

Is Jehovah the Proper Name of God?

By Jason Hare

Introduction

In a discussion of the various names of God in one popular textbook used in synagogues throughout the English-speaking world in introduction to Judaism classes, we find:

For non-Jews, the most familiar Name derived from the Hebrew Bible is probably Jehovah, a mistransliteration of the four-letter Name, Yud-Hay-Vav-Hay, the Tetragrammaton or, in Hebrew, the Shem Hameforash. This name is actually never vocalized in Hebrew—it is too sacred, too powerful. Reading the four-letter Name aloud, a Jew will say “Adonai.” (Robinson 9)

Like Jeffrey Tigay, emeritus professor of Hebrew and Semitic languages and literature at the University of Pennsylvania and one of the contributors to the popular *Jewish Study Bible*, most scholars today are quick to admit that the “the exact pronunciation [of יהוה] was forgotten and [its] vocalization is uncertain” and that it “was probably pronounced Yahweh” but that we cannot be sure “since the vowels were forgotten in ancient times” (Tigay 103-104). The pronunciation of יהוה as *Yahweh* (or *Yahveh*, since the ם in Hebrew is pronounced as *v* and not as *w*)¹ has become the standard scholarly position on this issue since at least the publication of Wilhelm Gesenius’ lexicon (see Appendix II).

As a result of this scholarship, several Bible translations today use *Yahweh* throughout. Consider the following:

Such was the story of heaven and earth as they were created. At the time when **Yahweh** God made earth and heaven there was as yet no wild bush on the earth nor had any wild plant yet sprung up, for **Yahweh** God had not sent rain on the earth, nor was there any man to till the soil. Instead, water flowed out of the ground and watered all the surface of the soil. **Yahweh** God shaped man from the soil of the ground and blew the breath of life into his nostrils, and man became a living being.

Genesis 2:4-7, NJB

¹ Nehemia Gordon makes a good argument that the Hebrew letter ם *vav* is authentically *v* in Hebrew and should not be compared to the letter ן *waw* in Arabic. Rather the *w* sound appears in a few Jewish communities from Arab areas as the result of the influence of Arabic on Hebrew. See <https://youtu.be/SsLhk39qEqw?t=2m57s> for this discussion.

Still others use *Jehovah*:

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that **Jehovah** God made earth and heaven. And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for **Jehovah** God had not caused it to rain upon the earth: and there was not a man to till the ground; but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And **Jehovah** God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:4-7, ASV

Yet, it is still vastly more common for English translations of the Bible to render יהוה simply as *the LORD* (notice the small capital letters). This is their way of distinguishing יהוה from אֲדֹנָי *adonai* (“the Lord”), a common appellation of God in the biblical text.

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that **the LORD** God made the earth and the heavens, And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for **the LORD** God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And **the LORD** God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:4-7, KJV

For the most part, this comes down simply to convention. When translating, one needs a pragmatic way to consistently render the name יהוה into English for the sake of the readership. One cannot simply write the name in Hebrew letters while writing English, as some Greek copyists of the Septuagint (LXX) did. Surprisingly, in some manuscripts of the LXX we actually find the equivalent of the following:

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that יהוה God made earth and heaven. And no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up; for יהוה God had not caused it to rain upon the earth: and there was not a man to till the ground; but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And יהוה God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:4-7, ASV with יהוה substituted for “Jehovah”

The entire passage is written in English, but the name of God has been preserved in Hebrew (יהוה). We actually see this happen in some manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible among the Dead Sea Scrolls (in which the Name is placed in Paleo-Hebrew letters [איהוה]) and in the Septuagint (see Appendix I)!

Publishers of Bible translations seek to provide a readable text to the average person who wants to engage the text of the Scriptures. Inserting a Hebrew word in the Hebrew alphabet every few paragraphs is not very helpful to the average reader of English. Translators, therefore, need to decide what to do with the Name when they come across it in a text. Our question: To what extent we can know which of the above options (Jehovah, Yahweh or the LORD) are more accurate and which are less so?

Some Preliminary Definitions

Adonist – Someone who holds the opinion that the vowels on יהוה or יהוה are part of the *ketiv-keri* system reminding people to read אֲדֹנָי *adonai* rather than the actual vowels belonging to the name יהוה (YHVH).

Jehovist – Someone who holds that the vowels on יהוה or יהוה represent the preservation of the actual name of the God of Israel as it should be pronounced.

Ketiv-Keri – A system invented by the Masoretic scribes whereby they were able to preserve the text of the Tanach without altering it while still adding vowels, tone marks and notations. *Ketiv* refers to what is written in the text; *keri* refers to any type of alterations that should be read. The *keri* notation could be in the margin of the text (*masorah parva*) or with larger comments above and below the text blocks (*masorah magna*).

Vowel Pointing (Nikud) – The addition of vowels to Hebrew text is called נִקּוּד *nikud* “pointing.” Thus, we call Hebrew text written with no indicated vowels “unpointed,” and text with the vowels is called “pointed.” For example, בית is unpointed and בֵּית is pointed. We can also add a small accent mark (as is done in grammar books) to indicate vocal stress, such that בֵּית tells us that this is *báyit* rather than *bayít* (the stress is on the first syllable).

Tanach – Also called “the Hebrew Bible” or “Jewish Scriptures,” this refers to the books known as the “Old Testament” by Christians. The word *Tanach* (also *Tanakh*) is a Hebrew acronym for the three parts of the Scriptures. *T* is for *Torah* (Pentateuch), *N* is for *Nevi'im* (“Prophets”) and *K/Kh* is for *Ktuvim* (Hagiographa). Together, ת (T), נ (N) and כ (K) are תַּנְכְּ.

Torah – The word תּוֹרָה *torah* means “instruction.” It generally refers to the first five books of the Tanach: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These five books are also called the Pentateuch or the Books of Moses (because of the tradition that Moses wrote them). The word “Torah” is used more generally to refer to the entire body of Jewish teaching and may also refer to the Talmud and other books associated with it (called more frequently תּוֹרַת שֵׁבַע־עֵלָּה *torah she-be'al peh* “Oral Torah”). The vowel points, cantillation marks and masorah found in the text of the Bible today are part of the Oral Torah tradition.

Trope / Cantillation – A system of marks in addition to the vowels that tell a synagogue reader how to put the words to music, not for the sake of singing but for the sake of making the reading both interesting and memorable. The first verse of Genesis is written as follows:

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ	Consonantal Text
בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ	Text with Vowels
בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ:	Text with Trope Marks
בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ:	Text with Vowels and Trope Marks

The Case for Jehovah

There is a minority opinion today which believes that *Jehovah* is not only a proper transliteration of the *Nomen Tetragrammaton* (together with *Jehová* [as in the Spanish Reina Valera translation of the Bible] and *Yehovah*) but that it is even the correct and proper pronunciation of the name of God.² I will do my best to reproduce this argument here. If I am mistaken in any part, I hope that those who hold the position will correct me gently. I have recently made friends with someone who is convinced that Jehovah is the name of God. Through my interaction with him, I have come to know that Nehemia Gordon, a Karaite Jew³ widely respected by both Christians and Messianics, also believes Jehovah to be the correct vocalization of the Name.

The reality of the situation can certainly leave us with a feeling of desperation. As we saw before, it is popularly held that the vowels of the Tetragrammaton were lost to history and that we now have mere suggestions in the Greek language of how to pronounce it from momentary mentionings of how people in certain places pronounced it, all of which look mostly like vowel clusters. Theodore of Cyrus states that “The Samaritans call him *Yavé*, but the Jews call him *Ayá*” (133).⁴ Long before that, Diodorus of Sicily, who lived in the first century BCE, claimed that the Jews called God by the name *Yaó* (158).⁵ So, what is it? Is it *Ayá*, *Yavé*, *Yaó*, *Yehovah* or something else? Was the pronunciation really lost? Does it stand any chance of recovery?

