

EXODUS 3:14 AND THE DIVINE NAME: A CASE OF BIBLICAL PARONOMASIA

BARRY J. BEITZEL
TRINITY EVANGELICAL DIVINITY SCHOOL

I. The Device of Paronomasia in the Old Testament

In its broadest definition, paronomasia is a comprehensive term first employed by ancient Greek scholastics when referring to rhetorical devices designed to engage and retain the attention of an audience. This extremely persuasive literary embellishment was so-called because one word was "brought alongside" (lit. "to name beside") of another which appeared or sounded similar or identical--thus producing an aura of literary ambiguity--but which was actually quite different in origin and meaning.¹

Paronomasia is a common ancient Near Eastern phenomenon, specimens of which are preserved in Mesopotamian,² Egyptian³ and Arabic⁴ literatures. It is also attested in the New Testament⁵ and post-Biblical⁶ corpora.

¹ *adnominatio* in Latin; *tajnis* in Arabic.

² The reader is referred to M. Fishbane, "The Qumran Peshet and Traits of Ancient Hermeneutics," *Proceedings of the VIth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1977) 97-114.

³ Examples have been collected by L. Peeters, "Pour une interpretation du jeu de mots," *Semitics* 2 (1971-72) 127-42.

⁴ Consult the discussions of G. M. Redslob, *Die Arabischen Worter mit entgegengesetzten Bedeutungen* (Hamburg: Meissner, 1873); W. C. F. Giese, *Untersuchungen uber die 'addad auf Grund von Stellen in altarabischen Dichtern* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1894); T. Noldeke, "Worter mit Gegensinn," *Neue Beitrage zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg: Trubner, 1910).

⁵ M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (3d ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 160-85; E. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1898 [repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968]). What seems to this writer to be an important New Testament example of paronomasia is not cited by Bullinger. The word Jerusalem translates two Greek words *Ierousalem* and *Hierosoluma*. The former is simply a Greek transliteration of the Old Testament Aramaic form, whereas the latter reflects the word *hieros*, "holy," representing an instance of Hellenistic paronomasia, but having correspondence neither with the Semitic root nor with the city's historical reality.

⁶ Cf. F. Domseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie* (2d ed.; Leipzig/Berlin: Teubner, 1925); R. Marcus, "Alphabetic Acrostics in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods," *JNES* 6 (1947) 109-115; S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Society, 1950); M. Steinschneider, *Jewish Literature* (2d ed.; Hildesheim: Olms, 1960); *Jewish Encyclopedia* 1.424-25; *EncJud* 2. §§ 229-32, 7. §§ 369-74.

Though regarded by contemporary Westerners only as an appropriate form of comedy, paronomasia is characteristically utilized in the Old Testament to arouse curiosity or to heighten the effect of a particularly solemn or important pronouncement, in this way permanently and indelibly impressing the proclamation upon the memory of an audience.⁷ This essay will consider the two foci of paronomastic types--visual and oral--and advance a paronomastic explanation of Exodus 3:14.

Visual paronomasia, tending to be intellectual, if not esoteric, includes the following varieties: (1) *Gematria*. In Biblical Hebrew, a numerical equivalent existed for each letter of the alphabet (e.g. ' =1, b=2, etc.). Gematria normally defines a cryptograph in the form of a word or cluster of words which, through the calculation of their combined numerical values, discloses an otherwise-concealed meaning. For instance, David, whose gematria is 14, is listed 14th in the genealogy of Jesus (Matthew 1) and the employment of his gematria is reinforced by the prominent role which the number 14 plays later in this chapter (v 17). Gad, with a gematria of 7, is reckoned 7th in the tribal listing of Genesis 46, where 7 sons are ascribed to him. The first collection of Solomonic Proverbs (10:1-22:16) is introduced with the expression *misle selomoh*, the gematrial total of which is 375. Hence, it is not surprising that one discovers precisely the same number of Proverbs comprising this section of the book.⁸ Some writers see in the "318" servants of Abraham (Gen 14:14) a gematria for Eliezer, the servant of Abraham (15:2), and in the "603,550" people delivered from Egypt (Num 1 :46) a gematria for *bene yisra'el kol ros*, "the children of

⁷ Studies devoted to the paronomastic phenomenon in the Old Testament include the following: I. M. Casanowicz, "Paronomasia in the Old Testament," *JBL* 12 (1893) 105-67; G. B. Gray, *Studies in Hebrew Proper Names* (London: Black, 1896); E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*; H. Reckendorff, *Uber Paronomane in den semitischen Sprachen. Ein Beitrag zur allgemeinen Sprachwissenschaft* (Giessen: Topelmarm, 1909); A. Murtonen, *A Philological and Literary Treatise on the Old Testament Divine Names* (*StudOr* 18; Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seuran kirjapainon, 1952); F. de Lagre Bohl, "Wortspiele in Alten Testament," *Opera minora* (1953) 11-25; A. Guillaume, "Paronomasia in the Old Testament," *JSS* 9 (1964) 282-90; A. F. Key, "The Giving of Proper Names in the Old Testament," *JBL* 83 (1964) 55-9; M. Noth, *Die israelitischen Personenamen im Rahmen der gemeinsemitischen Namengebung* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1966); D. F. Payne, "Characteristic Word Play in 'Second Isaiah': A Re-appraisal," *JSS* 12 (1967) 207-29; W. Wilson, *Old Testament Word Studies* (2d ed.; London: Macmillan, 1870 [repr., Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1968]) 561-66; C. M. Carmichael, "Some Sayings in Genesis 49," *JBL* 88 (1969) 435-44; J. J. Gluck, "Paronomasia in Biblical Literature," *Semitics* 1 (1970) 50-78; W. L. Holladay, "Form and Word-Play in David's Lament Over Saul and Jonathan," *VT* 20 (1970) 153-89; I. H. Eybers, "The Use of Proper Names as a stylistic device," *Semitics* 2 (1971-72) 82-92; L. Peeters, "Pour une interpretation;" J. F. A. Sawyer, "The Place of Folk-Linguistics in Biblical Interpretation," *Proceedings of the Vth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1973) 109-13; J. M. Sasson, "Wordplay in the OT," *IDBSup* 968-70.

