

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

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A Study for Judaism • Christianity • Islam

DOCUMENT 62

IS IT CORRECT TO CALL YAHWEH “GOD”?

A Covenant Lexical and Historical Study — Expanded Edition, Revised
The Name He Declared, the Titles He Used, and the Word the Nations Borrowed — A Three-Religion Covenant Response

First edition April 2026 • Revised September 2026

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The Message is Sent to the World

REACHING JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

✡ JUDAISM	✝ CHRISTIANITY	☪ ISLAM
Jewish practice honors the Name so highly that it is not spoken: Adonai (my Lord) or HaShem (the Name) is read in its place, and English-speaking Jews often write "G-d." The written Tanakh commands the Name to be remembered "for ever" (Exodus 3:15) and never commands silence. The question is not reverence, which is shared, but whether a later fence has replaced the text.	Most English Bibles print "the LORD" where the Hebrew has the Name, following the Greek Kyrios (Lord) of the Septuagint, and use "God" for Elohim . The New Testament itself quotes Joel 2:32 — "whoever calls on the name of Yahweh " — as a promise (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13). The Name the verse calls upon is the one the Tanakh gives.	The Qur'an's account of the burning bush has the voice say, "Indeed, I am Allah; there is no deity except Me" (Q. 20:14). Allah is a Semitic word from the same family as El and Eloah , and Islam, unlike English usage, never adopted a non-Semitic word for the Creator. The personal Name of Exodus 3:15 is the part the Qur'anic account does not carry.

DOCTRINAL AUTHORITY — STANDING RULE OF MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

The sole binding authority of Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution is the *Tanakh* — the written covenant of **Yahweh**. No Talmudic tractate, Church council decree, papal encyclical, hadith collection, or extra-biblical tradition carries doctrinal weight equal to or greater than the written Torah. Where any tradition conflicts with the written covenant, the written covenant governs without exception. The

Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an are cited as historical reference and comparative witness — never as superseding authority. Miqdash Bethel uses the Written Tanakh as its sole source for four reasons: it is the only text Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all recognize as originally given by **Yahweh**; it predates and underlies the Talmud, New Testament, and Qur'an, so testing those traditions against it follows the evidentiary direction of **Deuteronomy 19:15** — the earlier witness governs the later commentary; every later tradition that departs from the Tanakh does so by addition or reinterpretation, never by overturning the text itself, so the text remains the fixed standard; and **Yahweh's** own words declare the covenant unchanging (Malachi 3:6; Psalms 119:89), making the written covenant — not evolving institutional interpretation — the only stable ground for doctrine. All three great covenant traditions — Judaism, Christianity, and Islam — are addressed simultaneously and equally in every Miqdash Bethel document, because **Yahweh's** covenant belongs to every nation that will receive it. The **Deuteronomy 19:15** two-or-three-witness evidentiary standard governs all textual claims in this document.

HOW TO READ THIS DOCUMENT

This document applies the sole authority of the written *Tanakh* to one question: whether the English word "God" is the name of the Creator, or an adequate title for Him. **Yahweh** (יהוה) and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים) appear in bold throughout. Tanakh book names are given in English. Hebrew transliterations appear in ***bold italic*** with English meaning in parentheses at every occurrence. Scripture references are bold. Verse numbers follow the English versification; where the Hebrew numbering differs, it is given in brackets. Lexicons and grammars are cited as scholarly witnesses to the meaning of Hebrew words; they are not doctrinal authorities. Each claim is graded: **corroborated** (two or more independent witnesses), **disputed** (witnesses divide), or **not corroborated**. Three audiences are addressed simultaneously: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Written Tanakh governs all conclusions.

