



## **The Sinaitic Light**

### **The True Name of God**

יְהוָה

#### **Study Article No. XII**

If you cannot read this Hebrew word יהוה, or the word above, then you need to be studying with the New Covenant Congregation of Israel Charlotte.

© 2012 NCCI UNIVERSUM

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher or author.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. ESV® Permanent Text Edition® (2016). Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

This article uses the English terms for Elohim (God), Yah (Father) Yahoshua (Christ).

## **Objective and Learning Outcome**

### **Objective:**

The objective of this article is to understand what God's name is. The purpose is not to demean or castigate other names that believers may embrace, but to demonstrate why many Biblicists prefer to vocalize God's name as Yah or Yahuah.

### **Learning Outcome:**

Upon completion of this study, the reader will:

1. Learn God's name;
2. Understand the origin of the name Jehovah;
3. Understand the origin of the name Yahuah;
4. Identify historical references that support the names Yah and Yahuah;
5. Understand what the names Yah and Yahuah mean?

## Introduction

It has been said that God has many names, such as Lord, God, Adon, Elohim, El Shaddai, etc. but this assertion is incorrect. The aforementioned are titles, not names. God only has two names, expressed by either two or four letters. The first, *God's personal name*, Yah (יה) = YH, known as the Digrammaton, means "life, Is, to exist, Be or to be". The second is *God's expressive name*, the Tetragrammaton, arguably pronounced Yehuah or Yahuah (יהוה) = YHWH, revealed as God's name in *third person* meaning, "He be, He Is, He lives, He exists." In other words, there is no name that can be ascribed to God to explain to a finite man who He is.<sup>1</sup>

The Digrammaton, "Yah" - "YH", *possibly* originates from Exodus 3:14. The phrase written in Hebrew as יהוה, Ehyeh or Ahyah (first person masculine singular) in 3:14 means, "I will be who I will be". The name Yah, as God's name has been written in the Bible some 49 times, and is considered to be the holiest name of God, and has been regarded by most scholars as a "proper name for God" (Strong: 108). Dr. William Arnold, Professor at Andover Theological Seminary writes, "Whatever may be the literal meaning of the word יהוה [Ehyeh], in this sentence is in the nominative case, subject of the verb which follows it, and therefore a substantive. Since moreover, the word is in itself a verb in the first person singular of the imperfect tense, as a substantive it cannot be an appellative, *but must be a proper name*" (Arnold: 124).

Reflecting the historicity, veracity and authenticity of God's name and this thesis, The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (TDOT) quotes Dr. Charles Simon Clermont-Ganneau (1846 - 1923), French Archaeologist and Professor at the College de France. He writes, "The name occurs 8 times on ostraca in the formula *yh, yhh*. That the expression is common can be seen from a letter to a woman: 'I am sending you vegetables tomorrow. Meet the boat tomorrow on Sabbath lest they get lost/spoiled. By the life of *yhh* [Yahh] if not, I shall take your life. Do not rely upon Meshullemeth or upon Shemaiah, now, send me barley in return... Now, by the life of *yhh*, if not, you will be responsible for the bill" (Clermont-Ganneau: 504). This ostraca dates to about the sixth century BC, and it demonstrates that the common name for God was Yah.<sup>2 3 4</sup>

Old Testament Scholar, Dr. Walther Theodor Zimmerli, quotes Dr. Samuel Rolles Driver, former Old Testament Biblical Scholar and Professor of Hebrew at Christ Church, Oxford. He says, "Driver claimed that he could interpret the form 'Yah' as a shout of ecstatic excitement, which then turned into a divine name and, in association with the deliverance from Egypt, became the long form with the meaning 'He who Is' or He who calls into being'" (Zimmerli: 19). The most popular form of praise to give to God is Hallelujah, (הללויה) which means "praise you Jah." The letter J does not exist in Hebrew so the biblical spelling would be *Halleluyah* from Greek *Halleluiah* "praise you Yah." The conclusion here is that the holiest name of God in the

- 
1. What are some titles assumed to be God's name?
  2. What is the Digrammaton?
  3. What name is considered to be the holiest name for God?
  4. What name for God was written on a potsherd (ostraca)?



the “uu” sound as in boo. Not Yahweh, Ahayah, Yehowah, Yahowah, Yahwah or Yehovah, which by transliteration introduced the name Jehovah.<sup>10 11 12</sup>

Dr. Bernard Lang, German Theologian and Professor of Old Testament Bible and Religion states, “Yahweh” represents no more than a modern conjecture based on linguistic consideration, first suggested by Gilbert Genebrard (1537 - 97), professor of Hebrew at the College Royal in Paris (today’s prestigious College de France)” (Lang: 207). According to *some scholars*, God was not called Yahweh by the Israelites. It is a sixteenth century invention by Hebrew scholars adopted in academia. The name Jehovah is also a recent vocal invention for the Tetragrammaton popularized by the Jehovah Witnesses, though they affirm that Jehovah was and is not God’s original name. They write, “The first recorded use of this form dates from the thirteenth century C.E. Raymundus Martini, a Spanish monk of the Dominican Order used it in his book *Pugeo Fidei* of the year 1270. Hebrew scholars generally favor “Yahweh” as the most likely pronunciation. They point out that the abbreviated form of the name is Yah (Jah in the Latinized form), as at Psalm 89:8 and in the expression Hal-lu-Yah (meaning Praise Jah, you people) (*Aid to Bible Understanding*: 884-85)” [emphasis added]. Raymundus Martini undoubtedly received this vocalization as a Latinized form of the Masoretic vocalization Yehowah or Yehovah, which became Jehovah.<sup>13 14 15</sup>

