

YHWH Shalom

יהוה שלום

YHWH Is Peace / The Name of YHWH Is Peace

Pronounced **Yä-wá' shaw-lome'**, the compound name appears only once in the Old Testament.

So Gideon built an altar to the LORD (YHWH) there and called it The LORD (YHWH) Is Peace (Shalom). To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.
(Judges 6:24 *parenthetical text added*)

Etymology

The word "*shalom*" derives from the Hebrew root "*shâlam*" ("שָׁלַם"), which means to be "**safe**", "**completed**", "**perfect**"; to be "**well**", "**happy**", "**friendly**"; and by implication "**absence of strife**".

Since the Talmud translates "YHWH Shalom" as "*The **Name** of God is Peace*", the word is considered to be so sacred that Jews are not permitted to greet another with "Shalom" in unholy places, such as a bathroom.

What is the historical setting of this compound name?

In order to understand the importance of this covenantal attribute of YHWH, we must consider the historical setting in which it was given. As a result of Israel's idolatrous rebellion against YHWH, He sent the Midianites against them. For several years, they severely oppressed Israel, ruining their crops and destroying their land and livestock. When Israel cried out to YHWH to save them, the Angel of the LORD appeared to an unlikely deliverer, Gideon, who was threshing wheat in a secret place for fear of the Midianites.

Prior to this, the LORD had sent a prophet to teach and exhort Israel (Judges 6:8-10). Now, the Angel of the LORD had come to confirm the word of the prophet, to commission Gideon as Israel's deliverer, and to inspire him through various miracles. Most Bible scholars believe that the Angel of the LORD was a preincarnate self-manifestation of YHWH—or Jesus Himself, as Jesus **is** YHWH incarnate. This, of course, is borne out by Gideon's own testimony after the Angel suddenly disappeared.

²² When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD (YHWH), he exclaimed, "Alas, Sovereign (Adonai) LORD (YHWH)! I have seen the angel of the LORD (YHWH) face to face!"

²³ But the LORD (YHWH) said to him, "Peace (shalom)! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die."

(Judges 6:22-23 *parenthetical text added*)

Obviously, Gideon not only believed he had come face-to-face with YHWH, but the LORD's response to him seems to confirm that. Or, at the very least, YHWH did not correct Gideon's thinking. At that, Gideon felt compelled to build an altar and call it "**YHWH Shalom**".

This celestial encounter was much more significant than we might think at first telling. Gideon, a young farmer who only hours earlier had been threshing in secret, suddenly stepped into



the role and title by which the Angel of the LORD had addressed him: "mighty man of valor" (Judges 6:12). How did he do this? What brought about such a dramatic change? The answer is simple. In verse 23, YHWH said, "Peace! Do not be afraid," which implied a foretelling by YHWH Jireh of the successful outcome of the impending battle in which he was about to engage.

All Gideon had to do at that point was **believe** and step into that peace and freedom YHWH had just promised. Think about that. **Before** Gideon destroyed his father's altar to Baal and sacrificed a bull to YHWH on a new altar . . . **before** he tested and confirmed the LORD's word with the fleece . . . **before** he decreased his army by more than 30,000 men and routed out the Midianites and Amalekites with only 300 men . . . Gideon had been infused with **total peace** and **confidence** because he had first **worshiped** at the altar of "YHWH Shalom"!

How is "shalom" used in Scripture?

Although the compound name appears only once in the Old Testament, the word "shalom" by itself appears ±326 times. Transliterated "peace" in our English Bibles, the word appears ±120 times as a greeting or blessing and ±157 times in its various contexts meaning "**well**", "**peace**", "**good health**", "**whole**", "**perfect**", or "**fulfilled**".

