This fragment, dating to about 100 BC, was originally part of a psalms scroll (11Q5) and preserves biblical psalms 121 and 122. It illustrates the occasionally attested practice of using paleo-Hebrew script as a sign of respect to write the divine name YHWH (Yahweh/Jehovah). Two of the six occurrences of the divine name found on this fragment are on the second line, third word from the right, and on the eighth line, second word from the right (below the empty space).

The Name and Titles of God in the Old Testament

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Jehovah is a divine name, while “God” is a title in the Old Testament as it has come down to us. Jehovah, the God of Israel, is also designated by other titles in the Hebrew Bible (the Christian Old Testament). The overview that follows identifies and describes the most common ones. First, however, a context for examining this name and these titles is provided by reviewing the importance of God’s name for ancient Israelites.

Knowing God’s name and titles was, and still is, necessary to worship properly and to invoke divine power. Many passages in the Old Testament illustrate this. For example, Jehovah instructed Moses that through the Aaronic priestly prayer the priests “shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them” (Numbers 6:27). Centuries later, Elijah instructed the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel, “Call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD [Jehovah]: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God” (1 Kings 18:24; see also 2 Kings 5:11; Joel 2:32).

In certain passages, Jehovah’s name and titles seem to function as substitutes in place of him. Thus, scripture often indicates that Israelites called on God’s name in prayer (see Psalm 116:13; Mosiah 4:11, 20; Alma 13:28).
Likewise, to praise God’s name was to express praises to and for him. Job declared, for example, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord [Jehovah]” (Job 1:21). And the Psalmist proclaimed, “Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore” (Psalm 113:2; see also Enos 1:1; Alma 7:4; 3 Nephi 1:17).

Taking God’s name upon oneself served to identify a person as a worshipper and devotee (see Numbers 6:27; Mosiah 5:8–12). By extension, a divine name symbolized divine presence: “The place which the Lord your God shall choose . . . to put his name there . . . thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings” (Deuteronomy 12:5–6; see also 12:11; 14:23; 16:2, 6, 11). Knowing God’s name was thus an important dimension in knowing and worshipping him.

Because of its inherent sacred nature, there were consequences for misusing God’s name. Jehovah instructed the Israelites, “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). The Hebrew term (shaw) translated “vain” in the King James Version (hereafter KJV) means “worthless, frivolous, of no consequence, destructive.” Although exact consequences are not provided, Jehovah promised he would “not hold . . . guiltless”—literally, “not leave . . . unpunished” (yenaqqeh)—someone who employed his name in a trivial or irreverent manner, whether in casual conversation, in covenant making, or when swearing oaths (see also Leviticus 19:12). Not only is the Being it designates holy, but the name itself is holy: “Neither shall ye profane my holy name” (Leviticus 22:32). The Psalmist encouraged all people, “Glory ye in his holy name” (Psalm 105:3), and “let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy” (Psalm 99:3).

The ancient Israelites were not alone in recognizing the power inherent in knowing and properly using divine names. Their ancient Near Eastern neighbors had similar conceptions; however, they lacked the understanding that Jehovah was the only true God: “I am the Lord [Jehovah], and there is none else; there is no God beside me” (Isaiah 44:6; see also Isaiah 44:8; 45:21).

**Jehovah and His Titles in the Old Testament**

In the following basic overview of the terms used by ancient Israelites to refer to their God, only one is a proper name—YHWH/Jehovah. The rest of these terms were used in Hebrew as common nouns and adjectives. They also functioned as titles for Israel’s God.

**יהוה/yhwh/Yahweh/Jehovah**

This name of the God of Israel—יהוה/yhwh—occurs over 6,800 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is sometimes referred to as the Tetragrammaton, meaning “four letters.” Due to historical developments in the English language—for example, the letter j used to be pronounced as y—and because the pronunciation of w and v alternates in different languages, the four letters of this divine name are variously written in English as YHWH, YHVH, and JHVH. Whatever the variations in English and other modern languages, the four Hebrew consonants are always the same: יהוה/yhwh (there are no vowel letters nor capital letters in Hebrew). This name has traditionally been rendered Jehovah in English; scholars prefer Yahweh, or simply YHWH. It is derived from the verb meaning “to be” and means either “He is (exists)” or “He causes to be.” The name I AM is an alternate form from the same verb (see Exodus 3:14; John 8:58; D&C 29:1; 38:1; 39:1).

