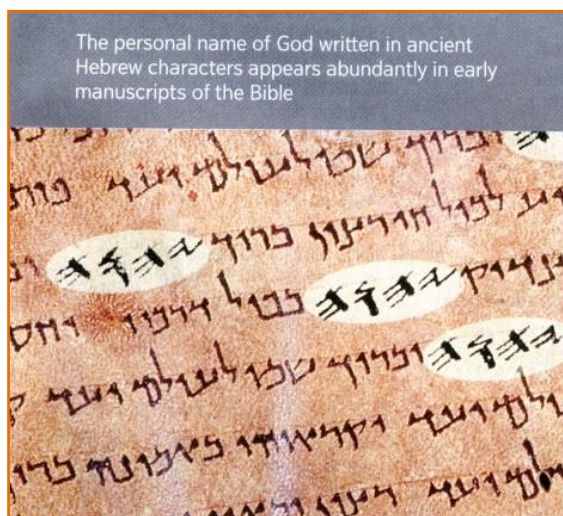


References to YHWH in ancient Hebrew documents

Page 15 of *Awake!* no. 6. 2017 asserts: “The personal name of God written in ancient Hebrew characters appears abundantly in early manuscripts of the Bible”.



Awake! no. 6, 2017, page 15

The illustration is from an unidentified Jewish document from an unidentified Jewish sect operating at an unidentified time. Although the passage is written with square Hebrew characters, the tetragram – from right to left – is written in an archaic form, as the *Awake!* article acknowledges. It is an ancient form that was no longer in use at the time the document was written. To claim this it appears “abundantly” requires justification with the use of statistical evidence.

As for the allegation that this form was used “abundantly”, and which is a process that is never ever used in any Watchtower publication, **the following provides a balanced description of the situation. It comes from, “*The Birth of Monotheism*”, pages 128-130, by André Lemaire.**

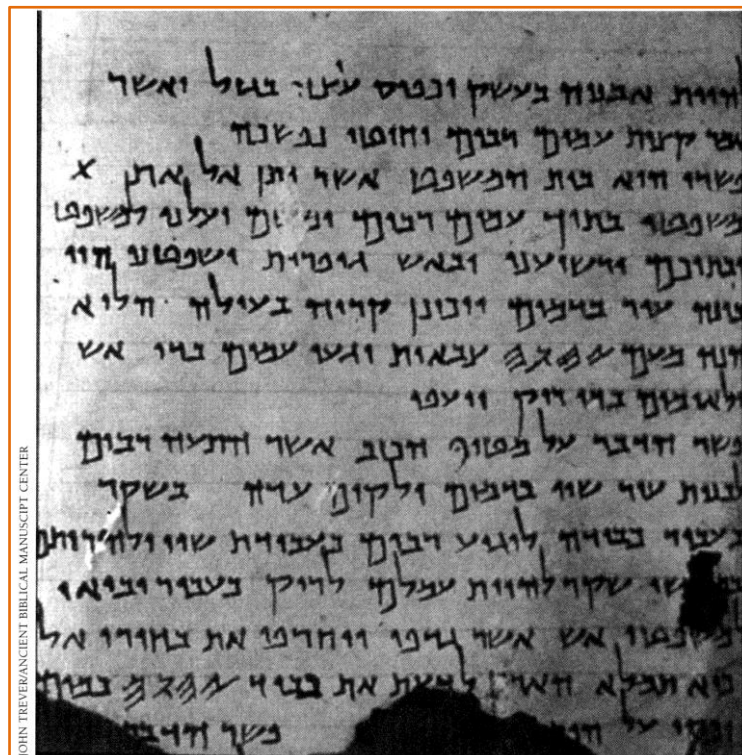
Toward the end of the Hellenistic period and during the Roman period, Jews, especially Jews of the Diaspora but probably also Jews living in Judea, avoided pronouncing the name “YHWH.” In reading the old religious texts that came to form the Bible, they replaced “YHWH” with the reverential Hebrew title “Adonai,” which the Greeks translated as *kyrios* (Master/Lord).

The course of this evolution is difficult to trace precisely. In the oldest manuscripts of the Septuagint (for example, in papyrus 4QLXXLevB), the Greek transcription “IAO” is used, while in other manuscripts (for example, papyrus Fouad 266), the tetragrammaton is neither translated nor transcribed in Greek but retained in Judean Aramaic script. This preservation of the Judean Aramaic tetragrammaton is then adapted into Greek as “PIPI.” Other Judean Greek manuscripts present the tetragrammaton in paleo-Hebrew script.