⁸According to the count of codex Vaticanus. For this reference, I am indebted to my colleague, Professor Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

Israel, every individual."⁹

(2) *Atbash*. Atbash is an oratorical device according to which letters of one or more words, counted from the beginning of the alphabet, are exchanged for corresponding letters counted from the end of the alphabet (e.g. ' = t, b = s, etc.). Embedded in Jeremiah's grim oracle of doom directed against Babylon and the king of Babylon (chaps. 50-1) is the enigmatic Sheshak (51:41). Enigmatic, that is, until one recognizes that the letters which comprise the word *ssk* are actually atbash for *bbl*, "Babylon" (cf. 25:26). In this same chapter (v 1), Jeremiah describes the inhabitants of Babylon by means of the otherwise-mysterious *lb qmy* which, through atbash, becomes *ks'dym*, "Chaldeans," known to have been contemporary inhabitants of the great city. It is suggested that the *hapax legomenon kbwl* of 1 Kings 9:13, traditionally transliterated "Cabul," is to be understood as atbash for *lspk*, "worthless land."¹⁰

(3) *Acrostic*. Biblical literature displays a paronomastic device in which successive or alternating verses, or cluster of verses, begin with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in sequence. A complete acrostic sequence may be found in Psalms 111, 112, 119, 145!;¹¹ Proverbs 31:10-31 and Lamentations 1, 2, 3, 4.¹²

(4) *Notrikon*. This term defines the concept in which letters of a word are considered as abbreviations for a series of words. Hence, 'yk, "how" (Jer 3:19) is said to represent a notrikon for '[amen] y[hwh] k[i], "Amen, O Yahweh for," and *hnh*, "this" (Jer 7:4) is a notrikonic representation for *h[am] m[aqom] h[azzeh]*, "this place."

(5) *Acronymy*. The opposite of notrikon, an acronym is formed when the initial letter of each of the successive words in a series is extracted to form a separate word. Acronymy is beautifully illustrated in Esther 5:4. In context, the heroine has just risked her life to plead the case of her betrayed people. The dramatic suspense reaches a climax when, in response to the king's query, Esther's first sentence of intercession includes the words *y[abo] h[ammelek] w[ehaman] h[ayyom]*, "let the king and Haman come today." Now the writer, realizing full well that the book inevitably would be translated into

⁹ Cf. EncJud 7. § § 369-70. The use of letters to signify numbers was known to other Semitic peoples. An inscription of Sargon II (722-705) states that this king extended the wall of his capital city to 16,283 cubits, which corresponds to Sargon's personal gematria. Rabbinic scholarship also indulged in this oratorical device; based upon a gematrial interpretation of the phrase '*elleh-haddebarim*, "these are the words" (Exod 35:1), they argue that there were 39 categories of work forbidden on the sabbath. One recalls that the painstaking statistical work undertaken by Massorettes, including the counting of verses, words and letters for each book of the Old Testament, was recorded in the Massorah finalis, where such detailed data was somewhat unsusceptible to textual corruption, owing to the employment of gematria.

¹⁰ Variations of atbash advanced by others include atbah (i.e. t is substituted for ' , h for b, etc.) and cipher (i.e. reversing the letters of a word and then suggesting that the following letter in the alphabet was actually intended). Using the latter method, some writers suggest that the intended subject of the prophecy of Ezekiel 38-9 is Babylon [*bbl*], and that Magog [*mgg*] is to be interpreted in the text only as a cipher for Babylon.

¹¹ The *nun* verse, omitted in the MT, is attested at Qumran, cf. J. A. Sanders, *The Dead Sea Psalms Scroll* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1967) 66, lines 2-3.

¹² Partial acrostics occur in Psalms 9-10, 25, 34, 37; and Nahum 1.

Persian, and wishing to preserve the divine name from Persianized profanation, wrote the entire book without its inclusion. However, in this critical passage, the Lord is present, if oratorically by way of the acronymic reference *yhwh*, in a form which cannot possibly be distorted by a Persian writer.¹³

(6) *Anastrophe*. In this type of paronomasia, the usual syntactical order is inverted for oratorical effect or emphasis. Though examples of this device abound in the Scriptures, it is poignantly employed in Gen 1:2. Here one observes that, after verse 1, the chapter is decidedly geocentric. And it is the anastrophic function of *weha'ares* at the *beginning* of verse 2 which rhetorically signals this orientation for the balance of the chapter.

Alternatively, the name of the patriarch Noah is purposely placed at the end of a verbal sentence in order to underscore a relationship with the admired ancestor Enoch. One reads '*et-ha'elohim hithallek-noah*, "and Noah walked with God," (Gen 6:9), and observes that the last three radicals, read backwards [*hnk*], spell the name Enoch, known also for walking with God (Gen 5:22-4).¹⁴

(7) *Epanastrophe*. Here the final syllable of one word is reproduced in the first syllable of the word which immediately follows. For example, *takossu 'al-hasseh / seh tamim*, "you should compute for the lamb / (your) lamb should be whole" (Exod 12:4-5); *bene-yisra'el beyad ramah le 'ene kol-misrayim / umisrayim meqabberim 'et . . . kol-bekor*, "the children of Israel went out triumphantly before all the Egyptians / while the Egyptians were burying. . . all (their) firstborn" (Num 33:3-4); *welir'ot sehem-behemah hemmah lahem*, "to show them that they are but beasts" (Eccl 3:18); or the constantly recurring phraseology, *paras reset leraglay*, "he has spread a net for my feet" (Lam 1:13; Prov 25:13; cf. Ezek 18-20); and finally '*oyaw 'albis boset*, "I will clothe his enemies with shame" (Ps 132:18; cf. Job 8:22).¹⁵

Oral paronomasia depends upon the similarity of sounds to provide a meaning or to draw an image other than that expected in the context. The terminology is adopted from Gluck.¹⁶

(1) *Equivocal*. This type of paronomasia depends on the literary paradox of homonymy, that is, the similarity of sound between varying words, illustrated in the *mene, mene, teqel, parsin* passage of Daniel 5. Daniel announces, "*mene'*, God has numbered [*menah*] . . . your kingdom," "*teqel*, you have been weighed [*teqiltah*] . . . and found wanting," "*peres*, your kingdom is divided" [*perisat*]. Other eloquent expressions of equivocal paronomasia include *yhwh seba'ot . . . wehayah . . . ulsur miksol . . . te'udah*, "Yahweh Seba'ot . . . will become a rock offense. . . / (therefore) bind up the testimony" (Isa 8:14, 16); *wehahemar hayah lahem lahomer*, "and they had bitumen for mortar" (Gen 11:3);¹⁷ and *beti 'aser-hu' hareb . . . wa'eqra'*

¹³ Cf. 7:7.

¹⁴ The reader will find a fuller discussion in J. M. Sasson, "Word-Play in Gen 6:8-9," *CBQ* 37 (1975) 165-66; cf. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 699-700.

¹⁵ It is sometimes suggested that *lahem hallbenah le'aben*, "they had brick for stone" (Gen 11:4), illustrates the epanastrophic principle.

¹⁶ J. J. Gluck, *Semitics* 1 (1970) 50-78.

