

## YAHWEH (JEHOVAH): THE GREAT I AM

Exodus 3: 1- 15; Isaiah 45: 1- 8, John 8:54- 58; text Exodus 3:14-15

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**Introduction:** God told Moses to go tell Pharaoh to let his people go. Moses was afraid to do this, but God told him that he would be with him. Moses then asked God what he should say if the people asked who the God was who sent him. It is in that context that God revealed his name Yahweh. We will examine what the significance of that name is both for the world in general and what it especially means to God's people.

### I. The Name Itself

**Exodus 3:14 (NIV)** 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.'"

- A. **God's name Yahweh is derived here from the words, "I Am."**
- B. **It is often rendered as "The LORD" in our English translations of the Bible**
  1. **The Hebrews considered the name of God so holy that they would not speak it.**
  2. **Instead when a priest or scribe was reading the scrolls containing the scriptures and they came to God's name, they would simply say, Adonai, which in English means the Lord.**
  3. **As we read what our scripture says about God's holiness we might wonder if they were all that wrong to do so.**
  4. **Following that tradition most Bible translations, like the NIV or old KJV translate "Yahweh" as The LORD using all capital letters.**
- C. **Some translations, however, use Jehovah or Yahweh.**
  1. **Years ago, some Christian scholars reasoned that since we bear the name of Christ, and that we are made holy in him, we shouldn't have the hang-ups the Jews did with saying God's name.**
  2. **Sadly, however, those same scholars made some big mistakes in their first attempts to write God's name in English letters, which is why some English translations like the ASV translate Yahweh as Jehovah.**
  3. **Most modern translators, who not sure of the pronunciation and who don't want to repeat past errors, continue to translate God's name as "The LORD."**
  4. **A few like the Catholic Jerusalem Bible translate it Yahweh.**

#### Questions:

- 1) **When have I ever been afraid to do what I believe God has called me to do?**
- 2) **Some Bible scholars point out that the name God gave Moses must have been known by the Israelites, because otherwise they would not have understood which god Moses was referring to. Do I agree with them? Why or why not? Is this an important matter? Why or why not?**
- 3) **Should Christians be concerned about speaking God's name? Why or why not? Which one of the Ten Commandments speaks of misusing God's name? Does this commandment forbid using profanity (using God's name to express our strong emotions)? Why or why not? (see Heidelberg Catechism Question and Answer 99.) How careful am I to treat God's name with respect?**
- 4) **If I were a Bible translator how would I translated the name of God? Why?**

### II. Its Significance for All People

- A. **One thing this means is that God simply is.**
  1. **Some people, thinking themselves wise, ask the childish question, "Who made God?"**
  2. **God wasn't made and has no beginning.**
- B. **God's name also reminds us that our restrictions of time and space are meaningless to God.**

1. **Peter, loosely quoting Psalm 90, wrote the following about how our time compares to Yahweh's:**

**2 Peter 3:8 (NIV)** But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.

2. **Yahweh is also present everywhere.**

**Psalm 139:7 (NIV)** Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?

- C. **Yahweh created and gives life to everything.**

**Isaiah 45:18 (NIV)** For this is what the LORD says-- he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited-- he says: "I am the LORD, and there is no other.

1. **In John 8:58 Jesus reveals that he is Yahweh.**

**John 8:58 (NIV)** "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

2. **As Yahweh, Jesus created and gives life to all things.**

**John 1:3-4 (NIV)** Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

- D. **Yahweh alone is I Am; everything else was created, including other so-called gods.**

1. **Some of these were created by people.**
2. **Some are evil spirits posing as gods.**
3. **Satan and other evil spirits were once angels created by God.**

**Isaiah 45:6-7 (NIV)** so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting men may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

4. **That's why, if you know Yahweh, you cannot worship any other gods.**
5. **The Egyptians considered Nile a manifestation of their god Hapi, who blessed the land with life.**
  - a. **That is why the first plague was powerful.**
  - b. **God turned the manifestation of their god of life to blood so that all in it died.**

6. The Lord uses us to proclaim that he alone is God to the idolatrous people of our day, but today he's not proclaiming a curse, but is calling all to salvation.