Despite the frequency of yhwh in the Hebrew Bible, “Jehovah” appears only seven times in the King James Version of the Old Testament (see Genesis 2:14; Exodus 6:3; 17:15; Judges 6:24; Psalm 83:18; Isaiah 12:2; 26:4). This is because the translators generally followed a Jewish practice that developed sometime after 500 BC of not pronouncing the divine name yhwh out of respect for its holiness. Substitute titles were employed when reading the biblical text, leading to the loss of the original pronunciation of yhwh. The substitute title most often used in later centuries was יְהֹוָה/‘adonay, “(my) Lord” (discussed below). Since the Middle Ages, the vowel marks (vocalization points) for the word ‘adonay have usually been placed around the four consonants of the divine name יהוה/yhwh in copies of the Hebrew Bible, reminding readers to say “(the) Lord” “(the)” is not in the Hebrew text), instead of the divine name yhwh. This explains why the Hebrew name yhwh is usually represented by the title “the Lord” in English Bibles. Printing “Lord” in a capital and small capital letters shows respect for the divine name and allows English readers to distinguish between occurrences of yhwh in the Hebrew Bible and actual occurrences of the noun ‘adon, “lord.”

The familiar name Jehovah is thus an artificial, hybrid form created by combining the consonants yhwh and the vowels from ‘adonay (a-o-a)—YaHoWaH, which became Jehovah in English. This hybrid form did not consistently appear in English until the early sixteenth century. The divine name yhwh was never actually pronounced “Jehovah” in antiquity. Scholars postulate that yhwh was originally pronounced “Yahweh,” based in part on...
the shortened form of the name *yhw* that appears independently in the Hebrew Bible as *yah/JAH* in Psalm 68:4 and Isaiah 26:4 (“for in the LORD [*yah*] JEHOVAH [*yhw*] is everlasting strength”). This form also occurs in the last portion of the phrase *halelu-yah*, in English usually spelled *hallelujah*, meaning “praise Yah/the Lord” (see Psalm 150:1, 6) and in Israelite personal names, such as Elijah, “my god is Yah/Jehovah,” and Isaiah, “Yah/Jehovah helps [or saves].”

Curiously, the use of the name YHWH/Jehovah as a divine component in Israelite personal names is not attested until the time of Moses. (Many Israelite and other West Semitic personal names were formed by combining two words, one of which was often a divine name or title.) The name of Moses’s mother, Jochebed—“YHWH/Jehovah is glory/power” (see Exodus 6:20)—is the earliest Yahwistic personal name in the Bible as we have it. Based on biblical evidence, the practice of using the name *yhw* in Israelite personal names did not really become popular until the tenth century BC. In the Old Testament, abbreviated forms of the divine name *yhw* appear in translation in first position in Israelite personal names as *Jeho- and Jo-* (for example, Jonathan, “Jehovah has given”). In final position, it occurs as *-iah* and *-jab* (for example, Adonijah, “my Lord is Jehovah”).

The Bible routinely depicts YHWH/Jehovah as the only God Israelites should worship. Somewhat surprisingly, there is currently no clear ancient Near Eastern archaeological or textual evidence other than the Bible for the worship of YHWH/Jehovah or the use of his name prior to the ninth century BC, about a century after the time of King David. From the mid-nineteenth century onward, the Hebrew name *yhw* is well attested in Israelite and in some non-Israelite inscriptions.

Because of this situation, most scholars posit that (1) the Israelites’ ancestors in Genesis worshipped the god El (see below), as did the Canaanites and other West Semites, that (2) Israelites later began to worship YHWH/Jehovah, that (3) some but not all Israelite religious traditions were recast in the last portion of the phrase *halelu-yah*, meaning “praise Yah/the Lord” (see Psalm 150:1, 6) and in Israelite personal names, such as Elijah, “my god is Yah/Jehovah,” and Isaiah, “Yah/Jehovah helps [or saves].”

