
by
Scott Jones

A concerted effort has been underway for the past several generations to alter the pronunciation of the Divine Name, known as the Tetragrammaton, from *Jehovah* into the Egyptian slur, *Yahweh*. In spite of these efforts, there is compelling evidence to stick with the traditional pronunciation.

Although a few elementary matters will be explained, this paper will assume that the reader has at least a basic knowledge of this issue. Therefore, those who read with a critical eye should not expect me to deal exhaustively with the technical issues, such as explaining in detail the points, the variations when the word occurs in certain combinations, its root construction, and so forth. On the other hand, the following demonstration will override most any discussions along these lines anyway, and will bring to light much that grammatical speculations and other assumptions can only prevaricate over. Thus, I will only be hitting the highlights - and generally at that - yet hopefully in such a way that even those who are not terribly familiar with this issue will still be able to keep up.

Finally, the information presented here is information that is not widely known in mainstream Christian circles, so I am confident that even those who feel comfortable with this issue will still find the data useful and enlightening. I should also mention that this treatise is intended to be primarily informational, not comprehensive, but as I said above, the following demonstrations speak volumes in and of themselves - much more, in fact, than all the grammatical and theoretical suppositions of modern biblical scholarship ever could. With that in view, let's proceed.

Briefly, the Tetragrammaton is composed of four Hebrew consonants - *YHVH* or *YHWH* (יהוה). The third letter in Hebrew is known as a *vav* and is pronounced by different proponents as either a *V* or a *W*, thus the two different spellings here. For purposes of this discussion, this particular distinction is irrelevant. When the vowel points are added to these four consonants, the word is pronounced literally as *Yehovah*, or the Anglicized form, *Jehovah*. This is the straightforward pronunciation with the vowels.

It is assumed by modern scholars that the vowels have been transferred from the word *Adonai* (אדני), which means *Lord*. This assumption has led modern scholars to believe that the vowels that are affixed to the Tetragrammaton are either not accurate or don't belong there. There is no evidence to support this assumption. In fact, the evidence goes the other way, as we shall see, for the actual evidence suggests that the vowels *are* accurate and that they *do* belong.

Before beginning our demonstration, it becomes necessary to dispel another popular myth, namely, that the Divine Name, that is, the Tetragrammaton, was never pronounced. For example, observe this assertion -

"The Tetragrammaton was not pronounced at all..." Anchor Bible Dictionary, VI-1011

Modern biblical scholarship is bursting at the seams with myth. This is one of them. In fact, the Tetragrammaton was not only pronounced, it was pronounced frequently. There were, however, strict rules under which the Sacred Name was to be pronounced, and it was considered the greatest heresy to violate the Sacred Name by pronouncing it at the wrong time, or in the wrong place, or by the wrong person.

As the rules governing the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton are not the focus of this paper, we will only give a few examples from the Rabbinical literature demonstrating that the Divine Name was pronounced somewhat frequently.

Speaking of Rahab the harlot - "WHAT REWARD DID SHE RECEIVE? SOME OF HER DAUGHTERS WERE MARRIED INTO THE PRIESTHOOD AND BORE SONS WHO STOOD AND PERFORMED SERVICE UPON THE ALTAR AND ENTERED THE SANCTUARY, WHERE, UTTERING THE INEFFABLE NAME OF GOD, THEY WOULD BLESS ISRAEL." MIDRASH RABBAH NUMBERS VIII:9

"IN THE TEMPLE THEY PRONOUNCED THE DIVINE NAME AS IT IS WRITTEN, BUT IN THE COUNTRY BY ITS SUBSTITUTE." MISHNA - TAMID 7:2, TALMUD - TAMID 33B

"SOME SAY ALSO OF THE HIGH PRIEST WHEN HE PRONOUNCED THE DIVINE NAME ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT - FROM JERICHO THEY COULD SMELL THE ODOUR OF THE COMPOUNDING OF INCENSE." MISHNA - TAMID 3.8, TALMUD - TAMID 30B

