

# KNOWING GOD *by* NAME

NAMES *of* GOD  
THAT BRING HOPE  
*and* HEALING

DAVID  
WILKERSON



**Chosen**

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# Contents

Introduction 7

Pronunciation of the Names of God in This Book 12

1. *El Elyon • El Shaddai • Jehovah Jireh* 13
2. *Jehovah Rophi • Jehovah Makkeh* 30
3. *Jehovah Nissi* 42
4. *Jehovah Tsebaioth* 61
5. *Jehovah Shalom* 85
6. *Jehovah Tsdkenu* 104
7. *Jehovah Shammah* 125
8. *Jehovah Rohi* 143
9. *Immanuel* 160
10. *His Name Is Forgiveness* 182
11. *His Name Is Intercessor* 203



## Introduction

Many books have been written about the names of God. Most of these are scholarly works, exploring the deepest theological meanings behind each of God's names. They are exhaustive, covering the 23 compound names of God found in Scripture, as well as the more than forty compound names of Jehovah.

In writing this book I have chosen not to cover every name of God. Nor have I sought to study every theological nuance of the names I cover. My purpose in exploring this subject has been to obtain a heart-knowledge of God's names. I wanted to have a personal revelation of His names—to appropriate their fullest meaning for my daily walk with Him.

You see, each of God's names reveals a defining quality of His nature and character. As I searched the Scriptures, I discovered that God revealed these names to His people only as they needed them—in their moments of deepest crisis. It dawned on me that this is how I want to learn my Lord's nature also: to understand His heart toward us in our most desperate times. That is why I

have chosen to explore the names of God that relate to my own times of testing and crisis.

Simply put, this book is for weary or hurting believers who need assurance and hope in their times of trial. In my opinion, that includes every devoted servant of Jesus Christ! Scripture makes it abundantly clear that, because of our commitment to the Lord, we are going to be put through the fire of testing. That is the very reason God revealed His names to His people in the first place: to bring them encouragement, hope and life.

Why is it important for us to know these names of God? Here are just two of the reasons the Bible gives us.

First, various psalms tell us that we receive God's deliverance through knowing His name. "Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 124:8). "Because he has known my name . . . I will deliver him" (Psalm 91:15). "I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the LORD. . . . I was brought low, and he helped me" (Psalm 116:3–4, 6).

Second, Isaiah writes that God keeps us close when we trust in His name. "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God" (Isaiah 50:10).

In reality, God refers to Himself by only one name. In the Bible, He calls Himself the great I AM. "God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14).

What does the Lord mean by saying His name is I AM? He is telling us that He is the everlasting one—the true God, with no beginning and no end. He always was, He is right now and He always will be. As He explained to Moses, "I AM whatever you need, at any point in your life. That is My nature—to be for you whatever you need at any given time. My name is I AM—and I want My people to remember it."

Although “I AM” is the only name God gave for Himself, the ancient Hebrews also referred to Him by several other names in order to help describe His nature and character. These names are expressions of who our Lord is and what He is like.

It is important to note that we can know someone’s name without having any clear idea of who that person is or what he is like. This is true with God also. We can memorize all of the Lord’s various names, and yet still have only the vaguest idea of who He truly is. I believe this is why He revealed His names to the Israelites during their trials and crises. He wanted them to learn every facet of His loving nature toward them, and He used difficult situations as the best way to impress truth on their hearts.

Is this not how our children get to know us? If someone were to ask my children, “Who is your father and what is he like?”, I would be grieved if all they could give were the basics: “His name is David Wilkerson. He lives in New York City and pastors a church in Times Square. During my childhood, he put a roof over my head and always put food on the table. He took care of me well.”

This says nothing about my relationship with my children. Even if they were to add, “He’s also a good father,” it would not capture what I hope I am in my relationship to them. I hope that I have been a good father to them over the years—rejoicing over them in love, being patient with their failures, available to them at all times, offering counsel and meeting their needs. Like any loving dad, I want my relationship with my children to go beyond fulfilling my duties. In fact, I want them to know me *mostly* by my caring heart toward them.