David Paul Drach, a nineteenth-Century French Jewish convert to Catholicism, gives three basic proofs for the pronunciation of the Name as *Jehovah*, which I would summarize as follows (Drach 474-475):

1. **The Jewish Tradition on the Proper Pronunciation.** Jewish tradition has persistently maintained that the name is properly pronounced *Jehovah*. This is supported by the fact that the Talmud calls reading the Name as “Jehovah” reading it “according to how it is written” (בְּכִתְּבִיתּוֹ).
2. **Exact Composite of Three Tenses of הָיָה (“to be”).** The name *Jehovah* is composed of the three tenses of the verb “to be” (הָיָה\הוּא) and contains all the vowels necessary to form each

² The three spellings *Jehovah* (English), *Jehová* (Spanish) and *Yehovah* (direct transliteration of הָיָה from Hebrew according to the vowels) represent the changes through which the *y* went as it came into other languages. In Hebrew, it is represented by the IPA /j/, like the *y* in *yet*. In Spanish, it is IPA /x/, like the *ch* in the Scottish *loch* (or like the *j* in the Spanish word *jamás*). In English, it is IPA /dʒ/, like the *j* in the word *jump*.

³ Karaite (Hebrew: קָרַיִי) is derived from the Hebrew word for Scripture (מִקְרָא *mikra*). Karaite Jews believe like the Christian Reformers in *sola scriptura*—the principle that only Scripture (as opposed to religious tradition or edict) has authority over the lives of believers. Therefore, Karaites reject the traditional Jewish teaching regarding the Oral Torah (Mishnah, Gemara, Midrash, Tosefta, etc.) and the religious dictates of the rabbis.

⁴ καλοῦσι δὲ αὐτὸν Σαμαρεῖται μὲν Ἰαβέ, Ἰουδαῖοι δὲ Ἀϊά. Gesenius misquotes it as ΙΑΩ in his lexicon (see Appendix II), probably by analogy to the passage that he had quoted just above from Diodorus of Sicily, which does authentically read ΙΑΩ (see the note immediately following).

⁵ ἱστοροῦσι... παρὰ δὲ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους Μωσῆν τὸν Ἰαὼ ἐπικαλούμενον θεόν. “Among the Jews, they make inquiry of Moses regarding the God called Yaó.”

tense—*hayah* (past), *hoveh* (present) and *yihyeh* (future). No other proposed pronunciation contains all the features of each tense; therefore, it is only sensible to take *Jehovah* as the proper pronunciation.

3. **Theophoric Names.** Names beginning or ending with portions of the Tetragrammaton (either as *Yeho-* or as *Yo-* at the beginning or *-yah* or *-yahu* at the end) from the earliest periods of Hebrew literature are more easily explained on the basis of *Jehovah* than on any other proposed pronunciation, as even Gesenius admits in his lexicon.

To these three proofs, I would add the following from Nehemia Gordon's paper:

4. **Mark-for-Mark Reading of the Name.** If you read each mark on the word יהוה as saved in the tradition of the Masoretes, you get *Jehovah*. This represents a sort of corollary to Drach's first proof. Since the Name as preserved in the Masoretic tradition literally reads יהוה—that is, י Je-, ה -ho- and ה -vah—we quite readily read *Jehovah*. This is not an instance of scribal substitution, but rather the actual spelling and vocalization of the Name faithfully preserved right before our eyes.
5. **Yahveh as Baseless Conjecture.** The proposed pronunciation *Yahweh* (or *Yahveh*) is merely complete speculation based on transcriptions of Hebrew utterances recorded by Greek authors. The attempt to use Greek transcriptions to reconstruct the supposedly lost pronunciation is futile, given that Greek has no silent *h* and no *v* sound—making it inadequate to represent the Hebrew sounds necessary to write the Name properly. The Samaritan Ἰαβέ as recorded by Diodorus was probably a distortion of יפה *Yafé*, a title Samaritans were known to have used for God.
6. **Weakness of *Jehovah* as *Ketiv Perpetuum*.** The vowels of יהוה do not match the vowels of אֶדְנִי; therefore, it is not actually an instance of perpetual *ketiv-keri*. Besides, for every other word marked for perpetual *ketiv-keri*, there is a scribal notation (cp. נֶעֱרָ in Deuteronomy 22:23, where the elevated ring above the נ signals us to look in the margin and find that we should read נֶעֱרָה). If יהוה were an instance of this feature of the Masoretic system, we would expect to find that ring over יהוה at least some of the times in the manuscripts.
7. ***Jeh-vah* as *Ketiv* for *Jehovah*.** The loss of the *cholem* in the manuscripts (יהוה for יהוה) itself constitutes the scribal attempt to keep readers from pronouncing the name as written. If the placement of the vowels of אֶדְנִי upon the word יהוה was to remind readers not to pronounce it, then the dropping of the *cholem* is unexplicable.

On these seven premises we may say that the case for *Jehovah* finds its support. I will proceed to discuss each of these premises' strengths and weaknesses. Only when this is done will I present what I perceive to be the failures of this position more generally and then the case for the traditional position.

The Jewish Tradition on Jehovah

I must admit that this proof does not ring true for me personally. Drach (474) claims that there is “a constant and ancient tradition” among the Jews regarding the proper pronunciation of the Name. It seems to me that during the time when this author lived there was a lot of fervor about the pronunciation of the Name. The Jewish community was probably just feeding into that fervor. As far as I can tell, Jews do not pronounce the Name – even behind closed doors – so, I doubt that anyone is raised just “knowing” that *Jehovah* is the right way to read the name.

Exact Composite of Three Tenses

Even though Hebrew does not normally use a “to be” verb in the present tense, there is a single instance of it in the Bible.

הִנֵּה יַד־יְהוָה הַזֹּאת בְּמִקְנֶה אֲשֶׁר בַּשָּׂדֶה בַּסּוֹסִים בַּחֲמֹרִים בְּגִמְלִים בְּכֶקֶר וּבְצֹאן דֹּכָר כְּבֹד מְאֹד:

Behold, the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain.

Exodus 9:3, MT and KJV

This is the only instance of a participle (“present tense”) for *hayah* in the Bible. Later Hebrew developed a different form of the participle for this verb. Above we see *hoyah*, which is feminine (in concord with *yad* “hand”), but we can expect that at some point a masculine could have been used, which would have been *hoyeh* (הַזֶּה). This form does not actually appear in the Bible, but it is a possibility.

In modern Hebrew, the infrequently employed present tense of *hayah* shows a *vav* that has replaced the *yod*. The name of the “present tense” is called זֶמַן הֵיחָה *zman hoveh*. In *Adon Olam*, a Jewish creed-type prayer loosely formulated from Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles, we find the line וְהוּא הָיָה וְהוּא הָיָה וְהוּא יִהְיֶה בְּתִפְאָרָה “he is, and he was, and he will [ever] be in splendor.” This concept of God being “he who was and is and is to come” was also imported into Christianity, as we find combinations of this phrase in the Revelation at the end of the Christian Bible.

For יהוה to contain all the tenses of *hayah*, it should not have the *vav*. If we had a *yod* instead, we could see all three forms of the verb perfectly (looking only at the red letters):

יְהָיָה	<i>hayah</i>	“he was”
יְהִיָּה	<i>hoyeh</i>	“he is”
יְהִיָּיָה	<i>yihyeh</i>	“he will be”

The insertion of the *vav* came at a time long after the Hebrew Bible was complete. Indeed, if we have the *vav*, the future tense of *hayah* cannot be formed except by drawing from Aramaic (in which the past tense is הָוָה *havah* “he was” and the future is לְהָוֵה *lehevé* “he will be”). Certainly, this doesn’t match our

case perfectly! So, while it is true that the Tetragrammaton reflects the concept of timelessness with regard to God, it does not contain a perfect copy of each tense of *hayah*. In fact, *it doesn't contain a single complete form of the Hebrew verb "to be"*—not past, not present and not future (unless we adopt a second-Temple form for the present [הָיָה] instead of the extrapolated biblical form [הָיָה]).