Latter-day Saints do not subscribe to this developmental view of ancient Israelite knowledge of and devotion to YHWH/Jehovah. They do, however, uniquely accept that Jehovah in the Old Testament was the premortal Christ.” Taking this view, the question arises, does the Hebrew name *yhw* ever designate God the Father, or is it consistently used to designate God the Son? Some Latter-day Saints do think the name YHWH/Jehovah at least occasionally designates God the Father in the Old Testament. For example, Keith Meservy stated that “in at least three Old Testament passages it appears that LORD [*YHWH/Jehovah*] applies to Heavenly Father, not Jesus Christ: Ps. 110:1; Ps. 2:7; Isa. 53:10.”

However one deals with such passages, understanding the meaning of the name YHWH/Jehovah—“He is” or “He causes to be”—and realizing how this divine name is masked in translation—represented by the title “the Lord”—can be helpful in appreciating the degree to which God the Son is mentioned in the Old Testament and the manner in which he fulfilled his purposes in those earlier dispensations. The tabernacle and the Jerusalem temple were, after all, considered the “house of the Lord [*yhw/Jehovah*]” (see Joshua 6:24; 1 Kings 8:63). Of course, in all of this, Latter-day Saints understand that the Son represented and still represents the Father and does all that he does in the name of and under the direction of the Father.
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One of the few biblical attestations of īl not used in reference to YHWH/Jehovah occurs in Ezekiel 28:2, in which Jehovah instructed Ezekiel to "say unto the prince of Tyrus [the Phoenician city of Tyre], Thus saith the Lord God; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God [īl],... yet thou art a man, and not God [mīl]." This passage can also be translated, "you have said 'I am a god [mīl],... but you are a man, and not a god [mīl]."

Although feminine forms of the noun īl do not occur in the Hebrew Bible, they are attested in West Semitic texts. For example, Ugaritic texts include īlt, "goddess," and ʾilhāt, "goddesses" (for example, "He supplied the goddesses with ewes").

The masculine singular noun īl occurs in a variety of West Semitic personal names, including such Israelite names as Joel/yo‘el, "YHWH/Jehovah is God," and in geographic names, such as beth-ēl/Bethel, "House of God" (see Genesis 28:19). The name Israel also contains the noun īl (yisra‘ēl), and is usually translated as "God prevails," "May God contend," or "God rules."

The etymology of īl, "god/God," is uncertain. It is sometimes connected with the Semitic lexical root ʾ-‘-l, "to be strong," and with a Hebrew homonym īl, "power, strength." If there is a linguistic relation between these two forms of īl, God and power, then the significance of this name-title for Deity becomes immediately evident.

'elhoah, 'elohim, Elohim, God

After YHWH/Jehovah, the second most common designation for deity in the Hebrew Bible is 'elohim, "gods/God," occurring about 2,750 times. Most of these occurrences designate YHWH/Jehovah as the God of Israel, but sometimes 'elohim refers to non-Israelite gods.

Grammatically, 'elohim is the masculine plural form of the Hebrew common noun 'elōb, which means "god/God." When functioning as the subject of a sentence, this plural name-title usually occurs in the Hebrew Bible with a singular verb. Sometimes 'elohim designates Israel's God but with no mention of the name YHWH. For example, "And Joseph said unto [his brothers], ye thought evil against me; but God [elohim] meant it unto good" (Genesis 50:19–20). In some biblical passages 'elohim alternates with the name yhwh, making it clear they indicate the same being, as in Exodus 6:2: "And God [elohim] spake unto Moses, and said unto him, I am the Lord [yhwh]." And often a form of 'elohim occurs in conjunction with yhwh, as in Genesis 2:4: "The Lord God [yhwh 'elohim] made the earth and the heavens" and in the phrase "thus saith the Lord God [yhwh 'elohim] of the Hebrews" (Exodus 9:1). This use of a grammatically plural noun with singular verbal forms is routinely labeled the "plural of majesty" or "plural of absolutization"—using a plural form to represent the greatness or absolute power of the being designated by the noun, in this case 'elohim/God.

