

The God Who Showed Up

What His Names Reveal About Who He Is



Paul & Pam Hainline

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“Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’” Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’”

— Exodus 3:13–14 (NASB)

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INTRODUCTION

What's In A Name?

“Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, “The God of your fathers has sent me to you.” Now they may say to me, “What is His name?” What shall I say to them?’ God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’”

— Exodus 3:13–14 (NASB)

When someone tells you their name, they are giving you access to who they are. Not just a label — access. A name is how you call someone. How you address them. How you enter into relationship with them. Without a name, a person remains a stranger. With a name, the door opens.

When God tells you His name, He is doing something far greater than identification. He is revealing His character — and inviting you to know Him.

This is not a dictionary of divine titles. The book you are holding is a journey — the same journey Israel walked out of Egypt and into the promises of God. The same journey every Christian walks today. And along that journey, at every point of crisis, need, and covenant, God revealed something about Himself by telling His people His name.

He did not reveal all His names at once. He gave each one at a specific moment — when His people needed to know that

particular truth about who He is. When they were afraid, He told them His name. When they were hungry, He told them His name. When the enemy stood in front of them and the sea stood behind them and there was no human way forward, He told them His name. Every name answered a question they were asking, whether they spoke it aloud or not.

And every name He revealed then is a name He still answers to now.

* * *

To understand why the names were revealed — and why they were revealed in the order they were — you have to understand what was driving the story. And what was driving the story were three promises God made to one man.

God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldeans and made him three promises that would drive the entire biblical narrative from that moment forward:

"I will make you a great nation."

— Genesis 12:2

One man. One barren wife. And a promise that defied every natural possibility. God would take this childless couple and build from them a nation no one could number.

"To your descendants I will give this land."

— Genesis 12:7

A land — specific, physical, promised. This is the promise that drove the entire journey from Egypt through the wilderness and into Canaan. Every name God revealed along the way was revealed on the road to that promise.

"In you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

— Genesis 12:3

This is the promise that reaches across the testaments and lands on us. It is the reason this book exists. Paul, writing to the Galatians, calls it the Gospel preached in advance:

"The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'All the nations will be blessed in you.'"

— Galatians 3:8

The promises are the reason for the journey. The names are revealed along the journey. And the fulfillment of that third promise — all nations blessed — is the reason we are reading this book today.

* * *

But here a reader might reasonably ask: why should Israel's story matter to me? These names were revealed to them — to Moses at a burning bush, to Hagar in a wilderness, to Gideon hiding in a winepress. What does their journey have to do with mine?

The answer is not something we are imposing on the text. The text establishes it.

Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, looks back at Israel's entire wilderness experience — the crossing of the Red Sea, the cloud, the manna, the water from the rock — and says this:

"Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction."

— 1 Corinthians 10:11

Their story was written for us. Not merely recorded — written *for our instruction*. The things that happened to Israel in the wilderness were real historical events, but they were also examples, preserved in Scripture specifically so that we would learn from them.

And the connection goes deeper than example. Writing to the Galatians, Paul makes it explicit:

"And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise."

— Galatians 3:29

If you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's descendants. The promises God made to Abraham are not ancient history for the Christian. They are our inheritance. The seed of Abraham through whom all nations would be blessed is Christ Himself — Paul is precise about this: "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ" (Galatians 3:16). And if we are in Christ, we are in the promise.

Paul presses this further in Romans. He redefines who the true children of Abraham are — not by ethnicity but by faith:

"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter."

— Romans 2:28–29

And again:

"For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: 'through Isaac your descendants will be named.' That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants."

— Romans 9:6–8

The children of the promise are the true descendants. Not the children of the flesh — the children of the promise. This is Paul's consistent teaching: belonging to Christ is what makes a person an heir of Abraham's promises.

In his closing words to the Galatians, Paul writes: "And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16). We believe Paul is here identifying Christians — those who walk by the rule of new creation — as the Israel of God. In a letter that has spent six chapters demolishing the wall between Jew and Gentile in Christ, a letter whose entire argument is that faith in Christ — not ethnicity or law-keeping — defines God's people, this closing

benediction applies the title "Israel of God" to the new creation people of God.

We should be honest: not every faithful student of Scripture reads this verse the same way. Some understand the Greek word *kai* — "and" — as connecting two distinct groups: Christians generally, and believing Jews specifically. That reading takes *kai* in its most common sense, and the phrase "Israel of God" appears nowhere else in Paul's writings for direct comparison. The alternative view deserves to be stated fairly, and we have stated it.

But the weight of the letter leans strongly in one direction. Paul has just written, in the verse immediately before, that "neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but a new creation" (Galatians 6:15). He has erased the ethnic distinction. To re-establish it in the very next verse would undermine the argument he has spent six chapters building. We believe the context of the letter, the immediate context of verse 15, and the supporting evidence from Romans settle the matter — but we present it honestly and trust the reader to weigh the evidence.

And here is the essential point: even if you read Galatians 6:16 differently than we do, the framework of this book does not depend on that single verse. It stands firmly on 1 Corinthians 10:11 — their story was written for our instruction. On Galatians 3:8 — the promise to Abraham was the Gospel announced in advance. On Galatians 3:29 — if you belong to Christ, you are Abraham's descendants. On Romans 2:28–29 and Romans 9:6–8 — the children of promise are the true descendants. None of these texts are disputed in the way Galatians 6:16 is. The case does

not rest on a single verse. It rests on the consistent testimony of the apostle Paul across multiple letters.

* * *

What all of this means is that Israel's journey is not just ancient history. It is the Christian's journey.

Their Egypt is our Egypt — the world, the bondage of sin that held us before God delivered us. Their Pharaoh is our Pharaoh — the power that enslaves, whatever form it takes. Their Red Sea is our Red Sea — the moment of deliverance, when God brought us through and the waters closed behind us. Paul himself draws this parallel explicitly: "For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1–2). Their wilderness is our wilderness — the life of faith, where the promises have been given but the fulfillment is still ahead, and where God reveals Himself through what He provides along the way. And their Promised Land is our Promised Land — the life God calls us into, the inheritance He has prepared for those who are His.

Every name in this book was revealed somewhere along that journey. And as we walk with Israel through the story, we discover God's character the same way they did: one crisis at a time, one provision at a time, one name at a time.

* * *

A word about how this book is built.

The names of God are not arranged here alphabetically, thematically, or by theological category. They are arranged in the order God revealed them. This is a deliberate choice, because God's self-revelation is progressive — He did not hand His people a complete theological profile and send them on their way. He walked with them. And as they walked, He showed them who He is, one name at a time, each one answering the need of the moment.

The result is not a reference guide. It is a story — with a beginning, a middle, and an end. It begins with Elohim, the God who was already there before anything existed. It ends with Immanuel, the God who closed every remaining distance and moved in permanently. And between those two names, every crisis Israel faced — and every crisis we face — is met by a God who shows up and tells you His name.

Each chapter will walk through the passage where the name was revealed, examine the Hebrew behind it, trace it through the rest of Scripture, and then ask the question that matters most: what does this name mean for the Christian today? Each chapter closes with a section called "Praying His Name" — because knowing who God is should change the way we talk to Him. Not with a scripted prayer, but with a connection. You now know who He revealed Himself to be. Talk to Him like it.

* * *

We are about to walk a road that begins before creation and ends in a manger in Bethlehem — though it does not stop there. Along

the way, we will meet a God who sees the invisible, provides the impossible, heals the bitter, fights the battle, speaks peace into fear, shepherds the lost, clothes the unrighteous in His own righteousness, and promises His presence to people who have every reason to believe He has left.

He has not left. He never has.

He keeps showing up. And He keeps telling His people His name.

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me."

— Psalm 50:15

Come. Let's walk the road together. And let's meet the God who showed up.

Elohim — The God Who Was Already There

Part I: The God Who Hears

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

— Genesis 1:1

There is no crisis in Genesis 1:1. No cry for help. No enemy at the gate. No desperate people calling out for a God they do not yet know.

There is nothing at all.

And then, without preamble, without introduction, without a single word of explanation about who He is or where He came from, the Bible opens with a statement so massive that we have spent thousands of years examining it and have not reached the bottom:

No defense of His existence. No argument for why you should believe in Him. No autobiography. The text does not pause to establish credentials. It simply assumes the one thing that everything else depends on — God was already there — and moves forward.

Every other name in this book will be revealed in a moment of crisis or need. A slave woman alone in a wilderness. A father holding a knife over his son. A nation trapped between an army

and a sea. But this name — the first name — is revealed in the moment before all moments, in the silence before the first word was spoken, in the nothing before there was anything at all.

And the name the text uses for the God who was already there is *Elohim*.

* * *

The Name

The Hebrew word *Elohim* is the very first name for God in Scripture. It appears in the first sentence of the first verse of the first book. Before any other name is given — before Yahweh, before El Shaddai, before any of the compound names that will fill the pages of this book — the reader meets *Elohim*.

The word is related to the Hebrew root *El*, which carries the sense of might, power, and strength. *El* is the most basic word for God in the Old Testament — short, strong, foundational. *Elohim* builds on that root, but with a feature that has drawn the attention of Hebrew students for centuries.

Elohim is plural in form.

The *-im* ending in Hebrew is the standard masculine plural. *Seraph* becomes *seraphim*. *Cherub* becomes *cherubim*. And *Eloah* — the singular form of the word for God — becomes *Elohim*. The form is unmistakably plural.

But in Genesis 1:1, this plural noun takes a singular verb. The Hebrew word translated "created" is *bara* — and it is third person masculine singular. Not "Gods created." God — plural in

form — created, singular in action. The grammar itself holds a tension: a plural name doing a singular thing.

This is a grammatical fact, not an interpretation we are imposing. The Hebrew text simply does this. And it does it consistently — throughout Genesis 1 and throughout the Old Testament, *Elohim* regularly takes singular verbs, singular adjectives, and singular pronouns when referring to the God of Israel.

What does this mean? We should be honest about what the text does and does not tell us. The plural form of *Elohim* does not, by itself, fully explain the nature of God. His nature is so far above us that we can only know what He has chosen to reveal — and He chose to reveal it progressively. The Spirit hovers over the waters in Genesis 1:2. God says "Let Us make man in Our image" in Genesis 1:26. The Angel of the Lord speaks as God throughout the Old Testament. And in the fullness of time, the Son comes in the flesh and the Spirit is poured out on the church. Scripture reveals the Father, the Son, and the Spirit — one God — not through a single proof text but through the unfolding of the entire biblical story.

But the grammar is suggestive. The very first name Scripture uses for God carries a plurality within it — a plurality that is never polytheism, because the verbs are always singular. One God, but something within His nature that a simple singular word could not contain. The text plants a seed in its very first sentence that will not fully bloom for centuries. And it does so without commentary, without explanation, as if to say: you will understand this later. For now, know that the God who was there

before the beginning is greater and more complex than any single word can hold.

* * *

What *Bara* Tells Us

There is another word in Genesis 1:1 that deserves careful attention — the verb *bara*, translated "created."

Bara is used in the Old Testament exclusively of God. Human beings make, build, form, and fashion. But they do not *bara*. This verb is reserved throughout the Hebrew Scriptures for divine creative action — bringing into existence something that did not exist before. It is used in Genesis 1:1 for the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is used in Genesis 1:21 for the creation of living creatures. It is used in Genesis 1:27 — three times in a single verse — for the creation of human beings in God's image.

The word itself communicates something about the nature of *Elohim*: this is a God who does not work with pre-existing material someone else provided. He does not reshape what was already there. He originates. He brings forth. He creates from nothing — or more precisely, from Himself, by His own will and power.

When the reader meets God for the first time in Scripture, this is the first thing they learn about Him: He creates. He is the origin of everything. Whatever exists, exists because *Elohim* made it so.

* * *

Before All Things

The opening phrase of Genesis 1:1 — "In the beginning" — is itself a statement about the nature of God, though it can be easy to read past it.

"In the beginning" marks the beginning of time, space, and matter. It is the starting point of the created order. But notice carefully: God is not described as beginning in that moment. He is described as already present in it. "In the beginning, God..." He did not come into existence when creation began. He was there when it started — and the necessary implication is that He was there before it started.

The rest of Scripture confirms this in language that leaves no room for ambiguity. Moses — the same Moses who will later stand before the burning bush and hear the name Yahweh for the first time — writes in Psalm 90:

"Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

— Psalm 90:2

Before the mountains. Before the earth. From everlasting to everlasting. The God who appears in Genesis 1:1 has no origin story because He has no origin. He does not begin. He simply is.

Isaiah, centuries later, puts it this way:

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable."

— Isaiah 40:28

The "Everlasting God" — *El Olam* — is a name we will return to in the "For Further Study" section of this chapter. But the point Isaiah makes here is the same point Genesis 1:1 makes without saying it directly: this God does not begin, does not end, does not tire, and does not depend on anything outside Himself. He simply was, and is, and will be.

And if that is who He is, then everything else in this book follows from it. The God who will later provide for Abraham, heal the waters at Marah, fight the battle at Rephidim, and speak peace to Gideon is not a God scrambling to respond to crises He did not foresee. He is the God who was already there — before the crisis, before the need, before the question was asked.

* * *

The God Who Needed Nothing

There is something else Genesis 1:1 establishes that is easy to miss but essential to everything this book is about: *Elohim* created, but He did not need to.

Nothing in the text suggests that God created because He was lonely, or incomplete, or lacking something that creation would supply. The heavens and the earth are not a solution to a divine problem. They are the overflow of a God who is, in Himself, entirely sufficient.

This matters for a specific reason. Every name of God that follows in this book is a name revealed in relationship — God responding to human need, meeting human crisis, providing what human beings lacked. And every one of those responses is

voluntary. He heals because He chooses to, not because He must. He provides because He wills it, not because His nature requires it. He shows up because He is good, not because He is compelled.

A God who needed creation would be a God whose goodness toward us was ultimately self-serving — He would provide for us because He needs us, and that would make every act of provision merely transactional. But a God who needed nothing and created anyway — who entered into relationship with beings He did not require — is a God whose every act of provision, healing, protection, and presence is pure grace. He did not need Hagar, but He saw her. He did not need Abraham, but He provided for him. He did not need Israel, but He delivered them.

Elohim is the name that establishes this. The God who was already there, who existed before all things, who created from His own sufficiency, is the God who will choose — freely, voluntarily, at great cost — to show up for people who have nothing to offer Him in return.

* * *

The New Testament Witness

The New Testament reaches back to Genesis 1:1 repeatedly, and every time it does, it deepens what the opening verse of Scripture reveals.

John's Gospel opens with deliberate echoes of Genesis:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being."

— John 1:1–3

John is doing something remarkable here. He takes the opening phrase of Genesis — "In the beginning" — and applies it not only to the Father but to the Word, who is Christ. The Word was not created in the beginning. The Word was already there, with God, and was God. And through Him, all things were made. The *Elohim* of Genesis 1:1, John tells us, includes the One who would later be born in Bethlehem and named Immanuel. The last chapter of this book was present in the first verse of Scripture.

Paul makes the same point in Colossians:

"For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together."

— Colossians 1:16–17

Before all things. All things created through Him and for Him. And in Him all things hold together — present tense. The *Elohim*

who created in Genesis 1 is not a God who set things in motion and stepped away. He is the God in whom the entire created order currently holds together. He is sustaining it right now, in this moment, as you read this sentence.

The writer of Hebrews adds one more layer:

*"You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the works of Your hands. They will perish,
but You remain."*

— Hebrews 1:10–11a

The heavens and the earth — the very things *Elohim* created in Genesis 1:1 — will perish. But He remains. The creation is temporary. The Creator is not. The first name in Scripture is also the most enduring reality in the universe.

* * *

The Shadow

Every other chapter in this book will apply the shadow framework we laid out in the Introduction — Egypt as our bondage, the wilderness as our life of faith, the Promised Land as the life God calls us into. But this chapter stands before the shadow begins, because *Elohim* stands before the story begins.

This is the name for the person whose story has not started yet.

Before you knew you needed God — before the crisis, before the diagnosis, before the loss, before the sin that sent you running — *Elohim* was already there. Not waiting to see if you would call

on Him. Not coming into existence the moment you needed a higher power. Already there. Already sufficient. Already creating, sustaining, and holding together the world you were about to be born into.

Your story has a first verse, just as the Bible does. And the God who was present in the first verse of Scripture is the God who was present in the first verse of yours. He was there before you drew your first breath. He was there before your parents met. He was there before the foundations of the world — and Ephesians 1:4 tells us that He chose you in Christ "before the foundation of the world." The God who created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1 had you in mind before He spoke the first word.

That is the kind of God *Elohim* is. Not a God who reacts. A God who was already there.

And if He was already there — before everything, before anything, before you — then nothing you will face in this life will catch Him by surprise. Nothing will arrive before He does. Whatever mountain you will climb, whatever wilderness you will walk, whatever sea will stand before you with no way through — He was there first. He is there now. And He will be there still when the story is finished.

* * *

Praying His Name

If you have ever opened your mouth to pray and not known where to begin — if you have felt the weight of a need so large or a

situation so tangled that the words would not come — there is a starting point.

Start with *Elohim*.

Not because you have figured out what to say. Not because you have organized your thoughts or cleaned up your life or found the right formula. Start with the God who was there before the beginning, who is before all things, in whom all things hold together. Start with the simple, staggering reality that the God you are speaking to is not new to your situation. He is not hearing about it for the first time. He has been there since before there was a "there" to be in.

You do not have to bring God up to speed. You do not have to explain the context. He was there before the context existed. Begin where Scripture begins — with the God who was already there — and let everything else flow from that.

* * *

For Further Study

Genesis 1:1–2:3 — The full creation account

Psalms 90:1–2 — From everlasting to everlasting

Isaiah 40:28–31 — The Everlasting God does not grow weary

John 1:1–3 — In the beginning was the Word

Colossians 1:15–17 — By Him all things were created

Hebrews 1:10–12 — You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth

Ephesians 1:3–4 — Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world

Related names:

El Elyon — God Most High (Genesis 14:18–20). When Melchizedek blesses Abraham, he calls God "God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth." The Most High God is the God above all — above every power, every authority, every rival claim. This title appears throughout the Psalms (Psalm 7:17, 47:2, 57:2, 78:35) and in Daniel's visions of the Ancient of Days.

El Olam — The Everlasting God (Genesis 21:33). After making a covenant with Abimelech at Beersheba, Abraham plants a tamarisk tree and calls on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting

God. This name emphasizes what Genesis 1:1 assumes — God is not bound by time. He does not begin and He does not end.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

If *Elohim* was already there before your story began, what does that change about how you see the chapter of your life you are currently living?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Open your Bible to Genesis 1:1. Read the verse aloud, slowly. Then sit with it for sixty seconds — not analyzing it, not studying it, just letting the weight of it settle. The God who created the heavens and the earth is the God you are about to talk to. Let that be enough to begin.

* * *

"Before the mountains were born or You gave birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

— Psalm 90:2

El Roi — The God Who Sees

Part I: The God Who Hears

“Now the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness, by the spring on the way to Shur. He said, “Hagar, Sarai’s maid, where have you come from and where are you going?” And she said, “I am fleeing from the presence of my mistress Sarai.”

— Genesis 16:7–8

She is not part of the story. At least, not the way anyone planned it.

She is Egyptian. A slave. Property, in the eyes of the world she lives in. She belongs to Sarai, the wife of Abram — the man to whom God made promises so vast they seemed absurd. A great nation. A land. A blessing to all the earth. Enormous promises. World-shaping promises.

But the years have passed, and Sarai is still barren. The promise of a son has not come. And in the silence between promise and fulfillment — in the space where faith is supposed to live but impatience moves in instead — Sarai makes a decision. She gives her slave to her husband. “Go in to my maid,” she tells Abram. “Perhaps I will obtain children through her” (Genesis 16:2).

This was not unusual in the ancient Near East. It was culturally expected. A barren wife could offer her servant as a surrogate, and the child born would legally be the wife's. Sarai is not inventing the idea. She is following the customs of her world. But she is also stepping ahead of God — trying to produce through human means what God had promised to provide by His own.

Abram listens to Sarai's voice. Hagar conceives. And the moment she does, everything changes.

* * *

The Fracture

Genesis 16:4 says it simply: "He went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight."

Hagar's pregnancy shifts the power in the household. She has done what Sarai could not. And something in that knowledge changes the way she looks at the woman who owns her. The text does not explain the inner workings — it simply says Sarai was despised in Hagar's eyes.

Sarai's response is fierce. She goes to Abram: "May the wrong done me be upon you. I gave my maid into your arms, but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May the Lord judge between you and me" (Genesis 16:5).

And Abram — the man of the promise, the friend of God — steps back. "Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight" (Genesis 16:6).

Notice what he does not do. He does not protect the woman carrying his child. He does not mediate. He does not pray. He hands her back to the woman she has offended and walks away.