Gordon goes so far as to mistakenly say that there is no *pi'el* or *hifil* version of the *h-y-h* root (7). It would indeed be accurate to say that this root is not used in the Bible (much like הָיָה isn't!), but it would not have been impossible for someone to have conceived of such a form. In fact, there are two instances of a *pi'el* form in the Talmudic literature (מְהַוֶּה *mehavah* in *Ktubot* 40b and מְהַיֶּה *mehayeh* in *Kiddushin* 18a) (Fernández 132). In modern Hebrew, the *pi'el* of this word exists in all the tenses and has two meanings: “to constitute” and, less commonly, “to cause to be.” It is at least *possible* that יהוה emerged with a causative sense, as God is the one who brings all things into existence. If we use the root הוה as in Aramaic (the Name is probably not distinct to the Hebrew language, after all), then we could easily conceive of the form יְהוֹהֵי *yehaveh* “he brings into being” or יְהוֹהֵי *yahaveh* with the same meaning. The former would be *pi'el* and the latter *hifil*—both being possibilities that we cannot truly rule out.

It may be that this is the origin of the Name, and it later took on the meaning of “eternal” in addition (and not in opposition) to its original etymological and morphological connotations. Gordon is wrong in claiming that no *pi'el* or *hifil* forms exist for this root. The *pi'el* certainly exists in rabbinic and modern Hebrew, and there's no reason to rule it out as a possibility, just as the present tense in the *qal* is only used once and could easily have not been used—and then Gordon might claim that the *qal* participle was also an impossibility (even though we have it at later stages of the language's development).

Given that the Tetragrammaton contains a *vav*, neither *Jehovah* nor *Yahveh* fits the claim better. It doesn't seem to be a good argument, except to explain the relationship between the root and the various tenses. Besides, in reality the entire concept would be encapsulated in using the *imperfect*, which includes the concept of current and future existence. Thus, אֶהְיֶה *ehyeh* “I shall be” includes the oh-so-famous “I am.” There is no need to fit all of the vowels and consonants in perfect harmony into the Name. It would more fitting to express Isaac's name as “ever laughing” or Jacob's as “ever deceiving,” since both of their names really do contain everything necessary for past, present and future.

צָחַק *tsachak* “he laughed”
צֹחֵק *tsochek* “he laughs”
יִצְחָק *yitschak* “he will laugh”

עָזַב *akav* “he deceived”
עֹזֵב *okev* “he deceives”
יַעֲקֹב *ya'akov* “he will deceive”

Theophoric Names

With regard to theophoric names, I have to agree with Gesenius that the case for *Jehovah* seems stronger here than in the other proofs herein mentioned. Drach pulls up a list of such names to drive home his point (476-477), and such lists are certainly sported on every site that argues for *Jehovah* against other forms of the Name.

On the face of it, it seems clear that יהוה *yeho-* is just added to a lot of other words to say that *Yehovah* does this or that, or that *Yehovah* is this or that. For example, יהוה אל *Yeho'el* means “YHWH is God.” Similarly, יהושפט *Yehoshafat* means “YHWH judges.” It looks like Lego’s that are just pieced together or puzzle pieces that fit perfectly. It is certainly easier to imagine יהוה *Yehovah* being shortened to *Yeho* and then added to a name than to deal with vowel shifting and morphology rules!

On the other hand, how does *Yehó* become *Yáh(u)* at the end of such a name? For example, the inverse of *Yeho'el* is *Elijah(u)* (אלהיה or אליהו), meaning “My God is Yah(u).” Where did the long *-a-* come from? Wouldn’t it be more sensible to imagine a *Yáho* or *Yáhu* than a *Yehó* turning into the ending? If it is such a perfect match as a prefix, why the mismatching as a suffix?

There are actually quite a lot of things going on here in Hebrew morphology that can explain all of these various prefixes and suffixes.

1. **Interplay between *o* and *u*.** Consider this word: כָּל *kol* “all.” When it is joined to another word, the vowel shortens: כָּל־לֵבָבְךָ *kol-levavcha* “all your heart.” When it takes a suffix, it shifts to *u*: כָּלָם *kulam* “all of them.” Additionally, we have the word חֹק *chok* “statute,” which becomes חֻקֹּת *chukot* “statutes” in the plural. There is obvious interchange between *u* and *o*, so we should not be surprised to see both *o* and *u* in the second syllable of the abbreviated name (when the name is truncated—thus, *yeho* and *yahu*). That part is not a problem and conforms to both positions.
2. **Dropping of final *heh* after *vav*.** In the Bible, there are two imperfect verbal forms: one that represents a relative future tense (like יִבְנֶה *yivneh* “he will build”) and one that represents a sequential verb in a narrative text (like וַיִּבֶן *vayiven* “and he built”). When a root ends in *heh*, the creation of a *vav-consecutive* form (as in *vayiven*) often results in the loss of the final syllable, which can cause changes to the letter that precedes it. For example, יִבְכֶּה *yivkeh* “he will cry” becomes וַיִּבֶךְ *vayivk* “and he cried”; יַעֲשֶׂה *ya'aseh* “he will do” becomes וַיַּעַשׂ *vayá'as* “and he did”; יִשְׁתֶּה *yishteh* “he will drink” becomes וַיִּשְׁתַּי *vayesht* “and he drank.” A more interesting case is יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה *yishtachaveh* “he will bow down,” which becomes וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ *vayishtáchu* “and he bowed down.”⁶ If we had simply left off the *heh*, as happened in all the other cases just compared, we would have been left with a theoretical **vayishtachv*. Hebrew didn’t like that consonantal *v* hanging around at the end of the word, so it switched it to a vowel (*u*). This is what we see when the *heh* is truncated from the end of theophoric names: if the *v* had been left to stand at the end, it would have caused unusual consonant clusters (for example, **elijahv*). To correct for this, the *vav* was either dropped (*elijah*) or converted into a vowel (*elijahu*). Thus, the form *Yahveh* properly predicts the suffix *-yah* and *-yahu* in

⁶ Here is the process step by step:

יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה	<i>yishtachaveh</i>	full imperfect (“future”) form	=	יִבְנֶה
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה*	<i>*vayishtachaveh</i>	addition of <i>va-</i> for <i>vav-consecutive</i> (inversion)	=	וַיִּבְנֶה*
וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶה*	<i>*vayishtachv</i>	loss of final <i>heh</i> syllable (bad consonant cluster)	=	וַיִּבְנֶה*
וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ	<i>vayishtáchu</i>	resolution of consonant cluster	=	וַיִּבְנֶה

theophoric names (*Yahveh* › **yahveh* › **yahv* › *yah(u)*). This is the best explanation for what is happening in theophoric names with the *-yah(u)* suffix.

