

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 אֵלֹהֵי תוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹם בְּהִבְרָאָם בְּיוֹם עֲשׂוֹת 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- αὐτῆς ἡβίβλος γενέσεως οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὅτε ἦ 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 אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה וַיֹּאמֶר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶהְיֶה 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 שְׂמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ 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 ἐξελθόντων 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 אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד לֹא אֵל עִמָּנוּ 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.

Connections with the New Testament

Although the Greek New Testament uses Κύριος (“Lord”) rather than YHWH, many passages apply Old Testament texts about YHWH to Jesus Christ (e.g., [Philippians 2:10–11](#), [Romans 10:13](#) plugin-autotooltip__default plugin-autotooltip_bigRomans 10:13

Greek πάντες γὰρ ὅς 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

Hebrew ESV And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the LORD has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the LORD calls.

καὶ ἔσται πᾶς ὃς ἂν τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται ὅτι ἐν τῷ ὄρει καὶ ἐν ἔσται καθότι κύριος καὶ ἐὺ ἀγγελιζόμενοι οὐδὲς κύριος).

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

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