What Sarai does next, the text describes in a single Hebrew word: *ta'anneba*. She treated her harshly. The same root — *'anab* — is used in Exodus 1:11-12 to describe Egypt's affliction of Israel. The word carries the weight of oppression, not merely a scolding. Whatever Sarai did, it was severe enough to drive a pregnant woman into the desert alone.

And Hagar runs.

* * *

The Wilderness

Think about where she is. She is pregnant. She is alone. She is not in the land of her birth — she is Egyptian, likely taken as a servant during Abram's time in Egypt (Genesis 12:16). She has no family here. No protector. No rights. The one man who could have protected her just handed her back to the woman hurting her.

She is heading back toward Egypt — the text says the angel finds her "on the way to Shur," which is the road toward Egypt (Genesis 16:7). She is running toward the only place she knows, even though she has nothing there either. She is not making a plan. She is fleeing.

A pregnant, foreign slave woman, alone in the wilderness, heading nowhere good. By every measure that the ancient world

used — and if we are honest, by many measures the modern world still uses — she does not matter. She is nobody. She is invisible.

But she is not invisible to God.

* * *

Found

The first thing to notice is who moves. Hagar is not looking for God. She is not praying. She is not crying out to the God of Abram for help. She is simply running — a woman in survival mode, putting one foot in front of the other because stopping means facing what is behind her. She does not seek God.

God seeks her.

The text says the angel of the Lord *found* her. The Hebrew is *matsa'* — to find, to come upon. It is the language of pursuit, of searching and locating. Hagar did not stumble into a divine appointment. She was found. In the wilderness, by a spring, on a road going the wrong direction — she was found.

And the angel calls her by name. "Hagar." Not "woman." Not "slave." Her name. And then he identifies her position — "Sarai's maid" — not to diminish her, but to make clear that God knows exactly who she is, where she belongs, and what she is running from.

Then he asks two questions: "Where have you come from, and where are you going?"

God is not asking because He does not know. He is asking because Hagar needs to say it. She needs to hear her own answer. And her answer is honest but incomplete: "I am fleeing from the

presence of my mistress Sarai." She knows what she is running from. She does not know where she is running to.

* * *

The Hard Command

What the angel says next is not easy:

Then the angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself to her authority."

— Genesis 16:9

Go back. Return to the woman who was hurting you. Submit.

This is a hard word, and we should sit with it rather than rush past it. God does not explain why. He does not promise that Sarai will change. He does not tell Hagar that the situation will be easy or painless. He tells her to go back.

But He does not send her back empty. What follows the hard command is a promise — and it is an extraordinary one for a slave woman with no standing to receive:

Moreover, the angel of the Lord said to her, "I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they will be too many to count."

— Genesis 16:10

The angel of the Lord said to her further, "Behold, you are with child, and you will bear a son, and you shall call his name Ishmael, because the Lord has given heed to your affliction."

— Genesis 16:11

Stop and weigh what is happening. God is making a promise to Hagar. Descendants too many to count. A son with a name God Himself chooses. And the name — Ishmael — means "God hears." The Lord has given heed to your affliction. The same root — *'anah* — that described what Sarai did to Hagar now appears in God's response to it. She was afflicted. God heard.

This does not erase the complexity of the situation. Ishmael is not the child of promise — that child is still coming, and God will make the distinction clear. The angel's description of Ishmael's future in verse 12 is honest about the conflict ahead: "He will be a wild donkey of a man, his hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him; and he will live to the east of all his brothers." This is not a storybook ending. It is the truth.

But here is what matters for this chapter: God saw a woman no one else was watching. He heard an affliction no one else was addressing. And He gave her something she had no right to expect — a promise, a future, and a son whose name would be a permanent reminder that her affliction had not gone unnoticed.

* * *

The Name

And then Hagar does something no one in Scripture has done before.

Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"

— Genesis 16:13

She names God.

Not Abraham. Not Sarai. Not Moses, not a priest, not a prophet. A foreign slave woman, pregnant and alone in the desert, is the first person in the Bible to give God a name.

The Hebrew is *El Roi* — God who sees. *El* is the word for God. *Roi* comes from the verb *ra'ah* — to see, to perceive, to regard. But this is not the seeing of casual observation. When Scripture uses *ra'ah* of God, it carries the weight of attention, care, and knowledge. God saw the affliction of His people in Egypt (Exodus 3:7 — "I have surely seen the affliction of My people"). God sees not as man sees (1 Samuel 16:7). To be seen by God is not merely to be noticed. It is to be known.

And Hagar knew it. She had been invisible to the world. Sarai saw her as a tool. Abram saw her as a problem to hand back. The desert saw nothing at all. But God saw her — saw her circumstances, saw her affliction, saw her future, saw *her* — and Hagar recognized it. She gave Him the name that matched what she had experienced: You are the God who sees.

The second half of verse 13 is more difficult to translate. The NASB renders it: "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?" Other translations offer different readings — the Hebrew is genuinely uncertain in this phrase. But the core of what Hagar is expressing is wonder. She has seen God — or been addressed by

God's angel — and she is alive. The encounter has left her astonished, not that she saw God, but that God saw her.

The well where this happened is also named. Verse 14: "Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi" — the well of the Living One who sees me. The name endures as a landmark, a reminder that at this specific place in the wilderness, the living God saw a woman no one else was looking for.

* * *

The First to Name Him

It is worth pausing to consider who God chose for this moment.

Throughout this book, names of God will be revealed to patriarchs and prophets, to leaders and kings, to men who carry authority in the covenant community. But the first person to name God — the first person in all of Scripture to articulate something true about God's character and attach it to a name — is none of these.

It is a woman. A foreigner. A slave. Someone with no standing in the covenant. Someone whose pregnancy was the result of another person's impatience with God's timing. Someone so overlooked that when the crisis came, the man who fathered her child would not even stand up for her.

And God does not merely tolerate her naming of Him. The name sticks. It enters the text. It is preserved in the canon of Scripture for every generation that follows. El Roi — the God

who sees — named not by a patriarch but by a slave woman who had been seen when no one else was looking.

This tells us something about the God we are meeting in these pages. He is not only the God of the powerful, the prominent, or the positioned. He is the God who shows up at a spring in the wilderness for a woman the rest of the story has forgotten. And He lets her name Him.

* * *

He Saw Her Again

The story of Hagar does not end in Genesis 16. Years later, after Isaac — the child of promise — is born, the tension that began with Hagar's pregnancy erupts again. Sarah sees Ishmael mocking, and she demands that Abraham send both Hagar and her son away (Genesis 21:9-10).

This time, Abraham does not hand the decision off. This time it grieves him — the text says so (Genesis 21:11). But God tells Abraham to listen to Sarah, because the covenant promise runs through Isaac. And God adds a promise for Ishmael: "I will make a nation of him also, because he is your descendant" (Genesis 21:13).

So Abraham sends them away. Early in the morning. Bread and a skin of water. Into the wilderness of Beersheba.

The water runs out.

When the water in the skin was used up, she left the boy under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him,

about a bowsbot away, for she said, "Do not let me see the boy die." And she sat opposite him, and lifted up her voice and wept.

— Genesis 21:15–16

This is the scene you may be picturing if the two stories have blended in your memory. The boy under the bush. The mother weeping at a distance. The water gone and hope gone with it.

And God shows up. Again.

God heard the lad crying; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Do not fear, for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is."

— Genesis 21:17

He opens her eyes and she sees a well (Genesis 21:19). Water. Life. Right there, where despair had blinded her to it.

The God who saw her the first time — pregnant, alone, fleeing — saw her again. Different wilderness. Different crisis. Same God. Same eyes on the same woman. El Roi does not see you once and move on. He sees you still.

* * *

The Shadow

The shadow framework we laid out in the Introduction asks a simple question at every stop along the journey: their crisis is our crisis. What they needed, we need. What God revealed to them, He reveals to us.

What Hagar needed was to be seen.

Not rescued immediately — God sent her back to a hard situation the first time. Not given an easy path — her life remained complicated, and Ishmael's future would be marked by conflict. What she needed, before anything else, was to know that she had not been forgotten. That someone — Someone — was watching, and knew, and cared.

This is a need that does not belong to the ancient world alone.

There are people in every congregation, every workplace, every family who are invisible. Not because they are hidden, but because no one is looking. The single mother who sits in the back row and leaves before anyone speaks to her. The man caring for a dying spouse in a house no one visits. The teenager drowning in something they cannot name, surrounded by people who see their face but not their pain. The person whose crisis is not dramatic enough to draw attention — just a slow, steady erosion of hope that nobody notices because nobody asks.

Hagar's invisibility was specific to her world — a slave, a foreigner, a woman in a culture that measured worth by status and standing. Our invisibility takes different forms. But the ache is the same: Does anyone see me? Does anyone know what I am carrying? Does anyone care?

El Roi is God's answer. Not in theory. Not as a theological proposition. As a name — spoken first by a woman who had been seen when she had every reason to believe she was alone.

You are not alone. You are not invisible. The God who found Hagar at a spring in the wilderness on a road going nowhere

knows exactly where you are, what you are carrying, and what you need. He found her before she thought to look for Him. He will find you too.

* * *

Praying His Name

There is a kind of loneliness that crowds cannot cure. You can be surrounded by people — a full room, a busy office, a noisy family — and still carry the quiet conviction that no one really sees you. Not the face you show the world, but the real thing underneath. The fear you have not spoken. The grief you have not named. The struggle you carry so quietly that no one thinks to ask about it.

When that loneliness settles in, pray to El Roi.

You do not have to explain your situation to Him. He already sees it. You do not have to convince Him that your pain is real. He saw Hagar's affliction before she said a word about it. You do not have to earn the right to be noticed — Hagar had no standing, no claim, no covenant, and God found her anyway.

The God who sees is not watching from a distance, checking in occasionally, scanning the horizon for more important matters. He found a single pregnant slave woman at a spring in the desert. His attention is not divided. His vision is not limited. And the things that are invisible to the rest of the world are not invisible to Him.

Hagar's first response when she realized God had seen her was wonder: Have I really seen the One who sees me? There is

something in that moment that prayer can recover for us — the astonishment of being known. Not known about. Known. Seen through. Understood. Regarded.

Pray to El Roi. And when you do, you are not informing God of something He has missed. You are responding to a God who was already looking at you before you opened your mouth.

* * *

For Further Study

Genesis 16:1–16 — The full account of Hagar's flight and El Roi

Genesis 21:8–21 — Hagar and Ishmael sent away; God sees them again

Exodus 3:7 — "I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt"

Psalm 33:13–15 — "The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men"

Psalm 139:1–6 — "O Lord, You have searched me and known me"

1 Samuel 16:7 — "God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart"

2 Chronicles 16:9 — "For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His"

Matthew 6:6 — "Your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you"

Related name:

El Olam — The Everlasting God (Genesis 21:33). After the resolution of the Hagar and Ishmael crisis, after the covenant with Abimelech at Beersheba, Abraham plants a tamarisk tree and "called on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God." The God who sees across a single moment in the wilderness is the God whose vision spans eternity. He is not watching a snapshot. He sees the whole arc — beginning to end — and every hidden moment in between.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

If God saw Hagar — a foreign slave with no standing and no claim on His promises — what makes you think He has overlooked you?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Think of one person in your life who might feel invisible right now — someone who is easy to overlook, who does not demand attention, who might be carrying something no one has asked about. Reach out to them this week. Not with a sermon. Not with a program. Just with the words: I see you. I wanted you to know that. Be the hands and eyes of El Roi for someone who needs it.

* * *

Then she called the name of the Lord who spoke to her, "You are a God who sees"; for she said, "Have I even remained alive here after seeing Him?"

— Genesis 16:13

El Shaddai — God Almighty

Part I: The God Who Hears

“Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless.”

— Genesis 17:1

Twenty-four years.

That is how long it has been since God first told Abram, “I will make you a great nation” (Genesis 12:2). Twenty-four years since the promise. Twenty-four years of waiting for a son.

Abram is now ninety-nine years old. Sarai is eighty-nine. They have tried — and failed — to produce the promised heir through their own efforts. The Hagar situation, which we walked through in Chapter 2, was the result: a plan born of impatience, a son born outside the promise, and a household fractured by the consequences of trying to do God’s work for Him.

Ishmael is thirteen years old. By every human calculation, he is the heir. He is the only son Abram has. And Abram has apparently settled into this conclusion, because when God speaks in this chapter and promises a son through Sarah, Abram’s first response will be to laugh and say, “Oh that Ishmael might live

before You!" (Genesis 17:18). He has stopped expecting the impossible. He has made peace with the possible.

And then God shows up and introduces Himself by a name He has never used before.

* * *

The Appearance

The Hebrew is *El Shaddai*. This is the first time this name appears in Scripture. God does not explain it. He does not define it. He simply declares it — and then follows it with a command: walk before Me, and be blameless.

The name and the command are connected, and the order matters. God does not say, "Walk before Me, and then I will be almighty." He says, "I am God Almighty" — first — and then tells Abram to walk accordingly. The command is grounded in the name. You can walk before Me and be blameless because of who I am, not because of who you are. My power is the foundation. Your obedience is the response.

This is not a small distinction. Abram has just spent more than a decade living with the results of walking ahead of God rather than before Him. The Hagar plan was Abram's attempt to walk in front of God — to make the promise happen on a human timeline, through human means. God is now resetting the relationship. I am El Shaddai. Walk *before* Me. Not ahead of Me. Not beside Me on your own terms. Before Me — in My sight, under My authority, in step with My timing.

The Name

The meaning of *Shaddai* is not as settled as some popular treatments suggest. The word has been connected to several Hebrew roots, and scholars have debated its origin for centuries. But we are not writing a book about what scholars think. We are writing about what the text reveals. And what the text reveals is consistent from its first appearance to its last.

Every time *El Shaddai* appears in Scripture, it appears in a context of overwhelming power — the kind of power that overrides natural impossibility. God uses this name when He is about to do something that no human effort could accomplish.

Here, He speaks it to a ninety-nine-year-old man with a barren wife and tells him he is about to become the father of nations. In Genesis 28:3, Isaac blesses Jacob with the words "May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you." In Genesis 35:11, God appears to Jacob and says, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply." In Genesis 43:14, Jacob — facing the possible loss of Benjamin — says, "May God Almighty grant you compassion." In Genesis 48:3, Jacob tells Joseph, "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me."

The pattern is unmistakable. *El Shaddai* is the name God uses when He is doing the impossible through people who cannot do it themselves. It is the name of a God whose power does not depend on the raw materials He has to work with. Ninety-nine

years old. Barren. Beyond hope. Beyond the reach of human remedy. And God says: I am El Shaddai. I am enough.

Then there is the passage that ties this name directly to the story we are telling in this book. In Exodus 6:2–3, God says to Moses:

"I am the Lord; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them."

— Exodus 6:2–3

El Shaddai was the name the patriarchs knew. It was the name under which God related to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob throughout the entire patriarchal period. Every promise spoken, every covenant made, every impossible birth and unlikely deliverance during those generations — all of it happened under the name El Shaddai. It was the foundational name of the era. And it was given here, in Genesis 17, to a man who had run out of options and settled for less than what God had promised.

* * *

The Covenant

What follows the name is a covenant — and it is extraordinary in its scope:

"I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly." Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying, "As for Me, behold, My covenant is

with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I will make you the father of a multitude of nations."

— Genesis 17:2–5

God changes his name. Abram — "exalted father" — becomes Abraham — "father of a multitude." And He changes it before there is a single child of promise. The name is spoken over a man whose household contains one son, born to a slave woman, through a plan that God did not authorize. And God says: your name is now Father of a Multitude.

This is the nature of El Shaddai. He names things for what they will be, not for what they are. He speaks the future into the present. He looks at a ninety-nine-year-old man and a barren woman and sees nations, kings, and a covenant that will outlast empires.

The name change is not symbolic. In the ancient world, a name was identity. To change a man's name was to change who he was. Every time someone called him Abraham from that day forward, they were speaking the promise. Every time he introduced himself, he was declaring what God had said he would become — even though the evidence was nowhere in sight.

God continues:

"I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings will come forth from you. I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you

throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

— Genesis 17:6–8

Count the promises. Nations. Kings. An everlasting covenant. The land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. And binding it all together: "I will be their God." The Abrahamic promises are not just restated here — they are expanded, formalized, and sealed as an everlasting covenant. And they are sealed under the name El Shaddai — the God for whom none of this is difficult.

* * *

Sarah

God is not finished. The covenant extends to Sarai as well:

Then God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and indeed I will give you a son by her. Then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

— Genesis 17:15–16

Her name changes too. And the promise is specific: a son *by her*. Not by Hagar. Not through any surrogate arrangement. Through Sarah — the woman who has been barren for nearly ninety years.

Abraham's response is painfully honest:

Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, "Will a child be born to a man one hundred years old? And will Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before You!"

— Genesis 17:17–18

He laughs. Not the laughter of joy — the laughter of a man who has done the math and knows the numbers do not work. And then he offers God an alternative: what about Ishmael? He is already here. He is already alive. He is the son Abraham has. Can we not just work with what we have?

This is the voice of a man who has learned to manage his expectations. He has stopped dreaming of the impossible and started negotiating for the possible. Ishmael is real. Ishmael is present. The promise of a son through Sarah requires a miracle. Ishmael just requires acceptance.

And God says no:

But God said, "No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him."

— Genesis 17:19

No. Not Ishmael. Isaac. Through Sarah. On God's terms, in God's timing, by God's power. El Shaddai does not accept substitutes for what He has promised.

God is gracious to Ishmael — He promises to bless him, make him fruitful, multiply him, and make twelve princes from him (Genesis 17:20). Ishmael is not discarded. But the covenant — the everlasting promise — runs through Isaac. The son who does not yet exist. The son who cannot exist apart from the power of the God who is speaking.

This is El Shaddai. He does not adjust His promises to fit your circumstances. He adjusts your circumstances to fit His promises.

* * *

The Shadow

There is a particular kind of spiritual exhaustion that comes from waiting on God.

It is not the exhaustion of crisis — the sudden emergency, the unexpected blow. That kind of pain is sharp and immediate, and it often drives people straight to prayer. The exhaustion of waiting is different. It is slow. It is quiet. It wears you down not with a single blow but with the steady erosion of time passing and nothing changing.

You prayed for a marriage to heal, and it has been years. You asked God to open a door, and the door has stayed shut so long you have stopped checking. You believed, once, that God was going to do something in your life that defied every natural obstacle — and the obstacles are still there, and the years have piled up, and somewhere along the way you stopped expecting the impossible and started negotiating for the manageable.

That is where Abraham was when God showed up as El Shaddai. Not in crisis. Not in agony. In something worse — settled resignation. He had a son. It was not the right son, but it was a son. He had a plan. It was not God's plan, but it was a plan. He had made peace with the possible.

And God walked into that resignation and said: I am El Shaddai. I am God Almighty. And I am not finished.

The God who spoke to Abraham at ninety-nine is the God who speaks to every person who has grown tired of waiting. Every person who has quietly replaced hope with management. Every person who has a plan B that works well enough and has stopped believing plan A was ever real.

El Shaddai does not come to condemn the waiting. He comes to interrupt the settling. He comes to say: the promise is not dead. Your timeline is not My timeline. Your math is not My math. And the thing you have stopped believing I can do — I am about to do it.

Walk before Me. Be blameless. And stop negotiating for less than what I promised.

* * *

Praying His Name

When you pray to El Shaddai, you are praying to the God who specializes in the word *impossible*.

Not difficult. Not unlikely. Impossible. The kind of thing that cannot happen without divine intervention — where the math does not work, where the years have passed, where every

natural avenue has been exhausted and every human effort has failed or fallen short.

Abraham had tried. Hagar was the proof. He had done his best to produce the promise through his own means, and the result was pain, division, and a son who was not the son. And God did not shame him for it. He simply said: I am El Shaddai. Now let Me do what I said I would do.

When you pray to El Shaddai, you are not asking God to help you with your plan. You are releasing your plan and asking Him to accomplish His. You are saying: I have tried. I have done the math. The numbers do not work. But You are God Almighty, and Your power is not limited by what I can see, calculate, or arrange.

Pray to El Shaddai when you are tired of waiting. Pray to Him when hope feels foolish. Pray to Him when the gap between what God promised and what you can see is so wide that you have stopped looking across it.

He is the God who looked at a ninety-nine-year-old man and an eighty-nine-year-old woman and said: nations and kings will come from you. And they did. Not because the math changed. Because the God behind the math is almighty.

* * *

For Further Study

Genesis 17:1–27 — The full El Shaddai covenant with Abraham

Genesis 18:10–14 — "Is anything too difficult for the Lord?"