Finally, especially in manuscripts transmitted by the Christian tradition, YHWH is written as *kyrios*, which implies that these texts were based on original Hebrew manuscripts in which the tetragrammaton was rendered as “Adonai.”

The discovery of the Qumran manuscripts—or Dead Sea Scrolls—a little more than half a century ago shed new light on ancient usage of the tetragrammaton. These manuscripts are mainly Hebrew or Aramaic texts copied between the end of the third century B.C.E. and 68 C.E. The appearance of the tetragrammaton in these texts is dependent on chronology (it becomes more rare the later the text) and, possibly, on differences among scribal schools (the most significant school represented was the Qumran school, which many scholars believe was Essene) or even among individual scribes. The Dead Sea Scrolls show at least a dozen ways of transcribing the tetragrammaton:

1. It can be transcribed with the same characters (in paleo-Hebrew or in square Judean Aramaic/Hebrew) as the remainder of the manuscript.’



THE DEAD SEA SCROLL known as the Habakkuk Commentary shows how some ancient Jewish scribes treated the divine name. When this scroll's scribe came to the name of the deity, he wrote out the tetragrammaton—the four-letter personal name of God—in archaic, slanted paleo-Hebrew script, rather than in the square script of the rest of the text. Two examples can be seen on this fragment. In line 7, the third word from the right, one can see the four letters of the tetragrammaton (*yod, heh, vav, heh*) in a quotation from Habakkuk 2:13. The letters appear again in the last complete line, the second word from the left, in a quotation from Habakkuk 2:14. The verse reads: “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

“The Birth of Monotheism”, page 132, by André Lemaire

2. The tetragrammaton is not written at all on the line but five supralinear dots above the following word presumably indicate the reading “Adonai/Lord”: 1QIsa^a XXV,15 (= 42, 6).
3. In a significant number of square Hebrew texts, the tetragrammaton is written in paleo-Hebrew, probably to indicate that it was not to be pronounced, unlike the remainder of the text. This practice seems to be widely used in the scribal school of Qumran.
4. In ten manuscripts, particularly texts devoted to the rules of the Qumran sect, the tetragrammaton is replaced by four points suspended from the line of writing of the other letters. These manuscripts were apparently copied between the second half of the second century B.C.E. and about the middle of the first century B.C.E. They are characteristic of the scribal school of Qumran, and four of them were likely copied by the same scribe.
5. Some texts replace the tetragrammaton, especially in biblical quotations, with *'DNY* (Adonai).
6. In a few texts, the tetragrammaton is replaced by *'L* (God). This is the reverse of the early first-millennium B.C.E. practice of replacing “El” with “YHWH.”
7. In 4Q364 (Pentateuchal Paraphrase), the tetragrammaton is written in square Hebrew characters but preceded by two vertical points, perhaps to alert the reader to the special quality of this word.

8. Many Qumran texts, in Hebrew and Aramaic, replace the tetragrammaton with 'LYWN (Elyon/Most High) or 'L 'LYWN (*El Elyon/El*, God Most High).

9. In manuscript 4Q248 (4QHistorical Text A), the tetragrammaton is replaced by five strokes.

10. In 11Q22 (11QpaleoUnidentified Text), *L'LHYK* ("to your God") is written with an ink of a different color than the remainder of the manuscript.

11. In 4Q511 10:12, YWD seems to be substituted for YHWH (see Psalm 19:10).

12. In 1QS 8:13, *HW'H* seems to be substituted for YHWH (see Isaiah 40:3).

Besides these various practices, the rule of the Qumran community absolutely prohibited pronouncing the divine name. Transgressing this rule meant expulsion from the community:

Whoever pronounces the name honored over all ... by surprise when confronted by misfortune or for any other reason ... or if he reads in a book or if he blesses, then he will be excluded and he will not return any more to the council of the community (1QS^{VI}, 27-vii, 2).

This severe prohibition against pronouncing the tetragrammaton was not confined to the Essene movement. ...

Before the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 C.E., there was only a single exception to the prohibition against uttering the divine name. ... According to the Mishnah, only the high priest could pronounce the tetragrammaton in its correct intonation, and even then only in the Temple on Yom Kippur (*Yoma* 3:8, 4:2, 6:2; see *Tamid* 3:8). The high priest was also the only one on that day who could enter the Temple's Holy of Holies, where he could recite the sacerdotal blessing and pronounce "the Name such as it is written" (*Sotah* 7:6; *Tamid* 7:2; see Jerusalem Talmud, *Yoma* 3:7).

