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Symbolism of Names and of the Word "Name" in the Bible

Simbolizem imen in besede ‚ime' v Svetem pismu

Abstract: In every civilization, there is a clear tendency for people to find a proper name for things, places, human persons, angels and gods / God. Nearly 4,000 geographical and personal names can be found in the Bible of the Old and New Testaments. The main aim of the paper is to show aspects of the interpretation of the meaning of names as symbols, with special attention to the use of the word "name," which appears in the Bible in very large numbers and in various roles in connection with God. Because the God of the Bible is the highest spiritual and personal being, working in intimate personal dialogue with individual human beings and with the chosen people as a whole, it is often emphasized that no individual name alone can capture and properly express God's essence. Therefore, God's names are enriched with many titles and attributes that express the fundamental attributes of God. The search for the meaning of names, titles and attributes is usually not carried out in isolation, but within the direct linguistic and literary context of the use of names. The second stage of the contextual approach in finding the meaning of names, titles, and attributes is an overview of intertextual relationships across all available sources within ancient Israel and in neighbouring cultures. The contextual approach enables the discovery of content and form relationships between related names, titles and attributes that form individual semantic fields. The most basic structure of associating related names, titles, and attributes is the stylistic form of parallelism. At the hermeneutic level, the search for the meaning of names, titles and attributes is based on the principle of analogy. The article is an introductory contribution to the long-term research of the material of biblical onomastics and the history of discussions on the fundamental role and symbolic value of names, titles and attributes. The originality is already shown in the fact that a comprehensive treatment of God's names, titles and attributes has not yet been carried out.

Keywords: names, titles, appellatives, attributes, geographical names, personal names, the word "name", role of angels, semantic fields of names and attributes, context, intertextual relations

Povzetek: V vsaki civilizaciji obstaja jasna težnja, da ljudje za stvari, kraje, človeške osebe, angele in bogove/Boga najdejo ustrezno ime. V Svetem pismu Stare in Nove zaveze najdemo blizu 4000 zemljepisnih in osebnih imen. Glavni cilj prispevka je, prikazati vidike interpretacije pomena imen kot simbolov, s posebno pozornostjo na rabi besede ‚ime‘, ki v Svetem pismu nastopa v zelo velikem številu in v različnih vlogah v povezavi z Bogom. Ker je Bog Svetega pisma najvišje duhovno in osebno bitje, ki deluje v intimnem osebnem dialogu s posameznimi človeškimi osebami in z izvoljenim ljudstvom kot celoto, se pogosto poudarja, da nobeno ime samo na sebi ne more zajeti in ustrezno izraziti božjega bistva. Zato so božja imena obogatena s številnimi nazivi in atributi, ki izražajo temeljne božje lastnosti. Iskanje pomena imen, nazivov in atributov pa praviloma ne poteka izolirano, ampak v okviru neposrednega jezikovnega in literarnega konteksta rabe imen. Druga stopnja kontekstualnega pristopa v iskanju pomena imen, nazivov in atributov je pregled intertekstualnih razmerij v prerezu vseh razpoložljivih virov znotraj starega Izraela in v sosednih kulturah. Kontekstualni pristop omogoča odkrivanje vsebinskih in oblikovnih razmerij med sorodnimi imeni, nazivi in atributi, ki tvorijo posamezna semantična polja. Najosnovnejša struktura povezovanja sorodnih imen, nazivov in atributov je slogovna oblika paralelizma. Na hermenevtični ravni pa se iskanje pomena imen, nazivov in atributov opira še na načelo analogije. Članek je uvodni prispevek v okviru dolgoročne raziskave gradiva biblične onomastike in zgodovine diskusij o temeljni vlogi in simbolni vrednosti imen, nazivov in atributov. Izvirnost se kaže že v dejstvu, da celovita obravnava božjih imen, nazivov in atributov doslej še ni bila izvedena.

Ključne besede: imena, nazivi, atributi, geografska imena, osebna imena, beseda ‚ime‘, vloga angelov, semantična polja imen in atributov, kontekst, interkontekstualna razmerja

1.   Introduction[1]

The importance of divine, human and geographic names within the Bible is not demonstrated only by their linguistic structure and basic meaning but also by the use of the word "name" itself and its synonyms: "fame," "renown," "memory," "memorial," "remembrance," etc. The word "name" is well attested in the various Semitic languages with a broad range of meanings in relation to things, humans and gods/God. In Hebrew, there is the word *šēm*, in Aramaic *šēm* or *šûm*, in Ugaritic *šm*, in Akkadian *šumu*. Since no Semitic language has a form with three radicals for this word it is most likely a biconsonantal noun. The word has been linked also with the root *wšm* as in Arabic *wašāma*, "to brand, to mark." In the Hebrew Bible,

the word designates "name, reputation, fame." In post-biblical Hebrew, it means "name, mark, title, nature, denomination." Often it is used as a designation of God, and later the word *haššēm*, "the name," is used as a substitute for the name of God, especially for the tetragrammaton *yhwh*. The word has been linked with the Semitic root *šmh*, "to be high," suggesting the sense of "majesty" and "excellence." The common idea linked with the word is that of a "mark to distinguish."

The common Greek term for "name" is *onoma* (ὄνομα), used also in the LXX rendering for the Hebrew *šēm* and its Aramaic equivalent *šûm*. The LXX translators render also the Hebrew *zēker* by *onoma*, when used in this sense (Ps 30:5), but normally by *mnḗmē* (Pss 97:12; 145:7; Prov 10:7; Eccl 9:5), by *mnēmósunon* (cf. Ex 3:15; Job 18:17; Pss 102:12; 135:3; Hos 12:5), and by *mneía* (Isa 26:8). The common Latin term for "name" is *nomen*. The Indo-European languages have deposited their version of the same word: Old English *nama*, *noma* and *namo*; Old Frisian *nama* and *noma*; Old Saxon *namo*; Old High German *namo*; Old Norse *nafin* and *namn*; Gothic *namo*; etc. (Nicolaisen 1996, 384). Discussions of the relationship between *names* and *words (appellatives)* have led to an agreement that proper names denote, i.e., exclude, isolate and individualise a particular designation, whereas words (appellatives) connote, i.e., include, comprehend and embrace it (Nicolaisen 1996, 391).[2]