3. **Prefix Also Affected by Truncation.** When *Yahveh* is truncated to create a prefix, we are again left with an awkward consonant cluster (**yahv*) that is shifted to a vowel. In this case, it is *o* rather than *u* (as with the suffix). The same principle is involved—that they were avoiding an odd consonant cluster.
4. **Weighty Suffixes Cause Earlier Vowel Reductions.** This is seen very clearly in Hebrew verbs when the second-person plural endings are added in the *qal* of the perfect (“past”) tense. When a heavy suffix pulls the weight of the accent to the final syllable of a verb in the *qal*, an earlier syllable will show vowel reduction – either completely (to *sheva*) or partially (to a *chataf* vowel, in the case of gutturals). Thus:

שָׁמַר <i>shamar</i> “he kept”	שָׁמַרְתֶּם <i>sh’martém</i> “you (mp.) kept”
לָקַח <i>lakach</i> “he took”	לָקַחְתֶּם <i>l’kachtén</i> “you (fp.) took”
הָלַךְ <i>halach</i> “he went”	הָלַכְתֶּם <i>halachtém</i> “you (mp.) went”

When the prefix **yaho-* is added to the beginning of a word, it is far removed from the final syllable. It, therefore, loses its long vowel (*a*), which is replaced by a *sheva*.

<i>*yaho-</i> › <i>*yaho-shafát</i> › <i>yeho-shafat</i> (<i>Yehoshafat</i> = <i>Yoshafat</i>)
<i>*yaho-</i> › <i>*yaho-ézer</i> › <i>yeho-ézer</i> (<i>Yehoezer</i> = <i>Yoezer</i>)
<i>*yaho-</i> › <i>*yaho-el</i> › <i>yeho-el</i> (<i>Yehoel</i> = <i>Yoel</i>)
<i>*yaho-</i> › <i>*yaho-natan</i> › <i>yeho-natan</i> (<i>Yehonatan</i> = <i>Yonatan</i>)

It’s quite likely that **yaho-* so regularly shifted at a very early stage in the development of the language that *yeho-* became a fixed form anyway. For example, the word for “he delivered” is **הוֹשִׁיעַ** *hoshia*, with the *ho* already existing as part of the word. Normally, to form the imperfect (“future”) form, you replace the *heh* in the *hifil* stem. Thus, we have **יִשְׁיַע** *yoshia* “he will deliver.” Yet, with this word we actually find two instances of the *yod* being added before the *heh*, which gives us **יְהוֹשִׁיעַ** “he will deliver” (see Psalm 116:6 and 1 Samuel 17:47). Forming the name “Joshua” doesn’t even require the addition of the *yeho-* prefix, but we should assume that it is assimilated into the verbal form and that *yeho-* in *yehoshua* is playing double duty—both as the theophoric prefix and as part of the verbal meaning.

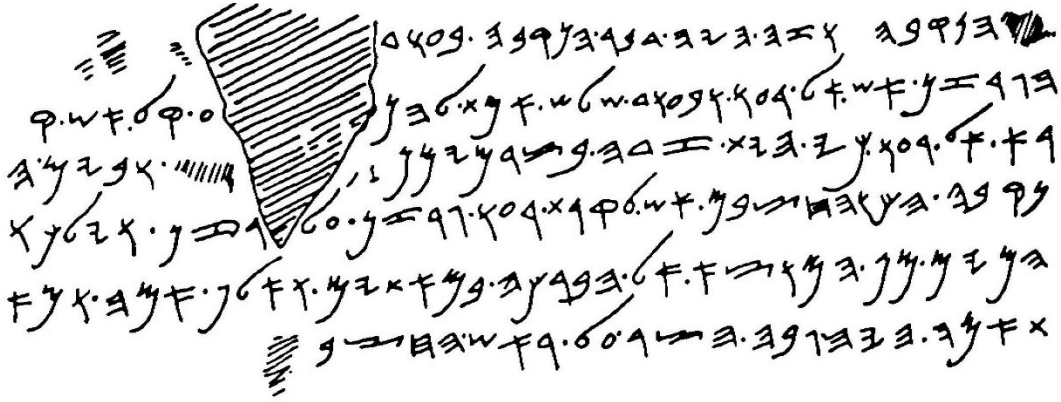
Once these features of Hebrew grammar are allowed for, it is clear that on all counts, the theophoric names can be better accounted for by the assumption of *Yahveh* than of *Yehovah*.

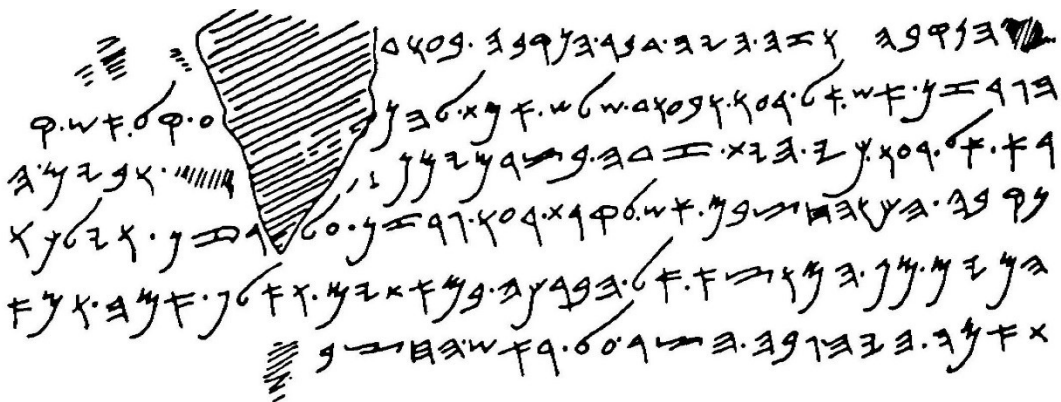
Phonetic Reading and כְּתִיבָתוֹ

When you read יהוה phonetically as pointed (that is, with the vowels as written), you arrive at *Yehovah*. The phonetic reading of הוּא, which is extremely common in the Torah, is *hiv*. We all know that we're supposed to read it as הִיא *hi* "she, it" even though it is never explained in the text of the Bible. There are some words in the Bible that the scribes intended us to read *other than* how they are written (see *Ketiv-Keri* immediately below). This is not a worthy argument.

The Talmudic prohibition on reading the name of God relates specifically to reading it כְּתִיבָתוֹ *bichtivato* "as it is written." Jehovahists attempt to equate "reading the name as it is written" with "reading the name as Jehovah."

Ketiv-Keri – Correcting the Hebrew Text

The text of the Bible from ancient times included only consonants. When the Torah was originally written, the alphabet of Hebrew looked something like this: . These letters were etched onto city walls and gates, memorial stones and even underground tunnels – like the Siloam Tunnel Inscription in Jerusalem's Old City, which speaks about the event recorded in the Bible when Hezekiah ordered the re-routing of the Gihon spring under the city walls to avoid a drought during a siege.



Jewish tradition tells us that Ezra copied the Torah into the script that he learned in Babylonian exile.⁷ There is little textual variation in the letters of the Torah (as opposed to works like Isaiah and Jeremiah, which show a lot of divergence between the Masoretic Text [MT] and the Dead Sea Scrolls [DSS], for example). When the scribe family in Tiberias took it upon themselves to add a consistent and useful vocalization to the text, the consonants of the Bible had already been set apart as unchangeable. Rather than changing the text in any way, the Masoretes devised a way of writing above, under and

⁷ "At first the Torah was given to Israel in the Hebrew script and the Holy Tongue. It was given them again in the days of Ezra in the script of the Assyrian language and the Aramaic tongue." (B *Sanhedrin* 21B)

בְּתַחֲלָה נִתְּנָה תּוֹרָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכַתָּב עִבְרִי וּלְשׁוֹן הַקֹּדֶשׁ. חֲזָרָה וְנִתְּנָה לָהֶם בְּיָמֵי עֶזְרָא בְּכַתָּב אַשּׁוּרִית וּלְשׁוֹן אַרְמִי.

inside the letters to represent (1) vowels, (2) verse divisions, (3) proper public recitation and (4) mistakes within the text.

Around the time of Ezra, the men of the Great Synod (אֲנָשֵׁי בְּנֵי־הַסֵּדֶר) decided to make a few changes to the consonantal text in order to keep away idolatry. These emendations were called תִּקְוֵי סוֹפְרִים *Tikunei Sofrim* (“Scribal Corrections”). The rabbis indicated 18 places in which these emendations were adapted into the text of the Torah. However, by the time of the Masoretes and well before, the consonantal text was fixed.

