

NAMES OF GOD

Psalm 72:19

By Mike Burnham

Psalm 72:19 And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen. (KJV)

The people of Biblical times and lands valued the name of the person. They always gave to it symbolical or character meaning. While our modern names are almost exclusively intended merely for identification, the Biblical names were also descriptive, and often prophetic. Religious significance was nearly always figured in the name, a parent relating his child to the Deity, or declaring its consecration to the Deity, by joining the name of the Deity with the service which the child should render, or perhaps commemorating in a name the favor of God in the gracious gift of the child, e.g. Nathanael ("gift of God"); Samuel ("heard of God"); Adonijah ("Yahweh is my Lord"), especially the name given to Our Lord at His birth: *"Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people"* <Mt 1:21>.

Great honor or dishonor was attached to a name. The Old Testament writings contain many and varied instances of this. Sometimes contempt for certain reprobate men would be most expressively indicated by a change of name, e.g. the change of Esh-baal, "man of Baal," to Ish-bosheth, "man of shame" (<2 Sam 2:8> ff), and the omission of Yahweh from the name of the apostate king, Ahaz (2 Kin 15:38, etc.). The name of the last king of Judah was changed by Nebuchadnezzar from Mattaniah to Zedekiah, to assure his fidelity to his overlord who made him king <2 Kin 24:17>.

Since the Scriptures of the Old Testament and New Testament are essentially for purposes of revelation, and since the Hebrews laid such store by names, we should expect the scriptures to make the Divine name a

medium of revelation and expressive of His nature. And what one name could be adequate to God's greatness? There is none, so the Old Testament contains a number of names and compound names for God which reveal Him in some aspect of His character and dealings with mankind.

The many forms or varieties of the name will be considered under the following heads: (1) Absolute or Personal Names, (2) Attributive, or Qualifying Names, and (3) Names of God in the New Testament.

ELOHIM (el-lo-heem) (Greek Theos)

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning *God* created the heaven and the earth. (KJV)

The Hebrew word from which the word God is translated is Elohim. While not the most frequently occurring word for the Deity, it occurs 2570 times. Elohim is derived from the shorter word AEl@, which means mighty, strong, prominent. This word El is translated AGod@ some 250 times and frequently in circumstances which especially indicate the great power of God.

Numbers 23:22-23 God (El) brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. **23** Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God (El) wrought!

Deuteronomy 10:17 For the LORD your God (Elohim) is God (Elohim) of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God (El), a mighty, and a terrible (dreadful), which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: (KJV)

Elohim may be said to express the idea of greatness and glory. But it also contains the idea of creative and governing power, of omnipotence and sovereignty. This is indicated by the fact that from Genesis 1:1 to 2:4 the word Elohim alone is used, and that thirty-five times. By this name God revealed Himself as bringing the world out of chaos, light out of darkness, habitation out of desolation, and live in His image.

Joseph on his deathbed declares to his brethren:

Genesis 50:24 And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God (Elohim) will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land unto the land which he sware to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. (KJV)

Jeremiah 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God (Elohim), and they shall be my people. (KJV)

The Plural Form

A peculiarity about this word *Elohim* is that it is in the plural, but its verb or adjective is always singular, unless used of heathen deities. In the first verse of Genesis the verb create is singular, and so all through the chapter and on through the Old Testament. In many places we find singular pronouns:

Isaiah 45:5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God (Elohim) beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God (Elohim), and there is none else. (KJV)

Other places in the scriptures use *adjectives* in the singular with Elohim;

2 Kings 19:4 It may be the LORD thy God (Elohim) will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the *living* God (Elohim); and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God (Elohim) hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.

16 LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the *living* God (Elohim). (KJV)

Psalm 7:9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the *righteous* God (Elohim) trieth the hearts and reins. (KJV)

Psalm 57:2 I will cry unto God (Elohim) *most high*; unto God (El)(mighty) that performeth all things for me. (KJV)

Elohim is used to express the Godhead. This one Elohim speaks of Himself as *Us*;

Genesis 1:26 And God (Elohim) said, Let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

Colossians 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: (KJV)

This verse tells us that Christ created all things. But creation is the act of Elohim. Therefore, Christ is in the Elohim or Godhead. And in verse 3 of Genesis one we see the Spirit of the Elohim moved or brooded over the face of the waters as He creates order and beauty out of chaos and darkness (Isa. 40:12,14; Job 26:13; 33:4).

Lord (Ad-ho-nay) (Greek Kyrios)

Lord occurs some 300 times and means One who rules over everything external to Him.