Genesis 21:1–7 — Isaac is born — the promise fulfilled

Exodus 6:2–3 — "I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty"

Genesis 28:3 — Isaac blesses Jacob: "May God Almighty bless you"

Genesis 35:11 — God to Jacob: "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and multiply"

Genesis 48:3 — Jacob to Joseph: "God Almighty appeared to me at Luz"

Job 42:2 — "I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted"

Luke 1:37 — "For nothing will be impossible with God"

Related name:

El Olam — The Everlasting God (Genesis 21:33). Abraham calls on this name after the birth of Isaac and the covenant with Abimelech at Beersheba — after the promise has been fulfilled. El Shaddai is the name of the God who makes the impossible promise. El Olam is the name Abraham uses once he has seen it come to pass — the God who keeps His word across the ages. The Almighty is also the Everlasting. What He promises, He completes.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

Where in your life have you stopped expecting what God promised and started settling for what seems possible — and what would it mean to hear Him say, "I am El Shaddai"?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Read Genesis 17:1–8 and then Genesis 21:1–7 back to back. The promise and the fulfillment. Notice the years between them. Notice what God said and what God did. Then ask yourself: what has God said to me that I have stopped believing He will do? Write it down. Hold it before El Shaddai this week, and ask Him to restore the expectation.

* * *

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be blameless."

— Genesis 17:1

Jehovah Jireh — The Lord Will Provide

Part II: When the Veil Still Stood

“Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, “Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.”

— Genesis 22:1

The boy is walking beside his father, carrying wood on his back.

He is old enough to notice that something is missing. They have fire. They have wood. They have a knife. But there is no animal. Every other time his father has gone to make an offering, there has been an animal. Isaac notices, and he asks the only question that matters:

“Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” (Genesis 22:7).

Abraham’s answer is one of the most remarkable statements of faith in all of Scripture. It is also the sentence that gives God a name.

“God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son” (Genesis 22:8).

He did not say “God has provided.” He did not say “God is providing.” He said “God *will* provide” — future tense, spoken by

a man walking uphill toward the worst moment of his life, with the son of promise beside him carrying the wood for his own sacrifice.

What Abraham could not have known — what no one standing on that mountain could have seen — is that the name he was about to give that place would still be answering questions thousands of years later.

* * *

The Test

Genesis 22 opens with a single sentence that changes everything:

The text tells the reader what Abraham does not know. This is a test. The Hebrew word is *nissab* — to test, to prove, to try. It is not the word for temptation. God does not tempt (James 1:13). He tests — and the difference matters. A temptation is designed to make you fall. A test is designed to reveal what is already there. God is not trying to destroy Abraham's faith. He is about to put it on display.

But Abraham does not have the benefit of verse 1. He does not know this is a test. He only hears what comes next:

He said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you."

— Genesis 22:2

Read that command slowly. Watch how God narrows the scope, layer by layer: your son. Your *only* son. The one you *love*. Isaac. There is no ambiguity. There is no possible misunderstanding. God is not speaking in metaphor. He is asking Abraham to take the child he waited twenty-five years to receive — the child through whom every promise was supposed to be fulfilled — and offer him as a burnt offering.

Think about what is at stake. This is not merely a father being asked to give up a son, though that alone would be unthinkable. This is the man to whom God said "I will make you a great nation" being told to kill the only means by which that nation could come. This is the man to whom God said "In your seed all the families of the earth will be blessed" being told to put the seed on an altar and set it on fire.

If Isaac dies, the promises die with him. Or so it would seem.

* * *

The Walk

What Abraham does next says more than any words could:

So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

— Genesis 22:3

Early in the morning. Not after weeks of deliberation. Not after arguing with God. Not after proposing an alternative. He rose early, split the wood, and went.

The journey takes three days. Three days of walking with the son he has been told to sacrifice. Three days of silence — at least, the text records nothing of the conversation. Three days during which Abraham could have turned back at any moment and no one would have blamed him.

On the third day, Abraham lifts his eyes and sees the place in the distance. And then he says something to his servants that stops a careful reader in their tracks:

Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you."

— Genesis 22:5

We will worship and *we* will return. Not "I will return." We. Both of us.

Abraham is either lying to his servants, or he believes something extraordinary. The book of Hebrews tells us which:

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; it was he to whom it was said, "In Isaac your descendants shall be called." He considered that God is able to raise people even from the dead, from which he also received him back as a type.

— Hebrews 11:17–19

Abraham reasoned that if God had made promises through Isaac, and God cannot lie, and God was now telling him to sacrifice Isaac — then God must be able to raise Isaac from the dead. It was the only conclusion that let both the command and the promises be true at the same time. Abraham did not understand how. He simply believed that the God who made the promise was able to keep it, even through death.

This is not commentary. This is Scripture interpreting Scripture. Hebrews tells us what Abraham was thinking. And what he was thinking was that the promises of God are more certain than death.

* * *

The Question

Then comes the moment that breaks the scene wide open:

Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

— Genesis 22:7

"My father." "Here I am, my son." The intimacy of the exchange makes what is happening almost unbearable to read. The boy trusts his father. He is not suspicious. He is simply observant — they have everything except the offering, and he wants to know where it is.

And Abraham answers:

Abraham said, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So the two of them walked on together.

— Genesis 22:8

There is a detail here that a careful reader should notice. The Hebrew word Isaac and Abraham both use is *seh* — a young animal from the flock. It was the standard term for a sacrifice animal, the word anyone in their world would have used. Abraham was most likely answering his son honestly in the language they both knew — God will provide the offering — while trusting that God would resolve the impossible, even if it meant raising Isaac from the dead (Hebrews 11:19).

But when God provides, the text uses a different word. The animal in the thicket is an *ayil* — a mature ram (Genesis 22:13). Abraham spoke of a *seh*. God sent an *ayil*. The text preserves both words. Whether Abraham intended anything beyond reassuring his son, we cannot say — the text does not tell us.

What we can say is that the distinction is there, and Scripture does not forget it. Centuries later, when John the Baptist sees Jesus approaching the Jordan, he says: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Abraham spoke of a lamb. God provided a ram. And the Lamb that Abraham's words pointed toward — whether he knew it or not — did not come that day on Moriah. He came much later. The thread runs from the mountain to the Jordan. Scripture draws it. The reader can trace it.

* * *

The Altar

Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood, and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

— Genesis 22:9–10

The text does not slow down. It moves through these actions with a deliberateness that mirrors what Abraham is doing — one step at a time, one motion at a time. He builds. He arranges. He binds. He lays his son on the wood. He reaches for the knife.

Isaac does not resist. The text records no struggle, no protest, no attempt to flee. Isaac is old enough to carry the wood up the mountain. He is old enough to overpower a man who is well over a hundred years old. But he does not resist. He allows himself to be bound and placed on the altar. Whatever Abraham has said to him — whatever passed between them in those three days of walking — Isaac submits.

The knife is in Abraham's hand. His arm is raised.

And then God speaks.

But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." He said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me."

— Genesis 22:11–12

"Now I know." Not that God learned something He did not know. The test was not for God's information — He knows the heart (1 Samuel 16:7, Jeremiah 17:10). The test was for Abraham. And through Abraham, for every generation that would read this account. Now it is revealed. Now it is demonstrated. Now it is on the record: Abraham feared God more than he loved his own son. He trusted the promises more than he clung to the means of their fulfillment.

* * *

The Provision

Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him as a burnt offering in the place of his son.

— Genesis 22:13

The ram was already there. Caught in the thicket, waiting. God had not scrambled to find a substitute at the last moment. The provision was in place before the knife was raised. Abraham simply had not seen it yet.

This is the nature of Jireh. The provision is not late. It is not improvised. It is already there — arranged by a God who sees the end from the beginning, who was working the answer before the crisis reached its peak. Abraham's job was not to find the provision. It was to obey, to trust, and to keep walking until God revealed what He had already prepared.

The Name

Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

— Genesis 22:14

The Hebrew is *Yahweh Yireh* — the Lord will see, the Lord will provide. The word *yireh* comes from the same root as *ra'ah* — the verb we met with El Roi, the seeing that is not casual observation but attentive knowledge. When Abraham names this place, he is saying: the Lord sees, and because He sees, He provides. Seeing and providing are not two separate actions. They are one. God sees the need before you speak it, and His provision is already in motion before you know to ask.

And notice the tense. Abraham does not name the place "The Lord Provided" — though God certainly had, and a lesser faith might have looked backward in relief and named it for the past. Abraham names it for the future: The Lord *will* provide. What happened on this mountain was not a one-time rescue. It was a revelation of who God is, permanently. He will provide. He always will. The name is not a memory. It is a promise.

The phrase that follows in verse 14 confirms this: "as it is said to this day, 'In the mount of the Lord it will be provided.'" The name outlasted Abraham. It became a saying — a proverb — passed down through the generations. When the people of God faced a need they could not meet, a crisis they could not solve, a

moment when the cost of obedience seemed too high, they repeated what Abraham had named: in the mount of the Lord, it will be provided.

* * *

The Mountain

There is one more detail the text preserves that is easy to pass over. The place where this happened has a name: Moriah. God told Abraham to go to "the land of Moriah" and offer Isaac on one of the mountains there (Genesis 22:2).

Moriah appears only one other time in Scripture. In 2 Chronicles 3:1:

Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the Lord had appeared to his father David.

— 2 Chronicles 3:1

The temple — the place where God's presence would dwell among His people, where sacrifices would be offered for the sins of the nation, where the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place once a year with the blood of atonement — was built on the same mountain where Abraham raised the knife and God provided the ram.

The text does not elaborate on this connection. It simply records the location. But the reader who has walked with Abraham up the slopes of Moriah, who has watched the knife go up and heard the angel call out, who has seen the ram caught in

the thicket — that reader will not miss the significance of learning that the temple of God was built on the same ground. The place Abraham named "The Lord Will Provide" became the place where God provided atonement for an entire nation, generation after generation.

And it was on this same mountain, centuries later, that a Lamb finally came — not caught in a thicket, but walking willingly, carrying not wood but a cross.

* * *

The Promise Reaffirmed

Immediately after the provision, God speaks again — and what He says makes clear that this test was not a detour from the Abrahamic promises. It was a confirmation of them:

"By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice."

— Genesis 22:16–18

All three promises, restated. The nation — your seed multiplied like stars and sand. The land — your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. The blessing to all nations — in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

And notice how this oath is different from every previous statement of the promises. God says "By Myself I have sworn." He swears by Himself — because there is no one greater to swear by (Hebrews 6:13). The promises that began as declarations in Genesis 12 are now sealed with an oath, tied directly to Abraham's obedience on the mountain. Jireh is not just the name of the place where God provided a ram. It is the place where the promises were confirmed with a covenant oath that cannot be broken.

* * *

The Shadow

Every Christian will face a mountain.

Not Moriah specifically. But a moment where obedience costs something that feels like everything. A moment where what God is asking does not make sense — where the command and the promises seem to contradict each other, where following means letting go of the very thing you thought God had given you.

It may be a career you built that God is asking you to walk away from. A relationship you are clinging to that is not leading where God leads. A plan for your life that seemed so right, so blessed, so clearly from Him — and now He is asking you to lay it on the altar and let go.

The temptation in those moments is to believe that God has forgotten His promises. That if you obey, you will lose. That the cost is too high and the provision too uncertain.

Abraham walked three days with the cost in front of him. He built the altar with his own hands. He laid his son on the wood. And at the last moment — not a moment before, but not a moment too late — God provided.

Jireh does not promise that the provision will come early. It does not promise you will see the ram before you climb the mountain. It does not promise the path will make sense while you are walking it. What it promises is this: the God who sees the end from the beginning has already arranged what you need. Your job is to keep walking. His job is to provide.

And He will. He always has. That is the name Abraham gave the mountain, and it has never once been proven wrong.

* * *

Praying His Name

There are prayers that come easily — gratitude, praise, the comfortable conversations of a faith that is not under pressure. And then there are the prayers that come from the mountain — the ones spoken through clenched teeth, through tears, through the slow walk up a hill you did not want to climb.

When you are on the mountain, pray to Jehovah Jireh.

Not because it will make the climb easier. It may not. Abraham still had to build the altar. He still had to bind his son. He still had to pick up the knife. The provision came, but it came at the top of the mountain, not at the bottom. Jireh does not spare you the walk. It promises that the walk is not wasted.

When you pray to Jehovah Jireh, you are praying to a God who has already seen your need and has already set in motion the provision for it. You may not see it yet. Abraham did not see the ram until after the knife was in his hand. But it was there. It was already caught in the thicket, waiting for the moment when obedience and provision would meet.

The God who provided the ram on Moriah — who provided atonement on that same mountain for centuries — who provided the Lamb on that same mountain once and for all — is the God you are praying to. He does not forget His promises. He does not run short. He does not look at your need and wonder how to meet it. He has already provided. You simply have not seen it yet.

Keep walking. Keep obeying. And when you reach the place He has led you to, lift your eyes. The provision will be there.

* * *

For Further Study

Genesis 22:1–19 — The full account of Abraham and Isaac on Moriah

Genesis 12:1–3 — The original three promises to Abraham

Genesis 22:16–18 — The promises reaffirmed by oath after the test

2 Chronicles 3:1 — Solomon builds the temple on Mount Moriah

Hebrews 11:17–19 — Abraham's faith: he considered God able to raise the dead

Hebrews 6:13–18 — God swore by Himself because there was no one greater

John 1:29 — "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"

Romans 8:32 — "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all"

Philippians 4:19 — "My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"

Related name:

El Elyon — God Most High (Genesis 14:18–20). After Abraham's rescue of Lot, Melchizedek — king of Salem, priest of God Most High — blesses Abraham and says: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth." The God who possesses heaven and earth is the God whose provision is limitless. Jireh is the name He earns on the mountain. El Elyon is the reason He can afford it — He owns everything.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

What are you holding so tightly that you have not yet placed it on the altar — and what would it look like to trust that the God who provided for Abraham will provide for you?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Read Genesis 22:1–14 in one sitting, slowly. When you reach verse 8 — "God will provide for Himself the lamb" — stop. Write down the thing in your life that feels most like a mountain right now. Then write the name above it: Jehovah Jireh. The Lord will provide. Set the paper where you will see it every day this week.

* * *

Abraham called the name of that place The Lord Will Provide, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

— Genesis 22:14

Yahweh — The Self-Existent One

Part II: When the Veil Still Stood

“Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.”

— Exodus 3:4–6

A man is standing in the desert, watching his father-in-law's sheep.

He is eighty years old. He has been doing this for forty years. Whatever he once was — a prince of Egypt, a man of education and privilege, a man who once thought he could deliver his people by the force of his own hand — that life is gone. He killed a man. He ran. And the decades have done what decades do to a man living in exile: they have ground him down into the shape of his circumstances. He is a shepherd in Midian. That is all.

And then a bush catches fire and does not burn.

Exodus 3 is one of the most important chapters in the Bible, not because of the miracle — though the miracle is real — but because of what God says in the middle of it. At this burning

bush, on this unremarkable mountain, to this forgotten fugitive, God reveals the name that will define His relationship with His people from that moment until the end of time.

Moses had asked a simple question. God gave him an answer so deep that we are still wading into it.

* * *

The Scene

The setting matters. Moses is not in a temple. He is not in a position of authority. He is not at the head of an army or in the courts of a king. He is alone, in the wilderness, tending animals that do not belong to him. If you were choosing the moment and location for the most important self-revelation in the Old Testament, you would not choose this.

But God would. And God did. This is a pattern worth noticing early, because it will repeat throughout this book. God does not wait for the right setting. He shows up where His people are — and where Moses was, at this moment, was as far from significance as a man could get.

The bush is burning, but it is not consumed. Moses turns aside to look. And the moment he turns, God speaks:

Two things happen in these verses that set up everything that follows. First, God identifies Himself in relationship — not by title, not by abstract attribute, but by covenant history. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Abrahamic promises are in the room before Moses says a word.

Second, Moses hides his face. He is afraid. He knows, instinctively, that whatever is happening at this bush is not ordinary. The ground itself has changed. The God of his fathers — the God of the promises — is speaking.

But before we move forward, consider something the text says that is easy to pass over too quickly. God tells Moses to remove his sandals. Why? The text says it plainly: "the place on which you are standing is holy ground." But what is it about the sandals?

This command appears only twice in Scripture. The first time is here, at the burning bush. The second is in Joshua 5:15 — nearly identical language, nearly identical circumstances. Joshua is standing at the edge of the Promised Land. Jericho is in front of him. The captain of the host of the Lord appears, and says: "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

Two men. Two moments. And both are moments when the promises God made to Abraham are about to move. At the burning bush, God is about to deliver the nation He promised — "I will make you a great nation." At Jericho, God is about to give the land He promised — "To your descendants I will give this land." Two promises. Two thresholds. And at both thresholds, the same command: take off your sandals.

The text does not explain why, and we should be careful not to build more on this than the passage supports. But it is worth sitting with. Look at the scene at the bush. The ground is God's — He created it. The bush is God's. The fire is God's — supernatural, burning without consuming. The man himself is

God's, formed in His image. But the sandals are man-made. They are the one thing in the scene that man produced. And God says: take them off. Stand on what I have made, not on what you have made.

We do not claim to know the full significance. But the text gives this command twice, at two of the most pivotal moments in the fulfillment of God's promises, and never explains it — and that feels deliberate. Whatever the sandals represent, the pattern is clear: when God is about to do what He promised, when a man is standing at the threshold of something only God can accomplish, something needs to come off before he goes forward. The ground had not changed — it was the same desert dirt Moses had been walking on for forty years. But the presence of God made it holy. And in the presence of the holy, something man-made needed to be removed.

And what God says next is why the promises are about to move again. He has seen the affliction of His people. He has heard their cry. He knows their sufferings. And He has come down to deliver them (Exodus 3:7–8).

The word translated "come down" is *yarad* — the same word used later when God descends on Sinai in fire and thunder. God does not dispatch a messenger to observe the situation. He comes down. He has seen. He has heard. He knows. And now He has come. The God who was already there — *Elohim*, the name we met in Chapter 1 — is about to give Moses something more. He is about to give him His personal name.

* * *

The Question

What Moses asks next is not idle curiosity. It is the most practical question a man in his position could ask:

Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"

— Exodus 3:13

Moses is not asking for theological enrichment. He is asking because he is about to walk into a slave camp in Egypt and tell people who have been in bondage for four hundred years that God has sent him to deliver them. They will want to know which God. They will want a name — not a description, not a title, but a name. Something they can call on. Something that identifies exactly who has sent this shepherd from Midian to stand against Pharaoh.

The question is relational and urgent: who are You? What do I call You? When they ask me who sent me, what do I say?

And God answers.

* * *

The Name

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

— Exodus 3:14

And then, in the next verse, God connects this new revelation to every promise He has already made:

God, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, '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, and this is My memorial-name to all generations."

— Exodus 3:15

This is the moment. The name above all names is given. And it is given not in a cathedral or a palace but in a desert, to a fugitive, for the purpose of delivering slaves.

The Hebrew phrase God speaks in verse 14 is *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh* — "I AM WHO I AM." The word *Ehyeh* is the first person form of the Hebrew verb *hayah*, which means "to be." When God speaks of Himself, He says *Ehyeh* — I AM. The name that is given to Israel, however, is the form we know as *Yahweh* — spelled with the four Hebrew consonants Yod-He-Vav-He, often written as YHWH. This form appears to come from the third person of the same verb: He IS. When God names Himself, He says "I AM." When His people speak of Him, they say "He IS."

The verb *hayah* in the form used here is what Hebrew grammarians call the imperfect — a form that expresses ongoing, uncompleted action. It is not past tense. It is not a single completed moment of existence. It carries the sense of continuous, unfinished being. "I AM" is not "I was" — He did not exist once and then stop. It is not "I will be" — He is not waiting

to begin. It is the present, continuous, ongoing reality of a God who simply IS — always, now, without interruption.

The NASB renders it "I AM WHO I AM." Some translations offer "I WILL BE WHAT I WILL BE," which is also within the range of the Hebrew imperfect. Both renderings are faithful to the verb. And both are true to the nature of God — He is what He is, and He will be what He will be. He does not change. He does not shift. He does not become something other than what He has always been. His character is as fixed as His existence is certain.

This is the name God chose for Himself. And He did not choose it lightly.

* * *

What the Name Reveals

To understand what *Yahweh* means, it helps to understand what it excludes.

Every other being in the universe is contingent — dependent on something else for its existence. You exist because your parents existed. The earth exists because the forces that formed it existed. Every created thing traces back to something before it. Pull one thread, and the whole fabric unravels.

Yahweh — I AM — is the name of a being who depends on nothing. He does not trace back. He does not derive. He does not owe His existence to any prior cause. He simply is. Self-existent. Underived. Uncaused.

This is not an abstract philosophical point. It is the most practical thing Moses could have been told. He was about to walk into Egypt and challenge the most powerful empire on earth. He needed to know that the God who sent him was not a regional deity who might be outmatched by the gods of Egypt. He needed to know that the God who sent him did not borrow His power from someone else, did not depend on favorable circumstances, and could not be overcome by any force in the created order — because He was before the created order, and He would be after it.

I AM does not negotiate with rival powers. I AM does not wonder whether He will be strong enough. I AM simply is — and everything else either exists by His will or does not exist at all.

That is the name Moses was given to carry into Egypt. That is the name the slaves in Goshen were given to call on. And that is the name that stands behind every promise God makes in the rest of Scripture.

* * *

The Covenant Name

There is something intensely personal about the way this name is given.

