Proverbs 31:1-4
1 The words of Agur the son of Jake, the sententious sayings which he made to Ithiel and Ucal:

2 Although of men I am the least learned, and human wisdom is not in me;

3 Although of science I have not been taught, yet of holy things have I acquaintance.

4 Who hath ascended into the heavens and descended? Who hath collected the wind within his grasp? Who hath enclosed the waters as within a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? WHAT IS HIS NAME, and WHAT IS HIS SON’s NAME, if thou knowest?

Exodus 3:13-14
13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, WHAT IS HIS NAME? What shall I say unto them?

14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

1. The Significance of Names

Many times, the name given to a person in the bible was given for a reason, and was indicative of the person’s nature. We saw in a previous article that God called the first man Adam, which means taken out of the ground. This was because God had made Adam’s body from the dust of the ground. Later in the book of Genesis, we see that Adam named his wife Eve, which means source of life. The bible explicitly states [Genesis 3:20] that Adam did this because Eve was to become the mother of all that live.

The significance of names is further underscored by the fact that God found it necessary to change the names of certain people to reflect their new nature and put them in position to inherit the promises God had given them. As they, in faith, called themselves by the new name God had given them, they became what the name said they were. A case in point is the patriarch Jacob, whose name meant deceiver. God changed his name to Israel, which means power with God. Yet another example is the patriarch Abram (father is high) whose name God changed to Abraham, which means father of a multitude.

It goes without saying, that if the names given to men were significant, that the names by which God has revealed himself unto man would likewise be significant.
The scriptures tell us in Malachi 3:16-17 that God takes notice of those that reverence Him and think upon His name; and Psalm 91:14 tells us that God delivers and protects those that set their love upon Him and know His name. Therefore, we should seek to know and understand the names of God.

2. Knowing and Understanding the Name of God

In the book of Proverbs, a prophet named Agur posed to the people of his day the following questions about God:

**Proverbs 31:4**

*Who hath ascended into the heavens and descended? Who hath collected the wind within his grasp? Who hath enclosed the waters as within a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? WHAT IS HIS NAME, and WHAT IS HIS SON’s NAME, if THOU KNOWEST?*

This shows that even in the days of the Old Testament, the people of God understood that

1. God had a name;
2. God had a Son;
3. The Son of God also had a name.

There is another instance in the Old Testament of an inquiry into the name of God. An angel of Jehovah appeared to Manoah and his wife, the parents of Samson before he was born. The angel instructed them how to raise the child, and as the interview was coming to an end, Manoah asked the angel for his name:

**Judges 13:17-18**

17 And Manoah said unto the angel of Jehovah, WHAT IS THY NAME, that, when thy words come to pass, we may do thee honor?
18 And the angel of Jehovah said unto him, Wherefore askest thou after my NAME, seeing it is wonderful?

Now the word translated “angel” in this passage just means *messenger*. Reading further in the book of Judges, we see that Manoah and his wife realized that the messenger of Jehovah they had just talked with was none other than God himself. At that time, God did not provide a full answer to Manoah’s question, noting only that his name was *wonderful*. The phrase “Wonderful” used here brings to mind the following prophecy of Isaiah, which referred to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus.

**Isaiah 9:6**

*For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his NAME shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

The various names used in this verse highlight different aspects of the nature of God, and the different relationships that God, through his Son, sustains toward his people. But none of these names is the name that God gave to himself before time
began. For that name, we have to return to the encounter of Moses with God at the burning bush.

3. I AM THAT I AM

Ideally, the name for something should describe just that one thing and no other. In the case of the God who created all things, his name should fit only him and no other being. When God appeared to Moses at the burning bush desiring to send him to Egypt to bring out the children of Israel, Moses asked God his name and received an answer:

**Exodus 3:13-14**

13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, WHAT IS HIS NAME? What shall I say unto them?

