

The Names of God

O LORD, our Lord, How excellent is your name in all the earth,
Ps 8:1

1. Introduction

The names God chooses to reveal himself by are of immense importance in understanding his attributes. Also the interpretation of certain scriptures hangs on the particular name (or names) used; so it behoves believers to have a grasp of these divine names. This paper seeks to give a foundational explanation of the names with little comment. For this reason the paper is in note form and not sustained discourse.

Names in the Bible

Names are usually indicative of character, hence the reason for changing names; e.g. Jacob = deceiver, Israel = Prince with God.

God's names

Similarly, the particular choice, or use, of God's names tells us something about his character or attributes. God desires to make himself known to us and uses specific names or titles for himself, e.g. Lord, God, Yahweh (= Jehovah see study 8). There are also phrases used describing an aspect of God, e.g. Lord of Hosts, Almighty God, Prince of Peace, Jehovah Jireh etc. No one name is sufficient for the greatness of God. The names, mostly revealed by God himself, manifest something of his divine nature or character.

[Note: a separate name for 'goddess' does not appear in the Hebrew OT. Whenever a pagan goddess is named (such as Astarte - 1 Kg 11:5, 33 - the word 'god', *elohim*, is used. All versions translate this wrongly!]

The name of God

Sometimes, a specific name for God is not mentioned and instead the phrase 'the name of God' or 'the name of the Lord' is used instead. Examples would be:

- I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving. (Ps 69:30)
- Daniel answered and said, 'Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his.' (Dan 2:20)
- Then *men* began to call on the name of the LORD. (Gen 4:26)
- And there Abram called on the name of the LORD. (Gen 13:4)
- So he built an altar there and called on the name of the LORD. (Gen 26:25)

This is clearly connected with worshipping God in all his perfections. The 'name of God' is the fulness and perfection of all that God is. The opposite of calling on God's name is to dishonour God by emptying his name of value: You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold *him* guiltless who takes His name in vain (Ex 20:7). The word 'vain' here means 'emptiness, nothingness, vanity, falseness, worthlessness'. It means treating God's person with derision by using his name superficially or in an empty or worthless manner. By demeaning God's name, a person treats God with contempt.

The 'name of God' is the most common expression in the OT for God's self-manifestation to men; it is something tangible that represents God to men, which describes his being. God reveals himself by proclaiming (making known) his name (Ex 6:3, 33:19, 34:5). His servants are authorised to act for God by his name (Ex 3:13, 15; 1 Sam 17:45). Men worship by calling on the name of God (Gen 12:8, 13:4), by fearing it (Deut 28:58), praising it (2 Sam 22:50), or glorifying it (Ps 86:9). God's dwelling place is where he causes his name to dwell (Deut 12:11; 2 Sam 7:13; 1 Kg 3:2).

Biblical revelation

The Bible develops ideas gradually; this is called 'progressive revelation'. For example, the prophets show more about God's plan than David understood; the Gospels reveal even more, the apostolic letters explain it fully. There is also a development of God's names; the further you go, the more you know.

The fullest, final and most complete revelation of God is in the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1-3); but note that the presence of God in Christ was a manifestation of God's name (Jn 17:6).

The Godhead

God is one yet three persons. He is a unity of indivisible essence, yet a trinity of persons. He is a wonderful God beyond our comprehension. Each person in the Godhead has his own function: the Father initiates; the Son accomplishes and the Holy Spirit applies the Son's work to the Father's plan. The names of God bring out the differences of these persons.

Main Old Testament names

In Genesis we see: God (in Hebrew *Elohim*), Lord (*Yahweh*), Almighty (*El Shaddai*), Most High (*El Elyon*), These four reveal characteristics of God; they tell us what God is. In Psalm 91:1-2 we see all four at once - **He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD [Yahweh], '*He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, [Elohim]* in Him I will trust.'**

After these we see others such as: Lord (*Adonai*), Everlasting God (*El Olam*), Lord of Hosts (*Yahweh Tsebaoth*). These describe God's relation to certain other things.

God meets all our needs by revealing something of himself. We can look to him for help knowing what he is like, how he helps, how he will react.

2. God

Biblical data

El lae

- Strong's number 410 = 411; a shortened form of 352 ('*ul* 'strength').
- The word can refer to God, a god, mighty one, mighty men, angels, strength, power. *El* primarily means power or might ('power' Gen 31:29; 'might' Deut 28:32; Ps 29:1).
- The word in the Hebrew text appears 4374 times, and is translated as God 213 times in the KJV.
- The plural form = *Elim* ('mighty ones' Ps 29:1).
- It is the most simple name for God.
- There is much disagreement over its derivation.
 - The most probable root is Strong's number 352 ^{lyia}" '*ul*, (written as '*ayil* by Strong): 'ruler, strong, mighty, the first', e.g. Gen 14:20. Thus a general meaning of: 'Mighty'.
 - Another likely possibility is from the root '*lh* meaning 'to be strong, powerful' or 'direction, sphere of control'. Thus a general meaning of: 'Leader'
 - A final possibility is the root '*l* meaning 'to bind', hence 'binding force'. Thus a general meaning of: 'Governor'
 - These meanings stress the distance between God and man.
- It is usually followed by an adjective, e.g. *El Olam* (Everlasting God).
- It was the most common designation of God in the Ancient Near East; the chief Canaanite god was called 'El'.
- Note that the name of the people of God, Israel, was formed with *El* (lit. 'God prevails' or 'prince with God'; Jacob's new name) not *Yahweh*. The formation of God's people through the patriarchs was prior to the full revelation of the covenant name *Yahweh*.
- To distinguish the true God it was sometimes combined with other words, such as 'God, the God of Israel' (Gen 33:20).
- Men were named with 'el' as part of the compound word, such as: Ishmael (Gen 16:11), Methusael (Gen 4:18).

Elah Hl'a/

- Properly '*elāh*. Strong's number 426, corresponds to 433 (*eloah*). It refers to God or a god; i.e. a general term for God or a god.
- This is an Aramaic (Chaldean) word only found in Ezra and Daniel which = 'God', 'an object of worship' and is the equivalent of *Eloah*. It is a cognate (related word) of '*allāh* (the Arabic term for 'god') and is used for the true God and false gods (in one verse it is used for a divine messenger - Dan 3:25). In Dan 4:8-9, 18, 5:11 the phrase 'the spirit of the holy gods' is used - but this is explained as being spoken by pagans.
- Often Ezra used additional words to clarify he meant the true God, such as, 'God of Israel' (Ezra 5:1, 6:14), 'God of Jerusalem' (Ezra 7:19) or 'God of heaven' (Ezra 5:12, 6:9). There is one verse written in Aramaic in Jeremiah, and this uses *elah* to describe false gods (Jer 10:11).

Eloah H;Ala

- *Eloah* is the singular form of *Elohim*.

- It is rare for 'God' and is found mostly in Job [41 times, note that Job and his friends were not Israelites, thus would not use *Yahweh*] 16 times elsewhere, mostly poetry (e.g. Ps 18:31, 50:22, 139:19; Prov 30:5).
- *Eloah* is Strong's number 433 (properly 'elôah i.e. *Elowah*) is the equivalent of the Aramaic *elah* and the Ugaritic *il*.
- For derivation see *Elohim*. Most likely meaning = 'God, the power to be dreaded,'
- Some dispute about whether this is the singular form of *Elohim* or whether it derives from *El*.