How can you make changes to a fixed text? The nature of the Hebrew language allowed for such cosmetic emendation. Let’s say that your text reads **וְאַחַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹן** and you want it to say something else. First, you would place vowels on the words that you want to keep...

וְאַחַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹן	{text as received}
וְאַחַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹן	{pointing of acceptable words}
וְאַחַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹן	{place ring above unacceptable form}
ק' אֶת־רֵעֶךָ	{write in margin how you think it should read}

The text as it appears is called **כְּתִיב** *ktiv* “what is written” (in Aramaic). The correction is called **קרי** *kri* or **קרי** *keri* (“what is read”; cp. Ezra 4:18 MT). In the margin of the Bible, ק' is generally the notation for *kri*.

In a couple of instances – notably, **היא** *hi* “she, it” and **יהוה** *YHWH* – the corrections are so common that they are never noted in the margins of the text. Every time that you read **היא** you must read **היא** without being reminded. Similarly, when you see **יהוה** your mind should automatically connect to **אֲדֹנָי** *adonai* and read that word instead.

The letter *yod* does not naturally hold a *chataf* vowel. Therefore, the *chataf patach* is written as a *sheva* (אָ > יָ). Although the *cholem* is no present in all forms, its lack does not affect anything. It simply makes reading according to the points impossible, since *sheva* is not a full vowel that could hold a closed syllable. This should be clear since we all agree that **אֲדֹנָי יְהוה** (even without the *cholem*) has **אֱלֹהִים** *elohim* as the *keri* for **יהוה**. If the *chataf segol* can be reduced to the *shema* here (אָ > יָ – though some manuscripts have יְ), then the same is the case for **אֲדֹנָי**. To argue that “**יהוה** does not carry the vowels of **אֲדֹנָי**” would be the same as arguing that “**יהוה** does not carry the vowels of **אֱלֹהִים**,” but we all agree that it does.

Use of Greek Transcriptions

In arguing that “whatever Theodoret of Cyrus heard from the Samaritans, his mission of transcribing the name in Greek was hopeless” (5), Nehemia Gordon makes several errors. First off, the common Greek that was spoken in the Hellenistic period (“Koiné”) underwent several changes from the earlier Attic form of the language. One of these changes was the shift in pronunciation of the letter β *beta*, which was a hard *b* in the classical period. Randall Buth (223) states that by the time of the Koiné, it had shifted to something of the *b/v* of Spanish (in which *b* and *v* sound the same—the value of which is somewhere between them both). In the later language (as in Greece today), β became exactly the sound of the English *v*. Thus, Ιαβέ is exactly *ya-VE* (the pronunciation of either **יהוה** or **יהוה**).

I'm actually at a loss for why Gordon would propose **יָבֵה** – seeing that a *chataf patach* cannot stand in a closed syllable. He should automatically have shifted that to **יָבֵהּ**, which is phonetically closer to the reality. Once he takes the real sound of β at the time into account, it easily becomes **יָבֵהּ** or **יָבֵהּ** – which is simply missing the unpronounced *heh*: **יָבֵהּ**. The claim that Hebrew doesn't have non-consonantal *heh* inside a word is also false, as is demonstrated by the word **יְהוֹמֵהּ** in Mainmonides' thirteenth principle. The fact that it is rare does not mean that it is impossible. In fact, Gesenius specifically states that it is possible:

When a guttural with *quiescent Šwâ* happens to close a syllable in the middle of a word, the strongly closed syllable (with *quiescent Šwâ*) may remain; necessarily so with **ח**, **ע**, and **ה** at the end of the tone-syllable, e.g. **יְהוֹמֵהּ**, **יְהוֹמֵהּ**, but also *before* the tone (see examples under *i*), even with **א**. (*Grammar* 78)

He fails to list an example with *heh* because it so often disappears in a situation like this (cp. **בָּנִיתִי** *baníti* “I built” from **בָּנָה** *banah* “he built”). He did, however, in *i* (as he noted) mention the case of **יְהוֹגֵהּ** *yehgu* “they will mediate,” which (of course) brings up **יְהוֹגֵהּ** *yehgeh* “he will meditate.” There is no problem at all with *heh* closing the first syllable of *Yahveh*.

None of the arguments that he made in this section of his paper hold any weight at all. The form **Ἰαβέ** quite directly transliterates **יָהוֹה** into Greek, and **Ἰαώ** (also spelled **Ἰαοῦ** in some texts) clearly represents **יָהּ** *Yahu*. There is no reason to find fault with these transliterations.

The fact is that there are lot of different transliterations into Greek. Nehemia Gordon gives 33 different transliterations found in Greek manuscripts on his website. Here they are:

1. Ἰεωά	10. Ἰαουέ	19. Ἰαέ	28. Ἰαβού
2. Ἰηωά	11. Ἰαουέη	20. Ἰαή	29. Ἰαβέ
3. Ἰεουά	12. Ἰαουηέ	21. Ἰεού/Ἰεοῦ	30. Ἰαβαί
4. Ἰηουά	13. Ἰωά	22. Ἰεύ	31. Ἰάων
5. Ἰευά	14. Ἰωαά	23. Ἰεώ	32. Ἰαχώ
6. Ἰαωά	15. Ἰαώ/Ἰαῶ	24. Ἰεαέ	33. Ἰαβά
7. Ἰανέ	16. Ἰάο	25. Ἰεώχ	
8. Ἰανή	17. Ἰαεώ	26. Ἰαεωβά	
9. Ἰαού	18. Ἰαεή	27. Ἰαβώ	

Some of these are worse than others, but if you understand the way that Greek was pronounced at the time, you find several groups that get close to the Hebrew – whether *Yehovah*, *Yah*, *Yahu/Yaho* or *Yahveh*. Here they are divided into groups, leaving the worst out of the groupings:

Yehovah:	Ἰεωά, Ἰηωά, Ἰεουά, Ἰηουά, Ἰευά, Ἰαωά, Ἰαουέη, Ἰαουηέ, Ἰαεωβά
Yahveh:	Ἰανέ, Ἰανή, Ἰαουέ, Ἰαβέ, Ἰαβαί, Ἰαβά
Yahu/Yaho:	Ἰαού, Ἰαώ, Ἰάο, Ἰάων, Ἰαχώ

These are actually pretty good approximates, remember that $\alpha\nu = av$, that $\epsilon\nu = ev$, that $\beta = v$, that $ou = v/w$, that $\epsilon = \alpha i$, etc (see Buth's short publication on Koiné pronunciation norms). If you deal with the regular orthographic errors that were taking place in writings from the time, we shouldn't be surprised to find such a wide range of spellings. In fact, even $\eta\mu\iota\nu$ ("to us") was misspelled as $\eta\mu\epsilon\iota\nu$ in many Koiné manuscripts from the period.

Explanation of the Lack of *Cholem*

In his latest release on this issue (since he is so interested in it), Nehemia Gordon reports that there are six manuscripts in which some instances of יהוה (with the *cholem* above the *vav* – like יְ) have been discovered. The name is normally written in the manuscripts as יהוה (with no upper dot), which is not really pronounceable in Hebrew. Mr. Gordon surmises that the full form is with the upper dot, and that the scribes who copied the manuscripts were following the Masoretic tradition of leaving of the dot in order to remind people *not* to read it as "Jehovah." The assumption behind this is that the scribes actually *knew* that "Jehovah" was the name and the way to read it, but that leaving off the upper dot would serve as a reminder not to pronounce it.

