

What's in a Name?

Throughout the Scriptures there is a name....
A name that consists of four Hebrew letters....
A name that Biblical scholars refer to as the Tetragrammaton...
YHVH ... Yod...Hey...Vav...Hey....
A name that in Judaism is never uttered....
A name that English Bibles replace with LORD....
A name that no-one, really, knows how to pronounce...

It is my only desire, when it comes to my Father's Word, to seek **truth**. I will not participate in the Gnosticism that rages around YHVH. Many approach this name as if unlocking the 'true pronunciation' of it will somehow, through their own mastery of linguistic skills and techniques, please G-d. They find verses in the Scriptures to support their own ambition to solve 'the secret mystery' and then proudly proclaim with confidence their interpretations.

Others, particularly the Jewish community, hold this name as Sacred. In strict adherence to the Third Commandment and a hard-lined decision made by the Rabbi's between the 7th and 10th Centuries AD concerning it, they will not even attempt to discern the pronunciation because they wouldn't speak it anyways. (The Third Commandment, in Hebrew, says to not take the Name of our G-d in a vain {false} oath.)

I will not join in the debate. But I *will* say that His Name is not Yahweh. And I *will* say that His Name is not Jehovah. And until He tells me otherwise, I *will continue* to believe that G-d has no name.....but HE SURE HAS A LOT OF CHARACTER!

The word 'name' in Hebrew is *shem*. Shem, we all recognize, was a son of Noah; the son through whom G-d's line of promise would be established. In English, Shem's *name* would be "Name"! More accurately, *shem* means 'character' or 'characteristics'. But it is not only in understanding what the words of a name 'mean' that show us truth, it is also understanding the context that surrounds the usage of a name.

As an example, when talking about the Third Commandment, we are actually being commanded to not take (or use) the 'character' of YHVH in false or deceptive statements, actions or thoughts. Includes a lot more than cursing doesn't it? Anytime that someone who declares that they belong to YHVH does, thinks or says something deceptive or false, regardless of the intention, they are taking His name in vain.

Our Father is All-Powerful and had a Divine Purpose in His Word. If we can accept that the Scriptures were divinely inspired and guided by Him, then we must also accept that names in the Scriptures are given to us to glean understanding. Understanding through what they mean AND understanding through the context that they are used.

When Mary was told by Gabriel that her son would be called *Immanuel*, why did Joseph NAME Him *Yeshua*? It shouldn't be confusing. *Immanuel* means 'G-d with us,'; *Yeshua*

means 'salvation.' Both are characteristics of G-d's Servant, our King. Joseph was told in a dream to call Him Yeshua because He would save the people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). In Isaiah we get "*Sar Shalom*" (Prince of Peace) as a name, among others. Character, character, character.

To put it simply: Any time that we see the English word NAME in the Scriptures, we must let go of our Western way of thinking and replace *name* with CHARACTER.

In the simplest of terms, think as a child. A child exposed to the Scriptures at an early age will remember the pictures of the ark that Noah built... the strength of Samson... and the triumph of David over Goliath long before they will have memorized the names. Hebrew thought and language is action based. Understanding is achieved through actions. Character is built by and upon actions.

So do we, as believers and supporters of the ONE, TRUE, LIVING G-D need a name to identify Him as if He needs to be separately identified? Will a name ever truly do justice to all that He embodies?

Even though I won't debate the use (or lack thereof) of a pronounced 'version' of YHVH, I have joked at times, when approached by closed-minded advocates of one name or another that since these particular letters in the Hebrew alphabet can all be silent... and since *neshema* is Hebrew for breath... maybe the pronunciation is just a deep, sincere, from the gut exhalation of air. ?????? (They usually don't get my point which is that maybe *they* should take a deep breath, but it quells the issue.)

There are in fact many 'names' (characteristics) of G-d throughout the Scriptures; each revealing a certain perspective in relation to it. A name that correlates to creation and authority (actions) is *Elohim*. In Exodus 34:14 G-d says that His name is Jealousy, *quana*, which comes from the action of protecting the nest like a mother bird. Not too many people, however, have jumped on the bandwagon to insist we call Him that!

All kidding aside, it is not the Name that we should focus on but rather the characteristics revealed in its use. The word YHVH stems from the Hebrew word *hayah* meaning 'to be' and is considered to mean in its most concise form "The One who exists".

Exodus 6: 2-8

² **And God spoke to Moses, and said to him: 'I am YHVH;**

³ **and I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as El Shadai, but by My name YHVH I made Me not known to them.**

⁴ **And I have also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned.**

⁵ **And moreover I have heard the groaning of the children of Israel, whom the Egyptians keep in bondage; and I have remembered My covenant.**

⁶ Wherefore say to the children of Israel: I am YHVH, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm, and with great judgments;

⁷ and I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am YHVH your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.

⁸ And I will bring you in to the land, concerning which I lifted up My hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob; and I will give it to you for a heritage: I am YHVH.'

Verse 3 states that by the name YHVH G-d was not known to the patriarchs. He was known as *El Shadai* (the G-d who is all sufficient or G-d Almighty).

G-d is speaking to Moses, preparing him to not only free the Israelites from Egyptian bondage but to also, in turn, prepare *them* for their future as a distinct nation of G-d. YHVH is directly linked to His relationship with mankind and the land of Israel. In verse 6 G-d says that "HE IS YHVH" and explains what this characteristic will do. He will deliver and He will redeem. Verse 7: "And I will take you to be my people and I will be your G-d". Verse 8: "And I will bring you into the land...and I will give it to you as a heritage. I AM YHVH."

