

Words for Worship: Outline

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A. Biblical Vocabulary of Worship

1. Biblical Vocabulary of Worship “Word Search”

See attached.

2. Words of Worship—Summary

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| a. Seek, worship as a “quest for God” | (Heb. <i>dārash</i>) |
| b. Fear, worship as the “fear of the Lord | (Heb. <i>yārē</i>) |
| c. Serve, worship as loving service | (Heb. <i>`abad</i>) |
| d. Minister, participate in the liturgy | (Heb. <i>shārat</i>) |
| e. Bow down, worship as humility | (Heb. <i>hāwāh</i> or <i>shāhāh</i>) |
| f. Draw near, God is approachable | (Heb. <i>nāgash</i> or <i>qārab</i>) |
| g. Ritual action, worship as form/liturgy | (Grk. <i>latreúō, latreía</i>) |
| h. Service, perform liturgy | (Grk. <i>leitourgéō, leitourgía</i>) |
| i. Bow down, worship, reverence | (Grk. <i>proskunéō</i>) |
| j. Worship, worship, (false) worship | (Grk. <i>sébomai</i>) |

B. Worship as a Word: “Amen”

The word “Amen” is a liturgical formula in Christian worship most often used as a response to prayers and doxologies. The expression is a loan word in English from the Hebrew (אָמֵן) and the Greek (Ἀμήν) and is typically translated “surely!” or “truly!”

The Hebrew word “Amen” is used in several ways in the Old Testament, including:

1. to introduce or confirm a wish or a prophecy (e.g., 1 Kgs. 1:36; Jer. 11:5; 28:6)
2. to accept a curse as a divine word with an active force, or seal a vow (e.g., Deut. 27:15-26; Num. 5:13)
3. to praise God in response to a prayer or doxology (e.g., Neh. 8:6; 1 Chron. 16:36)
4. to ascribe praise to God as a formal response in liturgical texts (e.g., the doxologies at the end of Pss. 41, 72, 89, 106)
5. as an epithet for God himself (e.g., Isa. 65:16; Rev. 3:14).

To utter “Amen” is affirmation, curse, praise—depending upon the context. To say “Amen” is to make something one’s own, “an expression of firm and hearty belief” (Martin Luther). Jesus condemned the “heaping up of empty phrases” in prayer (Matt. 6:7). It is important that we are theologically conscious of what we say when we pray, even with a closing formula like “Amen.” Otherwise, we are little better than those who entreat God with vain repetitions.

The “Amen Corner” was an area off to one side of the pulpit where a group of worshipers led the congregation in responsive “Amens” during the worship service. The practice emerged out of mid-nineteenth century American revivalism. Later the term signified any special place in the church occupied by zealous worshipers.

C. Definitions of Worship

1. MWCD, 10th ed.

worship = reverent honor and homage paid to God or a sacred personage, or to any object regarded as sacred;

formal ceremonial rendering of such homage;

the object of adoring reverence or regard;

to feel an adoring reverence or regard

2. Implications of the word “worship”:

an object of worship

a worshiper

activity/ritual

“existential” involvement (feelings, attitudes, will, heart, mind)

3. Worship Defined Theologically

a. Temple

“To worship is:

To quicken the *conscience* by the holiness of God,
To feed the *mind* with truth of God,
To purge the *imagination* by the beauty of God,
To open the *heart* to the love of God,
To devote the *will* to the purpose of God.”

[W. Temple, The Hope of a New World. Macmillan, 1942, p. 30.]

b. Flynn

To this I would add the importance of “concretizing” our worship with appropriate worship actions, engaging our bodies (including the senses) in the worship response; what Leslie Flynn calls the reciprocal relationship between “bodily action” and “soul faith.”

[L. Flynn, Worship: Together We Celebrate. Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1983, p. 42.]

c. Tozer

“Now because we were created to worship, worship is the normal employment of moral beings.”

Worship means...

1) “to feel in the heart; that’s first, feel it in the heart.”

2) “to express in some appropriate manner what you feel”...” and what will be expressed? A humbling but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder.”

3) Avoid “the evangelical rationalism which tries to explain everything and takes the mystery out of life and the mystery out of worship. There must be that awe upon our spirits...that stands silent and breathless or kneels in the presence of that awful Wonder, that Mystery, that unspeakable Majesty...”

4) we learn about worship from the Scriptures

5) we are restored to a place of worship by Jesus Christ—to worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness, to spend our time in awesome wonder and adoration of God, feeling and expressing it, and letting it get into our labors and doing nothing except as an act of worship to Almighty God through his Son Jesus Christ.”

[A. W. Tozer, Worship: The Missing Jewel. Camp Hill, Penn.: Christian Publications, 1992.]

d. Schaper

worship is “the expression of a relationship in which God the Father reveals himself and his love in Christ and by his Holy Spirit administers grace, to which we respond in faith, gratitude, and obedience.”

[Robert Schaper, In His Presence. Nelson, 1984, p. 13.]

e. Webber

“Worship represents through re-presentation the mission of God (*missio dei*) to rescue creatures and creation (for God so loved the world). God’s creation has been dislocated by sin and the powers of evil. God chooses to “rescue” creatures and creation. God becomes involved in the history of Israel to foreshadow his salvation which is fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession and coming again of Jesus Christ to destroy all powers and set up his reign/kingdom over all creation.”