Elohim ~yhil{a

- Properly '*Elôhim*. The first name of God ever spoken (Gen 3:3).
- Strong's number 430, plural of 433 (*Elowah, Eloah*).
- The word can refer to judges, rulers, God, gods, angels, works/possessions of God, It appears about 2570 times in the OT. Like *El* it is a title more than a proper name.
- It appears as a name of God only in Hebrew and not other Semitic languages (Oehler, p88).
- The word is used as a superlative on occasion since Hebrew lacks a grammatical form for intensification. Thus in Jonah 3:3, 'exceedingly' = *elohim*; literally, the 'great city of God', but to be translated as a superlative. This is also true of *El*: thus Ps 80:10, 'mighty cedars' ('goodly' KJV) = 'cedars of God'; Ps 36:6 'great mountains' = 'mountains of God', meaning majestic mountains.
- Possible root =
 - 'ālâh 'mighty' or 'to be smitten with fear, reverence'.
 - Another possible root is that it is a related word of *El* and from the same root 'ul ('strength').
 - Another suggestion is the root 'lh meaning 'dread'.
- The plural form *Elohim* is used for intensity, i.e. to speak of fulness of power and majesty (Isa 44:8). [Technically this is an abstract plural, not a true numeric plural. It is used with other words in the singular. The normal plural form is *elahin*.] Only in the quoted speeches of pagans is the word used as an actual plural in reference to God (1 Sam 4:8; 2 Sam 7:23; Deut 5:26).
- *Yahweh* speaks about what God is in himself; *Elohim* is the impression made by his power. It is the ordinary Hebrew word for God and is also used of heathen gods. It is the only name used for God in the first chapter of Genesis where it is found in nearly every verse. *Elohim* is the creator God.
- It emphasises his majesty and glory (Isa 40:28, 65:16); implying his role as Judge (Ps 50:6, 58:11, 75:7); his role as Saviour (Gen 17:8, 26:4); his leadership of his dependent people (Gen 48:15; Ps 4:1; Jer 23:23). Bavinck (p.139) sees *Elohim* as describing the divine being in his relation to the universe; a designation of relationship not of inner being, expressing the idea of absolute transcendence. This is the heart of the word.
- *Elohim* is formed (according to some) from the Hebrew 'Alâh meaning: 'to swear' [Strong's number 423 there are several Hebrew words spelled similarly!]. Andrew Jukes sees this as describing one in covenant relationship (cf. Ps 110:4), i.e. referring to the oath or covenant God made with us in Christ through grace. This covenant is the basis of our relationship with God (Gen 6:13, 18, 19:9, 17, 17:1-8; 1 Kg 8:23; Heb 6:13-20). Is this really construed by *Elohim*? *Yahweh* is God's covenant name.
- Some consider that the many plural references speak of the Trinity relating to man in covenant terms; e.g. 'Let us make man' (Gen 1:26), 'God my makers' (Job 35:10), 'remember thy creators' (Eccles 12:1), Prov 9:10; Isa 54:5 - but this is stretching the interpretation;

Calvin refused to do this. The plurality is intensive, for grammatical emphasis - fulness of power. Often the plural form is not so translated.

| Name | Meaning | Symbolism |
|---------------|---------|--|
| EI | God | Power |
| Elah | God | Worship |
| Eloah | God | Majesty, power, to smite with fear |
| Elohim | God | Fulness of power, majesty, omnipotence; creator and sustainer. |

| Elohim | Yahweh |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Divine title | Divine proper name |
| Descriptive of power | Descriptive of person |
| General revelation | Special revelation |
| God's sovereignty | God's covenant of mercy |
| God as creator | God in relationship to his people |
| Judge | Saviour |
| Used of men as delegated authority | Never used of men |
| Used in OT to describe pagan gods | Only used for the true God |

| EI | Yahweh |
|---|--|
| Divine title | Divine proper name |
| Descriptive of power | Descriptive of person |
| General revelation | Special revelation |
| Emphasises distance from man. | Emphasises closeness to the elect. |
| Used in OT to describe pagan gods | Only used for the true God |
| Used to refer to deity by foreign nations | No evidence of use by heathen cultures |
| Used as the proper name for the high god in pagan cultures. | Not used in this way. |

Application

- God is all-powerful, the King (Eph 1:19); he is in sovereign control of all things.
- We need to have a healthy fear of God, as Jesus did (Heb 5:7; 1 Pt 2:17; Eccles 12:13; Acts 5:11) resulting in humility before God and true reverence; true obedience as a son to a father (Ps 103:10-14; 1 Pt 1:17). Fear and love go together.
- Worship is based upon who God is and what he has done for us, not how we feel (2 Sam 22:1-4)
- Surrender to God (Rm 12:1).

3. El Elyon - God Most High

Biblical data

- Formed from *El* (Strong's no, 352) and !Ayl.[, *Elyon* (or *Elyown*; Strong's no, 5945).
- *Elyon* derives from the root, 'Ālāh, 'to ascend, go up', Strong's number 5927. [Some have suggested from 'Ālāh, 'to swear', Strong's number 423). It means: 'high, upper, exalted, highest, most high' and is used of God, rulers and angels. It appears 53 times in the KJV.
- *Elyon* literally means: 'highest'.
- Refers to God's exaltation and supremacy (cf. 1 Tim 6:15-16). The word was also used by the Phoenicians and Carthaginians.
- NB Micah 6:6 uses 'exalted' (*Marowm* not *Elyon*).
- First appearance is in Gen 14:18 (see also Heb 7:3). Used by Melchizedek, the high priest of God, Balaam and Nebuchadnezzar. The use of this title by Gentiles, and an examination of the other references, show that this name particularly reveals the relationship of God to all the world; even outsiders to the faith use this name.
- The word is used in connection with *El*, *Elohim* (God Most High), and *Yahweh* (Lord Most High).
- It occurs less than 25 times (cf. *Elohim* used 2570 times). About two thirds of the occurrences refer to God as a proper name.
- It appears mostly in poetry reflecting the omnipotence and overwhelming majesty of God.

Application

- God is the highest; as such he is, 'possessor of heaven and earth'; Gen 14:19-22.
- He does whatever is according to his will; he is sovereign.
- His kingdom is everlasting, Dan 4:34-35.
- His kingdom is over all, Rm 9:5.
- He is God of gods, supreme over angels and demons, Ps 136:2.
- All things are from him, to him and through him, Rm 11:36; Col 1:15-17; Eph 1:21-23.
- If the world fails to know God as their master now (*Elohim*), or as redeemer (*Yahweh*), it will know him as 'Most High' at the end.

4. El Shaddai - Almighty God

Biblical data

- Formed by *El* (God) and *shaddai* yD;v; (almighty): Strong's no. 7706 (from 'powerful' 7703). *Shaddai* is translated as 'almighty' 48 times in the KJV and 35 times as the name for God ('the Almighty'); mostly in Job. 'Almighty God' (*El Shaddai*) appears 7 times.
- The first appearance of *El Shaddai* for God is in Gen 17:1. This is the first time God gives a special revelation about himself: the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, 'I *am* Almighty God; walk before me and be blameless.'
- The various ideas about the root word are:
 - from *shadad* - [7703] 'to be powerful, violent'; the rabbis thought that the word meant *self sufficient*;
 - or from the Akkadian *shadu* - 'a mountain', i.e. enduring strength;
 - or from *shad* - 'to pour forth, bountiful' (from the word for 'breast'). The Hebrew word for 'breast' is very similar to *shaddai*.
- NB that *El* also primarily means power or might (Gen 31:29; Deut 28:32; Ps 29:1); so the addition of *shaddai* means something more than just 'power'. In my opinion, it is probably best to see this name as: all-power in enduring sufficiency to complete God's plan of grace.
- The name stresses God's greatness as a source of blessing and fruitfulness, not as an object of fear.
- Almightyness is the power to carry out the divine will and the work of grace. God is not limited by things that he cannot do (e.g. lie, sin).
- This name is involved with fruitfulness (Gen 17:1-2, 28:3, 35:11). It indicates the fulness and riches of God's grace, which he always pours forth upon his people.
- Shaddai appears in personal names (e.g. Zurishaddai, Num 1:6).
- The name's first appearance in Gen 17:1 is where there is a fresh revelation of God to Abram, whose name is changed to Abraham and then becomes fruitful. It is the point where Abram yields to God instead of trusting the flesh. *El Shaddai* served as the covenant name of God for the patriarchs until the time of Moses (Ex 6:3). It was the name most used then to indicate the God who makes the powers of nature subject and subservient to the work of grace. From this point God is identified as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God is no longer an object of dread but of comfort to his people and his power the guarantee of the fulfilment of covenant promises.

Application

- God subjects **all** powers to divine grace. God is all powerful *for his people*, see his acts in the Old Testament. The way forward is always to discover God's will first, then get in line, then expect great things. Don't limit God (Eph 3:20).
- God is all powerful *in his people* e.g. 2 Cor 12:9. Meekness before God is necessary to receive grace from God, not strength or gifts (Jm 1:21, 4:10; Ps 119:130). Meekness = controlled power (e.g. a bridled horse). We must submit to God as Abram did to be fruitful like Abraham whose name means '*the father of a multitude*'.
- God is all powerful *in salvation*. The Gospel is an expression of God's power (Rm 1:16; 1 Cor 1:24). Expect power in witnessing. Formulas and methods are no good alone.
- God is the only source of blessing, he empowers his people to bear fruit (Gal 5:22-23).

- Believers should not limit God in their expectations (Eph 3:20).
- God always gives grace to his people and is gracious to his children (Heb 4:16).