"OUR RABBIS TAUGHT: TEN TIMES DID THE HIGH PRIEST PRONOUNCE THE NAME ON THAT DAY: THREE TIMES AT THE FIRST CONFESSION, THRICE AT THE SECOND CONFESSION, THRICE IN CONNECTION WITH THE HE-GOAT TO BE SENT AWAY, AND ONCE IN CONNECTION WITH THE LOTS." TALMUD - YOMA 39B

"AND EZRA BLESSED THE LORD, THE GREAT GOD. WHAT DOES 'GREAT' IMPLY? — R. JOSEPH SAID IN THE NAME OF RAB: HE MAGNIFIED HIM BY PRONOUNCING THE INEFFABLE NAME." TALMUD - YOMA 69B

"ANY BENEDICTION IN WHICH THE DIVINE NAME IS NOT MENTIONED IS NO BENEDICTION." TALMUD - BERACHOTH 40B

"DURING THE SECOND TEMPLE PERIOD THE TETRAGRAMMATON WAS PRONOUNCED DURING THE CEREMONY OF BLESSING THE PEOPLE BY THE PRIESTS AND IN OTHER PRAYERS, BUT ONLY IN THE TEMPLE. OUTSIDE OF IT THE SUBSTITUTION ADONAI (LORD) WAS USED." THE CLASSIC MIDRASH - TANNAITIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE, REUVEN HAMMER, PAULIST PRESS, P 168

"NAME, THE TETRAGRAMMATON, AS WRITTEN IN THE VERSE HERE, MUST BE PRONOUNCED BY THE PRIESTS. THE WORD ADONAI MEANING LORD IS SUBSTITUTED FOR THE ACTUAL NAME OF GOD WHEN THE BLESSING IS RECITED OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE." THE CLASSIC MIDRASH - TANNAITIC COMMENTARY ON THE BIBLE, REUVEN HAMMER, PAULIST PRESS, P 223

There are many other references, but these few demonstrate that the Tetragrammaton was pronounced during and before the times of Jesus. Thus, the assertion that "*the Tetragrammaton was not pronounced at all*" is pure myth - an habitual occurrence in modern biblical scholarship - yet, it is a myth that is unfortunately perpetuated ad nauseam, in spite of conclusive evidence to the contrary.

In the 19th century a converted Jew and Masoretic scholar, Christian Ginsburg, undertook a detailed study of the Masoretic text. In this study, he traced the pedigree of the Scriptures and noted how the Jewish guardians of the Hebrew text took safeguards in order to make sure the Tetragrammaton was not accidentally pronounced at the wrong time or by the wrong people or in the wrong place -

"There are, however, a number of compound names in the Bible into the composition of which three out of the four letters of the Incommunicable Name have entered. Moreover, these letters which begin the names in question are actually pointed **יהו** *Jeho*, as the Tetragrammaton itself and hence in a pause at the reading of the first part of the name it sounded as if the reader was pronouncing the Ineffable Name. To guard against it an attempt was made by a certain school of redactors of the text to omit the letter *He* **ה** so that the first part of the names in question has been altered from *Jeho* (**יהו**) into *Jo* **יו**." *Introduction To the Massoretico-Critical Edition Of The Hebrew Bible*, p 369.

Ginsburg then goes on to demonstrate from the text and the Masorah that the following names were *shortened* so as not to *accidentally* pronounce the Tetragrammaton at the wrong time, or in the wrong place, or by the wrong person -