TANAKH BOOKS CITED IN THIS DOCUMENT

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Torah	Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy	The declaration of the Name; the grammar of Elohim ; the third commandment; the witness standard
Nevi'im (Prophets)	1 Samuel, 1 Kings, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Malachi	The Name proclaimed to the nations; elohim used of foreign gods; the promise to those who call on the Name

DIVISION	BOOKS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Ketuvim (Writings)	Psalms, Job, Ruth	The divine council; Eloah (God, singular) in Job; the Name used in everyday greeting

COMPARATIVE TEXTS CITED — HISTORICAL AND COMPARATIVE REFERENCE ONLY

CATEGORY	TEXTS CITED	PURPOSE IN THIS STUDY
Rabbinic literature	Mishnah Berakhot 9:5; Mishnah Yoma 6:2; Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1; Talmud Pesachim 50a	How and when the Name ceased to be spoken, and the reasons given
New Testament	Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13	Christian quotation of Joel 2:32
Qur'an	Q. 20:9–14; Q. 28:30	The burning-bush account in the Islamic witness
Lexicons and grammars	BDB (1906); HALOT (1994–2000); Gesenius, <i>Lexicon</i> (Tregelles tr.) and <i>Hebrew Grammar</i> (Kautzsch–Cowley, 1910), §124	The meaning and grammar of EL , Eloah , Elohim
Other historical sources	Fabre d'Olivet, <i>The Hebraic Tongue Restored</i> (1815–16; English 1921); Bede, <i>The Reckoning of Time</i> (725); Gothic Bible of Wulfila (4th c.)	A speculative comparative voice; the history of the English vocabulary

I. FRAMING THE QUESTION

I-A. The Assumption Under Examination

Across Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the English-speaking world, the word "God" is used as though it were the proper name of the Creator, or at least a neutral equivalent for the titles the Tanakh uses. This study examines that assumption under the **Deuteronomy 19:15** standard. It asks three questions. Where does the English word "God" come from? What name did **Yahweh** declare for Himself, and what titles does the Tanakh itself use? And how did the Name come to be replaced in speech and in translation?

The Tetragrammaton יהוה appears about 6,800 times in the Hebrew Tanakh (6,828 in the standard count of the Leningrad Codex). The English word "God" appears nowhere in it, because the Tanakh is not written in English. That observation alone settles the first half of the question: "God" is a

translation word, not a revealed name. The second half — whether "God" is an adequate *title* — needs more care, and this revised edition gives it that care.

I-B. What This Revised Edition Corrects

The first edition (April 2026) reached a sound conclusion but supported parts of it with claims that do not survive checking. Under the Institution's own standard those claims are corrected here rather than repeated. The main corrections are:

#	FIRST EDITION SAID	CORRECTED READING
1	Greek <i>Theos</i> means "the Shining One," from the root *dyeu-.	*dyeu- is the root of Latin <i>deus</i> and Greek <i>Zeus</i> , not of <i>theos</i> . The origin of <i>theos</i> is uncertain; most specialists derive it from a different root.
2	Gesenius explains "Let us make man" (Genesis 1:26) as the royal plural of majesty.	Gesenius' <i>Hebrew Grammar</i> §124g says the plural in Genesis 1:26 "has been incorrectly explained in this way" and is "best explained as a plural of self-deliberation." It also says plural respectful address "is quite foreign to Hebrew."
3	All the lexicons agree that <i>El</i> comes from a root meaning "strength."	The derivation of <i>El</i> is disputed. "Strength / power" is one leading proposal (Gesenius favored it), and Genesis 31:29 uses <i>el</i> for "power," but BDB and HALOT treat the origin as uncertain.
4	Direct quotations were attributed to BDB, HALOT, and the Gesenius <i>Lexicon</i> .	Those sentences could not be matched to the printed entries. They are replaced with accurate summaries of what the entries say, without quotation marks.
5	Ugaritic <i>ilm</i> with singular verbs proves the pattern predates Moses.	The clearer ancient parallel is in the Amarna letters (14th c. BCE), where Canaanite scribes address one Pharaoh as <i>ilanu</i> ("my gods," plural). The pattern is attested outside Israel; its meaning is still debated.
6	Fabre d'Olivet is a fully independent fifth lexical witness equal to BDB, HALOT, and Gesenius.	D'Olivet's sign-by-sign method is speculative and is not accepted by Hebrew philology. He is kept as a comparative voice (IV-E), not counted as a lexical witness. The witness standard is still met without him.
7	The Name was declared "at Sinai."	The Name was declared at the burning bush at Horeb, "the mountain of Elohim " (Exodus 3:1). It was proclaimed again at Sinai (Exodus 34:5–7).
8	Exodus 9:16 reads "That you may know that I am Yahweh ..."	Exodus 9:16 reads: "that My name may be declared in all the earth." The first edition merged two verses.