5. El Olam - Everlasting God

Biblical data

- Formed by *El* with *Olam* literally meaning, 'God of the ages' or 'God of eternity'.
- *Olam* ׀ל = Strong's number 5769 appearing 439 times in KJV, usually as 'forever' or 'everlasting'. It means: long duration, forever, everlasting, evermore, perpetual, always, continuous existence, perpetual, eternity. *Olam* is derived from ׀ל"ל; '*alam* [5956] a primitive root meaning: to veil from sight, i.e. conceal (literally or figuratively); thence time hidden from man.
- The *God of the Ages* is the God who works out his will throughout the ages of time towards the consummation of his unchanging purpose.
- First and only clear mention in Gen 21:10, 22, 33 when Abraham has received Isaac and must cast Hagar and Ishmael out; i.e. when Sonship in Christ is produced by the Gospel and the fruit of the law is expelled, a new phase of Gospel history (Gal 4:22, 30). Thus the name is associated with Beersheba (Gen 21:25-34).
- There is a suggestion of continuity and stability in the name; God is not affected by the vicissitudes of time. God is unchangeable (Mal 3:6; Heb 1:10-12).
- Gen 21:33 is the only place where the title *El Olam* occurs, but Isa 40:28 uses *olam* in conjunction with 'God' (*elohim*); but Paul also uses the term in Greek in Rm 16:26 [aivwni,ou qeou/, *aionios theos*].

Application

- Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever (Rev 15:7).
- For every phase of our lives God is there to bless us and lift us up.
- God is active in every phase of church history.
- God never tires, he will always sustain his people and give grace (Isa 40:28).
- God can always meet every new situation, nothing takes him by surprise since he sees then end from the beginning. Indeed, God predestines all things according to his will and moulds every day of our lives to his purpose (Ps 56:8, 139:15-16; Matt 10:29-30).

| Name | Meaning | Symbolism |
|------------|-----------------|--|
| El Elyon | Most High God | Sovereignty, exaltation |
| El Shaddai | Almighty God | Power in enduring sufficiency, fruitfulness and blessing in grace. |
| El Olam | Everlasting God | Eternity, immutability |

6. Other Compounds with El

El Roi yair\ la

- The God of seeing. [Pronounced Ro-ee] *Roi* is Strong's number 7210 (from the root 7200 - 'looking, appearance, seeing, sight') meaning: 'to see, look at, perceive, consider.'
- Gen 16:13 - used by Hagar when the Lord revealed himself to her in the desert after conceiving Ishmael. The translations of this name vary significantly: KJV - Thou God seest me; NKJV - You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees; ASV/NAS/NAB - Thou (you) art a God who sees; RSV - Thou art a God of seeing; NRS - You are El-roi; Darby - Thou art the God who reveals himself; BBE - You are a God who is seen; Young's Lit, - Thou {art}, O God, my beholder; LXE (Septuagint) Thou art God who seest me. Thus most translations view this phrase as a description of God rather than a name of God.
- Gen 16:14, the well was named *Beerlahairoi* by Hagar; [Strong's 883, from 875 & 2416] meaning: 'well of the Living One seeing me'. She was utterly shocked to have seen a manifestation of God who deemed to see her in her situation (probably due to being raised in Egypt worshipping false, powerless Gods).
- This is the only occasion where God is named by a human being; and this is done not only by a woman but an Egyptian woman.
- God sees everything and allows himself to be seen (Ps 33:13-15).
- No one is hidden before him, he sees our inmost thoughts and intentions (Heb 4:13; Ps 139:7-12).
- To the disobedient God's presence is fearful, he comes in judgment. To the worshipper he comes with grace, even if that person is an Egyptian outcast like Hagar.

El Rechum

The God of compassion (Deut 4:31).

El Berith

The God of the Covenant (Jud 9:46).

El Nose

[Pronounced Naw-saw] The forgiving God (Ps 99:8).

El Channum

The gracious God (Neh 9:31)

El Kannah

The jealous God (Ex 20:5).

El Elohe Israel

God, the God of Israel (Isa 45:3).

These phrases are really descriptions of God rather than specific names; but traditionally they are included in the list of God's names. However, we cannot positively state that these are formal names. Even 'the God of Israel' is not a formal name expressing a divine attribute, but a name that identifies the true God in comparison with the gods of heathen nations. Often God's name (such as *El* or *Yahweh*) introduces the phrase - 'the God of Israel'. With or without this, the term 'God of Israel' occurs 201 times in the OT and NT.

7. Adonai - Lord

Biblical data

- *Adonai* or *Adonay* [yn"doa] pronounced ad-o-noy] is Strong's number 136, being an emphatic plural form of 113 (*Adon*) with a pronoun suffix 'my'. It means: 'my lord, lord, God, lord over all'. The suffix later ceased to have meaning and served to distinguish God from a human master. The use with singular pronouns and verb shows that it means 'the Lord' (Gen 18:3).
- The singular form is *Adown* [!Ada' 136] or the shortened form *Adon* [!doa'], meaning: 'master, lord, God, owner, king'; from a root meaning 'to rule'. It is also used occasionally as a form of respectful address (Gen 18:12, 32:18). It refers to sovereign authority rather than ownership (which is represented by *ba'al*; e.g. Joseph was *adon* over Pharaoh's household but didn't own it).
- The normal plural is *Adoniym* or *Adoney* as used for 'my master, my lord, my owner' but when used to apply to God a special termination is used - *Adonai*. *Adon* also means 'judge' and derives from *dun* or *adan*: 'to judge, or rule'. The words were common in foreign cultures meaning 'lord' or 'master'.
- *Adonai* appears in Hebrew royal personal names, such as: Adonijah, Adonikam, Adoniram.
- *Adonai* first appears (with Yahweh) in Gen 15:2 where Abraham addresses God as Lord (*Adonai*) God (*Yahweh*). It was often used instinctively when someone was in need or worried (as here) or when Moses lacked eloquence (Ex 4:10).
- As a divine name *Adonai* appears 439 times and *Adon* 30 times.
- The plural form is much more frequent but examples of the singular use for God include: Ex 23:17, 34:23; Jos 3:11, 13. Note Deut 10:17: For the LORD [Yahweh] your God [elohim] is God [elohim] of gods [elohim] and Lord ['adown] of lords, ['adown] the great God [el], mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality.
- It is not found often in the Pentateuch or the historical books, but is frequent in Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Amos.
- The word is also used for men, e.g. husbands, princes, kings and masters of slaves (Gen 24:9, 10, 12; Ex 21:4, 5, 6).
- It stresses God's sovereignty as Lord and judge over all, the mighty ruler demanding obedience; able to reward and punish (Hos 12:14).
- It equates to the Greek *Kurios* (Lord).
- It is very often used with other words for God: 'Lord God' is frequently *Adonai Yahweh*. Sometimes as 'my Lord and my God' (Ps 35:23).
- Often understanding the Hebrew names involved transform a certain verse. For example Ps 110:1, The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.' This is literally, 'Yahweh said to Adown'; i.e. 'The LORD said to my Lord' or 'God the Father said to my Lord Messiah (i.e. the Son).' [Cf. Matt 22:45]
- What is in view is the relationship of a master to a slave, a relationship that is personal but involved rights of possession, ownership, lordship. The slave in the house had certain privileges (which the hired servant did not have) e.g. sharing the Passover (Ex 12:45; Lev 22:10, 11).
- This name for God is very familiar to Jews since it was used as a substitute for *Yahweh* which was considered too holy to pronounce.

Application

- God is our king and master who requires our obedience (Mal 3:17).
- Jesus is our great example of servant-hood, he only did God the Father's will (Matt 6:24).
- God, as a husband to his bride, should have our submission in return for his love (Isa 54:5-8).
- God is the great judge of all sinful men (Heb 9:27).
- God (Christ) is our judge (2 Cor 5:10).
- We must rely on God's faithfulness and power for everything as a slave to his master. God is our sufficiency, he provides for the work he has given us (2 Cor 3:5-6; Phil 4:19).
- God is sovereign, he controls all things according to his purpose (Lam 3:37-38; Rm 5:17, 8:28; Ps 138:8).
- God's sovereignty is the foundation of the Gospel; we must take pains not to minimise this with modern lukewarm ideas based on a divine universal love.
- Is Jesus Lord in every area of my life?

