

Part II

Using the Name Yahweh

Introduction to Part II

It is claimed by many Christian groups that, regardless of what the ancients did, there is simply no justification or requirement for continuing to use the sacred name. The people of the Bible spoke Hebrew and, even if those from Adam to Moses were cognizant of the name Yahweh, it is an old tribal name and it is just not required any longer. A term denoting “Lord,” in their opinion, better represents the universality of the almighty.

This popular explanation for not using the sacred name is laden with misinterpretation, self-deception, and confusion. Its origin lies with the developing doctrine of the Jewish religious leaders who, on their own authority and beginning in the latter part of the second century B.C.E., decided to substitute the sacred name with the words *adonai* (meaning either “my sovereign” or “sovereigns” and often translated in English as “my Lord” or “Lord”) and *eloahim*, which in English is translated as “God.” These philosophers did not originally envision substitution as necessary for establishing a universal religion. They substituted because they deemed the name “יהוה” as far too sacred for any common man to speak. Even devout Jews were forbidden to utter its sound out of fear that any common usage would profane the name.

Later on the Jews reasoned that the by-product of substitution was to raise Yahweh from a tribal deity to a universal deity. For example, the *Jewish Encyclopedia* argues that “from a reverential feeling that the Name ought not to be pronounced except with consecrated lips and to consecrated ears, the substitute ‘Lord’ came into use.” It then goes on to add:¹

Yet this simple measure, introduced to guard the Name against profane use, formed one of the most powerful means of securing to the Biblical God the universal character with which He is invested as the Lord of Hosts and the Ruler of men and nations. YHWH, as the God of Israel, might still be taken as a tribal God; The Lord is no longer the God of one people; He is Lord of all the world, the Only One.

Solomon Zeitlin similarly informs us:²

After the Restoration those who adhered to the view of the universality of God maintained that Yahweh is

¹ JE, 1, p. 203.

² JQR, 59, p. 261.

not an ethnic God but is God of the universe, the God of all peoples. To propagate this view they declared that the word Yahweh in the Pentateuch should be pronounced Adonai to signify that He is the Lord, Master of the Universe.

In the second century C.E. Greek translators and various Christian Church leaders began to follow this Jewish doctrine of an ineffable name and continued the practice of substitution. They also adopted the Jewish reasoning that the term “adonai,” translated into Greek as “*kyrios* (Lord),” gave the deity a universal character. In later centuries the practice remained but the reasons for doing so had been expanded. The new Christian claim was that the sacred name was Jewish and was no longer of any importance; to use the name was Judaising. Yet the Christians remained in agreement with the Jews that a universal religion required a common title.

The Christians contend that before the beginning of the Christian era Judaism had already begun to substitute the personal name of Yahweh with the Hebrew words adonai and eloahim. Ancient Greek translators, following this lead, substituted the name Yahweh with *kyrios* (Lord) and *theos* (deity) in both the Septuagint and New Testament books. Subsequent Latin versions, like the Vulgate, followed suit, replacing Yahweh with *Dominus* (Lord). The conclusion of this view, as stated in the *Revised Standard Version*, is that “the use of any proper name for the one and only God, as though there were other gods from whom He had to be distinguished, was discontinued in Judaism before the Christian era and is entirely inappropriate for the universal faith of the Christian Church.”³

Mohammed (eighth century C.E.), founder of the Muslim religion, meanwhile, had been taught by local Arab Jews. These Jews, as their Talmudic laws required, practiced substitution of the sacred name. The unfortunate result of this intermixture was that Mohammed came to believe that the generic title Allah (Arabic for eloah) was the almighty’s personal name. The Jews, who considered the Arabs to be men of unconsecrated lips and ears, did not find it necessary to tell them otherwise.

These issues will be fully examined as we proceed with our first two volumes of study. In Volume II, for example, we shall demonstrate that the “Lord” doctrine of universality (which originated in pagan Baal worship but was adopted by the Jews and followed by the Christians) is false and the product of human and demonic invention. For now we shall direct our attention towards the specific issue of the universality and the appropriateness of using the sacred name for everyone following Scriptures. This evidence will prove that the sacred name Yahweh is the only universal name required for use by all those following Scriptures, regardless of national origin or language.