JEHOachaz	יְהוֹאָחָז	JOachaz	יֹאָחָז	<i>hath grasped</i>
JEHOash	יְהוֹאָשׁ	JOash	יֹאָשׁ	<i>is strong</i>
JEHOzabad	יְהוֹזָבָד	JOzabad	יֹזָבָד	<i>hath bestowed</i>
JEHOhanan	יְהוֹחָנָן	JOhanan	יֹחָנָן	<i>hath been gracious</i>
JEHOiada	יְהוֹיָדָע	JOiada	יֹיָדָע	<i>knoweth</i>
JEHOiachin	יְהוֹיָכִין	JOiachin	יֹיָכִין	<i>appointeth</i>
JEHOiakim	יְהוֹיָקִים	JOiakim	יֹיָקִים	<i>raiseth up</i>
JEHOiarib	יְהוֹיָרִיב	JOiarib	יֹיָרִיב	<i>contendeth</i>
JEHOnadab	יְהוֹנָדָב	JOnadab	יֹנָדָב	<i>is noble</i>
JEHOnathan	יְהוֹנָתָן	JOnathan	יֹנָתָן	<i>hath given</i>
JEHOseph	יְהוֹסֵף	JOseph	יֹסֵף	<i>hath increased</i>
JEHOzadak	יְהוֹזָדָק	JOzadak	יֹזָדָק	<i>is righteous</i>
JEHORam	יְהוֹרָם	JORam	יֹרָם	<i>is exalted</i>
JEHOshaphat	יְהוֹשָׁפָט	JOshaphat	יֹשָׁפָט	<i>hath judged</i>

Thus, it is clear how the ancient Jews viewed the correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton, for without exception the first two syllables in the above names are identical in pronunciation to the traditional pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton.

Further, the above names, as Ginsburg notes, are all derivatives of the Tetragrammaton. Like father, like son. The first two syllables in these names was pronounced the same way the Tetragrammaton was pronounced, which is why the Jews took safeguards to shorten these names in the first place. If the Jewish guardians of the Hebrew Scriptures did not consider *Jehovah* to be the correct pronunciation of the Ineffable Name, the above exercise in shortening the names would have been superfluous.

As an aside, it will be seen that the above names all appear in both forms in the Old Testament. In other words, both the longer forms appear, and the shorter forms appear, which merely proves that the names originally appeared in their longer forms before they were shortened, exactly as the Masorah and the text reveals, and as Ginsburg demonstrated.

Further still, it would of course be ludicrous to suppose that the vowel points for these names were transferred from *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי), which is the assumption leveled at the Tetragrammaton. In other words, these names share the same vowel points as the Tetragrammaton, yet it would be blasphemy to assert that the vowel points from *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי) were transferred to these names. Thus, the assertion that these vowels were transferred to the Tetragrammaton is equally ridiculous. Of course, we are not asserting that there is no relationship between the points; what we are questioning is their origin. For example, Adonai and Elohim are almost certainly later derivations and thus succeeded the Tetragrammaton, not the reverse, but that is another subject entirely, as the permutations are quite complex. As a noted Hebraist stated --

Davidson On The Tetragrammaton

The Analytical Hebrew And Chaldee Lexicon, Hendrickson Publishers, p 171

יְהוָה the most sacred name of God, expressive of His *eternal, Self-existence*, first communicated to the Hebrews, Ex. 3.14, comp. chap. 6.3. This name appears to be composed of יְהוֹ (fut. of הוּה, like יְהִי from הָיָה) and וָה (preterite by aphaeresis for הוּה), the verb *to be* being twice repeated as in Ex. 3.14. If we supply אֶשֶׁר between these words we obtain nearly the same sense as expressed there in the words אֶהְיֶה אֶשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה. The Jews who (from an early date) believed this name incommunicable, substituted, in the pronunciation, the consonants of אֲדֹנָי, the vowels being alike in both words (with the exception of simple and composite Sheva), and according to these the punctuators suited the vowels of the prefixes when coming to stand before יְהוָה, as בִּיהוָה, לִיהוָה, מִיהוָה according to אֲדֹנָי, לֵאדֹנָי, מֵאדֹנָי. Where, however, יְהוָה is already preceded by אֲדֹנָי, to avoid repetition, they furnished it with the vowels of אֱלֹהִים, in order that it be pronounced with its consonants, so that אֲדֹנָי יְהוָה is to be read אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהִים. **The punctuators seem to intimate the originality of the vowels of יְהוָה by not pointing Yod with Hhateph-Pattah (יְהוָה) to indicate the reading of אֲדֹנָי just as they point it with Hhateph-Segol to indicate the reading of אֱלֹהִים. We could, moreover, not account for the abbreviated forms יְהוֹ, יוֹ prefixed to so many proper names, unless we consider the vowels of יְהוָה original.**