The common noun 'elohim and grammatical forms thereof also occur in the Hebrew Bible with a plural sense designating non-Israelite gods, including this verse in which a form of 'elohim designates both YHWH/Jehovah and Canaanite deities: "Thou shall not do so unto the Lord thy God [yhwh 'eloheyka]; for every abomination to the Lord, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods [eloheyhem]" (Deuteronomy 12:31). As is the biblical custom, the plural form is translated singularly, "God," when used with "the Lord [yhwh]," and is translated "gods" when used in reference to other deities. Similarly, "When Solomon was old,... his wives turned away his heart after other gods [elohim]; and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God [yhwh]" (1 Kings 11:4). Additionally, a form of 'elohim occurs several times in phrases naming peoples or places, including "all the gods [elohim] of Egypt" (Exodus 12:12) and "the gods [elohim] of Syria, and the gods [elohim] of Zidon, and the gods [elohim] of Moab" (Judges 10:6). However, the form of 'elohim in the similar phrase 'elohim yisra‘ēl is regularly translated as singular, the "God of Israel" (see 1 Samuel 1:17). A reference to non-Israelite deities is presumably contained in the commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods [elohim] before me" (Exodus 20:3).

The nature of the noun 'elohim in the Hebrew Bible is further illustrated by its use in reference to unnamed divine beings, members of the heavenly council, such as in Psalm 82:1: "God [elohim] standeth in the congregation of the mighty [el]; he judgeth among the gods [elohim]." A few verses later, this psalm reads: "I have said, Ye are gods [elohim]; and all of you are children of the most High [elīyon]. But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes" (Psalm 82:6–7). Although this psalm has engendered a variety of interpretations, Latter-day Saints generally see in it a statement on humanity's divine nature and a depiction of a heavenly host that, at least in part, includes the spirits of premortal humans.

Another interesting passage, and the last one cited here, narrates the serpent's encouragement to Eve to eat some fruit in Eden, saying, "For God [elohim] doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods [elohim], knowing good and evil" (Genesis..."
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3:5). While the modern New Revised Standard Version renders the final phrase, “you will be like God,” the recent NET Bible more accurately renders, “you will be like divine beings [plural].”

Based on such evidence, most Bible readers understandably accept that the noun ‘elohim, “God/gods,” merely provided a generic way of referring to divine beings in the Old Testament, whether YHWH/Jehovah, members of the heavenly council, or non-Israelite gods. In this dispensation Latter-day Saints use the name-title “Elohim” to designate God the Father, as distinct from Jehovah—God the Son. As just reviewed, the available biblical evidence does not provide ancient confirmation for this usage. Some Saints have suggested the plural form ‘elohim supports the Latter-day Saint doctrine of divine parents (plural), or that ‘elohim should always be understood as plural, referring to the godhead in all biblical passages (in harmony with Nephi’s assertion that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are “one God” [2 Nephi 31:12,1]). While such doctrinal truths may lie behind an original use of ‘elohim in remote antiquity, such suggestions are not supported by biblical usage. The Latter-day Saint use of Elohim—designating a singular being, God the Father—is based on the prophetic pronouncements of the Restoration, not the use of ‘elohim in the Hebrew Bible as it has come down to us.