#	FIRST EDITION SAID	CORRECTED READING
9	<i>zikri</i> (my memorial) is from Strong's H2142.	H2142 is the verb <i>zakar</i> (to remember). The noun in Exodus 3:15 is <i>zekher</i> (memorial), H2143.
10	English "hell" was "repurposed" from the Norse goddess Hel.	English "hell" comes from Proto-Germanic <i>*haljō</i> (the hidden place); Norse <i>Hel</i> is a cognate, not the source.
11	Phone number, Pearl River location, non-affiliation line, discussion questions.	Removed under the Institution's current standing rules.

II. THE ENGLISH WORD "GOD" — A GERMANIC ORIGIN

II-A. The Proto-Germanic Root

The English word "God" does not come from Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, or Latin. It comes from Proto-Germanic **gudaǵ* (a god, a divine being), the source also of Gothic *gub*, Old Norse *godð* / *guð*, Old High German *got*, and Dutch *god*. Etymologists trace it further back to one of two Proto-Indo-European roots. The derivation is **disputed** between them; both are pagan in setting:

Proposal one — "the one invoked." From **ǵʰew(h₂)-* (to call, to invoke). The Sanskrit participle *būta* (invoked) is the usual comparison; the compound *purubūta* (much-invoked) is an epithet of the Vedic god Indra.

Proposal two — "the one poured to." From **ǵʰew-* (to pour), the sense being the one to whom a libation is poured. Some scholars have connected this with offerings at burial mounds. That further step is **speculation** and is reported as such.

What is **corroborated** is the core finding: the word "God" belongs to the religious vocabulary of the pre-Christian Germanic peoples. It has no Semitic root and no place in the language in which **Yahweh** spoke to Mosheh.

LANGUAGE	WORD	ROOT MEANING	ORIGIN
Proto-Germanic	<i>*gudaǵ</i>	"Invoked" or "poured to" (disputed)	Pre-Christian Germanic religion; grammatically neuter
Old English	god	From <i>*gudaǵ</i>	Used of pagan gods, then taken over for Christian use
Latin	deus	"Heavenly, shining" (PIE <i>*deiwo-</i> , from <i>*dyeu-</i> sky)	Indo-European sky vocabulary; same root as <i>Zeus</i>

LANGUAGE	WORD	ROOT MEANING	ORIGIN
Greek	theos	Uncertain; not from *dyeu-	Used in the Septuagint to render <i>Elohim</i>
Hebrew (title)	אֱלֹהִים / אֵל	<i>El, Elohim</i> — derivation disputed; "power" is a leading proposal	The Tanakh's own vocabulary
Hebrew (Name)	יהוה	Yahweh — linked by the text itself to <i>ehyeh</i> (I will be / I am), Exodus 3:14	Declared by Yahweh at Horeb, Exodus 3:15
Arabic	Allah	Generally derived from <i>al-ilāh</i> (the deity)	Semitic; cognate with <i>Eloah</i> and Aramaic <i>Elaha</i>

Table 1: Comparative etymology of divine terms. "God" is the only one of the words in common Western use with no Semitic root.

II-B. From Neuter Idol-Word to Masculine Title

Most etymologists hold that **gudą* was grammatically neuter in pre-Christian use, as Old Norse *goð* (the gods, neuter plural) still shows. When Christian missionaries needed a word for Greek *theos* — beginning with Wulfila's Gothic Bible in the 4th century CE — they adopted this word and used it as a masculine noun for the one Creator. The shift from neuter to masculine is **corroborated** in the Germanic languages. It did not come from the Hebrew text; it came from the needs of translation into a pagan people's tongue.

Scholars call the wider practice *interpretatio Christiana* (Christian reinterpretation) — existing pagan vocabulary absorbed into Christian use. The pattern is visible in other English religious words, with the details stated accurately:

WORD	PRE-CHRISTIAN BACKGROUND	CHRISTIAN USE
God	Germanic <i>*gudą</i> — a pagan divine being, neuter	Applied to the Creator of Israel; made masculine
Hell	Germanic <i>*haljō</i> — the hidden place of the dead; Norse <i>Hel</i> is the cognate realm and its ruler	Used for the place of punishment
Easter	Old English <i>Ēastre</i> , named by Bede (725) after a spring goddess <i>Ēostre</i> ; Bede is the only early witness	Kept as the English name of the Resurrection festival; most other languages use a name from <i>Pesach</i> (Passover)
Yule	Germanic midwinter season	Carried over to the Christmas season in Germanic and Scandinavian languages

Table 2: Pre-Christian vocabulary absorbed into English Christian use.

