

God's Sacred Names

Several years ago, a dear lady gave me a book entitled 'The Memorial Name, Yahweh'. The book declared that salvation was based on calling God Yahweh and if someone didn't, they would be lost. The seal of God was Yahweh. The greatest of the commandments was calling God Yahweh. According to the author, everything centered on calling God this one particular name. This over devotion to one of God's many names came to be after the return of the captives from Babylonian captivity. A group of students called the sopherim felt that Yahweh was the most sacred of God's names. At this time, the rabbis came to believe that Yahweh was even too sacred to pronounce.

Well, Yahweh is an awesome name for God, but it isn't the only one and it isn't even the first one used in the Bible to refer to the unseen Deity. God's many names serve a wonderful purpose in the Bible. They help us to understand what the Unseen God is really like; names reveal a person's character. This was not true only of God. When Jacob, the supplanter/deceiver finally gained the victory over himself, his name was changed to Israel 'for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.' Gen.32:28 When the direction of Saul's life was about to drastically change; when his life's work was about to be laid before him, his name was changed to Paul. When God appeared to Moses, notice what it says, "And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and in truth. Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty'...." Exodus 34:5-7 When God proclaimed His name to Moses, He proclaimed His character. By studying God's many names, we should catch a glimpse of His wonderful character!

The very first name for God in the Bible is Elohim. Elohim means the Mighty Covenant Maker, the One who always keeps His promises. What a wonderful first picture that the Unseen God gives to His children. 'I'm trustworthy and dependable; you can count on Me.' Elohim made covenants with everything that He made. Before He made the birds on the fifth day, Elohim made sure that they would have a home to sleep in their first night so He created the trees on the third day for their habitation. Elohim is faithful and worthy of trust! Elohim

is always encouraging us to look to Him because He will take care of us. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God (Elohim), and *there is* none else. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall *one* say, in the LORD (Yahweh) have I righteousness and strength.” Isaiah 45:22-24 Throughout the Old Testament, Elohim is translated in the KJV as ‘God’. Elohim is also plural. This leaves one with the idea that there is more than one being in the Godhead. As the Bible unfolds, it becomes very clear that there are actually three Persons in the Godhead; the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The second name for God in the Old Testament is Yahweh. The King James translates it as ‘LORD’. Whenever God introduces a new name for Himself, He always attaches it to a previous name so that the reader recognizes that He is the same God! Yahweh means ‘the One that is, the Supreme, Sovereign of the universe.’ He is the eternal One, the Judge of all the earth. Probably the best phrase to describe Yahweh is found in Ex. 3 with Moses at the burning bush. “And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, **I AM THAT I AM:**” Ex. 3:13, 14 Yahweh is the consummate Being, the One who is!

When Yahweh is introduced in Genesis 2, we find Him seeing/judging need and then going about to meet that need. There was no rain falling, so Yahweh sent a mist to take care of the need. (Genesis 2:5, 6) There was no one to take care of the garden, so Yahweh made a man to watch over it. (Genesis 2:8) Finally, all the creatures had mates, but the man did not. Yahweh saw the need and provided a woman for him. (Genesis 2:21, 22) Yahweh sees our needs and takes care of them!!!

Another name for God that we find in the Old Testament is El Roi. It is first recorded in Genesis 16 with the story of Hagar. When Hagar and Sarai had their battle over supremacy in their home, and Sarai dealt with Hagar, she fled not knowing where she went. She felt no one cared, but Someone was and loved her! “And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou *art* with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction... And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, **Thou**

God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? Wherefore the well was called **Beerlahairoi**; behold, *it is* between Kadesh and Bered.” Gen. 16:11-14 When everyone else isn't looking, El Roi is looking out for His children. When no one else cares, El Roi sees and is there to comfort His children. Beautiful, beautiful name!

Another name that so beautifully portrays the grandeur of God is the name El Shaddai. El Shaddai has as its base the Hebrew word shad. Shad denotes a mother's breast! From Leslie Hardinge's book, “His Name is Wonderful”, “This idea of almightiness, illustrated by a mother's breasts, is colored by her unique relationship to her infant... The mother loves her newborn because he is totally helpless, completely dependent and utterly vulnerable, and so she continues to give him everything she has and seeks to anticipate all his needs... She is able to provide his mental, physical, psychological, emotional, and social needs at her breasts.” Pg.56&57 El Shaddai first appears when Abram and Sarai have given up all hope for a child of their own. El Shaddai comes to provide their desperate need in their helpless situation. El Shaddai is translated in the KJV as ‘Almighty’. It is truly a wonderful study to watch Jacob/Israel as he flees from home,(Genesis 28:3) watches his boys commit heinous crimes,(Genesis 35:11) must send his only remaining son by Rachel to Egypt,(Genesis 43:14)and then in his final benediction says that El Shaddai has been with him the whole way.(Genesis 48:3) Over half the times El Shaddai is mentioned in the Old Testament can be found in the book of Job!

Sometimes God's names are combined together. One powerful name is Yahweh Sabbaoth. This name is translated in the KJV as LORD of hosts. It means the Sovereign Commander of the armies of the universe. This name illustrates the idea that one person with God is a majority! Hannah first invoked Yahweh Sabbaoth to give her a child and defeat her nemesis. (1Sam. 1:11) Zerrubabel asked that Yahweh Sabbaoth would defeat Israel's enemies and help rebuild the temple. (Zech 4:6, 7) The shepherd soldier told Goliath he didn't have a chance against Yahweh Sabbaoth. (1Samuel 17:45) Martin Luther sang that Yahweh Sabbaoth would carry the Reformation on His shoulders and halt the march of the Holy Roman Empire and Charles V. That name is in ‘A Mighty Fortress is our God’. Under the power of the Latter Rain, Ellen White promised the aid of Yahweh Sabbaoth to God's humble followers! (DA, pg. 352)

God's many names teach us of the Unseen who still watches over His children!