Zechariah 6:5 And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth. (KJV)

The word emphasizes God's sovereignty and is frequently combined

with Yahweh and Elohim;

Psalm 2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the *Lord* shall have them in derision. (KJV)

Genesis 15:8 And he said, Lord GOD, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? (KJV)

Isaiah 7:7 Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. (KJV)

The word signifies ownership or mastership and is translated owner once and master many times. Abraham, after his rescue of Lot and his defeat of the four kings and their armies, heard God speak to him in a vision and in his reply he addresses God as Adhonay Jehovah@, in acknowledgment that Jehovah is also his Master, that is, God's complete possession of and perfect right to all that he was and had.

Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

2 And Abram said, Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? (KJV)

In those days the relationship of master and slave was much closer than the hired servant, who was free to come and go as he wished. In Israel, the hired servant who was a stranger might not eat of the Passover or the holy things of the master's house, but the purchased slave, as belonging to his master, and so a member of the family, possessed this privilege;

Exodus 12:43 And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof:

44 But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.

45 A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof. (KJV)

Leviticus 22:10 There shall no stranger eat of the holy thing: a sojourner of the priest, or an hired servant, shall not eat of the holy thing.

11 But if the priest buy any soul with his money, he shall eat of it, and he that is born in his house: they shall eat of his meat. (KJV)

The slave had the right of the master's protection and help and direction. Nor was the relationship lacking in affection. In the absence of seed, a slave, Eliezer, is the heir of Abram's entire household. This is what the Psalmist meant in;

Psalm 123:1 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that he have mercy upon us. (KJV)

So in Genesis 15:1-2 we see that the Lord is Abraham's Master who protects, helps, and guides him and to whom he looks for help.

Another interesting and significant fact is that when used of God it is almost always used in its plural form AAdhonay@ and when used of men it is always in the singular form Aadhon.@ The suggestion of the Trinity is in the name ALord@ like it is in AElohim.@ It is more than suggested when we at its use in;

Psalm 110:1 The LORD (Jehovah) said unto my Lord (Adhon), Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. (KJV)

Jesus refers this passage to Himself:

Matthew 22:41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,

42 Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.

43 He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,

44 The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?

45 If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? (KJV)

How significant it is that David, speaking of but one member of the Trinity, should use here not the plural AAdhonay@, but the singular form AAdhon@!

Daniel addresses God as Lord in his prayer of forgiveness and restoration of the people and Jerusalem since it is God as Lord and Master whose will they have disobeyed;

Daniel 9:4 And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

5 We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments:

19 O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name. (KJV)

Throughout the Old Testament those who know God as Lord acknowledge themselves as servants. Over and over we read, Moses, the servant of the Lord.@

Genesis 18:3 And said, My Lord, if now I have found favour in thy sight, pass not away, I pray thee, from thy servant: (KJV)

Exodus 4:10 And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant:

but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. (KJV)

Exodus 32:12 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. (KJV)

Deuteronomy 3:24 O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? (KJV)

2 Samuel 7:21 For thy word's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all these great things, to make thy servant know them. (KJV)

Nehemiah 1:11 O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer. (KJV)

The meaning of (Adonay) is carried over into the New Testament as Lord and Master. We are not hired servants. We are bought with a price and we now belong to the Lord and are to glorify Him in body and spirit;

1 Corinthians 6:19 What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (KJV)

Thomas, when he finally believed said to the Lord:

John 20:28 And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and

my God. (KJV)

The disciples called Jesus Master and Lord and He accepted it:

John 13:3 Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;

4 He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself.

5 After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.

6 Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?

7 Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8 Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.

9 Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

10 Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.

11 For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

1 So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?

13 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.

14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet.

15 For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have

done to you. (KJV)

Jesus Christ is Lord and Master and most, if not all, called themselves His servant:

Paul (Rom. 1:1); Paul and Timothy (Phil. 1:1); James (Jas. 1:1); Peter (2Pe. 1:1); John (Rev. 1:1). In fact we are called servants (1Co. 7:22-23).

Paul spoke of himself as a "servant," a word sometimes rendered as "bondservant" but frequently also as "slave". Christians are not hired servants, but slaves committed to service to Jesus. A slave does not manage his own life. The person who calls himself a slave of Christ acknowledges that the Savior has power over him.

Service to the Lord involves voluntary service, one who gives himself up to God's will, one who is devoted to the Lord over and above one's own interests. The picture, I believe, is that of a love slave of the Old Testament:

In the case of a slave's release in the seventh year there was allowed a willing choice of indefinite slavery.

Exodus 21:6 Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever. (KJV)

A pierced ear probably meant obedience to the master's voice.

Deuteronomy 15:15 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.

