

### Patriarchal Altars

Altars were built by the patriarchs at significant junctures in their lives. They reflected a centre of worship both in the geographic situation and also in the thought process which caused them to be built at a certain time.

Genesis 13v4 *“And there Abram called on (proclaimed) the name of the LORD”*. Abraham knew God by His name Yahweh and openly proclaimed it. However, he awaited the time when the divine promises made to him would be fulfilled. He came to realise these would be long after his death and therefore resurrectional in scope.

Genesis 22v17 *“And Abraham called the name of that place **Jehovah-jireh**, as it is said to this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen”*. Although not an altar this was a holy place of memorial. *It will be seen* is a declaration that to some degree is still prophetic. Yes, God is seen to shine forth from the records of this sublime act of faith on the mount in demonstration of trust in God through the process of future resurrection, Hebrews 11v17-19. However, the world at large will ultimately come to recognise and appreciate God for who He is, but the time of complete manifestation is still future. Yahweh Jireh: I will be seen and appreciated as the God who provided the ram caught in the thicket, encapsulates this idea quite profoundly.

Genesis 33v20 *“And he erected there an altar and called it **El-elohe-Israel**”*. Jacob whose name was changed to Israel, Isra-el *prince with God*, named the altar he built at Shalem near Shechem, after the God he served. El elohe isra-el uses El twice and Elohim once. It means “The power of the powerful ones with the prince with power” and in that rudimentary form expresses something of the raw energy behind the empowered one to come who, like him, would be a prince centred around God and manifested in the midst of his people also mighty because they have been empowered by God themselves as well.

Genesis 35v7 *“And he built there an altar and called the place, **El-beth-El**”*. It is limiting to say that this merely means the god of Bethel. El Beth-El more fully means the power behind the house or place of power. God empowers certain places not in a magical sense but in a spiritual sense, that is that the essence of

what Jacob saw in his dream about the ladder whilst in Luz, had a deep and profound meaning that speaks of core issues of divinity. It was only years after (40+) that he named that place, which subsequently became known as Bethel. The power behind this revelation and purpose through Jacob was the supreme being, God. Building an altar there memorialised that great event for others. Records were therefore being made in wood and stone and scrolls of these divine interventions by God into the affairs of mankind.

Exodus 17v15 *“And Moses built an altar and called the name of it **“Jehovah-nissi”**. Moses, although not a patriarch in the strictest sense, was nevertheless a great father figure of the nation and in Biblical terms, he helped father Israel. Yahweh nissi, I will be a banner or ensign! The war which God declared against that wayward people of Amalek, is a banner or ensign witnessing His divine intent to act. It illustrates God’s fulfilment of all His promises for good or for evil. Amalek never repented, so God’s will was never thwarted by His need to extend His mercy to a true penitent. Instead, Amalek was totally destroyed in accordance with His later decree in 1 Samuel 15v3. That future work is reflected in His name Yahweh “I will be...”. It would have not been inaccurate to call the altar Yahweh-nissi if the armies of Israel had totally destroyed the enemy Amalek in that battle. If Amalek had continued indefinitely until Christ’s return, then there is no banner witness of fulfilled prophecy in that context. Neither of these occurred, God staged His manifestation as Yahweh Nissi through Amalek, and we are strengthened in our understanding of Him thereby.*

Judges 6v24 *“Then Gideon built an altar and called it **Jehovah-shalom** unto this day it is yet in Oprah of the Abi-ezrites”. If Moses was not a patriarch in the fullest sense, Gideon was even less so. However, he is a major judge in the emerging nation of Israel. Yahweh shalom, I will be peace was an altar that was erected at a time of mounting tension and just before a major war was concluded with the slaughter of thousands of the adversaries of Israel. “I will be peace” was appropriate to proclaim at a time when peace was absent to the majority of Israelites. It was a future hope and reminds the reader that Yahweh is most often future rather than present in declaration thus I WILL BE not I AM.*

Phanerosis page 122 From the section entitled **And at his feet the aspect of glowing brass.**

“The altar of Burnt-offering prefigured the Messiah’s body in sacrificial manifestation. The idea of an altar of sacrifice representing a personal and divine plurality is frequent in Scripture. Thus, Jacob erected an altar at Shalem, in the land of Canaan, and called it AIL-ELOHAI YISRAAIL, that is, the strength of the mighty ones of Israel” Gen33v20 and Moses, before the law was given, and in memory of the victory of Joshua over Amalek, “built an altar and called the name of it YAHWEH-NISSI”, that is, He shall be my ensign – He who was symbolized by the altar (Exo17v15 Isaiah 11v10,12 18v3 31v9 Zec 9v16). This Yahweh-nissi-altar was superseded by an altar of brass. These plates represented “the flesh of sin” purified by fiery trial.”

Dr Thomas in his usual incisive way focuses upon the connection between the sacrificial altar and Christ. Jesus, as a derived being, represented both God and man to the people. This was needed by them, such matters were not only already known by God but initiated by Him. He is the first cause of everything good and right and noble and true.

The passage in Exodus 6v3 “And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, (El Shaddai), but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them” is understood in different ways. Some taking this on face value in the English reason that God did not reveal His name Yahweh (Jehovah is a linguistic invention from the combining of the vowels of Adonai with the consonants of YHWH to remind pious Jews not to pronounce the Holy Name of God lest they do so wrongly, but instead to sound Adonai, which means lords. This preventative caution is unscriptural.

It is clear from the Genesis record that God’s name Yahweh was known to them as a word, what had not been made known was the fulfillment of the implied promised “I will be.....” which is the meaning of that name. Genesis 13v4, quoted above makes that clear, where LORD in capitals is used for Yahweh in the Hebrew, as does Genesis 21v33 “*And Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God (El).*” Up to that time in Egypt God had not revealed Himself as the God, Yahweh Elohim or Yahweh Tsvaoth. I will be mighty ones and I will be armies or hosts. In Genesis 22v17 as we have seen, Abraham called a place Yahweh Jireh and Moses retrospectively adds the editorial comment under inspiration, that “*as it is said to this day*”. With this

testimony it must be accepted that the Bible is either contradictory or that something else is meant by *“by my name Jehovah was I not known to them”*.

God’s name was known right at the start in Genesis 4v26 *“Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD”*. There never was a time when God was not known by His name Yahweh as He revealed Himself to all mankind. The current darkness upon such matters is not His fault but the result of men straying away from true light for thousands of Years, ever since Eden.

A Voice from the Altar

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