

*yhwh elohim sebaoth*Jer 38.17 "thus says *yhwh elohim sebaoth*, the *elohim* of Israel"

X	(45.17) *lord (only) # #
K	the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel
T	the LORD # Almighty, the God of Israel
L	the *Lord, the God Zebaoth, the God of Israel
G	the *God of Israel, the Lord of the world
S	the Eternal One, the God of the armies, the God of Israel
B	Yahve, the God Sabaoth, the God of Israel
F	the Lord, God of the universe and God of Israel
N	Yave Sebaot, the God of Israel
V	the Lord # Almighty, the God of Israel

X reduces the whole expression to "lord" only; T and V leave out *elohim*; others follow their standard renderings.

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## NOTE ON THE TRANSLATION OF THE DIVINE NAMES IN THE FRANÇAIS COURANT BIBLE

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The Committee responsible for translating the Old Testament in Français Courant only started their formal work of translation after having met together to establish a number of conventions which would apply for the whole of the Old Testament. (We were in Geneva for this preparatory meeting - hence the name "Geneva Conventions" that we gave to them.) With these conventions worked out in advance we were able to avoid having to make numerous changes later in the work for the sake of consistency in the text.

At the start we decided on the translation of proper names, technical terms, stereotyped expressions and so on. And among the proper names (around 2750 altogether) the **divine names** have a prominent place.

The general rule which guided our choice of names was twofold. We wanted on the one hand to find simple solutions consistent with the principles of dynamic equivalence translating, without being different just for the sake of being different. But we wanted also to propose equivalents which would be acceptable to all the religious groups who would use our translation.

So it was that the word *DIEU* ("God"), was chosen to render the Hebrew *'elohim* or *'el*, in spite of its pagan origin and all the ambiguities that it carries with it. Here we just followed regular usage: the common noun *dieu*, "god", has become a proper name.

The true proper name for God, of which we really know only the consonants *YHWH*, has been rendered in various ways by the traditional French versions. Protestant and Jewish translations have *l'Éternel*, "the Eternal". But this seemed to us too impersonal and too coloured by its usage in certain churches. Furthermore it rests on an understanding of its origin which is not universally accepted (from the Hebrew *hayah*, "to be"). On their side the Catholic Bibles have decided for *Yahvé* (with some

differences in spelling between the different versions). However this form, which makes a claim to be scientific, finds hardly any positive response in present religious thinking; and above all it is quite unacceptable to Jewish thinking, which for more than 2000 years has been careful to avoid pronouncing the divine name (see Ex 20.7) and to replace it with what is in effect an equivalent. It is one of the traditional equivalents, adopted already by the *Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible* (TOB, 1975), which was chosen also for the Français Courant Bible (BFC): *le Seigneur* ("The Lord").

The closest Hebrew equivalent of *Seigneur* (or *mon Seigneur*, "my Lord") is the term *'adonai*, and this term is used in the Old Testament at times to refer to God. To distinguish this term from the other name *YHWH*, the BFC has chosen to render it by *le/mon Maître* (in English, literally, "the/my Master").

The double name *YHWH 'adonai* has been translated in BFC by *Seigneur Dieu*, "Lord God", as suggested by the vowels supplied for the reading of the Hebrew text. The same goes for the formula *YHWH 'elohim* which is found in Genesis 2-3.

The form *YHWH seba'oth* presents a double problem. Firstly, for the hearer, the traditional translation *l'Éternel/Yahvé/le Seigneur des armées* can easily be taken in a bad sense: there is nothing, in fact, to prevent the listener from hearing *l'Éternel désarmé*, "the Eternal One disarmed" or "stripped of his power"! Secondly, it raises the question, "What armies does it refer to?" For the person who is not a Biblical specialist this remains obscure, not to say scandalous. Recent research has shown that this term probably designates the whole collection of elemental spirits and powers in heaven and on earth which owe allegiance to the Lord. Thus BFC has decided to use the expression *Seigneur/Dieu de l'univers*, "Lord/God of the Universe". This formula, which has an undeniably liturgical ring, seems to have been favourably received by users.

