

THE NAMES OF GOD

By

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NAMES OF GOD

Hosea said "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." (Hos. 4:1,6). One of the best ways we can know more of God is through studying His various names, which all reveal various aspects of His Being, Character, and relationships with man. Each one of these names by which the Bible designates God are significant. Each of them stands as a symbol of some intricate truth concerning Him which He would have us receive. The following outline is by no means complete, but I am persuaded that you will receive a blessing (as I have) in studying these names, and that it will lead you into a deeper study in the names of God as given by Scripture, and shed more light upon His wonderful character!

ELOHIM - "God" (Genesis 1:1)

This is the first name of God mentioned in the Bible, and is especially connected with creation, as evidenced by the fact that it appears thirty-two times in Genesis 1. This name is recorded some 2,570 times in all. Elohim is derived from two roots: El meaning "mighty, strong, omnipotent, sovereignty," and Alah meaning "to declare, swear, make a covenant." Together we find this great name of God reveals His supreme power, sovereignty, and glory, coupled with His unfailing faithfulness in His Word and the promises recorded there. A good example we can all relate to can be seen by considering our different reactions to the same promise from different sources. If I promised you a pardon, it probably wouldn't mean much to you--But if Governor Engler promised you a pardon, especially in writing, you would probably believe him. So it is with God. He is "Elohim." The strong, faithful One! The promises made by Him are FAITHFUL because He has the POWER to keep them!

JEHOVAH - "Lord" (Genesis 2:4)

Jehovah appears for the first time in Genesis 2:4, and 6,823 times in all the Old Testament - Far more than any other name of God. The name is derived from the Hebrew verb "Havah" meaning "to be, or being," and clearly teaches us that God is the eternal, self-existent One, who in Himself possesses essential life, without beginning and without end, the unchangeable One (Heb. 13:8; Ps. 102:27). The great "I AM" of Exodus 3:14! It is interesting that the name "Jehovah" appears in Scripture only AFTER the creation of man, and generally has to do with relationships between God and man, especially in redemption. Jehovah reveals God as a God of moral and spiritual attributes, especially His Holiness. This name shows us God's hatred and judgement of sin, and His love for the sinner, all of which figure in man's salvation. Many Scriptures from the Old Testament and New Testament combine to prove conclusively that "Jehovah" of the Old Testament is "Jesus" of the New Testament. Compare Exodus 3:14 with John 8:58; and Isaiah 43:10 with Acts 1:8.

ADONAI - "Lord" (Genesis 15:2)

This name is used of God some three hundred times in the Old Testament, and is always translated "Lord" with small letters, as opposed to the capital "LORD" for Jehovah. Adonai is used both of deity and humanity (the latter some 215 times, translated master, sir, and lord with the small letter "l".) This word comes from the Hebrew root meaning to "judge, rule." "Lord signifies ownership and indicates that God is the owner of each member of mankind and that He consequently claims unrestricted obedience of all. Lordship implies God's complete possession of and perfect right to all one is and has. All of God's people are His servants, recognizing His right to command them as Lord of their lives. Saul (later called Paul) recognized this fact early in his Christian walk when, after meeting Christ on the road to Damascus asked "Lord, what will you have me do?" (Acts 9:6) This should be every Christians' response upon meeting the living Christ.

EL-SHADDAI - "Almighty God" (Genesis 17:1)

Shaddai itself occurs forty-eight times in the Old Testament and is translated "almighty." The other similar word "Shad" occurs twenty-four times and means "breast." Connected with "El," the word showing God as being mighty, strong, omnipotent, it signifies the One mighty enough to nourish, satisfy and abundantly bless. It speaks of His inexhaustible stores of bounty from which come every good and perfect gift which He bestows upon His people. All that a mother is to her baby, El Shaddai is to His own children as their sufficiency, sustenance, strength and satisfaction. God first appeared as El Shaddai to Abraham in Genesis 17, which well illustrates the all-sufficient, all-bountiful source of blessing and fruitfulness revealed in this name. How aptly does this picture of parental love fit the words of Jesus when he mourned over Jerusalem saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kills the prophets, and stones them which are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you would not." (Matthew 23:37)

