

## THE NAME OF THE LORD: JEHOVAH

\* \* \* IDENTIFICATION AND ETYMOLOGY OF THE NAME OF GOD \* \* \*

S.L.H.  
Soli Deo Gloria!

"That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone is **JEHOVAH**, art the most high over all the earth."  
(Psalm 83:18)

**INTRODUCTION.** The identification and etymology (and as a result the proper pronunciation) of the name of the one true God, Who has revealed Himself in the text of the Bible and in the Person of Jesus Christ, has long been disputed. The controversy appears to be shrouded in mystery, cloaked in myths and traditions, and largely propagated by various Jewish sects and a multitude of pseudo-Christian cults. The issue arises because, according to Jewish tradition, pronunciation of the divine Name was for millennia avoided entirely<sup>1</sup> out of a fear of violating the 3rd commandment (Exod20:7), which resulted in its proper pronunciation being forgotten<sup>2</sup>.

However, when the Biblical record is consulted as the final authority on this matter (Isa8:20), the issue is not at all as ambiguous as many suggest. The identification and etymology of the name of God is clearly revealed in the Hebrew scriptures, and it's proper pronunciation can be reliably inferred from their testimony.

**THE BIBLICAL RECORD.** Moses, before the burning bush, asked "Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?" (Exod3:13). Moses was told by God (i.e., Elohim), "**I AM THAT I AM:** and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, **I AM** hath sent me unto you." (Exod3:14).

Moses was told by God that His name is I AM (Exod3:14), repeated twice in the previous verse. The word translated into English as "I AM" is the Hebrew **היה** (Transl. *hayah*, Strong's H1961; TWOT 491), which is the verb meaning *to be, to exist* and is derived from the primitive root **הוה** (Transl. *havah*, Strong's H1933). This Hebrew verb is transformed into the name of God by the addition of the smallest Hebrew letter **י** (yod; Cp., Matt5:18) as a prefix, which was the common procedure (see the Table: COMMON CONSTRUCTION OF HEBREW NAMES). This results in **יהוה** (Strong's H3068; TWOT 484a) as the personal name of God, referred to as the Tetragrammaton (a Greek word that literally means *four letters*). The Tetragrammaton occurs 6,518 times in the traditional (Masoretic) text of the Hebrew scriptures.

<sup>1</sup> This alleged tradition, however, is false and can be demonstrated to be so by simply consulting the Mishna and/or the Talmud. While there were strict regulations guiding when, where, and by whom the pronunciation of the divine Name was acceptable, it was indeed pronounced publicly with considerable frequency even by ordinary Jews.

<sup>2</sup> The possibility of forgetting through disuse the proper pronunciation of a Hebrew word arises because of the fact that ancient Hebrew was written in consonants only, with the appropriate vowels to be used commonly understood by native speakers of Hebrew.

In the Old Testament of the King James Version of the Bible, the Tetragrammaton is rendered as LORD (6,510), GOD (4), or JEHOVAH (4).

COMMON CONSTRUCTION OF HEBREW NAMES

Hebrew Verb	Verb Meaning	Hebrew Name	English Name
צחק	to laugh	יִצְחָק	Isaac
עקב	to supplant	יַעֲקֹב	Jacob
הוה	to be, to exist	יְהוָה	Jehovah

**THE NAME OF GOD IN ENGLISH.** Transliteration of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton into corresponding Latin characters results in YHWH (using Latin letters that produce the same sound as the Hebrew letters when pronounced in English). In German, the letter "J" is pronounced like the Hebrew "י", and the letter "V" is pronounced like the Hebrew "ו", such that the Tetragrammaton becomes JHVH in German; this provides the basis for the four consonants representing the name of God in English.

Traditionally, the name of God is pronounced in English using the same vowels as occur in the Hebrew word אֲדֹנָי (Transl. *adonai*, meaning "Lord" when used as a title; Strong's H113), resulting in the traditional name of God in English: JEHOVAH. The controversy arises, however, in the modern presumption that use of the same vowel set in JEHOVAH as Adonai is merely a convention rather than the genuine original. There is no shortage of so-called scholars offering contradictory opinions on every side of this controversy, such that the ordinary Christian is tempted to believe there is no hope of ever knowing the answer.

**THE WITNESS OF SCRIPTURE.** Is there any way in which this issue can be resolved with certainty? The Psalmist testified that "Thy word is true from the beginning" (Ps119:160) and prayed "Oh LORD; give me understanding, according to thy word" (Ps119:169). This issue can be determined with certainty by means of the witness of scripture itself (Isa8:20).

The resolution comes out of a recognition that, historically, the personal name of God was incorporated into a multitude of names of ordinary Jewish people, the record of which has been faithfully preserved in the Hebrew scriptures (i.e., the Old Testament). Furthermore, the proper pronunciation of these ordinary Hebrew names is certain and disputed by none. Such names are readily recognized among the kings of Judah, such as יהושפט (Jehoshaphat; 1Kgs15:24), יהורם (Jehoram; 1Kgs22:50), יהואש (Jehoash; 2Kgs11:21), and יהויקים (Jehoiakim; 2Kgs23:36). Each of these names begin with the first two letters/syllables of the Tetragrammaton (i.e., יה). Furthermore, all of these names are also recorded in the Bible as being shortened, reflecting an uneasiness over the possible misuse of the divine Name, even as partially incorporated into the names of ordinary Hebrew persons (e.g., Jehoshaphat becomes Joshaphat, 1Chron11:43; Jehoram becomes Joram, 2Kgs8:16; Jehoash becomes Joash, 1Kgs22:26; and Jehoiakim becomes Joiakim, Neh12:10). This pattern holds true even for the name of our Savior, Jesus (יהושוע in Hebrew, Jehoshua in English, commonly shortened to Joshua). There is no dispute that the vowels used with these Hebrew names, and their proper pronunciation, are derived from the Tetragrammaton, not from Adonai.

The witness of scripture is unambiguous. The pronunciation of the divine Name of God, as authenticated in both the spelling and (undisputed) pronunciation of a multitude of common Hebrew names, begins with JE-HO.

**CONCLUSION.** The dispute over the proper form and pronunciation of the name of God in English, whether it be JEHOVAH as has been traditionally accepted by the people of God or *Yahweh* as is commonly asserted by modern (so-called) scholars, is easily resolved with certainty by the witness of scripture. We can know that the name of God is **JEHOVAH**, as it is reflected in both spelling and pronunciation in a multitude of ordinary Hebrew names preserved in the Bible, about which there is no dispute. That fact that JEHOVAH and Adonai share a common set of vowels is coincidental; the association of these vowels with the Tetragrammaton is authentic and original, not a mere convention derived from Adonai.

The proper name of God in English is JEHOVAH, which has been faithfully preserved in the King James Version<sup>3</sup> of the Bible (cf. Ps83:18). This is yet another of many of reasons<sup>4</sup> why the people of God should remain faithful to the King James Version as the very words of God preserved in English (Ps12:7-8).

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the **old paths**, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."  
(**Jeremiah 6:16**)

---

<sup>3</sup> The proper name of God is increasingly omitted or obscured in modern English translations of the Bible; the name JEHOVAH does not occur in the NIV, NASB, ESV, or even the NKJV.

<sup>4</sup> See the article, [Why Use the KJV?](https://continueinmyword.net/textual-studies/), which is available for download at: <https://continueinmyword.net/textual-studies/>