Exodus 3:15 does not say, "This is a title you may use." It says, "This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations." The word translated "memorial-name" — *zeker* in Hebrew — carries the sense of how one is to be remembered, invoked, called upon. God is not giving Moses a theological

concept. He is giving him a name — the name — the one by which He is to be known and addressed by His people for all time.

And notice how God frames it: "The Lord, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." The personal name is embedded in the covenant relationship. Yahweh is not an anonymous force. He is the God who made promises to specific people and who is now acting to keep those promises. He remembered His covenant with Abraham — Exodus 2:24 says this explicitly: "God heard their groaning; and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

The name Yahweh is the covenant name. It is the name of God in relationship with His people. *Elohim* tells you He is God. *Yahweh* tells you He is your God — the God who made promises, who remembers them, and who has come down to keep them.

This is why the revelation happens here, at this moment, and not earlier. The promises were made to Abraham under the name El Shaddai — God Almighty. God tells Moses this directly in Exodus 6:2–3: "I am the Lord; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them." The patriarchs knew God as the Almighty — the God of power, the God of the impossible. But the covenant name, the personal name, the name by which God binds Himself to His people as their deliverer — that name is revealed here, at the moment He begins to deliver.

The name matches the moment. God does not reveal Yahweh when the promises are merely spoken. He reveals it when the promises begin to be fulfilled.

I AM in the New Testament

The name Yahweh echoes through the entire Old Testament — it appears over 6,800 times. But its most stunning appearance comes in the New Testament, in a single sentence spoken by Jesus that nearly got Him killed on the spot.

The scene is John 8. Jesus is in a heated exchange with Jewish leaders who are challenging His authority. The argument has been building — about Abraham, about truth, about whose children they really are. And then Jesus says something that changes the entire temperature of the conversation:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

— John 8:58

The reaction is immediate: "Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him" (John 8:59). They understood exactly what He said. He did not say "Before Abraham was born, I was" — that would have been a claim to pre-existence, remarkable but not necessarily blasphemous. He said "I am" — *ego eimi* in the Greek, present tense, the same construction used in the Septuagint translation of Exodus 3:14. Jesus took the covenant name of God — the name given at the burning bush, the name too holy for many Jews to even speak aloud — and applied it to Himself.

This was not a slip. Jesus knew exactly what He was claiming. And the Jewish leaders knew exactly what they were hearing. The man standing in front of them was either out of His

mind, or He was the I AM of the burning bush standing in human flesh.

John's Gospel records seven "I am" statements from Jesus — I am the bread of life, the light of the world, the door, the good shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and the life, the true vine. Each one is an echo of the burning bush. Each one is Jesus saying: the God who revealed Himself to Moses is standing in front of you. The self-existent One has come in the flesh.

This is where Chapter 1 and Chapter 12 of this book meet. The *Elohim* who was already there in Genesis 1:1 and the Immanuel who will close this book in a manger in Bethlehem are the same God — and His name is I AM.

* * *

The Shadow

The shadow framework we laid out in the Introduction arrives at its center here.

Egypt is the world. Pharaoh is the power that enslaves. The cry of Israel in bondage is the cry of every human being who has ever been trapped in something they could not escape on their own — sin, addiction, despair, the consequences of choices that have compounded into chains.

And into that bondage, God speaks a name. I AM. The self-existent One. The God who depends on nothing and is limited by nothing. The God who has come down to deliver.

When Paul writes to the Romans about the human condition apart from Christ, the language echoes Egypt: "For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Helpless. That was Israel in Egypt — unable to free themselves, unable to break the power that held them, unable to do anything but cry out. And God heard. And God came down.

The deliverance from Egypt and the deliverance from sin are not merely parallel — they are connected by the same promises and the same God. The Yahweh who said "I have come down to deliver" in Exodus 3:8 is the same God who sent His Son to deliver us from a bondage far deeper than Pharaoh's bricks and mortar.

And the name He gave at the burning bush is the name He still answers to. When you call on the Lord — when you cry out from whatever Egypt holds you — you are calling on I AM. The God who was, who is, and who will be. The God who does not change, who does not weaken, whose power is not borrowed and cannot be revoked.

He heard their cry in Egypt. He hears yours now.

* * *

Praying His Name

You are not praying to a concept. You are not sending words into a philosophical abstraction. You are not addressing the "ground of

all being" or the "unmoved mover" or any other human attempt to capture in language what God revealed at the burning bush.

You are praying to I AM.

The God who exists right now, in this moment, as fully and completely as He existed when He spoke to Moses from the fire. The God whose existence does not depend on your belief in Him, whose power does not depend on your understanding of it, whose presence does not depend on your ability to feel it. He simply is — and when you open your mouth to pray, you are speaking to a God who is more real, more present, and more certain than anything else in your life.

The burning bush was not consumed because the fire was not natural fire. It was the presence of I AM — the God who sustains without depleting, who gives without diminishing, who burns without destroying. When you pray to Yahweh, you are approaching that same presence. And it will not consume you — because the same God who said "Do not come near" to Moses at the bush later tore the veil from top to bottom so that you could come as close as it is possible to come.

Start with His name. I AM. Let the weight of it settle. And then speak — honestly, humbly, boldly — to the God who was there before the bush, before the desert, before the world, and who is here now, listening, present, and unchanged.

* * *

For Further Study

Exodus 3:1–4:17 — The full burning bush encounter

Exodus 6:2–3 — "By My name, Lord, I did not make Myself known to them"

Exodus 2:23–25 — God heard, remembered, saw, and took notice

Psalm 90:2 — From everlasting to everlasting

Psalm 102:25–27 — You are the same, and Your years will not come to an end

John 8:56–59 — "Before Abraham was born, I am"

Hebrews 13:8 — Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever

Revelation 1:8 — "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty"

Related name:

Jehovah Mekoddishkem — The Lord Who Sanctifies You (Exodus 31:13). In the covenant at Sinai, God tells Israel: "You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you." The Yahweh who delivered them from Egypt is also the Yahweh who sets them apart as His own. Deliverance and sanctification come from the same name.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

If the God you are praying to is I AM — self-existent, unchanging, dependent on nothing — what does that do to the fear that your situation might be too big for Him?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Read Exodus 3:1–15 aloud, slowly — the whole passage, not just the famous verses. Place yourself in the scene. A bush is burning. A voice is speaking. And the voice is telling you His name. When you reach verse 14, stop. Read "I AM WHO I AM" one more time. Then close the Bible, and talk to Him.

* * *

"God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM'; and He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

— Exodus 3:14

Jehovah Rapha — The Lord Who Heals

Part III: The Veil Is Torn

“Then they said to Moses, “Is it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you dealt with us in this way, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the word that we spoke to you in Egypt, saying, ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”

— Exodus 14:11–12

The sea is in front of them. The army is behind them.

Everything God has done so far — the burning bush, the plagues, the Passover lamb, the night of deliverance — has brought Israel to this moment. They are standing on the edge of the Red Sea with Pharaoh's chariots closing in, and there is nowhere to go. The people who sang no songs in Egypt, who endured four hundred years of slavery in silence, now find their voices — and what comes out is not faith. It is terror:

Better to serve the Egyptians than to die free. That is where they are. That is how deep the bondage goes — not just in the body, but in the mind. Four hundred years of slavery had taught

them to prefer captivity to the unknown. They could not yet imagine what freedom looked like.

And Moses answers:

"Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever. The Lord will fight for you while you keep silent."

— Exodus 14:13–14

Keep silent. Watch. The Lord will fight for you.

What happens next is the defining act of deliverance in the Old Testament:

Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided. The sons of Israel went through the midst of the sea on the dry land, and the waters were like a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

— Exodus 14:21–22

They walked through. On dry ground. Water standing on both sides — not a shallow ford, not a lucky low tide, but a wall of water on the right and a wall of water on the left, with dry land underfoot. The God who said "I have come down to deliver" (Exodus 3:8) was delivering. Not partly. Not symbolically. Completely.

And when Israel reached the far side, the sea returned:

*The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen,
even all Pharaoh's army that had gone into the sea after them;
not even one of them remained.*

— Exodus 14:28

Not one. The power that had enslaved them for four centuries was gone. Not weakened. Not negotiated with. Not reformed. Destroyed. The people who had said "it would have been better to serve the Egyptians" would never serve them again.

* * *

The Crossing

This moment deserves more weight than a summary, because it is the hinge of the entire story — and not just Israel's story.

In the Introduction, we laid out the framework that Scripture itself establishes: Israel's journey is the Christian's journey. Egypt is the bondage of sin. Pharaoh is the power that enslaves. The wilderness is the life of faith. And the Red Sea is the crossing point — the moment of deliverance, the line between the old life and the new.

Paul says so explicitly:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

— 1 Corinthians 10:1–2

Baptized. Paul uses that word deliberately. Israel's passage through the water was not merely an escape route — it was a type, a shadow of the baptism that would come. They went down into the water under the old identity — slaves, Pharaoh's property, a people defined by their bondage. They came up on the other side as something new — free, delivered, God's people, walking toward the land He had promised their father Abraham.

This is what baptism is. Not a ritual. Not a formality. A crossing. The old life on one side. The new life on the other. The water between. And on the far side, you do not belong to Pharaoh anymore.

The Song of Moses erupts on the other side — Exodus 15:1–21 — and it is the first recorded worship of the delivered nation. "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation" (Exodus 15:2). "The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is His name" (Exodus 15:3). Whatever Israel knew of God in Egypt, they had never known this — the God who fights, who delivers, who drowns the enemy in the sea while His people walk through on dry ground. The song is the sound of a people who have just seen who their God is.

That was three days ago.

Now there is no water.

* * *

The Crisis

Then Moses led Israel from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water.

— Exodus 15:22

Three days. That is all it takes to move from the highest point of faith to the first crisis of the wilderness. The God who parted the sea has not changed. The promises have not been revoked. The destination has not moved. But the road between deliverance and the Promised Land runs through a desert, and the desert does not care what miracles you saw last week.

They find water at a place called Marah. But they cannot drink it:

When they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter; therefore it was named Marah.

— Exodus 15:23

The name tells the story. *Marah* means bitter. The water they had been desperate to find — the water they needed to survive — was there, but they could not drink it. It was not absent. It was ruined.

And the people do what people do when the thing they hoped for turns out to be the thing that disappoints them:

So the people grumbled at Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

— Exodus 15:24

This is the first time Israel grumbles in the wilderness. It will not be the last. But notice what happens — and, just as importantly, what does not happen. God does not rebuke them. The text records no punishment, no correction, no lecture about gratitude. They grumbled. And what follows is not judgment. It is provision.

* * *

The Tree

*Then he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree;
and he threw it into the waters, and the waters became sweet.*

— Exodus 15:25a

Moses does not solve the problem. He cries out. And God shows him a tree.

The Hebrew word is *ets* — tree, or wood. The text does not tell us what kind of tree it was. It does not explain the mechanism — how wood thrown into bitter water makes it sweet. It does not give us a principle to extract or a process to replicate. It simply says: God showed him a tree, Moses threw it in, and the water became sweet.

This is worth pausing on, because the temptation with a detail like this is to build more on it than the text supports. The tree is real. The transformation is real. But the text offers no explanation for how or why it worked, and we should not invent one. What the text does tell us is who was behind it: the Lord *showed* him the tree. The solution was not something Moses

discovered on his own. It was something God revealed. The provision — as with Jireh on the mountain — was already there. Moses simply had to be shown where it was.

The bitter became sweet. Not by removing the water and replacing it with something else. Not by relocating the people to a different spring. The same water, in the same place, was transformed. What was undrinkable became drinkable. What was useless became life-giving. And it happened because God intervened.

* * *

The Name

What follows the healing of the water is not just a miracle. It is a revelation:

There He made for them a statute and regulation, and there He tested them. He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer."

— Exodus 15:25b–26

The Hebrew is *Yahweh Rophka* — the Lord your healer. The verb is *rapha* — to heal, to cure, to restore, to make whole. This is the name. And the context in which God reveals it is not what we might expect.

He does not reveal it at a sickbed. He does not reveal it after healing a plague or mending a wound. He reveals it after making bitter water sweet. The first act of *rapha* in this passage is not the healing of a body. It is the healing of water. The restoration of something that had gone wrong — something that should have sustained life but could not.

This tells us something about the scope of the name. *Rapha* is not limited to physical illness, though it certainly includes it. *Rapha* is restoration. It is the setting right of what has gone wrong. Bitter water made sweet. Broken things made whole. Ruined things made useful again. The God who heals is the God who takes what sin, circumstance, and the brokenness of the world have damaged, and He restores it.

But notice the structure of the promise. God does not say "I am your healer" and leave it there. He frames it within a covenant relationship: *if* you give earnest heed to My voice, *if* you do what is right in My sight, *if* you listen to My commandments — then I will put none of these diseases on you. The specific promise of protection from the diseases of Egypt was conditional. It was tied to Israel's faithfulness within the covenant.

This does not mean the name is conditional. God *is* the healer — that is who He is, and the name does not change based on the behavior of His people. But the specific application of that promise at Marah was given within the framework of a covenant, and the text says so plainly. We should read it the way God said it, not reshape it into something He did not.

* * *

What God Heals

The diseases of Egypt are not incidental in this passage. Israel has just left Egypt. The plagues that God sent on the Egyptians are fresh in their memory — boils, pestilence, suffering that devastated an entire nation. And God says: those diseases will not come on you, because I am your healer.

The word *rapha* appears throughout the Old Testament, and its range is broader than a single passage can capture. In Genesis 20:17, Abraham prays and God heals Abimelech and his household. In Numbers 12:13, Moses cries out to God to heal Miriam of leprosy. In 2 Kings 20:5, God tells Hezekiah, "I will heal you." In each case, the healing is physical, specific, and direct.

But *rapha* is not confined to the body. In 2 Chronicles 7:14, God says, "If My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." Heal their *land*. The word is the same. In Psalm 147:3, "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." The healing there is not physical. It is the restoration of a soul that has been shattered.

And then there is Isaiah 53:5 — written centuries after Marah, but reaching back to the same God and the same verb:

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

— Isaiah 53:5

The healing spoken of here is not bitter water made sweet. It is not boils removed or leprosy cleansed. It is the deepest healing of all — the healing of the breach between God and man, accomplished through the suffering of the One who bore our transgressions. The *rapha* that began at a bitter spring in the wilderness reaches its fullest expression at the cross.

* * *

After the Bitter

The chapter does not end at Marah. There is one more verse, and it is easy to pass over:

Then they came to Elim where there were twelve springs of water and seventy date palms, and they camped there beside the waters.

— Exodus 15:27

After the bitter, abundance. After the single spring of undrinkable water — twelve springs, overflowing. After the barren wilderness — seventy palm trees, shade and rest. The text does not explain the numbers. It does not draw the connection for the reader. It simply records that after Marah came Elim.

This is the rhythm of the wilderness, and it is the rhythm of the life of faith. The bitter seasons are real. The disappointments are real. The moments when the thing you needed most turns out to be the thing that cannot sustain you — those are real. But they are not the end of the road. Marah is a stop on the journey. It is

not the destination. And the God who healed the water at Marah had Elim waiting just ahead.

* * *

The Shadow

There is a particular kind of bitterness that does not come from disaster. It comes from disappointment.

Disaster is the Red Sea moment — the sudden crisis, the army behind you, the water in front of you. That kind of moment, as terrifying as it is, often produces the clearest faith. There is nowhere else to turn. You cry out, and God answers, and the sea parts.

But Marah is different. Marah is what happens after the miracle. Three days into the journey, you find water — and it is bitter. You got what you were looking for, and it was not what you expected. The job came through, but it is nothing like what was promised. The marriage survived, but the intimacy did not. The prayer was answered, but the answer tastes wrong. You are standing at the spring, and you cannot drink.

This is where many Christians lose their footing. Not at the Red Sea, where the crisis is dramatic enough to demand faith. At Marah, where the disappointment is quiet enough to erode it. The question at the Red Sea is "Will God save me?" The question at Marah is "Is this really what God had in mind?"

Jehovah Rapha does not promise that there will be no bitter water. Israel still had to walk three days through a desert to reach Marah. The bitter spring was real, and they really could not drink

from it. What Rapha promises is that the bitter is not the final word. God can take what is undrinkable and make it sweet. He can take what is broken and restore it. He can take the disappointment that is sitting in front of you right now — the thing that should have been life-giving but is not — and heal it.

Not always the way you expect. God did not replace Marah's water. He transformed it. The healing may not look like a new set of circumstances. It may look like the same circumstances, changed from the inside. The same marriage. The same job. The same life — but sweet where it was bitter, because God has done something in it that you could not do yourself.

And after the bitter, Elim. God does not lead His people from one bitter spring to the next. He leads them through Marah on the way to abundance. The bitter is not the destination. It is the stop where you learn the name of the God who heals — and then you keep walking.

* * *

Praying His Name

When life turns bitter, the first instinct is to grumble. Israel did it. We do it. The disappointment is real, and the words come before we can stop them — this is not what I signed up for, this is not what I was promised, this is not fair.

God did not rebuke Israel for grumbling at Marah. He answered them. He showed Moses the tree. He healed the water. And then He gave them His name: I am the Lord who heals you.

When you pray to Jehovah Rapha, you are not pretending the bitterness is not real. You are not putting on a brave face and calling the bitter water sweet. You are bringing the real thing — the actual disappointment, the actual wound, the actual brokenness — to a God who heals.

And His healing is not limited to the categories we assign it. Rapha heals water. Rapha heals bodies. Rapha heals land. Rapha heals the brokenhearted. Rapha heals the breach between God and man. Whatever is broken in your life — whatever has gone bitter, whatever should be sustaining you but is not — falls within the reach of this name.

You do not have to understand how the healing will come. Moses did not understand how a tree thrown into water would change it from bitter to sweet. He did not need to understand. He needed to cry out, and then do what God showed him. That is what prayer to Jehovah Rapha looks like: honest about the bitterness, open to the provision, and willing to trust that the God who heals does not need you to understand the process — only to bring Him the problem.

The water at Marah is still sweet. And the name God gave there is still good.

* * *

For Further Study

Exodus 15:1–21 — The Song of Moses after the Red Sea crossing

Exodus 15:22–27 — The full account of Marah and Elim

Numbers 12:13 — Moses cries out: "O God, heal her, I pray!"

Numbers 21:4–9 — The bronze serpent in the wilderness — another healing in the desert

2 Kings 20:5 — "I will heal you"

2 Chronicles 7:14 — "I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land"

Psalms 103:2–3 — "Who pardons all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases"

Psalms 147:3 — "He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds"

Isaiah 53:5 — "By His scourging we are healed"

Jeremiah 17:14 — "Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved"

James 5:14–16 — Prayer for healing

Related name:

Jehovah Sabaoth — The Lord of Hosts (1 Samuel 1:3, Isaiah 6:3). The God who heals is not a local deity with limited reach. He is the Lord of Hosts — the commander of heaven's armies, the sovereign over every power in heaven and on earth. When Rapha heals, it is not a small god doing a small thing. It is the Lord of Hosts restoring what the brokenness of the world has ruined. His authority to heal is as vast as His authority to command.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

What in your life right now is bitter — the thing that should be sustaining you but is not — and what would it look like to bring it to the God who heals rather than trying to fix it yourself?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Read Exodus 15:22–27 slowly. Then read it again. The second time, stop at verse 25 — "the Lord showed him a tree." Ask God to show you what He wants to do with the bitter thing in your life. You may not see the answer today. But the asking matters. Moses cried out, and God showed him what to do. Start there.

* * *

He said, "If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer."

— Exodus 15:26

Jehovah Nissi — The Lord Is My Banner

Part III: The Veil Is Torn

“Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim.”

— Exodus 17:8

The water from the rock is still fresh on their lips when the enemy arrives.

Israel has been in the wilderness only a short time. They have already grumbled about water — twice — and about food. God has already provided: bitter water made sweet at Marah, manna on the ground each morning, quail in the evening, and water from a rock at Rephidim when Moses struck it at God's command (Exodus 17:1–7). Every need has been met. Every complaint has been answered. But the wilderness is about to teach Israel something new. Not every crisis in the life of faith is a crisis of provision. Some are battles.

One sentence. No warning. No explanation of motive. No preamble. Amalek came and fought. Israel did not pick this fight. They were not raiding Amalekite territory or threatening Amalekite interests. They were passing through the wilderness, following the God who had delivered them, heading toward the land He had promised. And an enemy showed up.

This is Israel's first battle as a free nation. In Egypt, they did not fight — they endured. At the Red Sea, they did not fight — God fought for them, and Moses told them to stand still and watch (Exodus 14:13–14). But Rephidim is different. At Rephidim, God does not tell them to stand still. He tells them to fight.

* * *

How Amalek Attacks

The account in Exodus 17 does not describe the nature of Amalek's assault. But Moses himself provides the detail later, in Deuteronomy, when he instructs Israel to remember what happened:

"Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God."