³ RSV, p. vii.

Chapter VI

Are We to Use the Sacred Name?

Despite the powerful evidence proving that the only personal name of our heavenly father is the valuable, eternal, and sacred name **יהוה** (Yahweh), the religious leaders of the Judaeo-Christian and Moslem worlds still feel justified in not teaching or using it. The Jewish groups feel that it should not be used because it is simply too sacred. The Christians and Moslems believe that they are under no obligation to use it. They argue that there are no commandments or indications in the Scriptures that all “believers” must know and continually call upon the name Yahweh. Besides, they reason, the name Yahweh is a Jewish name and the Christian and Moslem worlds are neither Jewish nor do they speak Hebrew. The Jews, meanwhile, teach that the name Yahweh is only for the most pious of the Jews and is not to be known or uttered by any other people. Although, these views are commonly expressed, can they find support in Scriptures?

What Do Scriptures Say?

Human tradition and personal interpretation serve to make students both blind and deaf to what the Scriptures have to say. Indeed, the claim that the Scriptures do not inform us that we are to use the sacred name is simply untrue. According to the Scriptures, the sacred name is not only to be declared, it is to be praised, blessed, thanked, exalted, glorified, magnified, and called on! The following are a number of examples from the Psalms which fully demonstrate this scriptural doctrine:

I will give thanks to **יהוה** in his righteousness, and praise the name **יהוה**, the most high. (Ps., 7:17)

I will give thanks, **יהוה**, with my whole heart I will tell of all your wonderful acts; I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will praise **שמך עליון** (your most high name).⁴ (Ps., 9:1-2)

Therefore, I will extol you among the nations, **יהוה**, and to your name I will sing praises. (Ps., 18:49)

⁴ **שמך עליון** has traditionally been read as, “your name, (thou) most high.” Though it can be read this way, it would be more proper to say, “your most high name.” First, “you (thou)” is not in the Hebrew and is placed in as an interpretation. In this construction it flows better if we allow “most high” to modify “your name” rather than assuming that the statement is an address to the most high. Normal practice would be to say “el the most high,” or some other such phrasing if “most high” was intended to refer to the person Yahweh. In either case, Yahweh’s name was praised.

We will rejoice in your salvation, and we will set up banners in the name of our eloahi; may אֱלֹהִים fulfill all your prayers. Now I know אֱלֹהִים saves his messiah; he will answer him from his sacred heavens with the saving strength of his right hand. These (trust) in the chariot, and these in horses, but we will mention the name of אֱלֹהִים, our eloahi. (Ps., 20:5–7)

I will declare your name to my brothers; in the midst of the assembly I will praise you. You that respect אֱלֹהִים, praise him all of the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and all of the seed of Israel revere him. (Ps., 22:22f)

And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies, my encirclers, and I will offer sacrifices of joy in his tabernacle. I will sing, and I will sing praise to אֱלֹהִים. (Ps., 27:6)

Ascribe to אֱלֹהִים (you) sons of mighty ones; ascribe to אֱלֹהִים glory and strength. Give to אֱלֹהִים the glory due his name. (Ps., 29:1f)

Sing praises to אֱלֹהִים, (you) his saints and give thanks for his sacred זִכָּר (memorial).⁵ (Ps., 30:4)

Magnify אֱלֹהִים with me; and let us exalt his name together. (Ps., 34:3)

Let those who delight in my righteousness shout and rejoice, and they shall continually say, “אֱלֹהִים is magnified!” delighting in the peace of his servant. (Ps., 35:27)

Observe that in this passage from Psalm, 35:27, those who are delighting in the success of the servant of Yahweh are the ones who will say, “אֱלֹהִים is magnified!”

