



You said God's name is "Yahweh." I haven't heard that before, where does that come from?

It's not unusual that you've never heard it before, because "Yahweh" is not found in most English translations of the Bible. It is, however, found 6820 times in the original Hebrew of the Old Testament. It is actually the most common way of referring to God in the whole Old Testament!

You may have noticed in our English translations of the Bible, the word LORD (all caps) appears a lot in the Old Testament - 6820 times, in fact! The all-caps version of LORD is an indication that the actual word in that text of Scripture is God's name, "Yahweh."

Yahweh is the name God gave to Moses to refer to Him by when God appeared to Moses in the Burning Bush in Exodus chapter 3.

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" Exodus 3:13

God's reply in Exodus 3:14 & 15:

God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'Yahweh 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,
the name you shall call me
from generation to generation."*

God's name when He says it is "I Am." His name when we say it is, "He Is" or, in Hebrew "Yahweh."

So, why don't we just print God's actual name instead of LORD?

Well, somewhere along the line when the Israelites returned to the Promised Land after being in exile in Babylon, someone came up with the idea: "We can't take God's name in vain (use it in a wrong or meaningless way) if we never say it." So, the tradition arose of substituting the word "lord" for "Yahweh" when reciting a passage of Scripture. The popular English translations of the Bible have followed along with this tradition, but to indicate that the actual word in the original Hebrew is not "lord" but "Yahweh," they distinguish it by putting LORD in all capital letters.

It's admirable that the people had the desire to not break the second commandment, but their solution seems to me comparable to, for example, a carpenter being so afraid of using a hammer incorrectly that he starts pounding nails with a screwdriver. Or maybe a painter being so afraid of using a brush incorrectly that she starts painting pictures with a fork. Very simply, not what God intended.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net