

Jehovah
Leue
the
Incommunicable
Name

Its Meaning and
Pronunciation



The Incommunicable Name, JEHOVAH

FOR many years it was on my heart to clear up the question, "What is the meaning of 'Jehovah'?" I have read various interpretations. Some say it signifies, "I Am." Others say, "The Coming One." The latest scholarship seems to consider the French equivalent, "the Eternal," as the most satisfactory. But I could not forget the explanation given in the introduction to the Revelation of Jesus Christ: "Him Who is, and Who was, and Who is coming." (Rev.1:4). This book is concerned chiefly with the day of Jehovah (1:10), and nothing could be more fitting than to give the full significance of His name at the very first. I determined, however, that I would wait until my Hebrew investigations were far enough along to test the matter thoroughly before coming to a conclusion.

Finally the time came when a decision was imperative. It could wait no longer. I was tired—too weary to study any more that day. So I planned to take it up next morning when mentally fresh. Still, I thought, it will take only a minute to compare the name with my recently settled Hebrew grammatical standards. In less time than that I had done so, and was deeply moved with thankful satisfaction; for the test convinced me not only that the triple-timed interpretation of Jehovah is correct, but also puts the seal upon my Hebrew standards. I will now explain the matter more fully, so that my readers may have the same confidence that this is truly the significance of the tetragrammaton, as the name is often called, seeing that it consists of four letters.

THE HEBREW VOWELS

At this point it will be necessary to set forth briefly some of the problems connected with the Hebrew alphabet so that my explanation may be easily understood. At present Hebrew Bibles are printed with innumerable little dots and dashes below, above and in the letters. These indicate the pronunciation and the tone, and fix the grammar. These "points" were unknown before the sixth century, so are not inspired. They were gradually added by the so-called Massorites, in order to preserve the traditional oral rendering of the text. There was no attempt to give the ancient or original text or pronunciation—only that current between the sixth and the tenth centuries. Therefore it is of little value for us, who wish God's Word, and not man's wisdom.

The addition of the so-called vowel points tended to make certain letters practically useless. When translated into English, the first letter of the alphabet (*aleph*) is now represented by a *spiritus lenis* (‘), which is not pronounced at all. The sixteenth letter (*oin*) is represented by a similar sign, but curved in the opposite direction (‘), though it is supposed to have a varying, uncertain sound. The tenth letter (*yod*), and the sixth (*waw*) are practically useless. There can be no question that these letters had their use before the vowel signs were added. The ancient language would not lack the necessary vowels and, at the same time, insert a lot of silent letters, for it is a tongue of utmost brevity. I saw the Lord's Prayer in about twenty different languages on the walls of a church on the mount of Olives, and the Arabic and Hebrew had far fewer words and letters than the other languages.

If we discard all of the signs, leaving the text unpointed, we are in a dilemma until we see that these useless letters are really vowels, and were such until the signs displaced

them. If we range the Hebrew, the Greek, the Latin, the German and the English alphabets alongside each other, we are immediately impressed by their similarity, not only in regard to letters, but in the order in which these occur. For instance, *Aleph*, *Alpha*, and the Latin, German and English *A* begin the alphabets, and there is very little doubt that they all have the open *ah* sound. *Yod* will be seen to correspond with *i*, but sounded as long *e*, as in all continental tongues. *Waw* is undoubtedly *u*. *Oin* comes where the later alphabets have *o*.

Thus we have the vowels *a*, *i*, *o*, and *u*. We lack only the short *e* sound, the *eh*. Looking again at our alphabets, we find the so-called Hebrew *h* in its place. Can it be possible that this is the lost *eh*? Many tests have convinced me that it is. In many words it is hardly possible to distinguish between *eh* and *h*. For our present purpose we will assume this to be so. Thus we have five vowels, *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, pronounced *ah*, *eh*, *ee*, *oh*, *oo*. Our English long *a* (*ay*) is really a diphthong, *ehee*, not a single vowel. These will be found quite ample, with one exception.

THE INVOLUNTARY VOWEL

In many Hebrew words consonants come together without any vowel between them. They cannot be pronounced without some sort of link. Much practice and experimentation has convinced me that this vowel is *involuntary*. That is, if we try to vocalize two succeeding consonants, we instinctively insert a short vowel sound. It is not necessary to have a letter for this because it is inherent in the human vocal organs. This sound is *uh*, I have named this the "involuntary vowel," which comes without effort or direction, when we seek to bridge the gap between two consonants.