II-C. An Honest Limit: What Etymology Can and Cannot Prove

Fairness requires one further observation, and the Tanakh supplies it. The Hebrew common noun **elohim** (gods / God) is itself used of foreign gods: "against all the **elohim** (gods) of Egypt I will execute judgment" (**Exodus 12:12**); "you shall have no other **elohim** (gods) before Me" (**Exodus 20:3**); Dagon is called the Philistines' **elohim** (god) (**1 Samuel 5:7**); Chemosh is "the **elohim** (god) of Moab" (**1 Kings 11:33**). So the problem with "God" cannot simply be that the word was once used for pagan deities — **elohim** was too.

The real difference is this. **Elohim** is the word the covenant itself chose, and the Tanakh fills it with meaning by its own usage: "Yahweh your **Elohim**, He is **Elohim** of the **elohim** (gods)" (**Deuteronomy 10:17**). "God" is a foreign word brought in from outside to translate a translation (Greek *theos*), carrying Germanic, not covenant, history. The case against using "God" as the Creator's *name* is therefore decisive. The case against it as a *title* rests on the covenant's own vocabulary and on the Name, and only secondarily on etymology.

III. YAHWEH'S OWN TESTIMONY — THE NAME HE DECLARED FOREVER

III-A. The Declaration at the Burning Bush — Exodus 3:13–15

Mosheh was keeping the flock at "Horeb, the mountain of **Elohim**" (**Exodus 3:1**) when he asked what name he should give the children of Israel. The answer comes in two steps:

"And Elohim said to Mosheh, 'I will be what I will be.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: I will be has sent me to you.' And Elohim said further to Mosheh, 'Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: Yahweh, the Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Avraham, the Elohim of Yitzchak, and the Elohim of Ya'akov, has sent me to you. This is My name for ever, and this is My memorial to all generations.'" (Exodus 3:14–15)

In verse 14 the self-description is **ehyeh asher ehyeh** (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה, I will be what I will be / I am who I am). In verse 15 the Name itself is given: **Yahweh** (יְהוָה). Note carefully who speaks in verse 15: **Elohim** speaks, and the name He gives is **Yahweh**. The title identifies the speaker; the Name is what He says to call Him.

le-olam (לְעֹלָם, for ever) — the Name is given for all time, not for one era. *zikri* (זִכְרִי, My memorial) — from *zekher* (memorial, remembrance), H2143, built on the verb *zakar* (to remember), H2142. The Name is the means by which He is to be remembered and called upon in every generation.

The Name was proclaimed again at Sinai, where **Yahweh** passed before Mosheh and "proclaimed the name of **Yahweh**: **Yahweh, Yahweh, El merciful and gracious**" (**Exodus 34:5–6**). And in **Exodus 6:2–3** the Name is set at the head of the Exodus itself: "I am **Yahweh**."

III-B. Six Witnesses to the Name Among All Nations

Deuteronomy 19:15 requires two or three witnesses. On the use of His Name the Tanakh gives more:

"This is My name for ever, and this is My memorial to all generations." (**Exodus 3:15**)

"But for this purpose I have raised you up: to show you My power, and that My name may be declared in all the earth." (**Exodus 9:16**)

"Give thanks to Yahweh, call upon His name; make known His deeds among the peoples." (**Psalms 105:1**)

"I am Yahweh; that is My name; and My glory I will not give to another, nor My praise to carved images." (**Isaiah 42:8**)

"And I will sanctify My great name, which has been profaned among the nations... and the nations shall know that I am Yahweh." (**Ezekiel 36:23**)

"And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh shall be delivered." (**Joel 2:32** [**Hebrew 3:5**])

In **Joel 2:32** the verb is *yimmalet* (יִמָּלֵט, shall escape / be delivered). Six texts from the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings direct that the Name be remembered, called upon, declared, and made known among the nations. None directs that a substitute be used in its place. The finding is **corroborated** well beyond the two-or-three standard.