14 And God said unto Moses, I am that I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

15 And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, JEHOVAH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: THIS IS MY NAME FOREVER, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

God seems to give Moses two names: *I AM* and *Jehovah*. He tells Moses, in effect, that *Jehovah* has always been his name, and would always be. It turns out that *Jehovah* and *I AM* are the same name. The Hebrew word translated *Jehovah* (or sometimes, *Yahweh*) means all of the following:

- He who is
- He who exists
- He who lives

At the same time, *I AM* can also be rendered

- I AM
- I EXIST
- I LIVE

so that the two names are the same: God would use the form *I AM* when referring to himself, while any other person would use the equivalent form *Jehovah* when referring to God.

Think back, if you will, to the time before God had created anything. At that time, nothing existed except God, and the most apt description for God would be *He who exists*. And God would have rightly thought of himself and to himself: I *am*, or equivalently, I *exist*. These descriptions are of course summed up in the name Jehovah.

The name *Jehovah* is sometimes rendered *Yahweh*. It is considered so sacred to Jewish people that they never say it. Many English translations of the Hebrew scriptures, such as the King James and New American Standard versions, follow this Jewish tradition and substitute the phrase *The Lord* (in small caps) for the name Jehovah.
4. **As the Lord Lives**

The scriptures in their original languages contain many plays on words that are sometimes lost in translation. Consider the following verse:

**Psalm 18:46**

*Jehovah liveth; and blessed be my rock; And exalted be the God of my salvation,*

Here, the psalmist is literally saying *He who liveth liveth*. When a person in the Old Testament swore by saying *As the LORD liveth*, he was literally saying he would do something as surely as Jehovah exists. In effect, he was swearing by the existence of the one who exists [2 Kings 2:2, Jeremiah 5:2].

Hebrews 6:16-19 tells us that men swear (or make an oath) to show that they are in earnest about what they say and put an end to all doubts. The same passage of scripture tells that while men swear by one greater, God swears by himself because there is none greater than Him:

**Ezekiel 33:11**

*Say unto them, AS I LIVE, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?*

**Romans 14:11**

*For it is written, AS I LIVE, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.*

When Jehovah says *AS I LIVE*, he is swearing by his own name. According to Hebrews 6:19, God uses an oath to show the immutability of his counsel and stress to men the things that are of the utmost importance to the heart of God:

1. In Ezekiel 33:11, Jehovah expresses with an oath his desire for man to turn to God in repentance;
2. In Romans 14:11, Jehovah declares, also with an oath, his intent to establish his kingdom over all the earth.

5. **The Eternal Father and Son**

*James Rotherham’s Emphasized Bible* is believed by many to be one of the most accurate translations in existence. It renders the conversation of Moses with God at the burning bush as follows:

**Exodus 3:14-15** [3]

14 *And God said unto Moses, I WILL BECOME WHATSOEVER I PLEASE, and he said – Thus shalt thou say to the sons of Israel, I WILL BECOME hath sent me unto you.*

15 *And God said yet further unto Moses – Yahweh, God of your fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob has sent me unto you. This is my name to TIMES AGE ABIDING.*
It turns out the phrase *I AM THAT I AM* can also be translated *I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE*: It is both present and future. This future aspect is further brought out when God said: *This is my name to times age abiding.* There is clearly an aspect of eternity here. Likewise, the name Jehovah also means *He who will be.* In actuality, the name denotes the *eternal* and *everlasting* nature of God: He was, He is, and He will always be.

All of this is also collaborated by Strong’s Concordance, where it is shown that the word translated Jehovah means both *self-existent* and *eternal.* And indeed, Jehovah is the only one in the universe who is both self-existent and eternal: Everything else was created by Jehovah and owes its existence to him.

What is true of God the Father is also true of his Son Jesus. The following scriptures, taken from the New Testament, confirm the eternal and everlasting nature of the Son:

**Revelation 1:7-8**
7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, WHICH IS, AND WHICH WAS, AND WHICH IS TO COME, Almighty.

**John 8:57-58**
57 Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?

58 Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM.

The fact that the name Jehovah speaks to the eternal nature of God is beautifully brought out by the Moffat translation, which translates the name that is variously rendered Jehovah, Yahweh, or *The Lord* by other translations as *The Eternal*:

**Exodus 3:14-15** [1]
15 God said to Moses, “I-will-be-what-I-will-be: tell the Israelites that I-will-be has sent you to them.”

