

YHWH Rapha (Rophe)

יהוה רפא

YHWH Heals / YHWH Who Heals

Pronounced **Yä-wá' Raw-faw'** (or **Roh-fee'**), the compound name "YHWH Rapha" appears only once in Scripture and is the second name YHWH used to reveal Himself to His people. It arises out of one of Israel's earliest experiences in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt.

He said, "If you listen carefully to the LORD (YHWH) your God (Elohim) and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD (YHWH), who heals (Rapha) you."
(Exodus 15:26 *parenthetical text added*)

Etymology

The word "*rapha*" (râphâ') is a Hebrew root verb meaning "**to mend**", "**cure**", "**heal**", or "**restore**". It is primarily transliterated as "heal/s" or "healed" in the Scripture, but is also used as a noun meaning "physician".

How is "rapha" used in Scripture?

The word "rapha" appears in four verses in the Old Testament as a noun or pronoun.

Then Joseph directed the physicians (rapha) in his service to embalm his father Israel. So the physicians (rapha) embalmed him
(Genesis 50:2 *parenthetical text added*)

"Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician (rapha) there? Why then is there no healing (rapha) for the wound of my people?"
(Jeremiah 8:22 *parenthetical text added*)

See *also* 2 Chronicles 16:12 and Job 13:4.

As a verb meaning "**to heal**" or "**make whole**", the word appears in 63 verses in the Old Testament. Of those, 20 verses pertain directly to YHWH's **involvement** in healing, although they do not incorporate the compound name itself.

So Moses cried out to the LORD (YHWH),
"Please, God (El), heal (rapha) her!"
(Numbers 12:13 *parenthetical text added*)

- ² Praise the LORD (YHWH), my soul, and forget not all his benefits—
- ³ who forgives all your sins and heals (rapha) all your diseases
(Psalm 103:2-3 *parenthetical text added*)

"Return, faithless people; I will cure (rapha) you of backsliding."
"Yes, we will come to you, for you are the LORD (YHWH) our God (Elohim)."
(Jeremiah 3:22 *parenthetical text added*)



Heal (rapha) me, LORD (YHWH), and I will be healed (rapha);
save me and I will be saved, for you are the one I praise.
(Jeremiah 17:14 *parenthetical text added*)

"But I will restore (rapha) you to health and heal (rapha)
your wounds," declares the LORD (YHWH),
(Jeremiah 30:17a *parenthetical text added*)

"Come, let us return to the LORD (YHWH).
He has torn us to pieces but he will heal (rapha) us;
he has injured us but he will bind up (rapha) our wounds."
(Hosea 6:1 *parenthetical text added*)

See *also* Exodus 15:26; Deuteronomy 28:27; 1 Kings 18:30; 2 Kings 2:21, 20:5,8; 2 Chronicles 16:12, 30:20; Psalms 6:2, 30:2, 41:4; Isaiah 19:22, 30:26, 57:19; Jeremiah 19:11.

GOD's Word also references instances when YHWH actually **inflicts** harm and does **not** heal, as Moses warned Israel for her disobedience in his farewell speech...

²⁷ The LORD (YHWH) will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured (rapha).

³⁵ The LORD (YHWH) will afflict your knees and legs with painful boils that cannot be cured (rapha), spreading from the soles of your feet to the top of your head.
(Deuteronomy 28:27, 35 *parenthetical text added*)

Jesus is YHWH Rapha, the "Great Physician".

Contrary to popular thought, there are no Scriptural references to Jesus as "the Great Physician". In fact, He only very loosely referred to Himself as a "physician" twice:

- When the religious leaders criticized Him for including tax collectors and "sinners" among His followers, He answered in reference to spiritual healing.

On hearing this, Jesus said to them,
"It is not the healthy who need a **doctor**, but the sick.
I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
(Mark 2:17 *emphasis added*)

- When He gave His first message in Nazareth—where "He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" (Matthew 13:58)—He prophesied about their rejection and refusal to believe.

Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me:
'**Physician**, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in
your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"
(Luke 4:23 *emphasis added*)

With so little direct references to Jesus as a physician—let alone as "the Great Physician"—one might question how He came to be known by this name in the Church. The answer is simple. Nearly one-fifth of the Gospel accounts is devoted to Jesus' healing ministry. Out of



3,779 verses in the four Gospels, more than 700 relate specifically to Him healing physical and mental illnesses.

- ³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.
- ³³ After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue.
- ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "*Ephphatha!*" (which means "**Be opened!**").
- ³⁵ At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

(Mark 7:32-35)

- ³² While they were going out, a man who was demon-possessed and could not talk was brought to Jesus.
- ³³ And when the demon was driven out, the man who had been mute spoke. The crowd was amazed and said, "Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel."

(Matthew 9:32-33; see also Luke 11:14-16)

See also Matthew 4:23-25, 8:5-16,28-34, 9:18-31,35-38, 12:10-15, 13:58, 14:14,34-36, 15:21-31, 17:14-21, 19:1-2, 20:29-34, 21:14-15; Mark 1:23-34, 2:3-12, 3:1-12, 4:40, 5:1-15, 6:5, 53-56, 7:24-43, 8:22-27, 9:2-8,17-29,37-42, 10:46-52, 16:9; Luke 4:31-39, 5:15-26, 6:6-11,17-19, 7:2-10,21, 8:2,26-56, 13:11-13,22, 14:1-4, 17:15-19, 18:35-43, 22:50-51; John 4:46-54, 5:2-15, 9:1-12,35-37, 18:10.

