

## Introduction to God's Names

by Rod Reynolds

Have you ever considered that there are many names and titles used of God in the Bible? Some of the Hebrew names used of God are: Elohim, Yahweh, Adonai, Yah, El, Eloah, Elyon, Shaddai. Some of these are used in combination with other words to form divine titles, such as Yahweh-Jireh (The Eternal Will See or Provide), Yahweh-Ropheka (The Eternal Who Heals You), Yahweh-Nissi (The Eternal My Banner), Yahweh-Mekaddishkem (The Eternal Who Sanctifies You), Yahweh-Amah (The Eternal Our Maker), Immanuel (God Is with Us), these being only a few.

Other titles and descriptive names are used of God as well, such as Melchizedek (King of Righteousness), and in English such titles as the Portion of Jacob, the Rock of Our Salvation, the Prince or King of Peace, Wonderful, Holy One of Israel, Counselor, Redeemer, Shepherd of Israel, Everlasting Father, Savior, Refuge, Strength, Fortress, Deliverer, Creator. All these and more are from the Old Testament. The New Testament adds more, such as Jesus Christ, the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Lord God Omnipotent, Apostle, High Priest, the Light of the World, the Father of Lights, the Bread of Life.

Why so many names for God? The reason is that God in his word names things what they are. God is a great being, greater than our minds can fully comprehend. He fills many roles, many offices, has many responsibilities. There are a multitude of facets to his character and nature. The various names and titles highlight different aspects of who God is and what he is like.

The more we understand of God the more close and personal our relationship with him can be -- the more we can love him (Psalm 91:14-16). Understanding the meaning of God's names can help us to grasp more fully the greatness of his power and mercy -- and hence trust in him more (Psalm 20:7).

"There is no one like you, Yahweh [or Eternal, or Everliving One]; you are great, and **your name is great** in might. Who should not fear you, King of the nations?" (Jeremiah 10:6-7, World English Bible). The better we know God the more we can learn to fear and reverence him. Israel in ancient times forgot God's name through the deceit of false prophets who misrepresented God and lied to the people (Jeremiah 23:25-27). The people themselves were rebellious against God and wanted to believe lies (Isaiah 30:9-14). As a result they lost their inheritance (2 Kings 17:5-10; Jeremiah 24:8-10; 25:1-11). Similar events are in the beginning stages of happening today among the modern nations consisting largely of peoples descended from Israel, including the United States, British and some other English speaking nations, and some of the western European

peoples -- formerly professing to be "Christian" nations, but increasingly casting off any restraint based on Scripture. And those peoples are already beginning to experience God's blessings being withdrawn, and hence eventually losing the physical inheritance promised to Israel's descendants in the "latter days" (Genesis 49:1). God's inheritance is the reward of those who properly fear his name (Ps. 61:5). [Note: Various authors have researched and written about peoples and nations identified as having descended from the tribes of ancient Israel (cf. a partial list: *The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy*, Herbert W. Armstrong; *The 'Lost' Ten Tribes of Israel...Found!*, Steven M. Collins; *The Story of Celto-Saxon Israel*, W. H. Bennett; *Missing Links Discovered in Assyrian Tablets*, E. Raymond Capt; [hebrewnations.com](http://hebrewnations.com); [ephraimswatchman.org](http://ephraimswatchman.org); [britam.org](http://britam.org); I don't necessarily agree with all the claims and conclusions in these resources, but there is much to learn from them, and the reader can examine the evidence and draw his own conclusions)].

The faithful who abide in God's word are called by his name (Jeremiah 15:16). The true Church bears the name of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 1:2; et al). It is said of the Philadelphia era of the Church in part "you...have not denied my name" (Revelation 3:8). He who overcomes bears the name of God (Revelation 3:12). Those present in the New Jerusalem shall have the name of God on their foreheads (Revelation 22:4), symbolic of having engraved in their minds the knowledge of the inherent meaning of God's name and the spiritual and intellectual likeness of God which his name expresses.

We are not to take or use God's name in vain (Exodus 20:7). God's name should never be used carelessly or thoughtlessly. It should never be used as a byword. Often in the world, and sometimes even among Church members, we hear the expression "My God" or "Lord" used as an exclamation. We should never use God's name in such an irreverent, disrespectful manner. We are to pray "Hallowed [holy] be Your Name" (Matthew 6:9). And we should always treat God's name as holy and worthy of the deepest care and respect.

Below I discuss just a few of the names and titles of God as an introduction to the subject. It will be only a bare introduction because as we've seen there are many names used of God, each with its own meaning and implications. It would be worthwhile to systematically study the names of God and learn all you can about them.