In eloahim we boast all the day, and in your name we praise to עוֹלָם (olam, forever).⁶ (Ps., 44:8)

I will declare your name in all generations upon generations; therefore the peoples shall praise you to forever and perpetually. (Ps., 45:16)

⁵ That Yahweh's זִכָּר or zeker (memorial) is his sacred name see above pp. 35f.

⁶ That עוֹלָם, “to olam,” means “to/for forever” or “eternity” see above pp. 42f.

I will sacrifice to you freely; I will praise your name, **יְהוָה**, for it is good. (Ps., 54:6)

Therefore, I will bless you while I live. In your name I will lift up my hands (in worship). (Ps., 63:4)

I will praise eloahim's name in song; I will magnify him with thanks, and it shall be good to **יְהוָה**, more than bulls, horned and hooped bulls. (Ps., 69:30)

Blessed is **יְהוָה** of eloahim, the eloahi of Israel, who alone does wonderful things. And blessed is his glorious name to olam (forever) and the whole earth is filled with his glory! (Ps., 72:18f)

Let not the ill-treated ones turn back ashamed; let the humble and needy praise your name. (Ps., 74:21)

We have given thanks to you, eloahim, we have given thanks, for is near your name; your wonderful works have been told. (Ps., 75:1)

Make us live, and we will call on your name **יְהוָה**, eloahim of hosts, turn us again, make your face shine, and we will be saved. (Ps., 80:18)

Teach me your way, **יְהוָה**; I will walk in your truth; unite my heart to respect your name. I will thank you **יְהוָה** eloahi with all my heart; and I will glorify your name to olam (forever). (Ps., 86:11–12)

Blessed is the people who know the joyful sound “**יְהוָה**”; in the light of your face they shall walk. In your name they shall rejoice all the day and in your righteousness they are exalted. (Ps., 89:15–16)

(It is) good to give thanks to **יְהוָה**, and to sing praises to your most high name. (Ps., 92:1)

Be glad (you) righteous ones in **יְהוָה**; give thanks to his sacred **זֵכֶר** (zeker; memorial). (Ps., 97:12)

יְהוָה is great in Zion; and he is high above all the peoples. They shall thank your great and respected name, it is sacred. (Ps., 99:2–3)

Shout joyfully to *יהוה* all the earth. Serve *יהוה* with gladness. Come before his face with singing. Know that this *יהוה*, he is eloahim. He has made us, and not we (ourselves), his people and his sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, (into) his courts with praise. Be thankful to him. Bless his name, for *יהוה* is good; his mercy is to forever, and his faithfulness is unto generation upon generation.⁷ (Ps., 100:1–5)

Bless *יהוה* my nephesh (life) and all within me this his sacred name. Bless my nephesh and do not forget all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems from ruin your life, who crowns you (with) mercy and tender compassion. (Ps., 103:1–4)

Save us *יהוה*, our eloahi, and gather us from the nations to give thanks to your sacred name, to boast in your praise. Blessed is *יהוה*, the eloahi of Israel, from the olam as far as the olam; and let say all the people, “Amen, praise *יהוה*!” (Ps., 106:47f)

It is important to note that in this verse from Psalm, 106, all the people are to say, “Amen, praise *יהוה*!”

Praise *יהוה*! Praise, servants of *יהוה*, praise the name *יהוה*. Blessed is the name of *יהוה* from now and as far as olam (forever). From the rising of the sun until its going *יהוה*'s name is to be praised. (Ps., 113:1–3)

What shall I return to *יהוה* for all his benefits to me? The cup of salvation I will lift up and on the name *יהוה* I will call. My vows to *יהוה* I will pay in the presence of all his people. (Ps., 116:11–14)

Hallelu-Yah! Praise the name *יהוה*. Praise, servants of *יהוה* who stand in the house of *יהוה*, in the courts of the house of our eloahi. Hallelu-Yah! For *יהוה* is good. Sing praises to his name, for it is delightful. (Ps., 135:1–3)

⁷ וְעַד דָּר וְדָר (and as far as generation and generation). This Hebrew phrase is generally translated as, “to all generations” (see KJV, HEOT; AB; ect). NTB renders it, “from age to age”; IB has, “to generation and generation.” It essentially holds the meaning, “unto all generations of men,” see above pp. 42f and and Chap. IV, ns. 8–10.