This distinction is very helpful for understanding the important function of names, especially proper names, as items with identifying and individualizing reference: "Proper names are not simply ordinary words, but are by definition lexical items with the distinction of having definite and unique reference qualities and functions, and are therefore classified as those parts of speech known as proper nouns. The definition of the proper name limits the field of proper name lexicography." (Möller 1996, 324) Names are specific categories of words in any language. Their role of identification and individualization of persons and places made in the history of humankind great impact on all levels of personal and social life. It follows that "the interest of names can be linguistic or philosophical, historical or contemporary, theoretical or practical, legal or political, ethnographic or religious; and in each of these and other cases, interest can concentrate on a single language, a group of languages, or a family of them. On the other hand, some onomastic problems are of a universal, cross-linguistic character." (Eichler et al. 1996, xi)

The scope of this contribution is limited to dealing with the general issues of naming things, humans and God, to dimensions of the meaning of the term "name" in the Old Testament and to the words and symbols of names, appellatives and attributes as used in relation to God. The article is set as part of a long--term study of the place and the meaning of God's names, titles, appellatives and attributes in the Bible and in the main streams of biblical hermeneutics.

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[2]   For general presentations of the word 'name' in the Bible, see Brongers 1965; Barr 1969; Ross 1997, 147–151; van der Woude 1997, 1348–1367; Bietenhard 1995, 242–283; Reiterer; Fabry; Ringgren 2006, 128–176.

2. Naming as a Mark to Distinguish in Acts of Creation and Redemption

In the *Oxford Dictionary of First Names* (1996) we read the statement:

> "A person's given name is a badge of cultural identity. Cultural identity is closely allied to religious identity: religious affiliation and native language are often key factors, overtly or subliminally, in the choice of an appropriate name for a new member of a family. Even agnostics and atheists typically choose names for their children that are common among the sect or religion which they may have rejected but in whose midst they live, rather than totally alien or invented names." (Hanks and Hodges 1996, vii)[3]

In the Hebrew Bible and elsewhere in the ancient Near East, the name is inextricably bound up with existence and represents a distinguishing mark of its bearer. Names are used with respect to things, to humans and to gods/God. They make it possible to differentiate beings and things and to order them. The most universal significance of the name is signalled in the narratives on the creation and the primordial time. The Babylonian epic of creation *Enūma Elish* opens:

> "When on high no name was given to heaven,
> Nor below was the netherworld called by name,
> Primeval Apsu was their progenitor,
> And matrix-Tiamat was she who bore them all,
> They were mingling their waters together,
> No cane brake was intertwined nor thicket matted close.
> When no gods at all had been brought forth,
> None called by names, none destinies ordained,
> Then were the gods formed within the(se two).
> Lahmu and Lahamu were brought forth, were called by name."
> (1.1-10; Hallo 1997, 391)

The Biblical narrative of creation (Elohist/Yahvist) does not associate the act of naming with the creation of gods but with the creation of things. The first human being, Adam, is invited by the Creator to name created things (Gen 2:19-20): "So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names

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3   Jürgen Schwenden attributes to names the ability to express the essence of the bearers of names. In the "Vorwort" of his book *Biblische Eigennamen* he writes "Namen haben in den Schriften des Thanach eine hervorragende Bedeutung – seien es die Personennamen – seien es die Orts- und Gebietsnamen – seien es die Namen von Gottheiten. Für sie alle gilt, daß Name nicht 'Schall und Rauch' ist, sondern daß im Namen über den Träger eben dieses Namens und/oder über seine Herkunft eine wesentliche Aussage gemacht wird. Das ist nicht nur nach außen hin von Belang, sondern hat eine zutiefst innere Bedeutung für das Verständnis eines Menschen und für sein Handeln – und zuweilen auch für den Ort, an dem er lebt." (1995, 1)

to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field." The act of naming things opens up specific divine and human dimensions for communication and for fellowship.

God himself reveals to Moses his Name at the burning bush. The narrative of the dialogue between the revealing God in Moses reads:

But Moses said to God,

> "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors 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." He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you': This is my name forever (*zeh-šěmî lě'ôlām*),and this my memorial (*zikrî*) for all generations." (Gen 3:13-15)

In verse 15 is expressed the close connection of *šēm*, "name," with the word zēker, "memory, memorial." This connection indicates a memorializing, making mention of or meditating upon the name (cf. Ps 20:8). This connection is effectively presented in the meeting of Moses with God at the moment of renewal of the covenant at Sinai: "The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name (*wayyiqrā' běšēm*), 'The Lord'. The LORD passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious ...'" (Ex 34:5-6)

The narrative of Jacob's wrestle with God at Peniel (Gen 32:22-31) "a man wrestled with him until daybreak" (v. 24). When the day was breaking the mysterious man wanted to go, but Jacob said to him: "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." This demand opens the dialogue:

> "So he said to him, 'What is your name?' And he said: 'Jacob.' Then the man said, 'You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.' Then Jacob asked him, 'Please tell me your name.' But he said. 'Why is it that you ask my name?' And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, 'For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved'." (Gen 32:27-30)

Yoel Elitzur states about the origin of place names in some events: "A widespread phenomenon in the Bible is the naming of places after certain events that took place there; but with very few exceptions this represents a secondary interpretation of an existing name which had survived accurately for generations." (Elitzur 2004, 2)

In another place in the Hebrew Bible we find a prophetic poetic exclamation:

> "Lift up your eyes on high and see:
> who created these?

He who brings out their host by number,
calling them all by name …" (Isa 40:26)

Within the poem Isa 56:1-8 we find a divine assurance to groups of exiles who returned to the Holy Land from Babylon:

"To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,
I will give in my house and within my walls
a monument and a name (*yād wāšēm*)
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name (*šēm ʿôlām*)
which shall not be cut off." (Isa 56:4-5)

It is noteworthy that in the State of Israel the phrase *yād wāšēm* was chosen as the name of the memorial in honour of all who perished in the holocaust.

