

## What's in a Name?

1. When we are reading printed materials, the author has several methods he can use as 'clues' to emphasize important points: use italics, underline, highlight, bold script, capital letters, etc.

2. But in its origins the Bible was an oral/aural (speaking/hearing) transmission. The narrator had 'clues' he could use to indicate or suggest particularly important passages, including:

- repetition (in Ex. 18, 13 times: *"Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses..."*)
- asking a question (in Gen 3. 9: *"Adam, where are you?"*)
- rearranging the words in a sentence (in Gen 2:4: *"These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,..."*)

3. The 'clues' act like flashing yellow lights when driving a car: slow down, use caution, proceed with attention, be alert in this surrounding area. The narrator's clue, as in Gen 2:4, had the same purpose.

### 4. Notice what is the Divine Name in the verses preceding Gen. 2:4.

Some samples include:

*Gen. 1:1* In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,

*Gen. 1:6* And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters."

*Gen. 1:14* And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,

*Gen. 1:26* ¶ Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

*Gen. 1:31* God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

*Gen. 2:3* So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.

**The Divine Name used is God.**

**5. Now let's notice what is the Divine Name in the verses following Gen. 2:4.**

Some samples include:

*Gen. 2:7* then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.

*Gen. 2:15* ¶ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.

*Gen. 2:16* And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden;

*Gen. 2:21* So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.

**The Divine Name used is LORD God.**

6. Is the difference significant? For example, I have a sister, Geraldine. To me she is *Geri*. To her husband Joe she is *Sweetheart*. To her son Conor she is *Mom*. One woman; but three different names. The different names signify different relationships between the person pronouncing the name and the person being addressed.

7. Might this be the same for *God* and *Lord*?

8. We can understand the relationship signified by the name *God* by examining some of the occasions of that Divine Name in the sacred texts of the Old Testament. Some examples include:

*1Kings 3:28* All Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered; and they stood in awe of the king, because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him, to execute justice.

*Job 8:3* Does God pervert justice?  
Or does the Almighty pervert the right?

*Hos. 12:6* But as for you, return to your God,  
hold fast to love and justice,  
and wait continually for your God.

*Psa. 72:1* Give the king your justice, O God,  
and your righteousness to a king's son.

Conclusion: In the Torah (the Old Testament,) the Divine Name *God* is generally (but not always) associated with justice, right order, judgment-making, righteousness.

9. We can understand the relationship signified by the name *Lord* by examining some of the occasions of that Divine Name in the sacred texts of the Old Testament. Some examples include:

*Ex. 33:19* And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD'; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.

*2Sam. 24:14* Then David said to Gad, "I am in great distress; let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but let me not fall into human hands."

*Psa. 23:6* Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

*Is. 63:7* I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD,

because of all that the LORD has done for us, and the great favor to the house of Israel that

he has shown them according to his mercy according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

Conclusion: In the Torah (the Old Testament,) the Divine Name *LORD* is generally (but not always) associated with mercy, graciousness, compassion, steadfast love.

10. One pastoral thought based on the above.

*Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One. (Deut. 6:4)*

This verse, referred to in Hebrew as the *Shema* (Listen, Harken, Hear,) was recited in Morning Prayer and Evening Prayer by Jesus, and is still recited twice a day by our Jewish sisters and brothers.

Notice: *Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One. (Deut. 6:4)*

**LORD**, signifying mercy and compassion, surrounds **God**, signifying justice and righteousness.

The Divine is One. There must be both justice and mercy. But the **LORD's** mercy is always more available to us than the justice of **God**. Justice must always be surrounded by mercy. What an extraordinary and consoling revelation.