

JEHOVAH-JIREH

THE NAME Jehovah-jireh is one of a number of names compounded with Jehovah. Naturally these names owe something of their significance to the name Jehovah itself, which as we have learned, reveals God as the eternal, self-existent One, the God of revelation, the God of moral and spiritual attributes-of righteousness, holiness, love, and therefore of redemption, the God who stands in special covenant relation to Israel in contrast to Elohim, the general name of God in relation to all the nations.

Most of these compound names of God arise out of some historic incident, and portray Jehovah in some aspect of His character as meeting human need.

HISTORICAL SETTING

The historic incident out of which the name Jehovahjireh rises is one of the most moving and significant in the Word of God. The story is found in Genesis 22. It is the story of the last and greatest crisis in the life of Abraham. Every event in his life has led up to this supreme hour from the time of his call to a high destiny, through every vicissitude, through every joy, through every trial or failure, through every measure of success and blessing, through every hope and promise and assurance. All had been in preparation for this event. The great promise had been fulfilled, the supreme hope of his life realized. He had settled down to live the rest of his life in peace and in joyous anticipation of the larger fulfillment of the promise through the centuries, and its final spiritual fulfillment. The rationalistic critics have long been silenced who denied or doubted the reality of the Patriarchs as actual persons, but interpreted them merely as ideal and imaginary figures around which ancient Hebrew tradition cast its national origins and early history. For apart from our faith in the Bible as the inspired revelation of God, and its Old and New Testament testimony, to the reality of Abraham as a historic person, abundant evidence has been brought to light in recent years and decades as to the historicity of the persons and the veracity of the events to dispel all doubts and invalidate all objections.

In this incident Elohim appears to Abraham with the astounding command to offer up as a sacrifice, a burnt offering, his only and well-beloved son Isaac. Abraham, apparently, is not aware that this is a testing. His feelings can scarcely be imagined. His tremendous faith, in view of all the circumstances, is, perhaps, not sufficiently appreciated. The record reveals not a word of objection or remonstrance on his part. But if he laughed in his heart with joyful hope, even though perhaps mingled with a little doubt, when this son was promised to him, how deep his anguish and perplexity must have been at this amazing request from the God who had been so good to him. Yet the faith which enabled him to believe such a staggering promise in the first place is now sufficient for an even more staggering demand. This incident, then, reveals Abraham's obedience and faith, Isaac's willing submission, and Jehovah's gracious provision of a substitute in his place.

THE MEANING OF THE NAME

Before we discuss the derivation and meaning of this name, it will be well to briefly recall the happenings which occasioned its use. On the way to the place of sacrifice Isaac cannot contain his curiosity about the lamb for the burnt offering. "Behold the fire and wood"; he said, "but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" (Gen. 22:7). Abraham's answer to this question is that God will provide Himself a lamb. It is not necessary to suppose that Abraham thought of an ordinary lamb in this answer, although he may have had some such dim hope in his mind. At any rate, in his instructions to his young men to wait for him he says: "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (v. 5). It is only at the last moment, when Isaac lies bound upon the altar, and any such hope he may have entertained is gone, and the knife in his upraised hand is about to descend, that the voice of the angel of Jehovah arrests and stays his hand, and Abraham looks about and sees a ram caught in a thicket by its horns, which he offers up instead of his son. Then in verse 14 we read in the Authorized Version of our Bible: "And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord [Jehovah] it shall be seen." In the American Standard Version of our Bible, however, instead of "it shall be seen," it reads "it shall be provided." Still another rendering of this important word is

“he shall be seen.” Thus, “in the mount of Jehovah, he shall be seen or provided.”

First of all it must be understood that in this name Jehovah-jireh, the word jireh is simply a transliteration of a Hebrew word which appears many times throughout the Scriptures and is translated for what it means. Only its unusual significance here, its connection with this remarkable event, and its union with the title Jehovah has brought it down to us as a compound name of God. It is simply a form of the verb to see. What connection can there be then between the word see and provide, for both of these English words are used to translate the one Hebrew word, and they certainly seem to be quite distinct in their meaning? It must be admitted, too, that in the great majority of cases where this word occurs in the Hebrew Bible, it is translated “see” or “appear.” Why then should we translate it “provide” here?

One reason for this, no doubt, as one writer declares, is, that with God, to see is also to foresee. As the One who possesses eternal wisdom and knowledge, He knows the end from the beginning. As Elohim He is all-knowing, all-wise, and all-powerful. From eternity to eternity He foresees everything. But another word for seeing is vision, from the Latin word video-to see. Thus with God foreseeing is prevision. As the Jehovah of righteousness and holiness, and of love and redemption, having prevision of man’s sin, and fall, and need, He makes provision for that need. For provision, after all, is merely a compound of two Latin words meaning “to see beforehand.” And we may learn from a dictionary that provide is simply the verb and prevision the noun of seeing beforehand. Thus to God prevision is necessarily followed by provision, for He certainly will provide for that need which His foreseeing shows Him to exist. With Him prevision and provision are one and the same thing. All this is certainly expressed in the term Jehovah-jireh; and it is quite correct and in its proper significance to translate this name of God Jehovah jireh, “God will provide.”