— Deuteronomy 25:17–18

Amalek did not charge the front of the column. He did not face Israel's strength. He went for the rear — the stragglers, the faint, the weary. The people who had fallen behind. The ones who could not keep up. The vulnerable.

This is worth noticing, because it tells us something about the nature of the enemy Israel faced — and, within the framework Scripture has given us, the nature of the enemy we face. Amalek did not announce himself and fight fair. He picked off the weak.

He attacked where the defenses were thinnest, where exhaustion had created gaps, where people had drifted from the safety of the group.

Moses adds one more detail: "he did not fear God." Amalek had seen what God did to Egypt. The nations had heard about the Red Sea — Rahab will confirm this in Joshua 2:10. But Amalek was not deterred. He attacked anyway. An enemy who does not fear God is an enemy who will not stop on his own. He must be fought.

* * *

The Battle

Moses' response to the attack is immediate, and it involves two things happening at once:

So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand."

— Exodus 17:9

This is the first time Joshua appears in Scripture — and he appears as a warrior, chosen by Moses to lead the fight. There is a battle to be fought on the ground, with swords and men and physical courage. Moses does not minimize that. He tells Joshua to choose men and go fight.

But Moses himself goes to the top of the hill. With the staff of God in his hand — the same staff that struck the Nile, that was raised over the Red Sea, that struck the rock at Rephidim. And

what happens on that hilltop is one of the most vivid pictures of spiritual reality in the entire Old Testament:

So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed.

— Exodus 17:10–11

Read that again. When Moses' hands were up, Israel won. When his hands dropped, Amalek won. The battle on the ground was real — Joshua and his men were fighting with real swords against a real enemy. But the outcome of the battle was not determined on the ground. It was determined on the hilltop. The victory depended on something above the battlefield, not on the battlefield itself.

Moses' hands were not magic. The staff was not a talisman. What was happening on that hill was intercession — a man standing between God and the battle, holding up the instrument God had given him, and the outcome turning on whether that connection held. When it held, Israel prevailed. When it faltered, the enemy advanced.

But Moses is human. And humans get tired:

But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set.

— Exodus 17:12

Moses could not hold his hands up alone. His arms grew heavy. The battle lasted all day. And if Aaron and Hur had not been there — if no one had come alongside him, if he had been alone on that hill — his hands would have fallen, and Amalek would have prevailed.

The text does not editorialize on this. It does not draw a lesson. It simply records: Aaron on one side, Hur on the other, and Moses' hands steady until sunset.

So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

— Exodus 17:13

The victory came. But it came through the combination of Joshua fighting on the ground and Moses interceding on the hill, held up by two men who understood that the battle was bigger than one person could carry alone.

* * *

The Name

Moses built an altar and named it The Lord is My Banner; and he said, "The Lord has sworn; the Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

— Exodus 17:15–16

The Hebrew is *Yahweh Nissi*. A *nes* in Hebrew is a banner — a standard, a flag, the rallying point that an army gathers around in battle. When an army was scattered or disoriented, the banner told

them where to look. It was the visible marker that said: here is your commander. Here is your cause. Rally here.

Moses does not name the altar "The Lord Won the Battle" — though He did. He does not name it "The Lord Gave Us Victory" — though that is true. He names it "The Lord Is My Banner." The emphasis is not on what God did. It is on what God *is* — the rallying point, the standard, the one you look to when the fight is raging and you need to know where to stand.

And then Moses adds something that elevates this moment beyond a single battle: "The Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation." This is not a conflict that ended at Rephidim. It is ongoing. The enemy that attacked the stragglers in the wilderness will keep coming — generation after generation — and the Lord will keep fighting. The banner is not raised once and then folded. It stands as long as the war lasts.

* * *

From Generation to Generation

The text proves this declaration true. Amalek does not disappear after Rephidim.

In Numbers 14:45, the Amalekites defeat an Israelite force that went up to fight without God's authorization — a battle God had told them not to fight. In Judges 6:3, the Amalekites join with Midian to oppress Israel in the days before Gideon. In 1 Samuel 15, God commands Saul to destroy Amalek completely — and Saul's failure to obey becomes the turning point that costs him the kingdom. In 1 Samuel 30, David fights the Amalekites at Ziklag.

And centuries later, in the book of Esther, Haman — identified as an Agagite, a descendant of the Amalekite king — attempts to destroy the entire Jewish people.

Generation after generation. The enemy keeps showing up. And the war the Lord declared at Rephidim keeps being fought.

* * *

The Shadow

In the Introduction, we laid out the framework that 1 Corinthians 10:1–11 establishes: Israel's journey is the Christian's journey. Their experiences happened as examples, written for our instruction. Egypt is the bondage we were delivered from. The Red Sea is the crossing point. The wilderness is the life of faith.

And in the wilderness, there is an enemy.

The text does not say "Amalek represents sin." But the pattern is unmistakable within the framework Scripture has given us. Israel was delivered from Egypt. They crossed the water. They entered the wilderness. And immediately, an enemy attacked — not from the front, not with an honest challenge, but from the rear, going after the weak, the weary, and the ones who had fallen behind.

Every Christian who has walked any distance in the life of faith recognizes this enemy. Not the dramatic crisis — the Red Sea moments, where the need is so obvious that you cry out and God answers in power. This is the other enemy. The one who waits until you are tired. The one who finds the gap where you have let your guard down. The one who does not attack your strength but

your weakness — the area of your life where you are faint, where you are weary, where you have drifted to the back of the column and no one is watching.

And Deuteronomy adds the detail that makes the shadow complete: "he did not fear God." The enemy who attacks in the wilderness is not intimidated by what God has already done. He saw the Red Sea. He does not care. He is coming anyway.

This is why the name matters. Jehovah Nissi — the Lord is my banner. When the enemy attacks your weakness, when the battle comes to the place where you are most vulnerable, where you are most likely to fall — the banner tells you where to look. Not at the enemy. Not at your own strength. Not at the size of the fight. At the Lord. He is the rallying point. He is the standard. And the war He declared against this enemy is a war He intends to win.

But notice what the battle at Rephidim also teaches. The victory was real, but it was not solitary. Joshua fought on the ground. Moses interceded on the hill. Aaron and Hur held up his arms. The battle required all of them. Moses alone on the hill with tired arms would have lost. Joshua alone on the field without the intercession would have lost. Aaron and Hur were not warriors and were not intercessors — they were the ones who held up the man who could no longer hold up himself.

The Christian life is not a solo campaign. The enemy who attacks the stragglers — the ones at the rear, the ones who have fallen behind, the ones who are isolated — knows that the most vulnerable person is the one who is alone. Aaron and Hur did not

fight the battle. They made it possible for Moses to keep fighting it. And that was enough.

* * *

Praying His Name

There are seasons in the Christian life when the fight is real, and your arms are tired, and you are not sure how much longer you can hold on.

Pray to Jehovah Nissi.

Not because prayer is a magic formula that makes the enemy disappear. Amalek did not vanish when Moses raised his hands. The battle lasted all day. Joshua still had to swing the sword. The fight was real, and it was long, and it was exhausting. But the outcome depended on Moses' hands being raised — on the connection between the battlefield and the hilltop, between the fight on the ground and the intercession above it.

When you pray to Jehovah Nissi, you are looking at the banner. You are fixing your eyes on the rallying point when everything in the battle is trying to pull your attention elsewhere — to the size of the enemy, to the length of the fight, to the exhaustion in your own arms. The banner says: the Lord is here. The Lord is fighting. The Lord has declared war on this enemy, and He will not stop until the war is won.

And if your arms are heavy — if the fight has gone on so long that you cannot hold them up on your own — look for Aaron and Hur. They are the people God has placed beside you: the friend who prays when you cannot, the brother or sister who

holds you up when your strength gives out, the community that keeps the intercession going when you are too tired to continue.

Moses did not win the battle by himself. Neither will you. But the God whose banner flew over Rephidim flies His banner over you. And the war He declared from generation to generation is a war He has never lost.

* * *

For Further Study

Exodus 17:8–16 — The full account of the battle with Amalek

Deuteronomy 25:17–19 — "Remember what Amalek did to you"

1 Samuel 15:1–35 — Saul's failure to destroy Amalek — and the cost

1 Samuel 30:1–20 — David fights the Amalekites at Ziklag

Esther 3:1 — Haman the Agagite — the enemy persists

Numbers 21:1–3 — Israel's victory over the Canaanites after prayer

Isaiah 11:10–12 — The Root of Jesse as a banner for the peoples

Ephesians 6:10–18 — The full armor of God — the New Testament battle

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 — "The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh"

1 Timothy 6:12 — "Fight the good fight of faith"

Related name:

El Gibbor — Mighty God (Isaiah 9:6). The banner is not carried by a weak commander. Isaiah calls the coming King "Mighty God" — the warrior who fights for His people, whose strength is the foundation of the victory. Nissi tells you where to look. Gibbor tells you the strength of the One you are looking at. The banner flies because the God behind it cannot be defeated.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

Where is the enemy attacking you right now — not at your place of strength, but at your place of weariness — and who has God placed beside you to hold up your arms?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Think of one person you know who is in a battle right now — someone whose arms are tired, who is struggling, who might be falling behind. Be Aaron or Hur for them this week. You do not need to fight their battle. You need to hold up their arms. A phone call. A prayer spoken over them. A meal. A presence. Just show up and hold on.

* * *

*Moses built an altar and named it The Lord is My Banner;
and he said, "The Lord has sworn; the Lord will have war
against Amalek from generation to generation."*

— Exodus 17:15–16

Jehovah Shalom — The Lord Is Peace

Part IV: Through the Open Door

“Then the sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian seven years. The power of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of Midian the sons of Israel made for themselves the dens which were in the mountains and the caves and the strongholds. For whenever Israel had sown, the Midianites would come up with the Amalekites and the sons of the east and go against them. So they would camp against them and destroy the produce of the earth as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey.”

— Judges 6:1–4

Israel is in the land.

The journey we have been walking — from Egypt through the Red Sea, through the wilderness with its bitter waters and its battles — has reached its destination. Joshua led Israel across the Jordan, into the land God had promised to Abraham. The second of the three promises — “To your descendants I will give this land” (Genesis 12:7) — has been fulfilled. The wilderness is behind them. They are home.

But by the time we open the book of Judges, something has gone wrong.

This is what life in the promised land looks like when Israel has turned away from the God who gave it to them. The Midianites — joined by the Amalekites, the same enemy we met at Rephidim — swarm the land at harvest time, destroy the crops, take the livestock, and leave nothing. Israel is reduced to hiding in caves and mountain dens. They are living in the land of promise like refugees in their own country.

The text is blunt about why: "The sons of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord." The oppression is not random. It is a consequence. And the pattern repeats throughout Judges — Israel turns away, God allows the consequences, Israel cries out, and God raises a deliverer.

When Israel does cry out, God's first response is not a warrior. It is a prophet:

Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the Lord on account of Midian, that the Lord sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery. I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land, and I said to you, "I am the Lord your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed My voice.'"

— Judges 6:7–10

Before God sends the deliverer, He sends the word. And the word is a reminder: I am the Lord your God. I delivered you. I gave you this land. I told you not to fear other gods. And you did not listen.

The prophet names no sin specifically. He does not detail what Israel did. He simply lays out the contrast: here is what I did for you, and here is what you did with it. The reminder comes before the rescue. God does not deliver without first telling them why they needed deliverance.

And then, in the very next verse, the deliverer shows up — in the last place you would look for one.

* * *

The Winepress

Then the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezarite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites.

— Judges 6:11

A winepress is a low place — a pit carved into rock, designed to collect the juice of crushed grapes. It is not where you thresh wheat. Threshing requires an open floor, wind, space to toss the grain so the chaff blows away. You thresh wheat on a hilltop or a wide, flat area. You do not thresh wheat in a hole in the ground.

Unless you are hiding.

Gideon is not threshing wheat in a winepress because it is efficient. He is doing it because if the Midianites see him

processing grain in the open, they will take it. He is feeding his family in secret, crouching in a pit, doing in hiding what should be done in the open.

This is the promised land. This is the land God swore to Abraham, fought for at Jericho, and divided among the tribes. And here is an Israelite, hiding in a hole, trying to keep enough wheat to survive.

The angel of the Lord sits down under a tree and watches. And then he speaks:

The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, "The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior."

— Judges 6:12

The Hebrew is *gibbor hayil* — a man of valor, a warrior of strength. It is the kind of title you give to a battle-tested commander, not to a man hiding in a pit with a handful of wheat.

God does not describe Gideon as He finds him. He names him as He intends him to be.

We have seen this before. In Genesis 17, God appeared to a 99-year-old man with a barren wife and changed his name to Abraham — "father of a multitude" — before there was a single child. God named what He would do, not what was. He does the same thing here. The man in the winepress is addressed as a valiant warrior, because that is what God is about to make him.

But Gideon does not hear a commission. He hears a contradiction.

* * *

The Honest Question

Then Gideon said to him, "O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

— Judges 6:13

This is not rebellion. It is not cynicism. It is the honest question of a man who has heard the stories but is living in a reality that does not match them.

Gideon knows the history. His fathers told him about Egypt. About the Red Sea. About the miracles. He grew up hearing about a God who delivers His people — and he is living under Midianite oppression, hiding his food in a hole. The stories say God is with Israel. The evidence says otherwise — or so it seems to Gideon.

Notice that Gideon does not reject God. He does not say "there is no God." He says, "If the Lord is with us, why has this happened?" He is not walking away from faith. He is standing in the gap between what he was told and what he sees, and he is asking the hardest question a believer can ask: Where are You?

The text does not rebuke the question. And what follows is remarkable — because the answer to Gideon's question is not an explanation. It is a commission:

The Lord looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?"

— Judges 6:14

Notice what happens in this verse. The text has been calling this figure "the angel of the Lord" (verses 11, 12). Now it says "the Lord looked at him and said." The text shifts — without explanation, without transition — from "the angel of the Lord" to "the Lord." The reader is left to see what the text shows: this visitor under the oak tree is more than a messenger.

And the Lord does not answer Gideon's question about why Israel is suffering. He does not explain the theology behind the oppression. He does not give a lesson on the cycle of Judges. He says: Go. In this your strength. Deliver Israel. I am sending you.

"This your strength" — what strength? The strength of a man hiding in a winepress? The answer seems to be: yes. The strength Gideon has is enough, because the one sending him is the Lord. The adequacy is not in the instrument. It is in the one who wields it.

Gideon is not persuaded:

He said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house."

— Judges 6:15

The least family in the tribe. The youngest in the family. By every human measure of qualification, Gideon is at the bottom. He is not being falsely modest. He is stating facts — at least as the world measures them.

And God's answer cuts through every objection:

But the Lord said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man."

— Judges 6:16

Not "you are stronger than you think." Not "believe in yourself." *I will be with you.* The same promise God made to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:12). The same God. The same answer. Your qualification is not your ability. Your qualification is My presence.

* * *

The Sign and the Fire

Gideon asks for a sign — proof that this is really God speaking to him:

So Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me. Please do not depart from here until I come back to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You." And He said, "I will remain until you return."

— Judges 6:17–18

Gideon prepares a meal — a young goat and unleavened bread, a substantial offering from a man living under oppression — and brings it out:

Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a

basket and the broth in a pot, and brought them out to him under the oak and presented them.

— Judges 6:19

What happens next removes all doubt about who is sitting under that tree:

The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the Lord vanished from his sight.

— Judges 6:20–21

Fire from the rock. The offering consumed. And the angel of the Lord vanishes. This was not a traveler. This was not a prophet. This was God — present, visible, speaking, and now gone.

And Gideon's response is not relief. It is terror:

When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the Lord, he said, "Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face."

— Judges 6:22

Gideon is afraid he will die. The understanding — rooted in passages like Exodus 33:20, where God told Moses "no man can see Me and live" — was that to see God face to face was fatal. Gideon has just realized what happened. He was talking to God. He saw Him. And now he believes he is a dead man.

This is the moment the name appears:

The Lord said to him, "Peace to you. Do not fear; you shall not die."

— Judges 6:23

And Gideon builds an altar:

Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

— Judges 6:24

* * *

The Name

The Hebrew is *Yahweh Shalom*.

The English word "peace" carries part of the meaning but not all of it. In English, peace usually means the absence of conflict — the war is over, the fighting has stopped, everything is quiet. The Hebrew *shalom* is far richer. It carries the sense of completeness, wholeness, well-being — not just the absence of something wrong but the presence of everything right. When Scripture uses *shalom*, it describes a state where nothing is broken, nothing is missing, nothing is fractured.

But the *shalom* Gideon names on this altar is even more specific than the word's full range. Gideon is not naming an abstract concept. He is naming what just happened to him.

He was terrified. He had seen God — and in Israel's understanding, that meant death. The holiness of God and the

frailty of man were not compatible. To stand in God's presence unprotected was to be consumed. And Gideon knew it. "Alas, O Lord God! For now I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face."

And God said: Peace to you. Do not fear. You shall not die.

The *shalom* on this altar is not the absence of conflict with Midian. The battle with Midian has not even begun. The *shalom* is God's answer to the terror of His own holiness. It is peace between God and man — the assurance that standing in God's presence does not have to mean death. That the holy God can meet an unqualified man in a winepress and the man can survive the encounter. More than survive — he can be commissioned by it.

This is why Gideon names the altar. Not because the war is over. Not because Midian has been defeated. Not because the oppression has lifted. None of that has happened yet. Gideon names the altar because in this moment, the God whose holiness should have destroyed him instead spoke peace to him. And that changes everything.

* * *

What God Calls You

There is a thread running through this passage that deserves attention before we move to the shadow.

God called Gideon "valiant warrior" when he was hiding in a winepress. He told him "go in this your strength" when Gideon had no strength worth mentioning. He said "you shall defeat Midian as one man" to the youngest son of the least family of a

conquered tribe. And He said "peace to you — you shall not die" to a man who was certain he was about to.

Every word God speaks to Gideon contradicts what Gideon sees when he looks at himself.

And the rest of Judges 6–8 proves that God was right. Gideon does become a warrior. He does defeat Midian — not with an army of thousands, but with three hundred men carrying torches and jars, because God wanted it clear that the victory was His (Judges 7:2). The man in the winepress becomes the man whose name Israel remembers. Not because he was qualified. Because God said "I will be with you," and He was.

God does not call us what we are. He calls us what He is making us. And the peace He speaks over us is not a wish. It is a declaration from the one with the authority to make it true.

* * *

The Shadow

Gideon's situation is not hard to recognize.

He is a man living in the gap between what God promised and what life looks like. He knows the stories. He has heard about the God who delivers. But his daily reality is oppression, hiding, scarcity, and fear. He is doing the right thing — trying to provide for his family — but he is doing it in secret, in a cramped and inadequate place, because the enemy has made it dangerous to live in the open.

Every Christian who has ever felt the distance between what they believe and what they experience knows this winepress.

You know God is good. You know He delivers. You have heard the testimonies, read the passages, sung the songs. But the Midianites keep showing up. The crop keeps getting destroyed. The thing you are trying to build keeps getting torn down. And the honest question — the one you might be afraid to say out loud — is Gideon's question: If the Lord is with us, why has this happened?

The text does not punish Gideon for asking. And God does not punish you for asking either. The question is not the problem. The question is the beginning of the encounter. God met Gideon in the place of his honest doubt, not in the place of his polished faith. He found him in the winepress, not in the tabernacle.

But notice what God does not do. He does not explain why the oppression happened. He does not give Gideon a theology lesson about the cycle of Judges. He does not say "this is happening because Israel sinned." The prophet already said that (Judges 6:7–10). By the time God shows up in person, the diagnosis is finished. What God brings is not an explanation. It is a commission and a promise: Go. I am sending you. I will be with you. And peace.

The *shalom* of this passage is not the promise that the fight will be easy or that the circumstances will immediately change. Gideon still had to tear down his father's altar to Baal that same night (Judges 6:25–27). He still had to gather an army. He still had to face the Midianites with three hundred men against a force the text describes as "numerous as locusts" (Judges 7:12). The battle was real, and it was ahead of him, not behind him.

But he went into it with something he did not have in the winepress. He went into it knowing that the God whose holiness should have consumed him had instead spoken peace to him — and that the same God had said "I will be with you."

Shalom is not the absence of the battle. It is the presence of God in the middle of it. It is the settled assurance that the God who met you, who called you something you are not yet, who commissioned you for something you cannot do on your own, has also said: you will not die. Peace. I am with you. Go.

* * *

Praying His Name

There are moments in the Christian life when you feel profoundly unqualified.

Not just outmatched — that was Nissi, the banner in the battle. This is something different. This is the quiet fear that you are the wrong person. That God has the right idea but the wrong instrument. That the task He seems to be placing in front of you — the conversation, the calling, the step of faith, the responsibility — belongs to someone stronger, more experienced, more spiritual, more together. Someone who is not hiding in a winepress.

Pray to Jehovah Shalom.

Not because prayer removes the inadequacy. Gideon was still the youngest son of the least family after God spoke to him. His résumé did not change. His tribe did not change. His track record

did not change. What changed was that God said "I will be with you" — and Gideon believed Him enough to move.

