

Names of God 2024 Pt. 4

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, April 28, 2024

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for joining us. Whether you are here in person or joining via the livestream you are most welcome! Please have a Bible at the ready and be prepared to take notes as you like. We have much to cover in a rather short space of time.

SETTING THE STAGE

NOTE 1 – We are in the midst of an extended series on the Names and Titles of God (i.e., OT emphasis) (**SLIDE**). We do well to review the Names and Titles of God, as each provides unique insight into His character and nature.

QUOTE – “Names were particularly important in the biblical world. The *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Words* reminds us that ‘in biblical cultures a name did more than identify; it communicated something of the essence, the character, or the reputation of the person or thing named.’ This fact helps us understand why the Bible is filled with so many and wonderful names of God. Each . . . reveals something about the essential nature and character of God (and no one name or title could possibly sum up who He is).”

QUOTE – “Scripture’s names and titles [i.e., for the Lord] are unveilings. Through the names and titles given, God unveils Himself, stripping off the layers of mystery, so that we might see [i.e., or know] Him as He really is.”

NOTE 2 – Thus far we have covered: **a)** ‘El ‘Olam (The Eternal God); **b)** ‘El ‘Shaddai (Almighty God); **c)** ‘El ‘Roi (The God Who Sees Me); **d)** ‘El ‘Elyon (God Most High); **e)** Eloah (Creator Who Protects or Destroys); **f)** Elohim (Almighty Creator); and **g)** Adonai (Master or Lord). This morning we have much more to cover. Let us delve in!

YHWH PT. 1

NOTE 1 – Today we will explore the primary Name or Title of God in the Old Testament scriptures: YHWH (**SLIDE**). In recent days I have noted that there are three primary Names and/or Titles for God in the Old Testament texts. Firstly, we noted Adonai (400-plus appearances). Secondly, we noted Elohim (app. two-thousand appearances).

Q. How many times does YHWH appear in the OT?

A. This Name or Title appears over 6,800 times in the OT.

NOTE 2 – Allow me to offer some interesting information regarding YHWH before we delve into its meaning(s):

YHWH PT. 2

Q. Why have I written Yahweh as YHWH on the screen?

A. Hebrew is a language of consonants. Vowel sounds are spoken of course, but are not traditionally written. Therefore, YHWH reflects the original rendering of this Most Holy Name. This four-letter combination is called the “Tetragrammaton” and is believed to be pronounced as “Yahweh” by most rabbinic and Christian scholars!

Q. Why are we unsure re: the pronunciation of this Name?

A. Beyond the lack of written vowels, ancient Jews came to never say YHWH aloud (i.e., it has been lost to time).

Q. Why would the ancient Jews not say the Name of God aloud?

NOTE 1 – Reverence for the personal Name of God was an established custom in the earliest history of Israel. Proper esteem for the Name of God is one of the Ten Commandments (cf. Exod. 20:7; Deut. 5:11), and cursing His Name was a sin punishable by death (Lev. 24:10–16). Thus said, it is no surprise to find Jewish people in the post-biblical period going to great lengths to reverence the Name YHWH. In fact, this Name became so sacred it became common practice NOT to pronounce it at all. How can you take His Name in vain if you never say it?

NOTE 2 – The fear of misusing the Name of the Lord impacted much of ancient Judaism (i.e., with great affect). For instance, a devout Jew reading the Word of God aloud would know never to pronounce YHWH while reading. Instead, it was customary for them to say the word Adonai in its place when they came upon YHWH in Scripture. Of course, even well-meaning Jews would make mistakes, and from time-to-time the faithful might say YHWH in the place of Adonai. Thus, the ancients came to insert a visual clue into the text, as a reminder to say Adonai.

Q. What visual clue did the Jews begin to insert as a reminder?

A. They added the vowels from Adonai and placed them into YHWH.

KEY – Doing so yields the following in the text each time YHWH appears:

Y e H o W a H (SLIDE)

FYI – The raised ^e is a half-vowel, and represents a hurried sound of barely distinguishable vocalic value (this is why ^adōnāy starts with an a, but the Masoretes point YHWH with an ^e). This “shewa,” as it is often called, is transcribed as *e* in the European languages.

