

## DO YOU PRONOUNCE THE NAME

# YAHWEH OR JEHOVAH?

*Controversy rages as to the correct pronunciation of the name of the Creator. Can we prove which is correct? Or at least get to the closest form?*

The most accepted and traditional pronunciation of the name of the Heavenly Father is “Jehovah.” But is that the proper and correct way to pronounce His name and does it matter?

Let’s take the last question first. How many of us have had our own name misspelled or mispronounced? I know that I have many, many times. People get very technical and touchy over the correct pronunciation of their names. I must admit that it gets to be aggravating when people misspell my name or mispronounce it. How about you?

Does it matter when a check is written or a deed to some type of property (e.g. house, car, etc.) whether the name is correct or not? If the name appears incorrectly on such items then you must first sign it incorrectly and then sign your proper name or initial it.

The point is that it is very important to us and to the system of legality that people get our names correct. If it is so important to us, then what about the name of the most important Being in existence? What about the name of our Great Creator? Shouldn’t His name be very important not only to Him, but also to us? Once we think of it in these terms, doesn’t it go without saying that His name is very important?

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* has this to say about the significance of names in the Scriptures, “In many places throughout the OT *šem* (Hebrew for name) serves no greater purpose than to identify some person, place, or thing, and to distinguish this one from other persons, places, or things. But it would be quite incorrect to say that in the OT a name was just an identity tag and no more. There, as in other ancient literature, the name of a person most of the time revealed his character, his personality, even his destiny. In fact, a person’s name was often considered to be but an expression, indeed a revelation, of his true nature, as the many popular etymological explanations of names given to people in the OT makes clear.

Because a person’s name is so closely related to what he is, *šem* comes also to mean ‘fame,’ ‘renown,’ ‘reputation.’ For one’s reputation, the name one makes for oneself, is but an extension of what that person is.” (Vol. 3, p. 481.)

If names were important to people, places and things, then the name of the Creator had to have much more intrinsic value and importance.

## WHENCE COMES JEHOVAH?

*The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Heb-rew-English Lexicon* has this to say about the name Jehovah, “The pronunciation *Jehovah* was **unknown** until 1520, when it was introduced by Galatinus; but it was contested by Le Mercier, J. Drusius, and L. Capellus, as against grammatical and historical propriety.” (p. 218.)

Professor Anson F. Rainey of Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel, says, “The Anglicized form, Jehovah, is a ‘**ghost word**’ based on four consonants YHWH, with the vowels of another word, *adonai*, meaning, ‘my Lord.’ The Hebrew scribes of the Middle Ages put those vowels in to remind the reader to say *adonai* rather than pronounce the sacred Name. But in the first syllable, they nevertheless put in an *e* rather than an *a* so as not to cause anyone to see the syllable *ya-* and inadvertently blurt out the sacred Name!” (*Biblical*

*Archeology Review*, 1985).

“The English form ‘Jehovah’ arose by a latinized combination of the four consonants (YHWH) with the vowel points that the Masoretes used to show that they meant the reader to say ‘Adonai’ when reading the tetragrammaton. That is, they left the consonants for ‘Yahweh’ in the text but put with them the vowels for ‘Adonai’ — *a, o, a*. Though the older English versions sometimes used this **hybrid form** with compound names (such as ‘Jehovah-Jireh’ [Gen. 22:14]), usually the divine name has been rendered by ‘the LORD,’ following the ancient Greek translations of the OT, which commonly rendered Yahweh by *kýrios*.” (*ISBE*, Vol. 2, p. 507.)

The *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th Edition, Vol. 12 admits, “The pronunciation ‘Jehovah’ is an **error** resulting among Christians from combining the consonants *Yhwh (Jhvh)* with the vowels of ‘*Adhonay*, ‘Lord,’ which the Jews in reading the Scriptures substituted for the sacred name, commonly called the *tetragrammaton* as containing four consonants. It is first found in manuscripts of Martini’s *Pugio Fidei* (1278), belonging to the 14th century; and Galatinus (1518) is found arguing against abbreviating it to ‘Jova,’ on the analogy of the Latin *Jovis* (as proved by G. F. Moore).” (p. 995.)

Look at the various descriptions for the name *Jehovah* to wit, an error, a ghost word, a hybrid, an unknown, etc. Doesn’t that send up a warning flag that something is wrong with that pronunciation?