8. Yahweh - Lord

Biblical data

Technical information about the word's construction

- Yahweh, hw"hoi> = Strong's number 3068, is formed from 1961 [*hayah* - to exist, become] and occurs 6519 times in the KJV and 6518 times in the Masoretic text used by the Brown, Driver, Briggs Lexicon. [It appears 6,823 times, according to the Jewish Encyclopaedia; 6,828 times according to the Biblia Hebraica and Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia Hebrew texts].
- Many Bible versions identify *Yahweh* by using 'LORD' in large and small capital letters, to distinguish it from *Adonai* which appears as 'Lord' in lower-case letters.
- This word is called 'The Tetragrammaton' (or 'tetragram', Greek for 'four letters') since it appears in the original Hebrew as the consonants YHWH without any vowels. We have no certain way of knowing what its vowels were and cannot be sure of its pronunciation.
- Because the ancient pronunciation differs from the modern pronunciation, it is common today to represent hw"hoi as YHWH rather than YHVH.
- Out of fear later Jews read *Adonai* when they saw it in the text since they believed *Yahweh* was too sacred to be spoken, so just the consonants were used. This was caused by misunderstanding Lev 24:16 (reading 'utter distinctly' instead of 'blaspheming') so Jews thought the mere mention of the name was a capital offence. Jews never wrote the name *Yahweh* on paper in case it fell to the floor and was trodden on. Instead of pronouncing *Yahweh* they would say, 'the Name' or 'the four-lettered name' etc. We do not know when this superstition developed, but by the time of the LXX (Greek OT) the translators read *Adonai* and translated the word by *kurios* (Lord). So, by 300 BC, when *Yahweh* was read it was pronounced as *Adonai*; but when *Yahweh* followed *Adonai* it was pronounced as *Elohim*.
- The OT text was standardised by Jewish textual scribes called the Masoretes who lived from the 5th-9th centuries. This text was called the Masoretic text and is the basis of our OT translation. When the Masoretes added vowels to the Hebrew text (it was originally written without them) they added vowel points to *Yahweh* to indicate that *Adonai* should be pronounced instead. So the text has the consonants YHWH plus the vowel points of *Adonai*. However, when YHWH was added to *Adonai* ('Lord God') the vowel points of *Elohim* were used.
- The traditional form of this word in English, based on the KJV, is *Jehovah*, formed from a transliteration of the word in the Hebrew text, thus YaHoWaH. This is an arbitrary construction, since it was not known then that the vowel points were an instruction to read *Adonai*; though now it is well loved through hymns and sermons. [This word was introduced, despite much opposition, in 1518 by the Pope's confessor, Franciscan theologian and Hebrew scholar Petrus Galatinus, who used the Latin transcription *lehoua* as a combination, in English, of YHVH with the vowels of *Adonai*.]
- Another tradition seeks to explain *Yahweh* as derived from three different verb forms sharing the same root YWH: **Yehiye** (YHYH = 'he will be') + **hove** (or howe, HWH = 'being' or 'he is') + **hahyah** (HYH = 'he was') thus Yehovah or Jehovah. This is fantasy.
- The first *English* transcription of God's name is 'lehouah' as found in Tyndale's Pentateuch, which was written in 1530. Then the English letter 'u', when being used as a consonant, was pronounced like the English letter 'v' today. The 'J' in *Jehovah* is a result of Martin Luther's rendering of *Yahweh* in his German translation of the Masoretic Text first published in 1534. J was unknown in any alphabet until the 14th

century. The letters J & I originally had the consonantal sound of Y, but eventually, the two were differentiated, with J acquiring consonantal force and the I becoming a vowel. By 1630 the differentiation became general in England and Luther's transliteration was preferred in early English translations. The first 1611 edition of the KJV has 'Iehovah'; but during the revisions of 1762-1769 the spelling was changed to 'Jehovah' (as I/J and U/V differentiated into separate letters over the course of the 17th century).

- The best scholarship is agreed that the closest pronunciation is *Yahweh*, or perhaps *Javeh* originally.
 - In the 19th century scholars began to use this pronunciation as being more accurate.
 - The divine name *Jah* and the forms *Yeho*, *Yo* and *Yah* (which occur in proper names such as the Hebrew forms of Jehoshaphat, Joshua, Shephatiah) can all be derived from *Yahweh*.
 - However, the form *Yahweh* is actually ancient. Early Christian writers, such as Clement of Alexandria (2nd century) had used a form like *Yahweh* [*laoue* or *laouai*] while other ancient Greek manuscripts and inscriptions also show that YHWH should be pronounced *Yahweh*; thus this pronunciation was never lost. [See for example: Philo Byblius - *leuo*; Jerome - *Jaho*; Origen & Didorus Siculus - *lae*; Theodoret & Epiphanius - *labe*.] Therefore, the use of *Jehovah* is more modern and more inaccurate than *Yahweh*. All the oldest information refers back to a pronunciation of *Yahweh*. *Jehovah* is not even like a Hebrew word type. The excellent and learned conservative, reformed theologian Herman Bavinck states '*The pronunciation of "Jehovah" is of recent origin*' (p141). Both Reymond (p156) and Barton Payne (p147) call it '*impossible*'. VanGemeren says - "*Jehovah" does not represent any known ancient pronunciation*' (4:1296)
 - Greek transcriptions *labe*, *laoue*, *laouai*, *lae* confirm that *Yahweh* is the correct pronunciation.
- *Jah* or *yah*, *Jahu* or *Yahu* and *Y'ho* or *Yo* are shortened forms of the word (e.g. Ex 17:16 [Heb]; Ps 68:4; Isa 12:2, 26:4, 38:11). These are found as a prefix or suffix in many compound names (e.g. **Elijah**, **Ahijah**, **Jehoshua**) and other words like *Halleluyah* ('praise the Lord'). Occasionally the form *Yah* stands alone (Ex 15:2).
- *Yahweh* never occurs in the plural or with a suffix for 'God'.
- *Yahweh* is used with other names for God, e.g. *Elohim* and with other designations to form compound names (see next study).

Technical information about the word's meaning

- Just as its pronunciation is debated, so is its meaning. It is fitting that mystery surrounds this name. The exact derivation of the name is uncertain. The best option is to let scripture speak for itself, as it does in Exodus 3.
- *Yahweh* is probably a noun derived from the third person imperfect of the verb 'to be', *hayah* (Ex 3:13-15) and cannot be translated by one word. It essentially means 'I am', 'I am who I am'; or better 'He who is', or 'He who is what He is'. It can also mean, 'I will be who I will be' or 'I will cause to be what I will cause to be' or even 'the eternal'. Thus although we see written 'the living *Elohim*' we never see 'the living *Yahweh*' since the word means the self-existent one. However, it implies not just self-existence, but existence in motion, focused on a purpose [*hayah* means 'to be active' in the present tense].
- Ex 3:14 thus it speaks of God as the self-existent one; the one who causes to be; the one who will be all that his people need; the one who was and is and is to come; the one who is unchangeable in his covenant love relationship to his people; the one who will accomplish his salvific purpose. Here God is saying to Moses that God will be to

Moses and Israel what he was to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Perhaps the simplest and best meaning is, 'I will be God for you'. *'The force of the name is not simply that God is or that God is present [hardly a new revelation - Fahy], but that God will be faithfully God for them in the history that is to follow ... God will be with and for this people at all times and places; the formula suggests a divine faithfulness to self.'* (VanGemeren, Vol 4; p1296).

- Ex 6:2-3 - *Yahweh* is considered to be the only personal name for God, i.e. *Yahweh* derives from God's personality (rather than a descriptive attribute, such as power or authority).
- Ps 83:18 - it can be viewed as a proper noun. The Jews never said, 'the *Yahweh*' or 'my *Yahweh*', unlike 'the *Elohim*' or 'my *Elohim*'. It is God's name and reveals his inward being. The other names derive from his works.

Doctrinal information about the word

- There is no appearance of this word for God outside of the Bible; it is God's special or personal name revealed only to his covenant people. It is the most common name used for God in the OT but is never used of other gods. Thus we never see, '*Yahweh* of Israel' since there is only one true *Yahweh*.
- It first appears in Gen 2:4 though further explanation of the name was given to Moses (Ex 3:14-17, 6:2-8). He spoke to the patriarchs as *Yahweh*, but the full meaning of his name as deliverer wasn't understood until the Exodus (see later). The name emphasises God's covenant faithfulness to his people. This is why we never see 'my *Yahweh*' the word by itself suggests relationship.
- Almost all OT expressions referring to divine revelation occur in connection with *Yahweh*. The theophanies (divine appearances) are *Yahweh* and not *Elohim*.
- Before the creation of man only *Elohim* is used for God, emphasising power in creation. *Yahweh* comes to the fore in the second account of creation (Gen 2:4-25; *Elohim* also appears) which focuses on the origin of man. Thus *Yahweh* begins to be used only after the creation of man, confirming that this name is God's choice to denote covenant relationship. *Elohim* thus emphasises God as creator, ruler and the Lord of the earth; while *Yahweh* speaks of the Lord as the faithful God of the covenant, the redeemer. Several passages demonstrate a shift in divine names from *Elohim* to *Yahweh* as the sense progresses from God's sovereignty to redeeming activity. See Gen 1-2, 9:26-27: *Elohim* is for Japheth but *Yahweh* for Shem; Ps 19: the heavens declare the glory of *Elohim* but the law of *Yahweh* is perfect and *Yahweh* is my redeemer. Note *Elohim* gave commands to Noah but *Yahweh* shut the door against the coming judgment.
- *Yahweh* is viewed in connection with God's covenant and its fulfilment (Ex 6:2-3); he will fulfil the covenant promises made to the patriarchs. He is the unchanging, ever living God who is faithful to his word.
- *Yahweh* is the God of redemption and his name was explained at the time of the Exodus. *Elohim* is God the creator; God revealed in power and in nature; *Yahweh* is God revealed in grace and deliverance. The product of *Elohim* is man. The creation of *Yahweh* is redeemed man (Ex 34:6-7).
- Many characteristics of *Yahweh* are revealed by the passages where it is used, such as: holiness (Lev 11:44-45, 19:1-2); judgment on sin (Gen 6:3-7; Ex 34:6-7); love for his people (Gen 3:8; Ex 3:1-10; Isa 53:1, 5, 6, 10).
- The revelation of the depth of this name at the time of the Exodus identifies God as Saviour; he is a God who delivers his people. The final expression of *Yahweh* is Jesus. The word 'Jesus' is literally *Yahweh*-Saviour (or '*Yahweh* is salvation'; Jesus is the Greek form of Joshua or Yehoshua); i.e. the fulness of the covenant God, man's saviour. However, the name is also applied to all three persons of the Trinity in the OT

