

Names of God from the Bible

3 – YHWH

Every name of God is an eternal Name. Jehovah / Yahweh / Adonai.

Reading: Exodus 3:1-15

Before looking at this Scripture it is important that we look at the three variants. The 'basic' name for the deity of God in the Old Testament was transliterated as Adonai. We looked at Elohim at the beginning of our series and saw that it was the distinguishing name for God within the local communities. It revealed God's uniqueness from all other gods.

When we come to Yahweh, we find it more a question of a name for Israel's God. Yahweh and Jehovah are the same name. In the original language, we find just four letters – YHWH (sometimes referred to as the tetragram). However, scholars inserted vowels to make it easier to pronounce; YHWH became Yahweh and consequently transliterated as Jehovah.

Whilst the name may have been used prior to this event in Moses' life, it nevertheless became more common a term from this point on.

I want to look at how and why this name was established by God.

Moses was born of Hebrew parents living in Goshen, Egypt. Because of Pharaoh's decree, Moses should have been murdered at birth. Despite this, his mother, Jochebed, weaned him and, when she could no longer hide him, made a casket out of rushes and placed him in it, close to where Pharaoh's daughter usually went to bathe.

After Pharaoh's daughter discovered Moses, she asked Jochebed to look after Moses. Moses' mother undoubtedly taught him about the existence of Elohim and how a deliverer would soon arise to rescue the Hebrew people.

Eventually, Moses was returned to Pharaoh's daughter where he was groomed as a prince of Egypt. However, he must have felt an alien within the palace. One day, on seeing an Egyptian taskmaster beat a Hebrew, Moses took revenge in his own hands and murdered the Egyptian. When Moses realised he could no longer hide his guilt, he ran for his life into the desert. There he met Jethro's daughter, Zipporah, whom he later married. Moses continued to live in the desert as a shepherd.

Into this humdrum and routine existence God intervened. God chose to use a vision of a burning bush to get Moses' attention. When Moses drew near, God spoke to him and revealed His plan for delivering the Israelites from Egypt. God introduced Himself as "*The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.*" What I find strange is that, during the conversation, Moses suddenly asked God, "*If the Hebrew leaders ask me who sent me, what should I reply?*" God had already told Moses who He was: "*The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.*" So what was Moses' question all about?

There may be many reasons for Moses' question, however, I think one may be that Moses wanted a 'new' name, a name that would be so special it would not only galvanise his hearers but also prove that he was on special terms with God.

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Whatever Moses' reason for asking, God was gracious enough to listen to his request and give him the doom-shattering, history-making, life-giving revelation that His Name was YHWH. I AM WHO I AM. The Great I AM. I will be what I will be. What a Name!

Just think – you have just been invited to go and lead the Israelite 'nation' out of the nation of Egypt, to break free from oppression and slavery. You might need a bit of help, you might need a bit of authority greater than that of the Pharaohs and you might need a bit of power to accomplish the task, and the One who calls you says – I AM. Wow, wow, wow. What more could Moses possibly need now?

What does that name mean for us today

He is the I AM... Whatever you need, whatever you truly and righteously desire, He is. He is the Answer to every heartfelt cry. He is the Answer to all your fears. He is the Answer to this hurting world's needs. He is still the Great I AM.

Prayer

Father, the Great I AM, thank You for being my God and my Heavenly Father. I worship You for Who You are. Thank You for giving me the privilege of praying to You and for being able to have an intimate relationship with You. Thank You that You are the same yesterday, today and forever. Amen.

Additional Readings

- Genesis 6:1-12
- Psalm 83
- Isaiah 12

Questions

1. How do you think Moses felt when God revealed the name YHWH to him?
2. Has God revealed Himself in this way to you? How and when?
3. How does Jesus fulfil that name?