First off, there is a trope mark that *revi'i* or *revi'a* that looks almost like a *cholem* dot. On a *vav*, the *cholem* looks like יְ while the trope mark looks like יִ , which is extremely similar. Some instances of יהוה that are said to carry the *cholem* may actually be the *revi'i* mark. יהוה with *cholem* (יְהוה) and with *revi'i* (יִהוה). Each instance needs to be examined to make sure that it's not a trope mark instead of the vowel mark.

Since the scribe is writing יהוה *YHWH* while reciting the word אֲדֹנָי *adonai* to himself (since we all tend to read out loud while copying a text), it should not surprise anyone that on some occasions he would write the whole vowel set – and it is not a violation of the word to do so. It shouldn't require much of an explanation, since there is no pattern among the manuscripts that certain verses contain it *this way* and other verses contain it *that way*. The same thing could happen whether the scribe were thinking *Jehovah* or *Adonai* while making his copy. No weight is added to the side of the Jehovahists with this argument.

Attachable Prepositions and Vav with יהוה in Hebrew

One thing that I have yet to see from the Jehovahist position is an explanation of the various syntactic prefixes placed on יהוה within sentences.

First, a little background. In English, we do not have any prepositions that are attached to words. In Hebrew, however, there are such things. Specifically, there are four: בִּ *b-* means "in, at, with, against" (depending on the context: "I am *in* the city." "I'm *at* home." "I fought *with/against* my enemy."); לִּ *l-* means "to, for" (as in: "I gave the book *to* him." "I bought a present *for* her."); and, כִּ *k-* means "like, as, according to" (as in: "That child is *like* my son." "I did *as* he requested." "I did everything *according to* the instructions."). The fourth is sometimes attached and sometimes not (מִן *min* "from, out of"). When these prepositions attach to words, strange things sometimes happen.

Expected Cases

Normally, the preposition simply attaches: **בְּעִיר** *b'ir* “in a city,” **כְּיֶלֶד** *k'yeled* “like a child,” **לְעוֹלָם** *le'olam* “forever.”

בְּעִיר <i>b'ir</i> “in a city”	בְּבַיִת <i>b'váyit</i> “in a house”
לְעִיר <i>l'ir</i> “for a city”	לְבַיִת <i>l'váyit</i> “for a house”
כְּעִיר <i>k'ir</i> “like a city”	כְּבַיִת <i>k'váyit</i> “like a house”

This is routine and happens all the time in the pages of the Bible. However, if there is a *sheva* in the first syllable, Hebrew doesn't like having two *shevas* together in that situation, so the first will naturally change to *-i-* if it can.

בְּבֵאֵר <i>biv'er</i> “in a well”	לְבֵאֵר <i>liv'er</i> “to a well”
---	--

If there's a *chataf* vowel, the prefix will adopt the related full short vowel.

בְּאַרֹן <i>ba'aron</i> “in a chest”	כְּאַרֹן <i>ka'aron</i> “like a chest”
---	---

If there is a *yod* with *sheva* after the prefix, the prefix again takes *-i-* (two *shevas* together), but the second *sheva* simply disappears.

יְהוּדָה <i>yehudah</i> “Judah”	יְרוּשָׁלַיִם <i>yerushaláyim</i> “Jerusalem”
לְיְהוּדָה* <i>*le-yehudah</i>	לְיְרוּשָׁלַיִם* <i>*le-yerushalayim</i> {prefixed prep}
לְיִהוּדָה* <i>*liyhudah</i>	לְיִרוּשָׁלַיִם* <i>*liyrushaláyim</i> {reduction of first <i>sheva</i> }
לִיהוּדָה <i>lihudah</i> “to Judah” (real)	לִירוּשָׁלַיִם <i>lirushaláyim</i> (real) {loss of second <i>sheva</i> }

Explanation: Words with י in the first syllable become יִ after prefixed prepositions.

There are two words for which none of this happens. We would expect, according to the rules, to find **לְאֲדֹנָי** *la'adonai* “to the Lord” and **לְאֱלֹהִים** *le'elohim* “to God” (or “to the gods”). Instead, we find a curious occurrence. The alef complete quiesces and the prefix retains its vowel (except that *e* lengthens).

לְאֲדֹנָי <i>la'donai</i> “to the Lord”	לְאֱלֹהִים <i>le'lohim</i> “to God” (or “to the gods”)
--	---

Explanation: *Adonai* and *elohim* behave uniquely with prefixed prepositions.

The Case of the Tetragrammaton

What's curious is that if we suppose that the proper vowels of יהוה are יהוה, then we would expect it to follow along like יהודה “Judah” and ירושלים “Jerusalem” (and every other noun like them – including theophoric names). We would expect all of these to be the same:

יְרוּשָׁלַם	Jerusalem	בְּיְרוּשָׁלַם	in Jerusalem	וְיְרוּשָׁלַם	and Jerusalem
יְהוּדָה	Judah	בְּיְהוּדָה	in Judah	וְיְהוּדָה	and Judah
יְהוֹשֻׁעַ	Joshua	בְּיְהוֹשֻׁעַ	in Joshua	וְיְהוֹשֻׁעַ	and Joshua
יְהוָה	Jehovah	בְּיְהוָה	in Jehovah	וְיְהוָה	and Jehovah

Explanation: We would expect יהוה to behave like יהודה or ירושלים, but it doesn't.

Instead, we see that יהוה follows אֲדֹנָי (and *not* יהודה) in every instance – with all four prefixed prepositions and the *vav* conjunction. On the far right is what we would expect to see if *Jehovah* were the intended pronunciation:

Adonai	YHWH (real)	YHWH (expected)	Judah
אֲדֹנָי my Lord	יְהוָה YHWH	יְהוָה	יְהוּדָה Judah
בְּאֲדֹנָי in my Lord	בְּיְהוָה in YHWH	בְּיְהוָה	בְּיְהוּדָה in Judah
לְאֲדֹנָי to my Lord	לְיְהוָה to YHWH	לְיְהוָה	לְיְהוּדָה to Judah
כְּאֲדֹנָי like my Lord	כְּיְהוָה like YHWH	כְּיְהוָה	כְּיְהוּדָה like Judah
מֵאֲדֹנָי from my Lord	מֵיְהוָה from YHWH	מֵיְהוָה	מֵיְהוּדָה from Judah
וְאֲדֹנָי and my Lord	וְיְהוָה and YHWH	וְיְהוָה	וְיְהוּדָה and Judah

Explanation: Again, we would expect יהוה to behave like יהודה, but it doesn't... ever.

In reality, *none* of the forms in the “YHWH (expected)” column is evidenced anywhere in the manuscripts or in the printed Bibles that we have today. The middle column is what we see – and it is what we would expect to see (with or without the *cholem*) if יהוה were bearing the vowels of אֲדֹנָי as a *keri perpetuum*.

The strangest instance is what happens with מִן *min* “from.” When it is attached to a word, the ך assimilates into the following letter and is represented by a *dagesh* – a dot in the middle of the letter. Thus, מִיְלֵד *miyéled* “from a child” has a dot in the *yod* (י) that represents the assimilation of the *nun*. If words have ך at the beginning, we see that the ך simply becomes a vowel letter (like מִיְהוֹשֻׁעַ *mihoshua* “from Joshua”). If the real vowels of יהוה were as written, we would expect מִיְהוָה *mihovah* “from Jehovah,” but we actually see it as if the assimilation were rejected – as happens with gutturals (like *alef*)! So, מֵעֵץ *me'ets* “from wood” and מֵאָדָם *me'adam* “from Adam.” Why would יהוה reject the assimilation? There is no reason for מִיְהוָה according to the rules of Hebrew pointing.