In a logical inner relationship with the conscience, God gives existence to all things by naming them to stand passages expressing the idea that to cut off a name means to end the existence of its bearer (1 Sam 24:21; 2 Kings 14:27; Isa 14:22; Zeph 1:4; Job 18:17; Ps 83:4). Everyone who is called by the name of the Lord is his possession and therefore comes under his authority, his protection and his mercy (Deut 28:10; Isa 43:7; 63:19; Dan 9:18-19; 2 Chr 7:14). All the more strong is the desire to be called by God's name and thus to survive and to exist forever. According to the closing eschatological passage in the book of Isaiah God promises:

"For as the new heavens and the new earth
which I will make,
shall remain before me, says the Lord;
so shall your descendants and your name remain." (Isa 66:22)

In his work *Paradise Lost*, John Milton refers to Adam who was able to give names to beasts and birds (Gen 2:20) and says that he understood their nature:

"I named them, as they passed, and understood
Their nature, with such knowledge God endued
My sudden apprehension: but in these
I found not what methought I wanted still;
And to the heavenly vision thus presumed.
O by what name, for thou above all these,
Above mankind, or aught than mankind higher,
Surpassest far my naming, how may I
Adore thee, author of this universe,
And all this good to man, for whose well being
So amply, and with hands so liberal

> Thou hast provided all things: but with me
> I see not who partakes. […]" (Milton 2008, 8.352–364)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) expressed himself on the meaning of names in his work *Faust* in Faust's reply to Margareta's question whether he believes in God:

> "MARGARETA. Then you don't believe?
> FAUST. My sweet beloved child, don't misconceive
> My meaning! Who dares say God's name?
> Who dares to claim
> That he believes in God?
> And whose heart is so dead
> That he has ever boldly said:
> No, I do not believe?
> Embracing all things,
> Holding all things in being,
> Does He not hold and keep
> You, me, even Himself?
> Is not the heavens' great vault up there on high,
> And here below, does not the earth stand fast?
> Do everlasting stars, gleaming with love,
> Not rise above us through the sky?
> Are we not here and gazing eye to eye?
> Does all this not besiege
> Your mind and heart,
> And weave in unseen visibility
> All round you its eternal mystery?
> Oh, fill your heart right up with all of this,
> And when you'are brimming over with the bliss
> Of such a feeling, call it what you like!
> Call it joy, or your heart, or love, or God!
> I have no name for it. The feeling's all there is:
> The name's mere noise and smoke–what does it do
> But cloud the heavenly radiance?" (von Goethe 2008, Part I, 3430–3458)

Great poets were well aware of limited possibilities to understand the *nature* or effectiveness of created things which bear their names. They are aware that no name can adequately express the essence, omnipotence, omniscience and holiness of God. As James Barr states: "There is a difficulty in principle that the name represents the character of the being an existence of the bearer." (1969, 21) Many explanations of names rest in fact on very weak foundations. The tendency to name things, humans and gods/God helps to overcome "primitive anonymity." The search for identity leads to the maximal potential of naming things, humans, and especially gods/God. As Hans Bietenhard states:

"In contrast to the primitive anonymity of the gods is another stage of religion, namely that which heaps as many names as possible on the god which is worshipped. On the magical view that the utterance of the right word, in this case the use of the appropriate divine name, is an indispensable condition for achieving the desired effect, "names are heaped up, and it is felt better to go too far than to run the risk to missing the decisive word. [...] This heaping up of names for the one god can easily lead religion to the conclusion that language no longer has the resources to name the God adequately. [...] This is not philosophical resignation; the religious thinker is pressing forward in profound faith to acceptance of the θεῖον and θεός." (Bietenhard 1995, 249)

In spite of all limitations, there is the tendency to name God and created things to denote essential properties of God and humans. The most conspicuous result of this tendency is a very great number of proper names, appellatives and attributes forming "onomastic fields" according to some criteria of appropriateness. It seems to be important to note that "names, despite their individuating function, do not exist in isolation; quite the contrary, they are part of textured structures in which they hone each other in mutual interdependence. They belong to a variety of discrete onomastic 'fields'." (Nicolaisen 1995, 389; see also Moser 1957; 1958; Fleischer 1962; Nicolaisen 1982)

A greater number of synonym and antonym common and proper names, appellatives and attributes, referred to God in various literary kinds and genres, express many aspects of God's properties, but in the final analysis, they cannot properly express the essence of God. Ludwig Wittgenstein points to the limits of language in any attempt to express the essence of God and humans, because "absolute or ethical values" are nonsensical. He explains: "I see now that these nonsensical expressions were not nonsensical because I had not yet found the correct expressions, but that their nonsensicality was their very essence. For all I wanted to do with them was just to go beyond the tendency and I believe the tendency of all men who ever tried to write or talk Ethics or Religion was to run against the boundaries of language. This running against the walls of our cage is perfectly, absolutely hopeless." (Wittgenstein 1965, 12)

It was already Buchanan Gray who classified the great number of Biblical proper names into four classes of names:

I.   Compound names in which one element denotes some form of kindred: father, brother, son, uncle, father-in-law, mother, son and daughter.
II.   Animal names.
III.   Compound names containing an element denoting some form of dominion: king (*melek*), lord (*ba'al*, *'ādôn*).
IV.   Compound names containing a divine name (*'ēl*, *yah*, *šadday*). (Gray 1896, 18)

This methodological criterion of classification is helpful also for making the classification of hundreds of appellatives and/or attributes contained in the Bible of the Old and the New Testament in relation to God. In this case, classification is not made so much on the ground of mere external resemblance, but rather on the thematic

ground: the class of names expressing God's power; the class of names expressing God's personal feeling towards humans. So we can form "fields" of appellatives or attributes: the "field" of appellatives or attributes denoting God's power; the "field" of appellatives or attributes denoting God's righteousness and justice[4]; the "field" of appellatives or attributes denoting God's grace, compassion and forgiveness[5]; the "field" of appellatives or attributes denoting God's wisdom,[6] etc.

