

How is the name YHWH Pronounced

By Don Esposito



Almost 7,000 times in the English translations of the original Hebrew Texts the translators take out the Sacred name of our Creator YHWH and replace it with either the word God or Lord.

The Father tells us what his personal name is for all of eternity; **Exo 3:15** *And Elohim said to Moses again, You shall say this to the sons of Israel, YAHWEH, the Elohe of your fathers, the Elohe of Abraham, the Elohe of Isaac, and the Elohe of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is how I should be remembered from generation to generation.*

The third commandment tells us “*You shall not take the name of YAHWEH your Elohim in vain*” In vain means to change, falsify or to make common. A child could see that taking out the personal name of YHWH or in Hebrew, it is the letters **Yod, Hey, Vav, Hey**, almost 7,000 times and replacing it with a generic title of *lord* or *god* is definitely breaking the third commandment.

So our next question is how do we pronounce the name of YHWH? After the Babylonian captivity, the Rabbi’s felt this name to be so sacred to say and started to hide the phonetic pronunciation of the name YHWH. The Talmud tells us that they even wrote it incorrectly so that if someone was reading the name they would not accidentally pronounce it.

What they started to do was take the vowels from *Adonia* (Hebrew word translated as Lord) and mix it with the consonants for YHWH and come up with *Jehovah*. They only used *Jehovah*

so no one could pronounce the name correctly. Very easily you could see that Jehovah would not be the correct pronunciation of the sacred name as there is no letter “J” in Hebrew language and in Hebrew the name “*Hovah*” comes from Strong’s Concordance # 1943 and means *ruin* or *mischievous*. The name of our Heavenly Father is not ruin or mischief. Also Jehovah or Yehovah is grammatically impossible in the Hebrew language. Please refer to the many references at the end of this article.

Another wrong misconception on the pronunciation of the name of YHWH that has come up recently is *Yahuah*. In Hebrew a vav can be a consonant or a vowel but can not be both. So pronouncing YHWH as *Yahuah* you are using the vav first as a vowel and then by putting another vowel after it, it goes against the grammatical laws of Hebrew.

The argument for using *Yahueh* is because the name *Yahudah* (Hebrew for Judah) has the same letters as YHWH but adds a dalet. So some think to just remove the dalet, and that is how you pronounce YHWH. This is not the way the Hebrew language works and again goes against the grammatical laws of Hebrew. In Hebrew every word goes back to a 2 or 3 letter root, and then vowel pointed.

So although in English it may seem that YHWH is simply *Yahudah* without the dalet in Hebrew it does not even come from the same root. Check this out for yourself. In Strong’s concordance *Yahudah* is word number 3063 and comes from the root word 3034 *Yadah*, *Yod*, *dalet*, *hay*, where as the name **Yahweh** is Strong’s 3068 and comes from the root 1961 *hayah* or in Hebrew *hey*, *vav*, *hey*. So you can see they do not even have the same root and certainly would not apply a new rule of dropping the dalet and coming up with a new pronunciation.

Also the argument goes that since some names in Hebrew end with “Yahu” such as *Elijah* then *Yahweh*’s name must start as *Yahu* and then add another syllable “*ah*” at the end. Again, anyone who is thinking this way does not really understand Hebrew and Hebrew grammar.

There are quite a few references in scripture that refer to our Heavenly Father merely as “Yah”.

Isa 12: 2 *Behold, El is Y’shua* (My salvation)! I will trust and not be afraid, for my strength and song is Yah YAHWEH; yea, He has become to me Y’shua*.*

Psa 118:14 *YAHWEH is my strength and my song; and He is to me Y’shua*.*

In the Aramaic Peshitta, which is the oldest New Testament writing, it has the form *MarYah* for YHWH, in its Tanach, almost 7,000 times. *Mar Yah* simply means *Master Yah*. *Yahweh* is a family name consisting of *Yah* *Yahweh* the Father and *Yahshua* *Yahweh* the Son. There is absolutely no question that the Father’s shortened name is *Yah*. Even *Halleluyah*, which means praise *Yah* uses His shortened name *Yah*. So nowhere in scripture does it ever have our Heavenly Father’s name in the Hebrew as *Yahu*.

So where does the name *Yahu* come from in certain names such as *Elijah*? In Hebrew pronouns are added into the verb conjugation and *Yahu* simply means “*He is Yah*” Just like if you were going to say *our “Elohim”* in Hebrew, instead of using the pronoun *our* with the noun *Elohim*, you would simply say *Eloheni*, which is our *Elohim*. So having *Yahoo* at the end of a name proves nothing and certainly would not justify a *Yahuah* pronunciation, as not even all names have this ending, such as *Nehemyah*, which simply has the correct shortened name of *Yah*.

So with the *Yah* part being 100% confirmed we can also go back to the second century historian *Origen* and see that he clearly pronounced the second syllable as “*weh*”, again dogmatically proving from History that *Yahweh* was the pronunciation in the first and second century by Jews and Christians alike. Early Christian writers, such as *Clement of Alexandria* in the 2nd century, had used a form like *Yahweh*, and this pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton was never really lost.