Thus we have all the vowels in Hebrew *without the vowel signs*. Further investigation has suggested the following sim-

ple equivalents for the Hebrew letters, which we will use in the future in our writings, and in the Hebrew Indexes and Lexicon. By this simple means any Hebrew word can be immediately pronounced. Only remember the involuntary vowel between consonants, and that *i* is long *e*.

אֲבָנָדְ הַוְזָהְבְּ יְכַלְּמַנְתָּאָפְּאָקְרָבְּ
 thsh r q tz ph o s n m I k i t ch z u e d g b a

THE HEBREW “TENSES”

The greatest difficulty in our path is the fact that the Hebrew verb can hardly be said to distinguish *time* at all. How, then, can we get this in the name Jehovah? A long search has settled the question of the Hebrew verb thus: There are two forms, which distinguish primarily between *indefinite* (fact) and *incomplete* (acting), as, *I write*, and *I am writing*. Moreover, the *context* of the indefinite may show it to be in the *past*, but *seldom in the future*. The *context* of the incomplete may be in the *future*, but *seldom in the past*. Thus **I-WRITE** may be *I wrote*, and **I-AM-WRITING** may be *I will write*. This has been tested in thousands of cases, and seems to be quite satisfactory. This is probably the reason why these have sometimes been called the *past* and *future* “tenses.”

To simplify a fresh examination of the Hebrew text it is necessary to make special tools. For instance, we wish to keep clearly before the mind at all times the fact that the simple root, without any so-called “servile” letters—that is, those which indicate person, number, etc.—this root may indicate one of two different grammatical ideas. It may be

HE— (he writes or he wrote)
 —YOU (you write, *imperative*).

To keep this and the regular prefixes and suffixes under

the eye constantly, I made a very condensed chart, not much larger than a book mark, showing at a glance the use of the "servile" letters.

About half of the letters, in Hebrew, *serve* the purpose of making grammatical distinctions, besides being used in the usual way. That is why they are called *serviles*. Thus the letter *i* (*yod*) prefixed to a Hebrew root changes it from HE— (he writes, *or* wrote) to HE-IS—ING (he is writing *or* he will write).

In Hebrew, continuous action in the present, our—ING (writing), is usually indicated by inserting *u* after the first letter. This is the only practical way to indicate the present.

Thus, by inserting *u* for the present, and prefixing *i* for the future it is possible to combine in one form past, present and future. We will now try this out in forming the name Jehovah.

The Hebrew word for BE is *eue*, which is pronounced *ehueh*. We will take this root and add to it the servile letters suggested by the expansion of the name, as found in Revelation, "He Who *was*, and Who *is*, and Who is *coming*." Past, present, and future. The root already signifies He-was. Reversing the letters so as to read as in English, we have

<i>He-was</i>	<i>e u e</i>
<i>Being</i>	<i>- u -</i>
<i>He-will-be</i>	<i>i - - -</i>
	<i>I e u e</i> (Yehweh)

Thus, by adding to the root BE, which already covers the past, the signs for the present and future, we automatically obtain the name Jehovah! As the *u* for the present coincides with the *u* in the root, the only actual change needed to transform BE into Jehovah is to prefix the *i*.

This seems to be conclusive that *Ieue*, the most sacred name in all the universe, denotes the Deity's relation to revealed time, past, present and future. A more fitting

appellation cannot be found for Him as related to the course of the eons. It is the complement of the august *Aleim* (Elohim), the great Arbiter. It accords perfectly with its every occurrence, and is the only possible solution which fully and finally satisfies the heart. If this name occurred but a few times in the Scriptures, it would be possible to translate it in full, as is done in Revelation on some occasions. But, as it occurs many thousands of times, we are forced to take over the Hebrew into our own tongue.

Scholars are continually telling us that "Jehovah" is wrong, and that it should be Yahweh. It will be seen that ours is practically the same, and may be spelled Yewe, or Yehweh. There is no good reason for making the same letter both *ah* and *eh*. The pronunciation "Jehovah" came about in this way: To avoid taking it in vain, the Jews gradually ceased pronouncing the sacred name. Even today some say *shem* (Name) in place of it. In ancient times they used another TITLE, *adni*, instead of it. the vowel signs of *adni* were practically as indicated by the small capitals in *AAdonAH*. substituting, we have *YaehouAHeh*, very nearly Yehovah. This was gradually corrupted into Jehovah, its present popular form. This is now English. In assimilating foreign words we always anglicize them, so we need not apologize for using "Jehovah." It is not Hebrew. Ieue is correct in that tongue. But we are translating, not transliterating.