¹⁷ Cf. G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) 148-49.

horeb 'al-ha'ares, "my house is a desolation. . . I have called a drought on the earth" (Hag 1:9, 11); and *watta 'as ha'ares beseba' hassaba' leqmasim*, "during the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth abundantly" (Gen 41:47).

Sometimes homonymy that allows for such punning occurs when consonants which are phonemically disparate in proto-Semitic fall together in Hebrew, e.g. *hereb 'al-kasdim . . . horeb 'el-memeha*, "a sword (HRB) upon the Chaldeans . . . a drought (HRB) upon her water" (Jer 50:35, 38); *we'anah 'iyyim be'almenotaw . . . weqarob laba' 'ittah*, "hyenas will cry (GNH) in its towers . . . its time ('NH) is close at hand" (Isa 13:22; cf Jer 51:14, 18; Pss 88:1, 10; 119:153, 172).¹⁸

(2) *Metaphony*. Metaphonic wordplay is facilitated by the occurrence of verbal forms in which a change in stem conjugation does not affect the consonantal root but introduces a vowel mutation which alters, sometimes radically, the nature of the act described. *maqel saqed 'ani ro'eh*. . . / *ki-soqed 'ani*, "I see a rod of almond. . . / for I am watching" (Jer 1:11, 12); *kelub qayis . . . / ba' haqqes 'el-'ammi*; "a basket of summer fruit . . . / the end has come upon my people" (Amos 8:1, 2); *'im lo' ta'aminu ki lo' te'amenu*, "if you do not believe, then you will no longer be established" (Isa 7:9); *wahasimoti 'ani 'et-ha 'ares wesamemu 'aleha 'oyebekem hayyosebim bah*, "I will devastate the land, so that your enemies who settle in it will be astonished at it" (Lev 26:32). A somewhat more sophisticated instance of metaphonic wordplay is to be found in Gen 26:8. Isaac's name, which in Gen 17:17, 19; 21:6 had been associated with its cognate verb "to laugh" (SHQ), is read here as follows: *wehinneh yishaq mesaheq 'et ribqah 'isto*, "Isaac was fondling Rebekah his wife."

(3) *Parasonance*. This type of paronomasia involves the use of verbal and nominal roots which differ in one of their three radicals. This device is profusely illustrated in Judg 5:19-21. Here the kings of Canaan fought, heaven fought and the stars fought [*nilhamu*] (LHM) against Sisera while the torrent Kishon, the mighty onrushing torrent [*nahal*] (NHL) swept him away. The Lord frequently promises, "I will bring again [*sabti*] (SWB) the captivity [*sebut*] (SBY) of my people."¹⁹ Parasonancy is artfully employed elsewhere: "Yahweh seba'ot looked for justice [*mispāt*], but there was only bloodshed [*mispāt*],²⁰ for righteousness [*sedaqah*], but there was only a cry [*se'aqah*] (Isa 5:7); *qamah 'en-lo semah beli ya 'aseh-qqemah*, "standing grain has no heads, it will yield no meal" (Hos 8:7); *haggilgal galah yigleh*, "Gilgal will surely go into exile" (Amos 5:5); *kime noah*. . . *me noah*, "like the days of Noah . . . the water of Noah" (Isa 54:9); *wesama 'ta yisra'el wesamarta La'asot*, "hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do [my commandments]" (Deut 6:3); *weteben lo'-yinnaten lakem wetoken rebenim tittenu*, "no straw shall be given you, yet you shall deliver the same number of bricks" (Exod

¹⁸ C. Fritsch, "Homophony in the Septuagint," *Proceedings of the VIth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1977) 115-20.

¹⁹ This formula is recorded some 26 times in Scripture.

²⁰ This word is a hapax legomenon.

But perhaps the most widespread use of parasonancy is to be found in word plays upon proper names. Very often, assignment of the names of Biblical characters, tribes, places and episodes is made to suggest a characteristic attributed to them or an important event associated with them.²² Babel [babel] (BBL) received its name because it was the place of confusion, [balal] (BLL) (Gen 11:9); the first female was called woman [*'issah*] ('NS) because she was taken from man [*'is*] ('YS) (Gen 2:23);²³ Cain [*qayin*] (QYN) was so named because his mother claimed to have gotten [*qaniti*] (QNY) a man with the help of the Lord (Gen 4:1).²⁴ At times, double parasonancy is employed with proper names. Gad [*gad*] was named at birth because of his mother's good fortune [*bagad*] (Gen 30:11), and later in life he is called a raider [*gedud*] (Gen 49:19). Because Jacob took hold of Esau's heel [*ba 'aqeb*] (Gen 25:26) he was named Jacob [*ya 'aqob*], but later Esau claimed that Jacob had been named aright because he had beguiled [*wayya' qebeni*] (Gen 27:36) his older brother. Though examples of punning proper names could be multiplied, it should be clear from these cited that one is dealing with words which exhibit a paronomastic relationship, and not an etymological one.

A more complicated form of parasonance is the type in which radicals of one word are found in another word in a differing order: "He delivers (*yehalles*) the afflicted by their affliction, and opens their ears by adversity (*ballahas*)" (Job 36:15); "All my enemies shall be ashamed (*yebosu*) and sorely troubled, they shall turn back (*yasubu*) and be put to shame (*yebosu*) in a moment" (Ps 6:10 [H 11]); "Noah (*noah*) found grace (*hen*) in the eyes of the Lord" (Gen 6:8). One is tempted to see an example of this type of parasonancy in Genesis 32:24 [H 25]: "And Jacob (*ya'aqob*) was left alone, and a man wrestled (*ye'abeq*) with him until daybreak."

(4) *Farrago*. This form of paronomasia defines somewhat confused and often ungrammatical wording which gains meaning only because of context. A characteristic of farrago is that some of the elements display a tendency to rhyme (e.g. "hodge-podge," "helter-skelter"). Farragonic examples from the Scripture include *maher salal has baz*, the son of Isaiah (Isa 8:1, 3); *tohu wabohu* "without form and void" (Gen 1:2); *'et-ha'urim we'et-hattummim*, "Urim and Thummim" (Exod 28:30); *uben-meseq beti hu' dammeseq 'eli'ezer*, "the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus" (Gen 15 :2); *ben sorer umoreh*, "a stubborn and rebellious son" (Deut 21: 18, 20).

(5) *Assonance*. Words may be strung together primarily for oral effect rather than furthering the meaning of the phraseology. Isaiah seems to have

²¹Parasonance becomes the vehicle to convey the poignant outpouring of Micah's grief (1:10-5).

²²J. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (2 vols.; London: Cumberlege, 1926 [repr. 1954]) 1.245-59. He succinctly states: "To know the name of a man is the same as to know his essence. . . the name is the soul" (245).

