

## Introduction: The Names of God/group

### What's in a Name?

Today we give little attention to names. We choose a name for a child because it has been in the family for generations, it's cute, it might look good on an office door, it starts with a letter you like, it's the name of a friend, or even the name of a popular cultural hero. People took names more seriously in ancient times. A person's name signified the expectation for his or her future. Jesus, for example, means "God is my Salvation" (lit., Yahweh Saves). Clearly, this given name reflects the incarnate Son of God's destiny. God changed Jacob's name, meaning deceiver, to Israel (prince) after a divine wrestling match. The examples are multitude in the Bible.

When Moses asked God for His name, He began with simple words, "I AM." At first it seemed sufficient that His people simply know that He was the one who existed for all eternity, existed now, and would exist forever. As He revealed more and more of Himself other names emerged: Jehovah Jira (I AM your provider), Jehova Ropha, (I AM your healer), Jehovah Nisse (I AM your banner), Jehovah Shalom (I AM your peace), and others. Each spoke of a characteristic of the Great I AM. Each said something about His relationship to His people at a particular place and a particular time. Each had a special meaning and revealed truths about God's character, personality, and nature.

When we consider the names of God we move away from a list of attributes that can, when taken out of context, become abstract and impersonal. Our God is neither abstract nor impersonal. He exists eternally in relationship (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). In other words at the center of the universe is a Relationship. For God to be love means He has to exist in relationship to all things. As God's names are revealed, the relationship that He offers by faith through grace comes alive in the stories of His people and His interaction with them. These revealing stories move us into reality and the personal.

One word of caution some people in the Middle Ages and, even some in modern times, created aberrant teachings concerning the names of God. Some thought by chanting one of these names in Hebrew, it would act like a magic spell to bring about certain miracles. Even today, there are some Christian authors who have said that you have to pray using the right name in order for your prayers to be answered. For instance, if you want peace in your home, you have to address God in your prayers as "Jehovah Shalom" or He won't hear you. We humans seem to be experts in establishing our various forms of legalisms, those additions to God's word by which we can measure one another's spirituality. Of course, these peculiar teachings also border on superstition, by which we think that we can somehow manipulate God by simply uttering the proper name and thereby bypass His search of our hearts.

While we want to avoid potential abuses of the study of God's names we do not want to avoid the study itself. By reminding ourselves (not reminding God, He never forgets!) of the many ways He deals with us and the blessings He has for us, our faith increases, and our worship takes on added dimension. As followers of Christ we are learning to exalt the Father as the source of everything. Jesus leads us into a living relationship with our Creator God where we now can know Him intimately and personally. With that in mind, we will begin to consider some of the names of God

Consider the names we will be discussing below. Notice that many of the names are compound names (two words).

Jehovah: I AM THAT I AM	Exodus 3:1-15
Elohim – The One God	Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4
El Elyon – God Most High	Genesis 14:1-20
Adonai – The Lord of Lords	Genesis 15:1-20
El Roi – God Who Sees	Genesis 16
El Shaddai – God the All Sufficient One	Genesis 17:1-8
Jehovah Jira – I AM your Provider	Genesis 22:1-19
Jehovah Ropha – I AM your Healer	Exodus 15:22-27
Jehovah Macceddeshem – I AM the Lord Who Sanctifies	Exodus 31:12-18
Jehovah Shalom – I AM your Peace	Judges 6:1-24
Jehovah Tsidkenu – I AM your Righteousness	Jeremiah 23:1-6
Jehovah Raah – The Lord is my Shepherd	Psalms 23
Jehovah Shua – I AM your Salvation	Matthew 1:18-25

**Assignment:** As you reflect on the list of names that we will be considering over the next several weeks, pick one that draws your attention, read the Scripture associated with that name and write a prayer that reflects the desires of your heart in knowing God in the way His name reveals Him. Be ready to share your thoughts next group meeting.