

# La Vista Church of Christ

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## The Name of God

October 18, 2007

Text: [Exodus 3:10-17](#)

- I. The Jehovah's Witnesses have gone out into the world declaring that God's name is "Jehovah."
  - A. A reader of our website wrote to ask why this claim is made since he was only able to find less than ten instances of the name "Jehovah" in his Bible.
    1. The KJV uses this name 8 times.
    2. The ASV uses it 5,818 times.
    3. But in most other translations, it does not appear at all.
  - B. Before answering the question, we need to realize that names play a significant role in the Bible
    1. We tend to select names because of how they sound, or because a favorite relative or a famous person had the name.
    2. In biblical times names were selected because of ideas or events surround the birth of the child
    3. Example: Esau and Jacob - [Genesis 25:24-26](#)
      - a. When Esau was born, he was covered with red hair, hence he was called "Esau," which means "hairy" in Hebrew.
      - b. Jacob was born holding onto his brother's heel, so he was named "heel catcher."
        - (1) This is the word used to describe the jokester who sticks out his foot to trip you while you are walking.
        - (2) The name turned out to be appropriate for Jacob as Jacob ended up supplanting his older brother by gaining both the birthright and the blessing.
    4. Example: Abram - [Genesis 17:1-7](#)
      - a. Abram means "high father"
      - b. God changed his name to "father of a multitude"
      - c. Because Abram took on the name Abraham without evidence that he would sire a multitude of children, demonstrates his faith in God's promise
    5. As we read through the Scriptures, we find a variety of names for God
      - a. Understanding each name gives us insight into the nature and character of God.

b. Yet any one name is inadequate to describe the infinite being whom we call God.

## II. Names for God

### A. God

1. In Hebrew "Elohim"
  - a. Translated as God over 3,800 times in the Bible
  - b. It is a plural noun used in a singular form, much as "herd" or "tribe" or "flock" is used to describe a group in a singular sense.
  - c. Found abbreviated in names that end with "el", such as Israel which means one who wrestles with God.
2. In Greek, the word is "Theos"
3. [Genesis 17:1](#) - God revealed himself to Abram as the Almighty God
4. It is common for the name God to be combined with other descriptors, such as
  - a. Eternal God - [Deuteronomy 33:17](#)
  - b. Living God - [Joshua 3:10](#)

### B. Yahweh or LORD

1. [Exodus 6:3](#) - a new name is revealed to the children of Israel
2. This name is used over 6,800 in the Old Testament alone.
3. The generally accepted translation is "he is" or "the Eternal". But when translated into Greek, the word for "Lord" was used, meaning "master" or "ruler".
4. It too is abbreviated and found at ends of words or names, such as *hallelu Yah* (praise Yahweh), Isaiah (Yahweh has saved).
5. It also is found at beginning of names, such as Joash (Yahweh has come to help)
6. How Yahweh became Jehovah
  - a. Israelites were concerned God's name would be taken in vain
  - b. By 300 BC it was traditional not to pronounce God's name; instead, when it was found in a reading, the word "Lord" was used in its place.
  - c. This tradition was picked up by the Septuagint translation where the Greek word for Lord was used wherever YHWH was found.
  - d. By the sixth century, Hebrew was no longer commonly spoken and those in the Jewish community were afraid that people would forget how to pronounce the language (since it was composed only of consonants in written form). Vowel pointers were added, but when they came to the word YHWH, the vowels for Lord were used since they said Lord when the word was read.
  - e. Jumping ahead, when Hebrew was transliterated into English, the German system was used (as was common in early English). (J's sound like Y's and V's like W's).
  - f. The early translators did not know about the vowel shift, so they picked up the wrong vowels from the Hebrew text.
  - g. The KJV did not consistently use Jehovah for YHWH in its text. Instead, they usually followed the old tradition of using Lord, but they wrote it in all capitals to indicate that it came from YHWH.
  - h. The ASV, striving for more consistency used Jehovah most of the time.
  - i. It wasn't until the mid 1900's that people learned the correct pronunciation of YHWH, which they learned by reading older transliterations

into other languages prior to the tradition not to say YHWH.

7. When the Old Testament is translated into the Greek, the Hebrew word YHWH was translated to "Lord" *kurios* in Greek. This pattern is then retained in translations into English. YHWH is translated as LORD, written in all capitals to indicate it comes from YHWH.

8. As with God, LORD is sometimes combined with other words, such as Hannah's prayer ([I Samuel 1:11](#)) where she speaks of the LORD of hosts (where hosts is a reference to armies).

- a. James speaks of the Lord of Sabaoth - [James 5:4](#)
- b. Sabaoth is a military term in Greek referring to armies
- c. Hence God is the ruler of armies. It emphasizes His control and power over the world, and His capability to execute justice.

C. I AM - [Exodus 3:13-14](#)

1. The Hebrew word is *hayah*, which scholars believe is related to YHWH. It is a common enough Hebrew word that means "to be."
2. Hence, when used as God's name, it emphasizes God's self-existence and eternal nature.
3. This is why the Jews were upset with Jesus - [John 8:58-59](#)
  - a. To claim "I am" is to claim to be deity.

D. The Most High - [Deuteronomy 32:8](#)

1. Emphasizes God's position. There is none higher.
2. [Deuteronomy 10:17](#) - God of gods and Lord of Lords makes the same point.

E. The Judge - [Genesis 18:25](#)

1. God is the ultimate Judge of all that occurs.
2. Again this is a role that Jesus claimed - [John 5:22](#)

F. Holy One of Israel - [Psalm 71:22](#)

1. Emphasis on God's pure character. He is set apart from all evil.

G. Creator or Maker - [Ecclesiastes 12:1](#)

H. The Rock - [Isaiah 30:29](#)

1. A rock is a place of strength and refuge. It is solid and unchanging. Such is descriptive of the Almighty God.
2. [Isaiah 44:8](#)

I. Father

1. While not used often in the Old Testament, it becomes a frequent name in the New Testament
2. [Psalm 89:26](#); [Isaiah 63:16](#); [64:8](#)
3. The name emphasizes our relationship with God with God being the Father, Jesus being the Son, and Christians as adopted children into God's family - [Galatians 4:4-7](#)

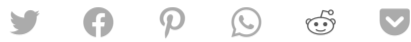
J. Redeemer, Savior

1. [Isaiah 54:5](#); [49:26](#)
2. This name tells us what God does for His people.
3. He restores them from the oppression of sin. He rescues them from their own iniquities - [Isaiah 63:16](#)

III. This is not an exhaustive list

- A. While YHWH is the most common name, it is not used exclusively.
- B. Since the inspired New Testament uses Lord for YHWH, it is appropriate to use Lord in other translations as well.
- C. The variety of names give us insight into God’s character.
- D. God is our Savior, and there is an opportunity to accept salvation today.

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