

# DIVINE DOUBLE ENTENTRE

## Sermon, September 6, 2020

### Texts: Exodus 3:1-15; Matthew 7:13-29

#### THE NAME OF GOD

Sermon Supplement, September 6, 2020

Some of you may have noticed our pew Bibles, at times, prints the word "LORD" (*all upper-case, capital letters*), and at other times prints "Lord." Psalm 8:1 is a prime example: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Two different Hebrew words are being translated; one rendered "LORD," and the other "Lord."

Wherever "LORD" appears (*all upper-case letters*), the actual word being translated from the original Hebrew text is יהוה (*or "YHWH"*), the name of God given to Moses by God via the burning bush. The original Hebrew text contained consonants only; no vowels or vowel markings were in the original. This name is sometimes referred to as the "Tetragrammaton" (*from Greek τετραγράμματον, meaning "having four letters"*). "YHWH" almost defies definition. As one scholar wrote, this verse "is one of the most puzzled over verses in the entire Hebrew Bible." Most understand it to be a form of the Hebrew verb *hayah*, "to be". As explained in Exodus 3:14, it can be translated "I AM WHO I AM." It can also mean "I am what I am," or "I will be what I will be;" see footnotes "b" and "c" in the pew Bible, page 57. Another possibility: "I will be what I now am."



Whenever the word "Lord" appears (*upper-case "L" and lower-case "o-r-d"*), the actual word being translated is the Hebrew *Adonai*, which means "Lord, Master, sovereign one." "Adonai" (Lord) is a title, YHWH (LORD) is a name; just as "Pastor" is a title and "Clark" is a name. Psalm 8:1 actually reads, "O YHWH (LORD), our Adonai (Lord), how majestic is thy name in all the earth!"

Vowel markings were added to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament many years after the original text was written. The scribes who performed this task ran into great difficulty trying to add vowel markings to YHWH; nobody was certain how to pronounce it. In their zealous ambition to honor Commandment 3, God-fearing Jews would not utter this name of God *at all!* As the years passed, the vowel sounds for this Name apparently faded from the collective memory of the Jewish faithful.

The solution? Scholars tell us the vowel sounds from "Adonai" (Lord) were taken and applied to YHWH (LORD), which resulted in YaHoWaH. Anglicized, that comes out "Jehovah" (*see below*).

Y H W H + A d o n a i = Y a H o W a H

Jehovah, therefore, is sort of a "hybrid" name, and not believed to be an accurate phonetic rendering of God's proper name. Most scholars agree the original pronunciation of this Name was "Yah-WEH" or "Yah-VEH."

be outdone, the college chaplain posted his own ad: "Bring Your Parents to Chapel Sunday. We'll Pretend We Know You Well." This intimate address of name repetition is found just eight times (I think) in the Bible; it is used sparingly.

Remember Abraham, the father of the faithful. God promised him that he would be the father of a great nation; that in his advanced years he and his wife Sarah would have a son, an heir, and from that heir all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Well, Abraham and Sarah do have a son, Isaac, and then God puts Abraham to the test (*Genesis 22*). God tells Abraham, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering to me." We can only imagine the agony of that experience for Abraham, as he obeys God and takes his son on what has to be a tortuous three-day journey to Mt. Moriah. When they arrive at the summit, he wraps his son in ropes, lays him on the altar, and being scrupulously obedient to the voice of God he raises the knife and is about to plunge it into his boy, when suddenly the voice comes from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham! Do not harm the boy. Now I know you fear God. You have not withheld from Me your son, your only son."

*A bit of an aside, in the center of Jerusalem to this day is the Temple Mount, believed to be build over the actual site of Abraham's testing. It is probably the most passionately contested area of real estate in the world, as the Muslim faith holds Mohammed ascended*

We read in Exodus 3 of Moses encounter with a bush in the wilderness. He sees this bush that is burning, but it is not burning up, it's not being consumed. He approaches and a voice calls out to him from this bush, and the voice calls Moses by name! That's all certainly pretty unusual, but there's something else unusual here easily missed by the Western reader. It's not the burning bush, although that's certainly unusual, nor is it the voice of God coming out of the bush, which is also unusual. Nor is it the name of God, which is also certainly unusual (*see the insert*). The unusual thing I want to draw attention to in the time we have is HOW God addresses Moses. He repeats Himself! Maybe you're thinking, "So what? Maybe God had to repeat Himself to get Moses' attention."

No, there is something of what I'd like to call a "divine double entendre" here. A double entendre is a word or phrase open to two interpretations, one of which is usually risqué or indecent, but not always. *Entendre* comes from a Latin root word *intendere* which means "to turn one's attention." And God certainly turns the attention of this man living in exile, this one who had to flee his people in Egypt, by the manner with which he calls him. "Moses, MOSES."