When you pray to Jehovah Shalom, you are praying to the God who speaks peace into the exact place where fear says you should be destroyed. The fear might be that you are not enough — not qualified, not gifted, not ready. The fear might be that you have already failed too many times. The fear might be the deepest one of all — that if God really looked at you, really saw what was there, the holiness would be unbearable and you would not survive the encounter.

Gideon thought the same thing. He saw the angel of the Lord and said, "I'm a dead man." And God said: Peace. You will not die.

The God who speaks *shalom* is the God who knows exactly who you are — hiding in the winepress, full of honest questions, certain you are the wrong choice — and calls you a warrior anyway. Not because you have earned the title. Because He intends to make it true. And His peace is the foundation you stand on while He does it.

* * *

For Further Study

Judges 6:1–8:35 — The full account of Gideon — calling, signs, battle, and aftermath

Judges 6:25–27 — Gideon tears down the altar of Baal — the first act of obedience after the encounter

Judges 7:1-22 — Three hundred men, torches, and jars — the victory that proved the strength was God's

Numbers 6:24-26 — The priestly blessing: "The Lord give you peace"

Isaiah 26:3 — "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You"

Isaiah 57:19-21 — "Peace, peace to him who is far and to him who is near"

John 14:27 — "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you"

John 16:33 — "In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world"

Romans 5:1 — "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"

Philippians 4:6-7 — "The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"

Colossians 3:15 — "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts"

Related name:

Sar Shalom — Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Isaiah calls the coming King not just a bringer of peace but the Prince of it — the one who rules over it, who possesses it, who grants it by His own authority. At the winepress, God spoke peace to one man. In Isaiah's prophecy, the Prince of Peace establishes a kingdom where *shalom* is not a single moment of assurance but the permanent order — "there will be no end to the increase of His government

or of peace" (Isaiah 9:7). The peace Gideon received at the altar is a foretaste of the peace that the Prince of Peace will make final.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

What has God called you to that you have been hiding from — not because you do not believe in Him, but because you do not believe He could mean you?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Think about Gideon's honest question: "If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened?" If you have a question like that — one you have been afraid to bring to God because it feels too raw, too honest, too close to doubt — bring it to Him this week. Not with polished words. Not with a prayer that sounds like it belongs in a book. Just the question, the way Gideon asked it — standing in the winepress, holding the wheat, wondering where the God of the miracles went. He did not rebuke Gideon for asking. He answered by showing up.

* * *

Then Gideon built an altar there to the Lord and named it The Lord is Peace. To this day it is still in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.

— Judges 6:24

Jehovah Rohi — The Lord Is My Shepherd

Part IV: Through the Open Door

“But David said to Saul, “Your servant was tending his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear.”

— 1 Samuel 17:34–36

Every name we have encountered so far has been revealed in a moment.

Hagar, alone in the wilderness, names the God who found her. Abraham, on a mountain with a knife in his hand, names the place where God provided. Moses, barefoot before a burning bush, hears the name that stands above all other names. At Marah, at Rephidim, at the winepress in Ophrah — each name emerges from a specific crisis, a single encounter where God shows up and His people discover something about who He is that they did not know before.

Psalm 23 is different.

This is not a crisis. There is no enemy at the gate, no bitter water, no impossible command. This is a man sitting down — after the battles, after the valleys, after the long nights on the hillside — and declaring what he knows to be true about the God who has walked with him. This is not revelation in the moment of need. This is the settled confidence of a man who has been through enough to know his Shepherd's character.

And the man who writes it is not guessing about shepherds.

* * *

The Man Who Knew

David was a shepherd before he was a king. Not as a metaphor. Not as a title. He spent years in the fields outside Bethlehem, tending his father's sheep — alone, exposed to weather and predators, responsible for creatures who could not protect themselves.

When David stood before Saul and volunteered to fight Goliath, Saul told him he was not qualified. David's answer reveals how seriously he took the work:

This is not poetry. This is a young man describing actual encounters with predators — hand-to-hand, in the field, with no army behind him. He went after the lion. He pulled the lamb from its mouth. He killed the bear. Because the sheep were his responsibility, and a shepherd does not abandon his flock.

When David writes "The Lord is my shepherd," he is not borrowing someone else's metaphor. He is using the language of his own life — the work he did, the tools he carried, the battles he

fought alone in the dark — and he is saying: what I was to those sheep, God is to me.

That makes every line of this Psalm specific. David knows what a shepherd does, because he has done it.

* * *

The Psalm

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

— Psalm 23:1

Five words that contain every name we have studied.

"I shall not want" does not mean "I will never have needs." It means "I will not lack." The shepherd does not promise the absence of need — he promises the presence of provision. The sheep still get hungry. They still get thirsty. They still face terrain they cannot navigate alone. But the shepherd is there, and because the shepherd is there, the sheep lack nothing essential.

Look at what God has already revealed about Himself in this book. Jireh — the Lord who provides. Rapha — the Lord who heals. Nissi — the Lord who fights. Shalom — the Lord who speaks peace. Every one of those names answers a specific need. And David gathers them all into a single declaration: the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. The shepherd provides, heals, fights, and gives peace. "I shall not want" is the summary.

But notice the word at the center of the verse. Not "the Lord is *a* shepherd." Not "the Lord is *the* shepherd." *My* shepherd. This is personal. David is not making a theological statement about

God's nature in general. He is making a claim about his own experience. The God of the universe — the God who created the heavens, who parted the sea, who spoke from the fire — that God is *mine*. He is *my* shepherd. And I am one of His sheep.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

— Psalm 23:2–3

A shepherd who knows his work does not simply point sheep in the right direction and hope they figure it out. He makes them lie down — because sheep, left to themselves, will keep grazing past exhaustion. They will not rest unless they feel safe, and they do not feel safe unless the shepherd is near. He does not suggest rest. He makes it happen.

He leads beside quiet waters — not rushing streams. Sheep will not drink from fast-moving water. They are afraid of it. A shepherd who knows his flock leads them to water they can actually drink from. The provision is shaped to what the sheep can receive.

He restores my soul. The Hebrew here carries the sense of bringing back — turning around a sheep that has wandered, reviving one that has collapsed. A good shepherd does not discard the sheep that strays or the one that falls. He goes after it. He brings it back. He restores what was lost or broken.

He guides in the paths of righteousness *for His name's sake*. Not for the sheep's merit. Not because the sheep have earned the right path. For His name's sake — because the shepherd's

reputation is tied to the condition of his flock. A shepherd whose sheep are scattered, starving, and lost is not a good shepherd. God guides us in right paths because His name — His character, His faithfulness — is at stake.

And then the Psalm turns. And when it turns, the language turns with it.

* * *

The Valley

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

— Psalm 23:4

Read the first three verses again and notice the pronouns. "He makes me lie down." "He leads me." "He restores my soul." "He guides me." David is speaking *about* God. Third person. He is describing his shepherd to someone else.

But here — in the valley of the shadow of death — the pronouns change. "You are with me." "Your rod and Your staff." No longer "He." Now "You."

When it gets darkest, the language gets most intimate. David is no longer describing his shepherd. He is talking *to* him. The valley does not push the shepherd further away. It brings him closer. Or rather — it reveals how close he has been all along. In the green pastures, David could talk about God. In the valley, he talks to Him.

"I fear no evil." Not because there is no evil. The valley is real. The shadow is real. But the fear is gone — not because the threat has been removed, but because the shepherd is present. "For You are with me." That is the reason. Not the rod and staff by themselves — though they matter. The reason David does not fear is the presence of the one who carries them.

"Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." David knows these tools. He carried them. The rod is a weapon — a heavy club used to fight off predators. The staff is a long hook used to guide sheep, pull them out of crevices, and draw them back when they wander. One protects. The other corrects and retrieves. Both are acts of love. A shepherd who does not use the rod leaves his sheep to the predators. A shepherd who does not use the staff leaves them to their own wandering. David finds comfort in both — in the God who fights for him and in the God who pulls him back when he strays.

The valley of the shadow of death is one of the most deeply personal passages in all of Scripture. It has been read beside hospital beds, at funerals, in foxholes, in dark nights of the soul that had no name. We will not attempt to contain it here — it carries more weight than any single chapter in any single book can hold. But this much is certain from the text: David does not say "I walked through the valley" — past tense, looking back. And he does not say "if I walk through the valley" — hypothetical, uncertain. He says "even though I walk" — present, real, happening now. And in the middle of it: You are with me.

That is what a shepherd does. He does not airlift the sheep over the valley. He walks through it with them.

* * *

The Table

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows.

— Psalm 23:5

The enemies do not disappear.

This is consistent with everything we have seen. At Rephidim, the enemy was not removed — he was fought. At the winepress, the Midianites were still in the land when God spoke peace to Gideon. And here, the table is not set in a safe room far from danger. It is set *in the presence of my enemies*. They are watching. They are still there. And the shepherd feeds His sheep anyway.

There is something almost defiant about this image. The enemies are present — close enough to see. And God does not rush the meal. He prepares a table. He anoints David's head with oil — a gesture of honor and abundance. The cup does not merely fill. It overflows. This is not survival rations in a foxhole. This is abundance, dignity, and provision in full view of the threat.

The shepherd does not wait until every enemy has been destroyed before He provides. He provides now — in the middle of the battle, in the presence of the opposition, while the threat still exists. And the provision is not meager. It overflows.

* * *

The Pursuit

Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

— Psalm 23:6

The Hebrew word translated "follow" is *radaph*. It appears over a hundred times in the Old Testament, and in the vast majority of those uses, it does not mean "follow" in the casual sense of walking behind someone. It means "pursue" — to chase, to run after, to hunt down. It is the word used when enemies pursue someone in battle. When Pharaoh pursued Israel to the Red Sea (Exodus 14:8), the word is *radaph*. When Laban pursued Jacob (Genesis 31:23), the word is *radaph*.

David uses it here — but what is pursuing him is not an enemy. It is goodness and lovingkindness. David says they will *chase him down* all the days of his life. God's goodness is not passive. It is not waiting somewhere for David to find it. It is coming after him — relentlessly, aggressively, with the same tenacity that an enemy would pursue.

Every day. All the days of his life. Goodness and lovingkindness on his heels, running him down, refusing to let him outrun them.

And the final line settles everything: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." The shepherd leads. The sheep follows. And the journey ends not in another wilderness, not in another valley, but in the house of the Lord — permanently, finally, home.

The Name

The Hebrew is *Yahweh Rohi* — the Lord is my shepherd. The verb *ra'ab* means to tend, to pasture, to shepherd — to take full responsibility for the care of living things that cannot care for themselves.

This name carries all the others within it. A shepherd provides — that is Jireh. A shepherd heals — that is Rapha. A shepherd fights — that is Nissi and the rod. A shepherd gives peace — that is Shalom and the quiet waters. A shepherd sees — that is El Roi, the God who knows where every sheep is, even the one that has wandered.

But Rohi adds something that no other name has said so directly. The other names reveal what God does. Rohi reveals how He does it: personally, intimately, and without leaving. The shepherd does not manage from a distance. He does not delegate the valley. He does not send a substitute for the dark nights. He walks with the sheep, through the pastures and through the shadow, and he stays.

And the word that makes it personal is the smallest word in the verse: *my*. Not "the Lord is a shepherd." Not "the Lord is Israel's shepherd." *My* shepherd. The claim of Psalm 23 is that the God of the universe — Elohim, who created everything; Yahweh, the self-existent one; El Shaddai, the God for whom nothing is impossible — that God is personally, individually, specifically mine. He knows me. He leads me. He restores me. He walks with me.

Every sheep in the flock can say it. And every sheep who says it is right.

* * *

The Good Shepherd

Centuries after David, Jesus stood in the temple and claimed this name for Himself:

"I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

— John 10:11

David fought a lion and a bear for his father's sheep. He risked his life. But Jesus says something David never could: the good shepherd *lays down* His life. Not risks it. Gives it. Voluntarily, deliberately, completely.

And then He goes further:

"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."

— John 10:14–15

The relationship between the shepherd and the sheep is compared to the relationship between the Father and the Son. That is as intimate as language can reach. The good shepherd does not tend a faceless flock. He knows His own. They know Him. And the knowing is as deep as the bond within God Himself.

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."

— John 10:27–28

No one will snatch them. The rod David carried to fight off predators is nothing compared to the hand of the shepherd who says: no one takes my sheep from me. Not death. Not the enemy. Not the valley. No one.

This is the name Rohi fulfilled. What David experienced as shepherd and as sheep, what he wrote in the most beloved poem in Scripture, finds its ultimate expression in the one who said "I am the good shepherd" — and then proved it at the cross.

* * *

The Shadow

Psalm 23 is not hard to apply. It is the most applied chapter in the Bible. It has been whispered in every kind of darkness human beings experience. But within the framework of this book, one thing is worth saying plainly.

Every name we have studied so far has met a specific crisis. Provision on the mountain. Healing at the bitter water. A banner in the battle. Peace in the winepress. Each name addresses a particular moment, a particular need.

Rohi does not address a moment. Rohi addresses *all* of it. The shepherd is not a crisis responder who shows up when things go wrong and disappears when they stabilize. The shepherd is

present in the green pastures and in the valley. At the quiet waters and at the table surrounded by enemies. In the morning and through the night. "All the days of my life."

The Christian life is not a series of disconnected crises with God appearing at each one like a specialist called in for a consultation. The Christian life is a flock and a shepherd. He leads. You follow. And the relationship that sustains you through the valley is the same relationship that led you to the green pastures — the same shepherd, the same rod and staff, the same voice.

If you have ever felt that God is only present in the emergencies — that He shows up for the Red Sea moments but is absent in the ordinary — Psalm 23 corrects that. The shepherd does not disappear between crises. He is leading in the green pastures too. He is restoring beside the quiet waters. He is guiding in paths of righteousness when nothing dramatic is happening, when the day is ordinary, when no enemy is in sight. The shepherd is always shepherding.

And when the valley comes — and it will come — you will not be walking into it alone. The shepherd who was with you in the pasture will be with you in the shadow. The pronouns will shift from "He" to "You." And the thing you will know, if you have walked with Him long enough to know His voice, is the thing David knew: I fear no evil. For You are with me.

* * *

Praying His Name

Psalm 23 has been prayed more than it has been studied. And that is not wrong. Some truths are meant to be spoken to God before they are analyzed.

When you pray to Jehovah Rohi, you are praying from the position of a sheep — which is to say, from the position of dependence. Sheep are not strong. They are not fast. They are not clever. They cannot defend themselves, find their own water in unfamiliar terrain, or navigate a valley without getting lost. Everything the sheep has, the shepherd provides. Everything the sheep needs, the shepherd knows before the sheep does.

That is a hard position for most of us. We prefer to be capable, independent, in control of our own direction. The idea that we are sheep — dependent, prone to wander, unable to protect ourselves — does not flatter us. But David, a warrior and a king, was not ashamed of the comparison. He did not say "the Lord is my commanding officer" or "the Lord is my advisor." He said *shepherd*. And he meant: I cannot do this alone. I need to be led. I need to be fed. I need to be brought back when I wander. And I need someone who will walk through the valley with me when the shadow falls.

Pray to Jehovah Rohi when you do not know where to go. He leads. Pray when you are exhausted and cannot stop running. He makes you lie down. Pray when your soul is depleted and you feel like a version of yourself that you do not recognize. He restores. Pray when the valley is dark and the shadow is real and the fear is pressing in from every side. He is with you — not ahead

of you where you cannot reach Him, not behind you where He cannot see what is coming. With you. Rod in one hand, staff in the other, walking through it at your pace.

And when you come out the other side of the valley — and you will — the goodness and lovingkindness that have been pursuing you every step of the way will still be there. Chasing you down. Relentless. Running you to ground with a love you cannot outrun.

* * *

For Further Study

Psalm 23:1–6 — The complete Psalm, for slow and repeated reading

1 Samuel 17:34–36 — David's experience as a shepherd, fighting the lion and the bear

Psalm 100:3 — "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture"

Isaiah 40:11 — "Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom"

Ezekiel 34:11–16 — God Himself declares He will search for His sheep, rescue them, and tend them

John 10:1–18 — Jesus as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep

John 10:27–30 — "My sheep hear My voice ... and no one will snatch them out of My hand"

Hebrews 13:20–21 — "The God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep"

1 Peter 2:25 — "You were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls"

1 Peter 5:4 — "When the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory"

Related name:

Jehovah Raah — an alternate transliteration of the same Hebrew root (*ra'ah*) behind Rohi, sometimes rendered separately to highlight the verb form: the Lord who shepherds, the Lord who tends. The meaning is identical — the God who takes personal responsibility for His flock — but the alternate form appears in some study tools and is worth recognizing as the same name.

For readers who have walked through deep grief or loss, the companion volume *Through the Valley* (NobleMind Press) explores the landscape of Psalm 23:4 at length — the shadow, the presence, and the shepherd who walks with us through the darkest ground we will ever cross.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

When you read "The Lord is my shepherd" — do you believe the word *my*? Not as theology. As experience. Do you know His voice? And when did you last hear it?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Read Psalm 23 aloud this week — slowly, once a day, for seven days. Not to study it. Not to analyze it. Just to hear it. Let the words settle. By the seventh day, you may find that you are not reading it anymore. You are praying it. And the shepherd is listening.

* * *

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

— Psalm 23:1

Jehovah Tsidkenu — The Lord Our Righteousness

Part V: The Life of Prayer

“Both prophet and priest are polluted; even in My house I have found their wickedness,” declares the Lord.”

— Jeremiah 23:11

The kingdom is falling apart.

It has been a long time coming. Since the days of Solomon, when the kingdom split in two, the story of Israel has been a story of slow decline. The northern kingdom fell to Assyria centuries before Jeremiah was born. Now the southern kingdom — Judah, the tribe that carried the line of David, the tribe through which God’s promises were supposed to reach the world — is rotting from the inside.

The kings are corrupt. Not merely weak or misguided — corrupt. Jeremiah’s ministry spans the reigns of Judah’s final kings, and what he sees from the inside is devastating. The men sitting on David’s throne are nothing like the man who wrote Psalm 23. They exploit the people, ignore the covenant, chase after other gods, and fill Jerusalem with injustice. The throne that was supposed to represent God’s rule over His people has become a monument to human failure.

And the prophets are no better:

"Among the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen a horrible thing: the committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; and they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one has turned back from his wickedness."

— Jeremiah 23:14

The prophets — the men who are supposed to speak God's word to the people — are lying. They are telling the people what they want to hear. "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14). They claim to speak for God, but God says He did not send them (Jeremiah 23:21). The very office that exists to hold the nation accountable has been corrupted.

This is the context. The kings have failed. The prophets have failed. The priesthood is polluted. The covenant has been broken — not by God, but by His people. And the consequence is coming: Babylon is rising in the east, and within Jeremiah's lifetime, Jerusalem will fall, the temple will be destroyed, and the people will be carried into exile.

Everything that defined Israel as a nation — the land, the city, the throne, the temple — is about to be stripped away. The promises God made to Abraham seem to be unraveling. The nation exists, but barely. The land is about to be lost. And the blessing to all nations? It is hard to see how a nation in exile, scattered and humiliated, is going to bless anyone.

Into this darkness, God speaks.

* * *

The Righteous Branch

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.'"

— Jeremiah 23:5–6

Read this against the backdrop of what Jeremiah has been describing, and the weight of every word becomes clear.

The kings have been unrighteous. God will raise up a *righteous* Branch. The kings have acted foolishly. This King will act *wisely*. The kings have perverted justice. This King will do *justice and righteousness in the land*. The current rulers are the reason Judah is falling. Under this King, Judah will be *saved* and Israel will dwell *securely*.

Everything the current leadership has failed to be, this coming King will be. He is not a reform of the existing system. He is a replacement — raised up by God Himself, not appointed by human politics or inherited by dynastic succession. God says "I will raise up." This King comes from God's hand.

And His name tells you everything you need to know about Him: "The Lord our righteousness."

* * *

A Name That Cuts

There is a detail in this text that the original audience would not have missed.

The king on the throne of Judah during the final years before the exile was Zedekiah. His name in Hebrew — *Tsidqiyahu* — means "The Lord is my righteousness." It is almost identical to the name God gives the coming King: *Yahweh Tsidqenu* — "The Lord *our* righteousness."

The irony is sharp enough to draw blood. Zedekiah — the king whose name claims the Lord's righteousness — is one of the most faithless kings in Judah's history. He ignores Jeremiah's warnings. He breaks his oath to Nebuchadnezzar. He does evil in the sight of the Lord (2 Kings 24:19). His name says one thing. His life says the opposite. He carries the title "The Lord is my righteousness" while presiding over the destruction of everything God built.

And God says: a King is coming whose name will be "The Lord *our* righteousness" — and unlike Zedekiah, the name will be true. Not a title claimed and contradicted. A reality lived and given.