In a long-term project of God's attributes in the Bible, the semantic analysis of classes of God's attributes will be based on the examination of attributes according to their sources, their basic form of parallelism,[7] and their thematic relationships.

3. Aspects of the Meaning of the Word "Name" in the Old and the New Testament

In the Old Testament, the word *šēm*, "name," occurs approximately 770x in the singular and 84x in the plural. The word has the meanings of name, mark, title, denomination and nature and denotes essential being with regard to both humans and God. The name contains something of the character of the one who bore it. In Eccl 6:10 we read: "Whatever has come to be has already been named (*niqrā' šĕmô*), and it is known what human beings are, and that they are not able to dispute with those who are stronger." When used of God, certain passages of the word "name" come close to the sense of "being, presence." God has promised: "In every place where I cause my name to be remembered (*'azkîr 'et-šĕmî*) I will come to you and bless you." (Ex 20:24) The testament of Deuteronomy contains God's demand: "You shall seek the place that the Lord your God will choose out of all your tribes as his habitation to put his name there" (Deut 12:5); God will choose a place "as a dwelling for his name" (Gen 12:11).

The use of the word in various biblical texts reflects the oral-formulaic language. Right at the beginning of the existence of humankind "people began to invoke the name of the Lord" (Gen 4:26); in Bethel Abram "built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord" (Gen 12:8); Abram "called on the name of the Lord" (Gen 13:4; 21:33; 26:25); at Mount Carmel, Elijah proposes to the prophets of Baal: "You call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the Lord …" (1 Kings 18:24-26) Naaman thought that Elisha would come out, "and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God" (2 Kings 5:11). God addresses a word of judgment "to a nation that did not call on my name" (Isa 65:1). The oracle of judgment on Assyria proclaims: "See, the name of the Lord comes from far away, burning with his anger

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[4] Dimensions of God's righteousness and justice are extensively treated in my monograph study *God's Righteousness and Justice in the Old Testament* (2022). The presentation of righteousness and justice in the New Testament remains to be done.

[5] Many aspects of this 'field' of attributes of God's grace, compassion and forgiveness in the Old Testament are already treated in my above mentioned and other studies.

[6] Important aspects of the 'field' of God's wisdom are treated by Matjaž 2019 and Palmisano 2019.

[7] For basic forms of parallelism, see Avsenik Nabergoj 2019, 867–872.

…" (Isa 30:27) The name of God is in direct contrast to the pride of human forces.

In close connection with *šēm* occurs the noun *zēker*, "remembrance, memory, memorial," derived from the verb *zākar*, "to remember." In Akkadian *zikru* means "name" and *zakāru* can mean "to name, to mention." The nouns *šēm* and *zēker* often occur in parallel constructions. According to Ex 3:14-15 God revealed to Moses his name by saying: "Say this to the people of Israel, 'The Lord, 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 (*zeh-šĕmî*) for ever, and thus I am to be remembered (*wzeh zikrî*) throughout all generations." (Cf. Job 18:17; Prov 10:7; Isa 26:8). The psalmist proclaims: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God (*wa'ănahnû bĕšēm-yhwh 'ĕlōhênû nazkîr*)." (Ps 20:8)[8] The pair is used also in the structure of antithetical parallelism: "The memory of the righteous (*zēker ṣaddîq*) is a blessing, but the name of the wicked (*wĕšem rĕšā'îm*) will rot." (Prov 10:7)

The use of the word "name" in a contrasting sense reflects the central status of God as the holy one. On the one hand, God's name is an object of memorializing, praise, thanksgiving and worship, on the other hand of profanation. The psalmist proclaims: "We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks; your name is near." (Ps 75:2) Another psalmist prays that God should pour his anger on the nations and the kingdoms "that do not call on your name" (Ps 79:6 = Jer 10:25). When the response to God's revelation is negative in any sense, God's holy name is profaned (Ezek 36:20-21; Am 2:7), defiled (Ezek 43:8), reviled (Ps 74:10,8, 18) or despised (Isa 52:5). In such situations God reacts with judgment, as proclaimed in Isaiah 59:19:

> "So those in the west shall fear the name of the LORD,
> and those in the east, his glory;
> for he will come like a pent-up stream
> that the wind of the LORD drives on."

In connection with David God declares: "my servant David may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen to put my name" (1 Kings 11:36); Mount Zion is declared as "the place of the name of the LORD of hosts" (Isa 18:7). The temple is built as a habitation for the name of God (2 Sam 7:13; 2 Chr 20:8). The temple is the dwelling place of God's name (1 Kings 8:27-30:3; Ps 74:7). So the psalmist can pray: "Save me, O God, by your name, and vindicate me by your might." (Ps 54:3) Of special relevance is God's promise for the king: "My faithfulness and steadfast love shall be with him; and in my name his horn shall be exalted." (Ps 89:25)

The revealed nature and character of God is the basis for calling upon the name of God. There are passages of appeal to God "for your/his name's sake." In Ps 25:11 the penitent prays: "For your name's sake (*lĕma'an šimkā*), O LORD, pardon

my guilt, for it is great." (cf. Jer 14:7, 21) Similarly prays the petitioner in Ps 31:4: "You are indeed my rock and my fortress; for your name's sake lead me and guide me." Similarly does the petitioner in Ps 143:11: "For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life. In your righteousness bring me out of trouble."

God has chosen also angels to represent his name. In the account of the conquest of Canaan, God promises: "I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him (*kî šěmî běqirbô*)." (Ex 23:20-21; cf. 33:14) In the act of creation, God gives to Adam authority to name created things:

Then the LORD God said,

> "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner. So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them (*mah-yiqrā'-lô*); and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name (*hû' šěmô*). The man gave names (*wayyiqrā' 'ādām šěmôt*) to all cattle and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rip that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; this one shall be called Woman (*'iššāh*), for out of Man (*kî mē'îš*) this one was taken.'" (Gen 2:18-23)

This narrative is recalled in the prophecy of consolation in Isa 40:25-26:

> "To whom then will you compare me,
> [...] or who is my equal? Says the Holy One.
> Lift up your eyes on high and see:
> [...] Who created these?
> He who brings out their host and numbers them,
> [...] calling them all by name (*lěkullām běšēm yiqrā'*);
> Because he is great in strength,
> [...] mighty in power,
> [...] not one is missing."