JEHOVAH-JIREH - "The Lord will provide" (Genesis 22:14)

Abraham is the one to whom God reveals Himself as the Lord who will provide. For Abraham, the provision was a ram to offer in the stead of his son Isaac on Mount Moriah. That provision was a shadow of the future provision where God provided deliverance to mankind in "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29) by providing His Son to die in our stead. Jehovah-Jireh was teaching Abraham the awful cost to Himself of the provision of the substitutionary sacrifice for sin He was going to provide in His only Son at Calvary. By looking at Philippians 4:19 where we are promised God will "supply all of our need according to the glory of His riches in Christ Jesus," it is easy to see who our "Jehovah-Jireh" is today!

JEHOVAH-ROPHE - "The Lord That Heals" (Exodus 15:26)

Out of Israel's bitter experience in the wilderness, when Jehovah healed the bitter waters of Marah with a tree, comes this comforting name of God, Jehovah-Rophe. Mankind is physically in constant need for healing, but the need for spiritual healing is even greater. The moral and spiritual sickness of man is like an open, running sore (Jeremiah 17:9). Sin is the basic disease of man, and only Jehovah-Rophe can heal that bitter disease. Jesus is the Great Physician, the Jehovah-Rophe to all who trust in Him, and He can sweeten the bitter experiences of life for the believer. Jesus healed many people throughout His ministry, and was a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 53:5 where we are told "...and by His wounds we are healed."

JEHOVAH M'KADDESH - "The Lord That Sanctifies" (Exodus 31:13)

The Lord desires rest for His people, for it is then that they will be able to enter into the fullness and nearness of their relationship with Him. He sanctifies, or sets apart, His people positionally on the basis of redemption in Christ (Hebrews 10:10). But He also desires them to be sanctified, holy, in life and practice as well as separated in position. The one is meaningless without the other. Jehovah-M'Kaddesh sanctifies His people by His Word and the indwelling Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; John 17:17; Galatians 5:25; 1 Peter 1:16). Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:30 that "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness [sanctification], and redemption."

JEHOVAH-SHALOM - "The Lord My Peace" (Judges 6:24)

It was in a time of deep trouble in Israel, when they were overrun and impoverished by the Midianites because of their sin and disobedience, that God revealed Himself as Jehovah-Shalom to Gideon, the one who God was going to use to deliver Israel from the Midianites. Peace (the end of all strife and conflict), was not known by Israel, nor can it be by man because of the sin which puts him at enmity with God and separated from Jehovah-Shalom (Isa. 57:20,21). But Christ has removed the cause of enmity and unrest at the Cross (Col. 1:20) and peace with God is the result for everyone who by faith trusts Him as Saviour (Romans 5:1). He gives His peace to the believer (John 14:27). The God of Peace (Romans 15:33) gives the peace of God (Phil. 4:7) to the believer whose mind is stayed on Him (Isaiah 26:3) and obeys His Word (Isaiah 48:18). In Ephesians 2:14 we read that not only is Christ the One who gives us peace, but HE IS OUR PEACE! He is Jehovah-Shalom, "The Lord My Peace."

JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU - "The Lord Our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16)

Following Josiah's good reign as King of Judah, the nation again became corrupt and did evil in the sight of Jehovah, who then pronounced through the prophet Jeremiah the removal of Judah in judgement. Then God revealed in a prophecy the future restoration and conversion of Israel through a righteous King bearing the name Jehovah-Tsidkenu. While God has always been known for His righteousness (Psalm 97:2), man has been totally devoid of it (Romans 3:10), though he often futilely tries to establish his own righteousness with God (Romans 10:3). Until one sees his unrighteous condition, he can never be made righteous before God (I Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21) through faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26). Jehovah-Tsidkenu reveals to us the method and measure of our acceptance before a righteous God; cleansed in Christ's blood and clothed in His robe of righteousness. While awaiting the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy when Christ shall reign over the world in righteousness, may each one who knows Him become a servant of righteousness now (Rom. 6:18).