At times we are asked by nonbelievers, “You say you know God. Tell me, who is He and what’s He like?” All some Christians can answer is, “He’s the great I AM. He rules over heaven and earth and He sits on His throne in glory.” They have nothing to say about our heavenly Father’s loving relationship with us.

When my children were growing up, I never had to lecture them about what I am like. I never had to say, “I’m your father—I’m patient, kind, full of mercy and loving kindness toward you. I’m tenderhearted over you, ready to forgive you at all times.” They would have laughed if I had stood up at the dinner table and made a proclamation like that. Why? My kids learned about my love for them during their crisis experiences. They saw my love toward them when they were embarrassed, hurt by life or in need of forgiveness. Now, as they are grown and married with children of their own, my sons and daughters are getting to know me through a whole new set of experiences. They are learning even more about me by my attitudes and actions toward them in this new time of need in their lives.

So it is with us in getting to know our heavenly Father. From the time of Adam down through the cross of Christ, the Lord gave His people ever-increasing revelations of His character. He did not do this simply by proclaiming who He is. He did not try to reveal Himself by announcing to Abraham or Moses: “The following names describe My nature: *El Elyon, El Shaddai, Jehovah Jireh, Jehovah Rophi, Jehovah Makkeh, Jehovah Nissi, Jehovah Tsebaioth, Jehovah Shalom, Jehovah Tsidkenu, Jehovah Shammah*, etc. Now go and learn these, and you will discover who I am.”

These Hebrew expressions do describe the wondrous glories and provisions that are wrapped up in our Lord’s character, but God revealed these aspects of His nature by actually doing for His people what He proclaimed Himself to be. Time and again He saw His children’s need, foresaw the enemy’s strategy against them and intervened supernaturally on their behalf.

As you read this book I urge you to get to know your heavenly Father slowly and purposefully, on a heart-to-heart level. You do not need to memorize all of these hallowed names in their Hebrew forms. For example, do not memorize God’s name *Jeho-*



*vah Tsebaioth*—simply learn that He is the Lord of Hosts. Get to know the English meanings of His names and remember them.

I suggest that you read only one chapter at a sitting. You could keep this book on your nightstand, for instance, and try a chapter each night. Then, when you have finished, go back over the chapters that ministered to you while you were in difficulty. As you review those chapters ask the Holy Ghost to remind you of the many ways God has been there for you during your times of need. Ask the Spirit to build in you a true heart-knowledge of I AM—the God who is everything you need.

## Pronunciation of the Names of God in This Book

<i>El Elyon</i>	El Ely-OWN
<i>El Shaddai</i>	El Shad-DI
<i>Jehovah Jireh</i>	Je-HO-va JI-rah
<i>Jehovah Rophi</i>	Je-HO-va RO-fee
<i>Jehovah Makkeh</i>	Je-HO-va MA-keh
<i>Jehovah Nissi</i>	Je-HO-va NEE-see
<i>Jehovah Tsebaioth</i>	Je-HO-va Se-baw-OT
<i>Jehovah Shalom</i>	Je-HO-va Shaw-LOME
<i>Jehovah Tsdkenu</i>	Je-HO-va Sid-KAY-noo
<i>Jehovah Shammah</i>	Je-HO-va SHAW-mah
<i>Jehovah Rohi</i>	Je-HO-va RO-ee

*one*

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## El Elyon • El Shaddai • Jehovah Jireh



*God Most High, Creator and Possessor of Heaven and Earth  
God All-Powerful and All-Sufficient  
The Lord Who Sees and Who Provides*

The fourteenth chapter of Genesis describes the first war ever recorded in human history. A confederation of kings declared war on the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and the two sides waged a battle in the “vale of Siddim.” The attackers won and “the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, and fell there; and they that remained fled to the mountain” (Genesis 14:10).

The invading forces then pillaged Sodom and Gomorrah, capturing the people and securing all their wealth, food and supplies. “They took all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their victuals, and went their way” (verse 11). During this invasion, “They took Lot, Abram’s brother’s son, who dwelt in Sodom” (verse 12).

