

Database “Ancient Hebrew personal names” – a first overview

The personal name module of the BH¹ database includes the biblical Hebrew¹ and epigraphic Hebrew² names and has **three components**:

- (1) **Analysis entries** for the individual biblically and extra-biblically documented ancient Hebrew personal names.
- (2) An [overview of the morphology, syntax and semantics of old Hebrew personal names](#) (MSSAP).
- (3) A comprehensive [lexicon of Hebrew onomastically assigned verbs](#) (LHOV).

Anyone who calls up a single name (1) is guided to the relevant sections in the overview (2) by clicking on the §§ indication in the comment, line 22, by clicking on the root (“Wurzel” in majuscules!), line 16, to the corresponding entry in the root lexicon (3).

[Abbreviations](#) and [bibliographies](#) as well as a first [interface for search queries](#), which is still under construction, can be reached under the menu items sub “Dokumentation” at the top.

The **individual names can be accessed** by selecting "[Biblical](#)" vs. "[Epigraphic](#)". Both areas contain overviews of the initial letters.

- The alphabetical overview of biblical names include transliteration as in BH¹, Tiberian context form, representation in the Elberfelder Translation and the number of name bearers. There is also a field “Vorkommen” (“occurrence”) which starts a search query in BH¹ and provides a sentence concordance to the respective personal names.³
- The epigraphic names include transliteration, transcription, translation and the number of documents (inscriptions in the narrower sense + seals / bulls).

¹ As a rule, names of pre- and non-Israelites (e.g. לְמִיךְ and בְּלִעָם) as well as non-Hebrew names (e.g. מִשְׁהָה), as well as artificial-literary names (e.g. זִלְפִּיָּה) and primary place or collective names (e.g. הַקְּבִירִין) are not analyzed.

² Evidence from the post-exilic period is only included in the variant lists.

³ Search criteria are (1) transliteration and (2) part of speech “personal names”, so that in those rare cases where a transliteration includes different vocalizations, such as in *BNY* (בְּנִי vs. בְּנִי), both names appear indiscriminately in the concordance.



I. Biblical-Hebrew names

For each biblical-Hebrew name there are 23 lines:

- Line 1:** Tiberian-Masoretic context form (if unattested, reconstructed and marked with *).
- Line 2:** Tiberian-Masoretic Pausal form, if found and different from the context form.
- Line 3:** Orthographic variants (plene vs. defective spelling, He- vs. Aleph for final \bar{a}), further Qere (Q) vs. Ketib (K).
- Line 4:** Variants regarding the position of the predicate, the type of theophoric element, with verbal forms regarding the form category (prefix conjugation vs. suffix conjugation), also associated full / short and rudimentary forms (cf. [§§0139ff.](#)).
- Line 5:** Samaritan pronunciation (according to Murtonen),⁴ furthermore Masoretic representations beyond the Tiberian tradition (Palestinian, Babylonian I, Babylonian II).⁵
- Line 6:** Syriac representation in dotted Estrangela according to the Mosul edition (MOS: Biblia sacra juxta versionem simplicem quae dicitur Peshitta, vol. 1-2, Mosul 1887f.) With a phonemic transcription,⁶ if different, also the form from the Leiden Peshitta (LP: Peshitta. The Old Testament in Syriac, Leiden 1972ff.). Unless otherwise stated, the first document in the Hebrew canon is recorded.
- Line 7:** Greek rendering: Only the Vaticanus, Sinaiticus and Alexandrinus forms of the Septuagint (abbreviation: G^B, G^S, G^A: Swete, Henry B. (³⁻⁴1907-1912): The Old Testament in Greek according to the Septuagint. 3 Vols., Cambridge), and any representations in the New Testament or in Josephus (Schlatter, Adolph (1913): Die hebräischen Namen bei Josephus, Gütersloh), are separated by an em dash. Unless otherwise stated, the first document in the Hebrew canon is recorded.
- Line 8:** Latin rendering: Vulgata (Weber, Robert; Gryson, Roger (2007): Biblia Sacra. Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem, 5th edition, Stuttgart.) and Vetus Latina (Sabatier, Petrus (1743): Bibliorum sacrorum latinae versiones antiquae.

⁴ Murtonen 1986, XXXII Note 2: "... the length of consonants (or 'gemination') is indicated by repetition of the consonant sign, that of vowels usually by a colon after it, except where it carries the principal accent, when both combined are indicated by the tilde sign on top of it. Principal accent on a short vowel is indicated by the acute accent sign on top of it; any secondary one by gravis likewise, but the latter is used only if there is a special reason for it. "

⁵ Detailed information on the transliteration of the forms in the [appendix](#).

⁶ See in detail the [explanations in the appendix](#).