In fact, the Tetragrammaton is older than Adonai (אֲדֹנָי), as it appears much earlier in the biblical record, indicating - in complete accordance with entropy and the effects of sin - that

Adam and the earliest patriarchs knew God in his Ineffable Majesty - which is to say, they knew Jesus Christ, who was both Jehovah **P**reincarnate and later Jehovah **I**ncarnate - in his Ineffable Majesty. The earliest patriarchs' knowledge of Jesus Christ in his Ineffable Majesty was in stark contrast to the later inhabitants of earth when the image of God became more and more degraded in the minds and hearts of men due to the corrupting influences of sin, such as in the days of Noah.

It is instructive to note that the modern *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (TWOT), after going to great lengths to promote the slur, *Yahweh*, is forced into the following admission -

"Actually, there is a problem with the pronunciation Yahweh. It is a strange combination of old and late elements."

In other words, they can't find the evidence to support their attempt to overturn the Masoretic decrees, and up until the past couple of hundred years, the Masoretic decrees were acknowledged as having been handed down since Moses and Ezra.

A driving force in modern scholarship's *assumptions* concerning the Tetragrammaton is a papyrus fragment belonging to a corpus of papyri known as the Elephantine Papyri. These papyri were written in Aramaic and found in Elephantine, Egypt, an island in the Nile opposite Aswan. These documents are purported to have been written in approximately the 5th century BC. One of these contains one word in which the first three letters of the Tetragrammaton - YHV (יהו) appear.

From this discovery, and factoring in grammatical *assumptions*, modern scholars have assigned the pronunciation *Yahweh* to the Tetragrammaton. This, of course, is purely a guess, as is admitted -

"The pronunciation of yhw as Yahweh is a scholarly guess." Anchor Bible Dictionary, VI-1011.

The same source continues with the standard laissez-faire of modern biblical scholarship, which is to peremptorily deny the Hebrew text any authority when compared to the Egyptian and Assyrian literature, even though the Hebrew text has demonstrated unerring accuracy as opposed to the gross inaccuracy of the Egyptian and Assyrian literature. Accordingly, concerning the appearance of three letters of the Tetragrammaton in one of the Elephantine papyri, the same source asserts -

"The spelling of the divine name yhw (with three consonants) found in the papyri PRESUMABLY represents a form older than the biblical yhw." Anchor Bible Dictionary, IV-1003. (emphasis added).

Presumably? Of course. That's how the myths of modern biblical scholarship are fueled.

Due to the pervasive cultic elements found in the Elephantine papyri, they quickly admit -

"But these texts show combinations of the name Yahweh which cannot be reconciled with what the biblical texts establish as a norm of the faith in Yahweh..." Ibid.

Ergo, modern scholarship has no evidence for the pronunciation of *Yahweh* whatsoever. The assertions are all based on assumption -- which are in turn based upon other assumptions, ad nauseam -- none of which can be substantiated. Furthermore, the born again Christian knows -- and the evidence testifies -- that the first words ever written by man were simply --

"In the beginning God..."

The assertion that the Hebrew text is somehow not as old as, or somehow inferior to, other literature, including the Egyptian and the Assyrian, is also pure myth, just like most everything else in modern biblical scholarship.

In closing, the historical and traditional evidence for the pronunciation of *Jehovah* is preponderant, some of which has just been demonstrated.

Modern scholarship's endeavors to continually alter God's Word and all its components can be summed up in these words -

"For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." 2 Timothy 4:3-4

Let the born again Christian who can clearly see the Preincarnate Christ, even *Jehovah*, walking in the garden in the cool of the day, stick to the old paths, as it is written -

"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