

YHWH or YHVH?

The Sacred Name of our Heavenly Father first came to my attention more than 15 years ago. It was presented in a class in Bible I was taking, taught by a minister of a large denomination in mainstream Christianity. After the knowledge that it was important came to me, some superficial objective research in dictionaries and encyclopedias verified that it was best transliterated from Hebrew into English as YAHWEH. However, over the years since then my studies have continued. Research into the subject is uncovering more evidence continually. It will be presented in this reply to the question, which we hope will not become too technical so that the average reader may comprehend why we use YAHWEH and that if one is totally objective there is no evidence at this time to the contrary.

A truth will be supported and proven in many different ways and all of the sources will be in agreement.

by
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The reason why we have taken such diligence in research is because this unique word has been chosen by our Heavenly Father to be His personal Name. It appears approximately 7000 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the English translations the term “the Lord” has been favored but this is entirely erroneous. Many times in the Scriptures one encounters a statement such as we find in Isaiah 42:8. ***“I am Yahweh, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to carved images.”*** Therefore we should be very careful to research the best possible form of the Name that the Almighty has chosen, and to use it reverently in our worship. We seek to call Him by the Name He has chosen because we love Him.

In the Inspired Hebrew Scriptures the four letters of the Name

appear as יהוה in the text. One cannot escape this fact when we read the Hebrew text. The Name appears in the text very frequently and each encounter impresses upon us the fact of its importance. It is therefore imperative that we transliterate the Name into English and every other language spoken by men so that ALL may know the personal Name of the one true Mighty One. The word “transliterate” means “to write or spell (words, etc.) in the characters of another alphabet that represent the same sounds.” Therefore the word means to carry across from one language to another the sounds of words so that the same word will be recognized in both languages when spoken. The King James translators attempted to do this when they retained a phonetic transliteration of the names of the Prophets = Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. Incidentally, the names of the prophets and other Bible characters are usually an attempted transliteration of how their names sounded

in the Hebrew. The Bible is a Hebrew book, and its integral composition is Hebrew. We cannot circumvent this fact. Even though it has been translated into the English language its Hebrew imprint is unmistakable. Consequently, it is imperative that we preserve the true Name of the author of the book, that we reverence Him enough to call upon Him in worship using the Name that He Himself has chosen, so that we will be assured of worshiping the True Mighty One, 1 Cor. 8:4-7, and Jere. 10:10.

Although some authors will make the statement that no letters of the Hebrew alphabet are vowels, any Hebrew grammar you would care to peruse will inform you that such a statement is not entirely correct. All of the Hebrew letters are indeed consonants and have a consonantal value, but some of them function additionally as vowels and are so employed. In the past some scholars have condemned the Jewish historian Josephus for inaccuracies they supposed were to be found in his histories. Nevertheless, recent scholarship has proven Josephus to be accurate in many areas, the Sacred Name being one of them. Scholars had found fault with Josephus because he made the statement that the Sacred Name was four vowels. *"A mitre also of fine linen encompassed his head, which was tied by a blue riband, about which there was another golden crown, in which was graven the sacred name [of the Almighty]: it consists of four vowels."* This is a description of the headgear worn as the official ceremonial garb by the high priest of Israel. Josephus said that he saw this uniform and he identified the Sacred Name which was engraven into the golden band that held in place the turban (mitre) of the high priest. Since he was familiar with the Hebrew language as his native tongue, who are we to argue that it did not consist of vowels? But scholars customar-

ily sell manuscripts by the arguments they invent and so some of them have declared Josephus to be in error. But who is right? Any Hebrew grammar will verify that Hebrew does in fact have vowel letters, letters of the Hebrew alphabet bearing vowel sounds, functioning as vowels. Hebrew does have a system of vowels written under the consonants, little marks that indicate which vowel is to be read, but those marks were added to the text during the days when the Masoretic text was being composed from the ancient texts. This occurred around the 7th century (600 - 900 C.E.) of our common era. The reason why the vowel points were introduced was so that the ability to read the Hebrew text would not be lost among the Jews of the dispersion.

Let us check several Hebrew grammars to learn what they say on the subject. Weingreen (Oxford University Press, 1959), *"However, long before the introduction of vowel-signs it was felt that the main vowel-sounds should be indicated in writing, and so the three letters י ה ו were used to represent long vowels..."* (pages 7-8). Do you realize what you have just read? Here is a recognized scholar who has agreed with Josephus (as do all of the Hebrew grammarians right down the line!). Each one of the letters mentioned is used in the Heavenly Father's Name. If you wish more verification to this fact you may check the following sources, **A Beginners's Handbook to Biblical Hebrew**, Marks and Rogers, Abingdon Press, 1958, p. 7; **How the Hebrew Language Grew**, Horowitz, KTAV Publishing, 1960, pp. 333-334. Both of these sources also include the א (aleph) as a vowel letter, while some other sources include ע (ayin).

