

Come to Understanding

They also that erred in spirit shall come to understanding,
and they that murmured shall learn doctrine. — Isaiah 29:24

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Call Upon His Name

Many religious traditions are faithfully kept, even though they are contrary to the commandments of God. This was the case that Yahshua (Jesus) found with the religious leaders, which were called “scribes and Pharisees:”

- 1 Then came to Yahshua scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
- 2 Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.
- 3 But he answered and said to them, Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? -Matthew 15

Long-held man-made traditions can be elevated to such importance that they actually supersede the Scriptures. In keeping them, many worship God in vain:

- 9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men. -Matthew 15

One tradition that came into being during the 3rd century B.C. was that of substituting the name of God with the title of “Lord.” This English title is translated from the Greek word “Kurios,” as well as from the Hebrew word “Adonai,” which is described as follows:

“ADONAI אֲדֹנָי: literally “my Lord,” the plural form of Adon, that is, “Lord “ or “Lordship “): This word occurs in the Masoretic text 315 times by the side of the Tetragram YHWH (310 times preceding and five times succeeding it) and 134 times without it. Originally an appellation of God, the word became a definite title, and when the Tetragram became too holy for utterance Adonai was substituted for it, so that, as a rule, the name written YHWH receives the points of Adonai and is read Adonai, except in cases where Adonai precedes or succeeds it in the text, when it is read Elohim. The vowel-signs *e, o, a*, given to the Tetragrammaton in the written text, therefore, indicate this pronunciation, Aedonai, while the form Jehovah, introduced by a Christian writer about 1520, rests on a misunderstanding. The translation of YHWH by the word Lord in the King James’s and in other versions is due to the traditional reading of the Tetragrammaton as Adonai, and this can be traced to the oldest translation of the Bible, the Septuagint.

About the pronunciation of the Shem ha-Meforash, the “distinctive name” YHWH, there is no authentic information. In the early period of the Second Temple the Name was still in common use, as may be learned from such proper names as Jehohanan, or from liturgical formulas, such as Halelu-Yah. (see *The Jewish Encyclopedia: a descriptive record of the history, religion, literature, and customs of the Jewish people from the earliest times to the present day*, Vol. 1, Isidore Singer, ed., New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1912, p. 201.)

The term “Tetragrammaton” is from Greek. It literally means the four Hebrew letters, יהוה (YHWH), that form the name of God. While pronunciation of these letters as a name is unclear from their direct observation, there is strong evidence to show us how the first part of His name is pronounced. This is revealed by the Hebrew phrase הללו-יה (hllu-yh), which is spoken as “Hallelu-Yah.” This phrase is often translated as “Praise ye the LORD,” as in this example:

- 1 Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with *my* whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and *in* the congregation. -Psalms 111 (AV)

When the same Scripture is translated with His name, rather than with a title, we see that Yah and Yahweh are both forms of the same name:

- 1 Praise you Yah. I will praise Yahweh with *my* whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and *in* the congregation. -Psalms 111

The familiar usage of “Hallelu-Yah” reveals that the pronunciation of יה (YH) is “YAH.” This is the essence of the name of God, as He revealed it in the first person to Moses as “I AM.” It is written in Hebrew as אֶהְיֶה (haYAH):

- 14 And God said to Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you. -Exodus 3

He further told Moses to say His name as YHWH, likely pronounced as “Yahweh,” which is the third person form of His name. It essentially means “HE IS” or He is the One that exists:

- 15 And God said moreover to Moses, Thus shall you say to the children of Israel, Yahweh 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, and this is my memorial unto all generations.* -Exodus 3

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense,
and caused them to understand the reading. — Nehemiah 8:8

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Through His name, He declares that He is the only God:

10 You *are* my witnesses, says Yahweh, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe me, and understand that I *am* he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.

11 I, *even* I, *am* Yahweh; and besides me *there is* no savior. -Isaiah 43

He is Yah Yahweh, the only God. He is our salvation through His name Yahshua (Jesus), meaning “Yah is salvation.”

2 Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for Yah Yahweh *is* my strength and *my* song; he also has become my salvation. -Isaiah 12

He told His people to sing praises to His name as YAH:

4 Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rides upon the heavens by his name YAH, and rejoice before him. -Psalms 68

According to Yahweh’s instructions, the temple in Jerusalem was built to declare His name!

5 And, behold, I purpose to build a house unto the name of Yahweh my God, as Yahweh spoke to David my father, saying, Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your room, he shall build a house unto my name. -1 Kings 5

Isaiah reminds us to trust in Yahweh forever, also calling Him Yah Yahweh:

4 Trust you in Yahweh forever: for in Yah Yahweh *is* everlasting strength: -Isaiah 26

As Yahweh declares His name, He will not share His praise with graven images. (The name of Baal, which is represented by graven images, means Lord!)

8 I *am* Yahweh: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. -Isaiah 42

Even though the Scriptures clearly declare the importance of the name of Yahweh, somewhere along the line of history some thought that His name “became too holy for utterance.” They supposedly became persuaded that declaring His name would risk violating the third commandment against taking His name in vain.

7 You shall not take the name of Yahweh your God in vain; for Yahweh will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain. -Exodus 20

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Therefore, they thought that it would be prudent to remove His name from utterance and to replace it with the generic title, “Lord” (“Kurios” in Greek or “Adonai” in Hebrew).

To take His name “in vain” means to make it as “emptiness,” “nothingness,” and “emptiness of speech” (see *Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon, Larry Pierce, 2009*). Based on the English definition, it means to render it as “having no real value: idle worthless” (see *Merriam-Webster Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2010*). Therefore, might the third commandment actually be forbidding taking the glorious name of Yahweh, which is full of meaning, and vainly changing it into the same generic title that is shared with graven images?

The last book in the Old Testament, Malachi, reveals that the priests despised the name of Yahweh:

6 A son honors *his* father, and a servant his master: if then I *am* a father, where *is* my honor? and if I *am* a master, where *is* my fear? says Yahweh of hosts to you, O priests, that despise my name. And you say, Wherein have we despised your name? -Malachi 1

After that book was written, Yahweh ceased speaking through His prophets to inspire them to record His words in the Scriptures. His silence continued for about four hundred years. It was during this dark period of silence from Yahweh that His name was removed from the Scriptures. The Septuagint, which was a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek during the reign of Ptolemy II (284-247 B. C.) in Egypt, has this distinction:

The *Septuagint*, also called the Alexandrian version, from the city of its origin, is not only the oldest known translation of the Jewish scriptures but the oldest known translation of any book. (see John H. Raven, *Old Testament Introduction: General and Special*, New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1906, p. 65.)

It is also the version of the Bible which began the tradition of replacing the name of God with the title meaning “Lord.”

After about four hundred years of silence, Yahweh spoke through His angel, again declaring His name. He first announced it through the birth of John, whose name means “Yah has graced” (see Luke 1:60). Then He announced it through the birth of Yahshua (Jesus), whose name means “Yah is salvation” (see Matthew 1:21). Yahshua said that He not only had declared the name of God, but that He would continue to do so!

26 And I have declared to them your name, and will declare *it*: that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. -John 17

David had also said that he would declare His name:

22 I will declare your name to my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise you. -Psalms 22

How long should we hold onto our tradition in spite of the commandment of God? When will we declare His name?

4 And in that day shall you say, Praise Yahweh, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. -Isaiah 12

Might today be that day?