

Psalm 20 What's In A Name?

Isaiah Wilson / General Adult

Introduction

Names are powerful, aren't they? When someone remembers your name, it feels personal, significant. When they forget it, it stings a little. In our culture, we name our children carefully—sometimes after family members, sometimes because we like how it sounds, sometimes because of what the name means.

But in the ancient world, names carried even more weight. A name revealed character, destiny, authority. To know someone's name meant you had a relationship with them. To invoke someone's name meant you were appealing to their authority and power.

I want to ask you a question: **Do you know God's name?**

I don't mean can you say "God". I mean, do you really know His name—or more accurately, His names? Because throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself through multiple names, and each one is like a window into His character, His power, His promises.

Our main text today is Psalm 20, and I want you to notice

something as we read it. This is a prayer—probably prayed before the king went into battle. And watch how many times "the name" appears:

Psalm 20:1-9

"May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble! May the name of the God of Jacob protect you! May he send you help from the sanctuary and give you support from Zion! May he remember all your offerings and regard with favor your burnt sacrifices! May he grant you your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans! May we shout for joy over your salvation, and in the name of our God set up our banners! May the LORD fulfill all your petitions! Now I know that the LORD saves his anointed; he will answer him from his holy heaven with the saving might of his right hand. Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright. O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call."

Did you catch it? Verse 1: "May the **name of the God of Jacob** protect you." Verse 5: "In the **name of our God** set up our banners!" Verse 7: "Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust **in the name of the LORD our God.**"

Three times in nine verses, the psalmist anchors everything on **the name of God.**

When we know God's names, we know His character;

when we know His character, we know what to trust Him for.

So let's dive in.

I. THE CHOICE BEFORE US – Psalm 20:7

Let's start right at the heart of this psalm. Verse 7: "**Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the LORD our God.**"

This is the fundamental choice every human being faces:
What will you trust in?

In the ancient world, chariots were everything. They were the most advanced military technology of the day—the tanks, the fighter jets, the nuclear weapons of their time. If you had chariots, you had power. You had an advantage. You had security.

But the psalmist says, "We don't put our trust there. We trust in something—or rather, **Someone**—better. We trust in **the name of the LORD our God.**"

Now, let me ask you: What are your chariots today? What are you banking on? What gives you that sense of security and

control?

Maybe it's your education—your degrees, your credentials, your expertise. Education is important. Pursue it. But don't let your diploma become your god.

Maybe it's your savings account—your 401(k), your investments, your financial portfolio. Saving is wise. Proverbs commends it. But if your peace of mind rises and falls with the stock market, you're trusting in chariots.

Maybe it's your health—your youth, your strength, your fitness routine. Take care of your body. It's a gift. But health is fragile. Youth fades. If that's where your ultimate hope is, it's misplaced.

Maybe it's your relationships—your spouse, your kids, your friends. Thank God for them. Cherish them. But people are human. People fail. People leave. People die. If your identity is wrapped up entirely in another person, you're standing on shaky ground.

Your job. Your reputation. Your influence. Your abilities. All good things. All gifts from God. But if they're **ultimate** things, they're the wrong things.

Verse 8 tells us what happens when we trust in chariots: "**They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright.**"

Everything you trust in apart from God will eventually collapse. Chariots rust. Horses grow old. Savings evaporate. Health fails. Reputations crumble. People disappoint.

But those who trust in **the name of the LORD**? They rise. They stand firm. Because His name—His character, His power, His promises—never fails.

So the question is: Will you trust in chariots, or will you trust in the name?

II. THE NAMES THAT REVEAL HIS CHARACTER

Now, when the psalmist says "the name of the LORD our God," what does that mean? What is God's name?

Here's the beautiful thing: God doesn't reveal Himself through just one name. Throughout the Old Testament, God progressively unveils His character through multiple names. Each one is like a facet on a diamond—a different angle that reveals more of His glory.

Let me walk you through some of them, and as I do, I want you to see how each name meets a specific human need.

JIREH – "Provider" (Genesis 22:14)

This is the name Abraham gave to God after one of the most difficult tests of faith imaginable. God told Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac—the son of promise. Abraham obeyed, raised the knife, and at the last moment, God provided a ram caught in the thicket.

Abraham called that place "Jireh"—the LORD will provide.

Are you facing a need today? Financial pressure? Relational strain? Spiritual hunger? **Jireh** is the God who provides. And the ultimate provision? Jesus. John 1:29 says, "**Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**" God provided the sacrifice we could never provide ourselves.

RAPHA – "Healer" (Exodus 15:26)

After God delivered Israel from Egypt, He said, "**I am the LORD, your healer.**" Not just a God who *can* heal, but a God whose very nature is to heal.

Are you broken today? Physically sick? Emotionally wounded? Spiritually diseased by sin? **Rapha** is the God who heals. He heals bodies. He heals hearts. He heals souls.

NISSI – "Our Banner" (Exodus 17:15)

Moses built an altar and called it this after God gave Israel victory over the Amalekites. In battle, the banner identified whose side you were on. It rallied the troops. It declared allegiance.

Are you in a battle today? Fighting temptation? Facing opposition? Struggling with doubt or fear? **Nissi** is your banner. You don't fight in your own strength. You fight under His authority. And victory belongs to Him.

This connects directly to Psalm 20:5—"**In the name of our God set up our banners!**"

SHALOM – "Our Peace" (Judges 6:24)

Gideon gave God this name when the angel of the Lord appeared to him. But notice the context: Israel was being oppressed by enemies. Gideon was hiding in a winepress, terrified. Nothing about his circumstances was peaceful.