If we object to Jehovah because it is not the correct pronunciation of the name, we may as well be consistent and condemn the pronunciation of "Jesus" also. This certainly is not correct. It probably should be *Yaysoos*. In both cases English has arbitrarily changed the long E sound (for I) to DG (for J). It seems far wiser to accept the fact that these names have now become anglicized, and must of necessity be used in an English version. Otherwise all other names should be corrected also. James must be *Yakobus*, Peter *Petrus*, and even the inflections, such as *Christos*,

Christou, Christo, must be attended to. This is impractical and unprofitable. Though the husk of these names is somewhat altered by English, the content remains the same. The slight change in sound does not affect the sense, and this alone is vital.

That the name Jehovah is full of meaning is evident from the phrases which are used to indicate it in Revelation. With superhuman intelligence the three parts of the name are rearranged so as to accord with the burden of the context. Its normal and usual form is given us by the four animals, the cherubim who represent the creatures of the earth. They have no rest day or night saying (Rev.4:8):

“Holy! holy! holy!
Lord God Almighty,
Who wast and Who art
And Who art coming.”

The divine titles here used may be turned back into Hebrew as *Adonai* (Lord), *Aleim*. (God), *Shaddai* (Almighty), *Jehovah*. The latter is expanded in the regular order as the One Who was in the past, is in the present, and will be in the future.

But in the first chapter of Revelation, in the fourth and eighth verses, the time sequence is adapted to the theme. The present is put first—“Him Who *is*, and Who *was*, and Who *is coming*.” How beautifully this accords with the purpose of this revelation! All depends on the fact that, at last, He is *present*, though, at the beginning, this does not fully set aside the great truth that He is the Coming One. Therefore He is introduced emphatically, first of all, as He Who *is*, instead of giving the past first, as the normal order demands. The day of Jehovah, with which the Apocalypse is principally occupied, is characterized by His presence, and this is most aptly indicated by varying the time sequence in His Name.

This marvelous manipulation of the Name is further developed as the great tragedy proceeds. Immediately after the world kingdom becomes our Lords and His Christ's and He is reigning, the twenty-four elders fall on their faces and worship saying, “We are thanking Thee, Lord God Almighty, *Who art and Who wast . . .*” (Rev.11:17). “*Who art coming*” is omitted, because He *has* come! Surely no clearer confirmation could be conceived than this! Even before this, the messenger of the waters, recognizing the presence of Jehovah in the bloody judgment of the third bowl (Rev.16:5), says, “Just art Thou, Who art and Who wast . . .,” and leaves out the phrase for the future. The treatment of this Name, its rearrangement and the falling off of the future seem to settle its significance in a most satisfactory and delicious fashion.

The question has often been asked, why the Name itself never appears in the Greek Scriptures. Some have even insisted that we should not use Jehovah, the English equivalent for the Hebrew, because this was not done in the “New Testament.” But a few facts will show the reason why the name could not be transliterated into Greek, yet its meaning could be given in full, when necessary, as we have just seen. The title *Aleim*, which means “Disposer” is well translated by means of the Greek *Theos*, which literally denotes the “Placer.” The title *Adonai*, which means “my Lord” is well rendered by the Greek *Kurios*, which also means Master or Lord. But it is evident that the continual translation of Jehovah, by “Him Who was and Who is and Who is coming” is quite impracticable. It is far too cumbersome except on such special occasions as we have in the Apocalypse.

It would have been very simple to turn the Hebrew into Greek letters, but there were the gravest objections to this course. A false sense of reverence forbade the pronunciation of the Sacred Tetragrammaton. One who had

learned Hebrew could be trusted not to commit this great offense, but the Greek translation would be open to all, so that even foreigners might take His Name in vain, if it appeared thousands of times on its pages in the common language of the day. As the name Adonai was orally read in place of Jehovah, nothing would be more natural than that the translators should put the translation of Adonai in its place in their version. But when these two titles came together, they sometimes made it Lord God, yet frequently translated *Adonai* in order to avoid the repetition Lord, Lord. Their work was neither exact nor consistent, so that, to this day, we must go to the Hebrew text itself for all reliable information as to the titles of the Deity.