²³One observes that "man" and "woman" do not derive from the same root. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the character of the shin in these 2 words is phonemically different in proto-Semitic: in the former case it is a proto-Semitic and * and in the latter case a proto-Semitic *S.

²⁴The *petros/petra* passage in Matthew 16 closely resembles this classification.

been particularly fond of this rhetorical device: *wa'omar razt-li razi-li 'oy li bogedim bagadu ubeged bogedim bagadu / pahad wapahat wapah 'aleka yoseb ha'ares*. "But I say, 'I pine away, I pine away. Woe is me, for the treacherous deal very treacherously.' / Terror, and the pit, and the snare are upon you, O inhabitants of the earth" (Isa 24: 16-7); *hakkemakkat makkehu hikkahu 'im-kehereg harugaw horag*, "Did he smite him with the same blows as his smiters smote him? Was he slain in the same way as those he had slain?" (Isa 27:7); *hitmahmehu utemahu hista 'as 'u waso'u*, "Tarry and be astonished, blind yourselves and be blind!" (Isa 29:9). Other instances of assonantic paronomasia include *yitten yhw'et-metar 'arseka 'abag we'apar*, "Yahweh will make the rain of your land powder and dust" (Deut 28:24); *sam sepatam 'aser lo' yisme'u 'is sepat re'ehu*, "there [confuse] their language, that they may not understand one another's speech" (Gen 11 :7); *gad gedud yegudennu wehu/yagud 'aqeb*, "raiders shall raid Gad, but he shall raid at their heels" (Gen 49:19).

(6) *Onomatopoeia*. This term involves the formation and use of words in imitation of natural sounds, beautifully illustrated by the gibberish of foreign tongues in Isaiah 28:10, 13: *saw lastaw saw lasaw qaw laqaw qaw laqaw ze'er sam ze'er sam*, "precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little."²⁵ Other examples of onomatopoeia include: *'az halemu 'qqebe-sus middahot daharot 'abbiraw*, "then loud beat the horses' hoofs with the galloping, galloping of his steeds" (Judg 5:22); *welo' hayah noded kanap uposeh peh umsapsep*, "and there was none that moved a wing or opened the mouth or chirped" (Isa 10:14).

(7) *Antanclasis*. The same word or words, when repeated, sometimes requires different renditions: "I saw the tears of the oppressed, and there was no one to comfort them [*we'en lahem menahem*], strength was on the side of their oppressors, and there was no one to avenge them [*we'en lahem menahem*]" (Eccl 4:1); *hitrapptta beyom sarah sar kohekah*, "If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small" (Prov 24: 10); *'en qol 'anot geburah we'en qol 'anot halusah qol 'annot 'anoki somea*, "it is not the sound of the shout of victory, or the sound of the cry of defeat, but it is the sound of singing that I hear" (Exod 32:18).

The Biblical narratives also benefit from paronomastic displays extending beyond the confines of an immediate context. A few such wordplays, called extended paronomasia, deserve mention here. Launching a propaganda assault calculated to demonstrate the ineptitude of Hezekiah, the emissaries of Sennacherib charge, in effect: Hezekiah had to pay tribute (NS') to us, don't let him deceive (NS') you with words! (2 Kgs 18:14, 29; cf. 19:4, 22). The text of Genesis 3 supplies further expressions of this paronomastic device. A clever [*'arum*, 1] serpent leads the couple to sin and become naked [*'erummim*, 7] and to be cursed [*'arur*, 14]; because the woman had eaten from the tree [*'es*, 6] she must experience pain [*'issabon*, 16] in childbirth.

²⁵Casanowicz, 105, incorrectly limits paronomasia to the oral dimension and rules out this passage from consideration.

Cassuto²⁶ points out a skillful contrivance of extended paronomasia in the flood narrative, playing on the radicals in the name Noah: "This one shall bring us relief [*yenamenu*, 5:29]; "Yahweh was sorry" [*wayyinnahem*, 6:6]; "The ark came to rest" [*wattanab*, 8:4]; "A restingplace to set her foot" [*manoah*, 8:9].

This discussion in no way attempts to exhaust the possibilities of Old Testament paronomasia, either in function or in form. The concept was resorted to most frequently by the prophet Isaiah, and it may be found frequently in the books of Proverbs and Job. In the historical books, paronomasia is largely found embedded in poetic passages and in the assigning of proper names.

II. An illustration of Paronomasia in Exodus 3:14

The Exodus discourse between Moses and his God bristles with a number of virtually insoluble philological and theological problems, and one is not surprised at the inability to forge a common scholarly consensus regarding the linguistic and theological meaning of the ineffable tetragrammaton. Though a veritable kaleidoscope of etymological speculation has been set forth,²⁷ three prevalent viewpoints will be distinguished in this essay. These outlooks commonly share and express the belief that the relationship between the verb *hayah* and the divine name *yhwh* is one of etymology.

(1) *An Ejaculatory Cry*. Since the writing of G. R. Driver,²⁸ a number of scholars have embraced the opinion that the divine name, when first it arose, did not have a readily intelligible form, instead being an emotional cultic outburst, such as dervishes might cry out ecstaticly. In the main basing his

²⁶U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1972) 1.288-89.

²⁷A Sumerian etymology [ia-u5, "seed of life"] has recently been theorized by J. M. Allegro, *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1970) 20, 130, 215, n. 1. An Egyptian etymology [Y-h-we3, "moon one"] has been proposed by N. Walker, *The Tetragrammaton* (West Ewell, England: privately published, 1948) [volume unavailable to author] 10-4; "Yahwism and the Divine Name 'Yhwh'," *ZAW* 70 (1958) 262-65. An Akkadian etymology [ia-u, "noble one"] has been suggested by F. Delitzsch, *Babel and Bibel* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1921) 79-80; E. Littmann, *AfO* 11 [1936] 162 has proposed an Indo-European etymology [*Dyau-s, which became Zeus in Greek, Jupiter in Latin, and Yah in Hebrew]. A Hurrian etymology [ya, "god" (plus a pronominal suffix)] has been offered by J. Lewy, "Influences hurrites sur Israel," (*Revue des Etudes Semitiques*, 1938) 55-61. Finally, it has been suggested by B. Hrozný, ("*Inschriften und Kultur der Proto-Indo-Inder von Mohenjo-Daro und Harappa*," *ArOr* 13 [1942] 52-5) that Yahweh is to be related etymologically to a god Yaue, apparently mentioned in a yet unpublished 3rd millennium inscription found in the Indus valley.