The shift from *my* to *our* matters. Zedekiah's name was personal — "The Lord is *my* righteousness" — a claim about himself that he could not sustain. The promised King's name is communal — "The Lord *our* righteousness" — a gift to His people. This King does not claim righteousness for Himself. He *becomes* righteousness for the people He rules. His righteousness is not kept. It is given.

* * *

The Branch

The word Jeremiah uses — *tsemach*, Branch — is not a random metaphor. It appears across the prophets as a specific title for the coming King.

Isaiah describes a shoot coming up from the stump of Jesse — David's father — with the Spirit of the Lord resting on Him (Isaiah 11:1–2). A stump is what remains after a tree has been cut down. The monarchy will be cut down. The line of David will appear to be finished. But from the stump, a shoot will grow. Life from what looked like death.

Zechariah uses the same title: "Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord" (Zechariah 6:12). The Branch builds what was destroyed.

The promise thread runs straight through this. God promised Abraham descendants, a land, and a blessing to all nations. By Jeremiah's day, the descendants are about to be exiled, the land is about to be conquered, and the blessing seems impossible. The tree has been cut down. But God says: a Branch is coming. The promises have not failed. The stump is not dead. What looks like the end is actually the setup for something that will outlast every kingdom that came before it.

* * *

The Name

The Hebrew is *Yahweh Tsidkenu* — the Lord our righteousness.

Every name we have studied so far has revealed something God does. He sees. He provides. He heals. He fights. He speaks peace. He shepherds. Those are actions — things God does for His people in moments of need.

Tsidkenu is different. This name does not describe an action. It describes something God *is* — and something He *gives*. Righteousness is not just what this King does. It is who He is. And His righteousness does not stay with Him. It becomes *ours*.

This is the question that every other name in this book has been quietly raising. If God is holy — and every name has revealed that He is — how do we stand before Him? El Roi sees everything, including what we would rather keep hidden. Yahweh is the self-existent, perfectly holy God. El Shaddai's first command to Abraham was "walk before Me and be blameless" — and no one has. The holiness of God is not an abstraction. It is the reality that Gideon confronted at the winepress: to stand before the holy God should mean death.

Shalom answered the terror: "Peace to you. Do not fear; you shall not die." But Shalom did not explain *how*. It spoke peace without explaining the basis for it. Tsidkenu provides the basis. We can stand before the holy God — not because we have become righteous on our own, but because His righteousness has been given to us.

The kings of Judah proved that human righteousness is not enough. Zedekiah carried the right name and lived the wrong life. The best human king — David himself — committed adultery and murder. The throne that was supposed to represent God's justice became a seat of corruption. Every human attempt to produce righteousness sufficient to stand before God has ended the same way: failure.

And God's answer is not to demand more effort. His answer is to provide what we cannot produce. A King whose name is "The Lord our righteousness." Not a King who calls His people to be righteous enough. A King who *becomes* their righteousness.

* * *

The Exchange

Centuries after Jeremiah, Paul writes to the Christians in Corinth and describes what this looks like at the cross:

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

— 2 Corinthians 5:21

This is Tsidkenu fulfilled. The one who knew no sin — the righteous Branch, the King whose name is "The Lord our righteousness" — was made sin. And those who were not righteous became the righteousness of God in Him.

This is not commentary. This is Scripture interpreting Scripture. What Jeremiah promised, Paul explains. The coming King does not merely model righteousness for us to imitate. He

does not simply teach us how to be righteous. He takes our sin and gives us His righteousness. An exchange. His for ours.

Paul says it again to the Romans:

But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.

— Romans 3:21–22

The righteousness of God — witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. Jeremiah was one of those prophets. What he saw in the distance — a righteous King whose name would be "The Lord our righteousness" — Paul sees up close. The righteousness of God, given through faith in Jesus Christ, for all who believe.

This is how we stand before a holy God. Not in our own righteousness, which every king and every prophet and every priest in Israel's history proved to be insufficient. In His. Given freely. Received by faith.

* * *

The Shadow

Every name in this book has met a human need. Provision when the cupboard was bare. Healing when the water was bitter. A banner when the enemy attacked. Peace when the holiness of God was terrifying. A shepherd through every valley.

But underneath all of those needs is a deeper one — the one most people do not say out loud. It is the awareness, sometimes sharp and sometimes buried, that we are not good enough. Not good enough for the calling. Not good enough for the relationship. Not good enough for God.

And the awareness is accurate. That is what makes it so heavy. It is not false guilt or unnecessary shame. The kings of Judah were not good enough — and they sat on the throne of God's chosen nation. David was not good enough — and he was the man after God's own heart. If they could not sustain their own righteousness, we will not sustain ours. Every honest person knows this. The résumé has gaps. The record has stains. The heart has corners we would rather not examine.

And Tsidkenu does not argue with any of that. It does not say "you are better than you think." It does not say "your failures are not as bad as they seem." It says something far more radical: the righteousness you need is not yours. It is His. And He gives it.

This is the name for every person who has ever stood at the door of faith and wondered whether they were qualified to enter. Every person who has looked at their track record and concluded that God could not possibly want them. Every person who has tried to earn their way into right standing and found that the harder they try, the more clearly they see their own failure.

Tsidkenu says: stop. The righteousness you need is not something you produce. It is something you receive. The King whose name is "The Lord our righteousness" did not come to inspect your righteousness and see if it passed. He came to give you His.

That is why Paul can write with such confidence: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1). The peace of Shalom. The righteousness of Tsidkenu. Both given, not earned. Both received through the one whose name carries every promise.

* * *

Praying His Name

There are moments when you come to God and you know — clearly, painfully — that you do not deserve to be there.

Not because God has told you that. But because you have looked honestly at yourself, and the gap between who you are and who you should be is wide enough to swallow you. You know what you have done. You know what you have failed to do. You know the thoughts you carry that no one else sees. And the idea of approaching a holy God with that record feels not just intimidating but absurd.

Pray to Jehovah Tsidkenu.

Not because prayer earns you standing. Not because the right words make you acceptable. But because the God you are praying to has already done the thing you cannot do. He has provided the righteousness you do not have. The Branch Jeremiah promised has come. The exchange Paul described has happened. And when you come to God in the name of Jesus Christ, you come clothed not in your own record but in His.

When you pray to Jehovah Tsidkenu, you are not pretending your failures do not exist. You are acknowledging that they do —

and that they have been covered. Not overlooked. Not excused. Covered — by the righteousness of the one whose name means "The Lord our righteousness." The same holiness that should have destroyed Gideon, that kept Moses from seeing God's face, that hung a veil in the temple between God and man — that holiness has been satisfied. Not by your effort. By His.

You are qualified to pray. Not because of who you are. Because of whose righteousness you wear. And the God who gave it to you is not waiting for you to earn it. He is waiting for you to receive it — and to come.

* * *

For Further Study

Jeremiah 23:1–8 — The full context: corrupt shepherds, the righteous Branch, the promise of restoration

Jeremiah 33:14–16 — The promise repeated, with Jerusalem itself called "The Lord is our righteousness"

Isaiah 11:1–5 — The shoot from the stump of Jesse, with the Spirit of the Lord resting on Him

Isaiah 53:11 — "The Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many"

Zechariah 3:8 — "I am going to bring in My servant the Branch"

Zechariah 6:12–13 — "A man whose name is Branch ... He will build the temple of the Lord"

Romans 3:21–26 — The righteousness of God manifested apart from the Law, through faith in Christ

Romans 5:1 — "Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God"

Romans 5:17 — "Those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ"

2 Corinthians 5:21 — "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him"

Philippians 3:8-9 — Paul counts everything as loss "that I may gain Christ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own"

Related name:

Attiq Yomin — Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9). Daniel, Jeremiah's near-contemporary, saw a vision of the throne room of God — "the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames." And to the Ancient of Days comes "one like a Son of Man," who is given dominion, glory, and a kingdom that will not be destroyed (Daniel 7:13-14). Jeremiah saw the righteous Branch from the line of David. Daniel saw the Son of Man approaching the eternal throne. Both are looking at the same King — the one whose righteousness is not temporary, because the God who gives it is eternal. The Ancient of Days does not change, and the righteousness He grants does not expire.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

If you knew — truly believed — that your standing before God depended entirely on His righteousness and not on yours, what burden would you set down today?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21 slowly, three times. Each time, pause on the word "become." You do not *try* to become the righteousness of God. You do not *earn* it. You *become* it — in Him. Let that word do its work.

* * *

"This is His name by which He will be called, 'The Lord our righteousness.'"

— Jeremiah 23:6

Jehovah Shammah — The Lord Is There

Part V: The Life of Prayer

“The hand of the Lord was upon me, and He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; and it was full of bones. He caused me to pass among them round about, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley; and lo, they were very dry.”

— Ezekiel 37:1–2

The glory is leaving.

Ezekiel sees it happen. He does not look away, and God does not spare him the sight. In a vision, the prophet is taken to Jerusalem — to the temple, the place where God’s presence has dwelt since Solomon dedicated it, the place where the high priest enters once a year behind the veil, the place where the God of Israel promised to put His name.

And the presence is departing.

It does not happen all at once. That is what makes it so devastating. The glory of the Lord rises from above the cherubim, moves to the threshold of the temple, pauses — then moves to the entrance of the east gate. Then it rises from the city entirely and stands over the mountain east of Jerusalem (Ezekiel 10:4, 18;

11:22–23). Stage by stage, as if giving the city every chance to turn back, the presence of God withdraws from the place where He has dwelt among His people.

The temple is still standing when the glory leaves. The walls are intact. The altar is in place. The furnishings remain. But the building is now an empty shell — a house with no one home. The structure means nothing without the presence. And the presence is gone.

This is not Babylon's doing. Babylon will come later with siege ramps and fire and chains. But the real devastation has already happened before a single Babylonian soldier touches the wall. God has left the building.

* * *

The Exile Behind the Exile

Ezekiel is writing during the same period as Jeremiah. The context we walked through in the previous chapter — corrupt kings, lying prophets, a nation rotting from the inside — is the same world Ezekiel inhabits. But Ezekiel shows us something Jeremiah did not. Jeremiah showed us the darkness of the leadership and the promise of a righteous Branch. Ezekiel shows us what the sin cost at the deepest level: the loss of God's presence.

This is the exile behind the exile. The Babylonian captivity — the physical displacement of God's people from the land He promised them — is catastrophic. But it is a symptom. The cause is this: the people drove God's presence out of His own house. The idols they brought into the temple, the abominations they

practiced in the courts of the Lord, the polluted worship they offered where holy worship was supposed to happen — all of it made the dwelling place of God uninhabitable for God Himself.

Ezekiel sees it. The elders of Israel burning incense to images on the walls of the temple chambers, saying, "The Lord does not see us; the Lord has forsaken the land" (Ezekiel 8:12). Women weeping for Tammuz at the gate of the Lord's house (Ezekiel 8:14). Men with their backs to the temple, bowing toward the sun (Ezekiel 8:16). The very place built for the worship of the God of Israel has been turned into a shrine for everything that is not God.

And so the glory leaves. Not because God is weak. Not because He has been driven out. Because holiness and unrepentant sin cannot occupy the same space. The people chose, and God honored their choice — by withdrawing from the place they had made unholy.

The temple still stands. But it is just a building now.

* * *

Can These Bones Live?

If the story ended there, there would be nothing left to say.

But Ezekiel is not finished. God is not finished. The prophet who watched the glory depart is the same prophet who is taken to a valley full of dry bones.

Very many. Very dry. Not recently dead — long dead. Beyond recovery by any human measure. This is not a hospital scene where someone might still be resuscitated. This is an open graveyard of bleached bones in a desert valley. Whatever life these

bones once had is so far gone that the question God asks next sounds almost absurd:

He said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

— Ezekiel 37:3

It is a real question. Not rhetorical. God is asking Ezekiel to look at the evidence — the dryness, the death, the sheer impossibility of what he is seeing — and answer honestly. And Ezekiel's response is one of the most faithful lines in all of Scripture:

And I answered, "O Lord God, You know."

— Ezekiel 37:3

He does not say yes. He does not say no. He says: I cannot see how. But You know. It is the answer of a man who has learned that what his eyes tell him is not the final word. The God who created from nothing, who gave a son to a ninety-year-old woman, who split the sea and made bitter water sweet — that God is asking the question. And Ezekiel, rather than limiting God to what seems possible, puts the answer where it belongs: in the hands of the One who asked.

God tells him to prophesy. He does. And the bones come together — bone to bone, sinew and flesh covering them, breath entering them, and they stand on their feet, an exceedingly great army (Ezekiel 37:7–10).

God explains:

"Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up and our hope has perished. We are completely cut off.' Therefore prophesy and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I will open your graves and cause you to come up out of your graves, My people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel.'"

— Ezekiel 37:11–12

The nation is not finished. The exile is not the end of the story. The bones will live. The people will be brought back. And then God says something that connects everything:

"I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land."

— Ezekiel 37:14

My Spirit within you. Your own land. The presence that departed from the temple will not merely return to a building. It will dwell within the people themselves.

* * *

The Glory Returns

The final chapters of Ezekiel — chapters 40 through 48 — contain a detailed vision of a new temple, a new city, a new ordering of the land. The measurements are precise. The arrangements are specific. Faithful students have long discussed what this vision represents, and we will not attempt to settle that

discussion here. What matters for our purposes is what Ezekiel sees happen inside the vision — because it undoes the devastation of chapter 10.

And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was coming from the way of the east. And His voice was like the sound of many waters; and the earth shone with His glory.

— Ezekiel 43:2

From the east. The glory departed toward the east (Ezekiel 11:23). Now it returns from the east. The same direction. The same glory. The God who left is coming back.

And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate facing toward the east. And the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house.

— Ezekiel 43:4–5

The glory fills the house. The presence that departed has returned. The empty shell is no longer empty.

And then God speaks:

He said to me, "Son of man, this is the place of My throne and the place of the soles of My feet, where I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever."

— Ezekiel 43:7

Forever. Not temporarily. Not conditionally. Forever. The God who left because holiness and unrepentant sin could not coexist says: I am coming back, and this time I will stay.

The Name

The vision continues through five more chapters of detail. And then it ends. The last verse of the last chapter of the book of Ezekiel — after forty-eight chapters of judgment, exile, lamentation, dry bones, restoration, and the return of glory — is this:

The city shall be 18,000 cubits round about; and the name of the city from that day shall be, "The Lord is there."

— Ezekiel 48:35

The Hebrew is *Yahweh Shammah*. The Lord is there.

Not "the Lord was there." Not "the Lord will be there someday." *The Lord is there*. Present tense. Settled. Final.

After every name we have studied in this book — names that describe what God does, what He provides, what He heals, how He fights, what He gives — this last Old Testament name does not describe an action at all. It simply states a location. He is *there*. All the doing, all the providing, all the healing and fighting and shepherding and giving of righteousness — all of it flows from this one reality: He is present. He is there.

And the simplicity of the name is the point. It is not a compound theological statement. It is not a description of an attribute. It is two words: *Yahweh Shammah*. The Lord — there. As if after everything the book has put the reader through — the idolatry, the departure, the exile, the death, the bones, the slow

rebuilding — the simplest possible statement is the one that carries the most weight. He is there.

The name of the city. Not the name of the temple, or the altar, or the throne. The city. The whole place where God's people dwell. The presence is not confined to a room behind a veil. It defines the entire city. Wherever the people are, He is there.

* * *

The Promise Thread

By Ezekiel's day, every one of the promises God made to Abraham appears to be lost.

The nation — scattered. The great nation that God promised to make from one man and one barren wife has been conquered, deported, and dispersed among the nations. The identity that began with a name change in Genesis 17 seems to be dissolving in the empire of Babylon.

The land — conquered. The land God promised to Abraham's descendants, the land that drove the entire journey from Egypt through the wilderness, the land Joshua led them into, the land David ruled from — it belongs to Babylon now. The temple is rubble. The walls are broken. The city of David is a ruin.

The blessing to all nations — impossible. How does a scattered, exiled, humiliated people bless anyone? The third promise, the one that reaches forward to us, seems as dead as the bones in Ezekiel's valley.

And yet.

The bones live. The glory returns. The city gets a new name. And that name says: the Lord is there.

The promises have not failed. They have never failed. What looks like the end — what looked like the end when Abraham was childless at ninety-nine, what looked like the end when Isaac was on the altar, what looked like the end when Israel was enslaved in Egypt, what looked like the end when the water was bitter, when the enemy attacked, when the kings were corrupt and the prophets were liars — has never been the end. Every time the story seemed finished, God showed up. And here, at what may be the lowest point of the entire Old Testament, the final word is not death, not exile, not judgment.

The final word is: *He is there.*

* * *

The Shadow

There is an exile that has nothing to do with Babylon.

It is the distance you feel when you have wandered far from where you know you should be. Not because someone carried you away in chains, but because you walked away on your own. Step by step, choice by choice, until one day you look around and realize you are a long way from home. The presence you once felt — in prayer, in worship, in the quiet moments when you knew God was near — has gone silent. And you are not sure whether He left or you did.

The bones are dry. The temple is empty. And the question Ezekiel heard in the valley is the question that echoes in every spiritual exile: *can these bones live?*

The person in this place does not need to be told that God provides. They know that — but it feels like something that happens to other people now. They do not need to hear that God is their shepherd. They know — but they feel like a sheep that wandered so far from the flock that the shepherd has stopped looking. They do not need a theological argument. They need to know one thing: is He still there?

Shammah answers.

He is there. Not "He will be there when you get your life together." Not "He was there before you made your choices." He is there — in the exile, in the distance, in the silence. The God whose glory departed from a temple full of idols is the same God who said "I will dwell among the sons of Israel forever." The departure was real. But it was not the last word. The last word — the very last word of Ezekiel's prophecy — is presence.

You have not gone too far. You have not exhausted His willingness to be found. The bones in the valley were very many and very dry, and God brought them to life. The glory that departed came back — from the same direction it left, as if it had been waiting just over the horizon for the moment it could return.

Whatever distance you feel right now, Shammah speaks into it. Not with an explanation. Not with a condition. With a location: the Lord is *there*.

* * *

Praying His Name

There are seasons when prayer feels like talking to an empty room.

You know the words. You know the theology. You know that God promises to hear. But the room feels empty, and the silence feels permanent, and the hardest thing is not the sin or the failure — it is the suspicion that the presence has departed and may not come back. Not because God is cruel. Because you know what you brought into the temple.

Pray to Jehovah Shammah.

Not because the feeling will change immediately. Not because the right words will flip a switch and restore what took years to erode. But because the name is a fact, not a feeling. The Lord is there. He was there when the glory filled Solomon's temple, and He was there when the idols filled the chambers, and He was there when the bones were dry in the valley, and He is there now — in whatever exile you are sitting in.

Every name you have learned in this book lives inside this one. If the Lord is there, then El Roi is seeing you right now. If the Lord is there, then Jireh is providing. If the Lord is there, then Rapha is healing, Nissi is fighting, Shalom is speaking peace, Rohi is shepherding, and Tsidkenu is clothing you in a righteousness that is not your own.

The presence is the foundation underneath all of it. Without presence, the names are just words. With it, they are the character of the God who is in the room with you — right now, right where

you are, no matter how far you have wandered or how long the silence has lasted.

He is there. Pray like it.

* * *

For Further Study

Ezekiel 8:1–18 — The abominations in the temple that precipitated God's departure

Ezekiel 10:1–22 — The glory of the Lord departing from the temple

Ezekiel 11:22–25 — The glory departing from the city, standing over the mountain to the east

Ezekiel 37:1–14 — The valley of dry bones: death, breath, resurrection, and the promise of God's Spirit within

Ezekiel 43:1–7 — The glory of the Lord returning from the east and filling the house

Ezekiel 48:30–35 — The gates of the city and its name: "The Lord is there"

Psalm 139:7–12 — "Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence?"

Revelation 21:3 — "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them"

Related name:

Abba — Father (Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). Every name in this book has revealed something about God's character — His power, His sight, His provision, His righteousness, His presence. But the name Jesus used in His most

intimate moment of prayer was not a title of majesty. It was Abba — Father. Paul tells us that every Christian has received the Spirit by which we cry out the same word: "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). The God who is there is not a distant presence filling a cosmic temple. He is a Father — and the Spirit He has placed within us is the proof that the relationship is real, not formal. The presence Ezekiel saw returning from the east now dwells within every believer. The God who is there is as close as the cry of a child to a Father who has never left the room.

* * *

One Question to Sit With

If the last word of Ezekiel's prophecy — after forty-eight chapters of judgment, exile, and restoration — is not judgment but presence, what does that tell you about what matters most to God?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Find a quiet place. Sit in the silence — not to fill it, but to listen. Before you say a word, let the name settle: *The Lord is there*. He is there, in the silence, in the room, in the exile. Sit with that for five minutes before you say anything. Let His presence be the first word, not yours.

* * *

"The name of the city from that day shall be, 'The Lord is there.'"

— Ezekiel 48:35

Immanuel — God With Us

Part V: The Life of Prayer

“Ask a sign for yourself from the Lord your God; make it deep as Sheol or high as heaven.”

— Isaiah 7:11

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.

