

Jehovah Raffah - The Lord who Heals

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[0 : 0 0] So thanks Anne. We're looking, continuing our series, rather looking at the Old Testament names for God. And today we are looking at Jehovah Rapha, the Lord who heals and restores.

And James read that so beautifully and clearly, which I think gave us our best opportunity to spot where it is, because it's quite hard, I think, to spot these names for God when the passage is translated into English.

And it's in verse 26, right at the end of that verse. I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you.

I am Jehovah Rapha. So Jehovah Rapha used here as a noun is only found once in the Old Testament.

But the Hebrew word Rapha is used throughout the Old Testament, 67 times, my research said. And many times it is used in relation to the healing power of God.

[1 : 1 0] And I read that the origin of the word Rapha, if you look at the kind of literal root of the word, it means to properly mend by stitching. I thought that was something lovely for the nitter-natter crowd.

But figuratively, it means healing, but not just physical healing. It means restoring, mending, rebuilding, or making something whole again.

So if we look at how it appears in the Old Testament, it is used in the Book of Kings, when Elisha heals Naaman from leprosy.

It's used there to denote physical healing. It's used for emotional healing. So Psalm 147, the Lord heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Spiritual healing, Jeremiah 33. I will heal them and restore them. I will bring them abundant peace and security. One of my personal favourites, Isaiah 58.

[2 : 1 4] Then shall your light break forth like the dawn and your healing quickly appear. And actually, it's also a variation of Rapha, which is used in Nehemiah, which we studied together earlier this year.

And there it is used for repairing and rebuilding the city walls. And it's important, I think, that we understand the meaning of this word.

Because I think in this passage, it is used in a variety of ways. It is used for physical healing from disease. Refreshment through the fresh drinking water that the Lord provides in the desert for the deliverance from slavery.

And also a future keeping in righteousness, a kind of spiritual healing. so in the exodus account sorry I'm looking behind me for my slides there we go in the exodus account we have just had one of the big events in God's salvation plan we've just had the exodus from Egypt and this made me think of Jehovah Rapha and how that name for God speaks into our past our present and our future because God is the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end and God is the healer and restorer in our past our present and our future and hopefully this will make more sense when we dive into it together so if we go back to our passage in exodus 15 and this slide you probably can't see it very clearly but I recommend these the bible society do them on their website they're like one page illustrations of the books of the bible and for a visual learner like me I find them really helpful to to put things in context so we are at the bottom of the first column so we've had the plagues we've had the big miracle of the Israelites being led out of slavery and through the Red Sea that has just happened we heard at the beginning of our reading this passage is preceded by

Miriam's prayer of thankfulness for that deliverance the women singing and dancing in prayer and we are about to go into the wilderness for 40 years and then we will have Mount Sinai the Ten Commandments so the law is to come and I think that's also important that healing and restoration the promise of healing and restoration precedes the law and God makes reference to the history the recent history when he speaks about being Jehovah Rapha he contrasts the fate of the Egyptians with the faith fate of the Israelites in verse 26 I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians so we know the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt is the canonical event for want of a better word it's the really big event of the Old Testament and it's an archetypal event its story has echoes it's retelled in other ways and it becomes part of the Israelites identity they are the people who were brought out of slavery in Egypt can you click on the next one thank you and I thought I could do a lovely slide where this phrase the Lord who has brought us out of Egypt is used but it would have filled 20 slides because what I discovered is it's used right through the Old Testament it's used Exodus Leviticus Numbers Deuteronomy Joshua Kings the major and minor prophets the Lord who brought us out of Egypt so it becomes how the Israelites identify themselves but it also becomes how God is identified by the people and because I can't share all those examples I'm going to share my favorite which is from Joshua 2 verse 10 when Rahab who is living in the city of Jericho meets Joshua's spies she says to them we have heard how the Lord dried up the waters of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt and the we when she says we have heard she's probably referring to the people of Jericho and Rahab is a Gentile living in the enemy city so even the Israelites enemies have heard of this great rescue it becomes that important so for the Israelites in our passage who are receiving the healing water in the desert this is very recent history it's literally happened yesterday but I imagine by the time the account is written in the format we have it now it's gained even more significance and importance to the Jewish people the great rescue from Egypt