²⁸G. R. Driver, "The original form of the name 'Yahweh': evidence and conclusions," *ZAW* 46 (1928), 7-25, esp. 23-5. This view was also mentioned by H. Tur-Sinai, *Die Bundeslade und die Anfänge der Religion Israel* (2d ed.; Berlin: Philo, 1930) 75; K. G. Kuhn, "Über die Entstehung des Namens Jahwe," *Orientalische Studien Enno Littmann zu seinem sechzigsten Geburtstag überreicht* (Leiden: Brill, 1935) 25-42; M. Buber and F. Rosenzweig, *Die Schrift und ihre Verdeutschung* (Berlin: Schocken, 1936); A. Schleiff, "Der Gottesname Jahwe," *ZDMG* 90 (1936) 679-702; B. D. Eerdmans, "The Name Jahu," *OTS* 5 (1948) 16; R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (2d. ed.; London: Oxford, 1950 [repr., 1973] 190-91; E. Auerbach, *Moses* (Amsterdam: Ruys, 1953) 44-7.

conclusions upon extra-Biblical evidence, Driver affirmed that the antique form of the deity worshipped by some pre-Mosaic Hebrew ancestors was the digrammaton *Ya*, a form whose origin was a kind of numinal exclamation. Conclusive for Driver was the fact that whereas Hebrew compound proper names were never formed with *Yahweh*, many were formed with *Ya*. Now over a period of time, such primitive ecstatic ejaculations tend to become prolonged. Thus, taken together with Driver's belief that the genius of the Exodus event lay in the creation of a new national Hebrew deity, the evolution from *Ya* to *Yahweh* was easily effected. At once, this new form was recognized on the basis of popular etymology as closely resembling the verb *hayah*, therein facilitating its general acceptance and interpretation by the Mosaic community.

Elmslie²⁹ accepted the reasoning of Driver, but he extended the argument by suggesting, on the analogy of Tunisian cult shouts, that the ejaculation *Ya* was originally associated with the cult of the moon deity *Sin*, whom the Hebrew ancestors obviously adored and from one of whose centers the great patriarch emigrated.

In 1961, Mowinckel³⁰ sought to advance this hypothesis by asserting that the divine name was to be understood as *ya-huwa*, being composed of the Arabic interjection and the third person independent personal pronoun, and translated "Oh He!" Though such a form was originally a cultic cry of exclamation and invocation, it gradually developed into a symbolic designation ("He whose inmost essence and being we cannot see or understand") and finally came to be understood as a proper name.³¹

As to these suppositions, it must be asserted that it would be unprecedented for a Semitic divine name to originate as a religious exclamation. Driver cited Greek analogies and Mowinckel relied heavily on Norwegian analogues. Furthermore, leaving aside the problem of how *Ya* developed into *Yahweh* and not some other form, Semitic proper names normally begin with transparent appellations or sentences and *shorten* or *disintegrate*. They do not become prolonged, as supposed by adherents of this view.³²

(2) *A Triliteral Verbal Form*. By a large margin, the *opinio communis* has been one which treats the tetragrammaton as a triliteral verbal form, deriving from

²⁹W. A. L. Elmslie, *How Came Our Faith* (London: Cambridge, 1948 [repr., 1958] 119-21, 214.

³⁰S. Mowinckel, "The Name of the God of Moses," *HUCA* 32 (1961) 121-33, esp. that 131-33. A similar view had been espoused by J. P. Brown and H. S. Rose, *The Dervishes yet* (London: Milford, 1927) 275; A. Vincent, *La religion des Judeo-Arameens d'Elephantine* (Paris: Geuthner, 1937) 46. More recently M. Reisel, *The Mysterious Name of Y. H. W. H.* [Assen: Van Gorcum, 1957] 48) arrives at this conclusion.

³¹Psalm 102:27 [H28] *we'attah-hu'* was luminous with meaning for Mowinckel

³²For convincing discussions in support of this contention, the reader may consult D. D. Luckenbill, "The Pronunciation of the Name of the God of Israel," *AJSL* 40 (1924) 277; W. F. Albright, "The Name *Yahweh*," *JBL* 42 (1924) 370-78; L. Waterman, "Method In the Study of the Tetragrammaton," *AJSL* 43 (1926) 1-7; M. Noth, *Personennamen* 143-44; A. Murtonen, *Treatise* 58-61; P. M. Cross, "Yahweh and the God of the rep;., Patriarchs," *HTR* 55 (1962) 252-55; R. de Vaux, "The Revelation of the Divine Name," *Proclamation and Presence* (London: SCM, 1970) 50-1; *EncJud* 7. § 680.

the root HWY.³³ (a) Causative Participle. J. Obermann³⁴ attempted to show that Yahweh need not represent a finite verb. As a finite verb, it would be, of necessity, one of the third person. Yet the solemn formula *'ani yahweh*, occurring with high frequency throughout the pages of the Old Testament, would present one with the enigma of a third person imperfect having as its subject or agent a first person pronoun.³⁵ For Obermann, such a construction was manifestly impossible unless one assumes either that the meaning of the appellation had been lost by the time this formulation developed, or that the form *yahweh* does not represent a finite verb. On the other hand, arguing on the analogy of the Karatepe inscription of Azittawadd, where numerous expressions of the same type occur, Obermann submitted that *yahweh* represented a peculiar type of causative participial formation with a *y* instead of a *m* preformative. Therefore, as a lexeme, *yahweh* should be translated "Sustainer, Maintainer."

Against Obermann's view it must be argued that demonstrably participial forms with *y* preformatives are non-existent in Semitic. Even in the unlikely event that the Phoenician examples cited by Obermann should eventually prove to be participial in form and function,³⁶ their appearance only in relatively late inscriptions cannot be used to support the antiquity of the phenomenon. Moreover, the causative of the root HWY is attested in Semitic.

(b) G stem trilateral verb. Actually, the only common denominator among those who endorse this view is that the tetragrammaton springs from the root HWY. Goitein³⁷ argues that the root signifies "the Passionate One," whereas Schorr³⁸ and Bowman³⁹ aver that the root reflects the meaning "to speak" (cognate to Akkadian *awatu*), hence Yahweh was the "Speaker, Revealer," an epithet particularly eloquent in the Mosaic period. Murtonen,⁴⁰ who accepts this reasoning, regards the divine name as a kind of *nomen agentis* with a *y* prefix, meaning "Commander." Klostermann⁴¹ recognized in the same root a negative connotation, declaring that Yahweh means "the Faller," in the sense

³³ C. H. Ratschow, (*Werden und Wirken. Eine Untersuchung des Wortes hajah als Beitrag zur Wirklichkeitserfassung des alten Testaments* [BZAW 70; Berlin: Topelmann, 1941] 81) finds 3 meanings for the verb *hayah*: "to be," "to become" and "to effect."

³⁴ J. Obermann, "The Divine Name YHWH in the Light of Recent Discoveries," *JBL* 68 (1949) 301-23, esp. 303-09; "Survival of an Old Canaanite Participle and Its Import on Biblical Exegesis," *JBL* 70 (1951) 199-209.