He touched me!

As YHWH Rapha in the flesh (John 1:14), Jesus modeled the level of compassion required for a good physician, one that goes beyond meeting external physical needs to ministering to people's emotional/psychological needs too, as in...

- ² A man with leprosy came and knelt before him and said, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."
- ³ Jesus reached out his hand and ***touched the man***. "**I am willing,**" he said. "**Be clean!**" Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy.

(Matthew 8:2-3 *emphasis added*; see also Mark 1:40-42, Luke 5:12-13)

He ***touched*** the man! Tearing down the walls of alienation and centuries of prejudice—***and*** in opposition to the Law of which He was the divine Author—Jesus touched a man who had probably not felt the touch of another human for decades. Based on my own experiences while ministering to lepers in India, I can testify that Jesus touching that man undoubtedly meant as much, if not more, to him as his physical healing did!

Over and over again in the Gospels, we see Jesus deliberately touching sick and disabled people, as in Matthew 8:15, 20:34, Mark 7:33, and Luke 22:51. YHWH Rapha is the Great Physician who not only heals the physical needs of His people, but also our emotional and spiritual needs.

He gives life.

Only יהוה (YHWH) is "**I AM**", the One who ***imparts existence***. As YHWH Rapha in the flesh, Jesus exercised His authority over death by resurrecting those who had died, the best-known account being that of Lazarus' resurrection.



- 38 Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance.
- 39 "Take away the stone," he said. "But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there **four days.**"
- 40 Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?"
- 41 So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me.
- 42 I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."
- 43 When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!"
- 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

(John 11:38-44 *emphasis added*)

See also Luke 7:11-16 and 8:54-55.

There was a widespread belief at that time — one which is popular even to this day — that a person's spirit remains in the area for up to 72 hours after death. As a result of this belief, any "raising from death" within 72 hours, regardless of who performed it — and there have been many — could be challenged as merely a **resuscitation**, not a **resurrection**. (That's the basis of the claim that opponents of Christianity have been making for years when they claim that Jesus didn't die on the cross, but merely fainted and was later revived.)

In Lazarus' case, Jesus didn't go to Bethany until after Lazarus had been dead and in the tomb **four days (96 hours)**! His body had already begun to decay and there would be a stench! But Jesus didn't care about any of that. After all, if He could create man from the dust of the earth, surely He could **recreate** one from a corpse!

What great comfort, peace, and blessed hope there is in embracing the name "YHWH Rapha", the El who heals us! The great Elohim of the universe isn't far off and disinterested in His creation.

YHWH Rapha, our Great Physician, loves us so much that He willingly and purposely offered His back to be scourged and His body to be crucified in order to heal and deliver us from our greatest disease: **sin!**

But he was pierced for our transgressions,
 he was crushed for our iniquities;
 the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
 and by his wounds we are healed (rapha).
 (Isaiah 53:5 *parenthetical text added*)

Meditation

There are some who believe that a person's illness or disability is a result of sin in their lives. I believe this teaching is not only unbiblical, but has led to more people being crippled by guilt and shame than any physical ailment they might also be dealing with. I also believe it has pushed people **away** from Christ rather



than drawing them **to** Him. This is truly unfortunate. The fact is that **all disease is a consequence of sin.**

Every malady this world faces today—sickness, war, environmental disasters, famine, crime, poverty, homelessness, and so on—is a consequence of sin. Both the sufferings resulting from sin and the precious experience of sweet release and spiritual healing, should lead each of us to abhor and forsake sin in our own lives.

Then, as Ephesians 6:13 admonishes, "having done all . . . stand." When difficulties come—and they will—don't accuse yourself . . . don't accuse others . . . and don't let others accuse you.

In the story of the paralytic whose friends lowered him into a crowded room where Jesus was ministering, Jesus told him, "Son, your sins are forgiven." (cf. Mark 2:2-11) Apparently, Jesus knew that the paralyzed man needed to know his sins were forgiven. Why? Who knows? **Jesus** knew! As our Creator, He knows us and understands our needs even better than we do. While we may think we need physical healing, He offers something far better. He brings spiritual healing which can easily repair any part—body and soul—that is not functioning properly.

How many in our hospitals today would be instantly cured if they knew the Savior came, not to condemn, but to **take away** their sin, guilt, and shame? And how often do we obscure that message of hope and healing by criticizing, accusing, maligning, and degrading those who need the Savior and Great Physician?

Jesus never taught that sickness is the result of personal sin and the Bible does not teach that sickness is the result of personal sin. Therefore, we must be careful not to insinuate that flawed doctrine into Scripture nor permit it to infiltrate our churches.

As the Body of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 12:27), we are the Great Physician's hands. We are called to serve, to help, to lift up, to comfort, to encourage, and to heal. We are **not** called to judge that which only the LORD knows.

Really, if you think about it, regardless of when we came to Christ or how long we've been walking with Him, we **all** came helplessly, hopelessly lost. We **all** came wounded with the sickness of sin on us and in us. Thus, we are uniquely qualified to be the Great Physician's "wounded healers", **not** prosecuting attorneys or judges...



