

THE NAME



TETRAGRAMMATON

YHWH

THE NAME OF GOD

The Tetragrammaton **YHWH** is the personal name of the God of Moses. The correct pronunciation of the name was lost from Jewish tradition some time during the Middle Ages; late in the period of the Second Temple the name had come to be regarded as unspeakably holy and therefore unsuitable for use in public reading, although it continued to be used privately. To avoid the misuse of the holy name **YHWH**,

ADONAI (My Great Lord) was pronounced in place of the Tetragrammaton. In written texts, the vowels of **ADONAI** were combined with the consonants **YHWH** to remind readers to pronounce **ADONAI** instead of **YHWH**.

The incorrect hybrid, **JEHOVAH** arose from Christian misunderstanding in the late Middle Ages. The form **YAHWEH** is now accepted almost universally.

The structure and etymology of the name have been much discussed. While no consensus exists, the name is generally thought to be a verbal form derived from the root *hwy* "be at hand, exist (phenomenally), come to pass." In some texts: **I AM THAT I AM.**

The translators of the King James Version decided to translate **YHWH** as **LORD** and most all translations since have done the same. In 1901, a revision of the King James Version was published (The American Standard Version) and the revisors decided to use **JEHOVAH** whenever the Tetragrammaton appeared. The Jerusalem Bible is the only modern version that uses **YAHWEH**.

The preface to the New International Version says:

In regard to the divine name **YHWH**, commonly referred to as the Tetragrammaton, the translators adopted the device used in most English versions of rendering the name as "**LORD**" in capital letters to distinguish it from **Adonai**, another Hebrew word rendered "**Lord**" for which small letters are used. Wherever the two names stand together in the Old Testament as a compound name of God they are rendered "**Sovereign LORD.**"

Because for most readers today the phrases "*the LORD of hosts*" and "*God of hosts*" have little meaning, this version renders them "*the LORD Almighty*" and "*God Almighty.*" These renderings convey the sense of the Hebrew, namely, "*he who is sovereign over all the 'hosts' (powers) in heaven and on earth, especially over the 'hosts' (armies) of Israel.*"

For readers unacquainted with Hebrew this does not make clear the distinction between **Sabaoth** ("*hosts*" or "*Almighty*") and **Shaddai** (*which can also be translated "Almighty"*), but the latter occurs infrequently and is always footnoted. When **Adonai** and

YHWH Sabaoth occur together, they are rendered "***the Lord, the LORD Almighty.***"