Bd. 1-2, Reims). Unless otherwise stated, the first document in the Hebrew canon is recorded.⁷

Line 9: Cuneiform representation mainly to APN (Tallqvist 1914 Assyrian Personal Names).

Line 10: Epigraphic evidence in the sense of variants as in [line 4](#) (with regard to the position of the predicate, the theophoric element, in verbal forms with regard to the form category (PK vs. SK), furthermore associated full / short and rudimentary forms), separated by —, further Elephantine forms.

Line 11: Transliteration as in BH¹ texts (capital letters only).

Line 12: Structural transcription⁸ with segmentation, which is made using the following metacharacters:

- (hyphen) in the noun joint, e.g. B. 'ab-nē*r⁹ for אַבְנֵר
- __ (double underscore) in Maqqef or spaces, e.g. Bi[n]:t__šab' for בְּתֵשֶׁבַע
- = (equal sign) before and after proclitics and enclitics, e.g. B__sōd-Yah for בְּסוּדֵיָהּ.
- : (colon) before feminine ending, e.g. Huld:ā for הִלְדָּה
- _ (single underscore) for all other morphemes or components, e.g. Mi_bhar for מִבְּהָר

Line 13: Contains three fields separated by | (horizontal bar):

- (1) Syntactic analysis, for sentence names basically according to nominal sentence vs. verbal sentence¹⁰, for word group names, basically according to the connection type (constructus connection, prepositional connection). This field remains empty for one-word names.
- (2) Structure: Full form, short form, rudimentary form, or one-word name.¹¹
- (3) A note (only for sentence names!) as to whether the predicate is found in first or second position.

⁷ If there are two forms, for example "Abram / Abram", this means that the VL also provides evidence for the name in question.

⁸ The transcription is phonematic-morphematic. It does not seek to reproduce an old Hebrew sound. For the details cf. [Richter's remarks in the introduction to the Genesis volume](#). The transcription with segmentation applied in this field goes one step beyond the usual text transcription in the representation of the underlying phonematic-morphematic structure, e.g. B. Bi[n]:t__šab' vs. bi[t]t in the BH¹ texts or Ha_[w]šī'-Yah vs. hōšī' in Judges 10.13 etc.

⁹ The usual practice when transcribing proper names that begin with Aleph or Ayin, capitalizing the following letter, is not followed in this field for technical reasons, i.e. not 'Ab-nē*r, but 'ab-nē*r.

¹⁰ NS (nominal sentence) and VS (verbal sentence) are further classified using index numbers. For the types of nominal sentences cf. in detail [§§0085ff.](#), on the types of verbal sentences [§§0096ff.](#)

¹¹ One-word name means a primarily one-part form that cannot be understood as the abbreviation product of a multi-part form, cf. on this [§§0059ff.](#), on the short and rudimentary forms cf. [§§0122ff.](#) and [§§0139ff.](#)



Line 14: Formation with details of the grammatical form category and the construction type, e.g. B. יְגַדְלֵי־יְהוָה·*Yi_gdal-Yahū* with the indication G-PK, yi12a3 + GN, ya1U, prefix conjugation of the basic stem (G-PK¹²), construction type ("Bauform") *yiQTaL* plus divine name (GN), construction type *yaQū*. In the representation of the construction type, the basis radicals are given numerically and long vowels are marked with capitalization.¹³

Line 15: Hebrew basis in lowercase letters, e.g. B. יְגַדְלֵי־יְהוָה·*Yi_gdal-Yahū* with the indication *gdl I*¹⁴ + *hwy*.¹⁵

Line 16: Contains two fields separated by | (horizontal bar):

- (1) Semitic root in capital letters, e.g. B. שׁוּעַל *Šū'al* with the indication *T'L* (cf., on the other hand, the corresponding Hebrew base *š'l*).
- (2) Note on the root class of the predicative element, e.g. עַבְדֵי־אֵל *Šūb_a-'il* with the indication II-W/Y-verb for verba mediae infirmae.¹⁶ In the case of two-part sentence-names, the field is only understandable in connection with [line 13, field 3](#), where information is provided about the position of the predicate. In the case of names with constructus connection, the root class relates to the non-theophoric element.

Line 17: Semantics

- In the case of nominal personal names, which usually represent a statement about or a request for the name bearer (NT), the information is preceded by an NT-, e.g. with שׁוּעַל *Šū'al* [NT-Tier] or with עַבְדֵי־אֵל *'abd_ī-'il* [NT-Zugehörigkeit].
- In the case of verbal personal names, which usually represent a statement about the deity, the indication of verbal sentence names is generally based on the formulations in MSSAP, e.g. with יָדָא *Yāda'*-*Yah* [wahrnehmen/antworten] (cf. [§0329](#)). With the nominal sentence names the predications of the deity are classified, e.g. in יֹאב *Yō-'ab* [Verwandtschaft].¹⁷

Line 18: Offers a German "translation" of the name according to certain conventions:

- In verbal sentence names, SK is always given with the perfect tense, PK always with the past tense, except for state verbs (then always present tense, e.g. יְגַדְלֵי־יְהוָה "Great is Yah").
- Subject-predicate sequence is reproduced in the translation. If it is undecidable, the first element is supposed to be the subject (cf. [§§0086ff.](#)).