We've looked at this a few times over the 20+ years I've been here, but (*pun intended*) the repetition won't hurt. In Semitic forms of communication, when a name is used twice in succession, when a name is *repeated*, it is usually an expression of personal intimacy. It's something you say to someone you know well, someone you care deeply about. I like the story about a small college town, where a tavern frequented by students ran the following ad in the campus paper the week before Parent's Weekend: "Bring Your Parents For Lunch Saturday. We'll Pretend We Don't Know You." Not to

into heaven at this site; a mosque over that spot dominates the skyline of Jerusalem. A thousand years after Abraham, David founded Jerusalem on that site, and Solomon built the Temple there. From that spot where Abraham's sacrifice was stopped by God, sacrifices were offered. It was not far from that very spot where God's Son was sacrificed ... and when He was sacrificed, nobody yelled stop.

Later on, it's Abraham's grandson Jacob who is struggling in his old age, as we've talked about these past several weeks. (*Genesis 46*) There's a famine in Palestine, and there's plenty of food in Egypt; through a long chain of events one of Jacob's twelve sons, Joseph, had become prime minister of Egypt and has now invited his family to come to Egypt. However, Jacob wasn't sure. He wrestles with this decision with all the heartache and anxiety of any elderly person who is contemplating a move that may be permanent, so he laments in so many words, "*Should I stay or should I go? Should I stay here, or should I go with my sons and relocate to Egypt? There's food there, Joseph will take care of us, but ... maybe I'm just too old to go. This is my home; this is the land of my fathers. This is the Promised Land, I've a responsibility to stay here, this is where I belong ... if I move now, I'll probably never see this home again.*" God comes to Jacob in a vision and says, "*Jacob, Jacob.*" In so many words, God says, "*Jacob, Jacob. Don't be afraid, it will be all right. For there I will be with you and I will make of you a great nation.*" So Jacob and all his family go, and the Israelites prosper in Egypt for many years.

However, after Jacob and all his sons pass away, and the Israelites have greatly increased in number, a new Pharaoh comes to power. The Israelites are not treated kindly under this Pharaoh; they are enslaved for many years, until one day a Jewish man who had fled for his life into the Sinai wilderness notices a bush is burning, but it's not burning up! He turns to pay attention to it, and a voice comes out of the bush, and says "*Moses, Moses.*" Out of this intimate encounter comes the exodus from Egypt and the foundation of the Jewish nation. Again, years pass. There is uncertainty as to how this nation will develop, the political structure is chaotic at best and Israel was fighting for her very survival. God comes this time and disturbs the sleep of the young son of Hannah, calling to him in the night, "*Samuel, Samuel!*" Samuel is called and chosen by God and goes on to become one of the greatest leaders Israel ever knew. He is the last and the greatest of the Israelite judges, the first of the great prophets.

Just a few more... the great king David mourning for his slain, rebellious, insurrectionist son: "*Absalom, Absalom, my son, my son.*" Jesus speaking to the preoccupied and harried hostess of the home in which He was a guest, "*Martha, Martha.*" Jesus later seeing the great city of Jerusalem just before He enters, and he breaks down weeping, "*O, Jerusalem, Jerusalem; you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.*" Jesus speaking to His dear friend and disciple the night this same friend and disciple would deny Him three times, "*Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you like wheat.*" And on the cross, bearing the weight of our sin, Jesus cries out, "*My God, My God.*"

And as the early church begins to grow, the most dramatic conversion experience we find in the entire New Testament is when the Pharisee Saul is transformed from one of the most dangerous antagonists of the early church to the apostle Paul, one of the most powerful promoters and advocates of the early church. He was traveling on a road many people today would like to be traveling on as we enter day 181 or so of the fifteen days to "flatten the curve" ... the road to De-Mask Us. (*Someone in our congregation posted that meme on Facebook this week ... I couldn't resist it.*) On the road to Damascus, a blinding light literally knocks Saul off his high horse, Jesus calls out from heaven, "*Saul, Saul!*" As if to say, "*Saul, I know you. And I have prepared and chosen you for a momentarily important task.*"

In our Gospel this morning, Jesus issues a warning. Jesus says, "*Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' Will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not speak in your name? Did we not fight evil and corruption; did we not do all kinds of things for you?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you evildoers.'*" Jesus intimates that one Day people will come forward claiming to know Him, and not just superficially ... these are people who will be claiming to know Him intimately, personally. And Jesus will reply, "*I never knew you. Depart from me, you evil doers*" One hopefully gets the idea here that it *matters* what we do, it *matters* that we try to follow God's will, what God wants us to do, and it matters immensely. As Jesus says elsewhere John 14, "*Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show Myself to him.*" There is another side to this; a hope-filled side ... and that is one day our Lord see His faithful servants approach, and probably a smile will form on His face, and He will look, and say with that divine double entendre, "*Sam, Sam. ... Steve, Steve ... Welcome. Well done, good and faithful servant.*"

It's almost a cliché question to ask: "*Do you know Jesus?*" Now, that is an important question, but according to this text the most important question is not "*Do you know Jesus?*" but rather, it is "*Does Jesus know you?*" A good question to ask ourselves as we come to this Table. Does He know you intimately, well, because you have been spending time with Him, because you have made worship of Him a priority in your life, because you have been paying attention to His words, because you have been living to please and honor Him? Jesus won't be like that college chaplain who promises to pretend to know the students who, in reality, have spent no time with him.

May **all** of us grow to know and be known by Jesus Christ more and more as we do the Father's will, right up to that day when we meet Him face to face, and He calls us by name ... twice ... welcoming us into our eternal home.