16 God also said to Moses, “You must tell the Israelites that the ETERNAL, God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent you to them; tell them THIS IS MY NAME FOR ALL TIME, THIS IS MY TITLE FOR ALL AGES.

**Psalm 18:46** [1]
The ETERNAL is living—blessed be my Might, exalted by my God of victory!

6. **The Eternal Mercies of God**

As we pointed out in another study, the name for man, *Adam,* means *taken out of the ground.* This name perfectly describes the the nature and essence of man: he is created out of dust, and returns to dust when he dies. In the scriptures, the transient nature of man is likened to the grass and flowers of the field. Flowers spring up, flourish for a while, and then wither and die. In Psalm 90, Moses, the
man of God, noted the fleeting nature of man’s time on earth. Accordingly, he prayed that God would help us realize the shortness of our lives, and help us make every decision in the light of eternity [Psalm 90:2-6, Psalm 90:12].

In contrast to man, Jehovah is self-existent, eternal, and omnipotent. The frailty of man demonstrates his need for a source of help outside of himself, and naturally cries out for the mercy and protection of an omnipotent creator. Just as God is eternal, existing from everlasting to everlasting, so are his love, his lovingkindness, and his mercies toward man. We find these two realities, the helpless weakness of man, and the eternal mercies of God, juxtaposed in the following passage from the Psalms:

Psalm 103:13
13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.
14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are DUST.
15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.
16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.
17 But the MERCY of the LORD is from EVERLASTING to EVERLASTING upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children;
18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

Psalm 136 is devoted to extolling the goodness of Jehovah. In that psalm, the constant refrain is that Jehovah’s mercies, like him, are eternal and endure forever. Knowing this fact, and knowing that in Jesus we have a high priest who intercedes for us despite knowing our weaknesses, we can have strong encouragement to come before God’s throne to receive help in time of need [Hebrews 4:14-16]. No matter how we may have sinned, we can rest in the assurance that God, because of his love and mercy, stands ready to help us when we turn to him in true repentance.

The main premise of this series of studies is that the names of God reveal his nature and his attributes: we can begin to know what God is like by understanding the names by which He has revealed himself. In the book of Exodus, Moses, the intimate friend of God [Numbers 12:5-8, Deuteronomy 34:10], prayed that God would show him his glory:

Exodus 33:18
And he said, Show me, I pray thee, thy glory.

The Hebrew word for glory means weight. In those days, the substance, value, or worth of an object was determined by weighing it in a balance scale. This idea of glory or weight as a measure of worth or character extended to people [Daniel 5:27]. In asking to see the glory of God, Moses was asking to see the very nature and substance of God, and to see the qualities that made Jehovah worthy. God’s answer to this prayer was to show Moses the goodness [Acts 10:38, Mark 3:1-5, Acts 4:9], the name, the grace, and the mercy [Luke 18:38] of Jehovah:
Exodus 33:19
And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and will proclaim the name of Jehovah before thee; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

In this verse we have God’s own testimony that his name, his goodness, and his mercy are his glory; and that the qualities that make Him worthy and best reveal what He is are his goodness, his grace, and his mercy.

Incidentally, the phrase

\[ I \ will \ be \ gracious \ to \ whom \ I \ will \ be \ gracious \]

should not be construed to mean that Jehovah is arbitrary or capricious in selecting those to whom he shows mercy. Rather, it means that there are conditions of repentance and faith that usually have to be met before one can be a recipient of God’s goodness.

7. His Mercy Endures Forever

We cannot leave this subject of the mercies of God without mentioning King Jehoshaphat of Judah. The story is found in 2 Chronicles 20. Facing an enemy army with an overwhelming superiority in numbers, Jehoshaphat turned to Jehovah for help. After receiving the promise of God’s help in answer to his prayer, Jehoshaphat and all the people bowed before God in worship and thanksgiving. Arising from there, the people of Judah went forth to meet the enemy with the praises of God in their mouths:

2 Chronicles 20:20-22
20 And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem: believe in Jehovah your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

21 And when he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed them that should sing unto Jehovah, and give praise in holy array, as they went out before the army, and say, Give thanks unto JEHOVAH; for HIS LOVINGKINDNESS ENDURETH FOR EVER.