Joseph Smith Jr. preached a sermon at Nauvoo on June 16, 1844, about two weeks before he was killed, that included comments on the doctrine of the plurality of Gods. In it he is reported to have said in reference to Genesis 1:1 and 1:27: “The word Eloheam ought to be in the plural all the way thro—Gods, the heads of the Gods appointed one God for us—and when you take a view of the subject it sets one free to see all the beauty holiness & perfection of the God [Gods?].” While his emphasis in these remarks is clearly theological, rather than linguistic, Joseph Smith knew enough Hebrew to recognize that the term ‘elohim/Elohim (or Eloheam, as it is written in this quotation) was a plural term. However, when he declared, “The word Eloheam ought to be in the plural all the way thro—Gods,” it is not entirely clear what he intended to convey by the phrase “all the way thro.” Perhaps he meant just the passage on creation, which he was using for his theological exposition. Consider the frequent use of the phrase “the Gods” in Abraham 4–5 in relation to the planning and creation of this earth, in the place of “God,” ‘elohim, translated as singular in the KJV Genesis account. Less likely, Joseph Smith may have intended to convey that each and every attestation of ‘elohim in the whole Hebrew Bible should be rendered as a plural, “Gods.” If he meant this, then he presumably assumed that later editors were responsible for altering the Hebrew Bible, for as was reviewed above, singular verbs are used when the subject ‘elohim is used to designate YHWH/Jehovah, and YHWH/Jehovah and ‘elohim are used interchangeably to designate the God of Israel.

Joseph Smith’s comment, “The heads of the Gods appointed one God for us,” certainly conveys his understanding that ancient Israelites had, and we have, a God who directs his covenant people through his prophets. This God (‘elohim) is regularly designated in the Old Testament as YHWH/Jehovah, the premortal Christ. The use of the grammatically plural name-title ‘elohim to designate Jehovah, God the Son, in the Old Testament and to name God the Father in this dispensation serves to emphasize their matchless power and grandeur.

יתנ/’adon/’lord

The common noun ‘adon, “lord,” was employed in Hebrew and some other West Semitic languages in reference to deity and to humans. The name of the Greek deity Adonis, for example, derives from ‘adon, transferred through the Phoenicians. When ‘adon refers to God in the Bible, it is printed “Lord” in translation. Sometimes ‘adon refers to human rulers, and is rendered “lord” (except at the beginning of sentences). First Samuel 25:26, for example, reports that Abigail swore an oath to David, saying, “Now therefore, my lord [’adoni], as the Lord [yhwh] liveth.”

The word ‘adon occurs as a title for Jehovah over four hundred times in the Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible, usually as a plural form with a first-person singular pronominal suffix, ‘adonay, literally “my lords,” but usually translated “(the) Lord.” Isaiah 61:4, for example, reads “I saw also the Lord [’adonay] sitting upon a throne.” Israelite personal names composed with this title include ‘adoniyah/Adonijah, “my lord is YHWH,” and ‘adoniram/Adoniram, “my lord is exalted.”

In some biblical passages, the title ‘adonay immediately precedes the divine name yhwh. As mentioned above, the practice of pronouncing ‘adonay, “Lord,” developed when the name yhwh was encountered in the biblical text. Therefore, occurrences of the phrase ‘adonay yhwh are usually rendered “Lord God” in English (with God printed with small caps), rather than the expected but redundant-looking “Lord Lord,” even though the word “God” is not in the Hebrew of this phrase. One well-known example of this appears in Amos 3:7: “Surely the Lord God [’adonay yhwh] will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.”
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The frequent use of the title *adonay* for YHWH/Jehovah in the Old Testament underscores the supreme rule of Israel’s God. As Moses emphasized to the Israelites, “The Lord [yhwh] your God [elohaykem] is God of gods [elohay ha’adonim], and Lord of lords [adonay ha’adonim], a great God [ba’el haggaddol]” (Deuteronomy 10:17). He was, and still is, the Lord or ruler of his people, who covenant to be loyal to and obey him.

**Other Name-Titles Used for Israel’s God**

The Hebrew Bible also employs a number of other, less commonly attested titles in reference to Israel’s God. Four of these follow.

