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יְהוָה

Meaning

• Yahweh - God's personal name

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

First appearing in Genesis 2:4plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigGenesis 2:4

Hebrew אֱלֶהִים אֱלֶרְ וְשָׁמֵיִם וְהָאֶרֶץ בְּהַבּּרְאֵם בְּיֹוֹם עֲשֶׂוֹת יְהוֶה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֶרְ וְשָׁמֵיִם 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-αὕτηἡβίβλοςγενέσεωςοὐρανοῦκαὶγῆςὅτεἦἡμέραἐποίησενὁθεὸςτὸνοὐρανὸνκαὶτὴνγῆν..., 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 אָדֹעָי (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 הַיָּה (hayah, "to be"), suggesting meanings such as:

"I am who I am" (Exodus 3:14plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigExodus 3:14

Hebrew נְיָאֹמֶר אֱלֹחָיםֹ אֶל מֹשֶּׁה אֱהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֱהְיֶה נִיּאֹמֶר כְּיֹה תֹאמֵר לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵׁל אֱהְיֶה שְׁלָחְנִי אֲלֵיכֶם 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.'

καὶὁθεὸςπρὸς ἐγώεἰμιὸὤνκαὶτοῖς υἱοῖς Ισραηλὸὢνἀπέσταλκένμε 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.

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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 6:4plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigDeuteronomy 6:4

Hebrew שְׁמֵ יִשְּׂרָאֵֵל יְהֹוֶה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהֹוֶה אֶם 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 υἰοῖςΙσραηλἐντῆἐρήμψἐξελθόντωναὐτῶνἐκγῆςΑἰγύπτουἄκουεΙσραηλκύριοςὁθεὸςἡμῶνκύριοςεἷς ἐστιν... – "Hear, O Israel: The LORD (YHWH) our God, the LORD is one."

• Psalm 23:1plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 23:1

Hebrew מָזְמְוֹר לְדָגֵד יְהְנֵה רֹעִי לָאׁ אֶחְסֵּר 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 – "ΥΗΨΗ 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 10:13plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigRomans 10:13

Greek πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσηται 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 2:32plugin-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.

καὶἔσταιπᾶςδςἂντὸὄνομακυρίουσωθήσεταιὅτιἐντῷὄρεικαὶἐνἔσταικαθότικύριοςκαὶεὐαγγελιζόμενοιοῦ ςκύριος).

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

Grammatical forms

Because יְהוָה (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

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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 20:7plugin-autotooltipdefault plugin-autotooltip_bigExodus 20:7 Hebrew לָא תָשֶא אָת שֶׁם יְרֵוֶה אֲלֹהֵיךּ לְשֵּוֶא כֶּי לָא יְנָקָּהֹ יְהוֶֹה אַת אָשֶׁר יִשֶּא אָת שִׁם יִרוֶה אֲלֹהֵיךּ לְשֵּוֶא כֶּי לָא יְנָקָּהֹ יְהוָֹה אַת אָשֶׁר יִשָּא אָת שִׁם יִרוֶה אֲלֹהֵיךּ לְשֵּוֶא כָּי לָא יְנָקָּהֹ יְהוָֹה אַת אָשֶׁר יִשְּׁא אָת שִׁם יִרוֹה אָל ESV "You shall not take the name of the LORD your God 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. οὐλήμφητὸὄνομακυρίουτοῦθεοῦσουἐπἰματαίφοὐγὰρμἡκαθαρίσηκύριοςτὸνλαμβάνοντατὸὄνομααὐτοῦἐπὶματαίφ – "YHWH will not hold him guiltless"	יְהוָה
Object	YHWH is the object receiving the action	Psalm 18:1plugin-autotooltipdefault plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 18:1 Hebrew לְּמָנַצְּחֵ לְעֲבֶּד יְהוּוָּה לְּזְׁדֶד אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר לִיהוָֹה אָת דֻּבְרִי הַשִּׁירֶה הַזְּאָת בְּיָוֹם הַצִּיל יְהוֹה אוֹתִוֹ מֵבֶּף כָּל אֹיִבְּיו וּמֵיֵד שְׁאָר 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 DORD 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. ɛἰςτὸτέλοςτῷπαιδὶκυρίουτῷᾶἐλάλησεντῷκυρίωτοὺςλ – "I love You, O YHWH, my strength."	יְהנָה
Predicate / Apposition	identifying or describing	Exodus 15:3plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigExodus 15:3 Hebrew יְהְנֵה שְׁלְחָמֵה יְהְנֵה שְׁלְחָמֵה 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."	יְהוָה
Vocative (address)	Used when addressing God	Psalm 8:1plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigPsalm 8:1 Hebrew לְמִנְּצֵּח עֵּל הַּנְּּתִּית מִיְּמִוֹר לְדָרָד 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. εἰςτὸτέλοςὑπὲρτῶνληνῶνψαλμὸςτῷκόριεὁκόριοςἡμῶνώςθαυμαστὸντὸὄνομάσουἐνπάσητῆγῆὅτιἐπήρθηἡσουὑπεράνωτῶνοὐρανῶν – "Ο YHWH, our Lord, how majestic is Your name"	יְהוָה