... When the Romans captured Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple, in 70 C.E., the animal sacrifices performed in the Temple became a thing of the past, as did the role of the high priests (and the influence of the Sadducee movement). This also marked the end of Israelite Yahwism, since the particular Name of the God of Israel could no longer be pronounced, not generally or in religious practice. Josephus (who was from a priestly family) recognized that he was forbidden from pronouncing the divine name and used the Greek term *despotes* (Sovereign Lord) as an equivalent of the tetragrammaton.¹

=====

The rendering of "God's Name" in various languages

The following appears alongside the above illustration from the *Awake!* article:

God's name rendered in various languages	
Jehovah	Ziova
יהוה	Xehová
Yehuwa	Jiova
Yihowa	Jeová
Joova	여호와
Jehová	エホバ
יהוה	Yawe

Awake! no. 6, 2017, page 15

Overwhelmingly, the preferred modern rendering of the Divine Name is "Yahweh", and it is widely and commonly used, although the article in *Awake!* does not know this.

¹ *The Birth of Monotheism*, pages 128-131

The invention of the word “Jehovah”

In 1278 a Spanish monk, Raymundo Martini, wrote the Latin work PUGIO FIDEI (Dagger of faith). In it he used the name of God, spelling it Yohoua. Later printings of this work, dated some centuries later, used the spelling JEHOVA.

Soon after, in 1303, Porchetus de Salvaticis completed a work entitled VICTORIA PORCHETI AVERSUS IMPIOS HEBRAEOS (Porchetus’ Victory Against the Ungodly Hebrews). He spells God’s name IOHOUAH, IOHOUA and IHOUAH.

Then, in 1518, Petrus Galatinus, a Catholic priest born in the late 1400’s, published a work entitled DE ARCANIS CATHOLICAE VERITATIS (Concerning Secrets of the Universal Truth) in which he spelled God’s name IEHOUA.

The name “Jehovah” first appeared in an English BIBLE in 1530, when William Tyndale published a translation of the Chumash (the first five books of the Bible). In this, he included the name of God, usually spelled IEHOUAH, in several verses (Genesis 15:2; Exodus 6:3; 15:3; 17:6; 23:17; 33:19; 34:23; Deuteronomy 3:24. Tyndale also included God’s name in Ezekiel 18:23 and 36:23 in his translations that were added at the end of THE NEW TESTAMENT, Antwerp, 1534), and in a note in this edition he wrote: “Jehovah is God’s name... moreover as oft as thou seist LORD in great letters (except there be any error in the printing) it is in Hebrew Iehovah.” (Please note, there was no “J” in English at this time; the J is a product of a stylized I; thus giving us the current Jehovah rather than the Old English Iehovah. The “u” used in the above names is also a reminder that there was no “v” in Old English, as you can read David in the original King James version was written “Dauid”.)

In 1534, Martin Luther published his complete translation of the Bible in German, based on the original languages. While he used the German “Herr” (Lord or Sir) for the Tetragrammaton, in a sermon which he delivered in 1526 on Jeremiah 23:1-8, he said, “The name Jehovah, Lord, belongs exclusively to the true God.”

Subsequently, Jehovah was used not only in the “Authorized” King James version of 1611, but the Spanish VALERA version of 1602, the Portuguese ALMEIDA version of 1681, the German ELBERFELDER version of 1871, and the American Standard Version of 1901. It appears that the Jerusalem Bible was the first one to use Yahweh instead of Lord and Jehovah.

<http://www.yhwh.com/jehovah.htm> (Accessed 15 January 2018)

Reasons for preferring “Yahwoh”

The following reasons for preferring “Yahwoh” comes from **pages 135 to 138 of “The Birth of Monotheism” by André Lemaire.**

=====

The earliest evidence of the tetragrammaton, the four consonants representing the name YHWH, the God of Israel, is found on the Mesha Stela (Moabite Stone), which dates to the second half of ninth century B.C.E. On this stela, the Moabite king Mesha describes the longstanding confrontation between Moab (the land directly east of the Dead Sea) and Israel as a confrontation between their two national deities: Chemosh and YHWH. The tetragrammaton later appears in Hebrew inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom, dating to the eighth century B.C.E., and on ostraca (inscribed potsherds) from Lachish and Arad, dating to the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E.

