

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Allelujah/Alleluia

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تَرْجِعُ كَلِمَةُ «هَلِّلُؤْيَا» إِلَى الْعِبَارَةِ الْعِبْرِيَّةِ «هَلَلُوا يَاه» (הַלְלוּ-יָה), الَّتِي تَعْنِي حَرْفِيًّا «سَبِّحُوا يَاه». وَقَدْ حُفِظَتْ نُونُ تَرْجَمَةٍ فِي طُقُوسٍ كَنَسِيَّةٍ مُخْتَلِفَةٍ، بِمَا فِي ذَلِكَ طُقُسُ الْكَنِيسَةِ الْقُبطِيَّةِ، لِأَكْثَرِ مِنْ 3000 عَامٍ، تَوْقِيرًا لِمَعْنَاهَا، عَلَى نَحْوِ مُمَاطِلٍ لِاسْتِخْدَامِ كَلِمَةِ «أَمِينَ».

وَبَعْضُ النَّظَرِ عَنِ الطَّقْسِ، تُرْتَلُّ «هَلِّلُؤْيَا» قَبْلَ الْمَزْمُورِ. وَفِي الطَّقْسِ الْقُبطِيِّ، تُرْتَلُّ قَبْلَ الْمَزْمُورِ وَبَعْدَهُ أَثْنَاءَ الْقُدَّاسِ الْإِلَهِيِّ. وَعِلَاقَةُ عَلَى ذَلِكَ، تُرْتَلُّ «هَلِّلُؤْيَا» أَكْثَرَ مِنْ 40 مَرَّةً خِلَالِ الصَّلَوَاتِ الْمُخْتَلِفَةِ الَّتِي تَسْبِقُ لِيُتَوَرَّجَ السَّرَّ، بِمَا فِي ذَلِكَ رَفْعُ بُخُورٍ عَشِيَّةً وَبَاكِرَ، وَصَلَاةُ الْعُرُوبِ، وَتَسْبِيحَةُ نِصْفِ اللَّيْلِ.

لِذَا يَنْبَغِي عَلَيَّ كُلِّ مَنْ يُرْتَلُّ «هَلِّلُؤْيَا» أَنْ يَتَذَكَّرَ دَائِمًا مَعْنَاهَا. فَمَعَ أَنَّهَا دَعْوَةٌ لِلْخَلِيقَةِ كُلِّهَا لِتُسَبِّحَ اللَّهَ، فَإِنَّ الْكَلِمَةَ نَفْسَهَا تَحْمِلُ اسْمَ اللَّهِ الْقُدُّوسِ، وَلَيْسَتْ مَجْرَدَ تَعْبِيرٍ عَنِ التَّسْبِيحِ. وَلِذَلِكَ يَنْبَغِي دَائِمًا أَنْ نُعْلَنَ بِكُلِّ وَقَارٍ عَظِيمٍ.

Dutch: Het woord **Alleluja** stamt af van de Hebreeuwse zin “**Hallelu Jah**” (הַלְלוּ-יָה), wat letterlijk “**Loof Yah**” betekent. Uit eerbied voor de betekenis is het meer dan 3000 jaar in verscheidene tradities onvertaald behouden—inclusief de Koptische Kerk—op een soortgelijke wijze als het gebruik van het woord **Amen**.

Alleluja wordt los van traditie vooraf aan de Psalm gezongen. In de Koptische traditie wordt het zowel vóór als na de Psalm gezongen tijdens de Heilige Liturgie. Daarnaast wordt Alleluja meer dan 40 keer gezongen tijdens de verscheidene diensten die voorafgaan aan de Liturgie van het Sacrament, inclusief het Avond- en Ochtendwierookgebed, Vespers en de Middernachtelijke Lofzangen.

Iedereen die **Alleluja** zingt moet altijd de betekenis ervan herinneren. Hoewel het een roeping is aan alle scheppingen om God te loven, draagt het woord zelf de heilige naam van God en is het niet slechts een expressie van lof. Het moet derhalve altijd met grote verering verkondigd worden.

English: The word **Alleluia** originates from the Hebrew phrase “**Hallelu Jah**” (הַלְלוּ-יָה), which literally means “**Praise Yah**.” It has been preserved untranslated across various traditions, including the Coptic Church, for over 3,000 years out of reverence for its meaning, in a manner similar to the use of the word **Amen**.

Regardless of tradition, **Alleluia** is chanted before the Psalm. In the Coptic tradition, it is chanted both before and after the Psalm during the Holy Liturgy. Furthermore, **Alleluia** is sung more than 40 times during the various services that precede the Liturgy of the Sacrament, including the Evening and Morning Raising of Incense, Vespers, and the Midnight Praises.

