

# The Tetragrammaton

(te-tra-gra-ma-ton) — Greek for "the four letters" which is the consonantal Hebrew name of God

יהוה

(he | vav | he | yod)

“I AM THAT I AM” — Ex.3:14

<sup>3:14</sup> And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. <sup>3:15</sup> And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. <sup>4:5</sup> That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee. (Ex.3:14,15,4:5).

The verb “to be” translated “I AM” is not really God's name (Ex.3:14). What God wants to be known as is given in Ex.3:15, “The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”. Later God gave Moses the same name “the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Ex.4:5). This is the full name and specifically how God wanted the nation of Israel to refer to Him.

## YHWH

- This is the transliteration of 4 Hebrew consonants.
- This comes from the Hebrew verb “to be”.
- This became so sacred that they only spelled it using the consonants.
- We do not know how to pronounce it properly (*Yahweh* or *Jehovah*).
- These 4 consonants are not believed to be the name itself. They are only a substitute for the secret name. The real name was too sacred to be pronounced. What seems amazing is that the meaning of *YHWH* has been lost.
- To avoid profaning the sacred name, modern Judaism will pronounce “*Adonai*” which means “Lord” in place of *YHWH*.
- From the 6th to the 10th century the Masoretes worked to reproduce the original Hebrew text. They replaced the vowels of the name *YHWH* with the vowel signs of the Hebrew word “*Adonai*”. They would insert the vowels a-o-a from “*Adonai*” producing (*YaHoWaH*). Some spell it as *YeHoWaH*. The result is the artificial name “Jehovah” (*YeHoWaH*).
- Many Protestant Bibles use the Masoretes' compilation. The intention in adding the vowels was to help in pronunciation.
- Stringent rules apply to writing any of the names of God. Once God's name is written it is to be neither erased nor discarded. It must be stored. This is why you see circumlocutions like “G-d,” which do not need to be kept. (Recent rulings indicate that use in computer files or displays does not constitute erasing.)
- Some English translations attempt to represent the different Hebrew words by using the following conventions:
  - “**God**” (first caps) almost always is a translation from *Elohim*.
  - “**GOD**” (all caps) almost always is a translation from *YHWH*.
  - “**Lord**” (first caps) almost always is a translation from *adonai*.
  - “**LORD**” (all caps) almost always is a translation from *YHWH*.
- The reason we see “LORD” and “God” in our bibles is because of a Jewish tradition that the name *Yahweh* was not to be spoken for fear that the name be blasphemed. However, the scriptures declare that His name should be exalted (e.g. Ps 68:4).