

יהוה

hebrew

Meaning

- Yahweh - God's personal name

It is not a generic term for “god”, but rather the word יהוה (YHWH) is the name by which God uniquely identifies himself in the Old Testament.

First appearing in [Genesis 2:4](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigGenesis 2:4

Hebrew אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם בַּיּוֹם עָשׂוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם ESV These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. NIV This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens- αὐτὴ ἡ βίβλος γενέσεως οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὅτε ἤμειν ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν..., it occurs over 6,000 times in the Old Testament.

Frequently translated into English as “LORD” (all capital letters).

Pronunciation

In ancient Israel, the name was considered too sacred to pronounce aloud. When reading Scripture, Jews would often substitute אֲדֹנָי (Adonai, “Lord”) instead.

The Masoretes (medieval Jewish scribes) added the vowel points of “Adonai” to “YHWH” leading to the hybrid form “Jehovah.”

Most English Bibles today translate it as “LORD” (all in capitals) to distinguish it from “Adonai” (Lord).

Meaning and Etymology

The name is related to the Hebrew verb הָיָה (hayah, “to be”), suggesting meanings such as:

- “I am who I am” ([Exodus 3:14](#)plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigExodus 3:14

Hebrew וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל מֹשֶׁה אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲהִיָּה שְׁלַחְנִי אֵלֵיכֶם ESV God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” NIV God said to Moses, “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’

καὶ ὁ θεὸς πρὸς ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν καὶ τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ ὁ ὢν ἀπέσταλκέν με πρὸς ὑμᾶς...)

- “He is”
- “He causes to be”

This conveys that God is self-existent, eternal, and unchanging. He is the One who depends on

Theological Significance

- [Exodus 6:2-3](#) - God tells Moses that He is revealing Himself as YHWH, the God who keeps His promises.
- [Deuteronomy 6:4](#) plugin-autotooltip default plugin-autotooltip bigDeuteronomy 6:4

- Psalm 23:1 plugin-autotooltip default plugin-autotooltip big Psalm 23:1

In this sense, YHWH embodies both God's transcendence and His relational nearness.

Connections with the New Testament

Greek πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσῃται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται. ESV For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” NIV for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” NLT For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved. quoting [Joel 2:32](#)plugin-autotooltip default plugin-autotooltip bigJoel 2:32

This reflects the early Christian conviction that Jesus shares in the divine identity of YHWH.

Grammatical forms

Because יהוה (YHWH) is a proper personal name, not a regular noun, it does not decline for number, gender, or case like ordinary Hebrew words. Nevertheless, in Scripture, it appears in different grammatical roles and syntactic relationships (for example, as subject, object, or in construct with another noun).

Basic Grammatical Function

Grammatical Function	Description	Example Reference	Hebrew Text
Subject	YHWH is the subject performing the action	Exodus 20:7 plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigExodus 20:7 Hebrew יהוה לא ישא את שמו לשווא כי לא ינקוה יהוה את אשר ישא את שמו לשווא ESV “You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain. NIV “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. οὐλήμψητὸδδνομακυρίουτουθεοῦσουεπιματαιῶσούγάρμηκαθαρίσηκύριοςτὸνλαμβάνοντατὸδνομααυτοῦἐπιματαιῶ... - “YHWH will not hold him guiltless...”	יהוה
Object	YHWH is the object receiving the action	Psalm 18:1 plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 18:1 Hebrew יהוה ליהוה את דברי השירה הזאת ביום הציל יהוה אותו מכף כל איביו ומיד שאול ESV TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID, THE SERVANT OF THE LORD, WHO ADDRESSED THE WORDS OF THIS SONG TO THE LORD ON THE DAY WHEN THE LORD RESCUED HIM FROM THE HAND OF ALL HIS ENEMIES, AND FROM THE HAND OF SAUL. HE SAID: I love you, O LORD, my strength. εἰςτὸτέλοςτῷπαϊδικυρίουτῷᾧἐλάλησεντῷκυρίῳτοῦςλ... - “I love You, O YHWH, my strength.”	יהוה
Predicate / Apposition	Used in statements identifying or describing God	Exodus 15:3 plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigExodus 15:3 Hebrew יהוה איש מלחמה יהוה שמו ESV The LORD is a man of war; the LORD is his name. NIV The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name. NLT The LORD is a warrior; Yahweh is his name! LXX κύριος συντρίβων πολέμους κύριος ὄνομα αὐτῷ KJV The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. - “YHWH is a warrior.”	יהוה
Vocative (address)	Used when addressing God directly	Psalm 8:1 plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 8:1 Hebrew יהוה למנצח על הגתית מזמור לדוד ESV TO THE CHOIRMASTER: ACCORDING TO THE GITTITH. A PSALM OF DAVID. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. NIV O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. εἰςτὸτέλοςὑπεῖρτωνσηνῶνψαλμὸςτῷκύριεὸκύριοςῆμῶνὡςθεασυμαστὸντὸδδνομασουςἐνπάσητῇγῆδτιεπὶρηθῆσουὑπεράνωτῶνοὐρανῶν... - “O YHWH, our Lord, how majestic is Your name...”	יהוה