**שדאמר/Shaddai/Almighty.** Scholars have struggled for millennia to interpret the divine name-title shadday. Usually translated “Almighty,” suggestions include deriving it from a word meaning “strong, powerful,” from a word for “breast” (thus designating life and fertility), or from a word for “mountain” (thus meaning “one who dwells in the mountains”). The English translation “Almighty” is based on some of the renditions of Hebrew shadday in the Latin Vulgate and, to a lesser extent, the Greek Septuagint, whose translators wrestled with how to translate a term the etymology of which was unknown to them.13

This title occurs forty-eight times in the Old Testament, usually in parallel or conjunction with *el,* but also with the name yhwh and other divine titles. Examples include: “the Lord [yhwh] appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God [el shadday]” (Genesis 17:1); “[Naomi said] the Almighty [shadday] hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord [yhwh] hath brought me home again empty” (Ruth 1:20–21); and “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High [elyon] shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty [shadday]” (Psalm 91:1).

Numerous occurrences of the divine title “Almighty” in the Book of Mormon, New Testament, and Doctrine and Covenants may be based on the use of shadday in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., 2 Nephi 9:46; Revelation 11:7; D&C 84:96). Understood in its traditional sense, the use of this title for YHWH/Jehovah again emphasizes his might, supremacy, and ability to deliver and sustain his people—he is all-mighty/Almighty.

**עליון/elyon/Most High.** The adjective *elyon,* “upper, higher,” not only describes objects and people, but also functions as a nominal, divine name-title meaning “Most High” in Hebrew and other West Semitic texts. In the Bible, elyon occurs in conjunction with YHWH/Jehovah’s titles or in parallel to them or his name (sometimes in close proximity and sometimes several verses away). Examples from approximately two dozen occurrences in the Old Testament include: “Melchizedek . . . was the priest of the most high God [el ‘elyon]” (Genesis 14:18; see also 14:19, 20, 22); and “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord [yhwh], and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High [elyon]” (Psalm 92:1; see also 91:1, quoted above). The title ‘elyon thus emphasizes the exalted nature of God.

**עולם/olam/Everlasting.** The noun olam means “a long time, forever.” In the half dozen times it is used in the Old Testament in reference to God, it is translated with an adjectival sense as “everlasting.” Three examples of olam serving as a divine title are “Abraham [was] in Beer-sheba, and called there on the name of the Lord [yhwh], the everlasting God [el olam]” (Genesis 21:33); “Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God [el ‘elyon], the Lord [yhwh], the Creator . . . , fainteth not” (Isaiah 40:28); and “The Lord [yhwh] is the true God [elohim] . . . and an everlasting king [melek ‘olam]” (Jeremiah 10:10). In each of these examples, olam is the second of two nouns in a particular grammatical formulation that could be translated “God/ King of eternity.” This title emphasizes the unending, everlasting nature of Jehovah’s power and rule.

**אביר יאוה/abir ya’aqob/Mighty One of Jacob.** The Hebrew title abir ya’aqob is translated as “mighty One of Jacob” and “mighty God of Jacob” five times in the King James Version, even though “God” is not in the Hebrew phrase. The variation ‘abir yisra’el “mighty One of Israel” occurs one time (Isaiah 1:24). Two examples include “His hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob [‘abir ya’aqob]” (Genesis 49:24) and “I the Lord [yhwh] am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob [‘abir ya’aqob]” (Isaiah 49:26). The Hebrew noun ‘abir (with double “b”) appears in the Bible with the meaning “powerful, strong,” and designates people and animals, including bulls (see Isaiah 34:7). This suggests to many Bible scholars that the spelling ‘abir (with a single “b”), attested only in this divine title, is artificial and that the biblical phrase ‘abir ya’aqob/yisra’el should be translated “Bull of Jacob/Israel,” powerfully symbolizing the “might” or strength of God.14

**Conclusion**

The preceding overview explains and illustrates biblical occurrences of the name YHWH/Jehovah and important titles employed by the ancient Israelites in their worship of him.15 There are thousands of occurrences of this
divine name and these titles in the Old Testament. Only a few of them have been cited here as examples. However, when one knows them, they are readily seen on every page of the Old Testament. Hopefully, readers will not only be more attentive to the scriptural occurrence of these titles and this name but will also consider how these titles were employed to represent the nature of YHWH/Jehovah—powerful, exalted, everlasting, Lord, Almighty, God.