That is how the writer of Hebrews opens his letter (Hebrews 1:1–2). And if you have walked through this book from the beginning, you know exactly what those “many portions and many ways” looked like.

He spoke through creation — Elohim, the God who was already there before anything existed. He spoke through a well in the wilderness to a woman no one else saw — El Roi. He spoke through an impossible promise to a man too old to believe it — El Shaddai. He spoke through a ram caught in a thicket on the mountain where a father held a knife — Jehovah Jireh. He spoke through a bush that burned without burning up — Yahweh, I AM. He spoke through a tree thrown into bitter water — Jehovah Rapha. Through raised hands on a hilltop while the battle raged below — Jehovah Nissi. Through a word of peace to a man hiding

in a winepress — Jehovah Shalom. Through a shepherd's psalm written by a man who knew what it meant to carry a lamb — Jehovah Rohi. Through a promise of righteousness spoken into the darkness of a failing kingdom — Jehovah Tsidkenu. Through the last line of a prophecy that ended not with judgment but with presence — Jehovah Shammah.

Many portions. Many ways. Every one of them real. Every one of them revealing something true about who God is.

But every one of them was spoken from the other side of a distance.

* * *

The Distance

It is easy to read through the names of God and miss what is underneath all of them: a gap. A separation between God and the people He keeps showing up for.

El Roi saw Hagar — but from heaven. Jireh provided — but through a ram. Rapha healed — but through a tree thrown into the water. Shalom spoke peace — but to a man who was terrified that seeing God face to face meant death. Even Shammah — the most intimate of the Old Testament names — is still a promise about a future city. *The Lord is there*. There. Not here.

The presence was real. God was not distant in the way a person is distant when they do not care. He spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11). He walked with Enoch (Genesis 5:22–24). He wrestled with Jacob (Genesis

32:24–30). He filled the tabernacle with His glory and led His people with a pillar of cloud and fire.

But even Moses — the man who spoke with God face to face — was told: "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live" (Exodus 33:20). There was a limit. A line that could not be crossed. A veil hung in the tabernacle and later in the temple, and it said the same thing the words said to Moses: *this far, and no further*.

Every name in this book was revealed through that veil. Real presence, but limited access. God showing up — but never fully arriving. Revealing His character one name at a time, one crisis at a time, one portion and one way at a time — but always with a gap between Himself and the people He loved.

Until now.

* * *

A Sign You Did Not Ask For

The setting is another crisis. Ahaz is king of Judah, and he is afraid. Syria and the northern kingdom of Israel have formed an alliance against him. They are marching on Jerusalem, and Ahaz — who is not a faithful king, not a man who trusts the God of his fathers — is terrified. The text says his heart and the heart of his people "shook as the trees of the forest shake with the wind" (Isaiah 7:2).

God sends Isaiah to meet him. The message is simple: do not fear. This alliance will not stand. It will not happen. And then God does something remarkable — He tells Ahaz to ask for a sign:

Anything. As deep as the grave, as high as heaven. No limits. God is offering a faithless king an open invitation to see His power confirmed. It is an act of extraordinary generosity — the same kind of generosity that sent an angel to a foreign slave woman in the desert, that gave a promise to a man too old to father children, that called a man hiding in a winepress a mighty warrior. God does not wait for people to deserve His revelation. He gives it anyway.

And Ahaz refuses:

"I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord."

— Isaiah 7:12

It sounds pious. It is not. Ahaz wraps his cowardice in religious language. He does not want a sign from God because a sign from God would require him to trust God — and Ahaz has already decided to trust Assyria instead. He would rather make a political alliance with a foreign empire than depend on the God who made promises to his ancestor David. The refusal to ask is not humility. It is the refusal to be accountable to the answer.

And God gives the sign anyway.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel."

— Isaiah 7:14

To a king who did not want it. To a king who would not trust it. God gives the sign — not because Ahaz asked, but because the promise was never really about Ahaz. It was about something so

much larger than one faithless king in one political crisis. It was about the moment, still centuries away, when God would close the distance for good.

* * *

The Name

The Hebrew is *Immanu-El*. Two parts. *Immanu* — with us. And *El* — God. The same *El* from the first page of this book. Elohim. El Roi. El Shaddai. El Elyon. El Gibbor. The God who has been revealing Himself by name since Genesis 1 now attaches Himself to a single, staggering preposition.

With us.

Not "God sees us." Not "God provides for us." Not "God heals us" or "God fights for us" or "God shepherds us" or "God gives us His righteousness" or "God is there." All of those are true — every name in this book has proven them true. But this name does not describe something God does. It describes where God is. He is *with* us. Not watching from heaven. Not speaking through prophets. Not present in a cloud above a tent. *With*.

Every other name maintained the distance, even while bridging it. This name eliminates it.

* * *

The Fulfillment

Centuries pass between Isaiah's words and their fulfillment. The exile comes, just as Jeremiah and Ezekiel warned. The people return. The temple is rebuilt — though the elders who remember Solomon's temple weep when they see it, because it is nothing compared to what was lost (Ezra 3:12). The prophets fall silent. For four hundred years, no prophetic voice speaks in Israel. The "many portions and many ways" stop. Heaven is silent.

And then Matthew writes:

Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."

— Matthew 1:22–23

Matthew does not hedge. He does not say "this may have been what Isaiah was pointing to." He says: this took place *to fulfill* what was spoken. And then he does something no Old Testament writer needed to do — he translates the name. "Which translated means, 'God with us.'" As if to make absolutely certain that no reader, Jew or Gentile, misses what has happened. The child born to Mary in Bethlehem is not merely a king, not merely a prophet, not merely a deliverer. He is God — with us.

The angel had already told Joseph what to name the child: Jesus — *Yeshua* — "for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Jesus is the name written on the birth record. Immanuel is who He *is*. Every name in this book has worked that way — not merely a label, but a revelation of

character. And Immanuel is the revelation that gathers all the others into one: the God who saw, provided, healed, fought, spoke peace, shepherded, gave righteousness, and promised His presence — that God is now here. In person. In flesh. Among us.

* * *

The Word Became Flesh

John says it with a single sentence that carries the weight of eternity:

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

— John 1:14

The Word became flesh. The God who spoke creation into existence with a word now *becomes* flesh. The one who said "Let there be light" is wrapped in human skin, born in the town of Bethlehem, laid in a feeding trough because there was no room anywhere else.

And the word John uses for "dwelt" carries the story forward in a way his first readers would not have missed. It is related to the word for tent or tabernacle — the portable dwelling where God's presence traveled with Israel through the wilderness. The glory that filled the tabernacle when Moses finished building it (Exodus 40:34). The glory that filled Solomon's temple at its dedication (1 Kings 8:10–11). The glory that Ezekiel watched depart — and then saw return from the east.

That glory now dwells in a person. Not a tent. Not a temple. Not a city named for His presence. A man. Born of a woman. Full of grace and truth.

Paul says it to the Colossians: "For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him" (Colossians 1:19). All the fullness. Not a portion. Not a manifestation. All of it. Every attribute this book has traced — the sight of El Roi, the power of El Shaddai, the provision of Jireh, the healing of Rapha, the peace of Shalom, the shepherding of Rohi, the righteousness of Tsidkenu, the presence of Shammah — all of it dwells fully in one person.

And the writer of Hebrews confirms it:

And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power.

— Hebrews 1:3

The exact representation. Not a reflection. Not an approximation. The *exact* representation of God's nature. When you have seen Jesus, you have seen the God who has been revealing Himself by name since the first verse of the Bible.

* * *

The Third Promise

The promises God made to Abraham have been running through every chapter of this book. A great nation. A land. A blessing to all nations.

The first promise was fulfilled in Israel — from one man and one barren wife to a nation no one could number. The second promise drove the journey from Egypt through the wilderness into Canaan, and even through the exile and back.

But the third promise — "in you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3) — has been waiting. Through every crisis, every name, every chapter, this promise has been on the horizon. How will one nation bless all nations? How does the God who revealed Himself to Abraham, to Moses, to Gideon, to David, to Jeremiah, to Ezekiel — how does that God reach the rest of the world?

Paul answers:

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

— Galatians 3:16

Abraham's seed — the one through whom all nations will be blessed — is Christ. The child born in Bethlehem. The one whose name means "God with us." The third promise, the one that reaches across the testaments and lands on us, is fulfilled in Immanuel.

And if Immanuel — if God with us, in flesh, in person — is the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, then every name that was revealed along the journey to this moment was pointing here. Jireh on the mountain where Abraham raised the knife — pointing here. Rapha at the bitter water, three days after the

crossing — pointing here. Nissi on the hilltop, with arms held up by brothers on either side — pointing here. Tsidkenu in the darkness of Jeremiah's day — pointing here. Shammah in the last verse of Ezekiel's prophecy — pointing here.

Here. God with us. The distance closed. The promise kept. All nations blessed.

* * *

The Shadow

Every shadow in this book has been a version of the same need: the need for God to show up. In the wilderness of invisibility. On the mountain of impossible obedience. At the bitter water of disappointment. In the battle. In the fear. In the valley. In the exile. The human situation changes, but the need does not. We need God to show up.

And every name has said: He does. He shows up. He sees, provides, heals, fights, speaks peace, shepherds, gives righteousness, promises His presence.

But the deepest version of the need is not for any one of those things. It is for God Himself. Not His gifts. Not His interventions. Him. The ache underneath every crisis, every exile, every dark night is the ache for presence — for someone to be *with* you. Not sending help from a distance. Not watching from heaven. With you.

This is the need Immanuel meets. Not a need for a specific provision, but the need underneath all the needs. The need for God to stop being over there and start being *here*. And when the

Word became flesh and dwelt among us, that is exactly what happened. God stopped sending messages and came in person. He stopped speaking through prophets and spoke as a Son. He stopped revealing Himself one name at a time and revealed Himself all at once — every attribute, every name, every portion and every way, gathered into one person who walked the same dust, breathed the same air, and sat at the same tables as the people He had been showing up for since Genesis 1.

Immanuel is not one more name on the list. It is the name the whole list was building toward.

* * *

Praying His Name

When you pray to God in the name of Jesus Christ, you are not praying across a distance.

You are not sending a message to someone far away and hoping it arrives. You are not calling out into the dark, wondering if anyone is listening. You are speaking to Immanuel — God with you. The one who closed the gap, who crossed the distance, who took on flesh and entered the world He made so that every name He had ever revealed would be as close as your next breath.

Every name in this book is now available to you in Him. When you need to be seen, you are not calling out to a distant El Roi — you are known by the one who is with you. When you need provision, you are not hoping Jireh notices from heaven — the God who is with you already knows the need before you speak it (Matthew 6:8). When you need healing, peace, a banner in the

battle, a shepherd through the valley, a righteousness you cannot produce on your own — it is all in Him. Present. With you. Not far off.

The writer of Hebrews will say, in words we will return to in the Conclusion: "Let us draw near" (Hebrews 10:22). *Draw near*. Not "send a message." Not "wait for a vision." Draw near. Because Immanuel means the one you are drawing near to has already drawn near to you.

He is not far. He has never been far. But now — in Christ — the distance is not just bridged. It is gone.

Pray to Him. He is with you.

* * *

For Further Study

Isaiah 7:1–17 — The full context: Ahaz's fear, the offer of a sign, the refusal, and the promise of Immanuel

Isaiah 9:6 — "For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us" — Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace

Matthew 1:18–25 — The birth of Jesus and the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy

John 1:1–14 — The Word became flesh and dwelt among us

Galatians 3:16 — Abraham's seed is Christ

Galatians 4:4 — "When the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman"

Philippians 2:5–8 — He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men

Colossians 1:15–20 — The image of the invisible God, in whom all the fullness dwells

Hebrews 1:1–3 — God has spoken in many portions and many ways, and now in His Son

Related name:

Alpha and Omega — The Beginning and the End (Revelation 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). The first name in this book was Elohim — "In the beginning, God." The last name before the Conclusion is Immanuel — God with us, in the flesh. And in the last book of the Bible, Jesus identifies Himself as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. He was there before the first word of Genesis, and He will be there after the last word of Revelation. Every name between those two points — every revelation, every crisis met, every promise kept — is held together by the one who stands at both ends of the story and says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Revelation 22:13). The journey that began with Elohim ends with the same God — now with a face, a name we can call, and a promise that He is with us to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

* * *

One Question to Sit With

If every name in this book was a portion of who God is — revealed one crisis at a time across thousands of years — what does it mean that all of those names now dwell fully in one person, and that person has promised to be with you?

* * *

One Thing to Do

Open your Bible to John 1:14. Read it once. Then go back to Genesis 1:1. Read it once. Then return to John 1:14. The God who was there in the beginning became flesh and dwelt among us. Let the arc of the whole story — from "In the beginning, God" to "the Word became flesh" — settle over you. That arc is the story of this book. And it lands on you.

* * *

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "God with us."

— Matthew 1:23

CONCLUSION

He Is Still Showing Up

“And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.”

— Matthew 27:50–51

From Elohim in Genesis 1 to Immanuel in Matthew 1 — every name, every revelation, every crisis met and answered — it is all one story. The story of a God who refuses to be distant. Who reveals Himself not in theological abstractions but in the real, raw, desperate moments of human life.

He showed up for Hagar in the desert when no one else saw her. He showed up for Abraham on the mountain when the knife was raised. He showed up for Moses at a bush that would not stop burning. He showed up at bitter water, on a battlefield, in a winepress, in a shepherd's psalm, in a prophet's promise, and in the last line of an exile's vision.

And in the fullness of time, He showed up in person — wrapped in human flesh, born in the town of Bethlehem, given the name Jesus because He would save His people from their sins, and called Immanuel because that is who He is: God with us.

But the story does not end in the manger. It ends at the cross — and at what happened the moment He died.

The Veil

There was always a barrier.

After Eden — after the open, unhindered communion between God and man was broken by sin — God did not go silent. He walked with Enoch. He spoke with Abraham. He revealed Himself by name, again and again, to anyone who needed to know who He was. But the communion had a limit. There was a line. And that line had a physical symbol.

In the tabernacle that Moses built, and later in the temple that Solomon raised, a thick curtain hung between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place — the place where God's presence dwelt above the mercy seat. Only one man could pass through it: the high priest. Only one day a year: the Day of Atonement. And even he had to bring blood — not his own righteousness, not his own worthiness, but the blood of a sacrifice that covered the sins of the people.

The veil said something. It said what God told Moses on the mountain: "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live" (Exodus 33:20). It said what Gideon feared at the winepress: that to see God face to face was to die. It said what every name in this book has quietly confirmed — that God is holy, and we are not, and the gap between those two realities is more than we can cross on our own.

Every name in this book was revealed through that separation. El Roi saw Hagar — but she did not see Him in the way Moses longed to. Jireh provided the ram — but Abraham still

came down from the mountain. Shalom spoke peace to Gideon's terror — but the terror was real, because the holiness was real. Even Shammah — "The Lord is there" — was a promise about a city yet to come, not a present reality Ezekiel could walk into. The presence was always real. The access was always limited.

The veil hung in the temple for centuries. It hung while the prophets spoke. It hung while the psalms were written. It hung while Jeremiah wept and Ezekiel saw visions and the people went into exile and came back and rebuilt and waited. Four hundred years of silence passed, and still the veil hung.

And then Jesus died.

* * *

From Top to Bottom

From top to bottom. Not from bottom to top — not from man's side reaching up. From top to bottom. From God's side reaching down.

The barrier that had stood between God and His people since Eden — the barrier that said *this far, and no further* — was torn. Not thinned. Not repaired. Not opened with a key that only the high priest carried. Torn. By God's own hand. At the moment His Son died.

Every name in this book was building toward this. Every revelation of God's character — His sight, His provision, His healing, His power in battle, His peace, His shepherding, His righteousness, His presence — all of it was revealed through a veil. And now the veil is gone.

The writer of Hebrews explains what this means:

Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith.

— Hebrews 10:19–22

A new and living way. Through the veil. Through His flesh.

Draw near.

Not "send a representative." Not "wait for the Day of Atonement." Not "bring your best effort and hope it is enough." Draw near. With confidence. With full assurance. Because the blood of Jesus has done what no animal sacrifice, no human righteousness, no high priest's annual visit behind the curtain could ever do. It has removed the barrier — permanently, completely, and by God's own hand.

* * *

Sandals Off, Sandals On

There is an observation Scripture makes that is easy to miss, and it belongs here — at the end of the journey — because it captures the entire shift in a single image.

Twice in the Old Testament, God tells a man to remove his sandals. The first is Moses at the burning bush: "Remove your

sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). The second is Joshua, on the threshold of the promised land, standing before the commander of the Lord's army: "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy" (Joshua 5:15).

Both moments are thresholds — places where the promises of God are about to move forward. Both involve standing on holy ground. And in both, the command is the same: take your sandals off. You are in the presence of the holy God. Stand before Him as you are — bare, uncovered, with nothing between you and the ground He has made sacred.

That is the posture of the Old Testament. Sandals off. You are a creature before the Creator, a servant before the Master, a sinful man on holy ground. You may come this close — but not closer.

Now consider a scene from the mouth of Jesus Himself. The parable of the prodigal son. The boy has squandered everything. He has been feeding pigs, which for a Jewish audience is as low as a person can go. He rehearses a speech on the way home: "I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men" (Luke 15:19). He is prepared to come back as a servant. Sandals off. That is all he expects.

But the father sees him while he is still a long way off. He runs — which in that culture, a patriarch did not do. And when he reaches the boy, he does not listen to the speech. He gives three commands:

"Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet."

The robe. The ring. And the sandals. Servants did not wear sandals. Sons did. The father is not accepting a servant back into the house. He is restoring a son. And the sign of that restoration — the detail that would have landed hardest on the ears of Jesus' audience — is the sandals. Put them *on* his feet.

Before the veil was torn: sandals off. You stand before the holy God as a servant, a creature, a sinner on sacred ground.

After the veil was torn: sandals on. You have been clothed in the righteousness of Tsidkenu, welcomed home by the Father, and restored not as a servant but as a son — or a daughter. The Spirit Himself testifies to it: "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15). The name we met in the last chapter — the name that makes the presence personal — is the cry of a child who has been given sandals and welcomed home.

That is what the torn veil accomplished. Not just access to a room. Restoration to a relationship. The God who said "remove your sandals" is the same God who says "put sandals on my child." The holiness has not changed. The access has. Because of the blood of Jesus, you do not approach God as a trembling servant hoping to survive the encounter. You approach Him as a child who has been given the robe, the ring, and the sandals — and told to come home.

* * *

He Is Still Showing Up

Every name in this book is now as close as your next prayer.

That is not poetry. That is what the torn veil means. The God who saw Hagar sees you — and He is not watching from a distance. He is with you. The God who provided the ram on Moriah provides for you — and the provision is not coming through a substitute animal on a faraway mountain. It comes through Jesus, who is closer than your next breath. The God who healed the bitter water, who held up Moses' arms, who spoke peace to Gideon's terror, who shepherded David through the valley, who promised righteousness through a coming King, who declared His presence as the last word over exile — that God is not behind a veil. The veil is gone.

And because the veil is gone, you can do the thing that every name in this book has been inviting you to do: draw near. Talk to Him. Call on Him. Not through a priest. Not through a ritual. Not through a system that says "this far and no further." Through Jesus. Directly. The new and living way.

This book has been about who God is — the character behind the names. But knowing who He is was never the end goal. The goal was always relationship. Communion. The kind of open, unhindered access to God that existed in Eden before sin broke it, that the veil symbolized as lost, and that the blood of Jesus restored.

If you want to learn how to walk through that open door — how to pray to the God whose names you now know — that is the subject of another book. *A New and Living Way* picks up

exactly where this book leaves off: at the torn veil, in the presence of the God who made Himself accessible, with the invitation to draw near and the practical guidance for how to do it. This book has taught you who you are praying to. That one teaches you how to pray.

But before you close this book, hear what God says:

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I shall rescue you, and you will honor Me."

— Psalm 50:15

And what Paul writes to every person, Jew or Gentile, who has ever wondered whether God's promises include them:

"For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

— Romans 10:13

Whoever. Not "whoever has earned the right." Not "whoever has cleaned up their life." Not "whoever belongs to the right nation or carries the right credentials." Whoever. Call on the name of the Lord, and you will be saved.

You know His names now. You have walked the road from creation to Immanuel, from Genesis to the manger, from the manger to the cross, from the cross to the torn veil. You have seen who He is. Not who theologians say He is. Not who traditions have made Him. Who *He* says He is — in His own words, by His own names, through His own actions across the pages of the book He gave us.

He is the God who was already there. The God who sees. The God for whom nothing is impossible. The God who

provides. The God who simply *is*. The God who heals. The God who fights for you. The God who speaks peace over your fear. The God who shepherds you through every valley. The God whose righteousness becomes yours. The God who is there — always there, even after the exile. And the God who is with you — not at a distance, not through a veil, but here, now, in the person of Jesus Christ.

He showed up for them. He is still showing up.

Call on Him. He will answer.

He always has.

* * *

"For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

— Romans 10:13

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