Anyone who chants **Alleluia** should always remember its meaning. While it is a call for all creation to praise God, the word itself bears God’s holy name rather than being merely an expression of praise. Therefore, it should always be proclaimed with great reverence.

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French: Le mot « **Alléluia** » tire son origine de l'expression hébraïque « Hallelu Jah » (הללו יה), qui signifie littéralement « Louez Yah ». Par respect pour sa signification, il a été conservé sans traduction au sein de diverses traditions—notamment l'Église Copte—depuis plus de 3 000 ans, à l'instar du mot « **Amen** ».

Quelle que soit la tradition, l'**Alléluia** est chanté avant le Psaume. Dans la tradition copte, il est chanté aussi bien avant qu'après le Psaume au cours de la Sainte Liturgie. Par ailleurs, l'**Alléluia** est entonné plus de quarante fois durant les différents offices précédant la Liturgie du Sacrement, tels que l'offrande de l'encens du soir et du matin, les vêpres et les louanges de minuit.

Quiconque chante l'**Alléluia** doit toujours en garder à l'esprit la signification. Bien qu'il s'agisse d'un appel adressé à toute la création pour louer Dieu, le mot lui-même porte le Saint Nom de Dieu, plutôt que d'être une simple expression de louange ; il convient donc de le proclamer toujours avec une profonde révérence.

German: Das Wort Alleluia stammt aus der hebräischen Wendung „Hallelu Jah“ (הללו יה), die wörtlich „Lobt Jah“ bedeutet. Aus Ehrfurcht vor seiner Bedeutung wurde es in verschiedenen Traditionen, darunter auch in der koptischen Kirche, seit über 3.000 Jahren unverändert und unübersetzt bewahrt—ähnlich wie die Verwendung des Wortes Amen.

Unabhängig von der jeweiligen Tradition wird Alleluia vor dem Psalm gesungen. In der koptischen Tradition wird es sowohl vor als auch nach dem Psalm während der Heiligen Liturgie gesungen. Darüber hinaus erklingt Alleluia mehr als 40 Mal während der verschiedenen Gottesdienste, die der Liturgie des Sakraments vorausgehen, darunter die Abend- und Morgenräucherungen, die Vesper und die Mitternachtslobpreisungen.

Jeder, der Alleluia singt, sollte sich stets seiner Bedeutung bewusst sein. Es ist nicht nur ein Ruf, mit dem die gesamte Schöpfung dazu aufgefordert wird, Gott zu preisen, sondern das Wort selbst trägt den heiligen Namen Gottes und ist daher weit mehr als lediglich ein Ausdruck des Lobpreises. Deshalb sollte es immer mit großer Ehrfurcht ausgesprochen und gesungen werden.

Greek: Η λέξη «**Ἀλληλούϊα**» προέρχεται από την εβραϊκή φράση «Hallelu Jah» (הללו יה), η οποία σημαίνει κυριολεκτικά «Αινείτε τον Γιαχ (Γιαχβέ)». Από σεβασμό προς το βαθύ θεολογικό της νόημα, η λέξη έχει διατηρηθεί αμετάφραστη επί περισσότερα από 3.000 χρόνια σε διάφορες χριστιανικές παραδόσεις, μεταξύ των οποίων και η Κοπτική Εκκλησία, κατά τρόπο ανάλογο με τη χρήση της λέξεως «**Ἀμήν**».

Ανεξαρτήτως λειτουργικής παραδόσεως, το «**Ἀλληλούϊα**» ψάλλεται πριν από τον Ψαλμό. Στην κοπτική παράδοση ψάλλεται τόσο πριν όσο και μετά τον Ψαλμό κατά τη διάρκεια της Θείας Λειτουργίας. Επιπλέον, το «**Ἀλληλούϊα**» ακούγεται περισσότερες από σαράντα φορές στις διάφορες ακολουθίες που προηγούνται της Θείας Λειτουργίας του Μυστηρίου, όπως στον Εσπερινό, στον Όρθρο, στην Ακολουθία του Θυμιάματος και στις Μεσονύκτιες Δοξολογίες.

Όποιος ψάλλει το «**Ἀλληλούϊα**» οφείλει πάντοτε να έχει κατά νου το αληθινό του νόημα. Παρότι αποτελεί πρόσκληση προς ολόκληρη την κτίση να δοξολογήσει τον Θεό, η ίδια η λέξη εμπεριέχει το Άγιο Όνομα του Θεού και δεν αποτελεί απλώς μία έκφραση δοξολογίας. Για τον λόγο αυτό, πρέπει πάντοτε να εκφωνείται και να ψάλλεται με βαθύ σεβασμό και ευλάβεια.