IV. WHAT EL, ELOAH, AND ELOHIM MEAN — THE LEXICAL WITNESSES

The Tanakh's titles for the Creator are **El** (אֵל, God, mighty one), H410; **Eloah** (אֱלֹהִים, God, singular), H433; and **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים, God / gods), H430. Three standard lexical works and the Tanakh's own

grammar are examined below. Their summaries are given in this document's words; they are not direct quotations unless marked.

Witness One — Brown–Driver–Briggs (BDB), 1906

On El: BDB glosses **El** as "god" and lists its uses: of the gods of the nations, of men of might, and above all of the God of Israel. BDB records several proposed derivations (from roots meaning "to be strong," "to be in front," or "to bind") and does not settle between them.

On Eloah: BDB treats **Eloah** as the singular corresponding to **Elohim**, found chiefly in poetry. It occurs about 57–58 times, 41 of them in Job.

On Elohim: BDB divides the uses in two. As a numerical plural, **elohim** means rulers or judges, divine beings, or the gods of the nations. As a "plural intensive" with singular meaning, it is used of a single god and, above all, of the one true God of Israel, and then it takes singular verbs and adjectives. BDB places the **elohim** of **Exodus 21:6** and **22:8–9** in the first group, as judges acting at the sanctuary.

Witness Two — Koehler–Baumgartner, HALOT (English edition 1994–2000)

On El: HALOT traces **El** across the Semitic languages — Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Akkadian, South Arabian — as the common word for a god. In the Ugaritic texts **Il** is also the proper name of the head of the Canaanite pantheon. HALOT regards the etymology as uncertain.

On Elohim: HALOT explains the plural used of Israel's God as an abstract or intensive plural — a plural that sums up "deity" as a whole — and notes the construction with singular verbs. The nearest ancient parallel is the Amarna correspondence (14th century BCE), in which Canaanite rulers address a single Pharaoh as **ilanu** (my gods). That parallel shows that a plural form used of one sovereign was at home in Canaan before Israel's monarchy; what the plural *meant* is **disputed** among scholars (Joel Burnett, *A Reassessment of Biblical Elohim*, 2001, is the fullest modern treatment).

Witness Three — Gesenius: Lexicon (Tregelles, 1857) and Hebrew Grammar (Kautzsch–Cowley, 1910)

On El: Gesenius derived **El** from a root meaning "to be strong," and cited **Genesis 31:29**, where Lavan says, "it is in the **el** (power) of my hand to do you harm." That verse is real textual evidence that **el** can mean "power." It is one proposal among several, but it is the one best supported from inside the Tanakh.

On Elohim: Gesenius' *Grammar* (§124g) classes **Elohim** used of Israel's God among the plurals of "excellence or majesty," which he calls a variety of the abstract plural: a plural that "sums up the several characteristics belonging to the idea" and intensifies it. This is the lexical basis for describing **Elohim** as the fullness of divine power, and that description is **corroborated** by BDB's "plural intensive."

On Genesis 1:26 — a correction to the first edition. Gesenius does *not* explain "Let us make man" as a royal "we." His *Grammar* states that the plural used by God in **Genesis 1:26, 11:7**, and **Isaiah 6:8** "has been incorrectly explained in this way." He notes that others take it as addressed to the attending angels, or as reflecting the fullness of power in **Elohim**, but concludes that "it is best explained as a plural of self-deliberation." He adds: "The use of the plural as a form of respectful address is quite foreign to Hebrew." The verb in **Genesis 1:26** is **na'aseh** (נַעֲשֶׂה, let us make). Whatever reading is taken, Gesenius' own words place the "us" of **Genesis 1:26** outside the royal-plural explanation, and the first edition should not have claimed him for it.