Now, the Bible tells us that Abram had 318 “trained servants” (verse 14). This phrase indicates that these men were practiced in the art of war. Evidently the servants were trained to protect the interests of Abram’s clan from plunder. Abram was determined to recover Lot and his family, so he led his servants in hot pursuit of the confederated army. When Abram and his militia had traveled some 140 miles, they finally overtook the invaders. They defeated the enemy soundly—a rout so lopsided that the fleeing soldiers left behind all the spoils they had stolen. Abram ended up rescuing all of the captives, including Lot, and recovering all of Sodom and Gomorrah’s goods.

As we pick up the story in verse seventeen, Abram and his men are heading back over a ridge in the valley just north of Salem. What a sight Abram’s caravan must have been! It was led by a bold man of God and followed by his troop of servant-soldiers, Lot and his family, the freed citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the treasures and food supplies taken by the confederation of kings.

As I picture this scene I cannot help wondering: Why did God allow Abram to save Sodom and Gomorrah? After all, God knew that they soon were to be judged. Why not tell Abram to rescue only Lot and his family, and let the wicked Sodomites be taken captive?

My personal belief is that God used Abram to prevent Satan from preempting His divine judgment. No doubt the devil knew that God planned to destroy Sodom. Satan may have hoped that, as prisoners in other countries, the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah would spread their perverted lifestyle to other heathen

nations. The devil would have had an army of “missionaries” spreading moral decay throughout the then-known world!

But God stopped Satan in his tracks. He used Abram to bring back all the people of Sodom and Gomorrah to face His divine judgment. By doing so, God was quarantining them. Now He could burn out the disease from their vile society and stop it from spreading.

## **Abram Encounters Two Kings**

Upon his victorious return from the battle, Abram was met by two kings—the king of Salem and the king of Sodom. These kings offer fascinating contrasts.

First, as Abram approached the city of Salem, which means “peaceful” and is generally identified as the ancient city of Jerusalem, the king came out to meet him. This king was named Melchizedek, and the Bible refers to this mysterious figure in only three verses. The first, Genesis 14:18, describes him as both “king of Salem” and “priest of the most high God.” This dual description of king and priest alerts us to Melchizedek’s role as a type—a living picture—of Christ Himself. Indeed, Melchizedek’s meeting with Abram was an amazing visitation. First, acting as priest, Melchizedek served Abram a covenant meal of bread and wine. Then, acting as king, Melchizedek accepted a tithe from Abram. Afterward Melchizedek disappeared from the picture as suddenly as he had appeared. This man clearly foreshadows the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

The second reference in Scripture to the King of Salem was written one thousand years after his meeting with Abram. Speaking prophetically of the Messiah, King David states: “Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4). Then, one thousand years after that, the writer of Hebrews confirms that this ancient king’s continual priesthood (see Hebrews 7:3) does indeed represent Jesus’ eternal priesthood:

“Thou [Jesus] art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 7:17).

Soon after his incredible meeting with Melchizedek, Abram was addressed by the king of Sodom. This king had fled the battlefield as the confederation of armies prevailed. Then he had had to sit by and watch as Abram carried the day. Now, as the king saw Abram returning in victory, he offered to him all the spoils of battle. The king told Abram, “Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself” (Genesis 14:21).

To gain the full impact of the king’s offer here, we need to examine the scene more closely. Here was godly Abram, leading home all the freed captives of Sodom and Gomorrah. Satan must have been enraged at the sight. His plan, I suspect, for spreading Sodom’s wickedness had been demolished. He was probably seething! I can imagine his thoughts running along these lines: “This holy man has become the people’s hero and deliverer. Worse, I just saw him communing with Melchizedek, the priest of God! The Lord must be planning to convert all of these Sodomites.”

At that point, I believe, the devil filled Sodom’s king with a spirit of jealousy. You can almost hear Satan’s scheming voice speaking through this vile king: “Keep all the spoils, Abram. You can have everything we possess. Just give me back my people.” In reality, the devil was pleading, “Please, Abram—take everything you want. Just don’t take these souls away from me.”