¹² Cf. the [general abbreviations](#).

¹³ With designs like *'aQTaL* etc. the initial aleph is not shown (i.e. a12a3 etc.).

¹⁴ I, II, III etc. to differentiate homonyms.

¹⁵ The base and root are also given for nominal elements.

¹⁶ Possible entries: Strong verb, I-N-verb, I-W/Y-verb, II-W/Y-verb, III-W/Y-verb, II=III-verb.

¹⁷ See the [compilation of all semantic entries in the appendix](#).

- Theophoric subject appears in a simplified phonation, untranslated and standardized like a proper name (Yah, Il, Ab, Malk etc.; cf. [§0089](#)).
- Linking element /i/ (“Fugen-i”) in nominal sentence names is generally not interpreted as a pronominal suffix of the first person, but as a semantically irrelevant connecting vowel, e.g. for יהוה י"י "Gott ist Yah" (cf. [§§0118-0121](#)).

Line 19: Gender of the bearer of the name ("m" if the name is used only for males, "f" if only for females, "c" if both for males and females).

Line 20: German name form according to the Elberfelder translation (also relevant for the text in other entries, e.g. for the prosopographical information in [line 21](#), e.g. "Diener des Elisa" as a reference for Gehasi), if deviant additionally also the form according to the “Loccumer Richtlinien”.

Line 21: Number of name bearers, number of instances as well as brief prosopographical identification of the respective persons with job details. In uncertain cases, no number appears in front of the name bearer description, but only an X: The name bearer could be identical to the one mentioned before. Character identity with other bearers of names is indicated in brackets.

Line 22: Commentary with discussion and references to relevant paragraphs in MSSAP.

Line 23: Link to WiBiLex (Alkier; Bauks; Koenen (ed.), Das wissenschaftliche Bibellexikon im Internet, 2007ff., <http://www.wibilex.de>), if there is an entry for the name in question.



II. Epigraphic-Hebrew names

For every epigraphic-Hebrew name there are 14 lines in the analysis entry:¹⁸

Line 1: Transliteration with capitalization of the first letter (or, if this is Aleph or Ayin, of the second letter).

Line 2: Comparable Biblical-Hebrew forms (variants corresponding to [line 4](#) above).

Line 3: Epigraphic-Hebrew variants (corresponding to [line 10](#) above).

Line 4 - Line 14: Correspond exactly to lines [9.12-19,21-22](#) above.

Notes on **line 13** (Distribution):

- First, a numerical specification is made in the form: $n_1 + m_1$ documents, $n_2 + m_2$ name carriers; "n" refers to inscriptions in the narrower sense and "m" to seals / bulls.
- Then the name bearers are listed as with the biblical names and the evidence is given,¹⁹ in addition a date that results from the archeological context and / or the palaeography.
- Unreadable letters are in square brackets, difficult or only partially visible letters in half brackets, conjectures in angle brackets; Slash indicates a line break. Dots and dashes as word separators are shown accordingly: • or |
- Gaps are indicated as follows: [.] One letter is missing; [..] some letters are missing; [...] several words are missing.

¹⁸ In contrast to the biblical names, those lines that are masoretic (lines 1–3 and 5) or have to do with Bible translations (lines 6–8 and 20) are of course omitted, as is a link to WiBiLex (line 23).

¹⁹ Primarily by means of HAE (Handbuch der Althebräischen Epigraphik), only in the case of documents that are not yet included in HAE by means of later collective works or individual publications.

Appendix 1 for the transliteration of the Palestinian and Babylonian Masora
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The transliteration is basically the same as in Murtonen (1986, XXXII):

Trans- literation	Pal	Bab I	Bab II
/a/	◌ְ	◌ֶ	◌ֶ
/a ₂ /	◌ֶ		
/ā/	(◌ֶ)	◌ֶ	◌ֶ ₂
/ā ₂ /			◌ֶ
/e/	◌ִ	◌ִ	◌ִ
/e ₂ /	◌ִ		
/i/	◌ִ	◌ִ	◌ִ
/ā/			
/o/	◌ֹ	◌ֹ	◌ֹ
/u/	◌ֻ	◌ֻ	◌ֻ
/u ₂ /	◌ֻ		

Only difference: We write /ā/ instead of /a/, /ā₂/ instead of /a₂/, /a/ instead of /ā/ and /a₂/ instead of /ā₂/.