(the Father: Ps 2:7, 110:1; the Son: Isa 6:1 cf. Jn 12:41; the Spirit: Ps 95:7-11 cf. Heb 3:7-9). Salvation is a work of the whole Trinity.

- *Yahweh* is also the expression of God's pure being. This includes love (1 Jn 4:8) but also justice and holiness. The essential attributes of God are holiness and love; God could be described as 'Holy Love'. Although God is Lord over evil (Isa 45:7, i.e. he controls it according to his plan and purpose) God is not the source of evil. Evil is not true being but the negation of being, just as darkness is the absence of light, cold the absence of heat and hate the absence of love. God is holy (Lev 11:44-45), he loves righteousness and hates iniquity (Ps 45:7); evil is antagonistic to God's nature. All this is comprehended in the word *Yahweh*.

Biblical information about the word

- Did Abraham use the word *Yahweh*? Gen 6:3, I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but *by My name LORD I was not known* to them, has been used to criticise the Bible's authority since the word *Yahweh* is used throughout Genesis and especially by Abraham. However, there are various explanations for this:
 1. Perhaps the most simple is that at the time Moses wrote Genesis the word had come into common usage after being declared to him. Thus Moses used the term in writing Genesis since that was the name of the Lord he knew personally, even though Abraham spoke to God with different words (*Elohim, Adonai*).
 2. Another simple explanation is that while the patriarchs knew the name, they did not know what the name signified. *Yahweh* made himself known by his power in creation, its government and in giving many blessings but he had not declared himself to be *Yahweh* in fulfilling the promises given to the patriarchs, which were now to be fulfilled in the Exodus and promised land. A person may know what a Prime Minister, judge, king or magistrate is and yet have no real understanding about what is involved until he becomes one. Their main experience of God was as *El Shaddai*.
 3. Interestingly, the name of Moses' mother was Jochebed (Yokheved), which is based on the name *Yahweh*. Thus, the tribe of Levi, to which Moses belonged, already knew the name. Number 2 is probably the best answer.
- *Yahweh* is used in the general introduction to prophetic messages: 'Thus says *Yahweh*', not 'Thus says *Elohim*.' This is because God is working out his eternal purpose through the prophetic message, and showing the Lord to be a God of grace warning his people.
- *Yahweh* is the name God adopts when making his covenant communications with man. Note: Gen 15:1 (*Elohim* does not appear in this chapter); Gen 16:13 - the Angel of the Lord is identical with *Yahweh* - a created being could not be given God's personal name and he also claims divine attributes to himself (Gen 18:10-14) and is called the judge of the whole earth (Gen 18:25. This is Jesus in his pre-incarnate form. It is always the Son who reveals God to men.).
- In Gen 1 only *Elohim* is used and the relationship to man is in connection with dominion; this points to *Elohim* as the God of power, the ruler. The emphasis on *Yahweh* in Gen 2 has to do with God's love relationship connected to quality (holiness). Man receives the breath of lives, becomes a living soul and is under law (v16-17); God is looking for righteousness. The probation involves the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (v9) then there is judgment on sin (Gen 3:17-19) and the promise of deliverance (3:15). Gen 2 also prefigures the death of Christ in the sleep of Adam and the provision of a bride.
- *Yahweh* looks for holiness and righteousness in his people (Lev 19:2, 20, 24, 26; Deut 11:13; Ezek 18: 5, 9, 11, 12) and sin grieves him (Jud 10:6, 7, 9; Ps 45:10). But he

makes his creatures righteous by giving them, in Jesus, his own righteousness (Jer 23:6, 31: 31-34; Heb 8:8-12; Ps 89:15-16; Rm 3:24-25).

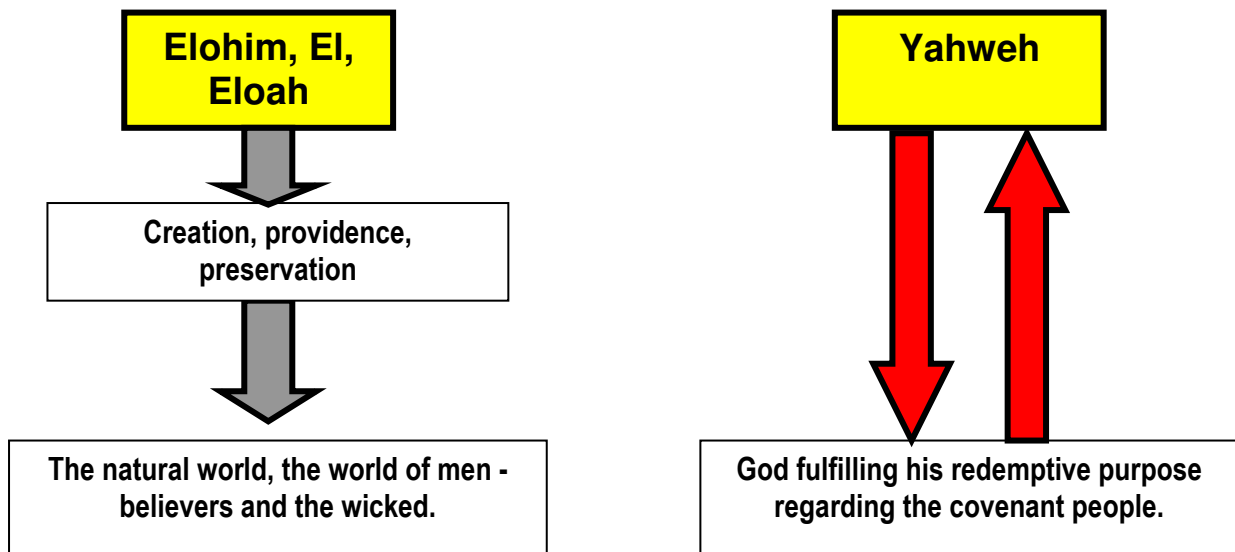
- In John's Gospel Jesus made seven specific self-descriptions, each one being introduced by the phrase 'I am' (Jn 6:35, 8:12 with 9:5, 10:7-9, 11-14, 11:25, 14:6, 15:1-5). The Greek text emphasises this and his hearers understood it to be a reference to God; hence they sought to kill him (Jn 10:31-33 see esp. 8:58-59). In the LXX (the Greek OT) *Yahweh* is rendered by *ego eimi* (Ex 3:14; 'I am'; this was a faulty translation but the LXX was widely used in Jesus' time). In the Greek NT Jesus uses this same term emphatically in other places too, e.g. Jn 8:24, 28. There is at least an implied identification with *Yahweh*. Also various OT passages about *Yahweh* are identified in the NT as Jesus, such as: Isa 40:3 with Mk 1:2-4; Joel 2:32 with Rm 10:13; Isa 6:1-5, 42:8 with Jn 12:41.
- The translation of *Yahweh* by 'LORD' is a problem. It obscures the fact that it is a proper name and not an epithet and there is already a Hebrew name for 'Lord'. The versions get more obscure when they translate *Adonai / Yahweh* (which appears 350 times) as 'Lord God', even though consistency demands 'Lord Lord'. All versions should transliterate the Hebrew word - *Yahweh*.

