

THE REVELATION OF THE DIVINE NAME

יהוה

PRESENTED BY MATT LYBARGER, MDIV

WWW.MYSPIRITUALDIRECTION.COM

THE HEBREW LETTERS



HE / "HAY"

VAV

HE / "HAY"

YOD / "YODE"

"H" AS IN HAT

"V" AS IN VICTOR

"H" AS IN HAT

"Y" AS IN YELLOW

H

V/W

H

Y

HEBREW READS RIGHT TO LEFT SO IN ENGLISH WE END UP WITH THE CONSONANTS Y-H-W-H

YHWH IS KNOWN AS THE TETRAGRAMMATON OR "FOUR LETTERS"

PRACTICE WRITING OUT AND PRONOUNCING EACH CONSONANT IN THE DIVINE NAME

Handwriting practice lines for the Hebrew letters. Each row consists of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line. The letters are shown in blue with numbered arrows indicating stroke order:

- Row 1: Letter He (ה) with stroke 1 starting at the top right and moving left.
- Row 2: Letter Vav (ו) with stroke 1 starting at the top right and moving left, and stroke 2 starting at the bottom right and moving left.
- Row 3: Letter He (ה) with stroke 1 starting at the top right and moving left.
- Row 4: Letter Yod (י) with stroke 1 starting at the top right and moving left.

PRACTICE WRITING THE DIVINE NAME BELOW

Blank handwriting practice lines for writing the divine name YHWH. The lines consist of a solid top line, a dashed middle line, and a solid bottom line.

HOW THE DIVINE NAME APPEARS IN ENGLISH BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

Whenever the Divine Name YHWH appears in an English translation, it normally appears with small caps as The LORD. For example, in its first appearance in Genesis 2:4, the ESV reads:

These are the generations of the heaven and earth
when they were created
in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens.


YHWH Elohim

Elohim = God (2,602x)

El = God (236x)

YHWH = (6,828x)

The Name YHWH from Genesis to Exodus

- Gen. 2:4 - First time YHWH appears in Scripture and does so as YHWH Elohim
- Gen. 4:1 - First time YHWH appears as a stand alone name by Eve
- Gen. 12:1 (Abraham) - And YHWH said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”
- Gen. 12:7 (Abraham) - Then YHWH appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.
- Gen. 12:8 (Abraham) - And there he built an altar to YHWH and called upon the name of YHWH
- Gen. 13:14 (Abraham) -And YHWH said to Abram “Lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward, 15 for all the land that you see I will give to you and to your offspring forever. 16 I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring also can be counted. 17 Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for I will give it to you.” 18 So Abram moved his tent and came and settled by the oaks of Mamre, which are at Hebron, and there he built an altar to the YHWH.

- Gen. 15:1-6 (Abraham) - After these things **the word of YHWH came to Abram in a vision**. “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” 2 But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” 5 **And he brought him outside** and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 6 And he believed YHWH, and he counted it to him as righteousness.
- Gen. 18:1 (Abraham) - And YHWH appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre...
- Gen. 26:1-5 (Isaac) - Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham’s time—and Isaac went to Abimelek king of the Philistines in Gerar. 2 YHWH appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. 3 Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. 4 I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, 5 because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.”
- Gen. 28:20-21 (Jacob) - Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If elohim will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear 21 so that I return safely to my father’s household, then the YHWH will be my elohim.

The Burning Bush & Moses' Hesitation - Exodus 3

3:11 – Moses 1st hesitation

“Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?”

3:12 – God's response

He said, “But I will be (Heb. “to be”/he-yod-he) with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.”

3:13 – Moses 2nd hesitation

What if the people ask me for you name? What shall I say to them?

What is Moses asking?

At first sight the question “What is His name?” seems to be quite conclusive evidence that the name (YHWH) was not known previously. But what are we to make of the patriarchal narratives?

Is Moses asking for a name of God that reveals some aspect of His nature or activity?

- El Elyon (God Most High, Gen. 14:18-20); El Roi (God who sees me, Gen. 16:13); El Shaddai (God Almighty, Gen. 17:1); El Olam (God Everlasting, Gen. 21:33); El Bethel (God of Bethel, Gen. 31:13); Fear of Isaac (Gen. 31:42, 53)

Is Moses asking not for a name, but rather inquiring about God's character?