Yehuah or Yahuah appears to have been one of the most ancient pronunciations for the Tetragrammaton, not Yahweh, Ahayah, Yehowah, Yahwah, Yehovah or Jehovah respectively and ancient documents support this supposition. Greek Historian Diodorus Siculus (BC 90 - 30), understood the name of God to be vocalized and pronounced by the Jews as “Iao” (Yahu). He says, “. . .and among the Jews Moyses referred his laws to the god who is invoked as Iao” (Diodorus Siculus, 1.94.1-2). Several hundred years later, early neo-Christian theologians such as Irenaeus (130 - 202), Greek Bishop of Lyon France writes, “I am established, and I am redeemed; I redeem my soul from this age (world), and from all things connected with it in the name of Iao, who redeemed his own soul into redemption in Christ who liveth” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* Book 1, Chapter XXI). Origen (184 - 253), neo-Christian Scholar and Exegete writes, “. . . and from the Hebrew Scriptures him who is termed in Hebrew Iao or Jah and Sabaoth, and Adonaeus, and Eloaeus. . .” (Origen, *Contra Celsum* Book VI, Chapter XXXII).<sup>16 17 18 19 20</sup>

---

10. What does *mater lectionis* mean?

11. What were the scribes called that added vowels to the Tetragrammaton?

12. What are the vowels called, which were created by the Masoretes in the seventh century AD?

13. Who introduced the name Jehovah for God’s name?

14. Jehovah Witnesses state that scholars believe the mostly likely pronunciation is not Jehovah but \_\_\_\_\_.

15. What year was the name Jehovah introduced to neo-Christendom?

16. In what year was the Greek Historian, Diodorus Siculus, introducing God’s name to his readers?

17. What name did Diodorus Siculus say the Jews ascribed to God?

18. What name did Irenaeus ascribed to God?

19. What name did Origen ascribe to God?

20. What are at least two ancient sources that presents God’s name as Yah and Yahuah?

These third century patristics (church fathers) reveal in their writings that the Jews used Iao as God's name. This means that they were terminating God's name with the "o" sound which serves as an obstruction for the "uu" sound. Thus, the proper vocalization is Yahu, which at times was vocalized as Yaho. The Hebrew letter "Hey" ה or H, the last letter of the Tetragrammaton was *elided*, meaning unpronounced. Therefore, many pre and post-exilic Jews who spoke God's name either uttered Yah or Yahu as an elision of Yahuah, the most probable vocalization for the Tetragrammaton. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the vocalization for God's name was and is Yah and Yahuah. To avoid ambiguity, many within the Messianic Jewish faith, such as our congregation, the New Covenant Congregation of Israel, proclaim the name Yah as God's divine name.

Yah is a name that is without argumentation and contention. A name that people can all agree upon. With David's command to call upon the name Yah being supported by a potsherd, (proclaiming God's name as Yah), the argument about what God's name is can be answered confidently. In respect to the Tetragrammaton, with the testimony of the Jewish historian, Josephus, and the testimony of Greek historians and neo-Christian patristics, there leaves little to no room to doubt that the vocalization for the Tetragrammaton as it is rendered in the Bible is Yahuah or Yehuah. Therefore, other names (prior to the Masoretic niqqud system) may not be philologically correct or even possible grammatically. We, however, do not castigate or cast aspersions upon those who call God by what they have been inspired through their studies and research.

It is essential to *practice* God's covenant (Torah), to know God by His name, to proclaim His name, and to call upon His name in prayer and worship. It is vital that His name be separated from all other names that are pagan and false (Ps. 9:10; 105:1; 116:13). This is what it means to build and have a personal relationship with God. To call upon His name, not a title. More importantly, it is vital that as believers and worshipers of Yah, that we live up to His name, which is righteousness and sanctification. Paul says, "For, as it is written, 'The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you'" (Rom. 2:24). Knowing God's name is important, but living a life according to what His name represents is more of an imperative and is critical to our salvation. Hence this article was written to enter the arguments surrounding God's proper name, so those who are searching may understand why some use the Digrammaton "Yah" as God's name exclusively. Others use Yahuah, and some alternate between Yahuah and Yah while dismissing other alternative vocalizations.

There is much more to discuss on this subject. If you have questions about this study or others, feel free to join us in fellowship, prayer, praise, and study every Saturday at 11:30 am. You may also call us for a consultation pertaining to this subject, or any other you might find intriguing. We are a Messianic Sinaitic assembly teaching the doctrine of Messianic Sinaiticism, which means keeping God's Word in the faith of Yahoshua the Messiah (Rev. 12:17; 14:12-13) and proclaiming God's gospel to the world and to those who are seeking His truth without interpretation or church tradition. May the blessings of Yah be with you and thank you for reading our article.

## References

- Aid to Bible Understanding*. New York, NY: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1971.
- Arnold, William R. "The Divine Name in Exodus 3:14." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 24.2 (1905): 107–165.
- Clermont-Ganneau text 152; cf. Porten, 126. In Johannes G Botterweck, and Helmer Ringgren, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. 15 vols. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974-2006.
- Josephus, Flavius. *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, rev. and expanded ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999.
- Lang, Bernhard. *The Hebrew God: Portrait of an Ancient Deity*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002.
- Siculus, Diodorus. "Book I, 69-98," The Library of History of Diodorus Siculus, accessed June 7, 2014, [http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus\\_Siculus/1D\\*.html#note46](http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Diodorus_Siculus/1D*.html#note46)
- Strong, James, and John R. Kohlenberger. (H3050). *The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. red letter ed. 1 vols. Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 2001.
- Zimmerli, Walther. *Old Testament Theology in Outline*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1978.