Another form of the word from which jireh is derived is also used of men in the sense of foresee. It is translated “seer” or “prophet.” Several references are made in the Scriptures to Samuel the Seer and the Book of Samuel the Seer (I Chron. 9:22; 26:28; 2Sam. 15:27; II Chron. 16:7). The

word is ro'eh which, as can easily be seen, is much like jireh. In I Samuel 9:9 it is stated that the prophet formerly was called a seer. Even as late as the time of Isaiah (30:10) this was the word sometimes used for a prophet. Here the prophet Isaiah speaks of a people who say to the seers: "See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things." A prophet is, of course, one who foresees, and since seer, or ro'eh, is the same as prophet, it consequently means one who foresees.

Besides this the word jireh is translated in Genesis 22:8, even in our Authorized Version of the Bible, as provide. Abraham here said to Isaac: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering." Even if we were to translate here, "God will see to it," or "God will see for Himself a lamb for a burnt offering," the meaning would be exactly the same as provide. The importance of the words used here can hardly be overestimated, and afford striking evidence and confirmation of the hand of God in revelation. "Abraham called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it or he shall be seen." "It shall be seen"-jeroeh-the same word as jireh. That is, God's provision shall be seen. In the mount of the Lord! What was this mount of the Lord? In Genesis 22:2 the command comes to Abraham: "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." The significant word here is the word Moriah, of which more will be said later. This word, many Hebrew scholars agree, is a kindred word to jireh, derived from the same root. Its ending is an abbreviated form of the name Jehovah. Thus it may be rendered "seen" or "provided of Jehovah." All of this confirms and justifies our translation of the word jireh as "seeing" or "appearing and providing," and invests this name of Jehovah with a wealth of meaning and significance.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS NAME

This name is significant, first of all, because it is a commemoration-a commemoration of a great deliverance. This was the primary reason for naming the scene of this event Jehovah-jireh. It was a constant reminder of the wonderful grace of the Jehovah who had wrought this deliverance.

Now that it was all over, and Abraham had learned the lesson God was teaching him and could see something of God's glorious purpose in it all, he sought only to magnify the grace of Jehovah. His magnifying of this grace was in proportion to the deep and dark perplexity that had filled his soul on the way to the mount. Had God really spoken to him and called him? Did the Elohim mean what He had said? Could He really mean what He said now? Such may have been Abraham's thoughts. But his joy and gratitude were in proportion to his sorrow and despair at the terrible prospect before him-the overwhelming horror that must have flooded his soul at the thought, yes, the very act of plunging the knife of sacrifice into the body of his own son, his only son, the son so longed for, hoped for, prayed for, the child of their old age. What a great and glorious deliverance it was that Jehovah's grace had provided, and how unexpected and dramatic! Man's extremity is ever God's opportunity, not only for deliverance but to teach also wonderful lessons of His purpose as well as providence.

Surely out of this experience of Jehovah's delivering grace there must have come a purer, more spiritual relationship of love between this father and son. This must have been one lesson the experience was intended to convey. As one great commentator has declared, it was that he should no more love his beloved son as his flesh and blood, but solely and only as the gracious gift and possession of God, as a good entrusted to him by God; which he was to be ready to render back to Him at any moment (Delitzsch). According to the words of the angel of Jehovah it is fullest proof of Abraham's faith and obedience, "seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." And He might have added, "Even as I will not withhold my only and well-beloved Son as the great provision for man's redemption." For this, after all, is the chief lesson of the story, the deliverance of Isaac through the provision of a substitute. For just as Abraham is about to slay him, the voice of the angel of Jehovah arrests him: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do anything unto him." And there in the thicket is the substitute provided by Jehovah.

A further significance of this name of God lies in the expectation of something yet to come. Even if we were to translate Jehovah-jireh as "the Lord doth provide" rather than "will provide," it would be Abraham's testimony to the fact that Jehovah is a God who always provides; that as He

provided then He would also provide in the future-deliverance from death, the oil of joy for the ashes of sorrow and mourning, blessings for obedience, even though obedience be made perfect through sufferings. The naming of the place Jehovahjireh was meant to be proverbial of this very thing-“as it is said to this day.”

But this naming of the place was more than proverbial with Abraham. He can hardly have emerged from such a remarkable and solemn experience without feeling or realizing that it had far deeper significance than the test of his own faith only. The profound import of the occasion is strikingly attested by the most solemn language of Jehovah Himself calling from heaven a second time after the lamb of His provision had been offered, and saying, “By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah.” The word translated “saith” is the particular word used of Jehovah when making the most solemn prophetic utterances. Some translate it “utterance,” others, “oracle.” Then follows an emphatic confirmation of the promises to make Abraham a multitude, and a blessing to the world “because thou hast done this thing,” and “because thou hast obeyed my voice.” There are various allusions in the New Testament to this great transaction that indicate that Abraham saw far more than the immediate provision and deliverance in it. It was more than proverbial. He saw in it a prediction. He called the name of the place Jehovah-jireh; not merely Jehovah doth provide but Jehovah will provide. And then, “as it is said to this day, In the mount of Jehovah it shall be seen” or “it shall be provided.” One of the most noted of medieval Jewish commentators also understood this expression to mean, “God will manifest Himself to His people.”