Witness Four — The Tanakh's Own Grammar

The strongest witness is the text itself. Its grammar shows when **elohim** means the one Creator and when it means many:

TEXT	WHAT THE HEBREW SHOWS	WHAT IT ESTABLISHES
Genesis 1:1	<i>Bereishit bara Elohim — bara</i> (He created) is singular	Elohim used of the Creator takes a singular verb: one Being, plural form
Genesis 1:26–27	"Let us make" (<i>na'aseh</i> , plural) — then " Elohim created (<i>bara</i> , singular) man in His image"	The narrator returns at once to the singular; the "us" does not make the Creator plural
Exodus 22:8–9 [Hebrew 22:7–8]	A case goes "to <i>ba-elohim</i> "; "whom elohim shall condemn" (<i>yarshi'un</i> , plural verb)	BDB and older translations read "judges"; JPS 1985 reads "God." Disputed , and noted as such
Psalms 82:1, 6	" Elohim stands (<i>nitzav</i> , singular) in the assembly of El; in the midst of the elohim He judges"; "I said, You (plural) are elohim "	The one Elohim stands over the many elohim and judges them
Deuteronomy 10:17	" Yahweh your Elohim , He is Elohim of the elohim and Lord of the lords"	The Tanakh itself uses the same word for the One and the many, and ranks them
Exodus 3:15	Elohim speaks and gives the Name Yahweh	The Name is Yahweh ; Elohim is the title the Tanakh uses of Him

Table 3: The Tanakh's internal grammar of **Elohim**.

IV-E. Fabre d'Olivet — A Comparative Voice, Graded

Antoine Fabre d'Olivet (1767–1825) was a French writer and esoteric philosopher. In *The Hebraic Tongue Restored* (1815–16; English translation by Nayán Louise Redfield, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921) he proposed that each Hebrew letter carries a primordial meaning as a "sign," and that roots can be decoded from those signs. His Radical Vocabulary entry for the root **AL** (לָא) reads:

"AL. This root springs from the united signs of power and of extensive movement. The ideas which it develops are those of elevation, force, power, extent. The Hebrews and Arabs have drawn from it the name of GOD." (Fabre d'Olivet, The Hebraic Tongue Restored, Radical Vocabulary, p. 294, as transcribed from the 1921 English edition)

Grading. The first edition counted d'Olivet as a fifth, fully independent lexical witness. That overstated his standing. His letter-as-sign method is not accepted by Hebrew philology, it was shaped by his own mystical system, and his sign definitions cannot be tested against the text the way a lexicon entry can. His conclusion that **AL** carries the sense of power and elevation happens to agree with Gesenius' proposal, which is worth noting, but agreement reached by a speculative method adds little weight. Under **Deuteronomy 19:15** he is recorded here as a comparative voice, not a witness. D'Olivet himself also used the English word "GOD" in the very sentence quoted, so he cannot be cited as evidence against the word.

IV-F. Convergence

WITNESS	STANDING	FINDING ON ELOHIM
BDB	Standard lexicon, 1906	A "plural intensive" with singular meaning when used of Israel's God; a numerical plural for judges, divine beings, and foreign gods
HALOT	Standard critical lexicon, 1994–2000	An abstract / intensive plural used of one deity, with singular verbs; ancient Canaanite parallels (Amarna)
Gesenius	Lexicon 1857; Grammar 1910	A plural of excellence or majesty, summing up and intensifying the idea of deity; the "us" of Genesis 1:26 is a plural of self-deliberation, not a royal plural
The Tanakh's grammar	The governing witness	Singular verbs for the Creator, plural usage for the many; Yahweh is Elohim of the elohim
<i>Fabre d'Olivet</i>	<i>Comparative voice only</i>	<i>AL = power, elevation, extent (speculative method)</i>

*Table 4: Four witnesses converge. **Elohim**, used of **Yahweh**, is one Being named with a plural of fullness. Corroborated.*

V. HOW THE NAME WAS SET ASIDE — HUMAN TRADITION, NOT COVENANT COMMAND

V-A. From Spoken Name to Substitute

The Name was spoken freely in the Tanakh period. The book of Ruth records it in an everyday greeting: Boaz says to the reapers, "**Yahweh** be with you," and they answer, "**Yahweh** bless you" (**Ruth 2:4**). The Mishnah itself remembers that the sages ordained that a person should greet his fellow with the Name, citing that verse (Mishnah Berakhot 9:5).

Over the Second Temple period the practice changed. By the time of the Mishnah the Name was pronounced by the High Priest in the Temple on the Day of Atonement (Mishnah Yoma 6:2), while elsewhere *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי, my Lord) was read in its place. Abba Shaul is recorded as saying that one who pronounces the Name by its letters has no share in the world to come (Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1). The Greek Septuagint had already rendered the Name as *Kyrios* (Lord), and English Bibles followed with "the LORD." After the Temple fell in 70 CE the one place where the Name was still spoken was gone.