Application

- Man knows God automatically as *Elohim* (through creation) but not as *Yahweh*. Knowing of someone is not like knowing a loved one.
- God is unchangeable; he is always faithful (2 Tim 2:11-13).
- We grow in grace, there is no formula for instant maturity, we grow as we know *Yahweh* more.
- God is a continual Saviour (1 Cor 10:13; Heb 7:24-25; Rm 8:28). He holds the future and is Lord over good and evil (Isa 45:7; Lam 3:38).
- God establishes a covenant of grace with us through Jesus.
- Human effort does not obtain blessing, not even prayer or striving; resting on Jesus our faithful covenant head does (Isa 40:31; Ps 127:1-2; Heb 4:10).
- *Yahweh* is Jesus. The same God who saved Israel at the Red Sea saved us.
- *Yahweh* is God's personal name. Jesus is a personal Saviour; he calls individuals by name. God desires our intimate friendship. Covenant friendship (*koinonia*) is a crucial part of church life; by sharing with each other we see more of God revealed in fellowship.

| Name | Meaning | Symbolism | Note |
|--------|---|--|--|
| Adonai | Lord, master | Sovereignty, ownership. | A formal title. Used of others. |
| Yahweh | The self-existent one, the unchanging, ever-living God. | Covenant head, saviour, deliverer; faithful one. | God's personal name. Never used of others. |

The difference between two divine concepts



9. Compounds with Yahweh

Biblical data

As God's self-revelation progressed in history, the name *Yahweh* became infused with additional meanings, which were identified in compound names where descriptive words were added to *Yahweh*. There are nine key compound words.

Yahweh Jireh (or Yireh) ha,r>yIfhw"hy ***The Lord will provide / The Lord sees***

- *Jireh* is Strong's number 3070 from 3068 (*Yahweh*) and 7200 (*ra'ah* 'to see, look upon, approve, provide').
- Gen 22:14 - the symbolic name given by Abraham to Mount Moriah to commemorate God's provision of a substitute offering and thus saving Isaac. It means 'the Lord will provide' or '*Yahweh* sees' (and thus provides). Only appears here.
- NB this revelation of God appears after Abraham was prepared to sacrifice Isaac - total consecration. Testing is necessary for a new discovery of God's character. Note Abraham's obedience: Gen 22:1-3 immediate action, no questioning.
- God expects out choicest possessions to be submitted to him (v2) to test our conformity to Christ.
- Compare the burnt offering - a type of complete consecration (all burned).
- Note God works by resurrection (the removal of all flesh, working by a new nature) Isaac was figuratively resurrected (Heb 11:19). I.e. our power consumed, God's power supplied; cf. Phil 3:7-11, Paul's life principle.
- NB v15 = 8th word of the Lord to Abraham; 8 is the number of resurrection; promise of blessing, multiplied descendants victory over enemies, nations blessed.
- God's provision leads to his self-revelation by a new name. The impact of this name is really provision by resurrection.
- Note Abraham's progressive understanding of God expressed in divine names: Elyon-Shaddai-Yahweh-Yahweh/Jireh.
- The name also means '*Yahweh* will see'. The Lord sees everything, including our thoughts, and reveals himself in every situation by providing what is needed (cf. the provision of manna or for Elijah in 1 Kg 19:4-8).
- The provision is never before God's time and then it overflows; cf. Jericho on the 7th day; Joseph (Gen 41:37-45), Daniel, Mordecai.
- Are we growing in our depth of understanding God's person? We grow by obedience in faith.

Yahweh Mekaddischem [or m'qaddishkhem] `~k,v.Dlq;m. hw"hy ***The Lord our Sanctifier, The Lord who sanctifies***

- *Mekaddischem* is Strong's number 6942 from the verb vd;q' *qadash*, 'to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, make holy, set apart'.
- Ex 31:12-13; Lev 20:8, 21:8, 22:32.
- Close association with the Sabbath (the 7th day set apart for God). The word first appears in Ex 31 in connection with the keeping of the Sabbath.
- Separation is the heart of sanctification.

- We are set apart by God for his own glory. The elect are the people set apart by God from the world of sin.

Yahweh Nissi ySinlfhw"hy> **The Lord our Banner**

- *Nissi* is Strong's number 3071 from 3068 and 5251 (*nec*, pron. *nace*; a flag or a sail; by implication, a flagstaff, signal, banner, standard).
- Ex 17:15-16 (only appears here).
- The name given by Moses to the altar which he built in commemoration of the victory over the Amalekites at Rephidim.
- Note that the Hebrew word translated 'banner' also underlies the word 'staff' held by Moses in Ex 17:9. The staff was a rallying point for the army and used as a battle standard. The divine name implies that God is the battle standard for believers.
- God wages war on behalf of his people. Vengeance belongs to him.
- God gives us victory as we follow him. Jesus is our rallying point, we need his strength, 1 Cor 15:57.
- God knows our troubles, he is at the front line, he fights for us (Rm 8:37). We cannot fight our battles in our own strength; particularly against our own flesh. Note that Amalek in Ex 17 is a symbol of the flesh.
- The armour of God in Eph 6 is a description of his attributes working for our behalf.
- Our testimony is to hold him up (exalt him in prayer Ex 17:11-13) but he hold us up (Isa 41:10-13).

Yahweh Rapha ap'r' hw"hy> **The Lord our Healer**

- *Rapha* is Strong's number 7495, meaning: to heal, make healthy, a healer, of national or individual hurts, to mend [even of inanimate things e.g. water or pottery].
- Ex 15:26; only here.
- God restores his people, physically and spiritually (Ps 103:1-2).
- Moses was the first person to call upon God for physical healing (Num 12:13).

Yahweh Shalom ~Alv'fhw"hy> **The Lord is Peace**

- *Yahweh Shalom* is Strong's number 3073; formed from *Shalom* 7965 (meaning: completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, health, and contentment).
- Jud 6:11-12, 14-18, 19-24;
- The name Gideon gave to the altar he set up in Ophrah when the Angel of God comforted him due to his fear.
- God gives perfect peace (Isa 26:3).
- Jesus is our peace (Jn 16:33; Rm 5:1)
- Jesus is the Prince of Peace; where he rules there is peace.
- Peace is also related to the Holy Spirit: Jn 16:13 with 33; Gal 5:22. The Holy Spirit brings the reality of Christ's finished work to us (Rm 8:6; Jn 14:25-27). We must recognise the Spirit's work in us and rely on his presence.
- Jn 14:30: Satan has no power over us while we are in the Spirit.
- NB the link with grace.
- Ps 119:165 - peace is characteristic of our faith. It was the first word to the disciples after the resurrection (Jn 20; Ps 85:8).
- Peace is secured by the cross and results from justification (NB Noah's first fruits after the flood - judgment on sin- was an olive leaf).

- Col 3:14-15 LET it rule; it's part of the new nature.
- Phil 4:6-7 - it's always there unless we're ignoring the Holy Spirit; keep your conscience clear.
- NB 2 Pt 1:2 - growing in knowledge multiplies peace.

Yahweh Rophi h[r' hw"hy> **The Lord is our Shepherd**

- *Yahweh* plus Strong's number 7462 *ra'ah* a root word meaning: shepherd, pastor, herdsman, to pasture, tend, graze, to be a friend or companion.
- Ps 23:1
- A common theme (Ps 80:1, 95:7, 100:3).
- Jesus will feed and protect his flock (Jn 10; Ezek 34).

Yahweh Shammah hM'v'fhw"hy **The Lord is there**

- Strong's 3074, formed by *Yahweh* plus 8033, *sham* (pron. 'shawm') meaning: there, then, thence, thither.
- Ezek 48:35 (only here). Vision of a restored Jerusalem at the end of the age; the complete church, the city of God; the main feature is God's presence within (Rev 21:2).
- It was used as a symbolic name for Jerusalem.
- God never leaves you; he guides, helps and protects.
- God is specially present in our fellowship and worship (1 Cor 12:12-13; Matt 18:19-20; NB we are in God's presence when together - hence the need for order.
- God is present in Christian families.
- We need faith not to make God present, but to benefit from his presence and live in the good of it.
- We are God's children because he is present in us.
- God is omnipresent in nature. [Story: A bishop offered a clever boy an orange if he could tell him where God is. The boy said he would give the bishop two oranges if he could tell him where God isn't!]
- God is specially present in our hearts. Regeneration gives us spiritual capacity. The Holy Spirit brings the things of Christ to us (2 Cor 5:17; 1 Cor 3:16-17, 6:17-20).
- Jesus will be physically present at the end Rev 21:1-4, 22:4-5.
- We dwell in Him, He dwells in us (Rev 21:3).