- ²⁷ He asked them how they were (shalom), and then he said, "How is (shalom) your aged father you told me about? Is he still living?"
- ²⁸ They replied, "Your servant our father is still alive and well (shalom). And they bowed down, prostrating themselves before him.
(Genesis 43:27-28 *parenthetical text added*)

"...the LORD (YHWH) turn his face toward you and give you peace (shalom)."
(Numbers 6:26 *parenthetical text added*)

Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace (shalom), for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD (YHWH), saying, The LORD (YHWH) is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever."
Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.
(1 Samuel 20:42 *parenthetical text added*)

So they turned in there and went to the house of the young Levite at Micah's place and greeted (shalom) him.
(Judges 18:15 *parenthetical text added*)

"The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,' says the LORD (YHWH) Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace (shalom),' declares the LORD (YHWH) Almighty."
(Haggai 2:9 *parenthetical text added*)

See *also* Genesis 24:21, 28:21; Leviticus 3:1-9, 4:31,35, 7:11,14,20-21,29, 9:4, 10:3, 17:5, 19:5, 22:21; Numbers 6:14,17,26; Judges 6:23, 11:31, 18:6; 1 Samuel 20:13,21; 1 Kings 2:33, 5:12, 22:17,28; 2 Kings 2:3,5, 20:19; 2 Chronicles 18:16,27; Psalm 4:8, 29:11, 85:8, 125:5; Proverbs 16:7; Isaiah 9:7, 26:12, 39:8, 42:19, 45:7, 48:22, 54:10,13, 57:19, 62:6, 64:12, 66:12; Jeremiah 4:10, 12:12, 14:13, 16:5, 23:17, 28:9, 29:7,11, 30:5, 34:5; Ezekiel 13:16; Micah 3:5; Zechariah 1:11, 6:13, 8:19.

Note: A closely-similar Chaldee word, "*sh^elâ^m*", meaning "**prosperity**", is also translated "peace" in four verses in the Old Testament: Ezra 4:17 and 5:7 and Daniel 4:1 and 6:25.



What is the significance of the compound name?

Based on the many uses of the word throughout the Old Testament, we can conclude that "shalom" means much more than the English word "peace", which means generally "harmonious relations" and the "absence of strife". While "shalom" certainly means that, it goes so much further. to that kind of peace that results from being a whole person in right relationship with God and with others. As Nathan Stone wrote:

"This word is one of the most significant in the Old Testament, its various shades of meaning harmonizing with the doctrine of the atonement as the basis of **peace with God**."¹ (*emphasis added*)

The compound name, "YHWH Shalom", is perhaps the most exciting of all His titles because it's the only attribute which YHWH doesn't bestow **on** us or do **for** us, but which He shares **with** us! All of the other titles express His power, majesty, and holiness or they tell us how He desires to bless and take care of us. With "YHWH Shalom", however, He reveals that He doesn't merely **have** peace, but that He **is** peace! And His desire is for us to participate in it! Nathan Stone explains it this way:

"Jehovah in His own person is perfect peace. This He must be if He is to be the source of peace to mankind. He is grieved at the sin and corruption of the world, which at creation He had pronounced so good. He is stirred to wrath at the evil of the wicked.

Yet none of these things disturb His peace in the sense that they can destroy or unsteady the perfect balance of His divine nature. He could never give to others a peace the passes understanding if He were not perfect, unfailing peace Himself. This is our hope and assurance."²

Jesus gives peace that surpasses understanding.

When Jesus shared that last supper with His disciples before the Feast of Passover, He tried several times to explain where He was going and why. He washed their feet, prophesied Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial, and commanded them to love one another. During that time, He even stooped to wash the feet and break bread with the very one who, with a false assurance of fidelity, would **sell** Him!

Following Judas' departure, He told those who remained...

"Peace I leave with you; **my peace** I give you.
I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not
let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."
(John 14:27 *emphasis added*)

How could He talk about **peace**, knowing the torturous trial that lay before Him? He was not only facing the most horrendous **physical** pain that one human being can inflict on another, but He was about to experience the most painful of all human **emotions**—one friend's treachery and another's denial...

His disciples no longer doubted that He was the long-awaited promised Messiah. They **knew** He was! But like most in Israel at that time, they believed that the coming of the Messiah meant liberation from Roman rule. For three years, they had followed Him, content to wait for Him to bring about His kingdom in His own way and in His own time, leaving all their hopes and expectations for the future in His capable hands. It never occurred to them that He was embarking on a journey to Calvary.



Now, instead of taking the kingdom "by storm"—which Jesus surely could have done if that had been His mission—instead of freeing them from political and religious tyranny, He was talking about leaving them. And He was saying something about loving one another (John 15:12-17), about abiding in Him (John 15:4-7), and about peace.