NOTE 3 – When the English versions of the OT were established, it became customary for translators to translate this hybrid term as “Jehovah”; the *y* became represented by the *j* and the *w* by a *v* due to Germanic influences!

Q. Why does such information matter?

- A1.** Biblical history and related information always matters. We do well to be informed regarding our faith, etc.
- A2.** This opens our eyes to how the Jews perceived the Lord, challenging how casual we may treat Him at times.
- A3.** This challenges our theological presuppositions. Realize Jehovah is a man-made term not original to the text.

Q. Is there a way to know when YHWH appears in our English Bibles?

A. YHWH is represented in the English Bible as LORD (i.e., capitalization).

NOTE 4 – “Lordship” is not the essence of YHWH, though this is how it is presented to us in the English language.

Q. What does YHWH represent then? What is its significance?

A. Let us delve a bit deeper and consider how it is used in the Word:

(SLIDE)

YHWH PT. 3

NOTE 1 – YHWH first appears in Genesis 2:4 (creation of man) and the Patriarchs all called God by this Name. Yet Scripture makes it clear that God truly came to be known (i.e., experientially) as YHWH in the days of Moses:

Exodus 6:2–3 (NIV, Emphasis Mine)

2 God also said to Moses, “I am the LORD. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty [i.e., El Shaddai], but by my name the LORD **I did not make myself fully known to them.**”

Q1. Might it be that there are elements of the Name of the Lord (YHWH) that we cannot know w/out affliction?

Q2. Might it be that there are aspects of God’s nature we will never come to know apart from earthly adversity?

NOTE 2 – It is in the Story of the Exodus that the Name and Title YHWH would begin to take on deeper meaning:

KEY – Allow me the time to establish necessary context for what we are about to read. Turn to Exod. 3 as I share:

YHWH PT. 4

NOTE 1 – In the days of Joseph, great-grandson of Abraham, the family of Israel moved to Egypt amidst famine. Joseph served as a high-ranking official in that nation, and the family of Israel came to know welcome in Egypt. Yet some time later, in the opening pages of the Book of Exodus, we see a leader arise who spurned the Hebrews:

Exodus 1:6–14

6 Now Joseph and all his brothers and all that generation died, 7 but the Israelites were exceedingly fruitful; they multiplied greatly, increased in numbers and became so numerous that the land was filled with them.

8 Then a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt. 9 “Look,” he said to his people, “the Israelites have become far too numerous for us. 10 Come, we must deal shrewdly with them or they will become even more numerous and, if war breaks out, will join our enemies, fight against us and leave the country.”

11 So they put slave masters over them to oppress them with forced labor, and they built Pithom and Rameses as store cities for Pharaoh. 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread; so the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites 13 and worked them ruthlessly. 14 They made their lives bitter with harsh labor in brick and mortar and with all kinds of work in the fields; in all their harsh labor the Egyptians worked them ruthlessly.

NOTE 2 – After a series of events, including infanticide, Moses was born unto this oppressed or enslaved people. Through the faith-filled act of his mother, Moses came into the custody of the house of Pharaoh (grand irony). Moses would in time desire freedom for his people; his desire manifesting in the murder of an Egyptian taskmaster. This act compelled his exile from Egypt, at which time he came to tend herds in the land of Midian until age 80.

NOTE 3 – It was at the age of 80 when God would call upon Moses to serve a key role in the deliverance of Israel.

KEY – We will consider much of the call of Moses, but with an eye on understanding the import of YHWH. Note:

YHWH PT. 5

Exodus 3:1–15

1 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."

4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"

And Moses said, "Here I am."

5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

7 The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."

11 But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

12 And God said, "I will be with you. And this will be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain."

13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

14 God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

15 God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.'

"This is my name forever,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation."