You must understand: The goods that Sodom’s king offered to Abram were more than just a wagonload of groceries. These were the spoils of two prosperous city-states: thousands of cattle, sheep, camels, donkeys, weapons, clothing and furnishings—treasures of gold, silver, diamonds, jewels and precious stones.

Yet Abram refused the offer without hesitation. He told the king, “I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing

that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich” (Genesis 14:22–23). Abram was saying, in essence, “You can have the people and all the riches. *I’m taking Lot and his family with me.*”

## Facing These Two Kings in Our Own Lives

When we believers give our hearts to Jesus, we win a great battle. We defeat the powers of hell, robbing Satan of the spoils he took from us when he ruled our lives. But afterward, as we are still glowing with spiritual victory and freedom, just down the road, two “kings” await us—symbolized by the same two kings who awaited Abram.

Abram faced as strong a temptation as any human being has ever experienced. Before him was an offer of riches, material goods and fame. It would not have compromised Abram’s reputation to accept it, but he did not even think twice about his decision. His response to the king’s offer was a quick and clear no. Why? Because what mattered most to Abram was preserving *God’s* reputation. In effect he was telling the king of Sodom, “I’m returning all of these things to you—the people, the riches, everything. My Lord owns them all anyway. If He decides to make me wealthy, so be it. But I don’t want you to be able to brag that you made me rich.”

Where did Abram get such detachment from this world and the independence to reject outright the devil’s offer? How did he obtain this tremendous authority to be able to refuse such a powerful temptation?

Abram derived his strength from a fresh revelation of who God is. You see, Melchizedek had opened Abram’s eyes to an amazing vision of God’s character: “He [Melchizedek] blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand” (Genesis 14:19–20).

Embedded in this verse is a name for Jehovah God: *El Elyon*. It means, literally, “God Most High, creator and possessor of heaven and earth.” Melchizedek was declaring to Abram, “Your Lord is not just the greatest of all the gods. He is the creator of the entire universe. Everything in it belongs to Him—all wealth, cattle, possessions. He is in control of everything you see around you.”

This name, *El Elyon*, provided Abram with a new discovery about the Lord. He had known God as the Lord who called him out of the land of Ur, but not as Lord Most High, creator and possessor of all things. Now Abram was convinced that God had everything under control.

Abram rejoiced over this marvelous discovery as he left his meeting with Melchizedek. That is why the patriarch spoke to the king of Sodom with an oath: “I have sworn to the Lord God Most High,” he said (see verse 22). It was as though he was saying, “From now on, I am going to trust only *El Elyon* to meet all my needs. If the Lord creates and possesses all things, then I won’t accept a single shoelace from this Sodomite society. I don’t want to depend on any man. Instead, I am going to put my life, my family and my future totally into God’s care.”

With this new understanding of who God was, Abram had the power and faith to face any temptation. Abram saw Sodom’s goods as trivial. He scoffed at the king’s offer: “You offer me trinkets, Sodom, when my God owns the universe. He possesses the spoils of the whole earth. The Lord alone is my supply, all I will ever need. So take your stuff and go. *El Elyon* has made me an offer I cannot refuse.”

Abram’s faith must have been totally rejuvenated at this point. I imagine him reasoning, “Lord, if You possess all that exists in heaven and earth, then possess me, too. I want You to take control of my life; rule over everything I am and everything I do!” Of course, Abram did eventually become God-possessed, and at that point his faith began to soar,



increasing with every thought of the wondrous revelation God had given him.

Every devoted Christian has discovered the Lord as his Savior from sin. Yet have we also discovered Him as *El Elyon*—God Most High, creator and possessor of all things? Have we begun to see Him with new eyes as Abram did? Are we convinced that He holds our entire lives and well-being in His hands?