## THE GREAT ERROR

One of the major problems with the whole controversy and concept that those who use the names Jehovah or Yahweh fall prey to is that they are calling the tetragrammaton (the four Hebrew letters that make up the name) consonants. There are two men who set the record straight concerning this, Josephus and Rabbi Arthur Green.

Josephus writes concerning the high priest entering the holy of holies on the Day of Atonement, “A mitre also of fine linen encompassed his head, which was tied by a blue riband, about which there was another golden crown, in which was engraven the sacred name [of God:] **it consists of four vowels**,” (*The Works of Josephus*, Book v., Chapter v., p. 556.)

Rabbi Green says, “I further betray my faith by the use of the English word ‘God,’ rooted as it is in old Germanic **paganism**. I struggle with ways to replace this term in English but come up empty-handed. By ‘God,’ of course, I mean Y-H-W-H, the One of all being. This name of God is the starting point of all Jewish theology. It is to be read as an impossible construction of the verb ‘to be.’ HaYaH—that which was— HoWeH—that which is—and YiHYeH—that which will be—are here all forced together in a grammatically impossible conflation. Y-H-W-H *is a verb that has been artificially arrested in motion and made to function as a noun*. As soon as you try to grab hold of such a noun, it runs away from you and becomes a verb again. ‘Thought does not grasp you at all,’ as the wise have always known. Y-H-W-H as noun can be the bearer of predicates, but those too become elusive as soon as the verbal quality of the divine name reasserts itself. Try to say anything definitional about Y-H-W-H and it dashes off and becomes a verb again. This elusiveness is underscored by the fact that **all the letters that make up this name serve in ancient Hebrew interchangeably as consonants and as vowels**. Really **they are mere vowels, mere breath**. There is nothing hard or defined in their sound. The name of that which is most eternal and unchanging in the universe is also that which is wiped away as readily as a passing breath.” (*Seek My Face, Speak My Name*, p. 18.)

Look at the wondrous glory of Yahweh’s name! He has taken the most versatile letters of the Hebrew alphabet, yet in their weakest state, as vowels, to make up His name. It is a name of power for it carries with it the energy of action as a verb, and the glory of the nominative in the proper noun. In other words Yahweh’s name has all of the attributes of a sentence, noun and verb, subject and predicate all wrapped up into one!

Men have been taking the vowels YHWH and adding more vowels to them thereby elongating the name

and making something out of it that it is not (Jehovah, Yehovah, Iehovae, Iehova, etc.).

A better and more simplified way of looking at the name in the form of vowels in the English would be IAUE or YAUE (pronounced Yahweh).

The *Oxford English Dictionary* even sheds a little more light on the vowel nature of the letters under its definition of the name Jehovah (je-ho' vä), n. [The common European spelling (with **j = y** and **v = w**) of Yehowah or Yahowah, the Massoretic form of the Hebrew name previously written without vowels JHVH (YHWH)....

## CONFESSIONS OF THE J. W.'S

The Jehovah's Witnesses have published a booklet entitled *The Divine Name That Will Endure Forever*. A vowel point system was added to the Hebrew Scriptures in order to retain pronunciation. In regards to the Name, they say this, "When it came to G-d's name, instead of putting the proper vowel signs around it, in most cases they put other vowel signs to remind the reader that he should say 'Adho-nai'. From this came the spelling Iehouah, and eventually, Jehovah became the accepted pronunciation of the divine name in English." (p.8).

In the *Kingdom Interlinear* translation of the Greek Scriptures, we find the following admission on page 23 of the forward, "While inclining to view the pronunciation 'Yahweh' as the more correct way, we have retained the form 'Jehovah' because of people's familiarity with it since the 14th century. Moreover, it preserves equally with other forms, the four letters of the Tetragrammaton JHVH."

The gravity of the situation is that they admit a more erroneous form of the name (Jehovah) is preferred over the more correct one (Yahweh) simply because of familiarity and custom or tradition.

The Savior warned of clinging to erroneous traditions, "And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of Yahweh, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, *It is Corban*, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; **he shall be free**. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; **Making the word of Yahweh of none effect through your tradition**, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye," Mk. 7:9-13.

The correct pronunciation of the name is Yahweh. Jehovah is an Anglicized, hybridized, ghost word of erroneous tradition. Man, by his own tradition has made the true name "Yahweh," of none effect.

We have given you the truth. It is now your responsibility to uphold it. May Yahweh bless you to do so.

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