The position of the Jehovist at this point must be completely lost because there is no explanation available for why attached prepositions and the conjunctive *vav* should be pointed this way – except from the Adonist position.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have laid out the arguments used by Jehovahists such as Nehemia Gordon use to support their claim that the *Nomen Tetragrammaton* (יהוה) should be understood to have rightly been preserved with its vowels as it is written in the text of the Hebrew Bible (except that it often lacks the *cholem*). The writings of David Paul Drach (“Sir P.L.B. Drach” in the cover of his book), from France at the end of the 19th Century, are still used today by those who hold this position.

Until I started researching for this paper, I had not really given much thought to how to pronounce the name. For some time, I had online interactions with Messianics on a certain web forum, and they generally used the name Yahweh to refer to God, but it wasn’t something that I participated in or opposed. It was my habit to say אֲדֹנָי *Adonai* when reading the Bible and הָשֵׁם *HaShem* when talking to people. I had run into the name Yahweh in reading things written about the Bible and ancient Israel. It never particularly bothered me—as I’ve never been one to really enjoy hearing the word “forbidden” (אָסוּר). Everyone had always told me that pronouncing the Name was “forbidden,” but superstition doesn’t sit well with me.

However, I’d also heard on so many occasions that Jehovah wasn’t a real name, that it was created by reading the letters of the Tetragrammaton with the vowels of *Adonai*. That’s what I was taught in Hebrew class while being told not to read the Name out loud.

Imagine my surprise to hear someone who knows the Hebrew language – I’ve heard Nehemia speak Hebrew on YouTube with his thick American accent – and received his M.A. in biblical studies from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem saying that “Jehovah” is the right way to read the Name! This is what made me look into the question more seriously – in the same way that hearing recently about a fringe group in the United States claiming that the Earth is flat made me stop and think.

I began to think about it constantly. Having dinner with my friends, I would ask them questions that must have seemed so irrelevant and *non-sequitur* to them. It was in these lines of questions that I thought about how I would expect יהוה to react with the prepositions if the Jehovahist position were right. I thought about what would cause the prefixed and suffixed Name to behave in certain ways. By kicking these things around in my head, I came to the conclusion that I needed to see if the arguments brought up on the Jehovahist side could better explain all of the relevant linguistic phenomena related to the Name and what other types of arguments that they offered. This led to more discussions with the person who initiated this line of thinking. He brought Drach and other authors to my attention, and I ended up translating portions of Drach from French and Latin to get to an understanding of his arguments.

In the end, the arguments that I came across did have a certain level of persuasive power. I suspended my belief and allowed for the idea that “Jehovah” was just suppressed by religious leaders while being fully known. I just looked at the way that the linguistic features of the language works, allowing that it was *possible* that scribes and rabbis for more than a millennium have been hiding the name of God *out in the open*, as it were.

In the end, I am unconvinced. The name יהוה behaves in all cases of vocalic pointing as if it were אֲדֹנָי and not as we would expect it if it were truly pronounced as Jehovahists claim. My conclusion is that Jehovah is *not* the way the name should be read – and I now lean heavily in favor of *Yahveh*.

Appendix I: Appearance of יהוה in Manuscripts

In some Greek manuscripts of the Septuagint, we find something like the following, in which יהוה (that is, יהוה in the letters used in many of the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially the Great Isaiah Scroll) interrupts a string of Greek text:

ΚΑΙ ΕΛΑΒΕΝ יהוה Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΤΟΝ	ΤΟΥ ΕΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΓΙΝΩΣΚΕΙΝ ΚΑΛΟΝ
ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΝ ΟΝ ΕΠΛΑΣΕΝ ΚΑΙ	ΚΑΙ ΠΟΗΝΡΟΝ ΟΥ ΦΑΓΕΣΘΕ ΑΠ
ΕΘΕΤΟ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣΩ	ΑΥΤΟΥ Η Δ ΑΝ ΗΜΕΡΑΙ ΦΑΓΗΤΕ ΑΠ
ΕΡΓΑΖΕΣΘΑΙ ΑΥΤΟΝ ΚΑΙ	ΑΥΤΟΥ ΘΑΝΑΤΩ ΑΠΟΘΝΕΙΣΘΕ ΚΑΙ
ΦΥΛΑΣΣΕΙΝ ΚΑΙ ΕΝΕΤΕΙΛΑΤΟ יהוה	ΕΙΠΕΝ יהוה Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΟΥ ΚΑΛΟΝ
Ο ΘΕΟΣ ΤΩ ΑΔΑΜ ΛΕΓΩΝ ΑΠΟ	ΕΙΝΑΙ ΤΟΝ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΟΝ ΜΟΝΟΝ
ΠΑΝΤΟΣ ΕΥΛΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΤΩ	ΠΟΙΗΣΩΜΕΝ ΑΥΤΩ ΒΟΗΘΟΝ ΚΑΤ
ΠΑΡΑΔΕΙΣΩ ΒΡΩΣΕΙ ΦΑΓΗ ΑΠΟ ΔΕ	ΑΥΤΟΝ

Genesis 2:15-18, LXX (theoretical)

We are told that Aquila's translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek used the Paleo-Hebrew letters to express the Name, although in Origen's *Hexapla* it's been replaced with ΚΥΡΙΟΣ. The papyrus roll labeled *Fouad* 266 (comprised of fragments 847, 848 and 942 in Rahfls' numbering system) contains portions of a Greek translation of the book of Deuteronomy that displays the Name in the regular Hebrew letters of the time (something like יהוה) in the middle of a line. It appears this way several many times in this manuscript, which looks something similar to the above rendition of Genesis 2:15-18.

We even find some manuscripts among the Dead Sea Scrolls in which the regular Hebrew text is interrupted when the *nomen tetragrammaton* ("four-letter name") appears, so that they can write it in Paleo-Hebrew to set it off from the rest of the text. It might appear something like this:

אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם
 ביום עשות אלהים את השמים והארץ
 וישמים ואל שמים השמים והארץ
 בארץ ואל עשב השמים והארץ
 לא העטוי אלהים על הארץ
 וארץ ארץ לעבד את הארץ וארץ
 על הארץ והשמים את על נברא הארץ
 וישמים אלהים את הארץ עבד על
 הארץ והארץ בארץ נשמת חיה ויהי
 הארץ לנפש חיה

Genesis 2:4-7, MT (theoretical)

Thus, the question of what to do with the Tetragrammaton has long vexed those who worked with the biblical text, no matter what language they were working with. In Latin, it is regularly translated as *Dominus* in all situations.

Appendix II: Gesenius on the *Nomen Tetragrammaton*

Gesenius' *Lexicon* is in the public domain. Therefore, I have chosen to include the entire main entry on יהוה here as an appendix. The following has, then, been adopted from Gesenius' *Lexicon* 337-338 as accessed on archive.org.

יהוה *Jehovah*, pr. name of the supreme God (האֱלֹהִים) amongst the Hebrews. The later Hebrews, for some centuries before the time of Christ, either misled by a false interpretation of certain laws (Ex. 20:7; Lev. 24:11), or else following some old superstition, regarding this name as so very holy, that it might not even be pronounced (see Philo, Vit. Mosis t. iii. p.519-529). Whenever, therefore, this *nomen tetragrammaton* occurred in the sacred text (הָשֵׁם הַמְּפָרָשׁ, הָשֵׁם), they were accustomed to substitute for it אֲדֹנָי, and thus the vowels of the noun אֲדֹנָי are in the Masoretic text placed under the four letters יהוה, but with this difference, that the initial Yod receives a simple and not a composite Sh'va (יהוה not יְהוה); prefixes, however, receive the same points as if they were followed by אֲדֹנָי, thus לִיהוה, בִּיהוה, מִיהוה. This custom was already in vogue in the days of the LXX. translators; and thus it is that they every where translate יהוה by ὁ Κύριος⁸ (אֲדֹנָי): the Samaritans have also followed a similar custom, so that for יהוה they pronounce שִׁמְעָא (i.q. הָשֵׁם). Where the text has יהוה אֱלֹהִים, in order that *Adonai* should not be twice repeated, the Jews read אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהִים, and they write אֲדֹנָי יְהוה.

