



**Names of God, XI, From Ezekiel 48:35,  
YHWH Shammah (YHWH is There): July 28, 2019**

In the book and movie, *A Dog's Purpose*, A devoted dog goes through several lives and humans it teaches to laugh and love. His conclusion is, "A dog's purpose is to be there, now." The human soul needs an unconditionally loving companion. Otherwise loneliness attacks. Guy Winch in *Psychology Today* wrote 10 Surprising Facts About Loneliness: "It is estimated 40% of us will feel the pangs of loneliness speaking of serious attacks of aloneness. Few people are fully aware of the ways which it impacts us.

10 surprising facts: 1) Loneliness doesn't depend on how many relationships you have but the quality of relationships. 2) Over 60% of lonely people are married. 3) Lonely people withdraw even further from the very people who could alleviate their loneliness. 4) Loneliness is contagious in social networks, feeling pushed out "into the cold." 5) Loneliness actually makes us feel colder. 6) Loneliness increases blood pressure, cholesterol, activates physical and psychological stress responses 7) Chronic loneliness increases risk of cardiovascular disease. 8) Loneliness suppresses the immune system to function less efficiently, increased risk for developing all kinds of illnesses. Even brief bouts of loneliness impact our immune system, which is why. 9) College freshmen who felt lonely had poorer reactions to flu shots. 10) Loneliness is as dangerous as cigarette smoking. Scientists have concluded that given all the drastic ways in which loneliness impacts our bodies, it represents as great a risk for our long term health and longevity as smoking cigarettes. Indeed, studies have concluded that chronic loneliness increases risk of an early death by 14%. Loneliness represents a hugely important psychological injury."

Mother Teresa said, "Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted is the most terrible poverty." One way to deal with it: self medication. Over a century ago Frank Kafka wrote, "My peers, lately, have found companionship through means of intoxication - it makes them sociable. I, however, cannot force myself to use drugs to cheat on my loneliness - it is all that I have - and when the drugs and alcohol dissipate, will be all that my peers have as well." Online relationship sites are a billion dollar industry, because people long for companionship, someone who is there. This concurs with the creation account, "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

Popular music cashed in on the theme of loneliness, paleo- country star, Hank Williams, *I'm so Lonesome I Could Cry*, Elvis- *Are You Lonely Tonight?*, *Dancing with Myself*- Billy Idol, *Need You Now*- Lady Antebellum, *Lonely*- Akon, and *You are Alone*- Flaming Lips, among hundreds. Martha Beck said, "Loneliness is proof that your innate search for connection is intact."

For the life of faith, loneliness is not a prescription. The old ascetic monks who lived on top of poles known as The Simon Stilites considered their self imposed isolation as a special brand of holiness and exceptional spirituality. That would be contrary to the New Testament Christian experience which calls Christians to community. The mystery author of the book of Hebrews said, "Do not forsake assembling together as is the habit of some." The 4 major disciplines among believers in Christ are teaching, relationships, breaking bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42). All require interaction with one another and/or

God. Togetherness is necessary for Judeo-Christian spirituality. Jesus' major moments with His disciples were travelling or eating with them. For those who know God, loneliness may be a trial and tribulation a believer must overcome, but it isn't prescribed for the experience of the people of God neither in the Old Testament which prescribed celebrations and feasts or the New which holds nothing back regarding love and fellowship.

Our study of God's names (This is name 12) is to get to know God the way He chose to introduce Himself to us. Today's name is YHWH Shammah. Each name for God in the Bible is another way of God saying, **"Hello, I'm..."**

We've covered God's title, Elohim, His name as YHWH, and YHWH Jireh, provider, YHWH Ropheka, Your Healer, YHWH Nissi, My Banner, YHWH Sabaoth, of the armies, YHWH Makkadeshkem, makes you all holy, Abba, Father, YHWH Roi, My Shepherd, YHWH Qanna, Jehovah the Jealous One, YHWH-Shalom, "God is peace" or "God of Peace" and this, YHWH Shammah or, "Yahweh who is There." The answer to loneliness is having the right one, right there, right now.

In a strange and mind boggling prophetic piece of literature from Ezekiel 37-48 the Bible directly goes to the loneliness problem with the name of God, YHWH Shammah in Ezekiel, in the last verse of that puzzling prophetic book. 13 of its chapters are about a strange temple, a strange time, and Israel like no one has ever recognized it. After prophesying dry bones coming to life, fresh water and fish in the Dead Sea, a war with images of flesh falling off of skin as in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Israel as a land of fruit trees that bear monthly and with healing leaves and abundant crops, a happy people restored in their 12 tribes, a spring of fresh water through Jerusalem into a beautiful river, Ezekiel's last verse ends the with, "the name of the city from that time on shall be, The LORD Is There" in Hebrew, YHWH Shammah (Ezekiel 48:35). He makes a point to end the whole book declaring that in the city of Jerusalem, "God is there." This name promises to transform loneliness into an experience with "The God who is There" Francis Schaeffer, author of "The God who is There" said, "We must first accept that the first part of the gospel is not 'Accept Christ as Savior' but God is there." Is that something one can grasp? In a line from Indiana Jones, after Donovan shot Indy's father: "It's time to ask yourself what you believe." This provocation throws down the challenge gauntlet to,

**experience YHWH Shammah and help others find the presence of God.**

### **1 . Often but not always we can experience YHWH Shammah in an emotional or physically tangible way.**

"Shekinah" glory of God from Hebrew shakan, "to stay with," or "to dwell," is a tangible, emotional or physical manifestation of God on earth. This term is not in the Old Testament to refer to God's glory, in the time between the Old and New Testaments rabbis used it to describe God's tangible manifested presence like fire, smoke, trembling earth, thunder and lightning, (Exodus 19:16-18, Exodus 40:34-38, 2 Chronicles 7:1) dwells (*shakan*) with His people (I Kings 6:13), God dwelling (*shakan*) in the mountain (Psalm 68.16-18, Joel 3:17), as a cloud (Exodus 24:16-18, Exodus 33:9, 1 Kings 8:10-13). It's an experience of God with signs, wonders, and feelings of His presence. God is there and you know it in emotions or in physical demonstration. When a person practices the spiritual disciplines of prayer, worship, repentance, fasting,

confessing sin to God, Christian meditation, contemplation, scripture, holy fellowship, and spiritual meetings, regularly they often enhance this feeling of God. Often the tangible working of God is noticed by missionaries and church planters that take the message of Jesus to new people and places.