³⁵ According to the linguistic model of F. Anderson, (*The Hebrew Verbless Clause in the Pentateuch* [Nashville/New York: Abingdon, 1970] 39-42), such a syntactical order would indicate a clause of identification.

³⁶ G. R. Driver, ("Reflections on Recent Articles," *JBL* 72 [1954] 125-31) disputes the admissibility of the Karatepe evidence. The forms at Karatepe are generally considered to be infinitives followed by a personal pronoun. An infinitive without such a governing pronoun could never have developed into a divine name in Hebrew.

³⁷ S. D. Goitein, "YHWH the Passionate: The Monotheistic Meaning and Origin of the Name YHWH," *VT* 6 (1956) 1-9.

³⁸ M. Schorr, *Urkunden des altbabylonischen Zivil- und Prozessrechts* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913 [repr., Hildesheim: Olms, 1971]) XXXII-XXXIV.

³⁹ R. A. Bowman, "Yahweh the Speaker," *JNES* 3 (1944) 1-8.

⁴⁰ A. Murtonen, *Treatise* 90.

⁴¹ A. Klostermann, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (München: Beck, 1896) 70.

of one who crashes down or falls from heaven, as a meteor.

But the prominent position⁴² has been to associate the tetragrammaton with *hayah* (necessarily related to a hypothetical antique verb *HWY), and to suggest the meaning "He Who is the Existing One," "the Absolute, Eternally-Existing One, the One Who is with His people." According to this view, Moses poses a question of nomenclature and Yahweh offers an etymological response.⁴³

In appraising this point of view, this writer would offer three lines of counter-argumentation: lexicographic, phonetic and onomastic. Buber⁴⁴ states the following:

If you wish to ask a person's name in Biblical Hebrew, you never say, as is done here, "What (*mah*) is his name?" or "What is your name?" but "Who (*mi* are you?" "Who is he?" "Who is your name?" "Tell me your name." Where the word "what" is associated with the word "name" the question asked is what finds expression in or lies concealed behind that name.

Having inspected the various categories and significant citations of the interrogative particles *mah* and *mi*; Motyer⁴⁵ concluded that when *mah* is employed, it consistently and uniformly possesses this qualitative force which Buber had attributed to it. Consequently, *mah* should be labelled as an impersonal interrogative particle asking the question "What?"

The question. . . *mah semo*, cannot mean; "by what name is the deity called?", because the answer to such a question should have been: He is called by the name YHWH. The actual answer to the question: "I am that I am" (v 14) does not give the name of the Deity. It gives the significance and the interpretation of the name YHWH, but not the name itself. Therefore the question *mah semo* can only mean: "What meaneth His name? what is its import and significance?"⁴⁶

⁴²C. F. Hitzing, *Ueber die Gottesnamen im alten Testament* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1875) 7-9; A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904) 54-6; E. F. Kautzsch, *Biblische Theologie des alten Testaments* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1911) 44-7; J. Hehn, *Die biblische und die babylonische Gottesidee; die israelitische Gottesauffassung im lichte der altorientalischen religionsgeschichte* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1913) 214; E. König, *Geschichte der Alttestamentlichen Religion* (2d ed.; Gutersloh: Bertelsmann, 1915) 213; O. Grether, *Name und Wort Gottes im alten Testament* (BZAW 64; Giessen: Topelmann, 1934) 9; U. E. Simon, *A Theology of Salvation; a Commentary on Isaiah 4-55* (London: SPCK, 1961) 89; Th. C. Vriezen, *An Outline of Old Testament Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962) 147, 235-36. For an incisive syntactical study of Exodus 3:14, refer to B. Albrektson, "On the Syntax 'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh in Exodus 3: 14," *Words and Meanings. Essays presented to D. Winton Thomas* (London/New York: Cambridge, 1968) 15-28; R. de Vaux, *The Early History of Israel* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978) 348.

⁴³ Against the claim of B. D. Eerdmans, (*OTS* 5 [1948] 12) that God was being intentionally evasive in answering Moses, cf. K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (4 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1961) 1/1.368-71.

⁴⁴M. Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant* (New York: Harper, 1958) 48.

⁴⁵J. A. Motyer, *The Revelation of the Divine Name* (London: Tyndale, 1959) 20-1.

⁴⁶M. H. Segal, *The Pentateuch: Its Composition and Its Authorship* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1967) 5. Furthermore, this assertion is altogether consistent with what is known about the word *sem* the semantic range of which, according to *BDB* 1027-28, is understood to encompass nomenclature, reputation, character and fame.

Accordingly, it appears that Moses is posing a question of character reference and not one of nomenclature. And in context, such a question would have conveyed profound theological potentialities.⁴¹ "What kind of a God are you?" Moses queries, to which the Lord responds in kind, "I will be what I will be." That is to say, God is affirming that in His essential character He will not be the product of human thought or manipulation, unlike the Egyptian deities with which the children of Israel would have been eminently familiar.

Secondly, the contention that the divine name and the verb *hayah* are related etymologically violates a Hebrew law of phonetics regarding the hollow verb. Here the same phonetic rules govern CwC/CyC verbs in all persons, and one looks in vain to find a verb in this classification exhibiting a middle *waw* in the 3rd person but a *yod* in the 1st person. In fact, so uniform is this phonetic axiom that Kautzsch⁴⁸ declares that secondary formations, found only in the latest Old Testament literature, are owing to Aramaic influence. And to suggest that in Exodus 3:14 there was an intentional alteration specifically to avoid confusion with the tetragrammaton is to introduce into the MT a hypothetical reconstruction for which there is an utter lack of textual support.

Finally, the suggestion that the tetragrammaton and verb *hayah* are etymologically interwoven leads inescapably to the conclusion that the divine name consists exclusively of a finite verb. Mowinkel observes that "in the ancient Semitic nomenclature a name containing a verbal form, whether impf. or perf., would otherwise always be an abbreviated form of the name concerned; the full form contains also a subject of the verb."⁴⁹ While the present writer has frequently encountered divine names consisting of augmented one-word nouns (e.g. El), genitive compounds (e.g. Marduk [amar-utu-ak] , "son of Utu"), predicate compounds (e.g. Dagan-Neri, "Dagan is light"), noun plus pronoun (e.g. Yaum-An, "An is mine"), and verb plus noun (e.g. Itur'-Mer, "Mer returns"), it would be virtually unparalleled for a bare verbal form to exist as a divine name.⁵⁰

What is more, it must be pointed out that a root HWY is inextant in all West Semitic languages which antedate the Mosaic era. That is to say, Phoenician contains no root HWY; Ugaritic, despite its attestation of a divine name *yw*,

⁴⁷W. Eichrodt, (*Theology of the Old Testament* [2 vols.; Philadelphia: Westminster, .1 1961] 1.118) makes this astute observation.

