

YHWH

An Encyclopedia Article

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Yahweh, or YHWH, the tetragrammaton name for the god of the bible. A name so sacred that the Jews do not speak it, nor in some sects even write it, instead referring to him as Adonai. It is also found in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible expressing God's absolute sovereignty. Adonai is usually translated as Lord or My Lord. The name Yahweh is made up of the consonants Yod, Heh, Waw and Heh.¹

Based on the literal and later readings from Hebrew into English, the name is often read as Yehovah, translated to Jehovah, which is where the name Jehovah's witness comes from.

Isaiah 43:10

'You are my witnesses and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.'²

In Exodus 3:15 it is written 'This is my name forever; this is my title for all generations.'³

Elohim is a generic name for the god from the bible, it translates as God and has the same etymological root as the Muslims' name for god, Allah.

Although Elohim is plural in its form, meaning Gods, it is thought that the Israelites borrowed it from Canaanite and made it singular in its meaning. Elohim is monotheistic in connotation, though it appears from its structure to be polytheistic.⁴

Historical origins:

'Yahweh is a desert pagan god'⁵

The name was revealed by Moses to the Israelites Exodus 6:2-3

'I am Yahweh; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as El Shaddai, but my name, Yahweh, I did not make myself known to them.'⁶

As the Israelites moved from worshipping Canaanite gods like El and Asherah and Baal, El and Yahweh in later centuries became epithets such as El Shaddai. In ancient Hebrew poetry pieces, Yahweh in his early career, far from portrayed as the supreme king and creator of the cosmos, saw Yahweh as a minor, yet ferocious storm deity of mountains and wilderness known as one of the Shaddai gods. At Deir Alla, an ancient city of the eastern Jordan valley, destroyed by an earthquake in around 800 BCE, archaeologists pieced together a

¹ Joshua, J/ Mark/World History Encyclopaedia: *Yahweh A Definition*, 22nd October 2018 <<https://www.worldhistoryencyclopedia.com>> {accessed 2024}.

² Bible Gateway: New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America <<https://www.biblegateway.com>> {accessed 2024}.

³ Bible gateway <<https://www.biblegateway.com>> {accessed 2024}.

⁴ New World Encyclopaedia, Contributors, 'Yahweh', New World Encyclopedia, 22 May 2023, 10:00 UTC <<https://www.Newworldencyclopedia.org>> {accessed 2024}.

⁵ DR Gene, Kim, 'Yahweh Is A Desert Pagan God' (San Jose Bible Baptist Church 4. October. 2018), Real Bible Believers, {accessed 2024}.

⁶ Francesca, Stavrakopoulou: *God An Anatomy* (Picador Press book publication, Londono, 2021, p-23 {read 2024})

description of the El Shadday gods going against El. In the earlier scriptures of the Bible, God called himself El Shadday, not Yahweh.⁷

Desert Deity:

On a Moabite stone found in Jordan Amenhotep III mentions the Shasu of Yahweh, the Shasu were a semitic tribe from Amurru, who lived in clans. These nomads worshipped Yahweh and were named on a column of the temple of Kadesh as the enemy of the Egyptians. The Moabite stone, also known as the Mesha Stele, talks about King Mesha's victory over the Israelites, claiming they were destroyed. A biblical scenario sees Yahweh as a god of the Midianites and other desert tribes, of which Moses was well informed as his wife was a Midianite herself and Yahweh was not known to the Israelites before the exodus.⁸

The Midianite hypothesis argues that Yahweh first came from arid lands located to the south of Canaan, as Moses reveals the name Yahweh and therefore it must have happened during the Exodus. The Kenites a clan of nomadic blacksmiths are attributed by some scholars as being the ones who brought Yahweh into Canaan and early Israel. It is not believed by many scholars that the Midianites worshipped Yahweh before the Israelites and many argue that the story is likely redacted.

A hymn called The Song of Deborah depicts Yahweh as a warrior deity from the south 'Yahweh, when you set out from Seir, as you trod the land of Edom.'⁹

Seir is the mountainous region of Edom, near Petra, Jordan and the 'Seir, in the land of Shasu'¹⁰ is written on the Amenhotep III temple at Soleb, bringing full circle the origin of a mountainous storm deity.

The Hebrew Bible preserves evidence of early worship of Canaanite gods, of which, Yahweh was one and also his wife, or female consort Asherah, during the tenth century, Yahweh was rapidly assimilated into the Israelite pantheon, where many of his qualities, over a period of time, surpassed the rival Canaanite deities.¹¹

⁷ Francesca, Stavrakopoulou: *God An Anatomy* (Picador Press book publication, London), 2021, p-21, {accessed 2024}

⁸ Juan, Manuel / Tebes, Biblical Archeology Society Review: Yahweh's Desert Origins, (Academia Education 2022), <<https://www.biblical archeology society.org>>, p-2 {accessed 2024}

⁹ Juan, Manuel / Tebes, Biblical Archeology Society Review: Yahweh's Desert Origins, (Academia Education 2022), <<https://www.biblical archeology society.org>>, p-2 {accessed 2024}

¹⁰ 'IBID'

¹¹ 'IBID'

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