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Part Three
The Names of God in the Hebrew Bible and the Absence of Names of God in the Armenian Bible[106]

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Abstract: The names of God are always specific names, which signify the symbol of God and do not describe God or His essence. This essay is going to discuss the names of God——in Hebrew Bible mainly——and explain why it is fairly rare to find any names of God in the Armenian translation[107] of the Holy Bible. Thus, this essay try to prove, that God or the Divine Essence cannot be described, because God's Essence exists beyond all description, which is circumscribed and limited.

Key Words: God, names of God, Hebrew Bible, Armenian Bible

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INTRODUCTION

The most fervent religious desire of humanity is to give a name to the divine being, to find a logical definition to it and try to demonstrate its existence. Although, it is impossible to find all the exact names given to the Creator in every translation of the Holy Bible. "The first point is that the Hebrew terms which can be found in the Old Testament are translated by God, or Deus, or Theos, these terms are actually proper names given in accordance to the wishes of the Talmud. The name of God is always said to be a proper name in the Scriptures. The word God would be absent from the Hebrew language![108]" The Bible often talks about God with a unique face, such as in the Exodus 20: 7, Psalms 8: 1. In all these occurrences, the Holy Bible does not mean any particular signs of God, the common name of God contains many unique names because God appeared to humanity through various titles. These names do not pertain to human creatures but are of Divine origin (although they are parts of human speech itself). However, we will limit ourselves with the discussion of God's unique names used in Hebrew Bible[109].

YHWH

The most common name for God in a singular form in the Hebrew Bible is YHWH (יהוה)

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[107] Here I have used the Armenian Bible in Armenian, Eastern Armenian new translation, The Armenian Apostolic Church, Catholicosate of All Armenians and The Bible Society of Armenia, Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin, 1994.

[108] Emmanuel LEVINAS, "The Philosophical Meaning of the Names of God", *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, mars 2006, p. 119.

[109] Weilin FANG, "Genealogical Studies on Hebrew Names of God in the Hebrew Bible", *Studies in World Religions*, No. 4 (July 2013), pp. 86-97.

which is known as Tetragrammaton from Greek "four-letter (word)" translation. But why YHWH? What does it mean and where does it come from? YHWH is roughly the name of God, the most common name in the Old Testament, which is used nearly 7000 times (6828 times, to be accurate). This word has been translated into Greek as Lord, "Kurios". This is different from the word "Adonai" (Lord), but these are equivalent words in Greek, as both are translated "Kurios" (Phil 2: 11).

The God of the tribe of Judah was called Yahweh (Jehovah). The Old Testament's scripture have been interpreted as "YaHWeH" (Yahweh) in the scientific sphere, which is also used in a distorted version of YeHoWaH (Jehovah). The third verse of the Ten Commandments is known to all: "You shall not call the name of your God in vain" (Exodus 20: 7). This seems to be a worthless line behind the word of Jehovah. The first part of the Bible, the Old Testament, was written in ancient Hebrew, which, like Semitic, does not use vowels in writing. Consequently, the reader mentally interprets and restores the vowels by himself. There is a crucial connection between "YHWH" and "ADONAI"/"ELOHIM" (another proper name given to God which will be discussed later). Writers did not use vowels in Hebrew, thus how can we be sure that the Tetragrammaton should be pronounced "YeHoWah" and not "YaHoWah" or "JeHoWah"? Here is the connection between these three names. The connection between these three words was explained by researchers; the vowels from "Adonai" and "Elohim" were smoothly transferred into Tetragrammaton "YHWH" due to which we have this mystic name "YeHoWah", "YahWeh", "YaHoWah", "JeHoWah"[110].

The Jews followed the command of God to not pronounce the name of God, so they were not allowed to pronounce Tetragrammaton, but instead used another word, Adonai, which is translated as "master," "ruler." The original YHWH word correctly was only known by the high ranked priest of the temple in Jerusalem, but after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem (70 AD), the correct reading of the Tetragrammaton and the puzzling became a mystery. Over time, when the need arose to analyse and study the Old Testament's scripture, the Tetragrammaton in the scientific world was read as "YaHWeH" (Yahweh) or YeHoWaH (Jehovah)[111].

The Hebrew word "YHWH[112]" literally means differently and judging, more precisely, the difference in which it is revealed (Ex. 3: 12-14, 6: 2-8), it means the "presence" of God is with the Israelites, He is close to His people, the Chorus, and also by the word "Promised-Emmanuel" (with God) (I am 7: 14, Matthew 1: 23). "Yahweh is present", He is available and close to all those who are calling Him (Psalm 145: 18) for Salvation (107: 13), Forgiveness (Pr 2: 25) and Teaching. It is also related to the covenant, for example (Exodus 6: 6-8) "I will be your God and you my people." In short, this word, apart from the use of ordinary letters, is used as a present, salvation, a liberator, a blessing, as well as a covenant, obedience and faithfulness.