It is enjoyable, instructive, and appropriate to read or think “Yahweh” or “Jehovah” whenever one encounters the phrase “the LORD” in translations of the Old Testament, such as in the King James Version. In so doing, one actually uses the name of God found in the Hebrew text of this scripture. As has been elsewhere observed, “We can find Jesus Christ in the Old Testament by substituting Jehovah for Lord whenever it appears. Then something wonderful happens. Jehovah, who is Jesus Christ, appears from beginning to end of this great book as the God of the Old Testament.”

Knowing the divine name and titles reviewed above and understanding what they mean helps us not only more fully understand and appreciate the Old Testament, but also more fully comprehend whom the ancient Israelites worshipped. Reverently considering this divine name and these titles during our own worship can be very meaningful for latter-day worshippers of Jehovah/ Jesus, the Great I AM. Recognizing the source of salvation, the Psalmist prayed, “Save us, O Lord our God [jehovah Eloheynu], and gather us . . . to give thanks unto thy holy name” (Psalm 106:47). And Nephi, Benjamin, Peter, and others declared, there is “no other name given . . . whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ” (Mosiah 3:17), who is YHWH/Jehovah, the Lord.

Notes

1. Examples of relevant references from the Book of Mormon are also provided to demonstrate the continuity in other ancient scripture of the observations made herein.

2. Some have wondered if YHWH/Jehovah is a name that originated as a title, and could thus perhaps be used to designate God the Father as well. While this may be possible, it goes beyond our knowledge. The witness of the available evidence—the Hebrew Bible and Restoration usage—is that Jehovah is the name of Israel’s God, God the Son.


4. The first vowel in the English form Jehovah is different from the first vowel in YHWH because of the nature of the aleph, the first letter in YHWH. This vowel would normally be pronounced as a short “ah,” but the preceding aleph changes it to a short “ah.” Thus the first vowel in the name Jehovah came to reflect the traditional pronunciation of this vowel. Jehovah was spelled Iehovah in William Tyndale’s translation of the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) in 1530. The English y developed from the letter i, which when it appeared as the initial letter in a word was pronounced like a y. Thus, Tyndale and others in his day pronounced the name Jehovah as “Yehovah,” while we, centuries later, write and pronounce it “Jehovah.”

5. From outside the Bible we do not know of any non-Israelites who employed this divine name in their personal names. See the reference in the following note.

6. Nonbiblical evidence that anyone in the ancient Near East worshipped YHWH or used this divine name in personal names prior to the tenth century BC is extremely limited and very ambiguous at best. For a summary of the relevant data, see Dana M. Pike, Insultile Theophoric Personal Names in the Bible and Their Implications for Religious History (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 35–40.


8. See, for example, Mark S. Smith, The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), especially 32–43. The same general observations could be made in relation to el, shadday, and elyon, but I have not repeated them because it is not the purpose of this article.

9. For support that YHWH/Jehovah is Christ, see Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954), 1:27, who stated, “All revelation since the fall has come through Jesus Christ, who is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.” See also “The Living Christ: The Testimony of the Apostles, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” Ensign, April 2000, 2, and scripture passages such as 1 Nephi 19:10, 12–13; 2 Nephi 9:2, 4–5, 19; Mosiah 3:5, 8, and D&C 110:2–4.

Interestingly, the dedicatory prayer for the Kirtland Temple, D&C 109, may seem at first glance to lack distinction between God the Father and the name Jehovah. Joseph Smith addresses “Jehovah” in 109:14, 41, 56, and 68, while verses 22, 24, and 29 each begin, “We ask thee, Holy Father.” In fact, in D&C 109 the Prophet employs a number of phrases used to refer to Jehovah in the Old Testament, including “Lord God of Israel” in verse 1. Some Church members have suggested this indicates a lack of delineation by Joseph Smith in the use of the name Jehovah (using it for the Father and the Son). Others have suggested this dedicatory prayer contains expressions to the Son in the context of a prayer to the Father. For example, “Such . . . expressions of praise to Jehovah, and also a formal prayer to the Father . . . are perfectly linked together in the revealed dedicatory prayer. . . . The command to build the house came from the Lord Jesus. He conveyed the Father’s will and gave the direction. It was his voice that spoke to Joseph Smith” (Joseph Fielding McConkie and Craig J. Ostler, Revelations of the Restoration [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000], 865–66).

