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THE NEW SHOFAR

God's name, Yahweh, is a verb, the verb "to be". To truly pronounce God's name then, we must pronounce it with our actions, not with our lips.

Psalm 66 - Call to Praise

Shouting for joy to God all the earth sits at the opening of this psalm, although it does not set down for us the actual words we are to use in such a proclamation. We will see the reason for that a little later, but at the moment we need to see that this celebration of the glorious power of God is not something limited to the Jewish people alone. The people of the earth, the nations, the peoples, the Gentiles are all invited into this celebration of the God of Israel. The reason for this is the awesome nature of the love, glory and power of Almighty God. It is because of what God has done and continues to do for all of us that our praise should be springing forth in all we do.

The Hebrew word for "glory" is ***kavod*** which has the literal meaning of "weight". We are all familiar with this from those moments in life when words fall short — when we sense something so holy, so far beyond ourselves, that all we can do is stand still in awe. That's the heart of the Hebrew word **Kavod** — glory, honour, weight, splendour. Biblically, ***kavod*** isn't just something that happens around us — it is also something God reveals through us. Thus, when Jesus came, the eternal **Kavod** of God took on flesh…*and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory (**kavod**), the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*."— **John 1:14**.

Through Jesus, **Kavod** became personal. He showed us that God's glory is not some distant light only visible through the Hobble telescope. It is visible in the face of a Saviour who kneels to wash our feet, heals the broken hearted, and dies for love. Divine **Kavod** is not about a power that overwhelms, but is a love that transforms.

Meaning of Kavod

In Hebrew, **Kavod** comes from the root **kaved** which literally means "heavy." It's the idea that God's presence is not light or fleeting — it carries substance, a holy weight filling everything it touches. When Scripture says, *The glory (**kavod**) of the Lord filled the tabernacle* (**Exodus 40:34**), it means His presence became so real, so tangible, that no one could stand inside. It was filled beyond its capacity. With the Son of God becoming man in Jesus of Nazareth, we were given a way into the glory of God, into the divine presence and all that becomes available to us through His Kavod.

God revealed His **Kavod** in the wilderness of the Exodus and what is important for readers of the Bible to appreciate is that God's glory is not something static, a kind of supernatural adjective describing a divine characteristic. God's glory is a reality that flows out from God and into all things. This, for example was evidenced in the cloud that led the freed people of Israel along the way to a new life in Canaan. It was manifested as a reassuring and empowering pillar of fire that rested above them at night. The **Kavod** of God was seen in the provision of manna and quail and through the water from the rock. Time and time again it was experienced by the people as God leading them into victory over their enemies. While God did reveal his **Kavod** to Moses (and the latter had to hid in the crevice of a rock to avoid being killed by it), most time, the divine glory is

experienced in what God is doing. It is something manifested in the world around us and to the world through the way we live to manifest to others God's **Kavod**. **Galatians 2:20** and **James 2:12** confirm this teaching that our reverence for God (***kavod***) is demonstrated by our willingness to die to self, obey His commands, and take sin seriously. We are left to ask: how important is the divine Kavod to us? How much "weight" does it carry among all of the other important priorities in our lives?

Psalm 66

There is so much of this psalm that refers back to the Exodus event, that divine deliverance that says so much about God and about the way he loves and cares for all his people. To understand how the **Kavod** of God works in creation, apart from the coming of Jesus, the actions of God in liberating, guiding, caring for and bring the Chosen People into the land of Milk and Honey (Canaan) says it all.

This does not mean that life for believers was the proverbial garden of roses. Far from it. In verses 10-12 the psalmist directly addresses God, rehearsing how God has tried His people and refined them as silver is refined. He brought them into the net and laid an oppressive burden on their loins. He made men ride over their heads. They went through fire and through water. But it is the end of this terrible time of testing that is celebrated: *Yet You brought us out into a place of abundance*. That word *abundance* is used only one other time in the Old Testament, in **Psalm 23:5**, where David says, *My cup overflows*. Imagine that! To endure all of the trials, punishments and sufferings that their own weaknesses, as well as life itself through up at them, and to then come to the end of it all and celebrate the abundance of gifts with which their lives have been filled. Most of all, the darknesses that blight their lives are consequences of their sins.

When the psalmist was in dire straits, he vowed to offer sacrifices to God if He would deliver him. Now, God has delivered him, so he follows through. Normally, thank offerings consisted of a portion what was burned on the altar and other portions that were shared by the worshiper and his friends. These sacrifices emphasized the joy of fellowship, along with thanksgiving to God for the blessing that prompted the thank offerings. But the sacrifices mentioned here are totally God-ward. The lavishness of the gifts in these verses underlines the point, saying in poetic fashion that the whole gamut of sacrificial beasts would scarcely do the occasion justice."

In New Testament terms, Jesus Christ is our God-ordained, acceptable sacrifice. His body, offered on the cross, is the once and for all sacrifice for sins that we need (**Heb. 10:4-10**). We can only approach God through Him. We can only worship God in spirit and truth after we have trusted in the shed blood of Christ. But then we have another sacrifice of worship that we must offer. Paul describes it in **Romans 12:1**, *Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship*. There it is. The Christian spiritual life is all here. No longer do we offer animal sacrifices. Our lives lived out in imitation of Christ are our sacrifices, the only one acceptable to God. And this is not something we achieve through our own strengths and gifts. Jesus is the one who makes us acceptable to God.