By this name, God appeared to his people, showing His mercy and pointed out "I am what I am" (Exodus 3: 14) and later, self-disclosure; "I am the Lord" (Exodus 6: 2-8). The main meaning of this word is "Being", "to be present", and later, as some would accept to have received the following meaning; "I am (and not someone else)". Also, the translation of the Greek phrase "Ego Emy" has the same meaning from the Greek Septuagint. And Moses gives the idea that there is a God, but he needs to understand it. And Jesus himself made this statement "I am" (Ego Emy) (Matthew 14: 27), (John 8: 24-28-58). Thus, the same words attributed to the God of Israel as "God," "I was, am and will be" have been used by Jesus Christ himself.

YHWH emphasises God's absolute being. He is the source of all being, of all reality and all existence. He exists in Himself. Everything else derives its existence from Him. YHWH expresses

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[110] Hovhannes Yordanyan, *Who is God? Who is the holy Trinity*, Yerevan, 2001.

[111] http://www.sarkavagagirq.net/2012/02/blog-post_08.html

[112] IHWH in other research: Francis B. Denio, "On the Use of the Word Jehovah in Translating the Old Testament", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 46, No. 1/2 (1927), pp. 146-149

the absolute transcendence of God. He is above all His creation. He is without beginning and without end because He always is.

This is a special memorable name that God revealed to Moses at the burning bush. "God said to Moses," I am who I am,"and he said:"Thus say to the sons of Israel:Jehovah sent me to you…This is My name forever,and the remembrance of Me from generation to generation" (Exodus 3:14-15). Although the name YHWH appears already in Genesis 2,God did not reveal Himself as YHWH until Exodus 3 in connection with the creation of Israel.

However,in the Armenian Holy Bible[113],we read "…and God spoke to Moses,saying;"I am the Lord. And I appeared to Abraham,to Isaac,and to Jacob. I am their God,my name is Lord,but I did not tell them" (Exodus 6:2-3),but in the Hebrew version it's written,"I didn't tell them that my name is YHWH (Yahweh)…". Thus,in the most important self-descriptive sentence of the Holy Bible,we won't find the exact name for God in the Armenian translation,but He calls himself Lord. Here is the question;what is the name of God in the Armenian Holy Bible? Does He have any name? Why doesn't He have names?

Armenia became the first Christian country in the world accepting it in 301 A. D[114]. The Armenian alphabet was created in 405 A. D[115] by St. Mesrop Mashtots. Here is the question;what was the language of liturgy in churches during one hundred years? How could the uneducated people learn the Holy Bible without writings and possibility to learn foreign languages (for that time Greek). According to Armenian sources,the word of the liturgy was either greek or orally translated version of the Holy Bible into Old Armenian[116].

The "canonical" being of the Holy Bible has played a crucial role in keeping the original text of the book. This is the reason why during the Middle Ages,the Armenian writers have been carefully imitated by the sacred caution and carefulness. That is the reason why hundreds of Bible translations of the Bible do not differ from each other and coincide with the original Greek text of the Bible[117]. In 387 A. D. Armenia was divided between the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires and according to many Armenian writers after the division,under the Persian force,only Assyrian language was used in Eastern Armenia. According to Khorenatsi[118],before the division of Armenia,the ritual language of the Armenian Church was Greek and then Assyrian. However,it is not ruled out that the Assyrian language is equal to Greek,as the southern regions of Armenia have been in the Assyrian influence for a quite long time. However,these facts are coming to explain why the Armenian translation of the Holy Bible in its rout has the Greek version rather than the Hebrew Bible,thus similarly with the Greek Holy Bible we won't find other names for God but Lord and others mentioned as follows.

In the Armenian translation of the Holy Book God has many titles:God is Արարիչ (ararich-Creator),he's——Տեր (Ter-Lord) of all,Թագավոր (Tagavor-King),Դատավոր (Datavor-Judge) and Իշխան (Ishkhan-Prince). He is Ամենակալ (Amenakal-Omnipotent),Ամենակարող (Amenakarokh-Almighty),Բարձրյալ (Bardzryal-Most Highly),Բրուտ (Brut-Potter),Բավական (Bavakan-

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[113] The first Bible was published by Voskan Yerevanci in 1666 in Amsterdam. The printing was started in 1666,March 11 and finished in 1668,October 13th. This Bible was first used in 1295. This text was edited by Voskhan Yerevantsi in the Latin translation of Vulgata. He has translated and added several books of the Old Testament,which are missing in the Armenian Bible. http://armchurch.info.

[114] The history of the Armenian People, H. G. Zhamkochyan, A. G. Abrahamyan, S. T. Meliq-Bashkhyan, S. P. Poxosyan, Yerevan 1975.