10. Keith H. Meservy, "Lord = Jehovah," Ensign, June 2002, 29 n. 3. Other Latter-day Saints, however, suggest the possibility that in each of these three passages Jehovah is represented as prophesying about himself as he would be later known, as Jesus. Thus we are not in a position to make exact statements about every attestation of YHWH/Jehovah in the received text of the Hebrew Bible. This, however, need not distract Latter-day Saints from the general understanding and usage of “Jehovah” to designate God the Son.
The Name and Titles of God in the Old Testament


22. It is now recognized that the Hebrew letter בָּה (b, “h”, is part of the independent form Eloah, and that -im is the plural suffix (not the eks and heene as presented in this quotation).

Joseph Smith studied Hebrew with Professor Joshua Seitzas in Kirkland, Ohio, in the early months of 1836. References to his study of Hebrew in Kirkland are found in Joseph Smith, History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1931–51), 2:185, 390, 196, 197, and elsewhere. For a convenient summary and discussion of his efforts with Hebrew, see D. Kelly Ogden, “The Kirtland Hebrew School (1835–36),” in Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio, ed. Milton V. Backman (Provo, UT: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1990), 63–87.

23. A similar ambiguity is evident in another declaration from Joseph Smith’s same sermon: “I once asked a learned Jew, ‘If the Hebrew language compels us to render all words ending in ‘hein in the plural, why not render the first Eloheim plural?’ He replied, ‘That is the rule with few exceptions; but in this case it would ruin the Bible.’ He acknowledged I was right.” (Teachings, 372). The first Eloheim must be a reference to the occurrence of Elohim in Genesis 1:1. Presumably, the Jewish man’s reply, ‘It would ruin the Bible,’ refers to the theology of the Bible as understood by Jews and Christians, but it does not necessarily imply that the Jewish person was saying that every attestation of Elohim in the Hebrew Bible should be translated as plural.

24. The use of this plural form is usually understood to reflect the principle of “plural of majesty,” referred to above in connection with Elohim.

25. Helpful in considering the broader use of the Hebrew term shadday as a title for deity is the occurrence of the cognate plural form shaddayin in the Deir ‘Allah inscription, a text written with ink on plaster discovered in fragmentary condition at Deir ‘Allah, a site located in the eastern Jordan River Valley about a mile north of the Jabbok River. The text is written in a local dialect with Aramaic and Ammonite affinities and dates to about 800–750 BC. The plural shaddayin is usually just transliterated “Shaddayin” rather than translated, but it clearly refers to divine beings who “took their place in the [heavenly] assembly.” The term occurs in parallel with ‘elohim (as it is written in that dialect), “gods” (1–5; see Ahituv, Echoes from the Past, 433–39, 444).


27. A few other titles associated with Israel’s God could have been discussed if space permitted, such as the common noun ba’al (“master,” Hosea 2:16), which more often occurs in the Hebrew Bible as Baal, the name-title of the Canaanite storm god. Other rarely attested titles involve compounds with the divine name YHWH/Jehovah, and which generally function as the names of altars and cities, such as “the LORD our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6; 3:16). One important exception is the title “the LORD of hosts,” yhwh shadday (see, for example, 1 Samuel 1:11), which occurs over two hundred times in the Old Testament (primarily in prophetic books), The Hebrew term יְבֵית הָאֱלֹהִים sometimes occurs transliterated as “Sabaoth” in the New Testament (see Romans 9:29) and the Doctrine and Covenants (see 87:7). For a discussion of this term and the phrase “the LORD of hosts,” see Pike, “Biblical Hebrew Words,” 1035–5.


29. See similarly 2 Nephi 25:20; 31:21; Mosiah 5:8; Acts 4:12; D&C 18:23.