22 And when they began to sing and to praise, Jehovah set liers-in-wait against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, that were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

The word translated lovingkindness here is actually the word for mercy and compassion. So in 2 Chronicles 20:21, the people of Judah were literally saying: Give thanks to the ETERNAL, for his mercies are ETERNAL.

8. Eternal Life

We now move to the New Testament to see how the name of God (Jehovah, The Eternal) relates to the life that Jesus came to bring.
John 3:14-16
14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:
15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have ETERNAL LIFE.
16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have EVERLASTING LIFE.

In these scriptures, eternal life is also called everlasting life. But just what is eternal life? Some people think of eternal life as a life that will last forever. This view is not exactly correct, because even people that do not receive eternal life will continue to exist for eternity, albeit in a place of eternal punishment away from the presence of God. Eternal life is actually the life of The Eternal God Jehovah. To put it in another way, eternal life is the life of God himself.

One of the benefits of receiving eternal life is that those that receive it will not perish. This means that they will avoid suffering everlasting punishment in the fires of hell. Another benefit of eternal life is the ability to know God and walk in fellowship with him:

John 17:1-3
1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee:
2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give ETERNAL LIFE to as many as thou hast given him.
3 And this is LIFE ETERNAL, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

9. Emmanuel

God is infinite, whereas language is finite. No one word, even one that refers to his eternal nature and godhead, can comprehend within its meaning all that God is. For this reason, God has revealed himself to man using a number of different names. Among these is the name Emmanuel.

Matthew 1:22-23
22 Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,
23 Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name EMMANUEL, which being interpreted is, GOD WITH US.

The name Emmanuel speaks to us of God’s desire to be with those that are his people through faith in his Son. First, it tells that God desires to be with us in fellowship as we walk though life [1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 John 1:3]. Second, it tells us that as we walk in obedience, in every situation God will be on our side to defend us against our enemies. Indeed, this is the truth that God gave to Joshua to sustain him at the beginning of his ministry after Moses had died:
Joshua 1:5,9
5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I WAS WITH MOSES, SO I WILL BE THEE; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.
9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of good courage; be not affrighted, neither be thou dismayed: for Jehovah thy God IS WITH THEE whithersoever thou goest.

Besides Emmanuel, God has also revealed himself through various hyphenated forms of the name Jehovah: Jehovah-Tsehdeq and Jehovah-Rapha. We will look at these names next.

10. Jehovah Our Righteousness

Jeremiah 33:14-16
14 Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will perform that good word which I have spoken concerning the house of Israel and concerning the house of Judah.
15 In those days, and at that time, will I cause a Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.
16 In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the NAME whereby she shall be called: JEHOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

In God’s eyes, his people are called by his name [2 Chronicles 7:14, Acts 11:26, James 2:7]. In the Hebrew language, the hyphenated name of God used for the people of God in verse 16 is Jehovah-Tsehdeq, which means Jehovah Our Righteousness. This name speaks to how all those that receive Jesus Christ are grafted into the tree of Israel and are counted by God as being part of Judah and Jerusalem [Hebrews 12:22, Galatians 4:26]. Such people receive salvation from sin:

“In those days shall Judah be saved”

and attain to the righteousness of God [Romans 10:3] in Christ.

While Jeremiah 33:14-16 has obvious application to the church, It also has an application to the natural nation of Israel that is yet to be fulfilled [Romans 11:25-26].

This prophecy of Jeremiah was given at a time when God’s people had apostasized and walked away from God. In the midst of calls to repentance and pronouncements of judgments to come if the people failed to repent, God would look forward to the coming of Christ, the branch who would spring from David. Christ would save men from sin by offering forgiveness of sins and deliverance from the power of sin. Doubtless, the apostle Paul had the promise given in this scripture in mind when he opened his epistle to the Romans:

Romans 1:1-3
1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
2 which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures,
3 concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh,
Soon after God brought his people out of Egypt, he revealed himself to them by another hyphenated name: Jehovah-Rapha.