[115] *Ibid*.

[116] Abexyan M. 1968 pp 136-145,545-548,630-641,Mesrop Mashtots (articles) Yerevan 1962,Mesrop Mashtots (articles) Yerevan 1963,Akinyan H. N. ,St. Mashtots vardapet Vienna 1949.

[117] Parandzem Meytikhanyan,"The names and the titles given to God in the Holy Book (The Father)",Yerevan 2006.

[118] Movses Khorenatsi was a prominent Armenian historian from the period of Late Antiquity and the author of the History of Armenia.

Enough), Երկնավոր (Erknavor-Heavenly), Հզոր (Hzor-Mighty), Կենարար (Kenarar-Life-giving[119]). We analyze some of these names with reference to translation, semantic, linguistic and stylistic aspects. Exodus has a very significant and unique role in the onomastic system of the Bible, as in 3. 13—14 of this book, God, who has different names, reveals the interpretation of the names: "I am the Essence". The comparison of the Armenian proper names and titles and their equivalents existing in other languages (Greek, Assyrian, Latin, German, Russian) shows that the texts in ancient and Eastern Armenian have a lot of similarities with the Greek Septuagint, yet they are quite different from the Assyrian one. The Proper Names in Eastern Armenian and Russian versions of the Bible with reference to translation are nearly identical. Besides, the translators of the Holy Bible were educated in Byzantium, thus they were the best specialists in the Greek language (Latin and Greek were being used in Byzantium[120]).

Actually, one of the most important rabbinic laws about God's name is a fundamental prohibition against saying the name of God aloud. In his book, God, Death and Time, Levinas[121] suggests that the reason for this prohibition is to say nothing about God[122] or to avoid saying anything about God. God's response to Moses from the burning bush was Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh——"I will be that I will be" (Exodus 3:14). This name is a special name because it is not a real name. Man cannot call God by this name, and could learn nothing about God's presence, character, or being. Rather, it resembles a description of a being with options: "I will be what I will be" and not what I will not be[123]. Is there a possibility of describing what has no description? Here I would like to cite Rabb Hayyim Volozhiner's differentiation between "from His side" and "from our side." Man has nothing to say about God by Himself——"from His side." All human language relating to God is from the human's perspective[124]. The Armenian interpretation for God's names has the same explanation; we cannot describe what is indescribable only by giving Him names, names are used for God to make its nature closer to us humans, even though they do not refer to the God's nature, but to His deeds.

ADONAI

During theyears of Egyptian slavery, the Jews started to use YHWH (Yahweh) very rarely, due to superstition, and the word 《 Adonai" became more popular. In modern Hebrew, the word "adon" is used as "Mr.", as "Adonai" is never used because this word is attributed to God and has plural meaning in Hebrew.

"ADONAI" is a rabbinical version of the replacement of Tetragrammaton. Literally this word can be translated as "gentlemen". This is an expressive form of the word "Adon," meaning "master" or "lord" (Isaiah 10:33), God is the Lord. He rules and gives orders. "Adonai" is usually translated as "Lord." This word is used about 450 times. "I saw Adonai (the Lord) sitting on a high and exalted throne, and the edges of His robe filled the whole temple" (Isaiah 6:1)[125]. In the Old Testament (Armenian translation) there are three people using this name; the fourth son of king David (2 Kings 4, 2 Kings 1:5, 7, 8…) and two Levites (1 Chronicles 3:2, 2 Chronicles 17:8).

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[119] Parandzem Meytikhanyan, "The names and the titles given to God in the Holy Book (The Father)", Yerevan, 2006.

[120] Hovhannes Yordanyan, *Who is God? Who is the holy Trinity*, Yerevan, 2001.

[121] Emmanuel Levinas was a French philosopher of Lithuanian Jewish ancestry who is known for his work related to Jewish philosophy, existentialism, ethics, phenomenology and ontology.

[122] Emmanuel Levinas, God, Death and Time, trans. B. Bergo, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2000, p. 234.

[123] Here we see an example of the limitations of language. We should not speak in terms of "be" when speaking of God, who is beyond being.

[124] See Emmanuel Levinas, "In the Image of God' according to Rabbi Hayyim Volozhiner", pp. 151-167.

[125] Russian Khazarzar, *The name of God*, *Moscow*, 2000.

The final syllable of Adonai uses the vowel kamatz, rather than patach which would be expected from the Hebrew for "my lord(s)". Professor Yoel Elitzur explains this phenomenon as a normal transformation——Hebrew words become can become names, e. g: Nathan, Yitzchak, and Yigal[126].