Swedish: Ordet Alleluia har sitt ursprung i den hebreiska frasen ”**Hallelu Jah**” (הללו יה), som bokstavligen betyder ”**Prisa Jah.**” Det har bevarats översatt inom olika traditioner, däribland den koptiska kyrkan, i över 3 000 år av vördnad för dess innebörd, på ett sätt som liknar bruket av ordet **Amen**.

Oavsett tradition sjungs **Alleluia** före psalmen. I den koptiska traditionen sjungs det både före och efter psalmen under den heliga liturgin. Dessutom sjungs Alleluia mer än 40 gånger under de olika gudstjänster som föregår sakramentets liturgi, däribland kvällens och morgonens rökelseoffer, vespern och midnattslovsången.

Den som sjunger **Alleluia** bör alltid komma ihåg dess innebörd. Även om det är en uppmaning till hela skapelsen att prisa Gud, bär själva ordet Guds heliga namn och är inte enbart ett uttryck för lovprisning. Därför bör det alltid förkunnas med stor vördnad.

Italian: La parola Alleluia deriva dall'espressione ebraica "Hallelu Jah" (הללו יה), che significa letteralmente "Lodate Jah." È stata conservata senza essere tradotta in diverse tradizioni, compresa quella della Chiesa Copta, per oltre 3.000 anni, per riverenza del suo significato, in modo simile all'uso della parola Amen.

Indipendentemente dalla tradizione, l'Alleluia viene cantato prima del Salmo. Nella tradizione copta, viene cantato sia prima che dopo il Salmo durante la Santa Liturgia. Inoltre, l'Alleluia viene cantato più di 40 volte durante i diversi servizi che precedono la Liturgia dei Sacramenti, tra cui l'Innalzamento serale e mattutino dell'incenso, i Vespri e le Lodi di mezzanotte.

Chiunque canti l'Alleluia dovrebbe ricordarne sempre il significato. Sebbene sia un invito rivolto a tutta la creazione a lodare Dio, la parola stessa contiene il santo nome di Dio, e non è semplicemente un'espressione di lode. Per questo motivo, dovrebbe essere sempre proclamata con grande riverenza.

The word **Allelujah** originates from the Hebrew phrase "**Hallelu Jah**" (הללו יה), which literally means "**Praise Yah.**" "Yah" is a shortened form of the divine name of God (YHWH). **Hallelujah** is commonly simplified to "**Alleluia**" and is used for the meaning of "**Praise the Lord.**" This is clearly seen in the Greek word ἀλληλοῦῖα, which dropped the H, probably because this sound does not exist in the Greek alphabet, while the Arabic word هليلويا kept the H because this sound is available in Arabic and even it kept the double ل—even though it's not frequent to double the letters in Arabic. The Coptic word allylouia followed the Greek pronunciation (without H) even though the Demotic letter hori 𐪨 could have been used to render the H (hallylouia). **Hallelujah** is considered one of the oldest expressions of praise in religious history. It has been used for over 3000 years in Jewish worship and also in Christian worship, aiming at giving God the due glory and thanksgiving.

The word **Hallelujah** first appears in the Bible, in Psalm 104:35 "May sinners be consumed from the earth, and the wicked be no more. Bless the LORD, O my soul! **Hallelujah.**" The word **Hallelujah** appears 24 times in the Book of Psalms, in Psalms 106, 111, 112, 113, 135, 146, 147, 148, 149, and 150. These Psalms were sung during temple worship and religious festivals in ancient Israel. **Hallelujah** also appears 4 times in the New Testament, in the Book of Revelation.

The Jewish tradition: **Hallelujah** is recited daily, particularly as part of Psalms 146–150. Hallel is considered a celebratory prayer of praise, Psalms 113–118, with traditional chants in the three major Jewish festivals, Passover, Sukkot, and Hanukkah [1]. Because "**Yah**" is a name of God, observant Jews will typically only say the word within the context of prayer or reading from the Torah.

The Christian tradition: As Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, early Christians adopted the Hebrew word **Hallelujah** without translating it [2]. The Greek New Testament preserves the word as "**Alleluia,**" particularly in the Book of Revelation, 19:1–6, where heavenly beings sing praises to God after His victory over evil. Because of its sacred significance, the word became a central part of Christian worship, especially during celebrations of the Feasts of the Lord.