It is evident, therefore, that the use of the Incommunicable Name was quite out of the question in the days when the Greek Scriptures were written. Yet we cannot think that even this human failing was contrary to the divine intention. There must be a deeper reason why the common use of the Name, as found in the Hebrew Scriptures, was not continued in the Greek. This is, we believe, indicated right at the beginning, where we are told that our Lord was named JESUS, because *He* should save His people from their sins.

In the Hebrew Scriptures salvation is of Jehovah. No other name is given which His own people could invoke for help. Even when the Messiah came in flesh in order to be the Saviour there was no real change, because *He is Jehovah-Saviour*, which is the meaning of Jesus. Peter could assure the Jews that "there is no salvation in any other, for neither has any other name been given under heaven by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Does this deny that there is salvation in Jehovah? Quite the opposite! It insists that Jesus is the Jehovah in Whom salvation is. So that, as a matter of fact, the name Jehovah occurs every time that we find the personal name of our Lord.

The theme of the later revelation is salvation. So this is united with the Name. It is no longer Jehovah, but Jehovah-Saviour—Jesus.

But there are times when Jehovah is not a Saviour. He may be a Judge or a man of War. As such He is presented of old, especially when foretelling His advent, which will usher in the day of Jehovah. In such a case the name Jesus is not appropriate. And is not this the reason why the name is spread before us at length at the beginning of Christ's Revelation? Our Lord, as Jehovah the Saviour, is the equivalent of Jehovah until the day of divine indignation. Then the term Saviour must be dropped occasionally, and the Name, or at least its significance, must be restored to the divine records. So we read of "Him Who is, and Who was, and Who is coming" (Rev.1:4).

How few realize the fullness which is in our Lord's personal name! Suppose we spread it out before us and unfold its meaning. Then "Jesus" is the *Saviour Who was and Who is and Who is coming*. How wonderfully this fits into His history! Most of His contemporaries saw only the One Who is. Of His past glory with the Father they knew nothing. Of His future exaltation they did not dream. They saw little more than His present humiliation. Anyone who really knew His Name realized what He had been, and what He would be, as well as what He was. He is a Saviour Who plans and performs and perfects, in the past, in the present, and in the future.

Once we see that "Jesus" is a glorified form of Jehovah, adapted to the new revelation, we will no longer wonder why the Incommunicable Name has almost disappeared from God's later revelation. It occurs about a thousand times in the personal name of our Lord and Saviour, Christ Jesus.

While Judaism invested the sacred name Ieue with superstitious reverence, Christendom has handled the sacred name, Jesus, with the utmost carelessness. This must be

even more offensive to God. So long as they did not pronounce the divine name at all they at least did not take it in vain. But when it is used freely and thoughtlessly and vulgarly, as is common in religious circles today, it must often be used needlessly and offensively. Perhaps few really intend to be disrespectful, but the instinctive reverence which befits His presence and His Name are lacking because the power of that presence is not realized. The Greeks who wished to see "Jesus" gave evidence of the state of their hearts by their free use of His name, hence were not received. Only those who knew Him not, or who were His enemies, used His Name in this familiar fashion.

The early disciples would no more have addressed Him as "Jesus" than an Englishman would address his sovereign by his given name. Even when speaking about Him they used a title, as Teacher or Lord. Only when needful is He spoken of without a title. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote as inspired by God, hence constantly refer to Him by His personal Name in their accounts of His life, because they are not the actual authors, but merely the amanuenses of the books that bear their names. God is the real Writer. Outside of these writings they seldom used His name without an appropriate title. Paul uses it alone only on very special occasions, when he desires to indicate our Lord's person or humiliation. There are times when it is necessary to use it alone, especially in writing an article like this. Otherwise it will be found that we have followed the example of the early days, and seldom used this sacred Name without some indication of His glories accompanying it.

Those who are spiritually sensitive to the august dignity of our Saviour will be slow to utter His Name needlessly. We would not think of following the example of the Jews, and prohibit the utterance of the Name, or change it to another in translation, as the Septuagint did Jehovah.

That is no more real reverence than if we were dumb or dead. Let us not fear it, but have it in holy awe, as befits its supremacy. Let us use it with the same restraint as the saints of old, who instinctively sensed His exalted station and uttered with their lips what was in their hearts. Much "Christian" literature today condemns itself and its authors, judged by this touchstone. The highest claims to spirituality are utterly discounted by a familiar use of the sacred Name. This is soulish, not spiritual. Men have more sense of awe when speaking of earthly dignitaries than when they refer to Him Who is above them all. Let us enshrine Him in our hearts as the Supreme.

A. E. Knoch

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