

THE NAME OF GOD

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Some of you may have noticed our pew Bibles, at times, prints the word "LORD" (*all upper-case, capital letters*), and at other times prints "Lord." Psalm 8:1 is a prime example: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Two different Hebrew words are being translated; one rendered "LORD," and the other "Lord."

Wherever "LORD" appears (*all upper-case letters*), the actual word being translated from the original Hebrew text is יהוה (*or "YHWH"*), the name of God given to Moses by God via the burning bush. The original Hebrew text contained consonants only; no vowels or



vowel markings were in the original. This name is sometimes referred to as the "Tetragrammaton" (*from Greek τετραγράμματον, meaning "having four letters"*). "YHWH" almost defies definition. As one scholar wrote, this verse "is one of the most puzzled over verses in the entire Hebrew Bible." Most understand it to be a form of the Hebrew verb **hayah**, "to be". As explained in Exodus 3:14, it can be

translated "I AM WHO I AM." It can also mean "I am what I am," or "I will be what I will be;" see footnotes "b" and "c" in the pew Bible, page 57. Another possibility: "I will be what I now am."

Whenever the word "Lord" appears (*upper-case "L" and lower-case "o-r-d"*), the actual word being translated is the Hebrew *Adonai*, which means "Lord, Master, sovereign one." "**Adonai**" (Lord) is a title, **YHWH** (LORD) is a name; just as "Pastor" is a title and "Clark" is a name. Psalm 8:1 actually reads, "O YHWH (LORD), our *Adonai* (Lord), how majestic is thy name in all the earth!"

Vowel markings were added to the Hebrew text of the Old Testament many years after the original text was written. The scribes who performed this task ran into great difficulty trying to add vowel markings to YHWH; nobody was certain how to pronounce it. In their zealous ambition to honor Commandment 3, God-fearing Jews would not utter the name of God *at all!* As the years passed, the vowel sounds for this Name apparently faded from the collective memory of the Jewish faithful.

The solution? Scholars tell us the vowel sounds from "**Adonai**" (Lord) were taken and applied to YHWH (LORD), which resulted in **YaHoWaH**. Anglicized, that comes out "**Jehovah**" (*see below*).

Y H W H + A d o n a i = Y a H o W a H

Jehovah, therefore, is sort of a "hybrid" name, and not believed to be an accurate phonetic rendering of God's proper name. Most scholars agree the original pronunciation of this Name was "**Yah-WEH**" or "**Yah-VEH**."