⁴⁸GKC 191. § 12m.

⁴⁹HUCA 32 (1961) 128.

⁵⁰For a listing of ancient Semitic deities, refer to A. Deimel, ed., *Pantheon Babylonicum* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1914); K. L. Tallqvist, *Akkadische Gotterepitheta* (Helsinki: Societas orientalis fennica, 1938); G. Dossin, "Le Pantheon de Mari," *Studia Mariana* (Leiden: Brill, 1950) 41-50; S. Moscati, ed., *Le Antiche Divinita Semitiche* (Studi Semitici 1; Rome: University of Rome, 1958). This writer has been able to find one such divine name: ^d*lksudum* (CTXXIV.16.21; 28.15 [Deimel #1545]); ARM XIII. 111.6.

bears no witness to this verbal root;⁵¹ and Amorite Akkadian evidences no root HWY.⁵² The root HWY is attested only in Aramaic, Syriac, Nabataean and Palmyrian.

(c) *H stem trilateral verb*. Many writers advocate that the divine name is to be connected etymologically with the causative stem of the root HWY, again agreeing only in the basic root. Smith⁵³ proposes that the word derives from an Arabic cognate meaning "to blow," claiming that Yahweh was originally a storm god. This sentiment is echoed by Wellhausen,⁵⁴ Duhm,⁵⁵ Eisler,⁵⁶ Ward,⁵⁷ Oesterly and Robinson,⁵⁸ and Meek,⁵⁹ some of whom link Yahweh with the ancient southern sanctuaries of the Kenites and/or the Midianites. Citing an alternate Arabic root, Barton⁶⁰ views the name as meaning "He Who causes to love passionately." On the other hand, Holzinger⁶¹ takes the root to mean "to destroy," and the God of Israel is seen to be "One Who brings about destruction." At the same time, a host of scholars⁶² advance the theory that the tetragrammaton derives from the causative stem of a Hebrew verb *hayah*. In this case, "Yahweh" and the verb "to be" are understood to be fused etymologically, and the divine name is taken to convey the meaning "the One

⁵¹Ch. Virolleaud, (*Ugaritica* V [Paris: Geuthner, 1968] 244-45) refers to a lexicographic text from Ugarit [RS 20.123.ii.28'] which he says exhibits the root *HWY, reading the line in question u-wu/a. Though this reading is accepted by H. Huffmon, ("Yahweh and Mari," *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* [Baltimore/London: Johns Hopkins, 1971] 289), F. Cross and T. O. Lambdin, ("A Ugaritic Abecedary and Origins of the Proto-Canaanite Alphabet," *BASOR*.160 [1960] 21-6), convincingly argue that the spelling u represents *hu*, so that the more likely reading of the line would be *hu-wa*, "he." The use of the independent personal pronoun as a copula in Canaanite is well known, cf. *HTR* 55 (1962) 254, n. 124. C. F. Jean and J. Hoftijzer, *Dictionnaire des Inscriptions Semitiques de l'Ouest* (Leiden: Brill, 1965) 63.

⁵²Akkadian attests the verb *awu* "to argue in court" "to discuss talk over" "to speak" [CAD A2 86a-96, possibly a denominative verb derived from *awatu*], as well as the verb *ewtl*, "to change, turn into" [CAD E 413b-15b]. The only root meaning "to be" of which there is evidence in Ugaritic 38d Phoenician is KWN; cf. Arabic *kawana*. The normal Akkadian root meaning "to be" is BSY.

⁵³W. R. Smith, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (New York: Appleton, 1881) 423.

⁵⁴J. Wellhausen, *Israelitische und judische Geschichte* (3d ed.; Berlin: Reimer, 1897) 25.

⁵⁵B. Duhm, *Israels Propheten* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1916) 34.

⁵⁶R. Eisler, "Orientalische Studien," *MVAG* 22 (1917) 36.

⁵⁷W. H. Ward, "The Origin of the Worship of Yahwe," *AJSL* 25 (1925) 175-87.

⁵⁸W. O. E. Oesterly and T. H. Robinson, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development* (2d ed.; London: SPCK, 1937) 153.

⁵⁹T. J. Meek, *Hebrew Origins* (2d ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto, 1950) 99-102.

⁶⁰G. A. Barton, *Semitic and Hamitic Origins, Social and Religious* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1934) 338.

⁶¹H. Holzinger, *Einleitung in den Hexateuch* (Leipzig: Mohr, 1893) 204.

⁶²P. Haupt, "Der Name Jahwe," *OLZ* 12 (1909) §§211-14; W. F. Albright, *JBL* 43 (1924) 374-75; *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (2d ed.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1946) 15-6, 260; J. P. Hyatt, "Yahweh as 'the God of my Father'," *VT* 5 (1955) 130-36; D. N. Freedman, "The Name of the God of Moses," *JBL* 79 (1960) 151-56; F. M. Cross, *HTR* 55 (1962) 251-55; *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1973) 65-9. Albright mentions that this point of view dates back to the time of Le Clerc (c. 1700).

Who causes to be (what is)," "He Who brings things to pass," or "the Performer of the Promise."

But again, one is left with a divine name composed wholly of a finite verb and, in this case, one of a demonstrably non-existent causative stem.⁶³ Nor can one affirm, with Lagarde,⁶⁴ that the divine name is itself responsible for this lack of attestation; to do so would be to commit an obvious circularism and to fail to explain such non-attestation in Semitic dialects where the divine name was never sacred.

Further, if, as the result of such an interpretation of the tetragrammaton, one formulates a notion of causality which implies ontological speculation, one proceeds still further from early Hebrew thought and faith. Though causatives of verbs meaning "to be" are predicated of deities in the sense of creating, it would be absolutely without precedent to define in such an abstract and philosophical manner the character, vis-a-vis the actions, of a deity.⁶⁵ That is to say, it seems to the present writer that the distinction is one of philosophy and not merely of semantics, and early Hebrew thought perceived being phenomenally, not ontologically or metaphysically. The latter impression is received from the reading of the LXX.⁶⁶ In any case, the causative of this root is unattested in Semitic.

(3) *A Genuine tetragrammaton.* Arrayed against the inherently improbable conclusions of the first two standpoints, this writer should like to theorize that, with the tetragrammaton, one is most likely dealing with a *quadriliteral* divine name in which the initial *yod* is lexically intrinsic.⁶⁷ In support of this suggestion, one summons the following evidence. As a second millennium extra-Biblical phenomenon, this name is ubiquitous. One is able to locate the name in an onomastically identical or equivalent form in three corpora of second millennium literature. It appears (1) as a Ugaritic divine name [yw],⁶⁸ (2) as an Egyptian place name [*ya-h-wa/yi-ha*] (Amenophis III text from

⁶³H. Bauer, "Die Gottheiten von Ras Schamra," *ZAW* 51 (1933) 93, n. 7; M. Reisel, *Y. H. W. H.* 17; G. Quell, "The Old Testament Name for God," (*TDNT* 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 1068, n. 151; cf. *BDB* 224-28; *KB* 1.229-30.

