

## THE HEBREW NAMES OF GOD

Psalms 23:1 ... "The Lord is my shepherd..."

Judges 6:24 ... "... Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Is-Peace..."

Most of the New Testament was written originally in Greek, which was a common and sophisticated language during the time of Christ and his apostles. The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew, the language of the Jews then and today. Our Bibles are translations into our own dialects (Filipino, Spanish, English, etc.) from those original languages. The challenge in translating the Bible into other languages, is that there are often no equivalent words. You can see the same problem in conversation and newspapers today. When a sentence is presented in both Filipino and English, the word count in Filipino will usually be higher than the English version, because of the lack of equivalent words. If you watch a Chinese movie with subtitles, you will notice that the actors seem to talk endlessly while a short English subtitle is displayed. That's because the meaning of the words in Chinese, can be explained more concisely in English. If you look at the instructions for a new phone or appliance that are printed in multiple languages, the English version often appears to be the shortest.

In many instances, words in the Hebrew and Greek languages have finer distinctions than equivalent words in English. For instance, the name "God" is found throughout the Old Testament of our Bibles. But the original Hebrew uses more than fifty different words for God. That is because the Hebrew language attaches distinct attributes of God depending upon the context in which it is used. You may have heard some of the more popular Hebrew names for God: Abba (Father), Yahweh or Jehovah (the Self-Existent One; always was and always will be), El Shaddai (God Almighty), Elohim (the Creator), Yahweh-Rapha (the Lord that Healeth), Yahweh-Shalom (the Lord is Peace), and Yahweh-Shammah (the Lord is There).

Does it matter that our versions of the Bible simplified the translation from Hebrew or Greek? Not really. It is still God's Word, which he has blessed and given to reveal his character, his expectations for us, and his promises. Plus, he has given every believer the Holy Spirit to guide us into a fuller understanding of God.

Bible study for many believers goes to a deeper level when they study the scriptures using reference materials to see how particular verses were written originally. I am not that scholarly, but on occasion we try to explain in our devotionals the unique context of certain passages from the original language. Although a library of Biblical reference books is nice to have, we have something even more resourceful. Before you open your Bible to read and study, simply ask God to illuminate the scriptures for you through his Holy Spirit. That is one of his purposes in your life, and one that you should count on every day.

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