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Dana M. Pike
dana_pike@byu.edu

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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

DANA M. PIKE

Dana M. Pike (dana_pike@byu.edu) is a professor of ancient scripture at BYU.

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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).¹

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 11:17).

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 45:5; see also Isaiah 44:6, 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.² 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/Jehovah³

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 22:14; 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 אֲדֹנָי/*’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.⁴ 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 *yhwh* that appears independently in the Hebrew Bible as *yah*/JAH in Psalm 68:4 and Isaiah 26:4 (“for in the LORD [*yah*] JEHOVAH [*yhwh*] 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 compounding 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 *yhwh* in Israelite personal names did not really become popular until the tenth century BC. In the Old Testament, abbreviated forms of the divine name *yhwh* 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 *-jah* (for example, Adonijah, “my Lord is Jehovah”).⁵

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.⁶ From the mid-ninth century onward, the Hebrew name *yhwh* is well attested in Israelite and in some non-Israelite inscriptions.⁷

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 to indicate the worship of YHWH from very early times, and that (4) later Israelites assumed that their ancestors’ worship of El was actually the worship of YHWH because the two came to be viewed as one in biblical tradition.⁸

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.⁹ Taking this view, the question arises, does the Hebrew name *yhwh*

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.”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*h/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.

אל/’el/God

אל/’el is the Hebrew form of a common Semitic singular noun designating deity, “god/God,” in a variety of texts (Hebrew belongs to the Semitic language family). Second millennium BC texts, especially those from Ugarit, indicate that ’el/’il also came to function as the name of the chief West Semitic god, El. The Hebrew plural of ’el is ’elim. It occurs four times in the Hebrew Bible, including Exodus 15:11: “Who is like unto thee, O LORD [*yhw*h], among the gods [’elim]?”¹¹ A singular formation presumably related to ’el is ’eloah (compare Arabic *al-ilah*, “the god,” Allah). Less commonly attested, ’eloah is the basis for (or a back-formation from) the plural noun ’elohim, which occurs very often in the Bible (discussed below).

The name-title ’el is attested about two hundred times in the Hebrew Bible and is usually employed as a designation for YHWH/Jehovah, whether found in close proximity to that divine name or not.¹² For example, Psalm 19:1 reads: “The heavens declare the glory of God [’el],” and Isaiah 43:12 reports: “Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD [*yhw*h], that I am God [’el].” The occasional use of a definite article with ’el, literally “the God [*ha’el*],” further indicates the use of this term as a title: “Thus saith God the LORD [*ha’el yhw*h; literally “the God YHWH/Jehovah”], he that created the heavens” (Isaiah 42:5; see also, for example, 2 Samuel 22:31, 33, 48).

One of the few biblical attestations of *’el* 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 [*’el*], . . . yet thou art a man, and not God [*’el*].” This passage can also be translated, “you have said ‘I am a god [*’el*], . . . but you are a man, and not a god [*’el*].”

Although feminine forms of the noun *’el* do not occur in the Hebrew Bible, they are attested in West Semitic texts. For example, Ugaritic texts include *’ilt*, “goddess,” and *’ilbt*, “goddesses” (for example, “He supplied the goddesses with ewes”).¹³

The masculine singular noun *’el* 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-’el*/Bethel, “House of God” (see Genesis 28:19). The name Israel also contains the noun *’el* (*yisra’el*), and is usually translated as “God prevails,” “May God contend,” or “God rules.”

The etymology of *’el*, “god/God,” is uncertain. It is sometimes connected with the Semitic lexical root *’w-l*, “to be strong,” and with a Hebrew homonym *’el*, “power, strength.”¹⁴ If there is a linguistic relation between these two forms of *’el*, God and power, then the significance of this name-title for Deity becomes immediately evident.¹⁵

אלהים/*’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 [*’elohey*] of Israel, but sometimes *’elohim* refers to non-Israelite gods.

Grammatically, *’elohim* is the masculine plural form of the Hebrew common noun *’eloah*, 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 'elohey*] 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.¹⁶

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 shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God [*yhwh 'elohayka*]: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods [*'elohayhem*]" (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 'elohayw*]" (1 Kings 11:4). Additionally, a form of *'elohim* occurs several times in phrases naming peoples or places, including "all the gods [*'elohey*] of Egypt" (Exodus 12:12) and "the gods [*'elohay*] of Syria, and the gods [*'elohay*] of Zidon, and the gods [*'elohay*] of Moab" (Judges 10:6). However, the form of *'elohim* in the similar phrase *'elohay yisra'el* is regularly translated as singular, "the God of Israel" (see 1 Samuel 1:17).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 [*'elyon*]. 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.¹⁸

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

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].”¹⁹

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.²⁰ 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 31:21]). 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 [through]—Gods—the heads of the Gods appointed one God for us—& when you take a view of the subject it sets one free to see all the beauty holiness & perfection of the God [Gods?].”²¹ 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.²² 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.²³

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.

יְדֹנָי/*'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."²⁴ Isaiah 6:1, 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."

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'elohim*], and Lord of lords [*'adoney ha'adonim*], a great God [*ha'el haggadol*]" (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.

יְשׁוּבָה/*shadday/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.²⁵

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.

עֵלְיוֹן/*'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 [*’elohey ’olam*], 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.

יעקב אביר/*’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 *’abbir* (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.²⁶

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.²⁷ 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.”²⁸

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 [*yhwh ’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.²⁹ **RE**

Notes

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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.