Hebrews tells us that our Lord never changes—that He is the same yesterday, today and forever (see Hebrews 13:8). Are you persuaded that God is in absolute control over all things in your own life? Are you able to face the storms, tests and trials in your life, calmly testifying, “My God, *El Elyon*, has everything under control”? Do you trust His power to help you resist every temptation the devil throws at you? Can you trust that if God has created a new heart in you, He also has the power to create in you a hunger and thirst to know Him more intimately?

We obtain this kind of power only by laying hold of the revelation that our God is *El Elyon*. In contemporary terms, this revelation means, “God is boss of everything. That means there are no accidents in my life—no such things as fate, happenstance or luck, either good or bad. Every step I take is ordered by the Lord. Everything in my life—in fact, everything in this universe—is under His control. His Word tells me that Satan cannot tempt me any more than I can bear. My boss is always faithful to show me the way of escape.”

## **Abram’s Revelation Brings a Challenge**

Armed with his new discovery about God, Abram took the opportunity to challenge the Lord about a promise made years earlier: “Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir” (Genesis 15:3). It is as if Abram were saying, “Lord, I know You are *El Elyon*, creator and possessor of all things. So where is my promised child?

You said I would be the father of many nations. Yet here I am, still childless after all these years.” God wanted Abram to hold fast to his faith. He responded by entering into covenant with Abram, making an oath to him that sealed His promise of a son (see verse 18).

For some reason, though, Abram’s faith did begin to waver. You know the story: After so many years of trying, Abram’s wife, Sarai, seemed unable to bear children. So she offered her handmaid, Hagar, to Abram to sire a son. At that point Abram took matters into his own hands. He impregnated the handmaid, who bore a son, Ishmael.

Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. He hoped the boy would provide the seed God had promised. But in the Lord’s eyes, this child was illegitimate because he was not the child of faith and promise.

More years passed and there was no sign that Sarai would ever bear a child. Abram and Sarai just kept getting older. By the time Ishmael turned 13, Abram was 99 years old. He must have been on the verge of losing all hope that God’s promise would ever be fulfilled. Once again, his faith was being tried.

I believe Scripture is making a point here for everyone who has chosen to follow Jesus. It is saying that God uses our crises—the most difficult, trying times in our lives—to give us hopeful revelations of who He is. Each revelation is like a separate ray of light reflecting from a diamond: It reveals a different aspect of our Lord’s nature, giving us fresh views of His character and power toward us. These revelations shine especially brightly during our times of darkness. Those are the most effective times for Him to reveal to us His ability and desire to deliver us.

As Abram faced this ongoing personal crisis, the Lord decided once again to give His servant a fresh revelation of Himself. He wanted Abram to be fully persuaded of His faithfulness. Scripture says, “When Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD

appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Genesis 17:1).

The Hebrew phrase for “Almighty God” here is *El Shaddai*. The literal meaning of this name is “God, all-powerful and all-sufficient.” What an incredible revelation for Abram to receive at this time! God was speaking very personally to His servant here, saying, “Abram, you already know I have power over every condition in your life. I have convinced you that I am in control of all things—that there are no accidents in your life, no situations that are merely fate or luck. I am the head, the chief, the boss of all creation, and My word is eternal. Now I am going to tell you something else about My nature that you need to understand to continue in faith.

“I am not only in control of all things, but I always keep My word. No obstacle can keep My word from coming to pass. I am not bound by the laws of nature or fettered by any man. I can do anything at any time. There are no mountains too high for Me, no valleys too low, no rivers or oceans too wide. When I say something is going to be done, it is already done. Nothing can stop My promise. I am *El Shaddai*—all-powerful, all-sufficient keeper of My promises. I guarantee My word.”

God saw that Abram was focusing on all the impossibilities of his situation. Abram simply could not see past his age, his dried-up body and Sarai’s dead womb. So the Lord revealed Himself to Abram specifically as the God who gives life to the dead. He opened Abram’s eyes to the part of His nature that performs the impossible.

Once Abram received this revelation, he believed God was who He claimed to be. Abram “was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Romans 4:20–21). This godly man knew that God could not lie. The Lord had sworn to make him a father of all nations; surely God would do what He said He would do.