But God said, "**Peace be with you.**" And Gideon called Him Shalom.

Peace isn't the absence of trouble. It's the presence of God in the middle of trouble.

Are you anxious today? Stressed? Overwhelmed by the chaos? **Shalom** doesn't promise to remove every storm, but He promises to be your peace in it.

ROHI – "Shepherd" (Psalm 23:1)

David wrote, "**The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.**" Not a distant king. Not an impersonal force. A shepherd. Personal. Caring. Leading. Protecting. Providing.

Are you lost? Confused? Unsure of the next step? **Rohi** is your shepherd. He guides you. He knows the path. And He will not leave you wandering.

EL SHADDAI – "God Almighty "or God of the Mountain" (Genesis 17:1)

This is the name God used when He appeared to Abraham and promised to make him the father of many nations—even though his wife was barren and far past childbearing years.

When you feel insufficient, inadequate, ill-equipped for what God is calling you to do—**El Shaddai** is more than enough.

The God of Jacob (Psalm 20:1)

Why does the psalmist call Him "the God of Jacob"? Why not the God of Abraham, the father of faith?

Because Jacob was a mess. His name literally means "deceiver" or "supplanter." He manipulated his brother. He tricked his father. He spent most of his life scheming and struggling.

But God met him. God wrestled with him. God transformed him and renamed him "Israel"—"one who struggles with God and prevails."

When the psalmist says "**the God of Jacob,**" he's reminding us: This is the God who meets you in your mess. You don't have to clean yourself up first. He specializes in struggling, broken, messy people who are being transformed by grace.

Now, do you see what's happening here? Each name reveals a different aspect of God's character. Each one meets a specific need. Each one invites us to trust Him in a particular way.

But here's what I want you to understand: All of these names—every single one—flow from and point back to **one ultimate name.**

III. THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES – YAHWEH

Turn with me to Exodus 3. Moses is standing before the burning bush. God has just told him to go back to Egypt and deliver Israel from slavery. And Moses asks the question we'd all ask:

Exodus 3:13-14 (ESV): *"Then Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, "The God of your fathers has sent me to you," and they ask me, "What is his name?" what shall I say to them?' God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.' And he said, 'Say this to the people of Israel: "I AM has sent me to you.'"*

I AM WHO I AM.

In Hebrew, it's **EHWEH (I am who I am)** we say **YAHWEH (He is who He is)** —the most sacred, most personal, most profound name of God. It's so holy that ancient Jews wouldn't even pronounce it. When they came to it in Scripture, they'd say "Adonai" (Lord) instead.

But what does it mean? **I AM WHO I AM.**

It means God is self-existent. He doesn't depend on

anything or anyone. He doesn't need us. He doesn't need creation. He simply **IS**.

It means God is unchanging. Malachi 3:6 says, "**For I the LORD do not change.**" Hebrews 13:8: "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**"

When everything around you is unstable—when your job is uncertain, when your health is shaky, when relationships are rocky, when the culture is shifting, when you don't know what tomorrow holds—you can trust in **YAHWEH**, because He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

But here's what I really want you to see: **Yahweh is the name that encompasses all the other names.**

When God says "I AM WHO I AM," He's saying, "I am whatever you need Me to be."

Do you need provision? **I AM** Jireh.

Do you need healing? **I AM** Rapha.

Do you need victory? **I AM** Nissi.

Do you need peace? **I AM** Shalom.

Do you need guidance? **I AM** Rohi.

Do you need sufficiency? **I AM** El Shaddai.

Are you a mess? **I AM** the God of Jacob.

I AM WHO I AM. Whatever you need, whenever you need it, however you need it—**I AM.**

This is why Psalm 9:10 says, "**And those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.**"

When you know His name—when you really know who YAHWEH is—you can trust Him completely. Because His name reveals His character, and His character never changes.

Proverbs 18:10: "**The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.**"

When the storms come—and they will come—where do you run? To your chariots? To your own strength? Or do you run to the strong tower of His name?

IV. THE NAME WE CALL ON – Psalm 20:1, 9

Now here's the incredible thing: God's name isn't just given for information. It's given for **invocation**. It's meant to be

called upon.

Look at Psalm 20:1 again: "**May the LORD answer you in the day of trouble!**"

Answer. That means someone is calling.

Verse 9: "**O LORD, save the king! May he answer us when we call.**"

When we call. God's name is given so we can call on it.

CONCLUSION

So let me bring this home.

You have a choice to make. The same choice the psalmist faced in Psalm 20.

Will you trust in chariots, or will you trust in the name?

Will you put your hope in what you can see, control, and measure? Or will you put your hope in the eternal, unchanging, all-sufficient God who reveals Himself as **I AM**?

Here's the promise: "**They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright**" (Psalm 20:8).

Everything you trust in apart from God will collapse. But

those who trust in His name will rise.

So which name do you need to call on today?

Do you need provision? Call on YAHWEH **Jireh**.

Do you need healing? Call on YAHWEH **Rapha**.

Do you need peace? Call on YAHWEH **Shalom**.

Do you need victory? Call on YAHWEH **Nissi**.

Do you need guidance? Call on YAHWEH **Rohi**.

Are you struggling, broken, a mess? Call on **the God of Jacob**.

Do you need to know that God is enough—that He is everything, always, in every circumstance? Call on **YAHWEH**, the great **I AM**.

Stop trusting in your chariots. Start calling on His name.