“Worship is not a “love affair,” but a life lived in the gospel in a complete obedience to God under the present reign of Christ. The one or two hour worship we do in church rehearses the *missio dei* and calls us to obedience.” Want to know if you have worshiped? Ask: Has my worship led me to live in obedience to God. If your answer is “yes,” then you are a worshiper.”

[Robert Webber, Ancient-Future Faith Column, Feb. 2003.]

D. Names of God in Worship

During Old Testament times, names described the being, existence, character, personality, reputation, and authority of individuals. This meant the name of a thing or a person embodied the reality of that entity in one sense. For this reason, the process of

naming a child was connected with religious ritual in most ancient societies because the ascribing of a name was important to one's identity, existence, and destiny (e.g., God changed Abram's name to Abraham, Gen. 17:5).

Likewise, the changing of a name usually signified a corresponding change of fortune, character, or circumstance in that individual's life (e.g., Jacob's name was changed to Israel after his encounter with God, Gen. 32:28; Naomi chose the name Mara after the death of her husband and sons, Ruth 1:20).

More drastic was the "forgetting" of a name or "erasing" a name—since such an act denied existence and blotted out the memory of one cursed in this fashion (e.g., Pss. 9:5; 109:13). The cultural emphasis on the process of naming and names explains importance of genealogical records in ancient world (e.g., Gen. 5), the expunging of names in historical records (cf. Exod. 32:32; Ezek. 13:9), and even the prophetic rebuke of the practice of idolatry (Zech. 13:2).

Given this context, it is only natural that God would choose to reveal himself to the Hebrews using a variety of divine names and titles. So when people encounter God in OT narratives, we should not be surprised that aspects of his nature, character, personality, and work are disclosed through names and titles specific to the historical circumstance of the his people (cf. Exod. 3:14-15; 6:3; 15:3; 20:7). In order to know God more fully, it becomes important to understand the names he used to communicate himself and his purposes to humanity. A list of the more prominent OT divine names and titles is included below:

1. God (Heb. *Elohim*): often regarded the plural of majesty for God in the OT, the name signifies speaks of his role as the transcendent Creator of all that exists (Gen. 1:2).
2. God Most High (Heb. *El-Elyon*): This name indicates Gods' superior position above all the other gods of the nations (Gen. 14:18-20).
3. LORD (Heb. *YHWH* or *Yahweh*): The "I AM" God of the burning bush episode in Moses' call to deliver Israel from slavery in Egypt (Exod. 3:14-15). The name signified God would be an inexhaustible resource for accomplishing all that he had charged Moses to do. The name is also associated with God's covenant with Israel and speaks to the personal and relational nature of his character.
4. Lord (Heb. *Adonai*): Revealed God as owner and master of all his creation (Josh. 3:11).
5. God Almighty (Heb. *El-Shaddai*): The name recalls God's power in creating and sustaining all life (Gen. 17:1). The name literally means "God of the mountains" and later it became associated with the awesome display of divine might at Mt. Sinai (Exod. 19).

6. God Everlasting (Heb. *El-Olam*): This name emphasizes God's immensity and eternity (Gen. 21:33).
7. God, the One Who Sees (Heb. *El-Roeh*): The name reveals God's beneficent omniscience, a God who sees the needs of his people and cares enough to respond with help and deliverance (Gen. 16:13).
8. God of the Covenant (Heb. *El-Berith*): A reminder of God's immanence as a covenant maker with humanity, his faithfulness as a covenant keeper, and the security found in relationship with God (Judg. 9:46).
9. God, the God of Israel (Heb. *El-Elohe-Israel*): The name attests God's sovereignty and providential watch and care over Israel as his elect people (Gen. 33:19-20).
10. The LORD our Provision (Heb. *YHWH/Yahweh-Yireh* or *Jehovah Jireh*): A name that witnesses God's ability to sustain the faithful in trial and testing (Gen. 22:13-14).
11. The LORD Heals (Heb. *YHWH/Yahweh-Rapha*): A name revealing God's potent curative powers to overcome sin and disease in the fallen creation (Exod. 15:26).
12. The LORD our Banner (Heb. *YHWH/Yahweh-Nissi*): A reminder that God himself goes before his people in battle and in all of life (Exod. 17:15).
13. The LORD is Peace (Heb. *YHWH/Yahweh-Shalom*): The righteous may rest secure in God (Judg. 6:24).
14. The LORD our Shepherd (Heb. *YHWH/Yahweh-Ra'ah*): The most poignant of all the divine names—God tends to his people like a shepherd for his sheep (Ps. 23:1).
15. The LORD our Righteousness (Heb. *YHWH/Yahweh-Tsidkenu*): The name exalts the perfection and impeccable character of God (Jer. 23:6).
16. The LORD is Present (Heb. *YHWH/Yahweh-Shammah*): The name affirms the omnipresence of God as the personal Creator and Redeemer of the world and all people (Ezek. 48:35).
17. The LORD of Hosts (Heb. *YHWH/Yahweh-Sabaoth*): The name designates God as the creator and leader of the angel armies of heaven (1 Sam. 17:45).

Names for God: Bibliography

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