The word **Hallelujah** has been used in the Coptic church from, as early as the first century. Although the earliest liturgy was based solely on the "Institutional prayers" and parts of the prophecies, Psalms ending with **Hallelujah** were added later on, and

the congregation were encouraged to chant them [3]. This structure of worship service was based on St Paul's epistles:

"When you come together, each one has a hymn (Psalm), a lesson, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up." 1 Cor 14:26. And "As you sing uttering psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts." Eph 5:19

By the beginning of the third century, Christian musical life seemed to have developed. A significant emphasis was put on structuring the use of singing the psalms in daily prayers and ending them with **"Hallelujah"**. This pattern of worship was not only found in Egypt but in Christian communities around the Mediterranean region [4]. During the Middle Ages, **"Hallelujah"** became an important element of Christian liturgy. In the Western Church, it was traditionally omitted during the season of Lent as a sign of repentance and anticipation, returning triumphantly at Easter to celebrate Christ's resurrection [5]. In contrast, the Eastern Orthodox Churches, including the Coptic Church, kept the practice of chanting the **"Hallelujah"** as a feature of worship throughout the year, emphasizing continuous praise of God.

Throughout history, music composers have incorporated **"Hallelujah"** into some of the world's most celebrated sacred music. Gregorian chants, Renaissance motets, classical masses, and modern hymns, all feature the word prominently. Perhaps the most famous musical setting is the **"Hallelujah Chorus"** from George Frideric Handel's *Messiah* (1741), which has become one of the best-known pieces of choral music in the world and remains part of Christmas and Easter celebrations in the West. Likewise, other musicians from different cultures, Syriac, Byzantine, Coptic and Slavonic have excelled in composing many pieces of **Hallelujah** that serve several church celebrations [6].

Hallelujah in the Coptic Tradition today: The term **Hallelujah** occupies a central place in almost all liturgical worship in the Coptic church. There is no service that does not have the word **Hallelujah** either before/after a chanted Psalm or at the end of the prayer. Even in the hourly prayers, the worshiper starts by saying **Πῶς καὶ νῦν Ἀλληλουία**—epchoice nai nan **Hallelujah** (God have mercy Alleluia). Counting the number of **Hallelujah** chanted by the worshiper, the congregation and the priest during one day structured service that includes vespers, matins, the liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Sacrament exceeds 40 times. Those **Hallelujahs** can be classified into melesmatic, that is, long hymns, for example Ally midnight praises, Ally Psalm 118, which is chanted at the beginning of the pre-vespers praises, Ally Al Korban and Ally Psalm 150 at the time of Holy Communion. It should be mentioned that the **Hallelujah** chanted at the time of distributing the Holy Communion has 5 different tunes, according to the feast or season being celebrated: Annual, Kiahk, Lenten, Shaaneen or Festive. The responsorial **Hallelujahs** are either very short syllabic chants or a neumatic chant which is performed with elaborate tunes. Examples of the syllabic **Hallelujah** are Psalm and Gospel responses, and an example of the neumatic **Hallelujah** is that chanted at the end of Psalm 118, during the offertory part of the liturgy. Another feature of the word **Hallelujah** in Coptic worship is that they either precede or follow the phrase "God" or the "Holy Trinity." In that discipline, **Hallelujah** aims at calling the whole congregation as well as all creation to praise God **"Yah"** "Let everything that has breath praise the name of the Lord, **Hallelujah."** The same principle applies to two other **Hallelujah** chanted during the Paskha Week; at the end of Psalm **Πεκθρονος Φνωϣ**—Pekethronos Efnouty (Your Throne O God) and at the beginning of Psalm 151 **Ἀνοκ πὲ πικουγι**—Anok pe pikougi (I am the Young). The only exception for this rule is Psalm 55:21 "The

words of his mouth were smoother than butter” chanted during the Paskha week, an observation that needs further studies.

Conclusion

The history of **Hallelujah** spans more than three thousand years, beginning in ancient Hebrew worship and continuing through Jewish tradition, early Christianity, medieval liturgy, and modern worship around the world. Its enduring presence reflects the timeless and powerful believers’ attitude towards gratitude, and thanksgiving, in particular by calling the whole world to share them praising God. Its power stems from the mention of God’s name “Yah” rather than simply His title, that creates an atmosphere of personal relationship and reverence. The Coptic church honours the phrase **Hallelujah** in a big way. It constitutes part of all services and praises. In liturgical services, **Hallelujah** is chanted with a short melody to invite the entire congregation and encourage them, irrespective of their musical skills, to take part in praising the Lord. During midnight praises, particularly in monasteries, **Hallelujah** is chanted using the long melismatic melodies that create a meditative atmosphere suitable for the monastic life for monks and nuns. Having explained the detailed meaning of **Hallelujah**, uttering it in prayer, irrespective of the place we are in, deserves bowing our heads in reverence for “Jah” in a way similar to when mentioning His feature “Holy.”

References

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