
Yahweh: "LORD"

The only actual name of God is Yahweh. This is the name which was revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai when God called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egyptian bondage. The Lord told Moses, "... This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations" (Exodus 3:15).

The name "Yahweh" is an attempt to translate the four Hebrew letters "YHWH." These letters are brought into English translations in different ways. The King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, and the New American Standard Bible (updated edition) use the word "LORD," while the American Standard Version uses the word "Jehovah." Most Bible scholars think the correct translation is "Yahweh." This representation of the personal name of God (Exodus 3:15) occurs more than any other designation of Deity, appearing about 6,823 times in the Old Testament. Various other words, when used in conjunction with "Yahweh," bring additional meaning to this name.

YAHWEH 'ELOHIM: "LORD GOD"

The First Biblical Use of "Yahweh"

The first appearance of the word "Yahweh" in a description of Deity occurs with the word *'Elohim* in Genesis 2:4, "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God [*Yahweh 'Elohim*] made earth and heaven."

The word "God" was used by Moses thirty-four times in Genesis 1:1—2:3. Then he introduced the name "Yahweh" and used it nineteen times in Genesis 2:4—3:24, coupled with the word "God." Some have supposed that the sudden and complete change from saying "God" to saying "LORD God" indicates two authors. Such reasoning does violence to the unity and integrity of the Book of Genesis and shows disregard for Jesus' statement that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch (John 5:46, 47). More reverent is the assumption that God had a purpose in having His names written as they appear.

The divine purpose is not specified, but the first use of the personal name of God, "Yahweh," occurs in a context of very personal relationships between God and man, between Yahweh and Adam. Genesis 2 tells of Yahweh's breathing into Adam's nostrils, creating a garden, walking in the garden, making Eve, and having direct conversations with Adam and Eve. It seems reasonable that the carefully written Bible would use the most appropriate descriptions of Deity in exactly the right places.

The Revelation of the Meaning of "Yahweh"

For some reason God waited hundreds of years after Adam's time to reveal fully the meaning of

the name "Yahweh." Though it was in frequent use among the ancients,¹ the meaning of this name was not completely revealed by the Lord until He spoke to Moses in a flame of fire on Mount Horeb. When Moses was commissioned to leave Arabia and lead the Israelites out of Egypt, he told the Lord that the Israelites would want to know God's name. Then God not only specified the name "Yahweh" (Exodus 3:15), but He also explained its meaning as "the self-existent One": "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14), or "I exist because I exist."

Even the patriarchs who were close to God had not been given the privilege of such a definition of God's name. They were quite familiar with the phrase *'El Shaddai*, "God Almighty"; but God said, ". . . by [the meaning of] My name, LORD [Yahweh], I did not make Myself known to them" (Exodus 6:3). On this occasion, however, to grant Moses' request and to beget faith in the Israelites, God for the first time completely revealed the meaning of His name.

Although the definition of the name "Yahweh" was plainly given to Moses and to Israel, it belonged—and still belongs—to the deep things of God. No human being can comprehend the nature of a Being who had no be-getter. No human being can explain how a Being could exist without having a beginning, how One could be His own cause for being. Everything else must have a cause, and ultimately the cause for

¹The first record of the name "Yahweh" on human lips is by Eve (Genesis 4:1). It was used in the days of Seth by men in general (Genesis 4:26). Among others specified as having used the name were Abram (Genesis 15:2), his servant (Genesis 24:12), Laban and Bethuel (Genesis 24:50), Abimelech (Genesis 26:28), Jacob (Genesis 28:16), and Rachel (Genesis 30:24).

everything is God; but for God there was no cause. He is the uncaused Cause.

When a child asks his father how God came to be, he is asking a question his father cannot answer. When his father replies, "Just because He is God," he has gone as far back as he can, as far back as God went with Moses. A paraphrase might be "I am in existence because I am in existence; I exist because I am who I am." The very nature of Deity is self-existence. This cannot be explained; it must be accepted by faith. He who comes to God must believe that He is (Hebrews 11:6), but he cannot know why or how He exists.

The Israelites could not know how God came to be, but they listened to Moses, saw his miraculous works, and believed that God exists because He exists. Then they bowed low and worshiped (Exodus 4:31). Similarly, we cannot know how God came to be; but if we appreciate the grace of life, we will acknowledge, thank, worship, and serve Him in whom we live and move and have our being, and from whom all blessings proceed.