If you wish to ask a person's name in Biblical Hebrew, you never say, as is done here, “*What (mah) is his name?*” or “*What is your name?*” Instead you say, “*Who (mi) are you?*” or “*Who is he?*” or “*Tell me your name.*” Where the word “*what*” (*mah*) is associated with the word “name” the question asked is, “What finds expression in or lies concealed behind the that name?”

- Examples using the interrogative *mi* to ask merely what is someone's name:
 - Judges 13:17 – Monoah asks “What is your name” and simply wants a name to attach to the angel
- Examples using the interrogative *mah*, similar to Ex. 3:13:
 - Genesis 32:27 (Hb. v28) – the man asking Jacob “What (*mah*) is your name?” is equivalent to asking “What sort of person are you?” Jacob then receives a new name indicating a new nature (Gen. 32:28; Hb. v29).

In conclusion: **Mah** when used with a personal association generally suggests enquiry into what sort or quality or character. **Mi** is generally an enquiry into external facts.

Therefore, what Moses envisions the Israelites asking is not, “What is this God’s name who you met with?” but, “What kind of revelation of God do you bring us? In other words, what is God up to and will He be faithful to what He promised and has He heard our cries?”

God’s Answer in Exodus 3:13-17

13 Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What (*mah*) is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” 14 God said to Moses, “**I am who I am** (Hebrew: ‘*eheh ‘asher ‘ehyeh*; Greek: *Ego Eimi ho on*)” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘**I am** has sent me to you.’” 15 God also said to Moses, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘**YHWH, the 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 thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations. 16 Go and gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, ‘**YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob**, has appeared to me, saying, “I have observed you and what has been done to you in Egypt, 17 and I promise that I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.”’

- In verse 14 God answers Moses’ question with the phrase: ‘*eheh ‘asher ‘ehyeh*, usually translated as “I AM WHO I AM.”
 - The exact rendering of the verb forms in the phrase, ‘I AM WHO I AM” is not definitive and many offerings are made among scholars:
 - I will be, who I was
 - I will cause to be, what I will cause to be
 - I shall be, who I shall be
 - As I was, so shall I be
 - The issue is that the imperfect verb form here may express past, present continuous or recurrent action, or future
- In verse 15, God then gives the Divine Name YHWH and in doing so connects its meaning with the verb “to be.” While YHWH is most likely a form of the verb *hayah* (“to be”) it is certainly related by way of pun/wordplay by the repeated sound ‘*eheh* and *YHWH*
- The name is further connected with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and YHWH’s faithfulness to them (verses 13, 14, 16).
 - Given the relationship of Y-H-W-H to the phrase in verse 14 and the repeated mention of the patriarchs, I offer for the following meaning:
 - The name YHWH reveals the nature and character of God as the One who is faithful to keep His covenant promises. More specifically, the God who was faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and made promises to them and their offspring, will now be faithful to Moses and the Israelites.

- More specifically, YHWH will be faithful in bringing about what was promised, which at this point in the biblical narrative, the promise of land and God's presence in defeating Israel's enemies are front and center, as is made clear in verse 17, as well as the whole context of Exodus.
- So we may translate and interpret the phrase in verse 14, "As I have been, so I will be." And we may expand its meaning: "Just as I was faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so I will be to you and more." This is the promise that is inherent to God's name YHWH; A promise to be with you; A promise to show up in your life just as He has done in the lives of those before you.

That we are on the right path is further affirmed by a closer look at Exodus 6

Exodus 6:2-3: 2 God spoke to Moses and said to him, "I am YHWH. 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name the Lord I did not make myself known to them.

How is it that Exodus says that up to this point God's name YHWH has not been known, yet in the book of Genesis, as already observed, the patriarchs appear to know it well and use it freely?

There are two interpretive options available that are faithful to the grammar and syntax of the underlying Masoretic Text :

First Option: If we translate taking into account the Hebrew verb themes of "appeared" and "know", the force of the governing preposition over *el shaddai* (God Almighty) and YHWH, and the biblical Hebraic concept of what it means to know someone by name, then are well justified in translating:

"And God spoke to Moses, and said to him: I am YHWH. And I showed myself to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob in the character of El Shaddai, but in the character expressed by my name YHWH I did not make myself known."