**Elohim** -- plural of El -- mighty or strong one. Elohim means literally "mighty ones" or "Gods." However, it is commonly used in a singular sense, and is properly translated "God." As a plural word often used in a singular sense Elohim lends itself to the concept of God as a compound unity, that is, a unified Godhead consisting of more than one being. That is the concept of God presented in the Bible, and is the true implication of the phrase, "the LORD our God is one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4). Elohim, being a

plural word, reveals that God is a family: "Let us make man in our image..." (Genesis 1:26-27; also John 1:1-3; Ephesians 3:14-15). Elohim is first used in Genesis 1:1 and is the only name for God used in Genesis 1. Its use there connects the name Elohim with God's role as Creator. Elohim accentuates the power and might of God as Creator of all things. Its use generally implies God's relationship as Creator to his creation or his creatures, including mankind. This is in contrast to Yahweh, which is used in connection with God's covenant relationship with his people. (See the contrast in 2 Chronicles 18:31: Jehoshaphat, name of the king of Israel, a compound word meaning Yahweh-judged or judges, and "God," Elohim, diverted the Syrians). The name occurs 2,250 times (*Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible*, "God, Names of," p. 297).

**Yahweh** -- is derived from the Hebrew root *hayah* (to be). It means the one who is, the One who exists, or by extension, the Self-existing One or the Eternal. Yahweh being derived from the verb *hayah* to be, was considered to signify God as *eternal* and immutable, who will never be other than the same. It's meaning is defined in Genesis 21:33; Psalm 90:1-2 (*olam* -- everlasting, simply means an unknown or indefinite period of time, often, depending on the context, a very long period of time; the expression "everlasting to everlasting," however, means eternity). The meaning of Yahweh was also explained by God to Moses: "I AM WHO I AM" -- God is explaining that his name Yahweh implies an existence and nature unbounded and unaffected by time (Exodus 3:13-15. See also Revelation 1:8; Colossians 1:17).

While *EI* is used in connection with God's relation as Creator to his creatures, Yahweh is the covenant name of God. It is this name that God especially uses in connection with his covenant relationship with Israel and the people of the earth. He created the earth as Elohim. He dealt personally with Adam and Eve as Yahweh-Elohim (the Eternal God). When Noah emerged from the ark he built an altar and sacrificed to Yahweh -- the Eternal (Genesis 8:20). God revealed himself to Abraham and made a covenant with him as Yahweh (Genesis 15:1-7). God also revealed himself to Abraham using other names as well, which have their own significance (Genesis 17:1, 3; 21:33; 24:27).

It's pointed out in some commentaries that Yahweh was the national name of Israel for God, because Israel stood in a special covenant relationship with God. All idols worshipped by men are things made by God or even things made by men, such as images made of metal, wood or stone. But the true God is Eternal, self-existing, and far transcends the idols and images worshipped or manufactured by men (Isaiah 40:18-31; 46:3-13; Psalms 89:6-18; Jeremiah 10:16). The name Yahweh, the Eternal or self-existing One, should be a constant reminder of the supremacy of the true God over idols (Exodus 20:1-5). God wanted Israel to remember that he is invisible and Eternal God, unlike the Gods of the nations. They made a golden calf, and called it the Eternal (Exodus 32:4-5). Associating the name of God, especially Yahweh, with idol worship was a sin Israel continued in for most of its history. For this God rejected them. He will

not share his glory with idols (Isaiah 42:8). Since God is the Eternal and unchanging God and represents himself in that very way as a covenant God (Malachi 3:6), we can be assured that he will keep the promises of his covenants, with Abraham, with Israel, with the Church, with each of us. Also, as the Eternal, God is the source and well-spring of all life (Job 12:9-10; Psalms 104:24-31; John 6:35, 53-54; Acts 17:25).

**Jesus Christ** -- English translation of Greek *Iēsoûs Christós*, which in turn is from the Hebrew. *Yehoshua Mashiach* = the Eternal Savior King & Priest ("Christ" from the Greek *Christós* means "Anointed One": As God's anointed one (Hebrews 1:8-12), the prophesied Messiah (John 1:41), Jesus Christ unites the offices of King and Priest, along with also prophet and apostle). Jesus Christ is eternal (John 8:58; Revelation 1:8). He is Savior (Philippians 3:20). He is King (Revelation 11:15; 19:11-16). He is High Priest (Hebrews 9:11). A prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15; Luke 7:16; Acts 3:22-23). An Apostle (Hebrews 3:1). The full covenant name embodies the two cardinal points of the covenant (Hebrews 10:16-17).

We're told that if we reverence God and meditate on God's name he will remember us (Malachi 3:16). Why not spend time often meditating on the name, or names, of God? Why not look up in the Scriptures other names of God, and learn all you can about them, and meditate on them. Think about God's name often, it will help you develop a more meaningful and fruitful relationship with him, the kind that he wants us to have.

Copyright © 2024 by Messenger Church of God

Unless otherwise noted Scripture taken from the New King James Version™  
Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.



Messenger Church of God  
PO Box 619  
Wentzville, MO 63385  
USA  
[cogmessenger.org](http://cogmessenger.org)