3. Portions of this discussion of the name Jehovah first appeared in Dana M. Pike, “Biblical Hebrew Words You Already Know and Why They Are Important,” *Religious Educator* 7, no. 3

(2006): 97–114, especially 106–9. See that article for a fuller discussion of this name and for further references.

4. The first vowel in the English form Jehovah is different from the first vowel in *'adonay* because of the nature of the *'aleph*, the first letter in *'adonay*. This vowel would normally be pronounced as a short “eh,” 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 *Jehouah* in William Tyndale’s translation of the five books of Moses (the Pentateuch) in 1530. The English *j* 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 Jehouah as “Yehowah,” 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, *Israelite Theophoric Personal Names in the Bible and Their Implications for Religious History* (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1990), 35–40.

7. See for example Shmuel Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past: Hebrew and Cognate Inscriptions from the Biblical Period*, trans. Anson F. Rainey (Jerusalem: Carta, 2008).

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 109:34, 42, 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.

11. The term *'elim* in this verse presumably refers to other members of the divine council in heaven. See also, for example, Psalm 29:1: “Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty [*beney 'elim*, literally ‘sons of gods,’ or ‘divine beings’].”

12. A name-title is a title that comes to function in place of, or even as, a name.

13. KTU 1.4 vi 48; Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquín Sanmartín, *The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani and Other Places*, 2nd ed. enlarged (Münster, Germany: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995), 20.

14. One example of the occurrence of this noun *'el* is in Genesis 3:1:29: “It is in the power [*'el*] of my hand to do you hurt.” See also an example of the plural form of this noun, *'elim*, in Job 41:25: “When he raiseth up himself, the mighty [*'elim*] are afraid.” Lexicographers have wondered whether *'el*, meaning “power,” developed from *'el*, “god/God,” or whether it was the other way around, or if there is any connection at all.

15. The derivation and etymology of *'el* are complex linguistic issues not likely to be clarified any time soon, and they go far beyond the scope of this paper.

16. Other texts and cultures preserve related practices. For example, past European monarchs sometimes employed the “royal we,” using a plural pronoun, to represent the greatness of their own power, and there are a number of occasions in the Quran in which Allah says “We” when referring to himself. This phenomenon is somewhat different, however, from what is being discussed regarding *'elohim* in the Bible. God/*'elohim* always speaks in the singular in the Bible and refers to himself in the singular, with the exception of Genesis 1:26, “Let us make man in our image.” In Genesis 1:7, YHWH/Jehovah says, perhaps speaking to the heavenly host, “Let us go down, and there confound their language.”

17. Likewise, this plural form occurs in conjunction with the singular names of non-Israelite deities, such as “Chemosh the god [*'elohay*] of the Moabites, and Milcom the god [*'elohay*] of the children of Ammon” (1 Kgs 11:33).

18. This concept is attested in many biblical passages; see also D&C 12:1:32 for the concept of divine beings assembled in a heavenly council: “According to that which was ordained in the midst of the Council of the Eternal God of all other gods before this world was.” For a more complete and detailed discussion of Psalms 82 from a Latter-day Saint perspective, see, for example, Daniel C. Peterson, “‘Ye Are Gods’: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2000), 471–594, and David E. Bokovoy, “‘Ye Really Are Gods’: A Response to Michael Heiser concerning the LDS Use of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John,” *FARMS Review* 19, no. 1 (2007): 267–313.

19. The plural rendition of *'elohim* in the KJV and the NET Bible is grammatically accurate, given the plural form of the Hebrew participle that is translated “knowing.” If the singular sense of “God” had been intended by *'elohim*, the participle would have been singular, not plural.

20. See for example James R. Clark, ed., *Messages of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 5:26, in a doctrinal exposition published under the names of President Joseph F. Smith, his counselors, and the Twelve Apostles: “God the Eternal Father, whom we designate by the exalted name-title ‘Elohim,’ is the literal Parent of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and of the spirits of the human race.”

21. *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph*, comp. and ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 379–380. The quote included here is from a written report by Thomas Bullock. Latter-day Saints may be more familiar with the editorially “improved” version of this quotation, found in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph

Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1967), 372 (hereafter abbreviated *Teachings*). The whole sermon is found in *Words of Joseph Smith*, 378–82, and in *Teachings*, 370–72.

22. It is now recognized that the Hebrew letter *he*, “h,” is part of the independent form *’elohah*, and that *-im* is the plural suffix (not the *eloi* and *beam* as presented in this quotation). Joseph Smith studied Hebrew with Professor Joshua Seixas in Kirtland, Ohio, in the early months of 1836. References to his study of Hebrew in Kirtland 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, 1932–51), 2:385, 390, 396, 397, 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 *heim* 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” (1.5–6; see Ahituv, *Echoes from the Past*, 435–39, 444).

26. For another Latter-day Saint author who favors this interpretation, see Paul Y. Hoskisson, “Aaron’s Golden Calf,” *FARMS Review* 18, no. 1 (2006): 379. Hoskisson correctly observes that based on biblical usage, “both the lamb and the calf [young bull] could function as an appropriate symbolic animal for the God of Israel.”

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; 33:16). One important exception is the title “the LORD of hosts,” *yhwsh s’eba’oth* (see, for example, 1 Samuel 1:11), which occurs over two hundred times in the Old Testament (primarily in prophetic books). The Hebrew term *s’eba’oth* 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,” 103–5.

28. Keith H. Meservy, “LORD = Jehovah,” *Ensign*, June 2002, 29.

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