## **2 . When YHWH Shammah removes His presence it's terror.**

Jesus said that God “makes His sun rise on the evil and the good” (Matthew 5:45). Part of God’s care for all people, those who identify with Him and those who don’t is giving them families, friendships, tribes, societies, and He provides companionship and belonging, for this life. But those blessings are for life here and now, not guaranteed for everyone that they’ll pass into eternity. According to Jesus, to believe in Him is God’s way to give eternal life (John 3:16). To enter the afterlife after rejecting a relationship with Jesus means to go into eternity without God and without all the good things that God provides for everyone here on earth, including meaningful companionship. Jesus described the absolute loneliness of the afterlife without God as “weeping and gnashing of teeth” 7 times (Luke 13:28, Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30 13:42, 50, 24:51). Separation from God begins the process, though it may be abated in this life, one who dies separated from God will be relegated in loneliness to what Jesus called, “Outer Darkness” (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30). Jesus, for a short while experienced this total isolation. He went through utter and total separation from God and people while He was on the cross when weight of the sins of the world put Him in complete darkness. For the first time in eternity Jesus was separated from the Father. He cried in stark agony, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34, Matthew 27:47).

The word, “gospel” means good news. But it can only be good news if it saves us from the bad news. The worse the bad news, the better the good news. In the un- sugar coated gospel, for one to die in one’s sins means absolute aloneness, rejection, emptiness, lostness, and meaninglessness in the dark because one chose it. If Jesus tells the truth, and one can assume he does (anyone who has risen from the dead has got to know what He’s talking about), companionship, acceptance, fulfillment, belonging, purpose and light come from God and those who know God will have them, forever. To reject God is to reject all of these qualities and to lose them, and be eternally desperately alone.

## **3 . We must let the presence of YHWH Shammah fill us even when we don't feel it.**

When one believes in the presence of God though not feeling it, faith matures. Jesus assured Thomas of that. He had a *Shekinah* experience with Jesus when He felt the wounds on Jesus’ hands and side, but Jesus spoke a blessing over those who wouldn’t have such an opportunity and said, “Blessed are those who do not see, and yet believe” (John 20:29). God’s name of YHWH Shammah is His bold declaration, “You’re NOT alone!” It’s up to us to believe it and live it, come what may.

Insecurity shrinks when one believes this saying, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). “Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel which translated means, God with us” (Matthew 1:22-23). One has YHWH Shammah’s pure presence by being in Jesus Christ. One way to treat loneliness is to be with someone who has as Tim Keller said, “walked in our shoes.” Jesus did walk in our shoes. One could say that Jesus never knew the shame of having failed, sinned, or done wrong. In His life and ministry, that was true. But any of

the pain, shame, guilt, and blame that He didn't experience in His life, He took upon Himself in His death. By His death on the cross and His resurrection He brings God's holy, pure, glorious, loving, powerful, presence to our unholy, impure, common and hateful weakness as one of us. He understands.

For the believer in Christ it is of essential importance to understand His presence. Once I visited a 92 year old brother in Christ who was very close to death. As I was ready to pray for him he said, "You always pray for me. I will now pray for you." He then prayed one of the shortest and most memorable prayers I've heard, "Lord, be with Him." The Psalm writer wrote when 185,000 Assyrian soldiers surrounded Jerusalem, "The Lord of Hosts (YHWH Sabaoth) is with us" (Psalm 46:7). Hebrews 13:5 says "I will neither leave you or forsake you."

The promise of YHWH Shammah can be turned up like the volume on a car radio when we serve Him in world missions, praying, giving, going, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20).

But, one may ask, where was He in the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation when Catholics killed Protestants in the name of Jesus for leaving their church? Protestants killed Catholics in the name of Jesus to keep their territories controlled by their churches. The Anabaptists of which the Brethren in Christ belong to, refused to kill anyone in Jesus' name so Catholics and Protestants both killed them. Those Anabaptists refusing to kill for Christ, were the foundation our movement, went to their deaths forgiving their torturers and murderers, and praised Jesus as they burned and when they were being drowned and were brought up to get breath, so they'd suffer more, they seemed to be in a very close connection to the Lord.

Recently, there are Isis persecutions, attacks on believers in Nigeria, and the new waves of persecution in China, and the 70 year persecution in North Korea. Are these people suffering and dying for an idea or could it be that they really know the God who is there? The cross wasn't some historical reference, but it was a person, Jesus who rose from the dead and declares to be present among those who believe. Is it for real?

One of the most well known illustrations ever describes the YHWH Shammah experience, the footsteps story by Mary Stevenson, "One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky. In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only. This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord, You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?"

The Lord replied, "The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you." Without question, there are times we feel alone but those who know YHWH Shammah are never alone. It's time to ask yourself what you believe. Did He die for you and rise from the dead? Then you're not alone. And for those who know that, like the God who is there, those who know God can, ought to, and quite often are there for those who are trekking through a lonely existence. As God is there for us, and if we've met Him as the God who is there, why should we not be there for one who is aching for someone to be there and to care?