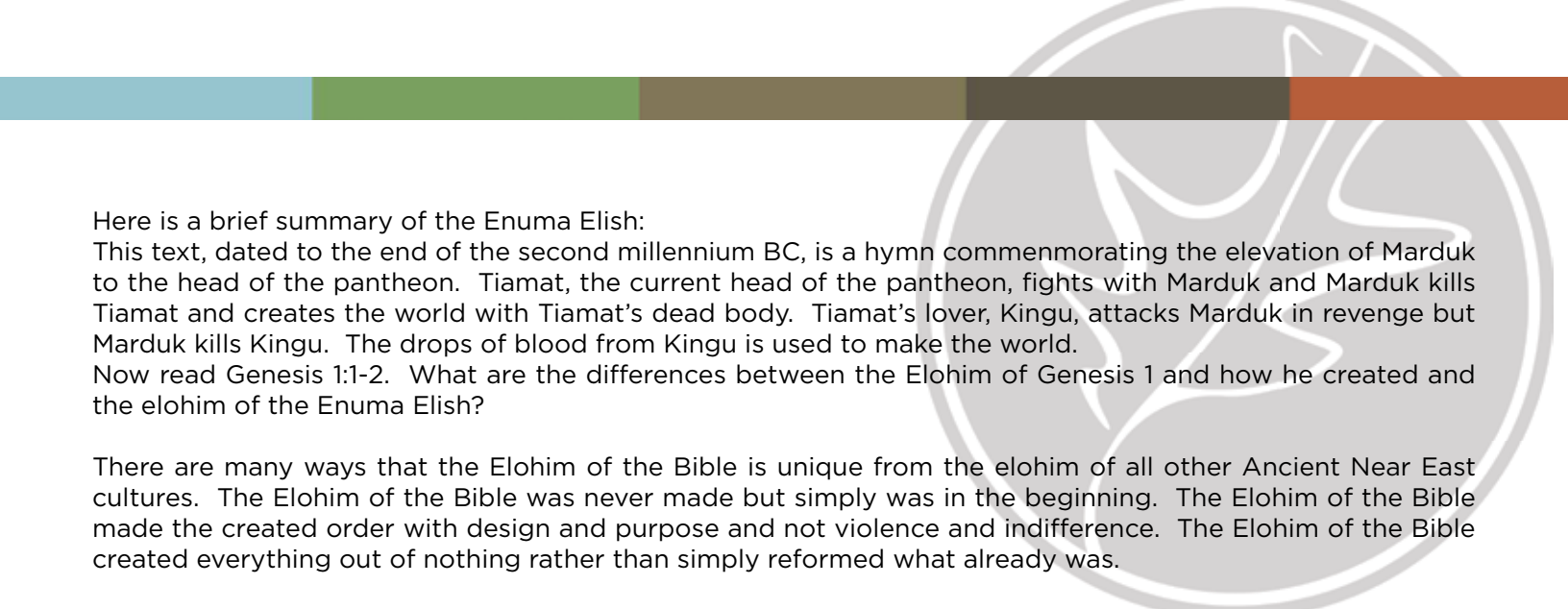
If you would interview a dozen people at Giant Eagle and asked them "What do you think of when you hear the name "God"?" then you might get close to a dozen answers. When people hear the name "God" what do they think?

We live in a society with many different views of God. But, that is not unique. In the time of the writing of the Old Testament there were many, many different views of God. The name "Elohim" or "El" is simply the general name for God. The Sumerians, the Akadians, and the Babylonians all used that word to refer to God. But the God of the Bible is unique.

Isaiah gives two different types of imagery in Is. 61:10-11 to convey how the Lord has given salvation and righteousness to his people. Explain the significance of each concept and how they demonstrate what God is saying through Isaiah.

[CREATION BY OTHER ELOHIMS]

All other Ancient Near East cultures not only used the term "Elohim" to refer to a god, but they all had their own idea of how the world began. One of the most famous of these is the Enuma Elish (<http://www.sacred-texts.com/ane/enuma.htm>).



Here is a brief summary of the Enuma Elish:

This text, dated to the end of the second millennium BC, is a hymn commemorating the elevation of Marduk to the head of the pantheon. Tiamat, the current head of the pantheon, fights with Marduk and Marduk kills Tiamat and creates the world with Tiamat's dead body. Tiamat's lover, Kingu, attacks Marduk in revenge but Marduk kills Kingu. The drops of blood from Kingu is used to make the world.

Now read Genesis 1:1-2. What are the differences between the Elohim of Genesis 1 and how he created and the elohim of the Enuma Elish?

There are many ways that the Elohim of the Bible is unique from the elohim of all other Ancient Near East cultures. The Elohim of the Bible was never made but simply was in the beginning. The Elohim of the Bible made the created order with design and purpose and not violence and indifference. The Elohim of the Bible created everything out of nothing rather than simply reformed what already was.

Read Genesis 1:26-28. Being made in God's image means that we are moral and spiritual. Why do you think God would want to make humans in his image? How are humans different in their relation to God than all other animals?

[GOD SPOKE]

Read the creation account in Genesis 1:3-25. How did God create? What mechanism did he use?

We see that the Elohim of the Bible spoke into existence the cosmos and waters and animals and trees. He used his Word.

God to John 1:1-3. What are the similarities? How does John 1:1-3 help explain how God created in the beginning?

Read Colossians 1:15-17. Read Hebrews 1:1-2. How does this inform the Genesis creation account, and how does this inform our understanding of who Jesus is?

For centuries Jewish scholars had a difficult time understanding the grammar Genesis 1:1. The problem was that the subject of the sentence was plural but the verb was singular: "In the beginning, God [Elohim = plural] created [singular verb] the heavens and the earth." As Christians we believe in the Trinity, which is the belief in God as three persons but one God. Father, Son, Holy Spirit but one God. Not three Gods but one God. Not one person but three persons. Genesis 1 is the first hint that God gives us that he reveals himself to us as a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[LIVING IT OUT]

How does understanding God as the Creator God impact the way we pray? The way we think? The way we value things?

One of the things that makes Jesus unique is that he was fully the Creator God but still fully man. What does that mean for our daily lives? Why is this so good and valuable?

[PRAYER]

Take some time together to pray together.

Thank God that he is the Creator who intentionally created us and took care to create us.

Thank God that we are made in his image and are able to relate to him personally.

Thank God for the beauty of his creation.