

Jehovah



God Revealed In His Names (Part 3)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again. In my previous two talks this week I've been speaking about the primary name for God in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, Elohim. I've explained that its main associations are power, majesty, righteousness and justice, and it's also associated with that which is eternal and heavenly.

Also, this word Elohim contains within it the seed of truth that is unfolded throughout the rest of the Bible. The essence of this truth can be stated in a paradox. Elohim represents the perfect unity of that which is more than one. God is essentially one and essentially more than one.

The ongoing development of this paradox through the Bible eventually leads to the full revelation of God given by Jesus who identified the plurality within the unity of God as Father, Son and Spirit. A proper understanding of Elohim enables us to see that the revelation of Jesus is not a departure from the original revelation of the Old Testament but rather its logical fulfillment.

Today I'm going to speak about the second great Hebrew name of God, that which has traditionally been represented in English by the name Jehovah. In its original Hebrew form this name consists of four Hebrew consonants and no vowels. We need to understand that normally in writing the Hebrew language only the consonants are written. The vowels have to be supplied by the reader. Sometimes they are placed under the consonants. But, in any case, the basic principle is unless you already know a word you cannot always pronounce it because you don't know where to put the vowels or what vowels to put there.

So, we have these four consonants which are this sacred, unique name of God. Since the time of the second temple this name has never been pronounced by the Jewish people. It was too sacred for them to pronounce. So, wherever this name occurs in the Hebrew of the Bible they substitute another form. Usually they substitute the form Adonai which means "my Lord." Adon means Lord. But, the interesting fact is that Adonai in itself is plural in form. The singular is Adoni. Alternatively, Jewish people will also, instead of pronouncing this name, simple say "The Name." But, anyhow, we come back to the point that there is this name revealed in Scripture in just four consonants. If we are going to pronounce it we have to determine what vowels to put in. Now, in most

English versions this name, let's say Jehovah because we have to say something, this name is represented by "the Lord" but Lord is in capitals. Many people read the Bible without realizing this. If the word "Lord" is not in capitals then it represents Adon in the original Hebrew text. But, if the word "Lord" is in capitals it represents the sacred name of Jehovah.

However, that's not always the way that this name is represented. In the Jerusalem Bible this name is written Yahweh. And this probably represents something close to the original pronunciation. I'll explain why a little later on. In another version, the Berkeley Bible, this name is translated "The Eternal." In other words, it's translated by an adjective. So, we see that there's a certain mystery that centers around this name.

Now let's look at the explanation of the name which the Lord Himself gave to Moses in Exodus 3:13-15. The Lord had told Moses he was to go back to Egypt and deliver Israel and Moses asked, "Well, whom am I to say has sent me?"

> "Moses said to God, 'Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?' God said to Moses, 'I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you." God also said to Moses, 'Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord [that's the sacred name], 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 forever, the name by which I am to be remembered from generation to generation.'" (NIV)

So, the name has a kind of meaning. It's got something to do with I AM. And actually there it's represented "I AM." But, the original statement is "I am who I am."

Now probably in early Hebrew, when this was made third person, it was "He is who He is." And this quite probably would be in the form Yahweh, "He is." So, there's a good reason to believe that Yahweh was close to the original pronunciation of the name. However, there's another thing that we have to take into account that in the Hebrew language the present tense often has a future meaning. It's tied down so specifically. So, it's "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be" or "He is who He is" or "He will be who He will be." In other words, it comprehends much more than we can say in one or two simple words.

But, let's look at it this way if we take it as Yahweh. It means "He is who He is." However, grammatically it's more like a personal name, a proper noun than a common noun. In this way it emphasizes God as a person. This personal name, Yahweh, Jehovah, the Lord, whatever you want to say, first occurs in Genesis 2 in connection with the creation of man. Genesis 2:7 says this about the creation of man:

> "And the Lord God [Yahweh Elohim, Jehovah Elohim, the two names combined] formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being." (NIV)

Now, the word "man" in Hebrew is Adam. It's also a proper name. The proper name Jehovah (God) created (the proper name) Adam (a man). You see, this brings out the personality both of God and man. A personal God created a personal man. What for? For fellowship between the two. So the use of the name there, Jehovah or Yahweh, brings out the fact that God as a person created a man as a person. It brings out right from the beginning the desire of God for a person-to-person relationship with man. We may sum it up a little in this way. Elohim describes the general creator of the universe. Jehovah or Yahweh describes the personal creator of man.