Abram's newfound faith eventually brought forth the child Isaac, the promised heir. It also brought Abram his new name, *Abraham*, "father of a multitude." Now Abraham and his Lord were united in a special realm of faith. Moreover, Abraham had discovered the secret to walking uprightly before God.

### Discovering the Secret That Abraham Knew

Here is the secret to a godly walk: We are to *receive*—to acknowledge, believe, embrace and act upon—the revelation God gives us of who He is. That is the secret, plain and simple. We are able to walk uprightly before the Lord, but not because we have willpower, knowledge or even a covenant promise in hand. We walk uprightly because we are fully persuaded that *El Shaddai* will keep His promises to us.

The evidence of such faith is a restful heart. If your soul is not at rest, you are not really living in faith. Conversely, if you believe God is who He says He is, and that He is faithful to do what He has promised to do, then you do not have a worry in the world. Faith is being confident that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord and are called according to His purpose (see Romans 8:28). God has already promised that He will not let the devil have you; nor will He allow anything to happen to you beyond what is common to every other human being (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). In the midst of every temptation, the Lord promises to make a way of escape for you so you will be able to bear up under the pressure (see 1 Corinthians 10:13).

God had given Abraham the following covenant promise: "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (Genesis 15:1). This is known as the Abrahamic covenant. The Lord vowed to Abraham, "None of your enemies can harm you. I will always be faithful to deliver you, no matter what your circumstances. I will personally be your reward. You are eternally Mine, Abraham. I am going to maintain you, protect you and keep you for Myself."

Why were these promises so important to Abraham? Let me remind you, this man lived in a brutal and wicked society. His neighbors, in the region of the lower Jordan, led wild, dissolute lives. God had declared that their “cup of iniquity” was filling up and they would come under judgment. The Lord’s assuring words enabled Abraham to lead a holy life in the midst of such abounding iniquity. How? Abraham believed what God said: that he was safe from all harm because the Lord was all-sufficient to keep His servant victorious over every evil.

The same is true for us today. I am convinced that only by embracing the revelation of God’s covenant names will we be able to lead godly lives. Have you discovered your *El Shaddai*, all-sufficient God? It is time for you to stop focusing on your own weaknesses, powerlessness and failures.

Instead, believe God’s promises to you. He has pledged to keep you, teach you, put His fear in you, cause you to walk in His ways, give you His Holy Spirit and blot out all your sins and replace them with His loving kindness. Will you rest in the promise that He will be all-sufficient for you?

## **Abraham’s Supreme Test of Obedience and Faith**

Abraham enjoyed a season of peace and quiet with his son of faith, Isaac. The boy’s name means “laughter” and, indeed, this miracle child was the joy of Abraham’s old age. Yet when Isaac was a young man, the Lord called upon Abraham for a supreme act of obedience. God told Abraham, “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of” (Genesis 22:2).

When Abraham heard this word, he immediately began splitting wood for the trip. Then he gathered Isaac, two servants and a donkey and set out for Mount Moriah. The mountain was some fifty or sixty miles away and it would have taken the group

about three days to get there. You can be sure that Abraham had plenty of time to think along the way. This had to have been the most trying, anguished time of his life! In his mind, his son was already dead. Abraham himself was now nearly 130 years old, and Isaac was about 30. The patriarch had watched his son grow into manhood—laughing with him, hugging him and teaching him the ways of the Lord. Now, after years of childlessness and waiting for God’s promise to be fulfilled, he was being asked to give up the one thing dearest to his heart.

God’s instruction to Abraham had to be as confusing as it was anguishing. Abraham knew Isaac was the promised seed through whom nations would come. This was the son he and Sarah had waited to have for so long, the one who would provide the very lineage of the Messiah. (We know Abraham was aware of this, because John 8:56 records Jesus as saying: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.”)

Nevertheless Abraham gave up his son in full faith. Think about it: He made the journey without once questioning God on the matter. Can you imagine the strength this required? We have to remember, Abraham was a human being just like us, with similar feelings and weaknesses. Yet he made a difficult decision to obey the Lord, based only on faith. Where did Abraham get the faith to obey such a hard word?