The more the experience of human transience is felt, the more God's transcendence is postulated. The "name" of God represents something wholesome and salutary. God's name is glorious and awesome (Deut 28:58), great (Jer 10:6; 44:26; Ps 76:2), majestic (Ps 8:2), holy (Lev 20:3; 22:32; Isa 57:15; Ezek 20:39; 36:20-22; 39:7, 22; 39:7-8; Am 2:7; Pss 33:21; 103:1; 105:3; 106:47; 146:21; 1 Chr 16:10, 35; 29:16), and jealous (Ezek 20:9, 14, 22; 39:7, 25). The people who know the name of God can appeal to him. This thought is particularly conspicuous in Solomon's

prayer for the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:27-30). The passage contains God's decision: "My name shall be there."

The name of God is frequently used as a synonym for God himself. In this sense God's name is an object of fear (Ps 61:6), of love (Isa 56:6; Pss 5:12; 69:37; 119:l32), of blessing (Job 1:21; Pss 96:3; 103:1), of thanks (Ps 54:6; 1 Chr 16:35), of praise (2 Sam 22:50; Pss 7:17; 9:2; 18:50). To know the name of God means to know God himself in the framework of his revelation (Isa 52:6l; Jer 29:25; Pss 9:11; 91:14). We find also one place in the Old Testament where "the Name" alone is used to denote God: "The Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name (*'et-haššēm*) in a curse. And they brought him to Moses …" (Lev 24:11) God's command to Moses is: "One who blasphemes the name (*šēm*) shall be put to death." (Lev 24:16) The LXX and Vg render "the name (*šēm*)" with explicit reference to God: "the name of the Lord (*to onoma kuríou*; *nomen Domini*)."

The formula "for his (my) name's sake" expresses the idea that God acts in accordance with his revealed character and reputation. In addition to petitions for help or mercy we find also the doctrine expressed by the psalmist that God saved Israel "for his great name's sake (*ba'ăbûr šěmô haggādôl*)" (1 Sam 12:22); "for my name's sake (*lěma'an šěmî*)" (Isa 48:9; Ezek 20:9, 14, 22, 44); "for my own sake (*lěma'anî*)" (Isa 48:11). The prophet Ezekiel has to announce to the house of Israel:

> "Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake (*lō' lěma'ankem*), O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name (*kî 'im-lěšēm-qodšî*), which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. I will sanctify my great name (*wěqiddaštî 'et-šěmî haggādôl*), which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them; and the nations shall know that I am the LORD, says the Lord GOD, when through you I display my holiness before their eyes." (Ezek 36:22-23)

The belief in God of salvation inspired also prayers in direct address to God "for your name's sake (*lěma'an šimkā*)" (Pss 25:11; 31:4; 143:11; Jer 14:7, 21). God's commitment to Israel could not be broken without a slur being cast on his reputation. God remains constant in his self-revelation and promises. Since God has chosen to accomplish his redemptive purpose for mankind through the election of Israel, he will not allow the nation to be destroyed. This doctrine presupposes the principle of revelation and God's unity, as declared by the prophet Zechariah: "And the LORD will become king over all the earth; on that day the LORD will be one and his name one." (Zech 14:9)

Some passages report of the negative aspect of a given name. Esau used the realistic popular etymology of the name of his brother Jacob: "Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times." (Gen 27:36) Esau refers the name Jacob to the root *'qb*, "to seize at the heel, to beguile," and designates the patriarch as a cheat (cf. Gen 25:26), but this reveals a misunderstanding of this name which originally probably meant "May God protect." But the name

can be also changed on the ground of a new reality, commission or purpose. Jacob's name is changed into a name of honour, the name Israel: "You will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed" (Gen 32:28). The changing of the patriach's name from Jacob to Israel is reported once more: "God said to him, 'Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.' So he was called Israel." (Gen 35:10) The name of Israel is interpreted freely, in contrary to its original linguistic meaning ("May God rule"). It is obvious that the narrator's main interest is not the exact etymological interpretation of the name but its change that indicates a change in the personality of Jacob.

In connection with the narrative of David's meeting with the clever and beautiful Abigail in the Judean desert, we find expressed the idea that people must be as their names indicate. The explanation is expressed with literary artistry. Abigail explains the meaning of the name of her husband Nabal who combined foolishness and churlishness by using the simple wordplay: "My lord, do not take seriously this il-natured fellow, Nabal; for as his name is, so is he; Nabal (*nābāl*) is his name, and folly (*něbālāh*) is with him." (1 Sam 25:25) The woman of good intelligence finds an excuse for her husband in his lack of wisdom.[9] Raymond Abba identifies the name with the character of the bearers of the name, when he explains this and some other biblical examples:

> "The Name in the OT is the essence of personality, the expression of innermost being. Esau says of his unscrupulous brother: 'Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times' (Gen. 27:36). As such, a name is regarded as possessing an inherent power which exercises a constraint upon its bearer: he must conform to his essential nature as expressed in his name. Thus Abigail makes excuse for her husband: 'As his name is, so is he; Nabal [fool] is his name, and folly is with him' (I Sam. 25:25). Hence a change of name accompanies a change in character. The changing of the patriarch's name from Jacob to Israel indicates a change in the personality of the man himself (Gen. 32:28)." (Abba 1962, vol. 3, 501b–502a)[10]

Human personalities act in the name of God; then they participate in divine authority. David, for instance, confronted Goliath "in the name of the LORD of hosts" (1 Sam 17:45). On the other hand, humans may participate in human authority by acting in the name of their lords (1 Sam 25:5, 9; 1 Kings 21:8; Esth 2:22; 3:12; 8:8, 10). And finally, they may act in their own name, i.e., in their own authority (Jer 29:25). If someone's name is invoked over someone or something, that person or thing is especially associated with him or her and comes under his or her authority and protection. Israel as a whole is considered to be an elected

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9   The same pun is made in Isa 32:6: "For the fool speaks folly (*kî nābāl něbālāh yědabbēr*) …" Job speaks of the fate of a fool: "Children of a fool are also children without name (*běnê-nābāl gam-běnê bělî-šēm*), the very outcast of society" (Job 30:10). Martin Buber renders the sentence: "Söhne von Gemeinem, auch Namenloser Söhne, die gepeitscht wurden aus dem Land."