16 And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee;

17 Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise. (KJV)

This word *ALord@* was spoken aloud in place of the word *AYahweh@* by the Jews. When you see Lord in all capital letters, LORD, in the King James Version you are not reading Adonay but Yahweh or Jehovah. There is another combination using the word *ALord@* that I will mention here because it follows the same pattern.

Ezekiel 36:33 Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.

Notice that here we have Lord along with GOD in all capital letters. GOD is a slight variation of the word Yahovah (Ya-ho-vaw).@ The only difference is one letter of the spelling, AYahwih (Ya-ho-vee).@ Where Adonay (Lord) is spoken in place of Jehovah by the Jews, Elohim (God) is spoken in place of Jehovee. Though this isn't true in every case (Eze. 37:9; 38:10; 39:25) it appears to be in most cases. Yahovah (Jehovah) is used many more times than Yahovih (Jehovee) but they are both used throughout the Old Testament.

JEHOVAH (YAHWEH)

In the King James Version of our Bible the Hebrew word *Jehovah* is translated "**LORD**" in capitals to distinguish it from another Hebrew word, Adonay, also translated Lord. Jehovah is found 6,823 times in the Old Testament. It appears for the first time in Genesis 2:4 with Elohim as Jehovah-Elohim.

Etymology and Meaning of the Name

The word *Jehovah* is derived from the Hebrew verb "to be," or "being." It is also almost exactly like the Hebrew verb "to live," or "life." When we read the name Jehovah, or Lord in capital letters, we should think in terms of being or existence and life. Jehovah is the Being who is absolutely self-existent, the One who in Himself possesses life, permanent existence. For

instance, when Moses spoke to God at the burning bush and asked who he should say sent him God replied "I am that I am" Or "I will be that I will be" (Exo. 3:14-15; 6:2-3). If I understand these two passages correctly, the Patriarchs used the name Jehovah as the title of God (Elohim) and its full meaning was not revealed to them. Now, after some hundreds of years the true significance of the name was revealed to Moses of God as a personal, living Being fulfilling to the people of Israel the promises made to their fathers.

Strictly speaking, Jehovah is the only "Name" of God. In Genesis wherever the word name is associated with the divine being that name is Jehovah. (Gen. 12:8; 13:4; 26:25). God is a Person and Jehovah is His personal Name which brings Him into a relationship with other human personalities. God (Elohim) is the general name of God concerned with the creation and preservation of the world, that is, His works *As Jehovah*, He is the God of revelation, especially to Israel.

It is interesting, as one writer points out, to note the change of these two names (Jehovah and God (Elohim)) of deity throughout the Old Testament beyond Exodus 6:3. Books that speak mainly to all people and nations, such as, Ecclesiastes, Daniel, and Jonah, have God (Elohim) almost exclusively. On the other hand, the strong theocratic and historical books relating to Israel, such as, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, have chiefly LORD (Jehovah). The same is true of Psalms, which may be divided on this basis into two parts. Psalms 42 to 84 almost exclusively use God (Elohim) and other compound names of God; while the other Psalms use chiefly LORD (Jehovah). It is not merely a matter of difference of authors, for Psalms in both sections are ascribed to David. It is rather a difference of purpose.

Genesis 14:17-22....Notice in verse 18 that Melchizedek blesses Abraham in the name of the most high God (EL elyon). Most high indicates God exultation, or the Exulted One, the Supreme God. Then the king of Sodom offers Abraham a gift, which he refuses, lifting up his hand to the LORD (YAHWEH, JEHOVAH). He means that he also worships the supreme

God, but knows Him by the name of Jehovah.

Genesis 27:20...Jacob deceives his father with the words, "Because the LORD (YAHWEY) thy God (Elohim) brought it to me." To interchange Yahwey and Elohim would not make sense. Yahweh is the name by which his father worships the supreme God (Elohim).

ATTRIBUTES OF LOVE, HOLINESS AND RIGHTEOUS REVEALED IN JEHOVAH

As previously noted, the name Jehovah does not appear till Genesis 2:4. Till then the narrative is concerned only with the general account of the entire creation. But now begins the special account of the creation of man and God's special relationship to man as distinct from the lower creation. God now comes into communion with the one whom He has made in His image, and the Elohim now is called Jehovah-Elohim, who blesses the earth for man's sake. God called man into existence as the one being on earth who would have the capacity for the enjoyment of God.

It was as Jehovah that God places man under moral obligations with the warning of punishment for disobedience (Gen. 2:15-17). It may be significant that when Satan tempts Eve to disobedience, he does not mention the name Jehovah, but only Elohim, nor does Eve mention it in her reply to him (Gen. 3:1-5). Could it be that with a sense of guilt within Eve caused her to suppress that name?