

# YHVH SABAOOTH



LORD OF HOSTS OR LORD OF ARMIES

One of the most encompassing of all the Names of God - **YHVH Sabaoth**.

## **YHVH is God's personal Name.**

By pairing **YHVH** with the Hebrew word **Sabaoth**, we get a title that is often translated as **LORD of Hosts** or **LORD of Armies**. But those titles are so limiting in contrast to the true significance of this Name.

## **What is Sabaoth?**

Sabaoth is the feminine form of the Hebrew word “*tsaba*”, which means **army, war** or **warfare**.

In fact, the Israeli military calls itself **Tzva Haganah Le'Yisrael** (literally, Israel Defense Army).

Yet, **tsaba** is often used in the Hebrew Scriptures not to refer to a military army but a “**vast array**” or “**host**” of resources available to the infinite God of the Universe.

The first time we see the word **tsaba** is in the completion of Creation.

**Genesis 2:1** “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts (*seba'am*).”

Here and in other Scriptures, **the masculine form of *tsaba*** refers to **the entire universe and all of God's perfect creation on earth**. He made it. He is Lord over all of it: lightning and wind, sun and moon, man and woman, animals and plants. Everything!

Now, imagine the result when we combine ***tsaba*** with the personal Name of God, **YHVH** - we get a Name that gives us a glimpse into how marvelously Almighty and all powerful He truly is.

Let's look at God's majesty through His Name and title: **YHVH Sabaoth**.

## **The God of Infinite Resources**

**Psalms 80:19** “Restore us, O YHVH Elohim Sabaoth (O LORD God Sabaoth)! Let Your Face shine, that we may be saved!”

The Name YHVH Sabaoth is used 235 times in the Bible.

We first see it in a desperate prayer by a barren woman opening her heart before God and begging for a child. **She pleads with YHVH Sabaoth out of anguish and great anxiety, calling upon a God of greatness and supreme power.**

**1 Samuel 1:11, 16** Hannah prays, “O LORD of hosts (YHVH Sabaoth), if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your servant and remember me and not forget Your servant, but will give to Your servant a son, ...for all along I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation.”

Hannah is facing one of those monumental obstacles in life that is beyond her power to overcome. She is filled with unspeakable despair, which threatens to overcome her.

This story of Hannah's prayer is all the more meaningful when we consider the surrounding cultures of her time.

Gentile peoples throughout the Middle East had specific gods, or names of gods, for specific requests: a fertility god for pregnancy, a war god for military conquests, or a god of harvest for agricultural needs, for example.



Armetis, the goddess of fertility and childbirth (notice the eggs adorning her body, which are pagan fertility symbols). (*Ephesus Archaeological Museum*)

Whether or not Hannah knew of these gods, she calls out to the One True God as **YHVH Sabaoth** for her fertility request.

Hannah does not need an army or a military victory.

**She needs the Comforter** who soothes her tormented soul.

**She needs a God who defends her and will remove her shame** in the community because she is barren. At that time, not having children was a sign of being cursed or a sinner.

**She needs the Creator** who established the universe and brings life into being.

**She needs an enormous Savior** for a predicament humanly insurmountable.

She found all of this in YHVH Sabaoth at the birth of her son Samuel.

## **There Is Power in the Name and Authority of YHVH Sabaoth.**

While YHVH Sabaoth can be seen as an intimate God who is with us in the details of our human experience (like Hannah in her plight of barrenness), **He is also a Warrior God who commands armies on behalf of His People.**

Imagine someone trying to fight against God! Yet, someone did ... Goliath of the Philistine army.

*"I defy the armies (maarakah) of Israel," said Goliath with weapons in hand, ready for tsaba (warfare).*

**1 Samuel 17:10, 45** *David responds, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the Name of the LORD of Hosts—YHVH Sabaoth—the God of the armies (maarakah) of Israel, whom you have defied."*

While Goliath openly defies the greatness of Israel's armies, David reminds him that **he is coming in the Name of the God of Israel's armies**; and in doing so, the will of God to defeat the giant Goliath is accomplished.

## **Holiness in the Presence of YHVH Sabaoth.**

In the face of such greatness is holiness, unlike any king or military commander on earth can ever expect to possess.

Moses appointed Joshua to lead the Israelites across the Jordan River and possess the Promised Land. Just before taking Jericho, a man appeared to him. Joshua asks this man, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

**Joshua 5:13–14** *"He replies with his sword drawn that he is "commander (sar) of the army (tsaba) of the Lord."*

This man is clearly the chief leader of a military unit of power under the authority of YHVH.

**Joshua 5:15** *"And with such greatness, he commands Joshua, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy."*

Holiness envelops God's presence. In Heaven, for instance, the seraphim who surround our King on His Throne are consumed with His holiness, proclaiming,

**Isaiah 6:3** *"Holy, holy, holy is YHVH Sabaoth; the whole earth is full of His glory."*

**We are to keep His holiness at the forefront of our thoughts.**

Too often, we judge how good or holy we are based on the “bad behavior” of those around us.

When we take our eyes off of YHVH Sabaoth, we forget that **He is sitting on His Throne in Heaven as the true Standard Bearer**, and we are to live our lives according to what He considers to be good behavior.

As we look at the holiness of YHVH Sabaoth, we cannot help but be consumed with the reality of how much we fall short of His standards.

***Isaiah 6:5*** ‘Like Isaiah, we might cry out, **“Woe to me! ... I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, YHVH Sabaoth.”**

When YHVH sees a heart sincerely humbled before Him, seeking to return to His standards, He removes our guilt and commissions us to move forward in His service.

In Isaiah’s case, one of the seraphim (angels) touched his lips with a live hot coal and said, “Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”

Then the Lord said, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”

***Isaiah 6:6*** Isaiah responded, “Here am I. Send me!”

The Master of the Universe is still looking for humbled people who will answer the call to do His Kingdom work according to Kingdom principles that are assigned by YHVH Sabaoth Himself.

***James 1:17*** “Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above.”

## How do we respond to His call?

- ❖ **Like Hannah**, we are to pray. He will answer according to His Will.
- ❖ **Like David**, we are to call upon His authority against enemies of His Kingdom.
- ❖ **Like Joshua**, we are to acknowledge and show respect for His holiness.
- ❖ **And like Isaiah**, we are to go into our workplaces, communities, and families as humbled, forgiven ambassadors of YHVH Sabaoth, spreading the Good News of the Kingdom of God—first to the Jew and then the Gentile.

***Isaiah 52:7*** ‘How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, “Your God reigns!”