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob knew the characteristics of YHVH; which was to form a promised nation in the Promised Land with a promised future seed (Yeshua) to come out of it. They knew the name YHVH, but G-d had not fulfilled it in their time. The characteristics involving the creation of His set apart people and nation were still ahead and going to be realized through Moses, the Wilderness experience and the conquests of Joshua!

Jacob, in Genesis 32:10-13, calls G-d YHVH when he says:

¹⁰'O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, YHVH, who said to me: Return to thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will do thee good;

¹²Deliver me, I pray Thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and smite me, the mother with the children. ¹³And Thou said: I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.'

Jacob knew this characteristic of G-d involved the promised blessings to his family line. About to meet his estranged brother, Esau, Jacob was nervous and pleading for G-d's mercy in light of this promise. If things went wrong with Esau and Esau rose up against Jacob and his family, the Covenant would be broken (an ongoing endeavor by the enemy is to do just that).

Now we know that G-d is faithful to His promises but how many times in our own lives do we allow fear or doubt to enter in just as Jacob does here? It is in this same chapter, Genesis 32 that Jacob is told by a man that he wrestles that he will be called 'Israel.' A

man, who when asked didn't find it too important to give His name. But He blessed Jacob all the same.

At this point in Jacob's story, only 11 of the 12 future tribes of Israel even existed (Benjamin had not been born yet) and the future 'Israelites' were still set to endure over four hundred years in Egypt! And yet it is not until Moses prepares to free His people that G-d reveals YHVH as an 'in the process of being fulfilled' characteristic.

If we go to Exodus 3:14 G-d introduces Himself to Moses and Moses asks for a name. The name G-d gives is **"Ehyeh asher Ehyeh". I will be who I will be... I am who I am...I am that I am...I will be what I will be....**

There are many translations because this phrase consists of two imperfect tenses of being "Ehyeh" (remember that 'to be' is *hayah*) with "asher" in the middle. And *asher* can mean 'which', 'that', 'who', or 'what'. HE IS EXISTENCE! Moses was not actually asking for a name but asking how he could possibly give a characteristic to the Israelites (who being surrounded by pagan worship for hundreds of years would probably ask for one) that would even come close to defining their G-d. How can you define 'ESSENCE'? Well, G-d answered:

"...say unto the children of Israel: Ehyeh has sent me to you."

All that has and does and will exist has sent you. And what does He say next?

Exodus 3:15

And God said moreover unto Moses: 'Thus say to the children of Israel: YHVH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you; this is My name for ever, and this is My memorial to all generations.

Is it a name that is His memorial? No, it is the action of what He is about to do that is His memorial. He is preparing to create the nation of Israel that He had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! This nation will receive His Word. This nation will be instructed on how to walk righteously and be an example to all nations. This nation will be the tree that gentile believers are grafted into! This nation- Israel - is at the center of His Divine Plan and through Israel we are all blessed!

In Exodus 4:22, G-d tells Moses to speak to Pharaoh.

"And thou shall say unto Pharaoh: Thus says YHVH: Israel is My son, My first-born."

Wait a minute; I thought Yeshua was His firstborn? If you think like a Greek, you have a problem. If you think like a Hebrew you know this: Yeshua and Israel are inseparable.

YHVH was realized through Moses.....
Then continued to the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel...
Then continued through the division of that Kingdom between Israel and Judah....
Then continued through the Assyrian exile of Israel....
Then the Babylonian exile of Judah.....
Then the return of the Jewish people to the land...
TO THE COMING OF OUR MESSIAH....
Then the Roman exile.....
Then the REESTABLISHMENT OF THE NATION OF ISRAEL 1948 AD...
Then from the four corners Jews begin to return to the land in record numbers...
Then the REESTABLISHMENT OF CONTROL OF JERUSALEM 1967AD...
Then Israelites from the Assyrian exile begin returning....
Then????????????????????????
Then????????????????????????
TO THE SECOND COMING OF OUR MESSIAH!!!
Then SHALOM!!!!

Ezekiel reminds us in Chapter 36 that what G-d is doing and will do with Israel and the Jewish people is not for our sake but for ‘HIS HOLY NAME’S SAKE’ and He goes into great detail to show us the picture of what ‘His Holy Character of Existence in relation to Israel and His children’ means. **I encourage you to read it.**

Instead of seeking a pronunciation of YHVH, why not just refer to Him as the **G-d of Israel** if we need an identifier? He refers to Himself by this ‘name’ in the Scriptures. Israel is His cherished land and those who believe are His cherished children; Jew and Gentile alike. Yeshua will be King and His throne will be in Israel, in Jerusalem.

If nothing else, referring to Him in our prayers and in our speech as the **G-d of Israel** will at least keep our hearts focused on today’s world stage when it comes to His land and His plan. And there would certainly be no doubt in the minds of those around us as to *whose* throne it is that we are communicating to.

So if we have an understanding of the character YHVH, The One who is existence and delivers and redeems and shows mercy and teaches and judges and loves and sets apart and cherishes.... does the pronunciation really matter? There is so much depth to the Scriptures, so many dimensions that even after a lifetime of tireless exhortation we would still have only scratched the surface.

We must never allow complacency to set in nor assume that we’ve got it all figured out. That leads to vanity (falsehood) and is not in the character of “*ma’amim*” (believers); a character which itself holds so much contextual meaning it will take another time and another article to get to the heart of!

Peace and Blessings!