I will worship towards your sacred temple and give thanks to your name, upon your mercy and upon your truth. (Ps., 138:2)

Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name; the upright shall dwell in your presence. (Ps., 140:13)

I will exalt you my eloah, the king, and bless your name to olam and perpetually. In every day I will bless you and praise your name to olam and perpetually. יהוה is great and to be praised greatly; and for his greatness is not a search (a finding out). Generation to generation shall praise your works and shall declare your mighty acts. (Ps., 145:1-4)

Hallelu-Yah! Praise this יהוה from the heavens; praise him in the heights; praise him all his malakim (angels); praise him all his hosts; praise him sun and moon; praise him all the stars of light; praise him heaven of heavens and waters that are above the heavens; let them praise the name יהוה, for he commanded and they were created. (Ps., 148:1-5)

To the above quotes from the Psalms we should also add one from Isaiah:

And you shall with joy draw waters out of the wells of salvation. And in that day you shall say, "Thanks יהוה!" Call on his name; make known among the peoples his doings; make mention that his name is exalted. Sing praise (to) יהוה, for he has done majestically; this is known in all the earth. (Isa., 12:3-5)

These above quotes are only a small handful of samples from Scriptures that can be offered. The question now arises: "Why is it that the Scriptures would have us thank, bless, glorify, or speak a name 'to olam (forever) and perpetually' while the religious leaders of this world who claim the Scriptures as authority do not see fit to teach or even believe it is relevant?" Also, one should ask, "Why is this sacred name considered usable only by Yahweh and his prophets of the Scriptures but not by the Jews, Christians, Moslems, or their associated religions?"

Does Language Exempt Use?

One common response to these questions is the reasoning that, "We speak English (or Arabic, French, or whatever national tongue one might be speaking)." Yahweh, they contend, is a Hebrew or Jewish name for the almighty. Therefore, the rationale goes, anyone not speaking Hebrew is exempt and is

permitted to use whatever name their own national language group has devised. For example, in America most Christians believe that because we speak English that an English name should be utilized. This kind of logic is precisely that to which the book of Proverbs refers when it twice states:⁸

There is a road (seeming) upright to the face of man,
but its ends are the roads of death.

In the book of Numbers, Yahweh warns the Israelites to remember all of the commandments of Yahweh and do them. They were not to “go about after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you go astray” (Num., 15:39).

Support is entirely lacking from Scriptures for the vain argument that one is exempt from using the sacred name Yahweh simply because he is speaking a language other than Hebrew. This view is merely a contrived notion of men, not an allowed deviation from Yahweh’s commandments. But let us assume for the moment that those pre-deluvian people, the ancestors of all mankind including the Hebrews, who are quoted in Scriptures as using the sacred name, from Eve to Noah, as well as the non-Hebrew people of Abimelech and his men from Palestim, all spoke Hebrew.⁹ What difference does it make? Nowhere does Yahweh say that his personal name was “your name for me.” Nowhere is it said that the sacred name is a Hebrew name. Rather, Yahweh states:

I am יהוה; that is my name; and I will not give my
glory to another, nor my praise to engraved images.
(Isa., 42:8)

Yahweh revealed his name to men, not vice versa. It existed “from olam,” long before mankind even set foot on the earth.¹⁰ Those speaking Hebrew were merely using the name that Yahweh had revealed to them. It was not the invention of men. Indeed, if a foreigner came to our country and told us that his name was Ivan or Jan, would we become so audacious as to disregard these forms and insist on calling him John, the English version of these names? Yet those who claim the right to rename Yahweh go even further. They not only refuse to use an English form of the sacred name יהוה (i.e., “Yahweh”), but claim the right to substitute his personal name with one of their own invention, like “the Lord,” “God,” and “Jehovah.” Does one show respect to Ivan or Jan if he, without permission, insisted on renaming him Harry or Ralph? By what scriptural authority do men receive the right to change their creator’s name?