10   See also Donald 1963, 285–292; Barr 1969, 21–28.

people when they are called by God's name and therefore stand under his rule and protection (Deut 28:10; Isa 63:19).

Things, places and humans can participate in the identity and authority of other things, places, humans or God. A city taken in a battle was normally called by the name of the conqueror who claimed authority over it (2 Sam 12:28). When a woman is called by the name of her husband she derives her identity from him (Isa 4:1). The ark of God, the Solomonic temple, or Jerusalem are holy and special because they are called by the name of the Lord (2 Sam 6:2 = 1 Chr 13:16; 1 Kings 8:43 = 2 Chr 6:33; Jer 25:29). A prophet is especially associated with the name of God and stands under his authority. In this belief, Jeremiah states: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by your name, O LORD, God of hosts." (Jer 15:16)

In the Deuterocanonical/Apocryphal part of the Old Testament, the word "name" is used in relation to humans and to God. In relation to humans, the word "name" denotes the reputation of those who establish their name in various ways (Tob 3:15; Sir 40:19; 41:12-13). In the hymn in honour of our ancestors, Ben Sirach writes that "their bodies are buried in peace, but their name lives on generation after generation" (Sir 44:14). He expresses the desire: "May their bones send forth new life from where they lie, and may the names of those who have been honoured live again in their children!" (Sir 46:12)

In relation to God, the word "name" is used as a warning of abuse, as a mark of God's identity, as an object of the supplication of faithful people, and as an object of worship. Sirach warns of habitually uttering "the name of the Holy one"; "the person who always swears and utters the Name (*onomázōv*) will never be cleansed from sin." (Sir 23:9-10) In idolatry there is a hidden trap for humankind to put "the Name" on objects of stone and wood (Wis 14:21). The word "the Name" is used as a substitute for the name of God himself. In the book of Wisdom of Solomon the author praises the holy people on the way out of Egypt: "They sang hymns, O Lord, to our holy name." (Wis 10:20) The hymn of praise to God in Sirach 39:12-35 ends: "So now sing praise with all your heart and voice, and bless the name of the Lord." (Sir 39:35) In the Prayer of Azariah and the Song of the Three Jews the petitioner prays: "Deliver us in accordance with your marvellous work and bring glory to your name, O Lord." (Song of Thr, v. 20) In his prayer for deliverance, Baruch supplicates under the burden of exile: "Hear, O Lord, our prayer and our supplication, and grant us favour in the sight of those who have carried us into exile; so that all the earth may know that you are the Lord our God, for Israel and his descendants are called by your name." (Bar 2:14-15; cf. 2:26; 3:7) When Nicanor threatened the temple, the priests wept and said: "You chose this house to be called by your name, and to be for your people a house of prayer and supplication." (1 Macc 7:37)

In the New Testament, the word "name" is used in ways which are both parallel and complementary to its Old Testament usage. The novelty is that the name of Jesus Christ is linked with the name of God. In the Johannine writings, we find

the phrase "to believe in the name of Jesus" (Jn 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; 1 Jn 3:23; 5:13). In Mt 18:5 appears the phrase: "whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me." Five times appears the formula of baptism "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19) and "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38; 10:48); "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16; 19: 5). In other passages appear variants of this expression in connection with various actions in performed by Jesus: "in your name" (Mk 9:38 = Lk 9:49; 10:17); "my name" (Mk 16:17); "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 3:6; 16:18); "(judgment) in the name of Lord Jesus" (1 Cor 5:4); warning "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thess 3:6); anointing "in the name of the Lord" (Jas 5:14). Barnabas had spoken boldly "in the name of Jesus" (Acts 9:27) and "in the name of the Lord" (Acts 9:28); Jesus speaks of receiving a child, praying or be gathered "in my name" (Mt 18:5 = Mk 9:37-55 = Lk 9:48; Mt 18:20; Jn 14:14; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26). We notice bearing "the name of Christ" (Mk 9:41); receiving the child "in the name of Christ"). Jesus complains that "many will come in my name" claiming to be the Messiah (Mt 18:5 = Mk 9:37 = Lk 21:8). There are faith, preaching, teaching and healing "in his (this) name" or "in the name of Jesus" (Lk 24:47; Acts 3:16; 4:17-18; 5:40); suffering "for the sake of the name" (Acts 5:42). Jesus warns of self-deception by saying: "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?" (Mt 7:22).

Jesus spoke also of persecution of his followers "because of my name" (Mt 10:22; 24:9; Mk 13:13, 17). In the Acts, the account of the conversion of Saul contains the Lord's order to Ananias that he should go to Saul; "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (Acts 9:15-16) Paul declares to those who urged him not to go up to Jerusalem: "I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13) The Jews ordered the apostles in the council "not to speak in the name of Jesus"; as they left the council, "they rejoiced that they were considered worthy to suffer dishonour for the sake of the Name" (Acts 5:40-41; cf. the expression "Way" in the sense of "Name" in Acts 9:2; 19:9).

4. Anonymity and Identity of God's Messengers (Angels) in the Old Testament

The advantages of naming persons can be illustrated by forms of etymology and descriptions of their role in events described. The proper name connotes personal identity, individuality, uniqueness, and personality: "The proper name defines biblical character more or less explicitly and comprehensively. In doing so, it ascribes unity and a full identity to the character and gives the reader a convenient way of referring to the figure and distinguishing it from others. The name may also carry symbolic meaning, which provides insight into the nature, appearance, or significance of the character in the larger story of the Israelite people." (Reinhartz

1998, 8) From this recognition follows that "an individual who was not named was not sufficiently prominent in the narrative, or in the history of the community to warrant specific identification" (Revell 1996, 51).