Jesus Is Yahweh

Thrilling is the thought that Jesus of Nazareth was more than a human being. Though physically He was a mortal man of Jewish ancestry, He—unlike any other human—existed prior to His Bethlehem advent. Before Abram lived, nearly two thousand years before the Bethlehem birth, Jesus was in existence as the *Logos*, the Word, who was God (John 1:1-3). He could use the same language of Himself in speaking to the Jews in Jerusalem that God used in identifying Himself to Moses: "I am" (John 8:58).

Long before Abraham's time, Jesus was described

as One whose "goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2). Understandable, therefore, is the biblical teaching that Yahweh (Isaiah 40:3) would come into the world. Behold, it was Jesus! (See Matthew 3:3.) Jesus Christ, then, is of the same nature as His Father. He is no less God, no less Yahweh, the self-existent One. Happy are they who put their trust in Him, and whose hope Yahweh is! (See Psalm 146:5.)

'ADONAI YAHWEH: "LORD GOD"

The first recorded time that Deity is described as "Lord" or "Master" occurs in Genesis 15:2. Abram addressed God as *'Adonai Yahweh*, meaning "Lord God."

Already it has been pointed out that the plural form *'Elohim* is used to reflect honor and authority, not a multiplicity of gods. Similarly, Abram in Genesis 15 used the plural form of the word "Lord" in reflecting the dignity, majesty, and respect due to Him who is Lord and Master of all things. Abram's use of the possessive pronoun "my" in the Hebrew indicates that he was making a confession of his own complete submission to Yahweh as his Lord and Master.

In this context, as God promised that He would be Abram's rewarder, Abram began to realize that the Lord Yahweh was in complete charge. Abram asked how God would reward a childless 85-year-old man and a 75-year-old barren wife. It is a high point in Abram's life and in Bible history that Abram had faith to accept God's word that He would reward Abram with descendants as numerous as the stars.

The Lord Yahweh in whom Abram believed so deeply is the same Lord Yahweh in whom all spiritual

children of Abram believe today. He is the One who “raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, He who was delivered over because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:24, 25).

**YAHWEH YIR’EH:
“THE LORD WILL PROVIDE”**

Later, Abraham used another name for Deity in Genesis 22:14: *Yahweh Yir’eh*, “The LORD Will Provide.” Abraham trusted God to provide what was needed.

A man of faith, Abraham told Isaac that God would provide the lamb for a burnt offering (Genesis 22:8). At that time, Abraham thought that the lamb would be Isaac himself. He did not know that God would provide a ram and spare Isaac. The joy that came to Abraham’s heart when he saw what God provided—when he experienced God’s providence—must have been unspeakable. Understandable, then, is the fact that Abraham named the unforgettable spot on the mountaintop *Yahweh Yir’eh*, “The LORD Will Provide.” Hundreds of years later, Abraham’s descendants rejoiced in God’s providence shown to their great ancestor. Apparently, they developed a proverb: “In the mount of Yahweh it will be provided.” This memorable incident in the life of Abraham not only bolstered his faith in God’s providence, but it has since strengthened the confidence of many others.

General Providence

That the Lord provides in general for all His creatures, giving rain from heaven and satisfying hearts with food and gladness, is well known (Acts 14:17). It is God who provides for the birds and clothes the lilies in beauty (Matthew 6:25–32). He who is kind to

the ungrateful and evil (Luke 6:35) makes the sun to rise on Christians and non-Christians alike. He sends showers on a sinner's farm just as He does on the farm of a saint (Matthew 5:45). In this general providence, He is the Savior of all men (1 Timothy 4:10).

Special Providence

Not only is *Yahweh Yir'eh* the Savior of all men, but "especially of believers" (1 Timothy 4:10). God foresees the needs of those devoted to righteousness, and for them He provides in a special way.

Since God is represented as our Father in the Bible, His special providence must be understood. No worthy father provides for his children only in a general sort of way, such as leaving a bank account and then disappearing. Good earthly fathers are not as good as the heavenly Father, but even they delight in giving personal attention to each of their children.

Sometimes prosperity is provided. Special providence to Christians sometimes means bigger paychecks. The Lord withholds no good thing from those who walk uprightly (Psalm 84:11). If Christians can righteously accept prosperity, using it to God's glory, *Yahweh Yir'eh* is able to make all grace abound to them (2 Corinthians 9:8). "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply . . . seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness" (2 Corinthians 9:10).