⁶⁴P. de Lagarde, *Erklärung hebraischer wörter* (Göttingen: Koenigliche Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, 1880) 27-30.

⁶⁵S. Mowinckel, *HUCA* 32 (1961) 128; R. de Vaux, *Proclamation 70. W. von Soden*, ("Jahwe: 'Er ist, Er erweist sich," *WO* 3 [1964-66] 182) argues that such a formulation of causality is not in accordance with the Biblical idea of God.

⁶⁶LXX reads 'Ego 'eimi ho on; Aquila and Theodotion 'Esomai hos 'esomai; and the Vulgate reads Ego sum qui sum.

⁶⁷Occurring in a number of languages, the name is attested some 250 times in extra-Biblical documentation where the linguistic equivalent of the Hebrew *yod* is always present, even in a language (e.g. Greek) in which the corresponding radical cannot possibly be construed as a preformative element.

⁶⁸UT 410 (#1084); J. Aistleitner, *Worterbuch der Ugaritischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1963) 126 (#1151). Though this word was read by U. Cassuto, (*The Goddess Anath* [Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971] 162, 171) as yr, A. Herdner ("Corpus des Tablettes en Cuneiformes Alphabetiques: Decouvertes a Ras Shamra-Ugarit de 1929 a 1939," [Mission de Ras Shamra 10; Paris: Geuthner, 1963] 4, n. 3) has collated the text and finds that the reading yw is absolutely certain.

Soleb, Ramses II text from 'Amarah, Ramses III text from Medinet Habu),⁶⁹ and (3) as a Byblian divine name ['Ieuw].⁷⁰ Moreover, some authorities argue that it may be found as an element in Babylonian proper names from the Cassite period [e.g. Ya-u-ha-zi]⁷¹ and as an element in personal names [e.g. *Is-ra-il / lu du-bi-zi-pis, Is-ra-ya lu du-bi-zi-pis; dinger Ya-ra-mu*] at Ebla.⁷²

This list cuts a wide swath linguistically and geographically, and it evidences a great antiquity for the word as a personal name, and as a divine name in particular. Now semitic philologists are familiar with onomastic proposition which states that geographical names and personal names derive from divine names, but that the converse is not generally true. Further, the complexity of phonetics, and orthography between the Akkadian, West Semitic and Egyptian writing systems is profound, but it is a fundamental principle in onomastic studies that "divine names and even other substantives lend themselves to borrowing more easily than do adjectives and that borrowing of verbal forms is highly improbable."⁷³

This latter dictum of linguistic borrowing is obviously recognizable in the first millennium extra-Biblical evidence, where Yahweh is found in Aramaic, Greek, Moabite and Canaanite literature.⁷⁴ But the antiquity and ubiquity of the second millennium evidence coupled with these two onomastic axia strongly suggest that the word was already known as a divine name centuries before the Mosaic epoch.⁷⁵ Accordingly, it seems preferable to conclude that tetragrammaton is a quadriradical divine name of unknown lexicographic and ethnic origin, and that its relationship with *hayah* in Exodus 3:14 is one of paronomasia, not etymology.

Since the use of paronomasia promoted a certain excitement and curiosity

⁶⁹B. Grdseloff, "Edom, d'apres les sources egyptiennes," *Revue de 'Histoire juive d'Egypt* 1 (1947) 69-99; R. Giveon, "Toponymes ouest-asiatiques a Soleb," *VT* 14 (1964) 239-55; most recently M. C. Astour, "Yahweh in Egyptian Topographic Lists," *Elmar Edel Festschrift* (forthcoming) 17-34.

⁷⁰Murtonen, *Treatise* 53; J. Gray, "The God YW in the Religion of Canaan," *JNES* 12(1953) 283.

⁷¹So G. R. Driver, *ZAW* 46 (1928) 7; J. J. Stamm, *Die Akkadische Namengebung* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1939) 113; A. Mutronen, "The Appearance of the Name Yhwh outside Israel" *StudOr* 16 (1951) 3-11; *Treatise* 51-4; M. Reisel, *Y. H. W. H.* 42-7.

⁷²E.g. most recently, M. Dahood, "Ebla, Ugarit and the Old Testament," *Bible and Spade* 8 (1979) 9-10; C. H. Gordon, "Echoes of Ebla," *Essays on the Occasion of the Seventieth Anniversary of The Dropsie University* (Philadelphia: Dropsie, 1979) 135-36. However, caution is urged by A. Archi, "The Epigraphic Evidence from Ebla and the Old Testament," *Bib* 60 (1979) 556-60; R. D. Biggs, "The Ebla Tablets: An Interim Perspective," *BA* 4 (1980) 82-3.

⁷³I. J. Gelb, P. M. Purves and A. A. MacRae, *Nuzi Personal Names* (OIP 57; Chicago: University of Chicago, 1943) 185; cf. H. B. Huffmon, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965) 15.

⁷⁴Found most recently in an 8th century inscription from Kuntillet Ajrud, cf. Z. Meshel and C. Meyers, "The Name of God in the Wilderness of Zin," *BA* 39 (1976) 6-10; Z. Meshel, "Did Yahweh have a Consort?" *BARev* 5 (1979) 24-35.

⁷⁵Ultimately, this discussion reduces itself to the philosophical question of similarity versus identity. Though it is unclear whether a West Semitic deity named Yahweh is to be identified with the Israelite God bearing the same name, balance of probability presently favors the equation, in the mind of the present writer.

to invite a search for meanings not readily apparent, it is not at all surprising to find that a divine revelation like Exodus 3:14 would be couched in paronomastic forms. Nor is such a view inconsistent with those Johannine passages in which Jesus consciously seeks to identify Himself with the "I am" of Exodus.⁷⁶ But neither the gospel nor the proclamation of Exodus is attempting to supply us with the etymology of the tetragrammaton. Exodus 3:14 becomes, therefore, yet another instance of paronomasia in the Bible.

⁷⁶See the insightful studies of R. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (i-xii) (AB 29; New York: Doubleday, 1966) 533-38; P. B. Harner, *The "I AM" of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Johannine Usage and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1970) 6-15.

This material is cited with gracious permission from:

Trinity Journal
2065 Half Day Rd.
Deerfield, IL 60015
www.tiu.edu/trinityjournal/index.html

Please report any errors to Ted Hildebrandt at: thildebrandt@gordon.edu