JEHOVAH-ROHI - "The Lord My Shepherd" (Psalm 23:1)

A shepherd feeds and protects his sheep, watching over them as he cares for their every need. This is just what Jehovah-Rohi does for every child of God, thus this name of God brings more comfort to His people than any other. The Lord Jesus Christ plainly declares that He is the "Good Shepherd" of the sheep (John 10:11). As such He died to deliver us from the penalty of sin. As the Great Shepherd He lives to deliver us from the practice of sin (Hebrews 13:20,21). Finally, as Chief Shepherd He is coming again to deliver us from the very presence of sin (2 Peter 5:4), where we shall enter that final fold in His house forever.

JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH - "The Lord Is There" (Ezekiel 48:35)

Ezekiel, in the very last verse of his prophecy, tells us that the millennial city of Jerusalem will be named "Jehovah-Shammah." All through the ages God has sought a place to be among His people as evidenced in the Tabernacle and the Temples of Jerusalem's history. In the Book of Revelation we read of the New Jerusalem, where there will be no need of the sun or moon, for God Himself will be its light (Revelation 22:5). This name also speaks to the believer in Christ today of His abiding presence with them at all times (Hebrews 13:5; I Cor. 3:16). Christ also dwells in His church (Ephesians 2:19-22 and is present among those gathered to His Name (Matthew 18:20). The eternal fulfillment of Jehovah-Shammah will be when believers are caught up to be with Him in glory (John 14:2,3; 17:24).

JEHOVAH-NISSI - "The Lord Is My Banner, Victor, Champion, or Standard
(Exodus 17:15)

This name of God was spoken by Moses when the Amalekites attacked Israel at Rephidim. As long as Moses held his hands up with the staff of God in them, Israel overcame their enemy. When his hands grew weary, and began to sink, Israel began losing the battle. Aaron and Hur helped Moses hold his hands up and Israel soundly defeated the Amalekites. After the battle, Moses built an altar, calling it "Jehovah-Nissi."

Christ is our Banner and our Victory, as so clearly taught in Romans 8:37 - "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." NIV

EL'OLAM - "The God of Eternity" (Gen. 21:33)

Abraham gives us this name of God after Abimelech, king of Gerar, had seen how God was with Abraham in all that he did, and the two made a treaty so that Abraham and his family could live in peace. Abraham planted a Tamarisk tree, and called upon the name of the Lord, the Eternal God - EL'OLAM. Christ is the eternal God, as pointed out in many places in the New Testament. John refers to Him as the "Word," who has existed with and as God from all eternity (John 1:1-3).

EL'ROI - "God, The Seeing One," or "God, The One Who Sees Me" (Genesis 16:13)

We find this name of God uttered by Hagar, mother of Ishmael. After she became pregnant with Ishmael Sarai became jealous and mistreated Hagar, so that she fled from her. The Angel of the Lord found Hagar near a spring in the desert. He told her to go back to her mistress, and that her descendants through Ishmael would be increased so that they would be too many to count. After this encounter she gave the name EL'ROI to the Lord who spoke to her, saying, "You are the God who sees me, for she said, I have now seen the One who sees me" (Gen. 16:13 NIV). This attribute was seen in Jesus when Philip brought Nathanel to Him in John 1:46-48. When Jesus saw Nathanel, He made it clear that He had seen what Nathanel was doing just previous to their meeting. In v. 48 Nathanel asked Jesus, "How do you know me?" Jesus told him that "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." This made an instant believer out of the skeptical Nathanel. God, in the Person of Jesus Christ always sees us, it is only as we can say with Hagar, "I have now seen the One who sees me" that victory comes in our lives!