[7 : 30] I was thinking a bit about this last week with Remembrance Day how we think back on the historical events that shape us and shape our identity of chapter 15 he talks about God's strength he describes the Lord as a warrior but when God speaks to his people in his own voice he doesn't choose to identify himself as the powerful warrior but as the healer restorer God I am the Lord who heals and restores we can't fully know God can we he is unknowable I am who I am because to know him fully would be too overwhelming but he reveals different facets of himself to his people at different times and this is one of those moments I think and I'm not saying that God doesn't have power that he isn't a warrior because he is all those things and more but I'm struck that in this moment he chooses to call himself healer restorer and this reminded me that we don't always see the full picture do we we sometimes just see the destruction a couple of weeks ago we came back from holiday we were away for half term and I got back on the train at Stansted airport and I checked the news and I saw that there'd been the stabbing on the train that took place earlier that evening at another train station and sometimes I guess coming back from holiday and seeing that news

I felt a bit overwhelmed by it I kind of felt where is God the destruction that we see around us but God is always working to heal and restore in ways we don't see straight away and I don't know if you saw that yesterday that one of those heroes from that evening has been released from hospital credited with saving other lives on the train so we don't always see the full picture initially of where God is at work so we can have faith that God is at work healing and restoring because he has done it before that's what the exodus provides God's people in the long term an account of God's restoration which they can trust which they can return to which they can use as a foundation for their faith in God going forward so maybe you have your own account of how God has healed and restored you maybe you have that kind of foundation story in your own life something that gives you the basis of praise and worship of God and something you can share with others and I think if we're Christians then one of those stories is how God saved us how we came to faith but we may have other milestones in our journey so for example one of the things that is important to me is God's presence with me when I had bone cancer in my 30s and that was physical healing but that experience has shaped my life in more profound ways that I couldn't have understood at the time it's changed my career as an obvious thing but I think it's just changed how I respond to just my everyday things about my life it's changed my attitude and my outlook and my perspective so the history if you go to the next slide please Anne is the exodus from Egypt the present situation is the Israelites have come out of the Red Sea and now they are in the desert and the water is bitter so they ask what is there to drink and the Lord enables Moses to transform the bitter water into fresh drinking water you may remember what comes next

God provides for the Israelites he sends bread he sends meat he keeps them safe in the desert and yet they will wander in the desert for the next 40 years I feel really sympathetic towards the Israelites in this passage they're in the middle of nowhere they don't have a home they don't have anything to eat or drink and it's human nature isn't it to care about the present and to be preoccupied by present concerns they are saved but they don't feel like they are saved because their present is tough but Jehovah Rapha is gracious in the wilderness after he sends them manna from heaven he sends them meat and it's only when the Israelites break his instruction to rest on the Sabbath that he gets frustrated with them so I think what this tells us is that God is working at healing and restoring but not always in the way or the timeline that we expect so that God is providing food and water and safety but the people still don't have a home and they are not getting that in what might feel to be a timely fashion also I think we have all prayed for healing at some point for another person because it was urgent because it needed to happen now and sometimes so often it's felt like God hasn't answered those prayers it feels like it is too late and it's heartbreaking isn't it when that happens and I think we've all been heartbroken at some point in this way and I think we've been heartbroken this year as a church community as we have prayed for healing and not see it happen that is so often our present reality and God I believe understands that heartbreak and he is kind and gracious to us as we endure it and God wants us to keep asking for what we need now he doesn't want us to be discouraged from doing that in Matthew 7