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	God's personal	Genesis 2:4plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigGenesis 2:4 Hebrew אַלָּה תוֹלְדְוֹת הַשְּׁמֵיִם וְהָאָרֵץ בְּהַבֵּרְאֵם בְּיֹוֹם עֲשָׂוֹת יְתוֶה אֱלֹהֶים אֶרֶץ וְשְׁמֵיִם 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-αὕτηἡβίβλοςγενέσεωςοὐρανοῦκαὶγῆςὅτεἦἡμέραἐποίησενόθεὸςτὸνοὐρανὸνκαὶτὴνγῆν	
YHWH Tsevaoth	God of angelic	1 Samuel 1:3plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_big1 Samuel 1:3 Hebrew יְמָיִם יָמִׁימָּים יָמִׁימָּה לְהָשְׁתַּחָוֹת וְלִזְּבָּח לִיתְּה צְּבָאוֹת בְּשִׁלֶּה וְשֶׁׁם שְׁצֵי בְיֵי עֵלִי חָפָּנִי וּפְּנְּחָׁס כּּהַצִּים (מְּיָמִים יָמִימָים יָמִימָים יָמִימָה לְהָשְׁתַּחָוֹת וְלִזְבְּּחַ לִיתּוֶה צְּבָאוֹת בְּשִׁלֶּה וְשֶׁׁם שְׁצֵי בְּיֵי עֵלִי חָפְנִי וּפְּנְחְׁס כּהַצִים 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 καὶἀνέβαινενὸἄνθρωποςἐξήμερῶνεἰςἡμέραςἐκπόλεωςαὐτοῦἐξπροσκυνεῖνκαὶθύειντῷκυρίῳθεῷεἰςκαὶἐκεῖ	יְהוָה צְבָּאוֹת
YHWH Shalom	"The LORD is peace"	Judges 6:24plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigJudges 6:24 Hebrew נִּיָּבֶּן שֶׁׁם גִּדְעוֹן מִזְבָּׁל לִיהוָֹה וַיִּקְרָא לְוֹ יְהְנֶה שָׁלֵּוֹם עֻד הַיָּוֹם הֵזֶּה עוֹנֶּיגּ בְּעָפְרֶת אֲבִי הָעֶזְרִי 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. καὶἀκοδόμησενἐκεῖθυσιαστήριοντῷκυρίῳκαὶἐκάλεσεν	יְהוָה שָׁלוֹם
YHWH Yireh	"The LORD will provide"	Genesis 22:14plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigGenesis 22:14 Hebrew אַבְרָהֵם שֵׁם הַמִּקוֹם הַהָּוֹה יִרְאֱה אֲשֶׁר ֹיֵאָמֵר הַיֹּּוֹם בְּהַר יְהוֶה יֵרְאֱה Mebrew הַּהָר יְהוֶה יֵרְאֶה אֲשֶׁר ֹיֵאָמֵר הַיֹּּוֹם בְּהַר יְהוֶה יֵרְאֶה hame 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, καὶἐκάλεσεντὸὄνοματοῦτόπουἐκείνουκύριοςεἶδενἵνασήμερονἐντῷὄρεικύριοςὧφθη	יְהוָה יִרְאֶה

		Jeremiah 23:6plugin-autotooltip_default plugin-autotooltip_bigJeremiah 23:6	
YHWH	righteousness"	Hebrew בָּיָמִיוֹ תִּוְשַׁע יְהוּדְּה וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁכְּוֹ שְׁמְוֹ אֲשֶׁר יִקְרְאִוֹ יְהֹוֶה צִּדְקֵנוּ 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.	יְהוָה
Tsidqenu		ἐνταῖςἡμέραιςαὐτοῦσωθήσεταιΙουδαςκαὶΙσραηλκατασκηνώσειπεποιθώςκα	צְדְקֵנוּ

Prepositional Phrases with יְהוָה

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	לַיהוָה
from YHWH	מיְהוָה
in / by YHWH	בַּיהוָה
with YHWH (object marker + name)	אֶת־יְהוָה
upon / against YHWH (context determines nuance)	עַל־יְהוָה

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