Construct or Possessive Relationships

While YHWH itself does not take a construct ending, it appears in construct phrases, especially “YHWH of __.”

Construct Phrase	Meaning	Example Reference	Hebrew Text
YHWH Elohim	“LORD God” — combining God’s personal and general titles	Genesis 2:4 plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigGenesis 2:4 Hebrew אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם ביום עשות יהוה אלהים ארץ ושמים ESV These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens. NIV This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created. When the LORD God made the earth and the heavens- αὐτῇῆβίβλοςγενεσεωςοὐρανοῦκαὶγῆςδτεῆῆμέραεποίησεντὸθεὸςτὸνοῦρανὸνκαὶτὴνγῆν...	יהוה אלהים
YHWH Tsevaoth	“LORD of hosts” — the God of angelic armies	1 Samuel 1:3 plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_big1 Samuel 1:3 Hebrew ועלה האיש ההוא מעירו מימים ימימה להשתחות ולזבח ליהוה צבאות בשלה ושני בני עלי חפלי ופנחס כהנים יהוה ESV Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD. NIV καὶἀνέβαινεὐδᾶνθρωποςἐξῆμερῶνεἰςῆμέραςἐκπόλεωςαὐτοῦἐξπροσκυνεῖνκαὶθύειντῷκυρίῳθεῶεἰςκαὶἐκεῖ...	יהוה צבאות
YHWH Shalom	“The LORD is peace”	Judges 6:24 plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigJudges 6:24 Hebrew ויבן גידעון מזבח ליהוה ויקרא לו יהוה שלום עד היום הנה עוזנו בעפרת אבי העזריה ESV Then Gideon built an altar there to the LORD and called it, The LORD is Peace. To this day it still stands at Ophrah, which belongs to the Abiezrites. NIV So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites. καὶὠκοδόμησενἐκεῖθυσιαστήριοντῷκυρίῳκαὶἐκάλεσεν...	יהוה שלום

YHWH Yireh	"The LORD will provide"	Genesis 22:14 plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigGenesis 22:14 Hebrew וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם שֵׁם הַמָּקוֹם הַהוּא יְהוָה יִרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר יֹאמַר הַיּוֹם בְּהָר יְהוָה יִרְאֶה ESV So Abraham called the name of that place, "The LORD will provide"; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall be provided." NIV So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, καὶ ἐκ αὐτῆς ἡμέρας αὐτοὺς ὀνόματο ὁ τόπος ἐκεῖνος κύριος ἐλθέτω ἡ σῆμερον ἐν τῷ ὄρει κύριος ὥφθη... יהוה יִרְאֶה	
YHWH Tsidqenu	"The LORD our righteousness"	Jeremiah 23:6 plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigJeremiah 23:6 Hebrew בְּיָמָיו תִּשָּׁעַ יְהוּדָה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁכֹּן לְבֶטֶח וְזֶה שְׁמוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִקְרָאוּ יְהוָה צְדִקְנוּ ESV In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.' NIV In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness. ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ σωθήσεται ἡ οὐδὰς καὶ ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σκεπὴν σωθῆσεται καὶ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὃ ἐπικλήσεται... יהוה צְדִקְנוּ	

Prepositional Phrases with יהוה

Here YHWH follows prepositions. The form itself remains unchanged, but the vowel under the initial consonant may slightly adjust because of the preposition.

Meaning	Hebrew Text
to / for YHWH	לִיהוָה
from YHWH	מִיהוָה
in / by YHWH	בִּיהוָה
with YHWH (object marker + name)	אֶת־יְהוָה
upon / against YHWH (context determines nuance)	עַל־יְהוָה

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