

יהוה

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 עָשָׂה 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 ἤδη ἡμέρα 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 אֲנִי אֲהִיָּה אֲשֶׁר אֲהִיָּה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לִבְנֵי 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 nothing else for existence and brings all things into being.

Theological Significance

YHWH is not a general term for “god”, rather it is a personal, covenantal name. It reveals God’s faithfulness and presence with His people:

- [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

Hebrew שְׁמַיְךָ יְהוָה יְהוָה אֶלֶּהינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד ESV “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

NIV Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. NLT “Listen, O Israel! The LORD is our

God, the LORD alone. LXX καὶ ταῦτα τὰ δικαιώματα καὶ τὰ κρίματα ὅσα ἐνετείλατο κύριος τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ ἐξεληθόντων αὐτῶν ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου ἄκουε Ἰσραὴλ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν κύριος εἷς ἐστίν... – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD (YHWH) our God, the LORD is one.”

- [Psalm 23:1](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 23:1

Hebrew יְהוָה לִי רֹעִי לֹא אֶחָסֵר ESV A PSALM OF DAVID. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall

not want. NIV The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. NLT The LORD is my shepherd; I

have all that I need. LXX ψαλμὸς τῷ Δαυιδ κύριος ποιμαίνει με καὶ οὐδέν με ὑστερήσει – “YHWH is my shepherd.”

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

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