V-B. The Masoretic Vowels and "Jehovah"

The Masoretes (6th–10th centuries CE) did not write vowels for the Name as it had once been spoken. They wrote vowel points drawn from *Adonai* as a reading instruction — a permanent signal to say "Adonai" instead. Christian readers who took those vowels together with the consonants produced the hybrid "Jehovah," popularized by Petrus Galatinus in 1518 and brought into English by William Tyndale in 1530. "Jehovah" is therefore a Renaissance misreading, not an ancient pronunciation. The pronunciation **Yahweh** is supported by the short form *Yah* in the Tanakh itself (**Exodus 15:2**; the *-yah* of names and of *Hallelu-Yah*) and by early Greek transcriptions.

V-C. The Third Commandment Governs Use, Not Silence

"You shall not take up the name of **Yahweh** your **Elohim** *la-shav* (לֹשֶׁן שָׁו, to falsehood / in vain)" (**Exodus 20:7**). The word *shav* (emptiness, falsehood), H7723, points to false oaths and empty, dishonoring use. The commandment regulates *how* the Name is carried, not whether it is spoken. The same Torah that gives this commandment commands the Name to be declared in all the earth (**Exodus 9:16**).

V-D. The Rabbinic Reasons, Answered from the Text

Two scriptural arguments are given for silence. The first reads **Leviticus 24:16**, "whoever *nokev* (blasphemes / pronounces) the name of **Yahweh** shall surely be put to death," as forbidding pronunciation. But the setting (**Leviticus 24:11**) is a man who cursed the Name in a quarrel; the verse punishes blasphemy, not speech. The second is a wordplay in the Talmud (Pesachim 50a), which reads

le-olam (for ever) in **Exodus 3:15** as if it were *le-alem* (to conceal). The written text says *le-olam*. A reading that reverses the plain meaning of a verse is an addition to it, and **Deuteronomy 4:2** forbids adding to the word. Both reasons are post-biblical rabbinic commentary; neither is a command of the written covenant. The finding is **corroborated**: no verse of the Tanakh forbids speaking the Name.

VI. THREE-RELIGION AUDIT

ELEMENT	☆ JUDAISM	† CHRISTIANITY	☩ ISLAM
The Name	Yahweh is written but not spoken; <i>Adonai</i> or <i>HaShem</i> is said. Reverence is real; the fence is post-biblical.	Printed as "the LORD" (Septuagint <i>Kyrios</i>); "Jehovah" is a 16th-century hybrid; many modern scholars and some Bibles use Yahweh .	The personal Name of Exodus 3:15 is not used; the Qur'anic bush account gives "Allah" (Q. 20:14).
The title	<i>Elohim</i> in Hebrew; "G-d" in English, which keeps the Germanic word while honoring it.	"God" — a Germanic word with no Semitic root, adopted to translate Greek <i>theos</i> .	<i>Allah</i> — Semitic, cognate with <i>Eloah</i> ; closer to the Tanakh's vocabulary than "God."
Covenant strength	Keeps the Hebrew titles; treats the Name as holy; Berakhot 9:5 preserves the memory of the Name in greeting.	Quotes Joel 2:32 on calling on the Name (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13).	Refused to borrow a foreign word for the Creator; the title stays in the Semitic family.
Covenant departure	Silence replaces what Exodus 3:15 calls a memorial "to all generations."	Replaces the Name with a title in print, and the title with a Germanic word in speech.	Omits the Name that the Tanakh gives at the bush.
Covenant verdict	Restore the Name in reverent use, as Ruth 2:4 shows it was used.	Use the Name Yahweh and the Tanakh's titles; read "God" as a translation word only.	Keep the Semitic title; receive the Name of Exodus 3:15 that the Tanakh declares.

Table 5: Three-religion audit of the Name and the title.