Now that we have established that the three letters (one of them is used twice) that compose the Heavenly Father's Name are

vowels, we shall return to the texts to determine what value they would have in the English language. The י (yothe) is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet and has the vowel sound of a long I (pronounced like a long E as in the word machine). The ה (hay) has the vowel sound of a long A. The ו (waw) has the vowel sound of a long U. The ה (hay) standing at the end of a masculine name has the vowel sound of short E. The long A sound is a feminine ending at the end of a name. Now if we put these letters together we have the English letters IAUE. Pronounce them slowly and then rapidly. You will discover you are saying YAHWEH!

The second way we can definitely prove that the most accurate transliteration of the Sacred Name from Hebrew into English is YAHWEH is to transliterate the letters just as though they were consonants. Here we find a conflict of opinion among some writers that has led to the two variations—YHWH and YHVH. The Masoretic Hebrew manuscripts (meaning the Hebrew text of the Old Testament that has been handed down to us) are vowel pointed for the Sephardic pronunciation system. The Sephardic Hebrew is the form of the language that was spoken in the Mediterranean area and is thought by scholars to be the most pure and the most ancient spoken Hebrew. Sephardic was still the language of the Scriptures during the time of the formulation of the Masoretic text and therefore the scrolls are vowel pointed for this pronunciation. The Ashkenazic form of Hebrew is less ancient. It is Hebrew read and spoken with Germanic sounds to the letters, without recognizing the softening of some of the letters such as is directed in the Sephardic. It was popularized by European Jews. Since the scrolls that were handed down to us are pointed for the Sephardic version we shall use this type of transliteration into the English.

Again we shall look at the four letters of the Heavenly Father's Name. They are transliterated as follows. The י (yothe) is transliterated as Y, the ה (hay) as H, the ו (waw) as W, the ה (hay) as H. Sources used are both Weingreen and the Marks and Rogers **Beginner's Handbook** mentioned above. In order to pronounce these letters as consonants, Marks and Rogers give the following examples. The י (yothe) is pronounced as the Y in "yes." The ה (hay) is pronounced as the H in "hat." The ו (waw) is pronounced as W in "way." They also state that the proper pronunciation of this letter is WOW. So now we have the second witness that the proper way of transliterating the four letters of the Tetragrammaton would be YHWH. In the final analysis both of these methods agree since they indicate that it would be pronounced YAHWEH and not YHVH. The Hebrew letter that is pronounced V is וּ. This letter does not appear in the Name of the Heavenly Father as you can plainly see! Since there are vowels added to the four letters of the Heavenly Father's Name in the Hebrew texts, let us examine them for just a moment. In the Hebrew texts the Sacred Name appears as יהוה. Notice the vowel points. One letter (the waw) has two points! It has a dot above it (a cholom) which means that it is already employed once as a vowel and cannot be used again as a consonant. The last vowel point is a patach and since it precedes the final letter it would take the place of the letter and become a pure long "a," according to the Hebrew rules of grammar. Therefore, it would have to be transliterated into the English as yehoâ, complete transliteration into the English would be Yehoah. Now it should be obvious to even the layman why scholars have stated that the pronunciation has been lost or that it couldn't be pronounced. Jehovah is IMPOSSIBLE as a transliteration which you can see for yourself. It is indeed

a hybrid word and of no value to the student. All scholars accept the fact that it was so pointed in the scrolls to assure that no one who read it would read the pronunciation demanded by the letters, YAHWEH, but that they would read the name which was prompted by the vowel points, Adonai. The Talmud says, "It is written הַיּוֹתֵהָיִם (YAHWEH), but it was pronounced הַיֵּי אֵלֶּיךָ אֲדֹנָי (Adonai)." The Talmud was written by Babylonian Jews who lived during and after the Messiah's time, therefore they were merely following the traditional view of the rabbis which demanded that no one pronounce the Sacred Name. Such a doctrine is erroneous and was condemned by Yahshua the Messiah, John 17:6. The Scriptures tell us many times to "call upon" His Name, Joel 2:32, Acts 2:21, Romans 10:13. Therefore, we must reject the vowel points attached to the Sacred Name as uninspired and the product of theological error, and with it we discard the word Jehovah. Let us also recall the solemn warning found in Deut. 4:2, Proverbs 30:6 and Rev. 22:18. The vowel points of the Masoretic Hebrew text did serve a good purpose in preserving the original pronunciation of the Hebrew words down through the centuries, but when the scribes overstepped their authority and added deceptive vowel signs to the Sacred Name so that no one would use the Name of the Heavenly Father, they became guilty of tampering with the Inspired Word of Yahweh. They have admitted their guilt and it is up to us, the True Worshipers of our time, to correct the error immediately rather than promulgating it and becoming party to it ourselves.