Second Option: The syntax of the second half of Ex. 6:3 suggests and allows for rendering it as a short statement followed by a question: “My name is YHWH. Did I not make it known to them?”

I opt for the first option. Moses and the Israelites will experience and know a fuller and deeper meaning of YHWH than their forefathers.

In other words, while Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all experienced God as El Shaddai, in that He transformed them and showed Himself powerful despite their weakness especially in “multiplying”, they did not experience the fullness of YHWH – the one who would fulfill in their entirety His covenant promises, in that they did not see the land-promise fulfilled. But that is precisely what the Israelites are going to experience as affirmed in Exodus 6:8 (though of course, as we know, their participation is conditional upon their faith and availing themselves to God’s covenant promises.)

The name YHWH and His Promise to you today

To understand the significance of the name YHWH for us today we need to look at an odd Greek formulation used to translate “I AM”.

Exodus 3:14 - “I AM” - Ego Eimi

In the phrase “I AM WHO I AM” in Exodus 3:14, the first “I AM” is translated in the LXX (Greek translation of Old Testament) as “ego eimi”, which is somewhat redundant. Such a construction may be translated with the reflexive “I myself am”. More literally it would be “I, I am.” Since this is a strange construction, it sticks out like a sore thumb to Greek readers. But to those who have knowledge of the OT, it sticks out for a reason.

This peculiar Greek phrase is especially utilized in Isaiah to translate the Hebrew *‘ani hu* (“I Am”) and is always in reference to YHWH.

- Is. 41:10, 13 - fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am (*ego eimi*) your God...For I, YHWH your God, hold your right hand; it is who say to you, “Fear not, I am the one who helps you.”

The “I Am” Sayings of Jesus as recorded by John

John 4:26 - Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you, *ego eimi*

John 6:35 - *ego eimi* the bread of life

John 6:42 - *ego eimi* the bread that came down from heaven

John 6:48 - *ego eimi* the living bread that came down from heaven

John 8:12 - *ego eimi* the light of the world

John 8:18 - *ego eimi* the one who bears witness about myself

John 8:58 - Truly, truly, I say to you before Abraham was *ego eimi*

John 10:9 - *ego eimi* the door

John 10:11/14 - *ego eimi* the good shepherd

John 11:25 - *ego eimi* the resurrection and the life

John 13:18 - I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that *ego eimi*

John 14:6 - *ego eimi* the way, the truth, and the life

John 15:1/5 - *ego eimi* the vine

John 18:3-6 - So Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons.⁴ Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, “Whom do you seek?”⁵ They answered him, “Jesus of Nazareth.” Jesus said to them, “*ego eimi.*” Judas, who betrayed him, was standing with them.⁶ When Jesus said to them, “*ego eimi,*” they drew back and fell to the ground.

The name YHWH and Jesus

Deut. 6:4 - Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.



Hebrew: *YHWH*; Greek: *kurios* (lord) Hebrew: *Elohim*; Greek: *theos* (God)

1 Cor. 8:6 - yet for us there is one God (*theos*), the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord (*kurios*), Jesus Christ, through whom all things and through whom we exist.

Eph. 1:2 - Grace to you and peace from God (*theos*) our Father and the Lord (*kurios*) Jesus Christ.

Was Jesus there in the beginning?

John 1:1:2 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him...

Col. 1:16 - For by him all things were created...

Our answer comes by looking at the root YHWH (“to be”) and the numerical value of the Devine name. Letters having numerical values is known as gematria. The gematria of YHWH is 26.

- y = 10
- h = 5
- w = 6
- 10 + 5 + 6 + 10 = 26

- Divine Speech Formulas using “to say” (Heb. ‘amar) - 26 words
- Divine Speech Formulas in Genesis 3 - 26 words
- Psalm 23 -
 - verses 1-4a - 26 words
 - Center - For you are with me
 - verses 4c-6 - 26 words
 - Consider Psalm 139:5 - You hem me in, behind and before

I Am” in Matthew

Matthew 28:18-20 - Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, And behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

- Matthew 28:20 literally reads, *kai hidou ego meth humon eimi*. If we translated literally it would read, “And behold, **I** with you all, **I am**.”