Note further details, which Murtonen explains in 1986, XXXII note 2:

"Apart from the vowel signs, other punctuation signs are found in Pal, Bab and Tib to express certain additional qualities or states of those consonant or vowel phonemes the signs for which they accompany. Most of such signs occur regularly in the Tib and Bab II systems only, and the express indication of lack of accentuation of certain vowels is unique to the latter. This is usually expressed by a (more or less) horizontal line underneath the respective vowel sign, but an unaccented / ä / is indicated by a totally different sign (without a line underneath) which is therefore included in the list above; In all cases, the indication of non-accentuation is transcribed by a horizontal line underneath the writing line which is placed *after* the vowel referred to due to the inability of the word processor to handle it straight underneath. In the same system, the length (or "gemination") of the *following* consonant is expressed by a horizontal line above the vowel sign: the presence of this is indicated by a plus sign between the respective vowel and consonant signs underneath the writing line (+). The same sign after a consonant indicates the presence of a sign equivalent to Tib Dagesh or Mappiq, in the case of / f /, also its proper pronunciation (where the letter is geminable, distinction is expressly made); for the sign of the pronunciation of this letter as / s / see the list of the consonant signs above (no. 29). The equivalent to Tib Raphe too is indicated by the horizontal line underneath the writing line after the consonant, except for its function as a conraindicator to Tib Mappig in Bab II, where it is formally identical with the Bab equivalent to Tib Shwa and is therefore transcribed the same way, by a point on the upper writing line (·). The presence of evidently quiescent consonants is also indicated by placing the respective transliteration on the upper writing line after the vowel to which it refers (eg, / o^w). "



Appendix 2 to the Peschitta forms

The **transcription of the Syrian forms** is structurally oriented, i.e. not geared towards the actual, for example, Eastern Syrian phonation in a certain historical period, but rather the sound structure (i.e. it is more like G. Bergsträßer, Introduction to the Semitic Languages, Darmstadt ⁴1989, pp. 75ff., as T. Muraoka, Classical Syriac, Wiesbaden 2005, p. 95), in particular:

- Double consonance is assumed where the syllable structure suggests, e.g. B. ܒܢܢܐ *Bannā*, because of the short vowel /a/, which would otherwise be in an open syllable and would be deleted (*vide* e.g. *ʿAbīhēl* etc. and Ungnad, Syrische Grammatik, Munich ²1932, §22a in connection with §7b including note 1).
- The opposition of short vs. long vowels in /i/, /o/ and /u/ are assumed, although not evident in the vocalization (cf. differently Muraoka, p. 6, note 8, and p. 8, note 14). Naturally, a lot remains speculative here with personal names.
- Formations that seem to start with a vowel such as ܐܝܣܪܐܝܠ, are transcribed with Aleph: *ʿĪsrāyēl*.

Notes on **text-critical questions**:

- A missing entry usually means that the Peschitta has a text minus.
- Specifically on the textual criticism of the name evidence in Esra-Nehemia, see C. Balzaretti, *The Syriac Version of Ezra-Nehemia*, Rome 2013, pp. 385–389.
- Critical comments on the personal names in the gradually appearing volumes of the “Syriac Peshitta” published by Gorgias Press will soon be included here.

Appendix 3: Semantic entries in the overview

Nominal personal names:

[NT-Beruf] = [name bearer-occupation]
[NT-Eigenschaft] = [name bearer-quality]
[NT-Geburtsumstände] = [name bearer-birth circumstances]
[NT-Pflanze] = [name bearer-plant]
[NT-Status] = [name bearer-status]
[NT-Tier] = [name bearer-animal]

Verbal personal names:

[erbarmen/lieben] = [pity/love]
[erschaffen/hervorbringen] = [create/produce]
[erscheinen] = [appear]
[ersetzen] = [replace]
[Freundschaft] = [friendship]
[geben] = [give]
[Gott] = [God]
[Güte/Schönheit] = [goodness/beauty]
[heilen/trösten] = [heal/comfort]
[helfen/leiten] = [help/guide]
[helfen/retten] = [help/save]
[herrschen] = [rule]
[Hoheit] = [highness]
[leben] = [live]
[loben/danken] = [praise/thank]
[mitteilen] = [communicate]
[Recht verschaffen/lohn] = [procure justice/reward]
[retten/befreien] = [save/liberate]
[Schutz] = [protection]
[schützen/bewahren] = [protect/preserve]
[segnen/erwählen/erfreuen] = [bless/choose/delight]
[Stärke/Größe] = [strength/size]
[Status] = [status]
[Unvergleichlichkeit] = [incomparability]
[verbergen/schützen] = [hide/protect]
[Vertrauen auf Gott] = [trust in God]
[Verwandschaft] = [relationship]
[wahrnehmen/antworten] = [perceive/answer]