Theodoret of Cyprus (5th Century AD) said the Samaritans of his time spoke the sacred name clearly as *Yahweh*. I believe that from historical and archeological evidence, the closest that comes to pronouncing the Sacred name of YHWH is phonetically pronounced as **YAHWEH**.

In 1898 A.H. *Sayce* transliterated 3 cuneiform tablets dating back to the time of *Hamurabi* that clearly said “*Yahweh is Elohim*”. (see *Haley’s bible handbook pg 62*)

Also, in the *Lachish* letters that have been found in 1938 and date back to the 6th century B.C., and are the oldest Hebrew writing with the sacred name on record, again clearly prove that the sacred name was pronounced **Yahweh**. What is also very interesting about the *Lachish* letters is not only the fact that they

are written in ancient Paleo-Hebrew, but that they are also vowel pointed, something that is very rare for a document that ancient, and the vowel pointing clearly shows the pronunciation of YHWH as **YAHWEH**.

After this, the Masoretes worked to reproduce the original text of the Hebrew Bible from about the 6th to the 10th century AD, and replaced the vowels of the name YHWH with the vowel signs of the Hebrew words Adonai, or Elohim. Thus, *the artificial name Jehovah* (YeHoWaH) (emphasis ours, ed.) came into being. Although Christian scholars after the Renaissance and Reformation periods used the term Jehovah for YHWH, in the 19th and 20th century's, biblical scholars again began to use the true form Yahweh.

Also, Josephus stated that the pronunciation of **YHWH** is phonetically spoken like 4 vowels. *EE AHH OOOH AAA*. (EE + AHH = Yah,) (OOH + AAA = weh.) So when you phonetically pronounce the 4 letters together they sound like **Yahweh**.

According to the Rabbi's who purposely write the name incorrectly so not to be accidentally spoken, they would only say the name once a year on the day of atonement and this only by the High Priest who would go into the Temple, but later it was sanctioned by the Rabbi's that the name could be said by all Jews but again only once a year and this only at sunset at the ending of Atonement. Out of curiosity I went to the Wailing Wall where this is done as atonement was ending and I clearly heard the pronunciation of **YHWH** as **Yahweh** over and over for about 5 minutes.

Some have mistakenly tried to connect the name of Yahweh to the false god Jupiter because Jupiter was also called IOUE which can phonetically be pronounced Yahweh. It should be noted that ancient pagans had many gods and were not shy in accepting any new concept of deity as a god. This is one of the reasons that the Romans persecuted the Jews so heavily, because only the nation of Israel had a concept of a single deity. They were looked at as poor and weak because they only worshiped one deity. This is why the goddess *Istar* is also called *Semeramis* and *Diana* and *Athena* or *Aphrodite*. Now, none of these names phonetically sound alike and none are transliterations of the other name. It was just the common practice of pagan cultures to accept any new god and call him or her by the name of one of their old gods.

So, could pagan cultures when they saw the power of **Yahweh**, have used his name and called him also by the name of their other pagan deities? Logic and history tells us yes, they did. Does that change the name of **Yahweh**? Logic and history and archeology tell us emphatically, **NO!** The way we know that our creators name is phonetically pronounced Yahweh is by the fact that Israel only had one deity and every credible scholar and every historical, and biblical, and archeological evidence distinctly points to the pronunciation of the only true deity, the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as **YAHWEH**.

I will close this article with the following references that dogmatically show the Creator's name to be Yahweh. On the other hand I have yet to ever find any biblical, archaeological, or historical proof that would back up either a *Jehovah* or *Yahuah* pronunciation.

Webster's Collegiate Dictionary:

"Jehovah — False reading of the Hebrew **YAHWEH**."
("Jehovah," *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary*, 1973 ed.)

Encyclopedia Americana:

"Jehovah — erroneous form of the name of the God of Israel."
(*Encyclopedia Americana*, vol. 16., 1972 ed.)

Encyclopedia Britannica:

"The Masoretes who from the 6th to the 10th century worked to reproduce the original text of the Hebrew Bible replaced the vowels of the name YHWH with the vowel signs of Adonai or Elohim. Thus the artificial name Jehovah came into being."
("Yahweh," *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, vol. 12, 1993 ed.)

The Jewish Encyclopedia:

"Jehovah — a mispronunciation of the Hebrew YaHWeH the name of God. The pronunciation of Jehovah is grammatically impossible."
("Jehovah," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, 1904 ed.)

The New Jewish Encyclopedia:

"It is clear that the word Jehovah is an artificial composite."
("Jehovah," *The New Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1962 ed.)

The Encyclopedia Judaica:

According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, p. 680, vol. 7, "the true pronunciation of the tetragrammaton, YHWH, was never lost. The name was pronounced **Yahweh**. It was regularly

pronounced this way at least until 586 B.C., as is clear from the Lachish Letters written shortly before this date."

Encyclopedia Judaica, pg. 680, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1971.

"The true pronunciation of the name YHWH was never lost. Several early Greek writers of the Christian Church testify that the name was pronounced 'Yahweh.' "

Isa 42:8 I am YAHWEH; that is My name; and I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to engraved images.

Clearly His name is Yahweh, let us exult His name together, HalleluYAH!

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