Yahweh Tsidkenu Wnqed>cifhw"hy **The Lord our Righteousness**

- *Yahweh Tsidkenu* is Strong's number 3072; formed by *Yahweh* plus 6664 (*tsedeq*, moral, legal or natural rightness, equity, justice).
- Jer 23:6; only used by Jeremiah.
- It is applied to Messiah in Jer 23:5-6.
- It is also applied to Jerusalem as the seat of the Messiah's rule (Jer 33:16).
- Jesus is our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21).
- We are not just saved from sin but given the righteousness of Jesus Christ to have a legal standing before God in heaven. This is the essence of our justification. (Rm 5:17-19).
- We also have a new nature which is in the likeness of Christ and righteous (Eph 4:24; Rm 6:4, 8:10, 29; 2 Cor 5:17). We must constantly put on this new nature (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:8-10).

Yahweh Tsebaoth (or S'vaoth, Zebaath) ab; x; hw"hy **Lord of Hosts**

- *Tsebaoth* is Strong's number 6635, *tsaba'* or feminine *tsba'ah* from 6653 (*tsebeth*, 'a handful'); meaning: a mass of people or things, that which goes forth, thence army, company, battle, host, host of angels, host of sun moon and stars. It appears 266 times with *Yahweh* and 18 times as *Yahweh Elohey tsebaoth* ('Lord God of Hosts'). Other combinations also appear, such as: 'Lord the God of Hosts is his name'. In the various combinations, this is the most frequent epithet [a descriptive phrase expressing a characteristic] of God in the OT.
- First appearance for God: 1 Sam 1:3; see also Isa 6:1-5; 1 Kg 22:19 etc. Before this the word *tsebaoth* on its own referred to Israel as the hosts of *Yahweh* (Ex 12:41).
- Not found in the Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel or Ezekiel; mostly in the prophets - times of failure of God's people. 80 times in Jeremiah, 50 times in Zechariah, 266 in all. In times of declension that require prophetic intervention, God is still in control and command (Ps 46:3, 7, 11). Note that even in the historical books, most of the mentions are associated with either worship (the altar, the ark) or a prophet.
- 'Hosts' refers to angels - the hosts surrounding God's throne (Gen 28:12-13, 32:1-2; Jos 5:14; 1 Kg 22:19; Job 1:6; Ps 68:17, 89:8, 103:21, 148:2; Isa 6:2). The name, 'Lord of Hosts' is repeatedly used with reference to angels (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Isa 37:16; Hos 12:5-6; Ps 80:1, 89:5-8). Thus God is Lord of heaven and earth. Although the singular term is sometimes used of angels ('host') scripture also repeatedly mentions many hosts of angels (Gen 32:2; Deut 33:2; Ps 68:17, 148:2).
- Some think that 'hosts' refers to the armies of Israel, or even to the stars. However, *tsebaoth* is not primarily a military term and only refers to armies by implication (referring to the mass of people rather than a military body). Further, the army of Israel is singular, not plural; stars are also always called 'the host (singular) of heaven' not 'hosts of God'. The idea that it referred to God as a God of war is now defunct through lack of evidence. In fact some insist that the word has no military character at all. [The name does not occur in narratives about war.] It expresses the glory of God as King (Deut 33:2; 1 Kg 22:19; Ps 24:10). Angels are a constituent part of the glory of God, representatives of his power and authority.
- God, as king of glory, is surrounded by angelic forces. He rules heaven and earth in the interests of his people. *Tsebaoth* is a name of power, majesty and royal glory.
- This term became a battle cry after David challenged Goliath (1 Sam 17:45). The army of Israel is connected to the divine name here, but is still distinct. David is identifying Israel's ranks with the hosts of the Lord. As God is the Lord of Hosts, he is also the God of Israel's ranks of soldiers on the battlefield.
- The Lord of Hosts is with US (Ps 46).
- Note that it is the Lord of Hosts who disciplines his unfaithful people (Isa 9:13, 19), and then punishes their adversaries (Isa 10:12, 24-27) and brings full deliverance (Isa 31:4-5).
- Haggai, in his short prophecy, constantly exhorts the faithful remnant, who have left Babylon to build God's temple, with this term; 14 times in 2 chapters.
- Malachi uses it 25 times in 4 chapters denouncing the failures of God's people cf. Ps 80:4, 19.
- The OT is full of examples of the Lord using his hosts (angels) to correct and deliver his people (1 Chron 21:2-16; 2 Kg 6:11-18, 18:17, 19:21-33; Ps 34:7)
- Note that sometimes *Elohim* is combined with, or substituted for, *Yahweh* e.g. Ps 80:4, 7, 14, 19; Amos 5:27.

- The NIV translation as 'Lord Almighty' is simply wrong.
- The Greek NT uses 'Sabaoth' in Rm 9:29 and Jm 5:4 as do many hymns; more usually the Greek text uses *pantokrator* ['the ruler of all'] e.g. Rev 1:8, 4:8.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON ANGELS

Heb: *Malach*, Greek *Angelos* meaning messenger (masculine). The words are also used of men and impersonal things, such as wind or pestilence as messengers of God.

TITLES

Angels, sons of God, god's (*elohim*, in poetry), heavenly beings, servants of God, heavenly powers, watchers etc.

WHAT ARE THEY?

- Spiritual, immaterial, created beings (Matt 12:45; Col 1:16; Ps 148:2; Eph 6:12). As created beings, they are not to be worshipped.
- Exalted above man but below God (Heb 2:7).
- Linked with men: they speak like men (1 Kg 19:5), eat (Gen 18:8), fight (Gen 32:1) and are always shown in scripture in human form (Gen 18:19).
- They are limited in space and time but are freer than us. They are not omnipresent, omnipotent or omniscient.
- Their appearance is glorious (Dan 10:6); similar to the Shekinah glory in Jesus' transfiguration and Rev 1:14-16
- They are moral and have willpower (Matt 25:31; Rev 14:10).
- After the general resurrection we will be like them (Lk 20:36).

FUNCTIONS

1. Never ceasing in praise and adoration to God (Ps 103:19-20; Neh 9:6; Dan 7:9-10; Ps 89:5).
2. Agents of God to man; i.e. intermediaries or messengers for deliverance, protection (Ps 91:11; 2 Kg 19:34-35) or judgment (2 Sam 24:16; Ex 12:23; Matt 13:41).
3. Agents in salvation and God's family: angels figure more when other guidance or knowledge is not available e.g. Genesis, Judges, the Captivity. There are no appearances with Moses or Samuel except to the prophets themselves.
4. They guide the elect (Gen 24:7, 40) and preserve them until they are saved (Heb 1:14; Matt 18:10; Ps 37:7). Then they rejoice (Lk 15:10).
5. God uses angels in the government of the world until redeemed man takes over (Rev 7:1, 15:1, 7, 19:17, 18)

NUMBERS

Vast (Rev 5:11); a myriad = 10,000.

NEW TESTAMENT REVELATION

THE Angel, i.e. God's messenger, is Jesus. Angelic ministry for guidance, knowledge etc is not needed now as we have the Spirit of Christ indwelling us. However, God still uses angels exceptionally in divine protection (Acts 12:7ff). Angels protect those who are to inherit salvation (Heb 1:14) but after receiving faith and grace, the Holy Spirit is our *paraklete* (the one who draws alongside us, Jn 14) not angels.

Angels are ever present in church meetings (1 Cor 4:9, 11:10; Eph 3:10; 1 Pt 1:12).

HIERARCHY

- Thrones, dominions, principalities and powers, possibly over areas (Col 1:16). [Note that this does not mean that fallen angels (demons) have any authority or power over geographical areas. The earth is the Lord's. The devil rules men and the earth through sin not delegated authority.]
- Seraphim: (Isa 6:2 only) an order of celestial beings, not necessarily angels, similar to (but not) the cherubim.
- Archangels: the chief princes (Dan 10:13). Michael: an archangel (Jude 9; lit. 'who is like God'), leader of man's struggle in God's name and strength against Satan (Rev 12:7; Dan 10:21, 12:1). Some think that Michael is, in fact, Jesus. Appears five times - five is the number of grace. Possibly includes Gabriel but he is not expressly stated to be an archangel (lit. 'man of God'; a word descriptive of angelic office). Gabriel: is set forth as a representative of the angelic ministry of comfort, sympathy and bringing good news (Dan 8:16; Mary; Elizabeth); no terror or mystery.
- Cherubim are not angels but represent all the redeemed awaiting the redemption of all creation (for more information see my separate paper on Cherubim).