YHWH PT. 6

Q. What do we see in this lengthy passage?

A1. We see that Moses is captivated by the sight of a “burning bush” that refused to be consumed by the fire(s):

Exodus 3:2–3

2 There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

A2. We see that it was from the burning (i.e., or non-burning) bush that the Lord God began to speak to Moses:

Exodus 3:5

5 “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”

FYI 1 – The removal of sandals was a sign of respect unto a superior. The place where God manifested was holy!

A3. We see God “identify” Himself. How did the Lord identify or establish Himself as He called unto aged Moses?

Exodus 3:6

6 Then he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

FYI 2 – Though centuries of horror(s) passed, God had not forgotten His covenantal connection to the Patriarchs!

A4. We also see God identify something of His divine character or nature. Let us consider the following passage:

Exodus 3:7–10

7 The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. 8 So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. 9 And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. 10 So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

Q. What do we see re: the Lord herein?

A. His omniscience; concern and compassion; covenantal nature; His nature to offer a sense of hope; His power!

A4. We also see something re: the frailty of man. How did Moses respond when called upon to serve the Lord?

Exodus 3:11

11 But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”

KEY – Those who read on into the subsequent chapter see said frailty on display as Moses tries to excuse himself!

YHWH PT. 7

KEY – Yet we see something fascinating take place in the latter part(s) of this chapter. Please note the following:

Exodus 3:13 (Emphasis Mine)

13 Moses said to God, “Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘**What is his name?**’ Then what shall I tell them?”

NOTE 1 – When Moses faced the issue of convincing the Hebrew slaves to receive him as an appointed herald, he sought out God’s Name. The form that the question takes is really the seeking of a description of character. Moses is not merely asking, “What shall I call you?” but “What is your nature and character? What are you like?”

Q. How did God respond?

Exodus 3:14 (Emphasis Mine)

14 God said to Moses, “**I am who I am.** This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘**I am** has sent me to you.’”

15 God also said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites, ‘The **LORD**, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.’”

NOTE 2 – The Hebrew for LORD (verse 15) sounds like and may be related to the Hebrew for “I am” v. 14. The underlying Hebrew of verse 14 (‘ehyeh) is seemingly a wordplay on YHWH (i.e., presented within verse 15).

YHWH PT. 8

Q. Yet what does this mean? Significance?

A. YHWH is derived from the Hebrew verb “to be” or “to exist.” Thus, YHWH is a statement of God’s existence.

Q. How else might this term be articulated?

A. He Who Is; I Am the One Who Always Is; I Was, I Am, I Always Will Be; the One who Forever Is and/or Exists.

KEY – As strange as this sounds, this may be the best way of defining the characters and nature of God: “He IS”

NOTE 1 – In a world where change is constant, there remains One who IS—One who serves as the only constant. Seasons come and go. Periods of adversity and affliction give way to periods of hope and prosperity. It is our nature to be born, to live and to die. Nations and kingdoms, entire civilizations rise for a time, and fall. Governments, rulers, tyrants and more come forth and soon disappear on the world stage; yet the Lord remains. He is timeless and He endures. He exists without beginning and without end. He is permanent. God simply “IS.”

QUOTE – “The phrase translated ‘I am who I am’ in Hebrew is ehyeh asher ehyeh. The word ehyeh is the first person common singular of the verb to be. It would be used in any number of normal situations: ‘I am watching the sheep,’ ‘I am walking on the road,’ or ‘I am his father.’ However, when used as a stand-alone description, I AM is the ultimate statement of self-sufficiency, self-existence, and immediate presence. God’s existence is not contingent upon anyone else. His plans are not contingent upon any circumstances. He promises that He will be what He will be; that is, He will be the eternally constant God. He stands, ever-present and unchangeable, completely sufficient in Himself to do what He wills to do and to accomplish what He wills to accomplish.