Can Men Rename Yahweh?

The arrogance that comes with the attitude expounded by men, that they

⁸ Prov., 14:12, 16:25.

⁹ For the quotations at issue see above pp. 44–48.

¹⁰ Isa., 63:16. Also see above pp. 42–44.

have the right to rename our heavenly father with a name of their own or collective choosing, is best expressed by the power that is appropriated to the person giving a name. The highly acclaimed *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, for example, explains that in the Scriptures:¹¹

Changing another's name displayed the power of the changer and the allegiance owed by the one whose name was changed.

In *The New Bible Dictionary*, J. A. Motyer, Vice-Principal of Clifton Theological College in Bristol, writes:¹²

To give a name is the prerogative of a superior, as when Adam exercised his dominion over the animals, by giving them their names (Gn. ii. 18ff), or when the victorious pharaoh renamed the conquered Judaeon king (2 Ki. xxiii. 34). Likewise, [in Scriptures] the parent (the mother on twenty-eight occasions, the father on eighteen) names the child.

G. H. Parke-Taylor poignantly observes that the giving of a name, "implies ownership and control."¹³ The *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*, likewise, states that in Scriptures:¹⁴

To bestow a name is an act of authority, denoting possession, responsibility, and protection for some person or object (2 Sam. 12:28; Ps. 49:11; Isa. 4:1). The naming of creation is thus an exercise of dominion, part of the "image of God" (Gen. 2:19-20; cf. 1:28). Changes of name confer new status, either greater or lesser ([Gen.,] 32:28; 2 Kgs. 24:17).

Under the same rules, the wife takes on the name of her husband, scripturally considered her superior.¹⁵ Yahweh named Adam, and Adam named his wife Eve.¹⁶ Yahweh also gave names to Abraham and his wife Sarah, to Isaak, and to Israel.¹⁷ But never is it said in Scriptures that anyone had the right or even dared to give Yahweh a personal name. Parents name their children, children do not name their parents. It is the prerogative of the superior to name, not the inferior. Yet humans, who have but the potential of becoming

¹¹ HBD, p. 684.

¹² NBD, p. 862.

¹³ YDNB, p. 1.

¹⁴ EBD, p. 747f.

¹⁵ Isa., 4:1; 2 Pet., 3:1-6; Eph., 5:22-24; 1 Cor., 11:3.

¹⁶ Gen., 5:2, shows that both Adam and his wife were called Adam "in the day that they were created." Since Adam was created first, he was first to hold this name. Eve being the wife of Adam received her husband's name. Gen., 3:20, states that Adam named his wife Eve.

¹⁷ Gen., 17:5, 15, 19, 32:28.

the children of Yahweh, feel that they have the right to rename our heavenly father. The imprudent notion held by men, that they even think they have this power and right, is in itself preposterous. To hold this view is to make the vain claim that the almighty is their inferior and subject to their control!

Conclusion

The Scriptures are neither silent nor permissive on the subject. Nowhere does it even suggest that mankind has some inalienable right to call upon Yahweh by a substitute name. Rather, it everywhere states that we are to praise, glorify, bless, respect, and thank the name “Yahweh.” Glory is to be given to no other. Only a superior has the right to bestow a name, and father Yahweh is superior over all. We are subject to his control, not vice versa.

To defend the position that people have the right to substitute the sacred name with other titles and names, the justification is brought forth that “the almighty knows what we mean.” Mankind imagines that because all knowledge is held by Yahweh and because he knows the intent of men’s hearts that he automatically grants them permission. The problem with this mind-set is that Yahweh does know their intent: it is that, despite all scriptural instruction to the contrary, those advocating substitution have decided on their own authority to do what they think is right in their own eyes. What men fail to see is that it is not a question of knowledge on the part of Yahweh; it is a problem of arrogance, lack of trust, disobedience, and thoughtlessness on the part of those claiming to be followers of Scriptures.