



Early in their relationship Moses asked God to reveal His name. God readily complied with Moses' request by giving Him not one but two names of God:

**Exodus 3:13** Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"

**Exodus 3:14** And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, '**I AM** has sent me to you.'"

**Exodus 3:15** Moreover God said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'The **LORD** God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This *is* My name forever, and this *is* My memorial to all generations.'

The first name that God told Moses about was **I AM**. The word in Hebrew is *Hayah*.

The second name that God told Moses about, translated **LORD** in all capitals, was a new Hebrew word for which we only have the four consonants. We do not have the vowels. As a matter of fact, the Hebrew alphabet is a consonantal one: there are no separate letters for vowels in the written alphabet.

This does not mean, of course, that vowels are not used in Hebrew. It is impossible to say anything at all without vowel sounds. But ancient Hebrew contained no written vowels as distinct letter forms. The actual vowel sounds were added to the reading by means of oral tradition and long-established usage.

If that sounds weird to you, *it's not!* Some of you send abbreviated text messages by leaving out the vowels. It's easier than you might think to read common words without vowels.

This name that God gave Himself, however, was a brand new word. It was four consonants without vowels and had not been pronounced before.

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Because it is only four letters it is sometimes referred to as the tetragrammaton – the Greek word that means *four letter word* or *the four letters*. The consonants, when transliterated into English, are YHWH.

(To transliterate is to spell a word using the letters of another language). (YHWH or יְהוָה in Hebrew read left to right).

The four Hebrew letters transliterated YHWH are:

- י Yod, rhymes with "rode", which we transliterate "Y"
- ה He, rhymes with "say", which we transliterate "H"
- ו Vav, like "lava", which we transliterate "W"
- ה another He

The four letters of the tetragrammaton seem to derive from the word *Hayah (I AM)*. But they constitute a new name for God.

The first written use of the tetragrammaton in the Bible is in Genesis 2:4,

**Genesis 2:4** This *is* the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the **LORD** God made the earth and the heavens,

You'll notice that the word **LORD** is all capitals in most Bibles. Here's a little translators secret:

1. When you read in English the word **God** (capital 'G' and lower case letters) it almost always translates *Elohim*.
2. When you read in English the word **GOD** (all in caps) it translates the tetragrammaton.
3. When you read in English **Lord** (capital 'L' and lower case letters) it translates *adonay*.
4. When you read in English **LORD** (all in caps) it translates the tetragrammaton.



The tetragrammaton is the most frequently occurring name of God, appearing some 6,800 times in the Bible.

- being changed to bring change -

We aren't quite sure how to pronounce the tetragrammaton. In fact, there is some disagreement as to whether or not Jews ever spoke the tetragrammaton. Some scholars say they did not, out of reverence for the Lord and so as to not risk taking His name in vain. Instead of pronouncing the letters, they said *adonay*, which is the Hebrew word for "Lord." When Hebrew scribes copied the Bible's ancient manuscripts, they inserted the vowels a-o-a (from *adonay*) above the four-letters.

When the tetragrammaton gets translated into English with the additional letters the result is something that sounds like *Jehovah*. That's why our old Bible translations (such as KJV and ASV) use *Jehovah* as a possible representation of God's personal name.

Other scholars, including some Jewish scholars, believe that the tetragrammaton **was** spoken aloud but that the correct pronunciation was lost over time. They do not like the pronunciation *Jehovah*. They consider it an erroneous and disrespectful Christianized version of the true biblical name of God.

Still others say the pronunciation was never lost and that YAHWEH is correct. The Modern Judaica Encyclopedia, Volume 7, page 69, says,

"The true pronunciation of the [tetragrammaton] was never lost. Several early Greek writers of the Christian Church testify that the name was pronounced 'Yahweh'. This is confirmed, at least for the vowels of the first syllable of the name, by the shorter form Yah, which is sometimes used in [bible] poetry (e.g., Exodus15:2) and the -yahu or -yah that serves as the final syllable in very many Hebrew names."

YAH may be a shortened form of YAWEH. This Name of God occurs about 50 times in the Hebrew Bible . The Name YAH is also found in the construct word "hallelu-YAH," which means "you [pl.] praise the LORD."

If you want to really split hairs, you need to know that there is no 'W' sound in Hebrew, so the most correct transliteration would use a 'V' instead and the pronunciation would be YAHVEH.



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At this point you feel like saying, *Oi vay!*

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We don't really know what YAVEH means either. It seems to be derived from the word for **I AM** but it's a new name unto itself.

As a name for God it must tell us something about His nature and character. To discover its meaning we would begin by looking at its first occurrence. We already said it was in the fourth verse of the second chapter of Genesis:

**Genesis 2:4** This *is* the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the **LORD** [YHVH] God [Elohim] made the earth and the heavens,

The first chapter of Genesis is concerned with the general overview of the created universe. Chapter two gives us the detailed description of the creation of man, and then woman out of man. The use of this new name of God, YAHVEH, is forever linked to His creation of man in His image.

**It becomes clear at that point in Genesis that all of creation was merely to serve the purpose of creating a man and a woman, and their descendants after them, to have fellowship with God. So we might say that YAHVEH is a name of special significance to represent God's desire that we enjoy fellowship with Him.**

When we have a close relationship with someone, we usually call them by a term of endearment, not by their designation. I might call my wife "dear" or "honey," *not* "woman," or "female human."

Some of you have unique, more memorable designations for relatives.

It might not be going too far to say that God was giving Adam and Eve and their descendants a name of endearment. In the same way, when God initiated a personal relationship with his people in Exodus, God may have given them a term of endearment.

That's the impression I'm getting from the name YAHVEH. It's a personal, endearing name for a loving heavenly Father.



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Why don't we use it more? Probably because Jesus referred to Himself multiple times as **I AM**, referring to the *Hayah* of Exodus, rather than as YAHVEH. We use the many other names of Jesus to refer to Him.

What about God our Father? If you are a Christian you've been born-again. You are a new creation. You are born again, not as an orphan, but as a forever member of God's family.

**1 John 3:1** Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

**1 John 3:2** Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

We in the Church Age have our own term of endearment for our Father:

**Galatians 4:6** And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"

When it comes to our heavenly Father, to YAHVEH, the apostle Paul told us we could call Him Abba, Father!

The term *Abba* occurs only two other times in the New Testament. Jesus uses the term in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mark 14:36. Paul uses it again in Romans 8:15. All three times it is in a phrase, Abba Father. It begs the question, Since Abba means Father in Aramaic, why follow it by using the Greek word for Father?

Because Abba is a more endearing term. It can be translated *Daddy!* It's our own term of endearment. God, YAHVEH, is our Father and our Daddy.

Dare to address your Father as Daddy. Enter in to the endearment; the intimacy; the joy.



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