Some other names which occur less frequently should also be mentioned, for instance *'elyon*, which the traditional versions render by *(le) Très-Haut*, "(the) Most High". BFC has not wanted to produce new renderings at any price. So, after considering in the first discussion the translation *Dieu suprême*, "(the) Supreme God", the Committee was finally content to retain the solution which has been traditional since the Septuagint. However seeing that the name *le Très-Haut*, "the Most High", is hardly ever used alone in the spoken language, it seemed necessary to expand it to *(le) Dieu Très-Haut*, "(the) Most High God".

*Shaddai* has been dealt with in the same way: here again we did not wish to be different for no particular reason. Like the Septuagint, BFC has decided to use a manufactured expression *tout-puissant*, "all powerful", taking care, for the same reasons as in the last case, to expand to *(le) Dieu tout-puissant*, "(the) all powerful God".

Some other less frequent divine names should also not be forgotten, for instance *'el 'olam*, which BFC has rendered by *Dieu éternel*, "(the) Eternal God", and *'el gibbor*, rendered by *(le) Dieu fort*, "(the) mighty God" (see Is 9.6 for example). The title *'abir ya'aqob* (Gen 49.24; Is 1.24; Ps 132.2)

presents a delicate problem. Rather than *le Taureau de Jacob*, “the Bull of Jacob”, or *l’Indomptable de Jacob*, “the Invincible One of Jacob”, solutions proposed by TOB, BFC has decided on the expression *le Dieu fort de Jacob*, “the mighty God of Jacob”.

Although it is not really a divine name, the term *kabod*, “glory”, also serves to designate God at times (Ezek 1.28; 3.12). BFC, relying on recent studies, translates this term by *la glorieuse présence du Seigneur*, “the glorious presence of the Lord”.

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## NAMES AND TITLES OF GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT OF THE GOOD NEWS BIBLE

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This presentation is not intended to be complete. Other titles of God, not dealt with in this article, may be found in Dr Loewen’s article in *The Bible Translator* (pages 201-207) and in the article “God, Names of” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (Volume 2, pages 407-417).

*YHWH* is the personal name of God in the Hebrew Scriptures. This four letter name is usually represented in English by “Jehovah” or “Yahweh”. As explained in its Preface, the Good News Bible follows the tradition of Bibles in English by representing this personal name by the title “the LORD”. The use of (small) capital letters is intended to distinguish the personal name from the title “the Lord”. This violation of dynamic equivalence principles of translation in the GNB is explained, if not justified, by long tradition and by its almost universal usage in Bibles in English (including Jewish and Catholic translations). Moffatt, in imitation of the French, translated “the Eternal”, and the English version of *La Bible de Jérusalem* has “Yahweh”. *YHWH* is a personal name; “LORD” is a title used only of God. To say, in English, “The LORD is God” (1 Kg 18.39) is to state the obvious: of course the LORD is God—by definition that is what the LORD is, the one and only sovereign creator and ruler of the universe and of all living creatures. But to say “*YHWH* is God” is to claim that the god worshiped by the Hebrews is the one and only God. A faithful application of dynamic equivalence principles would require a proper name, and not a title, as a translation of *YHWH*.

*’el/’elohim* is the generic word “god/gods”. As used in the Hebrew Old Testament, *’el* may mean “god” or “God”; and *’elohim* may mean “gods, divine beings, God.” In Ps 8.5, “You made the human being lower than *’elohim*” may mean “...lower than God” or “...lower than the gods”, probably the latter.

*’adon/’adonai* is a title, “lord/my lord” applied to human beings as well as to God. When used of God it is spelled with an initial capital letter, “(the) Lord”.

These three terms are variously combined: *YHWH ’elohim* is translated