

Person	Original Name	New Name	Meaning & Significance	Initiated By
Abram	Abram – “Exalted father”	Abraham – “Father of many”	God changed Abram’s name to confirm His promise to make him father of a multitude. The new name declared Abraham’s calling as patriarch of many nations.	God (Genesis 17:5)
Sarai	Sarai – “My princess”	Sarah – “Princess”	God changed Sarai’s name when announcing Isaac’s birth. Sarah signifies a princess to all people, not just one family. This affirmed her role as the mother of nations and that kings would come from her.	God (Genesis 17:15)
Jacob	Jacob – “Supplanter/h eel-grabber”	Israel – “He struggles with God”	After Jacob wrestled with God, God renamed him Israel. This marked Jacob’s transformation from a deceiver to one who prevails with God. The name Israel, containing God’s name (El), bestowed a new spiritual identity as the ancestor of God’s people.	God (Genesis 32:28)
Hoshea (Joshua)	Hoshea – “Salvation”	Joshua – “Yahweh is salvation”	Moses renamed Hoshea, son of Nun, to Joshua (Yehoshua) before sending him to scout Canaan. By adding God’s name (“Yah”), Joshua’s name meant “the LORD saves,” foreshadowing that God would save Israel through his leadership. (Joshua indeed led the conquest and was a precursor of Yeshua/Jesus.)	Moses (Num. 13:16) – by divine direction
Gideon	Gideon – (meaning “Hewer” or warrior)	Jerubbaal – “Let Baal contend”	After Gideon destroyed his town’s Baal altar, the people nicknamed him Jerubbaal, saying, “Let Baal contend against him” (Judges 6:32). The name mocked the powerless idol. It signified Gideon’s new identity as the challenger of Baal, champion of the Lord. (Scripture later prefers Jerubbesheth to avoid saying Baal.)	Israelites (Judges 6:32)
Naomi	Naomi – “Pleasant”	Mara – “Bitter”	In grief, Naomi renames herself Mara. This human-initiated change reflected her felt destiny of bitterness after tragic loss. Theologically, it shows how experiences can cloud one’s identity, though by the end of Ruth, Naomi’s joy and “pleasantness” are restored, suggesting Mara was temporary.	Naomi (self) (Ruth 1:20)
Ben-Oni/B enjamin	Ben-Oni – “Son of my sorrow”	Benjamin – “Son of the right hand” (or south)	Dying in childbirth, Rachel named her baby Ben-Oni (“son of my sorrow”). But Jacob renamed him Benjamin, often understood as “son of the right hand,” denoting a favored son or strength. Jacob refused to let the child bear a destiny of sorrow; instead, he spoke blessing and honor over him with the name Benjamin.	Jacob (Genesis 35:18)
Solomon	Solomon – “Peaceful”	Jedidiah – “Beloved of the LORD”	At Solomon’s birth, God, through Nathan, gave him the special name Jedidiah, meaning “beloved of Yahweh.” This indicated divine love and favor. While Solomon’s common name described his peaceful reign, Jedidiah was a sign of God’s gracious choice of him (despite the messy circumstances of his parents’ sin). It was God’s way of claiming the child for His purposes.	God (2 Samuel 12:25)
Daniel	Daniel – “God is my judge”	Belteshaz zar – “Bel, protect the king”	When exiled to Babylon, Daniel and his friends received foreign names (Daniel 1:7). Daniel’s Babylonian name Belteshazzar invoked the god Bel (“protect the king”). This was an attempt by King Nebuchadnezzar to redefine Daniel’s identity and loyalty toward Babylon’s gods. Yet Daniel remained true to his Hebrew name and faith. (Notably, Scripture continues to call him Daniel as a sign that his true identity—“God is my judge”—remained intact.)	Babylonian king/official (Dan. 1:7)
Hananiah	Hananiah – “Yahweh is gracious”	Shadrach – (“Command of Aku”)	Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah—Daniel’s friends—were renamed Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego after Babylonian gods. Shadrach likely means “command of Aku” (moon god). These new names tried to overwrite their identity as servants of Yahweh. Theologically, this shows the pressure of a pagan culture to assimilate God’s people by renaming them. (Yet in the fiery furnace story, it’s clear that their true God prevails despite the name change.)	Babylonian official (Dan. 1:7)
Mishael	Mishael – “Who is like God?”	Meshach – (“Who is like Aku?”)	Mishael’s name honored the uniqueness of Israel’s God (“Who is like El?”). His new name, Meshach, possibly twists that to “Who is like Aku?”—a Babylonian deity—again aiming to shift his allegiance.	Babylonian official
Azariah	Azariah – “Yahweh has helped”	Abednego – “Servant of Nebo”	Azariah’s God-honoring name was changed to Abednego, meaning “servant of Nebo” (a Babylonian god). Despite the name, Azariah (Abednego) refused to serve Nebo, famously declaring God’s ability to save him from the furnace. His story reveals that a divine identity can withstand a worldly label.	Babylonian official
Eliakim	Eliakim – “God will establish”	Jehoiakim – “Yahweh raises up”	Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, upon placing Eliakim on Judah’s throne, renamed him Jehoiakim (adding “Yahweh” to his name). This might seem odd for a pagan king to invoke Yahweh; perhaps it was to legitimize Eliakim’s rule in the eyes of the Jews. More likely, it was simply an assertion of Pharaoh’s authority to rename vassals (a common practice of conquerors). In any case, the name Jehoiakim (“the LORD establishes”) tragically did not guarantee righteousness —Jehoiakim proved to be an evil king.	Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:34)
Mattaniah	Mattaniah – “Gift of Yahweh”	Zedekiah – “Yahweh is righteous”	When Babylon’s King Nebuchadnezzar installed Mattaniah as a puppet king in Judah, he changed his name to Zedekiah. The new name, meaning “Yah is my righteousness,” may have been politically motivated. It signaled Nebuchadnezzar’s dominance (since renaming was an act of mastery). Sadly, Zedekiah did not live up to the pious meaning of his name; he rebelled and was overthrown. This renaming shows how foreign rulers asserted control through naming, even if the spiritual meaning was lost in practice.	King Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:17)
Joseph	Joseph – “He adds” (God shall add)	Zaphenath-Paneah – (uncertain, possibly “God speaks and lives”)	After interpreting Pharaoh’s dreams, Joseph was given an Egyptian name, Zaphenath-Paneah, upon his promotion (Genesis 41:45). The exact meaning is debated, but a plausible Egyptian rendering is “the god speaks and he lives,” or, by Jewish tradition, “revealer of secrets.” Either way, it reflected Joseph’s new status as a royal vizier. Like other foreign renamings, this showed Joseph’s integration into Egyptian life. Yet, notably, scripture continues calling him Joseph, signifying that his God-given identity remained, even as he operated in a Gentile world.	Pharaoh (Genesis 41:45)
Hadassah	Hadassah – “Myrtle”	Esther – (from Persian Ishtar or “star”)	The Jewish girl Hadassah, in exile, was known by her Persian name Esther when she became queen of Persia (Esther 2:7). Esther likely comes from the name of the goddess Ishtar or means “star.” This dual naming isn’t portrayed as a divine act, but was part of hiding her Jewish identity in a foreign palace. Only later does Queen Esther reveal her true heritage. Her two names highlight living in two worlds: the Hebrew Hadassah connecting her to God’s people, and Esther reflecting the Persian culture.	Self/Mordecai (Persian custom)