Sometimes adversity is provided. God's special providence can also mean adversity. He who knows the needs of all men sometimes, in His wisdom and love, deprives His saints of things which are not for their good. David never saw a righteous beggar (Psalm 37:25, 26), but Jesus did (Luke 16:19–31). Sometimes

the best of people need chastisement (Hebrews 12:2–6, 11). Happy is he who accepts chastening as a ministration from One who loves as only our Father can love. As a child who had unlimited confidence in the Father's care, Paul graciously accepted as for his good whatever God provided:

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need (Philippians 4:11, 12).

A man of Paul's energy and desire to preach must have felt sorely restricted by two years' confinement in chains. Nevertheless, he who wrote that all things work together for good to them that love the Lord (Romans 8:28) lived to see something good come from his imprisonment.

Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear (Philippians 1:12–14).

When one's mate has a terrible disease, or when some other tragedy strikes a family, it takes great faith to believe that somehow good will come out of it. In spite of the hardships he endured, Paul believed that God can make good come from any situation. He lived long enough to see it become a fact in his

own life. Some others will not live that long, but may they die in the faith that all things will cooperate for good to the ones who truly love Jesus!

Sometimes temptations are removed. The special providence over Christians also includes keeping the devil at a safe distance. Our ever-watchful God, able to give particular attention to each individual, is dependable: He will not allow a Christian to be tempted beyond his ability to resist, and He sees to it that a way of escape is always open (1 Corinthians 10:13). He does not force a Christian to resist or to escape; those actions are up to each disciple (James 4:7); but He sees to it that the power to resist and to escape is available. We might call this custom-made providence: Each temptation is tailored to a man's personal measurements.

Special Providence Need Not Be Miraculous

Though God, as *Yahweh Yir'eh*, has often intervened in a miraculous way, His providential hand is not limited to miracles. He can and does operate through His laws of nature to see that His saints get what they need and are deprived of what they do not need.

No miracle was required for a ram to be caught in a thicket. As far as the eunuch could know, it was a perfectly natural occurrence for Philip to come alongside his chariot. No miracle was involved in the Lord's using Paul's nephew to deliver Paul from assassination. No miracle need be supposed in regard to Paul's thorn in his flesh. God did not necessarily have to work a miracle to answer Elijah's prayer for rain.

Solomon's prayer for wisdom was answered mi-

raculously, but wisdom today is granted by prayer through natural laws (James 1:5–7). Though Peter’s deliverance from prison was miraculous, John’s deliverance from Domitian’s exile by the permission of Emperor Nerva in A.D. 96 was not miraculous. The fact that biblical miracles have passed away should not cause a Christian to despair of God’s special providence.

The Chief Example of Special Providence

The prime example of special providence is God’s supplying Jesus as a sin-bearer. As *Yahweh Yir’eh* provided a ram when Abraham was sorely in need, so the same *Yahweh Yir’eh* provided the Lamb of God in a special way when all mankind was in desperate need. As Abraham had to appropriate the ram and make use of it, so God’s unspeakable providential gift must be appropriated before forgiveness and joy can come to sinful souls.

God’s general providence to all mankind does not eliminate His special care for His children. He gives each one what is needed, whether pleasant or bitter. The passing of the age of miracles does not prevent the all-powerful and kindly disposed *Yahweh Yir’eh* from seeing to the requirements and happiness of His children.

YAHWEH NISSI:

“THE LORD IS MY BANNER”

The staff or rod which the shepherd Moses carried as he tended Jethro’s flock became quite famous. When Moses threw it on the ground, God’s power transformed it into a serpent (Exodus 4:3). It became a rod again when he picked it up. This miraculous

power was to convince the Hebrews that God had truly appeared to Moses. When the miracle was performed, the people believed, bowed their heads, and worshiped.

Apparently, the same rod was used miraculously in an unsuccessful attempt to convince Pharaoh to submit to God (Exodus 7:10). Likewise, it was used as the instrument by which God—through Moses and Aaron—turned water into blood, caused frogs to multiply, turned dust into lice (or sand flies or fleas), sent thunder and hail and caused fire to run along the ground, and produced a locust plague (Exodus 7:15—10:13). It probably also played a role in announcing the three days of darkness. When Moses lifted up his rod and stretched his hand out over the Red Sea, the sea was divided. The same procedure was evidently used to close the Red Sea. Then, in the wilderness, thirsty people were satisfied when water gushed from a rock which had been struck by Moses' rod (Numbers 20:11).