VII. SEVEN COVENANT DECLARATIONS

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
I	The Creator's personal Name is Yahweh , declared by Himself for ever and as His memorial to all generations.	Exodus 3:15; 6:2–3; 34:5–6
II	The Name is to be called upon, declared, and made known among all nations.	Exodus 9:16; Psalms 105:1; Isaiah 42:8; Ezekiel 36:23; Joel 2:32

#	COVENANT DECLARATION	BASIS
III	"God" is not the Name. It is an English translation word of Germanic origin with no Semitic root.	Table 1; Exodus 3:15
IV	The titles the Tanakh uses — <i>El, Eloah, Elobim</i> — are the covenant's own vocabulary; <i>Elobim</i> used of Yahweh names one Being with a plural of fullness.	Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 10:17; Psalms 82:1 ; BDB; HALOT; Gesenius
V	No verse of the Tanakh forbids speaking the Name. The third commandment forbids carrying it falsely.	Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 24:11–16; Ruth 2:4
VI	A tradition that reverses the plain words of a verse adds to the covenant and does not bind.	Deuteronomy 4:2; Exodus 3:15
VII	Claims must be tested before they are taught, including this Institution's own earlier claims.	Deuteronomy 19:15 ; Section I-B

VIII. COVENANT VERDICT

Is It Correct to Call Yahweh "God"?

On the Name: No. "God" is not the Name of the Creator. **Yahweh** declared His own Name at Horeb, declared it "for ever," proclaimed it again at Sinai, and commanded it to be made known among the nations. That Name is **Yahweh** (יהוה). This finding is corroborated by six Tanakh witnesses and by the Hebrew text in some 6,800 places.

On the title: not the covenant's word. The titles the Tanakh gives are *El, Eloah*, and *Elobim*. "God" entered English from pre-Christian Germanic religion and was adopted to translate Greek *theos*, which itself translated *Elobim*. It is at two removes from the text. Etymology alone does not condemn a word — the Tanakh uses *elohim* of false gods as well — but the covenant defined its own vocabulary, and a community that stands on the written Tanakh does best to use it.

The necessary pastoral distinction. Billions of people use the word "God" in sincere devotion to the Creator of Israel. Miqdash Bethel does not judge their hearts. It applies the standard **Yahweh** Himself set: a Name given "for ever" and "to all generations." Using that Name is not arrogance; it is obedience to **Exodus 3:15**.

Institutional usage. In Miqdash Bethel Covenant Institution documents the Creator is called by the Name He declared, **Yahweh** (יהוה), and the Tanakh's titles are used for Him, above all **Elohim** (אֱלֹהִים). The word "God" appears only in quotation, in translation, or where it is itself the subject of discussion.

SCRIPTURE INDEX

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Genesis 1:1	<i>Elohim</i> with the singular verb <i>bara</i>	IV
Genesis 1:26–27; 11:7	"Let us make" — plural of self-deliberation (Gesenius)	I-B; IV
Genesis 31:29	<i>el</i> meaning "power"	I-B; IV
Exodus 3:1	Horeb, the mountain of Elohim	I-B; III
Exodus 3:13–15	The Name declared for ever; <i>le-olam</i> ; <i>zekher</i>	III; V; VII; VIII
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1 Samuel 5:7	Dagon, the Philistines' <i>elohim</i>	II-C
1 Kings 11:33	Chemosh, the <i>elohim</i> of Moab	II-C
Isaiah 6:8	"Who will go for us?"	IV
Isaiah 42:8	"I am Yahweh ; that is My name"	III; VII
Ezekiel 36:23	The nations shall know the Name	III; VII

REFERENCE	SUBJECT	SECTION
Joel 2:32	Whoever calls on the Name shall be delivered	Opening; III; VI; VII
Malachi 3:6	Yahweh does not change	Opening
Psalms 82:1, 6	Elohim judges among the <i>elohim</i>	IV; VII
Psalms 105:1	Call upon His Name among the peoples	III; VII
Psalms 119:89	The word fixed in the heavens	Opening
Job	<i>Eloab</i> — 41 of about 57–58 occurrences	IV
Ruth 2:4	The Name in everyday greeting	V-A; VI; VII

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"This is My name for ever, and this is My memorial to all generations."

Exodus 3:15 — The Written Covenant of Yahweh

MIQDASH BETHEL COVENANT INSTITUTION

DOCUMENT 62 • IS IT CORRECT TO CALL YAHWEH "GOD"? • REVISED
SEPTEMBER 2026

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