

In God's Name

Where is God in our hour of need, in the middle of lock-down, when we are forbidden to meet other church folk in person? How do we know He is still here with us? We have a reminder every hour, every minute that we are all created in the image and likeness of God.

Some of us may still retain that childhood picture of a very old bearded man who lives above the clouds, but not everyone, by any means, looks like that. (Yes, I know, perhaps this author does!) So, it isn't in our physical appearance that we are created in His likeness.

The weather, climate and disease, are not under our control, much as we would like them to be, as is evident from whatever source of news you care to consult, so having power over nature is not how we resemble God. So what is it that reminds us every minute that we are like God?

Some people are defined by what they do, but most people are defined firstly by their name. In the past, what people did and their name were the same: Fletcher the maker of arrows; Newton the person from the new town; Smith the blacksmith.

One aspect of God is closely linked to his Hebrew name. The Hebrew *ruach* means "wind", "breath" or "spirit". The word's first use in the Bible appears in the second verse: "The Spirit of God [*Ruach Elohim*] was hovering over the waters" Genesis 1:2. God's *Ruach* is the source of life. In Gen 2:7, when the LORD breathes into the nostrils of "adamah" (soil or man), He actually gives His human creation, His own (God's) very self. The breath was and is "YH WH", the Hebrew name for God.

Many Jewish people conclude from Exodus 20:7, "*You shall not take the name of God in vain*", that the name of God should not be spoken at all. In reality, vocalizing the four consonants does not involve closing the mouth; God's name is not pronounceable but only breathable: *YH on the in-breath, and WH on the out-breath!*

Try it. Part your lips; relax your jaw and tongue. Shape your mouth as though you are going to spell the letter Y then breathe in quickly over one or two seconds and then out over one or two seconds. Hear the air flow in and out of your body:

Inhale: *YH*

Exhale: *WH*

Every breath that we take from the moment the midwife or other birth attendant slaps us on the back to start us breathing, until we breathe our last, we are saying God's name. Even in sleep we keep breathing "YH WH"; we breathe Him while active and inactive. So, in their various ways, do all the wide variety of life forms on this planet who respire. They all inhale and exhale regularly, the breath of God moves in them while they are alive. We are literally surrounded by reminders of God wherever we are, internally and externally.

When Jesus was in the desert, shortly after His baptism, every breath He took was a reminder of God, a prayer. Every day during Lent, when we remember that time in the desert, God is as close to us as He was to Jesus. However isolated you feel at the moment, cut off from church friends, from family, from meals out and shopping trips, you are not cut off from God. Each breath that you take is a reminder of Psalm 139:14 "*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well*".

Roger Newton