THE REALIZATION

What then was that provision which Abraham saw, dimly perhaps, with the eye of faith? What was the reality of which Isaac, and the lamb, were but types? Certainly Abraham understood the reality of sin, and realized the need for atonement. The numerous altars he built and the offerings he sacrificed attest that fact. Why then the demand for Isaac as an offering? Was it not to impress upon Abraham more deeply the temporary character of these sacrifices; that it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:4); that they were only shadows

of which something infinitely worthier should be the substance and reality? Thus Isaac was exhibited as the pattern of one under the judgment of God for sin. Animals cannot take away the sins of men. Animals cannot be consecrated to God instead of men. “Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering” (Isa. 40:16). Only one of like nature, if one worthy enough can be found, can make such atonement and consecration. Here again in the deliverance of Isaac as he was about to be offered Abraham received more than an inkling of the fact that not even Isaac, that none born of flesh alone, is sufficient for that. For Isaac was offered and received back only in a figure (Heb. 11:19), and the lamb became his substitute also.

Surely’ God was teaching Abraham that the only sacrifice acceptable to Him is the one chosen and appointed by Himself. “Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams . . . shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” says Micah 6:6, 7.

In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen or provided, and that mount is Moriah which, as already stated, means appearance or provision of God. It was this Mount Moriah which later became the site of the Temple and the center of Israel’s worship, its sacrificial system. In II Chronicles 3: 1 it is written: “Then Solomon began to build the house of the Lord [Jehvoah] at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where Jehovah appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing floor of Ornan, the Jebusite.” It was here, in David’s time, that God in His mercy staved the hand of avenging justice when David offered the sacrifices of substitution. The very heart of Israel’s religion, centered in the Temple on Mount Moriah, was its substitutionary sacrifices. A Jewish interpretation of Genesis 22:14 is: “God will see and choose that very place to cause His Shekinah to rest thereon and to offer the offerings.”

But, like Abraham, the true and faithful Israelite must have realized that the sacrifice of animals was only a shadow of something to come. Jehovah’s gracious promise to Solomon in II Chronicles 7 to set His heart and eyes and His glory on that place indicate something infinitely

nobler than animal sacrifice.

Isaiah and Micah make sublime predictions concerning the mountain of the house of the Lord. Zechariah speaks of the glory of that holy mountain, the mountain of Jehovah of hosts. What was the glory of that mountain? Surely it was no temple made with hands! Surely it was not all the beasts on Jewish altars slain. The Abraham who looked not for an earthly city but for one “which hath foundations, whose builder and maser is God,” also looked for a better and more enduring sacrifice: for the Mount Moriah of which he spoke saying: “In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.” became the site of Calvary and the scene of that grand and awful sacrifice of God’s only begotten and well beloved Son, who was put under judgment for sin, and became our Substitute. Perhaps Abraham understood better than we realize the wonder of Jehovah’s provision for man’s redemption when he said: “In the Mount of Jehovah, he will appear.” Was it not this to which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself referred in John 8:56, when He said: “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”

Abraham and Isaac, as father and only begotten son, are both types of Jehovah’s full and glorious provision for man’s sin and need. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son ...” (John 3:16). And Paul speaks of God as “he that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all ...” (Rom. 8:32). “Who was delivered up for our trespasses ...” (Rom. 4:25). And John says again: “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, in that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9).

On Mount Moriah Jehovah was teaching Abraham what He Himself was prepared to provide. He was teaching the awful cost to Himself of the provision of the sacrifice for sin. Does it break your heart, Abraham, to give up, to slay, yes, by your own hand, as an innocent sacrifice, your well-beloved and only son? Then think of the awful and infinite cost to Me of what I am prepared to do for man. The thing that Abraham foreshadowed on Mount Moriah was realized, accomplished, when God’s Son upon the cross cried, “It is finished.”

Isaac asks, “Where is the lamb?” Abraham answers, “God will provide himself a lamb.” John the Baptist announces, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). This was the Lamb provided and slain from the foundation of the world but manifested on Mount Moriah for us; through whose precious blood, even the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, we are redeemed (1 Peter 1:18, 19). This Lamb is the center of heaven’s glory and the object of its adoration. Ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands say with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory and blessing.” Yes, and every creature will join in saying: “Blessing and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever” (Rev. 5:11-13).

God will provide Himself a lamb. In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, it shall be provided. In the mount of the Lord He was seen, He was provided, even Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, our Savior, our Lord, to whom be glory forever, and who is over all God blessed forever. Amen.

8 Webb-Peploe, The Titles of Jehovah, p. 24.