

119

GROUP STUDY GUIDE

HaShem Series – FAQ: Why It’s Okay to Say “Lord”

Use with the full teaching and a Bible. Read or watch first, complete the questions, then discuss and apply. For family study, an adult can select suitable portions and accept spoken answers.

Test the teaching’s explanations against the cited passages. Keep the answer key and facilitator notes separate when distributing learner pages.

[Open the full teaching](#)

Teaching summary

The English title Lord expresses rulership and authority. Scripture repeatedly calls YHWH Adonai, and Lord conveys that meaning in English. The study therefore rejects the claim that using this title necessarily takes his name in vain or identifies him with a pagan deity.

The English word is traced to the Old English hlaforð, described as loaf-guardian and connected with the master of a household. Its broader sense of master or ruler makes it a suitable translation of Adonai. Examples from Exodus show Moses addressing YHWH with that Hebrew title.

Ba’al can name a pagan deity, but it also functions as an ordinary Hebrew word for owner, master, or husband. Scripture uses it for an ox’s owner, Uriah as husband, and YHWH’s relationship to Israel. A pagan use does not make every other use of the same word idolatrous. Moreover, many occurrences of Lord translate Adonai.

A separate issue is the replacement of YHWH with capitalized LORD in English translations. The ministry disagrees with that substitution and commonly restores YHWH when citing the text. This disagreement does not invalidate Lord as a translation of Adonai. YHWH possesses ultimate authority, so acknowledging him as Lord is fitting.

Summary points

- Lord expresses power, authority, and rulership.
- Adonai is a biblical title used for YHWH.
- Lord conveys the meaning of Adonai in English.
- The English word is traced to hlaforð.
- Ba’al can mean owner, master, or husband.
- Context distinguishes ordinary uses from the pagan deity.
- Jeremiah 31 uses husband language for YHWH.
- Capitalized LORD often substitutes for the tetragrammaton.
- The ministry disagrees with replacing YHWH in translation.
- That disagreement does not make the title Lord sinful.

Fill in the blank

Use the teaching and the cited Bible passages. Equivalent wording is welcome when it expresses the same meaning.

Basic

1. The Hebrew title commonly translated Lord is _____.
2. Lord can mean a master or _____.
3. The Hebrew word that can mean owner or husband is _____.
4. Capitalized LORD commonly replaces the name _____.
5. The Hebrew expression HaShem means “the _____.”
6. The Jewish substitution tradition arose from a desire to show _____ for the name.

Challenging

1. The Old English form discussed is _____.
2. Its literal description in the study is loaf-_____.
3. Exodus 21:28 uses ba'al for the _____ of an ox.
4. Second Samuel 11:26 uses ba'al for Uriah as a _____.
5. YHWH uses husband language in Jeremiah _____.
6. The Bible translation whose preface is quoted is the _____.

Group discussion

Discuss respectfully and support answers from the passages. Use these lines for brief notes or a notebook for longer responses.

1. How do the cited uses of Adonai support the English title Lord?

2. What does the word's English background contribute to the discussion?

3. How do owner and husband uses of ba'al challenge the objection?

4. Why must replacing YHWH be distinguished from translating Adonai?

5. How can a group explain that distinction without confusing new readers?

6. What does acknowledging YHWH as ruler and master call his people to recognize?

Answer key

For the leader or parent. Answers follow the teaching and the passages. Accept equivalent wording that expresses the same meaning.

Basic

1. Adonai

Exodus 4:10; 5:22; 15:17

2. ruler

Teaching discussion of Lord and Adonai

3. ba'al

Exodus 21:28; 2 Samuel 11:26; Jeremiah 31:32

4. YHWH

Teaching discussion of the tetragrammaton in English Bibles

5. Name

Teaching discussion of the substitution tradition

6. reverence

Teaching discussion of the substitution tradition

Challenging

1. hlaford

Teaching account of the Old English word

2. guardian

Teaching account of the Old English word

3. owner

Exodus 21:28

4. husband

2 Samuel 11:26

5. 31:32

Jeremiah 31:32

6. ESV (also: English Standard Version)

Teaching quotation of the ESV preface

Facilitator notes

These responses give direction for discussion. They are not a test of identical wording. Invite participants to explain the passages and consider a faithful practical response.

1. The cited passages address YHWH with Adonai, a title of authority. The teaching regards Lord as an English word conveying that sense, so its ordinary use is not evidence of idolatry.

Exodus 4:10; 5:22; 15:17

2. The account of hlaford gives an English-language history rather than a derivation from the Hebrew deity name Baal. The teaching's larger point is that the meaning of master or ruler is appropriate when referring to YHWH.

Teaching account of the Old English word

3. The same Hebrew word can refer to an owner or a husband without naming a deity. Context decides which use is meant. The existence of a pagan use does not make every occurrence idolatrous.

Exodus 21:28; 2 Samuel 11:26; Jeremiah 31:32

4. One question concerns substituting a title where the Hebrew text has YHWH; the other concerns translating the Hebrew title Adonai. We can disagree with the first choice while recognizing that Lord is a suitable rendering of the title.

Teaching discussion of the ESV preface and conclusion

5. Compare a Bible's preface and a passage such as Exodus 4:10. Explain the common small-capital LORD convention and the ordinary title Lord, while noting that translators may use additional conventions.

Exodus 4:10; teaching discussion of English translation practice

6. It recognizes his authority and calls for trust and a faithful response to him. Our discussion should focus on that relationship rather than treat a particular English title as automatically sinful.

Teaching conclusion; Exodus 4:10

Put it into practice

Choose one response to the passages. What will we do, and when will we revisit it? Share only what you are comfortable sharing.