The first aspect, therefore, of this sacred name Jehovah or Yahweh is that it's a personal name. It focuses on the fact that God is a real person. Not an abstraction, not an entity, not just a supreme being but a person.

The second thing that is emphasized by this name is that the person named is eternal and unchanging. This is implied by the use of the verb "to be" in this context. It's the one who is. In a certain sense, God, past, present and future, all come together in an eternity.

So, this unchanging, eternal nature of Jehovah or Yahweh is also brought out in the name. Right at the end of the Old Testament the Lord Himself brings this out. In Malachi 3:6 He says to Israel:

> "For I, the Lord [Jehovah or Yahweh], do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed."

The survival of Israel depends on the eternal, unchanging faithfulness of the Lord.

There's an alternative way of translating that verse which I prefer. "I am the Lord, I do not change..." That's the very essence of His name. He's the eternal, unchanging one. The same truth is brought out in various ways in the New

Testament. We need to see that the language always takes us back to the same person. Hebrews 13:8, it says of Jesus Christ:

> "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (NIV)

That's past, present and future all rolled together in one person. And then in Revelation 1:8 the Lord speaks and He says:

> "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'" (NIV)

You see, there's a transcending of time here. "I am Alpha," the first and the last. I'm at the beginning and I'm at the end simultaneously. And then I'm the one who is, and who was, and who is to come. Really, that phrase, "who is, who was and who is to come" is probably the best way of representing the true meaning of the word Jehovah or Yahweh, the one who is. But who is, not just in the present but comprehending within Himself also the past and the future. The one who is, and who was, and who is to come. So, to sum up this special, sacred, unique name, Jehovah or Yahweh, it has two particular significances. First of all, it emphasizes that God is a person. Secondly, it emphasizes that God is the eternal, unchanging one.

All right. Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll continue with this theme with God revealed in His name. I'll begin to deal with the seven covenant names of Jehovah, the Lord.

Radio Program

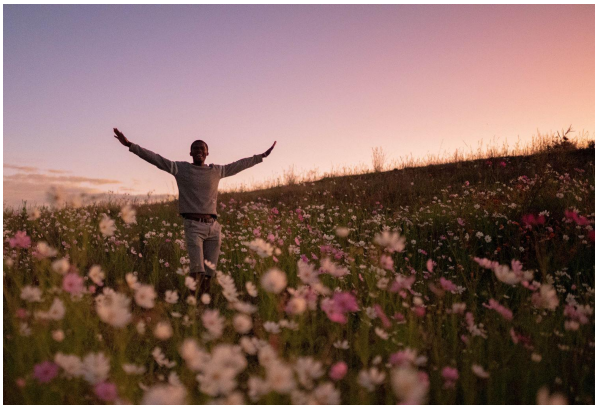
Transcript: TS-R040-103-ENG
Last Updated: 12 Apr 2023
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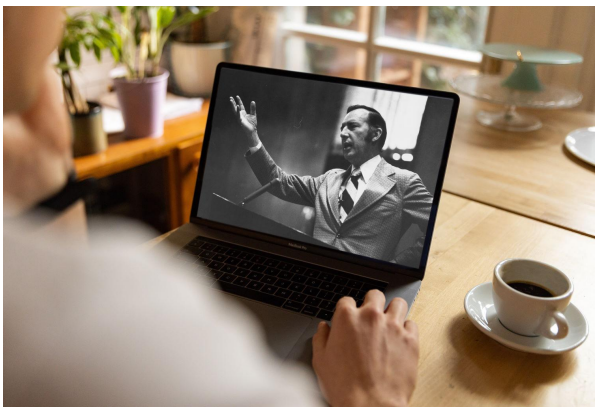
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