Jesus says how much will your father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him and Jesus uses the example of the father giving a son a loaf of bread something that we need daily we mustn't give up hope that God is listening and working someone a long time ago said to me that when we pray for healing God always shows up and does something and I think that is still true in my experience of it God shows up for the Israelites time and time again in the wilderness but do they remain in the wilderness?

yes they're stuck there for a long time so what about Jehovah Rapha of the yet to come when God speaks to the Israelites he gives them a promise for their future if you do what is right and pay attention to his commands and decrees I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians and it reminded me a bit I put a rainbow because it reminded me a bit of God's promise to Noah after the flood I will never again it's a never again promise from God and we also know that this foundational story the exodus from Egypt isn't the end of God's story and God's promise I think here that he is Jehovah Rapha speaks into three future timelines so I think we have the immediate future promise so that's the entry into the promised land we have the middle future promise which is the coming of the

[16 : 03] Messiah Jesus and the healing ministry of Jesus as a way that healing restoring promise of God is fulfilled but we also have that third timeline the future that is yet to come the full restoration of all things when God comes in glory and the new heaven and the new earth will be restored and prophetic words often operate on those several timescales we see that elsewhere like in the book of Isaiah but now we only see in the mirror dimly and it's easy often to just see one perspective many of these Israelites who receive fresh water in the desert will not themselves enter the promised land by the time they get there they will be too old and we know that Moses himself won't enter it so the Lord is healer and restorer but some of the healing and the restoration we long for may be for future generations or it may not be realised until Jesus comes again and the world is healed and made whole but God has promised it to his people and we must not stop believing and praying that it will come to pass so just to return to my story of healing and I know that all our stories are different and this is just illustrative rather than representative but I when I was healed from cancer in my 30s it meant that the cancer left my body in my left leg

I have a very large bit of metal that I will always have so my body hasn't been restored to its pre-cancer state it's not going to be restored until I get to heaven and get my resurrection body anyone looking forward to their heavenly resurrection body and future heavenly trampolining options so many people prayed for my need to be healed miraculously that wasn't what happened but it didn't mean that healing and restoration isn't God's plan for me and that that plan is still ongoing and I look forward to the full healing and restoration in heaven finally I just wanted to say something about the name Jehovah Rafa because I think we lose something in how these names for God are translated in our English Bibles so in

Hebrew I'm looking at I hope this is right I think it's a noun Jehovah Rafa is a noun but in English it becomes a noun phrase who heals and restores so for me this changes slightly into the healing and restoration being what God does but in the Hebrew healing and restoration is who God is and I think that's really important because it's God's nature healing and restoration is intrinsic to God's character he has to act in accordance with his character and I think sometimes that's a bit easier to see in Jesus perhaps maybe because we're more aware of his personhood Jesus is the healer as well as someone who heals and I think if we fail to understand that if we think of God as just someone who delivers healing

I think our prayer for healing can sometimes to me feel a little bit transactional so we ask for healing and God delivers healing and I think God's really gracious to us and I think he loves it when we pray like that I don't think there's anything wrong with praying like that but the problem for me personally is sometimes I think I'm not sure if God's going to heal that situation now and I've been aware over time that sometimes I stop praying for God to heal that I pray something different but if we understand healing restoration as part of God's identity then it means that our prayers for healing become prayers of praise and worship because they glorify and they testify to who God is so when I hold back from praying for healing I hold back from worship and that is why I think the Lord asks us to carry on asking for healing and restoration so in summary

Jehovah Rapha of history do you have an experience of God's restoration in your life that helps you build a foundation of faith praise and worship Jehovah Rapha of our present how do we understand the purposes and plans of God as healer if we don't always receive healing now and Jehovah Rapha of the yet to come how do we continue to worship God as healer and restorer how do we trust God's promises for healing and restoration even if we may not see it in our own lifetime and finally how do we worship God healer and restorer and give him praise for who he is and what he has done for us in the past present and for all time for all