When the Israelites were attacked, as long as Moses held his rod aloft, God's people were winning the battle. When Moses' hands were heavy and he lowered them for rest, the enemy army prevailed. Victory for God's people came through the help of Aaron and Hur. With Moses seated, Aaron and Hur stood on each side of him and held up his hands until sundown. To commemorate the victory given to Israel by the Lord, Moses built an altar and named it *Yahweh Nissi*, "The LORD is My Banner" (Exodus 17:15). The rod which had been so useful for other purposes, Moses now called a *nes*—a banner, a flag, an ensign. Thus Moses declared that the Israelites had not won the battle with their own strength, but

that God had given the triumph.

Triumph over sin likewise is set forth under the illustration of a *nes*, a banner. A day would come, according to prophecy, when "the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; . . ." (Isaiah 11:10). God would set up Christ as a banner around which the nations and Israel would gather (Isaiah 11:12). A *nes*, a pole on which a bronze serpent was placed in the wilderness, became a type of the cross on which Christ was nailed (Numbers 21:8, 9; John 3:14). The Savior spoke of a *nes* (from *nasas*, meaning "to lift up, exalt, raise") in the form of a cross when He said, "I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32). Far more significant than a victory over the Amalekites is Jesus' victory over sin and the grave. He, too, is *Yahweh Nissi*, "the LORD . . . my Banner."

**YAHWEH SHALOM:
"THE LORD IS PEACE"**

When Gideon realized he had seen the angel of God face to face (Judges 6:22), he was afraid that he must die. When the Lord spared his life, saying, "Peace to you, do not fear; you shall not die," then the appreciative Gideon built an altar and called it *Yahweh Shalom*, "The LORD is Peace" (Judges 6:24).

That we as sinners might not die in our sins, the Lord, who is Peace, dispatched the Prince of Peace to make peace by the blood of His cross. In addition, *Yahweh Shalom*, as the God of Peace, brought from the dead the Lord Jesus that we might be made perfect in every good thing to do His will.

**YAHWEH TSEBA'OTH:
"THE LORD OF HOSTS"**

The expression *Yahweh Tseba'oth*, "the LORD of Hosts," represents the multitudes of things in nature, the hosts of men, and the myriads of angels under God's control. The unlimited power at God's disposal is depicted by vast numbers who are ready to do His bidding. This is the image described by the phrase as David called to Goliath: "You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have taunted" (1 Samuel 17:45). This same God rules over the sun, moon, and stars—"all the host of heaven" (Deuteronomy 4:19; Psalm 33:6). He is praised and served by innumerable angels (Genesis 32:1, 2; Psalms 103:20, 21; 148:2; Revelation 5:11).

In the New Testament, the first of two occurrences of the word *Tseba'oth* is in Romans 9:29, where it is written as "Sabaoth." Paul spoke of "the Lord of Sabaoth" as he quoted from Isaiah 1:9, which has "the LORD of hosts." The phrase is a description of the God of armies, the Lord of unlimited resources. He was able, according to the context, to deliver a remnant of Israelites from destruction and able to make Gentiles become His people. There was and is no restraint placed upon the Lord.

The second New Testament occurrence of the Old Testament phrase *Yahweh Tseba'oth* is in James 5:4, again rendered "the Lord of Sabaoth." There we read that the God of armies, of innumerable resources, would see to it that unfair labor practices were made right.

**YAHWEH TSIDQENU:
"THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS"**

When one is ready to lean wholly on Jesus as righteousness, then he is ready to praise God according to the predictive utterance *Yahweh Tsidqenu*, "the LORD our righteousness" in Jeremiah 23:6: "In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The LORD our righteousness.'" In order to do this, one must cease to trust his own righteousness (see Titus 3:5), knowing it is but a filthy garment (Isaiah 64:6). To the saved person, Jesus has become "wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30), in order that he who glories may glory in the Lord. Jesus became our sin-bearer: As He was on the cross, God looked upon Him as sin itself, though He knew no sin, in order that we might be declared righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21). When He became "a guilt offering" (Isaiah 53:10) on Calvary, God laid on Jesus "the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Jeremiah's prediction of Jesus as "the LORD our Righteousness" found vivid fulfillment in Paul's realization of Christ's incomparable righteousness:

. . . I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith (Philippians 3:8, 9).