Exodus 15:25-26
25 An he cried unto Jehovah; and Jehovah showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them;
26 and he said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians: for I AM JEHOVAH THAT HEALETH THEE.

The phrase translated Jehovah that healeth thee is Jehovah-Rapha. The Hebrew word rapha means

1. to mend by stitching,
2. to cure, heal, repair, or make whole.

In fact, the word rapha can also be translated physician. To those that meet the conditions laid out in this passage of scripture, Jehovah has promised to be a physician that will heal diseases and mend broken bodies. By this name, Jehovah reveals his compassionate nature and his willingness to heal our physical bodies when we are sick.

12. The Name of Jesus

One of the central truths of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of God to man. Indeed, we are told in the book of Hebrews, and elsewhere, that Jesus is the outshining of God’s glory and the exact representation of his person:

Hebrews 1:1-4
1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
2 Hath in these last days SPOKEN UNTO US BY HIS SON, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;
3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent NAME than they.

It therefore stands to reason that the name of Jesus would be both the ultimate description of God and the ultimate revelation of his nature to man. This wonderful name, which is the name above every name [Philippians 2:9-10], will be the subject of a separate study.
13. Praising and Blessing the Name

There is an important point in the following statement of Manoah:

Judges 13:17-18
And Manoah said unto the angel of Jehovah, WHAT IS THY NAME, that when thy words come to pass, WE MAY DO THEE HONOR?

Manoah and his wife had no child, and the angel of the Lord had just told them they were going to have one. When we have been blessed by God, it is a natural expression of our gratitude to tell other people what God has done for us. Indeed, it pleases God that we do so [Mark 5:19]. But there is something missing in a testimony of the greatness and kindness of a benefactor whose name is not revealed. Manoah instinctively understood this, and asked to know the name of the angel.

The authors of the books of Psalms understood this principle, and never failed to mention the name of Lord in their praises. It is disappointing that some songs sung in many churches during worship services refer only to an anonymous “He” or “Him”, and never explicitly mention the name of Jesus, or whoever it is that they are praising.

Psalm 91:14 and Malachi 3:16-17 promise protection and a special place in the heart of God for those that love God and think upon his name:

Malachi 3:16-17
16 Then they that feared Jehovah spake one with another; and Jehovah hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared Jehovah, and that THOUGHT UPON HIS NAME.

17 And they shall be mine, saith Jehovah of hosts, even mine own possession, in the day that I make; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

Let us honor God by loving him, walking in his ways, and rendering to him the fruit of lips that give thanks to his name.

Hebrews 13:15
By him (Jesus) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips GIVING THANKS TO HIS NAME.

References

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Jehovah (Yahweh). Please help support the mission of New Advent and get the full contents of this website as an instant download. Includes the Catholic Encyclopedia, Church Fathers, Summa, Bible and more â€“ all for only $19.99 The proper name of God in the Old Testament; hence the Jews called it the name by excellence, the great name, the only name, the glorious and terrible name, the hidden and mysterious name, the name of the substance, the proper name, and most frequently shem hammephorash, i.e. the explicit or the separated name, though the precise meaning of this last expression. The name Jehovah is so fearsome to some people that they went to the trouble to remove it from His own book. They alternate between the excuses, that we don't know the original pronunciation of God's name, and that God's name is Jesus, when in fact, Jesus isn't the original pronunciation of Yeshua's name and that doesn't seem to bother them. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom", (Ps. Jehovah. Jehovah is the English pronunciation of the divine name. In in the Hebrew scriptures the divine name was written YHWH or JHWH (Tetragrammaton) because there are no vowels in Hebrew. No one knows how to pronounce this name because the Jews became superstitious about saying the name out loud before the time of Christ and the actual pronunciation was lost.