E. **Yahweh, who alone is God, knows exactly what will happen because he is in control of all things.**

1. **In Exodus 3: 19 God told Moses that he knew Pharaoh wouldn't let the people go.**
2. **So, Pharaoh played right into God's hand.**
3. **In the end he and all the nations who knew what happened knew who Yahweh was.**

Questions:

- 1) Do I agree that the question, "Who made God?" is a child and silly question? Why or why not? Yet, is it difficult to understand how God can just exist without having a beginning? Why? What would I say if someone asked me that question?
- 2) We believe that God is eternal, but is it possible for us to truly understand what means? Why or why not? We also believe that God is fully present everywhere (omnipresent), but is it possible for us to truly understand what this means? And if it's not possible, why did God tell us these things about himself?
- 3) Some people say that all religions teach the same thing. Why is this idea ridiculous, especially when we consider who Yahweh is? Why does believing in Yahweh compel me to also believe that other people's god are not gods at all, but only creations of their own minds or angels who rebelled against God (evil spirits?)
- 4) Since God controls all things, why is he not responsible for the evils in this world? Even if I don't fully understand it, do I believe both that God is in control of all things and that people and angels are responsible for their own actions and that they make decisions that really matter? Why is it important for me to believe this?

### III. Its Significance for God's People

A. **By revealing his name Yahweh to Moses God especially wanted to give hope to his people.**

**Exodus 3:15 (NIV)** God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, 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.

1. **He wanted Israel to know that he was the God who gave the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would be their God, and that they and their descendants would be his people.**

**Genesis 17:7-8 (NIV)** I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

2. **Out of all the people on the face of the earth, Yahweh, who made everything, chose Abraham and his children to be his own.**
3. **And that promise also is ours as believers.**

**Romans 4:16 (NIV)** Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all.

4. **Our faith must be in Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection made both them and us God's people.**

**Ephesians 1:4-5 (NIV)** For he chose us in him [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.

B. **In Exodus 3 God wanted his people to know that the great I AM, who always accomplishes his unchangeable purpose hadn't forgotten those he chose as his own, and he would do everything he had promised, including bringing them to the Promised Land.**

1. **Yahweh, whose name means I Am, is unchangeable.**
2. **In Malachi 3: 6, God told his rebellious people this and why it was important to them.**

**Malachi 3:6 (NIV)** "I the LORD do not change. So you, O descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.

3. **Limited minds like ours find God's being unchangeable difficult to understand, and it sometimes raises as many questions as it answers.**
4. **But both in Exodus and in Malachi, we see what a blessing God being unchangeable is to his people.**
5. **Yahweh, I Am that I am, will continue to fulfill his purpose, and other peoples' sins and our own sins can't stop him.**
6. **We should realize this even more than the Israelites did.**
  - a. **They only experienced how God rescued them from their evil enslavers.**
  - b. **And when God spoke to Moses, they hadn't even experienced that yet.**
  - c. **But we know that Jesus, who is Yahweh, left heaven's glory to come to this earth and die for our sin, freeing us from its curse, that we might be the sons and daughters he chose us to be and have the hope of the promised land (heaven and the new earth.)**

Questions:

- 1) Do I think that it was fair that of all people on the face of the earth, God chose as his own only the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Why or why not? Was there anything special about these people that caused God to choose them? (see Deuteronomy 7: 6-8) How did God use this choice to bless his entire world?
- 2) Do I believe that God chose me to be his child before he made the world? Why or why not? How do I know that I was chosen by God? Can I see how God guided my life and brought me to faith? How have I responded to his choosing me?
- 3) Do I believe that I share in those promises that God gave to Abraham? Why or why not?
- 4) What problems arise in my mind when I reflect on the Biblical teaching that God is unchangeable (immutable)? But what does this practically mean for me and why is it such a blessing to me?
- 5) Am I certain that I have a place in the Promised Land, in other words, a home in heaven and on the new earth? Why or why not?

To know Yahweh is to know the one true God who always accomplishes his unchanging purposes. He's the one who chose us to be his children, and he's guiding our lives until the day he brings us home to his Promised Land.