ELOHIM

God is the legitimate acting person of the Holy Bible from the very first sentence; in the Hebrew Bible, we find out that Elohim is the first name of God (Gen. 1:1: Elohim, Eli, Eloah (in Hebrew) have a common root). Elohim itself has plural meaning; it can be translated as "power, strength, mightiness[127]). When Elohim is used with other words, it is not related to a name anymore, but instead refers to the qualities and characteristics of the words describing God. El is coming from the name Eli and has the meaning of god in the Semitic language. In the book of Job and the psalms, there is a great section that has mentioned "El" 238 times by the meaning of power. The other meanings are related to different qualifications, such as truth (Numbers 23:19, Deuteronomy 32:4), envy (Deuteronomy 5:9) and mercy (Nehemiah 9:31, Psalm 86:15).

The word "Eloah" (60 times) is more commonly found in the book of Job, which literally means "power". According to the origin, this term is attributed to the true God, however, "Eloah" can be used for any god in general. Elohim or God, unlike Eloah has plural meaning and is used about 2300 times in the Holy Bible. However, all of these three names are translated as God (Theos) in Septuagint and combine everything that is related to God and divinity. Despite the fact that the word "Elohim" itself has plural meaning, in the Holy Bible it is used with nouns in singular form. In brief, due to the word "Elohim", God's ability is revealed in various places, such as creation, when God created the world through His Word (Genesis 1:3-8), it characterizes the almighty power of God. His words describe His power when barren women have children (Genesis 18:10-14, 25:21), when the suffering people are freed from Egypt (Exodus 20:2), when the crucified Christ is raised from the dead (Romans 1:1-4): The apostle Peter writes: "And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see" (1 Pet 1:5). I would like to mention three quite significant parts of the Holy Bible. As it is written in Psalm 21 "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"; the same sentence we find in the New Testament "…and about three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me ?" (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34). According to Armenian interpretation, by calling Father God with the name "Eli" Jesus Christ uses the same meaning that has the word in general, such as "almighty", "the powerful one", which all are attributed to God Himself[128].

CONCLUSION

Through Jesus Christ we have know God as "Father"; in the Prayer, Jesus says: "Hollowed by your name…" but never mentions name[129].

As we can see there are names of God and various epithets for God, which refer to his actions and to his Creation. Thus, is there any differences between "God" as "profession" and "God" as a

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[126] Yoel Elitzur, "Shemot HaEl VeTaarichei Ketivat Sifrei HaMiqra", published in Be'einei Elohim Va Adam, Beit Morasha Jerusalem: 2017, p. 407.

[127] Hovhannes Yordanyan, *Who is God? Who is the holy Trinity*, Yerevan, 2001.

[128] Parandzem Meytikhanyan, "The names and the titles given to God in the Holy Book (The Father)", Yerevan, 2006.

[129] "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one". Matthew 6:9-13, Luke 11:2-4.

name of the "almighty being"? In rabbinic literature, the term "Elohim" ("God") is used to refer to God's function as supreme judge (powerful God), YHWH emphasizes God's absolute being and "Adonai" is a rabbinical version of the replacement of Tetragrammaton (YHWH). However, the common point in all of the names given to God is that none of them is trying to describe a relationship, and is rooted in bringing what is beyond the present into the present. In a philosophically profound manner, the names of God are an attempt to describe a paradox, the paradoxic nature of revelation. Tetragrammaton (YHWH) itself is the hypothetical version to pronounce God's name, but it is still incorrect.

Moreover, we can conclude from this short essay that all of the names given to God are adjectives which attempt to make a statement about God and about the Divine Essence. It is not proved that the names mentioned in literature are the only ones given to God, it's quite possible that there were many names given to God which were not even used in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, this essay brings me to the conclusion that the names of God (in the Hebrew Bible) are adjectives or seem to be descriptions of God but not names at all.

中文题目:
希伯来圣经中上帝的名字在亚美尼亚译本中的缺席

雷丽,毕业于亚美尼亚叶立文州立大学神学院,2011 年获得学士学位。2011 年至 2015 年,在叶立文州立大学欧洲研究院学习并获得硕士学位。2015 年在南京大学哲学系宗教学系攻读哲学硕士学位。她的主要研究兴趣是宗教,政治和历史。联系电话:+8613062587786,电子邮箱:leylichina@gmail.com。基金项目:国家社科基金项目"希伯来圣经女性传统研究"(14BZJ026)

提要:上帝的名字,它表征上帝的符号,并不描述上帝本身或上帝的本质。本文探讨了上帝的名字的问题,指出,在希伯来圣经中出现的上帝的名字,在亚美尼亚的圣经译本中,未有被翻译体现,因而造成了上帝名字在亚美尼亚圣经中的缺席。本文试图指出,上帝的名字并不能体现上帝的本质,上帝的本质是不可被表面化的指称来描述的。

关键词:上帝;上帝的名字;希伯来圣经;亚美尼亚圣经