Q. How can we not be moved by this statement of “self-existence”?

Q. Why would this reality be significant to Moses and the enslaved Hebrews?

A. Moses was about to challenge the authority of one, Pharaoh, who held the lives of men and the most powerful empire of the earth in his hands. Yet Moses was commissioned by the One who existed from eternity past and would long endure after Pharaoh and his empire were but dust. God was reminding Moses and the people that Pharaoh drew his very breath according to the pleasure of the One who made Him and allowed him to reign! Yes, the Hebrews had been oppressed for a time, but the timeless One was about to reverse defeat unto victory. The power of a temporal man was about to be broken by One who reigns in heaven, unchecked and unrivaled.

NOTE 2 – Thus, this Name helped to provide necessary perspective to the people of God and His chosen servant.

YHWH PT. 9

KEY – However, YHWH is a nuanced term. In other words, there are multiple levels of application to this Name:

NOTE 1 – It is worth noting that the Hebrew form YHWH is not a passive, but active verb. What does this mean? This indicates “being or existence in action.” That is, God does not simply exist; He actively exists and is actively connected with and committed to those who are His. Consider this statement from a trusted theologian/scholar:

QUOTE – “The name YHWH, related to the verb ‘to be or exist,’ speaks of God’s self-existent nature. However, it means more than that. As YHWH, He is ever present with His people. God was present with the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), with the Israelites in bondage, with Moses and more. He is the God who is in covenant with His people, hears their cries, redeems them, delivers them, sustains them, and leads them into the fullness of His promise. YHWH reveals God as the ‘One Who is Faithfully Present’ with His people and active on their behalf.”

NOTE 2 – Thus, this term conveys a sense of proximity, intimacy and connection with His people (now and then)!

Q. Can we not sense these elements in the very call of Moses?

A. His awareness of their suffering; His desire to bring forth remedy!

Q. Why might this nuance be pivotal to Moses and the people of God?

A1. Moses was sent to challenge the authority of the most powerful man on the earth; one who ruled absolutely. Yet he would not go before Pharaoh alone or in his own power. No, He would be backed by One Who Endures; the One who would empower Him and be present with Him for the task at hand.

A2. Moreover, the people of God had experienced centuries of servitude and pain. It would be natural for them to think that God had forgotten them. What a revelation it would have been to hear that the God of your ancestors was yet for you, had been with you amidst affliction, and yet had a good plan!

NOTE 3 – This term YHWH yet has application, for consider the word of God to Moses at the time of his calling:

Exodus 3:15b

“This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.”

Q1. Do we know God as the permanent One (self-existence) and as the connected One (i.e., with us always)?

Q2. Can we not revel in the “One Who Forever Exists and is Faithfully Present”? I believe that you and I should!

NOTE 4 – Learn to consider every appearing of LORD as an opportunity to consider these aspects of His nature:

Psalms 23:1 (Emphasis Mine)

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

Joshua 1:8–9 (Emphasis Mine)

8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Isaiah 43:2–3a (Emphasis Mine)

2 When you pass through the waters,
I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.
When you walk through the fire,
you will not be burned;
the flames will not set you ablaze.
3 For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior

YHWH PT. 10

NOTE 1 – Clearly the Name YHWH and the themes it touches upon are critical to our understanding of the Lord.

NOTE 2 – Much like prior terms we have covered, it was common for the ancients to add descriptors to YHWH (i.e., forming a family of interrelated Names or Titles). In the weeks to come we will address a slate of them! Please plan on being part of future installments and review the sermons and notes online at your convenience.

CONCLUSION

NOTE 1 – Feel free to give either in person or online at www.NewLifeBarre.org.

NOTE 2 – Check out our website for any of our beyond Sunday ministries (MM; WM; CYC).

NOTE 3 – Potluck Supper following Service this AM. Special guest during Potluck (OCC Recipient).

Numbers 6:24–26 (Emphasis Mine)

24 The **LORD** bless you

and keep you;

25 the **LORD** make his face shine on you

and be gracious to you;

26 the **LORD** turn his face toward you

and give you peace.