Characters without a proper name, speech or power are in a much weaker position. If characters are unnamed they are also described only minimally, and they speak and act briefly if at all. They are presented as "agents, that is, in the typified roles they play or the functions they perform" (Natanson 1986, 25). Good examples of unnamed human persons in the Old Testament are three unnamed servants of Pharaoh, the butler, the baker, and the captain of the guard in the Joseph narrative (Gen 3750), the wise woman of Tekoa (2 Sam 14:1-14), the wise woman of Abel (2 Sam 20:1422), the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1-13 // 2 Chr 9:1-12), etc. The anonymous persons are not identified by proper name but by professional role and place names.

For the purpose of our study, the unnamed humans in biblical narratives are not of great relevance. For the appreciation of dimensions of the meaning of God's names, appellatives and attributes is all the more important than the role of the residents of the heavenly realm, called "the sons of God" (Gen 6:1-4). "The sons of God (*běnê hā'ĕlōhîm*) went into the daughters of humans (*běnôt hā'ādām*), who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, men of name (*'anšê haššēm*)." (Gen 6:4)[11] In the book of Job are mentioned Satan (Job 1:6; 2:1) and "heavenly beings" (Job 38:7). In many texts appear messengers or angels of God. Angels appear sometimes individually, sometimes in groups, always in connection with God's revelation and intervention in earthy events. In most biblical texts angels appear without a name. In most cases, angels have the role of personal guidance. Abraham promises his servant that the Lord "will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there" (Gen 24:7; cf. Gen 24:40). Angels appear further as God's agents in his salvation actions. God assures Moses help of his angel in the conquest of the land:

> "I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared. Be attentive to him and listen to his voice; do not rebel against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; for my name is in him. But if you listen attentively to his voice and do all that I say, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes." (Ex 23:20-22; cf. Ex 33:2)

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[11] The New Revised Standard Version keeps the English tradition to render the phrase '*anšê haššēm* with the interpretative phrase "warriors of renown."

This passage makes most clear that the angel does not act according to his name but definitely in the name of God, for God's name "is in him"; it is therefore so urgent for Moses to listen to his voice. Verse 22 points to the role of an angel as a prophet. As a prophet, the angel speaks in God's name. In Judges 2:1-5 we find the statement that "the angel of the Lord (*mal'ak-yhwh*) went up from Gilgal to Bochim" and declared using the first person form: "I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you into the land that I had promised to your ancestors […]" The absence of the definite article suggests that the designation "angel of the LORD" refers indiscriminately to any member of a class of angels. The relevant question is not whether it refers to a distinct individual, but the recognition that God chose the superhuman class of being as his mediator in the act of salvation of the chosen people. In 2 Kings 19:35 "angel of the LORD (*mal'ak-yhwh*) set out and struck down one hundred eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies." In the narrative of Jacob's dream at Bethel (Gen 28:10-22) the narrator reports that Jacob "dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God (*mal'ăkê 'ĕlōhîm*) were ascending and descending on it. And the LORD stood beside him and dais, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac …" (Gen 28:12-13). We note the plural form of "angels of God."

During the conquest of the land, angels act as warriors battling Israel's enemies. Moses' final blessing on Israel begins with the poetic description:

> "The Lord came from Sinai,
> and dawned from Seir upon us;
> he shone forth from Mount Paran.
> With him were myriads of holy ones;
> at his right, a host of his own.
> Indeed, O favorite among peoples,
> all his holy ones were in your charge;
> they marched at your heels,
> accepted direction from you." (Deut 33:2-3)

What are the boundaries that separate human beings, angels and God? Adele Reinhartz explains this important issue as follows:

> "Some of the ambiguity in the angelic portrait is related to their anonymity. Properly named angels could have been counted and distinguished from one another, as, indeed, they were in late- and postbiblical literature. Their role as divine agents may require anonymity, however; their narrative portrayal as the bearers of God's name and the executors of his will points consistently away from any personal and unique identity, as would have been implied by a proper name." (Reinhartz 1998, 160)

What are then the boundaries that separate the role of angels, who deliver the massages of God, and the role of prophets, who are also charged with delivering divine messages?

It is clear that both angels as superhuman beings and humans as chosen prophets act as God's agents. But angels in general act in more mysterious ways. In the narrative of Balak who summons Balaam, a non-Israelite, to curse Israel (Num 22:22-35) it appears that Balaam did not see an angel of the Lord (*mal'ak-yhwh*) standing in the road as his adversary when he was riding on the donkey, whereas "the donkey saw the angel of the Lord (*'et-mal'ak-yhwh*) standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand" (Num 22:22-23). The passage as a whole shows that God chose an angel and a donkey as actors of his will against the intention of Balaam to fulfil the will of the non-Israelite ruler Balak directed against God's plan with Israel. "Angel's anonymity draws attention to his angelic role as God's agent" (Reinhartz 1998, 164). We notice that the vision of the angel of the Lord with "drawn sword in his hand" (Deut 22:23) appears also in Joshua's theophany vision by Jericho (Josh 5:13-15) in the formulation: "He looked up and saw a man (*'îš*) standing before him with a drawn sword in his hand." (Josh 5:13)

Some important aspects of the role of an angel chosen by God for the special task are described in the narrative of the conception and birth of Samson to Manoah of the tribe Danites and her wife who is not named and was barren (Judg 13). The birth of Samson is presented as a work of miraculous intervention of an angel sent by God to Manoah's wife. Some day she reported to her husband: "A man of God came to me and his appearance was like that of an angel of God most awe-inspiring; I did not ask him where he came from, and he did not tell me his name." (Judg 13:6) Sometime later the angel appears again to the woman and she tells the event quickly her husband. Manoah asks the angel: "What is your name so that we may honour you when your words come true?" (Judg 13:17) But the angel of the Lord asks him a question contrary to his expectation: "Why do you ask my name? It is too wonderful." (Judg 13:18) The context of the narrative shows that the encounter between the angel, Manoah and his wife is intimate in transcendent terms. Therefore, the name of the angel is not to be divulged in connection to God who acts wonderful things in favour of humans.

