

NAME OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT – REVELATION, SIGNIFICANCE, PRAYER, AND THEOLOGY

The name of God, especially in its sacred form, YHWH (known as Yahweh), is a profound and complex concept and plays a central role in ancient religious traditions, especially in Semitic and Jewish culture. In antiquity, names were not just simple identifiers or appellatives as they are perceived today. They had profound meanings, reflecting the nature and essence of the person or being named. In a spiritual context, knowing and uttering a name meant gaining power and knowledge over the one named. Thus, the name of God was seen as a channel of communication and communion with the divine, enabling the knower to invoke the divine presence intimately and directly.

In the Jewish tradition, the divine name YHWH is not just a title but a direct revelation of God's identity and essence. When Moses was commissioned to deliver the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, he asked for the knowledge of God's name to answer the questions of his people. God answered him from the burning bush on Mount Horeb, revealing his holy name: YHWH. This revelation was not just an act of identification but a gesture of communion, revealing the eternal and all-powerful nature of the divinity. The name YHWH, which means "He is" or "He will be", suggests God's eternity, immanence, and continuous existence, offering the chosen people the guarantee of the divine presence and involvement in their life and history.

The linguistic origin of the name YHWH is a subject of debate in academic circles. While there are numerous theories about deriving this name from other languages or cultural traditions, most scholars recognize that Yahweh is a verb form that transcends simple meanings. It is primarily regarded as a verb reflecting to be, to become, again emphasizing the permanence and dynamism of God. Although attempts have been made to associate it with other deities or cultural practices, the only precise and reliable



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references to this name are in biblical texts and some ancient inscriptions preserved in ancient monuments, such as the Moabite Stone and the Sinai Peninsula inscriptions.

Throughout history, the name of God has acquired special importance in Jewish ritual and religious life. The name YHWH was not to be pronounced routinely because of respect and fear for its sacredness. Other divine titles, such as Adonay (Lord) or Ha-Shem (Name), replaced it in liturgical use and prayers. The reason for the inviolability of direct pronunciation is to be found in scriptural and Talmudic teachings, which prohibit the profane use of God's name. This tradition reflects a fear of taking the name in vain and protecting the sacredness and mystery of the divine essence, which, once known, gave one an extraordinary power over the sacred.

The relevance of God's name is most profoundly manifested in the theophanic episode on Mount Horeb, which marks a turning point in Jewish sacred history. By becoming a pillar of the people's religious identity, the name YHWH not only reaffirms the covenant between God and Israel but also emphasizes the continuity of the divine presence and God's faithfulness to the promises made to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In essence, this sacred name constantly witnesses the righteousness, deliverance, life, and redemption God promises to his people. In this context, the Tetragrammaton YHWH symbolizes God's timeless existence and his commitment to be with the Israelites in all the circumstances of their lives, offering them support, guidance, and deliverance.

A deep connection with his people reflects the relationship between God and his name. It is a symbolic name and a vehicle through which divine presence and power are conveyed and manifested. The Jews saw in the name of YHWH a certainty of a tangible and real divine presence, a spiritual guardian to protect them in times of vulnerability and difficulty. This holy name was invoked in prayers and ceremonies as a bridge between the divine and the human, between the Creator and his creation.

In later theological interpretations, especially Christian ones, the name YHWH takes on new dimensions and connotations, being integrated into the New Testament revelation. In Christianity, the essence and promises of the divine, as reflected in the Tetragrammaton, are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. In Greek texts, Christ is often called Lord (Kyrios), a title that equates the concept of divine sovereignty with that expressed by YHWH in Hebrew writings. Through his sacrifice and resurrection, Jesus becomes a teacher and the promised Savior, bringing salvation to all mankind in a way that continues and fulfills the promises of the Old Covenant.

Thus, in Christianity, the name of Jesus becomes a source of saving power through which divine grace and love are imparted to believers. The Apostle Paul speaks of Christ's name as "above every name," emphasizing the importance of faith and recognition of Jesus' lordship for the salvation of souls. In many Christian traditions, invoking the name of Jesus in prayer is a powerful means of spiritual protection and fulfillment, reflecting the continuity between the divinity of the Old and New Testaments.

Invoking the holy name in this way helps believers navigate through life's trials, strengthens their faith, and gives them inner peace. In both religious traditions – Jewish and Christian – God's name remains a spiritual anchor reflecting the divine's ongoing covenant with humanity and the divine capacity to transform, protect, and save. From biblical antiquity to contemporary Christian communities, God's name is a constant that unifies and guides those who place their hope in it.

This continues the tradition of the spiritual and mystical meaning of the divine name as a symbol of a living and dynamic relationship with the Creator. In modern society, this perception can give depth to a culture that often perceives the name only functionally. Thus, reflecting on the power and sacredness of the divine name, be it YHWH or Jesus, brings a better understanding of how ancient traditions and beliefs can anchor meaningful spiritual experiences in an often provisional and transitory world.

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