It came directly from the revelation of God’s name. Abraham reminded himself, “My Lord has told me He is the creator of all things, and I believe Him. So, even if I slay my son, I know God has the power to raise him up. I am convinced of His resurrection power.” Hebrews confirms Abraham’s belief, telling us, “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son . . . accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Hebrews 11:17–19).

When Abraham arrived at the foot of Mount Moriah, he instructed his two servants to stay behind while he and Isaac

went to make sacrifice. Even at this point, Abraham demonstrated great faith. He told his servants, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you” (Genesis 22:5). He was telling them, “You’ll see us both go up the mountain—and you’ll see us both return.”

Abraham made his way up the mountain, carrying the sacrificial knife and the burning censer. Isaac walked behind him carrying the wood and, at one point, spoke up: “Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering? And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together” (verses 7–8).

In many ways this scene foreshadows the event of the cross. Isaac, the sacrificial son, carried wood up a hill, just as God’s own Son, Jesus, would do. And Abraham willingly offered up his son as a sacrifice for sin, just as the heavenly Father would do. Moreover, during the three days’ journey Abraham considered his son as already being dead. Yet when it was finished, Isaac emerged from the trip as if he had been raised from the dead. This prefigures the three days Jesus was dead before God raised Him up.

You may wonder, “Why would the Lord demand a human sacrifice, when the Old Testament tells us He hated that practice?” God was birthing a church, a nation of faith, through this event. This whole scenario was crucial in showing later generations that animal sacrifice could not atone for human sin. One day, there would have to be a human sacrifice, one that was holy and pure, and it would involve someone willing to lay down His life for all of humankind. Simply put, Abraham’s journey was an illustrated sermon about the Messiah. It pointed to the future sacrifice made by Jesus Christ for the sins of the world.

Our focus in this passage, however, is a new discovery that God gave to Abraham. What was this discovery? It was another great revelation of His name.

When they finally arrived at the mountaintop, Abraham prepared to slay his son. As he bound Isaac and laid him upon the altar, the son must have obliged. After all, Isaac was an adult and his elderly father could never have wrestled him down. For this reason I believe that Isaac acted in faith as well. His father had taught him the covenant as he grew up, and Isaac had also learned the revelation of God's names. Thus, Isaac must have believed in the Lord's all-sufficiency as well. Like his father, he knew that even if he died, God had the power to raise him up again. Whether or not God chose to resurrect him, he would lay down his life in obedience to the Lord's command to Abraham. (This attitude also prefigured Christ, who willingly offered himself as the lamb to be sacrificed.)

What is the point of this scene for Christians who read it today? It is this: Almost all new discoveries of God—all fresh revelations of His Person, nature and character—are tied to some crisis, some intense human experience.

I stated earlier that we often discover more of our loving Father's nature during our difficult times. It was during Sodom's crisis that God revealed Himself to Abraham as *El Elyon*—God Most High, creator and possessor of all things. Likewise, it was during Abraham's own crisis of doubt that God revealed His name as *El Shaddai*—God all-powerful and all-sufficient. Now God was leading Abraham into the greatest crisis any human being could ever experience—the sacrifice of his own child. Yet, out of this crisis Abraham would receive the greatest revelation he could ever know about the heavenly Father.

As the time neared for Abraham to raise the knife, he was already walking in mature faith. He could face this test of obedience now, because he trusted in the revelations God had given him. In each case, he had received God's Word and mixed it with faith, taking its truth to heart. By this time he had appropriated the power of each of God's names in his life. And now, as Abraham stood over his son, he was ready to obey God perfectly. He remembered



the Lord's revelation of Himself as *El Elyon*, creator of all things. Therefore, it would be a small matter for God to raise up Isaac from the dead. In addition, Abraham believed in *El Shaddai*—God all-sufficient, the one who keeps His word. The Lord had already assured him, "I have given you a son, Abraham, and you are going to see entire nations come out of him." It is clear that Abraham was acting on a faith founded solely on God's revealed promises.