They didn't understand . . . How could they "abide" in Him if He was leaving? And what kind of "peace" could they possibly have without Him?

While trying to make them understand that He **had** to leave them, He was also trying to address their questions whose answers they weren't yet prepared to understand. He knew that in only a few days they would see more clearly what He'd been trying to tell them . . . that in giving His life for them, He was making a way for them to experience the greatest **freedom** of all. He was offering them wholeness and abundance. He was offering them freedom from fear of a vengeful, angry GOD to total **acceptance** and **oneness** with a loving **Father**.

But for now, all He could do was tell them He was going to prepare a place for them in His "Father's house" (John 14:2-3) . . . that He was sending the Holy Spirit to comfort and teach them (John 14:16,26) . . . and that He was leaving them in peace.

They didn't understand . . . They couldn't reconcile His words with their expectations. And although they trusted Him implicitly, their resulting confusion made it impossible to believe He really meant He was leaving them but not abandoning them. It **felt** like abandonment. Certainly, this Man who could command all of nature to bend to His will wouldn't quit before accomplishing the mission for which they thought He had come!

They didn't understand . . . They wanted here-and-now **physical** liberation while He was fulfilling the requirements for their eternal **spiritual** liberation. In a few days, they would understand. In a few days, they would rejoice in His victory. In a few days, they would be so infused with courage and confidence that the world would never be the same because of their testimony! In a few days, they would be able to say that they had lived and slept and eaten with the Prince of Peace, and they would be able to appropriate the peace which presently eluded them.

In a few days . . . they would understand when the words, "**It is finished!**" uttered at Calvary would be followed three days later with "**He is risen!**" shouted outside an empty tomb. Then, they would understand that He had accomplished something far greater than anything they expected or could have hoped for. He had restored the **peace with God** that had been lost by the Fall!

Then . . . they would be able to say with the Apostle Paul..

And the **peace of God** (YHWH Shalom), which transcends all understanding, will **guard** your **hearts** and your **minds** in Christ Jesus.
(Philippians 4:7 *emphasis & parenthetical text added*)

Meditation

Jesus knew peace on a level that none of us have ever experienced. He **never** knew fear. As the eternal **I AM**, He never feared "the unknown" as we all do at



one time or another. He never feared death because He knew He was the Resurrection and the Life. And He never lived a single moment in fear of GOD...

Jesus is the only Person who's ever lived who could truly call GOD His "Father". He was completely at home in the Temple (His "Father's house"). He never once doubted the Father's love and never allowed Himself to be in spiritual bondage to religious rules and taboos that cause the rest of us to doubt GOD's love and be **afraid** of Him.

If you're tempted to object and claim you've never been afraid of GOD, think about how often you've joked about the proverbial lightning bolt after doing something wrong. At one time or another, we're all trained to believe that when things go wrong or we suffer some harm that it's because we've done something to make GOD angry. It's Satan's original lie, that GOD doesn't really love us and that He's withholding what we really need to fulfill us.

It is said that the greatest thirst or hunger of every human heart at some point in their lives is to be at **peace** with GOD . . . **unafraid** of Him . . . **at ease** and **at one** with Him. And **that** is what Jesus appropriated for us at Calvary when He paid, once for all time, for the sins of the whole world.

"The death he died, he died to sin **once for all**,"
(Romans 6:10a *emphasis added*)

"For the wages of sin is death, but the **gift** of God
is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
(Romans 6:23 *emphasis added*)

"For it is **by grace** you have been saved, through faith--
and this is not from yourselves, it is the **gift** of God,"
(Ephesians 2:8 *emphasis added*)

"we have been **made holy** through the sacrifice
of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**."
(Hebrews 10:10 *emphasis added*)

The peace the world gives is momentary and temporary because it depends on our circumstances. The peace Jesus offers comes from the One who is eternal and unaffected by events—the One who is perfect, who **is** unfailing peace Himself.

We don't have to **ask** for peace; we only have to **receive** it. In Christ, we have peace with GOD. In Christ, we have **YHWH Shalom!**

¹ Stone, Nathan, *Names of God*. Chicago: Moody Press, 1944, 2010. p. 136.

² Ibid. p. 138.