At least twice in inscriptions from Kuntillet ‘Ajrud, and frequently in Aramaic documents from Elephantine (fifth century B.C.E.), the tetragrammaton is shortened to only three letters, YHW. This reduction to three letters also appears as a theophoric element in names from the southern kingdom of Judah during the First Temple period. Inscriptions from the northern kingdom of Israel simplify the tetragrammaton to YW.

According to the Bible, the proper name of the God of Israel is revealed to Moses. God tells Moses: “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, YHWH ... has sent me to you’: This is my name forever, and this my title for all generations” (Exodus 3:15).

Do we know with any certainty how to pronounce this theonym?

The exact pronunciation of the tetragrammaton is very difficult to specify because the Jews of the Hellenistic and Roman periods avoided pronouncing the tetragrammaton and replaced it with the reverential Hebrew title “Adonai” (“Master/Lord”). In the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible dating to the third and second century B.C.E., Adonai is for the most part translated as *kyrios*; and God is called *kyrios* in the New Testament Greek. Later, around sixth century C.E., the rabbis who produced the Masoretic vocalization of the Hebrew Bible gave the tetragrammaton the vowels of the word “Adonai.” This has been interpreted as meaning that the divine name is pronounced YeHoWaH, but it really means that one should not pronounce the tetragrammaton at all; instead, one should substitute the honorific “Adonai.”

How did one pronounce the tetragrammaton before the fourth century B.C.E., before the Hellenistic period? It is impossible to say with certainty because, in the earlier period, only consonants were written. As a result there are three possibilities: “Yahwoh,” “Yahweh” and “Yahwa.”

The argument for “Yahwoh” is based on two characteristics of paleo-Hebrew orthography. First, during the period of the monarchy, the consonant “H” is often preceded by the vowel “O,” particularly in marking the third person singular (*ahu>oh*), as in the name “Neboh” (in later Hebrew, the third person singular is denoted by a simple “W”). Second, in the proper names of this period, the divine name is generally shortened to YW (pronounced *yawo>yaw?*) in the northern kingdom or to YHW (pronounced *yahwo>yoihu?*) in the Judahite kingdom. Since the sound “O” is often associated with the semi-consonant “W”, the tetragrammaton could well have been pronounced “Yahwoh.”

“Yahwoh” evolved into YHW/yâhu as a theophoric element in Judahite proper names (with the loss of the final “H”) and into YW *Yaw/Yau* in the kingdom of Israel (with the loss of both “H”s). This vocalization may be based on the Egyptian word Y-H-W3-W, found in an inscription on the wall of a temple built by Amenhotep III (c. 1390-1353) at Soleb in Nubia; the final “W” can indicate that the preceding group be pronounced *wo*. Moreover, “Yahwoh” is in harmony with the vocalization of the Greek transcription *IAÔ*, as well as with the later Latin form, *IAHO*, used by the church father Jerome.

The argument for the pronunciation “Yahweh” rests on an interpretation of the meaning of the name. In the biblical account, the revelation of the tetragrammaton is associated with the Hebrew verb “to be” (*hâwâh/hâyâh*):

Moses said to God: “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am [’èheyèh ’ashèr ’èheyèh].” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:13-14).

This answer is sometimes interpreted as God’s refusing to reveal his name, sometimes as God’s stating that the God of Israel is the only god who “is” (that is, the other gods do not exist), and sometimes as God’s making clear his intention to serve as the God of his people: “I am who I will be,” or “I will reveal myself in action, in being at your side.” Such a threefold interpretation could explain the vocalization of the tetragrammaton as “Yahweh,” which could mean “he causes to be.” As such, God does not provide his name but his attributes. “Yahweh” is also consistent with such Greek transcriptions of the tetragrammaton as *Iaoue/ai* in Clement of Alexandria (late second century C.E.), *Iabe* in Epiphanius (fourth century C.E.) and *Iabe/labai* among the Samaritans (fifth century C.E.).

The argument for “Yahwa” is based on the transcription of theophoric Yahwist names into Babylonian Akkadian around 500 B.C.E. (*yâhû* or *yâma*, probably pronounced *yâwa*). The theophoric element *yâhû*, however, could also come from the nominative form *yâhwû/yâhwoh*. Moreover, around 500 B.C.E., under the probable influence of Aramaic, one could expect a change of a final “o” into “a.”

In all probability, the theonym YHWH was originally pronounced “Yahwoh.”

The “Yahweh” pronunciation later became widespread to give a theological interpretation to the mysterious, ancient name “YHWH,” which may have initially been a place-name.²

Doug Mason
doug_mason1940@yahoo.com.au

² *The Birth of Monotheism*, pages 135-138, by André Lemaire