Now this godly man lifted the knife. He was ready to thrust it through the heart of his beloved son. Then, suddenly, he was stopped by a voice from heaven:

And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I. And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh.

Genesis 22:11–14

What an amazing miracle of provision! The whole time that Abraham was preparing to slay his son, God had a sacrificial animal ready nearby. The Lord must have supernaturally given that ram an appetite, causing it to wander up the hillside. As the animal foraged for food, its horns got tangled in a bush.

Here was a glorious new discovery of God's nature. He revealed Himself to Abraham as *Jehovah Jireh*, "the Lord who sees." In contemporary terms, this phrase translates as, "God will see to it." It is a name that speaks of provision.

We see this meaning illustrated in a later verse in the same chapter: "And Bethuel begat Rebekah" (Genesis 22:23). Let me explain the connection here. At the very moment Abraham was raising the knife over Isaac, his nephew Bethuel was raising the girl

whom God would eventually give to Isaac as a wife. It is as if the Holy Spirit were telling Abraham, “Yes, I have kept My promise by saving your son. I have also provided for your heir; your brother’s wife has already given birth to the girl Isaac will marry.”

Isaac would not meet Rebekah for another several years down the road. But this passage proves the nature of *Jehovah Jireh*, the provider: Even before we call out to Him, our God answers. Long before we are even born, He is at work forming and shaping the circumstances of our lives.

The name *Jehovah Jireh* also has another meaning: “God is showing us.” In other words, our Lord will reveal to us everything we need to obey Him. He will see to it that we are provided with all the power, strength and resolve to do whatever He commands.

I have seen men point to their new cars and, smiling, say, “Jehovah Jireh.” In short, they are declaring, “See what God provided for me.” But if you see *Jehovah Jireh* only as a supplier of material things, you do not have the true revelation of this glorious name! Our God is all of that, but He is much more besides. The apostle Paul describes the full meaning of this name when he writes, “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19, emphasis added).

Our Lord promised to wipe away all our sins—and He did it. *Jehovah Jireh* saw to it that the penalties for our sins would be paid through His Son, Jesus Christ. Today our Lord promises that the Holy Spirit will provide us with the power we need to obey His word. He has written these words above His every command: “Your God will see to it that you obey Him. *Jehovah Jireh* will keep His promise to provide all faith and strength for you, through the power of the Holy Spirit.”

### **But What If Abraham Had Failed?**

You may wonder, “Even though God provided Abraham with the ram, did the outcome still depend on his faith? What if Abra-

ham had hesitated to plunge the knife into his son? Would God's plan have been aborted then? What if Abraham had stopped and said, 'This is too much, Lord. I can't handle it?'

God has no Plan B. That is why He told Abraham, "I want you to walk perfectly," meaning *uprightly*. Scripture is clear: When God gives a promise and swears to see it fulfilled, there can be no possibility of failure. Therefore, it was not possible for Abraham to fail. Why? God was going to supply His servant with all the faith he needed. The God who revealed Himself as "He who will see to it" made sure that Abraham had everything he needed to obey His command.

God has made a covenant with us also. He said He will cause us to obey Him, and He will endue us with all the power we need to walk uprightly before Him. Because He has promised this, I believe He will do it. His very existence hinges on fulfilling these promises. It is as if He says, "I am *Jehovah Jireh*, and if I don't keep My word, My throne will collapse. I will cease to exist, and the universe will dissolve. Everything will end."

The Bible states, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee" (Psalm 9:10) and "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10).

The ancient Hebrews followed a practice of naming their sons with magnificently descriptive words. They believed that a good name actually gave the child power to attain its qualities. The same is true of God's names. Every revelation is a different beam of His glory, each unfolding His love and provision for His children. He wants us to run to the security of those names, fully persuaded of their meaning and power.

"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. . . . It was impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:13–14, 18).

The Lord assures us, "I have committed all that I am to keep you by My grace."