Let us examine yet another witness, another method of arriving at the form we use—YAHWEH. One of the best explanations of the Sacred Name is to be found in the **Rotherham Emphasized Bible** (reprinted by Zondervan, Grand

Rapids). Dr. J. B. Rotherham has written slightly over 7 pages in his introduction and one section deals specifically with this question. Section No. 2 (p.25) reads as follows: *"The form 'Yahweh' is here adopted as practically the best. The only competing form would be 'Yehweh,' differing, it will be observed, only in a single vowel—'e' for 'a' in the first syllable. But even this difference vanishes on examination. It is true that 'Yehweh' is intended to suggest the derivation of the noun from the simple (Kal) conjugation of the verb, and that some scholars take 'Yahweh' as indicating a formation from the causative (Hiphil) conjugation; but, since other scholars (presumably because of the aspirate h) regard 'Yahweh' itself as consistent with a Kal formation, thereby leaving us free to accept the spelling 'Yahweh' without prejudging the question of the precise line of derivation from the admitted root hayah, we may very well accept the spelling now widely preferred by scholars, and write the name—'Yahweh.'"*

By way of explanation so that laymen can understand, the Kal conjugation of the verb is the most basic, active form. The Hiphil is the causative active form of the verb (causing something to be done). If we were to conjugate the Hebrew verb of existence יהוה, and place it into its Hiphil conjugation, imperfect (present and future tense), we would find the verb to stand as follows: יהוהִי. Notice the patach or short a and the segol or short e at the end. It would therefore be transliterated into English as follows: YaHWeH. Since this is a noun, the first vowel could be lengthened to indicate that it is not a verb. Since we already have evidence from the Scriptures that the abbreviated form of the Name יהוה is pronounced YAH, we would have to allow the complete form to harmonize with the abbreviated form and so we have YAHWEH.

Let us once more reiterate that the Sacred Name could not be transliterated as YHVH—unless you accept the V as standing for the Latin U. The W is merely a double U or long U. This was precisely the intention of the one who began this innovation. It has only been since the 1600's that this misunderstanding has existed, since it was after that time that the V became a consonant.

Let us obtain the testimony of yet another witness, and that is the ancient Moabite stone. You can find a description of this prized archeological discovery in most encyclopedias. This stone was written by King Mesha of Moab (read 2 Kings 1:1 and chapter 3), to celebrate his victory over Israel. It contains the Name YAHWEH written in the ancient Hebrew letters and if one is to be consistent in reading the remainder of the text he would have to read YAHWEH for the four letters of the Heavenly Father's Name. If you can obtain the use of a pic-

ture of the Moabite Stone, examine it closely, you will see that the ancient Hebrew alphabet then in use did not have the added vowel points, and yet the people were able to read the Name of the Heavenly Father and pronounce it.

In summary we would say the following: We spell and pronounce the Name of the Heavenly Father as YAHWEH since it is the best possible form that could be employed to transliterate the four letters of His Name into English from the Hebrew language in which He spoke His Name from Sinai, Exodus 19 and 20. YHVH is incorrect since it does not accurately transfer the sounds of the original letters into English from the Hebrew. Can we know that YAHWEH is correct beyond a shadow of a doubt? We have proven the form YAHWEH in several ways above, and up to this point, no evidence has been unearthed that would disprove it. Scholars are in agreement with this form today. As one of my

Hebrew professors stated, "We use Yahweh because it is the best representation of the original letters of the Name transliterated into English. We are 99 and 44/100% positive of this form, although our minds are not closed should new evidence be introduced by scholarship." I would concur completely with this statement because the evidence supports it.

Let us then be sincere and objective in our Bible study and in obeying the wishes of our Heavenly Father. He has set forth His Name in His Word. Who are we to alter it in any way, be it by translation or incorrect transliteration? His Name is His Mark. Being called by His Name and calling upon it in worship will bring us into His family. Let us who are sincere in heart do all that we can to restore the Truth of the Bible in our time and to prepare the way of the Messiah as He comes to establish the Kingdom of Yahweh on this earth. □

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