As it is thus evident that the word יהוה does not stand with its own vowels, but with those of another word, the inquiry arises, what then are its true and genuine vowels? Several consider that יְהוה is the true pronunciation (according to the analogy

of יְהוָה, יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), rightly appealing to the authority of certain ancient writers, who have stated that the God of the Hebrews was called ΙΑΩ (Diod. i. 94: ιστοροῦσι... τοὺς νόμους διδόναι—παρὰ δὲ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους Μωσῆν τὸν ΙΑΩ ἐπικαλούμενον θεόν. Macrob. Sat. i. 18. Hesych. v. Ὁζείας, intp. ad Clemen. Alex. Strom. v. p. 666. Theod. quæst. 15 ad Exod.: καλοῦσι δὲ αὐτὸν Σαμαρεῖται ΙΑΒΕ [יְהוָה] Ἰουδαῖοι δὲ ΙΑΩ);⁹ to which also may be added, that this same form appears on the gems of the Egyptian Gnostics as the name of God (Iren. adv. Hæres. i. 34; ii. 26. Bellermand, über die Gemmen der Alten mit dem Abraxasbilde, i. ii.). Not very dissimilar is the name ΙΕΥΩ of Philo Byblius ap. Euseb. præp. Evang. i. 9; and ΙΑΟΥ (יְהוֹ) in Clem. Al. Strom. v. p. 562. Others, as Reland (decad. exercitatt. dDe vera pronunciatione nominis Jehova, Traj. Ad Rh. 1707, 8.), following the Samaritan, suppose that יְהוָה was anciently the true pronunciation, and they have an additional ground for the opinion in the abbreviated forms יְהוּ and יְה. Also those who consider that יְהוָה was the actual pronunciation (Michaëlis in Supplem. p. 524), are not altogether without ground on which to defend their opinion. In this way can the abbreviated syllables יְהוּ and יְה, with which many proper names begin, be more satisfactorily explained. [This last argument goes a long way to prove the vowels יְהוָה to be the true ones.]

⁸ The Tetragrammaton is translated with Κύριος (no article) in the LXX and NT.

⁹ This is not quoted correctly. The actual text from Theodore of Sicily is found in footnote 4 above.

To give my own opinion [This opinion Gesenius afterwards thoroughly retracted; see Thes. and Amer. trans. in voc.: he calls such comparison sand derivations, “waste of time and labour;” would that he had learned how irreverent a mode this was of treating such subjects!], I supposed this word to be one of the most remote antiquity, perhaps of the same origin as Jovis, Jupiter, and transferred from the Egyptians to the Hebrews [What an idea! God himself revealed this as his own name; the Israelites could never have received it from the Egyptians]; (compare what has been said above, as to the use of this name on the Egyptian gems [but these gems are not of the most remote antiquity; they are the work of heretics of the second and third centuries]), and then so inflected by the Hebrews, that it might appear, both in form and origin, to be Phenicio-Shemitic (see **מִשְׁחָה**, **מִשְׁחָה**).

To this origin, allusion is made Exod. 3:14; **אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה**, “I (ever) shall be (the same) that I am (to-day);” compare Apoc. 1:4, 8, **ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος**; the name **יהוה** being derived from the verb **הָיָה** to be, was considered to signify God as *eternal* and immutable, who will never be other than the same. Allusion is made to the same

etymology, Hos. 12:6, **יְהוָה זָכָרוֹ** “Jehovah (i.e. the eternal, the immutable) is his name.” [We have thus the authority of God in His word, that this name is derived from the idea of *being, existence*, and not from any relics of Egyptian idolatry.] With this may be compared the inscription of the Saïtic temple, Plut. de Iside et Osiride, c. 9. **ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ γεγονὸς καὶ ὄν καὶ ἐσόμενον**. [This shews how Pagans borrowed ideas from the true theology of God’s revelation, and not that the latter borrowed any thing from the former.]

As to the usage of the word, the same supreme God, and the **θεὸς ἐπιχώριος** [God was in an especial sense the God of the Israelites, but no idea must be admitted for a moment which would even seem to localize the God whose name is Jehovah of Hosts] tutelar God of the Hebrews, Is called in the Old Testament by his proper name **יְהוָה**, and by the appellative **אֱלֹהִים**, **אֱלֹהִים** (**ὁ θεός**, **اللَّهُ**), sometimes promiscuously, and sometimes the one or the other is used according to the nature of the expressions, or the custom of the writers (see p. XLIX, B), as **נָאֵם יְהוָה**, **כַּחַ אֱמַר יְהוָה**, **רוּחַ יְהוָה**, **עַם יְהוָה**, **עֶבֶד יְהוָה**, etc. The use of the word is to be especially observed in the following cases.

Works Cited or Consulted

- Buth, Randall. ἡ κοινὴ προφορά (*Notes on the Pronunciation System of Koiné Greek*).
https://www.biblicallanguagecenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/03/Greek_Pronunciation_2008.pdf.
- Diodorus of Sicily. *Bibliotheca Historica* (Βιβλιοθήκη Ἱστορική). 1888,
<https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.103632>.
- Drach, David Paul. *De l'Harmonie Entre l'Église et la Synagogue: Perpétuité et Catholicité de la Religion Chrétienne* (*Harmony Between the Church and the Synagogue: Perpetuity and Catholicity of the Christian Religion*). Paris, 1844,
<https://archive.org/stream/delharmonieentr00unkngoog#page/n510/mode/2up>.
- Fernández, Miguel P. *An Introductory Grammar of Rabbinic Hebrew*. Translated by John Elwolde. Brill, 1999.
- Gesenius, Wilhelm. *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*. Edited and enlarged by E. Kautzsch. Dover, 2006.
- Gesenius, Wilhelm. *Gesenius's Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*. Translated and edited by Samuel P. Tregelles. Bagster, 1857,
<https://archive.org/stream/hebrewchaldeelex00geseuoft#page/337>.
- Gordon, Nehemia. *Pronunciation of the Name*. 2003,
http://obohu.cz/attachments/article/95/Vyslovnost_Jmena-Nehemia_Gordon_EN.pdf.
- Holladay, William L., editor. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. Brill, 1988.
- Robinson, George. *Essential Judaism: A Complete Guide to Beliefs, Customs, and Rituals*. Atria, 2000.
- Theodore of Cyrus (Θεοδώρητος Κύρρου). *Opera Omnia ex Recensione Iacobi Sirmondi* (Ἀπαντα). Halae, 1769, <https://books.google.co.il/books?id=CEmkg6JRAXAC&pg=RA1-PA133#v=onepage&q&f=false>.
- Tigay, Jeffrey H. *The Jewish Study Bible*. "Introduction and Annotations on Exodus." Oxford UP, 2014.

Bibles and Translations

- ASV *The Holy Bible, American Standard Version*. Thomas Nelson, 1901.
- KJV *The Holy Bible, King James Version*. American Bible Society, 1999.
- LXX Rahlfs, Albert. *Septuaginta* (ἡ παλαιὰ διαθήκη κατὰ τοὺς Ο΄ [ἐβδομήκοντα]). German Bible Society, 1979.
- MT *The Koren Tanach* (תַּנַּ"ךְ קוֹרֵן). Jerusalem: Koren Publishing, 2011.
- NIV *The Holy Bible, New International Version*. Zondervan, 1984.
- NJB *The New Jerusalem Bible*. Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985.
- Vulgate *Biblia Sacra Vulgata*. Editio Quinta (5th ed.). German Bible Society, 2007.