

## Worship in Genesis

**At that time people began to call upon the name of the LORD. (Genesis 4:26)**

What does it mean to ‘call upon the name of Yahweh’? LORD is the English translation for Yahweh. Yahweh is actually 4 Hebrew letters YHWH with no vowels and is sometimes translated as Jehovah as well. The variance occurs because of the absence of vowels in the Hebrew language and the fact that we don’t know how ancient Jews pronounced YHWH. Yahweh is the personal name of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The God of Israel. But what we do know is that they worshipped YHWH as their God – the Creator. The phrase ‘to call upon’ is translated as ‘worshipped’ in the NET Bible with a special note that explains that worship included prayers to God and the offering of sacrifices. In Genesis, the reader sees Cain, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all presenting offerings to Yahweh as acts of worship. From chapters 4 to 46, worshipping Yahweh through burnt offerings and the giving of offerings is part of the narrative (see below). What is worship? The Hebrew word for worship is literally to bow down or prostrate oneself before another, in this case, Yahweh, the one true and living God of Israel.

In the narrative of Cain and Abel, both present an offering to Yahweh as an act of worship. However, Cain’s offering was rejected. But why? Some suggest the reason was it wasn’t an animal sacrifice, but this doesn’t work with the rest of the Torah where grain offerings are required and acceptable. We read Abel brought the “firstborn from his flock” and the “fat portions,” which are pictures of our first and best, but did Cain bring the firstfruits (Exo 23:19)? Gen 4:3 says Cain brought “an offering of the fruit” —but it doesn’t say anything like ‘the firstborn’ and ‘fat portions’, all words that emphasize that this was the best Abel had and he was giving it to Yahweh. Cain’s offering was rejected because Cain didn’t give God his best. It is repulsive to offer to our Creator the leftovers of anything as an act of worship. God is worthy of our first and best.

Ch	Descriptions of Acts of Worship
4	Cain & Abel gave offering to God; men began to worship Yahweh
8	Noah built an altar to Yahweh and offered burnt offerings
12	Abraham made an altar and called/worshipped Yahweh
13	Abraham made an altar and there worshipped Yahweh
21	Abraham worshipped Yahweh, the Everlasting God
22	Abraham offering Isaac to Yahweh as the ultimate act of worship
24	Abraham’s servant bowed his head and worshiped with words
26	Isaac built an altar there and worshipped Yahweh
28	Jacob, after his ladder (stairway) dream, placed a memorial stone and poured oil over it
31	Jacob offered a sacrifice in the hill country
35	Jacob poured out a drink offering
46	Jacob offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac

In Genesis 22:5, Abraham specifically says that he and Isaac are going to Mt. Moriah to worship. Yet, the reader knows that Abraham is taking Isaac to the mountain to offer him as a burnt offering to Yahweh. This is the first text to specifically tie presenting offerings on an altar to worship. In chapter 24, Abraham’s unnamed servant bowed his head and worshiped Yahweh by expressing words of praise and thanksgiving. The New Testament brings an end to God’s people – followers of Christ – offering animals to Yahweh. In the NT, all Christians are priests worshipping God. The chart below illustrates how the NT uses OT imagery to describe worship. In fact, Jesus said, “the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him” (John 4:23). Do you worship like this? Does God get your firstfruits and fat portions or the leftovers?

Reference	Descriptions of Worship in the New Testament using Old Testament Language
Rom 12:1	I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, <b>to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.</b>
Rom 15:16	To be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in <b>the priestly service of the gospel of God</b> , so that the <b>offering of the Gentiles</b> may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
Phi 4:18	I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, <b>a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.</b>
2Ti 4:6	For I am already being <b>poured out as a drink offering</b> , and the time of my departure has come.
1Pe 2:5	You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, <b>to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.</b>
Heb 13:15	Let us continually <b>offer up a sacrifice of praise to God</b> , that is, the <b>fruit</b> of lips that acknowledge His name.