The question of how humans can see a superhuman being in its commission to reveal God's plan of salvation or damnation is not explicitly explained or presented in relevant passages. The theme of "seeing" the divine messenger is explicit in the divine appellation incorporated into the name of the well, named by the pregnant Hagar when "the angel of the Lord found her by a spring of water in the wilderness" (Gen 16:7-14). The angel acts as God's prophet of hope, communicating God's plan with Hagar and her son Ishmael. Hagar in distress was so impressed by the appearance of the Lord in the figure of an angel (*mal'ak-yhwh*) that the narrator concludes:

> "So she named the Lord who spoke to her, 'You are El-roi'; for she said, 'Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?' Therefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; it lies between Kadesh and Bered." (Gen 16:13-14)

Similar motifs appear in Hagar's second encounter with an angel (Gen 21:17-19). Here the angel does not act alone as God's representative. The narrator states that God himself opened Hagar's eyes to see the well as the sign of God's miraculous intervention in Hagar's extreme distress. The text reads:

> "And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God (*mal'ak 'ĕlōhîm*) called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, 'What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.' Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water and gave the boy a drink." (Gen 21:17-19)

In the narrative of Abraham and Lot in Geneses 18–19 and in the narrative of Gedeon in Judges 6:11-40 the differentiation and the boundaries between the angel and the Lord are blurred by the angel's anonymity. Abraham saw "three men standing near him" (Gen 18:2), "two angels" appeared to Lot in Sodom (Gen 19:1). From these information we can conclude that the third of Abraham's visitors was God. In a similar circumstance of encounter of a divine messenger and Gedeon in Judges 6:11-40, "the angel of the Lord (*mal'ak-yhwh*) came and sat under the oak as Ophrah …" (Judg 6:11). According to Judges 6:16 the Lord said to Gedeon: "But I will be with you (*kî 'hyeh 'immāk*), and you shall strike down the Midianites, every one of them." Here the Lord identifies himself by using a variant of the divine name revealed in Ex 3:14. Adele Reinhartz tries to explain the reason for combining the figures of man, angel and God himself in various theophanies:

> "The anonymity of the angels contributes greatly to the confusion surrounding the nature of the visitors, their number, their identities, and their relationship to one another. Proper names for all visitors would have gone some distance in resolving these problems, as later re-tellers of the story, including Jewish and Christian commentators, recognized. The contrast between the definite naming of the Lord and the indefiniteness of the angels is illusory in light of angels' ability to speak and act in God's name. And the question remains: If God can enter the human realm to do these things himself, why are angels needed? Does it make a difference whether God is perceived directly or through his angels? Their anonymity in any case is consistent with their lack of unique individuation; they seek in concert or in God's name and have no personalities to speak of." (Reinhartz 1998, 173–174)

Human messengers who convey God's word to those to whom they are sent execute their role separated from them just by physical distance. Angels, on the other hand, are divine messengers, who make possible communication between God and human beings separated from them by metaphysical distance. Divine-human relationships are unpredictable because angels do not display their own

personal ambition or will but the plan of God with humans according to their situation. Sometimes they act as prophets and warriors, sometimes as agents of salvation or destruction, sometimes as instruments of God, whose name lives within them.

5. Conclusion

Any study of names in lexical and onomastic fields is far more complicated than some general statements would indicate. There is a general agreement that the word "name" and proper names, appellatives and attributes often signify the essence of things, places, humans and gods/God. The biblical writers loved to explain the meanings of proper names and places, but most of their explanations are in the modern era recognized as "popular etymologies": they are merely phonetic wordplays to express the sentiments of the people or the significance of a particular person or event. Within the Hebrew religion, aspects of naming properties of the God of Israel prevails over the aspects of naming humans. The Bible of the Old and the New Testaments contains many names, appellatives and attributes of God. It seems that the role of the great number of names, appellatives and attributes of God reflects most clearly the dimensions of God's nature and his activity in the history of Israel and humankind. Allen P. Ross explains the development of naming of things, places, humans and God through the history of the ancient Near East as follows:

> "In telling the stories of antiquity, the narrators saw great value in analysing the significance of the names in such a way as to unlock the meaning of the event. The people had vanished, but their reputations and contributions would remain in the memory of a name explained. Places remained intact, but it was their names that brought back to life the events that occurred there. What is interesting is that later in the classical period, just when the names were most transparent and lent themselves more readily to etymological analysis, the writers ceased doing this. They were more interested in names in the foundational periods of the nation. Hebrew names were freely chosen if not invented. The names could be religious in content, expressing salvation experiences, confidence in the Lord, trust, thankfulness, and a variety of prayers: or, they could be profane ideas, such as animal names, plant names, colors, and the like." (Ross 1997, 149–150)

Religious dimensions of the Bible manifest the growth from mythical traditions common to the ancient Near East to the invention of vocabulary including many names, appellatives and attributes; literary phrases; forms of parallelism and theological symbols. We note that some names, appellatives and attributes are the abstract designations of God's nature and properties, some others are symbols taken from the material world. The more the Hebrew religion was demitisized and

personified the stronger the tendency to multiply names, appellatives and attributes relating to God. The process of naming God continues in the New Testament and in the early Church.[12]

Methodologically this means that any name, appellative and attribute can be properly explained not in isolation but in the framework of its lexical and onomastic fields, given literary modes and genres and intertextual relations. This process includes also the perception and naming of angels as God's messengers, demons and evil gods. The contrasting state of affaire is reflected most clear in forms of antithetical parallelism, in contrasting word pairs and names, and in contrasting dialogues. The more God is perceived as *summum bonum* the more names, appellatives and attributes related to him meet their opposite. So God's names, appellatives and attributes have in the Bible the role of controversy with pagan designations of gods and demons. Therefore any such comparative and holistic research requires accurate long-term research on linguistic, semantic, literary and hermeneutical levels. The question is of the fullness of the meaning of the particular name, appellative and attribute as against the shallowness and emptiness of naming things, humans and gods in the world of idolatry.

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