FINAL ACTIVITY

- To be with men (Heb 12:22; Col 1:20). Through the cross Jesus has brought together heaven and earth, God's original purpose.
- NB angels are mentioned as saying, not singing praise (Lk 2:13-14; Rev 5:11-12). Only the redeemed can sing of salvation; the elect angels never sinned and are thus not redeemed. There will be a new song in heaven when we arrive.

| Name | Meaning | Symbolism |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Yahweh Jireh | The Lord will provide / The Lord sees | God's care: his provision and supply for service |
| Yahweh Mekaddischem | The Lord our Sanctifier | God's holiness |
| Yahweh Nissi | The Lord our Banner, battle standard | The victorious testimony of God |
| Yahweh Rapha | The Lord our Healer | God heals (from sin, death and sickness). |
| Yahweh Shalom | The Lord is Peace | God is peace |
| Yahweh Rophi | The Lord is our Shepherd | God feeds his people and protects them. |
| Yahweh Shammah | The Lord is there | God is present everywhere and especially with his people. |
| Yahweh Tsidkenu | The Lord our Righteousness | God's righteousness |
| Yahweh Tsebaoth | The Lord of Hosts | God rules the heavens and earth. Majesty and glory. |

10. The New Testament Revelation

Biblical data

The NT retains the main OT names:

- *El & Elohim* are rendered by 'God' (qeo,j *theos* Strong's number 2316).
- *Elyon* is 'The Most High God' (u[yistoj qeo,j *hupsistos theos*) or 'God in the Highest', or 'God (the) Most High' (qeo,u/ tou/ u`yi,stou). [*Hupsistos* is Strong's number 5310.]
- *Yahweh* becomes 'the Alpha and Omega' a few times, 'him who is and who was and who is to come', 'the beginning and the end', 'the first and the last' (Rev 1:4, 8, 11, 17, 2:8, 21:6, 22:13). Elsewhere, following the LXX (Greek OT) which reads *Adonai*, it is usually translated as 'Lord' (ku,rioj *Kurios*, Strong's number 2962, derived from *kuros* = strength or supremacy).
- *Yahweh Elohim & Yahweh Elohim Tsebaoth* become 'Lord God' (Lk 1:16; Acts 7:37; 1 Pt 3:15; Rev 1:8, 22:5) and 'Lord God Almighty' (Rev 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 21:22).

Father path,r *Pater*

- This is the one new name given for God in the NT. It is Strong's number 3962.
- It is a name sometimes used by pagans for their gods and is also known in the OT (Deut 32:6; Ps 103:13; Isa 63:16, 64:8; Jer 3:4); note that Israel is also called God's son (Ex 4:22; Deut 14:1).
- In the OT the name signified the theocratic relation God had with his people, formed from Abraham, the called of God.
- In the NT the name now especially refers to the elect in Christ. Those who are saved know God as their heavenly Father, of which Israel was only a symbol. The name now is much deeper and individual.
- 'Father' becomes the common name for God in the NT. *Yahweh* is insufficiently translated as 'Lord' so the name 'Father' had to be supplied. This is, *'the supreme revelation of God. God is not only the Creator, the Almighty, the Faithful One, the King and Lord; he is also the Father of his people.'* (Bavinck p147).
- In the New Covenant, the subjects of God's kingdom are also individually sons, members of God's family. *"Both law and love, the state and the family, are completely realised in the NT relation of God to his people. Here we find perfect kingship, for here is a king who is simultaneously a Father who does not subdue his subjects by force but who himself creates and preserves his subjects. As children, they are born of him; they bear his image; they are his family.'* (Bavinck, p147). This is the fruit of the redemption accomplished by Christ and applied by the Spirit. It is possible since the elect are placed into Christ and adopted into full legal heirship with him.

11. Some Other titles used to refer to God

(Usually to express an attribute or power and majesty)

Note: The Jews listed seventy names of God.

Immanuel, God with us (laeWnM'ji Strong's no. 7405; '*with us is God*'; symbolising the presence of God to deliver his people; Isa 7:14, 8:8; Matt 1:23)

God of Heaven (Gen 24:3-7; Dan 2:37)

Judge of all the earth (Gen 18:25; Ps 94:2)

The mighty one (rybia' '*abiyr*', Strong's no.46 from 82; meaning: strong, mighty - used only to describe God, the Strong - old poetic name for God. Gen 49:24; Ps 132:2, 5)

Rock (Deut 32:18; Isa 30:29)

Shepherd (used without *Yahweh*: Ps 80:1; Heb 13:20; 1 Pt 2:25, 5:4)

The strong one (Gen 49:24; Isa 1:24; Ps 132:2)

Fortress (2 Sam 22:2; Ps 18:2; protection)

Shield (Gen 15:1; God's defence of his people.)

Buckler (Ps 3:3, 28:7; God's defence of his people.)

Strength or glory (1 Sam 15:29; i.e. immutability)

Jealous (Ex 20:5, 34:14; the one who commands exclusive worship.)

The Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9)

The Name (Lev 24:11)

The Fear (of Isaac) (Gen 31:42, 53)

King (Num 23:21; Ps 24:7-10, 29:10)

Living God (*El Hai*; Jos 3:10)

Holy God (*Elohim Q'dhoshim*; Jos 24:19)

Holy One of Israel (*Q'dhosh Yisrael*; Ps 78:41)

12. summary & Conclusion

God

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| EI | [Strong's Code 410] mighty one, plural <i>Elim</i> . |
| Elah | [426] Aramaic, God as an object of worship, only in Ezra & Daniel 84 times. |
| Elohim | [430] plural, mighty, to be smitten with fear; root = Alah, 2570 times 2310 trans. as God) Singular - <i>Eloah</i> [433] 57 times. |
| EI Elyon | [5945] God Most High, God's supremacy and exaltation, (once in this form, 3 times in other forms). |
| EI Shaddai | [7706] Almighty, 35 times; Almighty God, (7 with <i>EI</i>). |
| EI Olam | [5769] Everlasting God. |
| EI Roi | [7210] The God of seeing; once only. |

Other compounds with *EI*

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| EI Rechum | The God of compassion. |
| EI Berith | The God of the Covenant. |
| EI Nose | The forgiving God. |
| EI Channum | The gracious God. |
| EI Kannah | The jealous God. |
| EI Elohe Israel | God, the God of Israel. |

Lord

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Adonai | [136] Lord, master (sing. <i>Adon</i> , [113]); 439 times as a divine name. |
| Yahweh | [3068] (<i>Jehovah</i>) Lord, 'I am'; 6828 times. |
| Yah / Jah | [3050] shorter form of <i>Yahweh</i> . |
| Yahweh Tsebaoth | [3068 / 6635] Lord of Hosts (i.e. <i>Sabaoth</i> in NT). |

Other compounds with *Yahweh*

| | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Yahweh Jireh | The Lord will provide or see. |
| Yahweh Nissi | The Lord our banner. |
| Yahweh Rapha | The Lord our healer. |
| Yahweh Shalom | The Lord our peace. |
| Yahweh Shammah | The Lord is there. |
| Yahweh Tsidkenu | The Lord our righteousness. |

Greek names

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Theos | = EI, Elohim (Matt 22:32 cf. Ex 3:6). Usually applied to the Father. |
| Kurios | = Adonai (Matt 22:44 cf. Ps 110:1). Usually applied to the Son. |
| Kurios | = Yahweh (Matt 4:10 cf. Deut 6:13). Usually applied to the Son. |
| Hupsistos | = Elyon (Mk 5:7). Usually applied to the Father. |
| Pantokrator | = Shaddai (2 Cor 6:18; Rev 1:8) |
| Pater | = Father (1 Cor 8:6 cf. Deut 32:6). |

Properties implied by the 7 Chief names

Essence or self-existence

Yahweh

Eternity

Olam

Exaltation

Elyon

Dominion/Sovereignty

Adonai

Might

El, Elohim

Omnipotence and self-sufficiency

Shaddai

Fatherhood

Pater

Conclusion

This study should bring us all to our knees. Unlike the false gods of heathen nations, who were named by men according to their supposed powers (such as *Baal* the Canaanite storm god or *Thor* the Norse god of thunder), the God of the Bible revealed to men his own name - *Yahweh*. Our God is a God who manifests himself and shows us that he is a covenant-keeping God; a God who has befriended men.

God's decision to allow us to call on him by his name speaks of the graciousness of God who supplies all our needs, pre-eminently the need of righteousness. Through his own provision, *Yahweh* gives the elect complete, full and free salvation in his own Son.

Allowing us to know his name also speaks of a desire, on the part of God, for intimacy with his people. While there is always a necessary fear of God known by men, there is yet a calling into relationship for those in the covenant. Believers can come boldly into the presence of God (Heb 4:16).

Simply by looking at the names and titles of God in scripture we can generate a picture of his character and divine attributes, without getting into complex metaphysical discussions. The names show that God is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and holy; the creator, the sustainer, the provider, the master, the king and so on.

It is to be deeply regretted that all the Bible versions fail to fully reveal the complexity and variety of the names of God. Indeed, many versions actually obscure matters by not literally translating or transliterating the Hebrew text. So much more benefit could be found if this matter was dealt with properly.

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